AN EXPOSITION
OF THE
Old and New Testament:

WHEREIN
EACH CHAPTER IS SUMMED UP IN ITS CONTENTS; THE SACRED TEXT INSERTED AT LARGE, IN DISTINCT PARAGRAPHS; EACH PARAGRAPH REDUCED TO ITS PROPER HEADS; THE SENSE GIVEN, AND LARGELY ILLUSTRATED;

WITH
PRACTICAL REMARKS AND OBSERVATIONS:

BY MATTHEW HENRY.

EDITED BY
THE REV. GEORGE BURDER, AND THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES, A M

WITH THE
LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,
BY THE
REV. SAMUEL PALMER.

First American Edition:
TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,
A PREFACE,
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AN EXPOSITION,
WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS
UPON THE POETICAL BOOKS
OF THE OLD TESTAMENT,
NAMELY,
JOB, PSALMS, PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES, AND SOLOMON'S SONG.
A PRACTICAL
GUIDE TO THE
PROFESSION
OF MEDICINE
THE

PREFACE

TO THE

POETICAL BOOKS.

These five books of scripture, which I have here endeavoured, according to the measure of the gift given to me, to explain and improve, for the use of those who desire to read them, not only with understanding, but to their edification—though they have the same divine origin, design, and authority, as those that went before, yet, upon some accounts, are of a very different nature from them, and from the rest of the sacred writings: such variety of methods has Infinite Wisdom seen fit to take, in conveying the light of divine revelation to the children of men, that this heavenly food might have (as the Jews say of the manna) something in it agreeable to every palate, and suited to every constitution. If every eye be not thus opened, every mouth will be stopped, and such as perish in their ignorance will be left without excuse. We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced: we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented, Mat. xi. 17.

1. The books of scripture have hitherto been, for the most part, very plain and easy narratives of matter of fact, which he that runs may read and understand, and which are milk for babes, such as they can receive and digest, and both entertain and nourish themselves with. The waters of the sanctuary have hitherto been to the ankles or to the knees, such as a lamb might wade in, to drink of and wash in; but here we are advanced to a higher form in God’s school, and have books put into our hands, wherein are many things dark, and hard to be understood, which we do not apprehend the meaning of so suddenly and so certainly as we could wish; the study whereof requires a more close application of mind, a greater intenseness of thought, and the accomplishing of a diligent search, which yet the treasure hid in them, when it is found, will abundantly recompense. The waters of the sanctuary are here to the loins, and still, as we go forward, we shall find the waters still risen in the prophetic books, waters to swim in, (Isa. xl. 3--5.) not fordable, nor otherwise to be passed over; depths in which an elephant will not find footing; strong meat for strong men. The same method is observable in the New Testament, where we find the plain history of Christ and his gospel placed first in the Evangelists, and the Acts of the Apostles; then the mystery of both in the Epistles, which are more difficult to be understood; and, lastly, the prophecies of things to come, in the Apocalyptic visions.

This method, so exactly observed in both the Testaments, directs us in what order to proceed, both in studying the things of God ourselves, and in teaching them to others; we must go in the order that the scripture does; and where can we expect to find a better method of divinity, and a better method of preaching?

1. We must begin with those things that are most plain and easy, as, blessed be God, those things are which are most necessary to salvation, and of the greatest use. We must lay our foundation firm, in a sound experimental knowledge of the principles of religion, and then the superstructure will be well-reared, and stand firm. It is not safe to launch out into the deep at first, or to venture into points difficult and controverted, until we have first thoroughly digested the elements of the oracles of God, and turned them in succum et sanguinem—juice and blood. Those that begin their Bible at the wrong end, commonly use their knowledge of it in the wrong way.

And, in training up others, we must be sure to ground them well at first in those truths of God which are plain, and in some measure level to their capacity, which we find they take and relish, and know how to make use of, and not amuse those that are weak with things above them, things of doubtful disputation, which they cannot apprehend any certainty of, or advantage by. Our Lord Jesus spake the word to the people as they were able to hear it, (Mark iv. 33.) and had many things to say to his disciples which he did not say, because as yet they could not hear them, John xvi. 12, 13. And those whom St. Paul could not speak to as unto spiritual—though he blamed them for their backwardness, yet he accommodated himself to their weakness, and spake to them as unto babes in Christ, 1 Cor. iii. 1, 2.

2. Yet we must not rest in these things; we must not be always children, that have need of milk, but, nourished up with that, and gaining strength, we must go on to perfection, (Heb. vi. 1.) that, having, by reason of use, our spiritual senses exercised, we may come to full age, and put away childish things, and, forgetting the things which are behind, (Heb. v. 14.) that is, so well remembering them, (Phil. iii. 13.) that we need not be still poring over them, as those that are ever learning the same lesson, we may reach
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faith to the things which are before. Though we must never think to learn above our Bible, as long as we are here in this world, yet we must still be getting forward in it. Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain; now turn you, and take your journey onward in the wilderness toward Canaan: our motto must be Plus ultra—Onward. And then shall we know, if thus, by regular steps, (Hos. vi. 3) we follow on to know the Lord, and what the mind of the Lord is.

II. The books of scripture have hitherto been mostly historical, but now the matter is of another nature; it is doctrinal and devotional, preaching and praying. In this way of writing, as well as in the former, a great number of valuable prophets have served for inscriptions for the present time, and to those who know to use, not only what others did that went before us, and how they feared, but what their notions and sentiments were, what their thoughts and affections were, that we may, with the help of them, form our minds aright.

Plutarch's Morals are reputed as useful a treasure in the commonwealth of learning as Plutarch's Lives; and the wise disquisitions and discourses of the philosophers, as the records of the historians; nor is this divine philosophy, (if I may so call it,) which we have in these books, less needful, or less serviceable, to the church, than the sacred history was. Blessed be God for both.

III. The Jews make these books to be given by a divine inspiration somewhat different from that both of Moses and the prophets. They divided the books of the Old Testament into the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms—the Writers, which Epiphanius emphatically translates Ἁγγεία—Holy Writings, and these books are more commonly called among the Greeks 'Αγιογραφία—Holy Writings: the Jews attribute them to that distinct kind of inspiration which they call γένεσις—The Holy Spirit. Moses they supposed to write by the Spirit, in a way above all the other prophets, for with him God spake mouth to mouth, even apparently; knew him, (Num. xii. 8.) that is, conversed with him face to face, Deut. xxxiv. 10.

He was made partner of divine revelation, (as Maimonides distinguishes, De Fund. Legis, c. 7.) per vigiliam—while awake,* whereas God-manifested himself to all the other prophets in a dream or vision: and he adds, that Moses understood the words of prophecy without any perturbation or astonishment of mind, whereas the other prophets commonly feared and were troubled. But the writers of the Hagiography, and those who have treated of the Jews, have been more or less below that of the other prophets, and to receive divine revelation, not as they did, by dreams, and visions, and voices, but (as Maimonides describes it, More Nauochim—part 2. ch. 45.) they perceived some power to rise within them, and rest upon them, which urged and enabled them to write or speak far above their own natural ability, in psalms, or hymns, or in history, or in rules of good living, still enjoying the ordinary vigour and use of their senses.

Let David himself describe it. The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue: the God of Israel spake to me, 2 Sam. xxiii. 2, 3. This gives such a magnificent account of the inspiration by which David wrote, that I see not why it should be made inferior to that of the other prophets, for David is expressly called a prophet, Acts ii. 36.

But, since our hand is in with the Jewish masters, let us see what books they account Hagiography. Those are that are now before us come, without dispute, into this rank of sacred writers, and the book of the Lamentations is not unfitly added to them. Indeed, the Jews, when they would speak critically, reckon all those songs which we meet with in the Old Testament among the Hagiography; for, though they were penned by prophets, and under the direction of the Holy Ghost, yet, because they were not the proper result of a vision prophetici—prophetic vision, they were not strictly prophecy. As to the Historical Books, they distinguish; (but I think it is a distinction without a difference;) some of them they assign to the prophets, calling them the prophetici priores—the former prophets, namely, Joshua, Judges, and the two books of the Kings; but others they rank among the Hagiographa, as, the book of Ruth, (which yet is but an appendix to the book of Judges,) the two books of Chronicles, with Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, which last the Rabbins have a great value for, and think it is to be had in equal esteem with the law of Moses itself, that it shall last as long as it lasts, and shall survive the writings of the prophets. And, lastly, they reckon the book of Daniel among the Hagiographa, for no reason can be given, since he was not inferior to any of the prophets in the gift of prophecy: and, therefore, the learned Mr. Smith thinks that their placing him among the Hagiographical writers was fortuitous, and by mistake.*

Mr. Smith, in his Discourse, before quoted, though he supposes this kind of divine inspiration to be more 'pacate and serene than that which was strictly called prophetici, not acting so much upon the imagination, but seating itself in the higher and purer faculties of the soul, yet shows that it manifested itself in a divine nature, not only as it always acted pious souls into straits of devotion, or moved them strangely to dictate matters of true piety and goodness, but as it came in abruptly upon the minds of those holy men, and transported them from the temper of mind they were in before; so that they perceived themselves captivated by the power of some higher light than that which their own understanding commonly poured out upon them; and this, says he, was a kind of vital form to that light of divine and sanctified reason which they were perpetually possessed of, and that constant frame of holiness and goodness which dwelt in their hallowed minds. We have reason to glorify that God of Israel who gave such power unto men, and has here transmitted to us the blessed products of that power.

IV. The style and composition of these books are different from those that go before and those that follow. Our Saviour divides the books of the Old Testament into the Law, the Prophets. It will be of great use in verse, according to the ancient rules of versifying, though not according to the Greek and Latin prosodics.

Some of the ancients call these five books the second Pentateuch of the Old Testament, five sacred volumes, which are as the satellites to the five books of the law of Moses. Gregorius Nazianzen, (caur. 33, p. 98,) calls these si εικος πεντε—five metrical books; first, Job, (so he reckons them,) up then David, the twelve Psalms, Hymns, Ecclesiastes, Song, and Proverbs. Ambrose, Bishop of Ticinum, in his Isicic Poem to Socrates, reckons them up particularly, and calls them εικος πεντε σοληνοο—

* See Mr. Smith's Discourse on prophecy, ch. 11
† Hill Megil. c. 2 §11. ‡ Vid. Horatius, Theauram, Philol. lib. 2. cap. 1. §3

* See Mr. Smith's Discourse on prophecy, ch. 11
† Hill Megil. c. 2 §11. ‡ Vid Horatius, Theauram, Philol. lib. 2. cap. 1. §3
the five verse-books. Epiphanius, (lib. de ponder. et mensur. p. 533.) ἡ τῶν στιχίων τῶν ἑπταθερμῶν—
the five verse-books. And Cyril. Hierosol. Collect. 4. p. (mihi—in my copy.) 30. calls these five books τὰ στιχία—books
in verse. Polychronius, in his prologue to Job, says, that, as those that are without, call their tragedies and comedies ποιησις—Poetics, so, in sacred writ, those books which are composed in Hebrew metre, (of which he reckons Job the first,) we call στιχος, ἔπη—Books in verse, written στίχων στίχων—according to order. What is written in metre, or rhythm, is so called from μέτρον—a measure, and ςτίχων—a num-
ber, the metres of syllables, which please the ear with their smoothness and cadency, and so insinuate the matter the more movingly and powerfully into the fancy.
Sir William Temple,* in his essay upon poetry, thinks it is generally agreed to have been the first sort of writing that was used in the world; nay, that, in several nations, poetical compositions preceded the very invention or usage of letters. The Spaniards (he says) found in America many strains of poetry, and such as seemed to flow from a true poetic vein, before any letters were known in those regions. The same (says he) is probable of the Scythians and Grecians: the oracles of Apollo were delivered in verse; so were those of the Sibyls. And Tacitus says, that the ancient Germans had no annals or records but what were in verse. Homer and Hesiod wrote their poems (the very Alcoran of the Pagan Demonology) many ages before the appearing of any of the Greek philosophers or historians; and, long before them, (if we may give credit to the antiquity of Greece,) even before the days of David, Orpheus and Linus were celebrated poets and musicians in Greece; and, at the same time, Carmenta, the mother of Evander, who was the first that introduced letters among the natives of Greece, was so called a carmine—from a song, because she delivered herself in verse. And in such veneration was this way of writing among the ancients, that their poets were called Vates—Prophets, and their muses were defied.
But, which is more certain and considerable, the most ancient composition that we meet with in scripture was the song of Moses at the Red Sea, (Exod. xv.) which we find before the very first mention of writing, for that occurs not until Exod. xvii. 14. when God bade Moses write a memorial of the war with Amalek. The first, and indeed the true and general end of writing, is, the help of memory; and poetry does somewhat pretend to this end. So, in sacred writing, metal may be the most useful to writing, helps to preserve the remembrance of ancient things. The book of the Miscellaneous, (lives of the Lord, (N.T.) and the book of Jasher, (Josh. x. 13. 2 Sam. i. 18.) seem to have been both written in poetic measures.
Many sacred songs we meet with in the Old Testament, scattered both in the historical and prophetic books, penned on particular occasions, in the opinion of very competent judges, "have in them as true and noble strains of poetry and picture as are met with in any other language whatsoever, in spite of all the disadvantages from translations into so different tongues and common prose;" nay, are nobler examples of the true sublime style of poetry than any that can be found in the Pagan writers; the images are so strong, the thoughts so great, the expressions so divine, and the figures so admirably bold and moving, that the wonderful manner of these writers is quite inimitable." It is fit that what is employed in the service of the sacred oracles should be of such a nature as is useful, and what and what they contain is more fitted to our hand, and made ready for use, than any part of the Old Testament; upon which account, if we may be allowed to compare one star with another, in the firmament of the scripture, these will be reckoned stars of the first magnitude.
All scripture is profitable (and this part of it in a special manner) for instruction in doctrine, in devotion, and in the right ordering of the conversation. The book of Job directs us what we are to believe concerning God; the book of Psalms, how we are to worship him, pay our homage to him, and maintain our communion with him; and then the book of the Proverbs shows very particularly how we are to govern ourselves in πάντα έσωπροσόν—every turn of human life: thus shall the man of God, by a due at-
tendance to these lights, be perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good work. And these are placed according to their natural order, as well as according to the order of time; for very fitly are we first led into the knowledge of God, our judgments rightly formed concerning him, and our mistakes rectified; and then instructed how to worship him, and to choose the things that please him.
We have here much of natural religion, its principles, its precepts—much of God, his infinite perfections, his relations to man, and his government both of the world and of the church: here is much of Christ, who is the Spring, and Soul, and Centre, of revealed religion, and whom both Job and David were eminent types of, and had clear and happy prospects of. We have here that which will be of use to enlighten our understandings, and to acquaint us more and more with the things of God, with the deep things of God, speculation to entertain the mind contemplative, and discoveries to satisfy the most inquisitive, and increase the knowledge of those that have the best in its kind. Here is that also which, with a divine light, will bring into the soul the heat and influence of a divine fire, will kindle and inflame pious and devout affections, on which wings we may soar upward, until we enter into the holiest. We may here be in the mount with God, to behold his beauty; and when we come down from that mount, if we retain (as we ought) the impressions of our devotion upon our spirits, and make conscience of doing that good which the Lord our God here requires of us, our faces shall shine before all with whom we converse, who shall take occasion hence to gloryify our Father which is in heaven, Mat. v. 16.
Thus great, thus noble, thus truly excellent, is the subject, and thus capable of being improved, which gives me the more reason to be ashamed of the meanness of my performance, that the comment breathes so little of the life and spirit of the text. We often wonder at those that are not at all affected with the

* Miscell. part 2.
† Sir W. Temple, p. 220.
‡ Sir R. Blackmore's Preface to Job.
great things of God, and have no taste or relish of them, because they know little of them: but, perhaps, we have more reason to wonder at ourselves, that, conversing so frequently, so intimately, with them, we are not more affected with them, so as even to be wholly taken up with them, and in a continual transport of delight in the contemplation of them. We hope to be so shortly, in the meantime, though, like the three disciples that were the witnesses of Christ's transfiguration upon the mount, we are but dull and sleepy, yet we can say, Master, it is good to be here; here let us make tabernacles, Luke ix. 32, 33.

I have nothing here to boast of, nothing at all; but a great deal to be humbled for, that I have not come up to what I have aimed at, in respect of fulness and exactness. In the review of it, I find many defects, and those who are critical perhaps will meet with some mistakes in it; but I have done it with what care I could, and desire to be thankful to God, who, by his grace, has carried me on in his work thus far: let that grace have all the glory, (Phil. ii. 13.) which works in us both to will and to do whatever he will or do, that is good, or serves any good purpose. What is from God, I trust, shall be to him, shall be graciously accepted by him, according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not, and shall be of some use to his church; and what is from myself, that is, all the defects and errors, shall, I trust, be favourably passed by and pardoned. That prayer of St. Austin is mine, Domine Deus, quæcumque dixi in his libris de tuo, agnoscant et tu; et quæ de meo, et tu ignoscet et tu—Lord God, whatever I have maintained in these books correspond with what is contained in thine, grant that thy people may approve as well as thyself; whatever is but the doctrine of my book, forgive thou, and grant that thy people may forgive also.

I must beg likewise to own, to the honour of our great Master, that I have found the work to be its own wages; and that the more we converse with the word of God, the more it is to us as the honeycomb, Ps. xix. 10. In gathering some gleanings of this harvest for others, we may feast ourselves; and when we are enabled, by the grace of God, to do so, we are best qualified to feed others. I was much pleased with the passage I lately met with of Erasmus, that great scholar and celebrated wit, in an epistle dedicatory before his book De Ratione Concionandi, where, as one weary of the world and the hurry of it, he expresses an earnest desire to spend the rest of his days in secret communion with Jesus Christ, encouraged by his gracious invitation to those who labour and are heavy-laden to come unto him for rest; (Matth. xi. 28.) and this alone is that which he thinks will yield him true satisfaction. I think his words worth transcribing, and such as deserve to be inserted among the testimonies of great men to serious godliness. Neeque quisquam facilis credat quàm miserè animus jamudum affectet ab his laboribus in tranquillum omium secedere, quodque suærest vité, (suærest autem vice brevis falsus sine fugitibus,) solum cum eo solo colloqui, qui clamavit olim, (ne hodie mutat vocem suam,) "Veni ad me, omnes qui laboratis, et onerati estis, ego refeciam vos;" quandoquidem in tam turbulento, ne dicam furente, seculo, in tot molestiis quas vel ipsa tempora publicè inveheunt, vel privataù adserit eis ac valetudo, nihil referio in quo mens mea libentius conquaciet quàm in hoc arcano colloquio—No one will easily believe how anxiously, for a long time past, I have wished to retire from these labours into a scene of tranquillity, and, during the remainder of life, (dwindled, it is true, to the shortest span,) to converse only with him who once cried, (nor does he now retract,) "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you;" for in this turbulent, not to say furious, age, the many public sources of diquittedune connected with the infirmities of advancing age leave no solace to my mind to be compared with this secret communion. In the pleasing contemplation of the divine beauty and benignity we hope to spend a blessed eternity, and therefore in this work it is good to spend as much as may be of our time.

One volume more, containing the Prophetical books, will finish the Old Testament, if the Lord continue my life, and leisure, and ability of mind and body for this work. It is begun, and I fir.; it will be larger than any of the other volumes, and longer in the doing; but as God, by his grace, shall furnish me for it, and assist me in it, (without which grace I am nothing, less than nothing,) it shall be carried on with all convenient speed; and sat ciò, si sat bene—if with sufficient ability, it will be with sufficient speed. I desire the prayers of my friends, that God would minister seed to the sower, and bread to the eaters, (Isa. lv. 10.) that he would multiply the seed sown, and increase the fruits of our righteousness; (2 Cor. ix. 10.) that so he who soweth and they who reap may rejoice together; (John iv. 36.) and the great Lord of the harvest shall have the glory of all.

Chester, May 13, 1710.

M. H.
This book of Job stands by itself, is not connected with any other, and is therefore to be considered alone. Many copies of the Hebrew Bible place it after the book of Psalms, and some after the Proverbs, which perhaps has given occasion to some learned men to imagine it to be written by Isaiah, or some of the later prophets. But, as the subject appears to have been much more ancient, so we have no reason to think but that the composition of the book was, and that therefore it is most fitly placed first in this collection of divine morals; also, being doctrinal, it is proper to precede, and 'introduce, the book of Psalms, which is devotional, and the book of Proverbs, which is practical; for how shall we worship or obey a God whom we know not?

As to this book,

I. We are sure that it is given by inspiration of God, though we are not certain who was the penman of it. The Jews, though no friends to Job, because he was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, yet, as faithful conservators of the oracles of God committed to them, always retained this book in their sacred canon. The history is referred to by one apostle; (James, v. 11.) and one passage (ch. v. 13.) is quoted by another apostle, with the usual form of quoting scripture, *It is written,* 1 Cor. iii. 19. It is the opinion of many of the ancients, that this history was written by Moses himself in Midian, and delivered to his suffering brethren in Egypt, for their support and comfort under their burdens, and the encouragement of their hope that God would, in due time, deliver and enrich them, as he did this patient sufferer. Some conjecture that it was written originally in Arabic, and afterward translated into Hebrew, for the use of the Jewish church, by Solomon, (so Monsieur Jurieu,) or some other inspired writer. It seems most probable to me, that Elihu was the penman of it, at least of the discourses, because (ch. xxiii. 15, 16,) he mingles the words of an historian with those of a disputant: but Moses perhaps wrote the two first chapters and the last, to give light to the discourses; for in them God is frequently called Jehovah, but not once in all the discourses, except ch. xii. 9. That name was but little known to the patriarchs before Moses, Exod. vi. 3. If Job wrote it himself, some of the Jewish writers themselves own him a prophet among the Gentiles; if Elihu, we find he had a spirit of prophecy which filled him with matter, and constrained him, ch. xxxii. 18.

II. We are sure that it is, for the substance of it, a true history, and not a romance, though the dialogues are poetical. No doubt there was such a man as Job; the prophet Ezekiel names him with Noah and Daniel, Ezek. xiv. 14. The narrative we have here of his prosperity and piety, his strange afflictions and exemplary patience, the substance of his conferences with his friends, and God's discourse with him out of the whirlwind, with his return, at length, to a very prosperous condition, no doubt, is exactly true, though the inspired penman is allowed the usual liberty of putting the matter of which Job and his friends discoursed, into his own words.

III. We are sure that it is very ancient, though we cannot fix the precise time either when Job lived, or when the book was written. So many, so evident, are its hoary hairs, the marks of its antiquity, that we have reason to think it of equal date with the book of Genesis itself, and that holy Job was contemporary with Isaac and Jacob; though not co-heir with them of the promise of the earthly Canaan, yet a joint-expectant with them of the better country, that is, the heavenly. Probably, he was of the posterity of Nahor, Abraham's brother, whose first-born was Us, (Gen. xxii. 21.) and in whose family religion was, for some ages, kept up, as appears, Gen. xxxvi. 53. where God is called, not only the God of Abraham, but the God of Nahor. He lived before the age of man was shortened to 70 or 80, as it was in Moses's time; before sacrifices were confined to one altar; before the general apostasy of the nations from the knowledge and worship of the true God; and while yet there was no other idolatry known than the worship of the sun and moon, and that punished by the Judges, ch. xxxi. 26, 28. He lived while God was known by the name of God Almighty, more than by the name of Jehovah; for he is
called Shaddai—the Almighty, above thirty times in this book: he lived while divine knowledge was conveyed, not by writing, but by tradition; for to that appeals are here made, ch. viii. 8.—xxi. 29.—xv 18.—v. 1. And we have therefore reason to think that he lived before Moses, because here is no mention at all of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, or the giving of the law. There is indeed one passage which might be made to allude to the drowning of Pharaoh, (ch. xxxvi. 12.) He divided the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smite through Rahab; which name Egypt is very frequently called by in scripture, as Ps. lxxxvii. 4.—lxxxix. 18. Isa. li. 9. But that may as well refer to the proud waves of the sea. We conclude therefore that we are here got back to the patriarchal age, and, beside its authority, we receive this book with veneration for its antiquity.

IV. We are sure that it is of great use to the church, and to every good Christian, though there are many passages in it dark and hard to be understood. We cannot perhaps be confident of the true meaning of every Arabic word and phrase we meet with in it. It is a book that finds a great deal of work for the critics; but enough is plain to make the whole profitable, and it was all written for our learning. This noble poem presents to us, in very clear and lively characters, these five things among others:

1. A monument of primitive theology. The first and great principles of the light of nature, on which natural religion is founded, are here, in a warm, and long, and learned, dispute, not only taken for granted on all sides, and not the least doubt made of them, but by common consent plainly laid down as eternal truths, illustrated and urged as affecting commanding truths. Were ever the being of God, his glorious attributes and perfections, his unsearchable wisdom, his irresistible power, his inconceivable glory, his inflexible justice, and his incontestable sovereignty, disclosed of with more clearness, fulness, reverence, and divine eloquence, than in this book? The creation of the world, and the government of it, are here admirably described, not as matters of nice speculation, but as laying most powerful arguments upon us to fear and serve, to submit to, and trust in, our Creator, Owner, Lord, and Ruler. Moral good and evil, virtue and vice, were never drawn more to the life, (the beauty of the one and the deformity of the other,) than in this book; nor the inviolable rule of God's judgment more plainly laid down. That happy are the righteous, it shall be well with them; and wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with them. These are not questions of the schools, to keep the learned world in action, nor engines of state, to keep the unlearned world in awe; no, it appears by this book that they are sacred truths of undoubted certainty, and which all the wise and sober part of mankind have in every age subscribed and submitted to.

2. It presents us with a specimen of Gentile piety. This great saint descended, not from Abraham, but Nahor; or, if from Abraham, not from Isaac, but from one of the sons of the concubines that were sent into the east country; (Gen. xxv. 6.) or, if from Isaac, yet not from Jacob, but Esau; so that he was out of the pale of the covenant of peculiarity, no Israelite, no proselyte, and yet none like him for religion, nor such a favourite of heaven upon this earth. It was a truth, therefore, before St. Peter perceived it, that, in every nation, he that fears God, and works righteousness, is accepted of him, Acts x. 35. There were children of God scattered abroad, (John xl. 52.) beside the incorporated children of the kingdom, Matth. viii. 11, 12.

3. It presents us with an exposition of the book of Providence, and a clear and satisfactory solution of many of the difficult and obscure passages of it. The prosperity of the wicked, and the afflictions of the righteous, have always been reckoned two as hard chapters as any in that book; but they are here expounded, and reconciled with the divine wisdom, purity, and goodness, by the end of these things.

4. It presents us with a great example of patience, and close adherence to God, in the midst of the sorest calamities. Sir Richard Blackmore's most ingenious pen, in his excellent preface to his paraphrase on this book, makes Job a hero proper for an epic poem; for, (says he,) "He appears brave in distress, and valiant in affliction, maintains his virtue, and with that his character, under the most exasperating provocations that the malice of hell could invent, and thereby gives a most noble example of passive fortitude, a character no way inferior to that of the active hero," &c.

5. It presents us with an illustrious type of Christ, the particulars of which we shall endeavour to take notice of as we go along. In general, Job was a great sufferer, was emptied and humbled, but in order to his greater glory. So Christ abased himself, that we might be exalted. The learned Bishop Patrick quotes St. Jerom more than once speaking of Job as a type of Christ, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, who was persecuted for a time by men and devils, and seemed forsaken of God too, but was raised up to be an intercessor even for his friends that had added affliction to his misery. When the apostle speaks of the patience of Job, he immediately takes notice of the end of the Lord, that is, of the Lord Jesus, (as some understand it,) typified by Job, James v. 11.

In this book we have,

1. The history of Job's sufferings, and his patience under them, (ch. i. ii.) without a mixture of human frailty, ch. iii. (2.) A dispute between him and his friends upon them, in which, [1.] The opponents were Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. [2.] The respondent was Job. [3.] The moderators were, First, Elihu, ch. xxxix. xxxvii. Secondly, God himself, ch. xxxviii. xli.

2. The issue of all in Job's honour and prosperity, ch. xlii. Upon the whole, we learn, that many are the afflictions of the righteous, but that, when the Lord delivers them out of all, the trial of their faith will be found to praise, and honour, and glory.
CHAPTER I.

The history of Job begins here, with an account, I, of his great piety in general, (v. 1.) and in a particular instance, v. 5. 8. Of his great prosperity, v. 9. 4. Of the malice of Satan against him, and the permission he obtained to try his constancy, v. 6. 12. IV. Of the surprising troubles that befell him; the ruin of his estate, (v. 13. -17.) and the death of his children, v. 18, 19. V. Of his unceasing patience and piety under these troubles, v. 20. -22. In all which, he is set forth for an example of suffering affliction, from which no prosperity can secure us, but through which integrity and uprightness will preserve us.

I. THERE was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. 2. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. 3. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.

Concerning Job, we are here told,
I. That he was a man; therefore subject to like passions as we are. He was Ish, a worthy man, a man of note and eminency, a magistrate, a man in authority. The country he lived in was the land of Uz, in the eastern part of Arabia, which lay toward Chaldea, near Euphrates, probably not far from Ur of the Chaldees, whence Abraham was called. When God called one good man out of that country, accurately, yet he left not himself without witness, but raised up another in it to be a preacher of righteousness. God has his remnant in all places, sealed ones out of every nation, as well as out of every tribe of Israel, Rev. vii. 9. It was the privilege of the land of Uz to have so good a man as Job in it; now it was Arabia the Happy indeed; and it was the praise of Job, that he was eminently good in so bad a place, and these were others were round about him, the better he was.

His name Job, or Jrob, (some say,) signifies one hated, and counted as an enemy; others make it to signify one that grieves, or groans; thus the sorrow he carried in his name might be a check to his joy in his prosperity. Dr. Cave derives it from Jab, to love, or desire, intimating how welcome his birth was to his parents, and how much he was the desire of their eyes; and yet there was a time when he cursed the day of his birth. Who can tell what the day may prove, which yet begins with a bright morning?

II. That he was a very good man, eminently pious, and better than his neighbours. He was perfect and upright. This is intended to show us, not only what reputation he had among men, (that he was generally taken for an honest man,) but what was really his character; for it is the judgment of God concerning him, and we are sure that is according to truth. 1. Job was a religious man, one that feared God, that is, worshipped him according to his will, and governed himself by the rules of the divine law in every thing. 2. He was sincere in his religion; he was perfect, not sinless; he himself owns, (ch. ix. 20.) If I say I am perfect, I shall be judged false. But, having a respect to all God's commandments, aiming at perfection, he was really as good as he seemed to be, and did not resemble in his profession of piety; his heart was sound, and his eye single. Sincerity is gospel-perfection; I know no religion without it. 3. He was upright in his dealings both with God and man; was faithful to his promises, steady in his counsels, true to every trust reposed in him, and made conscience of all he said and did. See Isa. xxxiii. 15. Though he was not of Israel, he was indeed an Israelite without guile. 4. The fear of God reigning in his heart was the principle that governed his whole conversation. That made him perfect and upright, inward and entire for God, universal and uniform in religion; that kept him close and constant to his duty. He feared God, had a reverence for his majesty, regard to his authority, and a dread of his wrath. 5. He dreaded the thought of doing what was wrong; with the utmost abhorrence and detestation, and, with a constant care and watchfulness, he eschewed evil, avoided all appearances of sin and approaches to it, and this, because of the fear of God, Neh. v. 13. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; (Prov. viii. 13.) then, by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil, Prov. vi. 12.

III. That he was a man who prospered greatly in this world, and made a considerable figure in his country. He was prosperous, and yet pious. Though it is hard and rare, it is not impossible, for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven: with God, even this is possible, and by his grace the temptations of worldly wealth are not insuperable. He was rich, and his piety was a friend to his prosperity; for goodness has the promise of the life to come, as now is. He was prosperous, and his prosperity put a lustre upon his piety, and gave him, who was so good, so much greater opportunity of doing good. The acts of his piety were grateful returns to God for the instances of his prosperity; and, in the abundance of the good things God gave him, he served God the more cheerfully.

He had a numerous family; he was eminent for religion, and yet not a heretic; not a man of strife, but the father and master of a family. It is an instance of his prosperity, that his house was filled with children, which are a heritage of the Lord, and his reward, Ps. cxxii. 7. He had seven sons and three daughters, v. 2. Some of each sex, and none of the more noble sex, in which the family is built up. Children must be looked upon as blessings, for so they are, especially to good people, that will give them instructed instructions, and set them good examples, and put up good prayers for them. Job had many children, and yet he was neither oppressor nor uncharitable, but very liberal to the poor, ch. xxxi. 17, &c. Those that have great families to provide for ought to consider, that what is prudently given in alms is set out to the best interest, and put into the best fund for their children's benefit.

2. He had a good estate for the support of his family; his substance was considerable, v. 3. Riches are called substance, in conformity to the common form of speaking; otherwise, to the soul and another world, they are but shadows, things that are not, Prov. xxiii. 5. It is only in heavenly wisdom that we inherit substance, Prov. viii. 11. In those days, when the earth was not fully peopled, it was, as now, in some of the plantations, men might have land enough upon easy terms, if they had but where-withal to stock it; and therefore Job's substance is described as land. Job, it is likely, had silver and gold, as well as Abraham; (Gen. xiii. 2.) but then men valued their own and their neighbours' estates by that which was
for service and present use, more than by that which was for show and state, and fit only to be hoarded. As soon as God had made man, and provided for his maintenance by the herbs and fruits, he made him rich and great, by giving him dominion over the creatures, Gen. i. 28. That, therefore, being still continued to man, notwithstanding his defection, (Gen. ix. 2.) is still to be reckoned one of the most considerable instances of men's wealth, honour, and power, Ps. vi. 6.

(2.) By his servants; he had a very good household or husbandry, many that were employed for him and maintained by him; and thus he both had honour and did good; yet thus he was involved in a great deal of care and appetite to a great deal of charge. See the vanity of this world; as goods are increased, they must be increased that tend them and occupy them, and they will be increased that eat them; and what good has the owner thereof, save the beholding of them with his eyes? Eccles. v. 11.

In a word, Job was the greatest of all the men of the east; and they were the richest in the world; those were rich indeed who were replenished more than the east. Isa. ii. 16. Job's wealth, with his wisdom, entitled him to the honour and power he had in his country, which he describes, ch. xxxix. and made him sit chief. Job was upright and honest, and yet grew rich, nay, therefore grew rich; for honesty is the best policy, and piety and charity are ordinarily the surest ways of thriving. He had a great household and much business, and yet kept up the fear and worship of God; and he and his house served the Lord. The account of Job's piety and prosperity comes before the history of his great afflictions, to show that neither will scour us from the common, nor from the uncommon, calamities of human life. Piety will not secure us, as Job's mistaken friends thought, for all things come alike to all; prosperity will not, as a careless world thinks; (Isa. lvi. 8.) I sit as a queen, and therefore shall see no sorrow.

4. And his sons went and feasted in their houses every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters, to eat and to drink with them. 5. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.

5. We have here a further account of Job's prosperity and his piety.

I. His great comfort in his children was a taken notice of, as in place of his prosperity; for it temporal comforts are borrowed, depend upon others, and are as those about us are. Job himself mentions it as one of the greatest joys of his prosperous estate, that his children were about him, ch. xxxix. 5. They kept a circular feast at some certain times; (v. 4.) they went and feasted in their houses. It was a comfort to this good man, 1. To see his children grown up and settled in the world; all his sons were in the possession of their own, properly married; and to each of them he had given a competent portion to set up with. They that had been olive-plants round his table, were removed to tables of their own. 2. To see them thrive in their affairs, and able to feast another, as well as to feed themselves. Good parents desire, promote, and rejoice in, their children's wealth and prosperity, as their own. 3. To see them in health, no sickness in their houses; for that would have spoiled their feasting, and turned it into mourning. 4. Especially to see them live in love and unity, and mutual good affection; no jars or quarrels among them, no strangeness one of another, no strait-handedness; but, though every one knew his own, they lived with as much freedom as if they had had all in common. It is comfortable to the hearts of parents, and comely in the eyes of all, to see brethren thus knit together; Behold, how good and how pleasant it is! Ps. cxxxviii. 1. 5. It added to the comfort, to see the brothers so kind to their sisters, that they sent for them to feast with them; who were so modest, that they would not have gone, if they had not been sent for. Those brothers that slight their sisters, care not for their company, and have no concern for their comfort, are ill-bred and ill-natured, and very unlike Job's sons. It seems their feast was so sober and decent, that their sisters were good company for them at it. 6. They feasted in their own houses, not in public houses, where they would be more exposed to temptations, and which we not speak of.

We do not find that Job himself feasted with them; doubtless they invited him, and he would have been the most welcome guest at any of their tables; nor was it from any sorrness or moralness of temper, or for want of natural affection, that he kept away, but he was old and dead to those things, like Barzillai, (2 Sam. xix. 35.) and considered that the young people would be more free and pleasant, there were none but themselves. Yet he would not restrain his children from that diversion which he denied himself. Young people may be allowed a youthful liberty, provided they flee youthful lusts.

II. His great care about his children is taken notice of as an instance of his piety: for that we are really, which we are relatively. Those that are good will be good to their children, and especially do what they can for the good of their souls. Observe, (v. 5.) Job's pious concern for the spiritual welfare of his children.

1. He was jealous over them with a godly jealousy: and so we ought to be over ourselves and those that are dearest to us, as far as is necessary to our care and endeavour for their good. Job had given his children a good education, had comfort in them, and good hope concerning them; and yet he said, "It may be my sons have sinned in the days of their feasting, more than at other times; have been too merry, have taken too great a liberty in eating and drinking, and have cursed God in their hearts," that is, "have entertained atheistical, profane, thoughts in their minds, unworthy notions of God and his providence, and the exercises of religion." When they were full, they were ready to deny God, and to say, Who is the Lord? ready (Prov. xxx. 9.) to forget God, and to say, The power of our hand has gotten us this wealth, Deut. vii. 12, 13. Nothing alienates the mind more from God than the interest and love of the world.

2. As soon as the days of their feasting were over, he called them to the solemn exercises of religion: not while their feasting lasted; (Let them take their time for that; there is a time for all things;) but, when it was over, their good father reminded them that they must know when to take up, and not think to fare sumptuously every day; though they had their days of feasting the week round, they must not think to have the same the year round; they had something else to do. Note, Those that are merry must find a time to be serious.

3. He sent to them to prepare for solemn ordinances, sent and sanctified them; ordered them to examine their own consciences, and repent of what they had done amiss in their feasting; to lay aside
their vanity, and compose themselves for religious exercises. Thus he kept his authority over them for their good, and they submitted to it, though they were got into houses of their own. Still he was the priest of the family, and at his altar they all attended, valuing their share in his prayers more than their share in his estate. Parents cannot give grace to their children, (it is God that sanctifies,) but they exercise reasonable admonitions and counsels, to further their sanctification. In their baptism they were sanctified to God; let it be our desire and endeavour that they may be sanctified for him.

4. He offered sacrifice for them, both to atone for the sins he feared they had been guilty of in the days of their fasting, and to implore for them mercy and pardon, and grace to prevent, the debauching of their minds, and corrupting of their manners, by the liberty they had taken, and to preserve their piety and purity.

For he, with mournful eyes, had often spy'd,
Scatter'd on Pleasure's smooth but treach'rous tide,
The spoils of virtue overpow'd by sense,
And flouting wrecks of rul'd innocence.

Sir R. Blackmore.

Job, like Abraham, had an altar for his family, on which, it is likely, he offered sacrifice daily; but, on this extraordinary occasion, he offered more sacrifices than usual, and with more solemnity, according to the number of them all, one for each child. Parents should be particular in their addresses to God for the several branches of their family; “For this child I prayed, according to its particular temper, genius, and condition,” to which the prayers, as well as the endeavours, must be accommodated.

When these sacrifices were to be offered, (1.) He rose early, as one in care that his children might not lie long under guilt, and as one whose heart was upon his work, and his desire towards it. (2.) He required his children to attend the sacrifice, that they might join with him in the prayers he offered with the sacrifice, that the sight of the killing of the sacrifice might humble them much for their sins, for which they deserved to die, and the sight of the offering of it up might lead them to a Mediator. This serious work would help to make them serious again, after the days of their gaiety.

Lastly, Thus he did continually; not only whenever an occasion of this kind occurred, for he that is washed, needs to wash his feet: (John, xiii. 10.) the acts of repentance and faith must be often renewed, because we often repeat our transgressions; but, all days, every day, he offered up his sacrifices, as constant to his devotions, and did not omit them any day. The occasional exercises of religion will not excuse us from those that are stated. He that serves God uprightly will serve him continually.

6. Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. 7. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. 8. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? 9. Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? 10. Hast not thou made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land: 11. But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. 12. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power, only upon himself put not forth thy hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.

Job was not only so rich and great, but withal so wise and good, and had such an interest both in heaven and earth, that one would think the mountain of his wisdom, and the height of his understanding, as it were not moved; but here we have a thick cloud gathering over his head, pregnant with a horrible tempest. We must never think ourselves secure from storms, while we are in this lower region.

Before we are told how his troubles surprised and seized him here in this visible world, we are here told how they were concerted in the world of spirits; that the Devil having a great enmity to Job for his eminent piety, begged and obtained leave to torment him. It does not come from all depths of the credibility of Job's story in general, to allow that this discourse between God and Satan, in these verses, is parabolical, like that of Micaiah, (1 Kings xxii. 19, &c.) and an allegory designed to represent the malice of the Devil against good men, and the divine check and restraint that malice is under. Only thus much further is intimated, that the affairs of this earth are very much the subject of the counsels of the unseen world. That world is dark to us, but we lie very open to it.

Now here we have,

I. Satan among the sons of God, (v. 6.) an adversary (so Satan signifies) to God, to men, to all good. He thrust himself into an assembly of the sons of God, that came to present themselves before the Lord. This means, either, 1. A meeting of the saints on earth. Professors of religion, in the patriarchal age, were called sons of God; (Gen. vi. 2.) they had both their religious assemblies, and stated times for them. The king came in to see his guests; the eye of God was on all present: but there was a serpent in paradise, a Satan among the sons of God; when they come together, he is among them to distract and disturb them, stands at their right hand to resist them; the Lord rebuke thee, Satan! Or, 2. A meeting of the angels in heaven; they are the sons of God, ch. xxxviii. 7. They came to give an account of their negotiations on earth, and to receive new instructions. Satan was one of them originally; but how art thou fallen, O Lucifer! He shall no more stand in that congregation; yet he is here represented as coming among them, either summoned to appear as a criminal, or convicted at, for the present, though an intruder.

II. His examination, how he came thither; (v. 7.) The Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? He asked very well, and with what design he came thither; that, as the good angels came to do good, he came for a permission to do hurt; but he would, by calling him to an account, show him that he was under check and control. Whence comest thou? He asks this, 1. As wondering what brought him thither. Is Saul among the prophets? Satan among the sons of God? Yes, for he transformeth himself into an angel of light, (2 Cor. xi. 13, 14.) and would seek to deceive one of them. Note, It is possible that a man may be a child of the Devil, and yet be found in the assem
bles of the sons of God in this world, and there may pass undiscovered by men, and yet be challenged by the all-seeing God; *Friend, how camest thou in hither?* Or, 2. As inquiring what he had been doing before he came thither, the same question was put to the rest of the company, and presented themselves before the Lord, *Whence came you?* We are accountable to God for all our haunts, and all the ways we traverse.

III. The account he gives of himself, and the tour he had made. I come (says he) *from going to and fro on the earth.* 1. He could not pretend he had been doing any good, could give no such account of himself as the sons of God could, who *bring forth* (as I xxxii. 14) in the *laborious* work, *and in the *invention* of the time* (Gen. i. 29, 30), and after executing his orders, serving the interest of his kingdom, and ministering to the heirs of salvation. 2. He would not own he had been doing any hurt; that he had been drawing men from their allegiance to God, deceiving and destroying souls; no, *I have done no wickedness,* Prov. xxx. 20. *Thy servant went no whither.* In saying that he had *walked to and fro through the earth,* he intimates that he had kept himself within the bounds allotted him. He could have been *tethered* for the *dragon is cast out into the earth,* (Rev. xii. 9,) and not yet confined to his place of torment. While we are on this earth, we are within his reach; and with so much subtlety, swiftness, and industry, does he penetrate into all the corners of it, that we cannot be in any place secure from his temptations. 3. He yet seems to give some representation of his own character. (1.) Perhaps it is spoken proudly, and with an air of haughtiness, as if he were indeed the prince of this *world,* as if the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them were his, (Luke iv. 6,) and he had now been walking in circuit through his own territories. (2.) Perhaps it is spoken fretfully, and with discontent; he had been walking to and fro, and could find no rest, but was as much a fugitive and a vagabond as Cain in the land of Nod. (3.) Perhaps it is spoken carefully; *I have been hard at work, going to and fro,* or (as some read it) *seeking to work in the earth,* as if he really in quest of an opportunity to do mischief. He walks about seeking whom he may devour. It concerns us therefore to be sober and vigilant.

IV. The question God puts to him concerning Job, (v. 8.) *Hast thou considered my servant Job?* As when we meet with one that has been in a distant place, where we have a friend we dearly love, we are ready to ask, *You have been in such a place; pray did you see my friend there?* Observe, 1. How honourably God speaks of Job; he is my servant. Good men are God's servants, and he is pleased to reckon himself honoured in their services, and that they are to him for a name and a praise, (Jer. xiii. 11,) and a crown of glory, Isa. lxxxii. 3. *Yonder is my servant Job; there is none like him, none value I like him of all the princes and potentates of the earth, one such saint as he is worth than the all.* The *saints of old* of mankind, in comparison with Job, *many do well,* but he *excelleth them all;* there is not to be found such great faith, no not in Israel.* Thus Christ, long after held up the centurion and the woman of Canaan, who were both of them, like Job, strangers to that commonwealth. The saints glory in God; *Who is like thee among the gods?* And he is pleased to glory in them; *Who is like Israel among the people?* So here, none but he and Job are there in the heavens, that state of imperfection; those in heaven do indeed far outshine him; those who are least in that kingdom are greater than he; *but on earth there is none like his.* There is none like him in that land: so some good men are the glory of their country.

2. How closely he gives to Satan this good character of Job, *Hast thou set thy heart on my servant Job?* Designing hereby, (1.) To aggravate the apostasy and misery of that wicked spirit; *How unlike him art thou!* Note, The holiness and happiness of the saints are the shame and torment of the Devil, and the Devil with hypocrisy. To answer the Devil's seeming boast of the interest he had in this earth; *I have been walking to and fro in it,* says he, *and it is all my own;* all flesh have corrupted their way; they all sit still, and are at rest in their sins; Zech. i. 10, 11. *Nay hold,* saith God, *"Job is my faithful servant."* Satan may boast, but he shall not triumph. (3.) To anticipate his accusations, as if he had said, *"Satan, thou art the accuser of the servants of God; how do you propose to inform against Job; but hast thou considered him?"* Does not his unquickness character give thee the lie? Note, God knows all the malice of the Devil and his instruments against his servants; and we have an Advocate ready to appear for us, even before we are accused.

V. The Devil's base insinuation against Job, in answer to God's encomium of him. He cannot deny that Job feared God, but suggests that he feared God from motives of profit, not love, *not from the pure love of God*, (v. 9.) *Dost Job fear God for naught?* Observe, 1. How impatient the Devil was of hearing Job praised, though it was God himself that praised him. Those are like the Devil, who cannot endure that any body should be praised but themselves, and grudge at the just share of reputation others have, as Saul, (1 Sam. xviii. 5, &c.) and the Pharisees, Matth. xxii. 15. 2. How much at a loss he was for something to object against him; he could not accuse him of any thing that was bad, and therefore charges him with by-ends in doing good. Had the one half of that been true, which his angry friends, in the heat of dispute, charged him with, (ch. xv. 4.—xxii. 5,) Satan would, no doubt, have brought it against him now; but no such thing could be alleged, and therefore, 3. See how slyly he censures him as a hypocrite; *not asserting that he was so, but only asking,* *Is he not so?* This is the common way of slanderers; they only, to suggest that, by way of query, which yet they have no reason to think is true; whisperers, backbiters! Note, It is not strange if those that are approved and accepted of God, be unjustly censured by the Devil and his instruments; if they are otherwise unexceptionable, it is easy to charge them with hypocrisies, as Satan charged Job, and they have no way to clear themselves, but patiently to wait for the judgment of God. As there is nothing we should dread more than being hypocrites, so there is nothing we need dread less than being called and counted so without cause. 4. How unjustly he accuses him as mercenary, to prove him a hypocrite. It was a great truth that Job did not fear God for naught; he got well by it, for godliness is great gain; but it was a falsehood that he would not have feared God if he had not got this by it, as the event proved. Satan charges him falsely, because he was greatly afflicted; Satan, because he greatly prospered. It is no hard matter for those to calumniate that seek an occasion. It is not mercenary to look at the eternal recompense, in our obedience; but to aim at temporal advantages in our religion, and to make it subservient to that, is spiritual idolatry, worshipping the creature more than the Creator, and is likely to end in a fatal apostasy; men cannot long serve God and mammon.

VI. The complaint Satan made of Job's prosperity, v. 10. Observe, 1. What God had done for Job. He had protected him, made a hedge about him, for the defence of his person, his family, and all his possessions. Note, God's peculiar people
are taken under his special protection, and they and all that belong to them; divine grace makes a home about their spiritual life, and do not prove a curse about their natural life, so they are safe and easy. He had prospered him, not in idleness or injustice, (the Devil could not accuse him of,) but in the way of honest diligence; Thou hast blessed the work of his hands without that blessing, be the hands ever so strong, ever so skillful, the work will not prosper; but with that, his substance is wonderfully increased in the land of his inheritance. Let us see whether Satan himself or not. 2. What notice the Devil took of it, and how he improved it against him. The Devil speaks of it with vexation; I see thou hast made a hedge about him, round about; as if he had walked it round, to see if he could spy ever a gap in it, for him to enter in at, to do him a mischief; but he was disappointed; it was a complete hedge. The wicked one sees it, and was grieved, and argued against Job, that the only reason he was served God well, because he prospered him. “No thanks to him be true to the government that prefers him, and to serve a Master that pays him so well.”

VII. The proof Satan undertakes to give of the hypocrisy and mercenaryness of Job's religion, if he might but have leave to strip him of his wealth. “Let it be put to this issue,” says he, v. 11. “make him poor, frown upon him, turn thine hand against him;” to make him as much as he can, to what he has, and it will appear what he is. If he curse thee not to thy face, let me never be believed, but posted for a false accuser. Let me perish, if he curse thee not. So some supply the improcement, which the Devil himself modestly conceded; but the profane swearers of our age impudently and daringly speak out. Observe, 1. How slightly he speaks of the affliction he desired that Job might be tried with; “Do but touch all that he has, do but begin with him, do but threaten to make him poor; a little cross will change his tone.” 2. How spitefully he speaks of the impression it would make upon Job. “He will not only let fall his devotion, but turn it into an open defiance; not only think hardly of thee, but even curse thee to thy face.” The word translated curse is barac, the same that ordinarily and ordinarily signifies to bless; but cursing God is so impious a thing, that the holy law would not admit the name: but that, where the sense requires it, it must be so understood, is plain from 1 Kings xxi. 10-13. where the word is used concerning the crime charged on Naboth, that he did blaspheme God and the king.

Now, (1.) It is likely that Satan did think that Job, if impoverished, would renounce his religion, and so disprove his profession, and if so, (as a learned gentleman has observed in his Mound of Spirits,) Satan had made out his own universal empire among the children of men. God declared Job the best man then living: now, if Satan can prove him a hypocrite, it will follow God that had not one faithful servant among men, and that there was no such thing as true and sincere piety in the world, but religion was all a sham, and Satan was king de facto—in fact, over all mankind. But it appeared that the Lord knows them that are his, and is not deceived in them; for though to the Devil it should appear that his religion, Satan would have the satisfaction to see him sorely afflicted: he hates good men, and delights in their griefs, as God has pleasure in their prosperity.

VIII. The permission God gave to Satan to afflict Job for the trial of his sincerity. Satan desired God to do it, Put forth thy hand now. God allowed him to do it; (v. 12.) “All that he has is in thy hand; make the trial as sharp as thou canst, do my worst at him.” Now, (1.) His matter of wonder that God should give Satan such a permission as this, should deliver the soul of his turtle-dove into the hand of the adversary, such a lamb to such a lion; but he did it for his own glory, the honour of Job, the explanation of Providence, and the encouragement of his afflicted people in all ages; to make a case, which, being adjudged, might be a useful precedent. He suffered Job to be tried, as he suffered Peter to be sifted; but took care that his faith should not fail, (Luke xxxii. 32.) and then the trial of it was found unto praise, and honour, and glory, 1 Pet. i. 7. But, (2.) It is matter of comfort that God has the Devil in a chain, Rev. xx. 1. He could not afflict Job without leave from God first asked and obtained, and then no further than he had leave; “Only upon himself put not forth thine hand; meddle not with his body, but only with his estate.” It is a limited power that the Devil has; he has no power to debauch men, but that they give him themselves, nor power to afflict men, but what is given him from above.

Lastly, Satan's departure from this meeting of the sons of God. Before they broke up, Satan went forth (as Cain, Gen. iv. 16.) from the presence of the Lord; no longer detained before him (as Doeg was, 1 Sam. xxi. 7.) than until he had accomplished his malicious purpose. He went forth, 1. Glad that he had gained his point; proud of the permission he had to do mischief to a good man; and, 2. Resolved to lose no time, but speedily to put his project in execution: he went forth now, not to go to and fro, rambling through the earth, but, with a direct course, to fall upon poor Job, who is carefully going on the way of his duty, and knows nothing of the matter. What passes between good and bad spirits concerning us, we are not aware.

13. And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: 14. And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them; 15. And the Sabean fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 16. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burnt up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 17. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 18. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house, 19. And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

We have here a particular account of Job's troubles:
JOB, 1.

1. Satan brought them upon him on the very day that his children began their course of feasting, at their eldest brother's house, (v. 13.) where, he having (we may suppose) the double portion, the entertainment was the richest that the household could provide. The false Philistine, doubt, was in perfect repose, and all were easy, and under no apprehension of trouble, nor when they revived this custom; and this time Satan chose, that the trouble, coming now, might be the more grievous; The night of my pleasure has he turned to fear, Isa. xxxi. 4.

2. They all come upon him at once; while one messenger of evil tidings was speaking, another came; and, before he had told his story, a third, and a fourth, followed immediately. Thus Satan, by the divine permission, ordered it, 1 That there might appear a more than ordinary displeasure of God against him in his troubles, and by that he might be exasperated against Divine Providence, as if it were resolved, right or wrong, to ruin him, and not give him time to speak for himself. 2 That he might not have leisure to consider and collect himself, and reason himself into a gracious submission, but might be overwhelmed and overpowered by complication of calamities. If he have not room to pause a little, he will be apt to speak in haste, and then, if ever, he will curse his God. Note, The children of God are often in heaviness, through manifold temptations: deep calls to deep, waves and billows, one upon the neck of another. Let one affliction therefore quickly and help us to prepare for another; for how deep soever we have drunk of the bitter cup, as long as we are in this world, we cannot be sure that we have drunk our share, and that it will finally pass from us. 3. They took from him all that he had, and made a full end of his enjoyments. The detail of his losses answers to the foregoing inventory of his possessions.

1. He had 500 yoke of oxen, and 300 she-asses, and a competent number of servants to attend them; and all those he lost at once, v. 14, 15. The account he has of this, lets him know, [1.] That it was not through any carelessness of his servants, for then his resentment might have spent itself upon them: the oxen were ploughing, not playing, and the asses not suffered to stray, and so taken up as waifs, * but feeding beside them, under the servants' eye, each in their place; and they that pastured them were instructed by us, may suppose, him in person, and said, God speed the flocks. Note, All our prudence, care, and diligence, cannot secure us from affliction, no not from those afflictions which are commonly owing to imprudence and negligence. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman, though ever so wakeful, wakes but in vain; yet it is some comfort under a trouble, if it found us in the way of our duty, and not in any by-path. [2.] That it was through the wickedness of the Sabeans, a sort of robbers, perhaps, that lived by spoil and plunder; they carried off the oxen and asses, and slew the servants that faithfully and bravely did their best to defend them, and one only escaped, not in kindness to him or his master, but that Job might have the certain intelligence of it by an eye-witness, before he heard it by a flying report, which would have brought it upon him suddenly. We have here a reason that either Job or his servants had given any provocation to these Sabeans to make this inroad; but Satan put it into their hearts to do it, to do it now, and so gained a double point, for he made both Job to suffer, and them to sin. Note, When Satan has God's permission to do mischief, he will not want mischievous men to be his instruments in doing it, for he is a spirit that works in the children of disobedience.

2. He had seven thousand sheep, and shepherds that kept them; and all those he lost at the same time by lightning, v. 16. Job was perhaps, in his own mind, ready to reproach the Sabeans, and fly out against them for their injustice and cruelty, when the next news immediately directs him to look upward; The fire of God is fallen from heaven. As thunder is his voice, so lightning is his fire: but this was such an extraordinary lightning, and so directly against Job, that all his sheep and shepherds were not only killed, but consumed, by it at once, and one shepherd only left alive to carry the news to poor Job. The Devil, aiming to make him curse God and renounce his religion, managed this part of the trial very artfully, in order thereunto. [1.] His sheep, with which especially he used to honour God in sacrifice, were all taken from him, as if God were angry at his offerings, and would punish him in those very things which he had employed in his service. Having misrepresented Job to God as a false servant, in pursuance of his old design to set Heaven and earth at variance, he here misrepresented God to Job as a hard Master, who would not protect those flocks out of which he had so many burnt-offerings: this would tempt Job to say, It is vain to serve God. [2.] The messenger called the lightning the fire of God, and, probably, Satan thereby designed to strike into his mind this thought, that God was turned to be his enemy, and fought against him, which was much more grievous to him than all the insults of the Sabeans. He owns, (ch. xxxi. 23.) that destruction from God was a terror to him. How terrible then were the tidings of this destruction, which came immediately from the hand of God! Had the fire from heaven not only taken the sheep and the shepherd, but have contrived it into a token of God's favour; but the fire consuming them in the pasture, he could not but look upon it as a token of God's displeasure: there had not been the like since Sodom was burned.

3. He had three thousand camels, and servants tending them; and he lost them all at the same time by the Chaldeans, who came in three bands, and drove them away, and slew the servants of these camels, which fell to Job's honest servants, who were in the way of their duty, had fallen upon the Sabeans and Chaldean robbers who were doing mischief, God's judgments therein would have been, like the great mountains, evident and conspicuous; but when the way of the wicked prosperers, and they carry off their booty, when just and good men are suddenly cut off, God's righteousness is like the great deep, the bottom of which we cannot sound. Ps. xxxvi. 6.

4. His dearest and most valuable possessions were his ten children; and to conclude the tragedy, news is brought him, at the same time, that they were killed, and buried in the ruins of the house in which they were feasting, and all the servants that waited on them, except one that came express with the tidings of it, v. 18, 19. This was the greatest of Job's losses, and which could not but grieve the quick indeed. [1.] They all died together, and not one of them was left alive. David, though a wise and good man, was very much disposed...
by the death of one son; how hard then did it bear upon poor Job, who lost them all, and, in one moment, was written childless! [2.] They died suddenly: had they been taken away by some lingering disease, he had had notice to expect their death, and prepare for the breach; but this came upon him without giving him any warning. [3.] They died when they were feasting and making merry; had they died suddenly, when they were praying, he might have better have borne it; he would have hoped that death had found them in a good frame, if their blood had been mingled with their sacrifices; but to have it mingled with their feast, where he himself used to be jealous of them, that they had sinned, and cursed God in their hearts—to have that day come upon them at unawares, like a thief in the night, when perhaps their heads were overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness; this could not but add much to his grief, considering what a tender concern he always had for his children's souls; and that they were now out of the reach of the sacrifices he used to offer, according to the number of them all. See how all things came alike to all. Job's children were constantly prayed for by his father, and lived in love one with another, and as tender towards one another as possible. He always had a care for them, and ordered for them. [4.] They died by a wind of the Devil's raising, who is the prince of the power of the air; (Eph. ii. 2.) but it was looked upon to be an immediate hand of God, and a token of his wrath. So Bildad construed it; (ch. viii. 4.) They children have sinned against him, and he has cast them away in their transgressions. [5.] They were taken away when he had most need of them to comfort him under all his other losses. Such miserable comforters are all creatures; in God only we have a present help at all times.

20. Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped. 21. And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. 22. In all this Job sinned not, nor charg'd God foolishly.

The Devil had done all he desired leave to do against Job, to provoke him to curse God; he had touched all he had, touched it with a witness; he whom the rising sun saw the richest of all the men in the east, before night was poor to a proverb. If his riches had been, as Satan insinuated, the only principle of his religion, now that he had lost his riches, he had certainly lost his religion; but the account we have, in these verses, of his pious department under his affliction, sufficiently proved the Devil a liar, and Job an honest man.

1. He conducted himself like a man, under his afflictions; not stupid and senseless, like a stock or stone, nor in any foolish manner, to beg the death of his children and servants; no. (v. 20.) he arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, which were the usual expressions of great sorrow, to show that he was sensible of the hand of the Lord that was gone out against him; yet he did not break out into any indecencies, nor discover any extravagant passion; he did not faint away, but arose, as a champion to the combat; he did not, in a heat, throw off his clothes, but very gravely, in conformity to the custom of the country, rent his mantle, his cloak, or outer garment; he did not passionately tear his hair, but deliberately shaved his head; by all which it appeared that he kept his temper, and bravely maintained the possession and repose of his own soul, in the midst of all these provocations.

The time when he began to show his feelings is observable; it was not till he heard of the death of his children, and then he arose, then he rent his mantle. A worldly unbelieving heart would have said, 'Now that the meat is gone, it is well that the mouth is washed.' But Job saw that there are no portions, it is well that there are no comforts. Job knew better, and would have been thankful if Providence had spared his children, though he had had little or nothing for them, for Jehovah-jireh, the Lord will provide. Some expositors, remembering that it was usual with the Jews to read their clothes when they heard blasphemy, conjecture that Job rent his clothes in a holy indignation at the blasphemous thoughts which Satan now cast into his mind, as his heart was now hardened against God. So Job here is sold.

II. He conducted himself like a wise and good man, under his affliction, like a perfect and upright man, and one that feared God, and eschewed the evil of sin more than that of outward trouble.

1. He humbly himself under the hand of God, and accommodated himself to the providences he was under, as one that knew how to want as well as how to abound. When God called to weeping and mourning, he kept himself restrained; his mantle, and shaved his head, abased himself even to the dust before God, he fell down upon the ground, in a penitent sense of sin, and a patient submission to the will of God, accepting the punishment of his iniquity. Hereby he showed his sincerity; for hypocrites cry not when God binds them, Job xxxvi. 13. Hereby he prepared himself to get good by the affliction; for how can we improve the grief which we will not feel?

2. He composed himself with ingenuous considerations, that he might not be disturbed, and put out of the possession of his own soul by these events: he reasons from the common state of human life, which he describes with application to himself; Naked came I (as others do) out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither, into the lap of our common mother, the earth; as the child, when it is sick or weary, lays its head in its mother's bosom. Dust we were in our original, and dust we return to the earth as we were; (Ecc. xi. 7.) naked shall we return thither, whence we were taken, namely, to the clay, Job xxxix. 6. St. Paul refers to this of Job, (1 Tim. vi. 7.) We brought nothing of this world's goods into the world, but have them from others; and it is certain that we can carry nothing out, but must leave them to others. We come into the world naked; not only unarmed, but unchelthed, helpless, shiftless, not so well covered and fenced as other creatures. The sin we are born in, makes us naked to our shame, in the eyes of the holy God. We go out of the world naked; the body does, though the sanctified soul goes clothed, 2 Cor. v. 3. Death strips us of all our enjoyments; clothing can neither warm nor adorn a dead body. This consideration silenced Job under all his losses.

1. He is but where he was at first; he looks upon himself only as naked, not maltimed, not wounded; he was himself still his own man; when nothing else was his own, and therefore but reduced to his first condition. Nemo tam fauuer potest esse quam natura est—No one can be so poor as he was when born. Mm. Felix. If we are impoverished, we are not wronged, nor much hurt, for we are but as we were born. (2.) He is but where he must have been at last, and is only unclothed, or unchelthed, rather, a little sooner than he expected. If we put off our clothes before we go to bed, it is some inconvenience, but it may be the better borne when it is near bed-time.

3. He gave glory to God, and expressed himself
upon this occasion with a great veneration for the Divine Providence, and an awful submission to its dispositions; we may well rejoice to find Job in this good frame, because this was the very thing upon which the trial of his integrity was put, though he did not know it. The Devii said that he would, under his affliction, curse God; but he blessed him, and so proved himself an honest man. (1.) He acknowledged the favour of God both in the mercies he had formerly enjoyed, and in the afflictions he was now exercised with: The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. We must own the Divine Providence, [1] In all our comforts, God gave us our being, made us, and not we ourselves, gave us our wealth; it was not our ingenuity or industry that enriched us, but God’s blessing on our cares and endowments; he gave us power to get wealth; not only made us a people for himself, but bestowed upon us his share. [2] In all our crosses, The same that gave, hath taken away; and may we not do what he will with his own? See how he looks above instruments, and keeps his eye upon the First Cause; he does not say, “The Lord gave, and the Sabean and Chaldean have taken away; God made me rich, and the Devil has made me poor;” but, “He that gave, has taken;” and, for that reason, he is dumb, and has nothing to say, because God did it: He that gave, may take which and where and how and how much, he pleases. Seneca could argue thus, Abstulit, sed et dedit—He took away, but he also gave; and Epicetus excellently, (cap. 15.) “When thou art deprived of any comfort, suppose a child taken away by death, or a part of thy estate lost, say not, He took; I have lost it; but, He has restored it to the right owner. But thou wilt object, (says he) Ananias and Aquila, He is a bad man, that has robbed Aquila; to which he says, What is it to thee, what hand he that gives remainds what he gave?”

(2.) He adores God in both. When all was gone, he fell down and worshipped. Note, Afflictions must not divert us from, but quicken us to, the exercise of religion. Weping must not hinder sowing, nor hinder worshipping. He eyed not only the hand of God, but the name of God, in his afflictions, and gave glory to that, Blessed be the name of the Lord. He was still the same man, and had all the good thoughts of God that ever he had, and is as forward as ever to speak them forth to his praise; and can find in his heart to bless God, even when he takes away, as well as when he gives. Thus must we sing both of mercy and judgment, Ps. ch. 1. [1] He blesses God for what was given, though now it was taken away. When our comforts are removed from us, we must thank God that ever we had them, and had them so much longer than we deserved. Nay, [2] He adores God, even in taking away, and gives him honour by a willing submission; nay, he gives him thanks for good designed him by his afflictions, for gracious supports under his afflictions, and the believing hopes he had of a happy issue at last.

Lastly, Here is the honourable testimony which the Holy Ghost gives to Job’s constancy and good conduct under his afflictions. He passed his trials with applause, v. 22. In all this, Job did not act amiss, for he did not attribute folly to God, nor in the least reflect upon his wisdom in what he had done. Discontent and impatience do, in effect, charge God with folly. Against the workings of these, therefore, Job carefully watched; and so must we, acknowledging, that as God has done right, but we have done wickedly, so God has done wisely, but we have done foolishly, very foolishly. They who not only keep their temper under crosses and provocations, but keep up good thoughts of God and sweet communion with him, whether their praise be of men or no, it will be of God, as Job here was.

CHAP. II.

We left Job honourably acquitted, upon a fair trial between God and Satan concerning him. Satan had leave to touch, to touch and take, all he had, and was confident that he would then curse God to his face; but, or the contrary, he blessed him, and so he was proved an honest man, and Satan a false accuser. Now, one would have thought, this had been conclusive, and that Job should never have had his reputation called in question again; but Job is known to be armour of proof; and therefore is here set up for a mark, and brought upon his trial, a second time. 1. Satan moved for another trial which should touch his bone and his flesh, v. 1. 5. II. God, for holy ends, permits it, v. 6. III. Satan smites him with a very painful and loathsome disease, v. 7, 8. IV. His wife tempts him to curse God, but he resists the temptation, v. 9, 10. V. His friends come to console him, and to comfort him, v. 11. 13. And in this that godly man is set forth for an example of suffering affliction and of patience.

1. AGAIN there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord. 2. And the Lord said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. 3. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movest me against him, to destroy him without cause. 4. And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin; yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life: 5. But put forth thy hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. 6. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thy hand; but save his life.

Satan, that sworn enemy to God and all good men, is here pushing forward his malicious prosecution of Job, whom he hated because God loved him, and did all he could to separate between him and his God, to sow discord, and make mischief, between them, urging God to afflict him, and then urging him to blaspheme God. One would have thought that he had enriched of his former attempt upon Job, in which he was so shamefully haffled and disappointed; but malice is restless, the Devil and his instruments are so. They that calumniate good people, and accuse them falsely, will have their saying, though the evidence to the contrary be ever so plain and full, and they have been cast in the issue which they themselves have put it upon. Satan will have Job’s cause called over again. The malicious, unreasonable, importunity of that great persecutor of the saints is represented, (Rev. xii. 10,) by his accusing them before our God day and night, still repeating and urging that against them which has been many a time and again, and did Satan here accuse Job day after day. Here is,

I. The court set, and the prosecutor, or accuser, making his appearance, (v. 1, 2.) as before, ch. i. 6, 7. The angels attended God’s throne, and Satan
among them. One would have expected him to come and confess his malice against Job, and his mistake concerning him; to cry, Peccavi—"I have done wrong," for belying one whom God spake well of, and to beg pardon; but, instead of that, he comes with a further design against Job. He is asked the same question as before, Whence comest thou? And answers as before, From going to and fro in the earth; as if he had not been doing harm, though he had been abusing that good man. II. The Judge himself of counsel for the accused, and pleading for him; (v. 3.) "Hast thou considered my servant Job better than thou didst, and art thou now at length convinced that he is a faithful servant of mine, a perfect and an upright man; for thou seest he still holds fast his integrity?" This is now added to his character as a further achievement; instead of jetting go his religion, and cursing God, but they were not his. He, as that which he has now more than ordinary occasion for; he is the same in adversity that he was in prosperity, and rather better, and more hearty and lively in blessing God than ever he was, and takes root the faster for being thus shaken. See, 1. How Satan is condemned for his allegations against Job; Thou movest me against him, as an accuser, to destroy him without cause. Or, "Thou in vain movest me to trouble him; for I will never disturb him of that nature, thine endeavours to do it make him hold it the faster; instead of losing ground by the temptation, he gets ground." God speaks of it with wonder, and pleasure, and something of triumph in the power of his own grace; Still he holds fast his integrity. Thus the trial of Job's faith was found to his praise and honour, 1 Pet. i. 7. Constancy crowns integrity. III. The accusation further prosecuted, v. 4. Who except Satan can make for the failure of his former attempt? What can be the advantage of being so forward when he had been so very confident that he should gain his point? Why, truly, he has this to say, Skin for skin, and all that a man has, will he give for his life. Something of truth there is in this, that self-love and self-preservation are very powerful commanding principles in the hearts of men. Men love themselves better than their nearest relations, even their children, that are pieces of themselves; will not only venture, but give, their estates to save their lives. All account life sweet and precious, and while they are themselves in health and at ease, they can keep trouble from their hearts, whatever they lose. We ought to make a good use of this consideration, and while God continues to us our life and health, and the use of our limbs and senses, we should the more patiently bear the loss of other comforts. See Matth. vi. 25.

But Satan brings this an accusation of Job, silyly representing him, 1. As unnatural to those about him, and one that laid not to heart the death of his children and servants, nor cared how many of them had their skins (as I may say) stripped over their ears, so long as he slept in a whole skin himself. As if he that was so tender of his children's souls, could be careless of their bodies, and, like the ostrich, hardened against his young ones, as if he would have preserved their outward beauty, and no more, his beauty being thought the ornament of his soul. He might have been as wholly selfish, and minding nothing but his own ease and safety, as if his religion made him sour, and morose, and ill-tempered, and very ill-natured. Thus are the ways and people of God often misrepresented by the Devil and his agents.

IV. A challenge given to make a further trial of Job's integrity; (v. 5.) Put forth thine hand now, if I find my hand too short to reach him, and too weak to hurt him,) and touch his bone and his flesh, (that is with him the only tender part, make him sick with smiting him, Mic. vi. 13.) and then, I dare say, he will curse thee to thy face, and let go his integrity. See, 1. Satan does it, and he finds it by experience, that nothing is more tedious and loathsome to the thoughts, and put the mind into disorder, than acute pain and distemper of body. There is no disputing against sense. St. Paul himself had much ado to bear a thorn in the flesh, nor could he have borne it without special grace from Christ, 2 Cor. xii. 7. 9.

V. A permission granted to Satan to make this trial, v. 6. Satan would have had God put forth his hand and do it; but he afflicts not willingly, nor takes any pleasure in grieving the children of men, much less his own children; (Lam. iii. 38.) and therefore, if it must be done, let Satan do it, who delights in such work: He is in thine hand, do thy worst with him; (but with a proviso and limitation:) only save his life, or his soul. Afflict him, but not to death. Satan hunted for the precious life, would have taken that if he might, in hopes that dying agonies would have forced Job to curse his God; but God had mercy in store for Job after this trial, and therefore he must survive it, and, however he is afflicted, must have his life given him for a prey. If God did not chain up the roaring lion, how soon would he devour us! As far as he permits the wrath of Satan and wicked men to proceed against his people, he will make it turn to his praise and their's, and the remainder thereof, he will restrain, Ps. lxxvi. 10. Save his soul, that is, "his reason;" (so some) "preserve to him the use of that, for, otherwise, it will be no fair trial; if, in his delivery, he should curse God, that will be no disproving of his integrity. It would be the language not of his heart, but of his distemper."

Job, in being thus maligned by Satan, was a type of Christ, the first prophecy of whom was, that Satan should bruise his heel, (Gen. iii. 15.) and so he was foiled, as in Job's case. Satan tempted him to let go his integrity, his adoption; (Matth. iv. 6.) He show be against God. He entered into the heart of Judas who betrayed Christ, and (some think) with his terrors put Christ into his agony in the garden. He had permission to touch his bone and his flesh, without exception of his life, because by dying he was to do that which Job could not do; destroy him that had the power of death, that is the Devil.

7. So went Satan forth with the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils, from the sole of his foot unto his crown. And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes. 9. Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thy integrity? Curse God, and die. 10. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips. The Devil, having got leave to tear and worry poor Job, presently fell to work with him, as a tormentor first, and then attempt him. His own children he tempts first, and draws them to sin, and afterward tormenters, when whereby he has brought them
JOB, 11.

to ruin; but this child of God he tormented with affliction, and then tempted to make a bad use of his affliction. That which he aimed at, was, to make Job curse God; now here we are told what course he took both to move him to it, and move it to him; both to give him the provocation, else it would be to no purpose to urge him to it, and to give him the information, else he would not have thought of it. Thus Satan tempted him against his own integrity, and all the stability of the old serpent, who is here playing the same game against Job that he played against our first parents; (Gen. 3.) aiming to seduce him from his allegiance to his God, and to rob him of his integrity.

I. He provokes him to curse God, by smiting him with sores boils, and so making him a burthen to himself, v. 7, 8. The former attack was extremely violent, but Job kept his head, bravely made good the pass, and carried the day: yet he is still but girding on the harness, there is worse behind; the clouds return after the rain; Satan, by the divine permission, follows his blow, and now deep calls unto deep. 1. The disease was very grievous with which Job was seized; Satan smote him with boils, sore boils, all over him, from head to foot; with an evil inflammation, so some render it; a cryphela, perhaps, in a higher degree than cole, when it is gathering, is most painful, and gives a man abundance of pain and uneasiness. What a condition was Job then in, that had boils all over him, and no part free, and those of as raging a heat as the Devil could make them, and, as it were, set on fire of hell! The small-pox is a very grievous and painful disease, and would be much more terrible than it is, but that we know the extremity of it ordinarily lasts but a few days; how grievous then was that disease, and however it was taken another with sore boils or grievous ulcers, which make him sick at heart, put him to exquisite torture, and to spread themselves over him, that he could lay himself no way for any ease. If at any time we be exercised with sore and grievous distempers, let us not think ourselves dealt with any otherwise than as God has sometimes dealt with the best of his saints and servants. We know not how much Satan may have a hand in such a divine distemper, with which the children of men, and especially the children of God, are afflicted; what infections that prince of the air may spread, what inflammations may come from that fiery serpent. We read of one whom Satan had bound many years, Luke xiii. 16. Should God suffer that roaring lion to have his will against any of us, how miserable would he soon make us!

2. His management of himself, in this distemper, was very strange, v. 8. (1.) Instead of healing salves he took a potsherds, a piece of a broken pitcher, to scrape himself withal: a very sad pass this poor man was come to. When a man is sick and sore, he may bear it the better, if he be well tended and carefully looked after; many rich people have, with a soft and tender hand, charitably ministered to the poor in such a condition as this; even Lazarus had some case from the tongues of the dogs that came and licked his sores; but poor Job has no help afforded him. [1] Nothing is done to his sores but what he does himself, with his own hands. His children and servants are all dead, his wife unkind, ch. xix. 17. He has not wherewithal to fee a physician, or surgeon; and, which is most sad of all, none of those he had formerly been kind to had so much sense of honour and gratitude as to minister to his distress: he distemper to no surgeon to dress, or to wipe his running sores, either because the disease was lothsome and noisome, or because they apprehended it to be infectious. Thus it was in the former days, as it will be in the last days; men were i vers of their own selves, unhumble, and without natural affection. [2.] All that he does to his sores is, to scrape them; they are not bound up with soft rags, nor mollified with ointment, not washed or kept clean; no healing plasters laid upon them, no ointments, no antiseptic, ministered to his patient parts to regulate the heat, and compose his pain, rest, nor any cordials to support his spirits; all the operation is the scraping of the ulcers, which, when they were come to a head, and began to die, made his body all over like a scurf, as is usual in the end of the small-pox. It would have been an endless thing to dress his boils one by one, he therefore resolves thus to do it by wholesale; a remedy which one would think as bad as the disease. [3.] He has nothing to do with this but a potsherds, no surgeons instrument proper for the purpose, but that which would rather rake into his wounds, and add to his pain, than give him any ease. People that are sick and sore, have need to be under the discipline and direction of others, for they are often but bad managers of themselves.

(2.) Instead of exposing himself in a soft and warm bed, he sat down among the ashes. Probably he had a (for, if he had been stripped, we do not find that his house was burnt or plundered;) but he chose to sit in the ashes, either because he was weary of his bed, or because he would put himself into the place and posture of a penitent, who, in token of his self-abhorrence, lay in dust and ashes, ch. xili. 6. Isa. lviii. 5. Jon. iii. 6. Thus did he humble himself under the mighty hand of God, and bring his mind to the meanness and poverty of his condition. He compassed, (ch. vii. 5.) that his flesh was clothed with worms, and clods of dust; and therefore dust to dust, ashes to ashes. If God lay him among the ashes, there he will contentedly sit down: a low spirit becomes low circumstances, and will help to reconcile us to them. The Septuagint reads it, He sat down upon a dunghill without the city; (which is commonly said, in mentioning this story;) but the original says no more than that he sat in the midst of the ashes, which he might do through his houinge.

II. He urges him, by the persuasions of his own wife, to curse God, v. 9. The Jews (who covet much to be wise above what is written) say that Job's wife was Dinah, Jacob's daughter: so the Chaldee paraphrase. It is not likely that she was; but, whoever it was, she was to him like Michael to David, a scoffer at his piety. She was spared to him, when the rest of his comforts were taken away, for this purpose, to be a troubler and tempter to him. If Satan leaves any thing that he has permission to take away, it is with a design of mischief. It is policy to send his temptations by the hand of those that are dear to us, as he tempted Adam by Eve, and Christ by Peter. We must therefore carefully watch, that we be not drawn to say or do a wrong thing by the influence, interest, or entreaty, of any, no not those for whose opinion and favour we have ever so great a value. Observe how strong this temptation was.

I. She banters Job for his constancy in his religion; "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Art thou so very obstinate in thy religion, that nothing will cure thee of it? So tame and sheepish, as thus to trucule to a God, who is so far from rewarding thy services with marks of his favour, that he seems to take a pleasure in making thee miserable, strips thee of what encreaseth thee, without any provocation given? Is this a God to be still loved, and blessed, and served?"

Dost thou not see that thy devotion's vain?
What have thy prayers procured, but woe and pain?
Hast thou not yet found it to be true, of thee,
Perversely righteous, and absurdly good?
Those painful scenes, and all thy losses, show
(1 Tim. iv. 1) Heaven regards the foolish saints below.
Insincerely pious? Can't thy God
Reform thy stupid virtue with his rod?

R. E. BLACKMORE.

Thus Satan still endeavours to draw men from God, as he did our first parents, by suggesting hard thoughts of him, as one that envies the happiness, and delights in the misery, of his creatures, than which nothing is more false. Another artifice he uses, is, to drive men from their religion, by leading them with scoffs and reproaches for their adhesion to it: we have reason to expect it, but we are not surprised when Satan himself has undergone it, we shall be abundantly recompensed for it, and with much more reason may we revert it upon the scoffers, "Are you such fools as still to retain your impudence, when you might bless God, and live?"

2. She urges him to renounce his religion, to blaspheme God, set him at defiance, and dare him to do his worst; "Curse God, and die; live no longer in dependence upon God, wait not for relief from him, but be thine own deliverer, by being thine own executioner, end thy troubles by ending thy life, better die once than be always dying thus; thou art now despair of having any help from thy God, even curse him, and hang thyself.'"

These are two of the blackest and most horrid of all Satan's temptations, and yet such as good men have sometimes been violently assaulted with: nothing is more contrary to natural conscience than blasphemying God, nor to natural sense than self-murder; therefore the suggestion of either of these may well be suspected to come immediately from Satan. Lord, lead us not into temptation, not into such, not into any, tempting, but deliver us from the evil one.

III. He bravely resists and overcomes the temptation, v. 10. He soon gave her an answer, (for Satan spared him the use of his tongue, in hopes he would curse God with it,) which showed his constant resolution to cleave to God, to keep his good thoughts of him, and not to let go his integrity.

See, 1. How he resented the temptations; he was indignant at having such a thing mentioned to him; "What! Curse God? I abhor the thought of it; get thee behind me, Satan." In other cases, Job reasoned with his wife with a great deal of mildness, saying what he would do, but what would she? (xii. 17.) He entreated for the children's sake of my own body. But when she persuaded him to curse God, he was much displeased; Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. He does not call her a fool, and an atheist, nor does he break out into any indecent expressions of his displeasure, as those who are sick and sore are apt to do, and think they may be excused; but he shows her the evil of what she said, that she spoke the language of the infidels and idolaters, who, when they are hardly beset, fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, Is. viii. 21. We have reason to suppose, that, in such a pious household as Job had, his wife was one that had been well-affect ed to religion, but that now, when all their estate and comfort were gone, she could not bear the loss with that temper of mind that Job had; but that she stood in the breach, as it were, with a determined dis tember, was a great provocation to him, and he could not forbear thus showing his resentment.

Note, (1.) Those are angry and sin not, who are angry only at sin, and take a temptation as the greatest affront; who cannot bear them that are evil, Rev. ii. 2. When Peter was a Satan to Christ, he told him plainly, Thou art an offence to me. (2.) If those whom we think wise and good, at any time speak that which is foolish and bad, we ought to reprove them faithfully for it, and show them the evil of what they say, that we suffer not sin upon them. (3.) Temptations to curse God ought to be rejected with the greatest abhorrence, and not be parleyed with: whoever persuades us to that, must be looked upon as our enemy, to whom if we yield it is at our peril. Job did not curse God, and then think to come off with Adam's excuse, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she persuaded me to it, (Gen. iii. 12.) which had in it a tacit reflection on God, his ordinance, and providence; no, if thou scarest, thou alone shalt bear it. 2. How he reasoned against the temptation. Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil also? Those whom we reprove, we must endeavour to convince; and it is no hard matter to give a reason why we should still hold fast our integrity, even when we are stripped of every thing else. He considers that though good and evil are contraries, yet they do not come from contrary causes, but both from the hand of God; (Isa. xlv. 7. Lam. iii. 38.) and therefore that in both we must have our eye up unto him, with thankfulness for the good he sends, and without fretfulness at the evil. Observe the force of his argument,

(1.) What he argues for; not only the bearing, but the receiving, of evil;

Shall we not receive evil? that is, [1.] "Shall we not expect to receive it? If God give us so many good things, shall we be surprised, or think it strange, if he sometimes afflicts us, when he has told us that prosperity and adversity are set the one over against the other?" 1 Pet. iv. 12. [2.] "Shall we not set ourselves to receive it aright?" The word signifies to receive as a gift, and denotes a pious affection and disposition of soul under our afflictions, neither despising them nor fainting under them, accounting them gifts; (Phil. i. 29.) accepting them as punishments of our iniquity; (Lev. xxvi. 41,) acquiescing in the will of God in them; ("Let him do with me as seemeth him good;") and accommodating ourselves to them, as those that know how to wait as well as how to abound, Phil. iv. 12. When the heart is humbled, and weaned, by humbling wean ing providences, then we receive correction, (Zech. iii. 2.) and take up our cross.

(2.) What he argues from; "Shall we receive so much good as has come to us from the hand of God, during all those years of peace and prosperity that shall have before we have been taken away? Shall we not be amazed, when God thinks fit to lay it on us?" Note, The consideration of the mercies we receive from God, both past and present, should make us receive our afflictions with a suitable disposition of spirit. If we receive our share of the common good in the seven years of plenty, shall we not receive our share of the common evil in the years of famine? Qui sentit commodum, sentire debet et unus—He who feels the sweet, must also feel the bitter of the privation. If we have so much the more reason to thank God, why should we not be content with that which pleases God? If we receive so many comforts, shall we not receive some afflictions, which will serve as fuels to our comforts, to make them the more valuable; (we are taught the worth of mercies, by being made to want them sometimes;) and as allays to our comforts, to make them the less dangerous, to keep the balance of things in due weight, that we may not be lifted up above measure? 2 Cor. xii. 7. If there be so much good for the body, shall we not receive some good for the soul; that is, some afflictions, by which we partake of God's holiness; (Heb. xii. 10,) something which, by saddening the countenance, makes the heart better? Let murmuring, therefore, as well as boasting, be for ever excluded.

IV. Thus, in a good measure, Job still held fast
his integrity; and Satan's design against him was defeated. In all this did not Job sin with his lips; he not only said this well, but all he said, at this time, was under the government of religion and right reason: in the midst of all these grievances, he did not speak a word amiss; and we have no reason to think but that he also preserved a good temper of mind, so that though there might be some stirrings and risings of corruption in his heart, yet grace got the upper hand, and he took care that the root of bitterness might not spring up to trouble him, Heb. xii. 15. The abundance of his heart was for God, produced good things, and suppressed the evil that was there, which was out-voted by the better side. If he did think any evil, yet he laid his hand upon his mouth, (Prov. xxx. 32.) stifled the evil thought, and let it go no further; by which it appeared, not only that he had true grace, but that it was strong, and victorious; in short, that he had not forfeited the character of a perfect and upright man; for so he appears to be, who, in the midst of such temptation, offends not in word, Jas. iii. 2. Ps. xvi. 3.

11. Now when Job's three friends heard of this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him, and to comfort him. 12. And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. 13. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.

We have here an account of the kind visit which Job's three friends made him in his affliction. The news of his extraordinary troubles spread into all parts; he being an eminent man, both for greatness and goodness, and the circumstances of his troubles being very uncommon. Some, who were his enemies, triumphed in his calamities; (ch. xvi. 10.-xx. 18.-xxx. 1, &c.) perhaps they made badges on him: but his friends concerned themselves for him, and endeavoured to comfort him; a friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. Three of them are here named, (v. 11.) Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. We shall meet with a fourth after, who, it should seem, was present at the whole conference, namely, Elihu; whether he came as a friend of Job, or only as an auditor, does not appear; these three are said to be his friends, his intimate acquaintances, as David and Solomon had each of them one in their court, that was called the king's friend. These three were eminently wise and good men, as appears by their discourses; they were old men, very old, they had a great reputation for knowledge, and much deference was paid to their judgment, ch. xxxii. 6. It is probable that there were many of figure in their country—princes, or heads of houses. Now observe,

I. That Job, in his prosperity, had contracted a friendship with them: if they were his equals, yet he had not that jealousy of them; if his inferior, yet he had not that disdain of them, which was any hindrance to an intimate converse and correspondence with them. To have such friends, added more to his happiness in the day of his prosperity, than all the heads of cattle he was master of. Much of the comfort of this life lies in acquaintance and friendship with those that are prudent and virtuous; and he that has a few such friends, ought to value himself highly. Job's three friends were disposed to be all of them of the posterity of Abraham, which, for some descents, even in the families that were shut out from the covenant of peculiarity, retained some good fruits of that pious education which the father of the faithful gave to those under his charge. Eliphaz descended from Teman, the grandson of Esau; (Gen. xxxvi. 11.) Bildad (it is probable) from Shuah, Abraham's son by Keturah, (Gen. xxvi. 11.) Zophar from Naamath, and the same with Zepho, a descendant from Esau, Gen. xxxvi. 11. The preserving of so much wisdom and piety among those that were strangers to the covenants of promise, was a happy presage of God's grace to the Gentiles, when the partition wall should, in the latter days, be taken down. Esau was rejected; yet many that came from him inherited some of the best blessings.

II. That they continued their friendship with Job in his adversity, when most of his friends had forsaken him, ch. xix. 14. Two ways they showed their friendship.

1. By the kind visit they made him in his affliction, to mourn with him, and to comfort him, v. 11. Probably, they had been wont to visit him in his prosperity, not to hunt or hawk with him, not to dance or play at cards with him, but to entertain and edify themselves with his learned and pious conversation; and now, that he was in adversity, they came to share with him in his griefs, as formerly they had come to share with him in his comforts. These were wise men, whose heart was in the house of mourning, Eccl. vii. 4. Visiting the afflicted, sick or sore, fatherless or childless, in their sorrow, is made a branch of pure religion and undefiled; (Jas. i. 27.) and, if done from a good principle, will be abundantly recompensed shortly, Matth. xvi. 26. By visiting the sons and daughters of affliction, we may contribute to the improvement, (1.) Of our own graces; for many a good lesson is to be learned from the troubles of others; we may look upon them, and receive instruction, and be made wise and serious. (2.) Of their comforts; by putting a respect upon them, we encourage them, and some good word may be spoken to them, which may help to make them easy. Job's friends came, not to satisfy their curiosity with an account of his troubles, and the strangeness of the circumstances of them; much less, as David's false friends, to make invi
dious remarks upon him, (Ps. xii. 6-8.) but to mourn with him, to mingle their tears with his, and so to comfort him. It is much more pleasant to visit those in affliction, to whom comfort belongs, than to those to whom we must first speak conviction.

Concerning these visitants, observe, [1.] That they were not sent for, but came of their own accord; (ch. xxii. 23.) whence Mr. Caryl observes, that it is good manners to be an unbidden guest at the house of mourning, and in comforting our friends, to prevent their invitations. [2.] That they made an appointment to come. Note, Good people should make appointments among themselves for doing good, so exciting and obliging one another to it, and assisting and encouraging one another in it. For the carrying out of any pious design, let hand join in hand, and let the hearts of all within them work in love. (1 Cor. xiii. 4.) In order to this, we have reason to think it was a sincere design) to comfort him, and yet proved miserable comforters, through their unskilful management of his case. Many that aim well, by mistake, come short of their aim.
2. By their tender sympathy with him and concern for him in his affection; when they saw him at some distance, he was so disfigured and deformed with his sores, that they knew him not, v. 12. His face was foul with weeping, (ch. xvi. 16.) like Jerusalem's Naza res, that had been rudely as the ruber, but was now blacker some. Lam. iv. 7, 8. What a change will a sore disease, or, without that, oppressing care and grief, make in the countenance, in a little time! Is this Naomi? Ruth i. 19. So, Is this Job? How art thou fallen! How is thy glory stained and sullied, and all thine honour laid in the dust! God fit us for such changes!

Observing him thus miserably altered, they did not leave him, in a fright or loathing, but expressed so much the more tenderness toward him, (as is usual,) revived him with their undissembled grief in all the then usual expressions of that passion; they went aileud; the sight of them, (as is usual,) revived Job's grief, and set him a-weeping afresh, which fetched floods of tears from their eyes. They rent their clothes, and sprinkled dust upon their heads, as men that would strip themselves, and abuse themselves, with their friend that was stripped and abused.

(3.) Coming now to comfort him, they sat down with him upon the ground, for so he received visits; and they, not in compliment to him, but in true compassion, put themselves into the same humble and uneasy place and posture. They had many a time, it is likely, sitten with him on his couches, and at his table, in his prosperity, and were therefore willing to share with him in his grief and poverty, because they had shared with him in his joy and plenty. It was not, as before, that they came only to his house, that they might be admitted to his company, and to converse with him in his apparel and company; but they came to deal with him, and to comfort him, as his companions in tribulation, and exceptions from that rule, Nuntius ad admissas ibit amicus opes—They who have lost their wealth, are not to expect the visits of their friends.

They sat with him, but none spake a word to him, only they all attended to the particular narratives he gave of his troubles. They were silent, as men astonisht and amazed: Cura leves loquantur, ingentes stultificant—Our lighter griefs have a voice; those which are more offensive, are mute; or, according to Sir R. Blackmore,

So long a time they held their peace, to show
A reverence due to such prodigious woe.

They spake not a word to him, whatever they said one to another, by way of instruction, for the improvement of the present providence. They said nothing to that purpose to which afterward they said much—nothing to grieve him; (ch. iv. 2.) because they saw his grief was very great already, and they were loath at first to add affliction to his afflicted. There is a time to keep silence, when either the wicked is before us, and by speaking we may harden them, (Ps. xxxix. 1.) or when by speaking we may offend the generation of God's children, Ps. lxiii. 15. Their not entering upon the following solemn discourses till the seventh day, may perhaps intimate that it was the sabbath-day, which, thither being observed in the patriarchal age, and to that day they adjourned the intended conference, because, probably, then company resorted, as usual, to Job's house, to join him with his devotions, who might be edified by the discourse. Or rather, by their silence so long, they would intimate, that what they afterwards said was well considered and digested, and the result of many thoughts. The heart of the wise studies to answer. We should think twice before we speak once, especially in such a case as this, think long, and we shall be the better able to speak short and to the purpose.

CHAP. III.

Ye have heard of the patience of Job, says the apostle, Jam. v. 11. So we have, and of his impatience too. We wondered that a man should be so patient as he was; (ch. i. and ii.) but we wondered also, that a good man should be so impatient as he is here in this chapter, where we find him cursing his day, and, in passion, I. Complaining that he was born, v. i. 10. II. Complaining that he did not die as he was born, v. ii. 19. III. Complaining that his life was now comfortless, when he was in misery, v. 20. 26. In this, it must be owned that Job sinned with his lips, and it is written, not for our imitation, but our admonition, that he who thinks he stands, may take heed lest he fall.

1. AFTER this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day. 2. And Job spake, and said, 3. Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived. 4. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it. 5. Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it. 6. As for that night, let darkness seize upon it; let it not be joined unto the days of the year; let it not come into the number of the months. 7. Lo, let that night be solitary; let no joyful voice come therein. 8. Let them curse it that curse the day, who are ready to raise up their mourning. 9. Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark; let it look for light, but have none; neither let it see the dawning of the day: 10. Because it shut not up the doors of my mother's womb, nor hid sorrow from mine eyes.

Long was Job's heart hot within him; while he was musing, the fire burned, and the more for being stifled and suppressed; at length, he spake with his tongue, but not such a good word as David spake after a long pause, Lord, make me to know my end, Ps. xxxix. 3, 4. Seven days the prophet Ezekiel sat down astonished with the captives, and then (probably on the sabbath-day) the word of the Lord came to him, Ezek. iii. 15, 16. So long Job and his friends sat thinking, but said nothing; they were afraid of speaking what they thought, lest they should grieve him, and he durst not give vent to his thoughts, lest he should offend them. They came to comfort him, but, finding his afflictions very extraordinary, they began to think comfort did not belong to him, suspicious of his sect, and therefore they said nothing. But Job's think they may have leave to speak, and therefore Job gives vent first to his thoughts. Unless they had been better, it had been well if he had kept them to himself.

In short, he cursed his day, the day of his birth, wished he had never been born, could not think or speak his own birth without regret and vexation. Whereas men usually observe the annual return of their birth-day with rejoicing, he looked upon it as
the unhappiest of the day of the year, because the unhappi-
ness of his life, being the inlet into all his woe.

Not a Day.

1. This was bad enough. The extremity of his trouble and the discomposure of his spirits may ex-
cuse it in part, but he can by no means be justified in it.
Now he has forgotten the good he was born to, the lean kine have eaten up the fat ones, and he is fi-
illed with thoughts of the evil only, and wishes he had never been born.
The prophet Jeremiah himself expressed his resentment of his calamities, in language that is as
much his own fault as God's: "Let that mother, that thou hast borne me!" (Jer. xv. 10.)

Cursed be the day wherein I was born, Jer. xx. 14, &c.
We may suppose that Job, in his prosperity, had many a time addressed God for the day of his
birth, and reckoned it a happy day; yet now he brands it with all possible marks of infamy. When
we consider the iniquity in which we were conceived and born, we have reason enough to reflect with
shame and shame upon the day of our birth, and to say that the day of our death, by which we are
freed from sin, (Rom. vi. 7.) is far better, Eccl. vii. 1. But to curse the day of our birth, because
then we entered upon the calamitous scene of life, is to quarrel with the God of nature, to despise the
dignity of our being, and to indulge a passion which our own calm and sober thoughts will make us
ashamed of. Certainly there is no condition of life a man can be in in this world, but he may, in it,
(at God's not liking his fruit,) so honour God, and work out his own salvation, and make sure a hap-
iness for himself in a better world, that he will have no reason at all to wish he had never been born,
but a great deal of reason to say that he had his be-
ing to good purpose. Yet it must be owned, if
there were not another life after this, and divine con-
solations to support us in the prospects of it, so
many are the sorrows and troubles of this, that we
might sometimes be tempted to say that we were made
in vain (Ps. lx. xxxix. 4.) and to wish we had never been.
There are those in hell, who, with
good reason, wish they had never been born, as
Judges, Matth. xxvi. 24. But, on this side hell,
there can be no reason for so vain and ungrateful a
wish. It was Job's folly and weakness to curse his
day; we must say of it, This was his infirmity; but
good men have sometimes failed in the exercise of
these graces which they have been most eminent for,
that we may understand, that, when they are said
to have been made in vain, it is to mean that there is
right, not that they were sinless. Lastly, Let us
observe it, to the honour of the spiritual life above
the natural, that, though many have cursed the day
of their first birth, never any cursed the day of their
new birth, nor wished they never had had grace,
and the spirit of grace given them; those are the
most excellent gifts, above life and being itself,
and which will never be a burthen.

He was...Job's...Adam's. The
truth is, God had as Satan promised him-
self: Job cursed his day, but he did not curse his
God; was weary of his life, and would gladly have
parted with that, but not weary of his religion; he
resolutely cleaves to that, and will never let it go.
The dispute between God and Satan concerning
Job, was not whether Job had his infirmities, and
whether he was subject to like passions as we are;
(though was granted;) but whether he was a hypo-
crite, and secretly hated God, and, if he were pro-
ved wicked, would show it. The import of that was
no such man. Nay, all this may consist with his
being a pattern of patience; for though he did
thus speak unadvisedly with his lips, yet, both be-
fore and after, he expressed great submission and
resignation to the holy will of God, and repented of
his impiety; he condemned himself for it, and therefore God did not condemn him; nor must we,
but watch the more carefully over ourselves, lest
we sin after the similitude of this transgression.

The particular expressions which Job used, in
cursing his day, are full of poetical fancy, flame, and
rapture; and create as much difficulty to the critics
as the thing itself does to the divines: we need not
be particular in our observations upon them.

When he would express his passionate wish that
he had never been, he falls foul upon the day; and,
1. He wished that earth might forget it; Let it
perish, v. 5. Let it not be joined to the days of the
Jupiter, v. 6. Let it be not only not inserted in the
calendar in red letters, as the day of the king's na-
tility useth to be," (and Job was a king, ch. xxix.
ule.) "but let it be rased and blotted out, and
ried in oblivion. Let not the world know that ever
such a man as I was born into, and lived in it,
who made such a spectacle of misery."

2. That Heaven might frown upon it; Let not God
regard it from above, v. 4. "Every thing is
indeed as it is with God; that day is honourable on
which he puts honour, and which he distinguishes
and crowns with his favour and blessing, as he did
the seventh day of the week, but let my birth-day
never be so honour ed, let it be negro carbone notan-
dus—marked as with a black coal, for an evil day,
by him that determines the times before appointed.
The Father and Fountain of light appointed the
greater light to rule the day, and lesser lights to
rule the night; but let that want the benefit of both." (v. 9.) Let that day be darkness (v. 4.) and if the
light of the day be darkness, how great is that
darkness! It is terrible, because then we look for
light. Let the gloominess of the day represent
Job's condition, whose sun went down at noon. (2.)
As for that night too, let it want the benefit of moon
and stars, and let darkness seize upon it, thick dark-
ess, darkness that may be felt, which will not be
friend the repose of the night by its silence, but
rather disturb it with its terrors.

3. That all joy might forsake it; "Let it be a
melancholy night, solitary, and not a merry night
of music or dancing; let no joyful voice come there-
in;" (v. 7.) "let it be a long night, and not see
the eye-lids of the morning," (v. 9.) "which bring joy
with them."

4. That all curses might follow it; (v. 8.) "Let
none ever desire to see it, or bid it welcome when it
comes, but, on the contrary, let them curse it that
curse the day. Whatever day any are tempted to
curse, let it be the day of their birth; particularly upon my birth-day; particularly those that make it
their trade to raise up mourning a' masters with
their ditties of lamentation. Let them that curse
the day of the death of others, in the same breath
curse the day of my birth." Or, these who are so
fierce and daring as to be ready to raise up the
Leviathan, for that is the word here; who, being
about to strike the whale or crocodile, curse it with
the bitterest curse they can invent, hoping by
its contemplation to strike weakness into them-
self masters of it. Probably some such custom
might there be used, to which our divine poet al-
ludes. Let it be as odious as the day wherein men
beware the greatest misfortune, or the time where-
in they see the most dreadful appallments; so Bishop
Patrick, I suppose, taking the Leviathan here to
signify the Devil, as others do, who understand it
of the curses used by conjurers and magicians in
praying that these might fall upon him who has raised a devil that they cannot lay.

But what is the ground of Job's quarrel with the
day and night of his birth? It is because it shut not
up the doors of his mother's womb, v. 10. See the
tolly and madness of a passionate discontent, and
how absurdly and extravagantly it talks, when the
reins are laid on the neck of it. Is this Job, who
was so much admired for his wisdom, that unto him men gave ear, and kept silence at his counsel, and after his words they spake not again? ch. xxix. 21, 22. Surely his wisdom failed him, (1.) When he took so much pains to express his desire that he had never been born, which, at the best, was a vain wish, for it is impossible to make that which has been, not to have been. (2.) When he was so liberal of his curses upon a day and a night, that could not be hurt, or made ever the worse for his curses. (3.) When he wished a thing so very barbarous to his own mother, as that she might not have brought him forth, when her full time was come; which must inevitably have been her death, and a miserable death. (4.) When he despised the goodness of God to him, (in giving him a being, such a being, so noble and excellent a life, such a life, so far above that of any other creature in this lower world, and undervalued the gift, as not worth the acceptance, only because transit cum onere—It was clogged with a proviso of trouble, which now, at length, came upon him, after many years' enjoyment of its pleasures. What a foolish thing it was to wish that his eyes had never seen the light, that so they might not have seen sorrow, which yet he might hope to see through, and beyond which he might see joy! Did Job believe and hope that he should see in his flesh God at the latter day; (ch. xix. 26.) and yet would he wish he never had had a being capable of such a bliss, only because, for the present, he had sorrow in the flesh? God, by his grace, arm us against this foolish and hurtful lust of impatience!

11. Why did I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? 12. Why did the knees prevent me? or why the breasts that I should suck? 13. For now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept: then had I been at rest, 14. With kings and counsellors of the earth, which built desolate places for themselves; 15. Or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver: 16. Or as a hidden untimely birth I had not been; as infants which never saw light. 17. There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. 18. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. 19. The small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master.

Job, perhaps reflecting upon himself for his folly in wishing he had never been born, follows it, and thinks to mend it, with another, little better, that he would wish himself never born, since he enlarges upon these verses. When our Saviour would set forth a very calamitous state of things, he seems to allow such a saying as this, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the haps which never gave suck; (Luke xxiii. 29.) but blessing the barren womb is one thing, and cursing the fruitful womb is another! It is good to make the best of afflictions, but it is not good to make the worst of mercies. Our rule is, Bless, and curse not. Life is good, and death is better, and all is vanity; yet Job here very absurdly complains of life and its supports, as a curse and plague to him, and covets death and the grave, as the greatest and most desirable bliss. Surely Satan was deceived in Job, when he applied that maxim to him, All that a man hath will he give for his life; for never any man valued life at a lower rate than he did. 1. He ungratefully quarrels with life, and is angry that it was not taken from him as soon as 't was born; and when he was young, Why did I not die from the womb? See here, 1. What a weak and helpless creature man is when he comes into the world, and how slender the thread of life is, when it is first drawn. We are ready to die from the womb, and to breathe our last, as soon as we begin to breathe at all. We can do nothing for ourselves, as other creatures can, but should drop into the grave, if the knees did not prevent us; and the lamp of life, when first lighted, would go out of itself, if the breasts given us by which we should suck, did not supply it with fresh oil. 2. What a merciful and tender care Divine Providence took of us, at our entrance into the world. It was owing to this, that we died not from the womb, and did not give up the ghost when we came out of the belly. Why were we not cut off as soon as we were born? Not because we did not deserve it, justly might such weeds have been plucked up, as soon as they appeared, justly might such cockatrices have been crushed in the egg: not because we did, or could, take any care of ourselves and our own safety; no creature comes into the world so shiftless as man. It was not our might, or the power of our hand, that preserved us these beings; but God's power and providence upheld our frail lives, and his pity and patience spared our forfeited lives. It was owing to this that the knees prevented us. Natural affection is put into parents' hearts by the hand of the God of nature: and hence it was, that the doors of the breast attended those of the womb. 3. What a great deal of vanity and vexation of spirit attends human life. If we had not a God to serve in this world, and better things to hope for in another world, considering the faculties we are endued with, and the troubles we are surrounded with, we should be strongly tempted to wish that we had died from the womb, which had prevented a great deal both of sin and misery.

He that is born to-day, and dies to-morrow, Loses some hours of joy, but months of sorrow.

4. The evil of impatience, fretfulness, and discontent; when they thus prevail, they are unreasonable and absurd, impious and ungrateful; they are a slighting and undervaluing of God's favour. How much sooner life is illibtered, we must say, "It was of the Lord's mercies that we died not from the womb, that we were not consumed." Hatred of life is a contradiction to the common sense and sentiments of mankind, and our own at another time. Let discontented people declare ever so much against life, they will be loath to part with it when it comes to the point. When the old man in the fable, being tired with his burden, threw it down with discontent, and called for death, and death came to him, and asked him what he would have with him, he then answered, "Nothing, but help me up with my burden." He passionately applauds death and the grave, and seems quite in love with them. To desire to die, that we may be with Christ, that we may be free from sin, and that we may be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, is the effect and evidence of grace; but to desire to die, only that we may be quiet in the grave, and delivered from the troubles of this life, savours of corruption. Job's considerations here may be of good use to reconcile us to death, when it comes, and to make us easy under the arrest of it; but they ought not to be made use of as a pretence to quarrel with life while it is continued, or to make us uncasy under the burdens of it. It is our wisdom and duty to make the
post of that which is, be it living or dying, and so to live to the Lord, and die to the Lord, and to be his in both, Rom. xiv. 8.

Job here frets himself with thinking, that, if he had but died as soon as he was born, and been carried from the womb to the grave,

1. His condition would have been as good as that of the best. I should have been (says he, v. 14.) with kings and counsellors of the earth, whose power, policy, and arts, carry them, and keep them, out of the reach of death, nor secure them from the grave, nor distinguish their's from common dust in the grave. Even princes, who had gold in abundance, could not, with it, bribe death to overlook them when he came with commission; and though they filled their houses with silver, yet they were forced to leave it all behind them, no more to return to it. Some, by the desolate place which the kings and counsellors are here said to build for themselves, understand the sepulchres or monuments they prepared for themselves in their life-time; as Sheba (Isa. xxii. 16.) hewed him out a sepulchre; and by the gold which the princes had, and the silver with which they filled their houses, they understand the treasures which, they say, it was usual to deposit in the graves of great men. Such arts have been used to preserve their dignity, if possible, on the other side, to keep themselves from lying even with those of inferior rank; but it will not do; death is, and will be, an irresistible leveler; *Mors spectra ligeons spectat—Death mingles spectres with spectres.* Rich and poor meet together in the grave; and there, a hidden untimely birth, (v. 16.) a child that either never saw light, or but just opened its eyes, and peeped into the world, and, not liking it, closed them again, and hastened out of it, lies soft and easy, lies as high and safe, as kings, and counsellors, and princes that had gold; "And therefore," says Job, "would I had lain there in the dust, rather than live to lie here in the ashes!"

2. His condition would have been much better than now it was, v. 13. "Then should I have lain still and been quiet, which now I cannot do, I cannot be, but am still tossing and unquiet; then I should have slept, whereas now sleep departeth from mine eyes; whereas now, I, and in the morning, I am awake." Now these holy immortals are brought to a much clearer light by the gospel than before they were placed in, good Christians can give a better account than this of the gain of death; "Then should I have been present with the Lord, then should I have seen his glory face to face, and no longer through a glass darkly," but all that poor Job dreamt of, was rest and quietness in the grave, out of the fear of evil tidings, and out of the feeling of sore boils. Then should I have been quiet; and had he kept his temper, his even easy temper still, which he was in, in the two foregoing chapters, entirely resigned to the holy will of God, and acquiescing in it, he might have been quiet now; his soul, at least, might have dwelt at ease, even when his body lay in pain, Ps. xxv. 13. Observe how finely he describes the repose of the grave; which (provided the soul also be at rest in God) may much assist our triumph over it. (1.) Those that now are troubled, will there be out of the reach of trouble; (v. 17.) *There the wicked cease from troubling: when persecutors die, they can no longer persecute, their hatred and envy are now perished.* Herod had vexed the church, but when he became a prey for worms, he ceased from troubling. When the persecutors die, they are out of the anger, and doing any further trouble. Had Job been at rest in his grave, he had had no disturbance from the Sabians and Chaldeans, none of all his enemies had created him any trouble.

(2.) Those that are now toiled, will there see the period of their toils; *there the weary are at rest heaven is more than a rest to the souls of the saints, but the grave is a rest to their bodies; their pilgrimage is a weary pilgrimage; sin and the world they are weary of; their services, sufferings, and expectations, they are wearied with; but in the grave they rest from all their labours, Rev. xvi. 13. Isa. lxvii. 2. They are easy there, and make no complaints; there believers sleep in Jesus.

There are no more insulted and trampled upon, monecated and terrified, by their cruel task-masters; *they hear not the voice of the oppressor.* They were here forced to perpetual servitude, that could call no thing their own, no not their own bodies, are there no longer under command or control; there the servant is free from his master; which is a good reason why those that have power should use it moderately, and those that are in subjection should bear it patiently, yet a little while. (4.) Those that were at a vast distance from all others, there are upon a level, v. 19. The small and great are there, there the same, there all one, all alike free among the dead. The tedious pomp and state, which attend the great, are at an end there; all the inconveniences of a poor and low condition are likewise over; death and the grave know no difference.

Leveil'd by death, the conqueror and the slave,
The wise and foolish, cowards and the brave,
Lie mix't and undistinguished in the grave.
Sir R. Blackmore.

20. Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul; 21. Which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures; 22. Which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they can find the grave? 23. *Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?* 24. For my sighing cometh before I eat, and my roarings are poured out like the waters. 25. For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me. 26. I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came.

Job, finding it to no purpose to wish either that he had not been born, or had died as soon as he was born, here complains that his life was now continued, and not cut off. When men are set on quarrelling, there is no end of it; the corrupt heart will carry on the humour: having cursed the day of his birth, here he courts the day of his death. The beginning of this strife and impatience is as the letting forth of water.

1. He thinks it hard, in general, that miserable lives should be prolonged; (v. 20. 22.) *Wherefore is light given to them that are bitter in soul? Bitterness of soul, through spiritual grievances, makes life itself bitter. Why doth he give light? So it is in the original: he means God, yet does not name him, though the Devil had said, 'He will curse thee to thy face;' but he tacitly reflects on the Divine Providence as unjust and unkind, in continuing life, when the comforts of life are removed.
Life is called light, because pleasant and serviceable for walking and working; it is candle-light, the longer it burns, the shorter, and the nearer to the socket, it grows. This light is said to be given us; for if it were not daily renewed to us by a fresh gift, it would be lost. But Job reckons, that, to those who are in misery, it is graver than all gifts and no gift, a gift that they had better be without, while the light only serves them to see their own misery by. Such is the nature of life, that, in it, they may be vexed into a vexation of spirit; and so alienable is the property of death, that, though dreadful to nature, it may become even desirable to itself. He speaks of those here, (1.) Who long for death, when they have out-lived their comforts and usefulness, are burdened with age and infirmities, with pain or sickness, poverty or disgrace, and yet it comes not; while, at the same time, it comes to many who dread it, and would put it far from them. The continuance and period of life must be according to God’s will, not according to our’s. It is not fit that we should be consulted how long we would live, and when we would die: our times are in a better hand than our own. (2.) Who dig for it as for hid treasures; that is, would give any thing for a fair dismissal out of this world, which supposes that then the thought of men’s being their own executioners was not so much as entertained or suggested, else those who longed for it needed not take much pains for it, they might soon accomplish it, as Saturn tells them. If they thus thought of it, as if it was a pleasure to them, it may be a sin to long for death, but I am sure it is no sin to long for heaven.

2. He thinks of himself, in particular, hardly dealt with, that he might not be eased of his pain and misery by death, when he could not get ease any other way. To be thus impatient of life, for the sake of the troubles we meet with, is not only unnatural in itself, but ungrateful to the Giver of life, and argues a sinful indulgence of our own passion, and a sinful inconsideration of our future state. Let it be our great and constant care to get ready for another world, and then let us leave it to God to order the time and manner of our departure, to let him think fit: “Lord, when and how thou pleasest,” and this with such an indifferency, that if he should refer it to us, we would refer it to him again. Grace teaches us, in the midst of life’s greatest comforts, to be willing to die, and, in the midst of its greatest crosses, to be willing to live.

Job, to excuse himself in this earnest desire which he had to die, pleads the little comfort and satisfaction he had in life.

1. He in his new afflicted state, troubles were continually felt, and were likely to be so. He thought he had cause enough to be weary of living, for, [1.] He had no comfort of his life; My sighing comes before I eat, v. 24. The sorrows of life prevented and anticipated the supports of life; nay, they took away his appetite for his necessary food. His griefs returned as duly as his meals, and affliction was his daily bread. Nay, so great was the extremity of his pain and anguish, that he did not only sigh, but roar, and his murrings were poured out like the waters in a full and constant stream. Our Master was acquainted with grief, and we must expect to be so too. [2.] He had no prospect of bettering his condition, his way was hid, and God had hedged him in, v. 23. He saw no way open of deliverance, nor knew he what course to take; his way was hedged up with thorns, that he could not find his path. See ch. xxviii. 8. Lam. iii. 7.

2. Even in his former prosperous, state troubles were continually feared; so that then he was never easy, v. 23, 25. He knew so much of the vanity of the world, and the troubles to which, of course, he was born, that he was not in safety, neither had he rest then. That which made his grief new now the most, was, his coming to be conscious of any great degree either of new sin or security in the day of his prosperity, which might provoke God thus to chastise him. [1.] He had not been negligent and unmindful of his affairs, but kept up such a fear of trouble as was necessary to the maintaining of his guard: he was afraid for his children, when they were feasting, lest they should offend God; (ch. i. 5.) afraid for his servants, lest they should offend his neighbours; he took all the care and pains he could, to hide himself and his affairs with all possible precaution; yet all would not do. [2.] He had not been secure, nor indulged himself in ease and softness, had not trusted in his wealth, nor flattered himself with the hopes of the perpetuity of his mirth; yet trouble came, to convince and remind him of the vanity of the world, which yet he had not forgotten when he lived at ease. Thus his way was laid, for he knew not wherefore God contended with him. He knew this to be the order of Providence, yet to be safe he would not, might rather serve to alleviate it: nothing will make trouble easy so much as the testimony of our consciences for us, that, in some measure, we did our duty in a day of prosperity: and an expectation of trouble will make it sit the lighter when it comes. The less it is a surprise, the less it is a terror.

CHAP. IV.

Job having warmly given vent to his passion, and so broken the ice, his friends here come gravely to give vent to their judgment upon his case; which perhaps they had communicated to one another apart, compared notes upon it, and talked it over among themselves; and found they were all agreed in their verdict, that Job’s afflictions certainly proved him to have been a hypocrite; but they did not attack Job with this high charge, till by the expressions of his discontent and impatience, in which they thought he reflected on God himself, he had compromized himself in the opinion in the contrary conceived of him and his character. Now they set upon him with great fear. The dispute begins, and it soon becomes fierce. The opponents are Job’s three friends, Job himself is respondent, Eliphaz appears, first, as Senator, and, at length, God himself gives judgment upon the controversy, and the management of it. The question in dispute is, whether Job was an honest man or not? The same question that was in dispute between God and Satan in the two first chapters. Satan had yielded it, and durst not pretend that his cursing of his day was a constructive cursing of his God; no, he cannot deny but that Job still holds fast his integrity; but Job’s friends will needs have it, that, if he were an honest man, he would not have been thus sorely and thus tediously afflicted, and therefore urge him to confess himself a hypocrite in the profession he had made of religion, v. 4. Job says that I will not do; I have offended God, but no by his law, but by his authority, which God has been upbraid with him;

After this discourse, Eliphaz begins his answer, v. 2. He compliments Job with an acknowledgment of the eminency and usefulness of the profession he had made of religion, v. 5. The charge he had against him was for his present troubles, and his conduct under them, v. 5. To make good the inference, he maintains, that man’s wickedness is that which always brings God’s judgments, v. 7-11. V. He corroborates his assertion by a vision which he had, in which he was reminded of the incontestable purity and justice of God, and the meanness, weakness, and sinfulness, of man, v. 12-21.
By all this he brings down Job's spirit, and to make him both patient and patient under his afflictions.

1. THEN Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, 2. If we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved? But who can withhold himself from speaking? 3. Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. 4. Thy words have upheld him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. 5. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled. 6. Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, the uprightness of thy ways, and thy hope?

In these verses,

1. Eliphaz excuses the trouble he is now about to give to Job by his discourse; (v. 2.) "If we assay a word with thee, offer a word of reproof and counsel, wilt thou be grieved, and take it ill? We have reason to fear thou wilt: but there is no remedy; Who can refrain from words?" Observe, 1. With what modesty he speaks of himself and his own attempt. He will not undertake the management of the cause alone, but very humbly joins his friends with him; "We will commune with thee;" they that plead God's cause, must be glad of help, lest it suffer through their weakness. He will not promise much, but begs leave to assay or attempt, and try if he could propose any thing that might be pertinent, and suit Job's case. In difficult matters, it becomes us to pretend no further, but only to try what we can, and do the best we can. Many excellent discourses have gone under the modest title of "Essays."

2. With what tenderness he speaks of Job, and his present afflicted condition; "If we tell thee our mind, wilt thou be grieved? wilt thou take it ill? Wilt thou lay it to thine own heart as thine affliction, or to our charge as our fault? Shall we be reckoned unkind and cruel, if we deal plainly and faithfully with thee? We desire we may not, and should be sorry if that should be ill resented which is well intended." Note, We ought to be afraid of grieving any, especially those that are already in grief, lest we add affliction to the afflicted, as David's enemies, Ps. lxi. 26. We should show ourselves backward to say that which we foresee will be grievous, though ever so necessary. God himself, though he afflicts justly, yet he does not afflict willingly, Lam. iii. 33. 3. With what assurance he speaks of the truth and pertinency of what he was about to say; Who can withhold himself from speaking? Surely it was a pious zeal for God's honour, and the spiritual welfare of Job, that laid him under this necessity of speaking; Who can forbear speaking in vindication of God's honour, which we have reproved, in love to thy soul, which we see endangered? Note, It is foolishity to prove our friends, even our friends in affliction, for what they say or do amiss, only for fear of offending them. Whether men take it well or ill, we must with wisdom and meekness do our duty, and discharge a good conscience.

II. He exhibits a twofold charge against Job.

1. As to his particular conduct under this affliction; he charges him with weakness and faint-heartedness; this was of the worst sort. There was too much ground for, v. 3. 4. And here, (1.) He takes notice of Job's former serviceableness to the comfort of others. He owns that Job had instructed many, not only his own children and servants, but many others, his neighbours and friends, as many as fell within the sphere of his activity. He did not only encourage these who were teachers by office and call, and ministered them, and pay for the teaching of those who were poor, but he did himself instruct many: though a great man, he did not think it below him. King Solomon was a preacher: though a man of business, he found time to do it, went among his neighbours, talked to them above and below, and gave them reasons for their faith. O that this example of Job were imitated by our great men! If he met with those who were ready to fall into sin, or sink under their troubles, his words upheld them: a wonderful dexterity he had in offering that which was proper to fortify persons against temptations, to support them under their burdens, and to comfort afflicted consciences. He had, and used, the tongue of the learned, knew how to speak a word in season to them that were weary, and employed himself much in that good work. With suitable counsels and comforts he strengthened the weak hands for work and service and the spiritual warfare, and the feeble knees for bearing up the man in his journey and under his load. It is not our duty only to lift up our own hands, that hang down, by quickening and encouraging ourselves in the way of duty, (Heb. xii. 12.) but we are bound to set ourselves to minister to others, as there is occasion, and do what we can to confirm their feeble knees, by saying to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, Is. xxxv. 3, 4. The expressions seem to be borrowed thence. Note, They who have abundance of spiritual riches, should abound in spiritual charity. A good word, well and wisely spoken, may do more good than perhaps we think of.

But why does he add mention this here? (1.) Perhaps he praises him thus for the good he had done, that he might make the intended reproof the more passable with him. Just commendation is a good preface to a just reprehension, will help to remove prejudices, and will show that the reproof comes not from ill-will. Paul praised the Corinthians before he chid them, 1 Cor. xi. 2. [2.] He remembers how Job had comforted others as a token that he might justly expect to be himself comforted; But when thou hast comforted others, was not this as a reward, in order to comfort, they must be excused if they applied themselves to that first: the Comforter shall reprove, John xvi. 8. [3.] He speaks this, perhaps, in a way of pity, lamenting, that, through the extremity of his affliction, he could not apply those comforts to himself which he had formerly administered to others. It is easier to give good counsel than to take it; to preach meekness and patience than to have it. Facile omnes, cum valentus, rectum concilium negotios damus— We all find it easy, when in health, to give good advice to the sick. Terent. [4.] Most think that he mentions it as an aggravation of his present discontent, upbraiding him with his knowledge, and the good offices he had done for others, as if he had said, Thou hast comforted others; dost thee now thus deplore thyself? Is not this an evidence of thine hypocrisy, that thou hast prescribed that medicine to others which thou wilt not now take thyself, and so contradictest thyself, and actest against thine own known principles? Thou that teachest another not to faint, dost thou faint? Rom. ii. 21. Physician, heal thyself. They who have rebuked others, must expect to hear of it, if they themselves become obnoxious to rebuke. [5.] He upbraids him with the manner of his low-spiritedness, v. 5. Now that it is come upon thee, now that it is thy turn to be afflicted, and the bitter cup, that goes round, is put into thy hand, now that it touches thee, thou faintest, thou art troubled.
Here, [1.] He makes too light of Job's afflictions; "It touches thee." The very word that Satan himself used, ch. i. 11.—[ii. 5. Had Eliphaz felt but the one half of Job's afflictions, he would not speak as he did; it is only a piece of what Job's afflictions, he makes a mere trifle of it; "It touches thee, and thou canst not bear to be touched;" Vidi me tangere—Touch me not. [2.] He makes too much of Job's resentments, and aggravates them; "Thou failest, or thou art beside thyself; thou raves, and knownst not what thou sayst." Men in deep distress must have grains of allowance, and a favourable construction put upon what they say, or they are likely to be every word they do not as we would be done by.

2. As to his general character before this affliction, he charges him with wickedness and false-heartedness; that article of his charge was utterly groundless and unjust. How unkindly does he banter him, and upbraid him with the great profession of religion he had made, as if it were all now come to nothing, and proved a sham; (v. 6.) "Is not thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways? Does it not all appear now to be a mere pretence? For, hadst thou been sincere in it, God would not thus have afflicted thee, nor wouldst thou have behaved thus under the affliction." This was the very thing Satan aimed at, to prove Job a hypocrite, and disprove the character God had given of him: when he could not: himself do this to God, but He still saw and said, Job is perfect and upright, then he endeavoured, by his friends, to do it to Job himself, and to persuade him to confess himself a hypocrite: could he have gained that point, he would have triumphed, Habes confidentem reum—Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee. But, by the grace of God, Job was enabled to hold fast his integrity, and would not bear false witness against himself. Note, Those that pass rashi and uncharitable censures upon their brethren, and condemn them for hypocrises, do Satan's work, and serve his interest, more than they are aware of. I know not how it comes to pass that this verse is differently read in several editions of our common English Bibles; the original, and all the ancient versions, put thy hope before the uprightness of thy ways. So does the Geneva and most of the editions of the last translation; but I find one of the first, in 1612, has it, Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, the uprightness of thy ways, and thy hope? Both the Arber translations, and Mr. Poole, have that reading; and an edition in 1660 reads it, "Is not thy fear thy confidence, and the uprightness of thy ways thy hope? Does it not appear now, that all the religion, both of thy devotion, and of thy conversation, was only in hope and confidence that thou shouldst grow rich by it? Was it not all mercenary?" The very thing that Satan suggested. Is not thy religion thy hope, and thy righteousness thy confidence? Or, Was it not? Didst thou not think that what would have been thy protection? But thou art deceived." Or, "Would it not have been so? If it had been sincere, would it not have kept thee from this despair?" It is true, if thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength, thy grace, is small; (Prov. xxiv. 10.) but it does not therefore follow that thou hast no grace, no strength at all. A man's character is not to be taken from a single act.

7. Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off? 8. Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same. 9. By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed. 10. The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of the young lions, are broken. 11. The old lion perisheth for lack of prey, and the stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad.

Eliphaz here advances another argument to prove Job a hypocrite, and will have not only his impatience under his afflictions to be evidence against him, but even his afflictions themselves, being so very great and extraordinary, and there being no prospect at all of his deliverance out of them. To strengthen this argument, he here lays down these two principles, which seem plausible enough.

I. That good men were never thus ruined: for the proof of this, he appeals to Job's own observation; (v. 7.) "Remember, I pray thee; recollect all that thou hast seen, heard, or read, and give me an instance of any one that was innocent and righteous, and yet perished as thou dost, and was cut off as thou art." If we understand it of a final and eternal destruction, his principle is true. None that are innocent and righteous, perish for ever: it is only a man of sin that is a son of perdition, 2 Thess. ii. 3. But then it is ill applied to Job; he did not thus perish, nor was he cut off: a man is never under the same trial in hell. But, if we understand it of any temporal calamity, his principle is not true. The righteous perish; (Isa. lvii. 1.) There is one event both to the righteous and to the wicked, (Eccl. ix. 2.) both in life and death; the great and certain difference is after death. Even before Job's time, (as early as it was,) there were instances sufficient to contradict this principle, Did not righteous Abel perish being innocent; and was he not cut off in the beginning of his days? Was not righteous Lot burnt out of house and city? Was he not forced to retire to a melancholy cave? Was not righteous Jacob, a Syrian, ready to perish? Deut. xxvi. 5. Similar instances, no doubt, there were, which are not on record.

II. That wicked men were often thus ruined; for the proof of this, he vouches his own observation; (v. 8.) "Even as I have seen, many a time, They that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, by the threefold fruit of the earth, and for the same: So sows men, so shall they reap. Or, What is that? Didst thou not think that what would have been thy protection? But thou art deceived." Or, "Would it not have been so? If it had been sincere, would it not have kept thee from this despair?" It is true, if thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength, thy grace, is small; (Prov. xxiv. 10.) but it does not therefore follow that thou hast no grace, no strength at all. A man's character is not to be taken from a single act. The prayer is, that God would give him to bear his sufferings, as long as he can; and, when he cannot bear them, to give him a speedy deliverance. But, if it be not his lot to escape, to give him a peaceful death. So that, if it be his lot to suffer, to give him a prospect of an eternal happiness; and, if he must be cut off this way, to give him a suitable end.
in the cords of those ploughers, Ps. xxxix. 3, 4. They themselves are destroyed, which is the just punishment of their iniquity. They perish, that is, they are destroyed utterly; they are consumed, that is, they are destroyed gradually; and this, by the blast and breath of God, that is, (1.) By his wrath: his anger is the ruin of sinners, who are therefore called vessels of wrath, and his breath is said to kindle the fire, Isa. xxx. 33. Who knows the power of his anger? Ps. xc. 11. (2.) By his word: it is done, easily and of itself, for the destruction of God, in the word, consumes sinners; with that he slays them, Hos. vi. 5. Saying and doing are not two things with God. The man of sin is said to be consumed with the breath of Christ's mouth, 2 Thess. ii. 8. Compare Isa. xi. 4. Rev. xix. 21. Some think that in attributing the destruction of sinners to the blast of God, and the breath of his nostrils, he refers to the wind which blew the house down upon Job's children, as if they were therefore sinners above all men, because they suffered such things, Luke xii. 2.

2. He speaks particularly of tyrants and cruel oppressors, under the similitude of lions, v. 10, 11. Observe, (1.) How he describes their cruelty and oppression. The Hebrew tongue has several names for lions, and they are all here used to set forth the terrible terrors power, fierceness, and cruelty, of proud oppressors; they roar, and rend, and prey, upon all about them, and tear up their young ones to devour them. Ezek. xix. 3. The Devil is a roaring lion; and they partake of his nature, and do his lusts. They are strong as lions, and subtle; (Ps. x. 9.—xvii. 12.) and, as far as they prevail, lay all desolate about them. (2.) How he describes their destruction; the destruction both of their power and of their persons; they shall be restrained from doing further hurt, and reckoned with for the hurt they have done. An effectual course shall be taken, [1.] That they shall not terrify; the voice of their roaring shall be stopped. [2.] That they shall not tear; God will disarm them, will take away their power to do hurt, the teeth of the young lions are broken, Ps. iii. 7. Thus shall the remainder of wrath be restrained. [3.] That they shall not enrich themselves with the spoil of their neighbours. Even the old lion is ashamed, and perishes for lack of prey; they have surfeited on spoil and rapine, are perhaps reduced to such straits as to do worse than they; (4.) That they shall not pretend, as they promise themselves, leave a succession; the stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad, to seek for food themselves, which the old ones used to bring in for them, Nah. ii. 12. The lion did eat in pieces for his whelps, but now they must shift for themselves. Perhaps Eliphaz intended, in this, to reflect upon Job, as if he, being the greatest of all the men of the east, had got his estate by spoil, and used injustice, in oppressing his neighbours: but now, his power and estate were gone, and his family scattered: if so, it was pity that a man whom God praised, should be thus abused.

2. Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. 13. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, 14. Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. 15. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: 16. It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes; there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying, 7. Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his Maker? 13. Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: 19. How much less on them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth? 20. They are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish for ever, without any regarding it. 21. Doth not their excellency which is in them go away? they die, even without wisdom.

Eliphaz, having undertaken to convince Job of the sin and folly of his discontent and impatience, here vouches a vision he had been favoured with, which he relates to Job for his conviction. What comes immediately from God, all men will pay a particular deference to, and Job, no doubt, as much as any. Some think Eliphaz had this vision now lately, since he came to Job, putting words into his mouth wherewith to reason with him; and it had been well if he had kept to the purport of this vision, which would serve for a ground on which to reprove Job for his murmuring, but not to condemn him for a hypocrite. Others think he had it formerly; for God did in this way often communicate himself to the children of men in those first ages of the world, ch. xxxiii. 15. Probably, God had sent Eliphaz this messenger and message some time or other, when he was himself in an unexpected and new frame, to calm and pacify him. Note, As we should comfort others with that wherewith we have been comforted, (2 Cor. i. 4.) so we should endeavour to convince others with that which has been powerful to convince us.

The people of God had not then any written word to quote, and therefore God sometimes notified to them even common truths, by the extraordinary ways of his revelation. We that have Bibles, have there (thanks be to God) a more sure word to depend upon than even visions and voices, 2 Pet. i. 19. Observe, 1. The manner in which this message was sent to Eliphaz, and the circumstances of the conveyance of it to him. 1. It was brought him secretly, or by stealth; some of the sweetest communion gracious souls have with God, is in secret, where he only, who is all eye, can perceive. God has ways of bringing conviction, counsel, and comfort, to his people, unknown by the counsel or order of men, by secret messages, secret whispers, secret papers, as powerfully and effectually as by the public ministry. His secret is with them, Ps. xxv. 14. As the evil spirit often steals good words out of the heart, (Matth. xiii. 19.) so the good Spirit sometimes steals good words into the heart, or ever we are aware. 2. He received a little thereof, v. 12. And it is but little of divine knowledge that the best receive in this world; we know little, in comparison with what they that are partakers of the spiritual knowledge know when we come to heaven. How little a portion is heard of God! ch. xxvi. 14. We know but in part, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. See his humility and modesty. He pretends not to have understood it fully, but something of it he perceived. 3. It was brought him in the visions of the night; (v. 13.) when he was retired from the world and the hurry of it, and all about him was composed and quiet. Note, The way we have for entering into the things of it, the fitter we are for communion with God. When we are communing with our own hearts, and are still, (Ps. iv. 4.) then is a proper time for the Holy Spirit to commune with us.

When others were asleep, Eliphaz was ready to receive this vision from Heaven, and probably, like David, was meditating upon God in the night.
*watched*: in the midst of those good thoughts, this thing was brought to him. We should hear more from God, if we thought more of him; yet some are surprised with convictions in the night, ch. xxxiii. 14, 15. 4. It was prefaced with terrors; *Fear came upon him, and trembling, v. 14. It should seem, in some manner or other, God had put a terror into this man, he was seized with this trembling, which should have his bones, and perhaps the bed under him. A holy awe and reverence of God and his majesty being struck upon his spirit, he was thereby prepared for a divine visit. Whom God intends to honour, he first humbles and lays low, and will have us all to serve him with holy fear, and to rejoice with trembling.

42. The messenger by whom it was sent; a spirit, one of the good angels, who are employed not only as the ministers of God's providence, but sometimes as the ministers of his word. Concerning this apparition which Eliphaz saw, we are here told, (v. 15, 16.) 1. That it was real, and not a dream, not a fancy; an image was before his eyes, he plainly saw it; at first, it passed and repassed before his face, moved up and down, but, at length, it stood still to speak to him. If some have been so knavish as to impose false visions on others, and some so foolish as to dream visions of their own, shall not, therefore, follow that there have been no apparitions of spirits, both good and bad. 2. That it was indistinct, and somewhat confused. He could not discern the form thereof, so as to frame any exact idea of it in his own mind, much less to give a description of it. His conscience was to be awakened and informed, not his curiosity gratified. We know little of spirits, we are not capable of knowing much of them, nor is it fit we should; all in good time: wisdom for the understanding of spirits, and shall then be better acquainted with them. 3. That it put him into a great consternation, so that his hair stood on end. Ever since man sinned, it has been terrible to him to receive an express from Heaven, as conscious to himself that he can expect no good tidings thence; apparitions, therefore, even of good spirits, have always made deep impressions of fear, even upon good men. How well it is for us, that God sends us his messages, not by spirits, but by nature. If we expect the message of the so-called spirits, and shall not make us afraid! See Dan. vii. 28.—x. 8, 9.

III. The message itself; before it was delivered, there was silence, profound silence, v. 16. When we are to speak either *from God, or to him, it becomes us to address ourselves to it with a solemn pause, and so to set bounds about the mount on which God is to come down, and not be hasty to utter any thing. It was in a still small voice that the message was delivered, and this was it, (v. 17.) *Shall mortal man be more just than God? the immortal man? Shall a man be thought to be, or pretend to be, more pure than his Maker? Away with such a thought!* 1. Some think that Eliphaz aims hereby to prove that Job's great afflictions were a certain evidence of his being a wicked man; a mortal man would be thought unjust and very impure, if he should thus correct and punish a servant or subject, unless he had been guilty of some very great crimes. If, therefore, these were not some great crimes for which God thus punishes thee, man would be more just than God, which is not to be imagined." 2. I rather think it is only a reprofe of Job's murmuring and discontent; *Shall a man pretend to be more just and pure than God? More truly to understand, and more strictly to observe, the rules and laws of equity, than God? Shall Enosh, mortal, miserable, man, be so insane; nay, shall Geber, the strongest and most eminent man—man at his best estate, pretend to compare with God, or stand in competition with him?" Note, It is most impious and absurd to think either others or ourselves more just and pure than God. Those that quarrel and find fault with the directions of the divine law, the dispensations of the divine grace, or the disposals of the divine providence, make themselves more just and pure than God; and they who thus reprofe God, let them answer it. What! would mankind be more just than God, and as it were men, not beings! short-sighted man! Shall he pretend to be more just, more pure, than God, who, being his Maker, is his Lord and Owner? Shall the clay contend with the potter? What justice and purity is there in man, God is the Author of it, and therefore is himself more just and pure. See Ps. xxiv. 9, 10.

IV. The comment which Eliphaz makes upon this; so it seems to be; yet some take all the following verses to be spoken in vision. It comes all to one. 1. He shows how little the angels themselves are in comparison with God, v. 18. Angels are God's servants, waiting servants, working servants, they are his ministers; (Ps. civ.) bright and blessed things they are; but God neither needs them, nor is benefitted by them, and is himself infinitely above them; and therefore, (1.) He put no trust in them, did not rest upon them for their assistance; (2.) We may do in those we cannot live without; there is no sense in which he employs them, but, if he pleased, he could have it done as well without them. He never made them his confidants, or of his cabinet-council, Matth. xxiv. 36. He does not leave his business wholly to them, but *his own eyes run to and fro through the earth, 2 Chron. xvi. 9.* See this phrase, ch. xxxix. 11. Some give this sense of it, "So mutable is even the angelical nature, that God would not employ them, that less integrity; if he had, they would all have done, as some suppose, as their first estate; but he saw it necessary to give them supernatural grace to confirm them. (2.) He charges them with folly, vanity, weakness, infirmity, and imperfection, in comparison with God. If the world were left to the government of the angels, and they were trusted with the sole management of affairs, they would take false steps, and every thing would not be done for the best, as now it is. Angels, not infinite ones. Though not chargeable with injustice, yet with prudence. This last clause is variously rendered by the critics. I think it would bear this reading, repeating the negation, which is very common. He will put no trust in his saints. In angels suis non ponet gloriationem—Nor will he glory in his angels, or make his boast of them, as if their praises or services added any thing to him: it is his glory, that he is infinitely happy without them.

2. Thence he infers how much less man is, how much less to be trusted in, or grieved in: if there is such distance between God and angels, what is there between God and man! See how man is represented here in his meanness. (1.) Look upon man in his life, and he is very mean, v. 19. Take man in his best estate, and he is a very despicable creature in comparison with the holy angels; though honourable, if compared with the brute; it is true, angels are spirits, and the souls of men are spirits; but, 11. Angels are angels, and the spirits, the souls of men dwell in houses of clay, such the bodies of men are. Angels are free, human souls are housed, and the body is a cloud, a dlog, to it, it is its cage, it is its prison. It is a house of clay, mean and mouldering; an earthen vessel, soon broken, as it was first formed, according to the good pleasure of the potter. It is a cottage, not a house of cedar, or a house of ivory, but of clay, which would soon be in ruins, if not kept in constant repair. [2.] Angels are fixed; but the very four
dation of that house of clay in which man dwells, is in the dust. A house of clay, if built upon a rock, might stand long; but, if founded in the dust, the destruction of that rock, or the addition of the dust, will hasten its fall, and it will sink with its own weight. As man was made out of the earth, so he is maintained and supported by that which comes out of the earth. Take away that, and his body returns to its earth. We stand but upon the dust; some have a higher heap of dust to stand upon than others, but still it is the earth that stays us up, and will shortly swallow us up. [3.] Angels are immortal, but man is soon crushed, the earthly house of his tabernacle is solved, he dies and passes away, is crushed like a moth between one’s fingers, as easily, as quickly; one may almost as soon kill a man as kill a moth. A little thing will do it; he is crushed before the face of the moth, so the word is. If any lingering distemper, which consumes like a moth, be commissioned to destroy him, he can no more resist it than he can resist an acute distemper, which comes roaring upon him like a lion. See Hos. v. 12, 14. Is such a creature as this to be trusted in, or can any security be expected from him, by that God who puts no trust in angels themselves? [2.] Look upon him in his death, and he appears yet more despicable, and unfit to be trusted. Men are mortal, and dying, v. 20, 21. [1.] In death, they are destroyed, and perish for ever, as to this world; it is the final period of their lives, and all their employments and enjoyments here; their place will know them no more. [2.] They are dying daily, and continually wasting; destroyed from head to foot, and therefore, if any one amongst us, like a mole digging our grave at each remove, and we so continually lie exposed, that we are killed all the day long. [3.] Their life is short, and in a little time they are cut off; it lasts perhaps but from morning to evening. It is but a day; (so some understand it) their birth and death are but the sun-rise and sun-set of the same day. [4.] In death, all their excellency passes away; beauty, strength, learning, not only cannot secure them from death, but die with them; nor shall their pride in their wealth, or power, descend after them. [5.] Their wisdom cannot save them from death; they die without wisdom, die for want of wisdom, by their own foolish management of themselves, digging their graves with their own teeth. [6.] It is so common a thing that no body heeds it, or takes any notice of it; they perish without any regarding it, or laying it to heart. The deaths of others are much the subject of common talk, but little the subject of serious thought.

Some think the eternal damnation of sinners is here spoken of, as well as their temporal death. They are destroyed, or broken to pieces, by death, from morning to evening; and if they repent not, they perish for ever, so some read it, v. 20. They perish for ever, because they regard not God and their duty, they consider not their latter end, Lam. i. 9. They have no excellency but that which death takes away, and they die, they die the second death, for want of wisdom to lay hold on eternal life. Shall such a mean, weak, foolish, sinful, dying, creature as this, pretend to be more just than God, and more pure than his Maker? No, instead of quarrelling with his afflictions, let him wonder than he is out of hell.

CHAP. V.
Eliphaz, in the foregoing chapter, for the making good of his charge against Job, had use of a word from Heaven, sent him in a vision. In this chapter, he appeals to those that bear record on earth, to the saints, the faithful witnesses of God’s truths, in all ages, v. 1. They will testify, v. 2. That the sin of sinners is their ruin, v. 2-4.

II. That yet affliction is the common lot of mankind, v. 6.

III. That when we are in affliction, it is our wisdom and duty to apply to God, for he is able and ready to help us, v. 8-16. IV. That the afflictions which are borne well will end well; and Job particularly if he would come to a better temper, might assure himself that God had great mercy in store for him, v. 13-27. V. That he could not discourse in some what a better humour than he began it.

1. CALL now, if there be any that will answer thee; and to which of the saints wilt thou turn? 2. For wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one. 3. I have seen the foolish taking root; but suddenly I cursed his habitation. 4. His children are far from safety, and they are crushed in the gate, neither is there any to deliver them. 5. Whose harvest, the hungry eateth up, and taketh it even out of the thorns, and the robber swalloweth up their substance.

A very warm dispute being begun between Job and his friends, Eliphaz here makes a fair motion to put the matter to a reference; in all debates, perhaps, the sooner that is done the better, if the cont ending does not end it between themselves. So well assured is Eliphaz of the goodness of his own cause, that he moves Job himself to choose the arbitrators; (v. 1.) Plain and simple, sure and true answer over thee; that is, 1. "If there be any that sufferest as thou sufferest: canst thou produce an instance of any one, that was really a saint, that was reduced to such extremity as thou art now reduced to? God never dealt with any that love his name so as he deals with thee, and therefore surely thou art none of them," 2. "If there be any that say as thou sayest: did ever any good man curse his day as thou dost? Or, will any of the saints justify thee in these heats or passions, or say that these are the spots of God’s children? Thou wilt find none of the saints that will be either thine advocates, or mine antagonists. To which of the saints wilt thou turn? Turn to whom thou wilt, and thou wilt find they are all of my mind; I have the communis sensis fideland— the unanimous vote of all the saints on my side; they will all subscribe to what I am going to say." Observe, (1.) Good people are called saints, even in the Old Testament; and therefore I know not why we should, in common speaking, (unless because we must loqui cum vulgo—speak as our neighbours, ) appropriate the title to those of the New Testament, and not say St. Abraham, St. Moses, and St. Isaiah, as well as St. Matthew, and St. Mark; and St. David the psalmist, as well as St. David the British Bishop. Aaron is expressly called the saint of the Lord. (2.) All that are themselves saints, will turn to those that are so; will choose them for their friends, and converse with them; will choose them for their judges, and consult with them. See Ps. cxix. 79. Those saints shall judge the world, 1 Cor. vi. 1, 2. Walk in the way of good men, (Prov. ii. 20.) the old way, the footsteps of the flock. Every one chooses some sort of people or other to whom he studies to recommend himself, and whose sentiments are to him the test of honour and dishonour: now all true saints endeavour to recommend themselves to those that are such, and to stand right in their opinion. (3.) There are some truths so plain, and so universally known and believed, that one may venture to appeal to any of the saints concerning them. However there are some things, about which they unhappily differ, there are many more, and more considerable, in
which they are agreed; as the evil of sin, the vanity of the world, the worth of the soul, the necessity of a holy life, and the like. Though they do not all live up, as they should, to their belief of these truths, yet 'tis all ready to bear their testimony to them.

Now there are two things which Eliphaz here maintains, and in which he doubts not at all the saints concur with him.

I. That the sin of sinners directly tends to their own ruin; (v. 2.) Wrath kills the foolish man, his own wrath, and therefore he is foolish for indulging it; it is a fire in his bones, in his blood, enough to put him into a fever; envy is the rottenness of the bones, and so slays the silly one that frets himself with it. So it is with thee; says Eliphaz; while thou quarrellest with the estate thou dost thyself, v. 3. the greatest mischief, thine anger at thine own troubles, and thine envy at your prosperity, do but add to thy pain and misery: turn to the saints, and thou wilt find they understand themselves better.”

Job had told his wife she spake as the foolish women, now Eliphaz tells him he acted as the foolish men, the silly ones. Or, it may be meant thus: “If men are ruined and undone, it is always their own folly that ruins and doth them. They kill themselves by some lust or other; therefore, no doubt, Job, thou hast done some foolish thing, by which thou hast brought thyself into this calamitous condition.”

Many understand it of God’s wrath and jealousy. Job needed not be uneasy at the prosperity of the wicked, for the world’s smiles can never shelter them from God’s frowns; they are foolish and silly, if they think they will. God’s anger will be the death, the eternal death, of those on whom it fastens. What is hell, but God’s anger without mixture or period or time.

II. That their prosperity is short, and their destruction certain, v. 3-5. He seems here to parallel Job’s case with that which is commonly the case of wicked people.

1. Job had prospered for a time, seemed confirmed, and was secure in his prosperity; and it is common for foolish wicked men to do so. I have seen them taking root, planted, and, in their own and another’s apprehension, fixed, and likely to continue. See Jer. xii. 2. Ps. xxxvii. 35, 36. We see worldly men taking root in the earth; on earthly things they fix the standing of their hopes, and from them they draw the sap of their comforts. The outward estate may be flourishing, but the soul cannot prosper that takes root in the earth.

2. Job’s prosperity was now at an end, and so has the prosperity of other wicked people quickly been.

(1.) Eliphaz foresaw their ruin with an eye of faith. They who looked only at present things, blessed their habitation, and thought them happy, blessed it long, and wished themselves in their condition. But Eliphaz cursed it, suddenly cursed it, as soon as he saw them begin to take root, that is, he plainly foresaw and foretold their ruin; not that he prayed for it, (I have not desired the woeeful day,) but he prognosticated it. He went into the sanctuary, and there understood their end, and heard their doom read, (Ps. lxxxiii. 17, 18.) That the prosperity of fools will destroy them, Prov. i. 32. They who believe the word of God, can see a curse in the house of the wicked, (Prov. iii. 33.) though it be ever so finely and firmly built, and ever so full of all good things; and can foresee that it will, in time, infallibly consume it, with the terrors of the Lord, (Prov. vii. 24.)

(2.) He saw, at length, what he had foreseen: he was not disappointed in his expectation concerning him, the event answered it; his family was undone, and his estate ruined. In these particulars, he plainly and very injudiciously reflects on Job’s calamities. [1.] His children were crushed, v. 4. They thought themselves safe in their eldest brother’s house, but were far from safety, for they were crushed in the gate; perhaps the door or gate of the house was highest built, and fell head foremost upon them, and there was none to deliver them from perishing in the ruins. This is commonly understood of the destruction of the families of wicked men, by the execution of justice upon them to oblige them to restore what they have ill-gotten. They leave it to their children; but the descent shall not bar the entry of the rightful owners, who will crush their children, and cast them by due course of law, (and there shall be none to help them,) or perhaps by oppression, Ps. cix. 9, 10. [2.] His estate was plundered, v. 5. Job’s was so; the hungry robbers, the Sabeans and Chaldeans, ran away with it, and swallowed it; and this, says he, I have often observed in others. What has been got by spoil and rapine, has been lost the same way. The careful owner hedged it about with thorns, and then thought it safe; but the fence proved insignificant against the greediness of the spoilers, (if hunger will break through stone-walls, much more through thorn-hedges,) and against the divine curse, which will go through the thorns and briars, and burn them together, Isa. xxvii. 4.

6. Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground, 7. Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward. 3. I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause; 9. Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvelous things without number: 10. Who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields: 11. To set upon high those that be low; that those which mourn may be exalted to safety. 12. He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. 13. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness; and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong. 14. They meet with darkness in the day-time, and grope in the noon-day, as in the night. 15. But he saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty. 16. So the poor hath hope, and iniquity stoppeth her mouth.

Eliphaz, having touched Job in a very tender part, in mentioning both the loss of his estate and the death of his children, as the just punishment of his sin, that he might not drive him to despair, here begins to encourage him, and puts him in a way to make himself easy. Now he very much changes his voice, (Gal. iv. 20.) and accosts Job gently, as if he would alone for the hard words he had given him.

I. He reminds him, that no affliction comes by chance, nor is to be attributed to second causes. It doth not come forth of the ground, as the grass doth, v. 6. It doth not come of course, at certain seasons of the year, as natural productions do, by a chain of second causes. The proportion between prosperity and adversity

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is not so exactly observed by Providence, as that between day and night, summer and winter, but according to the will and counsel of God, when and as he thinks fit. Some read it, *Sine comes not forth of the dust, nor iniquity out of the ground.* If men be bad, they must not lay the blame upon the soil, the climate, the ground, but the thought, so *thou alone shalt bear it.* We must not attribute our afflictions to fortune, for they are from God, nor our sins to fate, for they are from ourselves; so that, whatever trouble we are in, we must own that God sends it upon us, and we procure it to ourselves; the former is a reason why we should be very patient, the latter why we should be very penitent, when we are afflicted.

11. He reminds them, that the human and natural afflictions are what we have grown to expect in this world. *Man is born to trouble;* (v. 7) not as man, (had he kept his innocency, he had been born to pleasure,) but as sinful man, *as born of a woman,* (ch. xiv. 1) who was in the transgression. Man is born in sin, and therefore born to trouble. Even those that are born to honour and estate, yet are born to trouble in the flesh. In our fallen state, it is become natural to us to sin, and the natural consequence of that, is trouble. This is, and remains, so in this world we are born to, and can truly call our own, but sin and trouble; both are as the sparks that fly upward. Actual transgressions are the sparks that fly out of the furnace of original corruption; and, being called *transgressors from the womb,* no wonder that we *deal very treacherously,* Is. xlvi. 8. Such too is the frailty of our bodies, and the vanity of all our enjoyments, that our troubles also thence arise as naturally as the sparks fly upward; so must we be as the thick and so fast does one follow another. Why then should we be surprised at our afflictions as strange, or quarrel with them as hard, when they are but what we are born to? Man is born to labour, so it is in the margin, is sentenced to eat his bread in the sweat of his face, which should inure him to hardness, and make him bear his afflictions the better.

12. He directs him, how to behave himself under his afflictions (v. 8). *I would seek unto God; surely I excel so it is in the original. Here is, 1. A tacit reproof to Job for not seeking to God, but quarrelling with Him;* "Job, if I had been in thy case, I would not have been so peevish and passionate as thou art, I would have acquiesced in the will of God." It is easy to say what we would do, if we were in such a one's case; but, when it comes to the trial, perhaps it will be found not so easy to do as we say. 2. Very good and seasonable advice to him, which Eliphaz transfers to himself in a figure; "For my part, the best way I should think I could take, if I were in thy condition, would be to apply myself to God." Note, We should give our friends no other counsel than what we would take ourselves if we were in their case, that we may be easy under our afflictions, may get good by them, and may see a good issue of them. (1.) We must by prayer fetch in mercy and grace from above. God sends him as a Father and Friend, though he could not, what scorn as one who is able to support and succour. His favour we must seek, when we have lost all we have in the world; to him we must address ourselves, as the Fountain and Father of all good, all consolation. *Is any afflicted? Let him pray. It is heart's-case, a salve for every sore.* (2.) We must by patience refer ourselves and our cause to him. *To God would I commit my cause;* having spread it before Him, I would leave it with him; having laid it at his feet, I would lodge it in his hand; *Here I am, let the Lord do with me as seemeth him good.* If our cause be indeed a good cause, we need not fear committing it to God, for he is both just and kind. They that would seek so as to speed, must refer themselves to God.

IV. He encourages him thus to seek to God, and commit his cause to him. It will not be in vain to do so, for he is one in whom we shall find effectual help. He recommends to his consideration God's authority power and sovereignty. And men who think:

1. In general, he doeth great things; (v. 9.) great indeed, for he can do any thing; he doth do every thing; and all according to the counsel of his own will; great indeed, for the operations of his power are, (1.) Unsearchable, and such as can never be fathomed, can never be found out from the beginning to the end, Eccl. iii. 11. The works of nature are mysteries; the most curious searches come far short of finding what secret store. And men who have owned themselves at a loss. The designs of Providence are much more deep and unaccountable, Rom. xi. 33. (2.) Numerous, and such as never can be reckoned up. He doeth great things without number; his power is never exhausted, nor will all his purposes ever be fulfilled till the end of time. (3.) They are marvellous, and such as never can be sufficiently admired; eternity itself will be short enough to be spent in the admiration of them. Now, by the consideration of this, Eliphaz intends, [1.] To convince Job of his fault and folly in quarrelling with God. We must not pretend to pass a judgment upon his works, for they are unsearchable and above our inquiries; nor must we strive with our Maker, for he will certainly be too hard for us, and is able to crush us in a moment. [2.] To encourage Job to seek unto God, and to refer himself to him. What more encouraging than to see that he is one whom he should go to? He can do great things and marvellous for our relief, when we are brought ever so low.

2. He gives some instances of God's dominion and power.

(1.) God doeth great things in the kingdom of nature: he gives rain upon the earth, (v. 10.) put here for all the gifts of common providence, all the fruitful seasons, by which he filleth our hearts with good and pleasant thoughts, Acts xiv. 16. He can observe, When he would show what great things God doeth, he speaks of his giving rain, which, because it is a common thing, we are apt to look upon as a little thing; but if we duly consider both how it is produced, and what is produced by it, we shall see it to be a great work, both of power and goodness.

(2.) He doeth great things in the affairs of the children of men: not only enriches the poor, and comforts the needy, by the rain he sends, (v. 10.) but, in order to the advancing of those that are low, he disappoints the devices of the crafty; for v. 11. is to be joined to v. 12. and compared with Luke i. 51. 55. He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, and so hath exalted them of low degree, and filled the hungry with good things.

See, [1.] How he frustrates the counsels of the proud and politic, v. 12.-14. There is a supreme power over the affairs of men, who are themselves free and absolute, and fulfil its own purposes in despite of their projects. Observe, First, The froward, that walk contrary to God and the interest of his kingdom, are often very crafty, for they are the seed of the old serpent, that was noted for subtlety. They think themselves wise, but, at the end, will be fools. Secondly, The froward enemies of God's kingdom have their devices, their crafty operations, and their own successes, and triumphs, against the loyal faithful subjects of it. They are restless and unwearied in their designs, close in their consultations, high in their hopes, deep in their politics, and fast linked in their confederacies, Ps. ii. 1, 2. Thirdly, God easily can, and (as far as is
for his glory) certainly will, blast and defeat all the designs of his and his people's enemies. How were the plots of Ahithophel, Sanballat, and Haman, baffled! The confederates of Syria and Ephraim against Judah, of Gabacl, and Ammon, and Amaleck, against God's Israel, the kings of the earth, and the princes, against the Lord and against his anointed, broken! The hands that have been stretched out against God, and his church, have not performed their enterprise, nor have the weapons formed against Zion prospered. Fourthly, That which enemies have designed for the ruin of the church, has often turned to their own ruin; (v. 13.) He takes the wine in their own craftiness, and smears them in the work of their own hands, Ps. vii. 15, 16.—ix. 13, 16. This is quoted by the apostle, (1 Cor. iii. 19.) to show how the learned men of the heathen were befouled by their own vain philosophy. Fifthly, When God infatuates men, they are perplexed, and the loss, even in those things that seem most plain and easy; (v. 14.) They meet with darkness even in the day-time; now, as it is in the margin, They run themselves into darkness by the violence and precipitation of their own counsels. See ch. xii. 20, 24, 25.

[2.] How he favours the cause of the poor and humble, and espouses that.

First, He exalts the humble, v. 11. Those whom proud men contrive to crush, he raises from under their feet, and sets them in safety, Ps. xii. 5. The lowly in heart, and those that mourn, he advances, comforts, and makes to dwell on high, in the mansions of rocks, Isa. xxxiii. 16. Zion's mourners are the sealed ones, marked for safety, Ezek. ix. 4.

Secondly, He delivers the oppressed, v. 15. The designs of the crafty are to ruin the poor: tongue, and hand, and sword, and all, are at work in order to this; but God takes under his special protection those who, being poor, and unable to help themselves, being his poor, and devoted to his praise, have committed to say against them to God, from the mouth that speaks hard things against them, and the hand that does hard things against them; for he can, when he pleases, tie the tongue, and wither the hand.

The effect of this is, (v. 16.) 1. That weak and timorous saints are comforted: so the poor, that began to despair, has hope. The experiences of some are encouragements to others to hope the best in the worst of times; for it is the glory of God to send help to the helpless, and hope to the hopeless. 2. That daring threatening sinners are confounded; iniquity stops her mouth, being surprised at the strange- ness of the deliverance, ashamed of its enmity against those who appear to be the favourites of Heaven, mortified at the disappointment, and compelled to acknowledge the justice of God's proceedings, having nothing to object against them. Those that domi- ned over God's poor, that frightened them, menaced them, and falsely accused them, will not have a word to say against them when God appears for them. See Ps. lxiii. 8, 9. Isa. xxxvi. 11. Mic. vii. 16.

17. Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: 18. For he maketh sore, and bindeth up; he woundeth, and his hands make whole. 19. He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. 20. In famine he shall redeem thee from death; and in war from the power of the sword. 21. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue; neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh. 22. At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh: neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth. 23. For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field; and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee. 24. And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace, and thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin. 25. Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great, and thine offspring as the grass of the earth. 26. Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season. 27. Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good.

Eliphaz, in this concluding paragraph of his discourse, gives Job (what he himself knew not how to take) a comfortable prospect of the issue of his afflictions, if he did but recover his temper, and accommodate himself to them.}

Observe,

I. The seasonable word of caution and exhortation that he gives him; (v. 17.) "Despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty; Call it a chastening, which comes from the father's love, and is designed for the child's good. Call it the chastening of the Almighty, with whom it is madness to contend, to whom it is wisdom and duty to submit, and who will be a God all-sufficient" (for so the word signifies) "to all those that trust in him. Do not despise it;" it is a copious word in the original. 1. "Be not averse to it. Let grace conquer the antipathy which nature has to suffering, and reconcile thyself to the will of God in it." We need the rod, and we deserve it; and therefore we ought not to think it either strange or hard if we feel the smart of it. Let not the heart rise against a bitter pill or potion, when it is prescribed for us for our good. 2. "Do not think ill of it, do not put it from thee, (as that which is either hurtful, or, at least, not useful, which there is no occasion for, nor advantage by,) only because, for the present, it is not joyous, but grievous. We must never scorn to stoop to God, nor think it a thing below us to come under his discipline, but reckon, on the contrary, that God magnifies man, when he thus visits and tries him, ch. vii. 17, 18. 3. "Do not overlook and disregard it, as if it were only a chance, and the production of second causes, but take great notice of it as the voice of God, and a messenger from Heaven." More is implied than is expressed: "Reverence the chastening of the Lord; have an humble, awful, regard to his correcting hand, and tremble when the lion roars, Amos iii. 8. Submit to the chasten- ing, and only to answer the call, to answer the end of it, and then thou reverencest it." When God, by an affliction, draws upon us for some of the effects he has intrusted us with, we must honour his bill by accepting it, and subscribing it, resigning his own when he calls for it.

II. The comfortable words of encouragement which he gives him, thus to accommodate himself to his condition, and (as he himself had expressed it) to receive evil from the hand of God, and not despise it, for it is not worth the accepting. If his affliction was thus borne.

1. The nature and property of it would be altered: though it looked like a man's misery, it would really be his bliss. Happy is the man whom God correcteth, if he make but a due improvement of the correction. A good man is happy, though he
be afflicted; for, whatever he has lost, he has not lost his enjoyment of God, nor his title to heaven; nay, he is happy, because he is afflicted; correction is an evidence of his sonship, and a means of his sanctification; it mortifies his corruptions, weans his heart from the world, draws him nearer to God, brings him to his Bible, brings him to his knees, works him for, and so is working for him, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; Happily therefore is the man whom God correcteth. 1. Sam. xxii. 19.

2. The issue and consequence of it would be very good, v. 18. (1.) Though he makes sore the body with sore boils, the mind with sad thoughts, yet he binds up at the same time; as the skilful surgeon binds up the wounds he had occasion to make with his incision-knife. When God makes sores by the rebukes of his providence, he binds up by the consolations of his Spirit, which oftentimes abound, as most afflictions do abound, and balances the effects of the patient sufferers. (2.) Though he wounds, yet his hands make whole in due time: as he supports his people, and makes them easy under their afflictions, so in due time he delivers them, and makes a way for them to escape. All is well again; and he comforts them according to the time wherein he afflicted them. God’s usual method is first to wound, and then to heal, first to convince, and then to comfort, first to humble, and then to exalt; and (as Mr. Caryl observes) he never makes a wound too great, too deep, for his own cure. Una eademque manus vulnus ofque tuli—The hand that inflicted the wound, afflicts the cure. God tears the wicked, and goes away, let them heal that will, if they can; (Hos. v. 14.) but the humble and penitent may say, He has torn, and he will heal us, Hos. vi. 1. This is general; but in the following verses he applies himself directly to Job, and gives him many precious promises of great and kind things which God would do for him, if he did but humble himself under his hand. Though then they had no Bibles that we know of, yet Eliphaz had sufficient warrant to give Job these assurances, from the general discoveries God had made of his good will to his people. And though, in every thing which Job’s friends said, they were not directed by the Spirit of God, (for they spake both of God and Job some things that were not right,) yet the general doctrine they laid down spoke the pious sense of the patriarchal age; and as St. Paul quoted, v. 13. for canonical scripture, and as the command, v. 17. is, no doubt, binding on us, so these promises here may be, and must be, received and applied as divine promises, and we may, through patience and comfort of this part of scripture, have hope.

Let us therefore give diligence to make sure our interest in these promises, and then view the particulars of them, and take the comfort we need from them. [1.] First, that as afflictions and troubles do recur, supports and deliverances shall be graciously repeated, be it never so often. In six troubles, he shall be ready to deliver thee; yea, and in seven. This intimates, that, as long as we are here in this world, we must expect a succession of troubles, that the clouds will return after the rain; after six troubles may come a seventh. After many, look for more; but out of them all will God deliver. Isa. lxxvii. 18. (2.) That, whether troubles good men may be in, there shall no evil touch them, they shall do them no real harm; the malignity of them, the sting, shall be taken out; they may hiss, they cannot hurt, Ps. xci. 10. The evil one toucheth not God’s children’s feet, 1 John v. 18. Being kept from sin, they are kept from the evil of every trouble. [3.] That, when desolating judgments are abroad, they shall be taken under special protection, v. 20. Do many perish about them, for want of the necessary supports of life? They shall be supplied. In famine he shall redeem thee from death: whatever becomes of others, thou shalt be kept alive, Ps. xxxiii. 19. Verily thou shalt be fed, nay, even in the days of famine thou shalt be satisfied, Ps. lxxx. 27. v. 19. “For time will come, when on thy right and left hand, he shall redeem thee from the power of the sword. If God pleases, it shall not touch thee; or, if it wound thee, if it kill thee, it shall not hurt thee; it can but kill the body, nor has it power to do that, unless it be given from above.” [4.] That whatever is maliciously said against them, it shall not affect them, to do them any hurt, v. 21. “Thou shalt not only be protected from the killing sword, but shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue, which, like a scourge, is vexing and painful, though not mortal.” The best men, and the most inoffensive, cannot, even with their innocency, secure themselves from calumny, reproach, and false accusation. From these a man cannot hide himself, but God can hide him, so that the most malicious slanders shall be so little heeded by him, as not to disturb his peace; and so little need be by others, as not to blemish his reputation: and the remainder of his wrath God can and does restrain, for it is owing to the hold he has of the consciences of bad men, that the scourge of the tongue is not the ruin of all the comforts of good men in this world. [5.] That they shall have a holy security and serenity of mind, arising from their hope and confidence in God, even in the worst of times. When dangers are most threatening, they shall be easy, believing themselves safe; and shall not be afraid of destruction, no, not when they see it coming. (v. 21.) nor the beasts of the field, when they set upon them, nor of men as cruel as beasts; nay, at destruction and famine thou shalt laugh, (v. 22.) not so as to despise any of God’s chastenings, or make a jest of his judgments, but so as to triumph in God, and his power and goodness, and therein to triumph over the world and all its grievances; to be not only easy, but cheerful and joyful, in tribulation. Blessed is Paul Jacobeth at destruction, when he says, “Christ shall be at ease and triumph when he dieth, where is my sting?” When, in the name of all the saints, he defined all the calamities of this present time to separate from the love of God, concluding, In all these things we are more than conquerors, Rom. viii. 37, &c. See Isa. xxxvi. 22.

[6.] That, being at peace with God, there shall be a covenant of friendship between them and the whole creation, v. 23. “When thou walkest thy grounds, thou shalt not need to fear stumbling, for thou shalt be at league with the beasts of the field, not to dash thy foot against any of them; nor shalt thou be in danger from the beasts of the field, for they all shall be at peace with thee;” compare Hos. ii. 18, I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field. This implies, that while man is at enmity with his Maker, the inferior creatures are at war with him; but Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia—A reconciled God reconciles all, and “When thou walkest through the land,” Ps. lxxxiii. 19. former deliverances are earnest of, not, as among men, excuses from, further deliverances, Prov. xix. 19. [7.] That, whatever troubles good men may be in, there shall no evil touch them, they shall do them no real harm; the malignity of them, the sting, shall be taken out; they may hiss, they cannot hurt, Ps. xci. 10. The evil one toucheth not peace and piety in the family will make it so. “Thou shalt know and be assured that thy tabernacle is, and shall be, in peace; thou mayest be confident both of its present and its future prosperity. That peace is thy la
bernacle, so the word is. Peace is the house in which they dwell, who dwell in God, and are at home in him; "Thou shalt visit," that is, "inquire into, the affairs of thy habitation, and take a review of them, and shalt not sin." First, God will provide a settlement for his people, mean, perhaps, and moveable, a cottage, a tabernacle, but a fixed and quiet habitation, which shall not, but shall have some substantial satisfaction, that peace is sure to thee and thine, having the word of God for it." Providence may change, but the promise cannot. Fourthly, They shall have wisdom to govern their families aright, to order their affairs with discretion, and to look well to the ways of their household, which is here called visiting their habitation; masters of families must not be strangers at home, but have a watchful eye over what they have, and what their servants do. Fifthly, They shall have grace to bear the concerns of their families after a godly sort, and not to sin in the management of them. They shall call their servants to account without passion, pride, covetousness, worldliness, or the like; they shall look into their affairs without discontent at what is, or distrust of what shall be. Family piety crowns family peace and prosperity. The greatest blessing, both in our employments, and in our enjoyments, is to live in peace. If there be in our habitation, and we are abroad, it is comfortable to hear that our tabernacle is in peace; and when we return home to visit our habitation, with satisfaction in our success, that we have not failed in our business, and with a good conscience, that we have not offended God.

8. That their posterity should be numerous and prosperous. Job had lost all his children; "But," says Eliphaz, "if thou return to God, he will again build up thy family, and thy seed shall be many, and as great as ever. Do thou abstain from all vain conversation, and hear and flourishing as the grass of the earth." (v. 25.) "and thou shalt know it." God has blessings in store for the seed of the faithful, which they shall have, if they do not stand in their own light, and forfeit them by their folly. It is a comfort to parents to see the prosperity, especially the spiritual prosperity, of their children: if they are truly good, they are truly great, how small a figure soever they make in the world.

9. That their death shall be reasonable, and they shall finish their course, at length, with joy and honour. v. 26. It is a great mercy, First, To live to a full age, and not to have the number of our months cut off in the midst. If the providence of God do not give us long life, if the grace of God give us to be satisfied with the time allotted us, we may be said to come to a full age. That man lives long enough that has done his work, and is fit for another world. Secondly, To be willing to die, to come cheerfully to the grave, and not be forced thither, as he whose soul was required of him. Thirdly, To die seasonably, as the corn is cut and housed when it is full ripe; not till then, but then not suffered to stand a day longer, lest it shed. Our times are in God's hand; it is well they are so, for he will take care that those who are his die in the best time: however their death may seem to us untimely, it will be found not unseasonable.

In the last verse, he recommends those promises to Job, 1. As faithful sayings, which he might be confident of the truth of: "Lo, this we have search-
ed, and so it is. We have indeed received these things by tradition from our fathers, but we have not taken them upon trust, we have carefully searched them, have compared spiritual things with spiritual, have diligently studied them, and been confirmed in our belief of them, from our own observation and experience; and we are all of a mind that so it is. Job 1. 5. is a treasure that is well worth digging for, diving for, and the people shall know both how to value it ourselves, and how to communicate it to others, when we have taken pains in searching for it. 2. As well worthy of all acceptation, which he might improve to his great advantage! "Hear it, and know thou it for thy good." It is not enough to hear and know the truth, but we must improve it, and be made wiser and better by it, receive the impressions of it, and submit to the commanding power of it. Know it in thyself, so the word is; with application to thyself, and thy own case; not only This is true, but This is true concerning me. That which we thus hear and know for ourselves, we hear and know for our souls, as we are nourished by the meat which we digest. That is, indeed, a good sermon, which does us good.

CHAP. VI.

Eliphaz concluded his discourse with an air of assurance: very confident he was that what he had said was so plain and so pertinent, that nothing could be objected in answer to it. But it appears that what is in his own cause, seems just, yet his neighbour comes, and his complaint is not condemned by all he has said, but still justifies himself in his complaints, and condemns him for the weakness of his arguing. 1. He shows that he had just cause to complain, a thing of this kind, which would appear to any impartial judge, v. 2.-7. II. He continues his passionate wish, that he might speedily be cut off by the stroke of death, and so be eased of all his miseries, v. 8.-13. III. He represents the ends of his friends for their unmerituous censures of him, and the unhappy treatment, v. 14.-30. It must be owned that Job, in all this, spake much that was not meet, but with a mixture of passion and human immodesty. And in this contest, as indeed in most contests, there was fault on both sides.

1. But Job answered and said, 2. Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! 3. For now it would become more than the sand of the sea: therefore my words are swallowed up. 4. For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terror of God do set themselves in array against me. 5. Dost the wild ass bray when he hath grass? or loweth the ox over his fodder? 6. Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg? 7. The things that my soul refused to touch are as my sorrowful meat.

Eliphaz, in the beginning of his discourse, had been very sharp upon Job: and yet it does not appear that Job gave him any answer at all. We are to understand him patiently, till he had said all he had to say, and then they that would make an impartial judgment of a discourse, must hear it out, and take it entire. But when he had concluded, he makes his reply, in which he speaks very feelingly.

1. He represents his calamity, in general, as much heavier than either he had expressed it, or he had apprehended it, v. 2. 3. He could not fully describe it, they would not fully apprehend it, or, at least, not own that they did; and therefore he
would gladly appeal to a third person, who had just weights and just balances with which to weigh his grief and calamity, and would do it with an impartial hand; he wished that they would set his grief in one scale, and all the expressions of it; his calamity in the other, and all the particulars of it; and (though he would not altogether justify himself in his grief, yet) they would find (as he says, ch. xxiii. 2.) that his stroke was heavier than his groaning; for, whatever his grief was, his calamity was more. He began with a declaration, and this declaration was aggravated, it was exaggerated, every grievance weighty, and all together numerous as the sand: Therefore (says he) my words are swallowed up; that is, "Therefore you must excuse both the brokenness and the bitterness of my expressions; do not think it strange if my speech be not so fine and polite as that of an eloquent orator, or so grave and regular as that of a morose philosopher; no, in these circumstances I can pretend neither to the one nor to the other; my words are, as I am, quite swallowed up." Now, 1. He hereby complains of it as his unhappiness, that his friends undertook to administer spiritual physic to him, before they thoroughly understood his case, and knew the worst of it. It is seldom that those who are at ease themselves, rightly weigh the afflictions of the afflicted; every one feels most from his own burthen, few feel for others; and the more exasperated expressions he had used when he cursed his day. Though he could not himself justify all he had said, yet he thought his friends should not thus violently condemn it, for really the case was extraordinary, and that might be condemned at in such a man of sorrows as he now was, which, in any common grief, would by no means be allowed of. 3. He beooks the charitable and compassionate sympathy of his friends with him, and hopes, by representing the greatness of his calamity, to bring them to a better temper toward him. To those that are pain ed, it is some ease to be pitied. II. He complains of the trouble and terror of mind he was in, as the sorest part of his calamity, v. 4. Herein he was a type of Christ, who, in his sufferings, complained most of the sufferings of his soul; Now is my soul troubled, John xii. 27. My soul is exceeding sorrowful, Matth. xxvi. 37. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Matth. xxvii. 46. Poor Job sadly complains here, 1. Of what he felt: The arrows of the Almighty are within me. It was not so much the troubles themselves he was under that put him into this confusion, his poverty, disgrace, and bodily pain; that which cut him to the heart, and put him into this agitation, was, to think that the God he loved, and served, had brought all this upon him, and laid him under these marks of his displeasure. Note, Trouble of mind is the sorest trouble: a wounded spirit who can bear? Whatever burden of affliction, in body or estate, God is pleased to lay upon us, we may well afford to submit to it as long as he continues to use the purpose of our reason, and the peace of our consciences; but if, in either of these, we be disturbed, our case is sad indeed, and very pitiable. The way to prevent God's fiercest storms is, to press the hand of the Lord to quench Satan's fiery darts of temptation. Observe, He calls them the arrows of the Almighty; for it is an instance of the power of God above that of any man, that he can with his arrows reach the soul. He that made it can make his sword to approach to it. The poison or heat of these arrows is said to drink up his spirit, because it disturbed his reason, shook his resolution, exhausted his vigour, and threatened his life; and therefore his passionate expressions, though they could not be justified, yet might be excused. 2. Of what he feared. He saw himself charged by the terrors of God, as by an army set in battle-array, and surrounded by them. God, by his terrors, fought against him: as he had no comfort when he retired inward into his own bosom, so he had none when he looked upward toward Heaven. He that used to be encouraged with the consolations of God, not only wanted those, but was amazed with the terrors of God. III. He reflects upon his friends for their severe censures of his complaints, and their unskilful management of his case. 1. Their reproofs were causeless. He complained, it is true, now that he was in this affliction, but he never used to complain, as those who do are of a fretful unquiet spirit, when he was in prosperity: he did not pray when he had grass, nor lay over his fodder, v. 5. But now, that he was utterly deprived of all his comforts, he must be a stock or a stone, and not have the sense of an ox or a wild ass, if he did not give some vent to his grief. He was forced to eat unsavoury meats, and was so poor, that he had not a grain of salt, wherewith to relish them, nor to give a little taste to the white of an egg, which was now the choicest dish he had at his table, v. 6. Even that food which once he would have scorned to touch, now he was glad of, and it was his sorrowful meat, v. 7. Note, It is wisdom not to use ourselves or our children to be nice and dainty about meat and drink, because we know not how we or they may be reduced, nor how that which we now disdain may be made acceptable by necessity. 2. Their comforts were sapsless and insipid; so some understand, v. 6, 7. He complains he had nothing now offered him for his relief, that was proper for him; no cordial, nothing to revive and cheer his spirits; what they had afforded, was in itself as tasteless as the white of an egg, and, when applied to him, as wholesome and tiresome as the most sorrowful meat. I am sorry he should say thus of what Eliphaz had excellently well said, ch. v. 8, &c. But peevish spirits are too apt thus to abuse their comforters. 8. Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for; 9. Even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off! 10. Then should I yet have comfort; yea, I would harden myself in sorrow: let him not spare; for I have not concealed the words of the Holy One. 11. What is my strength, that I should hope? and what is mine end, that I should prolong my life? 12. Is my strength the strength of stones? or is my flesh of brass? 13. Is not my help in me? and is wisdom driven quite from me? Ungoverned passion often grows more violent when it meets with some rebuke and check: the troubled sea, raged with it; and dashes against the solid rock; it has been courting death, as that which would be the happy period of his miseries, ch. iii. For this, Eliphaz had greatly reproved him; but he, instead of unsaying it, says it here again with more vehemence than before; it is as ill said as almost any thing we meet with in all his discourses, and is recorded for our admonition, not our imitation.
JOB, VI.

39 grace and devotion, he might make even these days of affliction good days; he could see no end of his trouble but death, and had not patience to wait the time appointed for that. He has a request to make, there is a thing he longs for: (v. 8.) and what is that? One would think it should be, That it wouild please God to deliver me, and restore me to my prosperity again; no, That it would please God to destroy me. Once he has used his hand to make me poor, and then to make me sick, let him loose it once more to put an end to my life. Let him give the fatal stroke; it shall be to me the stroke of favour," as in France, they call the last blow which dispatches them that are broken on the wheel. There was a time when destruction from the Almighty was a terror to Job; (ch. xxxi. 23.) yet now he courts the destruction of the flesh, but in hopes that the spirit should be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Observe, Though Job was extremely desirous of death, and very angry at its delays, yet he did not offer to destroy himself, nor to take away his own life; only he begged that it would please God to destroy him. Seneca's morals, which recommend self-murder as the lawful redress of insupportable grievances, were not then known, nor will ever be entertained by any that have the least regard to the laws of nature and reason. In the book of Job we have a picture over the soul's confinement in the body may be, it must by no means break prison, but wait for a fair discharge.

II. He puts this desire into a prayer, that God would grant him this request, that it would please God to do this for him. It was his sin, so passionately to desire the hastening of his own death, and offering up that desire to God made it no better; nay, what looked ill in his wish, looked worse in his prayer, for we ought not to ask any thing of God but what we can ask in faith, and we cannot ask any thing in faith, but what is agreeable to the will of God. Passionate prayers are the worst of passionate expressions; for we should lift up pure hands without wrath.

III. He promises himself effectual relief, and the redress of all his grievances, by the stroke of death; (v. 10.) "Then should I yet have comfort, which now I have not, nor ever expect till then." See, 1. The grief and the hope of the soul is, it that often proves men's greatest burthen, and nothing is so desirable as to get clear of it. Let grace make us willing to part with it, whenever God calls; for it may so happen, that even sense may make us desirous to part with it before he calls. 2. The hope which the righteous have in their death. If Job had not had a good conscience, he could not have spoken with this assurance of comfort on the other side death, that circumstance which made all the difference between the rich man and Lazarus; Now he is comforted, and thou art comforted.

IV. He challenges death to do its worst. If he could not die without the dreadful preludes of bitter pains and agonies, and strong convulsions; if he must be racket before he be executed, yet, in prospect of dying at last, he would make nothing of dying pangs. "I would harden myself in sorrow, with pain receive my last breath, and not shrink from them; let him not spare; I desire no mitigation of that pain which will put a happy period to all my pains. Rather than not die, let me die so as to feel myself die." These are passionate words, which might better be spared. We should soften ourselves in sorrow, that we may receive the good impressions of it, and, by the sadness of the countenance, our hearts, being made tender, may be made better; but, if we harden ourselves, we provoke God to proceed in his controversy; for when he judgeth, he will overcome. It is great presumption to dare the Almighty, and to say, Let him not spare; for, Are we stronger than he? 1 Cor. x. 22. We are much inclined to sparing mercy; it is bad indeed with us when we are weary of that. Let us rather say, with David, O spare me a little.

V. He grounds his comfort upon the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had been faithful in a firm, ardent, and unshaken profession of religion, and in some degrees useful and serviceable in the cause of God in his generation; I have not concealed the words of the Holy One. Observe, 1. Job had the words of the Holy One committed to him. The people of God were, at that time, blessed with divine revelation. 2. It was his comfort, that he had not concealed them, had not received the grace of God therein in vain. (1.) He had not kept them from himself, but had given them full scope to operate upon him, and in every thing to guide and govern him. He had not stifled his convictions, ignorings the truth in unrighteousness, nor done any thing to hinder the digestion of this spiritual food, and the operation of this spiritual physic. Let us never conceal God's word from ourselves, but always receive it in the light of it. (2.) He had not kept them to himself, but had been ready, on all occasions, to communicate his knowledge for the good of others, was never ashamed or afraid to own the word of God in his heart; nor remiss in his endeavours to bring others into an acquaintance with it. Note, Those, and these only, may promise themselves comfort in death, who are good, and do good, while they live.

VI. He justifies himself in this extreme desire of death, from the deplorable condition he was now in, v. 11, 12. Eliphaz, in the close of his discourse, had put him in hopes that he should yet see a good issue of his troubles; but poor Job puts these cordials away from him, refuses to be comforted, abandons himself to despair, and very ingenuously, yet perversely, argues against the encouragements that were given him. Disconsolate spirits will reason strangely against themselves. In answer to the pleasing prospects Eliphaz had flattered him with, he here intimates, 1. That he had no reason to expect any such thing: "What is my strength, that I should live?" You see how I am weakened and brought to be unable; I am to grapple with my distempers; and therefore shall be unable to hope that I should outlive them, and see better days? Is my strength the strength of stones? Are my muscles brass, and sinews steel? No, they are not, and therefore I cannot hold out always in this pain and misery, but must needs sink under the lead. Had I strength to grapple with my distemper, I might hope to look through it; but, alas! I have not," the weakening of my strength in the day will certainly be the weakening of my days, Ps. cii. 23. Note, All things considered, there is no reason to count upon the long continuance of life in this world. What is our strength? It is depending strength; we have no more strength than God gives us, for in him we live and move: it is decaying strength; we are daily spending the stock, and by degrees it will be exhausted. It is disproportionate to the encounters we may meet with; the strength that is to be depended upon, when two or three days' sickness will make us die as we do water? Instead of expecting an long life, we have reason to wonder that we have lived hitherto, and to feel that we are hastening off space. 2. That he had no reason to desire any such thing: "What is my end, that I should desire to prolong my life? What comfort can I promise myself in life, comparable to the comfort I promise myself in death?" Note, Those who, through grace, are ready for an
other world, cannot see much to invite their stay in this world, or to make them fond of it. That, if it be God’s will, we may do him more service, and may get to be fitter and ripe for heaven, is an end for which we may wish the prolonging of life, in some facility to our chief end; but, otherwise, what can we propose to ourselves in desiring to tarry here? The longer life is, the more grievous will its burthen be, (Eccl. xii. 1.) and the longer life is, the less pleasant will be its delights, 2 Sam. xix. 34, 35. We have already seen the best of this world, but we are not sure that we have seen the worst of it.

VII. He obviates the suspicion of his being delirious. 13.) Is not my help in me? that is, “Have I not the use of my reason, with which, I thank God, I can help myself, though you do not help me? Do you think wisdom is driven quite from me, and that I am gone distracted? No, I am not mad, most noble Eliphaz, but 
speak the words of truth and soberness.” Note, Those who have grace in them, who have the evidence of it, and have it in exercise, have wisdom in them, which will be their help in the worst of times. Sat lucis intus—They have light within.

14. To him that is afflicted pity should be shewed from his friend; but he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty. 15. My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away; 16. Which are blackish by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow is hid: 17. What time they wax warm they vanish: when it is hot, they are consumed out of their place. 18. The paths of their way are turned aside; they go to nothing, and perish. 19. The troops of Tema looked, the companies of Sheba waited for them. 20. They were confounded because they had hoped; they came thither, and were ashamed. 21. For now ye are nothing; ye see my casting down, and are afraid.

Eliphaz had been very severe in his censures of Job; and his companions, though as yet they had said little, yet had intimated their concurrence with him: their unkindness therein poor Job here complains of, as an aggravation of his calamity, and a further excuse of his desire to die; for what satisfaction could he ever expect in this world, when those that should be his comforters, thus proved his tormentors?

I. He shows what reason he had to expect kindness from them. His expectation was grounded upon the common principles of humanity; (v. 14.) “To him that is afflicted, and that is wasting and melting under his affliction, pity should be shewed, and be not shown that pity, forsakes the fear of the Almighty.” Note, 1. Compassion is a debt owing to those that are in affliction. The least which those that are at ease can do for those that are pained and in anguish, is, to pity them, to manifest the sincerity of a tender concern for them, and to sympathize with them; to take cognizance of their case, inquire into their grievances, hear their complaints, and mingle tears with theirs, to comfort them, and do all we can to help and relieve them: this well becomes the members of the same body, who should feel for the grievances of their fellow-members, not knowing how soon the same may be their own. 2. Inhumanity is impiety and irreligion. He that withholds compassion from his friend, forsakes the fear of the Almighty. So the Chaldee. How dwells the love of God in that man? 1 John iii. 17. Surely those have no fear of God who have dealt deceitfully as a brook.” They come by appointment, with a great deal of ceremony, to mourn with him, and to comfort him; (ch. ii. 11.) and some extraordinary things were expected from such great men, such good men, such wise, learned, knowing men, and Job’s particular friends; none questioned but that the drift of their discourses would be to comfort Job with the remembrance of his former piety, the assurance of God’s favour to him, and the prospect of a glorious issue; but, instead of this, they most barbarously fall upon him with their reproaches and censures, condemn him as a hypocrite, insult over his calamities, and pour vinegar, instead of oil, into his wounds, and thus they dealt deceitfully with him. Note. 1. It is fraud and deceit not only to violate our engagements to our friends, but to frustrate their just expectations from us, especially the expectations we have raised. 2. It is our wisdom to cease from man; we cannot expect too little from the creature, nor too much from the Creator. It is no new thing even for brethren to deal deceitfully; (Jer. ix. 4, 5. Mic. vii. 5.) let us therefore put our confidence in the Rock of ages, not in broken reeds; in the Fountain of life, not in broken cisterns. God will outdo our hopes as much as men come short of them.

This disappointment which he met with, he here illustrates by the failing of brooks in summer.

1.) The similitude is very elegant, v. 15-20. [1.] Their pretensions are fitly compared to the great show which the brooks make, when they are swelled with the waters of a land-flood, by the melting of the ice and snow, which makes them blackish or muddy, v. 16. [2.] His expectations from them, which their coming so solemnly to comfort him had raised, he compares to the expectation which the weary thirsty travellers have of finding water in the desert; but they, who have often seen it in great abundance in the winter, v. 19. The troops of Tema and Sheba, the caravans of the merchants of those countries, whose road lay through the desert of Arabia, looked and waited for a supply of water from those brooks: “Hard by here,” says one, “A little further,” says another, “when I last travelled this way, there was water enough, we shall have that to refresh us.” Whereupon, he says, the rest of God upon whom Job confided, he was apt to expect it again; and yet it does not follow: for, [3.] The disappointment of his expectation is here compared to the confusion which seizes the poor travellers, when they find heaps of sand where they expected floods of water. In the winter, when they were not thirsty, there was water enough; every one will applaud and admire those that are full and in prosperity: but, in the heat of summer, when thirsty and ravening, who should not be ashamed, when it was consumed, (v. 17.) it was turned aside, v. 18. When those who are rich and high, are sunk and impoverished, and stand in need of comfort, then those who before gathered about them, stand aloof from them, who before commended them, are forward to run them down; thus they who raise their expectations high from the creature, will find it fail them then when it
should help them; whereas they who make God their confidence have help in the time of need, Heb. iv. 16. They who make gold their hope, sooner or later will be ashamed of it, and of their confidence in it; (Ezek. vii. 19.) and the greater their confidence was, the greater their shame will be; They were confounded because they had hoped, v. 20. We prepare confusion for ourselves by our vain hopes: the reeds break under us, because we lean upon them. (Isa. xliii. 15.) He said, we shall certainly be confounded, for it will fall in the storm, and we must thank ourselves for being such fools to expect it would stand. We are not deceived unless we deceive ourselves.

(2.) The application is very close; (v. 21.) For now ye are nothing. They seemed to be somewhat, but in conversation they added nothing to him. Allude to Gal. ii. 6. He was never the wiser, never the better, for the visit they made him. Note, Whatever complacency we may take of whatever confidence we may put, in creatures, how great soever they may seem, and how dear soever they may be, to us, one time or other we shall say of them, Now ye are nothing. When Job was in prosperity, his friends were something to him, he took complacency in them and their society; but Now ye are nothing, how I can find no comfort but in God." It were well for us, if we had always such comparisons of the vanity of the creature, and its insufficiency to make us happy, as we have sometimes had, or shall have, on a sick-bed, a death-bed, or in trouble of conscience; "Now ye are nothing. You are not what you have been, what you should be, what you pretend to be, what I thought you would have been; for you see my casting down, and are said. When you saw me in my elevation, you caressed me; but, now that you see me in my dejection, you are shy of me, are afraid of showing yourselves kind, lest I should take boldness thence, to beg something of you, or to borrow." (compare v. 22.) "You are afraid, lest, if you own me, you should be obliged to keep me." Perhaps they were afraid of catching his distemper, or of coming within smell of the noisomeness of it. It is not good, either out of pride or niceness, for love of our purses, or of our bodies, to be shy of those in distress, and afraid of coming near them. Their case may soon be our own.

22. Did I say, Bring unto me? or, Give a reward for me of your substance? 23. Or, Deliver me from the enemies' hand? or, Redeem me from the hand of the mighty? 24. Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; and cause me to understand wherein I have erred. 25. How forcible are right words! but what doth your arguing reprove? 26. Do ye imagine to reprove words, and the speeches of one that is desperate, which are as wind? 27. Yea, ye overwhelm the fatherless, and ye dig a pit for your friend. 28. Now, therefore, be content: look upon me: for it is evident unto you if I lie. 29. Return, I pray you, let it not be iniquity: yea, return again, my righteousness is in it. 30. Is there iniquity in my tongue? Cannot my taste discern perverse things?

Poor Job goes on here to upbraid his friends with their unkindness, and the hard usage they gave him. He here appeals to themselves concerning several things which tended both to justify him and condemn them. If they would but think impartially, and speak as they thought, they could not but own,

I. That though he was necessitous, yet he was not craving, nor burlhsonome to his friends. Those that are so, whose troubles serve them to beg by, are commonly less pitied than the silent poor. Job would be glad to see his friends, but he did not say, Bring unto me, (v. 22.) or, Deliver me, v. 23. He did not desire to put them to any expense; did not urge his friends, to either make a collection for him, to set him up again in the world, or that he could plead that his losses came upon him by the hand of God, and not by any fault or folly of his own; that he was utterly ruined and impoverished; that he had lived in good condition, and that, when he had wherewithal, he was charitable, and ready to help those that were in distress; that his friends were rich, and able to help him; yet he did not say, Give me of your substance. Note, A good man, when troubled himself, is afraid of being troublesome to his friends. Or, 2. To raise the country for him, to help him to recover his cattle out of the hands of the Sabeans and Chaldeans, or to make reprisals upon them; "Did I send for you to deliver me out of the hand of the mighty? No, I never expected you should either expose yourselves to any danger, or put yourselves to any charge, upon my account; I will rather sit down content unto my affliction, and make the best of it, than spinse upon my friends." St. Paul wrought with his hands, that he might not be burlhsonome to any. Job's not asking their help, did not excuse them from offering it when he needed it, and it was in the power of their hands to give it; but it much aggravated their unkindness, when he desired no more from them than a good look, and a good word, and yet could not obtain them. It often happens that from man, even when we expect little, we have less, but from God, even when we expect much, we have more, Eph. iii. 20.

II. That though he differed in opinion from them, yet he was not obstinate, but ready to yield to conviction, and to strike sail to truth, as soon as ever it was made to appear to him that he was in an error; (v. 24, 25.) "If, instead of invidious reflections and uncharitable insinuations, you will give me plain instructions and solid arguments, which shall carry their own evidence along with them, I am ready to acknowledge to my own fault, my own mistake in a fault; Teach me, and I will hold my tongue, for I have often found, with pleasure and wonder, how forcible right words are: but the method you take will never make proselytes; what doth your arguing reprove? Your hypothesis is false, your surmises are groundless, your management weak, and your application peevish and uncharitable." Note, 1. parcel reasoning has a commanding power, and it is not easy for men are not conquered by it; but railing and foul language is impotent and foolish, and it is no wonder if men are exasperated and hardened by it. 2. It is the undoubtedly character of every honest man, that he is truly desirous to have his mistakes rectified, and to be made to understand wherein he has erred and that right words, when they appear to him to be so, though contrary to his former sentiments, are worth more to him and acceptable. 3. That though he had been indeed in a fault, yet they ought not to have given him such hard usage; (v. 26, 27.) "Do you imagine, or contrive with a great deal of art," (for so the word signifies, "to reprove words, some passionate expressions of mine in this desperate condition, as if they were certain indications of reigning impolicy and atheism? A little candour and charity would have served to excuse them, and to put a better con-
is in it," that is, "I am in the right in this matter; and though I cannot keep my temper as I should, I know I am in the right, and have not said, or done, or suffered, any thing which will prove me other than an honest man." A just cause desires nothing more than a just hearing, and, if need be, a re-hearing.

CHAP. VII.

Job, in this chapter, goes on to express the bitter sense he had of his calamities, and to justify himself in his desire of death. He complains to himself and his friends of his troubles, and the constant agitation he was in, v. 1. 6. 1. He turns to God, and expostulates with him, v. 7. to the end. In which, 1. He pleads the final period of man, with the impossibility of his present state, v. 7. 11. 2. He passionately complains of the miserable condition he was now in, v. 11. 16. 3. He wonders that God will thus contend with him, and begs for the pardon of his sins, and a speedy release out of his miseries, v. 17. 21. It's hard to methodise the speeches of one who owned himself almost desperate, ch. vi. 26.

1. Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? Are not his days also like the days of a hireling? 2. As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and as a hireling looketh for the reward of his work; 3. So am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me. 4. When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? and I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day. 5. My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken, and become loathsome. 6. My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope.

Job is here excusing what he could not justify, even his inordinate desire of death. Why should he not wish for the period of life, which would be the period of his miseries? To enforce this reason, he argues,

I. From the general condition of man upon earth; (v. 1.) "He is of few days, and full of trouble. Every man must die shortly, and every man has some reason (more or less) to desire to die shortly; and, therefore, why should you impute to me as so heinous a crime, that I wish to die shortly?" Or thus: "Pray mistake not my desires of death. I thought the time appointed of God could be anticipated; no, I know very well that this is fixed; only in such language as this, I take the liberty to express my present uneasiness. Is there not an appointed time (a warfare, so the word is) to man upon earth? Are not his days here like the days of a hireling? Observe,

1. Man's present place: he is of few days, which God has given to the children of men, Ps. cxv. 16. This bespeaks man's meanness and inferiority: how much below the inhabitants of yonder elevated and refined regions he is situated! It also bespeaks God's mercy to him: he is yet upon the earth, not under it; on earth, not in hell. Our time on earth is limited and short, according to the narrow bounds of this earth; but heaven cannot be measured, nor the days of heaven numbered.

2. His continuance in that place: is there not a time appointed for his abode here? Yes, certainly there is, and it is easy to say by whom the appointment is made, even by Him that made us and set us here. We are not to be on this earth always, nor long, but for a certain time, which is determined by Him in whose hand our times are. We are not to think that we are governed by the blind
fate of the Stoics, or by the blind fortune of the Epicureans, but by the wise, holy, and sovereign counsel of God.

3. His condition during that continuance: man's life is a warfare, and as the days of a hireling. We are not to consider it, as the Stoics have done, to look upon ourselves in this world, (1.) As soldiers, exposed to hardship, and in the midst of enemies; we must serve and be under command; and, when our warfare is accomplished, we must be disbanded, disarmed with either shame or honour, according to what we have done in the body. (2.) As day-labourers, that have the work of the day to do in its day, and must make up their account at night. This is his condition at this time. He had as much reason, he thought, to wish for death, as a poor servant or hireling, that is tired with his work, has to wish for the shadows of the evening, when he shall receive his penny, and go to rest. v. 2. The darkness of the night is as welcome to the labourer, as the light of the morning is to the watchman, Ps. cxxx. 6. The God of nature has provided for the repose of labours, and no wonder that they desire it. The sleep of the labouring mass is sweet to them. (12.) So plain to the Epicureans, and more generous, more relishing, to the luxurious, than rest to the labourers; nor can any rich man take so much satisfaction in the return of his rent-days, as the hireling in his day's wages. The comparison is plain, the application is concise, and somewhat obscure; but we must supply a word or two, and then it is easy: exactness of language is not to be expected from one in Job's condition. "As a servant earnestly desires the shadow, so, and for the same reason, I eagerly desire death, for I am made to possess, &c."

Hear his complaint:

1. His days were useless, and had been so a great while; he was wholly taken off from business, and utterly unfit for it. Every day was a burden to him, because he was in no capacity of doing good, or of spending it to any purpose. Evitit partem non attigit ullam—He could not fill up his time with any thing that would turn to account; this he calls possessing months of vanity, v. 3. It very much increases the affliction of sickness and pain, to be a good man, that he is thereby forced from his usefulness. He insists not so much upon it, that they are days in which he has no pleasure, as that they are days in which he does no good; on that account, they are months of vanity: but when we are disabled to work for God, if we will but sit still quietly for him, it is all one; we shall be accepted.

2. His nights were restless, v. 3, 4. The night relieves the toil and fatigue of the day, not only to the labourers, but to the sufferers: if a sick man can but get a little sleep in the night, it helps nature, and it is hoped that he will do well, John xi. 12. However, be the trouble what it will, sleep gives some intermission to the cares, and pains, and griefs, that afflict us; it is the parenthesis of our sorrows: but poor Job could not gain this relief. (1.) His nights were wearisome, and, instead of taking any rest, he did but tire himself more with toiling to and fro until morning. Those that are in great measiness, in pain of body, or anguish of mind, think, by changing sides, changing places, changing postures, to get some ease; but, while the cause is the same within, it is all to no purpose; it is but a resemblance of a fretful discontented spirit, that is ever shifting, but never easy. This made him dread the night as much as the servant desires it, and, when he lays down, to say, When will the night be over? (2.) These wearisome nights were appointed to him; God, who determines the times before appointed, had allotted him such nights as these. Whatever is, at any time, grievous to us, it is good to see it appointed for us, that we may acquiesce in the event, not only as unavoidable, because appointed, but as, therefore, designed for some holy end. When we have comfortable nights, we must see them also appointed to us, and be thankful for them; many better than we have wearisome nights.

3. His body was noisome, v. 5. His sores bred worms, the scabs were like clods of dust, and his skin was broken; so evil was the disease which cleaved fast to him. See what vile bodies we have, and what little reason we have to pamper them, or be proud of them; they have in themselves the principles of their own corruption: as fond as we are of them now, the time may come when we may loathe them, and long to get rid of them.

4. His life was hastening space towards a period, v. 6. He thought he had no reason to expect a long life, for he found himself declining fast; (v. 6.) My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, that is, "My time is now but short, and there are but a few sands more in my glass, which will speedily run out." Natural motions are more swift near the centre; Job thought his days ran swiftly, because he thought he should soon be at his journey's end. But he looked upon them as good as spent already, and he was therefore without hope of being restored to his former prosperity. It is applicable to man's life in general; our days are like a weaver's shuttle, thrown from one side of the web to the other, in the twinkling of an eye, and then back again, to and fro, until, at length, it is quite exhausted of the thread it carried; and then we cut off, like a weaver, our life, Isa. xxxviii. 12. Time hastens on space; the motion of it cannot be stopped, and, when it is past, it cannot be recalled. While we are living, we are sowing, (Gal. vi. 8.) so we are weaving; every day, like the shuttle, leaves a thread behind it; many weave the spider's web, which will fail them, ch. viii. 14. If we are weaving to ourselves holy garments and robes of righteousness, we shall have the benefit of them when our work comes to be reviewed, and every man shall reap as he sowed, and wear as he wove.

7. O remember that my life is wind: mine eye shall no more see good. 8. The eye of him that hath seen me shall see me no more: thine eyes are upon me, and I am not. 9. As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away; so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. 10. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more. 11. Therefore will I not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. 12. Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou testest a watch over me? 13. When I say, My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint; 14. Then thou searest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions: 15. So that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life. 16. I loathe it: I would not live always: let me alone; for my days are vanity.
his ear heavy. Yet we must not go to school to Job here, to learn how to speak to God, for, it must be confessed, there is a great mixture of passion and corruption in what he here says: but if God be not extreme to mark what his people say amiss, let us also make the best of it. Job is here begging of God either to ease him or end him. He here represents himself to God, 1. As a dying man, surely and speedily dying. It is good for us, when we are sick, to think and speak of death. Job had no purpose to put up a mind of it; and if we be duly mindful of it ourselves, we may, in faith, put God in mind of it, as Job does here; (v. 7.) O remember that my life is wind. He recommends himself to God as an object of his pity and compassion, with this consideration, that he was a very weak, frail, creature, his abode in this world short and uncertain, his removal out of it sure and speedy, and his return to it again impossible, and never to be expected; that his life was wind, as the lives of all men are, noisy perhaps, and blustering, like the wind, but vain and empty, soon gone, and, when gone, past recall. God had compassion on Israel, remembering that they were but flesh, a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again, Ps. lxxxviii. 38, 39. Observe, 1. The pious reflections Job makes upon his own life and death. Such plain truths as these concerning the shortness, fragility, and vanity of life, the unavoidableness and irrecoverableness of death, then do us good, when we think and speak of them with application to ourselves. Let us consider then, (1.) That we must shortly take our leave of all the things that are seen, that are temporal. The eye of the body must be closed, and shall no more see good, the good which most men set their hearts upon, for their cry is, Who will make us to see good? Ps. iv. 6. If we be such fools as to place our happiness in visible good things, what will become of us when they shall be for ever hid from our eyes, and we shall no more see good? Let us, therefore, live by that faith which is the substance and evidence of things not seen. (2.) That we must then remove to an invisible world: the eye of him that hath here seen me, shall see me no more there. It is Adon—an unseen state, v. 8. Death removes our lovers and friends into darkness, (Ps. lxxxviii. 18.) and will shortly remove us out of sight: when we go hence we shall be seen no more, (Ps. xxxix. 13.) but go to converse with the things that are not seen, that are eternal. (3.) That God can easily, and in a moment, put an end to our lives, and send us to another world; (v. 8.) Thine eyes are upon me, and I am not: thou canst look me into eternity, frown me into the grave, when thou pleasest. Shouldst thou, displeased, give me a frowning look, I sink, I die, as if with lightning struck. Sir R. Blackmore.

He takes away our breath, and we die; nay, he but looks on the earth, and it trembles, Ps. civ. 29, 32.

(4.) That when we are once removed to another world, we must never return to this. There is constant passing from this world to the other, but Vestigia nulla retrorsum—There is no repassing. "Therefore, Lord, show me kindness while I am here, for I shall return no more to receive kindness in this world." Or, "Therefore, Lord, kindly ease me by death, for that will be a perpetual ease, shall return no more to the calamities of this life. When we are dead, we are gone, to rest in no more," [1] From our house under ground, v. 9. He that goeth down to the grave, shall come up no more, until the general resurrection, shall come up no more to his place in this world. Dying is work that is to be done but once, and therefore it had need be well done: an error there is first retrieved. This is illustrated by the blotting out and scattering of a cloud. It is consumed, and vanisheth away, is resolved into air, and never knits again: other clouds arise, but the same cloud never returns: so a new generation of the children of men is raised up, but the former generation is quite consumed, and vanishes away. When we see a cloud which looks great, as if it would eclipse the sun and drown the earth, of a sudden dispersed and disappearing, let us say, "Just such a thing is the life of man; it is a vapour that appears for a little while, and then vanishes away." [2] To return no more to our house above ground, v. 10. He shall return no more to his house, to the possession and enjoyment of it, to the business and delights of it: others will keep it till they also resign to another generation. The rich man in hell desired Lazarus might be sent to his house, knowing it was to no purpose to ask that he might have leave to go himself. Glorified saints shall return no more to the cares, and burthens, and sorrows, of their house; nor damned sinners to the gaieties and pleasures of their house. Their place shall no more know them, no more own them, have no more sight of them, nor any benefit under their influence. It concerns us to secure a better place when we die, for this will no more own us.

2. The passionate inference he draws from it. From these premises he might have drawn a better conclusion than this, (v. 11.) Therefore I will not refrain my mouth, I will speak, I will complain. Holy David, when he had been meditating on the frailty of human life, made a contrary use of it; (Ps. xxxix. 9.) I know that my end is; and opened not my mouth: but Job, finding himself near expiring, hastens as much to make his complaint, as if he had been to make his last will and testament, or as if he could not die in peace until he had given vent to his passion. When we have but a few breaths to draw, we should spend them in the holy, gracious, breathings of faith and prayer, not in the noisome, noxious, breathings of sin and corruption. Be not preening and praising, thus die complain- ing and quarrelling.

II. As a dismembered man, sorely and grievously dismembered, both in body and mind. In this part of his representation, he is very peevish, as if God dealt hardly with him, and laid upon him more than was meet. Am I a sea, or a whale? v. 12. "A raging sea, that must be kept within bounds, to check its proud waves, or an unruly whale, that must be restrained by force from devouring all the fishes of the sea? Am I so strong, that there needs so much ado to hold me? So boisterous, that no less than all these mighty bonds of affliction will serve to tame me, and keep me within compass?" We are very apt, when we are in affliction, to complain of God and his providence, as if he had more restraint upon us than there is occasions for; whereas we are never in heaviness but when there is need, or beyond the just measure.

1. He complains that he could not rest in his bed, v. 13, 14. There we promise ourselves some repose, when we are fatigue with labour, rain, or travel; My bed shall comfort me, and my couch shall ease my complaint; sleep will, for a time, give me some relief; it does so; it is appointed for that end; many a time it has eased us, and we have awaked refreshed, and with new vigour. When it is so, we have great reason to be thankful; but it is not so with poor Job; his bed, instead of comfortting him, terrified him; and his couch, instead
of easing his complaint, added to it; for if he dropped asleep, he was disturbed with his frightful dreams, and when those awakened, still he was haunted with dreadful apparitions. This was its, that made the night so unwelcome and wearisome to him as it was; (v. 4.) When shall I arise? Note, God can, when he pleases, meet us with terror there, where we promise ourselves ease and repose; nay, he can make us a terror to ourselves, and, as we have often contracted guilt, by the ravings of an unsanctified fancy, he can likewise, by the power of our own imagination, create as much grief, and so make that our punishment which he has often been our sin. In Job's dreams, though they might partly arise from his distemper, (in fevers, or small-pox, when the body is all over sore, it is common for the sleep to be unquiet,) yet we have reason to think Satan had a hand in them; Satan, who delights to terrify those whom it is out of his reach to destroy; but Job looked up to God, who permitted Satan to do this, (Thou searest me,) and mistook Satan's representations for the terrors of God setting themselves in array against him. We have reason to pray to God that our dreams may neither defile nor disquiet us, neither tempt us to sin, nor torment us with fear; that He who keeps Israel, and neither slumbers nor sleeps, may keep us when we slumber and sleep; that the Devil may not then do us a mischief, either as an insinuating serpent, or as a roaring lion; and to bless God if we lie down and our sleep is sweet, and we are not thus scared.

2. He covets to rest in his grave, that bed where there are no tossings to and fro, nor any frightful dreams, v. 15, 16. (1.) He was sick of life, and hated the thoughts of it; "I loathe it, I have had enough of it, I would not live alway; not only not live alway in this condition, in pain and misery, but not live alway in the most easy and prosperous condition, to be continually in danger of being thus reduced: my days are vanity at the best, empty of solid comfort, exposed to real griefs; and I would not be for ever tied to such uncertainty." Note, A good man would not (if he might) live always in this world, no, not though it smile upon him, because it is a world of sin and temptation, and he has a better world in prospect. (2.) He was fond of death, and pleased himself with the thoughts of it: his soul (his judgment, his thought, but really it was Satan's suggestion and death rather,) any death rather than such a life as this. Doubtless, this was Job's infirmity; for though a good man would not wish to live alway in this world, and would choose strangling and death rather than sin, as the martyrs did, yet he will be content to live as long as pleaseth God, not choose them rather than life, because life is our opportunity of glorifying God, and getting ready for heaven.

17. What is man that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thy heart upon him? 18. And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment? 19. How long wilt thou not depart from me, nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle? 20. I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou Preserver of men? why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, so that I am a burden to myself? 21. And why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity? for now shall I sleep in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be.

Job here reasons with God,

1. Concerning his dealings with man in general; (v. 17, 18.) What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? This may be looked upon either, 1. As a passionate reflection upon the proceedings of divine justice; as if the great God did diminish and disparage himself, in contending with man. Great men think it below them to take cognizance of those who are much their inferiors, so far as to reprove and correct their follies and iniquities; why then does God magnify man, by visiting him, and trying him, and making so much ado about him? Why will he thus pour all his forces upon one that is such an unequal match for him? Why will he visit him with afflictions, which, like a quotidian ague, return as duly and constantly as the morning-light, and try, every moment, what he can bear? We mistake God, and the nature of his providence, if we think it any lessening to him, to take notice of the meanest of his creatures. Or,

2. As a pious admiration of the condescensions of divine grace, like that, Ps. viii. 4.—exlv. 3. He owns God's favour to man in general, even then when he complains of his own particular troubles. "What is man, miserable man, a poor, mean, weak creature, that Thou, the great and glorious God, shouldst deal with him as thou dost? What is man," (1.) That thou shouldest put such honour upon him; shouldest magnify him, by taking him into covenant and communion with thyself? (2.) "That thou shouldest concern thyself so much about him, shouldest set thy heart upon him, as dear to thee, and one thou hast a kind of passion to, and admire. The compassion every morning, as we daily visit a particular friend, or as the physician visits his patients every morning, to help them?" (4.) "That thou shouldest try him, shouldst feel his pulse, and observe his looks, every moment, as in care about him, and jealous over him?" That such a worm of the earth as man is, should be the darling and favourite of Heaven, is what we have reason for ever to admire.

II. Concerning his dealings with him in particular. Observe,

1. The complaint he makes of his afflictions, which he here aggravates, and (as we are all too apt to do) makes the worst of, in three particular respects.

(1.) That he was the butt to God's arrows; "Thou hast set me as a mark against thee," v. 20. "My case is singular, and none is shot at so as I am." (2.) That he was a burden to himself, ready to sink under the load of his own life. How much delight sooner we take in ourselves, God can, when he pleases, make us burdens to ourselves. What comfort can we take in ourselves, if God appear against us as an Enemy, and we have not comfort in him? (3.) That he had occasion of his griefs; (v. 19.) "How long wilt thou be ere thou cause thy rod to depart from me, or abate the rigour of the correction, at least, for so long as that I may swallow down my spittle?" It should seem, Job's distemper lay much in his throat, and almost choked him, so that he could not swallow his spittle. He complains, (ch. xxx. 18.) that it bound him about like the collar of his coat. "Lord," he says, "is it not thy hand that使我 some respite, some breathing time?" ch. ix. 18.

2. The concern he is in about his sins. The best men have sin to complain of, and the better they are, the more they will complain of it.

(1.) He ingenuously owns himself guilty before God; I have sinned. God had said of him, that he
was a perfect and an upright man; yet he says of himself, "I have sinned. Those may be upright who yet are not sinless; and those who are sincerely penitent are accepted, through a Mediator, as evangelically perfect. Job maintained, against his friends, that he was not a God-savant, a wicked man; and yet owns to his God, that he had sinned. If we have been kept from gross acts of sin, it does not, therefore, follow that we are innocent. The best must acknowledge, before God, that they have sinned. His calling God the Observer, or Preserver, of men, may be looked upon as designed for an aggravation of his sin; "Though God has had his eye upon me, his eye upon me for good, yet against me. Why are we in affliction? Is it reasonable to confess sin, as the procuring cause of our affliction? Penitent confessions would drown and silence passionate complaints.

(2.) He seriously inquires how he might make his peace with God; "What shall I do unto thee, having done so much against thee?" Are we convinced that we have sinned, and are we brought to own it? We cannot but conclude that something must be done to answer the demands of the case, or the consequences of it. The matter must not rest as it is, but some course must be taken, to undo what has been ill done. And, if we are truly sensible of the danger we have run ourselves into, we shall be willing to do anything; to take a pardon upon any terms; and therefore shall be inquisitive as to what we shall do. (Mic. vi. 6, 7.) what shall we do to God, not to satisfy the demands of his justice, (that is done only by the Mediator,) but to qualify ourselves for the tokens of his favour, according to the tenor of the gospel covenant. In making this inquiry, it is good to eye God as the Preserver or Saviour of men, not the Destroyer. In our repentance, we must keep up good thoughts of God, as one that delights not in the ruin of his creatures, but would rather they should return and live. "Thou art the Saviour of men; be thy Saviour, for I cast myself upon thy mercy."

(3.) He earnestly begs for the forgiveness of his sins, vi. 21. The heat of his spirit, as, on the one hand, it made his complaints the more bitter, so, on the other hand, it made his prayers the more lively and importunate; as here, "Why dost thou not pardon my transgression? Art not thou a God of infinite mercy, that art ready to forgive? Hast not thou wrought repentance in me? Why then dost thou not give me the pardon of my sin, and make me to hear the voice of that joy and gladness?" Surely he means more than barely the removing of his outward trouble, and is herein earnest for the return of God's favour, which he complained of the want of, ch. vi. 4. "Lord, pardon my sins, and give me the comfort of that pardon, and then I can easily bear my afflictions," Matth. ix. 2. Isa. xxxixii. 24. When the mercy of God pardons the transgression that is committed by us, the grace of God takes away the iniquity that precedes, and forever removes the guilt of sin, he breaks the power of sin.

(4.) To enforce his prayer for pardon, he pleads the prospect he had of dying quickly; "For now shall I sleep in the dust; death will lay us in the dust, will lay us to sleep there, and perhaps now in a little time. Job had been complaining of restless nights, and that sleep departed from his eyes; (v. 3, 4, 13, 14.) but those who cannot sleep in a bed, who must sleep in a bivouac, but not be scared with dreams, nor tossed to and fro. "Thou shalt seek me in the morning, to show me favour, but I shall not be, it will be too late then. If my sins be not pardoned while I live, I am lost and undone for ever." Note, The consideration of this, that we must shortly die, and perhaps may die suddenly, should make us all very solicitous to get our sins pardoned, and our iniquity taken away.

CHAP. VIII.

Job's friends are like Job's messengers; those followed one another close with evil tidings, these with harsh censures; both would drive him from his integrity, these to drive him from the comfort of it. Eliphaz did not reply to what Job had said in answer to him, but left it to Bildad, whom he knew to be of the same mind with himself in this affair. Those are not the worst of the company, but the weak est rather, who covet to have all the talk. Let others speak in their turn, and let the first keep silence, 1 Cor. xiv. 30, 31. Eliphaz had undertaken to show, that, because Job was surely afflicted, he was certainly a wicked man; Bildad is much of the same mind, and will conclude Job a wicked man, unless God do speedily appear for his relief. In this chapter, he endeavours to convince Job, v. 2, 3. That he and his children had suffered justly, v. 3, 4. III. That, if he were a true penitent, God would soon turn his captivity, v. 5, 7. IV. That it was a usual thing for Providence to extinguish the joys and hopes of wicked men, as his were extinguished; and therefore that they had reason to suspect him for a hypocrite, v. 8, 15. V. That they should be abundantly confirmed in their suspicion, unless God did speedily appear for his relief, v. 20, 22.

1. THEN answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said. 2. How long wilt thou speak these things? and how long shall the words of thy mouth be like a strong wind? 3. Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice? 4. If thy children have sinned against him, and he have cast them away for their transgression; 5. If thou wouldest seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplication to the Almighty; 6. If thou weri pure and upright; surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous. 7. Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase.

Here, I. Bildad reproves Job for what he had said; (v. 2.) checks his passion, but perhaps, (as is too common,) with greater passion. We thought Job spake a great deal of good sense, and much to the purpose, and that he had reason and right on his side; but Bildad, like an 'anger angry disputant, turns it all off with this, How long wilt thou speak these things? taking it for granted that Eliphaz had said enough to silence him, and that therefore all he said was impertinent. Thus (as Caryl observes) reproofs are often grounded upon mistakes. Men's meaning is not taken aright, and then they are gravely rebuked, as if they were evil-doers. Bildad compares Job's discourse to a strong wind. Job had excused himself with this, that his speeches were but as wind, (ch. vi. 26.) and therefore they should not make such ado about them; "Yea, but" (says Bildad) "they are as a strong wind, blustering and threatening, boisterous and dangerous, and therefore we are concerned to fence against them."

II. He justifies God in what he had done. This he had no occasion to do at this time, for Job did not condemn God, nor did he think what he had done: and this he might have done, without reflecting upon Job's children, as he does here. Could not he be an advocate for God, but he must be an accuser of his brethren?
1. He is right in general, that God doth not pervert judgment, nor ever go contrary to any settled rule of justice, v. 3. Far be it from him that he should, and from that we should expect only. He never oppresses the innocent, nor lays more load on the guilty than they deserve. He is God, the Judge; and shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Gen. xviii. 25. If there should be unrighteousness with God, how shall he judge the world? Rom. iii. 6. He is Almighty, Shaddai, All-sufficient. Men pervert justice, sometimes, for fear of the power of others; but God is Almighty, and stands in awe of none. Men had respect to the favour of others; but God is all-sufficient, and cannot be benefited by the favour of any. It is man’s weakness and impotency, that he often is unjust; it is God’s omnipotence, that he cannot be so.

2. Yet he is not fair and candid in the application: he takes it for granted that Job’s children (the death of whom was one of the greatest of his afflictions) had been guilty of some notorious wickedness, and that the unhappy circumstances of their death was sufficient evidence that they were sinners above all the children of the east, v. 4. Job readily owned that God did not pervert judgment; and yet it did not therefore follow either that his children were cast-aways, or that they died for some great transgression. It is true that we and our children have sinned against God, and we ought to justify him in all he brings upon us and ours; but extraordinary afflictions are not always the punishment of extraordinary sins, but sometimes the trial of extraordinary graces; and, in our judgment of another’s case, (unless the contrary appears,) we ought to take the more favourable side, as our Saviour directs, Luke xiii. 2, 4. Here Bildad missed it.

III. He puts Job in hope, that, if he were indeed upright, as he said he was, he should yet see a good issue of his present troubles: “Although thy children have sinned against him, and are cast away in their transgression, they have died in their own guilt; yet, if thou be pure and upright thyself, and, as an evidence of that, wilt now seek unto God, and submit to him, all shall be well yet,” v. 5...7. This may be taken two ways: either,

1. As designed to prove Job a hypocrite, and a wicked man, though not by the greatness, yet by the continuance, of his afflictions. “When thou wast impoverished, and thy children killed, if thou hadst not been pure and upright, and hadst not been so in the trial, God would, before now, have returned in mercy to thee, and comforted thee according to the time of thine affliction; but because he does not so, we have reason to conclude thou art not so pure and upright as thou pretendest to be. If thou hadst conducted thyself well under the former affliction, thou hadst not been struck with the latter. Herein Bildad was not in the right; for a good man may, and for his sake may be, very sorely, but very long, and yet, if for life, it is, in comparison with eternity, but for a moment. But, since Bildad put to it this issue, God was pleased to join issue with him, and proved his servant Job an honest man, by Bildad’s own argument; for, soon after, he blessed his latter end more than his beginning. Or,

2. As designed to direct and encourage Job, that he might turn himself into despair, and give up all for gone; yet there might be hope, if he would take the right course. I am apt to think Bildad here intended to condemn Job, yet would be thought to counsel and comfort him. (1.) He gives him good counsel, yet perhaps not expecting he would take it; the same that Eliphaz had given him, (ch. v. 8.) to seek unto God, and that betimes, that is, speedily and seriously, and not to be dilatory and trifling in his return and repentance. He advises him not to complain, but to petition, and to make his supplication to the Almighty with humility and faith; and he tells him that there was (what he feared had hitherto been wanting) sincerity in his heart, "That thou must be pure and upright," and honesty in his house, "That must be the habituation of thy righteousness, and not filled with ill-gotten goods; else God will not hear thy prayers," Ps. lxvi. 18. It is only the prayer of the upright that is the acceptable and prevailing prayer, Prov. xv. 8. (2.) He gives him good hopes that he should yet get again good days, secretly suspecting, however, that he was not qualified to see them. He promises that he would be early in seeking God, would awake for his relief, would remember him, and return to him, though now he seemed to forget him and forsake him; That if his habitation were righteous it should be prosperous; for honesty is the best policy, and inward piety a sure friend to outward prosperity. When we return to God in a way of duty, we have reason to hope that he will return to us in a way of mercy. Let not Job object that he had so little left to begin the world with again, that it was impossible he should ever prosper as he had done; no, "Though thy beginning should be ever so small, a little meal in the barrel, and a little oil in the cruse, God’s blessing shall multiply that to a great increase." This is God’s way of enriching the souls of his people with graces and comforts, not for saltum—as by a bound, but for gradum—step by step. The beginning is small, but the progress is to perfection. Dawning light grows to noon-day; a grain of mustard-seed to a great tree. Let us not therefore despise the day of small things, but hope for the day of great things.

3. For inquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers; 9. (For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow:) 10. Shall not they teach thee, and tell thee, and utter words out of their heart? 11. Can the rush grow up without mine? can the flag grow without water? 12. Whilst it is yet in his greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. 13. So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite’s hope shall perish: 14. Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider’s web. 15. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand: he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure. 16. He is green before the sun, and his branch shooteth forth in his garden. 17. His roots are wrapped about the heap, and seeth the place of stones. 18. If he destroy him from his place, then it shall deny him, saying, I have not seen thee. 19. Behold, this is the joy of his way, and out of the earth shall others grow.

Bildad here discourses well of the sad catastrophe of hypocrites and evil-doers, and the fatal process of all their doings; but he is too bold as to say, with Eliphaz, that none that were righteous were ever cut off thus; (ch. iv. 7.) yet he takes it for granted that God, in the course of his providence, does ordinarily bring wicked men, who seemed pious, and were prosperous, to shame and ruin in this world; and that, by making their prosperity short, he discovers their piety to be counterfeit. Whether this will certainly prove that all
who are thus ruined must be concluded to have been hypocrites, he will not say, but rather suspects and thinks the application is easy.

I. He proves this truth, of the certain destruction of all the hypocrisies of hypocrites, by an appeal to authority, and the concurring sentiment and observation of all wise and good men. It is an un

1. He insists not on his own judgment, and that of his companions; "(v. 8.) 2. He perceived that Job had no opinion of their abilities, but thought they knew little; "We will own," says Bildad, "that we know nothing, are as ready to confess our ignorance as thou art to condemn it; for we are but as yesterday, in comparison, and our days are short and transient, and hastening away as a shadow. And therefore," (v. 1.) "We are not so near the fountain-head of divine revelation" (which hypothesis he opposed); and knew not what they said, and recount what we have been told of their sentiments." Blessed be God, now that we have the word of God in writing, and are directed to search that, we need not inquire of the former age, nor prepare ourselves to the search of their fathers; for, though we ourselves are but of yesterday, the word of God in the scripture is as nigh us as they; (Rom. x. 8.) and it is the certain word of prophecy, to which we must take heed. If we study and keep God's precepts, we may by them understand more than the ancients, Ps. cxix. 99, 100. (2.) "We do not live so long as they of the former age did, to make observations upon the methods of Divine Providence, and therefore cannot be such competent judges as they, in a cause of this nature." Note, The shortness of our lives is a great hindrance to the improvement of our knowledge; and so is the frailty and weakness of our bodies; for, "Vita brevis, aetas longa—Life is short, the progress of art boundless.

2. He refers himself to the testimony of the ancients, and to the confidence which Job himself had of their sentiments. "Do thou inquire of the former age, and let them tell thee, not only their own judgment in this matter, but the judgment also of their fathers; (v. 8.) they will teach thee, and in-form thee, (v. 10.) that, all along, in their time, the judgments of God followed wicked men. This they will utter of their hearts, that is, as that which they firmly believe themselves, which they are greatly affected with, and desire to acquaint and affect others with." Note, (1.) For the right un

understanding of Divine Providence, and the unfolding of the difficulties of it, it will be of use to compare the observations and experiences of former ages with the events of our own day; and, in order thereunto, to consult history, especially the sacred history, which is the most ancient, probably truest, and written designedly for our learning. (2.) They that would fetch knowledge from the former ages, must search diligently, prepare for the search, and take pains in the search. (3.) Those words are most likely to reach to the hearts of the learners, that come from the hearts of the teachers. They shall teach thee best, that utter words out of their heart, that speak by experience, and not by rote, of spiritual and divine things.

The learned Bishop Patrick suggests, that Bil
dad, being a Shuhite, descended from Shuah, one of Abraham's sons by Keturah, Gen. xxv. 2. In this appeal which he makes to history, he has a particular respect to the rewards which the bless-

ings of God secured to the pesterity of faithful Abraham, who hitherto, and long after, continued in such a situation. He refers to the destruction of those eastern people, neighbours to Job, (in whose country they were settled,) for their wickedness; whence he infers, that it is God's usual way to prosper the just, and root out the wicked, though for a while they may flourish. II. He illustrates this truth by some similitudes.

1. The hopes and joys of the hypocrites are here compared to a rush or flag, v. 11. 13. (1.) It grows up out of the mire and water. They can

cause not to rise and bring his hope to the face rotten ground or other, out of which to raise it, and with which to support it and keep it alive, any more than the rush can grow without mire. He grounds it on his worldly prosperity, the plausible profession he makes of religion, the good opinion of his neighbours, and his own good conceit of himself, which are no solid foundation on which to build his confidence. It is all but mire and water; and the hope that grows out of it, is but rush and flag. (2.) It may look green and gay for a while, (thus the rush grows the grass,) but it is light, and hollow, and empty, and good for nothing. It is green for show, but of no use. (3.) It withers presently, before any other herb, v. 12. Even while it is in its greeness, it is dried away, and gone in a little time. Note, The best state of hypocrites and evil-doers borders upon withereth; even when it is green, it is going. The grass is cut down, and withers; (Ps. xci. 8.) but the rush is not cut down, and yet withers. It grows up; (Ps. cxix. 6.) as it has no use, so it has no continuance. So are the paths of all that forget God; (v. 13.) they take the same way that the rush does, for the hypocrite's hopes shall perish. Note, (1.) Forgetfulness of God is at the bottom of men's hypocrisy, and of the vain hopes with which they flatter and deceive themselves in their hypocrisy. Men would not be hypocrites, if they did not forget that the God with whom they have to do searches the heart, and requires truth there; that he is a Spirit, and has his eye on our spirits. Hypocrites could have no hope, if they did not forget that God is righteous, and will not be mocked with the torm and the lame. (2.) The hope of hypocrites is a great cheat upon themselves, and though it may flourish a while, it will certainly perish at last, and they with it. 2. They are here compared to a spider's web, or a spider's house, as it is in the margin; a cobweb, v. 14. 15. The hope of the hypocrite, (1.) Is woven out of his own bowels; it is the creature of his own fancy, and arises merely from a conceit of his own merit and sufficiency. There is a great deal of difference between the work of the bee and that of the spider; a diligent Christian, like the laborious bee, fetches in all his comfort from the heavenly dew of God's word; but the hypocrite, like the subtle spider, weaves his out of a false hypothesis of his own worth, and from the flattery of God, and the great deals of confidence which he has in himself. (2.) He is very fond of it, as the spider of her web; pleases himself with it, wraps himself in it, calls it his house, leaves upon it, and holds it fast. It is said of the spider, that she takes hold with her hands, and it is kings' palaces, Prov. xxx. 29. So does a carnal worldling hug himself in the fulness and firmness of his outward prosperity; he prides himself in that house as his palace, and fortiies himself in it as his castle, and can use that as a shelter of his in the day of distress. It is no sooner inscribed on the heart of him that is not inscribed on the heart, and has a mind to prey upon. So does a formal professor; he flatters himself in his own eyes, doubts not of his salvation, is secure of heaven, and cheats the world with his vain confidences. (3.) It will easily and certainly be swept away, as the cob-web with the besom, when God shall come to purge his house.
The prosperity of worldly people will fail them, when they expect to find safety and happiness in it. They seek to hold fast their estates, but God is plucking them out of their hands; and whose shall those things be which they have provided? or what the better will they be for them? The confidences of hypocrites will fail them; I tell you, I know you not. The house built on the sand will fall in the storm, when the builder most needs it, and had promised himself the benefit of it. When a wicked man dies, his expectation perisheth. The ground of his hope will prove false; he will be disappointed of that which he hoped for, in his foolish hope, with which he buoyed himself up, will be turned into endless despair; and thus his hope will be cut off, his web, that refuge of lies, swept away, and he crushed in it.

3. They are here compared to a flourishing and well-rooted tree, which, though it do not wither of itself, yet will easily be cut down, and its place know it no more. The secure and prosperous sinner may think himself wronged when he is compared to a rush and a flag, he thinks he has a better root; "We will allow him his conceit," (says Bildad,) "and give him all the advantage he can desire, and yet bring him in suddenly cut off." He is here represented, as Nebuchadnezzar was in his own dream, (Dan. iv. 10.) by a great tree. (1.) See this tree fair and flourishing, (v. 16.) like a green bay-tree, (Ps. xxxvii. 35.) green before the sun, that keeps its greenness in defiance of the scorching sun-beams, and its branch shoots forth under the protection of his garden-wall, and with the benefit of his garden-soil: see it fixed, and taking deep root, never likely to be overthrown by stormy winds, for his roots are interwoven with the stones; (v. 17.) it grows in firm ground, not as the rush, in mire and water. Thus does a wicked man, when he prospers in the world, think himself secure; his wealth is a high wall in his own conceit.

(2.) See this tree fallen and forgotten notwithstanding; destroyed from his place, (v. 18.) and so entirely extirpated, that there shall remain no sign or token where it grew; the very place shall say, I have not seen thee; and the standers by shall say the same, I sought him, but he could not be found, Ps. xxxvii. 36. He made a great show and a great noise for a time, but he is gone of a sudden, and neither root nor branch left him, Mal. iv. 1. This is the joy, that is, this is the end and conclusion of the sinner's ways, the utmost reach of his hopes and thoughts, with his joy comes to—The way of the ungodly shall perish, Ps. i. 6. His hope, he thought, would, in the issue, be turned into joy, but this is the issue, this is the joy, The harvest shall be heap in the day of grief and of desolater sorrow, Isa. xv. 11. This is the best of it; and what then is the worst of it? But shall he not leave a family behind him to enjoy what he has? No, out of the earth, (not out of heaven,) shall he bring it to the grave; that are nothing akin to him, and shall fill up his place, and rule over that for which he laboured. Others, namely, of the same spirit and disposition, shall grow up in his place, and be as secure as ever he was, not warned by his fall. The way of wordslings is their folly, and yet there is a race of them that approve their sayings, Ps. lxxxix. 13.

20. Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evil-doers; 21. Till he fill thy mouth with laughing, and thy lips with rejoicing. 22. They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame; and the dwelling-place of the wicked shall come to nought.

Bildad here, in the close of his discourse, sums up what he had to say, in a few words, setting before Job life and death, the blessing and the curse; envying one another, that as he was, so he should fare, and therefore they might conclude, that as he fared, so he was.

1. On the other hand, if he were a perfect upright man, God would not cast him away, v. 20. Though now he seemed forsaken of God, he would yet return to him, and, by degrees, would turn his mourning into dancing, (Ps. xxx. 11.) and comforts shoidd flow in upon him so plentifully, that his mouth should be filled with laughing, v. 21. So affecting should the tempter be, Ps. cxv. 2. They that loved him, would rejoice with him, but they that hated him, and had triumphed in his fall, would be ashamed of their insolence, when they see him restored to his former prosperity. God will not cast away an upright man; he may be cast down for a time, but he shall not be cast away for ever; it is true, that, if not in this world, yet in another, the mouth of the righteous shall be filled with rejoicing, though their sun should sit under a cloud, yet it shall rise again again, never more to be clouded; though they go mourning to the grave, that shall not hinder their entrance into the joy of their Lord. It is true, that the enemies of the saints will be clothed with shame, when they see them crowned with honour. But it does not there fore follow, that, if Job were not perfectly restored to his former prosperity, he forfeited the character of a perfect man.

2. On the other hand, if he were a wicked man and an evil doer, God would not help him, but leave him to perish in his present distresses; (v. 20.) and his dwelling-place should come to naught, 22. And here, also, it is true that God will not help the evil-doers; they throw themselves out of his protection, and forfeit his favour; he will not take the ungodly by the hand, so it is in the margin, will not have fellowship and communion with them; for what communion between light and darkness? He will not lend them his hand to pull them out of the miscarries, the eternal miscarries, into which they have plunged themselves; they will then stretch out their hand to him for help, but it is too late, he will not take them by the hand: Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed. It is true, that the dwelling-place of the wicked, sooner or later, will come to naught. Those only who make God their dwelling-place, are safe for ever, Ps. xc. 1.—sc. 1. They who make other things their refuge, will be disappointed. Sin brings ruin on persons and families. Yet to argue, (as Bildad, I doubt, silly does,) that because Job's family was sunk, and he himself, at present, seemed helpless, therefore he certainly was an ungodly wicked man, was neither just nor charitable, as long as there appeared no other evidence of his wickedness and ungodliness. Let us judge nothing before the time, but wait till the secret of all hearts shall be made manifest; and the present difficulty of Providence be solved, to universal and everlasting satisfaction, when the mystery of God shall be finished.

CHAP. IX.

In this, and the following chapter, we have Job's answer to Bildad's discourse, wherein he speaks honourably of God, humbly of himself, and feelingly of his troubles; but not one word by way of reflection upon his friends, or their unkindness to him, nor in direct reply to what Bildad had said. He seems desirous, as it were, to keep to the merits of the cause, and makes no remarks upon the person that managed it, nor seeks occasion against him. In this chapter, we have, I. The doctrine of God's justice laid down, v. 2. II. The proof of it, from his wisdom, power, and sovereign dominion, v. 3... 11. III. The application of it, in which, 1. He condemns himself, as
not able to contend with God, either in law or battle, v. 14. 21. 2. He maintains his point, that we cannot judge of man's character by their outward condition, v. 22. 24. 3. He complains of the greatness of his troubles, the confusion he was in, and the loss he was at what to say or do, v. 25. 33.

1. THEN Job answered and said, 2. I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God? 3. If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand. 4. He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered! 5. Which removeth the mountains, and they know not; which overturneth them in his anger; 6. Which shakest the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble; 7. Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not, and sealeth up the stars; 8. Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea; 9. Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south; 10. Which doeth great things past finding out, yea, and wonders without number. 11. Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not; he passeth on also, but I perceive him not. 12. Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? Who will say unto him, What dost thou? 13. If God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers do stoo under him.

Bildad began with a rebuke to Job for talking so much, ch. viii. 2. Job makes no answer to that, though it had been easy enough to retort it upon himself; but what he next lays down as his principle, that God never perverts judgment, Job agrees with him in, I know it is so of a truth, v. 2. Note. We should be ready to own how far we agree with those with whom we dispute, and we should not slight, much less resist, a truth, though produced by another, and urged against us, but receive it in the light and love of it, though it have been misapplied. "It is so of a truth, that wickedness brings men to ruin, and the gods are taken under God's special protection. These are truths which I subscribe to; but how can any man make good his part with God?" In his sight shall no flesh living be justified, Ps. cxliii. 2. How should man be just with God? Some understand this as a passionate complaint of God's anger against his threatenings, and man's inability to come up to the standards of God's holiness. It is in the greatest ness of that can be, to think to contend with a God of infinite wisdom and power, who knows every thing, and can do every thing; who can be neither outwitted nor overpowered. The Devil promised himself that Job, in the day of his affliction, would curse God, and speak ill of him, but, instead of that, he sets himself to honour God, and to speak highly of him. As much pained as he is, and as much taken up with his own miseries, when he has occasion to reflect on the wisdom and power of God, he forgets his complaints, dwells with delight, and exults with a flood of eloquence, upon that noble useful subject. Evidences of the wisdom and power of God he fethes, 1. From the kingdom of nature, in which the God of nature acts with an uncontrolled power, and does what he pleases; for all the orders and all the powers of nature are derived from him, and depend upon him.

1. In dispute; (v. 3.) If he will contend with him, either at law or at an argument, he cannot answer him one of a thousand. (1.) God can ask a thousand puzzling questions, which those that quarrel with him, and arraign his proceedings, cannot give an answer to. When God spake to Job out of the whirlwind, he asked him a great many questions; Dost thou know this? Canst thou do that? To none of which Job could give an answer, ch. xxxvii. and xxxix. God can easily manifest the folly of the greatest pretenders to wisdom. (2.) God can lay to our charge a thousand offences, can draw up against us a thousand articles of impeachment, and we cannot answer him so as to acquit ourselves of the imputation of any of them, but must, by silence, give consent that they are true; we cannot set aside one as foreign, another as frivolous, and another as false; we cannot, as to one, deny the fact, and plead not guilty, and, as to another, deny the fault, confess, and justify; no, we are not able to answer him, but must lay our hand upon our mouth, as Job did, (ch. xl. 4, 5,) and cry, Guilty, Guilty.

2. In combat; (v. 4.) Who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered? The answer is very easy; You cannot produce any instance, from the beginning of the world to this day, of any daring sinner, who has hardened himself against God, has obstinately persisted in rebellion against him, who did not find God too hard for him, and pay dear for his folly. They have not prospered or had peace; they have had no comfort in it nor success. What did ever man get by trials of skill, or trials of titles, with his Maker? All the opposition given to God, Our cutting briars and thorns before a consuming fire; so foolish, so fruitless, so destructive, is the attempt, Isa. xxxvii. 4. 1 Cor. x. 22. Apostate angels hardened themselves against God, but did not prosper, 2 Pet. ii. 4. The dragon fights, but is cast out, Rev. xii. 8. Wicked men harden themselves against God, dispute his wisdom, disobey his laws, are impatient for their sins, and incorrigible, under their afflictions; they reject the offers of his grace, and resist the stirrings of his Spirit; they make a show of wisdom in their threatenings, and resist him against his interest in the world; but have they prospered? Can they prosper? No, they are but treasuring up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath. That they roll this stone, will find it return upon them.

II. He proves it by showing what a God he is, with whom we have to do: He is wise in heart, and therefore we cannot answer him at law; he is mighty in strength, and therefore we cannot fight it out with him. He is beyond the reach of man's fineness that can be, to think to contend with a God of infinite wisdom and power, who knows every thing, and can do every thing; who can be neither outwitted nor overpowered. The Devil promised himself that Job, in the day of his affliction, would curse God, and speak ill of him, but, instead of that, he sets himself to honour God, and to speak highly of him. As much pained as he is, and as much taken up with his own miseries, when he has occasion to reflect on the wisdom and power of God, he forgets his complaints, dwells with delight, and exults with a flood of eloquence, upon that noble useful subject. Evidences of the wisdom and power of God he fethes, 1. From the kingdom of nature, in which the God of nature acts with an uncontrolled power, and does what he pleases; for all the orders and all the powers of nature are derived from him, and depend upon him.

1. When he pleases, he alters the course of nature, and turns back its streams, v. 5. 7. By the common law of nature, the mountains are settled, and are therefore called everlasting mountains; the earth is established, and cannot be removed, (Ps. xciii. 1.) and the pillars thereof are immovably fixed, the sun rises in its season, and the stars shine their influences on this lower world; but, when God pleases, he can not only drive out the common track, but invert the order, and change the
law, of nature. [1.] Nothing more firm than the mountains: when we speak of removing mountains, we mean that which is impossible; yet the divine power can make them change their seat; he removes them, and they know not; removes them whether they will or no; he can make them lower their heads; he can level them, and overturn them in his anger; he can spread the mountains as easily as the husbandman spreads the mole-hills, be they ever so high, and large, and rocky. Men have much ado to pass over them; but God, when he pleases, can make them pass away. He made Shinar shake, Ps. lxxviii. 8. The hills skipped, Ps. civ. 4. The everlasting mountains were moved, Hab. iii. 6.

[2.] Nothing more fixed than the earth on its axle-tree; yet God can, when he pleases, shake that out of its place,heave it off its centre, and make even its pillars to tremble: what seemed to support it, will itself need support, when God gives it a shock. See how much we are indebted to God's patience; God has power enough to shake the earth from under that guilty race of mankind, which makes it green under the burthen of sin; yet he spares them, Acts xxvii. 6. [3.] Nothing more constant than the rising sun, it never misses its appointed time; yet God, when he pleases, can suspend it. He that at first commanded it to rise, can countermand it. Once the sun was bid to stand, and another time to retreat, to show that it is still under the check of its great Creator. Thus great is God's power and how great then is his goodness; which causes his sun to shine even upon the evil and unthankful, though he could withhold it! He that made the stars also, can, if he pleases, seal them up, and hide them from our eyes. By earth- quakes, and subterraneous fires, mountains have sometimes been removed, and the earth shaken: in very dark and cloudy days and nights, it seems to us as if the sun were forbidden to rise, and the stars were scaled up, Acts xxvii. 20. It is sufficient to say, that Job here speaks of what God can do; but if we must understand it of what he has done in fact, all these verses may perhaps be applied to Noah's flood, when the mountains of the earth were shaken, and the sun and stars were darkened. The world that now is, we believe to be reserved for that fire which will consume the mountains, and melt the earth with its fervent heat, and which will turn the sun into darkness.

(2.) As long as he pleases, he preserves the settled course and order of nature; and this is a continued creation. He himself alone, by his own power, and without the assistance of any other, [1.] Spreads out the heaven; (v. 8.) not only did spread them out at first, but still spreads them out, that is, keeps them spread out; for otherwise they would of themselves roll together like a scroll of parchment. [2.] He treads upon the waves of the sea; that is, he suppresses them and keeps them under, that they return not upon the earth; (v. 9.) which is given as a reason why we should all fear God, and stand in awe of him, Jer. v. 22. He is mightier than the proud waves, Ps. xciii. 4—lxv. 7. [3.] He makes the constellations; three are named for all the rest, (v. 9.) Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and, in general, the chambers of the south; the stars of which these are composed, he made at first, and put into that order, and he still makes them, preserves them, and guides their motions; and he makes them to be what they are to man, and inclines the hearts of men to observe them, which the beasts are not capable of doing. Not only those stars which we see and give names to, but those also in the other hemisphere, about the antarctic pole, which never come in our sight, called here the chambers of the south, are under the divine direction and dominion. How wise is he then, and how mighty!

2. Evidences are here fetched from the kingdom of Providence, that special Providence, which is conversant about the affairs of the children of men. Consider what God does in the government of the world, and you will say, He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength.

(1.) He does many things and great, many and great to admiration, v. 10. Job here says the same that Eliphaz had said; (ch. v. 9.) and, in the original, in the very same words, not declining to speak after him, though now his antagonist. God is a great and excellentитель, Acts x. 12. His works of wonders are so many that we cannot number them, and so mysterious that we cannot find them out. O the depth of his counsels!

(2.) He acts invisibly and undiscerned, v. 11. He goes by me in his operations, and I see him not, I perceive him not; his way is in the sea, Ps. lxxvii. 19. The operations of second causes are commonly obvious to sense, but God doeth all about us, and we see not his works; Acts xxvi. 22. Our finite understandings cannot fathom his counsels, apprehend his motions, or comprehend the measures he takes. We are therefore incompetent judges of God's proceedings, because we know not what he doeth, or what he designeth. The arcana imperii—secrets of government, are things above us, which therefore we must not pretend to expound, or comment upon.

(3.) He acts with an uncontestable sovereignty, v. 12. He takes away our creature-comforts and confidences, when and as he pleases, takes away health, estate, relations, friends, takes away life itself; whatever goes, it is he that takes it; by what hand seer it is removed, his hand must be acknowledged in it; the Lord takes away, and who can hinder him? Who can turn him away? Marg. Who shall make him restore? So some. Who can dissuade him, or alter his counsels? Who can resist him, or oppose his operations? Who can control him, or call him to an account for it? What action can be brought against him? Or who will say unto him, What dost thou? Or, Why dost thou so? Dn. iv. 35. God is not obliged to give us a reason of what he doeth. The meaning of his proceedings we know not now; it will be time enough to know hereafter, when it will appear that what seemed now to be done by prerogative, was done in infinite wisdom, and for the best.

(4.) He acts with an irresistible power, which no creature can resist, v. 13. If God will not withdraw his anger, (which he can do when he pleases, for he is Lord of his anger, lets it out, or calls it in, according to his will,) the proud helpers do stoop under him; that is, He certainly breaks and crushes those that proudly help one another against him; proud men set themselves against God and his proceedings; in this opposition they join hand in hand. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, to throw off his yoke, to run down his truths, and to persecute his people. Men of Israel, help, Acts xxi. 28. Ps. lxiii. 8. If one enemy of God's kingdom fall under his judgment, the rest come proudly to help that, and think to deliver that out of his hand: but in vain; unless he pleases to withdraw his anger, (which he often does, for it is the day of his patience,) the proud helpers stoop under him, and fall with those whom they designed to help. Who knows the power of God's anger? Who is able to contend against him? Who is it that is able against his might? Who resists him, and prevails? He rules the sea, Ps. xlv. 9. He makes peace among the nations, Ps. lxxvi. 8.

14. How much less shall I answer him, and choose out my words to reason with him? 15. Whom, though I were righteous, yet
would I not answer, but I would make supplication to my Judge. 16. If I had called, and he had answered me: yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice. 17. For he breaketh me with a tempest, and multiplieth my wounds without cause. 18. He will not suffer me to take my breath, but filleth me with bitterness. 19. If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong: and if of judgment, who shall set me a time to plead? 20. If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. 21. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul: I would despise my life.

What Job had said of man's utter inability to contend with God, he here applies to himself, and, in effect, despair of gaining his favour; which (some think) arises from the hard thoughts he had of God, as one who, having set himself against him, righteously would, would be too hard for him. I rather think it arises from the sense he had of the imperfection of his own righteousness, and the dark and cloudy apprehensions which, at present, he had of God's displeasure against him.

I. He dares not dispute with God; (v. 14.) "If the proud helpers do stoop under him, how much less shall I, a poor weak creature, (so far from being a helper, that I am very helpless,) how shall I answer him? If I go about to reason with him, he will certainly be too hard for me." If the potter make the clay into a vessel of dishonour, or break in pieces the vessel he has made, shall the clay or the broken vessel reason with him? So absurd is the man who replies against God, or thinks to talk it out with him. No, let all flesh be silent before him.

II. He dares not insist upon his own justification before God. Though he vindicates his own integrity, he would not yield that he was a hypocrite and a wicked man, as they suggested, yet he would never plead it as his righteousness before God. I will never venture upon the covenant of innocency, nor think to come off by virtue of that.

Job knew so much of God, and knew so much of himself, that he durst not insist upon his own justification before God.

1. He knew so much of God, that he durst not stand a trial with him, v. 15. 19. He knew how to make his part good with his friends, and thought himself able to deal with them; but, though his cause had been better than it was, he knew it was to no purpose to debate it with God. (1.) God knew him better than he knew himself; and therefore, (v. 15.) "Though I were righteous in my own apprehension, and my own heart did not condemn me, yet God is greater than my heart, and knows those secret faults and errors of mine which I do not, and cannot understand, and is able to charge me with them, and therefore I will not answer." St. Paul speaks to the same purport; I know nothing by myself, am not conscious to myself of any reigning wickedness, and yet I am not hereby justified, 1 Cor. iv. 4. "I dare not put myself upon that issue, lest God charge that upon me which I did not discover in myself." Job will therefore waive that plea, and make supplication to his Judge; that is, will cast himself upon God's mercy, and not think to come off by his own merit.

(2.) He had no reason to think that there was anything in his prayers to recommend them to the divine acceptance, or to fetch in an answer of peace; no worth or worthiness at all, to which to ascribe their success; but it must be attributed purely to the grace and compassion of God, who answers before we call, and not because we call, and gives graciously, and in his extremities, and not for our prayers.

16. "If I had called, and he had answered, had given the thing I called to him for, yet, so weak and defective are my best prayers, that I would not believe he had therein hearkened to my voice; I could not say that he had saved with his right hand, and answered me," (Ps. ix. 5.) "but that he did it purely for his own name's sake." Bishop Patrick expounds it thus; If I had made supplication, and he had graced my desire, I would not think my prayer had done the business. Not for your sakes be it known to you.

(3.) His present miseries, which God had brought him into, notwithstanding his integrity, gave him too sensible a conviction, that, in the ordering and disposing of men's outward condition in this world, God acts by sovereignty, and though he never doth wrong to any, yet he doth not ever give full light to all; that is, the best do not always fare best, nor the wicked always worst. In every case, it serves the full and exact distribution of rewards and punishments for the future state. Job was not conscious to himself of any extraordinary guilt, and yet fell under extraordinary afflictions, v. 17, 18. Every man must expect the wind to blow upon him, and ruffle him, but Job was broken with a tempest; every man, in the midst of these thorns and briers, must expect to be scratched, but Job was wounded, and his wounds multiplied. Every man must expect a cross daily, and to taste sometimes of the bitter cup; but poor Job's troubles came so thick upon him, that he had no breathing time, he was filled with bitterness; and he presumes to say that all this was without cause, without any great provocation given. We have made the best of what Job said hitherto, though contrary to the judgment of many good interpreters; but here, no doubt, he spoke unadvisedly with his lips; he reflected on God's goodness, in saying that he was not suffered to take his breath, while yet he had such good use of his reason and speech to be able to talk thus; and on his justice, in saying that it was without cause. Yet it is true, that, as, on the one hand, there are many who are chargeable with more sin than the common infirmities of the human nature, and yet feel no more sorrow than that of the common calamities of human life; so, on the other hand, there are many who feel more than the common calamities of human life, and yet are conscious to themselves of no more than the common infirmities of human nature.

(4.) He was in no capacity at all to make his part good with God, v. 19. [1.] Not by force of arms; "I dare not enter the lists of the Almighty; for, if I speak of strength, and think to come off by that, lo, he is strong; stronger than I, and will certainly overpower me. There is no more room for dispute with him, than for commands legions much less with him that his legions of angels at command. Can thine heart endure, (thy courage and presence of mind,) or can thine hands be strong to defend thyself, in the days that I shall deal with thee? Ezek. xxii. 14. [2.] Not by force of arguments: "I dare not try the merits of the cause; if I speak of judgment, and insist upon my right, who will set me a time to plead? Power to plead is not for me, for, if there may appeal, no superior court to appoint a hearing of the cause, for He is supreme, and from Him every man's judgment proceeds, which he must abide by." 2. He knew so much of himself, that he durst not stand a trial, v. 20, 21. "If I go about to justify myself, and to plead righteousness of my own, my
Let this reconcile God's children to their troubles; they are but trials, designed for their honour and benefit; and, if God be pleased with them, it will not then be displeased; if he laugh at the trial of the innocent, knowing how glorious the issue of it will be, at destruction and famine let them also laugh, (ch. v. 22.) and triumph over them, saying, O death, where is thy sting!

On the other hand, the wicked are so far from being made the marks of God's judgments, that the earth is given into their hand, v. 24. They enjoy large possessions and great power, have what they will, and do what they will. Into the hand of the wicked one: in the original, it is singular; the Devil, that wicked one, is called the god of this world, and boasts that into his hands it is delivered, Luke iv. 6. Or, into the hand of a wicked man, meaning, (as Bishop Patrick and the Assembly's Annotations conjecture) some noted tyrant then living in those parts, whose great wickedness and great prosperity were well known both to Job and his friends. The wicked have the earth given them, but the righteous have heaven given them; and which is better— without heaven, or earth without heaven? God, in his providence, advances wicked men, while he covers the faces of those who are fit to be judges, who are wise and good, and qualified for government, and buries them alive in obscurity; perhaps suffers them to be run down and condemned, and to have their faces covered as criminals, by those wicked ones into whose hand the earth is given. We daily see this is done; if it be not God that doeth it, where and who is he that doeth it? To whom can it be ascribed but to Him that rules in the kingdoms of men, and gives them to whom he will? Dan. iv. 32.

2. Yet it must be owned that there is too much passion in what Job here says. The manner of expression is peevish; when he meant that God afflicts, he ought not to have said, He destroys both the perfect and the wicked: when he meant that God pleases himself with the trial of the innocent, he ought not to have said, He laughs at it, for he doth not afflict willingly. When the spirit is heated, either with dispute or with discontent, we have need to set a watch before the door of our lips, that we may observe decorum in speaking of divine things.

25. Now my days are swifter than a post: they flee away, they see no good. 26. They are passed away as the swift ships; as the eagle that hasteth to the prey. 27. If I say, I will forget my complaint, I will leave off my heaviness, and comfort myself; 28. I am afraid of all my sorrows, I know that thou wilt not hold me innocent. 29. If I be wicked, why then labour I in vain? 30. If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean; 31. Yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. 32. For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment. 33. Neither is there any days-man betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both. 34. Let him take his rod away from me, and let not his fear terrify me; 35. Then would I speak, and not fear him: but it is not so with me.

Job here grows more and more querulous, and
does not conclude this chapter with such awful expressions of God's wisdom and justice as he began with. The thing indulges a complaining humour, kinder to what indecencies, nay to what impurities, it will hurl them. The beginning of that strife with God is as the letting forth of water; therefore leave it off, before it be meddled with. When we are in trouble, we are allowed to complain to God, as the Psalmist, often, but must by no means complain of God, as Job here.

I. His complaint here of the passing away of the days of his prosperity is proper; (v. 23, 26.) "My days, that is, all my days, are ready to be cut off, never to return; gone of a sudden, gone ere I was aware: never did any courier that went express," (like Cush and Ahimaaz, "with good tidings, make such haste as all my comforts did from me; never did ship sail to its port, never did eagle fly upon his prey, with such incredible swiftness; nor does there remain any traces of my prosperity, any more than there does of an eagle in the air, or a shift in the sea," Prov. xxx. 19. See here, 1. How swift the march of time is; it is always upon the wing, hastening to its period; it stays for no man. What little need have we of pastimes, and what great need to redeem time, when time runs out, runs on so fast towards eternity, which comes as time goes! 2. How vain the enjoyments of time are, which we may be quite deprived of while yet time continues! Our day may be longer than the sun-shine of our prosperity; and when that is gone, it is as if it had not been. The remembrance of having done our duty will be pleasing afterward; so will not the remembrance of our having got a great deal of worldly wealth, when it is all lost and gone. They flee away, past recall; they see no good, and leave none behind them.

II. His complaint of his present uneasiness is excusable, v. 27, 28. 1. It should seem he did his endeavour to quiet and compose himself, as his friends advised him. That was the good he would do: he would fain forget his complaints against God, would leave off his heaviness and comfort himself, that he might be fit for converse both with God and man; but, 2. He found he could not do it; "I am afraid of all my sorrow: when I strive most against my trouble, it prevails most over me, and proves too hard for me!" It is easier, in such a case, to know what we should do than to do it; to know what temper we should be in to get into that temper, and keep in that temper, and patience to those that are in trouble, and to tell them they must forget their complaints, and comfort themselves; but it is not so soon done as said. Fear and sorrow are tyrannizing things, not easily brought into the subjection they ought to be kept in to religion and right reason.

III. But his complaint of God, as implacable and inexorable, was by no means to be excused. It was the language of his corruption. He denies nothing, and, at other times, would have been far from harbouring any such hard thoughts of God as now broke in upon his spirit, and broke out in these passionate complaints. Good men do not always speak like themselves; but God considers their frame, and the strength of their temptations; gives them leave afterward to unsay it by repentance, and will not lay it to their charge.

Job seems to speak here as he was afraid of obtaining from God any relief or redress of his grievances, though he should produce ever so good proofs of his integrity; "I know thou wilt not hold me innocent; my afflictions have continued so long upon me, and increased so fast, that I do not expect thou wilt ever clear up my innocency by delivering me out of them, and restoring me to a prosperous condition. Right or wrong, I must be treated as a wicked man; my friends will continue to think so of me, and God will do the same to himself, though I have never occasion to think so; why then do I labour in vain to clear myself, and maintain my own integrity?" v. 29. It is no purpose to speak in a cause that is already pre-judged. With men it is often labour in vain for the most innocent to go about to clear themselves; they must be adjudged guilty, though the evidence be ever so plain for them: but it is not so in our dealings with God, who is the Patron of oppressed innocency, and to whom it was never in vain to commit a righteous cause.

Nay, he not only desairs of relief, but expects that his endeavour to clear himself would render him yet more obnoxious; (v. 30, 31.) "If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my integrity ever so evident, it will be all to no purpose, judgment must go against me, thou shalt flunge me in the ditch," (the pit of destruction, so some, or rather the filthy kennel, or sewer,) "which will make me so offensive in the nostrils of all about me, that my own clothes shall abhor me, and I shall even loathe to touch myself." He saw his afflictions coming from God, those were the things that blackened him in the eye of his friends, and, upon that score, he complained of them, and of the continuance of them, as the ruin, not only of his comfort, but of his reputation. Yet these words are capable of a good construction. If we be ever so industrious to justify ourselves before men, and to preserve our credit with them, if we keep our hands so ever clean from the pollutions of gross sin, which fall under the eye of the world; yet God, who knows our hearts, can charge us with so much secret sin as will for ever take off all our pretensions to purity and innocency, and make us see ourselves odious in the sight of the holy God. Paul, while a Pharisee, made his hands very clean; but when the commandment came, and discovered to him his heart, made him know lust, that flung him in the ditch.

2. As if he despaired to have so much as a fair hearing with God, and that were hard indeed.

(1.) He complains that he was not upon even terms with God; (v. 32.) "He is not a man, as I am. I could venture to dispute with a man like myself, (the potsherds may strive with the potsherds of the earth,) but he is infinitely above me, and therefore I dare not enter the lists with him, I shall certainly be confounded by him; God is not a man as we are. Of the greatest princes we may say, "They are men as we are," but not of the great God. His thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours, and we must not measure him by ourselves. Man is foolish and weak, frail and fickle, but God is not. We are depending, dying, creatures; he the independent and immortal Creator; [2.] The consideration of this should keep us very humble, and cause us to refer the matter.

(2.) That there was no arbitrator or umpire to adjust the differences between him and God, and to determine the controversy; (v. 33.) Neither is there any dayman. This complaint that there was not, is, in effect, a wish that there were, and so the LXX read it; O that there were a mediator between us, an umpire between God and man. But no creature was capable of being a referee, and therefore he must even refer it still to God himself, and resolve to acquiesce in his judgment. Our Lord Jesus is the blessed Dayman, who has mediated between Heaven and earth, has laid his hand upon us both; to him the Father has committed all judgment, and we must: but this matter was not then brought to so clear a light as it is now by the ges-
pel, which leaves no room for such a complaint as this.

(3.) That the terrors of God, which set themselves in array against him, put him into such confusion, that he knew not how to address himself to God with the confidence with which he was formerly wont to approach him; (v. 34, 35.) “Beside the distance which I am kept at by his infinite transcendency, his present dealings with me are very discouraging. Let him take his rod away from me;” he means not so much his outward afflictions, as the lead which lay upon his spirit from the apprehensions of God’s wrath; that was his fear which terrified him; “Let that be removed, let me recover the sight of his mercy, and not be surprised with the sight of nothing but his terrors, and then I would speak, and order my cause before him. But it is not so with me, the cloud does not at all scatter, the wrath of God still fastens upon me, and preys on my spirits, as much as ever; and what to do I know not.”

From all this let us take occasion, [1.] To stand in awe of God, and to fear the power of his wrath. If good men have been put into such consternation by it, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? [2.] To pity those that are wounded in spirit, and pray earnestly for them, because in that condition they know not how to pray for themselves. [3.] Carefully to keep up good thoughts of God in our minds, for hard thoughts of him are the inlets of much mischief. [4.] To bless God that we are not in such a disconsolate condition as poor Job was here in, but that we walk in the light of the Lord; let us rejoice therein, but rejoice with trembling.

CHAP. X.

Job owns here that he was full of confusion; (v. 15.) and as he was, so was his discourse: he knew not what to say, and perhaps sometimes scarcely knew what he said. In this chapter, I. He complains of the hardships he was under; (v. 1. 7.) and then comforts himself with this, that he was in the hand of the God that made him, and pleads that, v. 8., 13. II. He complains again of the severity of God’s dealings with him, (v. 14., 17.) and then comforts himself with this, that death would put an end to his troubles, v. 18., 22.

1. My soul is weary of my life: I will leave my complaint upon myself; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. 2. I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; show me wherefore thou contendest with me. 3. Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress, that thou shouldest despise the work of thy hands, and shine upon the counsel of the wicked? 4. Hast thou eyes of flesh? or seest thou as man seeth? 5. Are thy days as the days of man? are thy years as man’s days? 6. That thou inquirest after mine iniquity, and searchest after my sin? 7. Thou knowest that I am not wicked; and there is none that can deliver out of thy hand.

Here is,

I. A passionate resolution to persist in his complaint, v. 1. Being daunted with the dread of God’s majesty, so that he could not plead his cause with him, he resolves, to give himself some case by giving vent to his sentiments. He begins with vehement language, “My soul is weary of my life, weary of this body, and impatient to get clear of it, fallen out with life, and displeased at it, sick of it, and longing for death.” Through the weakness of grace, he went contrary to the dictates even of nature itself. We should act more like men, did we act more like saints: faith and patience would keep us from being weary of our lives, (and cruel to them, as some read it,) even then when Providence has made the time of our days so short; for that is to be weary of God’s correction. Job, thinking of his life, and having ease no other way, resolves to complain, resolves to speak: he will not give vent to his soul by violent hands, but he will give vent to the bitterness of his soul by violent words. Losers think they may have leave to speak; and unbridled passions, as well as unbridled appetites, are apt to think it an excuse for their excursions, that they cannot know what we have wisdom and grace for, but to keep the mouth shut. Job’s correction speaks here, yet grace puts in a word: 1. He will complain, but he will leave his complaint upon himself: he would not impeach God, nor charge him with unrighteousness or unkindness; but, though he knew not particularly the ground of God’s controversy with him, and the cause of action, yet, in the general, he would suppose it to be in himself, and willingly bear all the blame. 2. He will speak, but he will not, in the character of his soul, that he will express, not his settled judgment. If I speak amiss, it is not I, but sin that dwells in me, not my soul, but its bitterness.

II. A humble petition to God. He will speak, but the first word shall be a prayer, and, as I am willing to understand it, it is a good prayer, v. 2. 1. That he might be delivered from the sting of his afflictions, which is sin; “Do not condemn me, do not separate me for ever from thee. Though I lie under the cross, let me not lie under the curse, though I smart by the rod of a Father, let me not be cut off by the sword of a Judge. Thou dost correct me, I will bear that as well as I can, but O do not condemn me!” It is the comfort of those who are in Christ Jesus, that, though they are in affliction, there is no condemnation to them, Rom. viii. 1. Nay, they are chastened of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world, 1 Cor. xi. 32. This, therefore, we should deprecate above all things the, when we are in affliction; “However thou art pleased to deal with me, Lord, do not condemn me; my friends condemn me, but do not thou.” 2. That he might be made acquainted with the true cause of his afflictions, and that is sin too; Lord, show me wherefore thou contendest with me. When God afflicts us, he contends with us; when he contends with us, there is always a reason. He is never angry without a cause, though we are, and it is desirable to know what the reason is, that we may repent of, m. r. ti, and forsake, the sin for which God has a controversy with us: in inquiring it out, let conscience have leave to do its office, and to deal faithfully with us, as Gen. xlii. 21.

III. A peevish expostulation with God concerning his dealings with him. Now he speaks in the bitterness of his soul indeed, not without some ill-natured reflections upon the righteousness of his God. He thinks it unbecoming the goodness of God, and the mercifulness of his nature, to deal so hard with his creature, as to lay upon him more than he can bear; (v. 3.) Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress? No, certainly it is not; what he approves not in men, (Lam. iii. 34-36.) he will not do himself. “Lord, in dealing with me, thou seemest to oppress thy subject, to despise thy workmanship, and to contemn thine enemies. Now, God, what is the meaning of this? Such is the case, that this cannot be a pleasure to thee; and such is thy name, that it cannot be an honour to thee; why then dealst thou thus with me? What is the fit there is in my blood?” Far be it from Job to
think that God did him wrong, but he is quite at a
loss how to reconcile his providences with his jus-
tice, as good men have often been, and must wait
until the day shall declare it. Let us, therefore,
now harbour no hard thoughts of God, because we
shall then see there was no cause for them.

2. He thinks it unbecoming the infinite know-
ledge of God to put a prisoner thus upon the rack,
as it were, by torture, to extort a confession from
him, v. 4.-6. (1.) He is sure that God does not discover things,
nor judge of them, as men do; he has not eyes of
flesh, (v. 4.) for he is a Spirit. Eyes of flesh can-
not see in the dark, but darkness hides not from
God. Eyes of flesh are but in one place at a time,
and can see but a little way; but the eyes of the
Lord are in every place, and run to and fro
through the whole earth.

(2.) According things are hid from eyes of flesh, the most curious and piercing;
there is a path which even the vulture’s eye hath not
seen: but nothing is, or can be, hid from the eye of
God, to which all things are naked and open. Eyes
of flesh see the outward appearance only, and
may be imposed upon, a decepito visus—an illusion of the
senses; but God sees every thing truly; his sight
cannot be deceived, for he tries the heart, and is a
Witness to the thoughts and intents of that. Eyes
of flesh discover things gradually, and when we go
to God for the heart of the matter, we lose the sight of
another, but God sees every thing at one view. Eyes
of flesh are soon tired, must be closed every night,
that they may be refreshed, and will shortly be
darkened by age, and shut up by death, but the
Keeper of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps, nor
does his sight ever decay. God sees not as man sees;
that is, he does not judge as man judges, at the best
secundum aegre et probata—according to what
is alleged and proved, as the thing appears, rather
than as it is, and too often according to the bias of
the affections, passions, prejudices, and interest;
but we are sure that the judgment of God is ac-
ording to truth, and that he knows truth, not by infor-
mation, but by his own inspection. Men discover
secret things by search, and examination of wit-
nesses, comparing evidence and giving conjectures
upon it, wheedling or forcing the parties concerned
to confess. But God needs not any of these ways
of discovery, he sees not as man sees. (2.) He is
sure that as God is not short-sighted
like man, so he is not short-lived; (v. 5.) “Are thy
days as the days of man, few and evil? Do they roll
on in succession, or are they subject to change, like
the days of man? No, by no means.” Men grow
wiser by experience, and more knowing by daily
observation; with them, truth is the daughter of
time, and therefore they must take time for their
searches, and, if one experiment fail, must try
another; but it is not so with God, to him nothing
is past; there is nothing future, but every thing present.
The days of time, by which the life of man is mea-
sured, are nothing to the years of eternity, in which
the life of God is wrapped up.

(3.) He therefore thinks it strange that God
should thus prolong his torture, and continue him
under the confinement of this affliction, and neither
bring him to a trial, nor grant him a release: as if
he must take time to inquire for his search after his
sin, v. 6. Not as if
Job thought that God did thus torment him, that he
might find occasion against him; but his dealings
with him had such an aspect, which was disho-
nourable to God, and would tempt men to think
him a hard master. “Now, Lord, if thou wilt not
consult my comfort, consult thine own honour; do
something for thy great name, and do not disgrace
the throne of thy glory,” Jer. xiv. 21.

3. He thinks it looked like an abuse of his omni-


potence, to keep a poor prisoner in custody, whom
he knew to be innocent, only because there was
none that could deliver him out of his hand; (v. 7.)
Thou knowest that I am not wicked. He had al-
ready owned himself a sinner, and guilty before
God, but he here stands to it, that he was not
wicked, not devoted to sin, not an enemy to God,
not a dissembler in his religion, that he had not
wickedly departed from his God, Ps. xlvii. 21.
“But there is none that can deliver out of thy hand,
and therefore there is no remedy; I must be con-
tent to lie there, waiting thy time, and throwing
myself on thy mercy, in submission to thy sovereign
will.” Here see, (1.) What ought to quiet us under
our troubles; that it is to no purpose to contend
with Omnipotence. (2.) What will abundantly
comfort us, if we are able to appeal to God, as Job
here, “Lord, thou knowest that I am not wicked.
I cannot say that I am not wanting, or I am not
weak; but, through grace, I can say, I am not
wicked: thou knowest I am not, for thou knowest I
love thee.”

8. Thy hands have made me, and fashion-
ed me together round about; yet thou dost
destroy me. 9. Remember, I beseech thee,
thou hast made me as the clay; and wilt thou
bring me into dust again? 10. Hast thou not poured me out as milk,
and curdled me like cheese? 11. Thou hast
clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast
fenced me with bones and sinews. 12.
Thou hast granted me life and favour, and
thy visitation hath preserved my spirit. 13.
And these things hast thou hid in thy heart:
I know that this is with thee.

In these verses, we may observe,
1. How Job eyes God as his Creator and Preser-
ver, and describes his dependence upon him as the
Author and Upholder of his being. This is one of
the first things we are all concerned to know and
consider.

(1.) That God made us: he is not our parents,
who are only the instruments of his power and
providence in our production. He made us, and not
we ourselves. His hands have made and fashioned
these bodies of ours, and every part of them; (v. 8.)
and they are fearfully and wonderfully made.
The soul also, which animates the body, is his gift.
He takes notice of both here. [1.] The body
is made as the clay, (v. 9.) cast into shape, into
this shape, as the clay is formed into a vessel,
according to the skill and will of the potter.
We are earthen vessels: mean in our original, and
soon broken in pieces, made as the clay: let not, there-
fore, the thing formed say unto him that formed it,
Why hast thou made me thus? We must not be
proud of our bodies, because the matter is from
the earth, yet not dishonour our bodies, because the
mould and shape are from the Divine Wisdom.
The formation of human bodies in the womb is
described by an elegant similitude, (v. 10.) Thou
hast fashioned my body out of clay, which, if it
were spread into a dish; and by an induction of some particu-
lars, (v. 11.) Though we come into the world
naked, yet the body is itself both clothed and arm-
ed; the skin and flesh are its clothing; the bones
and sinews are its armour, not offensive, but de-
servative. The vital parts, the heart and lungs, are thus
clothed, not to be seen; thus fenced, not to be put.
The admirable structure of human bodies is an illu-
s trious instance of the wisdom, power, and good-
ness, of the Creator. What pity it is that these
bodies should be instruments of unrighteousness, which are capable of being temples of the Holy Ghost! 2. The soul is the life, the soul is the man, and this is the gift of God; Thou hast granted me life, breathed into me the breath of life, without which the body would be but a worthless carcasse. God is the Father of spirits: he made us living souls, and endowed us with the power, endowment, life and breath of life; and thus we are a favour, a great favour, more than meat, more than raiment; a distinguishing favour, a favour that puts us into a capacity of receiving other favour. Now Job was in a better mind than he was when he quarrelled with life as a burthen, and asked, Why did I not from the womb? Or, by life and favour may be meant life and all the comforts of life, referring to his former prosperity. Time was, when he walked in the light of the divine favour, and thought, as David, that through that favour his mountain stood strong.

2. That God maintains us: having lighted the lamp of life, he does not leave it to burn upon its own stock, but continually supplies it with fresh oil; "Thy visitation has preserved my spirit, kept me alive, protected me from the adversaries of life, the death we are in the midst of, and the dangers we are continually exposed to; and blessed me with all the necessary supplies of life, and the daily supplies it needs and craves."

2. How he pleads this with God, and what use he makes of it. He reminds God of it; (v. 9.) Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me. What then?

(1.) Thou hast made me, and therefore thou hast a perfect knowledge of me, (Ps. xxviii. 11-13.) and needest not to examine me by scourging, nor to put me upon the rack for the discovering of what is within me.

(2.) Thou hast made me, as the clay, by an act of sovereignty; and wilt thou, by a like act of sovereignty, unmake me again? If so, I must submit.

(3.) Wilt thou destroy the work of thine own hands? It is a plea the saints have often used in prayer; We are the clay, and thou our potter, Isa. lxiv. 8. Thys hands have made me and fashioned me, Ps. cxvii. 3. So here, Thou madest me; and wilt thou destroy me? longer wilt thou will not destroy me, Wilt thou bring me into dust again? v. 9. Wilt thou not pity me? Wilt thou make me more ashamed, Wilt thou not spare and help me, and stand by the work of thine own hands? Ps. cxxviii. 8. Thou madest me, and knowest my strength; wilt thou then suffer me to be pressed above measure? Was I made to be made miserable? Was I preserved only to endure these calamities? If we plead this with ourselves as an inducement to duty, "God made me and maintains me, and therefore I will serve him and submit to him," we may plead it with God as an argument for mercy, Thou hast made me, new make me; I am thine, save me. Job knew not how to reconcile God's former favours and his present frowns, but concludes, (v. 13.) These things hast thou hid in thine heart; both are according to the counsel of thine own will, and, therefore, undoubtedly consistent, however they seem. When God thus strangely changes his ways, these are answers for it. They are hard to understand, but believe there are good reasons for it hid in his heart, which will be manifested shortly. It is not with us, or in our reach, to assign the cause, but I know that this is with thee. Known unto God are all his works.

14. If I sin, then thou markest me, and thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity. 15. If I be wicked, wo unto me; and if I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head. Vol. iii.—H

I am full of confusion; therefore see thou mine affliction; 16. For it increaseth. Thou huntest me as a fierce lion; and again thou shewest thyself marvellously upon me. 17. Thou renewest thy witnesses against me, and increasest thine indignation upon me. 18. Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb? Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me! 19. I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave. 20. Are not my days few? cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, 21. Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death; 22. A land of darkness, as darkness itself: and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness.

Here we have,

1. Job's passionate complaints. On that harsh and unpleasant string he harps much, in which, though he cannot be justified, he may be excused. He complained not for nothing, as the mourning Israelites, but had cause to complain. If we think it looks ill in him, let it be a warning to us to keep our temper better.

1. He complains of the strictness of God's judgment, and the rigour of his proceedings against him, and is ready to call it Summum jus—Justice bordering on severity. (1.) That he took all ad vantages against him; "If I sin, then thou markest me;" (v. 14.) If I do but take one false step, misplace a word, or cast a look awry, I shall be sure to hear of it. Conscience, thy deputy, will be sure to upbraid me with it, and to tell me, that this gripe, this twitch of pain, is to punish me for that. If God should thus mark iniquities, we are undone; but he does not thus mark them; though we sin, God does not deal in extremity with us. (2.) That he prosecuted those advantages to the utmost; "I will acquit me from mine iniquity. While his troubles continued, he would never take the comfort of his pardon, nor hear that voice of just and gladness; so hard is it to see love in God's heart, when we see frowns in his face, and a rod in his hand. (3.) That, whatever was his character, his case, at present, was very uncomfortable, v. 15. [1.] If he be wicked, he is certainly undone in the other world; If I be wicked, woe to me. Note, A sinful state is a woeful state. This we should each of us believe, as Job here; and apply it to ourselves; "If I be wicked, though prosperous, living in pleasure, yet woe to me." Some especially have reason to dread double woes if they were wicked; "I that have knowledge, that have made a great profession of religion, that have been so often under strong convictions, and have made so many fair promises; I that was born of such good parents, educated with such good education, that have lived in good families, and long enjoyed the means of grace, If I be wicked, woe, and a thousand woes, to me." [2.] If he be righteous, yet he dares not lift up his head; dares not answer as before, ch. ix. 15. He is so oppressed and overwhelmed with his troubles, that he cannot look up with any comfort or confidence. Without were fightings, within were fears; so that, between both, he was full of confusion: not only confusion of face, for the disgrace he was brought down to, and the censures of his friends,
but confusion of spirit; his mind was in a constant trouble, and he was almost distracted, Ps. lxxxviii. 15.

2. He complains of the severity of the execution. God (he thought) did not only punish him for every failure, but punish him in a high degree, v. 16, 17. His affliction was, (1.) Grievous, very grievous, marvellous, exceeding marvellous. God hunted him out, as a fierce lion hunts and runs down his prey. God was not only strange to him, but showed himself marvellous upon him, by bringing him into uncommon troubles, and so making him a prodigy, a wonder unto many. All wondered that God would inflict, and that Job could bear, so much. That which made his afflictions most grievous, was, that he felt God's indignation in them; that was it that made them taste so bitter, and lie so heavy. They were God's witnesses against him, tokens of his displeasure; this made the sores of his body wounds in his spirit. (2.) It was growing, still growing, worse and worse. This he insists much upon; when he hoped the tide would turn, and begin to ebb, still it flowed higher and higher. His affliction increased, and God's indignation in the affliction; he found himself no way better; these witnesses were renewed against him, that, if one did not reach to convict him, another might. Changes and war were against him. If there was and as a fierce lion hunts and runs down his prey; still he was kept in a state of war. As long as we are here in this world, we must expect that the clouds will return after the rain, and perhaps the sorest and sharpest trials may be reserved for the last. God was at war with him, and it was a great change. He did not use to be so, which aggravated the trouble, and made it truly marvellous. God usually shows himself kind to his people; if at any time he shows himself otherwise, it is his strange work, his strange act, and he doth in it show himself marvellous.

3. He complains of his life, and that ever he was born to all this trouble and misery; (v. 18, 19.) "If this was designed for my lot, why was I brought out of the womb, and not smothered there, or stifled in the birth?" This was the language of his passion, and it was a relapse into the sin he fell into before. He had just now called life a favour, (v. 12.) yet now he calls it a burden, and quarrels with God, as if God gave it, or used it, to torment him. Mr. Caryl gives this a good turn in favour of Job. "We may charitably suppose," (says he,) "that that which troubled Job was, that he was in a condition of life which (as he conceived) hindered the main end of life, which was the glorifying God. His harp was hung on the willow-trees, and he was quite out of tune for praising God. Nay, he feared lest his troubles should reflect dishonour upon God, and give occasion to his enemies to blaspheme; and, therefore, he wishes, O that I had given up the ghost! A godly man reckons that he lives to no purpose, if he do not live to the praise and glory of God." But, if that had been his meaning, it was grounded on a mistake, for we may glorify the Lord in the fires. But this use we may make of it, not to be over-fond of life, since the case has been such, sometimes, even with wise and good men, that we may be complained of it. Why should we dread giving up our lives, in love to be set on fire for men, since the time may come, when we may be ready to wish we had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen us? Why should we inordinately lament the death of our children in their infancy, that are as if they had not been, and are carried from the womb to the grave, when perhaps ourselves may sometimes wish it had been our own lot?

II. Job's humble requests. He prays,

1. That God would see his affliction, (v. 15.) take cognizance of his case, and take it into his compassionate consideration. Thus David prays, (Ps. xxv. 18.) "Look upon mine afflictions and my pain. Thus we should, in our troubles, refer ourselves to God, and may comfort ourselves with this, that he knows our souls in adversity.

2. That God would grant him some ease. If he could not prevail for the removal of his troubles, yet might he not have some intermission: "Let me, Lord, have a little time; let me not always be in extremity; O let me alone, that I may take comfort a little!" v. 20. Grant me some respite, some breathing time, some little enjoyment of myself." This he would reckon a great favour. Those that are not duly thankful for constant ease, should think how welcome one hour's ease would be, if they were in constant pain. Two things he pleads;

(1.) That life and its light were very short; "Are many days few?" v. 20. Yes, certainly, they are a very few; Lord, let them not be all miserable, all in the extremity of misery. I have but a little time to live, let me have some comfort of life while it does last." This pleads fastens on the goodness of God's nature, the consideration of which is very comfortable to an afflicted spirit. And if we would use this as a plea with God for mercy, "Are not many days few? Lord, pity me;" we should use it as a plea with ourselves, to quicken us to duty. "Are not many days few?" Do we always keep this in mind, and breathe out with these words, "Let the Almighty save me from the deep of death, and gather me unto his saints," Ps. lxxxv. 10. Let me have a little comfort before I die, that I may take leave of this world calmly, and not in such confusion as I am now in." Thus earnest should we be for grace, and thus should we plead; "Lord, renew me inwardly; Lord, sanctify me before I die, for then it will never be done."

See how he speaks here of the state of the dead.

[1.] It is a fixed state, whence we shall not return, even by praying, (Job xiii. 24.) "If I shall go to the land of the living, the land of the living." ch. vii. 10. At death, we must bid a final farewell, to this world. The body must then be laid where it will lie long, and the soul adjudged to that state in which it must be for ever. That had need be well done, which is to be done but once, and done for eternity.

[2.] It is a very melancholy state; so it appears to us. Holy souls, at death, remove to a land of light, where there is no death; but their bodies are left to the same condition and state of death. He heaps up expressions here of the same import, to show that he has as dreadful apprehensions of death and the grave as other men naturally have, so that it was only the extreme misery he was in, that made him wish for it. Come and let us look a little into the grave, and we shall find, First, That there is no order there; it is without any order; perpetual night, and no successions of day. All there lie on the same level, and there is no distinction between prince and peasant, but the servant is there free from his master, ch. iii. 19. No order is observed in bringing people to the grave, not the oldest first, not the richest, not the poorest, and yet every one in his own order, the order appointed by the God of life. Secondly, That there is no light there. In the grave there is thick darkness, darkness that cannot be felt indeed, yet cannot but be feared by those that enjoy the
light of life. In the grave there is no knowledge, no comfort, no joy, no praising God, no working out our salvation, and therefore no light. Job was so much ashamed that others should see his sores, and so much afraid to see them himself, that the darkness of the grave, which would hide them and huddle them up, would, upon that account, be welcome to him. Darkness comes upon us, and therefore let men work while we have the light with us. The grave being a land of darkness, it is well we are carried thither with our eyes closed, and then it is all one. The grave is a land of darkness to man; our friends that are gone thither, we reckon removed into darkness, Ps. lxxxviii. 18. But that it is not so to God, will appear by this, that the dust of the bodies of the saints, though scattered, though mingled with other dust, will none of it be lost, for God’s eye is upon every grain of it; and it shall be forthcoming in the great day.

CHAP. XI.

Poor Job’s wounds were yet bleeding, his sorer still runs and ceases not, but none of his friends bring him any oil, any balm; Zophar, the third, pours into them as much vinegar as the two former had done. 1. He exhibits a very harsh charge against Job, and does in justifying himself, v. 1–4. 2. He appeals to God for his conviction, and begs that God would take him to task, (v. 5.) and that Job might be made sensible, 1. Of God’s无限 wisdom and 2. Of his inexhaustible riches; v. 6–9. 2. Of his unsearchable perfections, v. 7–9. 3. Of his incontestable sovereignty, and uncontrollable power, v. 10. 4. Of the cognizance he takes of the children of men, v. 11, 12. 3. He assures him, that, upon his repentance and reformation, (v. 13, 14.) God would restore him to his former prosperity and safety; (v. 15–19.) but that if he were wicked, it was in vain to expect it, v. 20.

THEN answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said, 2. Should not the multitude of words be answered? and should a man full of talk be justified? 3. Should thy lies make men hold their peace? and when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed? 4. For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes. 5. But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee; 6. And that he would show thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! Know, therefore, that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.

It is sad to see what intemperate passions even wise and good men are sometimes betrayed into by the heat of disputation; of which Zophar here is an instance. Eliphaz began with a very modest preface, ch. iv. 2. Bildad was a little more rough upon Job, ch. viii. 2. But Zophar falls upon him without mercy, and gives him very bad language; Should a man full of talk be justified? And should thy lies make men hold their peace? Is this the way to comfort Job? No, nor to convince him neither. Does this become one that appears as an advocate for God and his justice? Tantane animis celestibus iret? In verba enim can such remittas demell? They that engage not with God will find it very hard to keep their temper. All the wisdom, caution, and resolution, they will have, will be little enough to prevent their breaking out into such indecencies as we here find Zophar guilty of.

1. He represents Job otherwise than what he was; (v. 2, 3.) he would have him think idle and impertinent in his discourse, and one that loved to hear himself talk; he gives him the lie, and calls him a mocker; and all this, that it might be looked upon as a piece of justice to chastise him. Those that have a mind to fall out with their brethren, and to fall foul upon them, it is necessary to put the worst colours they can upon them and their performances, and, right or wrong, to make them odious. We have read and considered Job’s discourses in the foregoing chapters, and have found them full of God’s secrets, to the purpose; that his principles are right, his reasoning sound, the force of his expressions weighty and very considerable, and that what there is in them of heat and passion, a little candour and charity will excuse and overlook; yet Zophar here invidiously represents him,

(1.) As a man that never considered what he said, but uttered what came uppermost, only to make a noise with the multitude of words, hoping by that means to carry his cause, and run down his reprovers. Should not the multitude of words be answered? Truly, sometimes it is no great matter whether it be or no; silence perhaps is the best conclusion of impertinence, and puts the greatest contempt upon it; Answer not a fool according to his folly. But, if it be answered, let reason and grace have the answering of it, not pride and passion. Should a man full of talk, (Marg. a man of lies, that is, all tongue, vox et praeterea nihil—mere voices,) be justified? Should he be justified in his logic, in his reasonings, in his effect, he that has so much to expound it for? No, for in the multitude of words there wanteth no sin. Should he be justified by it? Shall many words pass for valid pleas? Shall he carry the day with the flourishes of language? No, he shall not be accepted with God, or any wise men, for his much speaking, Matth. vi. 7.

(2.) As a man that made no conscience of what he said, a liar, and one that hoped, by the impudence of lies, to silence his adversaries; (Should thy lies make men hold their peace,) a knacker; one that bantered all mankind, and knew how to false colours upon any thing, and was not ashamed to impose upon every one that talked with him. When thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed? Is it not time to speak, to stem such a violent tide as this? Job was not mad, but spoke the words of truth and soberness, and yet is thus misrepresented. Eliphaz and Bildad had answered him, and said what they could to make him ashamed; it was, therefore, no instance of Zophar’s generoso, to mock upon a man so violently, who was already thus harassed: here were three matched against one.

2. He charges Job with saying that which he had not said; (v. 4.) Thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes. And what if he had said so? It is true that Job was sound in the faith, and orthodox in his judgment, and speak better of God than his friends did. If he had expressed himself unwarly, yet it did not therefore follow but that Job might say true; but he charges him with saying, I am clean in thine eyes. Job had not said so: he had, indeed, said, Thou knowest that I am not wicked; (ch. v. 7.) but he had also said, I have sinned, and never pretended to a spotless perfection. He had, indeed, maintained that he was not a hypocrite, as they charged him; but to infer thence that he would not own himself a sinner, was an unfair insinuation. We ought to put the best construction on the words and actions of our brethren that they will bear; but the true readers are tempted to put the worst.

3. He appeals to God, and wishes him to appear against Job. So very confident is he that Job is in the wrong, that nothing will serve him but that God must immediately appear to silence and condemn him. We are commonly ready with too much assurance to interest God in our quarrels, and to conclude that if he would but speak, he would take our part, and speak for us; as Zophar here,
O that God would speak, for he would certainly open his lips against thee; whereas, when God did speak, he opened his lips for Job against his three friends. We ought indeed to learn all controversies to be determined by the judgment of God, which we are sure is according to truth; but they are not always in the right, who are most forward to appeal to that judgment, and prejudge it against their antagonists.

Zophar despairs to convince Job himself, and therefore desires God would convince him of two things, which it is good for every one of us duly to consider, and under all our afflictions, cheerfully to submit to. (1.) The unsearchable depth of God's counsels. Zophar cannot pretend to do it, but he desires that God himself should show Job so much of the secrets of the divine wisdom, as might convince him that they are, at least, double to that which is, v. 6. Note, [1.] There are secrets in the divine wisdom; *arcana imperitī*—state secrets. God's way is in the sea; clouds and darkness are round about him; he has reasons of state which we cannot fathom, and must not pray into. [2.] What we know of God, is nothing to what we cannot know. What is hid, is more than double to what appears, Eph. iii. 9. [3.] By employing ourselves in adoring the depth of those divine counsels of which we cannot find the bottom, we shall very much tranquillize our minds under the afflictive hand of God. [4.] God knows a great deal more evil of us than we do of ourselves; so some understand it. When God gave David a sight and sense of sin, he said that he had in the *hidden part* made him to know wisdom, Ps. li. 6.

(2.) The unexceptionable justice of his proceedings; "Know, therefore, that how sore soever the correction is, that thou art under, *God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserves;" or, as some read it, "He remitteth part of thine iniquity, and doth not deal with thee according to the full demerit of it." Note, [1.] When the debt of duty is not paid, it is justice to insist upon the debt of punishment. [2.] Whatever punishment is inflicted upon us in this world, we must own that it is less than our iniuries deserve, and therefore, instead of complaining of our troubles, we must be thankful that we are out of hell, Lam. iii. 39. Ps. ciii. 10.

7. Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? 8. It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? 9. The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. 10. If he cut off, and shut up, or gather together, then who can hinder him? 11. For he knoweth vain men: he seeth wickedness also: will he not then consider it? 12. For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt.

Zophar here speaks very good things concerning God and his greatness and glory, concerning man and his vanity and folly: these two compared together, and duly considered, will have a powerful influence upon submission to all the dispensations of the Divine Providence.

I. See here what God is, and let him be adored. 1. He is an incomprehensible Being, infinite and immense, whose nature and perfection, our finite understandings cannot possibly form any adequate conceptions of, and whose counsels and actions we cannot therefore, without the greatest presumption, pass a judgment upon. We, that are so little acquainted with the divine nature, are incompetent judges of the Divine Providence; and, when we curse the dispensations of God, talk of things that we do not understand. We cannot find out God; how dare we then find fault with him? Zophar here shows,

(1.) That God's nature infinitely exceeds the capacities of our understandings; "Canst thou find out God? find him out to perfection?" No, What canst thou do? What canst thou know? vs. 7, 8. Thou, a poor, weak, short-sighted creature, a worm of the earth, that art but of yesterday? Thou, though ever so inquisitive after him, ever so desirous and industrious to find him out, yet darrest thou attempt the search, or canst thou hope to speed in it?" We may by searching find God, (Acts xviii. 27.) but we cannot find him out in any thing he is pleased to conceal; we may apprehend him, but cannot comprehend him; we may know that he is, but cannot know what he is; the eye can see the ocean, but not see over it; we may, by a humble, diligent, and believing search, find out, and learn something of God, but cannot find him out to perfection; we may know, but cannot know fully, what God is, or find out his work from the beginning to the end, Excl. iii. 11. Note, God is unsearchable. The ages of his eternity cannot be numbered, nor the spaces of his immensity measured: the depths of his wisdom cannot be fathomed, nor the reaches of his power bounded: the brightness of his glory can never be described, nor an inventory be made of the treasures of his goodness. This is a good reason why we should always speak of God with humility and caution, and never prescribe to him or quarrel with him; why we should be thankful for what he has revealed of himself, and long to be there where we shall see him as he is, 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10.

(2.) That it infinitely exceeds the limits of the whole creation; "It is higher than heaven, (so some read it,) deeper than hell, the great abyss, longer than the earth, and broader than the sea, many parts of which are, to this day, undiscovered, and more were then. It is quite out of our reach to comprehend God's nature; such knowledge is too wonderful for us, Ps. cxxxix. 6. We cannot fathom God's designs, nor find out the reasons of his proceedings; his judgments are a great deep. St. Paul attributes such immeasurable dimensions to God's wisdom. For we know that God doth not go about like man, to search out; as Zophar here attributes to divine wisdom, and yet recommends it to our acquaintance, (Eph. iii. 18,) That ye may know the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of the love of Christ.

2. God is a sovereign Lord; (v. 10.) If he cut off by death, (Marg. If he make a change, for death is a change; if he make a change in nations, in families, in the posture of our affairs,) if he shut up in hell, or in the bottom of the sea, or in the mouth of the pit, (Ps. lxxvi. 11.) if he seize any creature as a hunter his prey, he will gather it, (so Bishop Patrick,) and who shall force him to restore? Or, if he gather together, as tares for the fire, or, if he gather to himself man's spirit and breath, (ch. xxxiv. 14.) then who can hinder him? Who can either arrest the sentence, or oppose the execution? Who can control his power, or array his wisdom and justice? He can do all things, and all things he doth; he can give to all and to none, and he can cause all things to be done, and all things to be undone, all to nothing, or to their first chaos again; if he that separated between light and darkness, dry land and sea, at first, please to gather them together again; if he that made, unmake, who can turn him away, alter his mind, stay his hand, impede or impede his proceedings?

3. God is a strict and just overseer of the children of men; (v. 11.) He knoweth vain men. We know little of him, but he knows us perfectly; he
sees wickedness also, not to approve it, (Hab. i. 13.) but to animadvert upon it. (1.) He observes vain men; (such all are, every man, at his best estate, is altogether vanity;) and he considers it in his dealings with them. He knows what the projects and hopes of vain men are, and can blast and defeat them, the workings of their foolish fancies; he sits in heaven, and laughs at them. He takes knowledge of the vanity of men, that is, their little sins, so soon as they think and vanities, and unsteadiness in that which is good. (2.) He observes bad men; he sees gross wickedness also, though acted ever so secretly, and ever so artfully palliated and disguised. All the wickedness of the wicked is naked and open before the all-seeing eye of God; will he not then consider it? Yes, certainly he will, and will reckon for it, though for a time he seems to keep silence.

II. See here what man is; and let him be humbled; (v. 12.) God sees this concerning vain man, that he would be wise, would be thought so, though he is born like a wild ass's colt, so sottish and foolish, unteachable and untameable. See what man is: 1. He is a vain creature; empty; so the word is: God made him full, but he emptied himself, impoverished himself, and now he is raca, a creature that has nothing in him. 2. He is a foolish creature, become like the beasts that perish, (Ps. cxix. 22.) an idiot, born like an ass, the most stupid animal, an ass's colt, not yet brought to any service. If ever he come to be good for any thing, it is owing to the grace of Christ, who once, in the day of his triumph, served himself of an ass's colt. 3. He is a wilful ungovernable creature. An ass's colt may be made good for something, but the wild ass's colt will never be reclaimed, nor regards the crying of the driver. See Job xxxix. 5. 7. Man thinks him as his own liberty, and his own master; but the wild ass's colt does what is done to the wilderness, (Jer. ii. 24.) eager to gratify his own appetites and passions. 4. Yet he is a proud creature and self-conceited. He would be wise, would be thought so, values himself upon the honour of wisdom, though he will not submit himself to the laws of wisdom. He would be wise, that is, he reaches after forbidden wisdom, and, like his first parents, aiming to be wise above what is written, loses the tree of life for the tree of knowledge. Now, is such a creature as this fit to contend with God, or call him to an account? Did we but better know God and ourselves, we should better know how to conduct ourselves toward God.

13. If thou prepare thy heart, and stretch out thy hands toward him; 14. If iniquity be in thy hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles. 15. For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear: 16. Because thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away: 17. And thine age shall be clearer than the noon-day; thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning. 18. And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope; yea, thou shalt dig about thee, and thou shalt take thy rest in safety. 19. Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid; yea, many shall make suit unto thee. 20. But the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost.

Zophar, as the other two, here encourages Job to hope for better times, if he would but come to a better temper.

1. He gives him good counsel, (v. 13, 14.) as Eliphaz did, (ch. v. 8.) and Bildad, ch. vii. 5. He would have him repent, and return to God. Observe the steps of that return;

1. He must look within, and get his mind changed, and the tree made good. He must prepare his heart: there is no work of conversion and reformation must begin. The heart that wandered from God must be reduced; that was defiled with sin and put into disorder, must be cleansed and put in order again; that was wavering and unfixed, must be settled and established: so the word here signifies. The heart is then prepared to seek God, when it is determined and fully resolved to make a business of it, and to go through with it.

2. He must look up, and stretch out his hand toward God, that is, must set up himself to take hold on God; must pray to him with earnestness and importunity, striving in prayer, and with expectation to receive mercy and grace from him.

To give the hand to the Lord, signifies to yield ourselves to him and to covenant with him. 2 Chron. xxx. 8. This Job must do, and, for the doing of it, must prepare his heart. Job had prayed, but Zophar would have him to pray in a better manner, not as an appellant, but as a petitioner and humble supplicant.

3. He must amend what was amiss in his own conversation, else his prayers would be ineffectual; (v. 14.) If iniquity be in thy hand, that is, "If there be any sin, which thou dost yet live in the practice of, put it far away, forsake it with detestation and a holy indignation, steadily resolving not to return to it, nor ever to have anything more to do with it," Ezek. xxvii. 31. Hos. xiv. 9. Isa. xxx. 22. If any of the gains of iniquity, any wealth gotten by fraud or oppression, be in thine hand, make restitution of it," (as Zachaeus, Luke xix. 8.) "and shake thy hands from holding it." Isa. xxxiii. 15. The guilt of sin is not removed, if the gain of sin be not restored.

4. He must do his utmost to reform his family too; "Let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles; let not thy house harbour or shelter any wicked persons, and not suffer any wickedness to be gotten by wickedness." He suspected that Job's great household had been ill governed, and that where there were many, there were many wicked, and the ruin of his family was the punishment of the wickedness of it; and therefore, if he expected God should return to him, he must reform what was amiss there, and, though wickedness might come into his tabernacles, he must not suffer it to dwell there, Ps. cx. 3, &c.}

II. He assures him of comfort if he took this counsel, v. 15, &c. If he would repent and reform, he should, without doubt, be easy and happy, and all would be well. Perhaps Zophar might inculcate, that, unless God did speedily make such a change as this in his condition, he and his friends would be confirmed in their opinion of him as a hypocrite and a dissembler with God; a great truth, however, is conveyed, That the work of righteousness will be in the hands of such and such a person, with the greatest quietness and assurance for ever, Isa. xxxiii. 17.

Those that sincerely turn to God, may expect,

1. A holy confidence toward God; "Then shalt thou lift up thy face toward heaven without spot; thou mayest come boldly to the throne of grace," and not with that terror and amazement expressed, ch. ix. 34. If our hearts condemn us not for hypocrisy and impenitency, then have we confidence in our approaches to God and expectations from him. 1 John iii. 21. If we are looked upon in the face,
of the Anointed, our faces, that were dejected, may be lifted up; that were polluted, being washed with the blood of Christ(20) may be lifted up without spot. We may draw near in full assurance of faith, when we are sprinkled from evil conscience, Heb. x. 22. Some understand this of the clearing up of his credit before men, Ps. xxxvii. 6. If we make our peace with God, we may with cheerfulness look our friends in the face.

2. A holy composition in themselves; *Thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear, nor be afraid of evil tidings, thy heart being fixed*, Ps. cxvii. 7. Job was now full of confusion, (ch. x. 15.) while he looked up to God as his Enemy, and quarrelled with him; but Zophar assures him, that, if he would submit and humble himself, his mind would be stayed, and he would be freed from those frightful apprehensions he had of God, which put him into such an agitation. The less we are frightened, the more we are fixed; and, consequently, the more fit we are for our services and for our sufferings.

3. A comfortable reflection upon their past troubles; (v. 16.) "*Thou shalt forget thy misery, as the mother forgets her travelling pains, for joy that the child is born*." Job had endeavoured to forget his complaint, (ch. ix. 27.) but found he could not; his soul had still in remembrance the wormwood and the gall; but he submits to God, to the will of God, and makes it a point to forget it: let him by faith and prayer bring his griefs and cares to God, and leave them with him, and then he shall forget them. Where sin sits heavily, affliction sits lightly. If we duly remember our sins, we shall, in comparison with them, forget our misery; much more if we obtain the comfort of a sealed pardon and a sealed peace. He whose iniquity is forgiven shall not say, I am sick, but forget that, Isa. xxxiii. 24. Yet they are sensible of the respect of their future peace. This Zophar here thinks to please Job with, in answer to the many despairing expressions he had used, as if it were no purpose for him to hope ever to see good days again in this world; "*Yea, but thou mayest, *" (says Zophar,) "*and good nights too.*"

A blessed change he here puts him in hopes of. (1.) That though now his light was eclipsed, it should shine out again, and brighter than ever, v. 17. That even his setting sun should out-shine his noon-day sun, and his evening be fair and clear as the morning, in respect both of honour and pleasure; that his light should shine out of obscurity; (Isa. Ixvii. 10.) and the thick and dark cloud, from behind which his sun should break forth, would serve as a foil to its lustre. That it should shine even in old age, and those evil days should be good days for him. Note, They that truly turn to God then begin to shine forth; their path is as the shining light which increases, the period of their day will be the perfection of it, and their evening to this world their morning to a better. (2.) That though now he was in a continual fear and terror, he should live in a holy rest and security, and find himself continually safe and easy; (v. 18.) *Thou shalt be secure, because there is hope.* Note, Those who have a good hope, through grace, in God, and of heaven, are certainly safe, and have reason to be secure, how difficult soever the times are through which they pass in this world. He that walks uprightly may thus walk surely, because, though there are trouble and danger, yet there is hope that all will be well at last. Hope is an anchor of the soul, Heb. vi. 19. "*Thou shalt dig about thee, *" that is, "*Thou shalt be as safe as an army in its intrenchments.*" They that submit themselves to God's government shall be taken under his protection, and then they are safe both day and night. [1.] By day, when they employ themselves abroad; "*Thou shalt dig in safety, thou and thy servants for thee, and not be again set upon by the plunderers, who fell upon thy servants at plough*, " ch. i. 14. It is no part of the promised prosperity, that he should live in idleness, but that he should have a calling and follow it, and, when he was about the business of it, should be under the divine protection; *Thou shalt dig and be safe, nor rob and be safe; the way of duty is the way of safety.* [2.] By night, when they repose themselves at home; *Thou shalt take thy rest (and the sleep of the labouring man is sweet) in safety, notwithstanding the dangers of the darkness.* The pillar of cloud by day shall be a pillar of fire by night; *"Thou shalt lie down, (v. 19.) not forced to wander where there is no place to lay thy head on, not forced to watch and sit up in expectation of assaults; but thou shalt go to bed at bed-time, and not only shall not canker thee on thee, but shall make thee afraid, or so much as give thee an alarm."

Note, It is a great mercy to have quiet nights and undis turbed sleeps; these say so that are within the hearing of the noise of war. And the way to be quiet, is, to seek unto God, and keep ourselves in his love. Nothing needs make those afraid, who return to God as their rest, and take him for their habitation. (3.) That though now he was slighted, yet he should be courted; "*Many shall make suit to thee, and think it their interest and their advantage to do thee good.*" Suit is made to those that are eminently wise or reputed to be so, that are very rich, or in power. Zophar knew Job so well, that he foresaw, how low soever this present ebb was, if once the tide turned, it would flow as high as ever, and he would be again the darling of his country. They that rightly make suit to God, will probably see the day when others will make suit to them, as the foolish virgins to the wise, Gen. xvi. 8. "*Many shall make suit to thee, for their good.*"

Lastly, Zophar concludes with a brief account of the doom of wicked people; (v. 20.) But the eyes of the wicked shall fail. It should seem, he suspected that Job would not take his counsel, and here tells him what would then come of it, setting death as well as life before him. See what will come of those who persist in their wickedness, and will not be reformed. 1. They shall not reach the goal they flatter themselves with the hopes of, in this world and in the other. Disappointments will be their doom, their shame, their endless torment. Their eyes shall fail with expecting that which will never come. When a wicked man dieth, his expectation perisheth, Prov. vii. 20. Their hope shall be as a puff of breath, (Marg.) vanished and gone, past recall: or their hope will perish and expire as a man does when he gives up the ghost; it will fall them when they have most need of it, and when they expected the accomplishment of it; it will die away, and leave them in utter confusion. 2. They shall not avoid the evil which sometimes they frighten themselves with the apprehension of; they shall not escape the execution of the sentence past upon them; can neither out-brave it, nor out-run it. Those that will not fly to God, will find it in vain to think of flying from him.

CHAP. XII.

In this and the two following chapters, we have Job's answer to Zophar's discourse. In which, as before, he first reasons with his friends, (see ch. 13. 19.) and then turns
to his God, and directs his expostulations to him, from thence to the end of his discourse. In this chapter, he addresses himself to his friends, and I. He condemns what they had said of him, and the judgment they had given of his character, v. 1-5. II. He contradicts and confronts what his friends had put in proof or plea, v. 6-11. He exhibits the destruction of wicked men in this world, showing that they often prosper, v. 12-16. III. He consents to what they had said of the wisdom, power, and sovereignty of God, and the dominion of his providence over the children of men and all their affairs; he confirms this, and enlarges upon it, v. 12-25.

1. AND Job answered and said, 2. No doubt but ye are the people; and wisdom shall die with you. 3. But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these? 4. I am as one mocked of his neighbour, who calleth upon God, and he answereth him: the just upright man is laughed to scorn. 5. He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.

The reproofs Job here gives to his friends, whether they were just or no, were very sharp, and may serve for a rebuke to all that are proud and scornful, and an exposing of their folly.

1. He upbraids them with their conceit of themselves, and the good opinion they seemed to have of their own wisdom in comparison with them; than which nothing is more weak and unbecoming, nor better deserves to be ridiculed, as it is here.

2. He represents them as claiming the monopoly of wisdom, v. 2. He speaks ironically, "No doubt, you are the people; you think yourselves fit to dictate and give law to all mankind, and your own judgment to be the standard by which every man's opinion must be measured and tried; as if nobody could discern between truth and falsehood, good and evil, but you only; and therefore we must lower to you, and, right or wrong, we must all say as you say, and you three must be the people, the majority, to have the casting vote." Note, It is a very foolish sinful thing for any to think themselves wiser than all mankind besides, or to speak and act confidently and imperiously, as if they thought so. Nay, he goes further; "You not only think there are none, but that there will be none, as wise as you, and therefore that wisdom must die with you, and all the world must be fools when you are gone, and in the dark when your sun is set." Note, It is folly for us to think that there will be any great irreparable loss of us when we are gone, or that we can be ill-spared, since God has the residue of the Spirit, and can raise up others more fit than we are, to do his work. When wise men and good men die, it is a comfort to think that wisdom and goodness shall not die with them. Some think Job here reflects upon the bounds of his own reason, and thereby speaks haughtily of others; to others he speaks to the wise ass's colt, ch. xi. 12. "Yes," says he, "we must be asses, you are the only men."

2. He deems himself the justice to put in his claim as a sharer in the gifts of wisdom; v. (3.) "But I have understanding, a heart, as well as you; nay, I fall not lower than you;" (as it is in the margin;) "I am as well able to judge of the methods and meanings of the Divine Providence, and to construe the hard chapters of it, as you are." He says not this to his friends, but to God, and it was no great applause of himself to say, I have understanding as well as you; no, nor to say, "I understand this matter as well as you," for what reason had either he or they to be proud of understanding that which was obvious and level to the capacity of the meanest; "Yea, who knows not such things as these? What things you have said, that are true, are plain truths, and common themes, which there are many that can talk as excellently as you, or better; it is then to humble them, and check the value they had for themselves as doctors of the chair. Note, (1.) It may justly keep us from being proud of our knowledge, to consider how many there are that know as much as we do, and perhaps much more, and to better purpose. (2.) When we are tempted to be harsh in our censures of those we differ from and dispute with, we ought to consider that they also have their reasons as well as we have, and a capacity of judging, and a right of judging, for themselves, perhaps they are not inferior to us, but superior, and it is possible that they may be in the right, and we in the wrong; and therefore we ought not to judge or despise them, (Rom. xiv. 3.) nor pretend to be masters, (Jam. iii. 1.) while all we are brethren, Mat. xxiii. 8. It is a very reasonable allowance to be made to all we converse with, all we contend with, that they are rational creatures as well as we.

II. He complains of the great contempt with which they had treated him. Those that are haughty and think too well of themselves, are commonly scornful, and ready to trample upon all about them: Job found it so, at least he thought he did; (v. 4.) I am as one mocked. I cannot say there was cause for this charge; we will not think Job's friends designed him any abuse, nor aimed at anything but to convince him, and so, in the right method, to comfort him; yet he cries out, I am as one mocked. Note, We are apt to call reproaches, and to think ourselves mocked when we are but advised and admonished; this peevishness is our folly, and a great wrong to ourselves and to our friends. Yet we cannot but say there was a colour for this charge; they came to comfort him, but they vexed him; gave him counsels and encouragements, but with no great opinion that either the one or the other would take effect; and therefore he thought they mocked him, and he added much to his grief. Nothing is more grievous to those that are fallen from the height of prosperity into the depth of adversity, than to be trodden on, and insulted over, when they are down; and on this head they are too apt to be suspicious. Observe, 1. What aggravated this grievance to him. Two things: (1.) That they were his neighbours, his friends, his companions, so the word signifies; and the scoffs of such are often most spitefully given, and always most indignantly received; (Ps. xii, 13.) It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have slighted it, and so borne it; but it was thou, a man mine equal. (2.) That they were professors of religion, such as called upon God, and said that he answered them; for some understand that of the persons mocking; "They are such as have a regard to Heaven, and an interest in Heaven, whose prayers I would therefore be glad of and thankful for; and whose good opinion I cannot but covet, and therefore whose censures are the more grievous. It is as if Job had said, If one should call upon God should mock their brethren; (Jam. iii. 9, 10.) and it cannot but lie heavily on a good man to be thought ill of by those whom he thinks well of; yet this is no new thing.

2. What supported him under it. (1.) That he had a God to go to, with whom he could lodge his appeal; for some understand those words of the person mocked, that he calls upon God, and he exalteth him above the heathen; and it seems, therefore, that God should mock their brethren; (Jam. iii. 9, 10.) and it cannot but lie heavily on a good man to be thought ill of by those whom he thinks well of; yet this is no new thing.

(2.) That his case was not singular, but very common: The just upright man is
laughed to scorn; by many he is laughed at even for his justice and his uprightness, his honesty to-ward men, and his piety toward God; these are de-ceived in foolish things, which silly people needlessly hamper themselves with: as if religion were a jest, and therefore to be made a jest of. By most he is laughed at for any little infirmity or weakness, notwithstanding his justice and uprightness, without any consideration had of that which is so much his honour. Note, It was of old the lot of honest good people to be despised and derided; we are not therefore to think it strange, (1 Pet. iv. 12.) no nor to think it bad that the most eminent ones of them not only the prophets, but even the saints of the patriarchal age, Matth. v. 12. And can we expect to fare better than they?

3. What he suspected to be the true cause of it, and that was, in short, this; they were themselves rich and at ease, and therefore they despised him who was fallen into poverty. It is the way of the world, we see instances of it daily; they that prosper are praised, but of them that are going down it is said, "Down with them." He that is ready to sift with his feet, and fall into trouble, though he has formerly shone as a lamp, is then looked upon as a lamp going out, like the snuff of a candle, which we throw to the ground, and tread upon, and is accordingly despised in the thought of him that is at ease, v. 5. Even the just upright man, that is in his generation as a burning and shining light, if he enter into temptation, (Ps. lxxxiii. 2.) or come under a cloud, is looked upon with contempt. See here, (1.) What is the common fault of those that live in prosperity; being full and easy and merry themselves, they look scornfully upon those that are in want, pain, and sorrow; they overlook them, take no no- tice of them, and study to forget them. See Ps. cxviii. 4.) The chief butler drinks wine in bowls, but makes nothing of the afflictions of Joseph. Wealth without grace often makes men thus haughty, thus careless of their poor neighbours. (2.) What is the common fate of those that fall into adversity. Poverty serves to eclipse all their lustre; though they are lamps, yet, if taken out of golden candlesticks, and put, like Gideon's, into earthen pitchers, nobody values them as formerly, but they that live at ease despise them.

6. The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly. 7. But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. 9. Who knoweth not in all these, that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this? 10. In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind. 11. Doth not the ear try words? and the mouth taste his meat?

Job's friends, all of them, went upon this principle, that wicked people cannot prosper long in this world, but some remarkable judgment or other will suddenly come upon them; and they concluded with it, that the eyes of the wicked shall fall, ch. xi. 20. This principle Job here opposes, and maintains, that God, in disposing men's outward affairs, acts as a Sovereign, reserving the exact distribution of re- wards and punishments for the future state.

1. He asserts it as an undoubted truth, that wicked people may, and often do, prosper long in this world, v. 6. Even great sinners may enjoy great prosperity. Observe, 1. How he describes the sin- ners; they are robbers, and such as provoke God, the worst kind of sinners, blasphemers and persecu- tors; Prov. xi. 28. All refers to the Sabeans and the- deans, who had robbed him, and had always lived by spoil and rapine, and yet they prospered; all the world saw they did, and there is no disputing against sense; one observation built upon matter of fact is worth twenty notions framed by an hypothesis. Or, more generally, All proud oppressors are robbers and pirates. It is supposed that what is injurious to men, is provoking to God, the Patron of right, and the Protector of mankind. It is not strange, if those that violate the bonds of justice, break through the obligations of all religion, bid defiance even to God himself, and make nothing of provoking him. 2. How he describes their prosperity: it is very great; for, (1.) Even their tabernacles prosper, those that live with them, and those that come after them, and descend from them. It seems as if a blessing were entailed upon their families; and that is preserved sometimes to succeeding generations, which was got by fraud. (2.) They are secure, and not only feel no hurt, but fear none, are under no apprehensions of danger, either from threatening providences, or an awakened conscience. But those that provoke God are never the more safe for their being secure. (3.) Into their hand God brings abundantly. They have more than heart could wish, Ps. lxxxiii. 7. They have, not for necessity only, but for delight; not for themselves only, but for others; not for the present only, but for hereafter; and this from the hand of Providence too. God brings plentifully to them; we cannot therefore judge of men's piety by their plenty, nor of what they have in their heart by what they have in their hand.

11. He appeals even to the inferior creatures for the proof of this—the beasts, and fowls, and trees, and even the earth itself; consult these, and they shall tell thee; (v. 7, 8.) many a good lesson we may learn from them; but what are you here to teach us?

1. We may learn from them that the tabernacles of robbers prosper; some. For, (1.) Even among the brute creatures, the greater devour the lesser, and the stronger prey upon the weaker, and men are as the fishes of the sea, Hab. i. 14. If sin had not entered, we may suppose there had been no such disorder among the creatures, but the wolf and the lamb had lain down together. (2.) These crea-tures, the birds, which wicked men abuse, by making them the food and fuel of their lusts, will witness against them, another day, Jam. v. 3, 4.

2. We may from them learn the wisdom, power, and goodness, of God, and that sovereign dominion of his, into which plain and self-evident truth all these difficult dispensations must be resolved. Zophar had made of these a jest, v. 7. So far, says Job, "that what we were concerned to know, we may learn even from the inferior creatures; for who knows not from all these? Any one may easily gather from the book of the inferior creatures, that the hand of the Lord has wrought this," (v. 9.) that is, "that there is a wise providence which guides and governs all these things by rules which we are neither acquainted with, nor are competent judges of." Note, From
God’s sovereign dominion over the inferior creatures, we should learn to acquiesce in all his dispositions of the affairs of the children of men, though contrary to our wishes, and it would be

III. He resolves all into the absolute propriety which God has in all the creatures; (v. 10.) In whose hand is the soul of every living thing. All the creatures, and mankind particularly, derive their being from him, owe their being to him, depend upon him for the support of it, lie at his mercy, are under his direction and dominion, and entirely at his disposal, and at his summons must resign their lives. All souls are his, and may he not do what he will with his own? The name Jehovah is used here, (v. 9.) and it is the only time that we meet with it in all the discourses between Job and his friends; for God was, in that age, more known by the name of Shaddai, the Almighty.

Those words, (v. 11.) Doth not the ear try words, as the mouth tastes meat? may be taken either as the conclusion to the foregoing discourse, or the preface to what follows. The mind of man has as good a faculty of discerning between truth and error, when duly stated, as the palate has of discerning between what is sweet and what is bitter. He therefore demands from his friends a liberty to judge for himself of what they had said; and desires them to use the same liberty in judging of what he had said; nay, he seems to appeal to any man’s impartial judgment in this controversy; let the ear try the words on both sides, and it would be found that he was in the right. Note, The ear must try words before it receives them so as to subscribe to them. As by the taste we judge what food is wholesome to the body, and what not, so by the spirit of discerning we must judge what doctrine is sound, and savoury, and wholesome, and what not, 1 Cor. x. 15.—xi. 13.

12. With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding. 13. With him is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding. 14. Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again; he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening. 15. Behold, he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up; also he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth. 16. With him is strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver are his. 17. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools. 18. He loseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle. 19. He leadeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty. 20. He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged. 21. He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty. 22. He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death. 23. He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again. 24. He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way. 25.

They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man.

This is a noble discourse of Job’s concerning the wisdom, power, and sovereignty, of God, in ordering and disposing of all the affairs of the children of men, according to the counsel of his own will, which none dares gainsay, or can resist. Take both him and them out of the controversy in which they were so warmly engaged, and they all spake admirably well; but in that, we sometimes scarcely know what to make of them. It were well if wise and good men, that differ in their apprehensions of the less, would hold to the stress of honour and comfort, and the edification of others, to dwell most upon those great things in which they are agreed. On this subject, Job speaks like himself; here are no passionate complaints, no peevish reflections, but every thing masculine and great.

1. He asserts the unsearchable wisdom, and irresistible power, of God. It is allowed that among men there is wisdom and understanding, v. 12. But it is to be found only with some few, with the old and ancient, and those who are blessed with length of days, who get it by long experience and constant experience; and, when they have got the wisdom, they have lost their strength, and are unable to execute the results of their wisdom: but now with God there are both wisdom and strength, wisdom to design the best, and strength to accomplish what is designed; he does not get counsel and understanding, as we do, by observation, but he has it essentially and eternally in himself, v. 13. What is the wisdom of ancient men compared with the wisdom of the Ancient of days! It is but little that we know, and less that we can do; but God can do every thing, and no thought can be withheld from him. Happy they who have this God for their God, for they have infinite wisdom and strength engaged for them! Foolish and fruitless are all the attempts of men against him, v. 14. He breaketh down, and it cannot be built again. Note, There is no contention with the Divine Providence, nor breaking of the counsel of it. As he had said before; (ch. ix. 12.) He taketh away, and who can hinder him? So he says again, What God says, cannot be gainsaid, nor what he does, undone. There is no rebuilding what God will have to lie in ruins; witness the tower of Babel, which the undertakers could not go on with; and the desolations of Sodom and Gomorrah, which could never be repaired. See Isa. xxxv. 2. Ezek. xxvi. 15. Rev. xviii. 21. There is no releasing of those whom God has condemned to a perpetual imprisonment; if he shut up a man by sickness, reduce him to straits, and embarrass him in his affairs, there can be no opening. He shuts up in the grave, and none can break open those sealed doors; shuts up in hell, in chains of darkness, and none can pass that great gulf fixed.

2. He gives an instance, for the proof of it, in nature, v. 15. He has the command of the waters, binds them as in a garment. (Prov. xxxv. 4.) holds them in the hollow of his hand; (Isa. xli. 12.) and he can punish the children of men either by the defect, or by the excess of them: as men break the laws of virtue by extremes on each hand, both defects and excesses, while virtue is in the mean, so God corrects them by extremes, and denies them the mercy which is in the mean. 1. Great droughts are sometimes great judgments; he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up; if the heavens be brass, the earth is as iron; if the rain be denied, fountains dry up, and their streams are wanted, fields are parched, and their fruits are wanted, Amos iv. 7. 2. Great wet is sometimes a great judgment; he
raises the waters, and overturns the earth, the productions of it, the buildings upon it. A sweeping rain is said to leave no food, Prov. xxxviii. 3. See how many ways God has of contending with a sinful people, and taking from them abused, forfeited, mercies; and how utterly unable we are to contend with him! If we might invert the order, this verse would fitly refer to Noah's flood, that ever-memorable instance of the divine power. God then, in wrath, saw no waters out, and they overturn ed the earth; but, in mercy, he withheld them, shut the windows of heaven, and the fountains of the great deep, and then, in a little time, they dried up.

III. He gives many instances of it in God's powerful management of the children of men, crossing their purposes, and serving his own by them and upon them, overruling all their counsels, overpowering all their attempts, and overcoming all their oppositions. What change does God make with men, what turns does he give to them; how easily, how surprisingly!

In general, (v. 16.) With him is strength and reason, so some translate it; strength and consistency with himself: it is an elegant word in the original. With him are the very quintessence and extract of wisdom. With him are power and all that is, so some read it. He is what he is himself, and by him, and in him, all things subsist. Having this strength and wisdom, he knows how to make use, not only of those who are wise and good, who willingly and designedly serve him, but even of those who are foolish and bad, who, one would think, could be made no way serviceable to the designs of his providence: the deceived and the deceived are his; the simplest men that are deceived, are not below his notice, the subtest men that deceive, cannot, with all their subtility, be hid from his knowledge. The world is full of deceit, the one half of mankind cheats the other, and God suffers it, and from both will, at last, bring glory to himself. The deceivers make tools of the deceived, but the great God makes tools of them both, wherewith he works, and none can let him. He has wisdom and might enough to manage all the fools and knaves in the world, and knows how to serve his own purposes by them, notwithstanding the weakness of the one, and the wickedness of the other. When Jacob, by a fraud got the blessing, the design of God's grace was served; when Ahab was drawn by a false prophecy into an expedition that was his ruin, the design of God's justice was served; and in both the deceived and the deceived were at his disposal. See Ezek. xiv. 9. God would not suffer the sin of the deceived, nor the misery of the deceived, if he knew not how to set bounds to both, and bring glory to himself out of both. Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth! and it is well he does, for otherwise there is so little wisdom, and so little honesty, in the world, that it had all been in confusion and ruin long ago.

He next descends to the particular instances of the wisdom and power of God in the revolutions of states and kingdoms: for thence he fetches his proofs, rather than from the like operations of Providence concerning private persons and families, because the masses of men, when placed, the more the changes that befall them are taken notice of, and, consequently, the more illustrously does Providence shine forth in them. And it is easy to argue, If God can thus turn and toss the great ones of the earth, like a ball in a large place, (as the prophet speaks, Isa. xxii. 18.) much more the little ones; and with him, to whom states and kingdoms must submit, it is solely the greatest madness for us to contend. Some think that Job here refers to the extraitiog of those powerful nations, the Rephaim, the Zuzim, the Enim, and the Horites, (mentioned Gen. xiv. 5, 6. Deut. ii. 10. 20.) in which, perhaps, it was particularly noticed, how strangely they were infatuated and enfeebled; if so, it is designed to show, that, whenever the like is done in the affairs of nations, it is God that doeth it, and we must therein observe his sovereign dominion, even over those that think themselves most powerful, politic, and absolute. Compare this with that of Eliphaz, ch. xii. 12.

Let us gather up the particular changes here specified, which God makes upon persons, either for the destruction of nations, and the planting of others in their room, or for the turning out of a particular government and ministry, and the elevation of another in its room, which may be a blessing to the kingdom; witness the glorious Revolution in our own land twenty years ago, in which we saw King James, king in glory as ever was given of this discourse of Job's.

1. Those that were wise, are sometimes strangely infatuated; and in that the hand of God must be acknowledged; (v. 17.) He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, as trophies of his victory over them, spoiled of all the honour and wealth they have got by their policy, nay, spoiled of the wisdom itself for which they have been celebrated, and the success which they might have enjoyed in their offices. In his counsels stand, while all their devices are brought to nought, and their designs baffled, and so they are spoiled both of the satisfaction and the reputation of their wisdom. He maketh the judges fools: by a work on their minds he deprives them of their qualifications for business, and so they become really fools; and by his disposal of their affairs he makes the issue and event of their projects to be quite contrary to what they themselves intended, and so they become wise fools. In this sense, we bespeak, of what is called the Abihophel, one in whom this scripture was remarkably fulfilled, became foolishness, and he, according to his name, the brother of a fool. See Isa. xix. 13, The princes of Zaan are become fools, they have seduced Egypt, even they that are the stay of the tribes thereof. Let not the wise man, therefore, glory in his wisdom, nor the ablest counsellors and judges be proud of their station, but humbly depend upon the disposal of their affairs of God. Even the aged, who seem to hold their wisdom by prescription, and think they have got it by their own industry, and therefore have an indefeasible title to it, may yet be deprived of it, and often are, by the infirmities of age, which make them twice children; he taketh away the understanding of the aged, v. 20. The aged, who were most depended on for advice, fall those that depended on them. We read of an old and yet foolish king, Eccl. iv. 13.

2. Those that were high and in authority, are strangely brought down, impoverished, and enslaved; and it is God that humbles them; (v. 18.) He looeth the bond of kings, and taketh from them the power wherewith they ruled their subjects, perhaps enslaved them, and ruled them with rigour; strips them of all the ensigns of their honour and authority, and all the supports of their tyranny; removes their great ministers, and puts such in their stead, that the sword drops from their side, and then no marvel if the crown quickly drops from their heads; on which, immediately follows the girding of their loins with a girdle, a badge of servitude, for servants went with their loins girt. Thus he leads great princes away spoiled of all their power and wealth, and that in which they pleased and prided themselves, v. 19. Note, Kings are not exempt from God's jurisdiction. To us they are gods, but men to him, and subject to more than the common changes of human life.

3. Those that were strong, are strangely weak-
eneed; and it is God that weakens them, (v. 21.) and overthrows the mighty, v. 19. Strong bodies are weakened by age and sickness, powerful armies moulder and come to nothing, and their strength will not secure them from a fatal overthrow. No force can stand before Omnipotence, no not that of Go. iath.

4. Those that were famed for eloquence, and entrusted with public business, are strangely silenced, and have nothing to say. (v. 20.) He/removeth away the speech of the trusty, so that they cannot speak as they intended, and as they used to do, with freedom and clearness, but blunder and falter, and make nothing of it. Or, they cannot speak what they intended, but the contrary; as Balaam, who blessed those whom he was called to curse. Let not the orator therefore be proud of his rhetoric, nor use it to any bad purposes, lest God take it away, who made man's mouth.

5. Those that were honoured and admired, strangely fall into disgrace; (v. 21.) He poureth contempt upon princes. He leaves them to themselves to do mean things, or alters the opinions of men concerning them. If princes themselves dishonour God, and despise him, if they do indignities to the people of God, and trample upon them, they shall be lightly esteemed, and God will pour contempt upon them. See Ps. civ. 40. Commonly, none more abject in themselves, nor more abused by others, were found to suffer the same disgrace, those who were haughty and insolent when they were in power.

6. That which was secret, and lay hid, is strangely brought to light, and laid open; (v. 22.) He discovers deep things out of darkness. Plots closely laid are discovered and defeated; wickedness closely committed, and artfully concealed, is discovered, and the guilty brought to condign punishment; secret treaties (Eccl. x. 20.) secret murders, secret wrongdoings. The cabinet-councillors of princes are before God's eye, 2 Kings vii. 11.

7. Kingdoms have their ebbings and flowings, their waxings and wanings; and both are from God; (v. 23.) He sometimes increases their numbers, and enlarges their bounds, so that they make a figure among the nations, and become formidable; but, after a while, by some undisclosed cause, perhaps, they are destroyed and straitened, made few and poor, cut short, and many of them cut off, and so they rendible and turnable, and their neighbours, and their enemies; and they that were the head, become the tail, of the nations. See Ps. civ. 38, 39.

8. They that were bold and courageous, and made nothing of dangers, are strangely cowed and dispirited; and this also is the Lord's doing; (v. 24.) He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people, that were their leaders and commanders, and were most famed for their martial fire and great spirit, and that they should serve and attend upon their neighbours; and they that were the head, become the tail of the nations. Ps. lxixvi. 5.

9. That they were driving on their projects with full speed, are strangely bewildered and at a loss; they know not where they are, nor what they do, are unspeedy in their counsels, and uncertain in their motions, off and on, this way and that way, wandering like men in a desert, (v. 24.) groping like men in the dark, and stagging like men in darkness, Ps. civ. 10. Note, God can suddenly raise the deepest politicians, and bring the greatest wits to their wit's end; to show that where in they deal proudly, he is above them.

Thus are the revolutions of kingdoms wonderfully brought about by an overruling Providence. Heaven and earth are shaken, but the Lord sits King for ever, and with him we look for a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

CHAP. XIII.

Job here comes to make application of what he had said in the foregoing chapter; and now we have him not in so good a temper as he was in then; for, 1. He is very bold with his friends, comparing himself with them, notwithstanding the mortifications he was under, v. 1, 2. Condemning them for their falsehood, their forwardness to judge, their partiality and deceitfulness, under colour of pleading God's cause, (v. 4, 8.) and threatening them with the judgments of God for their so doing, (v. 9, 12.) desiring them to be silent, (v. 5, 19,) turning from them to God, v. 2. If. He is very bold with his God. 1. In some expressions, his faith is very bold, yet that is not more bold than welcome, v. 15, 16, 18. But, 2. In other expressions, his passion is rather too bold; in contempt and abhorrence of God concerning the deplorable condition he was in, (v. 14, 19, &c.) complaining of the confusion he was in, (v. 20, 22.) and the loss he was at to find out the sin that provoked God thus to afflict him; and, in short, of the rigour of God's proceedings against him, v. 23, 25.

1. Lo, mine eye hath seen all this, mine ear hath heard and understood it. 2. What ye know, the same do I know also: I am not inferior unto you. 3. Surely I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God. 4. But ye are forgers of lies, ye are all physicians of no value. 5. Oh that you would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom. 6. Hear now my reasoning, and hearken to the pleadings of my lips. 7. Will you speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for him? 8. Will ye accept his person? will ye contend for God? 9. Is it good that he should search you out? or, as one man mocketh another, do ye so mock him? 10. He will surely reprove you, if ye do secretly accept persons. 11. Shall not his excellency make you afraid? and his dread fall upon you? 12. Your remembrances are like unto ashes, your bodies to bodies of clay.

Job here warmly expresses his resentments of the unkindness of his friends.

I. He comes up with them as one that understood the matter in dispute as well as they, and did not need to be taught by them, v. 1, 2. They compelled him, as the Corinthians did Paul, to commend himself and his own knowledge, yet not in a way of self-applause, but of self-justification. All he had said before, his eye had seen confirmed by many instances, and his ear had heard seconded by many authoritative testimonies, and he had not at any time any such thing as he made to of it. Happy they, who do not only see and hear, but understand, the greatness, glory, and sovereignty, of God. This, he thought, would justify what he had said before, (ch. xii. 3.) which he repeats here; (v. 2.) "What ye know, the same do I know also, so that I need not come to you to be taught; I am not inferior unto you in wisdom." Note, Those who enter into disputation, enter into temptation to magnify themselves, and to vilify their brethren, more than is fit, and therefore ought to in earnest in disputation with God concerning the doings of pride.

II. He turns from them to God; (v. 3.) Surely I would speak to the Almighty; as if he had said, "I can promise myself no satisfaction in talking to you: O that I might have liberty to reason with God! He would not be so hard upon me as you are." The prince himself will perhaps give au-
dience to a poor petitioner with more mildness, patience, and condescension, than the servants will. Job would rather argue with God himself than with his friends. See here, 1. What confidence they have toward God, as if he could be cleared up, or if he were a witness against himself, and say, and wanted you to speak for him? Will you, who are so weak and passionate, put in for the honour of pleading God's cause? 2. Good work ought not to be put into bad hands. Will you accept his person? If those who have not right on their side, carry their cause, it is by the partiality of the judge in favour of their persons; but God's cause is so just, that it needs no such methods for the support of it. He would plead for himself; (Judg. vi. 31.) and if you were for ever silent, the heavens would declare his righteousness. 2. That God's cause suffered by such management. Under pretence of justifying God in affecting Job, they magisterially condemn him as a hypocrite and a bad man. "This" (says he) "is speaking wickedly, (for uncharitableness and censoriousness are wickedness, great wickedness; it is an offence to God to wrong our brethren,) it is talking deceitfully, for you conduct, in the frame and deliberation is much worse; yet against this wrong neither innocency, nor excellency will be a fence. 2. They basely deceived him, and that was unkind. They undertook his cure, and pretended to be his physicians, but they were all physicians of no value; "idol-physicians, who can do me no more good than an idol can." They were worthless physicians, who neither understood his case, nor knew how to prescribe to him; mere empirics, who pretended to great wonds, but he confess add nothing to him—he was never the wiser for all they said. Thus, to broken hearts and wounded consciences, all creatures, without Christ, are physicians of no value, on which one may spend all, and be never the better, but rather grow worse, Mark v. 26.

IV. He begs they would be silent, and give him a patient hearing, v. 5, 6. 1. He thinks it would be a credit to themselves, if they would say no more, but sit as much as wise; "Hold your peace, and it shall be your wisdom, for thereby you will conceal your ignorance and ill-nature, which now appear in all you say." They pleaded that they could not forbear speaking; (ch. iv. 2—xi. 2, 3.) but he tells them that they had more consulted their own reputation, if they had enjoined themselves silence. Better say nothing than nothing to the purpose, or that which tends to the dishonour of God, and the grief of our brethren. Even a god, when he holds his peace, is counted wise, because nothing appears to the contrary, Prov. xvii. 28. And as silence is an evidence of wisdom, so it is a means of it, as it gives time to think and hear. 2. He thinks it would be a piece of justice to him, to hear what he had to say; Hear now my reasoning. Perhaps, though they did not interrupt him in his discourse, yet they seemed careless, and did not much heed what he said; he therefore begs them to hear what he had to say, with the more respect. Note, It should be very willing and glad to hear what those have to say for themselves, whom, upon any account, we are tempted to have hard thoughts of. Many a man, if he could but fairly hear, would be fairly acquitted, even in the consciences of those that run him down.

V. He endeavours to convince them of the wrong they did to God's honour, while they pretended to plead for him, v. 7, 8. They valued themselves upon it, that they spake for God, were advocates for him, and had undertaken to justify him and his proceedings against Job. And being (as they thought) of counsel for the Sovereign, they expected not only the ear of the court, and the last word, but judgment on their side. But Job tells them plainly, 1. That God and his cause did not need such advocates; "Will you think to contend for God, as if his justice were clouded, and wanted a vindication? Will you be a court of record, take a note of the speeches, and say, and wanted you to speak for him? Will you, who are so weak and passionate, put in for the honour of pleading God's cause?" Good work ought not to be put into bad hands. Will you accept his person? If those who have not right on their side, carry their cause, it is by the partiality of the judge in favour of their persons; but God's cause is so just, that it needs no such methods for the support of it. He would plead for himself; (Judg. vi. 31.) and if you were for ever silent, the heavens would declare his righteousness.

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vindicating him, that he will resent them as a great provocation, as any prince or great man would, if a base action were done under the sanction of his name, and under the colour of advancing his interest. Note, What we do amiss, we shall certainly be reproved for, one way or other, one time or other, though it be done ever so secretly.

(3.) The terror of his majesty, which, if they would duly regard of, they would not do that which would make them obnoxious to his wrath; (v. 11.) "Shall not his excellency make you afraid?" You that have great knowledge of God, and profess religion and a fear of him, how dare you talk at this rate, and give yourselves so great a liberty of speech? Ought ye not to walk and talk in the fear of God? Nell. v. 9. "Should not his dread fall upon you, and give check to your passions?" Methinks, Job speaks this as one that did himself know the terror of the Lord, and lived in a holy fear of him, whatever his friends suggested to the contrary. Note, [1.] There is in God a dreadful excellency. He is the most excellent Being, has all excellencies in himself, and in each infinitely excels any creature. His excellencies in themselves are amiable and lovely. He is the most beautiful Being; but, considering man's distance from God by nature, and his detection and degeneracy by sin, his excellencies are dreadful. His power, holiness, justice, and his good- ness too, are dreadful excellencies. They shall fear the Lord and his goodness. [2.] A holy awe of this dreadful excellency should fall upon us, and make us afraid. This would awaken improvident sinners, and bring them to repentance, and would influence all to be careful to please him, and afraid of offending him.

2. Let them consider themselves, and what an unequal match they were for this great God; (v. 12.) "Your remembrances (all that in you for which you hope to be remembered when you are gone) are like unto ashes, worthless and weak, and easily trampled on and blown away; your bodies are like bodies of clay, mouldering and coming to nothing; your memories, you think, will survive your bodies; but, alas! they are like ashes which will be shovelled up with your dust." Note, The consideration of our own meanness and mortality should make us afraid of offending God, and is a good reason why we should not despise and trample upon our brethren. Bishop Patrick gives another sense of this verse: "Your remonstrances on God's behalf are no better than dust, and the arguments you accumulate, but like so many heaps of dirt."

13. Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak, and let come on me what will. 14. Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in my hand? 15. Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him. 16. He also shall be my salvation: for a hypocrite shall not come before him. 17. Hear diligently my speech and my declaration with your ears. 18. Behold now, I have ordered my cause; I know that I shall be justified. 19. Who is he that will plead with me? for now, if I hold my tongue, I shall give up the ghost. 20. Only do not two things unto me; then will I not hide myself from thee. 21. Withdraw thy hand far from me; and let not thy dread make me afraid: 22. Then call thou, and I will answer; or let me speak, and answer thee.

Job here takes hold, fast hold, of his integrity, as one that was resolved not to let it go, nor suffer it to be wrested from him: his firmness in this matter is commendable, and his words are full of truth. I. He entreats his friends and all the company to let him alone, and not interrupt him in what he was about to say, (v. 13.) but diligently to hearken to it, v. 17. He would have his own protestation to be decisive, for none but God and himself knew his heart; "Be silent, therefore, and let me hear no more of you, but hearken diligently to what I say, and let my own oath for confirmation be an end of the strife."

II. He resolves to adhere to the testimony his own conscience gave of his integrity; and though his friends called it obstinacy, that should not shake his constancy; "I will speak in my own defence, and let come on me what will, v. 13. Let my friends put what construction they please upon it, and think the worse of me for it, I hope God will not make my necessary defence to be my offence, as you do: he will justify me, (v. 18.) and then nothing can come amiss to me." Note, [1.] Those that are upright, and have the assurance of their own uprightness, may cheerfully welcome every event. Come what will, bene praeparaturn pectus— they are ready for it. He resolves (v. 15.) that he will maintain his own ways; he will never part with the satisfaction he had in having walked uprightly with God; but, though he could not justify every word he had spoken, yet, in the general, his ways were good, and he would maintain it; and why should he not, since that was his great support under his present exercises, as it was Hezekiah's, "Now, Lord, remember how I have walked before thee!" Nay, he would not only not betray his own cause, or give it up, but he would openly avow his sin-cerity, for, (v. 19.) "If I hold my tongue, and do not speak for myself, my silence now will for ever silence me, for I shall certainly give up the ghost," v. 19. "If I cannot be cleared, yet let me be eased by what I say," as Elihu, ch. xxxii. 17, 20.

III. He compasses the extremity of pain and misery he was in; (v. 14.) Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth? That is, 1. Why do I suffer such agonies? I cannot but wonder that God should lay so much upon me, when he knows I am not a wicked man. He was ready, not only to rend his clothes, but even to tear his flesh, through the greatness of his affliction, and saw himself at the brink of death, and his life in his hand, yet his friends could not charge him with any enormous crime, nor could he himself discover any; no marvel then that he was in such confusion. 2. "Why do I stifle and smother the protestations of my innocency?" When a man with great difficulty keeps in what he would say, he bites his lips: "Now," says he, "why may not I take liberty to speak, since I do but vex myself, add to my torment, and endanger my life, by refraining?" Note, It would vex the most patient man, when he has lost every thing else, that he should be denied to speak; but he desires it of a good conscience and a good name.

IV. He comforts himself in God, and still keeps hold of his confidence in him. Observe here, 1. What he depends upon God for: Justification and Salvation, the two great things we hope for through Christ. (1.) Justification: (v. 18.) I have ordered my cause, and, upon the whole matter, I know that I shall be justified. This he knew, because he knew that his Redeemer lived, ch. xix. 25. Their whose hearts are upright with God, in walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, may be
sure that through Christ there shall be no condemnation to them, but that, whoever lays any thing to their charge, they shall be justified. (2.) Salvation, (v. 10.) it also shall not come before him. He knew himself not to be a hypocrite, and that his guilty conscience was the purport of God, and therefore concluded he should not be rejected. Sincerity is our evangelical perfection, nothing will ruin us but the want of that.

2. With what constancy he depends upon him; Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him, v. 15. This is a high expression of faith, and what we should all labour to come up to; to trust in God, though he slay us. That is, we must be well pleased with God as a Friend, even then when he seems to come forth against us as an Enemy, ch. xxix. 8-10. We must believe that all shall work for good to us, even then when all seems to make against us, Jer. xxiv. 5. We must proceed and persevere in the way of our duty, though it costs us all that is dear to us in this world, even life itself, Heb. xi. 35. We must depend upon the performance of the promise, when all the ways leading to it are shut up, Rom. iv. 18. We must rejoice in God, when we have nothing else to rejoice in, and cleave to him, yea, though we cannot for the present find comfort in him. In a dying hour, we must derive from him living comforts; and this is to trust in him, though he slay us.

V. He wishes to argue the case even with God himself, if he might but have leave to settle the preliminaries of the treaty, v. 20-22. He had desired (v. 3.) to reason with God, and is still of the same mind; he will not hide himself, that is, he will not decline the trial, nor dread the issue of it, but under two provisos, 1. That his body might not be tortured with this exquisite pain; "Withdraw thine hand far from me;" for, while I am in this extremity, I am fit for nothing. I can make a shift to talk with my friends, but I know not how to address myself to thee." When we are to converse with God, we have need to be composed, and as free from bodily pain as we can possibly be, and very uneasy. 2. That his mind might not be terrified with the tremendous majesty of God; "Let not thy dread make me afraid;" either let the manifestations of thy presence be familiar, or let me be enabled to bear them without disorder and disturbance." Moses himself trembled before God, so did Isaiah and Habakkuk: O God, thou art terrible even in thy holy places. "Lord," says Job, "let me not be as one of them who make up uneasy. See what a folly it is for men to put off their repentance and conversion to a sick-bed, and a death-bed! How can even a good man, much less a bad man, reason with God, so as to be justified before him, when he is upon the rack of pain, and under the terror of the arrests of death? At such a time, how can we have peace of conscience, but very comfortable to have it done, as it was to Job, who, if he might but have a little breathing time, was ready either to hear God speaking to him by his words, and return an answer; Call thou, and I will answer thee, or. (2.) To speak to him by prayer, and expect an answer; Let me speak, and answer thou me, v. 22. Compare this with ch. ix. 34, 35. where he speaks to the same purport. In short, the badness of his case was at present such a damp upon him, as he could not get over; otherwise he was well assured of the goodness of his cause, and doubted not but to have the comfort of it last and long. The present cloud was over. With such holy boldness may the upright come to the throne of grace, not doubting but to find mercy there.

23. How many are nine iniquities and sins! make me to know my transgression and my sin. 24. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy? 25. Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro and wilt thou pursue the dry stubble? 26. For thou writest bitter things against me, and maketh me to possess the iniquities of my youth. 27. Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks, and lookest narrowly unto all my paths; thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet. 28. And he, as a rotten thing, consumeth, as a garment that is moth-eaten.

Here,

I. Job inquires after his sins, and begs to have them discovered to him: he looks up to God, and tells him what was the number of them; How many are nine iniquities, and what the particulars of them? Make me to know my transgressions, v. 23. His friends were ready enough to tell him how numerous and how heinous they were, ch. xxxii. 5. "But, Lord," says he, "Let me know them from Thee, for thy judgment is according to truth, theirs is not." This may be taken, either, 1. As a passionate complaint of hard usage, that he was punished for his faults, and yet was not told what his faults were. Or, 2. As a prudent appeal to God from the censures of his friends; he desired that all his sins might be brought to light, as knowing they would then appear not so many, nor so mighty, as his friends suspected him to be guilty of. Or, 3. As a pious request, to the same purport with that which Elihu directed him to; ch. xxxiv. 32. That which I see not, teach thou me. Note, A true penitent is willing to know the worst of himself; and we should all desire to know what our transgressions are, that we may be particular in the confession of them, and on our guard against them for the future.

II. He bitterly complains of God's withdrawals from him; (v. 24.) Wherefore hidest thou thy face? This must be meant of something more than his outward afflictions; for the loss of estate, children, health, might well consist with God's love; when that was all, he blessed the name of the Lord; but here we have a case of his own soul's calamity, of which he here laments. 1. That the favours of the Almighty were suspended; God hid his face as one strange to him, displeased with him, shy and regardless of him. 2. That the terrors of the Almighty were inflicted and impressed upon him; God held him for his Enemy; shot his arrows at him, (ch. vi. 4.) and set him as a mark, ch. vii. 20. Note, The holy God sometimes denies his favours, and discovers his terrors, to the best and dearest of his saints and servants in this world. This case occurs, not only in the production, but sometimes in the progress, of the divine life; evidences for heaven are eclipsed, sensible communications interrupted, dread of divine wrath impressed, and the returns of comfort, for the present, despaired of, Ps. lxxxvii. 7-9.—lxxxviii. 7, 15, 16. These are grievous burthens to a gracious soul, that values God's loving-kindness as better than life, Prov. xvii. 14. A wounded spirit...
JOB, XIV.

...what can bear? Job, by asking here, Why hidest thou thy face? teaches us, that when, at any time, we are under the sense of God's withdrawings, we are concerned to inquire into the reason of them; what is the sin for which he corrects us; and what the good he designs us. Job's sufferings were typical of the sufferings of Christ, from whom not only men hid their faces, (Isa. lii. 3,) but God hid his. Witness the darkness which surrounded him as he walked out of God, and ascribe it to him, why hast thou forsaken me? If these were done to these green trees, what shall be done to the dry? They will for ever be forsaken.

III. He humbly pleads with God his own utter inability to stand before him: (v. 25.) "Will thou break a leaf, pursue the dry stubble?" Lord, is it for thine hour to trample upon one that is down already? Or to crush one that neither has, nor pretends to, any power to resist thee?" Note, It is a great apprehension of the goodness and compassion of God, as to believe that he will not break the bruised reed, Matth. xii. 20.

IV. He sadly complains of God's severe dealings with him: he owns it was for his sins that God thus contended with him, but thinks it hard,

1. That his former sins, long since committed, should now be remembered against him, and he should be reckoned with for the old scores; (v. 26.) Thou art against me, to describe the Adversities are bitter things; writing of them denotes deliberation and determination, written as a warrant for execution; it denotes also the continuance of his affliction, for that which is written remains, and, "Herein thou makest me to possess the inequalities of my youth," that is, "thou punishest me for them, and thereby puttest me in mind of them, and obligest me to renew my repentance for them." Note, (1.) God sometimes writes very bitter things against the best and dearest of his saints, and enjoy- vants, both in outward affections and inward dis- quiet; trouble in body and trouble in mind, that he may humble them and prove them, and do them good in their latter end. (2.) That the sins of youth are often the smart of age, both in respect of sorrow within, (Jer. xxxi. 18, 19,) and suffering without, ch. xx. 11. Time does not wear out the guilt of sin. (3.) That when God writes bitter things against them, they must look to possess our iniquities, to bring forgotten sins to mind, and so to bring us to remorse for them, as to break us off from them. This is all the fruit, to take away our sin.

2. That his present mistakes and miscarriages should be so strictly taken notice of, and so severely animadverted upon; (v. 27.) "Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks, not only to afflict me, and expose me to shame, not only to keep me from escaping the strokes of thy wrath, but that thou mayest critically remark all my motions, and look narrowly to all my paths, to correct me for every false step, nay, for but a look away, or a word misapplied; nay, thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet, scorset down every thing I do amiss, to reckon for it; or, no sooner have I trodden wrong, though ever so little, than immediately I smart for it; the punishment treads upon the very heels of the sin." Job, and every other on whom God's hand of fresh date, is put together, to make up the cause of my calamity." Now, (1.) It was not true that God did thus seek advantages against him; he is not thus extreme to mark what we do amiss; if he were, there were no abiding for us, Ps. cxxx. 3. But he is so far from this, that he deals not with us according to the desert, not of our manifest sins which are not found by secret search, Jer. ii. 54. This therefore was the language of Job's melancholy; his sober thoughts never represented God thus as a hard Master. (2.) But we should keep such a strict unforgiving eye as this upon ourselves and our own steps, both for the terror of sin past, and the prevention of it for the future. It is good for us all to ponder the path of our feet.

V. He finds himself wasting away apace under the heavy hand of God, v. 28. He, that is, man, as a rotten thing, the principle of whose putrefaction is in itself, consumes, even like a moth-eaten garment, which becomes continually worse and worse. Or, He, that is, God, like bitterness, and like a moth, consumes the comforts of his iniquities. He shall be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness: and see Ps. xxxix. 11. Note, Man, at the best, wears fast; but, under God's rebukes especially, he is soon gone. While there is so little soundness in the soul, no marvel there is so little soundness in the flesh, Ps. xxxviii. 3.

CHAP. XIV.

Job had turned from speaking to his friends, finding it to no purpose to reason with them, and here goes on to speak to God and himself. He had reminded his friends of their frailty and mortality; (ch. xiii. 12,) here he reminds himself of his own, and pleads it with God for some mitigation of his miseries. We have here an account, I. Of man's life, the time, the sort, and one. 1. Sovereign, v. 1. 2. Soufjful, v. 2. 3. Sinful, v. 4. 4. Sinned, v. 5, 14. II. Of man's death, that it puts a final period to our present life, to which we shall not again return, v. 7, 12. That it hides us from the calamities of life; (v. 13.) destroys the hopes of life; (v. 18, 19,) sends us more to the business of life; (v. 20,) and keeps us in the dark concerning our relations in this life, how much soever we formerly have been in company with them, v. 21, 22. III. The use Job makes of all this. 1. He pleads it with God, who, he thought, was too strict and severe with him; (v. 16, 17,) begging that, in consideration of his frailty, he would not contend with him; (v. 5, 3,) but grant him some respect and little mercy. 2. He engages himself to prepare for death, (v. 14,) and encourages himself, and hopes that it would be comfortable to him, v. 15. This chapter is proper for funeral solemnities; and serious meditations on it will help us both to get good by the death of others, and to get ready for our own.

1. Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. 2. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. 3. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such a one, and bringest me into judgment with thee? 4. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one. 5. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee; thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass: 6. Turn from him that he may rest, till he shall accomplish, as a hireling, his day.

We are here led to think,

I. Of the original of human life; God is its great Original, for he breathed into man the breath of life, and in him we live; but we date it from our birth, and thence we must date both its frailty and its pollution. I. Its frailty; Man, that is born of a woman, is, v. 1. It may refer to the rest, after a bad birth, that every few days, v. 1. It may refer to the present state, because she was the mother of all living of her, who, being deceived by the serpent, was first in the transgression, we do call born, and consequently derive from her that sin. Her corruption which both shorten our days, and sadden them. It may refer to every man's immediate mother. The woman is the weaker vessel, and we know that Partus se- quitur ventrem.—The child takes after the mother.
Let not the strong man therefore glory in his strength, or in the strength of his father, but remember that he is born of a woman, and that, when God pleases, the mighty men become as women, Jer. iv. 20. In the solution: (v. 4.) Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? If man be born of a woman that is a sinner, how can it be otherwise than that he should be a sinner? See ch. xxxv. 4.

How can he be clean that is born of a woman? Clean children cannot come from unclean parents, any more than pure streams from an impure spring, or grapes from thorns. Our habitual corruption is derived, with our nature, from our parents, and is therefore bred in the bone: our blood is not only tainted with sin, but tainted with an hereditary disease. Our Lord Jesus, being made sin for us, is said to be made of a woman, Gal. iv. 4.

II. Of the nature of human life; it is a flower, it is a shadow, v. 2. The flower is fading, and all its beauty soon withers and is gone. The shadow is fleeting, and its very being will soon be lost and drowned in the shadows of the night: of neither do we make any account, in neither do we put any confidence.

III. Of the shortness and uncertainty of human life; man is of few days. Life is computed, not by months or years, but by days, for we cannot be sure of any day but that it may be our last. These days are few, fewer than we think of; few, at the most, in comparison with the days of the first patriarchs, much more, in comparison with the days of eternity; but much fewer to most, who come short of what we call the age of man. Man sometimes sooner comes forth, than he is cut down, comes forth out of the womb, than he dies in the cradle, comes forth into the world and enters into the business of it, than he is hurried away as soon as he has laid his hand to the plough. If not cut down immediately, yet it is a shadow, as a shadow, and never continues in one stay, in one shape, but the fashion of it passes away: so does this world and our life in it, 1 Cor. VII. 31.

IV. Of the calamitous state of human life; man, as he is short-lived, so he is sad-lived. Though he had but a few days to spend here, yet if he might rejoice in those few, it were well; (a short life and a merry, is the boast of some;) but it is not so; during these few days, he is full of trouble, not only troubled, but full of trouble, either toiling or fretting, grieving or fearing; no day passes without some vexation, some hurry, some disorder or other. They that are void of the world, shall have enough of it. He is natur tremore—full of commotion.

The fewness of his days creates him a continual trouble and uneasiness in expectation of the period of them, and he always hangs in doubt of his life. Yet since man's days are so full of trouble, it is well that they are few, that the soul's imprisonment in the body, and banishment from the Lord, are not perpetual, are not long. When we come to heaven, our days will be many, and perfectly free from trouble, but it will be pure light, hope, and love, and balance the present grievances.

V. Of the sinfulness of human life, arising from the sinfulness of the human nature. So some understand that question; (v. 4.) Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? A clean performance from an unclean prince, who therefore, actual transgressions are the natural product of habitual corruption; which is therefore called original sin, because it is inherent in all, and cannot be so by any job here meant, as all that are sinners do, running up the streams to the fountain, Ps. li. 5.) and some think he intends it as a plea with God for compassion; "Lord, be not extreme to mark my sins of human frailty and infirmity, for thou knowest my weakness; remember that I am flesh." The Chaldee

paraphrase has an observable reading of this verse; Who can make a man clean, that is polluted with sin? Cannot one that is, God. Or who but God, who is one, and will share him? God, by his almighty grace, can change the skin of the Ethiopian, that is, of the state of sinners, though clothed with worms.

VI. Of the settled period of human life, v. 5. We are here assured, 1. That our life will come to an end; our days upon earth are not numberless, are not endless, no, they are numbered, and will soon be finished, Dan. v. 26. 2. That it is determined, in the counsel and decree of God, how long we shall live, and when we shall die. The number of our months is with God, at the disposal of his counsel, and under the view of his omnipotence which cannot be deceived. It is certain that God's providence has the ordering of the period of our lives, our times are in his hand, the powers of nature depend upon him, and act under him; in him we live and move, diseases are his servants, he kills and makes alive, nothing comes to pass by chance, no not the execution done by a bow drawn at a venture; it is therefore certain that the presence of God in our life is known unto God; all his works. Whatever he does, he determines, yet with a regard partly to the settled course of nature, (the end and the means are determined together,) and to the settled rules of moral government, punishing evil, and rewarding good, in this life; we are no more governed by the Stoic's blind fate than by the Epicurean's blind fortune. 3. That the bounds God has fixed, we cannot pass, for his counsels are unalterable, his foresight being infallible.

These considerations Job here urges as reasons, (1.) Why God should not be so strict in taking cognizance of him, and of his slips, and failings; (v. 5.) "Since I have such a corrupt nature within, and am liable to so much trouble, which is a constant temptation from without, dost thou open thine eyes and fasten them upon such a one, extremely to mark what I do amiss? ch. xiii. 27. And dost thou bring me, such a worthless worm as I am, into judgment with thee who art so quick-sighted to discover the least failing, so holy to hate it, so just to condemn it, and so mighty to punish it?" The consideration of our own inability to contend with God, of our own sinfulness and weakness, should engage us to pray, Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant.

(2.) Why he should not be so severe in his dealings with him; "Lord, I have but a little time to live, I must certainly and shortly go hence, and the few days I have to spend here are, at the best, full of trouble. O let me have a little respite, v. 6. Turn from afflicting a poor creature thus, and let him rest a while; allow him some breathing time, until he shall accomplish, as a hireling, his day. It is appointed to me once to die, let that one day suffice me, and let me not thus he continually dying, dying a thousand deaths. Let it suffice that my life, at best, is as the day of a hireling, a day of toil and labour; I am content to accomplish that, and will make the best of the common hardships of human life, the burthen and heat of the day; but let me not feel those uncommon tortures, let not my life be as the day of a malefactor, all execution-day. Thus may we find some relief under great troubles by recommending ourselves to the compassion of that God who knows our frame, will consider it, and our being out of frame.

7. For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. 8 Though the root thereof wax old in the
earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; 9. Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plan- 10. But man dieth, and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? 11. As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and dieth up; 12. So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. 13. Oh that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! 14. If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. 15. Thou shalt call; and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands.

We have seen what Job has to say concerning life, let us now see what he has to say concerning death, which his thoughts were very much conversant with, now that he was sick and sore. It is not unseasonable, when we are in health, to think of dying; but it is an inexcusable incogitation, if, when we are already taken into the custody of death's messengers, we look upon it as a thing at a distance. Job had already showed that death will come, and that its hour is already fixed. Now here he shows,

1. That death is a removal for ever out of this world. This he had spoken of before, (ch. vii. 9.) and now he mentions it again: for though it be a truth that needs not be proved, yet it needs to be much considered, that it may be duly improved.

1. A man cut down by death, will not revive again, as a tree cut down will. What hope there is of a tree, he shows very elegantly, v. 7-9. If the body of the tree be cut down, and only the stem or stump left in the ground, though it seem dead and dry, yet it will shoot out young boughs again, as if it were but newly planted. The moisture of the earth and the rain of heaven are, as it were, scented and perceived by the stump of a tree, and they have an influence upon it to revive it: but the dead body of a man would not perceive them, nor be in the least affected by them. In Nebuchadnez- zar’s dream, when his being deprived of the use of his reason was signified by the cutting down of a tree, his return to it again was signified by the leaving of the stump in the earth, with a band of iron and brass, to be wet with the dew of heaven. Dan. iv. 15. But man has no such prospect of a return to life. The vegetable life is a cheap and easy thing, the scent of water will recover it; the animal life, in some insects and frogs, is so, the heat of the sun retrieves it; but the rational soul, once retired, is too great, too noble, a thing to be recalled by any of the powers of nature; it is out of the reach of sun or rain, and cannot be restored but by the immediate operations of Omnipotence itself; for, (v. 10.) Man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? Two words are here used for man. Geber, a mighty man, though mighty, dies; As. a man of the earth, is cut off from it. Man is a dying creature; he is here described by what occurs, (1.) Before death; he wastes away, he is continually wasting, dying daily, spending upon the quick stock of life; sickness and old age are wasting things to the flesh, the strength, the beauty. (2.) In death; he gives up the ghost, the soul leaves the body, and returns to God who gave it, the Fa- ther of spirits. (3.) After death; Where is he? He is not where he was, his place knows him no more; but, Is he nowhere? So some read it. Yes, he is some where; a man which he would not make considera- tion to think where they are that have given up the ghost, and where we shall be, when we give it up. It is gone to the world of spirits, gone into eternity, gone to return no more to this world.

2. A man laid down in the grave will not rise up again, v. 11. Every night, we lie down to sleep, and in the morning, we awake and rise again; but, at death, we must lie down in the grave, not to awake or rise again to such a world, such a state, as we are returning to, but to be dumb and no more till the heavens, the faithful measures of time, shall be no more, and, consequently, time itself shall come to an end, and be swallowed up in eternity; so that the life of man may fitly be compared to the waters of a land-flood, which spread far and make a great show, but they are shallow, and, when they are cut off from the sea or river, the swelling and overflow- ing of which was the cause of them, they soon decay and their place knows them not more. The waters of life are soon exhaled, and disappear; the body, like some of those waters, sinks and soaks into the earth, and is buried there; the soul, like others of them, is drawn upward, to mingle with the waters above the firmament. The learned Sir Richard Blackmore makes this also to be a dissimilitude; if the waters decay and be dried up in the summer, yet they will return again in the winter; but it is not so with the life of man. Take part of his paraphrase in like words:

A flowing river, or a standing lake, May their deeps and naked shores forsake; Their waters may exale and upward move, Their channels, rive, have to roll in the above; But the returning winter will restore What in the summer they had lost before: But if O man, thy vital streams decay Their purple channels, and defraud the heart, With fresh recreates they no'er will be supply'd, Nor the loosing life's returning tide.  

II. That yet there will be a return of man to life again in another world, at the end of time, when the heavens are no more. Then they shall awake, and be raised out of their sleep. The resurrection of the dead was, doubtless, an article of Job’s creed, as appears, ch. xix. 26. and to that, it should seem, he has an eye here; where, in the belief of that, we have three things:

1. An humble petition for a hiding-place in the grave. v. 13. It was not only in a passionate weak- ness of this life, that he wished to die, but in a pious assurance of a better life, to which, at length, he should arise. O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave! The grave is not only a resting-place, but a hiding-place, to the people of God. God has the key of the grave, to let in now, and to let out at the resurrection. He hides men in the grave, as we hide our treasure in a place of secrecy and safety; and he who hides will find, and nothing shall be lost. “O God, hide thou me not only from the storms and troubles of this life, but for the bliss and glory of a better life; let me lie in the grave, reserved for immortality, in secret from all the world, but not from thee, not from those eyes which saw my substance when first curiously wrought in the lowest part of the earth,” Ps. cxxxix. 15, 16. There let me lie. Until thy wrath be past. As long as the bodies of the saints lie in the earth, they have so long that life of those sins of which they were by nature children of, so long they are under some of the enmity of sin; but when the body is raised, it is wholly past; death, the last en- emy, will then be totally destroyed. (2.) Until the set time comes for my being remembered, as Noah was remembered in the ark, (Gen. viii. 1.) where
God not only hid him from the destruction of the old world, but reserved him for the reparation of a new world. The bodies of the saints shall not be forgotten in the grave; there is a time appointed, a time set, for their being inquired after. We must not be sure that they shall look through the darkness of death’s troubles, and see good days after them in this world; but if we can but get well to the grave, we may with an eye of faith look through the darkness of that, as Job here, and see better days on the other side it, in a better world.

2. A holy resolution patiently to attend the will of God both in his death and in his resurrection; (v. 14.) “If a man die, shall he live again?; all days of my appointed time will wait until my change come. Job’s friends proving miserable comforters, he set himself to be the more his own comforter; his case was now bad, but he pleases himself with the expectation of a change. I think it cannot be meant of his return to a prosperous condition in this world. His friends indeed flattered him with the hopes of that, but he himself all along despairs of it. Comforts founded upon uncertainties, at best, must needs be uncertain comforts; and therefore, I doubt, it is something more sure than that which he here sets before himself with the expectation of. The change he waits for must, therefore, be understood, either, (1.) Of the change of the resurrection, when the vile body shall be changed, (Phil. iii. 21.) and a great and glorious change it will be; and then that question, If a man die, shall he live again? must be taken by way of admiration. ’Strange! Shall these dry bones live! If so, all the time appointed for the continuance of the separation between soul and body, my separate soul shall wait until that change comes, when it shall be united again to the body, and my flesh also shall rest in hope,” Ps. xvi. 9. Or, (2.) Of the change at death. “If a man die, shall he live again? No, not such a life as he now lives; and therefore I will patiently wait until that change comes, which will put a period to my calamities, and not impatiently wish for the anticipation of it, as I have done.”

3. A joyful expectation of reward and satisfaction in this; (v. 15.) “Thou shalt call me out of the grave, by the voice of the archangel, and I will answer, and come at the call.” The body is the work of God’s hands, and he will have a desire to that, having prepared a glory for it, Or, (2.) At death, “Thou shalt call me out of the grave, and my soul to thyself, and I will answer, Ready, Lord, ready, coming, coming; here I am.” Gracious souls can cheerfully answer death’s summons, and appear to his writ. Their spirits are not forcibly required from them, (as Luke xii. 20.) but willingly resigned by them, and the earthly tabernacle not violently pulled down, but voluntarily laid down; with this assurance, “Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands; thou hast mercy in store for me, not only as made by thy providence, but new-made by thy grace; otherwise he that made them will not save them.” Note, Grace in the soul is the work of God’s own hands, and therefore he will not forsake it in this world, (Ps. cxxxviii. 8.) but will have a desire to it, to perfect it in the other, and to crown it with endless glory.

16. For now thou numberest my steps, dost thou not watch over my sin? 17. My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and thou seest up mine iniquity. 18. And surely the mountain falling cometh to nought, and the rock is removed out of his place. 19. The waters wear the stones: thou wastest away the things which grow out of the dust of the earth; and thou destroyest the hope of man. 20. Thou prevailest for ever against him; and he passeth: thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away. 21. His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them. 22. But his flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn.

Job here returns to his complaints; and though he is not without hope of future bliss, he finds it very hard to get over his present grievances.

1. He complains of the particular hardships he apprehended himself under from the strictness of God’s justice, v. 16, 17. Therefore he longed to go hence to that world where God’s wrath will be past, because now he was under the continual tokens of it, as a child, under the severe discipline of the rod, longs to be of age. “When shall my change come? For now thou seest me to number my steps, and watch over my sin, and seal it up in a bag, as bills of indictment are kept safe, to be produced against the prisoner.” See Deut. xxxiii. 34. “Thou takest all advantages against me, old scores are called over, every infirmity is anticipated, and new scores are a false step taken, than I am better for it.” Now, Job has a right to the divine justice, in owning that he smarted for his sins and transgressions, that he had done enough to deserve all that was laid upon him; for there was sin in all his steps, and he was guilty of transgression enough to bring all this ruin upon him, if it were strictly inquired into: he is far from seeing that he perishes being innocent. But, 2. He does wrong to the divine goodness, in suggesting that God was extreme to mark what he did amiss and make the worst of everything: he spake to this purport, ch. xiii. 27. It was unadvisedly said, and therefore we will not dwell too much upon it. God does indeed see all his sins, he sees sin in his own people, but he is not severe in reckoning with us, nor is the law ever stretched against us, but we are
punished less than our iniquities deserve. God does indeed seal and sow up, against the day of wrath, the transgression of the impenitent, but the sins of his people he blest out as a cloud.

II. He complains of the wasting condition of mankind in general: we live in a dying world; who knows the power of God's anger, by which we are consumed and troubled, and in which all our days are passed away? See Ps. xci. 7-9. 11. And who can wear up against such a rebuke? The last verse he perceives it not, v. 21. He is going to that world where he will be a perfect stranger to all those things which here filled and affected him. The consideration of this should moderate our cares concerning our children and families. God will know what comes of them when we are gone, to him therefore let us commit them, with him let us leave them, and not burthen ourselves with needless, fruitless, cares concerning them.

Thirdly, How dreadful the agonies of death are; (v. 22.) While his flesh is upon him, (so it may be read,) that is, the body he is so loath to lay down, it shall have pain; and while his soul is within him, that is, the spirit he is so loath to resign, it shall mourn. Note, Dying work is hard work; dying pangs are, commonly, sore pangs. It is folly, therefore, for men to defer their repentance to a death-bed, and to have that to do, which is the one thing needful, when they are really unfit to do any thing: for it is true wisdom, by making our peace with God in Christ, and keeping a good conscience, to treasure up comforts which will support and relieve us against the pains and sorrows of a dying hour.

CHAP. XV.

Perhaps Job was so clear, and so well satisfied, in the goodness of his own cause, that his friends had not convinced, yet he had, at least, silenced, all his thoughts against them; but, it seems, he had not; in this chapter, they begin a second attack upon him, each of them charging him anew, with the same or different arguments. It is natural to us to be fond of our own sentiments, and therefore to be firm to them, and with difficulty to be brought to recede from them. Eliphaz here keeps close to the principles upon which he had condemned Job, and, I. He reproves him for justifying himself, and others of him many evil things which are unfairly inferred from those. v. 2-13. II. He persuades him to humble himself before God, and to take shame to himself, v. 14-18. III. He reads him a long lecture concerning the woful estate of wicked people, who harden their hearts against God and the judgments which are prepared for them, v. 19-35. A good use may be made both of his reproofs, (for they are plain,) and of his doctrine, (for it is sound,) though both the one and the other are misapplied to Job.

I. THEN answered Eliphaz the Temanite, and said, 2. Should a wise man utter vain knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind? 3. Should he reason with unprofitable talk? or with speeches wherewith he can do no good? 4. Yea, though he were a man of understanding, and there was no spirit in him.

as man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that she should be righteous? 15. Behold, he puttest no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight: 16. How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?

Eliphaz here falls very foul upon Job, because he contradicted what he and his colleagues had said, and did not acquiesce in it, and applaud it, as they expected. Proud people are apt thus to take it very much amiss, if they may not have their way to dictate and to be all about them, and to censure those as ignorant and obstinate, and all that is naught, who cannot, in every thing, say as they say.

Several great crimes Eliphaz here charges Job with, only because he would not own himself a hypocrite.

I. He charges him with folly and absurdity; (v. 2, 3.) That whereas he had been reputed a wise man, he had now quite forfeited his reputation; any one would say that his wisdom was despised from him, he talked extravagantly, and so little to the purpose. Bildad began thus, (ch. viii. 2.) and Zophar, ch. xi. 2. 3. It is common for angry disputants thus to represent one another’s reasonings as impertinent and ridiculous, more than there is cause, forgetting the doom of him that calls his brother “Naca,” and Thou Fool. It is true, 1. That there is in the world a great deal of vain knowledge, science falsely so called, that is useless, and therefore worthless. 2. That this is the knowledge that puffs up, with which men swell in a fond conceit of their own accomplishments. 3. That whatever vain knowledge a man may have in his head, if he would be thought a wise man, he must not utter it, but let it die with himself, as it deserves. 4. Unprofitable talk is evil talk: we must give an account, in the great day, not only for wicked words, but for idle words. Speeches, therefore, which do no good, which do no service either to God or our neighbour, or no justice to ourselves, which are no way to the use of edifying, were better unspoken. Those words which are as wind, light and empty, especially which are as the cast wind, hurtful and pernicious, it will be wrong to fill either ourselves or others with, for they will pass very ill in the account. 5. Vain knowledge and unprofitable talk ought to be reproved and checked, especially in a wise man, whom it worst becomes, and who does most hurt by the bad example of it.

II. He charges him with impiety and irreligion; (v. 4.) “Thou castest off fear,” that is, “the fear of God, and that regard to him which thou shouldst have; and then thou restrained prayer.” See what religion is summed up in—fearing God, and praying to him; the former the most needful principle, the latter the most needful practice. Where no fear of God is, no good is to be expected; and those who pray without prayer, certainly live without God in the world. Those who restrain prayer, prove that they cast off fear. Surely those have no reverence of God’s majesty, no dread of his wrath, and are in no care about their souls and eternity, who make no applications to God for his grace. Those who are prayerless, are fearers and graceless. When the fear of God is cast off, all sin is let in, and a door open to all sin. Wherever it is thus, there is condescension to sin, not only in those who have had some fear of God, but have now cast it off, have been frequent in prayer, but now restrain it. How are they fallen? How is their first love lost! It denotes a kind of force put upon themselves. The fear of God would cleave to them; but they throw it off; prayer would be uttered, but they restrain it, and, in both, baffled their convictions. Those who either omit prayer, or straiten and abridge themselves in it, quenching the spirit of adoption, and denying themselves the liberty they might take in the duty, restrain prayer; in the name of aught else, but it is worse to restrain, than to yield up to prayer, to prohibit and discourage prayer, as Darius, Dan. vi. 7.

Now Eliphaz charges this upon Job, either, 1. As that which was his own practice. He thought that Job talked of God with such liberty as if he had been his equal, and that he charged him so vehemently with hard usage of him, and challenged him so often to a fair trial, that he had quite thrown over his reputation. But, 2. He says, that a man may be thus sorely afflicted, without he has been a good man, the faealll of all which are false, farewell prayer and the fear of God. If all things come alike to all, and the best men may have the worst treatment in this world, every one will be ready to say, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it to keep his ordinances? (Mal. iii. 14.) Verily I have cleansed my hands in vain, (Ps. lixxiii. 13, 14.) Who will be honest, if the tabernacles of robbers prosper? (ch. xii. 6.) If there be no forgiveness with God, (ch. vii. 21.) who will fear him? (Ps. cxxx. 4.) If he laugh at the trial of the innocent, (ch. ix. 23) if he be so difficult of access, (ch. ix. 32.) who will pray to him? Note, It is a piece of injustice, which even wise and good men are too often guilty of, in the heat of dispute, to charge upon their adversaries those consequences of their opinions, which are not fairly drawn from them, and which really they abhor. This is not doing as we would be done by.

Upon this strained imuco Eliphaz grounds that high charge of impiety; (v. 5.) Thy mouth uttereth thine iniquity, teaches it, so the word is. “Then tencheth others to have the same hard thoughts of God and religion that thou thyself hast.” It is bad to break even the least of the commandments, but worse to teach men so, Matth. v. 19. If we ever thought evil, let us lay our hand upon our mouth to suppress the evil thought, (Prov. xxx. 32.) and let us by no means utter it, that is putting an imperium to it, publishing it with allowance, to the dishonour of God, and the damage of others. Observe, When men have cast off fear and prayer, their mouths utter iniquity. They that cease to do good, soon learn to do evil. What can we expect but all manner of iniquity from those that arm themselves with the grace of God against us? But, thou choisest the tongue of iniquity, that is, They that choose the tongue of iniquity, which is the same as choosing the practice of impious, mixing some good words with the bad, as tradesmen do with their wares to help them sell. The mouth of iniquity could not do so much mischief as it does, without the tongue of the craft. The serpent beguiled Eve through his subtil... Rom. vi. 18. The tongue of the crafty speaks with design and deliberation; and therefore they that use it may be said to choose it, as charging with a purpose better than the tongue of the upright: but it will be found, at last, that honesty is the best policy.

Eliphaz, in his first discourse, had proceeded against Job upon mere surmise; (ch. iv. 6, 7.) but now he has got proof against him from his own discourses; (v. 6.) Thine own mouth condemns thee,
and not I. But he should have considered that he and his fellows had provoked him to say that which now they took advantage of; and that was not fair. Those are most effectually condemned, that are condemned by themselves, Tit. iii. 11. Luke xix. 22. Many a man needs no more to sink him, than for his own tongue to fall upon him.

III. He charges him with intolerable arrogance and presumption; what he has said was, besides a total and irreverent, and modest, demand that Job had made; (ch. xii. 3.) *Allow that I have understanding as well as you:* but see how they seek occasion against him; that is misconstrued, as if he pretended to be wiser than any man. Because he will not grant to them, they will have it thought that he claims to himself, the monopoly of wisdom, v. 7.-9. As if he thought he had the advantage of all mankind, 1. In length of acquaintance with the world, which furnishes men with so much the more experience; *Art not the first man that was born,* and, consequently, senior to us, and better able to give the sense of antiquity, and the judgment of the first and earliest, the wisest and purest, ages? *Art thou prior to Adam?* (So it may be read.) *Did not he suffer for sin,* and yet wilt not thou, who art so great a sufferer, own thyself a sinner? *Wast thou made before the hills,* as Wisdom herself was? (Prov. viii. 21, &c.) Must he not answer, who are as ancient as the meanest? (Ps. lxxxi. 6.) *Even in the valley of the former hills,* or in the everlasting hills, be subject to thy notions, and bow to them? Dost thou know more of the world than any of us do? No, thou art but of yesterday, even as we are," ch. viii. 9. Or, 2. In intimacy of acquaintance with God; (v. 8.) *Hast thou heard the secret of God?* Dost thou pretend to be of the cabinet-council of Heaven, that thou canst give better reasons than others can for God's proceedings? There are secret things of God, which belong not to us, and which, therefore, we must not pretend to account for; those are daringly presumptuous who do. He also represents him, (1.) As assuming to himself such knowledge as none else had; *Dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself,* as if none were wise besides? Job had said, (ch. xiii. 2.) *What ye know, the same do I know also,* and now they return upon him, according to the usage of eager disputants, who think they have a privilege to commend themselves; *What knowest thou that I know not?* How natural are such replies as these, in the heat of argument! But how simple do they look afterward, upon the review! (2.) As opposing the stream of antiquity, a venerable name, under the shade of which all contending parties strive to shelter themselves; *With us are the gray-headed, and very aged men,* v. 10. We have the fathers on our side; all the ancient doctors of the church are of our opinion." A thing soon said, but not so soon proved, and then proven, truth is not so soon discovered and proved by it, as most people imagine. David preferred right scripture-knowledge before that of antiquity; (Ps. cxxix. 100.) *I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.* Or perhaps one or more, if not all three, of these friends of Job, were elder than he, (ch. xxxii. 6.) and therefore they thought he was bound to acknowledge them to be in the right. This also serves contemporaries to make a noise with, to very little purpose, as if these men were the elders of the church; any can say 'twere known a thing before they were born, it will serve to make them arrogant and overbearing; whereas the eldest are not always the wisest, ch. xxxii. 9.

IV. He charges him with a contempt of the counsel and comforts that were given him by his friends; (v. 11.) *Are the consolations of God small with thee?* 1. Eliaphaz takes it ill that Job did not value the comforts, which he and his friends admin-
it makes us acceptable to God, and easy to ourselves, Ps. xviii. 24. 2. Man, in his fallen state, cannot pretend to be clean and righteous before God, either to acquit himself to God's justice, or recommend himself to his favour. 3. He is therefore to be adjudged unclean and unrighteous, because born of a woman, from whom he derives a corrupt nature, which is both his guilt and his portion. All truth is to convince Job, whereas he had just now said the same; (ch. xiv. 4.) Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? But does it therefore follow that Job is a hypocrite, and a wicked man, which is all that he denied? By no means. Though man, as born of a woman, is not clean, yet, as born again of the Spirit, he is.

Further to evince this, he here shows,
(1.) That the brightest beam of perfect and pure light before God, v. 13. God places no confidence in saints and angels; he employs both, but trusts neither with his service, without giving them fresh supplies of strength and wisdom for it, as knowing they are not sufficient of themselves, neither more nor better than his grace makes them. He takes no complacency in the heavens themselves. How puresoever they seem to us, in his eye they have many a speck and many a flaw; The heavens are not clean in his sight. If the (say) man, or (say) woman, has no light, nor light of the sight of the sun, what light has the sun in the sight of God? See Isa. xxiv. 23.

(2.) That man is much more so; (v. 16.) How much more abominable and filthy is man! If saints are not to be trusted, much less sinners. If the heavens are not pure, which are as God made them, much less man, who is degenerated. Nay, he is abominable and filthy in the sight of God, and, if ever he repent, he is so in his own sight, and therefore he abhors himself. Sin is an odious thing, it makes men hateful. The body of sin is so, and is therefore called a dead body, a loathsome thing. Such is the filthiness of man, that he drinks iniquity {that abominable thing which the Lord hates} as greedily, and with as much pleasure, as a man drinks water when he is thirsty. It is his constant drink; it is natural to sinners to commit impiety. It gratifies, but does not satisfy, the appetites of the old man. It is like water to a man in a dropsey.

The more men sin, the more they would sin.

17. I will show thee, hear me; and that which I have seen I will declare; 18. Which wise men have told from their fathers, and have not hid it: 19. Unto whom alone the earth was given, and no stranger passed among them. 20. The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days, and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor. 21. A dreadful sound is in his ears: in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him. 22. He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness, and he is waited for of the sword. 23. He wandereth abroad for bread, saying, Where is it? he knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand. 24. Trouble and anguish shall make him afraid; they shall prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle. 25. For he stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty. 26. He runneth upon him, even on his neck, upon the thick bosses of his bucklers; 27. Because he covereth his face with his fatness, and maketh collars of fat on his flanks. 28. And he dwelleth in desolate cities, and in houses which no man inhabiteth, which are ready to become heaps. 29. He shall not be rich, neither shall his substance continue, neither shall he prolong the perfection thereof upon the earth. 30. He shall not depart out of darkness: the flame shall dry up his branches, and by the breath of his mouth shall he go away. 31. Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity; for vanity shall be his recompense. 32. It shall be accomplished before his time, and his branch shall not be green. 33. He shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine, and shall cast off his flower as the olive. 34. For the congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery. 35. They conceive mischief, and bring forth vanity, and their belly prepareth deceit.

Eliphaz, having reproved Job for his answers, here comes to maintain his own thesis, upon which he built his censure of Job. His opinion is, That those who are wicked are certainly miserable; whence he would infer, that those who are miserable are certainly wicked, and that therefore Job was so. Observe,

I. His solemn bow to this discourse, in which he bespeaks Job's attention, which he had little reason to expect, he having given so little heed to, and put so little value upon, what Job had said; (v. 17.) “I will show thee that which is worth hearing, and not reason, as thou dost, with unprofitable talk.” Thus apt are men, when they condemn the reasonings of others, to commend their own. He promises to teach him, 1. From his own experience and observation; “That which I have myself seen in divers instances, I will declare.” It is of good use to make noted the evidences of God concerning the children of men, from which many a good lesson may be learned. What good observations we have made, and have found benefit by ourselves, we should be ready to communicate for the benefit of others: and we may then speak boldly, when we declare what we have seen. 2. From the wisdom of the ancients, (v. 18.) which wise men have told from their fathers. Note, The wisdom and learning of the moderns are very much derived from the light of the ancients. Good children will learn a good deal from their good parents: and what we have learned from our ancestors we must transmit to our posterity, and not hide from the generations to come. See Ps. lxxviii. 3-6. If the thread of the knowledge of many ages be cut off by the carelessness of one, and nothing be done to preserve it pure and entire, all that succeed, fare the worse. The authorities Eliphaz vouched, were authorities indeed, men of rank and figure; (v. 19.) unto whom alone the earth was given, and therefore you may suppose them favourites of Heaven, and best capable of making observations concerning the affairs of this earth. The dictates of wisdom come with advantage from those who are in places of dignity and power, as Solomon; yet there is a wisdom which none of the princes of this world knew, 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8.

II. The discourse itself. He here aims to show
1. That those who are wise and good do ordinarily prosper in this world. This he only hints at, v. 19. That those of whose mind he was, were such as had the earth given to them, and to them only; they enjoyed it entirely and peaceably, and no stranger passed among them, either to share with them, or to give disturbance to them. Job had said, The earth is given into the hand of the wicked, or rather, under the hands of the saints, and runs along with the faith committed unto them. And they are not robbed and plundered by strangers and enemies making inroads upon them, as thou art by the Sabaens and Chaldeans. But because many of God’s people have remarkably prospered in this world, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it does not therefore follow, that those who are crossed and impoverished, as Job, are not God’s people.

2. The wicked people, and particularly oppressors, and tyrannizing rulers, are subject to continual terrors, live very uncomfortably, and perish very miserably. On this head he enlarges, showing that even they who impiously dare God’s judgments, yet cannot but dread them, and will feel them at last. He speaks in the singular number, the wicked one, meaning, as some think, Nimrod, or perhaps Che-dorlaomer, or some such mighty hunter before the Lord, Gen. x. 10. He speaks to himself, whom he expressly charg’d both with the tyrannies of his breast, and with the timorousness, here described, ch. xxii. 9, 10. Here he thinks the application easy, and that Job might, in this description, as in a glass, see his own face. Now,

(1.) Let us see how he describes the sinner who lives thus miserably. He does not begin with that, but brings it in as a reason of his doom, v. 25-28. It is no ordinary sinner, but one of the first rate, an oppressor (v. 20.) a blasphemer, and a persecutor, one that neither fears God, nor regards man.

[1.] He bids defiance to God, and to his authority and power, v. 25. Tell him of the divine law, and its obligations; he breaks those bonds asunder, and will not have, no not him that made him, to restrain him or rule over him. Tell him of the divine wrath, and its terrors; he bids the Almighty do his worst, he will have his will, he will have his way, in spite of him, and will not be controlled by law, or conscience, or the notices of a judgment to come. He stretches out his hand against God, in defiance of him, and of the power of his wrath. God is indeed out of his reach, but he stretches out his hand against him, to show, that, if it were in his power, he would ungod him.

This applies to the audacious impudence of some sinners, who are really haters of God, (Rom. i. 30.) and whose carnal mind is not only an enemy to him, but enmity itself, Rom. viii. 7. But, alas! the sinner’s malice is so innate, that it is impossible what can he do? He strengthens himself (he would be valiant, so some read it) against the Almighty; he thinks with his exorbitant despotic power to change times and laws, (Dan. vii. 25.) and, in spite of Providence, to carry the day for rapine and wrong, clear of the check of conscience. Note, It is the prodigious madness of presumptuous sinners, that they enter the lists with Omnipotence. Woe unto him that saith against his Maker, that he will not do what he please; that he will not change times and laws. He that saith that he will do what his Maker will not allow him to do, it is a desperate combatant, when he finds himself an unequal match for his adversary, flies in his face, though, at the same time, he fails on his sword’s point, or the sharp spike of his buckler. Sinners, in general, run from God; but the presumptuous sinner, who, with a high hand, runs upon him, fights against him, and bids defiance to him; and it is easy to foretell what will be the issue.

[2.] He wraps himself up in security and sensuality, v. 27. He covers his face with his fleshness. This signifies both the pumpering of his flesh with daily delicious fare, and the hardening of his heart thereby against the judgments of God. Note, The gratifying of the appetites of the body, feeding and feasting them to the full, often often hardens the edge of the soul and its interests. Why is God forgotten and slighted, but because the belly is made a god of, and happiness placed in the delights of sense? They that fill themselves with wine and strong drink, abandon all that is serious, and flatter themselves with hopes that to-morrow shall be as this day, Isa. liv. 12. Woe to them that are thus at ease in Zion, Amos vi. 1, 3, 4. Luke xii. 19. The fat that covers his face, makes him look bold and haughty, and that which covers his flanks, makes him lie easy and soft, and feel little; but this will prove poor shelter against the darts of God’s wrath.

[3.] He enriches himself with the spoils of all about him, v. 28. He dwells in cities which he himself has made desolate by expelling the inhabitants out of them, that he might be placed alone in them, Isa. v. 8. Proud and cruel men take a strange pleasure in ruins, when they are of their own making; in desolation, ch. i. 14, (Ps. ii. 6.) and triumphing in the destruction, so the tyrants do, and with their own, but by making them ready to become heaps, and frightening the inhabitants out of them. Note, Those that aim to engross the world to themselves, and grasp at all, lose the comfort of all, and make themselves miserable in the midst of all. How does this tyrant gain his point, and make himself master of cities that have all the marks of antiquity upon them? We are told, (v. 35.) he does it by deceit and falsehood, (Ps. xiv.) and he that is chief is the last. By the wickedness, who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning; they conceive mischief, and then they effect it by preparing deceit, pretending to protect those whom they design to subdue, and making leagues of peace, the more effectually to carry on the operations of war. From such wicked men God deliver all good men.

(2.) Let us see now what is the miserable condition of this wicked man, both in spiritual and temporal judgments.

[1.] His inward peace is continually disturbed. He seems to those about him to be easy, who, therefore, envy him, and wish themselves in his condition, but he who knows what is in men, tells us that a wicked man has so little comfort and satisfaction in his own breast, that he is rather to be pitied than envied.

First, His own conscience accuses him, and, with the pangs at the thought of that, he travaileth in pain all his days, v. 20. He is continually uneasy at the thought of the cruelties he has been guilty of, and the blood in which he has imbrued his hands; his sins stare him in the face at every turn. Dirí conscia facti mens habet attonitos—Conscious guilt astonisheds and confoundeds.

Secondly, He is vexed at the uncertainty of the continuance of his wealth and power; the number of years is hidden to the oppressor. He knows, however he intends, that it will not last always, and has reason to fear that it will not last long, and this he frets at.

Thirdly, He is under a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation, (Heb. x. 27.) which puts him into, and keeps him in, a continual terror and consternation, so that he dwells with Cain in the land of Nod, or commotion, (Gen. iv. 16.) and is made like Bashur, Makor-missabih—A terror round about, Jer. xx. 3, 4. A dreadful sound is in his ears, v. 21. He knows that both Heaven
and and earth are incensed against him, that God is angry with him, and that all the world hates him; he has done nothing to make his peace with either, and therefore he thinks that every one who meets him will slay him, Gen. iv. 14. Or, like a man ab-scinding for debt, who thinks every man a bailiff. Fear came in, at first, with sin, (Gen. iii. 10.) and still attends the man in his apprehen-sion, but the destroyer will come upon him, either some destroying angel sent of God to avenge his quarrel, or some of his injured subjects who will be their own avengers. Those who are the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, usually go down slain to the pit, (Ezk. xxxii. 25.) the expectation of which makes them a terror to themselves. This is further set forth, v. 22. that he is, in his own apprehension, waited for of the sword; for he knows that he who kills with the sword, must be killed with the sword, Rev. xiii. 10. A guilty conscience represents to the sinner a flaming sword turning every way, (Gen. iii. 24.) and himself inevitably running on it. Again, (v. 23.) He knows that the day of darkness, (or the night of darkness rather) is ready at his hand, that it is appointed to him, and cannot be put by, that it is hastening on apace, and cannot be put off. This day of darkness is something beyond death; it is that his time of a long dark night, to all wicked people, under which they will be darkness and not light, and in which they will be doomed to utter, endless, darkness. Note, Some wicked people, though they seem secure, have already received the sentence of death, eternal death, within themselves, and plainly see hell gaping for them. No marble that it follows, (v. 24.) Trouble and anguish (that inward tribulation and anguish of soul spoken of, Rom. ii. 8, 9, which is the effect of God’s indignation and wrath fastening upon the consciences of sinners) and darkness. What is the hell before him, if this be the hell within him? And though he would fain shake off his fears, drink them away, and jest them away, it will not do; they shall prevail against him, and overpower him, as a king ready to the battle, with forces too strong to be resisted. He that would keep his peace, let him keep a good conscience.

Fourthly. If at any time he be in trouble, he deprains of getting out; (v. 25.) He believeth not that he shall shake off the darkness, but he gives himself up for gone and lost in an endless night. Good men expect light at evening time, light out of darkness; but what reason have they to expect that they shall return out of the darkness of trouble, who would not return from the darkness of sin, but went on in it? Ps. lxxxii. 5. It is the misery of damned sinners, that they know they shall never return out of that utter darkness, nor pass the gulf there fixed. Fifthly. He perplexes himself with continual care, especially if Providence ever so little draw upon him, v. 23. Such a dread he has of poverty, and such a waste does he discern upon his estate, that he is already, in his own imagination, wandering abroad for bread, going a-begging for a meal’s meat, and saying, Where is it? The rich man, in his abundance, cried out, What shall I do? Luke xii. 17. Perhaps he pretends fear of wanting, as an excuse for his covetous practices; lest he may be brought to poverty at last. We read of course who were full, but have hired out themselves for bread, (1 Sam. ii. 5.) which this sinner will not do; he cannot dig, he is too fat, (v. 27.) but to beg he may well be ashamed. See Ps. cix. 10. David never saw the righteous so far forsook as to beg their bread, for, verily, they shall be fed by the charitable, unasked, Ps. xxxvii. 3, 25. But the wicked want it, and cannot expect it should be readily given them. How should they find mercy, who never showed mercy?

[2.] His outward prosperity will soon come to an end, and all his confidence, and all his comfort, will come to an end with it. How can he prosper, when God runs upon him? Some understand that, v. 26. Whom God runs upon, he will certainly run down; for when he judges, he will overcome. See how the judgments of God cross this wicked man in his cares, desires, and projects, and completely his most cherished prospects.

First. He is in care to get, but he shall not be rich, v. 29. His own covetous mind keeps him from being truly rich. He is not rich, that has not enough; and he has not enough, that does not think he has. It is contentment only that is great gain. Provi-dence remarkably keeps some from being rich, defeating their enterprises, breaking their measures, and keeping them always behind-hand. Many that get much by fraud and injustice, yet do not grow rich; it goes as it comes, it is got by one sin, and spent upon another.

Secondly, He is in care to keep what he has got, but in vain, his substance shall not continue; it will dwindle and come to nothing, God blast it, and what came up in a night, perishes in a night. Wrath, gotten by vanity, will certainly be diminished. Some have themselves lived to see the ruin of those estates which have been raised by oppression; it goes, however, as the Lord roars, and those who succeed. De mortuis viviis gaudet tertius hostes—Ill-gotten property will scarcely be enjoyed by the third generation. He purchases estates to him and his heirs for ever; but to what purpose? He shall not prolong the perfection thereof up on the earth; neither the credit nor the comfort of his riches shall be prolonged; and, when those are gone, where is the perfection of them? How indeed can we expect the perfection of any thing to be prolonged upon the earth, where the perfection of the Lord is transitory, and we soon see the end of all perfection?

Thirdly. He is in care to leave what he has got and kept, to his children after him; but in this he is crossed, the branches of his family shall perish, in whom he hoped to have lived and flourish’d, and to have had the reputation of making them all great men. They shall not be green, v. 32. The flame shall dry them up, v. 36. He shall shake them off and cast them away, the never knowing who forerunners he shall have, or who shall succeed. They die in the beginning of their days, and never come to maturity. Many a man’s family is ruined by his iniquity.

Fourthly. He is in care to enjoy it a great while himself; but in that also he is crossed. 1. He may perhaps be taken from it; (v. 30.) By the breath of God’s mouth—(that is, by his wrath, which, like a stream of brimstone, kindles the fire that devours him, Isa. xxx. 35.) Or, by his word; he speaks, and it is done immediately—(shall he go away, and leave his wealth to others. This night, thy soul shall be required of thee; and so the wicked is driven away in his wickedness, the worldling in his worldliness. 2. It may perhaps be taken from him, and fly away like an eagle toward heaven; It shall be accomplished (or cut off) before his time, (v. 32.) that is, He shall survive his prosperity, and see himself stripped of it.

Fifthly. He is in care, when he is in trouble, how to escape of it; (not how to get good by it;) but in this also he is crossed; (v. 30.) He shall not depart out of darkness; when he begins to fall, like Haman, down with him. It was said of him, (v. 22.) He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness; he frightened himself with the perpetuity of his calamity, and God also shall choose his delusions, and bring his fears upon him, (Isa. lxix. 4.) as he did upon Israel, xiv. 28. God says, Amen, to his distrust and despair.

Sixthly. He is in care to secure his partners, and
hopes to secure himself by his partnership with them; but that is in vain too, v. 34, 35. The congregation of them, the whole confederacy, they, and all their tabernacles, shall be desolate, and consumed with fire. Hypocrisy and bribery are here charged upon them; that is, deceitful dealing both with God and man: God afflicted, under colour of religion, man incautiously, and the utmost justice is impossible that these should end well. Though hand join in hand for the support of these pernicious practices, yet shall not the wicked go unpunished. (5.) The use and application of all this. Will the prosperity of presumptuous sinners end thus miserably? Then, (v. 31.) Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity. Let the mischiefs which befal others be our warnings, and let us not rest on that broken reed which always failed those who leaned on it. Those who trust to their sinfull ways of getting wealth, trust in vanity, and vanity will be their recompence, for they shall not get what they expected. Their arts will deceive them, and perhaps ruin them in this world. [2.] Those who trust to their wealth when they have gotten it, especially to the wealth they have gotten dishonestly, trust in vanity, for it will yield them no satisfaction. The guilt that cleaves to it, will ruin the joy of it. They sow the wind, and will reap the whirlwind, and will own, at length, with the utmost confession, that a deceived heart turned them aside, and that they cheated themselves with a lie in their right hand.

CHAP. XVI.

This chapter begins Job's reply to that discourse of Eliphaz which we had in the foregoing chapter; it is but the second part of the same song of lamentation with which he had before bemoaned himself, and set to the same melancholy tune. 1. He upbraids his friends with their unkind usage of him, v. 1. to 5. II. He represents his own case, v. 6. to 11. He still holds fast his integrity, concerning which he appeals to God's righteous judgment, from the unrighteous censures of his friends, v. 12. to 22.

1. THEN Job answered and said, 2. I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all. 3. Shall vain words have an end? or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest? 4. I also could speak as ye do: if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake my head at you. 5. But I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief.

Both Job and his friends took the same way that disputants commonly take, which is, to undervalue one another's sense, and wisdom, and management. The longer the saw of contention is drawn, the hotter it grows; and the beginning of this sort of strife is as the letting forth of water, therefore leave it off before it be meddled with. Eliphaz had represented Job's sufferings as idle and unprofitable, and nothing to the purpose; and Job here gives him the same character. Those who are free in passing such censures, must expect to have them retorted; it is easy, it is endless: but Cui bono?—What good does it do? It will stir up men's passions, but will never convince their judgments, nor set truth in a clear light.

Job here reproves Eliphaz, 1. For his false suppositions; (v. 2.) "I have heard many such things. You tell me nothing but what I knew before; nothing but what you yourselves have before said; you offer nothing new, it is the same thing over and over again;" which Job thinks as great a trial of his patience as almost any of his troubles. The incalculing of the same things thus by an adversary, is indeed provoking and nauseous, but by a teacher it is often necessary, and must not be grievous to the learner, to whom receivest must be upon receivest, and line upon line. Many things have he heard, which it is good for us to hear again, that we may understand and remember them better, and be more affected with them, and influenced by them.

2. For unskilful applications. They came with a design to comfort him, but they went about it very awkwardly, and, when they touched Job's case, quite mistook it; "Miserable comforters are ye all, who, instead of offering any thing to alleviate the situation, add affliction to it, and make it yet more grievous." The patient's case is saved, when his medicines are poisons, and his physicians his worst disease. What Job says here of his friends, is true of all creatures, in comparison with God, and, one time or other, we shall be made to see it and own it, that miserable comforters are they all. When we are under convictions of sin, terrors of conscience, and the arrests of death, it is only the blessed Spirit that can comfort effectually; all others, to him, do it miserably, and sing songs to a heavy heart, to no purpose.

3. For endless impertinence. Job wishes that vain words might have an end, v. 3. If vain, it were well that they were never begun, and the sooner they are ended the better. Those who are so wise as to speak to the purpose, will be so wise as to know when they have said enough of a thing, and when it is time to break off.

4. For causeless obstinacy. What emboldeneth thee, that thou answerest? It is our rash and unjust confidence, with Eliphaz, to charge men with those crimes which we cannot prove upon them, to pass a judgment on men's spiritual state, upon the view of their outward condition, and to re-adverse those objections which have been again and again answered.

5. For the violation of the sacred laws of friendship; doing by his brother as he would not have been done by, and as his brother would not have done by him. This is a cutting reproof, and very affecting, v. 4, 5.

(1.) He desires his friends, in imagination, for a little while, to change conditions with him, to put their souls in his soul's stead; to suppose themselves in misery like him, and him at ease like them. This was no absurd or foreign supposition, but what might quickly become true in fact; so strange, so sudden, frequently, are the vicissitudes of human affairs, and such the turns of the wheel, that the spoken soon change places. Whatever our brethren's sorrows are, we ought by sympathy to make them our own, because we know not how soon they may be so.

(2.) He represents the unkindness of their conduct toward him, by showing what he could do to them, if they were in his condition. I could speak as ye do. It is an easy thing to trample upon those that are down, and to find fault with those that are in extremity of pain and affliction. "I could heap up words against you, as you do against me; and how would you like it? How would you bear it?"

(3.) He shows them what they should do, by telling them what, in that case, he would do; (v. 5.) "I would strengthen you, and say all I could to assuage your grief, but nothing to aggravate it." It is natural to sufferers to think what they would do, if the tables were turned; but perhaps our hearts may deceive us; we know not what we should do. We find it easier to discern the reason
ableness and importance of a command, when we have occasion to claim the benefit of it, than when we have occasion to do the duty of it. See what is the duty we owe to our brethren in affliction. [1.] We should say and do all we can to strengthen them, suggesting to them such considerations as are proper to encourage their confidence in God, and to support their sinking spirits. Faith and patience are the strength of the afflicted; what helps these graces, confirms the feeble knees. [2.] To assuage their grief, the causes of their grief, if possible, or, however, their resentment of those causes. Good works cost nothing; but they may be of good service to those that are in sorrow, not only as it is some comfort to them to see their friends concerned for them, but as they may be so reminded of that which, through the prevalence of grief, was forgotten. Though hard words (we say) break no bones, yet kind words may help to make broken bones rejoice; and those have the tongue of the learned, that know how to speak a word in season to the weary.

6. Though I speak, my grief is not assuaged; and though I forbear, what am I cased? 7. But now he hath made me weary: thou hast made desolate all my company. 8. And thou hast filled me with wrinkles, which is a witness against me: and my leanness rising up in me beareth witness to my face. 9. He teareth me in his wrath which hateth me: he gnasheth upon me with his teeth; mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me. 10. They have gaped upon me with their mouth; they have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully; they have gathered themselves together against me. 11. God hath delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over into the hands of the wicked. 12. I was at ease, but he hath broken me asunder: he hath also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for his mark. 13. His archers compass me round about; he cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare; he poureth out my gall upon the ground. 14. He breaketh me with breach upon breach; he runneth upon me like a giant. 15. I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin, and defiled my horn in the dust. 16. My face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelids is the shadow of death;

Job's complaint is here as bitter as anywhere in all his discourses, and he is at a stand whether to smother it or to give it vent. Sometimes the one, and sometimes the other, is a relief to the afflicted, according as the temper or the circumstances are; but Job found help by neither, v. 6. (1.) Sometimes giving rein to grief gives ease; but, "Though I speak" (says Job), "my grief is not assuaged, my spirit is never the lighter for the pouring out of my complaint; nay, what I speak is so misconstrued as to be turned to the aggravation of my grief." (2.) At other times, keeping silence makes the trouble the easier and the sooner forgotten; but (says Job) though I forbear, I am never the nearer; what am I cased? If he complained, he was censured as passionate; if not, as sullen. If he main-

1. That his family was scattered; (v. 7.) "He hath made me weary, weary of speaking, weary of forbearing, weary of my friends, weary of life itself; my journey through the whole round world was now all over, and they are gone, and nothing is left, but that I am quite tired with it:" this made it as tiresome as any thing, that all his company was made desolate; his children and servants being killed, and the poor remains of his great household dispersed. The company of good people, that used to meet at his house for religious worship, was now scattered, and he spent his sabbaths in silence and solitude. He had company indeed, but such as he would rather have been without, for they seemed to triumph in his desolation. If lovers and friends are put far from us, we must see and own God's hand in it, making our company desolate.

2. That his body was worn away with diseases and pains, so that he was become a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones, v. 8. His face was furrowed, not with age, but sickness; Thou hast filled me with wrinkles. His flesh was wasted with the running of his sore sores, so that his leanness rose up in him, that is, his bones, that were not seen, stuck out, ch. xxxviii. 21. These are called witnesses against him, witnesses of God's displeasure against him, and such witnesses as his friends produced against him to prove him a wicked man. Or, "They are witnesses for me, that my complaint is not causeless," or, "witnesses to me, that I am a dying man, and must be gone shortly.

3. That his enemy was a torment to him, (threaten him, frightened him, looked upon him, and) was full of knavish and dishonest arts and ways against him; (v. 9.) He tears me in his wrath. But who is this enemy? Either, (1.) Eliphaz, who showed himself very much exasperated against him, and perhaps had expressed himself with such marks of indignation as are here mentioned; at least, what he said; to Job's good name, and thundered nothing but terror to him; his eyes were sharpened to spy out matter of reproach against Job, and very barbarously both he said and did it, and thus did him injury. (2.) Satan, he was his enemy, that hated him, and perhaps, by the divine permission, terrified him with apparitions, as (some think) he terrified our Saviour, which put him into his agonies in the garden; and thus he aimed to make him curse God. It is not improbable that this is the enemy he means. Or, (3.) God himself; if we understand it of him, the expressions are indeed as rash as any he used. God hates none of his creatures; but Job's melancholy discourse of them, (as (some think) he did) could not but give rise to all the terrors of the Almighty: and nothing can be more grievous to a good man, than to apprehend God to be his enemy. If the wrath of a king be as messengers of death, what is the wrath of the King of kings!

4. That all about him were abusive to him; (v. 10.) They came upon him with open mouth to devour him, as if they would swallow him alive, so terrible were their threats, and so scornful was their taunt in the common form of their indignities they could invent, and even smote him on the cheek; and herein many were confederate, they gathered themselves together against him, ever the object, Ps. xxxv. 15. Herein Job was a type of Christ, as many of the ancients make him: these very expressions are used in the predictions of his sufferings; (Ps. xxii. 13.) They gushed upon me with their mouths; and (Mic. v. 1.) They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek,
and all his comfort, in compliance with the affliction providences that surrounded him. Some can lessen their own troubles by concealing them, holding their heads as high, and putting as good a face upon them, as ever; but Job could not do so; he received the impressions of them, and, as one truly penitent, and truly patient, he humbled himself under the mighty hand of God, v. 15, 16. (1.) He now laid aside all his ornaments and soft clothing, consulted not either his ease or finery in his dress, but sewed the sackcloth upon his skin, that clothing which he thought good enough for such a defiled disfigured body as he had. Silks upon sores, such sores, he thought, would be unsuitable, sackcloth would be more becoming. Those are fond indeed of gay clothing, that will not be weaned from it by sickness and old age, and, as Job was, (v. 8.) by wrinkles and leanness. He not only put on sackcloth, but sewed it on, as one that resolved to continue his affliction as long as the affliction continued. (2.) He insisted not upon any points of honour, but humbled himself under humbling providences; he defiled his horn in the dust, and refused the respect that used to be paid to his dignity, power, and eminency. Note, When God brings down our condition, that should bring down our spirits. Better lay the horn in the dust, than lift it up in contradiction to the designs of Providence, and have it broken at last. Eliphaz had represented Job as high and haughty, and unhumbled under his affliction; (1.) “Note,” says Job, “I know better things; the dust is now the fittest place for me.” (3.) He banished mirth as utterly unreasonable, and set himself to sow in tears; (v. 16.) “My face is foul with weeping so constantly for my sins, for God’s displeasure against me, and for my friends’ uncleanness; this has brought a shadow of death upon my eye-lids.” He had not only wept away all his beauty, but almost wept his eyes out. In this also, he was a type of Christ, who was a man of sorrows, and much in tears, and pronounced those blessed that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

17. Not for any injustice in my hands: also my prayer is pure. 18. O earth, cover not thou my blood, and let my cry have no place. 19. Also now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high. 20. My friends scorn me; but mine eye poureth out tears unto God. 21. Oh that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbour! 22. When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return.

Job’s condition was very deplorable; but had he nothing to support him, nothing to comfort him? Yes, and he here tells us what it was.

1. He had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had walked uprightly, and had never allowed himself in any gross sin. None was ever more ready than he to acknowledge his sins of infirmity; but, upon search, he could not charge himself with any enormous crime, for which he should be made more miserable than other men, v. 17. He had no sin, but a sin, a sin of being tempted. Then—

1. Toward men. “Not for any injustice in my hands, any wealth that I have unjustly got or kept.” Eliphaz had represented him as a tyrant and an oppressor; “No,” says he, “I never did any wrong to any man, but always despised the gain of oppression.” 2. Toward God. Also my prayer is pure; but prayer cannot be pure, as long as there is injustice in our hands, Isa. 1. 15. Eliphaz had charged him with hypocrisy in reli...
JOB, XVII.

In this chapter, Job reflects upon the harsh censures which his friends had passed upon him, and, looking upon himself as a dying man, (v. 1.) he appeals to God, and begs of him speedily to appear for him, and right him, because they had wronged him, and he knew not how to right himself, v. 2. - 7. But he hopes, that, though it should be a surprise, it will be no stumbling-block, to good people, to see him thus abused, v. 8, 9. II. He reflects upon the vain hopes they had fed him with, that he should yet see good days; showing that his days were just at an end, and with his body all his hopes would be buried in the dust, v. 10. - 16. His friends becoming strange to him, which greatly grieved him, he makes death and the grave familiar to him, which yielded him some comfort.

1. MY breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the graves are ready for me. 2. Are there not mockers with me? and doth not mine eye continue in their provocation? 3. Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee; who is he that will strike hands with me? 4. For thou hast hid their heart from understanding: therefore shalt thou not exalt them. 5. He that speaketh flattery to his friends, even the eyes of his children shall fail. 6. He hath made me also a by-word of the people, and aforesight I was as a tabret. 7. Mine eye also is dim by reason of sorrow, and all my members are as a shadow. 8. Upright men shall be astonished at this, and the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite. 9. The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.

Job's discourse here is somewhat broken and interrupted, and he passes suddenly from one thing to another, as is usual with men in trouble: but we may reduce what is said here to three heads.

1. The deplorable condition which poor Job was in, with which he describes, to aggravate the great
unkindness of his friends to him, and to justify his own complaints. Let us see what his case was.

1. He was a dying man, v. 1. He had said, (ch. xiv. 21.) "I am an old age," and as age 18., v. 1. I shall go on that journey." But here he corrects himself, "Why do I talk of years to come? Alas! I am just setting out on that journey, am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; my breath is already corrupt, or broken off, my spirits are spent, I am a gone man." It is good for every one of us thus to look upon ourselves as dying, and especially to think of it when we are sick. We are dying, that is, (1.) Our life is going, for the breath of life is continually wasting, as it is in "our nostrils," (Isa. ii. 22.) the door at which it entered; (Gen. ii. 7.) there is it upon the threshold, ready to depart. Perhaps, Job's distemper obstructed his breathing, and short breath will, after a while, be no breath. Let the Anointed of the Lord be the breath of our nostrils, and let us get spiritual life breathed into us, and that breath will never be corrupted. (2.) Our time is ending, (My days are extinct.) and put out as a candle, which, from the first lighting, is continually wasting and burning down, and will by degrees burn out of itself, but may by a thousand accidents be extinguished. Such is life. It concerns us, therefore, carefully to redeem the days of time, and to spend them in getting ready for the days of eternity, which will never be extinct. (3.) We are expected in our long home. The graves are ready for me. But would not one grave say? Yes, but he speaks of the\textit{archtères of his fathers, to which he must be gathered.} (v. 4.) graves where they are laid, are ready for me also, graves in consort, the congregation of the dead. Wherever we go, there is but a step between us and the grave. Whatever is unready, that is ready; it is a bed soon made. If the graves be ready for us, it concerns us to be ready for the graves. The graves\textit{for me, so it runs; denoting not only his expectation of death, but his desire of it; "I have done with the world, and have nothing now to wish for but a grave."}

2. He was a despised man; (v. 6.) \textit{"He,"} (that is, Eliphaz, so some, or rather God, whom he all along acknowledges to be the Author of his calamities) \textit{"has made me a by-word of the people, the talk of the country, a laughing-stock to many, a gazing-stock to all; and aforetime, or, to men's faces, publicly, I was as a tabret, that whoever chose might play upon;' they made ballads of him; his name became a proverb; it is so still, \textit{As soon as Job. He has now made me a by-word, a reproach of men, whereas, aforetime, in my prosperity, I was as a tabret, Delicieux humain geniès—The darling of the human race, whom they were all pleased with. It is common for those who were honoured in their wealth, to be despised in their poverty.

3. He was a man of sorrows, v. 7. He wept so much, that he had almost lost his sight; \textit{Mine eye is dim.} ch. xiv. 20. He had no comfort to which row of the world thus works darkness and death. He vexed so much, that he had fretted all the flesh away, and was become a perfect skeleton; nothing but skin and bones; \textit{"All my members are as a shadow. I am grown so poor and thin, that I am not to be called a man, but the shadow of a man."}

II. The ill use which his friends made of his miseries; they trumped upon him, and insulted over him, and condemned him as a hypocrite, because he was thus grievously afflicted. Hard usage! Now observe,

1. How Job describes it, and what construction he puts upon their discourses with him. He looks upon himself as basely abused by them. (1.) They abused him with their foul censures, condemning him as a bad man, justly reduced thus, and exposed to contempt, v. 2. \textit{"They are mockers, who deride my calamities, and insult over me, because I am thus brought low. They are so with me, abusing me to my face, pretending friendship in their visit, but inflicting much misery upon me; they are continually tearing me, and they will not be wrought upon, either by reason or pity, to let fall the prosecution."} (2.) They abused him too with their fair promises, for in them they did but banter him. He recks them (v. 5.) among those that speak flattery to their friends. They all came to morn with him; Eliphaz began with a commendation of him, ch. iv. 3. They had all promised him that he would be in happiness, and Eliphaz will take their advice. Now all this he looked upon as a jest, and as designed to vex him so much the more. All this he calls their \textit{provocation,} v. 2. They did what they could to provoke him, and then condemned him for his resentment of it; but he thinks himself excusable when his eye continued thus in their \textit{provocation;} it never ceased, and he could never look off it. Note, The unkindness of those that trample upon their friends in affliction, that banter and abuse them the more they would try to comfort, if not to tire, the patience even of Job himself.

2. How he condemns it. (1.) It was a sign that \textit{God had hid their heart from understanding,} (v. 4.) and that in this matter they were infatuated, and their wonted wisdom was departed from them. Wisdom is a gift of God, which he grants to some, and withholds from others, grants at some times, and withholds at other times. Those that are void of compasion, are so far void of understanding. Where there is not the tenderness of a man, one may question whether there be the understanding of a man. (2.) It would be a lasting reproach and diminution to them; \textit{Therefore shalt thou not exalt them.} Those are certainly kept back from honour, whose hearts are hid from understanding. When God infatuates men, he will abuse them. Surely they who discover a little acquaintance with the methods of Providence, shall not have the honour of deciding this controversy! That is reserved for a man of better sense, and better temper, such as one as Elihu afterward appeared to be. (3.) It would entail a curse upon their families. He that thus violates the sacred laws of friendship, forfeits the benefit of it, not only for himself, but for his posterity. \textit{"Even the eyes of his children shall fail, and when they look for succour and comfort from their own and their father's friends, they shall look in vain, as I have done, and be as much disappointed as I am in you."} Note, Those that wrong their neighbours, may, in the end, wrong their own children more than they are aware of.

3. How he appeals from them to God; (v. 3.) \textit{Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee,} that is, \textit{"Let me be assured that God will take the hearing and determining of the cause into his own hands, and I desire no more. Let some one engage for God to bring on this matter. Thus they whose hearts concern me now have confidence toward God, and can, with humble boldness, be impudent, beg of him to search and try them. Some make Job here to glance at the mediation of Christ, for he speaks of a Surety with God, without whom he durst not appear before God, nor try his cause at his bar; for though his friends' accusations of him were utterly false, yet he could not justify himself before God but in a Mediator. Our English annotations give the reading of this verse, \textit{"Appoint, I pray thee, my Surety with thee, name me Christ, who is with thee in heaven, and has undertaken to be my Surety: let him plead my cause, and stand up for me; and who is then that will strike upon mine hand?"}'}
JOB, XVII.

if Christ be an advocate for me?” Rom. viii. 32, 33.

Christ is the Surety of the better testament, (Heb. vii. 22,) a Surety of God’s appointing; and if he undertake for us, we need not fear what can be done against us.

III. The good use which the righteous should make of Job’s afflictions from God, from his enemies, and from his friends, v. 8, 9. Observe here,

1. How the saints are described. (1.) They are upright men, honest, and sincere, and that act from a steady principle, with a single eye. This was Job’s own character; (ch. i. 1.) and, probably, he speaks of such upright men especially as had been his intimates and associates. (2.) They are the innocent; not perfectly so, but it is what they aim at, and press toward. Sincerity is evangelical innocence, and they that are upright are said to be innocent, from the great transgression, Ps. xix. 13.

(3.) They are the righteous, who walk in the way of righteousness. (4.) They have clean hands, kept clean from the gross pollutions of sin, and, when spotted with iniquities, washed with innocence, Ps. xxvi. 6.

2. How they should be affected with the account of Job’s troubles. Great inquiry, no doubt, would be made concerning him, and every one would speak of him and his case; and what use will good people make of it?

(1.) It will amaze them; Upright men shall be astonished at this; they will wonder to hear that so good a man as Job should be so grievously afflicted in body, name, and estate; that God should lay his hand so heavy upon him, and that his friends, who ought to have comforted him, should add to his grief; that such a remarkable soul should be such a remarkable sufferer, and so useful a man laid aside in the midst of his usefulness; that shall we say to these things? Upright men, though satisfied, in general, that God is wise and holy in all he does, yet cannot but be astonished at such dispensations of Providence; paradoxes which will not be unfolded till the mystery of God shall be finished.

(2.) It will animate them. Instead of being deterred from, and discouraged in, the service of God, by the hard usage which this faithful servant of God met with, they should see much more in it to proceed, and persevere in it. This, which was St. Paul’s care, (1 Thess. iii. 3.) was Job’s, that no good man should be moved either from his holiness, or his comfort, by these afflictions, that none should, for the sake hereof, think the worse of the ways or work of God. And that which was St. Paul’s comfort, was his too, that the brethren of the Lord would wax confident by his bonds, Philip i. 14. They would hereby be animated.

3. To oppose sin, and to confront the corrupt and pernicious inferences which evil men would draw from Job’s sufferings, as, That God has forsaken the earth, That it is in vain to serve him; and the like; The innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite, will not bear to hear this, (Rev. ii. 2.) but will withstand him to his face; will stir up himself to search into the meaning of such provinences, and study these hard chapters, that he may read the book of God, and will set up himself to maintain religion’s just, but injured, cause against all its opposers. Note, The boldness of the attacks which profane people make upon religion, should sharpen the courage and resolution of its friends and advocates. It is time to stir, when proclamation is made in the gate of the camp, Who is on the Lord’s side? When vice is daring, it is no time for virtue, through fear, to hide itself.

[2.] To persevere in religion. The righteous, instead of drawing back, or so much as starting back, at this frightful spectacle, or standing still to deliberate whether he should proceed or no, (allude to 2 Sam. ii. 23.) shall, with so much more constancy and resolution, hold on his way, and press forward. Though, in me, he foresees that bonds and afflictions abide him, yet none of those things shall move him, Acts xx. 24. Those who keep their eye upon heaven as their end, will keep their feet in the paths of religion as their way, whatever difficulties and discouragements they meet with in it.

[3.] In order thereunto, to grow in grace. He will not only hold on his way notwithstanding, but will grow stronger and stronger, and, by the sight of other good men’s trials, and the experience of his own, he will be made more vigorous and lively in his duty, more warm and affectionate, more resolute and undaunted, the more he suffers; that is, the better he will be; that which dismays others, imbolds him. The blistering wind makes the traveller gather his cloak the closer about him, and gird it the faster. They that are truly wise and good, will be continually growing wiser and better. Proficiency in religion is a good sign of sincerity in it.

10. But as for you all, do you return, and come now: for I cannot find one wise man among you. 11. My days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart. 12. They change the night into day: the light is short because of darkness. 13. If I wait, the grave is my house: I have made my bed in the darkness. 14. I have said to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister. 15. And where is now my hope? as for my hope, who shall see it? 16. They shall go down to the bars of the pit, when our rest together is in the dust.
ing the poor, and raising funds, perhaps, for charitable uses; but all these thoughts of his heart were now at an end, and he would never have the satisfaction of hearing to the signs. Note. The period of our days will be the period of all our contrivances and hopes for this world; but if with full purpose of heart we cleave to the Lord, death will not break off that purpose.

Job, being thus put upon new counsels, was under a constant uneasiness; (v. 12.) The thoughts of his heart being broken, they changed the night into day, and shortened the light. Some, in their vanity and vice, turn night into day and day into night, but Job did so, through trouble and anguish of spirit, which was a hindrance, (1.) To the repose of the night; keeping his eyes waking, so that the night was as wearisome to him as the day, and the toils of the night tired him as much as the toils of the day. (2.) To the entertainments of the day. "The light of the morning is welcome, but, by reason of this inward darkness, the comfort of it is soon gone," (xxvi. 7.) Job could not but reflect, we must be thankful for the health and ease which enable us to welcome both the shadows of the evening and the light of the morning.

2. All his expectations from this world would very shortly be buried in the grave with him; so that it was a jest for him to think of such mighty things as they had flattered him with the hopes of; (ch. v. 19.—vii. 21.—xi. 17.) "Alas, you do but make a fool of me."

(1.) He saw himself just dropping into the grave.

A convenient house, an easy bed, and agreeable relations, are some of those things which we take satisfaction in this world: Job expected not any of these above ground; all he felt, and all he had in view, was unpleasing and disagreeable, but under ground he expected them.

[1.] He counted upon no house but the grave; (v. 13.) "If I wait, if there be any place where I shall ever be easy again, it must be in the grave. I should decease myself, if I should count upon any outlet from my trouble but what death will give me. Nothing is so sure as that." Note. In all our prosperity, it is good to keep death in prospect. Whatever we expect, let us be sure to expect that; for that may prevent other things which we expect, but nothing will prevent that. But see how he endeavours not only to reconcile himself to the grave, but to recommend it to himself: "It is my house."

The grave is a house; to the sick it is a prison-house; (ch. xxiv. 19, 20.) to the godly it is Bethabara, a passage-house in their way home. "It is my house, mine by descent, I am born to it; it is my father's house; mine by purchase, I have made myself obnoxious to it." We must every one of us shortly remove to this house, and it is our wisdom to provide accordingly; let us think of removing, and send before to our long home.

[2.] He counted upon no quiet bed but in the darkness of the grave: "I have made my bed. It is made, for it is ready, and I am just going to it." The grave is a bed, for we shall rest in it the evening of our day on earth, and rise from it in the morning of our everlasting day, Isa. lvi. 2. Let this make good people willing to die; it is but going to bed, they are weary and sleepy, and it is time that they were in their beds; why should they not go willingly, when their Father calls? "Nay, I have made my bed, by preparation for it; hence I end. It makes me keep a conscience pure, by seeing Christ lying in this bed, and so turning it into a bed of spices, and by looking beyond it to the resurrection."

[3.] He counted upon no agreeable relations but what he had in the grave; (v. 14.) "I have cried to corruption, that is, to the grave, where the body will corrupt, Thou art my father, for our bodies were formed out of the earth, and to the worms there, Ye are my mother and my sister, to whom I am allied, for a man is a worm, and with whom I must be conversant, for the worms shall cover us," ch. xxxi. 26. Job complained that his kindred were estranged from him, (ch. xix. 13, 14.) therefore here he claims acquaintance with other relations, that would cleave to him, when those disinowed him. Note, First, We are all of us near akin to corruption and the worms. Secondly, It is, therefore, good to make ourselves familiar with them, by conversing much with them in our thoughts and meditations, which would very much help us above the inordinate love of life and fear of death.

(2.) He saw all his hopes from this world dropping into the grave with him; (v. 15, 16.) "Seeing I must shortly leave the world, where is now my hope? How can I expect to prosper, who do not expect to live?" He is not hopeless, but his hope is not there where they would have it be. "If in this world only I had hope, I were of all men most miserable; " No, for I hope for comfort and support myself with, who shall see it? It is something out of sight that I hope for, not things that are seen, that are temporal, but things not seen, that are eternal." What is his hope, he will tell us, ch. xix. 25. Non est mortale quod opto, immortale nescio.—I seek not for that which perishes, but for that which abides for ever. "But as for the hopes you would buoy me up with, they shall go down with me to the bars of the pit; you are dying men, and cannot make good your promises, I am a dying man, and cannot enjoy the good you promise. Since, therefore, our rest will be together in the dust, let us all lay aside the thoughts of this world, and set our hearts upon another." We must shortly be in the dust, for dust we are, dust and ashes in the pit, under the bars of the pit, held fast there, never to loose the bands of death till the general resurrection. But we shall rest there, we shall rest together there. Job and his friends could not agree now, but they will both be dead in the grave; the dust of that will shortly stop their mouths, and put an end to the controversy. Let the foresight of this cool the heat of all contenders, and moderate the disputers of this world.

CHAP. XVIII.

In this chapter, Bildad makes a second assault upon Job. In his first discourse (ch. viii.) he had given him encouragement to hope that all should yet be well with him. But here, there is not a word of that; he is grown more peevish, and is so far from being convinced by Job's reasonings, that he is but more exasperated. 1. He sharply reproves Job, as haughtily and passionately, and obstinately as his opinion, and the doctrine of his own mind, lead him to. He enlarges upon the doctrine he had before maintained, concerning the misery of wicked people, and the ruin that attends them, v. 5, 21. In which he seems, all alone, to have an eye to the complaints of the miserable condition he was in, that he was in the dark, bewildered, enwrapped, terrified, and hastening out of the world. "This," says Bildad, "is the condition of a wicked man; and therefore, thou art one."

1. THEN answered Bildad the Shluhite, and said, 2. How long will it be ere you make an end of words? mark, and afterwards we will speak. 3. Wherefore are we counted as beasts, and reputed vile in your sight? 1. He teareth himself in his anger: shall the earth be forsaken for thee? and shall the rock be removed out of his place?
Bildad here shoot his arrows, even bitter words, against poor Job, little thinking, that, though he was wise and good man, in this instance he was serving Satan's design, in adding to his affliction.

1. He charges him with idle, endless, talk, as Eliphaz had done; (ch. xx. 2, 3) so long shall it be! (v. 2) Here he reflects, not only upon Job himself, but either upon all the managers of the conference, (thinking, perhaps, that Eliphaz and Zophar did not speak so close to the purpose as they might have done,) or upon some that were present, who, possibly, took part with Job, and put in a word now and then in his favour, though it be not recorded. Bildad was weary of hearing others speak, and impatient till it came to his turn. What cannot be observed to any man, that for we ought to be swift to hear, and slow to speak. It is common for contenders to monopolize the reputation of wisdom, and then to insist upon it as their privilege to be dictators. How unbecoming that is in others, every one can see; but few that are guilty of it can see it in themselves. Time was, when Job had the last word in all debates; (ch. xxix. 22.) After my words they spake not again. Then he would not need to charge and punish himself, for he was impoverished and brought low, he could scarcely be allowed to speak at all, and every thing he said was as much viliﬁed as formerly it had been magniﬁed. Wisdom, therefore, (as the world goes) is good with an inheritance; (Eccl. vii. 11.) for the poor man’s wisdom is despised, and, because he is poor, his words are not heard, Eccl. ix. 16.

2. With a regardlessness of what was said to him, intimating that, Mark, and afterwords we speak, and it is to no purpose to speak, though what is said be ever so much to the purpose, if those to whom it is spoken will not mark and observe it. Let the ear be opened to hear as the warned, and then the tongues of the learned will do good service, (Isa. 1.4.) and not otherwise. It is an encouragement to those that speak of the things of God, to see the hearers attentive.

3. With a haughty contempt and disdain of his friends, for which they offered; (v. 3) Wherefore are we counted as beasts? This was invidious: Job had indeed called them mockers, had represented them both as unwise and as unkind, wanting both in the reason and tenderness of men, but he did not count them beasts; yet Bildad so represents it, (1.) Because his high spirit resented what Job had said, as if it had been the greatest affront imaginable. Proud men are apt to think themselves slighted more than really they are. (2.) Because his hot spirit was willing to ﬁnd a pretence to be hard upon Job. Those that incline to be severe upon others, will have it thought that they have: first been so upon them.

4. With outrageous passion; He teareth himself in his anger, v. 4. Herein he seems to reﬂect upon what Job had said, (ch. xiii. 14.) Wherefore do I take my ﬂesh in my teeth? It is thine own fault, says Bildad; or he reﬂects upon what he said, (ch. xvi. 9,) where he seemed to charge it upon God; or, as some think, upon Eliphaz; He teareth me in his wrath. "No," says Bildad, "thou alone shalt bear it." He teareth himself in his anger. Note, Anger is a sin that is its own punishment. Fretful, passionate, people tear and torment themselves. He teareth his soul, so the word is; every sin wounds the soul, tears out, that, wrongs, that, (Prov. viii. 36.) unbridled passions are particularly abhorred. May we, with a proud and arrogant expectation to give law even to Providence itself; Shall the earth be forsoaken for thee? Surely not; there is no reason for that, that the course of nature should be changed, and the settled rules of government violated, to gratify the humour of one man. Job, dost thou think the world cannot stand without thee; but that, if thou art ruined, all the world is ruined and forsaken with thee? Some make it a reproof of Job’s justiﬁcation of himself, falsely insinuating, that either Job was a wicked man, or we must deny Providence, and suppose that God has forsaken the earth, and the Rock of ages is removed. It is rather a just reproof of his passionate complaints; when we quarrel with the events of Providence, we forget, that, whatever befalls us, it is, (1.) According to the eternal purpose and counsel of God. (2.) According to the written word. Thus it is written, that in the world we must have tribulation, that since we sin daily, we must expect to smart for it; and, (3.) According to the usual way and custom, the track of Providence, nothing but what is common to men: and to expect that God’s counsels should change, his method alter, and his word fail, to think that the earth should be forsaken for us, and the rock removed out of its place.

5. Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his ﬁre shall not shine. 6. The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his candle shall be put out with him. 7. The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down. 8. For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walketh upon a snare. 9. The gin shall take him by the heel, and the robber shall prevail against him. 10. The snare is laid for him in the ground, and a trap for him in the way.

The rest of Bildad’s discourse is entirely taken up in an elegant description of the miserable condition of a wicked man, in which there is a great deal of certain truth, and which will be of excellent use, if duly considered, that a sinful condition is a sad condition, and that iniquity will be men’s ruin, if they do not repent of it. But, 1. It is not true that all wicked people are visibly and openly made thus miserable in this world; nor, 2. That all who are brought into great distress and trouble in this world, are therefore to be deemed and adjudged wicked men, though no other proof appears against them; and therefore, though Bildad thought the application of it to Job was easy, yet it was not safe nor just. In these verses we have,

(1.) The destruction of the wicked foreseen and foretold, under the similitude of darkness; (v. 5, 6.) Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out. Even his light, the best and brightest part of him, shall be put out; even that which he rejoiced in, shall fall him. Or, the yea may refer to Job’s complaints against them; and therefore, though Bildad thought the application of it to Job was easy, yet it was not safe nor just. In these verses we have,
it shall remain, with which to kindle another fire. Even while he is in his tabernacle, while he is in the body, while he is preserved, let the tabernacle of the soul, (2 Cor. v. 1.) the light shall be dark, he shall have no true solid comfort, no joy that is satisfying, no hope that is supporting; even the light that is in him is darkness; and how great is that darkness! But, when he is put out of this tabernacle by death, his candle shall be put out with him. The period of his life will be the final period of all his days, and will turn all his hopes into endless despair. When a wicked man dies, his expectation shall perish, Prov. xi. 7. He shall lie down in sorrow. (2.) The preparations for that destruction represented under the similitude of a beast or bird caught in a snare, or a malefactor arrested and taken into custody, in order to his punishment, v. 7•10. [1.] Satan is preparing for his destruction. He is the robber that shall prevail against him; (v. 9.) for as he was a murderer, so he was a robber, from the beginning. He, as the tempter, lays snares for sinners in the way, wherever they go, and he shall prevail. If he make them sinful like himself, he will make them miserable like himself. He hunts for the precious life. [2.] He is himself preparing for his own destruction, by going on in sin, and so treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. God gives him up, as he deserves and desires, to his own counsels, and then his counsels come down, v. 7. His sinful projects and pursuits bring him into mischief. He is cast into a net by his own feet, (v. 8.) runs upon his own destruction, is snared in the work of his own hands, (Ps. ix. 16.) his own tongue falls upon him, Ps. lxiv. 8. In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare. [3.] God is preparing for his destruction. The sinner by his sin is preparing the fuel, and then God by his wrath is preparing the fire. See here, First, How the sinner is infatuated, to run himself into the snare; whom God will destroy, he infatuates. Secondly, How he is embarrassed; the steps of his strength, his mighty designs and efforts, shall be straitened, so that he shall not compass what he intended; and the more he strives to extricate himself, the more will he be entangled. Evil men wax worse and worse. Thirdly, How he is secured and kept from outrunning the judgments of God that are in pursuit of him; the grace shall take him by the heel. He cannot escape the divine wrath, that is in pursuit of him, than a man, so held, can flee from the pursuer. God knows how to reserve the wicked for the day of judgement, 2 Pet. ii. 9. 11. Terrors shall make him afraid on every side, and shall drive him to his feet. 12. His strength shall be hunger-bitten, and destruction shall be ready at his side. 13. It shall devour the strength of his skin: even the first-born of death shall devour his strength. 14. His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle; and it shall bring him to the king of terrors. 15. It shall dwell in his tabernacle, because it is none of his: brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation. 16. His roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut off. 17. His remembrance shall perish from the earth, and he shall have no name in the street. 18. He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world. 19. He shall neither have son nor nephew among his people, nor any remaining in his dwellings. 20. They that come after him shall be astonished at his day, as they that went before were affrighted. 21. Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the place of him that knoweth not God.

Bildad here describes the destruction itself which wicked people are reserved for in the other world, and which, in that degenerate age, will be the period of their misery; the destruction of his own conscience shall haunt him, so that he shall never be easy; wherever he goes, these shall follow him, which way soever he looks, these shall stare him in the face. It will make him tremble to see himself sought against by the whole creation, to see Heaven frowning on him, hell gaping for him, and earth sick of him. He that carries his own accuser, and his own tormentors, always in his bosom, cannot but be afraid on every side. This will drive him to his feet, like the malefactor, who, being conscious of his guilt, flees when none pursueth, Prov. xxviii. 1. But his feet will do him no service, they are fast in the snare, v. 9. The sinner may as soon overpower the divine omnipotence, as overrun the divine omniscience, Amos ix. 2, 3.

No marvel that the sinner is dispirited, and distracted with fear, for, 1. He sees his ruin approaching; destruction shall be ready at his side, to seize him whenever justice gives the word, so that he is brought into desolation in a moment, Ps. lxixii. 19. 2. He feels himself utterly unable to grapple with it, either to escape it, or to bear up under it. That which he relied upon as his strength, (his wealth, power, pomp, friends, and the hardness of his own spirit,) shall fail him in the time of need, and be hunger-bitten, that is, it shall do him no more service than a famished man, pining away for hunger, would do in war or war. The case being thus with him, no marvel that he is a terror to himself. Note, The way of sin is a way of fear, and leads to everlasting confusion, of which the present terrors of an impure and unpacified conscience are earnest, as they were to Cain and Judas. II. See him devoured and swallowed up by a miserable death; and miserable indeed a wicked man’s death is, how secure and jovial soever his life was.

1. See him dying, arrested by the first born of death, some disease, or some stroke that has in it a more than ordinary resemblance of death itself; old age is called death, as it is called a messenger of death, that has in it an uncommon strength and terror: the harbingers of death devour the strength of his skin, they bring rottenness into his bones, and consume them. His confidence shall then be rooted out of his tabernacle; (v. 14.) that is, all that he trusted to, for his support, shall be taken from him, and he shall have nothing to rely upon, no not his own tabernacle. His own soul was his confidence, but for him shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, as a tree that cumbered the ground. Thy soul shall be required of thee.

2. See him dead, and see his case then with an eye of faith. (1.) He is then brought to the king of terrors. He was surrounded with terrors while he lived, (v. 11.) and death was the king of all those terrors; they fought against the sinner in death’s name, for it is by reason of death that sin-
fers are, all their lifetime, subject to bondage, (Heb. ii. 15.) and, at length, they will be brought to that which they so long feared, as a captive to the conqueror. Death is terrible to nature; our Saviour himself prayed, Father, save me from this hour; but to the wicked it is, in a moral manner, the fall of a mountain. Thus the judgments of God follow him, after death, in this world, as an indication of the misery his soul is in after death, and an earnest of that everlasting shame and contempt to which he shall rise in the great day. The memory of the accursed, but the name of the wicked shall rot, Prov. x. 7.

V. See a universal amazement at his fall, v. 20. They that see it are affrighted, so sudden is the change, so dreadful the execution, so threatening to all about him; and they that come after, and hear the report of it, are astonished at it; their cars are made to tingle, and their hearts to tremble, and they cry out, Lord, how terrible art thou in thy judgments! and how shall this be reconciled to the universal declaration that God will make himself known, and man will know himself thereunto? See here what is the beginning, and what is the end, of the wickedness of this wicked world. 1. The beginning of it is ignorance of God, and it is a wilful ignorance, for there is that to be known of him which is sufficient to leave them for ever incusable. They know not God, and then they commit all sin; Pharaoh knows not the Lord, and therefore will not obey his voice. 2. The end of it, and that is utter destruction. Such, so miserable, are the dwellings of the wicked. Vengeance will be then to those that know not God, 2 Thess. i. 8. For those whom he has not honour from, he will get him honour upon. Let us therefore stand in awe and not sin, for it will certainly be bitterness in the latter end.

CHAP. XIX.

This chapter is Job's answer to Bildad's discourse in the foregoing chapter. Though his spirit was grieved and much heated, and Bildad was very peevish, yet he gave him leave to say all he designed to say, and did not break in upon him in the midst of his argument; but, when he had done, he gave him a fair answer; in which, 1. He complains of his unkind usage. And very unkindly he takes it, 1. That his comforters added to his affliction, v. 2.-7. 2. That his God was the Author of his affliction, v. 8.-12. 3. That his relations and friends were strange and unexpected to him, and shy of his complaint, v. 13.-20. 4. That he had no compassion shown him in his affliction, v. 20.-22. II. He comforts himself with the believing hopes of happiness in the other world, though he had so little comfort in this, making a very solemn confession of his faith, with a desire that it might be recorded as an evidence of his sincerity, v. 23.-27. III. He concludes with a caution to his friends not to persist in their hard purposes of him, v. 28, 29. If the remonstrance Job here makes upon his grievances, and on the occasions of justifying our complaints, yet his cheerful views of the future state, at the same time, may shame us Christians, and may serve to silence our complaints, or, at least, to balance them.

1. THEN Job answered and said, 2. How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words? 3. These ten times have ye reproached me: you are not ashamed that you make yourselves strange to me. 4. And be it indeed that I have erred, mine error remaineth with myself. 5. If indeed ye will magnify yourselves against me, and plead against me my reproach; 6. Know now that God hath overthrown me, and hath compassed me with his net. 7. Behold, I cry out of wrong,
but I am not heard: I cry aloud, but there is no judgment.

Job's friends had passed a very severe censure upon him as a wicked man, because he was so grievously afflicted; now here he tells them how ill he took it to be so censured. Bildad twice began with a How long; (ch. xviii. 2.) and therefore Job, being now to answer him particularly, begins with a How long too, v. 2. What is not liked, is commonly thought long; but Job had more reason to think them long who assaulted him, than they had to think him long, who only vindicated himself. Better has been his manners, if we have right on our side, than for offending our brethren, though we have right on our side. Now observe here,

I. How he describes their unkindness to him, and what account he gives of it. 1. They vexed his soul, and that is more grievous than the vexation of the bones, Ps. vi. 2, 3. They were his friends, they came to comfort him, pretended to comfort him for the best, but with a great deal of gravity, and affectation of wisdom and piety, they set themselves to rob him of the only comfort he had now left him in a good God, a good conscience, and a good name; and this vexed him to the heart. 2. They brake him in pieces with words, and those were surely hard and very cruel words that would break a man to pieces: they grieved him, and so brake him; and therefore there will be a reckoning hereafter for all the hard speeches spoken against Christ and his people, Jude 13. 3. They reproached him, v. 5. They gave him a bad character, and laid to his charge things that he knew not. To an ingenious mind reproach is a cutting thing. 4. They made themselves strange to him, were shy of him, now that he was in his troubles; they did not know him, (ch. ii. 12.) were not free with him, as they used to be when he was in his prosperity. Those are governed by the spirit of the world, and not by any principles of true honour or love, who make themselves strange to their friends, or God's friends, when they are in trouble: a friend loves at all times. 5. They not only estranged themselves from him, but magnified themselves against him; (v. 5.) not only looked shy of him, but looked big upon him, and insulted over him, magnifying themselves, to depress him. It is a mean thing, it is a base thing, thus to trample upon those that are down. 6. They pleaded against him his reproach, that is, they made use of his affliction as an argument against him to prove him a wicked man. They should have pleaded for him his integrity, and helped him to take the comfort of that under his affliction, and so have pleaded that against his reproach, as St. Paul; (2 Cor. i. 12.) but, instead of that, they pleaded his reproach against his integrity, which was not only unkind, but very unjust; for where shall we find an honest man, if reproach may be admitted for a plea against him?

II. How he aggravates their unkindness. 1. They had thus abused him often; (v. 3.) These ten times ye have reproached me, that is, very often, as Gen. xxxii. 7. Numb. xiv. 22. Five times they had spoken, and every speech was a double reproach. He spake as if he had kept a particular account of their reproaches, and could tell just how many they were: it is but a peevish and unkindly thing to do, and looks like a design of retaliation and revenge: we better befriended an enemy than found grievances and injuries and unkindnesses, than by remembering them and scorning them up. 2. They continued still to do it, and seemed resolved to persist in it; How long will ye do it? v. 2, 5. I see you will magnify yourselves against me, notwithstanding all I have said in mine own justification. Those that speak too much, seldom think they have said enough; and, when the mouth is opened in passion, the ear is shut to reason. 3. They were not ashamed of what they did, v. 5. They had reason to be ashamed of their base and malicious wiles, but becoming men, and their uncharitableness, so ill becoming good men, and their deceitfulness, so ill becoming friends; but were they ashamed? No, though they were told of it again and again, yet they could not blush.

III. How he answers their harsh censures, by showing them that what they condemned was capable of excuse, which they ought to have considered. 1. The errors of his judgment were excusable; (v. 4.) He is not regarded as God's fault: if I have erred, that I am in the wrong through ignorance or folly, which may well be supposed concerning men, concerning good men; Humanum est errare—Error cleaves to humanity; and we must be willing to suppose it concerning ourselves. It is folly to think ourselves infallible. But be it so, said Job, mine error remaineth with myself, that is, I speak according to the best of my judgment, with all sincerity, and not from a spirit of contradiction. Or, If I be in an error, I am but a man, and do not impose it upon others as you do. I only do my own self and my own work by it, I meddle not with other people, neither to teach them to judge. Men's errors are the more excusable, if they keep them to themselves, and do not disturb others with them. Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself. Some give this sense of these words; If I be in an error, it is I that must smart for it; and therefore you need not concern yourselves; nay, it is I that do smart, and smart severely, for it; and therefore you need not add to my misery by your reproaches.

2. The breakings out of his passion, though not justifiable, yet were excusable, considering the vastness of his grief, and the extremity of his misery. If you will go on to cavil at every complaining word I speak, will make the worst of it, and improve it against me, yet take the cause of the complaint along with you, and weigh that, before you pass a judgment upon the complaint, and turn it to my reproach: know then that God has overcome me, v. 6. Three things he would have them consider, (1.) That his trouble was very great. He was overthrown, and could not help himself, enclosed as in a net, and could not get out. (2.) That God was the Author of it, and that in it he fought against him: It was his hand that overthrew me, it is in his net that I am enclosed; and therefore you need not appear against me thus; I have enough to do to grapple with God's displeasure, let me not have yours also. Let God's controversy with me be ended, before you begin yours. It is barbarous to persecute him whom God hath smitten, and to talk to the grief of one whom he hath wounded, Ps. lxxix. 26. (3.) That he could not obtain any hope of the redress of his grievances, v. 7. He complained of his pain, but got no ease; begged to know the cause of his afflictions, but could not discover it; appealed to God's tribunal for the clearing of his innocence, but could not obtain a hearing; never less a judgment, upon his appeal; I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard. God, for a time, may seem to turn away his ear from his people, to be angry at their prayers, and overlook their appeals to him, and they must be excused if, in that case, they complain bitterly. Woe unto us if God be against us!

8. He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass, and he hath set darkness in my paths. 9. He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head. 10. He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone: and my hope hath he removed
like a tree. 11. He hath also kindled his wrath against me, and he counteth me unto him as one of his enemies. 12. His troops come together, and raise up their way against me, and encamp round about my tabernacle. 13. He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me. 14. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. 15. They that dwell in my house, and my maids, count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight. 16. I called my servant, and he gave me no answer: I entreated him with my mouth. 17. My breath is strange to my wife, though I entreated for the children's sake of mine own body. 18. Yea, young children despised me; I arose, and they spake against me. 19. All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me. 20. My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh, and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth. 21. Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me. 22. Why do ye persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh? 

Bildad had very disingenuously perverted Job's complaints, by making them the description of the miserable condition of a wicked man; and yet he repeats them here, to move their pity, and to work upon their good nature, if they had any left in them. 1. He complains of the tokens of God's displeasure which he was under, and which infected the wormwood and gall into the affliction and misery. How doeful were accounts of his complaints; (v. 11.) "He hath kindled his wrath against me, which flames and terrifies me, which burns and pains me." What is the fire of hell but the wrath of God? Scared consciences will feel it hereafter, but do not fear it now. Enlightened consciences fear it now, but shall not feel it hereafter. Job's present apprehension was, that God counted him as one of his enemies; and yet, at the same time, God loved him, and gloried in him, as his faithful friend. It is a gross mistake, but a very common one, to think that whom God afflicts, he treats as his enemies; whereas, on the contrary, as many as he loves, he rebukes and chastens; it is the discipline of his sons. Which way severe Job looked, he thought he saw the tokens of God's displeasure against him. 2. Did he look back upon his former prosperity? He saw God's hand putting an end to that; (v. 9.) "He has stripped me of my glory, my wealth, honour, power, and all the opportunity I had of doing good; my children were my glory, but I have lost them; and whatever was a crown to my head, he has taken it from me, and has laid all mine honour in the dust." See the vanity of worldly glory, it is what we may be soon stripped of; and whatever strips us, we must see and own God's hand in it, and comply with his design. 3. Did he look down upon his present troubles? He saw God giving them their commission, and their orders to attack him. They are his troops, that act by his direction, which encamp against me, v. 12. It did not so much trouble him, that his miseries came upon him in troops, as that they were God's troops, in whom it seemed as if God fought against him, and intended his destruction. God's troops encamped r. and his tabernacle, his soldiers lay siege to a strong city, cutting off all provisions from being brought into it, and battering it continually; thus was Job's tabernacle besieged. These were God's soldiers, my God's army, my body for safety; Hast thou not made a hedge about him? Now, on the contrary, they surrounded him, to his terror, and destroyed him on every side, v. 16. 3. Did he look forward for deliverance? He saw the hand of God cutting off all hopes of that; (v. 8.) "He hath fenced up my way, that I cannot pass; I have now no way left to help myself, either to extricate myself out of my troubles, or to ease myself under my present friends. Would I attempt any steps, toward deliverance? I find my way hedged up; I cannot do what I would; nay, if I would please myself with the prospect of a deliverance hereafter, I cannot do it; it is not only out of my reach, but out of my sight; God hath set darkness in my paths, and there is none to tell me how long," Ps. lxxvi. 9. He concludes; (v. 16.) "I am gone, quite lost and undone for this world; my hope hath he removed like a tree cut down, or pleasant tree by which I will not pass again." Hope in this life is a perishing thing, but the hope of good men, when it is cut off from this world, is but removed like a tree, transplanted from this nursery to the garden of the Lord. We shall have no reason to complain, if God thus remove our hopes from the sand to the rock, from things temporal to things eternal. He complains of the unkindness of his relations, and of all his old acquaintance. In this also he owns the hand of God; (v. 13.) He has put my brethren far from me, that is, "He has laid these afflictions upon me, which frighten them from me, and make them stand aloof from my sores." As it was their sin, God was not the Author of it; it is Satan that alienates men's minds from their brethren in affliction; but as it was Job's trouble, God ordered it for the completing of his trial. As we must eye the hand of God in all the injuries we receive from our enemies, (the Lord be Shiahad curse David,) so also the hand of God in their relationships and communications from our friends, which will help us to bear them the more patiently. Every creature is that to us, (kind or unkind, comfortable or uncomfortable,) which God makes it to be: yet this does not excuse Job's relations and friends from the guilt of horrid ingratitude and injustice to him, which he had reason to complain of; few could have borne it so well as he did. He takes notice of the unkindness, 1. Of his kindred and acquaintance, his neighbors, and such as he had formerly been familiar with, who were bound by all the laws of friendship and civility to concern themselves for him, to visit him, and inquire after him, and to be ready to do him all the good offices that lay in their power; yet these were estranged from him, (v. 13.) they took no more care about him than if he had been a stranger whom they never knew. His kinsfolk, who claimed relation to him by kindred, and yet did not maintain it, they failed them; they came short of their former professions of friendship to him, and his present expectations of kindness from them. Even his familiar friends, whom he was mindful of, had now forgot him, had forgotten both his former friendliness to them and his present miseries: they had heard of his troubles, and designed him a visit; but truly they forgot it, so little affected were they with it. Nay, his neighbors, whom he had shown kindness to, his secret, whom he was most intimate with, and laid in his bosom, not only forgot him, but abhorred him, kept as far off as they could, because he was poor, and could not entertain them as he used to do, and because he was sore, and a loathsome spectre.
Those whom he loved, and who therefore were worse than publicans if they did not love him now that he was in distress, not only turned from him, but were turned against him, and did all they could to make him odious, so to justify themselves in being so strange to him, v. 19. So uncertain is the friendship of men; but, if God be our Friend, he will fail us not, nor forsake us. But let men pretend either to humanity or Christianity, ever use their friends as Job's friends used him: adversity is the proof of friendship.

2. Of his domestics and family-relations. Sometimes, indeed, we find that, beyond our expectation, there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother; but, at least, the master of a family expects to be attended on, and taken care of, by those of his family, even his domestics. Job had lost in the fall of his friends, others, it is true, but he is become despicable to others. But poor Job was misused by his own family, and some of his worst foes were those of his own house. He mentions not his children, they were all dead, and we may suppose that the unkindness of his surviving relations made him lament the death of his children so much the more: "If they had been alive," (would he think,) "I should have had comfort in them." As for those that were now about his house, xii. 1.

He laments also those servants slighted him: his maids did not attend him in his illness, but counted him for a stranger and an alien, v. 15. His other servants never heeded him; if he called to them they would not come at his call, but pretended that they did not hear him. If he asked them a question, they would not vouchsafe to give him an answer, v. 16. Job had been a good master to them, and did not despise their cause when they pleaded with him, (ch. xii. 3.) but they were rude to him now, and despised his cause when he pleaded with them. We must not think it strange if we receive evil at the hand of those from whom we have deserved well. Though he was now sickly, yet he was not cross with his servants, and imperious, as is too common, but he entreated his servants with his mouth, when he had authority to command: and yet they would not be civil to him, neither kind nor just. Note, Those that are sick and in sorrow are apt to take ill of others ill, and to lay heart the least unkindness done to them; when Job was in affliction, even his servants' neglect of him troubled him.

(2.) But, one would think, when forsook him, the wife of his bosom should have been tender of him; no, because he would not curse God and die, as she persuaded him, his breath was strange to her too, she did not care for coming near him, nor took any notice of what he said, v. 17. Though he spake to her, not with the authority, but with the tender-ness, of a husband, did not command, but entreated her by that conjugal love which their children were the pledges of, yet she regarded him not. Some read it, "Though I lamented, or bemoaned myself, for the children," that is, "for the death of the children of my own body;" an affliction in which she was equally concerned with him. Now, it appeared, the Devil spared her to him not only to be his tempter, but to be his tormentor. By what she said to him at first, Curst God and die, it appeared that she had little religion in her; and what can one expect that is kind and good from those that have not the fear of God before their eyes, and are not governed by conscience?

(3.) Even the little children who were born in his house, the children of his own servants, who were his servants by birth, despised him, and spake against him; v. 18.) though he arose in civility to speak friendly to them, or with authority to check them, they let him know, that they neither feared him, nor loved him.

III. He complains of the decay of his body; all the beauty and strength of that were gone. When those about him slighted him, if he had been in health, and at ease, he might have enjoyed himself. But he could take as little pleasure in himself as others took in him; (v. 20.) My bone cleaves now to my skin, as formerly it did to my flesh; this was it that filled him with wrinkles; (ch. xvi. 8.) he was a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones. Nay, his skin too was almost gone, little remained unbroken but the skin of his teeth, his gums, and perhaps his lips, all the rest was fetched off by his sore boils. See what little reason we have to indulge the body, which, after all our care, may be thus consumed by the diseases which it has in itself the seeds of.

Lastly, Upon all these accounts, he recommends himself to the compassion of his friends, and justly blames their harshness with him. From this representation of his deplorable case, it was easy to infer,

1. That they ought to pity him, v. 21. This he begs in the most moving, melting, language that could be, enough (one would think) to break a heart of stone: Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, they're my friends; if ye will do nothing else for me, be sorry for me, and shew some concern for me; have pity upon me, for the hand of God hath touched me; my case is sad indeed, for I am fallen into the hands of the living God, my spirit is touched with the sense of his wrath, a calamity of all other the most pitious. Note, It becomes friends to pity one another when they are in any trouble, and not to shut up the bowels of compassion.

2. That, however, they ought not to persecute him: if they would not ease his affliction by their pity, yet they must not be so barbarous as to add to it by their censures and reproaches; (v. 22.) "Why do ye persecute me as God?" Surely his rebukes are enough for one man to bear, you need not add your wormwood and gall to the cup of affliction he puts into my hand, it is bitter enough without that: God has a sovereign power over me, and may do what he pleaseth with me; but do you think that you may do so too? No, we must aim to be like the Most Holy and the Most Merciful, but not like the Most High and Most Mighty. God gives not account of any of his matters, but we must. If they did delight in his calamity, let them be satisfied with his flesh, which was wasted and gone, but let them not, as if that were too little, wound his spirit, and ruin his good name. Great tenderness is owing to those that are in affliction, especially to those that are troubled in mind.

23. Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! 24. That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! 25. For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: 26. And though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: 27. Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me. 28. But ye should say, Why persecute we him? seeing the root of the matter is found in me. 29. Be ye afraid of the sword: for wrath bringeth the punishments of the sword, that ye may know there is a judgment.

In all the conferences between Job and his friends, we do not find any more weighty and considerable
lines than these; would one have expected it? Here it is much both of Christ and heaven in these verses: and he that said, 'I am as the most high dwelling plainly from the fenced of the better country; that is, the heavenly: as the patriarchs of that age did, Heb. xi. 14. We have here Job's creed, or confession of faith: his belief in God the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth, and the principles of natural religion, he had often professed; but here we find him no stranger to revealed religion. Though the revelation of the Promised Seed, and the promised inheritance, was then discerned of the same as implied in the doctrine of God to believe in a living Redeemer, and to look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come, for of these, doubtless, he must be understood to speak: these were the things he comforted himself with the expectation of, and not a deliverance from his trouble, or revival of his happiness, in this world, as some would understand him. For, beside that the expressions he here uses, of the Redeemer's standing at the latter day upon the earth, of his seeing and hearing for himself are wretchedly forced, if they be understood of any temporal deliverance, it is very plain that he had no expectation at all of his return to a prosperous condition in this world. He had just now said, that his way was fenced up, (v. 8.) and his hope removed like a tree, v. 10. Nay, and after this, he expressed his despair of any comfort in this life, ch. xiii. 8.—xxx. 23. So that we must necessarily understand him of the redemption of his soul from the power of the grave, and his reception to glory, which is spoken of, Ps. lxix. 15. We have reason to think that Job was just now under an extraordinary impulse of the blessed Spirit, which raised him above himself, gave him light, and gave him utterance, even to his own surprise. And some observe, that, after this, we do not find in Job's discourses such passionate, peevish, unbecoming, complaints of God and his providence, as we have before met with: this hope quieted his spirit, stilled the storm, and, having here cast anchor within the veil, his mind was kept steady from this time forward. Let us observe,

I. To what intent Job makes this confession of his faith here; never did any thing come in more pertinently, or to better purpose. 1. Job was now accused, and this was his appeal. His friends reproached him as a hypocrite, and contemned him as a wicked man: but he appeals to his creed, to his faith, to his hope, and to his own conscience; which not only acquit him from reigning sin, but comforted him with the expectation of a blessed resurrection: these are not the words of him that has a devil. He appeals to the coming of the Redeemer, from this wrangle at the bar to the judgment of the bench, even to Him to whom all judgment is committed, who, he knew, would right him. The consideration of God's day coming, will make it a very small thing with us to be judged of man's judgment, 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4. How easily may we be caught in the snares of men, while we expect the glorious appearance of our Redeemer, and his redeemed, at the last day; and that there will then be a resurrection of names as well as bodies! 2. Job was now afflicted, and this was his cordial: when he was pressed above measure, this kept him from fainting; he believed that he should see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living; not in this world, for that is the land of the dying. III. He proceeds to the second proposition he introduces it, v. 23, 24. He breaks off his complaints abruptly, to triumph in his comforts; which he does, not only for his own satisfaction, but for the edification of others. Those now about him, he feared, would fittest regard what he said, and so it proved; he therefore wished it might be recorded for the generation to come. O that my words were now written the words I am now about to say! As if he had said, "I own I have spoken many unadvised words, which I could wish might be forgotten, for they will neither do me credit, nor do others good. But I am now going to speak deliberately, and that which I desire may be published to all the world, and preserved for the generations to come, in perpetuum relic memoriam—for an abiding memorial, and therefore that it may be written plain, drawn out in large and legible characters, so that he that runs may read it; and that it may not be left in loose papers, but put into a book; or, if that should perish, that it may be engraved like an inscription upon a monument, with an iron pen, in lead, or in the stone; let the engraver use all his art to make it a durable appeal to posterity." That which Job here somewhat passionately wished for, God graciously granted him; his words are written, they are printed in God's book; so that wherever that book is read, there shall be held forth and concerning Job, He believed, therefore he spake.

III. What his confession itself is; what are the words which he would have to be written. We have here them written, v. 25.—27. Let us observe them.

1. He believes the glory of the Redeemer, and his own interest in him; (v. 25.) I know that my Redeemer liveth; that he is in being, and is my Life, and that he shall stand at last, or stand the last, or at the latter day, and (or above) the earth. He shall be raised up, or, He shall be (at the latter day, that is, in the fulness of time; the gospel-day is called the last time, because that is the last dispensation) upon the earth: so it points at his incarnation; or, He shall be lifted up from the earth; (so it points at his crucifixion;) or, raised up out of the earth; so it is applicable to his resurrection; or, as we commonly understand it. At the end of time, he shall appear over the earth, for he shall come in the clouds, and every eye shall see him, so close shall he come to this earth. He shall stand upon the dust, so the word is; upon all his enemies, which shall be put as dust under his feet; and he shall tread upon them and triumph over them.

Observe here, (1.) That there is a Redeemer provided for fallen man, and Jesus Christ is that Redeemer. The word is Goel, which is used for the next of kin, to whom, by the law of Moses, the right of redemption was a right of nature. Lev. xxv. 25. Our heavenly inheritance was mortgaged by sin, we are ourselves utterly unable to redeem it, Christ is near of kin to us, the next Kinsman that is able to redeem; he has paid our debt, satisfied God's justice for sin, and so has taken off the mortgage, and made a new settlement of the inheritance! Our persons also want a Redeemer, we are sold for sin, and sold under sin; our Lord Jesus has wrought out a redemption for us, for us, and claims redemption for us, so he is truly the Redeemer. (2.) He is a living Redeemer: as we are made by a living God, so we are saved by a living Redeemer, who is both almighty and eternal, and is therefore able to save to the uttermost. Of him it is witnessed that he liveth; Heb. viii. 18. Rev. i. 18. We are dyeing, but he liveth, and hath assured us that because he lives, we shall live also, John xiv. 19. (3.) There are those that, through grace, have an interest: his Redeemer, who shall be known of God, they see him, they know him, and so none can have a claim to him. When Job had lost all his wealth, and all his friends, yet he was not separated from Christ, nor cut off from his relation to him. "Still he is my Redeemer." That next Kinsman adhered to him when all his other kindred forsook him, and he had the comfort of it. (4.) Our interest in the Redeemer is a thing that may be known, and, where it is known, it may be triumphed in; so
sufficient to balance all our griefs; I know. Observe with what an air of assurance he speaks it, as one confident of this very thing; I know that my Redeemer lives. His friends had often charged him with ignorance or vain knowledge; but he knows enough, and knows to good purpose, who knows God for his own Redeemer. (5.) They may not come to-morrow, but the latter day, a last day, a day when time shall be no more, Rev. x. 6. That is a day we are concerned to think of every day. (6.) Our Redeemer will, at that day, stand upon the earth, or over the earth, to summon the dead out of their graves, and determine them to an unchangeable state, for to him all judgment is committed. He shall stand, at the last, on the dust to which this earth will be reduced by the corruption of the flesh. He believes the happiness of the redeemed, and his own title to that happiness, that, at Christ's second coming, believers shall be raised up in glory, and so made perfectly blessed in the vision and fruition of God; and this he believes with application to himself. (1.) He counts upon the corrupting of his body in the grave, and speaks of it with a holy carelessness and unconcernedness; Though, after my skin which is to put on corruption, and the skin of my teeth, v. 20.) they destroy (they that are appointed to destroy it, the grave, and the worms in it, of whom he had spoken, ch. xvii. 14.) this body. The word body is added: "Though they destroy this, this skeleton, this shadow, (ch. xvii. 7.) this that I lay my hand upon," or (pointing perhaps to his weak and withered limbs) "this that you see, call it what you will, I expect that shortly it will be a feast for the fowls of the air." Christ's body saw not corruption, but itours must! And Job mentions this, that the glory of the resurrection he believed and hoped for might shine the more bright. Note, It is good for us often to think, not only of the approaching death of our bodies, but of their destruction and dissolution in the grave; yet let not that discourage our hope of their resurrection, for the same power that made man's body at first, out of common dust, can raise it out of its own dust. This body, which we now take such care about, and make such provision for, will, in a little time, be destroyed; Even my reins (says Job) shall be consumed within me; (v. 27.) the innermost part of the body, which perhaps putrifies first. (2.) He comforts himself with the hopes of happiness on the other side death and the grave; After I shall awake, (so the margin reads it,) though this body be destroyed, yet out of my flesh shall I see God. [1.] Soul and body shall come together again. That body which must be destroyed in the grave, shall be raised again, a glorious body; Yet in my flesh I shall see God. The separate soul has eyes wherewith to see God, eyes of the mind; but Job speaks of seeing him with eyes of flesh, in my flesh, with mine eyes; the same body that died shall rise again, a true body, but a glorified body, fit for the employments and entertainments of that world; and therefore a spiritual body. 1 Cor. xv. 44. Let us therefore glorify God with our bodies, because there is such a glory designed for them. [2.] Job and God shall come together again; In my flesh shall I see God, that is, the glorified Redeemer, who is God. I shall see God in my flesh, so some read it; the Son of God clothed with a body which will be visible even to eyes of flesh. Though the body, in the grave, seem despicable and miserable, yet it shall be dignified and made happy in the glory of God. Job now complained that he could not get a sight of God, (ch. xxviii. 8, 9.) but hopes to see him shortly, never more to lose the sight of him, and that sight of him will be the more welcome after the present darkness and distance. Note, It is the blessedness of the blessed that they shall see God; shall see him as he is, see him face to face, and no longer through a glass darkly. See with what pleasure Job enlarges upon this; (v. 27.) "Whom I shall see for myself," that is, see and enjoy, see to my own unspeakable comfort and satisfaction. I shall see him as mine, as he is, and in his own person. And God himself shall be with them, and be their God, they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is, that is, seeing for themselves, 1 John iii. 2. Mine eyes shall behold him, and not another. First, He, and not another for him, shall be seen, not a type or figure of him, but he himself. Glorified saints are perfectly sure that they are not imposed upon, it is no deceptive illusion—illusion of the senses. Secondly, I, and not another, shall see him. Though my flesh and body shall be consumed, yet I shall not need a proxy, I shall see him with my own eyes. This was what Job hoped for, and what he earnestly desired; which, some think, is the meaning of the last clause, My reins are spent in my bosom, that is, All my desires are summed up and concluded in this; this will crown and complete them all; let me have this, and I shall have nothing more to desire; it is enough, it is all. With this the prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended. IV. The application of this to his friends. His creed spake comfort to himself, but warning and terror to them that set themselves against him. 1. It was a word of caution to them, not to proceed and persist in their unkind usage of him, v. 28. He had reproved them for what they had said, and now tells them what they should say for the reducing of themselves and uplifted this better temper. "Why persecute we him thus? Why do we grieve him and vex him, by censuring and condemning him, seeing the root of the matter, or the root of the word, is found in him?" Let this direct us, (1.) In our care concerning ourselves. We are all concerned to see to it, that the root of the matter be found in us. A living, quickening, commanding, principle of grace in the heart, is the root of the matter, as necessary to our resolution as the root of the tree is to its fruitfulness; love to God and our brethren, faith in Christ, hatred of sin these are the root of the matter, other things are but leaves in comparison with this; serious godliness is the one thing needful. (2.) In our conduct toward our brethren. We are to believe that many have the root of the matter in them, who are not in every thing of our mind, who have their follies, and weaknesses, and mistakes; and, to conclude, it is at our peril if we persecute any such. Woe be to him that offends one of these little ones! God will resent and revenge it. Job and his friends differed in some notions concerning the methods of Providence, but they agreed in the root of the matter, the belief of another world, and therefore should not persecute one another for these differences. 2. It was a word of terror to them. Christ's second coming will be very terrible to those that are found smiting their fellow servants; (Math. xxiv, 49.) and therefore, (v. 29.) "He ye afraid of the sword, the flaming sword of God's justice, which turns every way; fear lest you make yourselves obnoxious to it." Good men need to be frightened from sin by the terrors of the Almighty, particularly from the sin of rashly judging their brethren, Matth. vii. 1. Jam. iii. 1. Those that are peevish with their brethren, or censuring them, or malicious toward them, should know, not only that their wrath, whatever it pretends, works not the righteousness of God, but, (1.) They may expect to smart for it in this world; it brings
the punishments of the sword: wrath leads to such crime; and expose men to the sword of the magistrate; however, God often takes vengeance for it, and those that showed no mercy, shall find no mercy. (2.) If they repent not, that will be an earnest of worse. By these you may know there is a judgment, not only a present government, but a future judgment, in which hard speeches must be accounted for.

CHAP. XX.

One would have thought that such an excellent confession of faith as Job's, whose disciples in the following chapters should have satisfied his friends, or, at least, have mollified them; but they do not seem to have taken any notice of it, and therefore Zophar here takes his turn, enters the lists with Job, and attacks him with as much vehemence as before. 1. His preface is short, but hot, v. 2, 3. II. His discourse is long, and all upon one subject, the very same that Bildad was large upon, (ch. xviii.) the certain misery of wicked people, and the ruin that awaits them. 1. He asserts in general, that the prosperity of a wicked person is short, and his ruin sure, v. 4. 2. He proves the misery of his condition by many instances—that he should have a diseased body, a troubled conscience, a wasted estate, a beggered family, an infamous name, and that he himself shall perish under the weight of divine wrath. All this is most curiously described here in lofty expressions and lively similitudes; and it often proves true in this world, and always in another, without repentance, v. 10. But the great mistake was, and (as Bishop Patrick expresses it) all the flaw in his discourse, (which was common to him with the rest,) that he imagined God never varied from this method, and therefore Job was, withal, but doubt a very bad man, though it did not appear he was, any other way than by his infidelity.

1. THEN answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said, 2. Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer, and for this I make haste. 3. I have heard the check of my reproach, and the spirit of my understanding causeth me to answer. 4. Knowest thou not this of old, since man, was placed upon earth, 5. That the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment? 6. Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds: 7. Yet he shall perish for ever like his own dung: they which have seen him shall say, Where is he? 8. He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found; yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night. 9. The eye also which saw him shall see him no more; neither shall his place any more behold him.

Here,

1. Zophar begins very passionately, and seems to be in a great heat at what Job had said. Being resolved to condemn Job for a bad man, he was much displeased that he talked so like a good man, and, as it should seem, like a judge himself. He began abruptly; (v. 2.) Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer. He takes no notice of what Job had said, to move their pity, or to evidence his own integrity, but fastens upon the reproof he gave them in the close of his discourse, counts that a reproach, and thinks himself therefore obliged to answer, because Job had bidden them be afraid of the sword, that he might not seem to be frightened by his menaces. The best counsel is too often taken from an antagonist, and therefore usually may be well spared. Zophar seemed more in haste to speak than because a wise man; but he excuses it with two things. 1. That Job had given him a strong provocation; (v. 3.) "I have heard the check of my reproach, and cannot bear to hear, it any longer." Job's friends, I doubt, had spirits too high to deal with a man in his low condition; and high spirits are impatient of contradiction, and think themselves affronted, if all about them do not say as they said, and with them. 2. He did not intend it the check of their reproach, and then they are bound in honour to return it, if not to draw upon him that gave it. 2. That his own heart gave him a strong instigation. His thoughts caused him to answer, (v. 2.) for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks; but he fathers it (v. 3.) upon the spirit of his understanding: that indeed should cause us to answer, we should rightly apprehend a thing, and duly consider it, before we speak to it; but whether he thereby mistakes the spirit of our discourses, or often mistake the dictates of their passion for the dictates of their reason, and therefore think they do well to be angry.

II. Zophar proceeds very plainly to show the ruin and destruction of wicked people, insinuating that because Job was destroyed and ruined, he was certainly a wicked man, and a hypocrite.

Observe,

1. How this doctrine is introduced; (v. 4.) where he appeals, (1.) To Job's own knowledge and conviction; "Knowest thou not this? Canst thou be ignorant of a truth so plain? Or canst thou doubt of a truth which has been confirmed by the suffrage of all mankind?" Those know little, who do not know that the wages of sin is death. (2.) To the experience of all ages. It was known of old, since man was placed upon the earth, that is, ever since man was made, he has had this truth written in his heart, that the sin of sinners will be their ruin; and ever since there were instances of wickedness, (which there were soon after man was placed on the earth,) there were instances of the punishments of it, witness the exclusions of Adam and Cain. When sin entered into the world, death entered with it: all the world knows that evil pursues sinners, whom vengeance suffers not to live, (Acts xxviii. 4.) and subscribes to that, (Isa. iii. 11.) Woe to the wicked, it shall be light unto him, when he shall see his end.

2. How it is laid down; (v. 5.) The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment. Observe, (1.) He asserts the misery, not only of those who are openly wicked and profane, but of hypocrites, who secretly practise wickedness under a show and profession of religion, because such a wicked man he looked upon Job to be; and it is true that a form of godliness, if it be made use of for a cloak of maliciousness, does make bad worse; disseminated piety is double iniquity, and the ruin that attends it will be accordingly. The hottest place in hell will be the portion of hypocrites, as our Saviour intimates, Math xxiv. 51. (2.) He grants that wicked men may, for a time, prosper, may be secure and easy, and very merry; you may see them in triumph and joy, triumphing and rejoicing in their wealth and power, their grandeur and success, triumphing and rejoicing over the fall of others; but the day of the Lord shall come on them; he vex and oppress: they feel no evil, they fear none. Job's friends were loath to own, at first, that wicked people might prosper at all, (ch. iv. 9.) until Job proved it plainely; (ch. ix. 24.—xii. 6.) and now Zophar yields it: but, (3.) He lays it down for a certain truth, that they will not prosper long. Their joy is but for a moment, and will quickly end in endless sorrow; though he be ever so great, and rich, and jovial, he will be humbled, and mortified, and made miserable.
3. How it is illustrated, v. 6, &c.
(1.) He supposes his prosperity to be very high,
so high as you can imagine, v. 6. It is in his wis-
dom and virtue, but his worldly wealth and great-
ness, that he accounts his excellency, and values
himself upon: we will suppose those to mount up to
the heavens, and, since his spirit always rises with
his condition, you may suppose that with it his
head reaches to the clouds. He is every way ad-
vanced, the world has done the utmost it can for
him, he looks down upon all about him with disdain,
while they look up to him with admiration, envy,
and fear; and he suppose his to bid fair for a uni-
versal monarchy. And though he cannot but have
made himself many enemies before he arrived to
this pitch of prosperity, yet he thinks himself as
much out of the reach of their darts as if he were in
the clouds.

(2.) He is confident that his ruin will, accord-
ingly, be very great, and his fall the more dreadful
for his having risen so high; _he shall perish for ever,
v. 7._ His pride and security were the certain pre-
sages of his misery. This will certainly be true of
all iniquitous sinners in the other world, they shall
be undone, for ever undone; but Zophar means his
ruin in this world: and indeed sometimes notorious
sinners are remarkably cut off by present judg-
ments, they have reason enough to fear what Zo-
phar here threatens even the triumphant sinner with.
[1.] _A shameful destruction._ He shall perish
like his own dung or dunghill, so loathsomely is
he to God and all good men, and so willing will the
world be to part with him, Ps. cxix. 119. Isa. 24.
[2.] _A surprising destruction._ He will be
brought into desolation in a moment, (Ps. lxxiii.
19.) so that those about him, that saw him but just
now, will ask, "Where is he? Could he that made
so great a figure vanish and expire so suddenly?"
[3.] _A swift destruction._ He shall fly away
upon the wings of his own terrors, and be chased
away by the just imprecations of all about him, who
would gladly be rid of him. [4.] _An utter de-
struction._ It will be total; he shall go away like a
dream, or vision of the night, which was a mere phan-
tasm, and, whatever in it pleased the fancy, it is
quite gone, and nothing of it remains, but what
serves us to laugh at the folly of. It will be final,
v. 9. The eye that saw him, and was ready to
adore him, shall see him no more, and the place he
filed shall no more behold him, having given him
an eternal farewell when he went to his own place,
as Judas, Acts i. 25.

10. His children shall seek to please the poor,
and his hands shall restore their goods.
11. His bones are full of the sin of his youth,
which shall lie down with him in the dust.
12. Though wickedness be sweet in his
mouth, though he hide it under his tongue;
13. Though he spare it, and forsake it not,
but keep it still within his mouth; 14. Yet
his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the
gall of asps within him. 15. He hath swal-
lowed down riches, and he shall vomit them
up again: God shall cast them out of his
belly. 16. He shall suck the poison of
asps: the viper's tongue shall slay him. 17.
He shall not see the rivers, the floods, the
brooks of honey and butter. 18. That
which he laboured for shall he restore,
and shall not swallow it down: according to
his substance shall the restitution be, and he
shall not rejoice thereon. 19. Because he
hath oppressed and hath forsaken the poor,
because he hath violently taken away a
house which he builded not; 20. Surely
he shall not feel quietness in his belly, he
shall not save of that which he desired. 21.
There shall none of his meat be left: there-
fore shall no man look for his goods. 22.
In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be
in straits: every hand of the wicked shall
come upon him.

The instances here given of the miserable con-
dition of the wicked man in this world, are ex-
pressed with a great fulness and fluency of language,
and the same thing returned to again, and repeated
in other words. Let us therefore reduce the partic-
ulars to their proper heads; and observe,
1. What his wickedness is, for which he is pu-
nished.

The lusts of the flesh, here called _the sins of
his youth;_ (v. 11.) for those are the sins which,
at that age, people are most tempted to. The forbid-
den pleasures of sense are said to be _sweet in his
mouth;_ (v. 12.) he indulges himself in all the gra-
tifications of the carnal appetite, and takes an inor-
dinate complacency in them, as yielding the most
agreeable delights. That is the satisfaction which
he hides under his tongue, and rolls there, as the
most dainty delicate thing that can be: he keeps it
within his mouth; (v. 13.) let him have that,
and he desires no more; he will never part with
that for the spiritual and divine pleasures of reli-
igion, which he has no relish of, nor affection for.
His keeping it still in his mouth, denotes both his
obstinate persisting in his sin, (he spares it when
he should kill and mortify it, and forsakes it not, but
holds it fast, and goes on frowardly in it,) and also
his re-acting of his sin, by revolting it, and re-
membering it with pleasure, as that adulterous woman,
(Exch. xxiii. 19.) who multiplied her whoredoms by
being too often guilty to her husband's youringga;
so does this wicked man here. Or, his hiding it and
keeping it under his tongue denotes his industrious
concealment of his beloved lust: being a hypocrite,
that he may save the credit of his profession, he
has secret haunts of sin; but he who knows what is
in the heart, knows what is under the tongue too,
and will discover it shortly.

2. The love of the world and the wealth of it;
that is it in which he places his happiness,
and which therefore he sets his heart upon. See here,
(1.) How greedy he is of it, v. 15. He has swal-
lowed down riches, as eagerly as ever a hungry
man swallowed down meat; and is still crying,
"Give, give." It is that which he desired; (v. 20.)
it was, in his eye, the best gift, and that which he
coveted earnestly. (2.) What pains he takes for
it; it is that which he laboured for, (v. 18.) not by
honest diligence in a lawful calling, but by an un-
wearied prosecution of all ways and methods, _her
things (Ps. xcviii. 16.) her means—right or wrong, to be rich. We
must labour, not to be rich, (Prov. xxxi. 4.) but to
be charitable, that we may have to give, (Eph. iv.
28.) not to spend. (3.) What great things he pro-
mises himself from it, intimated in the rivers, the
floods, the brooks of honey and butter; (v. 17.) his
being disappointed of them supposes that he had
flattered himself with the hopes of them; he ex-
pected rivers of sensual delights.

3. Violence, and oppression, and injustice, to his
poor neighbours, v. 19. This was the sin of the
giants of the old world, and a sin that, as much as
any other, brings God's judgments upon nations and
f milies. It is charged upon this wicked man, (1.)
That he has forsaken the poor, taken no care of
them, showed no kindness to them, nor made any
provision for them. At first, perhaps, for a pre-
tence, he gave alms like the Pharisees, to gain a
reputation; but, when he had served his turn with
it, he left it off, and forsook the poor, whom before
he seemed to be concerned for. Those who do
good, but not from a good principle, though they
may abound in it, and have others to do it for them,
crushed them, taken all advantages against them to do them a mischief:
to enrich himself, he has made the poor poorer. (3.)
That he has violently taken away their houses, which
he had no right to, as Ahab took Naboth's vineyard,
not by secret fraud, by forgery, perjury, or some
trick in law, but avowedly, and by open violence.
11. What his punishment is, for this wickedness.
1. He shall be disappointed of his expectation,
and shall not find that satisfaction in his worldly
wealth which he vainly promised himself; (v. 17.)
He shall never see the rivers, the floods, the brooks
of honey and butter, with which he hoped to glut
himself. The world is not that to those who love it,
and court it, and admire it, which they fancy it
will be. The enjoyment sinks far below the raised
expectation.
2. He shall be diseased and distempered in his
body, and have no little comfort a man has in riches,
if he has not health! Sickness and pain, especially
if they be in extremity, imbibit all his enjoyments.
This wicked man has all the delights of sense
wound up to the height of pleasurableness; but
what real happiness can he enjoy, when his bones
are full of the sins of his youth, (v. 11.) that is, of
the effects of those sins? By his drunkenness and
 glutony, his uncleanness and wantonness, when he was
young, has he not rendered his body a vessel that is
dreadful to him long after, and, perhaps, makes his
life very miserable, and, as Solomon speaks, con-
sume his flesh and his body, Prov. v. 11. Perhaps
he was given to flight when he was young, and then
made nothing of a cut or a bruise in a fray; but he
feels it in his bones long after. But can he get no
case, no relief? No, he is likely to carry his pains
and diseases with him to the grave, or rather, they
are likely to carry him to the grave, and with him;
he shall die in them, and with them. Do all those
with him in the dust: the very putrifying of his body in the grave is to him the
effect of sin; (ch. xxiv. 19.) so that his iniquity is
upon his bones there, Ezek. xxxii. 27. The sin
of sinners follows them to the other side death.
3. He shall be disquieted and troubled in his
mind; Surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly,
v. 20. He has not that ease in his own mind that
people think he has, but is in continual agitation.
The ill-gotten wealth which he has swallowed
down, makes him sick, and, like undigested meat, is
always upbraiding him. Let none expect to enjoy
that comfortably which they have gotten unjustly.
The unquietness of his mind arises, (1.) From his
conscience looking back, and filling him with the
fear of the wrath of God against him, for his wick-
edness. Even that wickedness which was sweet in
the commission, and was rolled under the tongue as a
defiled thing, is now, when he looks into the reflexions
and, when it is reviewed, fills him with horror and
evaction. In his bowels, it is turned, (v. 14.) like
John's book; in his mouth as sweet as honey, but,
when he had eaten it, his belly was bitter, Rev. x.
10. Such a thing is sin; it is turned into the gall
of asps, than which nothing is more bitter, the poi-
son of asps, (v. 16.) than which nothing more fatal,
and so it will be to him; what he sucked so sweetly,
and with so much pleasure, will prove to him the
poison of asps; so will all unlawful gains be. The
swelling tongue will prove the viper's tongue. All
the charming graces that are thought to be in sin,
when conscience is awakened, will turn into so
many raging furies. (2.) From his cares looking
forward, v. 22. In the fulness of his sufficiency,
when he thinks himself most happy, and most sure
of the continuance of his happiness, he shall be in
straits, that is, he shall think himself so, through
the anxieties and perplexities of his own mind, as
that rich man who, when his ground brought forth
fruit plentifully, (Luke 12.) that he, having nothing
left, said, This generation is wiser than the former
one: but the latter are wiser than they? (v. 18.)
4. He shall be dispossessed of his estate; that
shall sink and dwindle away to nothing, so that he
shall not rejoice therein, v. 18. He shall not only
never rejoice truly, but not long rejoice at all.
(1.) What he has unjustly swallowed, he shall
be compelled to disgorge; (v. 15.) He swallowed
dozen riches, and then thought himself sure of
them, and that they were as much his own as the
thing he has eaten, but he is deceived, he shall
vomit them up again; his own conscience perhaps
may make him so uneasy in the keeping of what he
has gotten, that, for the quiet of his own mind, he
shall make restitution, and that not with the plea-
sure of a virtue, but the pain of a vomit, and with
the utmost reluctancy. Or, if he do not himself re-
fund what he has violently taken away, God shall,
by his providence, force him to it, and bring it about,
one way or other, that ill-gotten goods shall return
to the right owner. God never allows one of his
belly, while yet the love of the sin is not cast out
of his heart. So loud shall the clamours of the poor,
whom he has impoverished, be against him, that
he shall be forced to send his children to them, to
sooth them, and beg their pardon; (v. 10.) His
children shall seek to please the poor, while his own
hands shall restore them their goods with shame,
v. 18. That which he laboured for, by all the arts
of opprobrious deceit, he shall have the most bitter
upbraidings: for they shall not so swallow it down as to digest it; it shall not stay
with him, according to his shame shall the re-
stitution be; having gotten a great deal unjustly,
he shall restore a great deal, so that when every
one has his own, he will have but a little left for
himself. To be made to restore what was unjustly
gotten, by the sanctifying grace of God, as Zacchaeus
was, is a great mercy; he voluntarily and cheerfully
restored all his ill-gotten gains, (Luke 19.) that may
give to the poor, Luke xix. 8. But to be forced to
restore, as Judas was, merely by the horrors of a
despairing conscience, has none of that benefit and
comfort attending it, for he threw down the pieces
of silver, and went and hanged himself.
(2.) He shall be stripped of all he has, and be,
become a beggar. He that spoiled others, shall him-
sel be spoiled; (Isa. xxxiii. 1.) for every hand
of the wicked shall be upon him. The innocent
whom he has wronged, sit down by their loss, saying,
as David, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked, but
my hand shall not be upon him, 1 Sam. xxiv. 13.
But though they have forgiven him, though they
will make no reprovals, divine justice will, and often
makes the wicked to avenge the quarrel of the
righteous, and squeezes and crushes one bad man
by the hand of another upon him. Thus when he is
plucked on all sides, he shall not save of that
which he has gotten. He shall be 20. Let not this
save it all, but he shall save nothing of it. There
shall none of his meat (which he coveted so much,
and fed upon with so much pleasure) be left, v. 21.
All his neighbours and relations shall look upon
him to be in such bad circumstances, that, when he
is dead, no man shall look for his goods, none of his
kindred shall expect to be a penny the better for
him, nor be willing to take out letters of administra-
tion for what he leaves behind him. In all this
Zophar reflects upon Job, who had lost all, and was
reduced to the last extremity.
23. **When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him, and shall rain it upon him while he is eating.** 

24. **He shall flee from the iron weapon, and the bow of steel shall strike him through.** 

25. **It is drawn, and cometh out of the body; yea, the glittering sword cometh out of his gall: terrors are upon him.** 

26. **All darkness shall be hid in his secret places; a fire not blown out shall consume him; it shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle.** 

27. The heaven shall reveal his iniquity; and the earth shall rise up against him. 

28. **The increase of his house shall depart, and his goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath.** 

29. **This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God.**

Zophar, having described the many embarrassments and vexations which commonly attend the wicked practices of oppressors and cruel men, here comes to the other side of the question.

1. Their ruin will take its rise from God's wrath and vengeance, v. 23. The hand of the wicked was upon him; (v. 22.) every hand of the wicked. His hand was against every one, and therefore every man's hand will be against him—yet, in grappling with these, he might go near to make his part good; but his heart cannot endure, nor his hands be strong, when God shall deal with him, (Ezek. xxii. 14.) when God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him. Even wickedness speaks terror. It is not only the justice of God, that is engaged against him, but his wrath, the deep resentment of provocations given to himself: it is the fury of his wrath, incensed to the highest degree; it is cast upon him with force and fierceness; it is rained upon him in abundance; it comes on his head like the fire and brimstone upon Sodom, to which the psalmist also refers, (Ps. xi. 6.) *On the head of the wicked Fire and brimstone.* There is no fence against this, but in Christ, up in only Covert from the storm and tempest, Isa. xxxii. 2. 

2. This wrath shall be cast upon him, when he is about to fill his belly, just going to glut himself with what he has gotten, and promising himself abundant satisfaction in it. Then, when he is eating, shall this tempest surprise him, when he is secure and easy, and in apprehension of no danger; as the ruin of the old world and Sodom came, when they were in the depth of their security, and the height of their sensuality, as Christ observes, Luke xvii. 26, &c. Perhaps Zophar here reflects on the death of Job's children, when they were eating and drinking. 

2. Their ruin will be inevitable, and there will be no possibility of escaping it; (v. 24.) **He shall flee from the iron weapon.** Flight argues guilt: he will not humble himself under the judgments of God, nor seek means to make his peace with him; all his care is to escape the vengeance that pursues him, but in vain: if he escape the sword, yet the bow of steel shall strike him through. God has weapons of all sorts, he has both *what his sword, and bent his bow;* (Ps. vii. 12, 13.) he can deal with his enemies comminus or eminus—at hand or afar off. He has a sword for those that think to fight it out with him by their strength, and a bow for those that think to avoid him by their craft. See Isaiah xxxiv. 17, 18. Jer. xlvii. 43, 44. He that is marked for ruin, though he may escape one judgment, will find another ready for him.

3. It will be a total, terrible, ruin. When the dart that has struck him through, (for when God shoots, he is sure to hit his mark, when he strikes, he strikes home,) comes to be drawn out of his body, when the glittering sword, (the lightning, so the word is,) the flaming sword, the sword that is bathed in heaven, (Isa. xxxiv. 5.) when this comes out of his gall, O what terrors are upon him! How strong are the convulsions, how violent are the dyings agonies of this, how terrible are the arrests of death to a wicked man!

4. Sometimes it is a ruin that comes upon him insensibly, v. 26. (1.) The darkness he is wrapped up in, is a hidden darkness: it is all darkness, utter darkness, without the least mixture of light, and it is hid in his secret place, whither he is retreated, and where he hopes to shelter himself; he never retires into his own conscience, but he finds himself among the false friends of the world, and there he is consumed by a fire not blown, kindled without noise, a consumption which every body sees the effect of, but nobody sees the cause of; it is plain that the gourd is withered, but the worm at the root, that causes it to wither, is out of sight. He is wasted by a soft gentle fire; surely, but very slowly. When the fuel is very combustible, the fire needs no blowing, and that is his case; he is ripe for ruin; the Fraud, and they that do wickedly, shall be as chaff, Mal. iv. An unquenchable fire shall consume him, so some read it; and that is certainly true of hell-fire.

5. It is a ruin, not only to himself, but to his family; *It shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle,* for the curse shall reach him, and he shall be cut off perhaps by the same grievous disease; there is an entail of wrath upon the family, which will destroy both his heirs and his inheritance, v. 27. The increase of his house shall depart; shall either be cut off by untimely deaths, or forced to run their country. Numerous and growing families, if wicked and vile, are soon reduced, dispersed, and extinguished, by the judgments of God. (2.) His estate will be sunk. His goods shall flow away from his family as fast as ever they flowed in to it, when the day of God's wrath comes, for which, all the while his estate was in the getting by fraud and oppression, he was making a paste to it. 

6. It is a ruin which will manifestly appear to be just and righteous, and what he has brought upon himself by his own wickedness; for, (v. 27.) *the heaven shall reveal his iniquity,* that is, the God of heaven, who sees all the secret wickedness of the wicked, will, by some means or other, let all the world know what a base man he has been, that they may own the justice of God in all that is brought upon him. The earth also shall rise up against him, both to discover his wickedness, and to avenge it. *The earth shall disclose her blood,* Isa. xxxvi. 21. *The earth rises up against him,* (as the stomach rises against that which is loathsome,) and will no longer keep him: *the Heaven reveals his iniquity,* and therefore will not receive him: whither then must he go but to hell? If the God of heaven and earth be his enemy, neither heaven nor earth will receive him, and the roots of the hosts of both are, and will be, at war with him.

Lastly, Zophar concludes like an orator; (v. 29.) *This is the portion of a wicked man from God;* it is allotted him, it is designed him as his portion. He will have it at last, as a child has his portion, and he will have it for a perpetuity, it is what he must abide by: *this is the heritage of his decree from God;* it is the settled rule of his judgment, and fair warning is given of dark. O wicked men, thou shalt perish! Ezech. xxxiii. 8. Though impenitent sinners do not always fall under such temporal judgments
is are here described, (therein Zophar was mis-
taken,) yet the wrath of God abides upon them, and they are made miserable by spiritual judges-
ments, which are much worse, their consciences being either, on the one hand, a terror to them, and
then they are in continual amazement, or, on the other hand, scared and silenced, and then they are
given up to a reprobate sense, and bound over to
eternal ruin. Never was any doctrine better ex-
plained, or worse applied, than this by Zophar, who
intended by all this to prove Job a hypocrite. Let
us receive the good explanation, and make a better
application, for turning to ourselves, to stand in
awe, and not to sin.

CHAP. XXI.

This is Job's reply to Zophar's discourse; in which he
cEnsures less of his own miseries than he had done in
his former discourses, (finding that his friends were not
moved by his complaints, to pity him in the least,) and
comes to the general question that was in dispute
betwixt him and them. Whether outward prosperity, and
the continuance of it, were a mark of the true church, and
the true members of it, so that the ruin of a man's
prosperity is sufficient to prove him a hypocrite, though
no other evidence appear against him: this they asserted,
but Job denied. 1. His preface here is designed for the
moving of their consciences, that they may gain their
attention. 11. His discourse is designed for the con-
vincing of their judgments, and the rectifying of their
mistakes. He owns that God does sometimes hang out
a wicked man as it were in chains, and sever that
terror and hell upon the world, in their case, that is,
but after a long reprieve, a v. 17. 21.
2. He observes a very great variety in the ways of God's
providence toward men, even toward bad men, v. 22.
26. 5. He overthrows the ground of their severe censures
of him, by showing that destruction is reserved for the other
world, and that the wicked often escape to the last in
this, v. 37. to the end. In this, Job was clearly in
the right.

1. But Job answered and said, 2. Hear
diligently my speech; and let this
be your consolations. 3. Suffer me that I
may speak; and after that I have spoken
mock on. 4. As for me, is my complaint
to man if and it were so, why should not
my spirit be troubled? 5. Mark me, and
be astonished, and lay your hand upon your
mouth. 6. Even when I remember I am
afraid, and trembling taketh hold on my
flesh.

Job here recommends himself, both his case and
his discourse, both what he suffered, and what he
said, to the compassionate consideration of his
friends.

1. That which he entreats of them is very fair,
that they would suffer him to speak, (v. 3.) and not
break in upon him, as Zophar had done, in the
midst of his discourse. Losers, of all men, may
have leave to speak; and if those that are accused
and censured may not speak for themselves, they
are wronged without remedy, and have no way
to come at their case. He entreats that they would
hear diligently his speech, (v. 2.) as those that were
willing to understand him, and, if they were under
a mistake, to have it rectified; and that they would
mark him; (v. 5.) for we may as well not hear as
not heed and observe what we hear.

2. That which he urges for this is very reason-

able. (l.) They came to comfort him; "Now,
"says he, "let this be your consolations; (v. 2.) if
you have no other comforts to administer to me,
yet deny me not this; be so kind, so just, as to give
me a patient hearing, and that shall pass for your
consolations." Nay, they could not know how to
comfort him, if they would not give him leave to
open his case, and tell his own story. Or, "It will
be a consolation to yourselves, in the reflection, to
have dealt tenderly with your afflicted friend, and
not abashedly.

(2.) He would have them speak, when it came
to their turn. "After I have spoken, you may go
with what you have to say, and I will not hinder
you, though you go on to mock me." Those that
engage in controversy, must count upon having hard
words given them, and resolve to bear it patiently;
for, generally, they that mock, will mock on, what-
erver is said to them.

(3.) He hoped to convince them; "If you will but
give me a fair hearing, mock on if you can, but
I believe I shall say that which will change your
note, and make you pity me, rather than mock me."
(4.) They were not his judges; (v. 4.) "Is my
complaint to man? No, if it were, I see it would
be to little purpose to complain. But my complaint
is to God, and to him do I appeal. Let him be
Judge between you and me. Before him we stand
upon even terms, and therefore I have the privi-
lege of being heard. Absurd as your complaint
were to men, my spirit would be troubled, for they
would not regard me, nor rightly understand me;
but my complaint is to God, who will suffer me to
speak, though you will not." It would be said if
God should deal as unkindly with us as our friends
sometimes do.

(5.) There was that in his case, which was very
surprising and astonishing, and therefore both need-
ed and deserved their most serious consideration.
It was not a common case, but a very extraordinary
one.

[1.] He himself was amazed at it, at the trou-
bles God had laid upon him, and the censures of
his friends concerning him; (v. 6.) "When I re-
member that terrible day, in which I was on a sud-
den stripped of all my comforts, that day in which
I was stricken with sore boils; when I remember
all the hard speeches with which you have grieved
me, I confess I am afraid, and trembling takes hold
of my flesh, especially when I compare this with
the prosperous condition of many wicked people,
and the appaluses of their neighbours, with which
they pass through the world." Note, The provi-
dences of God, in the government of the world, are
sometimes very astonishing, even to wise and good
men, and bring them to their wit's end.

[2.] He would have them wonder at it; (v. 5.)
"Mark me, and be astonished. Instead of expound-
ing my troubles, you should awfully adore the un-
searchable mysteries of Providence in afflicting on
thou, of whom you know no evil; you should there
fore lay your hand upon your mouth; silently wait
the issue, and judge nothing before the time." God's
way is in the sea, and his path in the great
waters. When we cannot account for what he does,
in suffering the wicked to become so, and the truly
wicked to be preserved, (finding the depth of those pro-
cedings, it becomes us to sit down and admire
them.) Uproar men shall be astonished at this, ch.
xvii. 8. Be you so.

7. Wherefore do the wicked live, become
old, yea, are mighty in power? 8. Their
seed is established in their sight with them,
and their offspring before their eyes. 9. Their
houses are safe from fear, neither is
the rod of God upon them. 10. Their bull gendereth, and faileth not; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf. 11. They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. 12. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. 13. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. 14. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. 15. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him? 16. Lo, their good is not in their hand: the counsel of the wicked is far from me.

All Job's three friends, in their last discourses, had been very large in describing the miserable condition of a wicked man in this world; "It is true," says Job, "remarkable judgments are sometimes brought upon notorious sinners, but not always; for we have many instances of the great and long prosperity of those that are openly and avowedly wicked; though they are hardened in their wickedness by their prosperity, yet they are still suffered to prosper."

I. He here describes their prosperity, to the height, and breadth, and length, of it. "If this be true, as you say, pray tell me wherefore do the wicked live?" v. 7. The matter of fact is taken for granted, for we see instances of it every day. 1. They live, and are not suddenly cut off by the strokes of divine vengeance. They yet speak, who have set their mouths against the heavens. They yet act, who have stretched their hands against God. Not only they live, that is, they are reprimed, but they live in prosperity. 1 Sam. xxv. 6. Nay, 2. They become old, they have the honour, satisfaction, and advantage, of living long; time enough to raise their families and estates. We read of a sinner a hundred years old, Isa. lxv. 20. But this is not all. 3. They are mighty in power, are preferred to places of authority and trust, and not only make a great figure, but bear a great sway. Vivit imo, et in senatum venit—He not only lives, but walks into the senate-house. Now wherefore is it so? Note, It is worth while to inquire into the reasons of the outward prosperity of wicked people. It is not because God has blessed the earth, because he does not see, or does not hear, or cannot punish, their wickedness; but it is because the measure of their iniquities is not full. This is the day of God's patience, and in some way or other he makes use of them, and their prosperity, to serve his own counsels, while it ripens them for ruin; but the chief reason is, because he will make it to appear there is another world, which is the world of retribution, and not this.

The prosperity of the wicked is here described to be: (1.) Complete and consummate. [1.] They are multiplied, and their family is built up, and they have the satisfaction of seeing it; (v. 8.) Their seed is established in their sight. This is put first, as that which gives both a pleasant enjoyment, and a pleasing prospect. [2.] They are easy and quiet, v. 9. Whereas Zophar had spoken of their continual frights and troubles, Job says, Their houses are safe, but they are afraid from the fear of it; (v. 9.) and so far are they from the killing wounds of God's sword or arrows, that they do not feel the smart of so much as the rod of God upon them. [3.] They are rich, and thrive in their estates; of this he gives only one instance, v. 10. Their cattle increase, and they meet with no disappointment in them; not so much as a cow casts her calf, and then their much must needs grow more. This is promised, Exod. xxvii. 26. Deut. vii. 14. [4.] They are merry, and live a jovial life; (v. 11, 12.) They send forth their little ones abroad among their neighbours, to learn all sorts of arts, and ways; and in a moment go down to the grave. They have their balls and music-meetings, at which their children dance; and dancing is fittest for children, who know not better how to spend their time, and whose innocence guards them against the mischiefs that commonly attend it. Though the parents are not so very youthful and frolicsome as to dance themselves, yet they take the timbrel and harp; they pipe, and their children dance, and the children pipe; and they put their instruments out of tune, or to withhold their hearts from any joy. Some observe that this is an instance of their vanity, as well as of their prosperity. Here is none of that care taken of the children, which Abraham took of his, to teach them the way of the Lord, Gen. xviii. 19. Their children do not pray, or say their catechism, but dance, and sing, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. Sensual pleasures are all the delights of carnal people; and as men are themselves, so they breed their children.

(2.) Continuing and constant; (v. 13.) They spend their days, all their days, in wealth, and never know what it is to want; in mirth, and never know what sadness means; and at last, without any previous alarms to frighten them, without any anguish, or agony, in a moment they go down to the grave, and there are no bands in their death. If there were not another life after this, it was more desirable to die by the quickest, shortest stroke of death. Since we must go down to the grave; if that were the furthest of our journey, we would wish to go down in a moment, to swallow the biter pill, and not chew it.

II. He shows how they abuse their prosperity, and are confirmed and hardened by it in their impiety, v. 14, 15. Their gold and silver serve to steel them, to make them more insolent, and more impudent, to their wickedness. Now he mentions this, either, 1. To increase the difficulty. It is strange that any wicked people should prosper thus, but especially that those should prosper, who are arrived at such a pitch of wickedness as openly to bid defiance to God himself, and tell him to his face that they care not for him; nay, and that their prosperity should be continued, though they bear up themselves upon that, in their opposition to God; with that weapon they fight against him, and yet they are not disarmed. Or, 2. To lessen the difficulty. God suffers them to prosper; but let us not wonder at it, for the prosperity of fools destroys them, by hardening them in sin, Prov. i. 32. Ps. lxxiii. 7-9.

See how light these prospering sinners make of God and religion, as if, because they have so much of this world, they had no need to look after another.

(1.) See how ill affected they are to God and religion; they abandon them, and cast off the thoughts of them. [1.] They dread the presence of God, they say unto him, Depart from us, let us never be troubled with the apprehension of our being under God's eye, nor be restrained by the fear of him. Or, They bid him depart, as one they do not need, nor have any occasion to make use of. The world is the portion they have chosen, and the world is the portion they would, or they suppose that they have that, they can live without God. Justly will God say to them, Depart, (Matth. xxxv. 41.) who have bid him depart; justly does he now take them at their word. [2.] They dread the knowledge of God, and of his will, and of their duty to
him; We desire not the knowledge of thy ways. They that are resolved not to walk in God's ways, desire not to know them, because their knowledge will be a continual reproach to their disobedience, John iii. 19.

(2.) See how they argue against God and religious duties. What is the Almighty? Strange, that ever creatures should speak so insolently, that ever reasonable creatures should speak so absurdly and unreasonably. The two great bonds by which we are drawn and held to religion, are those of duty and interest; now they here endeavour to break both these bonds asunder. [1.] They will not believe it is their duty to be religious. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? (Exod. v. 2.) Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? Observe how slightly they speak of God; What is the Almighty? As if he were a mere name, a mere cypher, or one they have nothing to do with, and that has nothing to do with them. How hardly they speak of religion! They call it a service, and mean a hard service. Is it not enough, they think, to keep up a fair correspondence with the Almighty, but they must serve him, which they look upon as a task and drudgery. Observe also how high they speak of themselves: "That we should serve him: we, who are rich and mighty in power, shall we be subject and accountable to him? No, we are Lords," Jer. ii. 31. [2.] They will not believe it is their interest to be religious. What profit shall we have if we pray unto him? All the world are for what they can get, and therefore wisdom's merchandise is neglected, because they think there is nothing to be got by it; It is vain to serve God, Mal. iii. 13, 14. Praying will not pay debts, nor prevent our losing what we have; Godliness may hinder a man's preferment, and expose him to losses; and what then? Is nothing to be called gain but the wealth and honour of this world? If we obtain the favour of God, and spiritual and eternal blessings, we have no reason to complain of losing by our religion. But if we have not profit by prayer, it is our own fault, (Isa. lvi. 3, 4,) it is because we ask amiss, Jam. iv. 3. Religion itself is not a vain thing; if it be so to us, it is because we find ourselves for resting in the outside of it, Jam. i. 26.

III. He shows their folly herein, and utterly disclaims all concurrence with them; (v. 19.) Lo, their good is not in their hand, that is, They did not get it without God, and therefore they are very ungrateful to slight him thus: it was not their might, nor the power of their hand, that got them this wealth, and therefore they ought to remember God who gave it them. Nor can they keep it without God, and therefore they are very unwise to lose their interest in him, and bid him to depart from them. Some give this sense of it; "Their good is in their barns and their bags, hoarded up there; it is not in their hand, to do good to others with it; and then, what good does it do them?" "Therefore," says Job, "the counsel of the wicked is far from me. Far be it from me that I should be of their mind, say as they say, do as they do, and take my measures from them. Their prosperity approved their sayings, though their way be their folly; (Ps. xlix. 13.) but I know better things than to walk in their counsel."

17. How oft is the candle of the wicked put out? and how oft cometh their destruction upon them? God distributeth sorrows in his anger. They are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away. 19. God layeth up his iniquity for his children: heewardeth him, and he shall know it. 20. His eyes shall see his destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty. 21. For what pleasure hath he in his house after him, when the number of his months is cut off in the midst? 22. Shall any teach God knowledge? seeing he judgeth those that are high. 23. One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet: 24. His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow. 25. And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure. 26. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them.

Job had largely described the prosperity of wicked people; now, in these verses, I. He opposes this to what his friends had main tained concerning their certain ruin in this life. "Tell me how often do you see the candle of the wicked put out? Do you not as often see it burn down to the socket, until it goes out of itself? v. 17. How often do you see their destruction come upon them, or God distributing sorrows in his anger among them? Do you not as often see their mirth and prosperity continuing to the last?" Perhaps there are as many instances of notorious sinners ending their days in pomp, as ending them in misery; which observation is sufficient to invalidate their arguments against Job, and to show that no certain judgment can be made of men's character by their outward condition.

II. He reconciles this to the holiness and justice of God; though wicked people prosper thus all their days, yet we are not therefore to think that God will let their wickedness always go unpunished. No,

1. Even while they prosper thus, they are as stubble and chaff before the stormy wind, v. 18. They are light and worthless, and do not rest either with God, or with wise and good men. They are fitted to destruction, and continually lie exposed to it; and, in the height of their pomp and power, there is but a step between them and ruin.

2. Though they spend all their days in wealth, God is laying up their iniquity for their children, (v. 19.) and he will visit it upon their posterity when they are gone. The oppressor lays up his goods for his children, to make them gentlemen, but God lays up his iniquity for them, to make them beggars: he keeps an exact account of the fathers' sins; seals them up among his treasures, (Deut. xxxii. 34.) and will justly punish the children, while the riches, to which the curse cleaves, are found as assets in their hands.

3. Though they prosper in this world, yet they shall be reckoned with in another world. God rewards him according to his deeds at last, (v. 19.) though the sentence passed against his evil works be not executed speedily. Perhaps he may not now be made to fear the wrath to come, but he may flatter himself with hopes that he shall have peace, though he go on; but he shall be made to feel it in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. He shall know it; (v. 19.) His eyes shall see his destruction, which he would not be persuaded to believe. They shall not see, but they shall not. Isa. xxvi. 11. The eyes that have been wilfully shut against the grace of God, shall be opened to see his destruction. He shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty; that shall be the portion of his cup. Compare Ps. xi. 6. with Rev. xiv. 10. The misery
of damned sinners is here set forth in a few words, but they are very terrible ones, they lie under the wrath of an Almighty God, who, in their destruction, both shows his wrath, and makes known his power.

If this will be his condition in the other world, what good will his prosperity in this world do him? (v. 21.) What pleasure has he in his house after him? Our Saviour has let us know how little pleasure the rich man in hell had in his house after him, when the remembrance of the good things he had received in his lifetime, would add much to his misery, as did also the sorrow he was in, lest his five brethren, whom he left in his house after him, should follow him to that place of torment, Luke xvi. 25-28. So little will the gain of the world profit him that has lost his soul.

III. He resolves this difference, which Providence makes between one wicked man and another, into the wisdom and sovereignty of God; (v. 22.) Shall any pretend to teach God knowledge? Dare we arrange God's proceedings, or blame his conduct? Shall we take upon us to tell God how he should govern the world, what sinner he should spare, and what he should punish? He has both authority and ability to judge those that are high. Angels in heaven, princes and magistrates on earth, are accountable to God, and must receive their doom from him; he manages them, and makes what use he pleases of them: shall he then be accountable to us, or receive advice from us? He is the Judge of all the earth, and therefore, no doubt, he shall do right, (Gen. xviii. 25. Rom. iii. 6.) and those proceedings of his providence which seem to contradict one another, he can make, not only mutually to agree, but jointly to serve his own purposes.

The little difference there is between one wicked man's dying impenitent in peace and pomp, and another wicked man's dying so in pain and misery, when both will, at last, meet in hell, he illustrates by the little difference there is between one man's dying suddenly and another's dying slowly, when they will both meet shortly in the grave. So vast is the disproportion between time and eternity, that, if hell be the lot of every sinner at last, it makes little difference, if one goes singing thither, and another sighing. See,

1. How various the circumstances of people's dying are. There is one way into the world, we say, but many ways out of it. Some are born by easy and quick birth, and others by hard and lingering, so dying is to some much more terrible than to others; and, since the death of the body is the birth of the soul into another world, death-bed agonies may not unfrequently be compared to child-bed throes. Observe the difference.

(1.) One dies suddenly, in his full strength, not weakened by age or sickness, (v. 23.) being wholly at ease and quiet, and nothing apprehended at all of the approach of death, nor in any fear of it; but, on the contrary, because his breasts are full of milk, and his bones moistened with marrow, (v. 24.) that is, he is healthful and vigorous, and of a good constitution, (like a milk-cow that is fat and in good liking,) he counts upon nothing but to live many years in mirth and pleasure. Thus fair does he bid for life, and yet he is cut off in a moment by the stroke of death. Note, It is a common thing for persons to be taken away when they are in the height of their vigour, in the highest degree of health, when they least expect death, and think themselves best armed against it, and are ready not only to set death at a distance, but to set it at defiance. Let us therefore never be secure; for we have known many well and dead in the same week, the same day, the same hour, nay, perhaps, the same minute. Let us therefore be always ready.

(2.) Another dies slowly, and with a great deal of previous pain and misery, (v. 25.) in the bitterness of his soul, such as poor Job was himself now in, and never eats with pleasure, has no appetite to his food, nor any relish of it, through sickness, or age, or sorrow of mind. What great reason have those to be thankful, that are in health, and always eat with pleasure! And what little reason have they to complain, who sometimes do not eat thus, when they hear of many that never do.

2. How inscrutable this difference is in the grave: as rich and poor, so healthful and unhealthy, meet there; (v. 26.) They shall lie down alive in the dust, and the worms shall cover them, and feed sweetly on them. Thus, if one wicked man die in a palace, and another in a dungeon, they will meet in the congregation of the dead and damned, and the worm that dies not, and the fire that is not quenched, will be the same to them, which makes those differences inconsiderable, and not worth perplexing ourselves about.

27. Behold, I know your thoughts, and the devices which ye wrongfully imagine against me. 28. For ye say, Where is the house of the prince? and where are the dwelling-places of the wicked? 29. Have ye not asked them that go by the way? and do ye not know their tokens? 30. That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath. 31. Who shall declare his way to his face? and who shall repay him what he hath done? 32. Yet shall he be brought to the grave, and shall remain in the tomb. 33. The clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him, and every man shall draw after him, as there are innumerable before him. 34. How then comfort ye me in vain, seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood?

In these verses,

I. Job opposes the opinion of his friends, which he says they all adhered to, That the wicked are sure to fall into such visible and remarkable ruin, as Job was now fallen into, and none but the wicked; upon which principle, they condemned Job as a wicked man. "I know your thoughts," says Job, (v. 27.) "I know you will not agree with me; for your judgments are tainted and biased by your prejudices and opinions against me, and the devices which you wrongfully imagine against my peace and honour: and how can such men be convinced?"

Job's friends were, indeed, in answer to his discourse concerning the prosperity of the wicked, "Where is the house of the prince?" (v. 28.) Where is Job's house, or the house of his eldest son, in which his children were feasting; inquire into the circumstances of Job's house and family, and then ask, Where are the dwelling-places of the wicked? and compare them together, and you will soon see that Job's house is in the same predicament with the houses of tyrants and oppressors, and may therefore conclude that doubtless he was such a one."

II. He lays down his own judgment to the contrary, and, for proof of it, appeals to the sentiments and observations of all mankind. So confident is he that he is in the right, that he is willing to refer the cause to the next man that comes by; (v. 29.) "Have ye not asked them that go by the way—any
indifferent person, any that will answer you? I say not, as Eliphaz, (ch. v. 1.) To which of the Saints—1 ask, To which of the children of men, will you turn? Turn to which you will, you will find them all of my mind; that the punishment of sinners is deserving more for the other world than this, is according to the prophecy of Enoch, the seventh from Adam, Jude 14. Do you not know the tokens of this truth, which all that have made any observations upon the providences of God concerning mankind in this world, can furnish you with? 

Now what is it that Job here asserts? Two things,

1. That impenitent sinners will certainly be punished in the other world, and, usually, their punishment is put off until then.

2. That therefore we are not to think it strange if they prosper greatly in this world, and fall under no visible token of God's wrath. Therefore they are spared now, because they are to be punished then; therefore the workers of iniquity flourish, that they may be destroyed for ever, Ps. xci. 7.

The sinner is here supposed,

1. To live in a great deal of power, so as to be not only the terror of the mighty in the land of the living (Eph. v. 11. 27.) but the terror of the wise and good too, whom he keeps in such awe, that none dares declare his way to his face, v. 31. None will take the liberty to reprove him, to tell him of the wickedness of his way, and what will be in the end thereof; so that he sins securely, and is not made to know either shame or fear. The prosperity of fools destroys them, by setting them (in their own conceit) above reproofs, by which they might be brought to that repentance which alone will prevent their ruin. They are marked for destruction that are let alone in sin, Hos. iv. 17.

And if none dares declare his way to his face, much less dare any repay him what he has done, and make him refund there where he has done wrong. He is one of those great flies which break through the cobwebs of the law, that hold only the little ones: this imboldens sinners in their sinful ways, that they can brow-beat justice, and make it afraid to meddle with them. But there is a day coming when the voice of the Lord of hosts will not be heard of them; shall have their sins set in order before them, and their way declared to their face, to their everlasting confusion, who would not have it done here, to their conviction; when those who would not repay the wrongs they had done, shall have them repaid to them.

2. To die, and be buried in a great deal of pomp and magnificence, v. 32, 33. There is no remedy; he must die; that is the lot of all men: but every thing you can think of shall be done to take off the reproach of death. [1.] He shall have a splendid funeral; a poor thing for any man to be proud of the prospect of; yet with some it passes for a mighty thing; well, he shall be brought unto the grave in state, surrounded with all the honours of the Heralds' office, and all the respect his friends can then pay to his remains: the rich man died, and was buried, but no mention is made of the poor man's burial, Luke xvi. 22. [2.] He shall have stately mourners over him, he shall remain in the tomb with a Hic jacet—Here lies over him, and a large encomium. Perhaps it is meant of the embalming of his body, to preserve it, which was a piece of honour anciently done by the Egyptians to their great men. He shall watch in the tomb, so the word is, shall abide solitary and quiet there, as a watchman in his tower. [3.] The elods of the valley shall be exalted to him; there shall be as much done as can be with rich odours, to take off the noisomeness of the grave, as by lamps to set aside the darkness of it, which perhaps was referred to in the foregoing phrase of watching in the tomb: but it is all a jest; what is the light, or what the perfume, to a man that is dead? [4.] It shall be alleged, for the lessening of the disgrace of death, that it is the common lot; he has only yielded to fate, and every man shall share after him, as there was innumerable before him. Note, Death is the terror of all the earth: when we are to cross that darksome valley, we must consider, First, That there are innumerable before us, it is a tracked road; which may help to take off the terror of it. To die is ire ad flures—to go to the great majority. Secondly, That every man shall draw after us: as there is a plain track before, so there is a long train behind; we are neither the first, nor the last, that pass through this valley: and here the enemys must go in his own order, the order appointed of God.

Lastly, From all this Job infers the impenitency of their discourses, v. 34. 1. Their foundation is rotten, and they went upon a wrong hypothesis; "In your answers there remaineth falsehood; what you have said, stands not only unproved but dis proved, and lies under such an imputation of false hood as you cannot clear it from." 2. Their building was therefore weak and tottering: "You com forth in vain. All you have said, gives me no relief; you tell me that I shall prosper again, if I turn to God, but you go upon this presumption, that pietv shall certainly be crowned with prosperity, which is false; and therefore how can your inference from it yield me any comfort?" Note, Where there is not truth, there is little comfort to be expected.

CHAP. XXII.

Eliphaz here leads on a third attack upon poor Job, in which Bildad followed him, but Zophar drew back, and quitted the field. It was one of the unhappinesses of Job, as it is of many an honest man, to be misunderstood by his friends. He had spoken of the prosperity of wicked men in this world as a mystery of Providence, but they took it for a reflection upon Providence, as countenancing their wickedness; and they reproached him accordingly. In this chapter, 1. Eliphaz checks him for his complaints of God, and of his dealings with him, as if he thought God had done him wrong, v. 2. 4. II. He charges him with many high enmities and misdemnaeors, for which he supposes God was made wroth with him, v. 5. 7—11. 2. Atheism and infidelity, v. 12. 14. III. He compared his case to that of the old world, v. 15. 20. IV. He gives him very good counsel, assuring him that, if he would take it, God would return in mercy to him, and he should return to his former prosperity, v. 21. 30.

1. THEN Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, 2. Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? 3. Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him that thou makest thy way perfect? 4. Will he re prove thee for fear of thee? will he enter with thee into judgment?

Eliphaz here insinuates that, because Job complained so much of his afflictions, he thought God was unjust in afflicting him; but it was a strained innuendo, Job was far from thinking so. What Eliphaz says here, is therefore unjustly applied to Job, but in itself it is very true and good;

1. That when God does us good, it is not because he is indebted to us; if he were, there might be some colour to say, when he afflict us, "He does not deal fairly with us:" but whoever pretends that he has by any merititious action made God his Debtor, let him prove this debt, and he shall be
5. Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite? 6. For thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought, and stripped the naked of their clothing. 7. Thou hast not given water to the weary or drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry. 8. But as for the mighty man, he had the earth; and the honourable man dwelt in it. 9. Thou hast sent widows away empty; and the arms of the fatherless have been broken: 10. Therefore snares are round about thee, and sudden fear troubleth thee; 11. Or darkness, that thou canst not see; and abundance of waters cover thee. 12. Is not God in the height of heaven? and, behold, the height of the stars, how high they are! 13. And thou sayest, How doth God know? can he judge through the dark cloud? 14. Thick-clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not; and he walketh in the circuit of heaven.

Eliphaz and his companions had condemned Job, in general, as a wicked man and a hypocrite; but none of them had descended to particulars, nor drawn up any articles of impeachment against him. But Eliphaz did it here, where he positively and expressly charges him with many high crimes and misdemeanors, which if he had really been guilty of, they might well have justified themselves in their harsh censures of him. "Come," says Eliphaz, "we have been too tender of Job, and afraid of grieving him, which has but confirmed him in his self-justification; it is high time to deal plainly with him; we have condemned him by parables, but that does not answer the end; he is not prevail'd with to condemn himself; we must therefore plainly tell him. "Thou shalt be the man, the tyrant, the oppressor, the atheist, we have been too long of this all. Is not thy wickedness great? Certainly it is, or else thy troubles would not be so great. I appeal to thyself, and thy own conscience; are not thine iniquities infinite, both in number and heinousness? Strictly taken, nothing is infinite but God: but he means this, that his sins were more than could be counted; and more heinous than could be conceived. Sin, being committed against Infinite Majesty, has in it a kind of infinite malignity. But when Eliphaz charges Job thus high, and ventures to descend to particulars too, laying to his charge that which he knew not, we may take occasion hence, 1. To be angry at those who unjustly censure and condemn their brethren. For aught I know, Eliphaz, in accusing Job falsely, as he does here, was guilty of as great a sin, and as great a wrong to Job, as the Sabeans and Chaldeans that robbed him; for a man's good name is more precious and valuable than his wealth. It is against all the laws of justice, charity, and friendship, either to raise, or receive, calumnies, jealousies, and evil surmises, concerning others; and it is the more base and disingenuous, if we thus vex those that are in distress, and add to their affliction. Eliphaz could produce no instances of Job's guilt in any of the particulars he follows here, but seems resolved to calumniate boldly, and the more he reproach he could on Job, not doubting but that some would cleave to him. 2. To pity those who are thus censured and condemned. Innocency itself will be no security against a false and foul tongue. Job, whom God himself praised as the best man in the world,
is here represented by one of his friends, and him a wise and good man too, as one of the greatest villains in nature. Let us not think it strange, if at any

1. Eliphaz branches out this charge into diverse particulars, with as much assurance as if he had called witnesses to prove upon oath every article of it. He tells him, (1.) That he had been cruel and unmerciful to the poor. As a magistrate, he ought to have protected them, and seen them provided for; but Eliphaz suspects that he never did them any kindness, but all the mischief his power enabled him to do; that, for an inconsiderable debt, he de-

2. He attributes all his present troubles to these supposed sins; (v. 10, 11.) "Those that are guilty of such practices as these, commonly bring them selves into just such a condition as thou art now in; and therefore we conclude thou hast been thus guilty." (1.) "It is the manner of God to cross and embarrass such; and snares are, accordingly, round about thee, so that, way soever thou steapest or lookest, thou findest thyself in distress; and others are as hard upon thee as thou hast been upon the poor." (2.) "Their actions may be expected to terrify and accuse thee; they make a louder cry there than unmercifulness; and, accordingly, sudden fear troubles thee; and, though thou wilt not own it, it is guilt of this kind that creates thee all this terror." Zophar had insinuated this, ch. xx. 19, 20. (3.) "They are brought to their wits’ end, so amazed and bewildered, that they know not what to do, and that also is thy case; for thou art in darkness, that thou cannot see whither God contents with thee, nor what is the best course for thee to take; for abundance of waters cover thee," that is, "thou art in a mist, in the midst of dark waters, in the thick clouds of the sky." Note, Those that have not showed mercy may justly be denied the comfortable hope that they shall find mercy; and then what can they expect but snares, and darkness, and continual fear? II. He charges him with atheism, infidelity, and gross injustice; and, though this was at the bottom of his injustice and oppressiveness: he that did not fear God did not regard man. He would have it thought that Job was an Epicurean, who did indeed own the being of God, but denied his providence, and fancied that he confined himself to the entertainments of the upper world, and never concerned himself in the inhabitants and affairs of this.

1. Eliphaz observes a good truth, which, he thought, if Job would but consider, he would be so preoccupied in his complaints, not so bold in justifying himself; (v. 12.) Is not God in the height of heaven? Yes, no doubt he is: no heaven so high but God is there; and in the highest heavens, the heavens of the blessed, the residence of his glory, he is, in a special manner; there he is pleased to manifest himself in a way peculiar to the upper world, and thence he is pleased to manifest himself in a way suited to this lower world. There is his throne; there is his sattion; there is the majesty of his throne, Dan. iv. 26. Thus Eliphaz proves that a man cannot be profitable to God, (v. 2.) that he ought not to contend with God; (it is his folly if he does) and that we ought always to address ourselves to God with very great reverence; for when we behold the height of the stars, how high they are, we, might, at the same time, also consider the transcendent majesty of God, who is above the stars, and how high he is.

2. He charges it upon Job, that he made a bad use of this doctrine, which he might have made so good a use of; (v. 13.) "This is holding the truth in unrighteousness, fighting against religion with its own weapons, and turning its own artillery upon itself: Thou art willing to own that God is in the height of heaven, but thence thou inferrest, How doth God know?" Bad men expect the fear of God and its influence, as a wall that is come down out of the world; (Ezek. viii. 12.) and care not what they do, if they can but persuade themselves that God does not know. Eliphaz suspects that Job had such a notion of God as this, that, because he is in the height of heaven, (1.) It is therefore impossible for him to see and hear what is done at so great a distance as this earth: especially since there is a dark cloud, (v. 15.) many thick clouds, (v. 14.) that come between him and God, and cover him, so that he cannot see, much less can he judge of the affairs of this lower world; as if God had eyes of flesh, ch. x. 4. The interposing firmament is to him as transparent crystal, Ezek. i. 22. Distance of place creates no difficulty to him who is immense, an
more than distance of time to him who is eternal. Or, (2.) That it is therefore below him; and a diminution to his glory, to take cognizance of this inferior part of the creation: he walks in the circuit of heaven, and has enough to do, to enjoy himself and his own perfections and glory, in that bright and quiet world; why should he trouble himself about us? This is gross absurdity, as well as gross impiety, which Eliphaz here fathers upon Job; for it supposes that the administration of government is a burden and disparagement to the Supreme Governor; and the acts of justice and mercy were a toil to a mind infinitely wise, holy, and good. If the sun, a creature, and immifiable, can with light and influence reach this earth, and every part of it, (Ps. xix. 6.) even from that vast height of the visible heavens in which he is, and in the circuit of which he walks, and through many a thick and dark cloud, shall we question it concerning the Creator?

15. Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden; 16. Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflowed with a flood; 17. Which said unto God, Depart from us: and what can the Almighty do for them? 18. Yet he filled their houses with good things: but the counsel of the wicked is far from me. 19. The righteous see it, and are glad; and the innocent laugh them to scorn. 20. Whereas our substance is not cut down: but the remnant of them the fire consumeth.

Eliphaz, having endeavoured to convict Job, by setting his sins (as he thought) in order before him, here endeavours to awaken him to a sight and sense of his misery and danger, by reason of sin; and this he does, by comparing his case with that of the sinners of the old world; as if he had said, "Thy condition is bad now, but, unless thou repent, it will be worse, as theirs was; theirs who were overflowed with a flood, as the old world, (v. 16.) and theirs the remnant of whom the fire consumed," (v. 20.) namely the Sodomites, who, in comparison of the old world, were but a remnant. And these two instances of the wrath of God against sin and sinners, are more than once put together, for warning to a careless world: as by our Saviour, Luke xvi. 26, &c. and the apostle, 2 Pet. ii. 5, 6. Eliphaz would have Job to mark the old way which wicked men have trodden, (v. 15.) and see what came of it, what the end of their way was. Note, There is an old way which wicked men have trodden. Religion had but newly entered, when sin immediately followed it: but though it is an old way, a broad way, a tracked way, it is a dangerous way, and it leaves the wandererark to it: it is good for us to mark it, that we may not dare to walk in it.

Eliphaz here puts Job in mind of it, perhaps in opposition to what he had said of the prosperity of the wicked; as if he had said, "Thou canst find out here and there a single instance, it may be, of a wicked man ending his days in peace; but what is that to those two great instances of the final perdition of ungodly men—the drowning of the whole world, and the burning of Sodom?" Destructions by wholesale, in which he thinks Job may, as in a glass, see his own face.

Observe, 1. The ruin of those sinners; (v. 16.) They were cut down out of time; that is, they were cut off in the midst of their days, when, as man's time then went, many of them might, in the course of nature, have lived some hundreds of years longer, which made their immature extirpation the more grievous. They were cut down out of time, to be hurried into eternity. And their foundation, the earth on which they built themselves, and all their houses, was overflowed with a flood, the flood which was brought in upon the old world; 2 Pet. ii. 5. Note, Those who build upon the sand, choose a foundation which will be overflowed, when the rains descend, and the floods come. (Matt. vii. 27.) and then their building must needs fall, and they perish in the ruins of it, and repent of their folly when it is too late.

2. The sin of those sinners, which brought that ruin; (v. 17.) They said unto God, Depart from us: Job had the name of some who had prospered and yet perished, ch. xii. 14. But these did not (says Eliphaz;) they found, to their costs, what it was to set God at defiance. Those who were resolved to lay the reins on the neck of their appetites and passions, began with this; they said unto God, Depart; they abandoned all religion, hated the thoughts of it, and desired to lie without God in the world; they shunned his word, and silenced conscience, his deputy! And what can the Almighty do for them? Some made these words, and the devil's his demonstration of their punishment. They said to God, Depart from us; and then what could the Almighty do with them, but cut them off? Those who will not submit to God's golden sceptre, must expect to be broken to pieces with his iron rod. Others make it to denote the injustice of their sin; But, what hath the Almighty done against them? What iniquity have they found in him? or, Wherein has he wearied them? Mic. vi. 3. Jer. ii. 5. Others make it to denote the reason of their sin; They say unto God, Depart, asking what the Almighty can do to them? "What has he done to oblige us? What can he do, in a way of wrath, to make us miserable, or, in a way of favour, to make us happy?" As they argue, (Zeph. i. 12.) The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil. Eliphaz shows the absurdity of this in one word, and that is, calling God The Almighty: for, if he be so, what cannot he do? But it is not strange if there be ruin off all men, who neither dread God's wrath, nor desire his favour.

3. The aggravation of this sin; Yet he had filled their houses with good things, v. 18. Both those of the old world, and those of Sodom, had great plenty of all the delights of sense; for they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, &c. (Luke xvii. 27.) so that they had no reason to ask what the Almighty could do for them? for they lived upon his bounty; no reason to bid him depart from them, who had been so kind to them. Many have their houses full of goods, but their hearts' empty of grace, and thereby are marked for ruin.

4. The protestation which Eliphaz makes against the principles and practices of those wicked people; But the counsel of the wicked is far from me. Job had said so, (ch. xxii. 16.) and Eliphaz will not be behind with him. If they cannot agree in their own principles, yet they agree in renouncing the principles of those that live without God in the world. Note, Those that differ from each other in some matters of religion, and are engaged in disputes about them, yet ought unanimously and vigorously to appear against atheism and irreligion, and to take great care that their disputes do not hinder either their vigour or unanimity, in that common cause of God, that righteous cause.

The y and third of the three, which the righteous shall have in this, (1.) In seeing the wicked destroyed, v. 19. They shall see it, that is, observe it, and take notice of it; (Hos. xiv. 9.) and they shall be glad, not to see their fellow-creatures miserable, or any secular turn of their own served, or point gained, but to see God glorified, the word
of God fulfilled, the power of oppressors broken, and thereby the oppressed relieved; to see sin shamed, atheists and infidels confounded, and fair warning given to all others to shun such wicked courses. Nay, they shall laugh them to scorn, that are by any means in such a case; they shall do it, as God does it, in a holy manner, Ps. ii. 4. Prov. i. 26. They shall take occasion thence to expose the folly of sinners, and show how ridiculous their principles are, though they call themselves wise. Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, and see what comes of it, Ps. lii. 7. Some understand this of righteous Noah and his family, who beheld the destruction of the old world, and rejoiced in it, as he had grieved for their impurity. Lot, who saw the ruin of Sodom, had the same reason to rejoice, 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8. (2.) In seeing themselves distinguished; (v. 20.) "Whereas our substance is not cut down, as theirs was, and as thine is, we continue to prosper, which is a sign that we are the favourites of Heaven, and in the right." The same rule that served him to condemn Job by, served him to magnify himself and his companions by. His substance is cut down, therefore he is a wicked man; ours is not, therefore we are righteous. But it is a deceitful rule to judge by; for none knows love or hatred by all that is before him. If others be consumed, if the very remnant of them be consumed, and we be not, instead of cursing them, and lifting up ourselves, as Eliphaz does here, we ought to be thankful to God, and take it for a warning to ourselves to prepare for the like calamities.

21. Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee. 22. Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thy heart. 23. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles. 24. Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks. 25. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver. 26. For then shall thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God. 27. Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows. 28. Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee; and the light shall shine upon thy ways. 29. When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up; and he shall save the humble person. 30. He shall deliver the island of the innocent; and it is delivered by the pureness of thy hands.

Methinks I can almost forgive Eliphaz his hard censures of Job, which we had in the beginning of the chapter, though they were very unjust and unkind, for this good counsel and encouragement which he gives him in these verses, with which he fills his discourse, and than which nothing could be better said, or more to the purpose. Though he thought him a bad man, yet he saw reasons to have hope concerning him, that, for all this, he would be both pious and prosperous. But it is strange, that out of the same mouth, and almost in the same breath, both sweet waters and bitter should proceed. Good men, though they may perhaps be put into a heat, yet sometimes will talk themselves into a better temper, and, it may be, sooner than another could talk them into it.

Eliphaz had before Job the miserable condition of a wicked man, that he might frighten him into repentance. Here, on the other hand, he shows him the happiness which those may be sure of, that do repent, that he might allure and encourage him to it. Ministers must try both ways in dealing with people, must speak to them from mount Sinai by the terrors of the law, and from mount Zion by the comforts of the gospel, must set before them both life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse. Now here observe, and

I. The good counsel which Eliphaz gives to Job; and good counsel it is to us all, though, as to Job, it was built upon a false supposition that he was a wicked man, and now a stranger and enemy to God.

1. Acquaint now thyself with God. Acquiesce in God; so some. It is our duty, at all times, especially when we are in affliction, to accommodate ourselves to, and quiet ourselves in, all the dispositions of the Divine Providence. Join thyself to him; so some; fall in with his interests, and act no longer in opposition to him. Our translators render it well; "Acquaint thyself with him; be not such a stranger to him as thou hast made thyself by casting off the fear of him, and restraining prayer before him." It is the duty and interest of every one of us, to acquaint ourselves with God. We must get the knowledge of him, fix our affections on him, join ourselves to him in a covenant of friendship, and then set up, and keep up, a constant correspondence with him in the ways he has appointed. It is our honour, that we are made capable of this acquaintance; our misery, that by sin we have lost it; our privilege, that through Christ we are invited to return to it; and it will be our unspeakable happiness to contract and cultivate this acquaintance.

2. "Be at peace; at peace with thyself, not from full uneasiness, and in confusion; let not thy heart be troubled, but be quiet and calm, and well composed. Be at peace with thy God; be reconciled to him. Do not carry on this unholy war. Though complainest that God is thine Enemy; be thou his friend." It is the great concern of every one of us to make our peace with God, and it is necessary in order to our comfortable acquaintance with him; for can two walk together, except they be agreed? Amos iii. 3. This we must do quickly; now, before it be too late. Agree with thyth adversary, while there is an opportunity. Be at peace with thyself and God. This we are earnestly urged to do. Some read it, "Acquaint thyself, I pray thee, with him, and be at peace." God himself beseeches us, ministers in Christ's stead, pray us, to be reconciled. Can we gain such entreaties?

3. Receive the law from his mouth; (v. 22.) "Having made thy peace with God, submit to his government, and receive to be ruled by him, that thou mayest acquiesce in thyself in his presence." We receive our being and maintenance from God. In him we hope to receive our bliss, and from him we must receive law; Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Acts ix. 6. Which way soever we receive the intimations of his will, we must have our eye to him; whether he speaks by scripture, ministers, conscience, or providence, we must take the word as from his mouth, and bow down before him. Though, in Job's case, we do not know that there was any written word, yet there was a revelation of God's will to be received. Eliphaz looked upon Job as a wicked man; and was pressing him to repent and reform. Herein consists the conversion of a sinner — his receiving the law from God's mouth, and no longer from the world and the flesh. Eliphaz, being now in contest with Job, appeals to the word of God for the ending of the controversy. Receive that,
and be determined by it. To the law and to the testament.

4. Lay up his word in thine heart. It is not enough to receive it, but we must retain it, Prov. iii. 18. We must lay it up as a thing of great value, that it may be safe: and we must lay it up in our hearts, as a thing of great use, that it may be ready to us when there is occasion, and we may neither lose it wholly, nor be at a loss for it in a time of need.

5. Return to the Almighty; (v. 23.) "Do not only turn from sin, but turn to God and thy duty. Do not only turn toward the Almighty in some good inclinations and good Beginnings, but return to him; return home to him, quite to him, so as to reach to the Almighty, by a universal reformation, an effectual thorough change of thy heart and life, and a firm resolution to cleave to him;" so My. Poole.

6. Put away iniquity far from thy tabernacle. This was the advice Zophar gave him; (ch. xi. 16.) "Let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacle. Put iniquity far off, the farther the better, not only from thy heart and hand, but from thy house. Thou must not only not be wicked thyself, but reprove and restrain sin in those that are under thy charge." Note, Family reformation is needful reformation; we and our house must serve the Lord.

This is the advice which Eliphaz gives to Job, that he should be very happy if he would but turn from sin to God. He speaks of the good that is now departed from thee; all the good thy heart can desire, temporal, spiritual, eternal, good shall come to thee. God shall come to thee, into covenant and communion with thee; and he brings all good with him, all good in him. Thou art now ruined and brought down, but if thou return to God, thou shalt be built up again, and thy present ruins shall be rebuilt. Thy family shall be built up in children, thy estate in wealth, and thy soul in holiness and comfort.

The promises which Eliphaz here encourages Job with, are reducible to three heads; 1. That his estate should prosper, and temporal blessings should be bestowed abundantly upon him; for godliness has the promise of the life that now is. It is promised.

2. That he should be very rich, (v. 24.) "Thou shalt lay up gold as dust, in such great abundance, and shalt have plenty of silver; (v. 25.) whereas now thou art poor and stripped of all." Job had been rich; Eliphaz suspected he got his riches by fraud and oppression, and therefore they were taken from him; but if he would return to God and duty, he should have more wealth than ever he had; not only thousands of sheep and oxen, the wealth of farmers, but thousands of gold and silver, the wealth of princes, ch. iii. 15. Abundantly more riches, true riches, are to be got by the service of God than by the service of the world. (2.) He should have it more secure to him; Thou shalt lay it up in good hands, and hold that which is got by thy piety, by a surer tenure than that which thou didst get by thine iniquity. Thou shalt have silver of strength, (for so the word is,) which, being honestly got, will wear well; silver like steel. He should, by the grace of God, be kept from setting his heart too much upon it, as Eliphaz thought he had done. Then wealth is a blessing indeed, when we are not insatiate with the love of it. Thou shalt lay up gold; but how? Not as thy treasure and portion, but as dust, and as the stones of the brooks. So little shalt thou value it or expect from it, that thou shalt lay it at thy feet, (Acts iv. 35.) not in thy bosom.

2. That yet he shall be very safe; whereas men's riches usually expose them to danger, and he had owned that in his prosperity he was not in safe

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The promises which Eliphaz here encourages Job with, are reducible to three heads; 1. That his estate should prosper, and temporal blessings should be bestowed abundantly upon him; for godliness has the promise of the life that now is. It is promised.

2. That he should have a humble, holy, confidence toward God; such as they are said to have, whose hearts condemn them not; (ch. iii. 21.) "Then shalt thou lift up thy face to God with boldness, and not be ashamed, if thou return to thy ways near to him. Thy countenance is now fallen, and thou lookest dejected; but when thou hast made thy peace with God, thou shalt blush no more, tremble no more, and hang thy head no more, as thou dost now, but shalt cheerfully, and with a gracious assurance, show thyself to him, pray before him, and expect blessings from him." (3.) That he should maintain a constant communion with God; "The correspondence, once settled, shall be kept up to thine unspakeable satisfaction. Letters shall be both staked and occasionally interchanged between thee and Heaven," (v. 27.) "Thou shalt by prayer send letters to God; Thou shalt make thy prayer" (the word is, Thou shalt multiply thy prayers) "unto him, and he will not think thy letters troublesome, though many and long. The oftener we come to the throne of grace, the more welcome. Under all thy bounties, in all thy wants, cares, and fears, thou shalt see heaven for guidance and strength, wisdom, comfort, and good success." (2.) "He shall, by his providence and grace, answer those letters, and give thee what thou askest of him, either in kind or kindness; he shall hear thee, and make it to appear he does so, by what he does for thee and in thee." (3.) "Then thou shalt by thy praises repay the gracious answers which he sent thee: thou shalt pray thy vows, and that shall be acceptable to him, and fetch in further mercy." Note, When God performs that which in our distress we prayed for, we
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(4.) That he should have inward satisfaction in the management of all his outward affairs; (v. 28.) Thou shalt decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee," that is, "Thou shalt frame all thy projects and purposes with so much wisdom and grace, and resignation to the will of God, that the issue of the shall be to thy heart's content, just as the wearesthould have it to be. Thou shalt commit thy works unto the Lord by faith and prayer, and then thy thoughts shall be established; thou shalt be easy and pleased, whatsoever occurs, Prov. xvi. 3. This the grace of God shall work in thee; nay, sometimes the providence of God shall give thee the very thing thou didst desire and pray for, and give it thee in thine own way, and manner, and time; be it unto thee, even as thou wilt. When, at any time, an affair succeeds just according to the scheme we laid, and our measures are in nothing broken, nor are we put upon new counsels, then we must own the performance of this promise, Thou shalt decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee.  

"Whereas now thou complainest of darkness round about thee, then the light shall shine upon thy ways;" that is, "God shall guide and direct thee, and then it will follow, of course, that he shall prosper and succeed thee in all thine undertakings. God's wisdom shall be thy guide, his favour thy comfort, and thy ways shall be so under both these lights, that thou shalt have a comfortable enjoyment of what is present, and a comfortable prospect of what is future," Ps. xc. 17.  

(5.) That, even in times of common calamity and danger, he should have abundance of joy and hope; (v. 29.) "When men are cast down round about thee, cast down in their affairs, cast down in their spirits, sinking, despising, and ready to despair, then shalt thou say, This is lifting up. Thou shalt find that in thyself, which will not only bear thee up under thy troubles, and keep thee from fainting, but lift thee up above thy troubles, and enable thee to rejoice evenmore. When men's hearts fail them for fear, then shall Christ's disciples lift up their heads for joy, Luke xxi. 26-28. Thus are they made to ride upon the high places of the earth; (Isa. lviii. 14.) and that which will lift them up, is, the belief of this, that God will save the humble person. They that humble themselves shall be exalted, not only in honour, but in comfort.  

3. That he should be a blessing to his country, and an instrument of good to many; (v. 30.) God shall, in answer to thy prayers, deliver the island of the innocent, and have a regard therein to the pureness of thy hands, which is necessary to the acceptableness of our prayers, 1 Tim. ii. 8. But, because we may suppose the innocent not to need deliverance immediately, (as is wanted for the benefit of Abraham's intercession,) I incline to the marginal reading, The innocent shall deliver the island, by their advice, (Eccl. ix. 14, 15.) and by their prayers, and their interest in heaven, Acts xxi. 24. Or, He shall deliver those that are not innocent, and they are delivered by the pureness of thy hands; so it may be read, and most probably. Note. A good man is a public good. Sinners fare the better for prayers, whether they are aware of it or no. If Eliphaz intended hereby, (as some think he did,) to insinuate that Job's prayers were not prevailing, nor his hands pure, (for then he would have relieved others, much more himself,) he was afterward made to see his error, when it appeared that Job had a better interest in heaven than he had; for he and his three friends, who, in this matter, were not innocent, were delivered by the pure ness of Job's hands, ch. xliii. 8.  

CHAP. XXIII.  

This chapter begins Job's reply to Eliphaz; in this reply he takes no notice of his friends; either because he saw it to be no purpose, or because he liked the good counsel Eliphaz gave him in the close of his discourse so well, that he would make no answer to the peevish reflections he began with; but he appeals to God; begins to have his cause heard, and doubts not but to make it good, having the testimony of his own conscience concerning his integrity. Here seems to be a struggle between flesh and spirit, fear and faith, throughout this chapter. 1. He complains of his calamitous condition, and establishing God's wisdom, which he feared, he destroyed; that he could not get his appeal heard, (v. 2, 5.) nor discern the meaning of God's dealings with him, (v. 8, 9.) nor gain any hope of relief, v. 13, 14. This made deep impressions of trouble and terror on his mind, and was the cause of the complaints of which he is accused, and by which his friends reproved him. 2. But, in the midst of these complaints, he comforts himself with the assurance of God's clemency, (v. 6, 7.) and his own integrity, which God himself was a Witness to, v. 10, 12. Thus was the light of his day like that spoken of, (Zech. xiv. 6, 7.) neither perfectly clear nor perfectly dark, but at evening time it was light.  

I. THEN Job answered and said, 2. Even to-day is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning. 3. Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! 4. I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. 5. I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me. 6. Will he plead against me with his great power? no; but he would put strength in me. 7. There the righteous might dispute with him; so should I be delivered for ever from my judge.  

Job is confident that he has wrong done him by his friends, and therefore, ill as he is, he will not give up the cause, nor let them have the last word. Here, 1. He justifies his own resentments and representations of his trouble; (v. 2.) Even to-day, I own, my complaint is bitter; for the affliction, the cause of the complaint, is so. There are wormwood and gall in the affliction and misery, which has been upon him, v. 13, 17. But, II. in the midst of these complaints, he comforts himself with the assurance of God's clemency, v. 6, 7. and his own integrity, which God himself was a Witness to, v. 10, 12. Thus was the light of his day like that spoken of, Zech. xiv. 6, 7. neither perfectly clear nor perfectly dark, but at evening time it was light. 

1. THEN Job answered and said, 2. Even to-day is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning. 3. Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! 4. I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. 5. I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me. 6. Will he plead against me with his great power? no; but he would put strength in me. 7. There the righteous might dispute with him; so should I be delivered for ever from my judge.  

Job is confident that he has wrong done him by his friends, and therefore, ill as he is, he will not give up the cause, nor let them have the last word. Here, 1. He justifies his own resentments and representations of his trouble; (v. 2.) Even to-day, I own, my complaint is bitter; for the affliction, the cause of the complaint, is so. There are wormwood and gall in the affliction and misery, which has been upon him, v. 13, 17. But, II. in the midst of these complaints, he comforts himself with the assurance of God's clemency, v. 6, 7. and his own integrity, which God himself was a Witness to, v. 10, 12. Thus was the light of his day like that spoken of, Zech. xiv. 6, 7.) neither perfectly clear nor perfectly dark, but at evening time it was light.
1. That God would not overpowers him; that he would not deal with him either by absolute sovereignty, or in strict justice; not with a high hand, not with a strong hand: Will he plead against me with his great power? No, Job's friends pleaded against him with all the power they had; but will God do so? No, his power is all just and holy, whatever men's is: against those that are obstinate in their unbelief and impenitency, God will plead with his great power, their destruction will come from the glory of his power; but with his own people, that love him and trust in him, he will deal in tender compassion.

2. That, on the contrary, he would empower him to plead his own cause before God: "He would put strength in me, to support me and bring me up, in maintaining mine integrity." Note, The same grace that is engaged against proud sinners, is engaged for humble saints, who prevail with God by strength derived from him, as Jacob did, Hos. xii. 3. See Ps. Ixviii. 35.

3. That the issue would certainly be comfortable; (v. 7.) There, in the court of heaven, when the final sentence is to be given, the righteous might dispute with him, and come off in his righteousness. Now, even the upright are often, chastened of the Lord, and they cannot dispute against it; integrity itself is no fence either against calamity or calumny; but in that day, they shall not be condemned with the world, though God may afflict by prerogative. Then you shall discern between the righteous and the wicked, Mal. iii. 18. So vast will be the difference between them in their everlasting state; whereas now we can scarcely distinguish them, so little is the difference between the upright and the outward condition, for all things come alike to all. Then, when the final doom is given, "I shall be delivered for ever from my Judge," that is, "I shall be saved from the unjust censures of my friends, and from that divine sentence which is now so much a terror to me." These that are delivered up to God as their Owner and Ruler shall be for ever delivered from him as their Judge and Avenger: and there is no flying from his justice, but by flying to his mercy.

8. Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: 9. On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: 10. But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. 11. My foot hath held his steps: his way have I kept, and not declined. 12. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips: I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

Here,

I. Job complains that he cannot understand the meaning of God's providences concerning him, but was quite at a loss about them; (v. 8, 9.) I go forward, but he is not there, &c. Eliphaz had bid him acquaint himself with God; "So I would, with all my heart, when I heard the words of my friend," III. He comforts himself with the hope that God would deal favourably with him in this matter, v. 6, 7. Note, It is of great use to us, in every thing wherein we have to do with God, to keep up good thoughts of him. He believes,
things he seems to complain of here. 1. That he could not fix his thoughts, nor form any clear judgment of things in his own mind: his mind was so hurried and discomposed with his troubles, that he was like a man in a fright, or at his wit's end, who runs this way, and that way, but, being in confusion, brings nothing to a head. By reason of the disorder and tumult his spirit was in, he could not fasten upon that which he knew to be in God, and which, if he had merely fixed his mind upon it, and dwelt upon it in his thoughts, would have been a support to him. It is the common complaint of those who are sick or melancholy, that, when they would think of that which is good, they can make nothing of it. 2. That he could not find out the cause of his troubles, nor the sin which provoked God to contend with him: he took a view of his whole conversation, turned to every side of it, and could not perceive wherein he had sinned more than others, for which he should thus be punished more than others; nor could he discern what other end God should aim at in afflicting him thus. 3. That he could not foresee what would be in the end hereof, whether God would deliver him at all, nor, if he did, when, or on which way: he saw not his signs, nor was there any to tell him how long; as the church complains, Ps. lxxiv. 9. He was quite at a loss to know what God designed to do with him; and whatever conjectures or advances, still something or other appeared against it.

II. He satisfies himself with this, that God himself was a Witness to his integrity, and therefore did not doubt but the issue would be good. After Job had almost lost himself in the labyrinth of the divine counsels, how contentedly does he sit down, at length, with this thought, "Though I know not the way that he takes, (for his way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters,) his thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours, and it would be presumption in us to pretend to judge of them,) yet he knows the way that I take," v. 10. That is, 1. He is acquainted with it. His friends judged of that which they did not know, and therefore charged him with that which he was never guilty of; but God, who knows every step he had taken, would not do so, Ps. cxxxix. 3. Note, It is a great comfort to those who mean honestly, that God understands their meaning, though they do not, cannot, or will not. 2. He accepts it of it: "He knows that however I may sometimes have taken a false step, yet I have still taken a good way; have chosen the way of truth, and therefore he knows it," that is, He accepts it, and is well pleased with it, as he is said to know the way of the righteous, Ps. i. 6. This comforts the prophet; Jer. xii. 3. Thou hast tried my heart toward thee. From this Job infers, When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. They that keep the way of the Lord, may comfort themselves, when they are in affliction, with these three things, (1.) That they are but tried; it is not intended for their hurt, but for their honour and benefit; it is the trial of their faith, 1 Pet. i. 7. (2.) That, when they are sufficiently tried, they shall come forth out of the furnace, and not be left to consume in it as dress or reprobathe silver. The trial will have an end; God will not contend for ever. (3.) That, while they are forsook as gold, there is more in the fire, more and precious to the refiner; they shall come forth as gold approved and improved; found to be good, and made to be better. Afflictions are to us, as we are; those that go gold into the furnace, will come out no worse.

Now that which encouraged Job to hope that his present troubles would thus end well, was, the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had lived a good life in the fear of God.

[1.] That God's way was the way he walked in;

(v. 11) "My foot hath held his steps," that is, "held to them, held close to them; the steps he takes. I have endeavoured to conform myself to his example." Good people are followers of God: or, "I have accommodated myself to his providence, and endeavoured to answer all the intentions of that; to follow Providence step by step." Or, "His steps are the steps he has appointed me to take; the way of religion and serious godliness—that way I have kept, and have not declined from it, that I may not err with it by some fallacy, nor turn aside out of it by any wilful transgression." His holding God's steps, and keeping his way, intimate that the tempter had used all his arts by fraud and force to draw him aside; but, with care and resolution, he had, by the grace of God hitherto persevered, and those that will do so, must hold and keep, hold with resolution, and keep with watchfulness.

[2.] What was the word the rule he walked by; (v. 12.) he governed himself by the commandment of God's lips, and would not go back from that, but go forward according to it. Whatever difficulties we may meet with in the way of God's commandments, though they lead us through a wilderness, yet we must never think of going back, but must press on toward the mark; Job kept close to the law of God in his conversation, for both his judgment and his affection led him to it. I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food; that is, He looked upon it as his necessary food; he could as well have lived without his daily bread as without the word of God. I have laid it up; so the word is, as those that lay up provision for a siege, or as Joseph laid up corn before the famine. Eliphaz had bid him lay up God's words in his heart, ch. xxvii. 22. "I do," says he, "and always did, that I might not sin against him, and that, like the good householder, I might bring forth food for the want of others." No, The word of God is to our souls as our necessary food is to our bodies; it sustains the spiritual life, and strengthens us for the actions of life; it is that which we cannot subsist without, and which nothing else can make up the want of: and we ought therefore so to esteem it, to take pains for it, hunger after it, feed upon it with delight, and nourish our souls with it; and this will be our rejoicing in the day of evil, as it was Job's here.

13. But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth. 14. For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him. 15. Therefore am I troubled at his presence; when I consider, I am afraid of him. 16. For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me: 17. Because I was not cut off before the darkness, neither hath he covered the darkness from my face.

Some make Job to complain here, that God dealt unjustly and unfairly with him, in proceeding to punish him without the least relenting or relaxation, though he had such incontestable evidences to produce of his innocence. I am loath to think holy Job would charge the holy God with iniquity; but his complaint is indeed bitter and peevish, and he reasons himself into a sort of a patience per force, which he cannot do without reflecting upon God, as dealing hardly with him; but he must bear it, because he cannot help it; the worst he says, is, that God deals unaccountably with him.
1. He lays down good truths, which were capable of a good improvement, v. 13, 14.

(1.) That God's counsels are immutable; He is in one mind, and who can turn him? He is one. So some read it, or in one; he has no counsellors by whose interest he might be prevailed with to alter his purpose: he is one with himself, and never alters his mind, never alters his measures. Prayer has prevailed with God to alter a part of his providence, but never was his will or purpose changed; for known unto God are all his works.

(2.) That his power is irresistible; What his soul desires or designs, even that he does, and nothing can stand in his way, or put him upon new counsels. Men desire many things, which either they may not do, or cannot do, or dare not do; but God has an incontestable sovereignty; his will is so perfectly pure and right, that it is highly fit he should quarantine all its determinations; and he has an uncontrollable power; none can stay his hand. Whatever the Lord pleased, that did he, (Ps. cxxxv. 6.) and always will, for it is always best.

(3.) That all he does, is according to the counsel of his will; (v. 14.) He performs the thing that is appointed for me; whatever happens to us, it is God that performs it; (Ps. lix. 2.) and an admirable power will certainly perform it, when the mystery of God shall be finished. He performs all that, and that only, which was appointed, and in the appointed time and method; this may silence us, for what is appointed cannot be altered. But to consider, that, when God was appointing us to eternal life and glory as our end, he was appointing to this condition, this affliction, whatever it is, in our way, this may do more than silence us, it may satisfy us that it is all for the best; though what he does we shall not know when he will perform it; he has his time and method of doing it.

(4.) That all he does, is according to the custom of his providence; Many such things are with him, that is, He does many things in the course of his providence, which we can give no account of, but must resolve into his absolute sovereignty. Whatever trouble we are in, others have been in the like; our case is not singular, the same afflictions are accomplished in our brethren, 1 Pet. v. 9. Are we sick, we shall know it when his will shall be accomplished. He has a mystery, and will not reveal it to us; we shall see the event, and then we shall see that God has appointed for us, and many such things are with him. Shall the earth be forsaken for us?

2. He makes but a bad use of these good truths; had he duly considered them, he might have said, "Therefore am I easy and pleased, and well reconciled to the way of my God concerning me; therefore will I rejoice, in hope that my troubles will issue well at last." But he said, Therefore am I troubled at his presence, v. 15. Those are indeed of troubled spirits, who are troubled at the presence of God; as the psalmist, who remembered God, and was troubled, Ps. lxviii. 3. See what confusion poor Job was now in, for he contradicted himself: just now, he was troubled for God's absence; (v. 8, 9) now he is troubled at his presence; When I consider, I am afraid of him. What he now felt, made him fear worse; there is indeed that which, if we consider it, will show that we have cause to be afraid of God—his infinite justice and purity, compared with our own sinfulness and vileness; but if, withal, we consider his grace in a Redeemer, and our compliance with that grace, the fears will vanish, and we shall see cause to hope in him. So what impressions were made upon him by the wounds of his spirit. (1.) He was very fearful; (v. 16.) The Almighty troubled him, and so his heart soft, that is, utterly unable to bear any thing, and afraid of every thing that stirred. There is a gracious softness, like that of Josiah, whose heart was tender, and trembled at the word of God; this is meant of a grievous softness, which apprehends every thing that is present to be pressing, and every thing future to be threatening. (2.) He was very fretful, peevish indeed, for he quarrels with God, v. 17. [1.] Because he did not die before his troubles, that he might never have seen them; (Because I was not cut off before the darkness,) and the height of his prosperity he had received a summons to the grave, he would have thought it hard. This may help to reconcile us to death whenever it comes, that we do not know what evil we may be taken away from. But when trouble is come, it is foly to wish we had not lived to see it, and it is better to make the best of it. [2.] Because he was left to live so long in his troubles, and the darkness was not covered from his face by his being hid in the grave. We should bear the darkness better than this if we would but remember, that to the upright there sometimes arises a marvellous light in the darkness; however, there is reserved for them a more marvellous light after it.

CHAP. XXIV.

Job, having, by his complaints in the foregoing chapter, given vent to his passion, and thereby gained some ease, breaks them off abruptly, and now applies himself to a further discussion of the doctrinal controversy between him and his friends, concerning the natural government of wicked people. That many live at ease, who yet are ungodly and profane, and despise all the exercises of devotion, he had showed, ch. 21. Now here he goes further, and shows that there is a power who are to be trusted with the life of open defiance to all the laws of justice and common honesty, yet thrive and succeed in their unrighteous practices; and we do not see them reckoned with in this world. We had read said before, (ch. xii. 6.) The leberacules of robbers prosper, he is gone up; he lays down his general proposition, (v. 1.) That the punishment of wicked people is not so visible and apparent as his friends supposed; and then proves it by an induction of particulars. I. Those that oppress the poor, to their poor neighbours, are not reckoned with, nor the injured righteous, (v. 2.) though the former are very barbarous, v. 21, 22. II. Those that severely practise mischief, often go undiscovered and unpunished, v. 15—17. III. That God punishes such by secret judgments, and reserves them for future judgments, v. 18—20. They are not now seen, v. 23—25. So that, upon the whole matter, we cannot say, that all who are in trouble are wicked; for it is certain, that all who are in prosperity are not righteous.

1. Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know him not see his days? 2. Some remove the landmarks; they violently take away flocks, and feed thereof; 3. They drive away the ass of the fatherless; they take the widow's ox for a pledge; 4. They turn the needy out of the way: the poor of the earth hide themselves together. 5. Behold, as wild asses in the desert, go they forth to their work, rising betimes for a prey: the wilderness yieldeth food for them and for their children. 6. They reap every one his corn in the field, and they gather the vintage of the wicked; 7. They cause the naked to lodge without clothing, that they have no covering in the cold; 8. They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for want of shelter; 9. They pluck the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor; 10. They cause him to go naked without clothing, and they...
take away the sheaf from the hungry; 11. Which make oil within their walls, and
tread their wine-presses, and suffer thirst. 12. Men groan from out of the city, and
the soul of the wounded crieth out; yet God layeth not folly to them.

Job's friends had been very positive in it, that they should soon see the fall of wicked people, and they much soverely that mighty prosper for a while. By this, says Job, though times are not hidden from the Almighty, yet they that know him do not presently see his day, v. 1. He takes it for granted, that times are not hid from the Almighty: past times are not hid from his judgment, (Exel. iii. 15.) present times are not hid from his providence, (Matt. x. 29.) future times are not hid from his prescience, Acts xv. 18. God governs the world, and therefore we may be sure he takes cognizance of it: bad times are not hid from him, though the bad men, that make the times bad, say one to another that he has forsaaken the earth, Ps. xcv. 6, 7. Every man's times are in his hand and under his eye, and therefore it is in his power to make the times of wicked men in this world miserable; he foresees the time of every man's death, and therefore, if wicked men die before they are punished for their wickedness, we cannot say, They escaped him and his stripes." They foresaw it may, he ordered it. Before Job will inquire into the reasons of the prosperity of wicked men, he asserts God's omnipresence, as one prophet, in a like case, asserts his righteousness, (Jer. xii. 1.) another his holiness, (Hab. i. 13.) another his goodness to his own people, Ps. lxxiii. 1. General truths must be held fast, though we may find it difficult to reconcile them to particular events. 2. He yet asserts, that they who know him, that is, wise and good people who are acquainted with him, and with whom his secret is, do not see his days, not the day of his judging for them; this was the thing he complained of in his own case, (ch. xxvii. 8.) That he could not see God appearing on his behalf to plead his cause; nor the day of his judging against open and notorious sinners, that is called his day, Ps. xxxvii. 13. We believe that day will come, but we do not see it, because it is future, and its presages secret. 3. Though this is a mystery of his dispensations, yet there is a reason for it, and we shall shortly know why the judgment is deferred; even the wisest, and those who know God best, do not yet see it. God will exercise their faith and patience, and excite their prayers for the coming of his kingdom, for which they are to cry day and night to him, Luke xviii. 7.

For the proof of this, that wicked people prosper, he specifies two sorts of unrighteous ones, whom all the world saw thriving in their iniquity. 1. They that are under pretence of law and authority. It is a melancholy sight, which has often been seen under the sun, wickedness in the place of judgment, Exel. iii. 16. The unregarded tears of the oppressed, while on the side of the oppressors there was power, Exel. iv. 1. The violent perverting of justice and judgment, Exel. v. 8. 1. They disseize their neighbours of their real estates, which came to them by descent from their ancestors. They remove the land-marks, under pretence that they were misplaced; (v. 2.) and so they encroach upon their neighbours' rights, and think they effectually secure that to their posterity, which they have got wrongfully, by making that to be an evidence for them, which should have been an evidence for the rightful owner. This was forbidden by the law of Moses, (Deut. xix. 14.) under
5. It is not only among the poor country people, but in the cities also, that we see the tears of the oppressed, (v. 12.) men groan from out of the city, when they are stripped and deprived of their property, with their poor debtors, as the landlords in the country are with their poor tenants. In cities, such cruel actions as these are more observed than in obscure corners of the country, and the wronged have easier access to justice to right themselves; and yet the oppressors there fear neither the restraints of the law, nor the just censures of their neighbours, but the oppressed groan and cry out for help. They can no more than the wild beasts help themselves, for the oppressors are unmerciful, and deaf to their groans.

II. He speaks of robbers, and those that do wrong by downright force, as the bands of the Sabeans and Chaldeans, which had lately plundered him; he does not mention them particularly, lest he should seem partial to his own cause, and to judge of men (as we are apt to do) by what they are to us; but among the Arians, the children of the heathen, there were persons that lived by spoil and rapine, making incursions upon their neighbours, and robbing travellers. See how they are described here, and what mischief they do, v. 5-8.

1. Their character is, that they are as wild asses in the desert, untamed, untractable, unreasonable, Ishmael's character; (Gen. xvi. 12.) fierce and furious, and under no restraint of law or government, Jer. ii. 25, 24. They choose the deserts for their dwelling, that they may be lawless and unaccountable, and that they may have opportunity of doing the more mischief. The desert is indeed the fittest place for such wild people, ch. xxxix. 6. But no desert can set men out of the reach of God's eye and hand. 2. Their trade is to steal, and to make a prey of all about them. They have chosen it as their trade; it is their work, because there is more to be got by it, and it is got more easily than by an honest calling. They follow it as their trade, they follow it closely; they go forth to it as their work, as man goes forth to his labour, Ps. civ. 22. They are diligent, and take pains at it; they rise betimes for a prey; if a traveller be out early, they will be out as soon to rob him: they live by it as a man lives by his trade; the wilderness (not the ground there, but the roads there) yielded food for them and for their children; they maintain themselves and their families by robbing on the highway, and insinuating themselves in it without any remorse of compassion or conscience, and with as much security as if it were honestly got; as Epherain, Hos. xii. 7, 8. 3. See the mischief they do to the country. They not only rob travellers, but they make incursions upon their neighbours, and reap every one his corn in the field, (v. 6.) that is, They enter upon other people's ground, cut their corn, and carry it away as freely as if it were their own: even the wicked gather the vintage, and it is their wickedness that makes it, and no other; and the vintage of the wicked; and so one wicked man is made a scourge to another. What the wicked got by extortion, (which is their way of stealing,) these robbers get from them in their way of stealing; thus oftentimes are the spoilers spoiled, Isa. xxxiii. 1. 4. The misery of those that fall into their hands; (v. 7, 8.) They cause the naked, whom they have stripped, not leaving them the clothes to their backs, to stand naked and exposed to the weather, so that they are wet with the showers of the mountains, and, for want of a better shelter, embrace the rock, and are glad of a cave or den in it to preserve them from the injuries of the weather. Elipha\(l\) had charged Job with such inhumanity as this, concluding that Providence would not thus have stripped him if he had not first stripped the naked of their clothing, ch. xxii. 6. Job here tells him, there were those that were really guilty of these crimes with which he was unjustly charged, and yet prospered and had success in their villainies; the curse they laid their hands under working invisibly: and Job thinks it need not to argue, as he did, from an open notorious course of wickedness to a secret and future punishment, than to argue, as Elipha\(l\) did, from nothing but present trouble, to a course of past secret iniquity.

The impunity of these oppressors and spoilers is expressed in one word; (v. 12.) Yet God layeth not folly to them, that is, he does not immediately precipitate them with his judgments for these crimes, nor make them examples, and so enervate their folly to all the world. He that gets riches, and onely right, at his end shall be a fool, Jer. xvii. 11. But while he prospers he passes for a wise man, and God lays not folly to him until he saith, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, Luke xii. 20.

13. They are of those that rebel against the light; they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof. 14. The murderer, rising with the light, killeth the poor and needy, and in the night is as a thief. 15. The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me; and disquises his face. 16. In the dark they dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the daytime: they know not the light. 17. For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death; if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.

These verses describe another sort of sinners, who therefore go unpunished, because they go undiscovered. They rebel against the light, v. 13. Some understand it figuratively: they sin against the light of nature, the light of God's law, and that of their own consciences; they profess to know God, but they rebel against the knowledge they have of him, and will not be guided and governed, commanded and controlled, by it. Others understand it literally: they have the day-light, and choose the night as the most advantageous season for their wickedness. Sinful works are therefore called works of darkness, because he that does evil, hates the light, (John iii. 20.) knows not the ways thereof, that is, keeps out of the way of it, or, if he happen to be seen, abides not where he thinks he is known. So that he here describes the worst of sinners, 1. That sin wilfully, and against the convictions of their own consciences, whereby they add rebellion to their sin. 2. That sin deliberately, and with a great deal of contrivance, gathering a thousand arts to conceal their villainies, fondly imagining, that, if they can but hide them from the eye of men, they are safe, but forgetting that there is no darkness, or shadow of death, in which the workers of iniquity can hide themselves from God's eye, ch. xxxiv. 22.

He specifies three sorts of sinners, that shun the light.

(1.) Murderers, v. 14. They rise with the light, as soon as ever the day breaks, to kill the poor travellers that are up early, and abroad about their business, going to market with a little money or goods; and though it is so little, that they are really to be called poor and needy, who with much ado get a sorry livelihood by their marketings, yet, to
that beareth not, and doeth not good to the widow. 22. He draweth also the mighty with his power: he riseth up, and no man is sure of life. 23. Though it be given him to be in safety, whereas he resteth; yet his eyes are upon their ways. 24. They are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low; they are taken out of the way as all other, and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn. 25. And if it be not so now, who will make me a liar, and make my speech nothing but truth?

Job, here, in the conclusion of his discourse, gives some further instances of the wickedness of these cruel bloody men. 1. Some are pirates and robbers at sea. To this many learned interpreters apply those difficult expressions; (v. 18.) He is swift upon the waters. Privateers choose those ships that are the best sallers: in these swift ships, they cruise from one channel to another, to pick up prizes; and this brings them in so much wealth, that they live the better, and are the more feared. Job makes it not the way of the vineyards, that is, as Bishop Patrick explains it, They despise the employment of those who till the ground, and plant vineyards, as poor and unprofitable. But others make this a further description of the conduct of those sinners that are afraid of the light: if they be discovered, they get away as fast as they can, and choose to look, not in the vineyards, for fear of being discovered, but in some cursed portion, a lonely desolate place, in which nobody looks after. 2. Some are abusive to those that are in trouble, and add affliction to the afflicted. Barrenness was looked upon as a great reproach, and those that fall under that affliction they upbraid with it, as Penniniah did Hannah, on purpose to vex them and make them to fret, which is a barbarous thing; this is evil entreating the barren that beareth not, (v. 21.) or those that are childless, and so want the arrows others have in their quiver, which enable them to do what they please in the enemy, in the Ps. cxvii. 5. He takes that advantage against, and is oppressive to, them: as the fatherless, so the childless, are in some degree helpless. For the same reason, it is a cruel thing to hurt the widow, to whom he ought to do good; and not doing good, when it is in our power, is doing hurt. There are those who, by injuring themselves to cruelty, come, at last, to be so exceeding boisterous, that they are the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, v. 22. He draws the mighty into a snare with his power; even the greatest are not able to stand before him when he is in his mad fits: he rises up in his passion, and lays about him with so much fury, that no man is sure of his life; nor can he at the same time be sure of his own, for his hand is against every man, and every man's hand against him, Gen. xvi. 12. One would wonder how any man can take pleasure in making all about him afraid of him, yet there are those that do.

II. He shows that these daring sinners prosper, and are at ease for a while, nay, and often end their days in peace, as Ishmael, who, though he was a man of such a character as is here given, yet both lived and died in the presence of all his brethren, as we are told, Gen. xvi. 12. xxv. 18. Of these sinners here it is said, 1. That it is given them to be in safety, v. 23. They seem to be under the special protection of the Divine Providence, and one would wonder how they escape with life through so many dangers as they run themselves into. 2. That they rest upon this, that is, they rely upon this, as sufficient to warrant all their violations: because sentence
against their evil works is not executed speedily, they think that there is a great evil in them; and that God is not displeased with them, nor will ever call them to an account. Their prosperity is their security. 3. That they are exalted for a while; they seem to be the favourites of Heaven, and value themselves as making the best figure on earth. They are set up in honour, set up (as they think) out of the reach of danger, and lifted up in the pride of their own spirits. 4. That, at length, they are carried out of the way, very gently and, without any remarkable disaster to the tree which is broken to shivers. They go down to the grave as easily as snow-water sinks into the dry ground, when it is melted by the sun. 

So Bishop Patrick explains, v. 19. To the same purport he paraphrases v. 20, The worm shall forget him, &c. "God sets no such mark of his dis- pleasure upon him, but that his mother may soon forget him: the hand of justice does not hang on him on a gibbet for the birds to feed on; but he is carried to the grave like other men, to be the food of worms: there he lies quietly, and neither he nor his wickedness is any more remembered than a tree which is broken to shivers."

And, v. 24, They are taken out of the way as all other, that is, "They are shut up in their graves like all other men; nay, they die as easily (without those tedious pains which some endure) as an ear of corn is cropped with your hand."

Compare this with Solomon's observations (Eccles. 11.) I saw the wicked buried who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten.

III. He foresees their fall, however, and that their death, though they die in ease and honour, will be their ruin. God's eyes are upon their ways; (v. 23.) Though he keep silence, and seem to con- nive at them, yet he takes notice, and keeps account, of all their wickedness, and will make it to appear shortly, that their most secret sins, which they thought no eye should see, (v. 13.) were under his eye, and will be called over again. Here is no mention of the punishment of these sinners in the other world, but it is intimated in the particular notice taken of the consequences of his death. 1. The consumption of the body in the grave, though common to all, yet to him is in the nature of a punish- ment for his sin. The grave shall consume those that have sinned; that land of darkness will be the lot of those that love darkness, rather than light. 2. That and their iniquities shall be a feast for worms, which shall feed as sweetly on them as ever they fed on the pleasures and gains of their sins. 2. Though they thought to make themselves a great name by their wealth, and power, and mighty achievements, yet their memorial is perished with them, Ps. ix. 6. He that made himself so much talked of, when he is dead, shall be no more remem- bered with honour; his name shall rot, Prov. x. 7. They thought that he should inherit all the world while he lived, shall not spare him when he is dead, so that the womb that bare him, his own mother, shall forget him, that is, shall avoid making mention of him, and shall think that the greatest kindness she can do him, since no good can be said of him. That honour which is got by sin will soon turn into shame. 3. The wickedness they thought to estab- lish in their families, shall be broken as a tree; all their posterity shall go through the same evil. 4. Their wicked hopes dashed and buried with them. 4. Their pride shall be brought down, and laid in the dust; (v. 24.) and, in mercy to the world, they shall be taken out of the way, and all their power and pro- sperity shall be cut off; you may seek him, and he shall not be found. Job owns that wicked people will be miserable at last, miserable on the other side death, but utterly denies what his friends asserted, that they are, usually, miserable in this life.

Lastly, He concludes with a bold challenge to all that were present, to disprove what he had said, if they could; (v. 25.) "If it be not so now, as I have declared, and if it do not thence follow that I am unjustly condemned and censured, let them that can, undertake to prove that my discourse is either, 1. False in itself, and then they prove me a liar; or, 2. Foreign, and to nothing the purpose, and then they prove my speech frivolous and nothing worth."

That, indeed, which is false, is nothing worth; where there is not truth, how can there be goodness? But they that speak the words of truth and soberness, need not fear having what they say brought to the test, but can cheerfully submit it to a fair examination, as Job does here.

CHAP. XXV.

Bilded here makes a very short reply to Job's last discourse, as one that began to be tired of the cause. Hedis the main question concerning the prosperity of wicked men, as being unable to answer the proofs Job had produced in the foregoing chapter: but, because he thought Job had made too bold with the Divine Majesty in his appeal to the divine tribunal, (e. xxii.) he, in a few words, shows the infinite distance there is between God and man, teaching us, I. To think highly and honourably of God, v. 2, 3, 5. II. To think meanly of ourselves; (v. 4, 6.) which, he thinks applicable to Job, are two good lessons for us all to learn.

1. THEN answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said, 2. Dominion and fear are with him; he maketh peace in his high places. 3. Is there any number of his armies? and upon whom doth not his light arise? 4. How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? 5. Behold, even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight: 6. How much less man, that is a worm, and the son of man, which is a worm?

Bildad is to be commended here for two things: 1. For speaking no more on the subject about which Job and he differed. Perhaps he began to think Job was in the right, and then it was justice to say no more concerning it, as one that contended for truth, not for victory; and therefore, for the finding of truth, would be content to lose the victory: or if he still thought himself in the right, yet he knew when he had said enough, and would not wrangle endlessly for the last word. Perhaps, indeed, one reason why he and the rest of them let fall this de- bate, was because they perceived that Job and they did not differ so much in opinion as they though: they owned that wicked people might prosper a while, and Job owned that they would be destroyed at last; how little then was the difference! If disputants would understand one another better, perhaps they would find themselves nearer one another than they imagined. 2. For speaking so well on the matter about which Job and he were agreed. If we would all get our hearts filled with awful thoughts of God, and humble thoughts of ourselves, we should not be so apt as we are to fall out about matters of doubtful disputation, which are trifling or intricate.

Two ways Bildad takes here to extoll God and abase man.

1. He shows how glorious God is, and thence in- fers how guilty and impure man is before him, v. 2-4. Let us see then,

1. What great things are here said of God, de- signed to possess Job with a reverence of him, and to check his reflections upon him, and upon his dealings with him.
I. JOB, 111. xxv.

(1.) God is the sovereign Lord of all, and with him is terrible majesty. Dominion and fear are with him, v. 2. He that gave being, has an incontestable authority to give laws, and can enforce the laws he gives. He that made all, has a right to dispose of all according to his own will, with an absolute sovereignty. Whatever he will do, he does, and may do; and none can say unto him, What dost thou? or Why dost thou so? Dan. iv. 35. His having dominion (or being God) (it is unnecessary to speak of him as exalted and Ruler of all the creatures they are all his, and they are all under his direction, and at his disposal. Hence it follows that he is to be feared, that is, revered and obeyed, and that he is feared by all that know him; the seraphim cover their faces before him; it follows too, that, first or last, all will be made to fear him. Men's dominion is often despised, often despaired, but God is always terrible.

(2.) The glorious inhabitants of the upper world are all perfectly absent of him, and entirely acquiesce in his will. He maketh peace in his high places. He enjoys himself in a perfect tranquility; the holy angels never quarrel with him, nor with one another, but entirely acquiesce in his will, and unanimously execute it, without murmuring or disputing; thus the will of God is done in heaven; and thus we pray it may be done by us and others on earth. The sun, moon, and stars, keep their courses, and never quarrel with the heaven, and are even in this lower region, which is often disturbed with storms and tempests, yet, when God pleases, he commands peace, by making the storm a calm, Ps. civ. 29. -lxv. 7. Observe, The high places are his high places; for the heavens, even the heavens, are the Lord's in a peculiar manner: peace is God's work; where it is made, it is he that makes it, Isa. lix. 19. In heaven there is perfect peace; for there is perfect holiness, and there is God, who is love.

(3.) He is a God of irresistible power; Is there any number of his armies? v. 3. The greatness and power of princes is judged of by their armies. God is not only himself almighty, but he numbers millions of forces at his beck and disposal; standing armies that are never disbanded; regular troops, and well disciplined, that are never at a loss, that never mutiny; veteran troops, that have been long in his service; victorious troops, that never failed of success, nor were ever defeated. All the creatures angels and especially. He is Lord of all, Lord of hosts. He has numberless armies, and yet makes peace; he could make war upon us, but is willing to be at peace with us; and even the heavenly hosts were sent to prevail peace on earth and good will toward men, Luke ii. 14.

(4.) His providence extends itself to all; Upon whom does not his light arise? The light of the sun is communicated to all parts of the world, and take the year round, till all equally. See Ps. xxi. 6. The sun, in full fulfilment of the universal cognizance and care God takes of the whole creation, Matth. v. 45. All are under the light of his knowledge, and are naken and open before him. All partake of the light of his goodness: it seems especially to be meant of that. He is good to all; the earth is full of his goodness. He is Deus Optimus - God, the best of beings, as well as maximus—the greatest; he has power to destroy; but his pleasure is, to show mercy. All the creatures live upon his bounty.

2. What few things are here said of man, and very truly and justly; (v. 4.) How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean? Man is not only mean, but vile, not only earthy, but filthy: he cannot be justified, he cannot be clean. (1.) In comparison with God. Man's righteousness and holiness, at the best, are nothing to God's, Ps. lxxxix. 6. (2.) In debate with God. He that will quarrel with the word and providence of God, must unavoidably go by the worst. God will be justified, and then man will be condemned, Ps. li. 4. Rom. iii. 4. There is no error in God's judgment, and therefore there lies no exception against it, nor appeal from it. (3.) In the sight of God. If God is so great and glorious, how can man, who is guilty and impure, appear before him? Note, [1.] Man, by reason of his actual transgressions, is thencefore guilty, to God's justice, and cannot in himself be justified before him: he can neither plead Not guilty, nor plead any merit of his own to balance or extenuate his guilt. The scripture has concluded all under sin. [2.] Man, by reason of his original corruption, as he is born of a woman, is odious to God's holiness, and cannot be clean in his sight. God sees his impurity, and it is certain that by it he is rendered incapable of his actual transgressions, is thencefore to God's justice, and cannot in himself be justified before him: he can neither plead Not guilty, nor plead any merit of his own to balance or extenuate his guilt. The scripture has concluded all under sin.
I. BEHOLD to them than really it is. (3.) That he had done him no service by it. He pretended to convince, instruct, and comfort, Job; but, alas! what he had said was so little to the purpose, that it would not avail to rectify any mistakes, nor to assist him either in bearing his afflictions, or in getting good by them; (v. 4.) “To whom hast thou uttered words? Was it to me that thou didst direct thy discourse? And dost thou take me for such a child as to need these instructions? Or dost thou think them proper for one of my condition?” Everything that is true and good is not suitable and seasonable. To one that was humbled, and broken, and grieved in spirit, as Job was, he ought to have preached of the grace and mercy of God, rather than of his greatness and majesty, to have laid before him the consolations, rather than the terrors, of the Almighty. Christ knows how to speak what is proper for the hearty; (Isa. I. 4.) and his ministers should learn how to divide the word of truth, and not make those sad, whom God would not have made sad; as Bildad did: and therefore Job asks him, Whose spirit came from thee? that is, “What troubled soul would ever be revived and relieved, and brought to itself, by such discourses as these?” Thus are we often disappointed in our expectations from our friends who should comfort us, but the Comforter, who is the Holy Ghost, never mistakes in his operations, nor misses of his end.

5. Dead things are formed from under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof. 6. Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering. 7. He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. 8. He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under them. 9. He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it. 10. He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end. 11. The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof. 12. He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud. 13. By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent. 14. Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?

The truth received a great deal of light from the dispute between Job and his friends, concerning those points about which they differed; but now they are upon a subject in which they were all agreed, the infinite glory and power of God. How does truth triumph, and how bright does it shine, when there appears no other strife between the contending, than that shall speak most highly and honourably of God, and be most large in showing forth his praise! It were well if all disputes about matters of religion were ended in granting God as Lord of all, and our Lord, with one mind and one mouth; (Rom. xvi. 6.) for to that we have all attained, in that we are all agreed.

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1. If we look about us, to the earth and waters here below, we shall see striking instances of omnipotence, which we may gather out of these verses.

CHAP. XXVI.

This is Job’s short reply to Bildad’s short discourse, in which he is so far from contradicting him, that he confirms what he had said, and outdoes him in magnifying God, and setting forth his power, to show what reason he had still to say as he did; (ch. xvi. 2.) What ye know the same do I know also. 1. He shows that Bildad’s discourse was foreign to the matter he was discourseing of: though very true and good, yet not to the purpose, v. 2, 4. 2. That it was needless to the person he was discourseing with; for he knew it, and believed it, and could speak of it as well as he, and better, and could add to the proofs which he had produced of God’s power and greatness, which he does in the rest of his discourse, (v. 5. 13.) concluding, that, when they had both said what they could, all came short of the merit of the subject, and it was still far from being exhausted, v. 14.

1. But Job answered and said, 2. How hast thou helped him that is without power? how savest thou the arm that hath no strength? 3. How hast thou counselled him that hath no wisdom? and how hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is? 4. To whom hast thou uttered words? and whose spirit came from thee?

One would not have thought that Job, now that he was in so much pain and misery, could have bantered his friend as he does here, and made himself merry with the impertinency of his discourse. Bildad thought that he had made a fine speech, that the matter was so weighty, and the language so fine, that he had gained the reputation both of an oracle and of an orator; but Job peevishly enough shows that his performance was not so valuable as he thought it, and ridicules him for it. He shows,

1. That there was no great matter to be found in it; (v. 3.) How hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is? This is spoken ironically, upbraiding Bildad with the good conceit he himself had of what he had said. (1.) He thought he had spoken very clearly, had declared the thing as it is. He was very fond (as we are all apt to be) of his own notions, and thought they only were right, and true, and intelligible, and all other notions of the thing were false, mistaken, and confused; whereas, when we speak of the glory of God, we cannot declare the thing as it is, without a glass darkly, or through a glass, and shall not see him as he is, till we come to heaven. Here we cannot order our speech concerning him, ch. xxxvii. 19. (2.) He thought he had spoken very fully, though in few words, that he had plentifully declared it; and, alas! it was but poorly and scantily that he declared it, in comparison with the vast compass and copiousness of the subject.

2. That there was no great use to be made of it: Cut barks—What good hast thou done by all that thou hast said? (v. 2.) How hast thou, with all this mighty flourish, helped him that is without power? (v. 3.) How hast thou, with thy grave dictates, counselled him that hath no wisdom? Job would convince him, (1.) That he had done God no service, nor made him in the least beholden to him. It is indeed our duty, and will be our honour, to speak on God’s behalf; but Bildad did not think that he needed service, or is indebted to us for it, nor will he accept it, if it come from a spirit of contention and contradiction, and not from a sincere regard to God’s glory. (2.) That he had done his cause no service by it. He thought his friends were mightily beholden to him, for helping them, at a dead lift, to make their part good against Job, when they were quite at a loss, and had no strength, no wisdom. Even weak disputants, when warm, are apt to think truth more

J O B, XXVI.

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And is there any thing in which the majesty of God appears more dreadful than in the eternal ruin of the ungodly, and the groans of the inhabitants of the land of darkness? Those that dwell not with angels fear and worship, shall for ever with devils fear and tremble, and God therein will be glorified.

3. If we look up to heaven above, we shall see instances of God's sovereignty and power.

(1.) He stretches out the north over the empty place, v. 7. So he did at first, then he stretched out the heavens like a curtain, (Ps. civ. 2.) and still continues to keep them stretched out, and will do so till the general conversion, when they shall be rolled together as a scroll. Ps. vii. 14. He mentions the north, because his country (as ours) lay in the northern hemisphere; and the air is the empty place over which it is stretched out. See Ps. lxxxix. 12. What an empty place is this world, in comparison with the other!

(2.) He keeps the waters that are said to be above the firmament from pouring down upon the earth, as once they did; (v. 8.) He binds up the waters in his thick clouds, as if they were well-tied in a bag till there is occasion to use them; and, notwithstanding the vast weight of water so raised and laid up, yet the cloud is not rent under them, for then they would burst, and pour out as a spout; but they do, as it were, distil through the cloud, and so come drop by drop, in mercy to the earth, in small rain, or great rain, as he pleases.

(3.) He conceals the glory of the upper world, the dazzling lustre of which the poor mortal could not bear; (v. 9.) He holds back the face of his throne, that light in which he dwells, and spreads a cloud upon it, through which he judges, ch. xxii. 13. God will have us to live by faith, not by sense; for this is agreeable to a state of probation. It were not a fair trial, if the face of God's throne were as visible now, as it will be in the great day.

Lost his high throne, above expression bright,
With deadly glory should oppress our sight,
To break the dazzling force, he draws a screen
Of oblique shades, and spreads his clouds between.

Sir R. Blackmore.

(4.) The bright ornaments of heaven are the work of his hands; (v. 13.) By his Spirit, the eternal Spirit that moved upon the face of the waters, the breath of his mouth, (Ps. xxxiii. 6.) he has garnished the heavens, not only made them, but beautified them; has curiously bespangled them with stars by night, and painted them with the light of the sun by day. God, having made man to look upward, (On homini sublimum dedi—to man he gave an erect countenance,) has therefore garnished the heavens, to invite him to look upward, that, by pleasing his eye with the dazzling light of the sun, and the sparkling light of the stars, their number, order, and various magnitudes, which, as so many golden studs, beautify the canopy drawn over our heads, he may be led to admire the great Creator, the Father and Fountain of lights, and to say, "If the pavement be so rich, what will the face be! If the visible heavens be so glorious, what are those that are out of sight!" From the beauteous garniture of the ante-chamber, we may infer the precious furniture of the presence-chamber. If stars be so bright, what are angels! What is meant here by the crooked serpent which his hands have formed is not certain. Some make it part of the garnishing of the heavens, the milky-way, say some; some peculiar constellation, say others. It is the same word that is used for leviathan, (Isa. xxvii. 1.) and, probably, may be meant of the whale or crocodile, in which appears much of the power of the Creator; and why may not Job conclude with that inference, when God himself does so? ch. xli. ---

Sir R. Blackmore.
Job's discourse here is called a parable, (mashal), the title of Solomon's proverbs, because it was grave and weighty, and very instructive; and he spake as one having authority. It comes from a word that signifies to rule, or have dominion; and some think it intimates that Job now triumphed over his opponents, and spake as one that had baffled them. We say of an excellent preacher, that he has the acumen to command his hearers. Job did so here.

A long strife there had been between Job and his friends; they seemed disposed to have the matter compromised; and therefore, since an oath for confirmation is an end of strife, (Heb. vi. 16.) Job here backs all he had said, in maintenance of his own integrity, with a solemn oath, to silence contradiction, and take the blame entirely upon himself, if he prevailed. Observ.

1. The form of his oath; (v. 2.) As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment. Here, (1.) He speaks highly of God, in calling him the living God, (which means ever-living, the eternal God, that has life in himself,) and in appealing to him as the sole and sovereign Judge. We can swear by no greater, and it is an affront to him to swear by any other. (2.) Yet he speaks hardly of him, and unbecomingly, in saying that God had taken away his judgment, and had ordered him to do him justice in this controversy, and to appear in defence of him, and that, by continuing his troubles, on which his friends ground their censures of him, he had taken from him the opportunity he hoped ere now to have had of clearing himself. Elihu reproved him for this word; (ch. xxxiv. 5.) for God is righteous in all his ways, and takes away no man's judgment. But see how apt we are to despair of favour from God next to his power, and to say, we have no hope of it, and are we, and so soon weary of waiting God's time. He also charges it upon God, that he had vexed his soul; had not only not appeared for him, but had appeared against him, and, by laying such grievous afflictions upon him, had quite embittered his life to him, and all the comforts of it. We, by our impatience, vex our own souls, and then complain of God that he has vexed them. Yet see Job's confidence in the goodness of both his cause and of his God. God was good, God is good, and God will yet appear with him, and to act against him, for the present; yet he could cheerfully commit his cause to him. 2. The matter of his oath, v. 3, 4. (1.) That he would not speak wickedness, nor utter deceit. That, in general, he would never allow himself in the way of lying; that, as in this debate he had all along spoken as he thought, so he would never wrong his conscience by speaking otherwise: he would never maintain any doctrine, nor assert any matter of fact, but what he believed to be true; nor would he deny the truth, how much soever it might make against him: and, whereas his friends charged him with being a hypocrite, he was ready to answer, upon oath, to all their interrogatories, if called to it. On the one hand, he would not, for all the world, deny the charge, if he knew himself guilty, but would declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and take to himself the shame of his hypocrisy; on the other hand, since he was conscious to himself of his integrity, and that he was not such a man as his friends represented him, he would never betray his integrity, nor charge himself with that which he was innocent of; he would not be brought, nor by the rack of their unjust censures, falsely to accuse himself. If we must not bear false witness against our neighbour, then not against ourselves. (2.) That he would adhere to this resolution, as long as he lived; (v. 3.) All the while my breath is in me. Our resolutions against sin should be thus constant, resolutions for life: in things
doubtful and indigant, it is not safe to be thus peremptory; we know not what reason we may see to change our mind, God may reveal to us that which we have hitherto been unaware of; but in so plain a thing as this, we cannot be too positive, that we will never speak wickedness. Somethings of a reason for his resolution is here implied—that our breath will not be always in us; we must shortly breathe our last, and therefore, while our breath is in us, we must never breathe wickedness and deceit, nor allow ourselves to say or do any thing which will make against us, when our breath shall depart. The breath is v. 14, as well the soul of Job, as the breath of our nostrils. It would fast hold his integrity, and not curse God, as Satan, by his wife, urged him to do, ch. ii. 9. Job here thinks of dying, and of getting ready for death, and therefore resolves never to part with his religion, though he had lost all he had in the world. Note, The best preparative for death, is, perseverance to death in our integrity. "Until I die," that is, "though I die by this affliction, I will not thereby be put out of concord with my God and my religion. Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." (2.) He would always stand to it, that he was an honest man; he would not remove, he would not part with, the conscience, and comfort, and credit, of his integrity; he was resolved to defend it to the last. "God knows, and my own heart knows, that I always meant well, and did not allow myself in the omission of any known duty, or the commission of any known sin. This is my rejoicing, and no man shall rob me of it; I will never lie against my right." It has often been the lot of upright men to be censured and condemned as hypocrites; but it well becomes them to bear up boldly against such censures, and not to be discouraged by them, or think the worse of themselves for them; as the apostle, (Heb. xiii. 18.) We have a good conscience in all things, willing to live honestly.

Job complained much of the reproaches of his friends; But (says he) my heart shall not reproach me; that is, "I will never give my heart cause to reproach me, but I will keep a true conscience in opposition to every thing I do. I will not give my heart leave to reproach me." "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies." To resolve that our hearts shall not reproach us, when we give them cause to do so, is to affirm God, whose deputy conscience is, and to wrong ourselves; for it is a good thing, when a man has sinned, to have a heart within him to smite him for it, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10. But to resolve that our hearts shall not reproach us, while we still hold fast our integrity, is to buffle the designs of the evil spirit, (who tempts good Christians to question their adoption, If thou be the Son of God,) and to concur with the operations of the good Spirit, who witnesses to their adoption.

7. Let mine enemy be as the wicked, and he that riseth up against me as the unrighteous. 8. For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? 9. Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him? 10. Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?

Job, having solemnly protested the satisfaction he had in his integrity, for the further clearing of himself, here expresses the dread he had of being found a hypocrite. I. He tells us how he started at the thought of it, for he looked upon the condition of a hypocrite and a wicked man, to be certainly the most miserable condition that any man could be in; (v. 7.) Let mine enemy be as the wicked; a proverbial expression, like that, (Dan. iv. 19.) The dream be to them that hate thee. Job was so far from indulging himself in any wicked way, and flattering himself in it, that, if he might have have to wish the greatest evil he could think of to the worst enemy he had in the world, he would wish him the portion of a wicked man, knowing that worse he could not wish him. Not that we may lawfully wish any man to be wicked, or that any man who is not wicked should be treated as wicked, but we should always choose to be in the condition of a beggar, an outlaw, a galley-slave, any thing, rather than in the condition of the wicked, though in ever so much plagues and outward prosperity.

II. He gives us the reasons of it.

1. Because the hypocrite's hopes will not be crowned; (v. 8.) For what is the hope of the hypocrite? Bildad had condemned it, (ch. viii. 13, 14.) and Zophar, (ch. xi. 20.) Job here concurs with them, and reads the death of the hypocrite's hope with as much assurance as they had done; and this fits in as a reason why he would not remove his integrity, but still hold it fast. Note, The consideration of the miserable condition of wicked people, and especially hypocrites, should engage us to be upright, (for we are undone, for ever undone, if we be not,) and also to get the comfortable evidence of our uprightness; for how can we be easy, if the great concern lie at uncertainties? Job's friends would persuade him that all his hope was but the hope of the hypocrite; (ch. iv. 6.) "Nay," says he, "I would not, for all the world, be so foolish as to build upon such a rotten foundation; for what is the hope of the hypocrite?" See verses. (1.) The hypocrite deceived. He has gained, and he has hope; this is his bright side; it is allowed that he has gained by his hypocrisy, has gained the praise and applause of men, and the wealth of this world. Jeth gained a kingdom by his hypocrisy, and the Pharisees many a widow's house. Upon this gain he builds his hope, such as it is; he hopes he is in good circumstances for another world, because he finds he is so in this world, and thereby he hopes to gain his end. (2.) The hypocrite unprovided; he will at last see himself wretchedly cheated: for, (1.) God shall take away his soul, sorely against his will; (Luk. xii. 20.) Thy soul shall be required of thee. God, as the Judge, takes it away to be tried and determined to its everlasting state. He shall then fall into the hands of the living God, to be dealt with immediately. (2.) What will his hope be then? It will be no avail to him; it will stand him no more in his stead. The wickedness of this world, which he hoped in, he must leave behind him, Ps. xlviii. 17. The happiness of the other world, which he hoped for, he will certainly miss of: he hoped to go to heaven, but he will be shamefully disappointed; he will plead his external profession, privileges, and performances, but all his pleads will be overruled as frivolous; Depart from me, I know you not. So that, upon the whole, it is certain, a formal
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Get judgment, and profess (Ps.) your company, and union of the reversible, the
does, and death will come, and trouble with it, when he must
leave the world and all his delights in it. The judgment of the
world will come, and fearfulness will surprise the hypocrites, Isa. xxxiii. 14. (2.)
Then he will cry to God; he will pray, and pray earnestly.
Those who in prosperity slighted God, either prayed not at all, or were
cold and careless in prayer, when trouble comes, will make their
application to him, and cry as men in earnest. But, (3.) Will God hear him then? in the troubles of this
life? God has told us that he will not hear the prayers of those who regard iniquity in their hearts,
(Ps. iv. 18.) nor of those that turn away their ear from hearing the law, Prov. xxviii. 9. Get you to the
gods whom ye have served, Judg. x. 14. In the judgment to come, it is certain, God will not
hear the cry of those who lived and died in their hypocrisy. Their doleful lamentations will all be unpitied;
I will laugh at your calamity. Their importunate petitions will all be thrown out, and their pleas rejected.
Inflexible justice cannot be biased, nor the irreverent sentence revoked. See Mat. xvii. 22.

Luke xiii. 26, and the case of the foolish virgins, Matt. xxv. 11.

3. Because the hypocrite's religion is neither con-

durable nor constant; (v. 10.) Will he delight him-
self in the Almighty? No, not at any time, for his
delight is in the profits of the world, and the plea-

sures of the flesh, more than in God, especially not in the time of trouble. Will he always call
upon God? No, in prosperity he will not call upon God, but slight him; in adversity, he will not call
upon God, but curse him; he is weary of his religion, when he gets nothing by it, or is in danger of losing.

Note, (1.) Those are hypocrites, who, though they profess religion, neither take pleasure in it, nor
persevere in it; who reckon their religion a task and a drudgery, a weariness, and snuff at it; who
do not believe in God, nor do not believe in God. He who believeth in God, and standeth
while he is in fashion, or while the pang of de-

votion lasts, but leave it off when they fall into other
company, or when the hot fit is over. (2.) The
reason why hypocrites do not persevere in religion,
is, because they have no pleasure in it. They that
do not delight themselves in the Almighty, will not
always call upon him. The more comfort we find
in our religion, the more closely we shall cleave to it.
Those who delight in God, and in a day of trouble,
will not let vanity veil the pleasures of sense, and so draw away
from their religion; and they are easily run down by
the crosses of this life, and so driven away from
their religion, and will not always call upon God.

11. I will teach you by the hand of God: that

which is with the Almighty will I not conceal. 12. Behold, all ye yourselves
have seen it; why then are ye thus alto-
gether vain? 13. This is the portion of a
wicked man with God, and the heritage of
oppressors, which they shall receive of the
Almighty. 14. If his children be multiplied,
it is for the sword; and his offspring shall
not be satisfied with bread. 15. Those that
remain of him shall be buried in death; and
his widows shall not weep. 16. Though he
heap up silver as the dust, and prepare
rainment as the clay; 17. He may prepare
it, but the just shall put it on, and the inno-
cent shall divide the silver. 18. He build-

hath his house as a moth, and as a booth that
the keeper maketh. 19. The rich man
shall lie down, but he shall not be gathered.
he openeth his eyes, and he is not. 20.
Terrors take hold on him as waters, a tem-
pest stealeth him away in the night. 21.
The east wind carrieth him away, and he
departeth; and, as a storm, hurleth him out of
his place. 22. For God shall cast upon
him, and not spare: he would fain flee out
of his hand. 23. Men shall clap their hands
at him, and shall hiss him out of his place.

Job's friends had seen a great deal of the misery
and destruction that attend wicked people, espe-
cially oppressors; and Job, while the heat of dis-
putation lasted, had said as much, and with as
much assurance, of their prosperity; but now, that
the heat of the battle was nearly over, he was will-
ing to own how far he agreed with them, and
where the difference between his opinion and theirs
lay. 1. He agreed with them, that wicked people
are miserable people; that God will surely reckon
with cruel oppressors, and, one time or other, one
way or other, his justice will make reprisals upon
them for all the affronts they have put upon God,
and all the wrongs they have done to their neigh-
bours. This truth is abundantly confirmed by the
entire concurrence of these angry disputants in
it. But, 2. In this they differed. They held
that these deserved judgments are presently and
visibly brought upon wicked oppressors; that they
travail with pain all their days; that in prosperity
the destroyer comes upon them; that they shall not
be rich, nor their branch green; and that their de-
struction shall be accomplished before their time;
so Eliphaz; (ch. xv. 20, 21, 29, 32.) that the steps of
their strength shall be straitened; that terrors will
make them afraid on every side; so Bildad; (ch.
xviii. 7, 11.) that he himself shall vomit up his
riches, and that in the fulness of his sufficiency he
shall be in straits; so Zophar, ch. xx. 15, 22. Now
Job held that, in many cases, judgments do not fall
upon them quickly, but are deferred for some time.
That vengeance strikes slowly, he had already
shown; (ch. xxi and xxiv.) now he comes to show
that it strikes surely and severely, and that re-
primances are not without effect.

I. Job here undertakes to set this matter in a true
light; (v. 11, 12.) I will teach you. We must not
disdain to learn even from those who are sick and
poor, yea, and peevish too, if they deliver what is
true and good. Observe, 1. What he would teach
them; "That which is with the Almighty," that is,
"the counsels and purposes of God concerning
wicked people, which are hid with him, and which
we cannot see, that judge all the works of his providence concerning them." This, says
Job, I will not conceal. What God has not con-
cealed from us, we must not conceal from these we
are concerned to teach. Things revealed belong to
us and our children. 2. How he would teach them;
By the hand of God, that is, by his strength and
assistance. Those who undertake to teach others must look to the hand of God to direct them, to open their ear, (Isa. l. 4.) and to open their lips. To se whom God teaches with a strong hand, are best able to teach others, Isa. viii. 11. 3. What reason they had to learn those things which he was about to teach them; (v. 12.) that it was confirmed by their own observation; You yourselves have seen it; (but what we have heard, and seen, and known, we have need to be taught, that we may be perfect in our do.) He eat that ye have not them to rise in their judgment concerning him: Why then are ye thus altogether vain, to condemn me for a wicked man because I am afflicted? Truth, rightly understood and applied, would cure us of that vanity of mind which arises from our mistakes.

That particularly which he offers now to lay before them, is, the portion of a wicked man with God, particularly of oppressors, v. 13. Compare ch. xx. 29. Their portion in the world may be great, and preferment great, but their portion with God is ruin and misery. They are above the control of any earthly power, it may be, but the Almighty can deal with them.

II. He does it, by showing that wicked people may, in some instances, prosper, but that ruin follows them in those very instances; and that is their portion, that is their heritage, that is it which they must abide by.

1. They may prosper in their children, but ruin attends them. His children perhaps are multiplied, (v. 14.) or magnified, so some; they are very numerous, and are raised to honour and great estates. Worldly people are said to be full of children; (Ps. xvi. 14.) and, as it is in the margin there, their children are full. In them the parents hope to live, and in their preferment to be honoured. But the more children they leave, and the greater prosperity they leave them in, the more and the fairer marks do they leave for the arrows of God's judgments to be levelled at: his three sore judgments, sword, famine, and pestilence, 2 Sam. xxiv. 13. (1.) Some of them shall die by the sword, the sword of war, perhaps; they brought them up to live by their sword, as Esau; (Gen. xxxvi. 40.) and those that do so, commonly die by the sword, first or last: or by the sword of justice for their crimes, or the sword of the murderer for their estates. (2.) Others of them shall die by famine; (v. 14.) offering shall be made of them, satisfied with bread. He thought that he had secured to them large estates, but it may happen that they may be reduced to poverty, so as not to have the necessary supports of life, at least not to live comfortably. They shall be so needy, that they shall not have a competency of necessary food, and so greedy, or so discontented, that what they have they shall not be satisfied with, because not so much, or not so dainty, as what they have been used to eat, and them satisfied with not enough.

(3.) Those that remain shall be buried in death, that is, shall die of the plague, which is called death, (Rev. vi. 8.) and be buried privately and in haste, as soon as they are dead, without any solemnity; buried with the burial of an ass; and even their widows shall not weep; they shall not have wherewithal to put them in mourning. Or it denotes, that these wicked men, as they live undesired, so do they die unlamented, and therefore, (v. 15.) those who lives have been heirs, they think them heirs even that they are got rid of them.

2. They may prosper in their estates, but ruin attends them too, v. 16-18. (1.) We will suppose them to be rich in money and plate, in clothing and furniture; They heap up silver, in abundance as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay: they have heaps of clothes about them, as plentiful as heaps of clay; or it intimates that they have such abundance of clothes, that they are even a burden to them; they lade themselves with thick clay, Hab. ii. 6. See what is the care and business of worldly people.—To heap up worldly wealth. Much would have more, until the silver is cankered, and the garments moth-eaten, Jan. v. 2, 3. But what comes of it? He shall never be the better for it himself; death will strip him, death will rob him, if he be not robbed and stripped sooner, Luke xii. 20. Nay, God will so order it, that the just shall have his heart's desire, the wicked shall have a testimony against him, and be stripped of his silver. [1.] They shall have it, and divide it among themselves; some way or other, Providence shall so order it, that good men shall come honestly by that wealth which the wicked man came dishonestly by. The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just, Prov. xiii. 22. God disposes of men's estates as he pleases, and often makes their wills, against their will. The just, whom he hated and persecuted, shall have rule over all his labour, and walk in the way he was glad to take, and it shall be taken from him. The Egyptians' jewels were the Israelites' pay. Solomon observes, (Eccl. ii. 26.) that God makes the sinners drudges to the righteous; for to the sinner he gives travail to gather and heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. [2.] They shall do good with it; the innocent shall not hoard the silver, as he did that gathered it, but shall divide it to the poor, shall give a portion to seven, and another eight, which is his own. More secure, and so secure, to have a treasure, good for nothing if it be not spread. When God enriches good men, they must remember they are but stewards, and must give an account. What bad men bring a curse upon their families with the ill-getting of, good men bring a blessing upon their families with the well-using of. He that by unjust gain increaseth his substance, shall gather it for him that will pay the poor, Prov. xiii. 8. (2.) We will suppose them to have built their mansions and stately houses; but they are like the house which the north makes for herself in an old garment, out of which she will soon be shaven, v. 18. He is very secure in it, as a moth, and has no apprehension of danger; but it will prove of as short continuance as a booth which the keeper makes, which will quickly be taken down and gone, and his place shall know him no more.

3. Destruction attend their persons, though they lived longer, and suffered less in life, and died at ease; (v. 19.) The rich man shall lie down to sleep, to repose himself in the abundance of his wealth, Soul, take thine ease; shall lie down in it as his strong city, and seem to others to be very happy and very easy; but he shall not be gathered, that is, he shall not have his mind composed, and settled, and gathered in, to enjoy his wealth. He does not sleep so contentedly as people think he does. He lies down, but his abundance will not suffer him to sleep, at least not so sweetly as the labouring man, Eccl. v. 12. He lies down, but he is full of tossings and fro and the dawning of the day, and then he opens his eyes, and he is not; he sees himself, and all he has, hastening away, as it were, in the twinkling of an eye. His cares increase his fears, and both together make him uneasy; so that, when we attend him to his bed, we do not find him happy there. But, in the close, we are called to attend his death, and see how miserable he is in death, and after death.

(1.) He is miserable in death. It is to him the king of terrors, v. 20, 21. When some mortal disease seizes him, what a fright is he in! Terrors take hold on him, as waters, as if he were surrounded by the flowing tides. He trembles to think of leaving this world, and much more of removing to another. This mingles sorrow and wrath with his sickness, as Solomon observes, Eccl. v. 17. These terrors put him either, [1.] Into a silent and bullen
JOB, XXVIII.

The strain of this chapter is very unlike the rest of this book. Job forgets his sores, and all his sorrows, and talks like a philosopher, or a virtuous, Here is a great deal both of natural philosophy and moral in this discourse; but the question is, How does it come here? Doubtless, it was not merely for an amusement, or diversion from the controversy; though, if it had been only so, perhaps it had not been much amiss. When disputes grow hot, better lose the question than lose our temper. But this is pertinent, and to the business in hand. Job and his friends had been discoursing about the dispensations of Providence toward the wicked and the righteous. Job had showed that some wicked men live and die older than the righteous; and as he is to be treated, so is it among men, and as he is openly arrested by the judgments of God. But, if any ask the reason why some are punished in this world, and not others, they must be told it is a question that cannot be resolved. The knowledge of the reasons of state, in God's providence, is of the world, and the world, and our cognoscenti must neither pretend to it, nor reach after it. Zophar had wished that God would show Job the secrets of wisdom, ch. xi. 6. No, says Job, secret things belong not to us, but things revealed, Deut. xxix. 29. And here he shows, 1. Concerning worldly wealth, how industriously that is sought for, and pursued, by the children of men, what pains they take, what contrivances they have, and what hazards they run, to get and possess it; ch. xii. 11. Concerning wisdom, v. 12. In general, the price of it is very great; it is of inestimable value, v. 15...19. The place of it is very secret, v. 14, 20, 22. In particular, there is a wisdom which is hid in God, (v. 25...27.) and there is a wisdom which is revealed to the children of men, v. 28. Our inquiries into the former must be checked, into the latter must be quickened, for that is it which is our concern.

1. Surely there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold where they fine it. 2. Iron is taken out of the earth, and brass is molten out of the stone. 3. He setteth an end to darkness, and searcheth out all perfection: the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death. 4. The flood breaketh out from the inhabitant; even the waters forgotten of the foot: they are dried up, they are gone away from men. 5. As for the earth, out of it cometh bread; and under it is turned up as it were fire. 6. The stones of it are the place of sapphires; and it hath dust of gold. 7. There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen: 8. The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it. 9. He putteth forth his hand upon the rock; he overturneth the mountains by the roots. 10. He cutteth out rivers among the rocks; and his eye seeth every precious thing. 11. He bindeth the floods from overflowing; and the thing that is hid bringeth he forth to light.

Here Job shows, 1. What a great way the wit of man may go, in diving into the depths of nature, and seizing the riches of it; what a great deal of knowledge and wealth men may, by their ingenious and industrious searches, make themselves masters of. But does it therefore follow that men may, by their wit, comprehend the reasons why some wicked people prosper, and others are punished, why some good people prosper, and others are afflicted? No, by no means. The caverns of the earth may be discovered, but not the counsels of heaven. 2. What a great deal of care and pains worldly men take to get riches. He had observed concerning the wicked man, (ch. xxvii. 16.) that he heaped up silver as the dust; now here he shows whence that silver came, and how it was come by, which he is so fond of, to show what little reason wicked rich men have to be proud of their wealth and pomp. Observe here, 1. The wealth of this world is hid in the earth. Thence the silver and the gold, which afterward they refine, are fetched, v. 1. There it lay mixed with a great deal of dirt and dross, like a worthless thing, of no more account than common earth; and abundance of it will so lie neglected, till the earth and all the works therein shall be burned up. Holy Mr. Herbert, in his poem called Amorice, takes notice of this, to shame men out of the love of money.

Money, thou bane of bliss, thou source of woe, Whence com'st thou, that thou art so fresh and fine? I know where came thine established grace, Man found thee poor and dirty in a mine.

Surely thou didst so little contribute To this great kingdom which thou now hast got, That he was fain, when thou wast destitute, To dig thee out of thy dark cave and grot. Man calleth thee his wealth, who made thee rich, And while he diggs out thee, falls in the ditch.
there found in great abundance, which abates their price indeed, but is a great kindness to man, who could much better be without gold than without iron. Nay, out of the earth comes bread, that is, broad-corn, the necessary support of life, v. 5. Thence man's maintenance is fetched, to remind him of his own finitude; he is of the earth, and cometh again to the earth. Under it is turned up as it were fire; precious stones, that sparkle as fire; brimstone, that is apt to take fire; coal, that is proper to feed fire. As we have our food, so we have our fuel, cut out of the earth. There the sapphires and other gems are, and thence gold-dust is dug up, v. 6. The wisdom of the Creator has placed these things, 1. Out of our sight, to teach us not to set our eyes upon them, Prov. xxiii. 5. 2. Under our feet, to teach us not to lay them in our bosoms, nor to set our hearts upon them, but to trample upon them, with a holy contempt. See how full the earth is of God's riches, (Ps. civ. 24.) and infer thence, not only how great a God he is, whose the earth is, and the fulness thereof, (Ps. xxvii. 1.) but how full heaven must needs be of God's riches, which is the city of the great King, in comparison with which this earth is a poor country.

1. And this wealth that is hid in the earth cannot be come at but with a great deal of difficulty. It is hard to be found out; there is but here and there a vein for the silver, v. 1. The precious stones, though bright themselves, yet, because buried in obscurity and out of sight, are called stones of darkness, and the shadow of death. Men may search long before they light on them; when found out, they are hard to be fetched out; men's wits must be set on work to contrive ways and means to get this hid treasure into their hands; they must, with their lances, scorn dross, and win, by dross, to the precious; one method fail, they must try another, till they have searched out all perfection, and turned every stone to effect it, v. 3. They must grapple with subterraneous waters, (v. 4, 10, 11.) and force their way through rocks which are, as it were, the roots of the mountains, v. 9. Now God has made the getting of gold and silver, and precious stones, so difficult, (1.) For the exciting and engaging of industry. Diligent laborious men, v. 6. Let the price of all things geo, gifts, and all things. If valuable things were too easily come by, men would never learn to take pains. But the difficulty of gaining the riches of this earth, may suggest to us what violence the kingdom of heaven suffers. (2.) For the checking and restraining of pomp and luxury. What is for necessity is had with a little labour from the surface of the earth; but what is for ornament must be dug with a great deal of pains out of the bowels of it. To be fed is cheap, but to be fine is chargeable.

3. Thirdly, the subterraneous wealth is thus hard to come by, yet men will have it. He that loves silver, is not satisfied with silver, and yet is not satisfied without it; but they that have much needs must have more. See here, 1. What inventions men have to get this wealth. They search out all perfection, v. 3. They have arts and engines to dry up the waters, and carry them off, when they break in upon them in their mines, and threaten to drown them, having no pumps, pumps, and canals, to clear their way, and, obstacles being removed, they tread the path which no foot knew, (v. 7, 8.) unseen by the vulture's eye, which is piercing and quick-sighted, and untroubled by the lion's whelps, which traverse all the paths of the wilderness. 2. What pains men take, and what vast charge they are at, to get this wealth. They work their way through the rocks, and undermine the mountains, v. 10. 3. What hazards they run. They that dig in the mines have their lives in their hands; for they are obliged to bend the floods from overflow-

ing, (v. 11.) and are continually in danger of being suffocated by damps, or crushed or burned alive by the fall of the earth upon them. See how foolish man adds to his own burtten; he is sentenced to eat bread in the sweat of his face. But as if that were not enough, he will get gold and silver at the peril of his life; though the more is gotten, the less valuable it is; for, in Solomon's time, silver was as stones. But, 4. Observe what it is that carries men through all this toil and peril. Their eye sees every precious thing, v. 10. Silver and gold are precious things with them; and they have them in their eye in all their pursuits; they fancy they see them glittering before their faces, and, in the prospect of laying hold of them, they may be induced to pass over all these difficulties; for they make something of it at last; that which is hid bringeth he forth to light, v. 11. What was hid under ground, is laid upon the bank; the metal that was hid in the ore, is refined from its dross, and brought forth pure out of the furnace; and then he thinks his pains well bestowed. Go to the miners, then, thou sluggard in religion, consider their ways, and be wise. Let their courage, diligence, and constancy in seeking the wealth that perisheth, show us out of slothfulness and faint-heartedness in laboring for the true riches. How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! How much easier and safer! Yet gold is sought for, but grace neglected. Will the hopes of precious things out of the earth, (so they call them, though really they are paltry and perishing,) be such a spur to industry, and shall not the certain prospect of truly precious things in heaven be much more so?

12. But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? 13. Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. 14. The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. 15. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. 16. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. 17. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. 18. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. 19. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold.

Job, having spoken of the wealth of the world, which men put such a value upon, and take so much pains for, here comes to speak of another more valuable jewel, and that is, wisdom and understanding, the knowing and enjoying of God and ourselves. They that found out all these ways and means to enrich themselves, thought themselves very wise; but Job will not own, that to be wisdom: he supposes them to gain their point, and to bring to light what they sought for, (v. 11.) and yet asks, Where is wisdom? For it is not here; this their way is their folly. We must therefore seek it somewhere else, and it will be found nowhere but in the principles and practices of religion. There is more true knowledge, satisfaction, and happiness, in sound divinity, which shows us the way to the joys of heaven, than in natural philosophy, or mathematics, which help us to find a way into the bowels of the earth.

Two things cannot be found out concerning this wisdom.

1. The price of it, for that is inestimable; its
worth is infinitely more than all the riches in this world. Man knows not the price thereof, (v. 13.)

1. Few put a due value upon it. Men know not the worth of it, its innate excellency, their need of it, and of what unspeakable advantage it will be to them; and therefore, though they have many a price in their hand to get this wisdom, yet they have no heart to it, Prov. xvii. 16. The cock in the fable value of the precious jewel he found in the dunghill, and therefore would rather have lighted on a barley-corn. Men know not the worth of grace, and therefore will take no pains to get it.

2. None can possibly give a valuable consideration for it, with all the wealth this world can furnish them with. This Job is large upon, (v. 13, &c.) where he makes an inventory of the Bona notabilia—The most valuable treasures of this world: gold is five times mentioned, silver comes in and takes the place of gold, the onyx and sapphire, pearls and rubies, and the topaz of Ethiopia; these are the things that are highest prized in the world's markets: but if a man would give, not only these, heaps of these, but all the substance of his house, all he is worth in the world, for wisdom, it would utterly be contemned: these may give a man some advantage in seeking wisdom, as they did to Solomon, but there is no purchasing wisdom with these.

It is a gift of the Holy Ghost, which cannot be bought with money, Acts viii. 30. As it does not run in the blood, and thus come to us by descent, so it cannot be got for money, nor does it come to us by purchase. Spiritual gifts are conferred without money and without price, because no money can be a price for them. Wisdom is likewise a more valuable gift to him that has it, makes him richer and happier, than gold or precious stones. It is better to get wisdom than gold. Gold is another, wisdom's, another's: gold is for the body and time, wisdom is for the soul and eternity. Let that which is most precious in God's account, be so in ours. See Prov. iii. 14, &c.

II. The place of it, for that is undiscoverable. Where shall wisdom be found? v. 12. He asks this,

1. As one that truly desired to find it. This is a question we should all put; while the most of men are asking, "Where shall money be found?" we should ask, Where may wisdom be found? that we may make the right choice, not vain policy, but true religion; for that is the only true wisdom, that is it which best improves our faculties, and best secures our spiritual and eternal welfare. This is that which we should cry after, and dig for, Prov. ii. 3, 4.

2. As one that utterly despaired of finding it any where but in God, and any way but by divine revelation. It is not found in this land of the living, v. 13. We cannot attain to a right understanding of God and his will, of ourselves, and our duty, and interest, by reading any books or men, but by reading God's book and the men of God. Such is the degeneracy of human nature, that there is no true wisdom to be found with any but those who are born again, and who, through grace, partake of the divine nature. As for others, even the most ingenuous and industrious, they can tell us no tidings of this lost wisdom. (1.) Ask the miners, and by them the dove will not be found, nor the wisdom dig into the bowels of the earth, to rifle the treasures there, cannot in these dark recesses find this rare jewel, nor with all their art make themselves masters of it. (2.) Ask the mariners, and by them the sea will say, It is not in me. It can never be got either by trading on the waters, or diving into them; can never be sucked from the abundance of the seas, or the treasures hid in the sand. Where there is a vein for the silver, there is no vein for wisdom, none for grace. Men can more easily break through the difficulties they meet with in getting worldly wealth, than through those they meet with in getting heavenly wisdom; and they will take more pains to learn how to live in this world, than how to live forever in a better world. So blind and foolish is man become, that it is in vain to ask him, Where is the place of wisdom, and which is the road that leads to it?

20. Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? v. 21. Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air. 22. Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears. 23. God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof. 24. For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven; 25. To make the weight for the winds; and he weigheth the waters by measure. 26. When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder; 27. Then did he see it, and declare it: he prepared it, ye, and searched it out. 28. And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.

The question which he had asked, (v. 12,) he asks again here; for it is too worthy, too weighty, to be left fall, until we speed in the inquiry. Concerning this, we must seek till we find, till we get some satisfactory account of it. By a diligent prosecution of this inquiry, he brings it, at length, to this issue; there is a twofold wisdom; one hid in God, which is secret, and belongs not to us; the other made known by him, and revealed to man, which belongs to us and to our children.

1. The knowledge of God's secret will, the will of his providence, is out of our reach, and what God has reserved to himself: it belongs to the Lord our God. To know the particulars of what God will do hereafter, and the reasons of what he is doing now, is the knowledge he first speaks of.

2. This knowledge is hid from men; it is high, we cannot attain unto it; (v. 21, 22.) It is hid from the eyes of all living, even of philosophers, politicians, and saints; it is kept close from the fowls of the air; though they fly high and in the open firmament of heaven, though they seem somewhat nearer that upper world where the source of this wisdom is, though their eyes behold afar off, (ch. xxxix. 29,) yet they cannot penetrate into the counsels of God. No; man is more rifer than the fowls of heaven, and yet comes short of this wisdom. Even those who, in their speculations, soar highest, and think themselves, like the fowls of the air, above the heads of other people, yet cannot pretend to this knowledge. Job and his friends had been arguing about the methods and reasons of the dispensations of Providence in the government of the world: "What fools are we" (says Job) "to fight in the dark thus; to dispute about that which we do not understand! The line of the sand, and the plumb line, no common reason can never fathom the abyss of the divine counsels. Who can undertake to give the rationale of Providence, or account for the maxims, measure, and methods, of God's government, these arcana imperii—the cabinet counsels of divine wisdom? Let us then be content not to know the future events of Providence, until time discover them, (Acts i. 7,) and not to know the secret reasons of Providence, until eternity discover them. God is now a God that hideth himself; (Isa. xlv. 13.) clouds and darkness are round about him. Though
this wisdom be hid from all living, yet destruction and death say, We have heard the fame of it; though they cannot give an account of it themselves, (for there is no wisdom, nor device, nor knowledge at all in the grave, much less this,) yet there is a world on the other side death and the grave, on which those dark regions border, and to which we must pass through them, and there we shall see clearly what we are now in the dark about. "Have a little patience," says death to the inquisitive soul, "I will fetch thee shortly to a plac[e] where even this dead world shall be found." When the work of God shall be finished, it will be laid open, and we shall know as we are known; when the veil of flesh is rent, and the interposing clouds are scattered, we shall know what God does, though we know not now, John xiii. 7.

2. This knowledge is hid in God, as the apostle speaks, (Eph. iii. 9.) Known unto God are all his works, though they are not known to us, Acts xv. 18. There are good reasons for what he does, though we cannot assign them; (v. 23.) God understands the way thereof. Men sometimes do they know not what, but God never does. Men do what they did not design to do; new occurrences put them upon new counsels, and oblige them to take new measures; but God does all according to the purpose which he purposed in himself, and which he never alters. Men sometimes do that which they cannot give a good reason for, but in every will of God there is a counsel: he knows both what he does, and why he does it; the whole series of events, and the order and place of every occurrence. This knowledge has in perfection, but keeps to himself.

Two reasons are here given why God must needs understand his own way, and he only;

(1.) Because all events are now directed by an all-seeing and almighty Providence, v. 24, 25. He that governs the world, is [1.] Omniscient: for he knows to the ends of the earth, both in place and time, the farthest distant ages, distant regions, are under his view. We do not understand our own way, much less can we understand God’s way, because we are short-sighted; how little do we know of what is doing in the world, much less of what will be done! But the eyes of the Lord are in every place; na(y, they run to and fro through the earth: nothing is, or can be, hid from him; and therefore the reasons why some wicked people prosper, and others are more or less disappointed, are not known to us, are known to him. One day’s events, and one man’s affairs, have such a reference to, and such a dependence upon, another’s, that He only, to whom all events and all affairs are naked and open, and who sees the whole at one entire and certain view, is a competent Judge of every part. [2.] He is omnipotent: he can do every thing, and is very exact in all he does. For proof of this, he mentions the winds and the waves, Acts xxiv. 25. What is lighter than the wind? Yet God hath ways of pleasing it; he knows how to make the weight for the winds, which he brings out of his treasuries, (Ps. cxxxv. 7.) keeping a very particular account of what he draws out, as men do of what they pay out of their treasuries, not at random, as men bring out of their trash. Nothing sensible is to us more unaccountable than the wind; we hear the sound of it, yet cannot tell whence it comes, or whether it goes: but God gives it out by weight, wisely ordering both from what point it shall blow, and with what strength. The waters of the sea, and the rain waters, he both weighs and measures; allotting the proportion of every tide and every shower. A great and constant communication there is between clouds and seas, the waters above the firmament and those under it; vapours go up, rains come down, air is condensed into water, water rafied into air: but the great God keeps an exact account of all the stock with which this brake is carried on for the public benefit, and sees that none of it be lost. Now if, in these things, Providence be so exact, how much more in dispensing frowns and favours, rewards and punishments, to the children of men, according to the rules of equity!

(2.) Because all events were, from eternity, designed and determined by an infallible prescience, and immutable decree, v. 26, 27. When he settled the course of nature, he foreordained all the operations of his almighty [1.] He settled the course of nature; for this, he mentions a decree for the rain, and a way for the thunder and lightning: the general manner and method, and the particular uses and tendencies, of these strange performances, both their causes and their effects, were appointed by the divine purpose; hence he is said to prepare lightnings for the rain, Ps. cxxxv. 7. Jer. x. 13.

[2.] When he had settled that, he laid all the measures of his providence, and drew an exact scheme of the whole work from first to last: then, from eternity, did he see in himself, and declare to himself, the plan of his proceedings; then he prepared it, fixed it, and established it, set every thing in readiness for all his works; so that, when any thing was to be done, nothing was to seek, nor could any thing unforeseen occur, to put it either out of its method, or out of its time, for all was ordered as exactly as if he had studied it, and searched it out; so that, whatever he does, nothing can be put into it, or taken from it, and therefore shall be for ever, Eccl. iii. 14. Some make Job to speak of wisdom here as a person, and translate it, Then he saw her, and showed her, &c. and then it is parallel with that of Solomon, concerning the essential Wisdom of the Father, the eternal Word, Prov. viii. 22, &c. Before the earth was, then was I by him, John i. 1, 2.

II. The knowledge of God’s revealed will, the will of his precept, and this is within our reach; it is level to our capacity, and will do us good; (v. 28.) Unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom. Let it not be said, that, when God concealed his counsels from man, and forbade him that tree of knowledge, it was because he grudged him any thing that would contribute to his real bliss and satisfaction; no, he let him know as much as he was concerned to know in order to his duty and happiness: he shall be intrusted with as much of his almighty knowledge as his nature can bear; but he must not think himself fit to be a privy-counsellor. He said to Adam, so some, to the first man, in the day in which he was created; he told him plainly, it was not for him to amuse himself with over-curious searches into the mysteries of creation, nor to pretend to solve all the phenomena of nature; he would find it neither possible nor profitable to do so. No less wisdom (says Archbishop Tillotson) than that which made the world, and knows how to understand the philosophy of it. But let him look upon this as his wisdom, To fear the Lord and to depart from evil; let him learn that, and he is learned enough, let this knowledge serve his turn. When God forbade man the tree of knowledge, he allowed him the tree of life, and this is that tree. Prov. iii. 18. We cannot attain true wisdom but by divine revelation; The Lord giveth wisdom, Prov. ii. 6. Now the matter of that, is not the secrets of nature or the world, but the rules of our own practice: unto man he said not, "Go up to heaven, to fetch happiness thence!" or, "Go down to the deep, to draw it up thence." No, the word is nigh thee; (Deut. xxx. 14.) He hath showed thee, O man, not what is greatest, but what is good, not what the Lord thy God designs to do with thee, but what he requires of thee, Mic. vi. 8. Unto you, O men, I call.
Prov. viii. 4. Lord, what is man that he should be thus minded, thus visited! Behold, mark, take notice, of this; he that has ears, let him hear what the God of heaven says to the children of men; The fear of the Lord, that is the wisdom. Here is, 1. The description of true religion, pure religion, and undefiled; it is to fear the Lord, and depart from evil, which agrees with God's character of Job, ch. i. 1. The fear of the Lord is the spring and source of all religion. There is a slavish fear of God, springing from hard thoughts of him, which is contrary to religion, Matth. xxv. 24. There is a selfish fear of God, springing from dreadful thoughts of him, which may be a good step toward religion. Acts ix. 5. But there is a filial fear of God, springing from great and high thoughts of him, which is the life and soul of all religion. And wherever this reigns in the heart, it will appear by a constant care to depart from evil, Prov. xvi. 6. This is to religion; we must first cease to do evil, or we shall never learn to do well. Virtus est vitium fugere—E'en in our flight from vice some virtue lies. 2. The commendation of religion; it is wisdom and understanding: to be truly religious, is to be truly wise: as the wisdom of God appears in the institution of it, so the wisdom of man appears in the practice and observance of it; it is understanding, for it is the best knowledge of truth; it is wisdom, for it is the best conduct of our affairs: nothing more surely guides our way, and gains our end, than being religious.

CHAP. XXIX.

After that excellent discourse concerning wisdom in the foregoing chapter, Job sat down and paused a while, not because he had talked himself out of breath, but because he would not, without the leave of the company, engross the talk to himself, but would give room for his friends, if they pleased, to make their remarks on what he had said; but they had nothing to say, and therefore, after he had recollected himself a little, he went on with his discourse concerning his own affairs, in this and the two following chapters; in which, I. He describes the height of the prosperity from which he was fallen. And, II. The depth of the adversity into which he was fallen; and this he does, to move the pity of his friends, and to justify, or, at least, excuse, his own complaints. But then, III. To obviate his friends' complaints of his very weak and pale and particular protestation of his own integrity notwithstanding. In this chapter, he looks back to the days of his prosperity, and shows, 1. What comfort and satisfaction he had in his house and family. 2. What a great deal of honour and power he had in his country, and what respect was paid him by all sorts of people. v. 7.—10. 3. What abundance of good he did in his place, as a magistrate, v. 11.—17. Then, he just prospect he had of the continuance of his comfort at home, (v. 18—20.) and of his interest abroad, v. 21—25. All this he enlarges upon, to aggravate his present calamities; like Naomi, I went out full, but am brought home again empty.

MOREOVER, Job continued his parable, and said, 2. Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; 3. When his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness; 4. As I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle; 5. When the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me; 6. When I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil; 7. Losers may have leave to speak, and there is nothing they speak of more feelingly than of the comforts they are stripped of. Their former prosperity is one of the most pleasing subjects of their thoughts and talk. It was so to Job here, who begins with a wish, (v. 2.) Oh that I were as in months past! So he brings in this account of his prosperity. His wish is, 1. "Oh that I were in as good a state as I was then; that I had as much wealth, honour, and pleasure, as I had then." This is a common wish to many for his ease, as for his reputation, and the glory of his God, which, he thought, was eclipsed by his present sufferings. "Oh that I might be restored to my prosperity, and then the censures and reproaches of my friends would be effectually silenced, even upon their own principles, and for ever rolled away!" If this be our end in desiring life, health, and prosperity, that God may be glorified, and the credit of our holy profession rescued, preserved, and at that, the desire is not only natural, but spiritual. 2. "Oh that I were in as good a frame of spirit, as I was then!" That which Job complained most of now, was a load upon his spirits, through God's withdrawing from him; and therefore he wishes he had now his spirit as much enlarged and encouraged in the service of God, as he had then, and that he had as much freedom and fellowship with him, as he then thought himself happy in. This was in the days of his prosperity, v. 4. When he was in the prime of his time for the enjoyment of those things, and could relish them with the highest gust. Note, Those that prosper in the days of their youth, know not what black and cloudy days they are yet reserved for.

Two things made the months pass pleasant to Job; 1. That he had comfort in his God. This was the chief thing he rejoiced in, in his prosperity, as well as in the springing of it, and the springing in it; that he had the favour of God, and the tokens of his favour. He did not attribute his prosperity to a happy turn of fortune, or to his own might, or to the power of his own hand, but makes the same acknowledgment that David does; (Ps. xxx. 7.) Thou, by thy favour, hast made my mountain stand strong. A gracious soul delights in God's smiles, not in the smiles of this world.

For things were then very pleasant to holy Job; 1. The confidence he had in the divine protection. They were the days when God preserved me, v. 2. Even then he saw himself exposed, and did not make his wealth his strong city, nor trusted in the abundance of his riches, but the name of the Lord was his strong tower, and in that only he thought himself safe, and to that he ascribed it that he was then safe, and his comforts were preserved to him. The Devil saw a hedge about him of God's making, (ch. 1. 10.) and Job saw it himself, and owned it. It was God's visiting the fruit, from a spirit, ch. x. 12. Those only whom God protects are safe, and may be secure; and therefore those who have ever so much of this world, must not think themselves safe, unless God preserve them. 2. The complacency he had in the divine favour; (v. 3.) God's candle shined upon his head, that is, God lifted up the light of his countenance upon him, gave him the assurances and sweet relishes of his love. The best of the communication of the divine favour to the saints in this world, is but a candle-light, compared with what is reserved for them in the future state. But such abundant satisfaction did Job take in the divine favour, that, by the light of that, he walked through darkness; that guided him in his doubts, comforted him in his griefs, bare him up under his burthens, and helped him through all his difficulties. Those that have the brightest sun-shine of outward prosperity, must yet expect some moments of darkness: they are...
sometimes crossed, sometimes at a loss, sometimes melancholy; but those that are interested in the favour of God, and know how to value it, can, by the light of that, walk cheerfully and comfortably through all the darkness of this vale of tears. That puts gladness into the heart, enough to balance all the grievances of this present time.

3. The communion he had with the divine word; (v. 4.) The secret of God was upon my tabernacle, that is, When God conversed freely with him, as one bosom friend with another. He knew God's mind, and was not in the dark about it, as, of late, he had been. The secret of the Lord is said to be with them that fear him, for he shows them that in his covenant, which others see not, Ps. xxv. 14. God communicates his favour and grace to people, and receives the returns of their devotion in a way secret to the world. Some read it, When the society of God was in my tabernacle; which Rabbi Solomon understands of an assembly of God's people, that used to meet at Job's house for religious worship, in which he presided; this he took a great deal of pleasure in, and the scattering of it was a trouble to him. Or, it may be understood of the angels of God pitching their tents about his habitations.

4. The assurance he had of the divine presence; (v. 5.) The Almighty was yet with me. Now, he thought God was departed from him, but, in those days, he was with him, and that was all in all to him. God's presence with a man in his house, though it be but a cottage, makes it both a castle and a palace.

II. That he had comfort in his family, every thing was agreeable there; he had both months for his meat, and meat for his mouths; the want of either is a great affliction. 1. He had a multitude of offspring to crown his estate. My children were about me. He had many children, enough to compass him round, and they were observant of him, and obsequious to him; they were about him, to know what he would have, and wherein they might serve him. It is a comfort to tender parents to see their children about them; Job speaks very feelingly of this comfort, now that he was deprived of it. He thought it an instance of God's being with him, that his children were about him; and yet we reason wrong, if when we have lost our children, we cannot comfort ourselves with this, that we have not lost our God. 2. He had a plentiful estate for the support of this numerous family, v. 6. His dairy abounded to that degree, that he might, if he pleased, wash his steps with butter; and his olive-yards were so fruitful, beyond expectation, that it seemed as if the rock poured him out rivers of oil. He reckons his wealth, not by his silver and gold, which were for hoarding, but by his butter and oil, which were for use; for what is an estate good for, unless we take the good of it ourselves, and do good with it to others?

7. When I went out to the gate, through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street: 8. The young men saw me, and hid themselves: and the aged arose, and stood up. 9. The princes refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth. 10. The nobles held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth. 11. When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it was a witness to me: 12. Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. 13. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. 14. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. 15. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. 16. I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched out. 17. And I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth.

We have here Job in a post of honour and power; though he had comfort enough in his own house, yet he did not confine himself to that; we are not born for ourselves, but for the public. When an attorney was to be done in the town, the place of judgment, Job went out to it through the city, (v. 7.) not in an affectation of pomp, but in an affection to justice. Observe, Judgment was administered in the gate, in the street, in the places of concourse, to which every man might have a free access; that every one who might be a witness to all that was said and done; and that, when judgment was given against the guilty, others might hear and fear. Job being a prince, a judge, a magistrate, a man in authority, among the children of the east, we are here told,

I. What respect was paid him by all sorts of people, not only for the dignity of his place, but for his personal merit, his eminent prudence, integrity, and good management. 1. The people honoured him, and stood in awe of him, v. 8. The gravity and majesty of his books and mien, and his known strictness in animadverting upon every thing that was evil and indecent, commanded all about him into an attitude of reverence. When any one, for example, were to expose their countenances, or, it may be, were conscious to themselves of something amiss, hid themselves, and got out of his way; and the aged, though they kept their ground, yet would not keep their seats, they arose and stood up to do obeisance to him; they who expected honour from others, gave honour to him. Virtue and piety challenge respect from all, and usually have it; but they that not only are good, but do good, are worthy of double honour. Modesty becomes those that are young and in subjection, as much as majesty becomes those that are aged and in power. Honour and fear are due to magistrates, and must be rendered to them, Rom. xiii. 7. But if a great and good man was thus reverenced, how is the great and good God to be feared! 2. The princes and nobles paid great deference to him, v. 9, 10. Some think that these were inferior magistrates under him, and that the respect they paid him was due to his place, as their sovereign and supreme; it should rather seem that they were his equals in place, and joined in commission with him, and that the peculiar honour they gave him was gained by his extraordinary abilities and services. It was agreed, that he excelled them all in quickness of apprehension, soundness of judgment, closeness of application, clearness and copiousness of expression; and therefore he was, among his felons, an oracle of law, and counsel, and justice, and that he said as he thought, and acquiesced in. When he came into court, especially when he stood up to speak to any business, the princes refrained talking, the nobles held their peace, that they might the more diligently hearken to what he said, and might be sure to take his meaning. They that had been forward to speak their own thoughts, loved to hear themselves talk, and cared not much what any body else said, when it came to Job's turn to speak, were as desirous to know his thoughts, as ever they had been to vent their own. They that suspected their own judgment were satisfied in his, and admired
with what dexterity he spilt the hair, and untied the knots which puzzled them, and which they knew not what to make of. When the princes and nobles wrangled among themselves, all agreed to refer the matters in dispute to Job, and to abide by his judgment. Happy the man who are blessed with such eminent gifts as these; they have great opportunities of honouring God, and doing good, but have great need to watch against pride: happy the people that are blessed with such eminent men; it is a token for good to them.

II. What good he did in his place. He was very serviceable to his country with the power he had; and here we shall see what it was which Job valued himself by in the day of his prosperity. It is natural to men to have some value for the body of the people, and we may judge something of our own character, by observing what is upon which we value ourselves. Job valued himself, not by the honour of his family, the great estate he had, his large income, his full table, the many servants he had at his command, the ensigns of his dignity, his equipage and retinue, the splendid entertainments he gave, and the court that was made to him, but by his usefulness. Goodness is God's glory, and it will be ours, if we be men of such a character as are serviceable for the public.

1. He valued himself by the interest he had in the esteem, affections, and prayers, of sober people; not by the studied panegyrics of the wits and poets, but the natural praises of all about him. All that heard what he said, and saw what he did, how he laid out himself for the public good with all the authority and tender affection of a father to his country, blessed him, and gave witness to him, v. 11. Many a good word they said of him, and many a good prayer they made on his behalf. It is to be our honour to make every body fear him, (Oderint dum metuant:—Let them hate, provided they also fear,) nor to be arbitrary, and to have his own will and way, not caring what people said of him; but, like Mowlecai, to be accedted of the multitude of his brethren, Est. x. 3. He did not so much value the applause of those at a distance, as the attestations of those that were the witnesses of his conduct, that closely attended him, saw him, and heard him, and could know the state of his heart, and what was the true situation of those who had themselves been the better for him, and could speak by their own experience; such was the blessing of him who was ready to perish, (v. 13.) and who by Job's means was rescued from perishing.

Let great men, and men of estates, thus do good, and they shall have praise of the same; and let those who have good done them, look upon it as a just debt they owe to their protectors and benefactors, to bless them and give witness to them; to use their interest on earth for their honour, and in heaven for their comfort, to praise them, and pray for them. Those are ungrateful indeed, who grudge these small returns.

2. He valued himself by the care he took of those that were least able to help themselves, the poor and the needy, the widows and the fatherless, the blind and lame, who could not be supposed either to merit his favour, or ever to be in a capacity to recommend it. (1.) If the poor were injured or oppressed, they might cry to Job; and, if he found the allegations of their petitions true, they had not only his ear and his bowels, but his hand too; he delivered the poor that cried, (v. 12.) and would not suffer them to be trampled upon and run down. Nay, (v. 16.) he was a father to the poor, not only a judge to protect them, and to see that they were not wronged, but a father to provide for them, and to see that they did not want, to counsel and direct them, and to appear and act for them upon all occasions. It is no disparagement to the son of a prince to be a father to the poor. (2.) The fatherless, that had none to help them, found Job ready to help them, and, if they were in straits, to deliver them. He helped them to make the best of what little they had, helped them to pay what they owed, and to get in what was owing to them, helped them out into the world, helped them into business, helped them to help themselves; it should be the fatherless be helped. (3.) Those that are ready to perish he saved from perishing, relieving them that were hungry and ready to perish for want, taking care of them that were sick, that were outcasts, that were falsely accused, or in danger of being turned out of their estates unjustly, or, upon any other account, were ready to perish: the extremity of the peril, as it quickened Job to appear the more vigorously for them, so it made his seasonable kindness the more affecting, and the more obliging, and brought their blessings the more abundantly upon him. (4.) The widows that were sighing for grief, and trembling for fear, he made to sing for joy; so carefully did he protect them, and provide for them, and so heartily did he espouse their interest; it is a pleasure to a good man, and should be so to a great man, to give those occasion to rejoice, that are most acquainted with grief. (5.) Those that were upon any account at a loss, Job provided for them. He reminded them of the dexters and mitures to the blind, counselling and advising those for the best, that knew not what to do; and, to see the lame: assisting those with money and friends, that knew what they should do, but knew not how to compass it. Those we best help, whom we help out in that very thing wherein they are defective, and most need help. We may come to be blind or lame ourselves, and therefore should pity and succour those that are so, Isa. xxxv. 3, 4. Heb. xii. 13.

3. He valued himself by the exercise of his gifts in the service of justice and equity in all his proceedings: his friends had unjustly censured him as an oppressor; "So far from that," (says he,) "that I always made it my business to maintain and support right." (1.) He devoted himself to the administration of justice; (v. 14.) I put on righteousness, and it clothed me, that is, He had an habitual disposition to execute justice, and put on a fixed resolution to do it. It was the girdle of his loin, Isa. xi. 5. It kept him upright and straight, and all his motions were according to it, as in his clothing, and never without it. Righteousness will clothe them that put it on; it will keep them warm, and be comfortable to them; it will keep them safe, and fence them against the injuries of the season; it will adorn them, and recommend them to the favour both of God and man. (2.) He took pleasure in it, and, as I may say, a holy * pride: he looked upon it as his greatest glory to do justice to all, and injury to none. My judgment was a robe and a diadem. Perhaps he did not himself wear a robe and a diadem, he was very indifferent to those ensigns of honour; they were most fond of them who had least intrinsic worth to recommend them; but the settled principles of justice, by which he was governed and did govern, were to him instead of all those ornaments. If a magistrate do the duty of his place, that is an honour to him far beyond his gold or purple, and should be, accordingly, his delight; and trusted men do not make conscience of his duty, and, in some measure, swallow the end of his elevation, his robe and diadem, his gown and cap, his sword and mace, are but a reproach, like the purple robe and crown of thorns with which the Jews studied to ridicule our Saviour: for as clothes on a dead man will never make him warm, so robes on a bad man will never make him honourable. (3.) He took pains in the business of

* We beg leave to protest against associating with Pride any epithet that implies it to be in any case allowable. See Glibborn's Sermon and Mrs. More's Structures, vol. 1. chap. 11. P. 26.
his place; (v. 16.) The cause which I knew not I searched out. He diligently inquired into the matters of fact, patiently and impartially heard both sides, set every thing in its true light, and cleared it from false colours; he laid all circumstances together, that he might find out the truth, and the merits of every cause, and then, and, not till then, gave judgment upon it; he never answered a matter before he heard it, nor did he judge a man to be righteous, however he seemed, for his being first in his own cause, Prov. xviii. 17.

4. He valued himself by the check he gave to the violence of proud and evil men; (v. 17.) I brake the jaws of the wicked; he does not say that he brake their necks; he did not take away their lives, but he brake their jaws; he took away their power of doing mischief, he humbled them, mortified them, and curbed their insolence, and so plucked the spoil out of their teeth; delivered the persons and estates of honest men from being made a prey of by them; when they had got the spoil between their teeth, and were greedily swallowing it down, he bravely rescued it, as David did the lamb out of the mouth of the lion, not fearing, though they roared and raged like a lion disappointed of his prey. Good might must thus be a firm and fixed restraint to evil-doers, and a protection to the innocent, and, in order to this, they have need to arm themselves with zeal and resolution, and an undaunted courage: a judge upon the bench has as much need to be bold and brave, as a commander in the field.

18. Then I said, I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand. 19. My root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch. 20. My glory was fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand. 21. Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel. 22. After my words they spake not again; and my speech dropped upon them. 23. And they waited for me as for the rain; and they opened their mouth wide as for the latter rain. 24. If I laughed on them, they believed it not; and the light of my countenance they cast not down. 25. I chose out their way, and sat chief, and dwelt as a king in the army, as one that comforteth the mourners.

That which crowned Job's prosperity, was, the pleasing prospect he had of the continuance of it; though he knew, in general, that he was liable to trouble, and therefore was not secure; (ch. iii. 26.) I was not in safety, neither had I rest, yet he had no particular occasion for fear, but as much reason as ever any man had to count upon the lengthening out of his tranquillity. I See here what his thoughts were in his prosperity; (v. 18.) Then I said, I shall die in my nest. Having made himself a warm and easy nest, he hoped nothing would disturb him in it, nor move him out of it, till death removed him. He knew he had never stolen any coal from the altar, which might fire his nest: he saw no storm arising to shake down his nest, and therefore concluded, To-morrow shall he as this day; as David; (Ps. xxx. 6.) My mountain stands strong, and shall not be moved. Observe, 1. In the midst of his prosperity, he thought of dying, and the thought was not unpleasing to him. He knew that though his nest was high, it did not set him out of the reach of the darts of death. 2. Yet he flattered himself with vain hopes, (1.) That he should live long, should multiply his days as the sand. He means as the sand on the sea-shore; whereas we should rather reckon our days by the sand in the hour-glass, which will be run out in a little time. Seeing how apt even good people are to think of death as a thing at a distance, and, to put far from them that evil day, which will really be to them a good day. (2.) That he should die in the same prosperous state in which he had lived. If such an expectation as this arise from a lively faith in the providence and promise of God, it is well, but if from a conceit of our own wisdom, and the stabil ty of these earthly things, it is ill-grounded, and turns to dishonour and to shame, like David's; (Ps. xxvii. 1.) Whom shall I fear? not like the rich fool's, (Luke xii. 19.) Soul, take thin ease.

II. See what was the ground of these thoughts. 1. If he looked at home, he found he had a good foundation. His stock was all his own, and none of all his neighbours had a demand upon him. He found no bodily disturber growing upon him, his estate did not lie under any incumbrance, nor was he harassed with debts, nor with worrisome and worrisome encroachment of others to bring him in; nothing going forward in his affairs, and not going behind-hand; he lost no reputation, but gained rather; he knew no rival that threatened either to eclipse his honour, or abridge his power: see how he describes this, v. 19, 20. He was like a tree whose root is not only spread out, whichfixes it and keeps it firm, so that it is in no danger of being overturned, but spread out by the waters, which feed it, and make it fruitful and flourishing, so that it is in no danger of withering. And as he thought himself blessed with the fruitfulness of the earth, so also with the kind influences of Heaven too; for the dew lay all night upon his branch. Providence favoured him, and made all his enjoyments comfortable, and all his enterprises successful. Let none think to support their prosperity with what they draw from this earth, without that blessing which is derived from above. God's favour being continued to Job, in the virtue of that, his glory was still fresh in him: those about him had still the same kind of approbation from him, and needed not to repeat the old stories: and it is only by constant goodness that men's glory is thus preserved fresh, and kept from withering and growing stale. His bow also was renewed in his hand, that is, his power to protect himself, and annoy those that assailed him, still increased, so that he thought he had as little reason as any man to fear the insults of the Sabeans and Chaldeans.

2. If he looked abroad, he found he had a good interest, and well confirmed. As he had no reason to dread the power of his enemies, so neither had he any reason to distrust the fidelity of his friends: to the last moment of his prosperity they continued their respects to him, and their dependence on him. What had he to fear, who so gave counsel, as, in effect, to give law to all his neighbours? Nothing surely could be done against him, when really nothing was done without him.

(1.) He was the oracle of his country. He was consulted as an oracle, and his dictates were acquainted in as oracles, v. 21. When others could not be heard, all men gave ear to him, and kept silence at his counsel, knowing that, as nothing could be said against it, so nothing needed to be added to it. And therefore, after his words they spake not again, v. 22. Why should men meddle with a subject that has already been exhausted?

(2.) He was the darling of his country. All about him were well-pleased with everything he said and did, as David's people were with him, 2 Sam. iii. 36. He had the hearts and affections of all his neighbours, all his servants, tenants, subjects; never was man so much admired, nor so well beloved. [1.] They
were thought happy to whom he spake, and they thought themselves so: never were the dews of heaven so acceptable to the parched ground, as his wise discourses were to them that attended on them, especially to whom they were particularly accommodated and directed. His speech dropped upon them, and they waited for it as for the rain; (v. 22, 23.) wondering at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, catching at them, laying hold on them, and treasuring them up as apophthegms. His servants, that stood continually before him to hear his wisdom, would not have envied Solomon's. Those are wise, or are likely to be so, that know how to value wise discourse, that wish for it, and wait for it, and drink it in as the earth does the rain that comes often upon it, Heb. vi. 7. And those who have such an interest as Job had in the esteem of others, whose thesauri—bare assertion goes so far, as they have a great opportunity of doing good, so they must take great care lest they do hurt to a standard out of their mouths is infectious. [2.] Much more happy were they thought on whom he smiled, and they thought themselves so, v. 24. "If I laughed on them, designing thereby to show myself pleased in them, or pleasant with them, it was such a favour, that they believed it not for joy, because it was so rare a thing to see this grave man smile. Many seek the ruler's favour: Job was a ruler whose favour was courted, and very little was the desire wherewith those to whom he once gave a kiss, was envied by another to whom he only gave a golden cup. Familiarity often breeds contempt, but if Job at any time saw fit, for his own diversion, to make himself free with those about him, yet it did not in the least diminish the veneration they had for him: the light of his countenance they cast not down. So wisely did he dispense his favours, as not to make them cheap, and so wisely did they receive them, as not to make themselves unworthy of them another time."

(3.) He was the sov'ereign of his country, v. 25. He chose out their way, sat at the helm, and steered for them, all referring themselves to his conduct, and submitting themselves to his command. To this perhaps, in many countries, monarchy owed its rise: such a man as Job, that so far excelled all his neighbours in wisdom and integrity, could not but sit chief, and the fool will, of course, be servant to him. It was the spirit of the wise, in which the wisdom did but for a while run in the blood, the honour and power would certainly attend it, and so by degrees become hereditary. Two things recommended Job to the sovereignty. [1.] That he had the authority of a commander, or general; he dwelt as a king in the army, giving orders which were not to be disputed. Every one that has the spirit of wisdom, has not the spirit of government, but Job had both, and, when there was occasion, could assume state, as the king in the army does, and say, Go, Come, and, Do this, Matt. viii. 9. [2.] That yet he had the tenderness of a confidante. He was as ready to succour those in distress, as if it had been his office to comfort the mourners. Eliphaz himself owned he had been very good in that respect; (ch. iv. 3.) Thou hast strengthened the weak hands. And this he now reflected upon with pleasure, when he was himself a mourner. He had found it easy to do good to his neighbours with the comfort of them, that we ourselves have been formerly comforted, than to comfort ourselves with those comforts whereby we have formerly comforted others.

I know not but we may look upon Job as a type and figure of Christ, in his power and prosperity: our Lord Jesus is such a King as Job was; the poor man's King, who loves righteousness and hates iniquity, and upon whom the blessing of a world ready to perish comes; see Ps. lxii. 2, 6, 8; To him therefore let us give ear, and let him sit chief in our hearts.

CHAP. XXX.

It is a melancholy But now, which this chapter begins with. Adversity is here described as much to the life as prosperity was here, and the height of that did but increase the depth of this. God sets the one over-against the other, and so did Job, that his afflictions might appear the more grievous, and, consequently, his case the more pitiable. I. Had he lived in great honour, but now he had fallen into disgrace, and was as much vilified, even by the meanest, as erer he had been magnified by the greatest; this he insists much on, v. 1. 14. II. He had had much inwrought comfort and delight, but now he was a terror and burden to himself, (v. 15, 16.) and overwhelmed with sorrow, v. 28. 31. III. He had long enjoyed a good state of health, but now he was sick and in pain, v. 17, 19, 20, 30. IV. Time was, when the secret of God was with him, but now his communication with Heaven was cut off, v. 20, 22. V. He had promised himself a long life, but now he saw death at the door, v. 23. One thing he mentions which aggravated his affliction, that it surprised him when he looked for peace. But two things gave him some relief: 1. That his troubles would not follow him to the grave, v. 24. 2. That his conscience witnessed for him, that, in his prosperity, he had sympathized with those that were in misery, v. 25.

1. BUT now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock. 2. Yea, where treight the strength of their hands profit me, in whom old age was perished? 3. For want and famine they were solitary; fleeing into the wilderness in former time desolate and waste: 4. Who cut up mallows by the bushes, and juniper-roots for their meat. 5. They were driven forth from among men (they cried after them as after a thief,) 6. To dwell in the cliffs of the valleys, in caves of the earth, and in the rocks. 7. Among the bushes they brayed; under the nettles they were gathered together. 8. They were children of fools, yea, children of base men; they were viler than the earth. And now am I their song, yea, I am their by-word. 10. They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face. 11. Because he hath loosed my cord, and afflicted me, they have also let loose the bridle before me. 12. Upon my right hand rise the youth; they push away my feet, and they raise up against me the ways of their destruction. 13. They mar my path, they set forward my calamity, they have no helper. 14. They came upon me as a wide breaking-in of waters: in the desolation they rolled themselves upon me.

Here Job makes a very large and sad complaint of the great disgrace he was fallen into, from the height of his prosperity, which was exceedingly grievous and cutting to such an ingenuous spirit as Job's was. Two things he insists upon as very aggravating.

I. The meanness of the persons that afflicted him, as it added much to his honour, in the day of his prosperity, that princes and nobles showed him respect, and paid a deference to him, so it added no less to his disgrace in his adversity, that he was spurned by the footmen, and trampled upon by those
that were not only every way his inferiors, but were the meanest and most contemptible of all mankind. 

1. They were young, younger than he; (v. 12) who ought to have behaved themselves respectfully toward him, for his age and gravity. Even the children, in their play, played upon him, as the children of Beth-el upon the prophet, Go up, thou bald-head. Children soon learn to be scornful, when they see their parents so.

2. They were brought up by their fathers with such a desperate ease, that such a man as Job would have disdained to take them into the lowest service about his house, as that of tending his sheep, and attending the shepherds with the dogs of his flock, v. 1. They were so shabby, that they were not fit to be seen among his servants, so filthy, that they were not fit to be employed, and so base, that they were not fit to be trusted in the meanest post. Job here speaks of what he might have done, not of what he did; he was not of such a spirit as to set any of the children of men with the dogs of his flock; he knew the dignity of human nature better than to do so.

3. They and their families were the unprofitable burthens of the earth, and good for nothing; Job himself, with all his prudence and patience, could make nothing of them, v. 2. The young were not fit for labour, they were so lazy, and went about their work so awkwardly; Wherein might the strength of the aged profit me? The old were not to be advised with in the smallest matters; for in them was old age indeed, but their old age was perished, they were twice children.

4. They were extremely poor; (v. 3) they were ready to starve, for they would not dig, and to beg they were ashamed. Had they been brought to necessity by the providence of God, their neighbours would have sought them out as proper objects of charity, and would have relieved them; but, being brought into distress by their own slothfulness and wastefulness, nobody was forward to relieve them; hence they were forced to flee into the deserts both for shelter and sustenance, and were put to sorry shifts indeed, when they cut up mallows by the bushes, and were glad to eat them, for want of food that was fit for them, v. 4. See what hunger will bring men to: one half of the world does not know how the other half lives; yet those that have abundance ought to think sometimes of those whose fare is very coarse, and who are brought to a short allowance of that too; but we must own the righteousness of God, and not think it strange, if slothfulness clothe men with rags, and the idle soul be made to suffer hunger. This beggarly world is full of the Devil's poor.

5. They were very scandalous wicked people, not only the burthens, but the plagues, of the places where they lived, the scum of the country; they were driven forth from among men, v. 5. They were such lying, thieving, liars, that all Israel had heard of them, that they were the mischiefs that the magistrates could do, was, to visit the country of them, while the very mob cursed after them, as after a thief, Away with such fellows from the earth, it is not fit they should live. They were lazy and would not work, and therefore they were exacained against as thieves, and unjust, for they that do not earn their own bread by honest labour, do, in effect, steal the bread out of other people's mouths; an idle fellow is a public nuisance; he does not but relieves the wereld-house, he is as here, into a wilderness, which will punish them indeed, but never reform them. They were forced to dwell in caves of the earth, and they braved like asses among the bushes, v. 6, 7. See what is the lot of those that have the cry of the country, the cry of their own conscience, against them; they cannot but be in a continual terror and confusion; they groan among the thorns, (so Broughton,) and smart among the nettles; they are stung and scalded there, where they hoped to be sheltered and protected. See what miseries wicked people bring themselves to in this world; yet this is nothing to what is in reserve for them in the other world.

6. They were all that is base, v. 8. They had nothing at all in them to recommend them to any man's esteem: they were a vile kind; yea, a kind without fame; people that nobody could give a good word for, nor wish for; they were banished from the earth, as being viler than the earth. One would not think it possible that ever the human nature should sink so low, and degenerate so far, as it did in these people. When we thank God that we are men, we have reason to thank him that we are not such men. But such as these were abusive to Job, (1.) In revenge; because, when he was in prosperity and power, like a good magistrate, he put the laws in execution, which were in force against vagabonds, and rogues, and sturdy beggars, which these base people now remembered against him. (2.) In triumph over him, because they thought he was now become like one of them, Isa. xiv. 10, 11. The abjects, men of mean spirits, insult over the miserable, Ps. xxxv. 15.

II. The greatness of the affronts that were given him: it cannot be imagined how abusive they were.

1. They made ballads on him, with which they made themselves and their companions merry; (v. 9.) I am their song, and their by-nymph. These have a very base spirit, that turn the calamities of their honest neighbours into a jest, and can sport themselves with their griefs.

2. They shunned him as a loathsome spectacle, abhorred him, fled far from him, (v. 10.) as an ugly monster, or as one infected; they that were themselves driven out from among men, would have driven him out. For,

3. They expressed the greatest scorn and indignation against him. They spit in his face, or were ready to do so; they tripped up his heels, pushed away his feet, (v. 12.) kicked him, either in wrath, because they hated him, or in sport, to make themselves merry with him, as they did with their companions at foot-ball. The best of saints have sometimes received the worst of injuries and indignities, from a spiteful, scornful, wicked, world, and must not think it strange; our Master himself was thus abused.

4. They were very malicious against him, and not only made a jest of him, but made a prey of him; not only affronted him, but set themselves to do him all the real mischief they could devise. They raise up against me the ways of their destruction; or, as some read it, They cast upon me the cause of their woe; that is, “They lay the blame of their being driven out, upon me;” and it is common for criminals to hate the judges and laws by which they are punished. But, under this present, (1.) They accused him falsely, and misrepresented his former conversation, which is here called marring his path. They reflected upon him as a tyrant and an oppressor, because he had done justice upon them; and perhaps Job's friends grounded their uncharitable censures of him (ch. xxii. 6, 8c.) upon the unjust and unreasonable clamours of these sorry people; and it was an instance of their great wickedness and insolence, when, for who can be innocent, if the accusations of a whole people are heeded? (2.) They not only triumphed in his calamity, but set it forward, and did all they could to add to his miseries, and make them more grievous to him. It is a great sin to forward the calamity of any, especially of good people: in this they have no helper, nobody to set them on, or to countenance
season; and my sinews take no rest. 18. By the great force of my disease is my garment changed: it bindeth me about as the collar of my coat. 19. He hath cast me into the mine, and I am become like dust and ashes. 20. I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me: I stand up, and thou regardest me not. 21. Thou art become cruel to me: with thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me. 22. Thou liestest up to the wind; thou causest me to ride upon it, and dissolvest my substance. 23. For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living. 24. Howbeit he will not stretch out his hand to the grave, though they cry in his destruction. 25. Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? was not my soul grieved for the poor? 26. When I looked for good, then evil came unto me; and when I waited for light, there came darkness. 27. My bowels were boiled, and rested not; the days of affliction prevented me. 28. I went mourning without the sun: I stood up, and I cried in the congregation. 29. I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls. 30. My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burnt with heat. 31. My harp also is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep.

In this second part of Job's complaint, which is very bitter, and has a great many sorrowful accents in it, we may observe a great deal that he complains of, and some little that he comforts himself with. 1. Here is much that he complains of.

1. In general, it was a day of great affliction and sorrow. (1.) Affliction seized him, and surprised him. It seized him; (v. 16.) The days of affliction have taken him by the tresses in the night; they have arrested me, as the bailiff arrests the debtor, and by violence secures him. When trouble comes with commission, it will take fast hold, and not lose its hold. It surprised him; (v. 27.) "The days of affliction prevented me," that is, "they came upon me without giving me any previous warning: I did not expect them, nor made any provision for such an evil day." Observe, He reckons his affliction by days, which will soon be numbered and finished, and are nothing to the ages of eternity, 2 Cor. iv. 17. (2.) He was in great sorrow by reason of it. His bowels boiled with grief, and rested not, v. 27. The sense of his calamities was continually preying upon his spirits, without any intermission: he went mourning from day to day, always sighing, always weeping; and such a cloud was constantly upon his mind, that he went, in effect, without the sun, v. 28. He had nothing else which he could take upon himself; he disdained himself to perpetual sorrow, as one that, like Jacob, resolved to go to the grave mourning: he walked out of the sun, (so some,) in dark shady places, as melancholy people use to do. If he went into the congregation, to join with them in solemn worship; instead of standing up calmly to desire their prayers, he stood up and cried aloud, through pain of body, or anguish of mind, like one half distracted. If he appeared in public, to receive visitors, when the fit came upon him, he could not contain

35. Thus did he all this mischief, were numerous, unanimous, and violent; (v. 14.) They came upon me as a wide breaking in of waters, when the dam is broken; or, "They came as soldiers into a broad breach which they have made in the wall of a besieged city, pouring in upon me with the utmost fury;" and in this they took a pride and a pleasure; they rolled themselves in the devotion, as a man rolls himself in a soft and easy bed; and they rolled themselves upon him with all the weight of their malice.

Lastly, All this contempt put upon him, was caused by the troubles he was in; (v. 11.) "Because he has loosed my cord; has taken away the honour and power with which I was girded, (ch. xii. 18.) has scattered what I had got together, and untwisted all my affairs, because he has afflicted me, therefore they have let loose the bridle before me," that is, "have given themselves a liberty to say and do what they please against me." They that by Providence were stripped of their honor, may always be loaded with contempt by inconsiderate ill-natured people. "Because he hath loosed his cord," (the original has that reading also,) that is, "because he has taken off his bridle of restraint from off their malice, they cast away the bridle from me," that is, "they make no account of my authority, nor stand in any awe of me." It is owing to the hold God has of the consciences even of bad men, and the restraints it lays upon them, that we are not continually thus insulted and abused; and if at any time we meet with such ill treatment, we must acknowledge the hand of God in taking off those restraints; as David did, when Shimei cursed him; So let him curse, for the Lord hath hidden him.

Now in all this, (1.) We may see the uncertainty of worldly honour, and particularly of popular applause; how suddenly a man may fall from the height of dignity into the depth of disgrace. What little cause therefore have men to be ambitious or proud of that which may be so easily lost, and what little confidence is to be put in it? They that, to-day, cry, Hosannah, may, to-morrow, cry, Crucify. But there is an honour which comes from God, which, if we secure, we shall find it not thus changeable and loseable. (2.) We may see that it has often been the lot of very wise and good men, to be tampered upon and abused. And, (3.) That those who look only at the things that are seen, despise those whom the world frowns upon, though they are ever so much the favourites of Heaven. Nothing is more grievous in poverty than that it renders men contemptible: Turba Remi sequitur fortunam, ut semper edit damnatos—The Roman footsoldiers, faithful to the turns of fortune, still persecute the fallen. (4.) We may see in Job a type of Christ, who was thus made a reproach of men, and despised of the people, (Ps. xxii. 6. Isa. liii. 3.) and who hid not his face from shame, and spitting, but bore it better than Job did.

15. Terrors are turned upon me: they pursue my soul as the wind; and my welfare passeth away as a cloud. 16. And now my soul is poured out upon me: the days of affliction have taken hold upon me. 17. My bones are pierced in me in the night.
himself, nor preserve due decorum, but stood up, and shrieked aloud. Thus he was a brother to dragons, and owls, (v. 29.) both in choosing solitude and retirement, as they do, (Isa. xxxiv. 13.) and in making a fearful hideous noise, as they do; his inconsiderable complaints were fitly compared to their inarticulate ones.

2. The terror and trouble that seized his soul, were the sorest part of his calamity, v. 15, 16. (1.) If he looked forward, he saw every thing frightful before him: if he endeavoured to shake off his terror, they turned furiously upon him: if he endeavoured to escape from them, they pursued his soul as swiftly and violently as the wind. He complained, at first, of the terror of his soul and the bed he slept upon, Eze. vi. 4. and still, which way soever he looked, they turned upon him; which way soever he fled, they pursued him. My soul.—Heb. My principal one. My princess; for the soul is the principal part of the man; it is our glory; it is every way more excellent than the body, and therefore that which pursues the soul, and threatens that, should be most dreaded. (2.) If he looked back, he saw all the good he had formerly enjoyed reversed; he found the paradise he had not no bittter remembrance of it; My welfare passeth away, as suddenly, swiftly, and irrecoverably, as a cloud. (3.) If he looked within, he found his spirit quite sunk, and unable to bear his infirmity, not only wounded, but poured out upon him, v. 16. He was not only weak as water, but, in his own apprehension, lost as water split upon the ground. Compare Ps. xxii. 14. My heart is melted like wax.

2. His bodily diseases were very grievous for him. (1.) He was first put into a fever, and in that went to the bone, to all his bones, v. 17. It was a sword in his bones, which pierced him in the night season, when he should have been refreshed with sleep; his nerves were affected with strong convulsions, his sinews took no rest. By reason of his pain, he could take no rest, but sleep departed from his eyes. His bones were burnt with heat; (v. 30.) He was in a constant fever, which dried up the natural moisture, and even consumed the marrow in his bones. See how frail our bodies are, which carry in themselves the seeds of our own disease and death. (2.) He was full of sores. Some, that are pained in their bones, yet sleep in a whole skin, but Satan’s commission against Job extending both to his bone and to his flesh, he spared neither. His skin was black upon him, v. 30. The blood settled, and the sores suppurred, which made his skin look black. Even his garment had its colour changed with the continual running of his blood, and the soft clothing he used to wear was now grown so stiff, that all his garments were like his collar, v. 18. It would be noisome to describe what a condition poor Job was in, for want of clean linen and good attendance, and what filthy rags all his clothes were. Some think, that, among other diseases, Job was ill of a quinsy, or swelling in his throat, and that was it which bound him about like a stiff collar.

2. The same disease, which, (v. 19.) compassed to mine, so some; his body looked more like a heap of dirt than any thing else. Let none be proud of their clothing, nor proud of their cleanliness; they know not what some disease or other may change their garments, and even throw them into the mire, and make them noisome both to themselves and others; instead of sweet smell, there shall be a stench, Isa. iii. 24. We are but dust and ashes at the touch of God, and bodies vile bodies; but we are apt to forget it, till God, by some sore disease, makes us sensibly to feel and own what we are; I am become already like that dust and ashes into which I must shortly be resolved; wherever I go, I carry my grave about with me.”

4. That which afflicted him most of all, was, that God seemed to be his Enemy, and to fight against him. It was he that cast him into the mire, (v. 19.) and seemed to trample on him when he had him upon the earth, He put him to the lowest thing else. (1.) That God did not appear for him. He addressed himself to him, but gained no grant; appealed to him, but gained no sentence; he was very important in his applications, but in vain; (v. 20.) “I cry unto thee, as one in earnest, I stand up and cry, as one waiting for an answer, but thou hearest not, thou regardest not, for any thing I can perceive.” If our most fervent prayers bring not in speedy and sensible returns, we must not think it.

The same disease, which, (v. 19.) compassed to mine, so some; his body looked more like a heap of dirt than any thing else, in yet, they have often thought that they did, and that God has not only been deaf, but angry, at the prayers of his people, Ps. lxxx. 4. (2.) That God did appear against him, We have here one of the worst words that ever Job spake; (v. 21.) Thou art become cruel to me; far be it from the God of mercy and grace, that he should be cruel to any; his passions fall not; but especially that he would be cruel to his own children, so ungrateful, when he said so of him, but harbouring hard thoughts of God was the sin which did, at this time, most easily beset him. Here, [1.] He thought God fought against him, and stirred up his whole strength to ruin him; With thy strong hand thou opposest thyself, or art an Adversary against me. He had better thoughts of God, (ch. xxiii. 6.) when he concluded he would not plead against him with his great power. God has an absolute sovereignty, and an irresistible strength, but he never uses either the one or the other for the crushing or oppressing of any. [2.] He thought he insulted over him; (v. 22.) Thou liest me up to the wind, as a feather or the chaff which the wind plays with; so unequal a match did Job think himself for Omnipotence, and so unable was he to help himself, when he was made to ride, not in triumph, but in terror, upon the wings of the wind, and the judgments of God did even dissolve his substance, is a cloud distinguished and dispersed by the wind, and his substance, take him in his best estate, is nothing before the power of God, it is soon dissolved. 5. He expected no other now, than that God, by these troubles, would shortly make an end of him. "If I be made to ride upon the wind, I can count upon nother than to break my neck shortly; and he speaks as if God had no other design upon him than that, in all his dealings with him; “I know that thou wilt bring me, with so much more the terror, to death, though I might have been brought thither without all this ado, for it is the house appointed for all living," v. 23. The grave is a house, a narrow, dark, cold, ill-furnished, house, but it will be our residence, where we shall rest and be safe; it is our long home, our own home, for it is our mother’s lap, and in it we are gathered to our fathers. It is a house appointed for us, by him that has appointed us the times of our visits. It is appointed for all living. It is the common receptacle, where rich and poor meet, it is appointed for the general rendezvous; we must all be brought thither shortly; it is God that brings us, for the keys of death and the grave are in his hand, and we may all know that, sooner or later, he will bring us thither; it would be well for us, if we would duly consider it. The living know that they shall die, let us weep and sigh for the dead. There were two things that aggrieved his trouble, and made it the less tolerable. (1.) That it was a very great disappointment to his expectation; (v. 26.) “When I looked for good, for more good, or, at least, for the continuance of what I had, then evil came!” such uncertain things are all our
worldly enjoyments, and such a folly is it to feed ourselves with great expectations from them. They that wait for light from the sparks of their creature-comforts, will be wretchedly disappointed, and will make their bed in the darkness. (2.) That it was a very great change in his condition; (v. 31.) “My heart is not only laid by, and hung upon the willow-trees, but it is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep.” Job, in his prosperity, had taken the timbrel and harp, and rejoiced at the sound of the organ, ch. xxi. 12. Notwithstanding he had not deserted them, now he would not enjoy them; but now his tune was altered. Let those, therefore, that rejoice, be as though they rejoiced not, for they know not how soon their laughter will be turned into mourning, and their joy into heaviness. Thus we see how much Job complains of: but,

II. Here is something, in the midst of all, with which he comforts himself, and it is but a little. 1. He foreseees, with comfort, that death will be the period of his calamities; (v. 24.) Though God now with a strong hand, opposed himself against him, yet, says he, he will not stretch out his hand to the grave. The hand of God’s wrath would bring him to death, but would not follow him beyond death; his soul would be safe and happy in the world of spirits, his body safe and easy in the dust. Though men cry in his destruction; though, when they are dying, there is a great deal of agony and outcry, many a sigh, and groan, and complaint, yet in the grave they feel nothing, they fear nothing, but all is quiet there. “Though in hell, which is called destruction, they cry, yet not in the grave; and I being delivered from the second death, the first to me will be an effectual relief.” Therefore he wished he might be hid in the grave, ch. xiv. 13. 2. He reflects with comfort upon the concern he always had for the calamities of others, when he was himself at ease; (v. 25.) Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? Sometimes he himself complained of God, thinking it very hard, that he, who had showed mercy to others, should not himself find mercy. I would rather take it as a quieting consideration to himself; his conscience witnessed for him, that he had always sympathized with persons in misery, and done what he could to help them, and therefore had reason to expect that, at length, both God and his friends would pity him. They who mourn with them, they are shortly after delivered; and they shall know better, when it comes to their turn to drink of the bitter cup. Did not my soul burn for the poor? So some read it, comparing it with that of St. Paul, (2 Cor. xi. 29.) Who is offended, and I burn not? As they who have been unmerciful and hard-hearted to others, may expect to hear of it from their own consciences, when they are themselves in trouble, so they who have considered the poor and succourcd them, shall have the remembrance of that to make their bed easy in their sickness, Ps. xli. 1, 3.

CHAP XXXI.

Job had often protested his integrity in general, here he does it in particular instances; not in a way of commendation, (for he does not here proclaim his good deeds,) but in his own way; whereby to do himself clear from those crimes with which his friends had falsely charged him, which is a debt every man owes to his own reputation. Job’s friends had been particular in their articles of impeachment against him, and therefore he bears his protestation, which consists to refer especially to what Eliphaz had accused him of, ch. xxii. 6, k.c. They had produced no witnesses against him, either could they prove the things whereof they accused him, and therefore he may well be admitted to purge himself upon oath, which he does very solemnly, and with many awful imprecatious of God’s wrath, if he were guilty of those crimes; this protestation confirms God’s character of him, that there was none like him in the earth; perhaps some of his accusers durst not have joined with him; for he not only acquits himself from those gross sins which lie open to the eye of the world, but from many secret sins, which, though he had been guilty of them, nobody could have charged him with, because he will prove himself no hypocrite. Nor does he only maintain the cleanness of his practices, but shows also that in them he went upon good principles; that the reason of his eschewing evil was, but that he feared God, and his piety was at the bottom of his justice and charity; and this crowns the proof of his sincerity. The sins from which he here acquits himself, are, 1. Wantonness and uncleanness of heart, v. 1, 4. 2. Fraud and injustice in commerce, ch. xxxi. 12. 3. Harlotry and severity toward his servants, v. 13, 15. 4. Unmercifulness to the poor, the widows, and the fatherless, v. 16, 25. 6. Confidence in his worldly wealth, v. 24, 25. 4. Deceit and hypocrisy in concealing his own sins, and cowardice in contriving at the sins of others, v. 33, 34. 11. Oppression, and the violent invasion of other people’s rights, v. 38, 40. And, above all, the close 4. deals to God’s judgment concerning his integrity, v. 35, 37. Now, in all this, we may see, (1.) The sense of the patriarchal age concerning good and evil, and what was so long ago condemned as sinful, that is, both hateful and hurtful. (2.) A noble pattern of piety and virtue proposed to us for our imitation, which, if our consciences can witness for us that we conform to it, will be our rejoicing, as it was Job’s, in the day of evil.

1. I MADE a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?
2. For what portion of God is there from above? and what inheritance of the Almighty from on high? 3. Is not destruction to the wicked? and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity? 4. Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps? 5. If I have walked with vanity, or if my foot hath hasted to deceit; 6. Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity. 7. If my step hath turned out of the way, and my heart walked after mine eyes, and if any blot hath cleaved to my hands; 8. Then let me sow, and let another eat; yea, let my off spring be rooted out.

The lusts of the flesh, and the love of the world, are the two fatal rocks on which multitudes split; against these Job protests he was always careful to stand upon his guard.

I. Against the lusts of the flesh. He not only kept himself clear from adultery, from defiling his neighbours’ wives, (v. 9.) but from all lewdness with any women whatsoever. He kept no concubine, but was inviolably faithful to the marriage-bed, though his wife was none of the wisest, best, or handsomest. This duty he also showed that a man should have but one wife, and cleave to her only; and Job kept close to that institution, and abhorred the thought of transgressing it; for, though his greatness might tempt him to it, his goodness kept him from it. Job was now in pain and sickness of body, and under that affliction it is in a particular manner comfortable, if our conscience can witness for us, that we have been careful to preserve our body in chaste conversation, and to possess those vessels in sanctification and honour, part from the lusts of uncleanness. Now observe here,

I. What the resolutions were, which, in this matter, he kept to; (v. 1.) I made a covenant with mine eyes, that is, “I watched against the occasions of the sin; why then should I think upon a maid?” that is, “By that means, through the grace of God, I kept myself from the very first step to-
wards it." So far was he from wanton dalliances, or any act of lasciviousness, that, (1.) He would not so much as admit a wanton look. He made a covenant with his eyes, made this bargain with them, that they would allow him the pleasure of beholding the light of the sun, and the glory of God shining in the visible creation, provided they would never fasten upon any object that might occasion any impure imaginings, much less any impure desires, in his mind; and, under this penalty, that if they did, they must smart for it in pestilential tears. Note, Those that would keep their hearts pure, must guard their eyes, which are both the outlets and inlets of uncleanness. Hence we read of wanton eyes, Job i. 15. His eye was on hidden things. The first sin began in the eye, Gen. iii. 6. What we must not meddle with, we must not lust after; and what we must not lust after, we must not look at; not the forbidden wealth, (Prov. xxiv. 5.) not the forbidden wine, (Prov. xxiii. 11.) not the forbidden woman, Matth. v. 28. (2.) He would not so much as allow a wanton thought; "Why then should I think upon a maid, with any unchaste fancy or desire toward her?" Shame and sense of honour might persuade him, He did not desire or think of a beautiful virgin, but only grace and the fear of God would restrain him from so much as thinking of it. Those are not chaste, that are not so in spirit as well as body, 1 Cor. vii. 34. See how Christ's exposition of the seventh commandment agrees with the ancient sense of it, and how much better Job understood it than the Pharisees, though they sat in Moses's chair.

2. What the reasons were, which, in this matter, he was governed by. It was not for fear of reproach among men, though that is to be considered, (Prov. vi. 33.) but for fear of the wrath and curse of God. He knew very well.

(1.) That uncleanness is a sin that forfeits all good, and shuts us out from the hope of it; (v. 2.) What portion of God is there from above? What blessing can such impure sinners expect from the pure and holy God, or what token of his favour? What inheritance of the Almighty can they look for, when there is no portion, no influence, no true happiness, for a soul, but what is in God, in the Almighty, and what comes from above, from on high. Those that wallow in uncleanness, render themselves utterly unfit for communion with God, either in grace here, or in glory hereafter, and become allied to unclean spirits, which are for ever separated from him; and then what portion, what inheritance, can they have with God? No unclean thing shall enter into the New Jerusalem, that holy city.

(2.) It is a sin that incurs divine vengeance, v. 3. It will certainly be the sinner's ruin, if it be not repented of in time. Is not destruction a swift and sure destruction to those wicked people, and a strange punishment to the workers of this iniquity? Fools make a mock at this sin, make a jest of it, it is with them a peccadillo, a trick of youth; but they deceive themselves with vain words, for, because of these things, how light soever they make of them, the wrath of God, the insupportable wrath of the eternal God, comes upon the children of disobedience, Eph. v. 6. There are some sinners whom God sometimes goes out of the common road of providence to meet with; such are these. The destruction of Sodom is a strange punishment. Is there not alienation (so some read it) to the workers of iniquity? This is the sinfulness of the sin, that it alienates the mind from God; (Eph. iv. 18, 19.) and this is the punishment of the sinners, that they shall be eternally set at a distance from him, Rev. xxii. 15.

(3.) It cannot be hid from the all-seeing God. A wanton thought cannot be so close, nor a wanton look so quick, as to escape his cognizance, much less any act of uncleanness so secretly done, as to be out of his sight. If Job was at any time tempted to this sin, he restrained himself from it, and all approaches to it, with this pertinent thought, (v. 4.) Doth not he see my secrets, Joseph, did, Gen. xxxix. 9. How can I do it, and sin against God? Two things Job had an eye to. [1.] God's omniscience. It is a great truth, that God's eyes are upon all the ways of men; (Prov. v. 20, 21.) but Job here mentions it with application to himself and his own actions; Doth not he see my ways? O God, thou hast searched me and known me. God sees what rule we walk by, what company we walk with, what end we walk to, and what course we follow. (2.) His observance. "He not only sees, but takes notice; he counts all my steps, all my false steps in the way of duty, all my by-steps into the way of sin." He not only sees our ways in general, but takes cognizance of our particular steps in these ways, every action, every motion. He keeps count of all, because he will call us to account, will bring every work into judgment. God takes a more exact notice of us than we do of ourselves; for who ever counted, or numbered, or watched every step? Job ii. 3. Let us therefore walk circumspectly.
1. How he ratifies his protestation. So confident is he of his own honesty, that, (1.) He is willing to have his goods searched; (v. 6.) Let me be weighed in an even balance, that is, “Let what I have got be inquired into, and it will be found to weigh well;” a sign that it was not gotten by vanity, for then Tekeel had been written on it—weighed in the balance, and found too light. An honest man is so far from dread-
ing a trial, that he desires it rather, being well as-
sured that God knows his integrity, and will approve it, and that the trial of it will be to his praise and honour. (2.) He is willing to forfeit the whole cargo, if there were found any prohibited, contraband, goods, any thing but what he came honestly by; (v. 8.) “Let me sow, and let another eat,” which was already agreed to be the doom of oppressors; (ch. v. 5.) “and let my offspring, all the trees that I have planted, be rooted out.” This intimates, that he believed the sin did deserve this punishment, that, usually, it is thus punished; but that, though now his estate was ruined, (and at such a time, if ever, his conscience would have brought his sin to his mind,) yet he knew himself innocent, and would venture all the poor remains of his estate upon the issue of the trial.

9. If my heart have been deceived by a woman; or if I have laid wait at my neigh-
bour’s door; 10. Then let my wife grind unto another, and let others bow down upon her. 11. For this is a heinous crime; yea, it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges. 12. For it is a fire that consumeth to destruc-
tion, and would root out all mine increase. 13. If I did despise the cause of my man-
servant, or of my maid-servant, when they contended with me; 14. What then shall I do when God riseth up? and, when he visit-
eth, what shall I answer him? 15. Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?

Two more instances we have here of Job’s integ-
rrity.

1. That he had a very great abhorrence of the sin of adultery. As he did not wrong his own mar-
riage-bed, by keeping a concubine, (he did not so much as think upon a maid, v. 1.) so he was careful not to offer any injury to his neighbour’s marriag-
edge.

Let us see here,

1. How clear he was from this sin, v. 9. (1.) He did not so much as covet his neighbour’s wife, for even his heart was not deceived by a woman. The beauty of another man’s wife did not kindle in him any unchaste desires, nor was he ever moved by the allurements of an adulterous woman, such as is described, Prov. vii. 6, &c. See the original of all the fell designs of this life. They come from a deceived heart. Every sin is deceitful, and none more so than the sin of uncleanness. (2.) He never compassed or imagined any unchaste design. He never laid wait at his neighbour’s door, to get an opportunity to debauch his wife in his absence, when the good man was not at home, Prov. vii. 19. See ch. xxiv. 15.

2. What a dread he had of this sin, and what frightful apprehensions he had concerning the ma-
lignity of it—that it was a heinous crime. (v. 11.) one of the greatest viles sins a man can be guilty

of, highly provoking to God, and destructive to the prosperity of the soul. With respect to the mis-
chievousness of it, and the punishment it deserved, he owns that, if he were guilty of that heinous crime, (1.) His family might justly be made infamous in the highest degree; (v. 10.) Let my wife grind to an-
other. Let her be a slave, so some; a harlot, so others. God often punishes the sins of one with the sin of another, the adultery of the husband with the adul-
tery of the wife, as in David’s case, (2 Sam. xii. 11.) which did not altogether excuse the treacher-
ous adulterous wife; but, how unrighteous soever she is, God is righteous. See Hos. iv. 13, Your spou-
ses shall commit adultery. Note, Those who are not just and faithful to their relations, must not think it strange, if their relations be unjust and unfaithful to them. (2.) He himself might justly be made a pub-
lic example; For it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges; yea, though they who are guilty of it are themselves judges, says God. Note, Adultery is a crime which the civil magistrate ought to take cognizance of, and punish: so it was adjudged even in the patriarchal age, before the law of Moses made it capital. It is an evil work, to which the sword of justice ought to be a terror. (3.) It might justly become the ruin of his estate; nay, he knew it would be so; (v. 12.) It is a fire. Lust is a fire in the soul: they that indulge it, are said to burn. It con-
sumes all that is good there, (the convictions, the comforts of conscience;) it endures the application of every reedy that drowns the fire of God’s wrath, which, if not extin-
guished by the blood of Christ, will burn to the lowest hell. It will consume even to that eternal destruc-
tion. It consumes the body, (Prov. v. 11.) it consumes the substance, it roots out all the in-
crease. Burning lusts bring burning judgments.

Perhaps it alludes to the burning of Sodom, which was intended for an example to those who should afterward, in like manner, live ungodly.

II. That he had a very great tenderness for his servants, and ruled them with a gentle hand. He had a great household, and he managed it well. By this he evidenced his sincerity, that he had grace to govern his passion as well as his appetite; and he that in these two things has the rule of his own spirit, is better than the mighty, Prov. xvi. 32. Here observe,

1. What were Job’s condensations to his serv-
rrants; (v. 15.) He did not despise the cause of his man-
servant, no, nor of his maid-servant, when they contended with him; that is, if they contradicted him in any thing, he was willing to hear their rea-
sons. If they did offended him, or were accused to him, he would patiently hear what they had to say for themselves, in their own vindication or ex-
cuse. Nay, if they complained of any hardship he put upon them, he did not bow-beat them, and bid them hold their tongues, but gave them leave to tell their story, and redressed their grievances as far as it appeared they had right on their side. He was tender of them, not only when they served him and pleased him, but even when they contended with him. Herein, he was a great example to masters, to give unto their servants that which is just and equa-
list, to do the same things to them, that they expect from them, (Col. iv. 1. Eph. vi. 9.) and not to rule them with the rigour of despised, and high hand. Many of Job’s servants were slain in his ser-
vice, (ch. i. 15. 17.) the rest were unkind and un-
dutiful to him, and despised his cause, though he never despised theirs; (ch. xix. 15, 16.) but he had this comfort, that in his prosperity he had behav-
ed well toward them. Note, When relations are either removed from us, or embittered to us, the testimony of our consciences, that we have done our duty to them, will be a great support to us when we are in trouble.
to treat his servants thus kindly; he had, herein, an eye to God, both as his Judge, and their Maker.

(1.) As his Judge; he considered, "If I should be imperious and severe with my servants, what then shall I do when God riseth up?" He considered that he had a Master in heaven, to whom he was accountable, who will rise up, and will visit; and we are concerned to consider what we shall do in the day of his visitation, (Isa. x. 3.) and, considering that we are undone, if God should then be strait and severe with us, we ought to be very mild and gentle towards all with whom we have to do. Consider what would become of us, if God should be extreme to mark what we do amiss, should take all advantages against us, and insist upon all his just demands from us; if he should visit every offence, and take every forfeiture; if he should always chide, and keep his anger for ever. And let not us be rigorous with our inferiors. Consider what will become of us, if we be cruel and unmerciful to our brethren. The cries of the injured will be heard, the sins of the injurious will be punished, they that showed no mercy, shall find none; and what shall we do then?

(2.) As his and his servants' Creator; (v. 15.) where he had not permitted to be harsh with his servants, to deny them right, and turn a deaf ear to their reasons, this thought came very seasonably into his mind, "Did not he that made me in the womb, make him? I am a creature as well as he, and my being is derived and depending as well as his. He partakes of the same nature that I do, and is the work of the same hand; have we not all one Father?"

Note, Whatever difference there is among men in their outward condition, in their capacity of mind, or strength of body, or place in the world, he that made the one, made the other also; which is a good reason why we should not mock at men's natural infirmities, nor trample upon those that are any way worse than the greater part of us. Is not the same power, for the same end, not withstanding the disparity of our outward condition, we are bound so far to set ourselves upon the level with those we deal with, as to do to them, in all respects, as we would they should do to us.

1. If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; 17. Or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; 18. (For from my youth he was brought up with me, as with a father, and I have guided her from my mother's womb;) 19. If I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; 20. If his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warned with the fleece of my sheep; 21. If I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate; 22. Then let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone. 23. For destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure.

Eliphaz had particularly charged Job with unmercifulness to the poor; (ch. xxi. 6, &c.) Thou most withholden bread from the hungry, stripped the naked of their clothing, and sent widows away empty. One would think he could not have been so very piteous and express in his charge, unless there had been some truth in it, some ground for it; and yet it appears, by Job's protestation, that it was utterly false and calumnious; he was never guilty of any such thing. See here,

1. The testimony which Job's conscience gave in, concerning his constant behaviour towards the poor. He is most large upon this head, because in this matter he was most particularly accused. He solemnly protests,

1. That he had never been wanting to do good to them, as there was occasion, to the utmost of his ability. He did not neglect to be attentive to the poor, and careful of them, especially the widows and fatherless, that were destitute of help. (1.) He was always ready to grant their desires, and answer their expectations, v. 16. If a poor person begged a kindness of him, he was ready to gratify him; if he could but perceive, by the widow's mournful craving look, that she expected an alms from him, though she had not confidence enough to ask it, he had compassion enough to give it, and never caused her to wait; but went and did it. (2.) He was ready to do good upon the poor, and did them honour; for he took the fatherless children to eat with him at his own table, they should fare as he fared, and be familiar with him, and he would show himself pleased with their company, as if they had been his own, v. 17.

As it is one of the greatest grievances of poverty, that it exposes to contempt, so it is none of the least supports to the poor, to be respected. (3.) He was very tender of them, and had a fatherly concern for their comfort, v. 18. He was a father to the fatherless, took care of orphans, brought them up with him under his own eye, and gave them, not only maintenance, but education. He was a guide to the widow, who had lost the guide of her youth; he advised her in her affairs, took cognizance of them, and undertook the management of them.

Those that need not our alms, may yet have occasion for our counsel, and it may be a real kindness to them. This Job doth not do from his youth, from his mother's womb, that is, he had something of tenderness and compassion woven in his nature; he began betimes to do good, ever since he could remember; he had always some poor widow or fatherless child under his care. His parents taught him betimes to pity and relieve the poor, and brought up orphans with him.

(4.) He provided food convenient for them; they ate of the same morsels that he did, (v. 17.) not after him, of the crumbs that fell from his table, but with him, of the best dish upon his table. They that have abundance, must not eat their morsels alone, as if they had none but themselves to take care of, nor indulge their appetite with a dainty bit by themselves, but take others to share with them, as David took Mephibosheth. (5.) He took particular care to clothe them that were without covering, which would be more expensive to him than feeding them, (v. 19.) Poor people may perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; as well as for want of clothing to lie in by night, or to go abroad by day. If Job knew of any that were in this distress, he was forward to relieve them, and, instead of giving rich and gaudy liveries to his servants, while the poor were turned off with rags that were ready to be thrown to the dunghill, he had good, warm, strong clothes, made on purpose for them, of the fleece of his sheep, (v. 20.) so that their loins, whenever they girt those garments about them, were blessed him; they commended his charity, blessed God for him, and prayed God to bless him. Job's sheep were burned with fire from heaven, but this was his comfort, that, when he had them, he came honestly by them, and used them charitably fed
the poor with their flesh, and clothed them with their wool.

2. That he had never been accessory to the wrongdoing of any that were poor. It might be said, perhaps, that he was kind here and there to a poor orphan that was a favourite, but to others he was oppressive. No, he was tender of all, and injurious to none. He never so much as lifted up his hand against the fatherless, and gave no occasion to those who threatened or frightened them, or offered to strike them; never used his power to crush them that stood in his way, or squeeze what he could out of them; though he saw his help in the gate, that is, though he had interest enough both in the people and in the judges, both to enable him to do it, and to bear him out when he had done it. Those that have it in their power to do a wrong thing, and go through with it, and a prospect of getting by it, and yet do justly, and love mercy, and are firm to both, may afterward reflect upon it with much comfort, as Job does here.

II. The imprecation wherewith he confirms this protestation; (v. 22.) "If I have been oppressive to the poor, let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone," that is, "Let the flesh rot off from the bone, and one bone be disjointed and broken off from another." Had he not been perfectly clear in this matter, he durst not have challenged the judge concerning it. And he intimates, that it is a righteous thing with God to break the arm that is lifted up against the fatherless, as he withered Jeroam's arm that was stretched out against a prophet.

III. The principles by which Job was restrained from all uncharitableness and unmercifulness. He durst not abuse the poor; for though, with his help in the gate, he could overpower them, yet he could not make his part good against that God who is the Father of orphans, and poor men, and will not let oppressors go unpunished; v. 23. " Destruction from God was a terror to me, whenever I was tempted to this sin, and by reason of his highness I could not endure the thought of making him my Enemy." He stood in awe. 1. Of the majesty of God, as a God above him. He thought of his highness, the infinite distance between him and God, which possessed him with such a reverence of him, as made him more circumspect in his conduct than he otherwise would have been. They who oppress the poor, and pervert judgment and justice, forget that he who is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be a higher than they, who is able to deal with them; (Eccl. v. 8.) but Job considered this. 2. Of the wrath of God, as a God that would certainly be against him, if he should wrong the poor. Destruction from God, because it would be a certain and an utter ruin to him, if he were guilty of this sin, was a constant terror to him, to restrain him from it. Note, Good men, even the best, have need to restrain themselves from sin with the fear of destruction from God, and all little enough. This should especially restrain us from all acts of injustice and oppression—that God himself is the Avenger thereof. Even then when salvation from God is a comfort to us, yet destruction from God should be a terror to us. Adam, in innocency, was awed with a threatening.

24. If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence; 25. If I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because my hand had gotten much; 26. If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness, 27. And my heart hath been secretly enuced, or my mouth hath kissed my hand: 28. This also were an iniquity to be punished ed by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above. 29. If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him; 30. (Neither have I suffered my mouth to sin, by wishing a curse to his soul;) 31. If the men of my tabernacle said not, Oh that we had of his flesh! we cannot be satisfied. 32. (The stranger did not lodge in the street; but I opened my doors to the traveller.)

Four articles more of Job's protestation we have in these verses, which, as all the rest, not only assure us what he was and did, but teach us what we should be and do.

1. He protests that he never set his heart upon the wealth of this world, nor took the things of it for his portion and happiness. He had gold, he had fine gold, his wealth was great, and he had gotten much. Our wealth is either advantageous or pernicious to us, according as we stand affected to it. If we make it our rest and our ruler, it will be our ruin; if we make it our servant and an instrument of righteousness, it will be a blessing to us. Job here tells how he stood affected to his worldly wealth, 1. He put no great confidence in it; he did not make wealth his god; v. 2. He did not depend upon that righteousness that do, and enemies to themselves, who depend upon it as sufficient to make them happy, who think themselves safe and honourable, and sure of comfort, in having abundance of this world's goods. Some make it their hope and confidence for another world, as if it were a certain token of God's favour and those who have so much sense as not to think so, yet promise themselves that it will be a portion with them in this life, whereas the things themselves are uncertain, and our satisfaction in them much more so. It is hard to have riches, and not to trust in riches; and that is it which makes it so difficult for as a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God, Matth. xix. 23. Mark x. 24. 2. He took no great complacency in it; (v. 25.) If I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and boasted that my hand had gotten much. He took no pride in his wealth, as if it added any thing to his real excellency, nor did he think any riches his merit, and in giving his hand got it, Deut. vii. 17. He took no pleasure in it, in comparison with the spiritual things which were the delight of his soul. His joy did not terminate in the gift, but passed through it to the Giver. When he was in the midst of his abundance, he never said, Soul, take thine ease in these things, eat, drink, and be merry, nor blessed himself in his riches. He did not inordinately rejoice in his wealth; and that helped him to bear the loss of it so patiently as he did. The way to weep as though we were not, is, to rejoice as though we rejoiced not. The less pleasure the enjoyment is, the less pain the disappointment will be.

2. He protests that he never gave the worship and glory to the creature, which are due to God only; he was never guilty of idolatry, v. 26.-28. We do not find that Job's friends charged him with the practice of idolatry; but there were those in the time of Job that so set themselves to worship the sun and moon, and stars, and that else Job would not have mentioned it. Idolatry is one of the old ways which wicked men have trodden, and the most ancient idolatry was, the worshipping of the sun and moon, to which the temptation was most strong, as appears, (Deut. iv. 19.) where Moses speaks of the danger which the people were in of being driven to worship them. But, as yet, it was practised secretly, and durst not appear in open view, as, afterward, the most abominable idolatry did. Observe,
1. How far Job kept from this sin. He not only never bowed the knee to Baal, (which, some think, was designed to represent the sun,) never fell down, and worshipped the sun, but he kept his eye, his heart, and his whole soul, from this sin. 

2. How ill Job thought of this sin, v. 28. (1.) He looked upon it as an affront to the civil magistrate; It were an iniquity to be punished by the judge, as a public nuisance, and hurtful to kings and provinces. Idolatry debouches men’s minds, corrupts their manners, takes off the true sense of religion, which is the great bond of societies, and provokes God to give men up to a gorg probate, so, and to send judgments upon a nation; and therefore the conservators of the public peace are concerned to restrain it by punishing it. (2.) He looked upon it as a much greater affront to the God of heaven, and no less than high treason against his crown and dignity; For I should have denied the God that is above, denied his being as God, and his sovereignty as God above. Idolatry is, in effect, atheism; hence the Gentiles are said to be without God (athetists) in the world. Note, We should be afraid of every thing that does but implicitly deny the God above, his providence, or any of his perfections.

III. He protests that he was so far from doing or designing mischief to any, that he neither desired nor delighted in the hurt of the worst enemy he had. The forgiving of those that do us evil, it seems, was not only a sin, but a crime; and the Pharisees, at the feast of unleavened bread, were concerning it of no effect, by teaching, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy, Matth. v. 43. 

Observe here,

1. Job was far from revenge. He did not only not return the injuries that were done him, not only not destroy those who hated him; but, (1.) He did not so much as rejoice when any mischief betel them, v. 29. Many who would not wilfully hurt their neighbours in their right, or have done them a dishappiness, yet are secretly pleased, and laugh in their sleeve, (as we say,) when hurt is done them: but Job was not of that spirit. Though Job was a very good man, yet, it seems, there were those that hated him, but evil found them. He saw their destruction, and was far from rejoicing in it, for that would justly have brought the destruction upon him, as it is intimated, Prov. xxiv. 17, 18. (2.) He did not so much as wish in his own mind that evil might befall them, v. 30. He never wished a curse to his soul (causes to the soul are the worst of curses,) never desired his death; he knew that, if he did, it would turn into sin to him. He was careful not to offend with his tongue, (Ps. xxxix. 1.) he would not suffer his mouth to sin, and therefore durst not impute any evil, no not to his worst enemy. If others bear malice to us, that will not justify us in bearing malice to them. 

2. He was violently urged to revenge, and yet he kept himself that clear from it. (v. 31.) The men of his tabernacle, his domestics, his servants, and those about him, were so enraged at Job’s enemy, that they could have eaten him, if Job would but have set them on, or given them leave. “O that we had of his flesh!” Our master is satisfied to forgive him, but we cannot be so satisfied.” See how much beloved Job was by his family, how heartily they espoused his cause, and what enemies they were to his enemies; but see what a strict hand Job kept upon his passions, that he would not act upon himself, though he had those about him that blew the coals of his resentment. Note, (1.) A good man commonly does not himself lay to heart the affronts that are done him so much as his friends do for him. (2.) Great men have commonly those about them that stir them up to revenge. David had so, 1 Sam. xxiv. 4.—xxvi. 8. 2 Sam. xvi. 9. But if they keep their temper, notwithstanding the spiteful insinuations of those about them, afterward it shall be no grief of heart to them, but shall turn very much to their praise.

IV. He protests that he had never been unkind or inhospitable to strangers; (v. 32.) The stranger lodged not in the street, as angels might lately have done in the streets of Sodom, if Lot alone had not entertained them. Perhaps, by that instance, Job was taught (as we are, Heb. xiii. 2.) not to be forgetful to entertain strangers. He that is at home, must consider those that are from home, and put his soul into their soul’s stead, and then do as he would be done by. Hospitality is a Christian duty, 1 Pet. iv. 9. Job, in his prosperity, was noted for good house-keeping; He opened his door to the road; so it may be read; he kept the street door open, that he might see who passed by, and he invited them in, as Abraham, Gen. xviii. 1.

33. If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom; 34. (Did I fear a great multitude, or did the contempt of families terrify me, that I kept silence, and went not out of the door?) Oh that one would hear me! behold, my desire is that the Almighty would answer me, and that mine adversary had written a book: 36. Surely I would take it upon my shoulder, and bind it as a crown to me. 37. I would declare unto him the number of my steps; as a prince would I go near unto him.) 38. If my land cry against me, or that the furrows likewise thereof complain; 39. If I have eaten the fruits thereof without money, or have caused the owners thereof to lose their life; 40. Let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley. The words of Job are ended.
We have here Job's protestation against three more sins, together with his general appeal to God's bar, and his petition for a hearing there, which, it is likely, was intended to conclude his discourse, (and therefore we will consider it last,) but that another particular sin occurred, from which he thought it requisite to acquit himself. He clears himself from the charge.

I. Of dissimulation and hypocrisy, which was the general crime his friends accused him of.—That, under the cloak of a profession of religion, he has kept up secret haunts of sin, and that really he was as bad as other people, but had the art of concealing it. Zophar insinuated (ch. xx. 12.) that he hid his iniquity under his tongue. "No," says Job, "I never did, (v. 33.) I never covered my transgression as Adam, never palliated a sin with frivolous excuses, nor made fig-leaves the shelter of my shame, nor ever hid my iniquity in my bosom, as a fondling, a darling, that I could by no means part with, as was stolen goods which I dreaded the discovery of." It is natural to us to cover our sins; we have it from our first parents; we are loath to confess our faults, willing to extenuate them, and make the best of ourselves, to devolve the blame upon others, as Adam on his wife, not without a tacit refection upon God himself. But he that thus covers his sins shall not prosper, Prov. xxviii. 13. Job, in this protestation, intimates two things, which were certain evidences of his integrity: 1. That he was not guilty of any great transgression or iniquity, inconsistent with sincerity, which he had now industriously concealed. In this protestation, he had dealt fairly, and, while he denies some sins, was not conscious to himself that he allowed himself any. 2. That what transgression and iniquity he had been guilty of, (Who is there that lives, and sins not?) he had always been ready to own it, and, as soon as ever he perceived he had said or done amiss, he was ready to unsay it, and undo it, as far as he could, by repentance, confessing it both to God and man, and forsaking it: this is doing honestly.

II. From the charge of cowardice and base fear. His courage in that which is good, he produces as an evidence of his sincerity in it; (v. 34.) Did I fear a great multitude, that I kept silence? No, all that knew Job, knew him to be a man of undaunted resolution, not easily daunted by the expectation of reproach, and spake, and acted, in defence of religion and justice, and did not fear the face of man, nor was ever threatened or brow-beaten out of his duty, but set his face as a flint. Observe, 1. What great conscience Job had made of his duty as a magistrate, or a man of reputation, in the place where he lived. He did not, he durst not, keep silence, when he had a call to speak in an honest cause, or keep within doors, when he had a call to go abroad to do good. The case may be such, that it may be our sin to be silent and retired; as when we are called to reproe sin, and bear our testimony against it, to vindicate the truths and ways of God, to do right to those who are injured or oppressed, or any way to serve the public, or do honour to our religion. 2. What little account Job made of the discouragements he met with in the way of his duty. He valued not the charge that was made against him, nor did he value the menaces of the mighty, nor did he value the contempt of families that never terrified him. He was not deterred by the number or quality, the scars or insults, of the injurious, from doing justice to the injured; no, he scorned to be swayed and biased by any such considerations, nor ever suffered a righteous cause to be run down by a high hand. He feared the great God, not the great multitude, and, of course, not the contempt of families.

III. From the charge of oppression and violence, and doing wrong to his poor neighbours. And here observe,

1. What his protestation is—that the estate he had, he both got and used honestly, so that his land could not cry out against him, nor the furrows thereof complain, (v. 38.) as they do against those who get the possession of them by fraud and extortion, Hab. ii. 9-11. The whole creation is said to groan under the sin of man; but that which is unjustly gained and held cries out against a man, and accuses him, condemns him, and demands justice against him for the injury. Rather than his oppression shall go unpunished, the very ground and the furrows of it shall witness against him, and be his prosecutors. Two things he could say safely concerning his estate, (1.) That he never ate the fruits of it without money, v. 39. What he purchased, he paid for, as Abraham for the land he bought, (Gen. xxiii. 16.) and David, 2 Sam. xxiv. 24. The labourers that he employed had their wages duly with them, and if he made use of the fruits of those lands that he let out, he paid his tenants for them, or allowed it in their rent. (2.) That he never caused the owners thereof to lose their life, never got an estate, as Ahab got Naboth's vineyard, killing the heir and seizing the inheritance; never starved those that held lands of him, nor killed them with hard bargains and hard usage. No tenant, no workman, no servant, he had, could complain of him.

2. How he confirms his protestation; he does it, as often before, with a suitable imprecation; (v. 40.) "If I have got my estate unjustly, let thistles grow instead of wheat; the worst of weeds instead of the best of grains." When men get estates unjustly, they are justly deprived of the comfort of them, and disappointed in their expectations from them. They sow their land, but they sow not that body that shall be; God will give it a body; it was sown wheat, but shall come up thistles. What men do not come honestly by, will never do them any good.

Job, toward the close of his protestation, appeals to the judgment-seat of God concerning the truth of it; (v. 35-37.) Oh that he would hear me, even, that the Almighty would answer me! This was what he often desired, and often complained that he could not obtain; and now, that he had drawn up his own defence so particularly, he leaves it upon record, in order to a final hearing, files it, as it were, till his cause he called.

(1.) A trial is moved for, and the motion earnestly pressed; "Oh that one, any one, would hear me; my cause is so good, and my evidence so clear, that I am willing to refer it to any indifferent person whatsoever; but my desire is, that the Almighty himself would determine it." An upright heart does not dread a scrutiny: he that means honestly, is sure that he has a clear conscience; and, as he has a window in his breast, that all men might see the light of the heart. But an upright heart does particularly desire to be determined in every thing by the judgment of God, which are, we sure, is according to truth. It was holy David's prayer, Search me, O God, and know my heart; and it was blessed Paul's comfort, He that judgeth me, is the Lord.

(2.) The prosecutor is called, the plaintiff summoned, and ordered to bring in his information, to the purpose of showing what he was charged against. The prisoner, for he stands upon his deliverance; (v. 41.) The prisoner had written a book—That my friends, who charge me with hypocrisy, would draw up their charge in writing, that it might be reduced to a certainty, and that we might the better join issue upon it." Job would be very glad to see the libel, to have a copy of his indictment; he would not hide it under his arm, but take it upon his shoulders, to be seen and read of all men, nay, he would bind it:
as a crown to him, would be pleased with it, and look upon it as his ornament; for, [1.] If it discovered to him any sin he had been guilty of, which he did not yet see, he should be glad to know it, that he might repent of it, and get it pardoned. A good man is willing to know the worst of himself, and will be thankful to those that will faithfully tell him of his faults. [2.] If it charged him with what was false, he doubted not but to disprove the allegations, that his innocence would be cleared up as the light, and he should come off with so much more honour. But, [3.] He did believe that, when his adversaries came to consider this most closely as they must do, if they put the charge in writing, the accusations would be trivial and minute, and every one that saw them would say, "If this was all they had to say against him, it was a shame they had given him so much trouble."

(3.) The defendant is ready to make his appearance, and to give his accusers all the fair play they can desire.

He will declare unto them the number of his steps, v. [22.] He will let them into the history of his own life, will show them all the stages and scenes of it; he will give them a narrative of his conversation, what would make against him as well as what would make for him, and let them make what use they pleased of it: and so confident is he of his integrity, that, as a prince to be crowned, rather than as a prisoner to be tried, he would go near to him, both to his accuser to hear his charge, and to his judge to hear his doom. Thus the testimony of his conscience was his rejoicing.

Those that have kept their hands without spot from the world, as Job did, may lift up their faces without spot unto God, and may comfort themselves with the prospect of his judgment, when they lie under the unjust censures of men. If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.

Thus the words of Job are ended; that is, he has now said all he would say, in answer to his friends: he afterward said something in a way of self-reproach and condemnation; (ch. xl. 4, 5, xlii. 2, &c.) but here ends what he had to say in a way of self-defence and vindication. If this suffice not, he will add more: more, he knows; for he has still enough, and must put himself to the judgment of the bench. Some think the manner of expression intimates that he concluded with an air of assurance and triumph. He now keeps the field, and doubts not but to win the field. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies.

CHAP. XXXII.

The stage is clear, for Job and his three friends are set down, and neither he nor they have any thing more to say; it is therefore very seasonable for a moderator to interpose, and Elihu is the man. In this chapter, we have, I. Some account of him, his parentage, his presence at the dispute, and his sentiments concerning v. 1. II. The apology he made for his bold undertaking to speak to a question which had been so largely and learnedly argued by his seniors. He pleads, 1. That though he had not the experience of an elder man, he had the experience of a man, v. 8. 10. 2. That he had patiently heard all they had to say, v. 11. 13. 3. That he had something new to offer, v. 14. 17. 4. That his mind was full of this matter, and it would be a refreshment to him to give it vent, v. 18. 20. 5. That he was resolved to speak impartially, v. 21, 22. And he did speak so well to this matter, that Job made no reply to him, and God gave him no rebuke, when he checked both Job himself and his other three friends.

1. So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. 2. Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram; against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God. 3. Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. 4. Now Elihu had waited till Job had spoken, because they were elder than he. 5. When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, then his wrath was kindled.

Usually young men are the disputants, and old men the moderators; but here, when old men were the disputants, as a rebuke to them for their unbecoming heat, a young man is raised up to be the moderator. Divers of Job's friends were present, that came to visit him, and to receive instruction. Now here we have,

I. The reason why his three friends were now silent; they ceased to answer him, and let him have his saying, because he was righteous in his own eyes, and because thus he argued, it was not to purpose to argue with a man that was so opinionative, v. 1. Those that are self-conceited are indeed hard to be wrought upon; there is more hope of a fool (a fool of God's making) than of them who are fools of their own making, Prov. xxi. 12. But they did not judge fairly concerning Job; he was really righteous before God, and not righteous only in his own eyes; so that it was only to save their own credit, that they made this the reason of their silence, as parents in dispute commonly do, when they find themselves run a-ground, and are not willing to own themselves unable to make their part good.

II. The reasons why Elihu, the fourth, now spake. His name Elihu signifies My God is he: they had all tried in vain to convince Job, but My God is he that can and will do it, and did it at last: he only can open the understanding. He is said to be a Buzite, Nahor's son, Nahor was Jacob's eldest son (Gen. xxii. 21.) and of the kindred of Ram, that is, Abram; so some; (Gen. xxii. 21.) whence the Syrians or Aramites descended and were denominated. Of the kindred of Abram; so the Chaldee paraphrase; supposing him to be the first called Ram, High, then Abram, a high father, and lastly, Abraham, The high father of a multitude. Elihu was not so well known as the rest, and therefore is more particularly described thus.

1. Elihu spake because he was angry, and thought he had good cause to be so. When he had made his remarks upon the dispute, he did not go away and calumniate the disputants, striking them secretly with a malicious censorious tongue, but what he had to say, he would say before their faces, that they might vindicate themselves, if they could. (1.) He was angry at Job, because he thought he did not speak so reverently of God as he ought to have done; and that was too true, v. 2. (2.) He justly felt his body far less than God, that is, took more care and pains to clear himself from the imputation of unrighteousness in being thus afflicted, than to clear God from the imputation of unrighteousness in afflicting him, as if he were more concerned for his own honour than for God's; whereas he should, in the first place, have justified God, and cleared his glory, and then he might well enough have left his own reputation to shift for itself. Note, A gracious heart is jealous for the honour of God, and cannot but be angry, when that is neglected or postponed, or any injury done it. Nor is it any breach of the
We have found out wisdom: God thrusteth him down, not man. 14. Now, he hath not directed his words against me; neither will I answer him with your speeches.

Elihu here appears to be,
1. A man of great modesty and humility: though a young man, and a man of abilities, yet not pert, and confident, and assuming; his face shone, and, like Moses, he did not know it, which made it shine much the brighter. Let it be observed also, especially by young people, as worthy their imitation.

1 What a difference he had of himself, and of his own judgment; (v. 6.) "I am young, and therefore I was afraid, and durst not show you mine opinion, for fear I should either prove mistaken, or do that which was unbecoming me." He was so observant of all that passed, and applied his mind so closely to what he heard, that he had formed in himself a judgment of it; he neither neglected it as foreign, nor declined it as intricate: but, how clear soever the matter was to himself, he was afraid to deliver himself upon it, because he differed in his sentiments from those that were elder than he. Note, It becomes us to be suspicious of our own judgment in matters of doubtful dispute, to be swift to hear the sentiments of others, and slow to speak our own, especially when we go contrary to the judgment of those whom, upon the score of their learning and piety, we justly have a veneration for.

2. What a deference he paid to his seniors, and what great expectations he had from them; (v. 7.) I said, Days should speak. Note, Age and experience give a man great advantage in judging of things, both as they furnish a man with so much the more matter for his thoughts to work upon, and as they ripen and improve the faculties he is to work with; which is a good reason why old people should take pains both to learn themselves, and to teach others, (else the advantages of their age are a reproach to them,) and why young people should attend on their instructions: it is good lodging with an old disciple, Acts xxii. 16. Tit. ii. 4.

Elihu's modesty appeared in the patient attention he gave to what his seniors said, v. 11, 12. He waited for their words, as one that expected much from them, agreeably to the opinion he had of these grave men. He gave ear to their reasons, that he might take them in, and fully understand what was the drift of their discourse, and what the force of their arguments; he attended to them with diligence and care; and this, (1.) Though they were slow, and took up a deal of time in searching out what to say; though they were often to seek for matter and words, paused and hesitated, and were unready at their work, yet he overlooked that, and gave ear to their reasons, which, if really convincing, he thought would not be less attended to by the listeners, and the success of the delivery of them. (2.) Though they trilled and made nothing of it, though none of them answered Job's words, nor said what was proper to convince him, yet he attended to them, in hopes they would bring it to some head at last. We must often be willing to hear what we do not like, else we cannot prove all things. His patient attendance on their discourses he pleads, [1.] As that which entitled him to credit in his turn, and empowered him to require their attention. [2.] As that which enabled him to pass a judgment upon what they had said: he had observed what they aimed at, and therefore knew what to say to it. Let us be thoroughly apprized of the sentiments of our brethren, before we cen-
sure them; for he that answers a matter before he hears it, or when he has heard it only by halves, it is folly and shame to him, and bespeaks him both impertinent and imperious.

11. He appears to have been a man of great sense and courage, and one that knew as well what and how to refute as well as to keep silence. Though he had so much respect to his friends, as not to interrupt them with his speaking, yet he had so much regard to truth and justice, (his better friends,) as not to betray them by his silence. He boldly pleads,

1. That man is a rational creature, and therefore that every man has for himself a judgment of discretion, and ought to be allowed a liberty of speech in his own cause. (Job i. xii. 3.) But I have understanding as well as you, when he says, (v. 8.) But there is a spirit in man; only he expresses it a little more modestly, that one man has understanding as well as another, and no man can pretend to have the monopoly of reason, or to engross all the trade of it. Had he meant, I have revelation as well as you, (as some understand it,) he must have proved it; but if he meant only, I have reason as well as you, they cannot deny it, for this is every man's honour, and it is no presumption to claim it, nor could they gainsay his inference from it; (v. 10.) Therefore hearken to me. Learn here, (1.) That the soul is a spirit, neither material itself, nor dependant upon matter, but capable of conversing with things spiritual, which are not the objects of sense. (2.) It is an understanding spirit. It is able to discover and receive truth, to discourse and reason upon it, and to direct and rule accordingly. (3.) This understanding spirit is in every man. (v. 11.) Even the most learned, John i. 9. (4.) It is the inspiration of the Almighty, that gives us this understanding spirit; for he is the Father of spirits, and Fountain of understanding. See Gen. ii. 7. 1 En. xii. 7. Zech. xii. 1.

2. That those who are advanced above others in grandeur and gravity, do not always proportionably go beyond them in knowledge and wisdom; (v. 9.) Great men are not always wise: it is pity but they were, for if they would never be content with their greatness, and would do so much the more good with their wisdom. Men should be preferred for their wisdom, and those that are in honour and power, have most need of wisdom, and have the greatest opportunity of improving in it; and yet it does not follow that great men are always wise, and therefore it is folly to subscribe to the dictates of any with an implicit faith. The aged do not always understand judgment, even they may be mistaken, and therefore must not expect to bring every thought into obedience to them; nay, therefore they must not take it as an affront to be contradicted, but rather take it as a kindness to be instructed, by their juniors: Therefore I said, Hearken to me, v. 10. We must be willing to hear reason from those that are very way inferior to us, and to yield to it. He that has a good eye can see further upon upper ground, than he that is purblind can from the top of the highest mountain. Better is a poor and wise child than an old and foolish king. Eccl. iv. 13.

3. That it was requisite for something to be said, for the setting of this controversy in a true light, which, by all that had hitherto been said, was but rendered more intricate and perplexed; (v. 13.) "I must speak, lest you should say, We have found out wisdom, lest you should think your argument against Job conclusive and irrefragable, and that Job cannot be convinced and humbled by any other argument than this of yours, that God casteth him down, and not man, that it appears by his extraordinary afflictions, that God is his Enemy, and therefore he is certainly a wicked man; I must show you that this is a false hypothesis, and that Job may be convinced without maintaining it." Or, "Lest you should think you have found out the wisest way, to reason no more with him, but leave it to God to thrust him down." It is time to speak, when we hear errors advanced and disputed for, especially under pretence of supporting the cause of God with them. It is time to speak, when God's judgments are vouched for the patronizing of men's pride and passion, and their unjust, uncharitable, censures of their brethren; then we must speak on God's behalf.

4. That he had something new to offer, and would endeavour to manage the dispute in a better manner than it had hitherto been managed, v. 14. He thinks he may expect a favourable hearing; for, (1.) He will not reply to Job's protestations of his integrity, but allude to the truth of it, to obtain the approbation of the impartial. He hath not directed his words against me; I have nothing to say against the main of his discourse, nor do I differ from his principles. I have only a gentle reproof to give him for his passionate expressions. (2.) He will not repeat their arguments, nor go upon their principles; Neither will I answer him with your speeches: not with the same matter; should I only say what has been said, I might justly be silenced as impertinent; nor in the same manner; I will not be guilty of that peevishness toward him myself, which I dislike in you. The controversy that has already been fully handled, a wise man will let alone, unless he can amend and improve what has been done; why should he actum agere—do that which has been done already?

15. They were amazed; they answered no more; they left off speaking. 16. When I had waited, (for they spake not, but stood still, and answered no more,) v. 15. I said, I will answer also my part; I also will show mine opinion. 18. For I am full of matter; the spirit within me constraineth me. 19. Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles. 20. I will speak, that I may be refreshed: I will open my lips, and answer. 21. Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person; neither let me give flattering titles unto man. 22. For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my Maker would soon take me away.

Three things here apologize for Elihu's interposing as he does in this controversy, which had already been canvassed by such acute and learned disputants.

1. That the stage was clear, and he did not break in upon any of the managers on either side; (v. 15.) They were amazed, v. 16. They stood still, and answered no more. They not only left off speaking themselves, but they stood still, to hear if any of the company would speak their minds, so that (as we say,) he had room and fair play given him. They seemed not fully satisfied them selves with what they had said, else they would have adjourned the court, and not have stood still, expecting what might further be offered. And therefore I said, (v. 17.) I will answer also my part. I cannot pretend to give a definitive sentence; no, the judgment is the Lord's, and by him it must be determined who is in the right, and who is in the wrong; but, since you have each of you shown your opinion, I also will show mine, and let it take its fate with the rest. When what is offered, even by the meanest, is offered thus modestly, it is pity but it should be fairly heard and considered.
I see no inconvenience in supposing that Elihu here himself to be the penman of this book; and that he is to be regarded as an historian, relating the fact, that, after he had bespoken the attention in the foregoing verses, they were amazed, they left off whispering among themselves, did not gainsay the liberty of speech he desired, but stood still to hear what he would say, being much surprized at the admirable mixture of boldness and modesty that appeared in his preface.

2. That he was uneasy, and even in pain, to be delivered of his thoughts upon this matter. They must give him leave to speak, for he cannot forego, while he is musing, the fire burns, (Ps. xxxix. 2.) shut up in his bones, as the prophet speaks, Jer. xx. 9. He longed to deliver his mind concerning Job’s case, v. 18-20. If any of the disputants would have hit that which he thought the right joint, he would contentedly have been silent; but, when he thought they all missed it, he was eager to try his hand at it. He pleads, (1.) That he had a great deal to say; "I am full of matter; having made my remarks upon all that has hitherto been said." When aged men are drawn dry, and have spent their stock, in discerning of the Divine Providence, God can raise up others, even young men, and fill them with matter, for the edifying of his church, for it is a subject that can never be exhausted, though they that speak to it may. (2.) That he was under a necessity of saying it, "The Spirit within me not only instructs me what to say, but puts me on to say it; so that I have not vent, (Such a ferment are my thoughts in,) I shall burst like bottles of new wine, when it is working," v. 19. See what a great grief it is to a good minister to be silenced, and thrust into a corner; he is full of matter, full of Christ, full of heaven, and would speak of these things for the good of others, but he may not. (3.) That it would be an ease and satisfaction to himself, to deliver his mind; (v. 20.) I will speak, that I may be relieved; not only that I may be eased of the pain of stifling it, but that I may have the pleasure of endeavouring, according to my place and capacity, to do good. It is a great refreshment to a good man, to have liberty to speak for the glory of God and the edification of others.

3. That he was resolved to speak, with all possible freedom and sincerity, what he thought was true, not what he thought would please; (v. 21, 22.) "Let me not accept any man’s person, as partial judgements do their masters; nor do I need to be justified; I am resolved to flatter no man." He would not speak otherwise than he thought, either, (1.) In compassion to Job, because he was poor and in affliction; would not make his case better than he really took it to be, for fear of increasing his grief; "But, let him bear it as he can, he shall be told the truth." Those that are in affliction must not be flattered, but dealt faithfully with; when trouble is upon any, it is foolish pity to suffer sin upon them. (2.) In the name of God, who is that, and that can be to their trouble. Thou shalt not countenance, any more than discountenance, a poor man in his case, (Exod. xxiii. 3.) nor regard a sad look any more than a big look, as, for the sake of it, to pervert justice, for that is accepting persons. Or,(2.) In compliment to Job’s friends, because they were in prosperity and reputation. "Let him not expect that I shall say as they have said, any further than I was taught; but as I have said, and have explained their dictates for the sake of their dignities." No, though Elihu is a young man, and upon his prefixment, he will not disseem his thought, to count the favour of great men: it is a good resolution he has taken up, "I know not to give flattering titles to men; I never used myself to that language;" and it is a good reason he gives for that resolution; "In so doing my Maker would soon take me away." It is good to keep ourselves in awe with a holy fear of God’s judgments: he that made us will take us away in his wrath, if we do not conduct ourselves as we should. He has all things in his hand and disposal, and will soon put lying lips to silence, and cut off flattering lips, Ps. xii. 3. The more closely we eye the majesty of God, as our Maker, and the more we dread his wrath and justice, the less danger shall we be in of a sinful flattering, or flattering of men.

CHAP. XXXIII.

Pompous prefaces, like the teeming mountain, often introduce poor performances: but Elihu’s discourse here does not disappoint the expectations which his preface had raised: it is pithy, both spiritual, and lively, and very much to the purpose. He had, in the foregoing chapter, said what he had to say to Job’s three friends; and now he comes up close to Job himself, and directs his speech to him. I. He bespeaks Job’s favourable acceptance of what he should say, and desires he would take him for that person whom he had so often wished for, that would plead with him, and receive his plea on God’s behalf, v. 1-7. II. He does, in God’s name, bring an action against him, for words, which have been spoken of Job, of violent reflecting upon God as dealing hardly with him, v. 8-11. III. He endeavours to convince him of his fault and folly herein, by showing him, 1. God’s sovereign dominion over man, v. 12-15. 2. The care God takes of man, and all the various ways and means he uses to do his soul good, which we have reason to think he designs, when he lays bodily afflictions upon him, v. 14. (1.) Job had sometimes complained of unquiet dreams, ch. xii. 14. "God," says Elihu, "sometimes speaks conversion and instruction to men by such dreams," v. 15-18. (2.) Job had especially complained of his sicknesses and pains; and as to these, he shows largely, that they were far from being tokens of God’s wrath, as Job took them, or evidences of Job’s hypocrisy, as his friends took them, that they were really wise and gracious methods, which divine grace took for the increase of his acquaintance with God, to work patience, experience, and hope, v. 19-30. And, lastly, he concludes with a request to Job, either to answer him, or give him leave to go on, v. 31-38.

1. Wherefore, Job, I pray thee, hear my speeches, and hearken to all my words. 2. Behold, now I have opened my mouth, my tongue hath spoken in my mouth. 3. My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart; and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly. 4. The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life. 5. If thou canst answer me, set thy words in order before me, stand up; 6. Behold, I am according to thy wish in God’s stead; I also am formed out of the clay. 7. Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee. Several arguments Elihu here uses, to persuade Job to give him a patient hearing, to believe that he designed him a good office, and to take it kindly, and be willing to receive the instructions he was now about to give him. Let Job consider, 1. That Elihu does not join with his three friends against him: he has, in the foregoing chapter, declared his dislike of their proceedings, disclaimed their hypothesis, and quite set aside the method they took, or the form in which they handled the case, he thee, hear my speech, v. 1. They all spake in the same strain; but I am trying a new way, therefore hearken to all my words, and not to some of them only; for we cannot judge of a discourse unless we take it entire, and hearken to it all. 2. That he intended to make a solemn busines:}
of it, not to put in a word by the by, or give a short repartee, to show his wit; after a long silence, he 
opened speech, (v. 2.) with a declaration and de-
sign; upon mature consideration, he had already 
begun to speak, and was prepared to go on, if Job 
would encourage him by his attention.
3. That he was resolved to speak as he thought, 
and not otherwise; (v. 3.) "My words shall be of 
the uprightness of my heart, the genuine product of 
my convictions and sentiments." There was reason 
to suspect that Job's three friends did not think, in 
the same consciousness, that Job had done what he 
had; in their discourses, merely for the support of 
their hypothesis, represented him to be; and that 
was not fair. It is a base thing to condemn those 
with our tongues, to serve a turn, whom, at the 
same time, we cannot but in our consciences think 
well of: Elihu is an honest man, and scorns to do so.
4. That what he said should be easy, and not dark 
and hard to be understood; My lips shall utter know-
ledge clearly. Job shall readily take his meaning, 
and perceive what he aims at. Those that speak 
of the things of God, should carefully avoid all ob-
scurity and perplexedness, both of notion and ex-
pression, and speak as plainly and clearly as they 
can; for by that it will appear that they do them-
sehls understand what they speak of, that they mean 
honestly, and design the edification of those they 
speak to. 
5. That he would, in his discourse, make the best 
use he could of the reason and understanding God had 
given him, that life, that rational soul which he 
received from the Spirit of God and the breath of the 
Almighty, v. 4. He owns himself unfit to enter into the 
lists with his seniors, yet he desires they will not 
spite his youth, for that he is God's workmanship 
as well as they, made by the same hand, endowed 
with the same noble powers and faculties, and designed 
for the same great end; and therefore why may not 
the God that made him, make use of him as an in-
strument of good to Job? With this consideration 
also we should quicken ourselves (and perhaps Elihu 
made that use of it) to do good in our places, ac-
cording to our capacity; God has made us, and given 
us life, and therefore we should study to use our life 
to some good purpose, to spend it in glorifying God, 
and serving our generation according to his will, 
that we may answer the end of our creation, and it 
may not be said that we were made in vain.
6. That he would be very willing to hear what 
Job should say against what he had to say; (v. 5.) 
"If thou causest, answer me. If thou hast so much 
spirit and spirit left thee, and art not quite spent 
with the distemper, set thy words in order, and 
they shall have their due consideration." Those 
that can speak reason, will hear reason.
7. That he had often wished for one that would 
appear for God, with whom he might freely exposu-
ete, and to whom, as arbitrator, he might refer 
that matter, and such a one Elihu would be; (v. 6.) 
I am, or will, in God's stead. How pathetically 
had Job wished, (ch. xvi. 21.) Oh that one might plead 
for a man with God! and (ch. xxiii. 3.) Oh that I knew where I might find him! Only he 
would make it his bargain, that his dreads should not 
maketheafraid, ch. xiii. 21. "Now," says Elihu, 
"look upon me, this once, as in God's stead; I will 
undertake to plead his cause with thee, and to show 
thee therein thou hast afflicted him, and what he 
hath done is not what he had to say; thou hast to make to God, make them to me."
8. That he was not an unequal match for him; 
"I also am formed out of the clay. I also, as well 
as the first man, (Gen. ii. 7.) I also as well as thou. 
Job had urged this with God, as a reason why he 
should not hear hard upon him; (ch. x. 9.) Re-
member that thou hast made me as the clay; "I,"
says Elihu, "am formed out of the clay, as well as 
they," formed of the same clay, so some read it. It 
is good for all to consider that we are formed out 
of the clay; and well for us it is, that those who are 
to us in God's stead, are so; that he speaks to us by 
men like ourselves, according to Israel's wish, upon 
a full trial, Deut. v. 24. God has wisely deposited 
the treasure in earthen vessels like ourselves, 
2 Cor. iv. 7.
Lastly, That he would have no reason to be 
frightened at the assault he made upon him; (v. 7.) 
"My words shall not make thee afraid," (1.) "As thy 
friends have done with their arguments, I will not 
proach thee as they have done, nor draw up such a 
heavy charge against thee. Nor," (2.) "As God would 
do, if he should appear to reason with thee. I stand 
upon the same level with thee, and am made of the 
same mould, and therefore cannot impress that ter-
ror upon thee, which thou mayest justly dread from 
the appearance of the Divine Majesty." If we would 
rightly convince men, it must be by reason, not by 
terror; by fair arguing, not by a heavy hand.

3. Surely thou hast spoken in my hear-
ing, and I have heard the voice of thy words, 
saying, 9. I am clean without transgression, I 
am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me. 10. Behold, he findeth occasions against 
me, he counteth me for his enemy; 11. He 
putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all 
my paths. 12. Behold, in this thou art not 
just: I will answer thee, that God is greater 
than man. 13. Why dost thou strive against 
him? for he giveth not account of any of 
his matters.

In these verses, 
I. Elihu particularly charges Job with some inde-
cent expressions that had dropped from him, re-
flecting upon the justice and goodness of God in 
his dealings with him. He does not ground the charge 
upon report, but was himself an ear-witness of what 
he here reproves him for; (v. 8.) "Thou hast 
skown it in my hearing, and in the hearing of all 
this company." He had it not at second-hand; if 
so, he would have hoped it had not been so bad as 
it was reported. He did not hear it from Job 
in private conversation, then he would not have 
been so ill-breasted as to repeat it thus publicly; 
but Job had said it openly, and therefore it was fit he 
should be openly reproved for it. Them that sin 
before all, rebuke before all. When we hear any 
thing said, that tends to God's dishonour, we ought 
publicly to bear our testimony against it. What is 
said amiss in our hearing, we are concerned to re-
prove; for ye are our witnesses, saith the Lord, to 
confront the unrighteous with their hinderer. 
1. Job had represented himself as innocent; (v. 
9.) Thou hast said, I am clean without transgres-
sion; Job had not said this totidem verbis—in so 
many words; nay, he had owned himself to have 
sinned, and to be impure before God; but he had 
indeed said, Thou knowest that I am not wicked: 
My righteousness I hold fast, and the like, on 
which Elihu might ground this charge. It was true, 
that Job was not so bad as he said, the like and an-
other, to have as a mark the same as his friends had represented him; but he 
ought not to have insisted so much upon it, if 
God had therefore done him wrong in afflicting him. 
Yet, it should seem, Elihu did not deal fairly in 
charging Job with saying that he was clean and 
inocent from all transgression, when he only plead 
ed, that he was upright and innocent from the 
great transgression. But those that speak passionately
and unwarily, must thank themselves if they be misunderstood; they should have taken more care.

2. He had represented God as severe in marking what he did amiss, and taking all advantages against him, (v. 10, 11,) as if he sought opportunity to pick quarrels with him. He findeth occasions against me; which supposes seeking them; to this purport Job adds, He findeth no fault watch over my sin? He counteth me for his enemy. So he had expressly said, (ch. xiii. 24.—xix. 11,) "He putteth my feet in the stocks; that, as I cannot contend with him, so I may not be able to flee from him." This he had said, ch. xiii. 27.; where also we meet with these words, Thou lookest narrowly unto all my ways.

II. He endeavours to convince him that he had spoken amiss in speaking thus, and that he ought to humble himself before God for it, and by repentance to unsay it; (v. 12.) Behold, in this thou art not just. Here thou art not in the right, so some read it. See the difference between the charge which Elihu exhibited against Job, and that which was preferred against him by his other friends; they would not own that he was just at all, but Elihu only says, "In this, in saying this, thou art not just." 1. Thou dost not deal justly with God." To this Job, it is true, replies, Thou dost not render God his due, nor are we just to him, if we do not acknowledge his equity and kindness in all the dispensations of his providence towards us; that he is righteous in all his ways, and that, however it be, yet he is good. 2. "Thou dost not speak the language of a righteous man; I do not deny but thou art such a one, but in this thou dost not make it to appear." Many that are just, yet, in some particulars, instances, do not speak and act like themselves; and as, on the one hand, we must not fail to tell even a good man wherein he mistakes and does amiss, nor flatter him in his errors and passions, for in that we are not kind; so, on the other hand, we must not draw men's characters, nor pass a judgment on them, from one instance, or some few misplaced words, for in that we are not just. In many things we all offend, and therefore must be candid in our censures.

Thus far Elihu proposes to Job's consideration, to convince him that he had said amiss.

(1.) That God is infinitely above us, and therefore it is madness to contend with him; for if he plead against us with his great power, we cannot stand before him. I will answer thee, says Elihu, in one word, which carries its own evidence along with it, That God is greater than man; no doubt he is infinitely greater. Between God and man there is no proportion. Job had himself said a great deal, and admirably well, concerning the greatness of God, his irresistible power and incontestable sovereignty, his terrible majesty and unsearchable immensity. "Now," said Elihu, "do but consider what thou thyself hast said concerning the greatness of God, and apply it to thyself; if he is greater than man, he is greater than thou, and thou wilt see reason enough to repent of these ill-natured, ill-favoured, reflections upon him, and to blush at thy folly, and the utter folly of thy presumption." Note, There is enough in this one passage, which is most plain and intelligible, That God is greater than man, if duly improved, for ever to put to silence and to shame all our complaints of his providence, and our exceptions against his dealings with us. He is not only more wise and powerful than we are, and therefore it is to no purpose to contend with him, who will be too hard for us, but more holy, just, and good, for these are the transcendent glories and excellencies of the divine nature; in these, God is greater than man, and therefore it is absurd and unreasonable to find fault with him, for he is certainly in the right.

(2.) That God is not accountable to us; (v. 13.) Why dost thou strive against him? Those that complain of God, strive against him, implead him, impeach him, bring an action against him. And why do they do so? For what cause? To what purpose? Note, It is an unreasonable thing for us, weak, foolish, and frail creatures, to strive with a God of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness. Woe to the clay that strives with the Potter; for he gives not account of any of his matters. He is under no obligation to show us a reason for what he does; neither to tell us what he designs to do, in what method, at what time, by what instruments; nor to tell us why he deals thus with us. He is not bound either to justify his own proceedings, or to satisfy our demands and inquiries; his judgments will certainly justify themselves, if we do not satisfy ourselves in them, it is our own fault. This is therefore daring insanity for us to arraign God at our bar, or challenge him to show cause for what he doeth, to say unto him, What dost thou? or, Why dost thou so? He gives not account of all his matters; so some read it. He reveals as much as it is fit for us to know, as follows here, v. 14. But still there are secret things, which belong not to us, which it is not for us to pry into.

14. For God speaketh once, yea, twice yet man perceiveth it not. 15. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed, 16. Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, 17. That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. 18. He keepest back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword.

Job had complained, that God kept him wholly in the dark concerning the meaning of his dealings with him; and therefore concluded he dealt with him as his enemy. "No," says Elihu, "he speaks to you, but you do not perceive him; so that the fault is yours, not his; he is designing your real good, even in those proceedings which you put this harsh construction upon. Observe in general, v. 15.

1. What a friend God is to our welfare: He speaketh to us once, yea, twice. It is a token of his favour, that, notwithstanding the distance and quarrel between us and him, yet he is pleased to speak to us. It is an evidence of his gracious design, that he is pleased to speak to us of our own concerns, to show us what is our duty, what our interest, what he requires of us, and what we may expect from him; to tell us of our faults, and warn us of our danger; to show us the way, and to lead us in it. This he does once, yea, twice, that is, again and again; when one warning is neglected, he gives another, not willing that any should perish. Precept must be upon precept, and line upon line; it is so, that sinners may be left inexcusable.

2. What enemies we are to our own welfare; Man perceiveth it not, that is, he does not heed it or regard it; he does not understand it; it is not aware that it is the voice of God, nor does he receive the things revealed, for they are foolishness to him; he stops his ear, stands in his own light, rejects the counsel of God against himself, and so is never the wiser, no not for the dictates of wisdom itself.

God speaks to us by conscience, by providences, and by ministers; of all which Elihu here discourses at large, to show Job that God was both telling him his mind, and doing him a kindness, even now that
he seemed to keep him in the dark, and so treat him as a stranger, and to keep him in distress, and so treat him as an enemy. There was not then, that we know of, any divine revelation in writing, and therefore that is not here mentioned among the ways by which God speaks to men, though now it is the principal way. In these verses, he shows how God teaches and admonishes the children of men by their own consciences.

1. The proper season and opportunity for these admonitions; (v. 15.) In a dream, in slumberings upon the bed, when men are retired from the world, and the business and conversation of it; it is a good time for them to retire into their own hearts, and commence with them, when they are upon their beds, solitary and still, Ps. iv. 4. It is the time God takes for dealing personally with men. 1. When he sent angels, extraordinary messengers, on his errands, he commonly gave them the delivery of them; when, by deep sleep falling on men, the bodily senses were all locked up, and the mind more free to receive the immediate communications of divine light. Thus he made his mind known to the prophets by visions and dreams; (Num. xii. 6.) thus he warned Abimelech, (Gen. xx. 3.) Laban, (Gen. xxxi. 24.) Joseph, Matth. i. 20. Thus he made known to Pharaoh, and Nebuchadnezzar, things that should come to pass hereafter. When he stirred up conscience, that ordinary deputy of his, in the soul, to do its office, he took that opportunity, either when deep sleep fell on men, for though dreams mostly come from fancy, some may come from conscience: or, in slumberings, when men are between sleeping and waking, reflecting at night upon the business of the foregoing day, or projecting in the morning the business of the ensuing day, then is a proper time for their hearts to proach them for what they have done ill, and to admonish them what they should do. See Isa. xxv. 20.

II. The power and force with which those admonitions come, v. 16. When God designs men’s good, by the convictions and dictates of their own consciences, 1. He gives them admission, and makes them to be heeded; Then he opens the ears of men, which were before shut against the voice of this charmer, Ps. lvi. 5. He opens the heart, as he opened Lydia’s, and so opens the ears. He takes away that which stopped the ear, so that the conviction finds, or forces, its way; nay, he works in the soul a submission to the regimen of conscience, and a compliance with its rules, for that follows upon God’s opening the ear; (Isa. l. 5.) God has opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious. 2. He gives them a settlement, and makes them to abide; He sealèth their instruction, that is, the instruction that is designed for them, and is suited to them; this he makes their souls to receive the deep and lasting impressions of, as the wax of the seal. When the heart is delivered into divine instructions, as into a mould, then the work is done.

III. The end and design of these admonitions that are sent.

1. To keep men from sin, and particularly the sin of pride; (v. 17.) That he may withdraw man from his purpose, that is, from his evil purposes, may change the temper of his mind, and the course of his life, hinder his inclinaion and inclination, or prevent some particular sin he is in danger of falling into: that he may withdraw man from his work, may make him leave off man’s work, which is working for the world and the flesh, and may set him to work the work of God. Many a man has been stopped in the full career of a sinful pursuit by the sensable checks of his own conscience, saying Do not this abominable thing which the Lord hates. Particularly, God does, by this means, hide pride from man, that is, hide those things from him which are the matter of his pride, and take his mind off from dwelling upon them, by setting before him what reason he has to be humble. That he may take away pride from man, so some read it; that he may pluck up that root of bitterness which is the cause of so much sin. All those whom God has never shown a store for he will humble, and hide pride from. Pride makes people eager to extend their labors in the prosecution of their purposes; they will have their way, therefore God withdraws them from their purposes, by mortifying their pride.

2. To keep men from ruin, v. 18. While sinners are pursuing their evil purposes and indulging their pride, their souls are hastening apace to the pit, to the sword, to destruction, both in this world and that to come: but when God, by the admonitions of conscience, withdraws them from sin, he also keeps back their souls from the pit, from the bottomless pit, and saves them from perishing by the sword of divine vengeance, so iniquity shall not be their ruin. That which turns men from sin, saves them from hell, saves a soul from death, James v. 20. See what a mercy it is to be under the restraints of an awakened conscience; faithful are the wounds, and kind are the bonds, of that friend, for the soul is kept from perishing eternally.

19. He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: 20. So that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. 21. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out. 22. His soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers. 23. If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness; 24. Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom. 25. His flesh shall be fresher than a child’s: he shall return to the days of his youth: 26. He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him; and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness.

27. He looketh upon men; and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; 28. He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.

God has spoken once to sinners by their own consciences, to keep them from the paths of the destroyer, but they perceive it not; they are not aware that the checks their own hearts give them, in a sinful way, are from God, but they are imputed to melancholy, or the preciosity of their education; and therefore God purpures twice; he speaks a second time, and tries another way to convince and reclaim sinners, that is, by providences, anfliative and merciful, (in which he speaks twice;) and by the sensible instructions of good ministers setting in with them. Job complained much of his diseases, and judged by them that God was angry with him; his friends did so too; but Elihu shows they were all mistaken, for God often afflicts the body in love, and while he has gracious designs of good to the soul, as appears in the issue which here: is brought to. This part of Elihu’s discourse will be of great use to us
for the due improvement of sickness, in and by which God speaks to men. Here is,

1. The patient described in his extremity. See what work sickness makes, (v. 19, &c.) when God sends it with commission. Do this, and it doeth it. He has pity upon him, p. 39. (v. 19.) He is chastened with pain upon his bed, such pain as confines him to his bed; or, so extreme the pain is, that he can get no ease, no, not on his bed where he would repose himself. Pain and sickness will turn a bed of down into a bed of thorns, on which he that used to sleep now tosses to and fro till the dawning of the day. The case, as here put, is very bad; pain is more hardly borne than sickness, and with that the patient here is chastened; not a dull heart, but a strong, and a strong and acute; and, frequently the stronger the patient, the stronger the pain, for the more sanguine the complexion is, the more violent, commonly, the disease is. It is not thesmarting of the flesh that is complained of, but the aching of the bones. It is an inward rooted pain; and not only the bones of one limb, but the multitude of the bones, are thus chastened. See what frail, what vile, bodies we have, which, though receiving near to a sacrament, the use of which is banished from them within themselves: see what work sin makes, what mischief it does. Pain is the fruit of sin; yet, by the grace of God, the pain of the body is often made a means of good to the soul.

2. He has quite lost his appetite, the common effect of sickness; (v. 20.) His life abhorreth bread, the most necessary food, and dainty meat, which he most delighted in, and formerly relished with a great deal of pleasure. This is a good reason why we should not be desirous of dainties, because they are deceitful meat, Prov. xxiii. 3. We may be soon made sad as sick of them as we are now fond of them; and those who live in luxury when they are well, if everthey come, by reason of sickness, to loathe dainty meat, may, with grief and shame, read their sin in their punishment. Let us not inordinately love the taste of meat, for the time may come when we may even loathe the sight of meat, Ps. cvi. 18.

3. He becomes a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones, v. 21. By sickness, perhaps a few days’ sickness, his flesh, which was fat, and fair, is consumed away, that it cannot be seen: it is strangely wasted and gone, and his bones, which were buried in flesh, now stick out; you may count his ribs, may tell all his bones. The soul that is well-nourished with the bread of life, sickness will not make lean, but it soon makes a change in the body.

He who, before, had such a beneficent air, And, powder’d with his case, seemed plump and fair, Both all his friends (amazing change!) surprise, With pale lean cheeks, and ghastly hollow eyes; So thin a bone, a hooded vulture, is this, Which lay before, in flesh and fat, unseen.

—Sir R. Blackmore.

4. He is given up for gone, and his life despaired of; (v. 22.) His soul draws near to the grave, that is, he has all the symptoms of death upon him, and, in the apprehension of all about him, as well as in his own, he is a dying man. The pangs of death, here called the death-vision, are the death-vision ready to seize him; they compass him about, Ps. cxvi. 3. Perhaps it intimates the very dreadful apprehensions which those have of death as a destroying thing, when it stares them in the face, who, when it was at a distance, made light of it. All agree, when it comes to the point, whatever they thought of it before, that it is a serious thing to die.

II. The provision made for his instruction, in order to the use of his affliction, that, when God in that way speaks to man, he may be heard and understood, and not speak in vain, v. 23. He is happy, if there be a messenger with him to attend him in his sickness, to convince, counsel and comfort, him, an interpreter to expound the provi-
dence, and give him to understand the meaning of it, a man of wisdom that knows the voice of the rod and its interpretation; for, when God speaks by afflictions, we are, frequently, so immersed in the language, that we have need of an interpreter; and it is well if we have advice and help of a good minister who are as needful and incomparable, and should be as acceptable, in sickness, as of a good physician, especially if he be well-skilled in the art of explaining and improving providences; he is then one of a thousand, and to be valued accordingly: his business, at such a time, is, to show unto man his uprightness, that is, God’s uprightness, that in faithfulness he afflicts him, and does him no wrong; which it is necessary to be convinced of, in order to our making a due improvement of the affliction: or rather, it may mean man’s uprightness, or rectitude: 1. The uprightness that is. If it appear that the sick person is truly pious, the interpreter will not do as Job’s friends had done, make it his business to prove him a hypocrite, because he is afflicted; but, on the contrary, will show him his uprightness, notwithstanding his afflictions, that he may take the comfort of it, and be justified, which is far better. This is the reformation, that should be, in order to life and peace. When men are made to see the way of uprightness to be the only way, and a sure way, to salvation, and to choose it, and walk in it accordingly, the work is done.

III. God’s gracious acceptance of him, upon his repentance, v. 24. When he sees that the sick person is indeed convinced that sincere repentance, and that uplifted perfection, which is in its im-looking as well as duty, then He that is to be gracious, and shows mercy, upon the first indication of true repentance, is gracious unto him, and takes him into his favour and thoughts for good. Wherever God finds a gracious heart, he will be found a gracious God; and, 1. He will give a gracious order for his discharge. He says, Deliver him, that is, Let him be delivered from going down to the pit, from that death which is the wages of sin. When afflictions have done their worst, they shall be removed. When we return to God in a way of duty, he will return to us in a way of mercy. These shall be delivered from going down to the pit, who receive God’s messengers, and rightly understand his interpreters, so as to subscribe to his uprightness. 2. He will give a gracious reason for this order, I have found a ransom, or propitiation; Jesus Christ is that Ransom, so Edith calls him, as Job had called him his Redeemer, for he is both the Purchaser and the Price, the Priest and the Sacrifice; so high was the value put upon souls, that nothing less would redeem them, and so great the injury done by sin, that nothing less would atone for it, than the blood of the Son of God, who gave his life a ransom for many. This is a ransom of God’s finding, a contrivance of Infinite Wisdom; we could never have found it ourselves, and the angels themselves knew not, which is gospel; it is the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom; and such an invention as is, and will be, the ever lasting wonder of those principalities and powers that desire to look into it. Observe how God glories in the invention here, ὅλος, ὅλος— I have found, I have found, the Ransom, I, even I, am he that has done it.

IV. The recovery of the sick man, hereupon. The away the cause and the effect will cease. When the sickness becomes a pestilent, see what blessed change follows.

1. His body recovers its health, v. 25. This is not always the consequence of a sick man’s repentance and return to God, but sometimes it is; and
recovery from sickness is then a mercy indeed, when it arises from the remission of sin; then it is in love to the soul, that the body is delivered from the pitt of corruption, when God casteth our sins behind his back, Isa. xxxviii. 17. That is the method of a blessed recovery; Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee; and then, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk, Matthew xii. 14. So when they were hid in the Ransomed, and then his flesh shall be furrther than a child's, and there shall be no remains of his distemper, but he shall return to the days of his youth, to the beauty and strength which he had then; when the distemper that oppressed nature is removed, how strangely does nature help itself, in which the power and goodness of the God of nature must be thankfully acknowledged! By such merciful providences as these, which afflictions give occasion for, God speaketh once, yes twice, to the children of men, letting them know (if they would but perceive it) their dependence upon him, and his tender compassion of them.

2. His soul recovers in peace, v. 26. (1.) The patient, being a penitent, is a suppliant, and has learned to pray; he knows God will be sought unto for his favours, and therefore he shall pray unto God, pray for pardon, pray for health. Is any afflicted, any sick? Let him pray. His prayers are acceptable, God will be favourable to him, and be well-pleased with him, his anger shall be turned away from him, and the light of God's countenance shall shine upon his soul; and then it follows, (3.) That he has the comfort of communication with God; he shall now see the face of God, and may have fellowship with him, and shall see it with joy, for what sight can be more reviving? See Gen. xxxiii. 10, As though I had seen the face of God. All true penitents rejoice more in the returns of God's favour, than in any instance whatsoever of prosperity or pleasure, Ps. iv. 6, 7. (4.) He has a blessed tranquillity of mind, arising from the sense of his justification before God, who will render unto this man his righteousness. He shall receive the atonement, that is, the reconciliation, shall be imputed to him, and peace, thereupon, spoken, the joy and gladness of which he shall then be made to hear, though he could not hear it in the day of his affliction. God will now deal with him as a righteous man, with whom it shall be well. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, even righteousness, Ps. xxiv. 5. God shall give him grace to go and sin no more. Perhaps this may be the reformation of his life after his recovery. As he shall pray to God, whom before he had slighted, so he shall render to man his righteousness, whom before he had wronged, shall make restitution, and for the future do justly.

V. The general rule which God will go by in dealing with the children of men, inferred from this instance, v. 27, 28. As sick people, upon their subscription, are recovered, so all others that truly repent of their sins, shall find mercy with God. Shall a dead man rise? He shall rise out of death, shall be imputed to him; and, that is, he shall be in a state of life; he shall not be so to sin. Would we know the nature of sin, and the malignity of it? It is the perversion of that which is right; it is a most unjust, unreasonable, thing, it is the rebellion of the creature against the Creator, the usurped dominion of the flesh over the spirit, and a contradiction to the eternal rules and reasons of good and evil. It is perverting the right ways of the Lord; (Acts xiii. 10.) and therefore the ways of sin are called crooked ways, Ps. cxix. 5. Would we know what is to be got by sin? It is profaneth us not. The works of darkness are unfruitful works; when profit and loss come to be balanced, all the gains of sin, put them all together, will come far short of countervailing the damage. All true penitents are ready to own this; and it is a mortifying consideration, (Rom. vi. 21.) What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? and why do we need to repent? Would we approve ourselves true penitents? We must then, with a broken and contrite heart, confess our sins to God, 1 John i. 9. We must confess the fact of sin, (I have sinned,) and not deny the charge, or stand upon our own justification: we must confess the fault of sin, the iniquity, the dishonesty of it; I have perverted that which was right: we must confess the folly of sin; So foolish have I been and ignorant, for I was not; and therefore what have I to do any more with it? Is there not good reason why we should make such a penitent confession as this? For, (1.) God expects it. He looks upon men, when they have sinned, to see what they will do next, whether they will go on in it, or whether they will bethink themselves, and return. He hearkens and hears whether any say, What have I done? Jer. viii. 6. He looks upon sinners with an eye of compassion, desiring to see their return for their own sakes; for God will destroy them in the rain. He looks upon them, and, as soon as he perceives these workings of repentance in them, he encourages them, and is ready to accept them, (Ps. xxxii. 5, 6.) as the father went forth to meet the returning prodigal. (2.) It will turn to our unspeakable advantage. The promise is general; If any humble themselves thus, whoever they are, [1.] They shall not come into condemnation, but be saved from the wrath to come; He shall deliver his soul from going into the pit, the pit of hell; insinuity shall not be his ruin. [2.] They shall be happy in everlasting life and joy; his life shall see the light, that is, all good, in the vision and fruition of God. To obtain this bliss, if the prophet had bid us do some great thing, would we not have done it? How much more, when he only says unto us, Wash and be clean; Confess and be pardoned, Repent and be saved?

29. Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, 30. To bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living. 31. Mark well; O Job, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I will speak. 32. If thou hast any thing to say, answer me: speak; for I desire to justify thee. 33. If not, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom.

We have here the conclusion of this first part of Elishu's discourse, in which:

1. He briefly sums up what he had said, showing that God's great and gracious design, in all the dispensations of his providence toward the children of men, is, to save them from being for ever miserable, and bring them to be for ever happy; v. 29, 30. All these things God is working with the children of men; he deals with them by conscience, by providences, by ministers, by mercies, by afflictions; he makes them sick, and makes them well again; all these are his operations; he has set the one over against the other. (Eccl. vii. 14.) but his hand is in all; it is he that performs all things for us. All providences are to be looked upon as God's workings with man, his dealings with him. He uses a variety of methods to do men good; if one affliction do not the work, he will try another; if neither do, he will try a mercy; and he will send a messenger to interpret both. He often works such things as these, twice, thrice; so it is in the original, referring to
r. 14. He speaks once, yeat twice; if that prevail not, he works twice, yea thrice; he changes his method, (Hee have piped, we have mourned,) returns again to the same method, repeats the same applications. Why does he take all this pains with man? It is to bring back his soul from the flit, v. 30. If God did not take much upon the care of this poor sinner, and himself, we were miserable; we would destroy ourselves, but he would have us saved, and devises means, by his grace, to undo that by which we were undoing ourselves. The former method, by dream and vision, was, to keep back the soul from the flit, (v. 18.) that is, to prevent sin, that we might not fall into it. This, by sickness and the word, is, to bring back the soul, to recover those that have fallen into sin, that they may not lie still and perish on it. What need is to all that holy repentance are brought back from the pit, it is, that they may be enlightened with the light of the living, that they may have present comfort and everlasting happiness. Whom God saves from sin and hell, which are darkness, he will bring to heaven, the inheritance of the saints in light; and this he aims at, in all his institutions, and all his dispensations. Lord, what is man, that thou shouldst thus visit him! This should enable us to comply with God's designs, to work with him for our own good, and not to counter-work him. This will render those that perish for ever inexcusable, that so much was done to save them, and they would not be healed.

2. He bespeaks Job's acceptance of what he had offered, and begs of him to mark it well, v. 51. What is intended for our good, challenges our regard. If Job will observe what is said, (1.) He is welcome to make what objections he can against it, (v. 32.) "If he must say any thing to myself, in thine own vindication, answer me; though I am fresh, and thou art spent, I will not run thee down with words; Speak, for I desire to justify thee, and am not as thy other friends, that desired to condemn thee." Elihu contends for truth, not, as they did, for victory. Note, those who reprove, we should desire to justify, and be glad to see them clear themselves from the imputations they lie under, and therefore give them all possible advantage and encouragement to do it. (2.) If he has nothing to say against what is said, Elihu lets him know that he has something more to say, which he desires him patiently to attend to, (v. 53.) Hold thy peace, and I will teach thee wisdom. Those that would both show wisdom and learn wisdom, must hearken and keep silence, be swift to hear and slow to speak. Job was wise and good; but those that are so, may yet be wiser and better, and must therefore set themselves to improve by the means of wisdom and grace.

CHAP. XXXIV.

Elihu, it is likely, paused a while, to see if Job had any thing to say against his discourse in the foregoing chapter; but he sitting silent, and, it is likely, intimating his desire that he would go on, he here proceeds. As He bespeaks not only the audience, but the assistance, of the company, v. 2.-4. II. He charges Job with some more indelict expressions that he had dropped from him, v. 5-8. He underlines to his readers the truth of what he had spoken amiss, by showing very fully, 1. God's incontestable justice, v. 10, 12, 17, 19, 23. 2. His sovereign dominion, v. 13, 15. 3. His almighty power, v. 4. His omniscience, v. 21, 22, 25. 5. His severity against sinners, v. 28. 6. His pardoning providence, v. 29, 50. IV. He teaches him what he should say, v. 31, 32. And then, lastly, he leaves the matter to Job's own conscience, and concludes with a sharp reproof of him, for his perverseness and discontent, v. 33, 37. All this Job not only bore patiently, but took kindly, because he saw that Elihu meant well; and whereas his other friends had accused him of that from which his own conscience acquitted him, Elihu charged him with that only for which, it is probable, his own heart, now upon the reflection, began to smite him.

1. FURTHERMORE, Elihu answered and said, 2. Hear my words, O ye wise men; and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge: 3. For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat. 4. Let us choose to us judgment: let us know among ourselves what is good. 5. For Job hath said, I am righteous: and God hath taken away my judgment. 6. Should I lie against my right? my wound is incurable without transgression. 7. What is like Job, who drinketh up scorning like water? 8. Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walketh with wicked men? 9. For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God.

Here,

I. Elihu humbly addresses himself to the auditors, and endeavours, like an orator, to gain their good will, and their favourable attention. 1. He calls them wise men, and men that had knowledge, v. 2. It is comfortable dealing with such as understand sense; I speak as to wise men, who can judge what I say, 1 Cor. x. 15. Elihu differed in opinion from them, and yet he calls them wise and knowing men. Peevish disputants think all fools that are not of their mind; but it is justice to those who are wise to acknowledge it, though our sentiments do not agree with theirs. 2. He appeals to their judgment, and therefore submits to their trial, v. 3. Then car of the judicious tries words, whatever is said be true or false, right or wrong, and he that speaks must stand the test of the intelligent. As we must prove all things we hear, so we must be willing that what we speak should be proved. 3. He takes them into partnership with him in the examination and discussion of this matter, v. 4. He does not pretend to be sole dictator, nor undertake to say what is just and good, and what is not, but he is willing to join with them in searching it out, and clarifies a consultation; "Let us agree to lay aside all animosities and feuds, all prejudices and affection of contradiction, and all stiffness in adhering to the opinion we have once espoused, and let us choose to ourselves judgment; let us fix right principles on which to proceed, and then take right methods for finding out truth; and let us know among ourselves, by comparing notes, and communicating our reasons, what is good and what is otherwise." Note, We are then likely to discern what is right, when we agree to assist one another in searching it out.

II. He warmly accuses Job for some passionate words which he had spoken, that reflected on the divine government, appealing to the house, whether he ought not to be called to the bar, and checked for them.

1. He recites the words which Job had spoken, as near as he can remember. (1.) He had insisted upon his own innocency: Job hath charged God with injustice, (v. 5.) and, when urged to confess his guilt, has stiffly maintained his plea of Not guilty. Should I lie against my right? v. 6. Job had spoken to this purport; (ch. xxvii. 6.) My righteousness I hold fast. (2.) He had charged God with injustice in his dealings with him, that he had wronged him in afflicting him, and had not righted him; God had taken away my judgment; so Job had said, ch.
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xxvii. 2. (3.) He had despaired of relief, and concluded that God could not, or would not, help him; My wound is incurable, and likely to be mortal, and yet without transgression; not for any injustice in my hand, ch. xvi. 16, 17. (4.) He had, in effect, said, that there is nothing to be got in the service of God, and that no man will be the better, at last, for his religion; (v. 9.) He hath said that which gives occasion to suspect that he thinks, in effect, a man nothing, that he shall delight himself with God. It is granted that there is a present pleasure in religion; for what is it but to delight ourselves with God, in communion with him, in concurrence with him, in walking with him as Enoch did; this is a true notion of religion, and bespeaks its ways to be pleasantness. Yet the advantage of it is denied, as if it were vain to serve God, Mal. iii. 14. This Elihu gathers and "Opinion, by an enumerating from what he said; (ch. ix. 22.) He destroys the perfect and the wicked, which has a truth in it, (for all things come alike to all,) but it was ill-expressed, and gave too much occasion for this imputation, and therefore Job sat down silent under it, and attempted not his own vindication; whence Mr. Carol well observes, That good men sometimes speak worse than they mean; and that a good man will rather bear more blame than he deserves, than stand to excuse himself when he has deserved any blame.

2. He charges Job very high upon it. In general, What man is like Job? (v. 7.) "Did you ever know such a man as Job, or ever hear a man talk at such an extravagant rate?" He represents him, (1.) As sitting in the seat of the scornful. He drinketh up scorn like water, that is, he takes a great deal of liberty to reproach both God and his friends, takes a pleasure in it, and is very liberal in his reflections of their faults. (2.) He is in receiving and hearkening to the scorns and contempt which others cast upon their brethren, is well pleased with them, and extols them. Or, as some explain it, "By these foolish expressions of his he makes himself the object of scorn, lays himself very open to reproach, and gives occasion to others to laugh at him; while his religion suffers by it, and the reputation of that is wounded through his speech. You need not pry that God affliction, we shall never leave us to ourselves, to say or do anything which may make us a reproach to the foolish, Ps. xxxix. 8. (2.) As walking in the course of the ungodly, and standing in the way of sinners; He goes in company with the workers of iniquity; (v. 8.) not that in his conversation he did associate with them, but, in his opinion he did favour and countenance them, and strengthen their hands. If (as I follow, v. 9, for the proof of this) it profits a man nothing to delight himself in God, why should he not lay the reins on the neck of his lusts, and herd himself with the workers of iniquity? He that says, I have cleansed my hands in vain, does not only offend against the generation of God's children, (Ps. lxiii. 13, 14.) but gratifies his enemies, and says as they say.

10. Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding: Far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity. For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways. Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment. Who hath given him a charge over the earth? or who hath disposed the whole world? 14. If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; 13. All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust.

The scope of Elihu's discourse is to reconcile Job to his afflictions, and to pacify his spirit under them. In order to this, he had showed, in the foregoing chapter, that God is inconsistent with the perfect innocence of his character, but intended it for his spiritual benefit. In this chapter, he shows that he did him no wrong in afflicting him, nor punished him more than he deserved. If the former could not prevail to satisfy him, yet this ought to silence him. In these verses, he directs his discourse to all the company; "Hearken to me, ye men of understanding, (v. 10.) and show yourselves to be intelligent, by assenting to this which I say." And this is that which he says. That the righteousness God never did, nor never will, do any wrong to any of his creatures, but his ways are equal, ours are unequal.

The truth here maintained respects the justice and equity of all God's proceedings. Now observe in these verses,

1. How plainly this truth is laid down, both negatively and positively. 1. He does wrong to none; God cannot do wickedness, nor the Almighty commit iniquity. (v. 10.) It is inconsistent with the perfection of his nature, and so it is also with the purity of his will; (v. 12.) God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment. He neither can, nor will, do a wrong thing, nor deal hardly with any man. He will never inflict the evil of punishment, but where he finds the evil of sin, nor in any undue proportion, for that would be to commit iniquity and do wickedly. If appeals be made to him, or he be to give a definitive sentence, he will have a eye to the merits of the cause, and not respect the person, for that were to pervert judgment. He will never either do any man wrong, or deny any man right, but the heavens will shortly declare his righteousness. Because he is God, and therefore is infinitely perfect and holy, he can neither do wrong himself, nor countenance it in others, any more than he can either die, or lie, or deny himself. Though he be Almighty, yet he never uses his power, as mighty men often do, for the support of injustice. He is obras God, all-sufficient, and therefore he cannot be tempted with evil, (James i. 13.) to do an unrighteous thing. 2. He ministers justice to all; (v. 11.) The work of a man shall he render unto him. Good works shall be rewarded, and evil works either punished or satisfied for; so that, sooner or later, in this world or in that to come, he will cause every man to find according to his ways. This is the standing rule of divine justice, to give to every man according to his work: Say to the righteous, it shall be well with them; Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him. If services persevered in now go unrewarded, and sins persisted in now go unpunished, yet there is a day coming, when God will fully render to every man according to his works, with interest for the delay.

II. How warmly it is asserted; 1. With an assurance of the truth of it: Yea, surely, v. 12. It is a truth which none can deny or call in question, it is what we may take for granted, and are all agreed in, That God will not do wickedly. 2. With an abhorrence of the very thought of the contrary; (v. 10.) Far be it from God, that he should do wickedness, and from us, that we should imagine such a thing, that we should entertain the least suspicion of it, or say any thing that looks like charging him with it.
III. How evidently it is proved by two arguments. 1. His independent absolute sovereignty and dominion; (v. 13.) *Who has given him a charge over the earth, and deputed him to manage the affairs of men upon the earth? Or, Who besides has disposed the whole world of mankind? He has the sole administration of the kingdoms of men, and has it of himself, nor is he intrusted with it by, or for, any other. (1.) It is certain that the government is his, and he does according to his will in all the honour done to us. Without the grant, he has not to be charged with injustice; for shall not *the Judge of all the earth do right? *Gen. xvii. 25. How shall God either rule or judge the world, if there be, or could be, any *unrighteousness with him? *Rom. iii. 5. 6. He that is entitled to such unlimited power must certainly have in himself unspotted purity. This is also a good reason why we should acquiesce in all God's dealings with us. Shall not he, that disposeth of the whole world, dispose of us and our concerns? (2.) It is as certain that he does not derive his power from any; nor is it a dispensation that is committed to him, but his power is original, and, like his being, of himself; and therefore, if he were not perfectly just, all the world and the affairs of it would soon be in the utmost confusion. The highest powers on earth have a God above them, to whom they are accountable, because it is not far from them to do iniquity. But therefore God has none above him, because it is not possible that he should do anything that (such is the perfection of his nature) that should need to be controlled. And if he be an absolute Sovereign, we are bound to submit to him, for there is no higher power to which we may appeal, so that the virtue is a necessity.

2. His irresistible power: (v. 14.) *If he set his heart upon man, to contend with him, much more if (as some read it) he set his heart against man, to ruin him, if he should deal with man either by *summa fatalest—mere sovereignty, or by *summa jus—strict justice, there were no standing before him; man's spirit and breath would soon be gone, and all flesh would perish together, v. 15. Many men's honesty is owing purely to their impotency; they do not do wrong, because they cannot support it when it is done, or it is not in their power to do it. But God is able to crush any man easily and suddenly, and yet does not by arbitrary power crush any man, which therefore must be attributed to the infinite perfection of his nature, and that is immovable. See here, (1.) What God can do with us; he can soon bring us to dust; there needs not any positive act of his omnipotence to do it, if he do but withdraw that concurrence of his providence, by which we live, if he gather unto himself that breath which was from his hand at first, and is still in his hand, we expire immediately, like an animal in an air-pump, when the air is exhausted. (2.) What he may do about us; the very thought of it may recall the being he gave, of which we are but tenants at will, and which also we have forfeited; and therefore, as long as that is continued of his mere favour, we have no reason to cry out of wrong, whatever other comforts are removed.

16. If now *thou hast understanding, hear this; hearken to the voice of my words: 17. Shall even he that hateth right govern? and wilt thou condemn him that is most just? 18. *Is it fit to say to a king, *Thou art wicked? and to princes, *Ye are ungodly? 19. *How much less to him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor? for they all are the work of his hands. 20. In a moment shall they die, and the people shall be troubled at midnight, and pass away: and the mighty shall be taken away without hand. 21. For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. 22. *There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. 23. For he will not lay upon man more than right, that he should enter into judgment with God. 24. He shall break in pieces mighty men without number, and set others in their stead. 25. Therefore he knoweth their works, and he overturneth them in the night, so that they are destroyed. 26. He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others; 27. Because they turned back from him, and would not consider any of his ways: 28. So that they cause the cry of the poor to come unto him, and he heareth the cry of the afflicted. 29. When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only: 30. That the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared.

Elijah here applies himself more directly to Job. He had spoken to the rest, (v. 10.) as *men of understanding; now, speaking to Job, he puts an *if upon his understanding; *If thou hast understanding, hear this, and observe it, v. 16.

1. *Hear this, That God is not to be quarrelled with for any thing that he does. It is daring presumption to arraign and condemn God's proceedings, as Job had done by his discontents. It was, 1. As absurd as it would be to advance one to power, that is a professed enemy to justice; *Shall even he that hateth right govern? 17. The righteous Lord so loves righteousness, that, in comparison with him, even Job himself, though a perfect and upright man, might be said to *hate right; and shall he govern? Shall he pretend to direct God, or correct what he does? Shall such unrighteous creatures as we are, give law to the righteous God? Or, must he take his measures from us? When we consider the corruption of our nature, and the contrariety there is in us to the eternal rule of equity, we cannot but see it an impious, insipid, thing for us to prescribe to God. 2. It was as absurd as it would be to call a most righteous innocent person to the bar, and to give judgment against him, though it appeared ever so plain, upon the trial, that he was most just. *Wilt thou condemn him that is righteous in all his ways, and cannot but be so? 3. It is more absurd and unbecoming than it would be to say to a sovereign prince, *Thou art wicked, and to judges upon the bench, *Ye are ungodly. 18. This would be looked upon as an insufferable affront to majesty and to magnificence; no king, no prince, would hear it. In favour of government, we presume it is a right sentence that is passed, unless the contrary be very evident; but, whatever we think, it is not fit to tell a king to his face that he is wicked. Nathan reproved David by a parable. But, whatever a high priest or a prophet might do, it is not for an ordinary subject to make so bold with the powers
that are. How absurd is it then to say so to God! To impute iniquity to him, who, having no respect of persons, is in no temptation to do an unjust thing? 

v. 19. He regardeth not the rich more than the poor, and therefore it is fit he should rule, and it is not fit we should find fault with him. Note, Rich and poor stand upon the same level before God. A poor man may have as much in the way of favour, for his wealth and greatness; nor shall a poor man fare ever worse for his poverty, nor in honest cause be starved. Job, now that he was poor, should have as much favour with God, and be as much regarded by him, as when he was rich; for they all are the work of his hands. Their persons are so; the poor are made by the same hand, and of the same mould, as the rich. Their conditions are so; the poor were made poor by the Divine Providence, as well as the rich made rich, and therefore the poor shall fare never the worse for that which is their lot, not their fault. 

II. Hear this, That God is to be acknowledged and submitted to in all that he does. Divers considerations Elihu here suggests to Job, to beget in him great and high thoughts of God, and so to persuade him to submit, and proceed no further in his quarrel with him. 

1. He is mighty, and able to deal with the strongest of men when he enters into judgment with them; (v. 20.) even the people, the body of a nation, though ever so numerous, shall be troubled, unhinged, and put into disorder, when God pleases; even the mighty man, the prince, though ever so honourable, ever so formidable among men, shall, if God speak the word, be taken away out of his throne, nay, out of the land of the living; they shall die, they shall pass away. What cannot He do, that is able to destroy the hosts of Hell, and bring in judgment? Observe the suddenness of this destruction; In a moment shall they die. It is not a work of time, with God, to bring down his proud enemies, but, when he pleases, it is soon done; nor is he bound to give them warning, no, not an hour's warning; This might thy soul shall be required. Observe the season of it; They shall be troubled at midnight, when they are secure and careless, and unable to help themselves; as the Egyptians, when their firstborn was smitten, when they did not consume, nor offer a sacrifice to the Lord, or either of his sons: God: they are taken away, without hand, insensibly, by secret judgments. God can himself humble the greatest tyrant, without the assistance or agency of any man. Whatever hand he sometimes uses in the accomplishing of his purposes, he needs none, but can do it without hand. Nor is it one single mighty man only that he can thus overpower, but even hosts of them; (v. 24.) He shall break in pieces mighty men without number: for no combined power can stand it out against Omnipotence. Yet, when God destroys tyranny, he does not design anarchy; if those are brought down that ruled ill, it does not therefore follow that people must have no rulers; for, when he breaks mighty men, he sets others in their stead, that will rule better; or, if they do not, he overturns them also in the night, or in a night, so that they are destroyed, v. 25. Witness Belshazzar. Or, if he designs them to pass away, that none may continue in their place, but he strikes them as wicked men, v. 26. Some humbling, mortifying, judgments are brought upon them; these wicked rulers are stricken as other wicked men; as surely, as sorely, stricken in their bodies, estates, or families, and this, for warning to their neighbours; the stroke is given in terrorem—as an alarm to others, and therefore is given in the open sight of others, that they also may see, and fear, and tremble, before the justice of God. If kings stand not before him, how shall we stand! 

God is omniscient, and can discover that which is most secret. As the strongest cannot oppose his arm, so the most subtle cannot escape his eye; and therefore, if some are punished, either more or less than we think they should be, instead of quarrelling with God, it becomes us to ascribe it to some secret cause known to God, only. For, (1.) Every thing is open before him; (v. 21.) His eyes are upon the ways of men: not on the ways of the reach of his eye, but on the ways of them, but his eye is upon them, so that he actually observes and inspects them; he sees us all, and sees all our goings; go whither we will, we are under his eye; all our actions, good and evil, are regarded and recorded, and reserved to be brought into judgment when the books shall be opened. (2.) Nothing is or can be concealed from him; (v. 22.) There is no darkness nor shadow of death, so close, so thick, so solitary, so remote from light or sight, as that it is the workers of iniquity may hide themselves from the discovering eye, and avenging hand, of the righteous God. Observe here, [1.] The workers of iniquity would hide themselves, if they could, from the eye of the world for shame, and from the eye of God for fear, as Adam among the trees of the garden; the day is coming when mighty men, and chief captains, will call to the rocks and mountains to hide them. [2.] They would gladly be hid even in the shadow of death, be it to grave, and die for ever there, rather than appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. (3.) It is in vain to think of flying from God's justice, or abscinding, when his wrath is in pursuit of us. The workers of iniquity may find ways and means to hide themselves from men, but not from God; He knows their works, (v. 25.) both what they do, and what they design. 

2. God is righteous, and, in all his proceedings, goeth according to the rules of equity. Even then when he is overturning mighty men, and breaking them in pieces, yet he will not lay upon man more than right, v. 23. As he will not punish the innocent, so he will not exact of those that are guilty more than their iniquities deserve; of the proportion between the sin and the punishment Infinite Wisdom shall be the Judge. He will not give any man cause to complain that he deals hardly with him, nor shall he ever be the judge of God, or bring an action against him. If he do, God will be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges. Therefore Job was very much to be blamed for his complaints of God, and is here well advised to let fall his action, for he would certainly be cast, or non-suited. It is not for man ever to purpose to enter into judgment with the Omnipotent; so some read the whole verse. Job had often wished to plead his cause before God. Elihu asks, "To what purpose? The judgment already given concerning thee will certainly be affirmed; no errors can be found in it, nor any exceptions taken to it, but, after all, it must rest as it is." All is well that God does, and will be found so. 

To prove, that, when God destroys the mighty men, and strikes them as wicked men, he does not lay upon them more than right, he shows what their wickedness was; (v. 27, 28.) and let any consider, whether they did not deserve it. In short, these unjust judges, whom God will justly judge, neither feared God, nor regarded man, Luke xviii. 2. (1.) They were rebels to God; they turned back from him, cast off the fear of him, and abandoned the very thoughts of him, for they would not consider any of his ways, took no heed either to his precepts or to his providences, but lived without God in the world. This is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked, they turn back from God; and it is because they do not consider, not because they can-
not; they will not. From inconsideration comes impiety, and thence all immorality. (2.) They were tyrants to all mankind, v. 28. They will not call upon God for themselves; but they cause the cry of the poor to come to him, and that cry is against them. They are injurious and oppressive to the poor, wrong them, crush them, impoverish them yet more, and add affliction to the afflicted, who cry unto God, make to be known him, and he resolves to help them, and pleads their cause. Their case is bad who have the prayers and tears of the poor against them; for the cry of the oppressed will, sooner or later, draw down vengeance on the heads of the oppressors, and no one can say that this is more than right, Exod. xxxii. 23.

4. God has an uncontrollable dominion in all the affairs of the children of men, and so guides and governs whatever concerns both communities and particular persons, that, as what he designs cannot be defeated, so what he does cannot be changed, v. 29. Observe, (1.) The frowns of all the world cannot trouble those whom God quiets with his smiles. When he gives quietness, who can then make trouble? This is a challenge to all the powers of hell and earth, to disquiet those to whom God speaks peace, and for whom he creates it. If God give outward peace to a nation, he can secure what he gives, and disquiet his enemies, and to give it any disquietence. If God give inward peace to a soul, he can set only, the quietness and everlasting assurance which are the effect of righteousness, neither the accusations of Satan, nor the afflictions of this present time, no, nor the arrests of death itself, can give trouble. What can make them uneasy, whose souls dwell at ease in God? See Phil. iv. 7. (2.) The smiles of all the world cannot quiet those whom God troubles with his frowns: for if he, in displeasure, hide his face, and withhold the comfort of his favour, who then can behold him? Who can behold a displeased God, so as to bear up under his wrath, or turn it away? Who can make him show his face when he resolves to hide it, or see through the clouds and darkness which are round about him? Or, Who can behold a disquieted sinner, so as to give him effectual relief? Who can stand a friend to him to whom God is an Enemy? None can relieve the distresses of the outward condition, without God; if the soul do not have it, 2 Ki. vii. 27. Nor can any relieve the distresses of the mind against God and his terrors. If he impress the sense of his wrath upon a guilty conscience, all the comforts the creature can administer are ineffectual: As vinegar upon nitre, so are songs to a heavy heart. The irresistibleness of God's operations must be acknowledged in his dealings, both with communities and with particular persons: what he does cannot be controlled, whether it be done in their condemnation or their praise. The same Providence that governs mighty kingdoms, presides in the concerns of the meanest individual. And neither the strength of a whole nation can resist his power, nor the smallness of a single person evade his cognizance; but what he does shall be done effectually and Victoriously.

5. God is wise, and careful of the public welfare, and therefore provides that the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be embroiled. (1.) The pride of hypocrites: they aim to reign; the praise of men, and power in the world, are their reward, what they aim at. (2.) The policy of tyrants; when they aim set up themselves, they sometimes make use of religion as a cloak and cover for their ambition, and by their hypocrisy come to the throne. (3.) The danger the people are in, when hypocrites reign; they are likely to be ensnared in sin, or trouble, or both. Power in the hands of dissemblers, is often destructive to the rights and liberties of a people, which they are more easily wheedled out of, than forced out of. Much mischief has been done likewise to the power of godliness, under the pretence of a form of godliness. (4.) The care which Divine Providence takes of the people, to prevent this danger, that the hypocrite reign not; either that he do not reign at all, or that he do not reign long. If God has mercy in store for a people, he will either prevent the rise, or hasten the ruin, of hypocritical rulers.

31. Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: 32. That which I see not, teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more. 33. Should it be according to thy mind? he will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose; and not I: therefore speak what thou knowest. 34. Let men of understanding tell me, and let a wise man hearken unto me. 35. Job hath spoken without knowledge, and his words were without wisdom. 36. My desire is, that Job may be tried unto the end, because of his answers for wicked men. 37. For he addeth rebellion unto his sin; he clappeth his hands among us, and multiplieth his words against God.

In these verses,

1. Elihu instructs Job what he should say under his affliction, v. 31, 32. Having reproved him for his peevish passionate words, here he puts better matter into his mouth. When we reprove for what is amiss, we must direct to what is good; to the reproofs of instruction, Prov. vi. 23. He does not impose it upon Job to use these words, but recommends it to him, as that which was meet to be said. In general, he would have him repent of his misconduct, and indecent expressions, under his affliction. Job's other friends would have had him own himself a wicked man, and by overdoing they would have made God more displeased; but Elihu told him truly that he had, in the management of this controversy, spoken unadvisedly with his lips. Let us remember this, in giving reproofs, and not make the matter worse than it is; for the stretching of the crime may defeat the prosecution. Elihu drives the right nail, and speeds accordingly. He directs Job,

1. To humble himself before God for his sins, and to accept the punishment of them; "I have borne chastisement. What I suffer comes justly upon me. If I be the cause of it, I will not refuse to justify God in it, but acknowledge his goodness." Many are chastised, that do not bear chastisement, do not bear it well, and so, in effect, do not bear it at all. Penitents, if sincere, will take all well that God does, and will bear chastisement as a medicinal operation intended for good.

2. To pray to God to discover his sins to him; (v. 32.) "That which I see not, teach thou me. Lord, upon the review, I find much smiss in me, and much done amiss by me, but I have reason to fear there is much more that I am not aware of; greater abominations, which, through ignorance, mistake, and partiality to myself, I do not yet see; Lord, give me to see it, awaken my conscience to do its office faithfully." A good man is willing to know the worst of himself, and particularly, under affliction, desires to be told wherefore God contends with him, and what God designs in correcting him.
3. To promise reformation; (v. 31.) I will not offend any more. "If I have done iniquity, (or, See I have,) I will do so no more; whatever thou shalt discover to me to have been amiss, by thy grace I will amend it for the future." This implies a confession that we have offended, true remorse and great desire after the offender and a humble compliance with God's design in afflicting us, which is to part between us and our sins. The penitent here completes his repentance; for it is not enough to be sorry for our sins, but we must go and sin no more, and, as here, bind ourselves with the bond of a fixed resolution never more to return to folly. This is meet to be said in a steadfast purpose, and meet to be said to God in a solemn promise and with fear of God.

II. He reasons with him concerning his discontent and unseasonableness under his affliction, v. 33. We are ready to think every thing that concerns us should be just as we would have it; but Elihu here shows, 1. That it is absurd and unreasonable to expect it; "Should it be according to thy mind? No, what reason for that?" Elihu here speaks with a great deference to the divine will and wisdom, and a satisfaction therein. It is highly fit that every thing should be according to God's mind, and Elihu speaks also with just a disdain of the pretensions of those who are proud, and would be their own carvers; Should it be according to thy mind? Should we always have the good we have a mind to enjoy? We should then wrongfully encroach upon others, and foolishly ensnare ourselves. Must we never be afflicted, because we have no mind to it? Is it fit that sinners should feel so smart, that scholars should be under no discipline? Or, if they must be afflicted, is it fit that we should choose what rod we will be beaten with? No, it is fit that every thing should be according to God's mind, and not ours, for he is the Creator, and we are creatures; he is infinitely wise and knowing, we are foolish and short-sighted; he is in one mind, we are in many. 2. That it is in vain, and to no purpose, to expect it; "He will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose. God will take his own way, fulfill his own counsel, and redress according to the sentence of his own justice, whether thou art pleased or displeased; he will neither ask thy leave, nor ask thy advice, but, what he pleases, that will he do; it is therefore thy wisdom to be easy, and make a virtue of necessity; make the best of that which is, because it is out of thy power to make it otherwise. If thou pretend to choose and refuse," that is, "to prescribe to God, and except against what he does, so will not I, I will acquiesce in all he does; and therefore speak what thou knowest, say what thou wilt do, whether thou wilt oppose or submit. The matter lies plain before thee; be at a point; thou art in God's hand, not in mine."

III. He appeals to all intelligent, indifferent, persons, whether there was not a great deal of sin and folly in that which Job said. 1. He would have the matter thoroughly examined, and brought to an issue; "Inquire is that Job may be tried unto the end. If any will undertake to justly what he has said, let them do it; if not, let us all agree to hear our testimony against it." Many understand it of his trial by afflictions; "Let his troubles continued till he be thoroughly humbled, and his proud spirit brought down till he be made to see his error, and to retract what he has so presumptuously said against God and his providence. Let that be the case till he be obliged to retract it. He appeals both to God and man, and desires the judgment of both upon it. (1.) Some read v. 36, as an appeal to God, O my Father, let Job be tried. So the margin of our Bibles, for the same word signifies my desire, and my father, and some suppose that he lifted up his eyes, when he said this, meaning, "O my Father which art in heaven, let Job be tried till he be subdued." When we are praying for the benefit of afflictions either to ourselves or others, we must eye God as a Father, because they are fatherly corrections, and a part of our filial education, and which, if properly received, will work in us a repentance and turning again. (2.) He appeals to the bystanders; (v. 34.) "Let the end of this be, whether they will, can, or will, or will not, to cry Peccavi—I have done wrong." In what Job had said, he thought it appeared, [1.] That he did not rightly understand himself, but had talked foolishly, v. 33. He cannot say that Job is without knowledge and wisdom; but, in this matter, he has spoken without knowledge, and, whatever his heart is, his words are without prudence. What he said to his wife, may be retorted upon himself, (He speaks as one of the foolish men speak,) and for the same reason, Shall we not receive evil as well as good, at God's hand? ch. ii. 10. Sometimes we need and deserve those reproofs ourselves, which we have given to others. Those that reproach God's wisdom, really reproach their own. [2.] That he has not a due regard to God's law, and has talked wickedly. If what he has said be tried to the end, that is, if one put it to the utmost stretch, and make the worst of it, it will be found, First, That he has taken part with God's enemies. His answers have been for wicked men, that is, what he had said, tends to strengthen the hands, and harden the hearts, of wicked people in their wickedness, he having carried the matter of their prosperity much further than he needed. Let wicked men, like Baal, plead for themselves, if they will, but far be it from us that we should answer for them, or say any thing in favour of them. Secondly, That he has insulted God's friends, and hectored over them; "He clappeth his hands among us; and if he be not thoroughly tried and humbled, will grow yet more insolent and impetuous, as if he had gotten the day, and silenced us all." To speak ill is bad enough, but to clap our hands, and triumph in it when we have done, as if error and passion had won the victory, is much worse. Thirdly, That he has spoken against God himself, and, by standing to what he had said, added rebellion to his sin. To speak, though but one word, against God, whom we speak, and for whom we ought to speak, is a great sin; what is it then to multiply words against him, as we would out-talk him? What is it to repeat them, instead of unsaying them? Those that have sinned, and, when they are called to repent, thus go on forwardly, add rebellion to their sin, and make it exceeding sinful. Errare humanum est, hereticus esse nolo—I may fall into error, but I will not plunge into heresy.

CHAP. XXXV.

Job being still silent, Elihu follows his blow, and here, a third time, undertakes to show him that he had spoken amiss, and ought to retract. Three improper sayings heere changes him with, and returns answer to them dismally. 1. He had represented religion as an indifferent, unpredictable thing, which God enjoins for his own sake, not for ours; Elihu evinces the contrary, v. 1. 8. 11. He had complained of God as deaf to the cries of the oppressed, against which he is strongly contradicted, v. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. He had despised of the return of God's favour to him, because it was so long deferred, but Elihu shows him the true cause of the delay, v. 14. 16.

1. ELIHU spake moreover, and said, 2. Thinkest thou this to be right, that thou saidst, My righteousness is more than God's? 3. Fortho saidst, What advantage
will it be unto thee? and, What profit shall I have, if I be cleansed from my sin? 4. I will answer thee, and thy companions with thee. 5. Look unto the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds, which are higher than thou. 6. If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him? 7. If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? 8. Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the son of man.

We have here,

1. The bad words which Elihu charges upon Job, v. 2, 3. To evince the badness of them, he appeals to himself, and his own sober thoughts, in the reflection, Thinkest thou this to be right? This intimates, 1. Elihu's confidence that the reproach he now gave was just, for he could refer the judgment of it even to Job himself. They that have truth and equity on their side, will not fear others, but every man's conscience on their side. 2. His good opinion of Job, that he thought better than he spake, and that, yet, though he had spoken amiss, when he perceived his mistake, he would not stand to it. When we have said, in our haste, that which was not right, it becomes us to own that our second thoughts convince us that it was wrong.

Two things Elihu here reproves Job for;

(1.) For justifying himself more than God, which was the thing that first provoked him; (ch. xxxii. 2.) "Thou hast, in effect, said, My righteousness is more than God's," that is, "I have done more for God than he ever did for me; so that, when the accounts are balanced, he will be brought in Debtor to me. As if Job thought his services had been paid less than they deserved, and his sins punished more than they deserved; which is a most unjust and wicked thought for any man to harbour, and especially for Job, who instanced so much upon his own integrity, and the severity of God's dealing with him, he did, in effect, say, My righteousness is more than God's; whereas, though we be ever so good, and our afflictions ever so great, we are chargeable with unrighteousness, and God is not.

(2.) For disowning the benefits and advantages of religion, because he suffers these things; What profit shall I have if I be cleansed from my sin? v. 3. This is gathered from ch. ix. 30, 31, Though I make my hands white ever so clean, what the nearer am I? Thou shalt plunge me in the ditch. And ch. x. 15, If I be wicked, woe to me; but if I be righteous, it is all one. The psalmist, when he compared his own afflictions with the prosperity of the wicked, was tempted to say, Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, Ps. lxxiii. 13. And if Job said so, he did, in effect, say, My righteousness is more than God's; (v. 2.) for if he got nothing by his religion, God was more beholden to him than he was to God. But though there might be some colour for it, yet, he was not fair to charge these words upon Job, when he himself had made them the wicked words of prospering sinners, (ch. xxi. 15.) What profit shall we have, if we pray to him? and had immediately exclaimed them, (v. 16.) The counsel of the wicked is far from me. It is not a fair way of disputing, to charge men with those consequences of their opinions, which they expressly renounce.

II. The good answer which Elihu gives to this; (v. 4.) "I will undertake to answer thee, and thy companions with thee," that is, "all those that suppose thy savings, and are ready to justify thee in them; and all others that say as thou sayest: I have that to offer which will silence them all." To do this, he has recourse to his old maxim; (ch. xxxiii. 12.) That God is greater than man. That is a truth, which, if duly improved, will serve many good purposes, and this particularly, to prove that God is Deiotor to no man. The greatest of men may be a debtor to the meanest, but such is the infinite disproportion between God and man, that the great God cannot possibly receive any benefit from any man, and therefore cannot be supposed to lie under any obligation to man; for if he be obliged by his purpose and promise, it is only to himself. That is a challenge which no man can take up, (Rom. xi. 35.) Who hath first given to God, let him prove it, and it shall be recompensed to him again. Why should we demand it, as a just debt, to gain by our religion, (if Job seem to do,) when the God we serve does not gain by it?

1. Elihu needs not prove that God is above man; it is agreed by all; but he endeavours to affect Job and as with it, by an ocular demonstration of the height of the heavens and the clouds, v. 5. They are far above us, and God is far above them; how much then is he set out of the reach either of our sins or of our services! Look unto the heavens, and hold the clouds. God made man erect, Cælumque tueri justissimi, and made him look up to heaven. Idolaters looked up, and worshiped the works of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars; but we must look up to heaven, and worship the Lord of those hosts. They are higher than we, but God is infinitely above them. His glory is above the heavens, (Ps. viii. 1.) and the knowledge of him higher than heaven, ch. xi. 8.

2. But hence he infers that God is not affected, either by one way or other, by any thing that we do. (1.) He says that men may be either bettered or damaged by what we do; (v. 8.) The wickedness, perhaps, may hurt a man as thou art, may occasion him trouble in his outward concerns. A wicked man may wound, or rob, or slander, his neighbour, or may draw him into sin, and so prejudice his soul. Thy righteousness, thy justice, thy charity, thy wisdom, thy piety, may, perhaps, profit the son of man; our goodness extends to the saints that are in the world, Ps. xvi. 3. To men like ourselves, we are in a capacity to suffer of doing injury, or of showing kindness. And in both these things, the Judge of all will interest himself, will reward those that do good, and punish those that do hurt, to their fellow-creatures and fellow-subjects; but,

(2.) He utterly denies that God can really be either prejudiced, or advantaged, by what any, even the greatest of all the men of the East, do, or can do.

[1.] The sins of the worst sinners are no damage to him; (v. 6.) "If thou sinnest wilfully, and of malice prepense, against him, with a high and mighty mind, if thy transgressions be multiplied, and the acts of sin be ever so often repeated, yet what doest thou against him?" This is a challenge to the carnal mind, and defies the most daring sinner to do his worst. It speaks much for the greatness and glory of God, that it is not in the power of his worst enemies to do him any real prejudice. Sin is said to be against God, because so the sinner intends it, and so he takes it, and it is an injury to his honour; yet it cannot do any thing against him. The worst sinners are impotent malice; it cannot destroy his being or perfection, it cannot dethrone him from his power and dominion, cannot diminish his wealth and possessions, cannot disturb his peace and repose, cannot defeat his counsels and designs, nor can it derogate from his essential glory. Job therefore ends in saying, What profit is it that I am cleansed from any sin? God was no Gainer by his reformation; who then would gain, if he himself did not.
The services of the best saints are no profit to him; (v. 7.) If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? He needs not our service; or, if he did want to have the work done, he has better hands than ours at command. Our religion brings no accession at all to his felicity. He is so far from being beholden to us, that we are beholden to him for making us righteous, and accepting our righteousness; and therefore we can demand nothing from him, nor have any reason to complain if we have not what we expect, but to be thankful that we have better than we deserve.

By reason of the multitude of oppressions they make the oppressed to cry; they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty: 10. But none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night; 11. Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven? 12. There they cry, but none giveth answer, because of the pride of evil men. 13. Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it.

Elihu here returns answer to another word that Job had said, which, he thought, reflected much upon the justice and goodness of God, and therefore ought not to pass without a remark. Observe, I. What it was that Job complained of; it was this, That God did not regard the cries of the oppressed against their oppressors; (v. 9.) By reason of the multitude of oppressions, the many hardships which proud tyrants put upon poor people, and the barbarous usage they give them, they make the oppressed to cry; but it is to no purpose, God does not appear to right them. They cry out, they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty, which lies heavy upon them. This seems to refer to those words of Job, (ch. xxiv. 12.) Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out against the oppressors, yet God lays not folly to them, does not reckon with them for it. This is a thing that Job knows not what to make of, nor how to reconcile to the justice of God and his government. Is there a righteous God, and can it be that he should so slowly hear, so slowly see?

II. How Elihu solves the difficulty: If the cries of the oppressed be not heard, the fault is not in God, he is ready to hear and help them, but the fault is in themselves; they ask and have not, but it is because they ask amiss, James iv. 3. They cry out, by reason of the arm of the mighty, but it is a complaining cry, a wailing cry, not a penitent praying cry, the cry of nature and passion, not of grace. See Hos. vi. 3. They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they bowed upon their beds. How then can we expect that they should be answered and relieved?

1. They do not inquire after God, nor seek to acquaint themselves with him, under their affliction; (v. 10.) But none saith, Where is God my Maker? Afflictions are sent to direct and quicken us to inquire early after God, Ps. lxxxviii. 34. But many, that grew under great oppressions, never mind God, because they take the pleasure of his hand in their troubles; if they did, they would bear their troubles more patiently, and be more benefited by them. Of the many that are afflicted and oppressed, few get the good they might get by their affliction. It should drive them to God, but how seldom is this the case! It is lamentable to see so little religion among the poor and miserable part of mankind. Every one complains of his troubles; but none saith, Where is God my Maker? that is, None repent of their sins, none return to him that smites them, none seek the face and favour of God, and that comfort in him which would balance their outward afflictions. They are wholly taken up with the wretchedness of their condition, as if that would excuse them in living without God in the world, which should engage them to cleave the more closely to him. Observe, (1.) God is our Maker, the Author of our being, and, under that notion, it concerns us to regard and acknowledge him, as God our Maker, in the plural number; which some think is, if not an indication, yet an intimation, of the Trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead; Let us make man. (2.) It is our duty therefore to inquire after him. Where is he, that we may pay our homage to him, may own our dependence upon him, and obligations to him? Where is he, that we may apply ourselves to him for maintenance and protection, may receive law from him, and may seek our happiness in his favour, from whose power we received our being? (3.) It is to be lamented, that he is so little inquired after by the children of men. All are asking, Where is mirth? Where is wealth? Where is a good bargain? But none ask, Where is God my Maker?

2. They do not take notice of the mercies they enjoy in and under their afflictions, nor are thankful for them, and therefore cannot expect that God should deliver them out of their troubles. He provides for our inward comfort and joy under our outward troubles, and we ought to make use of that, and wait his time for the removal of our troubles. He gives songs in the night, that is, when our condition is ever so dark, and sad, and melancholy, there is that in God, in his providence and promise, which is sufficient, not only to support us, but to fill us with joy and consolation, and enable us, in every thing, to give thanks, and even to rejoc1 as in tribulation. When we only pore upon the afflictions we are under, and neglect the consolations of God which are treasured up for us, it is just with God to reject our prayers. (2.) He preserves to us the use of our reason and understanding; (v. 11.) who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth, that is, who has endued us with more noble powers and faculties than they are endued with, and has made us capable of more excellent pleasures and employments, and has so ordered the affairs of nature and the world, that we may have ease and peace in them, as we have in all things, (1.) As that which furnishes us with matter for thanksgiving, even under the heaviest burden of affliction. Whatever we are deprived of, we have our immortal souls, those jewels, more than all the world, continued to us; even those that kill the body, cannot hurt them. And if our affliction prevail not to disturb the exercise of their faculties, but we enjoy the use of our reason, and the peace of our consciences, we have much more reason to be thankful, how pressing weever our calamities otherwise are. (2.) As a reason why we should, under our afflictions, inquire after God our Maker, and seek unto him. This is the greatest excellency of reason, that it makes us capable of religion, and it is in that especially that we are taught more than the beasts and the fowls. They have wonderful instincts and sagacities in seeking out their food, their physic, their shelter; but none can have a more capable of inquiring, Where is God my Maker? Something like logic, and philosophy, and politics, has been observed among the brute-creatures, but never any thing of divinity or religion; these are peculiar to man. If, therefore, the oppressed only cry by reason of the arm of the mighty, and do not look up to God, they do no more than the brutes, (who complain when they are hurt,) and they forget that instruction and wisdom by which they are advanced so far above them.
relieves the brute-creatures, because they cry to him according to the best of their capacity, Ps. civ. 21. ch. xxxviii. 41. But what reason have men to expect relief, who are capable of inquiring after God as their Maker, and yet cry to him no other with these insinuations do they put into the mouth of Job? 3. They are proud and unhumbled under their afflictions, which were sent to mortify them, and to hide pride from them; (v. 12.) There they cry, there they lie exclaiming against their oppressors, and filling the ears of all about them with their complaints, not sparing to reflect upon God himself and his providence; but none give answer. God does not work deliverance for them, and perhaps men do not much regard them; and why so? It is because they regard iniquity in their hearts, and therefore God will not hear their prayers, Ps. lxvi. 18. Isa. i. 15. God hears not such sinners. They have, it may be, brought themselves into trouble by their own wickedness, they are the Devil's poor; and then who can pity them? Yet this is not all; they are proud still, therefore they do not seek unto God, (Ps. x. 4.) or if they do cry unto him, therefore he does not answer; for he hears only the cry of the humble, (Ps. x. 17.) and delivers those by his providence, whom he has first, by his grace, prepared and made fit for deliverance; and that we are not, if, under humbling afflictions, our hearts remain unhumbled, and pride unmortified. The case is plain then, if we cry to God for the removal of the oppression and affliction we are under, and it is not removed, the reason is, not because the Lord's hand is shortened, or his ear heavy, but because the affliction has not done its work; we are not sufficiently humbled, and therefore must thank ourselves that it is continued.

4. They are not sincere and upright, and inward with God, in their supplications to him, and therefore he does not hear and answer them; (v. 13.) God will not hear vanity, that is, the hypocritical prayer, which is a vain prayer, coming out of feigned lips. It is a vanity to think that God should hear it, who searches the heart, and requires truth in the inward part.

14. Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him, yet judgment is before him; therefore trust thou in him. 15. But now, because it is not so, he hath visited in his anger; yet he knoweth it not in great extremity.

16. Therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain: he multiplieth words without knowledge.

Here is,

I. Another improper word, for which Elihu reproves Job; (v. 14.) Thou sayest thou shalt not see him; that is, (1.) Thou complainest that thou dost not understand the meaning of his severe dealings with the wicked, or discern the drift and design of them, "ch. xxviii. 8, 9. And, (2.) Thou despairest of seeing his gracious returns to thee, of seeing better days again, and art ready to give up all for gone;" as Hezekiah, (Isa. xxxviii. 11.) I shall not see the Lord. As, when we are in prosperity, we are ready to think our mountain will never be brought low; so, when we are in adversity, we are ready to think our valley will never be filled, but, in both cases, "they are in vain, even more so this day, which is as absurd as to think that the weather, when it is either fair or foul, will be always so, that the flowing tide will always flow, or the ebbing tide will always ebb.

II. The answer which Elihu gives to this despairing word that Job had said, which is this, (1.) That, when he looked up to God, he had no just reason to speak thus despairingly; Judgment is before him, that is, "He knows what he has to do, and will do all in infinite wisdom and justice; he has the entire plan and model of providence before him, and knows what he will do, which we do not, and therefore we understand not what he does. There is a day of judgment before him, when all the seeming disorders of Providence will be set to rights, and the dark chapters of it will be expounded. Then thou shalt see the full meaning of these dark events, and the final period of these dismal events; then thou shalt see his face with joy; therefore trust in him, depend upon him, wait for him, and believe that the issue will be good at last."

When we see the Lord, we shall see him, wise, righteous, and faithful, and that he is a God of judgment." (Isa. xxx. 18.) We shall see no reason to despair of relief from him, but all the reason in the world to hope in him, that it will come in due time, in the best time.

(2.) That, if he had not yet seen an end of his troubles, the reason was, Because he did not thus trust in God, and wait for him; (v. 15.) "Because it is not so; because thou dost not thus trust in him, therefore the affliction, which came at first from love, has now displeasure mixed with it. Now God has visited thee in his anger, taking it very ill that thou canst not find in thy heart to trust him, but harrowest such hard misgiving thoughts of him." If there be any mixtures of divine wrath in our afflictions, we may thank ourselves, it is because we do not behave aright under them; we quarrel with God, are fretful and impatient, and distrustful of his Divine Providence. There is a deal of the foolishness of man perverts his way, and then his heart frets against the Lord; (Prov. xix. 3.) yet Elihu thinks that Job, being in great extremity, did not know and consider that as he should, that it was his own fault that he was not yet delivered.

He concludes, therefore, that Job opened his mouth in vain, (v. 16.) in complaining of his grievances, and crying for redress, or in justifying himself, and clearing up his own innocence; it is all in vain, because he does not trust in God and wait for him, and had not a due regard to him in his afflictions. He had said a great deal, had multiplied words, but all without knowledge; all to no purpose, because he did not encourage himself in God, and humble himself before him. It is in vain for us either to appeal to God, or to acquit ourselves, if we do not study to answer the end for which affliction is sent; and in vain to pray for relief, if we do not trust in God, let him do what he pleaseth, and think that he shall receive any thing from him. James 1. 7. Or this may refer to all that Job had said. Having showed the absurdity of some passages in his discourse, he concludes that there were many other passages which were, in like manner, the fruits of his ignorance and mistake. He did not, as his other friends, condemn him for a hypocrite, but charges him only with Moses's sin, speaking unadvisedly with his lips, when his spirit was provoked. When at any time we do so, (and who is there that speaks not in this way?) it is a mercy to be told of it, and we must take it patiently and kindly, as Job did; not repeating, but recounting, what we have said amiss.

CHAP. XXXVI.

Elihu, having largely reproved Job for some of his unadvised speeches, which Job had nothing to say in the vindication of, here comes more generally to set him rights in his notions of God's dealings with him. His other friends had stood to it, that, because he was a wicked man, therefore his afflictions were so great and so long. But Elihu only maintained that the affliction was sent for his trial, and that, therefore, it was length
enned out, because Job was not, as yet, thoroughly humbled under it, nor had duly accommodated himself to it. He urges many reasons, taken from the wisdom and righteousness of God, his care of his people, and especially his greatness and almighty power, with which, in this and the following chapter, he persuades him to submissively accept of his sentence. I. His presence, v. 2-4. II. The account he gives of the method of God's providences toward the children of men, according as they conduct themselves, v. 5-15. III. The fair warning and great demonstration of God's sovereignty and omnipotence, which he gives instances of, in the operations of common providence, and which is a reason why we should all submit to him in his dealings with us, v. 16-21. IV. His demonstration of God's sovereignty and omnipotence, which he gives instances of, in the operations of common providence, and which is a reason why we should all submit to him in his dealings with us, v. 16-21.

I. EILIHU also proceeded, and said, 2. Suffer me a little, and I will show thee that I have yet to speak on God's behalf. 3. I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker. 4. For truly my words shall not be false: he that is perfect in knowledge is with thee.

Once more Elihu begs the patience of the auditory, and Job's particularly, for he has not said all that was in his heart, but he will now unfold them. Stand about me a little; some read it, v. 2. "Let me have your attendance, your attention, a while longer, and I will speak but this once, as plainly and as much to the purpose as I can." To gain this, he pleads,

1. That he had a good cause, a noble and fruitful subject; I have yet to speak on God's behalf. He spake as an advocate for God, and therefore might justly expect the ear of the court. Some, indeed, pretend to speak on God's behalf, who really speak for themselves; but those who sincerely appear in the cause of God, and speak in behalf of his honour, his truths, his ways, his people, shall be sure neither to want instruction, (It shall be given them in that same hour what they shall speak,) nor to lose their cause, or their fee. Nor need they fear lest they should exhaust their subject. They that have spoken ever so much, may yet find more to be spoken on God's behalf.

2. That he had a method to offer that was uncommon, and out of the road of vulgar observation; I will fetch my knowledge from afar, (v. 3) that is, "We will have recourse to our first principles, and the highest notions we can make use of to serve any purpose." It is worth while to go far for this knowledge of God, to dig for it, to travel for it; it will recompense our pains, and, though far-fetched, is not dear-bought.

3. That his design was undeniably honest; for all he aimed at was, to ascribe righteousness to his Maker; to maintain and clear this truth, that God is righteous in all his ways. In speaking of God, and speaking for him, it is good to remember that he is our Maker, to call him so, and therefore to be ready to do him, and the interests of his kingdom, the best service we can. If he be our Maker, we have all of him, must use all of him, and be very zealous for his honour.

4. That his management should be very just and fair; (v. 4.) "My words shall not be false, neither disagreeable to the thing itself, nor to my own thoughts and apprehensions. It is truth that I am contending for, and that for truth's sake, with all possible sincerity and plainness." He will make use of plain and solid arguments, and not the subtleties and niceties of the schools. "He who is perfect or upright in knowledge, is now reasoning with thee; and, therefore, let him not only have a fair hearing, but let what he says be taken in good part, as near well." The perfection of our knowledge, in this world, is, to be honest and sincere in searching out truth, in applying it to ourselves, and in making use of what we know for the good of others.

5. Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any: he is mighty in strength and wisdom. 6. He preserves not the life of the wicked: but giveth right to the poor. 7. He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous: but with kings are they on the throne; yea, he doth establish them for ever and they are exalted. 8. And if they be bound in fetters, and be held in cords of affliction; 9. Then he sheweth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. 10. He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity. 11. If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures: 12. But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge. 13. But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath; they cry not when he bindeth them: 14. They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean.

Elihu, being to speak on God's behalf, and particularly to ascribe righteousness to his Maker, here makes up the disposals of Divine Providence are not, not only according to the eternal counsels of his will, but according to the eternal rules of equity. God acts as a righteous Governor. For,

I. He does not think it below him to take notice of the meanest of his subjects, nor does poverty or obscurity set any at a distance from his favour. If men are mighty, they are apt to look with a haughty disdain upon those that are not of distinction, and make no figure; but God is mighty, infinitely so, and yet he despises not any, v. 5. He humbled himself, to take cognizance of the affairs of the meanest, to do them justice, and to show them kindness. Job thought himself, and his cause slighted, because God did not immediately appear for him. "No," says Elihu, God despiseth not any; which is a good reason why we should honour all men. He is mighty in strength and wisdom, and yet does not look with contempt upon those that have but a little strength and wisdom, if they be honest and upright. Nay, therefore, he despises not any, because his wisdom and strength are incontestably infinite, and therefore the condensations of his grace can be no diminution to him. They that are wise and good, will not look upon any with scorn and disdain.

II. He gives no countenance to the greatest, if they be bad; (v. 6.) He preserves not the life of the wicked. Though their life may be prolonged, yet not under any special care or the divine protection. Job had said that the wicked live, become old, and are mighty in flower, ch. xxi. 7. "No," says Elihu, "he seldom suffers wicked men to become old. He preserves not their life so long as they expected, nor with that comfort and satisfaction which are indeed our life; and their preservation is but a reservation for the day of wrath," Rom. ii. 5.

III. He is always ready to right those that are wronged, and to plead their causes; (v. 6.) He gives right to the poor, avenges their quarrel upon their persecutors, and forces them to make restitution of what they have robbed them of. If men will not right the injured poor, God will.
IV. He takes a particular care for the protection of his good subjects, v. 7. He not only looks on them, but he never looks off them. He withdraws not his eye from them, (v. 7.) Which seems not seem sometimes neglected and forgotten, and that befalls them which looks like an oversight of Providence, yet the tender careful eye of their Heavenly Father never withdraws from them. If our eye be ever toward God in duty, his eye will be ever upon us in mercy, and, when we are at the lowest, will not overlook us.

1. Sometimes he prefers good people to places of trouble and honor; (v. 7.) With kings are they on the throne, and every sheaf is made to bow to theirs. When righteous persons are advanced to places of honor and power, it is in mercy to them; for God's grace in them will both arm them against the temptations that attend preferment, and enable them to improve the opportunity it gives them of doing good. It is also in mercy to those over whom they are set; When the righteous bear rule, the city rejoices. If the righteous be advanced, they are established. They who in their keeping a good conscience, stand upon sure ground; and high places are not such slippery ground, to them as they are to others. But, because it is not often that we see good men made great men in this world, this may be supposed to refer to the honour to which the righteous shall rise when their Redeemer shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; for then only they shall be exalted for ever, and established for ever, then shall they all shine forth as the sun, and be made kings and priests to our God.

2. If, at any time, he bring them into affliction, it is for the good of their souls, v. 8. - 10. Some good people are preferred to honour and power, but others are in trouble. Now observe, (1.) The distress supposed, (v. 8.) If they be bound in fletters, laid in prison, as Joseph was, or holden in the cords of any other affliction, confined by pain and sickness, hampered by poverty, bound in their communities, and, notwithstanding all their struggles, held long in this distress. This was Job's case; he was caught, and kept fast, in the cords of anguish, as some read it. But observe, (2.) The design God has, in bringing his people into such distresses as these; it is for the benefit of their souls; the consideration of which should reconcile us to affliction, and make us think we'll of it. Three things God intends, when he afflicts us, [1.] To discover past sins to us, and to bring them before our eyes; (Job 33.) He shows them that sin in them, which, before, they did not see. He discovers to them the fact of sin, he shows them their work. Sin is our own work; if there be any good in us, it is God's work, and we are concerned to see what work we have made of sin. He discovers the fault of sin, shows them their transgressions of the law of God, and, withal, the sinfulness of sin, that they have exceeded, and harmed God. He shows us, when we are sinning, lay a load upon themselves, do not extenuate, but aggravate, their sins, and own that they have exceeded in them. Affliction sometimes answers to the sin; it serves however to awaken the conscience and puts men upon considering. [2.] To dispose our hearts to receive present instructions; then he opens their ear to discipline, v. 10. Whom God chastens, he teaches; (Ps. xciv. 12.) and the afflic-

3. It is the way to strengthen them to learn, softens the wax, that it may receive the impression. He shows them the sin of sin, if not repented of, will come down wrath. They think they are heaping up wealth, heaping up merits, but, when the treasures are opened, it will prove they were heaping up wrath.

Observe, 1. What they do to heap up wrath, what is it that is so provoking? It is this, They cry not when he binds them; that is, When they are
in affliction, bound with the cords of trouble, their hearts are hardened, they are stubborn and unhumbled, and will not cry to God, nor make their application to him. They are stupid and senseless, as stocks and stones, despising the chastening of the Lord. 2. What are the effects of that wrath? (v. 14.) They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean. This is the portion of hypocrites, whom Christ denounced many woes against. If they continue impenitent, (1.) They shall die a sudden death; die in youth, when death is most a surprise; and death (that is, the consequences of it) is always such to hypocrites; as they that die in youth die when they hoped to live, so hypocrites, at death, go to hell, when they hoped to go to heaven. When a wicked man dies, his expectations shall perish. (2.) They are sentenced to the second death, after death, (for so it comes in here,) is among the unclean; among the fornicators, so some; among the worst and vilest of sinners, notwithstanding their specious and plausible profession. It is among the Sodomites, so the margin; those filthy wretches, who, going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude 7. The souls of the wicked live after death, but they live among the unclean, the unclean spirits, the Devil and his angels, for ever separated from the New Jerusalem, which no unclean thing shall enter. 15. He delivereth the poor in his affliction, and openeth their ears in oppression: 16. Even so would he have removed thee out of the strait into a broad place, where there is no straitness; and that which should be set on thy table should be full of fatness. 17. But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked: judgment and justice take hold on thee. 18. Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee. 19. Will he esteem thy riches? no, not gold, nor all the forces of strength. 20. Desire not the night, when people are cut off in their place. 21. Take heed, regard not iniquity: for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction. 22. Behold, God exalteth by his power: who teacheth like him? 23. Who hath enjoined him his way? or who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity? Elisha here comes more closely to Job; and, 1. He tells him what God would have done for him, before this, if he had been duly humbled under his affliction; "We all know how ready God is to deliver the poor in his affliction; (v. 15.) he always was so; the poor in spirit, those that are of a broken and contrite heart, he looks upon with tenderness, and, when they are in affliction, is ready to help them. He opens their ears, and makes them to hear joy and gladness, even in their oppressions: while he does not yet deliver them, he speaks to them good words and comfortable words, for the encouragement of their faith and patience, the silencing of their fears, and the balancing of their griefs; and even so (v. 16.) would he have done to thee, if thou hadst submitted to his providence, and conducted thyself well, he would have delivered and comforted thee; and we should have had none of these complaints. If thou hadst altogether been restored to thee with advantage." 1. "Thou hadst been enlarged, and not confined thus, by thy sickness and disgrace; he would have removed thee into a broad place, where is no straitness, and thou shouldst no longer have been cramped thus, and have had all thy measures broken." 2. "Thou hadst been enriched, and not in this poor condition; thou shouldst have had thy table richly spread, not only with food convenient, but with the finest of the wheat," (see Deut. xxxii. 14.) "and the best of the flesh; and all thou hast been taught to silence us under our afflictions, to consider that if we were better, it would be every way better with us: if we had answered the ends of an affliction, the affliction would be removed; and deliverance would come, if we were ready for it. God would have done well for us, if we had conducted ourselves well, Ps. lxxx. 13, 14. Is. xlviii. 18. 11. He charges him with standing in his own light, and continuing in his own strength, Job xxx. 18, 21. "Thou art a wise and good man, but beware lest he take thee away, for the wisest and best have enough in them to deserve his stroke." 2. Let him not promise himself that, if God's wrath should kindle against him, he could find out ways to escape the strokes of it. (1.) There is no escaping by money; no purchasing a pardon with silver or gold, and such corruptible things. Even the great and the chief of the flesh, when God enters into judgment with thee; his justice cannot be bribed, nor any of the ministers of his justice. Will he esteem thy riches, and take from them a commutation of the punishment? No, not gold, v. 19. If thou hadst as much wealth as ever thou hadst, that would not ease thee, would not secure thee from the strokes of God's wrath, in the day of the revelation of which, riches profit not," Prov. xi. 4. See Ps. lxx. 8, 9. (2.) No escaping by rescue. "If all the forces of strength were at thy command, if thou couldst muster ever so many servants and vassals to
appear for thee to force thee out of the hands of divine vengeance, it were all in vain, God would not regard it, there is none that can deliver out of his hand." (3.) No escaping by absconding, v. 20. "Desire not the night, which often favours the retreat of a conquered army, and covers it: think not that thou canst escape the righteous judgment of God, for the darkness hideth not from him," Ps. cxxxix. 11, 12. See ch. xxxiv. 22. Think not, because in the night people retire to their place, go up to their beds, and it is easy then to escape being discovered by them, that God also ascends to his place, and cannot see thee: no, he neither slumbereth nor sleepeth; his eyes are open upon the children of men, not only in all places, but at all times: no rocks or mountain can shelter us from his eye. Let us understand it of the night of death: that is the night by which men are cut off from their place, and Job had earnestly breathed for that night, as the hireling desires the evening, ch. vii. 2. "But do not so," says Elihu, "for thou knowest not what the night of death is." Those that passionately wish for death, in hopes to make that their shelter from God's wrath, may perhaps be mistaken. There are those whom wrath pursues into that night.

3. Let this unwise continue his unjust quarrel with God and his providence, which hitherto he had persisted in, when he should have submitted to the affliction; (v. 21.) "Take heed, look well to thine own spirit, and regard not iniquity, return not to it;" so some; "for it is thy peril if thou do." Let us never dare to think a favourable thought of sin, never indulge it, nor allow ourselves in it. Elihu thinks Job had need of this caution, he having chosen rather iniquity than affliction, which is having chosen rather to gratify his own pride and humour in contending with God, than to mortify it by a submission to him, and accepting the punishment. We may take it more generally, and observe, that they who choose iniquity rather than affliction, make a very foolish choice; they that ease their cares by sinful pleasures, increase their wealth by sinful pursuits, escape their troubles by sinful projects, and evade sufferings for righteousness' sake by sin, can only be disappointed against their consciences, these make a choice they will repent of, for there is more evil in the least sin than in the greatest affliction. It is an evil, it is only evil. Let him not dare to prescribe to God, nor give him his measures; (v. 22, 23.) "Behold, God exaltext by his power;" that is, "He does, may, and can, set up and pull down whom he pleases, and therefore it is not for thee and me to contend with him." The more we magnify God, the more do we humble and abuse ourselves. Now consider,

(1.) That God is an absolute Sovereign: He exaltext by his own power, and not by strength derived from any other: he exalts whom he pleases, exalts those that were afflicted and cast down, by the strength and power which he gives his people. And therefore who has enjoined him his way? Who presides above him in his way? Is there any superior from whom advantage made of distinction, whose counsel is accountable? No, he himself is supreme and independent. Who puts him in mind of his way? (so some.) Does the Eternal Mind need a remembrancer? No, his own way, as well as ours, is ever before him; he has not received orders or instructions from any, (Isa. xi. 13, 14,) nor is he accountable to any: he enjoins to all the creatures their way; let not us then enjoin him his, but leave it to him to go as he pleases, and to do as he pleases. Some,

(2.) That he is an incomparable Teacher; Who teaches like him? It is absurd for us to teach him who is himself the Fountain of light, truth, knowledge, and instruction: he that teaches man knowledge, and so as none else can, shall not he know? Ps. xciv. 9, 10. Shall we light a candle to the sun? Observe, when Elihu would give glory to God as a Ruler, he praises him as a Teacher, for rulers must teach; God does so, he binds with the cords of a man. In this, as in other things, he is unequalled. None so fit to direct his own actions as he himself: he knows what he has to do, and how to do it for the best, and needs no information or advice. Solomon himself had a privy-council to advise him, but the King of kings has none. Nor is any so fit to direct our actions as he is: none teaches with such authority and convincing evidence, with such condescension and compassion, nor with such power and efficacy, as God does. He teaches by the Bible, and that is the best book, teaches by his Son, and he is the best Master.

(3.) That he is unexceptionably just in all his proceedings; Who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity? Not, Who dares say it? (many do iniquity, and persons tell them of it, at their peril,) but, Who can say it? Who had any cause to say it? Who can say it, and prove it? It is a maxim undoubtedly true, without limitation, that the King of kings can do no wrong. 24. Remember that thou magnify his work, which men behold. 25. Every man may see it; man may behold it afar off. 26. Behold, God is great, and we know him not; neither can the number of his years be searched out. 27. For he maketh small the drops of water: they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof, 28. Which the clouds do drop and distil upon man abundantly. 29. Also can any understand the spreadings of the clouds, or the noise of his tabernacle? 30. Behold, he spreadeth his light upon it, and covereth the bottom of the sea. 31. For by them judgeth he the people; he giveth meat in abundance. 32. With clouds he covereth the light; and commandeth it not to shine, by the cloud that cometh betwixt. 33. The noise thereof sheweth concerning it, the cattle also concerning the vapour. Elihu is here endeavouring to possess Job with great and high thoughts of God, and so to persuade him into a cheerful submission to his providence.

I. He represents the work of God; in general, as illustrious and conspicuous, v. 24. His whole work is so, God does nothing mean: this is a good reason why we should acquaint all the operations of his providence concerning us in particular: his visible works, those of nature, and which concern the world in general, are such as we admire and commend, and in which we observe the Creator's wise, powerful, and goodness; shall we then find fault with his dispensations concerning us, and the counsels of his will concerning our affairs? We are here called to consider the work of God, Eccl. viii. 13. 1. It is plain before our eyes, nothing more obvious, it is what men behold: every man that has but half an eye may see it, may behold it afar off. Look which way we will, we see the productions of God's wisdom and power; we see that done, and that doing, concerning which we cannot but say, This is the work of God; the finger of God; it is the Lord's doing. Every man may see, afar off, the heaven and all its lights, the earth and all its fruits, to be the work of Omnipotence: much more when we be held them high at hand. Look at the minutest
works of nature through a microscope; do they not appear curious? The eternal power and godhead of the Creator are clearly seen and understood by the things that are made, Rom. i. 20. Every man, even those that have not the benefit of divine revelation, may see this, for there is no speech or language where the voice of these natural constant preachers is not heard, Ps. xli. 3. It ought to be marvelous in our eyes. The beauty and excellency of the work of God, and the agreement of all the parts of it with what the one true God is, is so glowing and highly to exalt: not only justify it as right and good, and what cannot be blamed, but magnify it as wise and glorious, and such as no creature could contrive or produce. Man may see his works, and is capable of discerning his hand in them, (which the beasts are not,) and therefore ought to praise them, and give him the glory of them.

II. He represents God, the Author of them, as infinite and unsearchable, v. 26. The strength, being, power, and perfection, should lead us to the Fountain. God is great, infinitely so: great in power, for he is omnipotent and independent; great in wealth, for he is self-sufficient, and all-sufficient; great in himself, great in all his works; great, and therefore greatly to be praised; great, and therefore we know him not; we know that he is, but not what he is; we know what he is not, but not what he is. We know in part, but not in perfection. This comes in here as a reason why we must not rigour his proceedings, nor find fault with what he does, because it is speaking evil of the things that we understand not, and answering a matter before we hear it. We know not the duration of his existence, for it is infinite; the number of his years cannot possibly be searched out, for he is eternal, there is no number of them: he is a Being without beginning, succession, or period, who ever was, and ever will be, and ever the same, the great I AM. This is a good reason why we should not presuppose to him, or quarrel with him, because, as he is, such are his operations, quite out of our reach.

III. He gives some instances of God's wisdom, power, and sovereign dominion, in the works of nature, and the dispensations of common providence; beginning, in this chapter, with the clouds, and the rain that desents from them. We need not be critical in examining either the phrase, or the philosophy, or the disquisitions of this section, it is, to say, (1.) That God is infinitely great, and the Lord of all, the first Cause and supreme Director of all the creatures, and has all power in heaven and earth, and whom therefore we ought, with all humility and reverence, to adore, to speak well of, and to give honour to. (2.) That it is presumption for us to prescribe to him the rules and methods of his special providence toward the children of men, or to expect from him an account of the continuance, or the dispensations of common providences, about the meteors, that are so various, and so mysterious and unaccountable.

Elihu, to affect Job with God's sublimity and sovereignty, had directed him (ch. xxxv. 5.) to look unto the clouds: in these verses, he shows us what we may observe in the clouds we see, which will lead us to consider the glorious perfections of their Creator. Consider the clouds, which govern the world: the source and treasure of its moisture, and the great bank through which it circulates, a necessary provision, the stagnation of which would be as hurtful to this lower world as of the blood to the body of man. It is worth while to observe, in this common occurrence, (1.) That the clouds above distil upon the earth below: if the heavens become brass, the brass becomes iron; therefore thus the promise of plenty runs, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth. This intimates to us, that every good gift is from above, from him who is both Father of lights, and Father of the rain, and it is right that we should direct our prayers to him, and to look up. (2.) That they are here said to distil upon man; (v. 28.) for though indeed he caused it to rain in the wilderness, where no man is, (ch. xxxviii. 26. Ps. civ. 11.) yet special respect is had to man herein, to whom the inferior creatures are all made serviceable, and from whom the actual return of the tributes of praise is required. Among men, he caused his rain to fall upon the just, and upon the unjust, Mal. iv. 25. (3.) They are said to distil the water in small drops; not in spouts, as when the windows of heaven were opened, Gen. vii. 11. God waters the earth with that with which he once drowned it, only dispensing it in another manner, to let us know how much we lie at his mercy, and how kind he is, in giving rain by drops, that the benefit of it may be the further and the more equally diffused, as by an artificial water-course. (4.) Though sometimes, the rain comes in very small drops, yet, at other times, it pours down in great rain, and this difference between one shower and another must be resolved into the Divine providence which orders it so. (5.) Though it comes down in drops, yet it distils upon man abundantly, (v. 28.) and therefore is called the river of God which is full of water, Ps. lxxv. 9. (6.) The clouds pour down according to the vapour that they draw up, v. 27. So just the heavens are to the earth, but the earth is not so in the return it makes. (7.) The produce of the clouds is, sometimes, a great terror, and, at other times, a great favour, to the earth, v. 31. When he pleases, by them he judges the people he is angry with. Storms, and tempests, and excessive rains, destroying the fruits of the earth, and causing inundations, come from the clouds; but, on the other hand, from them, usually, he gives meat in abundance; they drop freshness upon the pastures that are clothed with flocks, and the valleys that are covered with corn.

Ps. lxxv. 11-13. Lastly, Notice is sometimes given of the approach of rain, v. 33. The noise thereof, among other things, shows concerning it. Hence we read (1 Kings xlv. 41.) of the sound of abundance of rain, or, as it is in the margin, a sound of a noise of rain, before it came, and a welcome harbinger it was then. As the noise, so the face of the sky, shows concerning it, Luke xii. 36. The cattle also, by a strange and manifest, consistent, initiation, is informed in the weather nigh at hand, and seek for shelter, shaming man, who will not foresee the evil, and hide himself.

2. As shadows to the upper world; (v. 29.) Can any understand the spreading of the clouds? They are spread over the earth as a curtain or canopy; how they come to be so, how stretched out, and how poised, as they are, we cannot understand, though, in a daily manner, we observe them. We cannot understand the reasons and methods of God's judicial proceedings with the children of men, whose characters and cases are so various, when we cannot account for the spreading of the clouds, which cover the light? v. 32. It is a cloud coming betwixt, v. 32. ch. xxvi. 9. And this we are sensible of, that, by the interposition of the clouds between us and the sun, we are, (1.) Sometimes favoured; for they frequently serve to shelter us from the violent heat of the sun, which otherwise would be destructive to us. A cloud of dew in the heat of harvest, is spoken of as a very great refreshment, Isa. xviii. 4. (2.) Sometimes we are by them frowned upon; for they darken the earth at noon-day, and eclipse the light of the sun. Sin is compared to a cloud, (Isa. xlv. 22.) because it comes between us and the light of God's countenance, and obstructs the shining of it. But though the clouds darken the
sun for a time, and pour down rain, yet, (Post nubi-lla Pheebus—The sun shines forth after the rain,) after he had weared the cloud, he spredeth his light upon it, v. 39. There is a clare shining after rain, (3 Sam. xxiii. 4.) the sun-beams are darted forth, and reach to cover even the bottom of the sea, thence to exhale a fresh supply of vapours, and so raise recruits for the clouds. In all this we must remember to magnify the work of God.

CHAP. XXXVII.

Elihu here goes on to extol the wonderful power of God in the meteor, and all the changes of the weather: If, in those changes, we submit to the will of God, take the weather as it is, and make the best of it, why should we not do so in other changes of our condition? Here he observes the hand of God, I. In the thunder and lightning, v. 1-5. II. In the frost and snow, the rains and wind, v. 6-13. III. He applies it to Job, and challenges him to solve the phenomena of these works of nature, that, confessing his ignorance in them, he might own himself an incompetent judge in the proceedings of Divine Providence, v. 14. 22. And then, IV. Concludes with his principle which he undertook to make out, That God is great, and greatly to be feared, v. 23, 24.

1. At this also my heart trembleth, and is moved out of his place. 2. Hear attentively the noise of his voice, and the sound that goeth out of his mouth. 3. He directeth it under the whole heaven, and his lightning unto the ends of the earth. 4. After it a voice roareth: he thundereth with the voice of his excellency; and he will not stay them when his voice is heard. 5. God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend.

Thunder and lightning, which usually go together, are sensible indications of the glory and majesty, the power and terror, of Almighty God, one to the ear, and the other to the eye; in these, God leaves not himself without witness of his greatness, as, in the rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, he leaves not himself without witness of his goodness, (Acts xiv. 17.) even to the most stupid and unthinking. Though there are natural causes and useful effects of them, which the philosophers undertake to account for, yet the sights and sounds are so designed by the Creator to startle and awake the slumbering world of mankind to the consideration of a God above them. The eye and the ear are the two learning senses; and therefore, though such a circumstance is possible, they say it was never known in fact, that any one was born blind and deaf. By the word of God divine instructions are conveyed to the mind through the ear, by his works, through the eye: but because the natural senses are so designed by the Creator to startle and awaken the slumbering world of mankind to the consideration of a God above them. The eye and the ear are the two learning senses; and therefore, though such a circumstance is possible, they say it was never known in fact, that any one was born blind and deaf. If the word of God be not heard, the natural senses are not made use of, and the mind remains in darkness.

How does he describe them. (1.) Their original, not their second causes, but the first. God directs the thunder, and the lightning is his, v. 3. Their production and motion are not from chance, but from the counsel of God, and under the direction and dominion of his providence, though, to us, they seem accidental and ungovernable. (2.) Their extent. The claps of thunder roll under the whole heaven, and are heard far and near; so are the lightnings darted to the ends of the earth, they shine out of the one part under heaven, and shine to the other, Luke xvi. 24. Though the same lightning and thunder do not reach to all places, yet reach they to very distant places in a moment, and there is no place but, some time or other, has these alarms from heaven. (3.) Their order. The lightning is first directed, and after it a voice roars, v. 4. The flash of fire, and the noise it makes in a watery cloud, are really at the same time; but, because the motion of light is much more quick, than that of sound, we think the voice is some time before we hear the thunder, as we see the firing of a great gun at a distance before we hear the report of it. The thunder is here called the voice of God's excellency, because by it he proclaims his transcendent power and greatness. He sends forth his voice, and that a mighty voice, Ps. lxviii. 33. (4.) Their violence. He will not stay them, that is, he does not need to check them, or control them, they go out to execute God's will without restraint from him; but by the lightning and thunder, he breaks in upon them, from heaven, and confounds their purposes, and takes from them the power and influence which he had before, as if it were for the purpose of piercing them to their hearts, and hindering them in their undertakings. God thunders with such great force and power that they are astonished, and if they attempt any thing they do it with great danger and impiety.}

2. God's lightning is especially considered, and he advises Job to affect Job, with the appearances of God's glory in the thunder and lightning; (v. 1, 2.) "For my part," (says Elihu,) "my heart trembles at it; though I have often heard it, often seen it, yet it is still terrible to me, and makes every joint of me tremble, and my heart beat as if it would move out of its place." Thunder and lightning have been dreadful to the wicked; the emperor Caligula would run into a corner, or under a bed, for fear of them; but we see, when they are not very much astonished, we say, they are thunder-struck. And as the people, we think thunder and lightning very awful; that which makes them the more terrible, is, the hurt often done by lightning, many having been killed by it; Sodom and Gomorrah were laid in ruins by it: it is a sensible indication of what God could do to this sinful world, and what he will do, at last, by the fire to which it is reserved. Our hearts, like Elihu's, should tremble at it for fear of God's judgments, Ps. cxxix. 120. He also calls upon Job to attend to it, (v. 2.) Hear attentively the voice of his voice. Ps. li. 4.) His voice, he thundered at a distance, and could not be heard without looking; or rather, though the thunder itself will be heard, and, whatever we are doing, we cannot help attending to it, yet, to apprehend and understand the instructions God thereby gives us, we have need to hear with great attention and application of mind. Thunder is called the voice of the Lord, (Ps. xxxix. 3, &c.) because, by it, God speaks to the children of men, to fear before him, and it should put us in mind of that mighty word by which the world was at first made, which is called thunder; (Ps. civ. 7.) At the voice of thy thunder, they hosted away, namely, the waters, when God said, Let them be gathered into one place. They that are themselves affected with God's greatness should labour to affect others.

How he describes them. (1.) Their original, not their second causes, but the first. God directs the thunder, and the lightning is his, v. 3. Their production and motion are not from chance, but from the counsel of God, and under the direction and dominion of his providence, though, to us, they seem accidental and ungovernable. (2.) Their extent. The claps of thunder roll under the whole heaven, and are heard far and near; so are the lightnings darted to the ends of the earth, they shine out of the one part under heaven, and shine to the other, Luke xvi. 24. Though the same lightning and thunder do not reach to all places, yet reach they to very distant places in a moment, and there is no place but, some time or other, has these alarms from heaven. (3.) Their order. The lightning is first directed, and after it a voice roars, v. 4. The flash of fire, and the noise it makes in a watery cloud, are really at the same time; but, because the motion of light is much more quick, than that of sound, we think the voice is some time before we hear the thunder, as we see the firing of a great gun at a distance before we hear the report of it. The thunder is here called the voice of God's excellency, because by it he proclaims his transcendent power and greatness. He sends forth his voice, and that a mighty voice, Ps. lxviii. 33. (4.) Their violence. He will not stay them, that is, he does not need to check them, or control them, they go out to execute God's will without restraint from him; but by the lightning and thunder, he breaks in upon them, from heaven, and confounds their purposes, and takes from them the power and influence which he had before, as if it were for the purpose of piercing them to their hearts, and hindering them in their undertakings. God thunders with such great force and power that they are astonished, and if they attempt any thing they do it with great danger and impiety.
6. For he saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth; likewise to the small rain, and to the great rain of his strength. 7. He sealeth up the hand of every man, that all men may know his work. 8. Then the beasts go into dens, and remain in their places. 9. Out of the south cometh the whirlwind; and cold out of the north. 10. By the breath of God frost is given; and the breadth of the waters is straitened. 11. Also by watering he weareth the thick cloud; he scattereth his bright cloud. 12. And it is turned round about by his counsel; that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth. 13. He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy.

The changes and extremities of the weather, wet or dry, hot or cold, are the subject of a great deal of our common talk and observation; but how seldom do we think and speak of these things, as Elihu does here, with an awful regard to God the Director of them, in the present hour, and serves the purposes of his providence, by them? We must take notice of the glory of God, not only in the thunder and lightning, but in the more common revolutions of the weather, which are not so terrible, and which make less noise. As,

1. In the snow and rain, v. 6. Thunder and lightning happen usually in the summer, but here he takes notice of the winter weather; then he saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth; he commissioned it, he commands it, he appoints it, where it shall light, and how long it shall lie. He speaks, and it is done, as in the creation of the world, Let there be light; so in the works of common providence, Snow, be thou on the earth. Saying and doing are not two things with God, though they are with us. When he speaks the word, the small rain distils, and the great rain pours down as he pleases.

The winter rain, so the LXX.; for, in these countries, when the winter was past, the rain either fell or was scarce. The cloud between the small rain and the great rain, is this, that the former is called a shower of rain, the latter of rains, many showers in one; but all are the showers of his strength: the power of God is to be observed as much in the small rain that soaks into the earth, as in the great rain that batters on the house-top, and washes away all before it. Note, The providence of God is to be acknowledged both by labourers in the fields, and travellers upon the road, in every shower of rain, whether it does them a kindness or a diskindness. It is sin and folly to contend with God's providence in the weather; if he send the snow or rain, can we hinder them? Or shall we be angry at them? It is as absurd to quarrel with any other disposal of Providence concerning ourselves or ours.

The effect of the extremity of the winter weather, is, that it obliges both men and beasts to retire, making them uncomfortable and unsafe for them to go abroad. (1.) Men retire to their houses from their labours in the field, and keep within doors; (v. 7.) He sealeth up the hand of every man. In frost and snow, husbandsmen cannot follow their business, nor some tradesmen, nor travellers, when the weather is extreme: the plough is laid by, the shipping laid up, nothing is to be done, nothing to be got, that men, being taken off from their own work may know his work, and contemplate that,

and give him the glory of that; and by the consideration of that work of his in the weather which seals up their hands, be led to celebrate his other great and marvellous works. Note, When we are, upon any account, disabled to follow our worldly business, and taken off from it, we should spend our time rather in the exercises of piety and devotion, (in acquainting ourselves with the works of God, and praising him in them,) than in foolish idle discourses and entertainments. And when we are set up, our hearts should be thus opened, and the less we have at any time to do in the world, the more we should do for God and our souls. When we are confined to our houses, we should thereby be driven to our Bibles and our knees. (2.) The beasts also retire to their dens, and remain in their close places, v. 8. It is meant of the wild beasts, which, being wild, must seek a shelter for themselves, to which, be he, the tame beasts, which are serviceable to man, are housed and protected by his care, as Exod. ix. 20. The ass has no den but his master's crib, and thither he goes, not only to be safe and warm, but to be fed. Nature directs all creatures to shelter themselves from a storm; and shall man only be unprovided with an ark?

2. In the winds, which blow from different quarters, and produce different effects, v. 9. Out of the north cometh the whirlwind; it turns round, and so it is hard to say from which point it comes, but it comes from the secret chamber, as the word signifies, which I am not so willing to understand of the south, because he says here, (v. 17.) that the wind out of the south is so far from being a whirlwind, that it is a warming, quieting, wind. But, at this time, perhaps, Elihu saw a whirlwind-cloud coming out of the south and making toward them, and he is now under the impression of what he saw, and he makes this remark about it, as it may be read, Or, if turbulent winds, which bring showers, come out of the south, cold and drying blasts come out of the north to scatter the vapours, and clear the air of them.

3. In the frost, v. 10. See the cause of it; it is given by the breath of God, that is, by the word of his power, and the command of his will; or, as some understand it, by the wind, which is the breath of God, as the thunder is his voice; it is caused by that prevailing wind out of the north. See the effect of it; The breadth of the waters is straitened; that is, the waters that had spread themselves, and flowed with liberty, are congealed, benumbed, arrested, bound up in crystal fetters. This is such an instance of the power of God, as, if it were not common, would be next to a miracle.

4. In the clouds; the womb where all these watery meteors are conceived, of which he had spoken, ch. xxxvi. 28. Three sorts of clouds he here speaks of:

(1.) Close, black, thick, clouds, pregnant with showers; these with watering he wearies; (v. 11.) they spend themselves, and are exhausted by the rain into which they melt and are dissolved, pouring out water till they are weary, and can pour out no more. See what pains, as I may say, the creatures, even those above us, take to serve man; the clouds water the earth till they are weary; they spend for our benefit; which shames and condemns us for the little good we do in our places, though it would be to our own advantage; for he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

(2.) Bright, thin, clouds, clouds without water; these he scattereth, they are dispersed of themselves, and not dissolved into rain, but what becomes of them we know not. The bright cloud, in the evening, when the sky is red, is scattered, and proves an earnest of a fair day, Matth. xvi. 2.
Flying clouds, which do not dissolve, as the thick cloud, into a close rain, but are carried upon the wings of the wind from place to place, dropping showers as they go; these are said to be turned round about by his counsels, v. 12. The common people say that the rain is determined by the planets, which is as bad divinity as it is philosophy, for it is guided and governed by the counsel of God, which extends itself even to those things that seem most casual and minute, that they may do whatsoever he commands them; for the stormy winds, and the clouds that are driven by them, fulfill his word; and, by this means, he causes it to rain upon one city, and not upon another, Amos iv. 7, 8. Thus his will is done upon the face of the world in the earth, that is, among the children of men, to whom God has an eye in all these things, of whom it is said, that he made them to dwell on the face of all the earth, Acts xxi. 26. The inferior creatures, being incapable of doing moral actions, are incapable of receiving rewards and punishments: but, among the children of men, God causes the rain to come, either for the correction of his land, or for a mercy to it, v. 13. [1.] Rain sometimes turns into a judgment, which turns to a sinful land: so once it was for the destruction of the whole world, so it is now often for the correction or discipline of some parts of it, by hindering seediness and harvest, raising the waters, and damaging the fruits. Some have said that our nation has received much more prejudice by the excess of rain than by the want of it. [2.] At other times, it is a blessing: it is for his land, that may be made fruitful, and, beside that which is just necessary, he gives for mercy, to fatten the land and fruit. [3.] It is not for the necessary dependence we have upon God, when the very same thing, according to the proportion in which it is given, may be either a great judgment, or a great mercy, and without God we cannot have either a shower or a fair gleam.

14. Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still and consider the wondrous works of God. 15. Dost thou know when God disposed them, and caused the light of his cloud to shine? 16. Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge? 17. How thy garments are warm, when he quieteth the earth by the south wind? 18. Hast thou with him spread out the sky, which is strong, and as a molten looking-glass? 19. Teach us what we shall say unto him: for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. 20. Shall it be told him that I speak? If a man speak, surely he shall be swallowed up.

Elihu here applies himself closely to Job, desiring him to apply what he had hitherto said, to himself. He informs him that he has not, of course, (v. 14.) that he would pause a while; Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God. What we hear, is not likely to profit us, unless we consider it, and we are not likely to consider things fully, unless we stand still, and compose ourselves to the consideration of them. The works of God, being wondrous, both deserve, and need, our consideration, and the due consideration of them will help to reconcile us to all his providences.

Elihu, for the humbling of Job, shows him, I. That he had no insight into natural causes, neither could see the springs of them, nor foresee the effects of them; (v. 15. 17.) Dost thou know the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge? We are here taught,

1. The perfection of God's knowledge: it is one of the most glorious perfections of God, that he is perfect in knowledge; he is omniscient. His knowledge is intuitive; he sees, and does not know by reflection: it is immediate and entire; he knows things truly, and not by their colours, though figuratively, and not by piece-meal. To his knowledge there is no distance, but all near; nothing future, but all present; nothing hid, but all open. We ought to acknowledge this in all his wondrous works, and it is sufficient to satisfy us, in those wondrous works which we know not the meaning of, that they are the works of one that knows what he does.

2. The imperfection of our knowledge. The greatest philosophers of ancient and modern days, concerning the powers and works of nature. We are a paradox to ourselves, and every thing about us is a mystery. The gravitation of bodies, and the cohesion of the parts, are most certain, and yet unaccountable. It is good for us to be made sensible of our own ignorance; some have confessed it, and those that would not have wished to expose it: but we must all suffer from it what incompetent judges we are of the various political, who understand so little even of the divine mechanics. We know not what orders God has given concerning the clouds, nor what orders he will give, v. 15. That all is done by determination and with design, we are sure; but what is determined, and what designed, and when the plan was laid, we know not. God often causes the light of his cloud to shine; in the rainbow, so says; in the lightning, so others; but not to us, for we could not, if we would, foretell, when he would do it? If we foresee the change of weather a few hours before, by vulgar observation, or when second causes have begun to work by the weather-glass, yet how little do these show us of the purposes of God by these changes? (2.) We know not how the clouds are poised in the air, the balancing of them, which is one of the wondrous works of God. They are so balanced, so spread, that they never rob us of the benefit of the sun; when the clouds are balanced, that they do not fall at once, or burst into cataracts or water-spouts: the rainbow is an intimation of God's favour in balancing the clouds, so as to keep them from drowning the world. Nay, so are they balanced, that they impartially distribute their showers on the earth, so that, one time or other, every place has its share. (3.) We know not how the comfortable change comes, when the winter is past, v. 17. 1.) How the weather becomes warm, after it has been cold. We know how our garment came to be warm upon us, that is, how we come to be warm in our clothes, by reason of the warmth of the air we breathe in. Without God's blessing, we should clothe us, yet not be warm, Hag. i. 6. But when he orders it, the clothes are warm upon us, which, in the extremity of cold weather, would not serve to keep us warm. [2.] How it becomes calm, after it has been stormy: he quiets the earth by the south-wind, when the clouds are dispersed: so he has a blustering, freezing, north-wind, so he has a howling, composing, south-wind: the Spirit is compared to both, because he both convinces and comforts, Cant. iv. 16.

II. That he had no share at all in the first making of the world; (v. 18.) “Hast thou with him spread out the sky? Thou camst not pretend to have stretched it out without him, no nor to have stretched it out in conjunction with him, for he was far from needing any help, either in contriving or in working.” The creation of the vast expanse of the visible heavens, (Gen. i. 6. 8.) which we see in...
being to this day, is a glorious instance of the divine power, considering, 1. That, though it is fluid, yet it is firm. It is strong, and has its name from its stability. It still is what it was, and suffers no decay, nor shall the ordinances of heaven be altered, till the lease expires with time. 2. That, though it is large, it is bright and most curiously fine; it is a molten looking-glass, smooth and polished, and without the least flaw or crack. In this, as in a looking-glass, we see the reflection of his handy-work, Ps. xix. 1. When we look up to heaven above, we should remember it is a mirror or looking-glass, not to show us our own faces, but to be a feint representation of the purity, dignity, and brightness of the upper world, and its glorious inhabitants.

III. That neither he nor they were able to speak of the glory of God, in any proportion to the merit of the subject, v. 19, 20. 1. He challenges Job to be their director, if he durst undertake it. He speaks it ironically, "Teach us, if thou canst, what we shall say unto him. Thou hast a mind to reason with God, and wouldest have us to contend with him on thy behalf; teach us, then, what we shall say; canst thou further this into this abyss than we can? If thou canst, favour us with the discoveries, furnish us with instructions." 2. He owns his own insufficiency, both in speaking to God, and in speaking of him; "We cannot express a word of the matter, but the best of men are much in the dark concerning the glorious perfections of the divine nature, and the administrations of the divine government. They that through grace know much of God, know little, nothing, in comparison with what is to be known, and what will be known, when that which is perfect is come, and the veil shall be rent. When we would speak of God, we speak confusedly and with great uncertainty, and are soon at a loss, and run a-ground, not for want of matter. As we must always begin with fear and trembling, lest we speak amiss, (Deus etiam vera dicere periculorum est—Even while affirming what is true concerning God, we incur risk,) so we must conclude with shame and blushing, for having spoken no better. Elihu himself had, for his part, spoken well on God's behalf, and yet is far from expecting a fee, or thinking that God was beholden to him for it, or that he would consider it as a work for him, that (1.) He is even ashamed of what he has said; not of the cause, but of his own management of it. Shalt it be told him that I speak? Shalt it be reported to him as a meritorious piece of service, worthy his notice? By no means, let it never be spoken of, for he fears that the subject has suffered by his undertaking it, as a fine face is wrunged by a bad painter, and his performance is so far from meriting thanks, that it needs pardon. When we have done well for God, we must acknowledge that we are unprofitable servants, and have nothing at all to boast of. He is afraid of saying any more. If a man speak, if he undertake to plead, for God, much more, if he offers to plead against him, surely he shall be swallowed up. If he speak presumptuously, God's wrath shall soon consume him; but if ever so well, he will soon lose himself in the mystery, and be overpowered by the divine lustre. Astonishment will strike him blind and dumb.

21. And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds; but the wind passeth and cleanseth them. 22. Fair weather cometh out of the north: with God is terrible majesty. 23. Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out: he is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice: he will not afflict. 24. Men do therefore fear him: he respecteth not any that are wise of heart.

Elihu here concludes his discourse with some short, but great, sayings concerning the glory of God, as that which he was himself possessed, and desired to show his fathers, with a holy awe of. He speaks conceisely, and at a distance, because, it should seem, he perceived that God was about to take the work into his own hands. 1. He observes, that God, who has said that he will dwell in the thick darkness, and make that his pavilion, (2 Chron. vi. 1. Ps. xviii. 11.) is in that awful chariot advancing toward them, as if he were preparing his throne for judgment, surrounded with clouds and darkness, Ps. xlvii. 2-9. He saw the cloud, with a whirlwind in the bosom of it, coming out of the south; but now it hung so thick, so black, over their heads, that they could none of them see the bright light, which just before was in the clouds. The light of the sun was now eclipsed; this reminded him of the darkness, by reason of which he could not speak, (v. 19.) and made him afraid to go on, v. 20. Thus the disciples feared when they entered into a cloud, Luke ix. 34. Yet he looks to the more excellent performance, which gives him hope that the clouds are not gathering for a deluge; they are covered, but not surrounded, with them. He expects that the wind will pass, (so it may be read,) and cleanse them; such a wind as passed over the earth, to clear it from the waters of Noah's flood; (Gen. vii. 1.) in token of the return of God's favour; and then fair weather will come out of the north, (v. 22.) and all will be well. God will not always frown, nor contend for ever. He hastens to conclude, now that God is about to speak; and therefore delivers much in a few words, as the sum of all that he had been discoursing of, which, if duly considered, would not only censure the nail he had been driving, but make way for what God would say.

(1.) That with God is terrible majesty. He is a God of glory, and such transcendent perfection as cannot but strike awe upon all his attendants, and a terror upon all his adversaries. With God there is terrible frame; so some; for he is fearful in frame, Exod. xv. 11.

(2.) That when we speak touching the Almighty, we must own that we cannot find him out; our finite understandings cannot comprehend his infinite perfections. Can we put the sea into an egg-shell? We cannot trace the steps he takes in his providence. His way is in the sea.

(3.) That he is excellent in power. It is the excellency of his power, that he can do whatever he pleases, in heaven and earth. The universal extent and irresistible force of his power, are the excellency of it; no creature has an arm like him, so long, so strong.

(4.) That he is no less excellent in wisdom and righteousness; in judgment and plenty of justice; else there would be little excellence in his power. We may urge the same reason that we who can do everything, will do everything for the best, for he is infinitely wise; and will not in any thing do wrong, for he is infinitely just. When he executes judgments upon sinners, yet there is plenty of justice in it, and he inflicts not more than they deserve.

(5.) That he will not afflict, that is, he will not afflict willingly; it is no pleasure to him to grieve the children of men, much less his own children. New afflictions but when there is cause, and when there is need, and he does not overburthen us with affliction, but considers our frame. Some read
thus: "The Almighty, whom we cannot find out, is in great power, but he will not afflict in judgment, and with him is plenty of justice, nor is he extreme to mark what we do amiss."

(6.) He values not the censures of those that are wise in their own conceit; He respecteth them not, for he will not with his wrath to oblige them, nor can those that prescribe to him pull with him to do as they would have him do. He regards the prayer of the humble, but not the policies of the crafty. No, the foolishness of God is wiser than men, 1 Cor. i. 25.

Lastly. From all this it is easy to infer, that, since God is great, he is greatly to be feared; nay, because he is gracious, and will not afflict, men do therefore fear him, for there is no forgiveness with him, that may be feared, Ps. xxxv. 4. It is the duty and interest of all men to fear God. Men shall fear him; so some. Sooner or later, they shall fear him. They that will not fear the Lord and his goodness, shall for ever tremble under the pourings out of the vials of his wrath.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

In most disputes, the strife is, who shall have the last word. Job's friends had, in this controversy, tamely yielded it to Job, and then he to Elihu. But, after all the wranglings of the counsels at bar, the Judge upon the bench must have the last word; so God had here, and so he will have his in every controversy, for God's judgement proceeds from him, and by his definitive sentence every man must stand or fall, and every cause be won or lost. Job had often appealed to God, and had talked boldly how he would order his cause before him, and as a prince would he go near unto him; but when God took the throne, Job had nothing to say in his own defence, but was silent before him. It is not so easy a matter, says the Apostle, Acts xiv. 27. A man's friends have sometimes appealed to God too; Oh that God would speak! ch. xi. 5. And now, at length, God does speak, when Job, by Elihu's clear and close arguments, was mellowed a little, and mortified, and so prepared to hear what God had to say. It is the office of ministers to prepare the way of the Lord. That which the great God designs in this discourse, is, to humble Job, and bring him to repent of, and recant, his passionate, indecent, invective manner; to make him mind the controversy, and the court, with a profound speaking, and arowing challenge and demand in general, v. 2, 3, 11. He proceeds in divers particular instances and proofs of Job's utter inability to contend with God, because of his ignorance and weakness. For, 1. He knew nothing of the founding of the earth, v. 4-7. 2. Nothing of the limiting of the sea, v. 8-11. 3. Nothing of the morning-light, v. 12-15. 4. Nothing of the dark recesses of the sea and earth, v. 16-21. 5. Nothing of the springs in the clouds, (as in 2 Cor. ii. 14.) nothing toward the making of his own soul, v. 36. And, lastly, he could not provide for the lions and the raven, v. 39. 41. If, in these ordinary works of nature, Job was puzzled, how durst he pretend to dive into the secrets of God's government, and do as he doth? In this, as Bishop Patrick observes, God takes up the argument begun by Elihu, (who came nearest to the truth,) and prosecutes it in inimitable words, excelling his, and all other men's, in the loftiness of the style, as much as thunder does a whisper.

1. THEN the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, 2. Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? 3. Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.

Let us observe here,
1. Who speaks; The Lord Jehovah, not a created angel, but the Eternal Word himself, the second person in the blessed Trinity, for it is he by whom the worlds were made, and that was no other than the Son of God. The same speaks here that afterward spake from mount Sinai. Here he begins with the creation of the world, and with the redemption of Israel out of Egypt, and, by way of reminder, refers the necessity of our subjection to him. Elihu had said, God speaks to men, and they do not perceive it; (ch. xxxvii. 14.) but this they could not but perceive, and yet we have a more sure word of prophecy, 2 Pet. i. 19.

2. When he spake: Then: when they had all had their saying, and yet had not gained their point, and Job's words, the third of his four friends, make him cry, Peccavi—I have done wrong; and, having humbled him, he puts honour upon him, by convincing his three friends that they had done him wrong. These two things God will, sooner or later, do for his people; he will show them their faults, that they may be themselves ashamed of them, and he will show others their righteousness, and bring it forth as the light, that they may be ashamed of their unjust censures of them.

3. How he spake; Out of the whirlwind, the rolling and involving cloud, which Elihu took notice of, ch. xxxvii. 1, 2, 9. A whirlwind prefaced Ezekiel's vision, (Ezek. i. 4.) and Elijah's, 1 Kings xix. 11. God is said to have his way in the whirlwind, (Nah. i. 3.) and, to show that even the stormy wind fulfils his word, here it was made the vehicle of it. This shows what a mighty voice God's is, even as strong, as it was, and as it is, but perfectly audible, even in the noise of a wide whirlwind. The Lord designs to startle Job, and to command his attention. Sometimes God answers his own people in terrible corrections, as out of the whirlwind, but always in righteousness.

4. To whom he spake: He answered Job, directed his speech to him, to convince him of what was amiss, before he cleared him from the unjust aspersions cast upon him. It is God only that can effectually convince of sin; and those shall so be humbled, whom he designs to exalt. Those that desire to hear from God, as Job did, shall certainly hear from him at length.

5. What he said; We may conjecture that Elihu, or some other of the auditory, wrote down verbatim what was delivered out of the whirlwind, for we find, (Rev. x. 4.) that, when the thunders uttered their voices, John was prepared to write. Or, if it was not written then, yet, the penman of the book being inspired by the Holy Ghost, we are sure that we have here a very true and exact report of what was said; The Spirit (says Christ) shall bring to your remembrance, as he did here, what I have said to you. The preface is very searching.

(1.) God charges him with ignorance and presumption in what he had said, (v. 2.) "Who is this that talks at this rate? Is it Job? What, a man that weak, foolish, despicable creature, whom he pretend to prescribe to me what I must do, or to quarrel with me for what I have done? Is it Job? What! my servant Job, a perfect and an upright
man? Can he so far forget himself, and act unlike himself? What, where, is he that darkness counsel through words without knowledge? Let him show his face if he dare, and stand to what he has said."

Note, Darkening the counsel of God's wisdom with our folly, is a great affront and provocation to God. Concerning God's counsel, we must own that we are without knowledge. They are a deep which we cannot fathom; we are quite out of our element, out of our aim, when we pretend to account for them. Yet we are too apt to talk of them as if we understood them, with a great deal of niceness and boldness: but, alas! we do but darken them, instead of explaining them; we confound and perplex ourselves and one another, when we dispute of the order of God's decrees, and the designs, and reasons, and methods, of his operations of providence and grace. A humble faith and sincere obedience shall see further and better into the secret of the Lord, than all the philosophy of their schools, and the sages' science so called. This first word which God spake is the more observable, because Job, in his repentance, fastens upon it as that which succeeded to humble him, ch. xlii. 3. This he repeated and echoed to, as the arrow that stuck fast in him; "I am the fool that have darkened counsel." There was some colour to have mouthed it upon Elijah, as if God meant him, for he spake last, and was speaking when the whirlwind began; but Job applied it to himself, as it becomes us to do, when we with reproofs are given, and not (as most do) to billet them upon other people.

(2.) He challenges him to give such proofs of his knowledge as would serve to justify his inquiries into the divine counsels; (v. 3.) "Gird up now thy loins like a stout man; prepare thyself for the encounter; I will demand of thee, will put some questions to thee; and answer me, if thou canst, before I answer thee." Those that go about to call God to an account, must expect to be catedh, called to an account themselves, that they may be made sensible of their ignorance and arrogance. God here puts Job in mind of what he had said, (ch. xiii. 22.) "Call thou, and I will answer: 'Now make thy words good.'"

4. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. 5. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? 6. Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner-stone thereof? 7. When the morning-stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? 8. Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth as if it had issued out of the womb? 9. When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling-band for it, 10. And brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, 11. And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?

For the humbling of Job, God here shows him his ignorance, even concerning the earth and the sea. Though so near, though so bulky, yet he could give no account of their origination; much less of heaven above or hell beneath, which are at such a distance, or of the several parts of matter which are so minute, and then, least of all, of the divine counsels.

1. Concerning the founding of the earth. If he have such a mighty insight, as he pretends to have, into the counsels of God, let him give some account of the earth he goes upon, which is given to the children of men.

1. Let him tell where he was when this lower world was made, and whether he was advising or assisting in that wonderful work; (v. 4.) "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Thy pretensions are high; canst thou pretend to this? Was thou present when the world was made?" See here, (1.) The greatness and glory of God; I laid the foundations of the earth. This proves him to be the only living and true God, and a God of power, (Isa. xl. 11. Jer. x. 12, 13.) and encourages us to trust in him at all times, Isa. ii. 13, 16. (2.) The meanness and contemptibleness of man; "Where wast thou then? Thou that hast made such a figure among the children of the east, and settled up for an oracle, and a judge of the divine counsels, where wast thou when the foundations of the earth were laid?" So far were we from having any hand in the creation of the world, which might entitle us to a dominion in it, or so much as being witnesses of it, by which we might have gained an insight into it, that we were not then in being. The first man was not, much less were we. It is the honour of Christ that he was present when this was done; (Prov. viii. 29. &c.) John i. 1, 2.) and we are the more the wonder, see what God has been pleased to give us, if we will not, therefore, find fault with the works of God, nor prescribe to him. He did not consult us in making the world, and yet it is well made; why should we expect, then, that he should take his measures from us in governing it?

2. Let him describe how this world was made, and give a particular account of the manner in which this strong and stately edifice was formed and erected; "Declare, if thou hast so much understanding as thou dost pretend to have, what were the advances of that work?" Those that pretend to have understanding above others, ought to give proof of it; show me thy faith by thy works, thy knowledge by thy words. Let Job declare, if he can,

(1.) How the world came to be so finely framed, with so much exactness, and such an admirable symmetry and proportion of all the parts of it; (v. 5.) "So He laid its foundations, and let the measures thereof, and stretched out the line upon it. Wast thou the architect that formed the model, and then drew the dimensions by rule according to it? The vast bulk of the earth is moulded as regularly as if it had been done by line and measure; but who can describe how it was cast into this figure? Who can determine its circumference and diameter, and all the lines that are drawn on the terrestrial globe? Is it to this day a dispute whether the earth stands still or turns round;* how then can we determine by what measures it was first formed?"

(2.) How it came to be so firmly fixed. Though it is hung upon nothing, yet it is established, that it cannot be moved; but who can tell upon what the foundations of it are fastened, that it may not sink with its own weight, or who laid the corner-stone thereof, that the parts of it may not fall asunder? (v. 13.) Wast thou the hewer of the mountains of the earth? (Ecc. iii. 14.) and therefore, as we cannot find fault with God's work, so we need not be in fear concerning it; it will last, and answer the end, the works of his providence, as well as the work of creation; the measures of neither can ever be ever be known; and the work of redemption is no less firm, of which Christ himself is both the Foundation and the Corner-stone. The church stands as fast as the earth.

* Such a dispute, in the present day, scarcely exists, even among the vulgar.—Ed.
3. Let him repeat, if he can, the songs of praise which were sung at that solemnity; (v. 7.) when the morning-stars sang together, the blessed angels, (the First-born of the Father of light,) who, in the morning of time, shone bright as the morning-star, going immediately before the light which God commanded to shine out of darkness upon the seeds of this lower world, the earth, which was without form and void. They were the sons of God, who shouted for joy, when they saw the foundations of the earth laid, because, though it was not made for them, but for the direct use of men, and though it would increase their work and service, yet they knew that the Eternal Wisdom and Word, whom they were to worship, (Heb. i. 6.) would rejoice in the habitable parts of the earth, and that much of his delight would be in the sons of men, Prov. viii. 31. The angels are called the sons of God, because they bear much of his image, are with him in his house above, and serve him as a son does his father. They now observe here, (1.) The glory of God, as the Creator of the world, is to be celebrated with joy and triumph by all his reasonable creatures; for they are qualified and appointed to be the collectors of his praises from the inferior creatures, who can praise him merely as objects that exemplify his workmanship. (2.) The work of angels is to praise God; the more we abound in holy, humble, thankful, joyful praise, the more we do the will of God as they do it; and whereas we are so barren and defective in praising God, it is a comfort to think that they are doing it in a better manner. (3.) They were unanimous in singing God's praises: they sang together with one accord, and there was no jar in their harmony. The sweetest concerts are in praising God. (4.) They all did it, even those who afterward fell, and left their first estate; even those who have praised God may, by the de- cidual power of sin, be brought to blaspheme him, and yet God will be eternally praised. 11. Concerning the limiting of the sea to the place appointed for it, v. 8, &c. This refers to the third day's work, when God said, (Gen. i. 9.) Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and it was so. 10. Out of the great deep or chaos, in which earth and water were intermixed, in obedience to the divine command, the waters break forth like a child out of the teeming womb, v. 8. Then the waters that had covered the deep, and stood above the mountains in repulsive vapors, at God's rebuke they fled, Ps. cix. 6, 7. 2. This new-born babe is clothed and swaddled, v. 9. The cloud is made the garment thereof, with which it is covered, and thick darkness (that is, shores vastly remote and distant from one another, and quite in the dark one to another) is a swaddlingband for it. See with what case the great God manages the raging sea; notwithstanding the violences of its tides, and the strength and violence of its waves, he manages it as the nurse does the child in swaddlingclothes. It is not said, He made rocks and mountains its swaddling-bands, but clouds and darkness; something that we are not aware of, and would think least likely for such a purpose. 3. There is a cradle, too, provided for this babe; I brake up for it my decreed place, v. 10. Valleys were sunk for it in the earth, capacious enough to receive it, and there it is I did to sleep; if it be sometimes referred to the resting place of the sun (as Dr. Clarke observes) is but the rocking of the cradle, which makes it sleep the fester. As for the sea, so for every one of us, there is a decreed place; for he that determined the times before appointed, determined also the bounds of our habitation. 4. This babe being made unruly and dangerous by the sin of man, which was the original of all unhappiness and danger in this lower world, there is also a prison provided for it; bars and doors were set, v. 10. And it is said to it, by way of check to its insolence, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further. The sea is God's, for he made it, he restrains it; he says to it, Here shalt thou proud waves be stayed, v. 11. This may be considered as an act of God's power over the sea; though it is so vast a body, and though its motion is sometimes extremely violent, yet God has it under check; its waves rise no higher, its tides roll no further, than God permits; and it is mentioned as a reason why we should stand in awe of God, (Jer. v. 23.) and yet why we should encourage ourselves in him; for he that stops the rise of the sea, even the noise of her waves, can, when he pleases, still the tumult of the people, Ps. lxv. 7. It is also to be looked upon as an act of God's mercy to the world of mankind, and an instance of his patience toward that provoking race; though he could easily cover the earth again with the waters of the sea, (and, methinks, every flowing tide twice a-day threatens us, and shows what the sea could do, and would do, if God would give it leave,) yet he restrains them, being not willing that any should perish, and having reserved the world that now is, unto fire, 2 Pet. iii. 7. 12. Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the day-spring to know his place; 13. That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, that the wicked might be shaken out of it? 14. It is turned as clay to the seal; and they stand as a garment. 15. And from the wicked their light is withheld, and the high arm shall be broken. 16. Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? 17. Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? 18. Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? declare, if thou knowest it all. 19. Where is the way where light dwelleth? and as for darkness, where is the place thereof? 20. That thou shouldst take it to the bound thereof, and that thou shouldst know the paths to the house thereof? 21. Knowest thou it, because thou wast then born? or because the number of thy days is great? 22. Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow, or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, 23. Which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war? 24. By what way is the light parted, which scattereth the east wind upon the earth? 25. The Lord here proceeds to ask Job many confounding questions, to convince him of his ignorance, and so to shame him for his folly in prescribing to God. If we will but try ourselves with such interrogatories as these, we shall soon be brought to own that what we know is nothing in comparison with what we know not. Job is here challenged to give an account of six things. 1. Of the springs of the morning, the day-spring from on high, v. 12-15. As there is no visible being of which we may be more firmly assured that
it is, so there is none which we are more puzzled in describing, nor more doubtful in determining what it is, than the light. We welcome the morning, the day-spring, as the dayspring of the day; but that which commanded since our days, but what it is, it was long before we were born, so that it was neither made by us, nor designed primarily for us, but we take it as we find it, and as the many generations had it that went before us. The day-spring knew its place before we knew ours, for we are but of yesterday. 2. It was not we, it was not any man, that commanded the morning-light at first, or appointed the place of its rising up and shining forth, or the time of it. The constant and regular succession of day and night, was no contrivance of ours, it is the glory of God that it shows, and his hand-work, not ours, Ps. xix. 1, 2. 3. It is quite out of our power to alter this course; "Hast thou countermanded the morning since thy days? Hast thou at any time raised the morning light sooner than its appointed time, to serve thy purpose, when thou hast waited for the morning; or ordered the day-spring for thy convenience to any other place than its own? No, never. Why then wilt thou pretend to direct the divine counsels, or expect to have the methods of Providence altered in favour of thee?"

We may as soon break the covenant of the day and of the night, as any part of God's covenant with his people, and particularly that, I will chasten them with the rod of men. 4. It is God that has appointed the day-spring to visit the earth, and diffuses the light through the air, which receives it as readily as the clay does the seal, (p. 14.) immediately admitting the impressions of it, so as of a sudden to be all one; enlightened by it, as the seal stamps its image on the wax; and they stand as a garment, or as if they were clothed with a garment. The earth puts on a new face every morning, and dresses itself as we do, puts on light as a garment, and is then to be seen. 5. This is made a terror to evil-doers. Nothing is more uncomfortable to mankind than the light of the morning; it is pleasant to the eyes, it is serviceable to life and the business of it, and the favour of it is universally extended, for it takes hold of the ends of the earth; and we should dwell, in our hymns to the light, not on its advantages to the earth, but God here observes how unwelcome it is to those that do evil, and therefore hate the light. God makes the light a minister of his justice, as well as of his grace, and is naturally quick to visit the ends of the earth, and for that purpose it takes hold of the ends of it, as we take hold of the ends of a garment, to shake the dust and moths out of it. Job had observed what a terror the morning-light is to criminals, because it discovers them, (ch. xxiv. 13, &c.) and God here secondeth the observation, and asks him, whether the world was indebted to him for that kindness? No, the great Judge of the world sends forth the beams of the morning-light, as his messenger, to proclaim the doom against him; they may only be defeated in their purposes, and put to shame, but that they may be brought to confound punishment, (p. 15.) that their light may be withheld from them, that is, that they may lose their comfort, their confidence, their liberties, their lives, and that their high arm, which they have lifted up against God and man, may be broken, and they deprived of their power to do mischief. When we see what is hence so much of the morning-light, was designed to represent, as in a figure, the light of the gospel of Christ, and to give a type of it, I will not say; but I am sure it may serve to put us in mind of the encomiums given to the gospel just at the rising of its morning-star, by Zecharias, (Luke i. 78.) By the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high has visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, whose hearts are turned to it as clay to the seal, 2 Cor. iv. 6. The virgin Mary too, (Luke i. 31.) shows that God, in his gospel, has showed strength with his arm, scattered the proud, and put down the mighty, by the light which he designed to shake the wicked, to shake the wickedness itself out of the earth, and break its high arm.

II. Of the springs of the sea; (v. 16.) "Hast thou entered into them, or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? Knowest thou what lies in the bottom of the sea, the treasures hid in the sands? Or canst thou give an account of the rise and original of the waters of the sea? Vapours are continually issued out of the sea. Dost thou know how the rains are gathered, by what means they are applied? Rivers are constantly poured into the sea. Dost thou know how they are continually discharged, so as not to overflow the earth? Art thou acquainted with the secret subterraneous passages by which the waters circulate?" God's way, in the government of the world, is said to be in the sea, and in the great waters, (Ps. lxxvii. 19.) intimating that it is hid from us, and not to be tried into by us.

III. Of the gates of death; Have these been often to thee? v. 16. Death is a grand secret. 1. We know not beforehand when and how, and by what means, we or others shall be brought to death; by what read we must go the way whence we shall not return; what disease or what disaster will be the door to let us into the house appointed for all living; Man knows not his time. 2. We cannot describe what death is, how the knot is untied between body and soul, nor how the spiritual light goes out, and that is a query, as Mr. Norris expresses it; with what dreadful curiosity (says he) does the soul launch out into the vast ocean of eternity, and resign to an untried abyss! Let us make it sure that the gates of heaven shall be opened to us on the other side death, and then we need not fear the opening of the gates of death, though it is a way we are to go but once. 3. We have no correspondence at all with separate souls, nor any acquaintance with their state. It is an unknown, undiscovered, region to which they are removed, we can neither hear from them, nor send to them. While we are here in a world of sense, we speak of the world of spirits, as blind men do of colours, and when we remove thither, shall be amazed to find how much we are mistaken.

IV. Of the breadth of the earth; (v. 18.) "Hast thou perceived that? The knowledge of this might seem most proper to him, and within what bounds he is challenged to declare this, if he can. We have our residence on the earth, God has given it to the children of men; but who ever surveyed it, or could give an account of the number of its acres? It is but a point to the universe; yet, small as it is, we cannot be exact in declaring the dimensions of it. Job had never sailed round the world, nor any before him; so little did men know the breadth of the earth, that what is said to a fame that the continent of America was discovered, which had, time out of mind, lain hid. The divine perfection is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea; it is therefore presumption for us, who perceive not the breadth of the earth, to dive into the depth of God's counsels.

V. Of the place and way of light and darkness. Of the day-spring he had spoken before, (v. 12.) and the way he speaks of it again; (v. 19.) Where is the way where light dwelleth? And again, (v. 24.) By what way is the light parted? He challenges him to describe, 1. How the light and darkness were at first made; when God, in the beginning, first spread darkness upon the face of the deep, and afterward commanded the light to shine out of darkness, by that might
word, *Let there be light,* was Job a witness to the order, to the operation? can he tell where the fountains of light and darkness are, and where those mighty princes keep their courts distinct, while in one world they rule alternately? Though we long ever so much either for the shining forth of the morning, or the shadows of the evening, we know not whither to send, or go, to fetch them, nor can tell the paths to the house thereof, v. 26. We were more than the number of our days so great, that we can describe the birth of that first-born of the visible creation, v. 21. Shall we then undertake to discourse of God's counsels, which were from eternity, or to find out the paths to the house thereof, to solicit for the alteration of them? God glories in it, that he forms the light and creates the darkness; and, if we must take those as we find them, take them as they come, and quarrel with neither, but make the best of both, then they must, in like manner, accommodate ourselves to the pean, and the evil which God likewise created, Isa. xlv. 7.

2. How they still keep their turns interchangeably. It is God that makes the outgoings of the morning and of the evening to rejoice; (Ps. lxv. 8.) for it is his order, and no order of ours, that is executed by the outgoings of the morning-light, and the darkness of the night. We cannot so much as tell whence they come, or whither they go, (v. 24.) But God's lightTherefore, if we imagine that we are in the dark, or, in another manner, when, in an instant, it shoots itself into all parts of the air above the horizon, as if the morning-light flew upon the wings of an east-wind, so swiftly, so strongly, as it carried, scattering the darkness of the night, as the east-wind does the clouds? Hence we read of the *wings of the morning,* (Ps. cxxxix. 9.) on which the light is conveyed to the uttermost parts of the sea, and scattered like an east-wind upon the earth. It is a marvellous change, that passes over us every morning by the return of the light, and every evening by the return of the darkness; but we expect them, and so they are no surprise or uneasiness to us. If we would, in like manner, count upon changes in our outward condition, we should neither in the brightest noon count upon perpetual day, nor in the darkest midnight despair of the return of the morning. God has set the one over against the other, like the day and night; and so have, Ecc. xii. 14.

VI. *Of the treasures of the snow and hail*; (v. 22, 23.) "Hast thou entered into those, and taken a view of them?" In the clouds the snow and hail are generated, and thence they come in such abundance, that one would think there were treasures of them laid up in store there, whereas indeed they are produced *extemore,* as I may say, and *pro re nata—on the occasion.* Sometimes they come so opportune to serve the purposes of Providence, in God's fighting for his people, and against his and their enemies, that one would think they were laid up as magazines, or stores of arms, ammunition, and provisions, against the time of trouble, the day of battle and war; when God will either contend with the world in general, as in the deluge, when the windows of heaven were opened, and the waters fetched out of these treasures to drown a wicked world, that waged war with Heaven, or with some particular persons or parties, as when God out of these treasures fetched great hail-stones where-with to fight against the Canaanites. Josh. x. 11. See what folly it is to strive against God, who is thus prepared for battle and war, and how much it is our interest to make our peace with him, and to keep ourselves in his love! God can fight as effectually with snow and hail, if he pleases, as with thunder and lightning, or the sword of an angel.

25. Who hath divided a water-course for the overflowing of waters; or for a way for the lightning of thunder; 26. To cause it to rain on the earth, *where no man is;* on the wilderness, wherein *is no man;* 27. To satisfy the desolate and waste ground, and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth? 28. Hath the rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of dew? 29. Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it? 30. The waters are hid as with a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen. 31. Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? 32. Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? 33. Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth? 34. Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee? 35. Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are? 36. Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts, or who hath given understanding to the heart? 37. Who can number the clouds in wisdom? or who can stay the bottles of heaven, 38. When the dust growth into hardness, and the clogs cleave fast together? 39. Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion? or fill the appetite of the young lions, 40. When they couch in their dens, and abide in the covert to lie in wait? 41. Who provideth for the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat.

Hitherto, God had put such questions to Job, as were proper to convince him of his ignorance and short-sightedness. Now, he comes, in the same manner, to show his impotency and weakness. As much is but little that he knows, and therefore he ought not to arrogate the divine counsels, so it is but little that he can do, and therefore he ought not to oppose the proceedings of Providence. Let him consider what great things God does, and try whether he can do the like, or whether he thinks himself an equal match for him.

1. How great God is. (1.) He has a sovereign dominion over the waters, has appointed them their course, even then when they seem to overflow, and to be from under his check, v. 25. He has divided a water-course, directs the rain where to fall, even when the shower is most violent, with as much certainty as if it were conveyed by canals or conduit-pipes. Thus the hearts of kings are said to be in *God's hand;* and, as the rains, those rivers of God, he turns them whithersoever he will. Every drop goes as it is directed. God has *sworn,* that the wa-
Job, xxxviii.

Job, XXXVIII.

goes on thine errand, and do the execution thou wstretch est for? Will they come at thy call, and say unto thee, Here we are? No, the ministers of God's wrath will not be ministers of ours. Why should they, then, if the work of man works not the righteousness of God?  

2. God has the stars of heaven under his command and cognizance; we have not. Our meditations are now to rise higher, far above the clouds, to the glorious lights above. He mentions, not the planets, which move in lower orbs, but the fixed stars, which are much higher. It is supposed that they have an influence upon this earth, notwithstanding they are not under the minds of men, or the events of providence, (man's things are determined by their stars,) but upon the ordinary course of nature; they are set for signs and seasons, for days and years, Gen. i. 14. And if the stars have such a dominion over this earth, (v. 33.) though they have their place in the heavens, and are but mere matter, much more has He who is their Maker, and ours, and who is an Eternal Mind. Now see how weak we are. 1. We cannot take the stars for our counsels; for they are the agents that are instrumental to produce the pleasures of the spring; Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades— the seven stars, that constellation which lies in so small a compass, (none in less,) and yet sheds very benign influences upon the earth. Nor can we alter theirs that introduce the rigour of the winter; Canst thou loose the bands of Orion?—that magnificent constellation which makes so great a figure, (none greater,) and dispenses rough and unpleasant influences, which we cannot control or repel. Both summer and winter will have their course; God can change them when he pleases, can make the spring cold, and so bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, and the winter warm, and so loose the bands of Orion; but we cannot. 2. It is not in our power to order the motions of the stars, nor are we entrusted with the conduct of them. God, who calls the stars by their names, (Ps. cxlvii. 4.) calls them forth in their respective seasons, appoints them the time of their rising and setting; but this is not in our province, we cannot bring forth Mazzaorath—the stars in the southern signs, nor guide Arcturus—those in the northern, v. 32. God can bring forth the stars to battle, (as he did when in their courses they fought against Sisera,) and guide them in the attacks they are ordered to make; but man cannot do so. 3. We are not only unconcerned in the government of the stars, (the government they are under, and the government they intrusted with, for they both rule and are ruled,) but utterly unacquainted with it; we know not the ordinances of heaven, v. 33. So far are we from being able to change them, that we can give no account of them: they are a secret to us. Shall we then pretend to know God's counsels, and the reasons of them? If it were left to us to set the dominion of the stars upon the earth, we should soon be at a loss. Shall we then teach God how to govern? The world did not; but God must.  

III. God is the Author and Giver, the Father and Fountain, of all wisdom and understanding, v. 36. The souls of men are nobler and more excellent beings than the stars of heaven themselves, and shine brighter. The powers and faculties of reason with which man is endowed, and the wonderful performances of thought, brings him into some alliance to the blessed angels; and whence comes this light? From God. Here is a lowly term of the expression of wisdom into the inward parts of man, and given understanding to the heart? 1. The rational soul itself, and its capacities, come from him as the God of nature, for he forms the spirit of man within him. We did not make our own souls, nor can we do—
scribe how they act, or how they are united to our bodies. He only, that made them, knows them, and knows how to manage them. He fashioneth men's hearts alike in some things, and yet unlike in others. 2. True wisdom, with its furniture and improvement, comes from him as the God of grace, and the Father of every good and perfect gift. Shall we pretend to be wiser than God, who have all our wisdom from him? Nay, shall we pretend to be wise above our sphere, and beyond the limits which he that gave us our understanding sets to it? He designed we should with it serve God, and do our duty, but never intended we should with it set up for directors of the stars or the lightning.

IV. God has the clouds under his cognizance and government, but so have not we, v. 37. Can any man, with all his wisdom, undertake to number the clouds? or (as it may be read) to declare and describe how far the distance of the stars which are, in our own atmosphere, yet we know little more of them than of the stars which are at so great a distance. And when the clouds have poured down rain in abundance, so that the dust grows into solid mire, and the clouds cleave fast together, (v. 38.) who can stay the bottles of heaven? Who can stop them, that it may not always rain? The power and goodness of God are herein to be acknowledged, that he gives the earth rain enough, but deigns not to give us in our own atmosphere, yet we know little more of them than of the stars which are at so great a distance. And when the clouds have poured down rain in abundance, so that the dust grows into solid mire, and the clouds cleave fast together, (v. 38.) who can stay the bottles of heaven? Who can stop them, that it may not always rain? The power and goodness of God are herein to be acknowledged, that he gives the earth rain enough, but deigns not to give us in our own atmosphere, yet we know little more of them than of the stars which are at so great a distance. And when the clouds have poured down rain in abundance, so that the dust grows into solid mire, and the clouds cleave fast together, (v. 38.) who can stay the bottles of heaven? Who can stop them, that it may not always rain? The power and goodness of God are herein to be acknowledged, that he gives the earth rain enough, but deigns not to give us in our own atmosphere, yet we know little more of them than of the stars which are at so great a distance.

V. God provides food for the inferior creatures, and it is by his providence, not by any care or pains of ours, that they are fed. The following chapter is wholly taken up with the instances of God's providence and goodness to the inferior creatures, and therefore some transfer to it the three last verses of this chapter, which speak of the provision made.

For the lions; (v. 39, 40.) "Thou dost not pretend that the clouds and stars have any dependence upon thee, for they are above thee; but, on the earth, thou thinkest thyself paramount, let us try that then; Wilt thou hunt the fowes for the lion? Thou valuest thyself upon thy possessions of cattle which thou wast once owner of, the oxen, and asses, and camels, and all that is thine; but wilt thou undertake the maintenance of the lions, and the young lions, when they couch in their dens, waiting for a prey? No, thou needest not do it, they can shift for themselves without thee: thou canst not do it, for thou hast not wherewithal to satisfy them: thou darest not do it; shouldst thou come to feed them, they would be upon thee. But I do it." See the all-sufficiency of the Divine Providence; it has wherewithal to satisfy the desire of every living thing, even the most ravenous. See the bounty of the Divine Providence, that, wherever it has given life, will give livelihood, even to those creatures that are not only not serviceable, but dangerous, to man. And see its sovereignty, that it suffers some creatures to be killed for the support of other creatures: the harmless sheep are torn to pieces, to fill the appetite of the young lions, who yet sometimes are made to lack and suffer hunger, to punish them for their cruelty, while those that fear God want no good thing.

For the young ravens, v. 41. As ravenous beasts, so ravenous birds, are fed by the Divine Providence. Who but God provides for the raven, his food? Man does not, he takes care only of those creatures that are, or may be, useful to him. But God has a regard to all the works of his hands, over the meanest and least valuable. The ravens, young ones, are in a special manner necessitous, and God supplies them, Ps. cxlvii. 9. God's feeding the fowls, especially these fowls, (Matth. vi. 26.) is an encouragement to us to trust him for our daily bread. See here, (1.) What distress the young ravens are often in; they wander for lack of meat. The old ones, they say, neglect them, and do not provide for them as other birds do for their young: and indeed those that are ravenous to others, are commonly barbarous to their own, and unnatural. (2.) What the young ones do in that distress; they cry, for they are noisy, clamorous, creatures, and this is interpreted a crying to God. It being the distress of nature, it is looked upon as directed to the God of nature. The putting of so favourable a construction as this upon the cries of the young ravens, may encourage us in our prayers, though we can but cry, Abba, Father. (3.) What God does for them; some way or other, he provides for them, so that they grow up, and come to maturity. And he that takes this care of the young ravens, certainly will not be wanting to his people, or theirs. This being but one instance of many of the divine compassion, may give us occasion to think how much good our God does, every day, beyond what we are aware of.

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God proceeds here to show Job what little reason he had to charge him with unkindness, who so compassionately doth arise to the inferior creatures, and took such a tender care of them; or to boast of himself, and his own good deeds before God, which were nothing to the divine mercies. He shows him also what great reason he had to be humble, who knows so little of the nature of the creatures about him, and had so little influence upon them, and to submit to that God on whom they all depend. He discourses particularly, I. Concerning the wild goats and the hinds, v. 1-4. II. Concerning the wild ass, v. 5-8. III. Concerning the unicorn, v. 9-12. IV. Concerning the peacock, v. 13. V. Concerning the ostrich, v. 13-18. VI. Concerning the horse, v. 19-25. VII. Concerning the hawk and the eagle, v. 26-30.

1. K NOWEST thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth? or canst thou mark when the hind doth calve? 2. Canst thou number the months that they fulfill; or knowest thou the time when they bring forth? 3. They bow themselves, they bring forth their young ones, they cast out their sorrows. 4. Their young ones are in good liking, they grow up with corn; they go forth, and return not unto them. 5. Who hath sent out the wild ass free? or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass? 6. Whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwellings. 7. He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver. 8. The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing. 9. Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? 10. Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? or will he harrow the valleys after thee? 11. Wilt thou trust him, because his strength is great? or wilt thou leave thy labour to him? 12. Wilt thou believe him, that he will bring home thy seed, and gather it into thy barn?

God here shows Job what little acquaintance he had with the untamed creatures that run wild in the
deserts, and live at large, but are the care of the Divine Providence. As,

I. The wild goats and the hinds. That which is taken notice of concerning them, is, the bringing forth, and bringing up, of their young ones. For as every individual is fed, so every species of the wild ass is provided for, the care of the Divine Providence, Lord, for aught we know, none extinct to this day.

Observe here,

1. Concerning the production of their young. (1.) Man is wholly ignorant of the time when they bring forth, v. 1, 2. Shall we pretend to tell what is in the womb of Providence, or what a day will bring forth, who know not the time of the pregnancy of a hind or a wild goat? (2.) Though they bring forth their young ones in a great number, and sordidly, and have no assistance from man, yet, by the good providence of God, their young ones are safely produced, and their sorrows cast out and forgotten, v. 3. Some think it is intimated, (Ps. xxix. 9.) that God by thunder helps the hinds in calving. Let it be observed, for the comfort of women in labour, that God helps even the hinds to bring forth their young; and shall he not more succour them, and save them in child-bearing, who are his children, and have no servant who can help them to bring forth?

2. Concerning the growth of their young; (v. 4.) They are in good liking; though they are brought forth in sorrow, after their dams have suckled them a while, they shift for themselves in the corn-fields, and are no more burthensome to them, which is an example to children, when they are grown up, not to be always hanging upon their parents, and craving from them, but to put forth themselves to get their own livelihood, and to require their parents.

II. The wild ass: a creature we frequently read of in scripture; some say, untemprable. Man is said to be born as the wild ass’s colt, so hard to be governed. Three things Providence has allotted to the wild ass. 1. An unbounded liberty; (v. 5.) Who, but God, has sent out the wild ass free? He has given a disposition to it, and therefore a dispensation for it. The tame ass is bound to labour, the wild ass has no bonds on him. Note, Freedom from service, and liberty to range at pleasure, are but the privileges of a wild ass. It is a pity that any of the children of men should covet it, or value themselves on it. It is better to labour and be good for something, than ramble and be good for nothing. But if, among men, Providence sets some at liberty, and suffers them to live at ease, while others are doomed to servitude, we must not marvel at the matter, it is so among the brute-creatures. 2. An uncensured lodging; (v. 6.) whose house I say, during the wilderness, where he has room enough to traverse his ways, and snuff up the wind at his pleasure, as the wild ass is said to do, (Jer. ii. 24.) as if he were to live upon the air, for it is the barren land that is his dwelling. Observe, The tame ass, that labours, and is serviceable to man, has his master’s crib to go to, both for shelter and food, and lives in a fruitful land; but the wild ass, that will have his liberty, must live in complete misery, that will not labour, let him not eat. He that will, shall eat the labour of his hands, and have also to give to him that needs. Jacob, the shepherd, has good red potage to spare, when Esau, a sportsman, was ready to perish for hunger. A further description of the liberty and livelihood of the wild ass we have, v. 7, 8. (1.) He has no owner, nor will he be in subjection; he scorns the multitude of the city. If they have a multitude of their own, that will reward him with a multitude, he will soon get clear of them, and the crying of the driver is nothing to him. He laughters at those that live in the tumult and bustle of cities, (so Bishop Patrick,) thinking himself happier in the wilderness; and opinion is the rate of things. (2.) Having no owner, he has no feeder, nor is any provision made for him, but he must shift for himself; the range of the mountains is his pasture, and a bare pasture it is; there he searches here and there after a green thing, as he can find it and pick it up; whereas the labouring labours have green things in plenty, without their searching for them. From these and other tokens of this and other creatures, we may infer how unfit we are to give law to Providence, who cannot give law even to a wild ass’s colt.

III. The unicorn; Rhem; a strong creature, (Numb. xcvii. 22.) a stately proud creature, Ps. lix. 10. He is able to serve, but not willing; and God here challenges Job to force him to it. Job expected every thing should be just as he would have it. "Since thou dost pretend," (says God) "to bring every thing beneath thy sway, begin with the unicorn, and try thy skill upon him. Now that thine oxen and asses are all gone, try whether he will be willing to serve thee in their stead, (v. 9.) and whether he will take up with the provision thou usest to make for them. Will he abide by thy crib? No," 1. "Thou canst not tame him, nor bind him with his band, nor set him to draw the harrow," v. 10. These are creatures that are willing to serve man, and seem to take a delight to have a love for their masters; but there are such as will never be brought to it; and it is the effect of sin: m. n. is revoluted from his subjection to his Maker, and is therefore justly punished with the revolt of the inferior creatures from their subjection to him; and yet, as an instance of God’s good-will to man, there are some that are still serviceable to humankind. Though the wild bull (which some think is meant here by the unicorn) will not serve man, nor submit to his hand in the furrows, yet there are tame bullocks that will, and other animals that are not ferre nature—of a wild nature, in whom man may have a property, for whom he provides, and to whose service he is entitled. Lord, what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him? 2. ‘Thou darst not trust him; though his strength is great, yet thou wilt not leave thy labour to him, as thou dost where the unicorn will not serve man, nor submit to his hand in the furrows, yet there are tame bullocks that will, and other animals that are not ferre nature—of a wild nature, in whom man may have a property, for whom he provides, and to whose service he is entitled. Lord, what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him? 2. ‘Thou darst not trust him; though his strength is great, yet thou wilt not leave thy labour to him, as thou dost where the unicorn will not serve man, nor submit to his hand in the furrows, yet there are tame bullocks that will, and other animals that are not ferre nature—of a wild nature, in whom man may have a property, for whom he provides, and to whose service he is entitled. Lord, what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him? 2. ‘Thou darst not trust him; though his strength is great, yet thou wilt not leave thy labour to him, as thou dost where the unicorn will not serve man, nor submit to his hand in the furrows, yet there are tame bullocks that will, and other animals that are not ferre nature—of a wild nature, in whom man may have a property, for whom he provides, and to whose service he is entitled. Lord, what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him? 2. ‘Thou darst not trust him; though his strength is great, yet thou wilt not leave thy labour to him, as thou dost where the unicorn will not serve man, nor submit to his hand in the furrows, yet there are tame bullocks that will, and other animals that are not ferre nature—of a wild nature, in whom man may have a property, for whom he provides, and to whose service he is entitled. Lord, what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him? 2.

13. Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks? or wings and feathers unto the ostrich? 14. Which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in the dust, 15. And forgettest that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. 16. She is hardened against her young ones, as, though they were not hers: her labour is in vain without fear; 17. Because God hath deprived her of wisdom.
neither hath he imparted to her understanding. 18. What time she lifteth up herself on high, she scorneth the horse and his rider.

The ostrich is a wonderful animal, a very large bird, but it never flies. Some have called it a winged camel. God here gives an account of it, and observes,

I. Something that it has in common with the peacock, that is, beautiful feathers; (v. 13.) 

1. Gavest thou proud wings unto the peacock? So some read it, and therefore merit compassion, the peacock is an emblem of pride; when he struts, and shows his fine feathers, Solomon, in all his glory, is not arrayed like him. The ostrich too has goodly feathers, and yet is a foolish bird; for wisdom does not always go along with beauty and gaiety. Other birds do not envy the peacock or the ostrich their gaudy colours, nor complain for want of them; why then should we repine, if we see others wear better clothes than we can afford? Does God give his gifts variously, and these gifts are not always the most valuable, that make the finest show? Who would not rather have the voice of the nightingale, than the tail of the peacock, the eye of the eagle, and her soaring wing, and the natural affections of the stork, than the beautiful wings and feathers of the ostrich, which can never rise above the earth, and is without natural affection?

II. Something that is peculiar to itself, the docility of her young. It is well that this is peculiar to herself, for it is a very bad character. Observe, (1.) How she exposes her eggs; she does not retire to some private place, and make a nest there, as the sparrows and swallows do, (Ps. lxxiv. 5.) and there lay eggs and her young. Most birds, as well as other animals, are strangely guided by natural instinct in providing for the preservation of their young. But the ostrich is a monster in nature, for she drops her eggs any where upon the ground, and takes no care to hatch them. If the sand and the sun will hatch them, well and good, they may for her, she will not warm them, v. 14. Nay, she takes no care to preserve them; the foot of the traveller may crush them, and the wild beast break them, v. 15. But how then are any young ones brought forth, and whence is it that the species is not perished? We must suppose, either that God, by a special providence, with the heat of the sun and the sand (so some think) bathes the neglected eggs of the ostrich, as he feeds the artless young ones of the raven; or, that, though the ostrich often leaves her eggs thus, yet not always. (2.) The reason why she does thus expose her eggs; it is, [1.] For want of natural affection; (v. 16.) She is hardened against her young ones. To be hardened against any is unamiable, even in a brute creature, much more in a rational creature that boasts of humanity; especially to be hardened against young ones, that cannot help themselves, and therefore merit compassion, and therefore merit no hard usage: but it is worst of all for her to be hardened against her own young ones, as though they were not hers, whereas, really, they are parts of herself. Her labour in laying her eggs, is in vain, and all lost, because she has not that fear and tender concern for them, that she should have. Those are most likely to lose their labour, that are least in fear of losing it. (2.) She is hardened against them; (v. 17.) God has deprived her of wisdom. This affirms, that she has, in her senses, which other animals have to nourish and preserve their young, is God's gift, and that, where it is not, God denies it, that, by the folly of the ostrich, as well as by the wisdom of the ant, we may learn to be wise; for, First, As careless as the ostrich is of her eggs, many people are of their own souls; they make no provision for them, no proper nest in which they may be safe, they leave them exposed to Satan and his temptations; a certain evidence that they are deprived of wisdom. Secondly, So careless are many parents of their children; some, of their bodies, not providing for their own house, their own bowels, and therefore worse than infants, and as bad as the ostrich; but many more are thus careless of their children's souls, take no care of their education, send them abroad into the world untaught, unarmed, forgetting what corruption there is in the world through lust, which will certainly crush them. Thus their labour in rearing them comes to be in vain; it was better for their country that they had been never born. Thus God says, So care less are too many ministers of their people, with whom they should reside; but they leave them in the earth, and forget how busy Satan is to sow tares while men sleep. They overlook those whom they should oversee, and are really hardened against them.

2. Care of herself. She leaves her eggs in danger, but, if she herself be in danger, no creature shall strive better to get out of the way of it than the ostrich. 18. Then she lifts up her wings on high, (the strength of her own的力量, and in better stead than their beauty,) and, with the help of them, runs so fast, that a horseman, at full speed, cannot overtake her; She scorneth the horse and his rider. Those that are least under the law of natural affection, often contend most for the law of self-preservation. Let not the rider be proud of the swiftness of his horse, when such an animal as the ostrich shall out-run him.

19. Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? 20. Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils is terrible. 21. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. 22. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted: neither turneth he back from the sword. 23. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. 24. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage; neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. 25. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha! and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.

God, having displayed his own power in those creatures that are strong, and desipse man, here shows it in one scarcely inferior to any of them in strength, and yet very tame, and serviceable to man, and that is, the horse; especially, the horse that is trained for the day of battle, and is serviceable to man at a time when he has more than ordinary occasion for his service. It seems there was, in Job's country, a noble generous breed of horses. Job, it is probable, kept many, though they are not mentioned among his possessions; cattle for use in husbandry being there valued more than those for state and war, which alone horses were then reserved for; and they were not then put to such mean services as with us they are commonly put to. Concerning the great horse, that stately beast, it is here observed,

1. That he has a great deal of strength and spirit; (v. 19.) Hast thou given the horse strength? He uses his strength for man, but has it not from him: God gave it him, who is the Fountain of all the powers of nature, and yet he himself delights not

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in the strength of the horse, (Ps. cxlii. 10.) but has told us that a horse is a vain thing for safety, Ps. xxxiii. 17. For running, drawing, and carrying, no creature that is ordinarily in the service of man, has much strength as the horse has, nor is of so stout and bold a spirit; not to be made afraid as a grasshopper, but daring and forward to face danger. It is a mercy to man to have such a servant, which, though very strong, submits to the management of a child, and rebels not against his owner; but let not the strength of a horse be trusted to, Hos. xiv. 3. Ps. xx. 7. Isa. xxxii. 1, 3.

That his neck and nostrils look great; his neck is close, and the flow of his mane, which makes him formidable, and is an ornament to him. The glory of his nostrils, when he snorts, flings up his head, and throws foam about, is terrible. Perhaps there might be, at that time, and in that country, a more stately breed of horses than any we have now.

3. That he is very fierce and furious in battle, and charges with an undaunted courage, though he pushes on in imminent danger of his life. (1.) See how frolicsome he is; (v. 21.) He fawns in the valley, scarcely knowing what ground he stands upon. He is proud of his strength, and he has much more reason to be so as using his strength in the service of man, and under his direction, than the wild ass that uses it in contempt of man, and in a revolt from him, v. 8. (2.) See how forward he is to engage; he goes on to meet the armed men, animated, not by the goodness of the cause, or the prospect of honour, but only by the soul of the trumpet, the thunder of the captains, and the shout of the soldiers, which are as bellows to the fire of his innate courage, and make him spring forward with the utmost eagerness, as if he cried, Ha, ha, v. 25. How wonderfully are the brute-creatures fitted for, and inclined to, the services for which they were designed. (3.) See how fearless he is; how he despises death, and the most threatening dangers; (v. 22.) He mocks at fear, and makes a jest of it; slash at him with a sword, rattle the quiver, brandish the spear, to drive him back, he will not retreat, but press forward, and even inspires courage into his rider. (4.) See how furious he is; he curvets and prances, and runs on with so much violence and heat against the enemy, that one would think he even swallowed the ground with fierceness and rage, v. 24. High mettle is the praise of a horse rather than of a man, whom fierceness and rage ill become. This description of the war-horse will help to explain that character which is given to presumptuous sinners; (Jer. viii. 6.) Every one turneth to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. When a man's heart is fully set in him to do evil, and he is carried on in a wicked way by the violence of inordinate appetites and passions, there is no making him afraid of the wrath of God, and the fatal consequences of sin. Let his own conscience set before him the curse of the law, the death, that is, the sentence of sin, and all the miseries of the mighty, in battle with the mockers at this fear, and is not affrighted, neither turns he back from the flaming sword of the cherubim. Let ministers lift up their voice like a trumpet, to proclaim the wrath of God against him, he believes not that it is the sound of the trumpet, nor that God and his heralds are in earnest with him; but what will be in the end hereof it is easy to foresee.

26. Dost thou keep the prey, and stretch thy wings toward the south? 27. Dost thou march about at thy command, and make her nest on high? 28. She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. 29. From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off. 30. Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she.

The birds of the air are proofs of the wonderful power and providence of God, as well as the beasts of the earth; God here specifies two stately ones. 1. The hawk, a noble bird, of great strength and sagacity, and yet a bird of prey, v. 26. This bird is here taken notice of for her flight, which is swift and strong, and especially for the course she steers toward the south, whither she follows the sun in winter, out of the colder countries in the north, especially when she is to cast her plumes, and renew her strength. That is, a wise bird, who gave her this wisdom, not man. Perhaps the extraordinary wisdom of the hawk's flight after her prey, was not used then for men's diversion and recreation, as it has been since. It is pity that the reclaimed hawk, which is taught to fly at man's command, and to make him sport, should at any time be abused to the dishonour of God, since it is from God that she receives that wisdom which makes her flight entertaining and serviceable. The hawk had a royal law, as a king of prey too, the permission of which, nay, the giving of power to which, may help to reconcile us to the prosperity of oppressors among men. The eagle is here taken notice of, (1.) For the height of her flight; no bird soars so high, has so strong a wing, nor can so well bear the light of the sun; * Doth she mount at thy command? (v. 27.) Is it by any strength she has from thee; or doth thou direct her flight? Not that she is above the power and dictates of prey too, the permission of which, nay, the giving of power to which, may help to reconcile us to the prosperity of oppressors among men. The eagle is here taken notice of, (1.) For the height of her flight; no bird soars so high, has so strong a wing, nor can so well bear the light of the sun; * Doth she mount at thy command? (v. 27.) Is it by any strength she has from thee; or doest thou direct her flight? Not that she is above the power and dictates of prey too, the permission of which, nay, the giving of power to which, may help to reconcile us to the prosperity of oppressors among men. The eagle is here taken notice of, (2.) For the strength of her nest; her house is her castle and strong hold; she makes it on high and on the rock, the crag of the rock, (v. 28.) which sets her and her young out of the reach of danger. Secure sinners think themselves as safe in their sins as the eagle in her nest on high, in the clefts of the rock; (Jer. xlix. 16.) But I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord. The higher the bad men set above the resiements of the earth, the nearer they ought to think themselves to the vengeance of Heaven. (3.) For her quicksightedness; (v. 29.) Her eyes behold afar off, not upward, but downward, in quest of her prey. In this, she is an emblem of a hypocrite, who, while in the profession of religion, he seems to rise toward heaven, keeps his eye and heart upon the prey on earth, some temporal advantage, some widow's house or other, that he hopes to devour, under pretence of devotion. (4.) For the way she has of maintaining herself and her young; she preys upon living animals, which she seizes and tears to pieces, and then carries to her young ones, who are taught to suck up blood; they do it by instinct, and know no better; but for men that have reason and conscience, to thirst after blood, is what could scarcely be believed, if there had not been, in every age, wretched instances of it. She preys upon the dead bodies of men; where the slain are, there is she. These birds of prey (in another sense than the horse, v. 25.) smell the battle afar off. Therefore, when a great slaughter is to be made among the enemies of the church, the fowls are invited to the sufferer of the great God, to eat the flesh of kings and captains, Rev. xix. 17, 18. Our Saviour refers to this instinct of the eagle, (Matth. xxiv. 28.) Whereunto the carcase in, there will the eagles be gathered together. Every creature, according to that which is its proper food; for he that provides them their food, has implanted in them that inclination. These, and many such instances of natural power and sagacity in the inferior crea-
Many humbling confounding questions God had put to Job, in the foregoing chapter; now, in this chapter, 1. He demands an answer to them, v. 1, 2. II. Job submits in a humble silence, v. 3. III. God proceeds to reason with him, for his conviction of the infinite distance and disproportion between him and God, and that he was by no means an equal disputant with him. He challenges him (v. 6.) to come with him, if he durst, for justice, (v. 8.) power, (v. 9.) majesty, (v. 10.) and dominion over the proud; (v. 11., 14.) and he gives an instance of his power in one particular animal, here called Behemoth, v. 15., 16.

1. Moreover, the Lord answered Job, and said, 2. Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproves God, let him answer it. 3. Then Job answered the Lord, and said, 4. Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. 5. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice; but I will proceed no further.

Here is,

1. A humbling challenge which God gave to Job. After he had heaped up many hard questions upon him, to show him, by his manifest ignorance in the works of nature, what an incompetent judge he was of the methods and designs of Providence, he clenches the nail with one demand more, which stands by itself here as the application of the whole. It should seem, God paused a while, as Elihu had done, to give Job time to say what he had to say, or to think of what God had said; but Job was in such confusion, that he remained silent, and therefore God here put him upon replying, v. 1, 2. This is not said to be spoken out of the whirlwind, as before; and therefore some think God said it in a still small voice, which wrought more upon Job than the whirlwind did, as upon Elijah, 1 Kings xix. 12, 13. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, and then it does wonders. Though Job had not spoken any thing, yet God is said to answer him; for he knows men's thoughts, and can return a suitable answer to their sense. Here,

1. God puts a convincing question to him; "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? Shall he pretend to dictate to God's wisdom, or prescribe to his will? Shall God receive instruction from every peevish complainer, and change the measures he has taken, to please him?" It is a question with disdain; Shall any teach God knowledge? ch. xxxi. 22. It is intimated, that those who quarrel with God, do, in effect, go about to teach him, and mend his work. For if we contend with men like ourselves, as not having done well, we ought to instruct them how to do better; but is it a thing to be suffered, that any man should teach his Maker? He that contends with God, is justly looked upon as his enemy; and shall he pretend so far to have prevailed in the contest, as to prescribe to him? We are ignorant and short-sighted, but before him all things are naked and open: nothing is hid from him; he is the Sovereign Creator; and shall we pretend to instruct him? Some read it, Is it any wisdom to contend with the Almighty? The answer is easy; No, it is the greatest folly which God can be troubled with; it will certainly be our ruin to oppose, and unspeakably our interest to submit to.

2. He demands a speedy reply to it; "He that reproaches God, let him answer this question to his own conscience, and answer it thus, Far be it from me to contend with the Almighty, or to instruct him. Let him answer all those questions which I have put, if he can. Let him answer for his presumption and insolence, answer it at God's bar, to his confusion." Those have high thoughts of themselves, and mean thoughts of God, who reprove any thing he says or does.

II. Job's humble submission thereunto. Now Job came to himself, and began to melt into godly sorrow; when his friends reasoned with him, he did not yield; but the voice of the Lord is powerful. When the Spirit of truth is come, he shall convince. They had condemned him for a wicked man, Elihu himself had been very sharp upon him, (ch. xxxiv. 7, 8, 37.) but God had not given him such hard words. We may sometimes have reason to expect better treatment from God, and a more candid construction of what we do, than we meet with from our friends. This the good man is here overcome by, and yields himself a conquered captive to the grace of God. 1. He owns himself an offender, and has nothing to say in his own justification, (v. 4.) "Behold, I am vile; not only mean and contemptible, but vile and abominable, in my own eyes." He is now sensible that he has sinned, and therefore calls himself vile. Sin debasest us, and penitents abase themselves, reproach themselves, and ashamed are they, even confounded. I have acted unfruitfully, unto my Father, ungraciously to my Benefactor, unwisely for myself; and therefore I am vile. Job now viliﬁes himself as much as ever he had justified and magniﬁed himself: repentance changes men's opinion of themselves. Job had been too bold in demanding a conference with God, and thought he could make his part good with him; but now he is convinced of his error; and owns himself utterly unable to stand before God, or to produce any thing worth his notice, the vileness and worth that ever crawled upon God's ground. While his friends talked with him, he answered them, for he thought himself as good as they; but when God talked with him, he had nothing to say; for, in comparison with him, he sees himself nothing, less than nothing, worse than nothing, vanity and vileness itself; and, therefore, What shall I answer thee? God demanded an answer, v. 2. Here he gives the reasons of his silence; it was not because he was short of words, but because he was convinced he had been in the wrong. Those that are truly sensible of their own sinfulness and vileness, dare not justify themselves before God, but are ashamed that ever they entertained such a thought, and, in token of their shame, lay their hand upon their mouth. 2. He promises not to offend any more as he had done; for Elihu had told him this was meet to be said unto God. When we have spoken amiss, we must repent of it, and not repeat nor stand it to it. He enjoins himself silence; (v. 4.) "I will lay my hand upon my mouth, will keep that as with a bridle, to suppress all passionate thoughts which may arise in my mind, and keep them from breaking out in inexpressive speeches." It is bad to think amiss, but it is much worse to speak amiss, for that is an allowance of the evil thought, and gives it an imprimatur—a sanction; it is publishing the seditious libel; and, then, if others join therewith, lay thy hand upon thy mouth, and let it go no farther, (Prov. xxx. 32.) and that will be an evidence for thee, that which thou thoughtest, thou allowedst. Job had suffered his evil thoughts to vent themselves; Once have I spoken amiss, yea twice, that is, divers times, in one discourse and in another; but I have done, I will not answer, I will not stand to what I have said, nor say it again, I will proceed no further. Observe here what
This is that which every proud heart must be brought to at last, either by its repentance, or by its ruin; and thus low must every mountain and hill be, sooner or later, brought. We must acknowledge,

I. That we cannot vie with God for justice; that the Lord is righteous and holy in his dealings with us. Yet shall we, by our own conduct toward him; we have a great deal to blame ourselves for, but nothing to blame him for; (v. 8.) "Will thou disannul my judgment? wilt thou take exceptions to what I say and do, and bring a writ of error, to reverse the judgment I have given as erroneous and unjust?" Many of Job's complaints had too much of a tendency this way; I try out of wrong, says he, but I am not heard; but this is not the language of him who is to be suffered.

God's judgment cannot, must not, be disannulled, for we are sure it is according to truth, and therefore it is a great piece of impudence and iniquity in us to call it in question. "Wilt thou," says God, "condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?" Must my honour suffer for the support of thy reputation? Must I be charged as dealing unjustly with thee, because thou canst not otherwise clear thyself from the censures thou liest under? Our duty is to condemn thou wilt the law, and thyself too. "David is therefore ready to own the evil he has done in God's sight," that God may be justified, when he speaks, and clear when he judges, Ps. ii. 4. See Neh. ix. 33. Dan. ix. 7. But those are very proud, and very ignorant both of God and themselves, who, to clear themselves, will condemn God; and the day is coming, when, if the mistake be not rectified in time by repentance, the eternal judgment will come both to the conformation of the儿, and the confusion of the proceedings; for the heavens shall declare God's righteousness, and all the world shall become guilty before him.

II. That we cannot vie with God for power: and therefore, as it is great impiety, so it is great impudence, to contest with him, and we go as much against our interest, as we do against reason and right; (v. 9.) "Hast thou an arm like God, equal to his in length and strength? Or canst thou thunder with a voice like him? (ch. xxxvi. 12.) or does now, out of the whirlwind?" To convince Job that he was not so able as he thought himself, to contest with God, he shows him, 1. That he could never fight it out with him, nor carry his cause by force of arms. Sometimes, among men, controversies have been decided by battle, and the victorious champion is adjudged to have the right on his side; but if it be put upon that issue between God and man, man would certainly go by the worse, for all the force he could raise against the Almighty, would be but like briars and thorns before a consuming fire, Isa. xxi. 4. "Hast thou, a poor weak worm of the earth, an arm comparable to his, who upholds all things?" The power of creatures, even of angels themselves, is derived from God, limited by him, and dependent on him; but the power of God is original, independent, and unlimited. He can do every thing without us, and we can do nothing without him, and therefore we have not an arm like God. 2. That he could never talk it out with him, nor carry his cause by noise and big words, which sometimes among men go a great way toward the gaining of a point; "Canst thou thunder with a voice like him? No, his voice will soon drown thine, and one of his thunders will overpower and overrule all thy whispers." Man cannot speak so convincingly, so powerfully, nor with such a commanding conquering voice as God, who speaks, and it is done. His creating voice is called his thunder; (Ps. cvii.) so that is voice of his, with which he terrifies and discomfits his enemies; (1 Sam. ii. 10.) "Out of heaven shall he
thunder upon them. The wrath of a king may sometimes be like the roaring of a lion, but can never pretend to imitate God’s thunder.

III. That we cannot vie with God for beauty and majesty; (v. 10.) “If thou wilt enter into a companion with him, and appear more amiable, put on thy best attire; Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency. Appear in all the martial, in all the royal pomp thou hast, and the best of every thing that will set thee off, array thyself with glory and beauty, such as may awe thine enemies, and charm thy friends; but what is it all to the divine majesty and beauty? No more than the light of a glow-worm to that of the sun, when he goes forth in his strength.” God decks himself with such majesty and glory as are the terror of devils, and all the powers of darkness, and make them tremble; he arrayes himself with such glory and beauty, as are the wonder of angels, and all the saints in light, and make them rejoice. David could dwell all his days in God’s house, to behold the beauty of the Lord. But, in comparison with this, what is all the majesty and excellency by which princes think to make themselves feared, and all the glory and beauty by which rulers think to make themselves beloved? If Job think, in contending with God, to carry the day by looking great, and making a figure, he is in the wrong, and he has no chance against God, and the moon confounded, when God shines forth.

IV. That we cannot vie with God for dominion over the proud, v. 11-14. Here the cause is put upon this short issue; if Job can humble and abase proud tyrants and oppressors as easily and effectually as God can, it shall be acknowledged that he has some colour to compare with God. Observe here,

1. The justice Job is here challenged to do, and that is, to bring the proud low, with a look; if Job will pretend to be a rival with God, especially if he pretend to be a judge of his actions, he must be able to do this.

(1.) It is here supposed that God can do it, and will do it, himself, else he would not have put it thus upon Job. By this, God proves himself to be God, that he resisted the proud, sat Judge upon them, and is able to bring them to ruin. Observe here, People are proud, and pride and pride is at the bottom of a great deal of wickedness that is in this world, both toward God and man. [2.] Proud people will certainly be abased and brought low, for pride goes before destruction. If they bend not, they will break; if they humble not themselves by true repentance, God will humble them, to their everlasting confusion. The wicked will be trodden down in their place, that is, Wheresoever they are found, though they pretend to have a place of their own, and to have taken root in it, yet even there they shall be trodden down, and all the wealth, and power, and interest, which their place entitles them to, will not be their security. [3.] The wrath of God, scattered among the proud, will humble them, and break them, and bring them down. If he casts abroad the rage of his wrath, as he will do at the great day, and sometimes does in this life, the stoutest heart cannot hold out against him; who knows how many there are, who are sure of power, does, easily abuse proud tyrants; he can look upon them, and bring them low, can overwhelm them with shame, and fear, and utter ruin, by one angry look, as he can, by a gracious look, revive the hearts of the contrite ones. [4.] He can, and will, at last, do it effectually, (v. 13.) not only bring them to the dust, from which they might hope to arise, but hide them in the dust, like the proud Egyptian whom Moses slew, and hid in the sand, (Exod. xix. 12.) that is, They shall be brought not only to death, but to the grave, that pit out of which there is no return. They were proud of the figure they made, but they shall be buried in oblivion, and be no more remembered than those that are hid in the dust; out of sight, and out of mind. They were linked in leagues and confederacies to do mischief, and are now bound in bundles; they are hid together, not their rest, but their shame together is in the dust, ch. xvii. 16. Nay, they are treated as malefactors, who, if not condemned, had their faces covered, as Haman’s was; he was treated in secret; they are treated as dead men; Lazarus in the grave, had his face bound about. So complete will the victory be that God will gain, at last, over proud sinners that set themselves in opposition to him. Now by this he proves himself to be God. Does he thus hate proud men? Then he is holy. Will he thus punish them? Then he is the just Judge of the world. Can he thus humble them? Then he is the Lord Almighty. When he had abased proud Pharaoh, and hid him in the sand of the Red-sea, Jethro inferred, that doubtless the Lord is greater than all gods, for wherein the proud enemies of his Israel dealt proudly, he was above them, he was too hard for them, Exod. xviii. 11. See Rev. x. 1, 2.

(2.) It is here proposed to Job to do it. He had been passionately quarrelling with God and his providence, casting abroad the rage of his wrath toward himself; is it thought thereby to bring God himself to his mind? Come, Job: God will try thy hand first upon proud men, and then wilt thou see how little they value the rage of thy wrath; and shall I then regard it, or be moved by it? Job had complained of the prosperity and power of tyrants and oppressors, and was ready to charge God with mal-administration for suffering it; but he ought not to find fault, except he could mend. If God, and he only, has power enough to humble and bring down proud men, do doubt he has wisdom enough to know when and how to do it, and it is not for us to prescribe to him, or to teach him how to govern the world; unless we had an arm like God, we must not think to take his work out of his hands.

2. The justice which is here promised, shall be done him, if he can perform such mighty works as these; (v. 14.) “Then will I also confess unto thee, that thy right hand is sufficient to save thee, though, as it is, it would be too weak to contend with me.” It is the innate pride and ambition of man, that he would be his own saviour, would have his own hands sufficient for him, and be independent; but it is presumption to pretend to it; our own hands cannot save us by recommending us to God’s grace, much less by rescuing us from his justice; unless we could by our own power humble our enemies, we cannot pretend by our own power to save ourselves; but if we could, God himself would confess it. He never did, nor ever will, deprive any man of his just praise, nor deny him the honour he has merited. But since we cannot do this, we must confess unto him, that our own hands cannot save us, and therefore into his hand we must commit ourselves.

15. Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee; he eateth grass as an ox. 16. Lo now, his strength is in his loins, and his force is in the navel of his belly. 17. He moveth his tail like a cedar: the sinews of his stones are wrapped together. 18. His bones are as strong, pieces of brass; his bones are like bars of iron. 19. He is the chief of the ways of God: he that made him can make his sword to approach unto him. 20. Surely the mountains bring him forth food, where all the beasts of the field play
21. He lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reed, and fens. 22. The shady trees cover him with their shadow; the willows of the brook compass him about. 23. Behold, he drinketh up a river, and hasteth not: he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth. 24. He taketh it with his eyes: his nose pierceth through snares.

God, for the further proving of his own power, and disproving of Job's pretensions, concludes his discourse with the description of this last animal. He does with style and strength; one he calls behemoth, the other, leviathan. In these verses, we have the former described. "Behold now behemoth, and consider whether thou art able to contend with him who made that beast, and gave him all the power he has, and whether it is not thy wisdom rather to submit to him, and make thy peace with him."

Behemoth signifies beasts in general, but must here be meant of some one particular species. Some understand it of the bull; others of an amphibious animal, well-known (they say) in Egypt, called the river-horse. (Hippopotamus,) living among the fish in the river Nile, but coming out to feed upon the earth. But I confess I see no reason to depart from the ancient and most generally received opinion, that it is the elephant that is here described, which is a very strong stately creature, of very large stature above any other, and of wonderful sagacity; and of so great a reputation in the animal kingdom, that, among so many four-footed beasts as we have had the natural history of, (ch. xxxviii. and xxxix.) we can scarcely suppose this should be omitted.

Observe,
I. The description here given of the behemoth.
1. His body is very strong, and well-built; His strength is in his loins, v. 16. His bones, compared with those of other creatures, are like bars of iron, and as strong as cedar, for his back is the bar of his tail be not large, yet he moves it like a cedars, with a commanding force, v. 17. Some understand it of the trunk of the elephant, for the word signifies any extreme part, and in that there is indeed a wonderful strength; so strong is the elephant in his back and loins, and the sinews of his thighs, that he will carry a large wooden tower, and a great number of fighting men in it. No animal whatsoever comes near the elephant for strength of body, which is the main thing insisted on in this description.
2. He feeds on the productions of the earth, and does not prey upon other animals, he eats grass as an ox, (v. 15.) the mountains bring forth food, (v. 20.) and the beasts of the field do not tremble before him, nor flee from him, as from a lion, but they play about him, knowing they are in no danger from him. This may give us occasion, (1.) To acknowledge the goodness of God, in ordering it so, that whilst we have much food, should not feed upon flesh, (for then multitudes must die, to keep him alive,) but should be content with the grass of the field, to prevent such destruction of lives as otherwise must have ensued. (2.) To commend living upon herbs and fruits, without flesh, according to the original appointment of man's food, Gen. i. 29. Even the strength of an elephant, as of a horse and an ox, may be supported without flesh; and why not that of a man? Though, therefore, we use the liberty God has allowed us, yet be not among ravenous eaters of flesh, Prov. xxi. 20. (3.) To command a quiet and peaceable life. Who would not rather, like the elephant, have his neighbours easy and pleasant about him, than, like the lion, have them a' afraid of him?
3. He lodges under the shady trees, (v. 21.) which cover him with their shadow, (v. 22.) where he has trees and open air to breathe in, while lions, which live by stealth, when they would dispose themselves, are obliged to retire into a close and dark den, to live therein, and to abide in the covert of that, ch. xxxviii. 40. They who are a terror to others, cannot but be sometimes a terror to themselves too; but they will be easy, who will let others be easy about them; and the reed and fens, and the willows of the brook, though a very weak and slender fortification, yet are sufficient for the defence and comfort of the great bull, therefore dread no harm, because they design none.
4. That he is a very great and greedy drinker, not of wine and strong drink, (to be greedy of that is peculiar to man, who by his drunkenness makes a beast of himself,) but of fair water. (1.) His size is prodigious, and therefore he must have supply accordingly, v. 23. He drinks so much, that one would think he could drink up a river, if you would give him time, and not, hasten him to drink, He drinks, v. 24. behemoth not, so that do drink that in fear he is confident of his own strength and safety, and therefore makes no haste when he drinks, no more haste than good speed. (2.) His eye anticipates more than he can take; for, when he is very thirsty, having been long kept without water, he trusts that he can drink up Jordan in his mouth, and even takes it with his eyes, v. 24. As a covetous man causes his eyes to fly upon the wealth of this world, which he is greedy of, so this great beast is said to snatch, or draw up, even a river with his eyes. (3.) His nose has in it strength enough for both; for when he goes greedily to drink with it, he pierces through snares or nets, which perhaps are laid in the waters to catch fish. He makes nothing of the difficulties that lie in his way, so great is his strength, and so eager his appetite.

II. The use that is to be made of this description. We have taken a view of this mountain of a beast, this overgrown animal, which is seen set before us, not merely as a show, (as sometimes it is in our country,) to satisfy our curiosity and to amuse us, but as an argument with us to humble ourselves before the great God; for,
1. He made this vast animal, which is so fearful and wonderfully made; it is the work of his hands, the contrivance of his wisdom, the production of his power; it is behemoth which I made, v. 15. Whatever strength this, or any other creature, has, it is derived from God, who therefore must be acknowledged to have all power originally and infinitely in himself, and such an arm as it is for us to contest with. This beast is here called the chief, in its kind, of the ways of God; (v. 19.) an eminent instance of the Creator's power and wisdom. They that will peruse the accounts given by historians of the elephant, will find that his capacities approach near to the understanding of reason, than any other brute-creature that is known to us, however, and therefore he is fitly called the chief of the ways of God, in the inferior part of the creation no creature below man being preferable to him.
2. He made him with man, as he made other four-footed beasts; on the same day with man, (Gen. i. 25, 26.) whereas the fish and fowl were made the day before; he made him, to live and move on the same earth, in the same element, and therefore man and beast are said to justly be served by Divine Providence, as fellow-commoners; (Ps. xxxvi. 6.) "It is behemoth which I made with thee; I made that beast as well as thee, and he doest not quarrel with me; why then dost thou? Why shouldst thou demand peculiar favours, because I
made thee, (ch. x. 9) when I made the behemoth likewise with thee? I made thee as well as that beast, and therefore can as easily manage thee as pleasure as that beast, and will do it, whether thou refuse or whether thou choose. I made him with thee, that thou mayest look upon him, and receive instruction. We need not go far for proofs and instances of God's almighty power and sovereign dominion; they are near us, they are with us, they are under our eye, wherever we are.

3. He that made him can make of his sword to appear afeared him. (v. 19.) that is, The same hand that made him, notwithstanding his great bulk and strength, can unmake him again at pleasure, and kill an elephant as easily as a worm or a fly, without any difficulty, and without the imputation either of caste or wrong. God, that gave to all the creatures their being, may take away the being he gave; for may he not do what he will with his own? And he can do it; he that has power to create with a word, no doubt, has power to destroy by a word, and can as easily speak the creature into nothing, as, at first, he spake it out of nothing. The behemoth perhaps is here intended (as well as the leviathan afterward) to represent those proud tyrants and oppressors, whom God had just now challenged Job to abuse and bring down. They think themselves as well fortified against the judgments of God, as the elephant with his bones of brass and iron; but he that made them, and one knows them, to him, here, he can make the sword of justice, his wrath, to approach to it, and touch it in the most tender and sensible part. He that framed the engine, and put the parts of it together, knows how to take it in pieces. Woe to him therefore that strives with his Maker, for he that made, has therefore power to make him miserable, and will not make him happy, unless he will be ruled by him.

CHAP. XLI.

The description here given of the leviathan, a very large, strong, formidable, fish, or water-animal, is designed yet further to compare the dignity and power of God's omnipotence, and of God's omnipotence, that he might be humbled for his folly in making so bold with him as he had done. I. To convince Job of his own weakness, he is here challenged to subdue that; if he could, he must make himself master of him, (v. 2. 3.) because he cannot do, he must own himself utterly unable to stand before the great God, v. 10. II. To convince Job of God's power and terrible majesty, divers particular instances are given, of the strength and terror of the leviathan, which is no more than what God has given him, nor more than he has under his check, v. 11. 12. The face of the leviathan is here described to be terrible; (v. 13. 14.) his scales close, (v. 15. 17.) his breath and nostrils sparkling, (v. 18. 21.) his flesh firm, (v. 22. 24.) his strength and spirit, when he is attacked, inexpressible, (v. 25. 30.) his motions turbulent, and disturbing to the deeps; (v. 31. 32.) that, upon the whole, he is a very terrible, creating, and man is no match for him, v. 33, 34.

1. CANST thou draw out leviathan with a hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down? 2. Canst thou put a hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn? 3. Will he make many supplications unto thee? will he speak soft words unto thee? 4. Will he make a covenant with thee? wilt thou take him for a servant for ever? 5. Wilt thou play with him as with a bird? wilt thou bind him for thy maidens? 6. Shall thy companions make a banquet of him? shall they part him among the merchants? 7. Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons? or his head with fish-spears? 8. Lay thy hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more. 9. Behold, the hope of him is in vain: shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him? 10. None is so fierce that dare stir him up; who then is able to stand before me?

Whether this leviathan be a whale or a crocodile, is a great dispute among the learned, which I will not undertake to determine; some of the particulars agree more easily to the one, others to the other; both are very strong and fierce, and the power of the Creator appears in them. The ingenious Sir Richard Blackmore, though he admits the more received opinion concerning the behemoth, that that must be meant of the elephant, yet agrees with the learned Bochart's notion of the leviathan, that it is the crocodile which was so well known in the river of Egypt. I confess that that which in clines me rather to understand it of the whale, is not only because it is much larger, and a nobler animal, but because, in the history of the Creation, there is such an express notice taken of it, as is not of any other species of animals whatsoever; (Gen. 1. 21.) God created great whales; by which it appears, not only that whales were well known in those parts, in Moses's time, who lived a little after Job, but that the creation of whales was generally looked upon as a most illustrious proof of the eternal power and godhead of the Creator; and we may conjecture that this was the reason (for otherwise it seems unaccountable) why Moses there so particularly mentions the creation of the whales, because God had so lately, in this discourse with Job, more largely insisted upon the bulk and strength of that creature than of any other, as the proof of his power; and the leviathan is here spoken of as an inhabitant of the sea, (v. 31.) which the crocodile is not; and (Ps. cv. 25. 26.) There, in the great and wide sea, to that leviathan.

Here, in these verses, 1. He shows how unable Job was to master the leviathan. (1.) That he could not catch him, as a little fish, with angling, v. 1. 2. He had no bait wherewith to deceive him, no hook where with to catch him, no fish-line wherewith to draw him out of the water, nor a thorn to pass through his gills, on which to carry him home. (2.) That he could not make him his prisoner, nor force him to cry for quarter, or surrender himself at discretion, v. 3. 4. "He knows his own strength too well to make many supplications to thee, and to make a covenant with thee to be thy servant, on condition thou wilt save his life." (3.) That he could not entice him into a cage, and keep him there as a bird for the children to play with, v. 5. There are creatures so little, so well cared for, as to be easily enticed, and triumphed over; but the leviathan is none of those, he is made to be the terror, not the sport and diversion, of mankind. (4.) That he could not have him served up to his table; he and his companions could not make a banquet of him; his flesh is too strong to be fit for food, and if it were not, he is not easily caught. (5.) That they could not enrich themselves with the spoil of him; Shall they part him among the merchants? shall they fill their houses with him? another? If they can catch him, they will; but it is probable that the art of fishing for whales was not brought to perfection then, as it has been since. (6.) That they could not destroy him, could not fill his head with fish-spears, v. 7. He kept out of the reach of their instruments of slaughter, or, if they touched him, they could not touch him to the quick. (7.) That it was to no purpose to attempt it; The
hope of taking him is in vain, v. 9. If men go about to seize him, so formidable is he, that the very sight of him will appal them, and make a stout man ready to faint away; Shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him? And will not that deter the pursuers from their attempt? Job is bid, at his peril, to lay his hand upon him, (v. 8.) "Touch him if thou dare, remember the battle, how unable thou art to encounter such a foe; and what is there likely to be the issue of the battle, and do no more, but desist from the attempt." It is good to remember the battle before we engage in a war, and put off the harness in time, if we foresee it will be to no purpose to gird it on. Job is hereby admonished not to proceed in his controversy with God, but to make his peace with him, remembering what the battle will certainly end in, if he come to an engagement. See Isa. xxvii. 4, 5.

Thence he infers how unable he was to contend with the Almighty. None is so fierce, none so fool-hardy, as to stir up the leviathan, (v. 10.) it being known that he will certainly be too hard for them; and when then is able to stand before God, either to impeach and arraign his proceeding, or to out-face the power of his wrath? If the inferior creatures that are put under the feet of man, and over whom he has dominion, keep us in awe thus, how terrible must the majesty of our great Lord be, who has a sovereign dominion over the world, and against whom man has been so long in rebellion! Who can stand before him when once he is angry?

11. Who hath prevented me, that I should repay him? whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine. 12. I will not conceal his parts, nor his power, nor his comely proportion. 13. Who can discover the face of his garment? or who can come to him with his double bridle? 14. Who can open the doors of his face? his teeth are terrible round about. 15. His scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal. 16. One is so near to another, that no air can come between them. 17. They are joined one to another, they stick together, that they cannot be sundered. 18. By his necesings a light doth shine, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning. 19. Out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out. 20. Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething-pot or caldron. 21. His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth. 22. In his neck remaineth strength, and sorrow is turned into joy before him. 23. The flaxes of his flesh are joined together: they are firm in themselves; they cannot be moved. 24. His heart is as firm as a stone: yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone. 25. When he raiseth himself, the mighty are afraid: by reason of breakings they purify themselves. 26. The sword of him that lieth at him cannot hold; the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon. 27. He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. 28. The arrow cannot make him flee: sling stones are turned with him into stubble.

29. Darts are counted as stubble: he laugheth at the shaking of a spear. 30. Sharp stones are under him: he spreadeth sharp-pointed things upon the mire. 31. He maketh the deep to boil like a pot: he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment. 32. He maketh a path to shine after him: one would think the deep to be hoary. 33. Upon earth there is not his like, who is made without fear. 34. He beholdeth all high things: he is a king over all the children of pride.

God, having in the foregoing verses showed how unable he was to deal with the leviathan, here sets forth his own power in that massy mighty creature. Here is,

1. God's sovereign dominion and independency laid down. v. 11. That he is indebted to none of his creatures. If any pretend he is indebted to them, let them make their demand and prove their debt, and they shall receive it in full, and not by composition; "Who has prevented me?" that is, "Who has laid any obligations upon me, by any service they have done me? Who can pretend to be before-hand with me? If any were, I would not long be behind-hand with them, I would soon repay them." The apostle quotes this, for the silencing of all flatterers in God's presence; (Rom. xi. 33.) Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompen sensed to him again? As God does not inflict upon us the evils we have deserved, so he does bestow upon us the favours we have not deserved. 2. That he is the rightful Lord and Owner of all the creatures; "Whatsoever is under the whole heavens, animate or inanimate, is mine, (and particularly this leviathan,) at my command and disposal; what I have an incontestable property in, and dominion over." All is his, we are his, all we have and do, and therefore we cannot make God our Debtor; but of thine own, Lord, have we given thee. All is his, and therefore, if he were indebted to any, he has wherewithal to repay them; the debt is in good hands. All is his, and therefore he needs not our services, nor can he be benefitted by them. If I were hungry I would not tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof, Ps. v. 12.

II. The proof and illustration of it, from the wonderful structure of the leviathan, v. 12. The parts of his body, the power he exerts, especially when he is set upon, and the comely proportion of the whole of him, are what God will not conceal, and therefore what we must observe and acknowledge the power of God in. Though he is a creature of monstrous bulk, yet there is in him a comely proportion. In our eye, beauty lies in little, (Trist Austiniana part 1. Little is the greatest beauty.) who he gives them all their own, because we ourselves are little; but in God's eye, even the leviathan is comely; and if he pronounce even the whale, even the crocodile, so, it is not for us to say of any of the works of his hands, that they are ugly or ill-favoured; it is enough to say so, as we have cause, of our own works. God here goes about to give us an anatomical view (as it were) of the leviathan; for his works appear most beautiful and excellent, and his wisdom and power appear most in them, when they are taken in pieces, and viewed in their several parts and proportions.

1. The leviathan, even prima facie—at first sight, appears formidable and inaccessible, v. 13, 14. Who dares come so near him, while he is alive, as to discover or take a distinct view of the face of the garment, the skin with which he is clothed as with a garment; so near him, as to bridge him like a horse,
and so lead him away; so near him, as to be within reach of his jaws, which are like a double bridle? Who will venture to look into his mouth, as we do into a horse's mouth? He that opens the doors of his face, will see his teeth terrible round about, strong and sharp, and fitted to devour; it would make a man tremble to think of having a leg or an arm between them.

He is distinguished by his beauty and strength, and therefore his pride, v. 15-17. The crocodile is indeed remarkable for his scales; if we understand it of the whale, we must understand by these shields, (for so the word is,) the several coats of his skin; or there might be whales in that country with scales. That which is remarkable concerning the scales, is, that they stick so close together, by which he is not only kept warm, for no air can pierce him, but kept safe, for no sword can pierce him, through these scales, and so he is fortified accordingly by the wisdom of Providence, which gives clothes as it gives cold.

3. He scatters terror with his very breath and looks; if he sneeze or spout by water, it is like a light shining, either with the froth, or the light of the sun shining through it, v. 18. The eyes of the whale are reported to shine in the night-time, like a flame, or, as here, like the eye-lids of the morning; the breath of his mouth is also like the say of the crocodile. The breath of this creature is so hot and fiery, from the great natural heat within, that burning lamps and sparks of fire, smoke and a flame, are said to go out of his mouth, even such as one would think sufficient to set coals on fire, v. 19-21. Probably, these hyperbolic expressions are used concerning the leviathan, to intimate the power and terror of the wrath of God, for that is it which all this is designed to convince us of: fire out of his mouth devours Ps. xcvii. 13. The breath of the Almighty is a stream of brimstone, kindles Tophet, and will for ever keep it burning, Isa. xxxv. 33. The wicked shall one be consumed with the breath of his mouth, 2 Thess. ii. 8.

4. He is of invincible strength and most terrible fierceness, so that he frightens all that come in his way, but is not himself frightened by any. Take a view of his neck, and there remains strength, v. 22. His neck was joined together, raw rejoices, or rides in triumph, before him, for he makes terrible work wherever he comes. Or, Those storms which are the sorrow of others, are his joy; what is tossing to others, is dancing to him. His flesh is well-knit, v. 23. The flakes of it are joined so closely together, and are so firm, that it is hard to pierce it; he is as if he were all bone; his flesh is of brass, which Job had complained his was not, ch. vi. 12. His heart is as firm as a stone, v. 24. He has spirit equal to his bodily strength, and, though he is bulky, he is sprightly, and not unwieldy; as his flesh and skin cannot be pierced, so his courage cannot be daunted; but, on the contrary, he daunts all he meets, and puts them into a consternation; (v. 23.) When he raises up himself like a moving mountain in the great waters, even the mighty are afraid lest he overturn their ships, or do them some other mischief: by reason of the breas- thes of his mouth, when the whale is dead, they purify themselves, consume their vessels, and cast themselves to their prays, and get ready for death. We read (ch. iii. 8.) of those who, when they raise up a leviathan, are in such a fright, that they curse the day. It was a fear which, it seems, used to drive some to their curses, and others to their prayers; for as now, so then there were seafaring men of different characters, and on whom the ter- rors of Fishes have contrary effects; but all agree there is a great fright among them when the levi- thans raise up himself.

5. All the instruments of slaughter that are used against him, do him no hurt, and therefore are no terror to him, v. 26-29. The sword and the spear, which wound nigh at hand, are nothing to him, the darts, arrows, and sling-stones, which wound at a distance, do him no damage; nature has so well armed him against them all. The defensive wea-pons which men use when they engage with the leviathan, or sea-devils, serve not; the high plate, often serve men no more than their offensive weapons; iron and brass are to him as straw and rotten wood, and he laughs at them. It is the picture of a hard- hearted sinner, that despises the terrors of the Al- mighty, and laughs at all the threatenings of his word. The leviathan so little dreads the weapons that are used against him, that, to show how hardly he is, he chooses to lie on the sharp stones, the sharp pointed things, (v. 29.) and lies as easy there, as if he lay on the soft mire. Those would endure hardness, must inure themselves to it.

6. His very motion in the water troubles it, and puts it into a ferment, v. 31, 32. When he rolls and tosses, and makes a stir in the water, or is in pursuit of his prey, he makes the deep to boil like a pot, he raises a great froth and foam upon the water, such as is upon a boiling pot, especially a pot of boiling ointment; and he makes a path to shine and boil with him, and his waves in the midst of the sea does not, Prov. xxxv. 19. One vessel of the leviathan under water by the bubbles on the surface; and yet who can take that advantage against him in pursuing him? Men track hares in the snow and kill them, but he that tracks the leviathan dares not come near him.

Lastly, Having given this particular account of his parts, and his power, and his comely proportion, he concludes with four things in general concerning this animal, v. 33, 34. (1.) That he is great among the inferior creatures. Upon earth there is not his like, no creature in this world is comparable to him for strength and terror; or, the earth is here distinguished from the sea; His do- minion is not upon the earth, so some, but in the waters; none of all the savage creatures upon earth come near him for bulk and strength, and it is well for man that he is confined to the waters, and there he dwells, a water, or a water, v. 11; (ch. vii. 12.) by the Divine Providence, because it is such a terrible creature, that he is allowed to roam and rage upon this earth, it would be an unsafe and uncomfortable habitation for the children of men, for whom it is intended. (2.) That he is more bold and daring than any other creature whatsoever; He is made without fear: the creatures are as they are made; the leviathan has courage in his constitution, nothing can frighten him; other creatures, quite contrary, seem as much designed for flying as for fighting; among men, some are in their natural terror, others are timidous. (3.) That he is himself very proud; though lodged in the deep, yet he beholds all high things; the rolling waves, the impending rocks, the hovering clouds, and the ships under sail with top and top-gallant, this mighty animal beholds with contempt, for he does not think they either lessen him or threaten him. Those that are great, are apt to be scornful. (4.) That he is a king over all his creatures, and is so, and he is a king over all his children, and is so, that he is a king over all his creatures, and is so, and he is a king over all. Some read it, so as to understand it of God; He that beholds all high things, even he is King over all the children of pride; he can tame the behemoth, (ch. xl. 19.) and the leviathan, }
as they are, and stout-hearted as they are. This
discourse, concerning these two animals, was brought
in to prove that it is God only who can look upon
forsud men and abuse them, bring them low and
tread them down, and hide them in the dust; (ch.
xl. 11-13.) and so it concludes with a Quod erat
Demonstrandum—Which was to be demonstrated;
there is one that beholds all things, and, wherein
delinquent persons are, is above them; he is King over
all the children of pride, whether brutal or rational,
and can make them all either bend, or break, be
fore him; (Isa. ii. 11.) The lofty looks of man shall
be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be
bowed down, and thus the Lord alone shall be ex-
calted.

CHAP. XLII.

Solomon says, Better is the end of a thing than the be-
ginning thereof, Ecc. vii. 8. It was so here in the story
of Job; at evening-time it was light. Three things we
have met with in this book, which, perhaps, have trou-
bled me much; but we find all the three grievances re-
dressed, thoroughly redressed, in this chapter, every
thing set to rights. I. It has been a great trouble to us,
to see such a body as Job was, so fretful and peev-
ish, and an enemy to himself, and uncouthly to hear
the quarrel with God, and speak indelicately to him; but,
though he thus falls, he is not utterly cast down, for here
he recovers his temper, comes to himself, and to his
right mind again, by repentance, is sorry for what he
has said amiss, unsays it, and humbles himself before
God, v. 1-6. II. It has been likewise a great trouble to
us, to see Job and his friends so much at variance,
not able to give a composure to his mind, in giving one
thing, a greater many hard words, and paining severe
curses one upon another, though they were all very wise
and good men; but here we have this grievance redress-
ed likewise, the differences between them happily ad-
dusted, the quarrel taken up, all the peevish reflections
they had cast upon one another forgiven and forgotten,
and all joining in sacrifices and prayers, mutually ac-
cepted of God, v. 7-9. III. It has troubled us, to see a
man, they say, so proud and unrefined as Job was,
so grievously afflicted, so pained, so sick, so poor, so
reproached, so slighted, and made the very centre of all
the calamities of human life; but here we have this
grievance redressed too; Job healed of all his ailments,
more honoured and beloved than ever, exalted with an
estate double to what he had before, surrounded with all
the comforts of life, and as great an instance of pros-
perity as ever he had been of affliction and patience,
v. 10-12. And I have been often for some time past,
that has been, under these and the like discouragements that we meet
with, through patience and comfort of this scripture,
may have hope.

1. THEN Job answered the Lord, and
said, 2. I know that thou canst do
every thing, and that no thought can be
withholden from thee. 3. Who is he that
hideth counsel without knowledge? there-
fore have I uttered that I understood not;
things too wonderful for me, which I knew
not. 4. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will
speak: I will demand of thee, and declare
thou unto me. 5. I have heard of thee by
the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye
seeth thee: 6. Wherefore I abhor myself,
and repent in dust and ashes.

The words of Job justifying himself, were ended,
ch. xxxi. 40. After that, he said no more to that
purport: the words of Job judging and condemning
himself, began, ch. xl. 4, 5. Here he goes on with
words to the same purport; though his patience
had not its perfect work, his repentance for his
impatience had. He is here thoroughly humbled for
his folly and unadvised speaking, and it was for-
given him. Good men will see and own their faults
at last, though it may be some difficulty to bring
them to it. Then when God had said all this to
him concerning his own greatness and power ap-
pearing in the creatures, then Job answered the
Lord, (v. 1.) not by way of contradiction, he had
promised not so to answer again, (ch. xl. 5.) but by
way of submission; and thus we must answer all the
calls of God.

I. He subscribes to the truth of God’s unlimited
power, knowledge, and dominion, to prove which
was the great concern of Job, to cast down the
wind, v. 2. Corrupt passions and practices arise either
from some corrupt principles, or from the neglect
and disbelief of the principles of truth; and therefore
true repentance begins in the acknowledgment of
the truth, 2 Tim. ii. 25. Job here owns his judg-
ment convinced of the greatness, glory, and perfe-
tion, of God, from which would follow the convicti-
on of his conscience concerning his own folly, in
speaking irreverently of him. 1. He owns that
God can do every thing. What can be too hard
for him that made behemoth and leviathan, and
manages both as he pleases? He knew this before
and had himself discoursed very well upon the
subject, but now he knew it with application; God
had spoken it once, and then he heard it twice, that
dower belongs to God; and therefore it is the great-
est madness and presumption imaginable to contend
with him. Thou canst do every thing, and there-
fore cannot raise me out of this low condition, which
I have so often foolishly despairs of as impossi-
bile; I now believe thou art able to do this.” 2.
That no thought can be withholden from him, that
is, (1.) There is no thought of ours that can be
hindered from the knowledge of it. Not a fretful,
discontented, unbelieving, thought is in our minds
at any time, but God is a Witness to it: it is in vain
to contest with him, for we cannot hide our coun-
sels and projects from him; and if he discover
them, he can defeat them. (2.) There is no
thought of his that he can be hindered from the
execution of; Whatever the Lord pleased, that did he.
Job had said this passionately, complaining of
it; (ch. xxxiii. 13.) What his soul desireth, that he
doeth; now he says, with pleasure and satisfaction,
that God’s counsels shall stand. If God’s thoughts
concerning us be thoughts of good, to give us an un-
expected end, he cannot be withheld from accom-
plishing them; the works of his grace are so surpris-
ing, whatever difficulties may seem to lie in the way.

II. He owns himself to be guilty of that which
God had charged him with in the beginning of his
discourse; (v. 3.) “Lord, the first word thou saidst,
was, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words
without knowledge? There needed no more; that
word convinced me; I own, I am the man that has
been so foolish. That word reached my conscience,
that was set before me, and is stouter before me to
to be denied, too bad to be excused; I have hid coun-
sel without knowledge; I have ignorantly over-
looked the counsels and designs of God in afflicting me,
and therefore have quarrelled with God, and insist-
ted too much upon my own justification; Therefore
I uttered that I understood not,” that is, “I have
passed a judgment upon the dispensations of Provi-
dence, though I was utterly a stranger to the rea-
s of God’s operations. Here I see myself igno-
rant of the divine counsels; and so we are all.
God’s judgments are a great deep, which we can-
not fathom, much less find out the springs of. We
see what God does, but we neither know why he
does it, what he is driving at, nor what he will
bring to it; these are things too wonderful for us,
out of our sight to discover, out of our reach to al-
ter, and out of our jurisdiction to judge of; they are
things which we know not, it is quite above our re-
pacity to pass a verdict upon them: the reason why we quarrel with Providence is, because we do not understand it; and we must be content to be in the dark about it, until the mystery of God shall be finished. He owns himself imprudent and presumptuous, in undertaking to discourse of that which he did not understand, and to arraign that which he did not know. He had before said: in matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame to him. We wrong ourselves, as well as the cause which we undertake to determine, while we are no competent judges of it.

III. He will not answer, but he will make supplication to his Judge, as he had said; (ch. ix. 15.) ‘Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak, (v. 4.) not speak either as plaintiff or defendant, (ch. xiii. 22.) but as a humble petitioner; not as one that intends to undertake to teach and prescribe, but as one that desires to learn, and is willing to be prescribed to. Lord, put no more hard questions to me, for I am not able to answer thee one of a thousand of those which thou hast put; but give me leave to ask instruction from thee, and do not deny it me, do not upbraid me with my folly and self-sufficiency,” Jam. i. 5. Now he is brought to the prayer Elisha took, I see not, teach thou me, (2 Kings iv. 29.) He puts himself into the presence of a penitent, and therein goes upon a right principle. In true repentance there must be not only conviction of sin, but contrition and godly sorrow for it, sorrowing according to God, 2 Cor. vii. 9. Such was Job’s sorrow for his sins.

1. Job had an eye to God in his repentance, thought highly of him, and went upon that as the principle of it; (v. 5.) ‘I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear;’ (Ps. lxxi. 4.) I have not heard of thee by the hearing of my ears. When I was young; from my friends, now of late; I have known something of thy greatness, and power, and sovereign dominion; and yet was not brought, by what I heard, to submit myself to thee as I ought; the notions I had of these things, served me only to talk of, and had not a due influence upon my mind; but now thou hast by immediate revelation discovered thyself to me in thy glorious majesty; now my eyes see thee, now I feel the power of those truths which before I had only the notion of, and therefore now I repent, and unsay what I have foolishly said.” Note, (1.) It is a great mercy to have a good education, and to know the things of God by the instructions of his word and ministers; faith comes by hearing, and then it is most likely to come, when we hear attentively, and with the hearing of the ear. (2.) When the understanding is enlightened by the Spirit of grace, our knowledge of divine things as far exceeds what we had before, as that by ocular demonstration exceeds that by report and common fame. By the teachings of men God reveals his Son to us; but by the teachings of his Spirit he reveals his Son in us, (Gal. i. 16.) and so changes us into the same image, 2 Cor. iii. 18.

(3.) God is pleased sometimes to manifest himself most fully to his people by the rebukes of his word and providence; “Now that I have been afflicted, now that I have been told of my faults, now mine eyes see thee. The rod and reproof give wisdom. Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest and teachest.”

2. Job had an eye to himself in his repentance, thought hardly of himself, and thereby expressed his sorrow for his sins; (v. 6.) ‘Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. Observe, (1.) It concerns us to be deeply humbled for the sins we have committed, and not to be led by any slight superficial displeasure against ourselves for them. Even good people, that have no gross enormities to repent of, must be greatly afflicted in soul for the workings and breakings out of pride, passion, perverseness, and discontent, and all their hasty unadvised speeches; for these we must be pricked to the heart, and be in bitterness. Till the enemy be effectually humbled, the peace will be insecure. (2.) Outward expressions of godly sorrow well become penitents; Job repented in dust and ashes. These, without an inward change, do but mock God; but where they come from sincere contrition of soul, they show a love and religion that gives glory to God, takes shame to himself, and may be instrumental to bring others to repentance. Job’s afflictions had brought him to the ashes, (ch. ii. 8.) he sat down among the ashes; but now his sins brought him thither. True penitents mourn for their sins as heartily as ever they did for any outward affections; and are in bitterness, as for an only son or a first-born, for they are brought to see more evils in their place, than all their troubles. (3.) Self-loathing is evermore the companion of true repentance. The more we see the glory and majesty of God, the more we see of the vileness and odiousness of sin, and of ourselves because of sin, the more we shall abase and abhor ourselves for it. “Now mine eyes see what a God he is, whom I have offended, the brightness of that majesty which by willful sin I have spit in the face of, the tenderness of that mercy which I have spurned at the bowels of; now I see, as the juster and holy God he is, whose wrath I have incurred; wherefore I abhor myself. Who am I, saith Job, for I am undone.” Isa. vi. 5. God had challenged Job to look upon proud men and abase them; “I cannot,” says Job, “pretend to it; I have enough to do to get my own proud heart humbled, to abase that and bring that low.” Let us leave it to God to govern the world, and make it our care, in the strength of his grace, to govern ourselves and our own hearts well.

7. And it was so, that, after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. 3. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering: and my servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job. 9. So Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, went, and did according as the Lord commanded them: the Lord also accepted Job.
would have thought that he only was in the wrong, and that the cause would certainly go against him; but he has been found quite otherwise, and the definitive sentence given in Job's favour. Wherefore judge nothing before the time. Those who are truly righteous before God, may have their righteousness clouded and eclipsed by great and uncommon afflictions, by the severe censures of men, by their own frailties and foolish passions, by the sharp reproofs of the word and conscience, and the deep humiliation of their own spirits in the sight of God. Yet, at a time, these clouds shall all blow over, and God will bring forth their righteousness as the light, and their judgment as the noon-day, Ps. xxxvii. 6. He cleared Job's righteousness here, because he, like an honest man, held it fast, and would not let it go. We have here, I. Judgment given against Job's three friends, upon the controversy between them and Job. Elihu is not censured here, for he did exculpate himself from the rest in the management of the dispute, and acted, not as a party, but as a moderator; and moderation will have its praise with God, whether it have with men or no. In the judgment here given, Job is magnified, and his three friends mortified. While we were examining the discourses on both sides, we could not discern, and therefore durst not determine, who was in the right; something of truth we thought they both had on their side, but we could not cleave the chasm between them; nor would we, for all the world, have been to give the decisive sentence upon the case, lest we should have determined wrong; but it is well that the judgment is the Lord's, and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth; to it we will refer ourselves, and by it we will abide. Now, in the judgment here given, 1. Job is greatly magnified, and comes off with honour. He was but one against three; yet beggar against princes, and yet, having God on his side, he needed not fear the result, though thousands set themselves against him. Observe here, (1.) When God appeared for him; After the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, v. 7. After he had convinced and humbled him, and brought him to repentance, for what he had said amiss, then he owned him in what he had said well, comforted him, and put honour upon him; not till then, for we are not privy to the Lord's affairs, till he will judge and condemn ourselves; but then he pleased his cause, for he that has torn, will heal us, he that has smitten, will bind us. The Comforter shall convince, John xvi. 8. See in what method we are to expect divine acceptance; we must first be humbled under divine rebukes. After God, by speaking these words, had caused grief, he returned and had compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies; for he will not contend for ever, but will deceive the spirit of man, and stay his rough wind in the day of his east wind. Now that Job had humbled himself, God exalted him. True penitents shall find favour with God, and what they have said and done amiss, shall no more be mentioned against them. Then God is well-pleased with us, when we are brought to abhor ourselves. (2.) How he appeared for him. It is taken for granted that all his offences are forgiven, for if he had pleased his God, as he had not, he was justified. Job had sometimes intimated with great assurance, that God would clear him at last, and he was not made ashamed of the hope. [1.] God calls him again and again his servant Job; four times in two verses, and he seems to take a pleasure in calling him so, as before his troubles, (ch. i. 8.) *Hast thou considered my servant Job? Though he is born and despised, he is my servant, and as dear to me as when he was in prosperity; though he has his faults, and has appeared to be a man like passions as others; though he has contended with me, he has gone about to thwart my judgment, and has darkened counsel by words without knowledge; yet he sees his error, and retracts it, and therefore he is my servant Job still.* If we still hold fast the integrity and fidelity of servants to God, as Job did, though we may for a time be deprived of the credit and comfort of the relation, we shall be restored to it at last, as he was. The Devil had undertaken to prove Job a hypocrite, but he and his friends had condemned him as a wicked man; but God will confess those whom he accepts, and will not suffer them to be run down by the mule of hell or earth. If God says, *Well done, good and faithful servant,* it is of little consequence who says otherwise. [2.] He owns that he had spoken of him the thing that was right, beyond what his antagonists had done; he had given a much better account of the Divine Providence, than they had done. They had wronged God, by making a prey of a man of the true church, and affliction a certain indication of God's wrath; but Job had done him right, by maintaining that God's love and hatred are to be judged of by what is in men, not by what is before them, Eccl. ix. 1. Observe, First, Those do the most justice to God and his providence, who have an eye to the rewards and punishments of another world more than to those of this, and with the prospect of those solve the difficulties of the present administration. Job had referred things to the future judgment, and the future state, more than his friends had done, and therefore he spake of God that which was right, better than his friends had done. Second-ly, Though Job had spoken some things amiss, even concerning God, whom he made too bold with, yet he is commanded for what he spake that was right. We must not only not reject that which is true and good, but must not deny it its due praise, though there appears in it a mixture of human frailty and infirmity. Thirdly, Job was in the right, and his friends in the wrong, and yet he was in pain, and they at ease; a plain evidence that we cannot judge of men and their sentiments by looking in their faces or purses; He only can do it infallibly, who sees men's hearts. [3.] He will pass his word for Job, that, notwithstanding all the wrong his friends had done him, he would be a good man, and of such a human, tender, forgiving spirit, that he will very readily pray for them, and use his interest in heaven on their behalf. *My servant Job will pray for you, I know he will. I have pardoned him, and he has the comfort of it, and therefore he will pardon you.* [4.] He appoints him to be the priest of this congregation, and promises to accept him and his mediation for his friends. *Take your sacrifices to my servant Job, for him will I accept.* Thus from God's enemies here he makes to himself kings and priests. True penitents shall not only find favour as petitioners for themselves, but be accepted as intercessors for others also. It was a great honour that God hereby put upon Job, in appointing him to offer sacrifice for his friends, as formerly he used to do for his own children, ch. i. 5. And a happy presage it was of his restoration to his prosperity again, and indeed a good omen; for God wanted it for the priesthood. Thus he became a type of Christ, through whom alone we and our spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God; see 1 Pet. ii. 5. *Go to my servant Job, to my servant Jesus,* (from whom for a time he hid his face,) *put your sacrifices into his hand, make use of him as your Advocate, for him I accept, but, out of him, you must expect to
Then every friend. I am wise, and know the importance of the thing requires, before we can hope to obtain from God the forgiveness of sins. See how thoroughly God espoused the cause of his servant Job, and engaged in it; God will not be reconciled to those that have offended him, till they have first begged his pardon, for, it is to be observed, Job and his friends had differed in their opinion about many things, and been too keen in their reflections one upon another, but now they were to be made friends; in order to that, they are not to argue the matter over again, and try to give it a new turn, (that might be endless,) but they must agree in a sacrifice and a prayer, and that must reconcile them: they must unite in affection and devotion, when they could not concur in the same sentiments. Those who differ in judgment about lesser things, yet are one in Christ the great Sacrifice, and meet at the same throne of grace, and therefore ought to love and bear with one another. Once more, observe, When God was angry with Job's friends, he did himself mix himself in it, and made their peace with him. Our quarrels with God always begin on our part, but the reconciliation begins on his.

II. The acquiescence of Job's friends in this judgment given, v. 9. They were good men, and, as soon as they understood what the mind of the Lord was, they did as he commanded them, and that speedily and without gainsaying, though it was against flesh and blood to court him thus whom they had condemned. Note, Those who would be reconciled to God, must carefully use the prescribed means and methods of reconciliation. Peace with God is to be had only in his own way, and upon his own terms, and they will never seem hard to those who know how to value the privilege, but they will be glad of it upon any terms, though ever so humbling. Job's friends had all joined in accusing Job, and now they join in begging his pardon; those that have sinned together, should repent together. They that appeal to God, as both Job and his friends had done, do not lose their sovereignty, by his award, whether pleasing or displeasing to their own thoughts. And they that conscientiously observe God's commands, need not doubt of his favour; The Lord also accepted Job, and his friends, in answer to his prayer. It is not said, He accepted them, (though that is implied,) but, He accepted Job, for them; so he has made us accepted in the Beloved, Eph. i. 6. Matth. iii. 17. Job did not insult over his friends, upon the testimony God had given concerning him, and the submission they were obliged to make to him; but, God being graciously reconciled to him, he was easily reconciled to them, and then God accepted him. This is what we should aim at in all our prayers and services, to be accepted of the Lord; this must be the top of our ambition, not to have praise of men, but to please God.

10. And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. 11. Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house; and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one
an ear-ring of gold. 12. So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses. 13. He had also seven sons and three daughters. 14. And he called the name of the first Jemima; and the name of the second, Keziah; and the name of the third, Keren-happuch. 15. And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among his brethren. 16. After this lived Job a hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. 17. So Job died, being old and full of days.

Ye have heard of the patience of Job, (says the apostle, Jam. v. 11.) and have seen the end of the Lord, that is, what end the Lord, at length, put to his troubles. In the beginning of this book, we had Job's patience under his troubles, for an example; here, in the close, for our encouragement to follow that example, we have the happy issue of his troubles, and the prosperous condition to which he was restored after them, which confirms us in counting them happy which endure. Perhaps, too, the extraordinary prosperity which Job was crown'd with after his afflictions, was intended to be to us Christians a type and figure of the glory and happiness of heaven, which the afflictions of this present time are working for us, and in which they will issue at last; this will be more than double to all the delights and satisfactions we now enjoy, as Job's after-prosperity was to his former, though then he was the greatest of all the men of the east. He that rightly endures temptation, when he is tried, shall receive a crown of life, (Jam. i. 12.) as Job, when he was tried, received all the wealth, and honour, and comfort, which here we have an account of.

I. God returned in ways of mercy to him; and his thoughts concerning him were thoughts of good, and not of evil, to give the expected (pay the unexpected) end, Jer. xxix. 11. His troubles began in Satan's malice, which God restrained; his restoration began in God's mercy, which Satan could not oppose. Job's sorest complaint, and indeed the sorrowful accent of all his complaints, on which he laid the greatest emphasis, was, that God appeared against him: but now God plainly appeared for him, and watched over him to build and to plant, like as he had (in his apprehension) watched over him to pluck up and to throw down, Jer. xxxi. 28. This put a new face upon his affairs immediately, and every thing now looked as pleasing and promising, as, before, it had looked gloomy and frightful. 1. God turned his captivity, that is, he repressed his grievances, and took away all the causes of his complaints; he lodged him from the hand with which Satan had bound him, and delivered him out of those cruel hands into which he had delivered him. We may suppose that now all his bodily pains and distempers were healed, so suddenly, and so thoroughly, that the cure was next to miraculous; His flesh became fresher than a child's, and he returned to the days of his youth; what was more, he felt a very great alteration in his mind; it was calm and easy, and the tumult was all over, his disquieting thoughts were all vanished, his fears silenced, and the emotions of God were now as much the delight of his soul, as his terrors had been its burtthen. The tide thus turned, and his troubles began to ebb as fast as they had flowed, just then when he was praying for his friends, praying over his sacrifice which he offered for them. Mercy did not return, when he was disputing with his friends, no, not though he had right on his side, but when he was praying for them; for God is better served and pleased with our prayers than with our words, in the hearing of his ears. When Job completed his repentance by this instance of his forgiving men theirtrespasses, then God completed his restoration by turning his captivity.

Note, We are really doing our business, when we are praying for our friends, if we pray in a right manner, for in those prayers there is not only faith, but love. Christ has taught us to pray with, and for, others, in teaching us to say, Our Father; and in seeking mercy for others, we may, and must, pray that God will turn their captivity. Our Lord Jesus has his exaltation and dominion there, where he ever lives making intercession. Some, by the turning of Job's captivity, understand the restitution which the Sabeans and Chaldeans made of the cattle which they had taken from him, God wonderfully inclining them to do it; and with these he began the world again. Probably, it was so; those spoilers had swallowed down his riches, but they were forced to vomit them up again, as is said of the 'puppets.' Ex. xxi. 36. I think it more likely, as we are generally of the turn now given. 2. God doubled his possessions; Also the Lord gave him twice as much as he had before. It is probable that he did at first, by some way or other, intimate to him, that it was his gracious purpose, by degrees, in due time, to bring him to such a height of prosperity, that he should have twice as much as he had, for the encouraging of his hope and the quickening of his industry, and that it might appear that he, by a wonderful increase was a special son of God's favour. And it may be considered as intended, (1.) To balance his losses: he suffered for the glory of God, and therefore God made it up to him with advantage, and allowed him more than interest upon interest. God will take care that none shall lose by him. (2.) To recom pense his patience and his confidence in God, which (notwithstanding the workings of corruption) he did not cast away, but still walked in the fear of God; and the issue of that was, that it which has a great recompense of reward, Heb. x. 35. Job's friends had often put their severe censure of Job upon this issue, If thou wert pure and upright, surely now he would awake for thee, ch. viii. 6. But he does not awake for thee, therefore thou art not upright; "Well," says God, "though your argument be not conclusive, I will, even by that, demonstrate the integrity of my servant Job; his latter end shall greatly increase, and by that it shall appear, since you have it so, that it was not for any injustice in his hands, that he suffered the loss of all things." Now it appeared that Job had reason to bless God for taking away, (as he did, ch. i. 21.) since it made so good a return.

II. His old acquaintance, neighbours, and relations, were very kind to him, v. 11. They had been estranged from him, and it was not the least of the grievances of his complaint that they were the cause of his unhappiness, ch. xix. 13, &c. But now they visited him, with all possible expressions of affection and respect. 1. They put honour upon him, in coming to dine with him as formerly, (but we may suppose) privately bringing their entertainment along with them, so that he had the reputation of feasting them without the expense. 2. They sympathized with him, and showed a tender concern for him, such as becomes brethren. They mourned him, when they talked over the calamities of his afflicted state; and comforted him,
when they took notice of God's gracious returns to him. They wept for his griefs, and rejoiced in his joys, and proved not such miserable comforters as his three friends, that, at first, were so forward and officious to attend him. These were not such great men, nor such learned and eloquent as those, but he had a finer, skilful, and kinder comforter. Job. God sometimes chooses the foolish and weak things of the world, as for conviction, so for comfort. 3. They made a collection among them for the repair of his losses, and the setting of him up again; they did not think it enough to say, Be warmed, Be filled, but gave him such things as would be of use to him, Jam. ii. 16. Every one gave him a piece of money, more than he could use; it is likely, and some rejoiced in their ability, to give every one an an-ring of gold, (an ornament much used by the children of the east,) which would be as good as money to him; this was a superfluity which they could well spare, and the rule is, That our abundance must be a supply to our brethren's necessity. But why did Job's relations now, at length, show this kindness to him? (1.) God put it in their hearts to do so; and every creature is that to us, which God has known God in their estrangement from him, for which he now rewarded him in turning them to him again. (2.) Perhaps some of them withdrew from him because they thought him a hypocrite, but, now that his integrity was made manifest, they returned to him, and to communion with him again. When God was friendly to him, they were all willing to be friendly too, Ps. cxix. 74, 75. Others of them, it may be, withdrew, because he was poor, and sore, and a refulge spectacle, but now that he began to recover, they were willing to renew their acquaintance with him. Swallow-friends, that are gone in winter, will return in the spring, though their friendship is of little value. (3.) Perhaps the rebuke which God had given to Eliphaz and the other two, for their unkindness to Job, awakened the rest of his friends to return to their duty. Reproofs to others we should thus take as admonitions and instructions to us. 4. Job prayed for his friends, and then they flacked about him, overcome by his kindness, and every one desiring an interest in his prayers. The more we pray for our friends and relations, the more comfort we may expect in them.

III. His estate strangely increased, by the blessing of God upon the little that his friends gave him. He thankfully received their coffers, and did not think it below him to have his estate repaired by contributions; he did not, on the one hand, urge his friends to raise money for him, he acquits himself from that, (ch. vi. 22.) Did I say, Bring unto me or give me a reward of your substance? Yet what they brought, he thankfully accepted, and did not upbraud them with their former unkindness, nor ask them why they did not do this sooner; he was neither so covetous and griping as to ask their charity, nor so proud and ill-natured as to be angry at them, when they offered it; and being in so good a temper, God gave him that which was far better than their money and ear-rings, and that was, his blessing, v. 12. The Lord comforted him now, according to the days wherein he had afflicted him, and blessed his latter end more than his beginning. Observe, 1. The blessing of the Lord makes rich; it is he that gives us power to get wealth, and gives success, in our endeavors. Those therefore that would thrive, must have an eye to God's blessing, and never go out of it, no, not into the warm sun; and those that have thriven, must not sacrifice to their own net, but acknowledge their obligations to God for his blessing. 2. That blessing can make very rich, and sometimes make good people so. Those that are become rich by getting, think they can easily make themselves very rich by saving; but as those that have little, must depend upon God to make it much, so those that have much, must depend upon God to make it more and to double it, Prov. i. 3. The last days of a good man sometimes prove his best days, his last works his best works, his last comforts his best comforts: for his path, like that of the morning-light, shines more and more to the perfect day. Of a wicked man it is said, His last state is worse than his first, (Luke xi. 26.) but of the upright man, His end is peace; and sometimes the nearer it is, the clearer are the views of it. Job's case shews, that though God is pleased sometimes to make the latter end of a good man's life more comfortable than the former part of it has been, and strangely to outdo the expectations of his afflicted people, who thought they should never have lived to see better days, that we may not despair even in the depths of adversity; we know not what good times we may yet be reserved for in our latter day. Non si male nune, etiamsi longe est ita, it is otherwise. Job, in his affliction, had wished to be as in months past, as rich as he had been before, and quite despaired of that; but God is often better to us than our own fears, nay, than our own wishes, for Job's possessions were doubled to him; the number of his cattle, his sheep and camels, his oxen and she-asses, is just double here to what it was, ch. i. 3. This is a remarkable instance of the extent of the Divine Providence to things that seem so minute, as this, of the exact number of a man's cattle, as also of the harmony of Providence, and the reference of one event to another; for known unto God are all his works, from the beginning to the end. Job's other possessions, no doubt, were increased, in proportion to his cattle, lands, money, and servants, &c. So that if before he was the greatest of all the men of the east, what was he now?

IV. His family was built up again, and he had great comfort in his children, v. 13.-15. The last of his afflictions that are recorded, (ch. i.) and the most grievous, was, the death of all his children at once: his friends upbraided him with it, (ch. viii. 4.) but God repaired even that breach in process of time, either by the same wife, or, she being dead, by another. i. The number of his children was the same as before, seven sons and three daugh.-ters. Some give this reason why they were not doubled as his cattle were, because his children that were dead, were not lost, but gone before to a better world; and therefore if he have but the same number of them, they may be reckoned double, for he has two fleeces of children, (as I may say,) Mahanaim,—two hosts, one in heaven, the other on earth, and in both he is rich. 2. The names of his daughters are here registered, (v. 14.) because, in the significations of them, they seemed designed to perpetuate the remembrance of God's goodness to him in the surprising change of his condition; he called the first Jemima, The day, (whence perhaps Diana had her name,) because of the shining forth of his prosperity after a dark night of affliction. The next Keziah, a spice of a very fragrant smell, because (says Bishop Patrick) God had healed his ulcers. The third Keren-happuch, that is, Plenty restored, or A horn of paint; because (says he,) God had renewed his family, and filled his face, ch. xvi. 16. Concerning these daughters we are here told, v. 15. (1.) That God adorned them with great beauty, no women so fair as the daughters of Job. In the Old Testament we often find women praised for their beauty, as Sarah, Rebekah,
and many others; but we never find any women in the New Testament, whose beauty is in the least taken notice of, no not the Virgin Mary herself, because the beauty of holiness is that which is brought to a much clearer light by the gospel. (2.) That their father (God enabling him to do it) supplied them with great fortunes. He gave them inheritance among their brethren, and did not turn them off with small portions, as most did. It is probable they had some extraordinary personal merit, which Job had an eye to in the extraordinary favour he showed them. Perhaps they excelled their brethren in wisdom and piety; and therefore, that they might continue in his family, to be a stay and blessing to it, he made them co-heirs with their brethren.

V. His life was long. What age he was, when his troubles came, we are nowhere told; but here we are told he lived 140 years; whence some conjecture that he was 70 when he was in his troubles, and that so his age was doubled, as his other possessions.

1. He lived to have much of the comfort of this life, for he saw his posterity to the fourth generation, v. 16. Though his children were not doubled to him, yet, in his children's children, (and those are the crown of old men,) they were more than doubled. As God appointed to Adam another seed instead of that which was slain, (Gen. iv. 25.) so he did to Job with advantage. God has ways to repair the losses, and balance the griefs, of those who are written childless, as Job was, when he had buried all his children.

2. He lived till he was satisfied, for he died full of days, satisfied with living in this world, and willing to leave it; not peevishly so, as in the days of his affliction, but piously so, and thus, as Eliphaz had encouraged him to hope, he came to his grave like a shock of corn in his season.
AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE BOOK OF

PSALMS.

We have now before us one of the choicest and most excellent parts of all the Old Testament; nay, so much is there in it of CHRIST and his gospel, as well as of GOD and his law, that it has been called the abstract, or summary, of both Testaments. The History of Israel, which we were long upon, led us to camps and council-boards, and there entertained and instructed us in the knowledge of GOD. The book of Job brought us into the schools, and treated us with profitable disputations concerning GOD and his providence; but this book brings us into the sanctuary, draws us off from converse with men, with the politicians, philosophers, or disputers, of this world, and directs us into communion with GOD, by solacing and reposing our souls in him, lifting up, and letting out, our hearts toward him. Thus may we be in the mount with GOD; and we understand not ourselves, if we say not, It is good to be here.

Let us consider,

I. The title of this book. It is called, 1. The Psalms; under that title it is referred to, Luke xxiv. 44. The Hebrew calls it Tehillim, which properly signifies Psalms of praise; because many of them are such: but Psalms is a more general word, meaning all metrical compositions fitted to be sung, which may as well be historical, doctrinal, or supplicatory, as laudatory. Though express and to excite all the other affections, as well as this of joy. The priests had a mournful muse as well as joyful ones; and the divine institution of singing psalms is thus largely displayed; for we are directed, not only to praise GOD, but to teach and admonish ourselves and one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, Col. iii. 16. 2. It is called the Book of Psalms; so it is quoted by St. Peter, Acts i. 20. It is a collection of psalms, of all the psalms that were divinely inspired, which, though composed at several times and upon several occasions, are here put together without any reference to, or dependence upon, one another; thus they were preserved from being scattered and lost, and laid in so much greater readiness for the service of the church. See what a good Master we serve, and what pleasantness there is in wisdom's ways, when we are not only commanded to sing at our work, and have cause enough given us to do so, but have words also put in our mouths, and songs prepared to our hands.

II. The Author of this book. It is, no doubt, derived originally from the Blessed Spirit. They are spiritual songs, words which the Holy Ghost taught. The penman of most of them was David, the son of Jesse, who is therefore called the sweet Psalmist of Israel, 2 Sam. xxiii. 1. Some that have not his name in their titles, yet are expressly ascribed to him elsewhere; as Ps. ii. (Acts iv. 25.) and Ps. xcvi. cv. (1 Chron. xvi.) One psalm is expressly said to be the prayer of Moses; (Ps. xc.) and that some of the psalms were penned by Asaph, is intimated, 2 Chron. xxxix. 30, where they are said to praise the Lord in the words of David, and Asaph, who is there called a seer or prophet. Some of the psalms seem to have been penned long after; as Ps. cxxviii. at the time of the captivity in Babylon; but the far greater part of them were certainly penned by David himself, whose genius lay toward poetry and music, and who was raised up, qualified, and animated, for the establishing of the ordinance of singing psalms in the church of GOD, as Moses and Aaron were, in their day, for the settling of the ordinances of sacrifice; theirs is superseded, but his remains, and will to the end of time, when it shall be swallowed up in the songs of eternity. Herein David was a type of CHRIST, who descended from him, not from Moses, because he came to take away sacrifice, (the family of Moses was soon lost and extinct,) but to establish and perpetuate joy and praise; for of the family of David in CHRIST there shall be no end.

III. The scope of it. It is manifestly intended, 1. To assist the exercises of natural religion, and to kindle in the souls of men those devout affections which we owe to GOD as our Creator, Owner, Ruler, and Benefactor. The book of Job helps to prove our first principles of the divine perfections and providence; but this helps to improve them in prayers and praises, and professions of desire toward him, dependence on him, and an entire devotedness and resignation to him. Other parts of scripture show that GOD is infinitely above man, and his sovereign LORD; but this shows us that he may, notwithstanding, be conversed with by us sinful worms of the earth; and there are ways in which, if it be not our own fault, we may keep up communion with him in all the various conditions of human life. 2. To
advance the excellencies of revealed religion, and, in the most pleasing powerful manner, to recommend it to the world. There is indeed little or nothing, in all the book of Psalms, of the ceremonial law. Though sacrifice and offering were yet to continue many ages, yet they are here represented as things which God himself had made (Ps. cxlv. 16); as things which he did not merely suffer, but from time to time did vanish away. But the word and law of GOD, those parts of it which are moral, and of perpetual obligation, are here, all along, magnified and made honourable, no where more. And CHRIST, the Crown and Centre of revealed religion, the Foundation, Corner, and Top-stone, of that blessed building, is here clearly spoken of in type and prophecy; both his sufferings and the glory that should follow, and the kingdom that he should set up in the world, which GOD's covenant with David, concerning his kingdom, was to have its accomplishment in. What a high value does this book put upon the word of GOD, his statutes and judgments, his covenant, and the great and precious promises of it; and how does it recommend them to us as our guide and stay, and our heritage for ever.

Jv. The use of it. All scripture, being given by inspiration of GOD, is profitable to convey divine light into our minds; but the book of singular use with that to convey divine life and power, and a holy warmth, into our affections. There is no one book of scripture that is more helpful to the devotions of the saints than this, and it has been so in all ages of the church, ever since it was written, and the several parts of it delivered to the chief musician, for the service of the church. 1. It is of use to be sung. Further than David's psalms we may go, but we need not, for hymns and spiritual songs. What the rules of the Hebrew metre were, even the learned are not certain. But these psalms ought to be rendered according to the metre of every language, at least, so that they may be sung for the edification of the church. And methinks it is a great comfort to us, when we are singing David's psalms, that we are offering the very same praises to GOD, that were offered him in the days of David, and the other godly kings of Judah. So rich, so well made, are these divine poems, that they can never be exhausted, can never be worn thread-bare. 2. It is of use to be read and opened by the ministers of CHRIST, as containing great and excellent truths, and rules concerning good and evil. Our Lord JESUS expounded the psalms to his disciples, the gospel psalms, and opened their understandings (for he had the key of David) to understand them, Luke xxiv. 44. 3. It is of use to be read and meditated upon by all good people. It is a full fountain, out of which we may all be drawing water with joy. The Psalmist's experiences are of great use for our direction, caution, and encouragement. In telling us, as he often does, what passed between God and his soul, he lets us know what we may expect from GOD, and what he will expect, and require, and graciously accept, from us. David was a man after GOD's own heart, and therefore those who find themselves in some measure according to his heart, have reason to hope that they are renewed by the grace of GOD, after the image of GOD, and may have much comfort in the testimony of their consciences for them, that they can heartily say Amen to David's prayers and praises. 4. Even the Psalmist's expressions too are of great use; and by them the Spirit helps our praying infirmities, because we know not what to pray for as we ought. In all our approaches to GOD, as well as in our first returns to GOD, we are directed to take with us words, (Hos. xiv. 2.) these words, words which the Holy Ghost teaches. If we make David's psalms familiar to us, as we ought to do, whatever errand we have at the throne of grace, by way of confession, petition, or thanksgiving, we may from thence be assisted in the delivery of it; whatever devout affection is working in us, holy desire or hope, sorrow or joy, we may there find apt words whereby to clothe it; sound speech which cannot be condemned. It will be good for the most religious minds, when it is committed to memory, to reduce it to a short, plain form, in the spirit of the psalm, we may then be sure of acceptance with GOD, in using the language of it. Nor is it only our devotion, and the affections of our mind, that the book of Psalms assists, teaching us how to offer praise so as to glorify GOD, but it is also a directory to the actions of our lives, and teaches us how to order our conversation aright, so as that, in the end, we may see the salvation of GOD, Ps. l 23. The Psalms were thus serviceable to the Old Testament Church, but to us Christians they may be of more use than they could be to them who lived before the coming of CHRIST; for, as Moses's sacrifices, so David's songs, are expounded and made more intelligible by the gospel of CHRIST, which lets us within the veil; so that, if to David's prayers and praises we add St. Paul's prayers in his Epistles, and the new songs in the Revelation, we shall be thoroughly furnished for this good work; for the new song, made of the old, maketh new Psalms of the most sweet.
PSALM I.

This is a psalm of instruction concerning good and evil, setting before us life and death, the blessing and the curse, that we may take the right way which leads to happiness, and avoid that which will certainly end in our misery and ruin. The different character and condition of godly people and wicked people, those that serve God and those that serve him not, is here plainly stated in a few words; so that every man, if he will be faithful to himself, may here see his own face, and then read his own doom. That division of the children of men into saints and sinners, righteous and unrighteous, the children of God and the children of the wickedness, is ancient; and every part of the struggle between sin and grace, the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, it is lasting, and will survive all other divisions and subdivisions of men into high and low, bond and free, by right, by birth, and by the will of him, the ever-living, that makes the distinction between sin and grace, will last as long as heaven and hell. This psalm shows us, I. The holiness and happiness of a godly man, v. 1.-3. II. The sinfulness and misery of a wicked man, v. 4.-5. III. The ground and reason of both, v. 6. Whoever collected the psalms of David, (probably it was Ezra,) with good reason put this psalm first, as a preface to the rest, because it is absolutely necessary, that we know the way before God, (for it is only the prayer of the upright that is his delight,) and, therefore, that we be right in our notions of blessedness, and in our choice of the way that leads to it. Those are not fit to put up good prayers, who do not walk in good ways.

1. BLESSED is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scorners: 2. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. 3. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

The psalmist begins with the character and condition of a godly man, that those may take the comfort of that, to draw it in long. Here is, A blessed one, given of the godly man's spirit and way, by which we are to try ourselves. The Lord knows them that are his by name, but we must know them by their character; for that is agreeable to a state of probation, that we may study to answer to the character, which is indeed both the command of the law, which we are bound in duty to obey, and the condition of the promise, which we are bound by. The character of a good man is here given by the rules he chooses to walk by, and to take his measures from. What we take at our setting out, and at every turn, for the guide of our conversation, whether the course of this world, or the word of God, is of material consequence. An error in the choice of our standard and leader, is original and fatal; but if we be right here, we are in a fair way to do well.

1. A godly man, that he may avoid the evil, utterly renounces the conduct of evil-doers, and will not be led by them; (v. 1.) He walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, &c. This part of his character is put first, because those that will keep the commandments of their God, must say to evildoers, Depart from us; (cxix. 115.) and departing from evil, is that in which wisdom begins. (1.) He sees evildoers round about him, the world is full of them, they walk on every side; these are here described by three characters, ungodly, sinners, and scornful. See by what steps men arrive at the height of impiety: Nemo respente fit turpisimius—None reach the height of vice at once. They are ungodly first, casting off the fear of God, and living in the neglect of their duty to him: but they rest not there; when the services of religion are laid aside, they come to be sinners, they break out into open rebellion against God, and engage in the service of sin and Satan; omissions make way for commissions; and, by these the heart is not hardened, that, at length, they come to be scorners, they openly defy all that is sacred, scoff at religion, and make a jest of sin. Thus is the way of iniquity down hill; the bad grow worse, sinners themselves become tempters to others, and advocates for Baal. The word which we translate ungodly, signifies such as are unsettled, aim at no certain end, and walk by no certain rule, but are at the command of every lust, and at the beck of every evil counsel. The word sinners, signifies such as are determined for the practice of sin, and set it up as their trade. The scornful, are those that set their mouths against the heavens. These the good man sees with a sad heart, they are a constant vexation to his righteous soul. But, (2.) He shuns them, wherever he sees them. He does not do as they do; and, that he may not, he does not converse familiarly with them. (1.) He does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly; his not walking with their councils, nor does he advise with them; though they are ever so witty, and subtle, and learned, if they are ungodly, they shall not be the men of his counsel; he does not consent to them, nor say as they say; (Luke xxiii. 51.) he does not take his measures from their principles, nor act according to the advice which they give and take. The ungodly are forward to give their advice against religion, and it is managed so artfully, that we have reason to think ourselves happy, if we escape being tainted and ensnared by it. (2.) He stands not in the way of sinners; he avoids doing as they do; their way shall not be his way, he will not come into it, much less will he continue in it, as the sinner does, who sets himself in a way that is not good, xxxvi. 4. He avoids (as much as may be) being where they are: that he may not imitate them, he will not associate with them, nor choose them for his companions. He does not stand in their way, to be picked up by them, (Prov. vii. 2.) but keeps as far from them as from a place or person infected with the plague, for fear of the contagion, Prov. iv. 14, 15. He would that he be kept from harm, must keep out of harm's way. (3.) He sits not in the seat of the scornful; he does not repose himself with those that sit down secure in their wickedness, and please themselves with the sordidness of their own consciences; he does not associate with those that sit in close cabal, to find out ways and means for the support and advancement of the Devil's kingdom, or that sit in open judgment, magnificently to condemn the generation of the righteous. The seat of the drunkards, is the seat of the scornful; xxix. 12. Happy is the man that never sits in it, Hos. vii. 5.

2. A godly man, that he may do that which is good and cleave to it, submits to the direction of the word of God, that makes it familiar to him, v. 2. This is that which keeps him out of the way of the ungodly, and fortifies him against their temptations; By the words of thy lips I have kept me from the path of the deceiver, xvii. 4. We need not court the fellowship of sinners, either for pleasure or for improvement, while we have fellowship with the word of God, and with God himself in and by his word; When thou walkest, it shall walk with thee, Prov. iv. 7. He may judge himself and his state by asking, What is the law of God to us? What account do we make of it? What place has it in us? See here, (1.) The entire affection which a good man has for the law of God; his delight is in it. He delights in it, though it be a law, a yoke, because it
is the law of God, which is holy, just, and good, which he freely consents to, and so delights in, after the image of God made him. All who are well pleased that there is a God, must be well pleased that there is a Bible, a revelation of God, of his will, and the only way to happiness in him. (2.) The intimate acquaintance which a good man keeps up with the word of God; in that law doth he meditate day and night; by this it appears that his delight is in it, for what we love, we love to think of, cxix. 97. To meditate on God's word, is to discourse with our- selves concerning the great things contained in the word, with a close application of mind, a fixedness of thought, till we be suitably affected with those things, and experience the power and the efficacy of them in our hearts. This we must do, day and night; we must have a constant habitual regard to the word of God, as the rule of our actions and the spring of our comforts, and we must have it in our thoughts, accordingly, upon every occasion that occurs, whether night or day. No time is amiss for meditating on the word of God, nor any time unseasonable for those visits. We must not only set ourselves to med- itate on God's word, morning and evening, at the entrance of the day and of the night; but these thoughts should be interwoven with the business and converse of every day, and with the reposi and slumber of every night; When I awake, I am still with thee. II. An assurance given of the godly man's happiness, with which we should encourage ourselves to answer for such. 1. In general, he is blessed, v. 1. God blesses him, and that blessing will make him happy. Bless- edness are to him; blessings of all kinds, of the upper and nether springs, enough to make him completely happy; none of the ingredients of happiness shall be wanting to him. When he undertakes to describe a blessed man, he describes a good man; for, after all, those only are happy, truly happy, that are holy, truly holy; and we are more concerned to know the way to blessedness, than to know where it is found; blessedness will consist. Nay, goodness and holiness are not only the way to happiness, (Rev. xxii. 14.) but happiness itself; supposing there was not another life after this, yet that a man is a happy man, that keeps in the way of his duty. 2. His blessedness is here illustrated by a simili- tude; (v. 3.) He shall be like a tree, fruitful and flourishing. This is the effect, (1.) Of his pious preparation, he is planted by the word of God, in succum et sanguinem—into juice and blood, and that makes him like a tree. The more we converse with the word of God, the better furnished we are for every good word and work. (2.) Of the promised blessing; he is blessed of the Lord, and therefore he shall be like a tree. The divine blessing produces real effects. It is the happiness of a godly man, (1.) That he is planted by the grace of God; they are watered by nature wild olives, and yet continue so till the Spirit of God shall make them fruitful. There is no fruit from a tree which is not planted by a power from above. Never any good tree grew of itself, it is the planting of the Lord, and therefore he must in it be glorified; (Isa. lxi. 3.) The trees of the Lord are full of sap. (2.) That he is placed by the means of grace; here called the rivers of water, those rivers which make glad the city of our God; (xlvi. 4.) from these a good man receives supplies of strength and vigour, but in secret, un- discerned works of grace, they shall bring forth fruit, abounding to a good account, Phil. iv. 17. To those whom God first blessed, he said, Be fruitful; (Gen. i. 22.) and still, the comfort and honour of fruitfulness are a recompense for the labour of it. It is expected from those who enjoy the mercies of grace, that, both in the temper of their minds, and in the tenor of their lives, they comply with the intentions of that grace, and then they bring forth fruit. And, be it observed to the praise of the great Dresser of the vineyard, they bring forth their fruit, (xxv. 1.) not only in the midst of them all, but of all kinds, divers sorts and qualities of fruit; to the glory of God, who is in the midst of them all. In that season, when it is most beautiful and most useful, improving every opportunity of doing good, and doing it in its proper time. 4.] That his profession shall be preserved from blemish and decay; His leaf shall not wither. Even the leaf of those who bring forth only the leaves of profession, without any good fruit, will wither, and they shall be as much ashamed of their profession as ever they were proud of it; but of the word of God rule in the heart, that will keep the profession green, both to our comfort and to our credit; the laurels, thus won, shall never wither. (5.) That prosperity shall attend him, wherever he goes, soul-prosperity. Whatever he does, in conformity to the law, it shall prosper and succeed, to his mind, or above his hope. In singing these verses, being duly affected with the malignant and dangerous nature of sin, and transcendent excellencies of the divine law, and the power and efficacy of God's grace, from which our fruit is found, we must teach and admonish ourselves, and one another, to watch against sin and all approaches toward it, to converse much with the word of God, and abound in the fruit of righteousness: and, in praying over them, we must seek to God for his grace both to fortify us against every evil word and work, and to furnish us for every good word and work. 4. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. (1.) In general; they are the reverse of the righteous, both in character and condition; they are not so. The LXX emphatically repeat this, not so the ungodly, they are not so; they are led by the counsel of the wicked, in the way of sinners, to the seat of the scornful; they have no delight in the law of God, nor ever think of it; they bring forth no fruit, but grapes of Sodom; they cumber the ground. (2.) In particular; whereas the righteous are like useful, fruitful, trees, they are like the chaff which the wind driveth away, the very lightest of the chaff, the dust which the owner of the floor desires to have driven away, as not capable of being put to any use. Would you value them? Would you weigh them? They are like chaff, of no worth at all in God's account, how highly soever they may value themselves. Would you know the temper of their minds? They are the dust driven away; they have no manifest- ance in them, no solidity; they are easily driven to and fro by every wind and temptation, and have no steadfastness. Would you know their end? The wrath of God will drive them away in their wick- edness, as the wind does the chaff, which is never gathered, or looked after more. The chaff may be for a while, among the wheat; but He is coming, whose fan is in his hand, and who will thoroughly purge his floor. That which is filthy and foully make themselves as chaff, will be found so, before the whirlwind and fire of divine wrath, (xxxv. 5.) so unable to stand before it, or to escape it, Isa. xlvii. 13. 2. The doom of the ungodly read, v. 5. (1.) They will be cast, upon their trial, as traitors convicted; they shall not stand in the judgment; they shall be found guilty, shall hang down the head with shame.
and confusion, and all their pleas and excuses will be overruled as frivolous. There is a judgment to come, in which every man's present character and work, though ever so artfully concealed and disguised, shall be truly and perfectly discovered, and appear in its own colours; and every man's future state will be, by an irreversible sentence, determined for eternity. The ungodly must appear in that judgment, to receive according to the things done in the body; they may hope to come off, nay, to come off with honour, but their hope will deceive them; they shall not stand in the judgment; so plain will the evidence be against them, and so just and impartial will the judgment be upon it. (2.) There will be formed from before the state of the blessed; they shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous; in the judgment, so some, in that court wherein the saints, as assessors with Christ, shall judge the world, those holy myriads with which he shall come to execute judgment upon all, Jude 14. 1 Cor. vi. 2. Or, in heaven; there will be seen, shortly, a general assembly of the church of the first-born, a congregation of the righteous, of all the saints, and none but saints, and saints made perfect, such a congregation of them as never was in this world, 2 Thess. ii. 1. The wicked shall not have a place in the congregation. Into the new Jerusalem none unclean or unsanctified shall enter; they shall see the righteous enter into the kingdom, and themselves, to their everlasting vocation, thrust out, Luke xiii. 27. The wicked and profane, in this world, ridiculed the righteous and their congregation, despised them, and cared not for their company; justly, therefore, will they be for ever separated from them. Hypocrites, in this world, under the disguise of a plausible profession, may thrust themselves into the congregation of the righteous, and remain undisturbed and undiscovered there; but Christ cannot be imposed upon, though his ministers may; the day is coming when he will separate between the sheaf and the goats, the tares and the wheat; see Matth. xiii. 41, 49. That great day, so the Chaldee here calls it, will be a day of discovery, a day of distinction, and a day of final division. Then you shall return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, which here it is sometimes hard to do, Mal. iii. 18. 3. The reason rendered of this different state of the godly and wicked, v. 6. (1.) God must have all the glory of the prosperity and happiness of the righteous. They are blessed, because the Lord knew their way; he chose them into it, inclined them to choose it, leads and guides them in it, and orders all their steps. (2.) Sinners must bear all the blame of their own destruction. Therefore the ungodly perish, because the very way in which they have chosen and resolved to walk, leads directly to destruction; it naturally tends toward ruin, and therefore must necessarily end in it. Or, we may take it thus, The Lord approves of, and is well pleased with, the way of the righteous, and therefore the influence of that way shall prosper, and end well; but he is angry at the way of the wicked, all they do is offensive to him, and therefore it shall perish, and they in it. It is certain that every man's judgment proceeds from the Lord, and it is well or ill with us, and is likely to be so to all eternity, according as we are, or are not, accepted of God. Let this support the drooping spirits of the righteous, that the Lord knows their way, knows their hearts, (Job iii. 26;) and provokes them to speak of it. (Mic. vi. 1.) knows their character, how much sweeter it is blackened and blemished by the reproaches of men, and will shortly make them and their way manifest before the world, to their immortal joy and honour. Let this cast a damp upon the secuity and jollity of sin-ners, that their way, though pleasant now, will perish at last.

In singing these verses, and praying over them, let us possess ourselves with a holy dread of the wicked man's portion, and depurpose it with a firm and lively sense of the judgment which is to come, and stir up ourselves to prepare for it, and with holy care, to approve ourselves to God in every thing, entreating his favour with our whole hearts.

PSALM II.

As the foregoing psalm was moral, and showed us our duty, so this is evangelical, and shows us our Saviour. Under the type of David's kingdom, which was of divine appointment, met with much opposition, but prevailed at last, the kingdom of the Messiah, the Son of David, is professedly, of which is the primary intention and scope of the psalm; and I think there is less in it of the type, and more of the anti-type, than in any of the gospel-psalms, for there is nothing in it but what is applicable to Christ, but some things that are not at all applicable to David. v. 6, 7. Thou art my Son, (v. 8.) I will give thee the uttermost parts of the earth, and, (v. 12.) kiss the Son. It is interpreted of Christ, Jers iv. 27. — xiii. 33. Heb. i. 5. The Holy Ghost here foretells, I. The opposition that should be given to the kingdom of the Messiah, v. 1. 3. II. The bating and challenging of that opposition, v. 4. 5. III. The setting up of the kingdom of Christ, notwithstanding the opposition; v. 6. 7. IV. The establishment of it, v. 7. V. A promise of the enlargement and success of it, v. 8. 9. VI. A call and exhortation to kings and princes, to yield themselves the willing subjects of this kingdom, v. 10. 12. Or thus; We have here, 1. Threatenings denounced against the adversaries of Christ's kingdom, v. 1. 6. 2. Promises made to Christ himself the Head of this kingdom, v. 7. 9. 3. Counsel given to all, to espouse the interests of this kingdom, v. 10. 12. 4. It is a promise to us, that in the days of the Messiah, we shall be subject to the precepts of his law, so it is likewise, that we should be subject to the grace of his gospel, and come to him in the name of a Mediator.

1. Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? 2. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, 3. Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. 4. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. 5. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. 6. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

We have here a very great struggle about the kingdom of Christ, hell and heaven contesting it; the seat of the war is this earth, where Satan has long had an usurped kingdom, and exercised dominion to that degree, that he has been called The prince of this world, and The god of the world we live in. He knows very well, that as the Messiah's kingdom rises and gets ground, his falls and loses ground; and therefore, though it will be set up certainly, it shall not be set up tamely. Observe here, I. The mighty opposition that would be given to the Messiah and his kingdom, to his holy religion and all the interests of it, v. 1-3. One would have expected that this thing should have been universally welcomed and embraced, and that every sheaf should immediately have bowed to that of the Messiah, and all the crowns and sceptres on earth should have been laid at his feet; but it proves quite contrary. Never were the notions of any sect of philosophers, though
ever so absurd, nor the powers of any prince or state, though ever so tyrannical, opposed with so much violence as the Jewish or Roman governments. Christ's religion was from heaven, for the opposition was plainly from hell originally.

1. We are here told who would appear as adversaries to Christ, and the Devil's instruments in this opposition to his kingdom. Princes and people, court and country, have sometimes separate interests, but here they are united against Christ; not the mighty only, but the mob, the heathen, the people, numbers of them, communities of them; they usually fund of liberty, yet they were averse to the liberty Christ came to procure and proclaim. Not the mob only, but the mighty, (among whom one might have expected more sense and consideration,) appear violent against Christ; though his kingdom is not of this world, nor intended to weaken their interests, but very likely, if they pleased, to strengthen them, yet the kings of the earth and rulers are up in arms immediately. See the effects of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman, and how general and malignant the corruption of mankind is. See how formidable the enemies of the church are, they are numerous, they are potent. The unbelieving Jews are here called heathen, so wretchedly were they degenerated from the faith and holiness of their ancestors; they stirred up the heathen, the Gentiles, to persecute the christians. As the Philistines and their lords, Saul and his confederates, the disaffected party and their ringleaders, opposed David's coming to the crown; so Herod and Pilate, the Gentiles and the Jews, did their utmost against Christ and his interest in men, Acts iv. 27.

2. Who is it that they quarrel with, and muster up all their forces against it; is against the Lord, and against his Anointed, against all religion in general, and the christian religion in particular. It is certain that all who are enemies to Christ, whatever the pretense, are enemies to God himself; they have hated both me and my Father, John xv. 24. The great Author of our holy religion is here called the Lord's Anointed, or Messiah, or Christ, in allusion to the anointing of David to be king; he is both authorized and qualified to be the church's Head and King, is duly invested in the office, and every way fitted for it; yet there are those that are against him; may, therefore they are against him, because they are against God's authority, obvious at Christ's advancement, and have a rooted enmity to the Spirit of holiness.

3. The opposition they give, is here described: (1. It is a most spiteful and malicious opposition. They rage and fret, they gnash their teeth, for vexation at the setting up of Christ's kingdom; it creates them the utmost uneasiness, and fills them with indignation, so that they have no enjoyment of themselves; see Lord's case, Matt. xvii. 27, 33.—(2. Idolaters raged at the discovery of their folly, the chief priests and Pharisees at the eclipsing of their glory and the shaking of their usurped dominion. They that did evil, raged at the light. (3. It is a deliberate and polite opposition. They imagine, or meditate; they contrive means to suppress the rising interests of Christ's kingdom, and are very confident of the success of their schemes; see Lord's case, Matt. xvi. xxiv. (4. It is a resolute and obstinate opposition. They set themselves, set their faces as a flint, and their hearts as an adamant, in defiance of reason and conscience, and all the terrors of the Lord; they are proud and daring, like the Babel-builders, and will persist in their resolution come what will. (4.) It is a combined and confederate opposition. They take counsel together, to assist and animate one another in the destruction of their adversary; and the doctrine and government of Christ, as viewed, by them, as nemine contradicente—unanimously, that they will push on the unholy war against the Messiah with the utmost vigour: and, thereupon, councils are called, cabals are formed, and all their wits are at work, to find out ways and means for the preventing of the establishment of Christ's kingdom, lxviii. 5.

4. We are here told what it is they are exasperated at, and what they aim at in this opposition; (v. 3.) Let us break their bands assunder. They will not be under any government; they are children of Belial, that cannot endure the yoke, at least, the yoke of the Lord and his Anointed. They will be content to entertain such notions of the kingdom of God and the Messiah, as will serve them to dispute of, and to support their own dominion with: if the Lord and his Anointed will make them rich and great in the world, they will bid them welcome, but if they will retain their corrupt appetites and passions, regulate and reform their hearts and lives, and bring them under the government of a pure and heavenly religion, truly then they will not have this man to reign over them, Luke xix. 14. Christ has bands and cords for us; they that will be saved by him, must be ruled by him; but they are cords of a man, agreeable to right reason, and bands of love, conducing to our true interest; and yet against those the quarrel is. Why do men oppose religion, but because they are impatient of its restraints and obligations? They would break asunder the bands of conscience they are under, and the cords of God's commandments by which they are called to tie themselves out from all sin, and to tie themselves up to all duty; they will not receive, but cast them away as far from them as they can.

5. They are here reasoned with concerning it, v. 1. Why do they do this? (1. They can show no good cause for opposing so just, holy, and gracious a government, which will not interfere with the secular powers, nor introduce any dangerous principles hurtful to kings or princes; but, on the contrary, if universally received, would bring a heaven upon earth. (2. They can hope for no good success in opposing so powerful a kingdom, with which they are utterly unable to contend. It is a vain thing; when they have done their worst, Christ will have a church in the world, and that church will be victorious and triumphant; it is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The moon walks in brightness, though the dogs bark at it.

II. The mighty conquest gained over all this threatening opposition. If heaven and earth be the combatants, it is easy to foretell which will be the conqueror. They that make this mighty struggle, are the people of the earth, and the kings of the earth, who think they will prove better judges of affairs than God, whom they contest with, is one that sits in the heavens, v. 4. He is in the heaven, a place of such a vast prospect, that he can oversee them all, and all their projects; and such is his power, that he can overcome them all, and all their attempts: he sits there, as one easy and at rest, out of the reach of all their impotent menaces and attempts. There he sits as Judge in all the affairs of the children of men, perfectly acquainted with all of his own purposes and designs, in spite of all opposition, xxix. 10. The perfect reposé of the Eternal Mind may be our comfort under all the disquietments of our mind. We are tossed on earth, and in the sea, but he sits in the heavens, where he has prepared his throne for judgment; and therefore,

1. The attempts of Christ's enemies are easily ridiculed; God laughs at them as a company of
fools. He has them, and all their attempts, in des- 

erion, and therefore the virgin, the daughter of 

Zion, has despised them, Isa. xxxvii. 22. Sinners’ 
follies are the just sport of God’s infinite wisdom 
and power; and those attempts of the kingdom of 
Satan, which in our eyes are formidable, in his 
are despicable. Sometimes God is in the utmost 
armour of his adversaries, for the vanquishing of 
his enemies; here he is said to sit still, and do it; for 
the utmost operations of God’s omnipotence create 
no difficulty at all, nor the least disturbance to 
his eternal rest.

2. They are justly punished, v. 5. Though God 
despairs them as impotent, yet he does not there- 
fore wink at them, but is justly displeased with 
them as impudent and impious, and will make the 
most of their words to know that he is so, and to 
tremble before him. (1.) Their sin is a provoca-
tion to him; he is wroth, he is sorely displeased. 
We cannot expect that God should be reconciled 
to us, or well pleased in us, but in and through the 
Anointed; and therefore, if we affront and reject 
him, we sin against the remedy, and forfeit the be-
nefit of his interposition between us and God. (2.) 
His anger will be a vexation to them; if he but 
speak of them in his wrath, even his mere word his mouth will be their confusion, slaughter and con-
sumption, Isa. xi. 4. 2 Thess. ii. 8. He speaks, 
and it is done; he speaks in wrath, and sinners are 
undone: as a word made us, so a word can unmake 
us again: Who knows the power of his anger? The 
enemies rage, but cannot vex God. God sits still, 
and yet vexes them, puts them into a consternation, 
(as the word is,) and brings them to their wit’s end: 
his setting up this kingdom of his Son, in spite of 
them, is the greatest vexation to them that can be. 
They were vexations to Christ’s good subjects; but 
the day is coming, when vexation shall be recom-
pensed to them.

3. They are certainly defeated, and all their 
counsels turned headlong; (v. 6.) Yet have I set my 
king upon my holy hill of Zion. David was 
advanced to the throne, and became master of the 
strong hold of Zion, notwithstanding the distur-
banee given to it by the confederacy of the ten 
kingdoms, and particularly the affronts he received from the 
garrison of Zion, who taunted him with their 
blindness and their lamen, their maimed soldiers, 2 Sam. 
v. 6. The Lord Jesus is exalted to the right hand 
of the Father, has all power both in heaven and in 
earth, and is Head over all things to the church, 
notwithstanding the restless endeavours of his en-
enemies to hinder his advancement. (1.) Jesus Christ 
is a King, and is invested by him who is the Foun-
tain of power, with the dignity and authority of a 
sovereign Prince, in the kingdom both of providence 
and grace. (2.) God is pleased to call him his King, 
because he is appointed by him, and intrusted for 
him with the sole administration of government and 
judgment. He is his King, for he is dear to the 
Father, and one in whom he is well-pleased. (3.) 
Christ took not this honour to himself, but was called 
unto it, and he that called him, owns him; I have set 
him there for a vindication, his commission, he 
received from the Father. (4.) Being called to this 
honour, he was confirmed in it; high places (we 
say) are slippery places, but Christ, being raised, is 
fixed; ‘ I have set him, I have settled him.’ (5.) 
He is set upon Zion, the hill of God’s holiness, a 
type of the gospel-church, for on that the temple 
was built, for the sake of which the whole mount was 
called holy. Christ’s throne is set up in his church, 
that is, by his own influence, his commission, and 
in the societies they form. The evangelical law of 
Christ is said to go forth from Zion, (Isa. ii. 3. Mic. 
v. 2.) and therefore that is spoken of as the head-
quarters of this General, the royal seat of this 
Prince, in whom the children of men shall be joyful.

We are to sing these verses with a holy exulta-
tion, triumphing over all the enemies of Christ’s 
kingdom, (not doubting but they will all of them be 
quickly made his footstool,) and triumphing in Jesus 
Christ as the great Trustee of power; and we are to 
pray, in firm belief of the assurance here given; ‘That 
Father has a kingdom, Thy kingdom come; let thy 
Son’s kingdom come.”

7. I will declare the decree: the Lord 
hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this 
day have I begotten thee. 8. Ask of me, and I 
shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, 
and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. 9. Thou shalt 
brake them with a rod of iron; thou shalt 
dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.

We have heard what the kings of the earth have 
to say against Christ’s kingdom, and have heard it 
gain said by him that sits in heaven; let us now hear 
what the Messiah himself has to say for his king-
dom, to make good his claims; it is what all the 
powers on earth cannot gainsay. I. The kingdom of the Messiah is founded upon 
decree, an eternal decree, of God the Father. It 
was not a sudden resolve, it was not the trial of an 
experiment, but the result of the counsels of the 
divine wisdom, and the determinations of the di-
vine will, before all worlds, neither of which can 
be altered. The precept or statute, so some read 
it; the covenant or compact, so others; the federal 
transactions between the Father and the Son con-
cerning mankind, and the appointment of the ten-
nant of royalty made with David and his seed, 
Ixxxix. 3. This our Lord Jesus often referred him-
to, as that which, all along in his undertaking, 
governed himself by; This is the will of him that 
sent me, John vi. 40. This commandment have I 
received of my Father, John x. 18.—xiv. 31.

II. There is a declaration of that decree, as far 
as is necessary for the satisfaction of all those who 
are called and sanctified to yield themselves sub-
jects to this King, and to leave them inexorable, 
who will not have him to reign over them. The 
decree was secret, it was what the Father said to 
the Son, when he possessed him in the beginning 
of his way, before his works of old; but it is declared 
by a faithful Witness, who had lain in the bosom 
of the Father from eternity, and came into the 
world as the Prophet of the church, to declare him, 
John i. 18. The Fountain of all being, is without 
doubt, the Fountain of all power; and it is by, from, 
and under, him; that the Messiah claims his right to 
rule, from what Jehovah said to him, by whose 
word all things were made, and are governed. 
Christ here makes out a twofold title to his king-
dom.

1. A title by inheritance; (v. 7.) Thou art my 
Son, this day have I begotten thee. This scripture 
the apostle quotes, (Heb. i. 5.) to prove, not only 
that Christ has a more excellent name than the 
angels, but that he obtained it by inheritance, v. 4. 
He is the Son of God, not by adoption, but his 
begotten Son, the only begotten of the Father, John i. 14. And the Father owns him, and will have this 
declared to the world, as the reason why he is con-
stituted King upon the holy hill of Zion; he is 
therefore unquestionably entitled to, and perfectly 
qualified for, that great trust. He is the Son of 
God, and therefore of the same nature with the 
Father, has in him all the fulness of the Godhead, 
infinite wisdom, power, and holiness. The supreme 
government of the church is too high an honour,
and too hard an undertaking, for any mere creature; none can be fit for it but he who is one with the Father, and was from eternity by him, as one brought up with him, thoroughly apprized of all his counsels, Prov. viii. 30. He is the Son of God, and therefore dear to him, his beloved Son, in whom he is well-pleased; and upon this account we are to receive him as a King; for because the Father loveth the Son, he hath given all things into his hand, John iii. 35. — v. 20. "Being a Son, he is Heir of all things, and the Father having made the world all, it is easy to infer thence, that by him also he governs them; for he is the eternal Wisdom and the eternal Word. If God hath said unto him, "Thou art my Son," it becomes each of us to say to him, "Thou art my Lord, my Sovereign." Further, to satisfy us that his kingdom is well-grounded upon his Sonship, we are here told what his Sonship is grounded on; This day have I begotten thee; which refers both to his eternal generation itself, for it is quoted (Heb. i. 5.) to prove that he is the Brightness of his Father's glory, and the express Image of his person, (v. 3.) and to the evidence and demonstration given of it by his resurrection from the dead, for to that also it is expressly applied by the apostle; (Acts xiii. 33.) He hath raised up Jesus again, as it is written, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. It was by the resurrection from the dead, that sign of the prophetJeans, which was for him the most convincing of all, that he was declared to be the Son of God with power, Rom. i. 4. Christ is said to be the first-begotten and first-born from the dead, Rev. i. 5. Col. i. 18. Immediately after his resurrection, he entered upon the administration of his mediatorial kingdom; it was then that he said, All power is given unto me, and to that especially he had an eye when he taught his disciples to pray, Thy kingdom come.

3. A title by agreement, v. 8, 9. The agreement is, in short, this; The Son must undertake the office of an intercessor, and, upon that condition, he shall have the honour and power of a universal Monarch; see Isa. liii. 12. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, because he made intercession for the transgressors: he shall be a Priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both, Zech. vi. 13.

(1.) The Son must ask. This supposes his putting himself into a state of inferiority to the Father, by taking upon him the human nature; for, as God, he was equal in power and glory with the Father, and had nothing to ask. It supposes the making of a satisfaction, by the virtue of which, the intercession must be made, and the paying of a price, on which this large demand was to be grounded; see John xvii. 4. 5. The Son, in asking the heathen for his inheritance, aims, not only at his own honour, but at their happiness in him; so that he pleads for them, even to do so, and is therefore able to save to the uttermost.

(2.) The Father will grant more than to the half of the kingdom, even to the kingdom itself. It is here promised him, [1.] That his government shall be universal; he shall have the heathen for his inheritance; not the Jews only, to whose nation the church had been long confined, but the Gentiles also; those in the uttermost parts of the earth, (as this may be here understood, and should have multitudes of willing loyal subjects among them. Baptized Christians are the possession of the Lord Jesus; they are to him for a name and a praise, God the Father gives them to him, when by his Spirit and grace he works upon them to submit their necks to the yoke of the Lord Jesus. This is, in part, fulfilled; a great part of the Gentile world received the gospel, when it was first preached, and Christ's throne was set up there where Satan's seat had long been. But it is to be yet further accomplished, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ, Rev. xi. 15. Who shall live when God doth this? [2.] That it shall be victorious; Thou shalt break them, those of them that oppose thy kingdom, with a rod of iron, v. 9. This was, in part, fulfilled, when the nation of the Jews, those that persisted in unbelief and enmity to Christ's gospel, were destroyed by the Roman power, which was represented, (Dan. ii. 40.) by feet of iron, as here by a rod of iron. It had a further accomplishment in the destruction of the Pagan powers, when the christian religion came to be established; but it will not be completely fulfilled, till all opposing rule, principality and power, shall be finally put down, 1 Cor. x. 24. See ex. 3. 6. Observe, How powerful Christ is, and how weak the enemies of his kingdom are before him; he has a rod of iron wherewith to crush them that will not submit to his golden sceptre; they are but like a potter's vessel before him, suddenly, easily, and irreparably, dashed in pieces by him; see Rev. ii. 27. "Thou shalt do it; thou shalt have leave to do it." Nations shall be ruined, rather than the gospel-church shall not be built and established; I have loved thee, therefore will I give men for thee, Isa. xlvii. 4. "Thou shalt have power to do it; none shall be able to stand before thee, thou shalt do it effectually." They that will not bow, shall break.

In singing this, and praying it over, we must give glory to Christ as the eternal Son of God, and our rightful Lord, and must take comfort from this promise, and plead it with God, that the kingdom of Christ shall be enlarged and established, and shall triumph over all opposition.

10. Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. 11. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. 12. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

We have here the practical application of this gospel doctrine, concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, by way of exhortation to the kings and judges of the earth. It is in vain to oppose Christ's government; let them therefore be so wise for themselves, as to submit to it. He that has power to destroy them, shows that he has no pleasure in their destruction, for he puts them into a way to make themselves happy, v. 10. Those that would be wise, must be instructed; and those are truly wise, that receive instruction from the word of God. Kings and judges stand upon a judgment-seat with common persons before God; and it is as necessary for them to be instructed in right judgment as others. They that give law and judgment to others, must receive it from Christ; and it will be their wisdom. What is said to them, is said to all, and is required of everyone of us; only it is directed to kings and judges, because of the influence which their example will have upon their inferiors, and because they were men of rank and power, that opposed the setting up of Christ's kingdom, v. 2. We are exhorted, 1. To seek true knowledge of God, and to accept of him, v. 11. This is the great duty of natural religion. God is great, and infinitely above us, just and holy, and provoked against us, and therefore we ought to fear him and tremble before him; yet he is our Lord and Master, and we are bound to serve him, our Friend and Benefactor, and we have reason to rejoice in him; and these are very well consistent.
with each other, for, 1. We must serve God in all ordinances of worship, and all instances of a godly conversation, but with a holy fear, a jealousy over ourselves, and a reverence of him. Even kings themselves, whom others serve and fear, must serve and fear God; there is the same infinite distance between them and God, that there is between the meanest of their subjects and him. 2. We must rejoice in God; in subordination to him, when we rejoice in other things, but still with a holy trembling, as those that know what a glorious and jealous God he is, whose eye is always upon us; our salvation must be wrought out with fear and trembling, Phil. ii. 12. We ought to rejoice in the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, but rejoice with trembling, with a holy awe of him, a holy fear for ourselves, lest we come short, and a tender concern for the many precious souls to whom his gospel and kingdom are preached; though ever we rejoice in, in this world, it must always be with trembling, lest we grow vain in our joy, and be puffed up with the things we rejoice in, and because of the uncertainty of them, and the damps which by a thousand accidents may soon be cast upon our joy. To rejoice with trembling, is to rejoice as though we rejoice not, 1 Cor. vii. 30.

11. To welcome Jesus Christ, and to submit to him, v. 11. This is the duty of the Christian, and the vocation; it is that which is required of all, even kings and judges, and it is our wisdom and interest to do it. Observe here,

1. The command given for this purpose; Kiss the Son. Christ is called the Son, because so he was declared, (v. 7.) Thou art my Son. He is the Son of God by eternal generation, and, upon that account, he is to be adored by us. He is the Son of man, the Mediator, (John v. 27.) and, upon that account, to be received and served. He is called Christ, to include both, as God is often called emphatically the Father, because he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him our Father, and we must have an eye to him under both considerations. Our duty to Christ is here expressed figuratively, Kiss the Son: not with a betraying kiss, as Judas kissed him, and as all hypocrites, who pretend to honour him, but really afflict him, with a base and perjured kiss. (1.) With a kiss of agreement and reconciliation; Kiss, and ye shall be written in the book of the living, Isa. iv. 3. (2.) With a kiss of adoration and religious worship; they that worshipped idols, kissed them, 1 Kings xix. 18. Hos. xiii. 2. Let us study how to do honour to the Lord Jesus, and to give unto him the glory due unto his name. He is thy Lord, and worship thou him, xiv. 11. We must worship the Lamb, as well as he that sits on the throne, Rev. v. 9-13. (3.) With a kiss of affection and sincere love; Kiss the Son; enter into a covenant of friendship with him, and let him be very dear and precious to you; love him above all, love him in sincerity, love him much, as she did, to whom much was forgiven, and, in token of it, kissed his feet,” Luke vii. 43. (4.) With a kiss of allegiance and loyalty, hence, 1 Sam. xvi. 14. Swear fealty and homage to him, submit to his government, take his yoke upon you, and give up yourselves to be governed by his laws, disposed of by his providence, and entirely devoted to his interest.

2. The reasons to enforce this command; they are taken from our own interest, which God, in his gospel, shows a concern for. Consider,

(1.) The certain ruin we run upon, if we refuse and pretend to do otherwise than at your peril if you do not. [1.] “It will be a great provocation to him; do it, lest he be angry.” The Father is angry already; the Son is the Mediator that undertakes to make peace; if we slight him, the Father’s wrath abides upon us (John xiv. 6.) and not only so, but there is an addition of the Son’s wrath too, to whom nothing is more displeasing than to have the offers of his grace slighted, and the designs of it frustrated. The Son can be angry, though a Lamb; he is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and the wrath of this King, this King of kings, will be as the roaring of a lion, and will drive even mighty men and chief captains to seek in vain for shelter in rocks and mountains. Rev. vii. 16. If the Son be angry, who shall intercede for us? There remains no more sacrifice, no other name, by which we can be saved. Unbelief is a sin against the remedy. [2.] It will be utterly destruction to yourselves; lest ye be cast out from him as your way to God.” It intimates that they were, or, at least, thought themselves, in the way; but, by neglecting Christ, they perished from it, which aggravates their ruin, that they go to hell from the way to heaven; are not far from the kingdom of God, and yet never arrive there.

(2.) The happiness we are sure of, if we yield ourselves to Christ. When his wrath is kindled, though but the least spark of that fire is enough to make the proudest sinners tremble, if it fasten upon his conscience; for it will burn to the lowest hell: one would think it should therefore follow, “When his wrath is kindled, woe be to those that despise him;” but the Psalmist startles at the thought, and blesses those that escape such a doom. They that trust in him, and so kiss him, are truly happy; but they will especially appear to be so, when the wrath of Christ is kindled against others. Blessed will they be in the day of wrath, who, by trusting in Christ, have made him their Refuge and Patron; when the hearts of others fail them for fear, they shall lift up their heads with joy; and then those who now despise Christ and his followers, will be forced to say to their own greater confusion, “Now we see that blessed are all they, and they only, that trust in him.”

In singing this, and praying it over, we should have our hearts not only filled with a holy awe of God, but borne, with a certain confidence in Christ, in whose mediation we may comfort and encourage ourselves and one another; We are the circumcision, that rejoice in Christ Jesus.

PSALM III.

As the foregoing psalm, in the type of David in preferment, showed us the royal dignity of the Redeemer; so this, by the example of David in distress, shows us the peace and holy security of the redeemed: how safe they really are, and think themselves to be, under the divine protection. David, being now driven out of his palace, from the royal city, from the holy city, by his rebellious son Absalom, I. Complains to God of his enemies, v. 1, 2. II. Confides in God, and encourages himself in him as his God, notwithstanding. Rev. iii. 11. He reflects on the satisfaction he had in the gracious answers God gave to his prayers, and his experience of his goodness to him, v. 4, 5. IV. Triumphs over his fears, (v. 6.) and over his enemies, whom he prays against, v. 7. Gives God the glory, and takes to him and his name all the credit of the peace and salvation which are sure to all the people of God, v. 8. Those speak best of the truths of God, who speak experimentally; so David here speaks of the power and goodness of God, and of the safety and tranquillity of the godly.

A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

1. LORD, how are they increased that trouble me? many are they that rise
2. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah. 3. But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of my head.

The title of this psalm and many others, is as a key hung ready at the door, to open it, and let us into the entertainments of it; when we know upon what that chosen psalm was sung to, we know the better how to expound it. This was composed, or, at least, the substance of it was meditated and digested in David's thoughts, and offered up to God, when he fled from Absalom his son, who formed a conspiracy against him, to take away, not his crown only, but his life; we have the story, 2 Sam. xv. &c. 1. David was now in great grief; when, in his flight, he went up the mount of olives, he wept greatly, with his head covered, and marching bare-foot; yet then he composed this comfortable psalm. He wept and prayed, wept and sung, wept and believed; this was sowing in tears. Is any afflicted? Let him pray; nay, let him sing psalms, let him sing this psalm. Is any afflicted with un- dutiful disobedient children? David was; and yet that did not hinder his joy in God, nor put him out of tune for holy songs.

2. He was now in great danger, the plot against him was laid deep, the party that against him was very formidable, and his own son at the head of them, so that his affairs seemed to be at the last extremity; yet then he kept hold of his interest in God, and improved that. Perils and frights should drive us to God, not drive us from him. 3. He had now a great deal of provocation given him by those from whom he had reason to expect better things; from his son, whom he had been indulgent of; from his subjects, whom he had been so great a blessing to; this he could not but resent, and it was enough to break upon any man's temper; yet he was so far from any indecent expressions of passion and indignation, that he had calmness enough for those acts of devotion, which require the greatest fixity and freedom of thought. The sedateness of his mind was evinc'd by the Spirit's coming upon him; for the Spirit chooses to move upon the still waters. Let no unkindness, no not of a child or a friend, ever be laid so much to heart as to disturb us for communion with God. 4. He was now suffering for his sin in the matter of Uriah; this was the evil which, for that sin, God threatened to raise up against him out of his own house; (2 Sam. xii. 11.) which, no doubt, he observed, and took occasion thence to renew his repentance for it. Yet he did not therefore cast away his confidence in the divine power and goodness, nor despair of succour. Even our sorrow for sin must not hinder either our joy in God, or our hope in God. 5. He seemed carefully to be keeping away from Absalom, quitting his royal city, before he had had one struggle for it; and yet, by this psalm, it appears that he was full of true courage arising from his faith in God. True Christian fortitude consists more in a gracious security and serenity of mind, in patient bearing, and patient waiting, than in daring enterprises with sword in hand.

In these three verses, he applies himself to God. When he was so far from God, let us go to him, when any thing grieves us or frightens us? David was now at a distance from his own closet, and from the courts of God's house, where he used to pray; and yet he could find a way open heaven-ward. Wherever we are, we may have access to God, and may draw nigh to him, whithersoever we are driven. David, in his flight, attends his God,

1. With a representation of his distress, v. 1, 2. He looks round, and takes, as it were, a view of his enemies' camp, or receives information of their designs against him, which he brings to God, not to his own council-board. Two things he complains of, concerning his enemies.

1. That they were very many; Lord, how are they increased? Beyond what they were at first, and beyond whatever he thought they would have been. Absalom's faction, like a snow-ball, strangely gathered in its motion. He speaks of it as one amazed; and well he might, that a people he had so many years, and such a child, should rebels his sovereign rebel against him, and choose for their head such a foolish and giddy young man as Absalom was. How slippery and deceitful are the many! And how little fidelity and constancy is to be found among men! David had had the hearts of his subjects, as much as ever any king had, and yet now, of a sudden, he had lost them. As people must not trust too much to princes, (cxlv. 3.) so princes must not build too much on their interest in the people. Christ, the Son of David, had many enemies, when a great multitude came to seize him, when the crowd cried, Crucify him, Crucify him. How were they then increased, that troubled him! Even good people must not think it strange, if the stream he against them, and the powers that threaten them, grow more and more formidable.

2. That they were very malicious; they rose up against him, they aimed to trouble him; but that was not all, they sought of their interest in the people. Christ, the Son of David, had many enemies, when a great multitude came to seize him, when the crowd cried, Crucify him, Crucify him. How were they then increased, that troubled him! Even good people must not think it strange, that so great unbelief should be found in any, especially in many, in Israel, as to think any party of men too strong for Omnipotence to deal with. (3.) They endeavoured to shake his confidence in God, and drive him to despair of relief from him. "They have said it to my soul;" so it may be read; compare xi. —xiii. 10. This grieved him worst of all, that they had so bad an opinion of him. It is impossible they could have taken him off from that foundation. The mere temptation was a buffeting to him, a thorn in his flesh, nay, a sword in his bones. Note, A child of God startles at the very thought of despairing of help in God; you cannot vex him with anything so much, as if you offer to persuade him, There is no help for him in God. David comes to God, and tells him what his enemies said of him, as Hezekiah spread Rabshakeh's blasphemous letter before the Lord. "They say to my soul, There is no salvation" (for so the word is) "for him in God; but, Lord, do thou say unto my soul, I am thy salvation, (xxxv. 3.) and that shall satisfy me, and, in due time, silence them." To this complaint he adds Selah, which occurs about 70 times in the book of psalms. Some refer it to the music with which, in David's time, the psalms were sung; others as a sign of special reverence, and an inhaling a solemn pause. Selah, Mark that, or, "Stop there, and consider a little." As here, they say, There is no help for him in God, Selah. "Take time for such a thought as this, Get thee behind me, Satan; The Lord rebuke thee! Away with such a vile suggestion!"
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vidence, or the reproaches of enemies, the faster he laid will take of him, and the closer will he cleave to him; so David here, when his enemies said, There is no help for him in God, cries out with so much the more assurance, “But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; let them say what they will, I am sure thou wilt never desert me, and I am resolved, I will trust the Lord. See what God is to his people, what he will be, what they have found him, what David found in him. 1. Safety. “Thou art a Shield for me, a Shield about me,” so some, “to secure me on all sides, since my enemies surrounded me.” Not only my Shield, (Gen. xv. 1.) which denotes an interest in the divine protection; but a shield for me, which denotes the present benefit and advantage of that protection. 2. Honour; Thou art my Glory. Those whom God owns for his, are not only safe and easy, but really look great, and have true honour put upon them, far above that which the great ones of the earth are proud of. David was now in disgrace, the crown was fallen from his head; but he will not think the worse of himself, while he has God for his Glory, Isa. lx. 19. “Thou art my Glory; thy glory I reckon mine;” (so some;) “this is what I aim at, and am ambitious of, whatever my lot is, and whatever becomes of my head.” 3. Joy and deliverance; “Thou art the lifter up of my head; thou wilt lift up my head out of my troubles, and restore me to my dignity again, in due time; however, thou wilt lift up my head under my troubles, so that I shall not droop nor be discouraged, nor shall my spirits fail.” If, in the worst of times, God’s people can lift up their heads with joy, knowing that all shall work for good to them, they will own it is God that is the Lifter up of their head, that gives them both cause to rejoice, and hearts to rejoice. In singing this, and praying it over, we should possess ourselves with an apprehension of the danger we are in from the multitude and malice of our spiritual enemies, who seek the ruin of our souls by driving us from God, and we should concern ourselves in the distresses and dangers of the church of God, which is every where sought against; but, in reference to both, we should encourage ourselves in our God who owns and protects, and will, in due time, crown his own interest both in the world, and in the hearts of his people. 4. I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah. 5. I laid me down and slept; I awoke: for the Lord sustained me. 6. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about. 7. Arise, O Lord: save me, O my God; for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek-bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. 8. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah.

David, having stirred up himself by the irritations of his enemies to take hold on God as his God, and so gained comfort, in looking upward, when, if he looked round about him, nothing appeared but what was discouraging, here looks back with pleasing reflections upon the benefit he had derived from trusting in God, and looks forward with pleasing expectations of a very bright and happy issue to which the dark dispension he was now under would shortly be brought.

I. See with what comfort he looks back upon the communion he had had with God, and the communications of his favour to him, either in some former troubles he had been in, and, through God’s goodness, got through or, in this, hitherto. David had been exercised with many difficulties, often oppressed and brought very low; but still he had found God his help. He now remembered, with pleasure,

1. That his troubles had always brought him to his knees, and that, in all his difficulties and dangers, he had been enabled to acknowledge God, and to lift up his heart to him, and his voice too; (this will be a comforting reflection, when we are in trouble;) I cried unto God with my voice. Care and grief do us good and no hurt, when they set us praying, and engage us, not only to speak to God, but to cry to him, as those that are in earnest. And though God understands the language of the heart, when the voice is not heard, (1 Sam. i. 13.) and values not the hypocritical prayers of those who cause their voice to be heard on high, (Isa. xiii. 4.) vox et praetera nihil—mere sound, yet when the earnestness of the voice comes from the fervency of the heart, it shall be taken notice of, in the account, that we cried unto God with our voice. 2. That we are answerable to God for the answers to our prayers; He heard me out of his holy hill, from heaven, the high and holy place; from the ark on mount Zion, whence he used to give answers to those that sought to him. David had ordered Zadok to carry back the ark into the city, when he was flying from Absalom, (2 Sam. xv. 25.) knowing that God was not tied, no, not to the ark of his presence, and that, notwithstanding the distance of place, he could hear the prayers;—He shall hear us, when we cry to him, the unanswerable prayers of the communications of God’s grace towards us, and the operations of his grace in us; between his favour and our faith. The ark of the covenant was in mount Zion, and all the answers to our prayers come from the promises of that covenant; Christ was set King upon the holy hill of Zion; (li. 6.) and it is through him whom the Father hears always, that our prayers are heard.

3. That he has been very safe, and very easy, under the divine protection; (v. 5.) “I laid me down and slept, composed and quiet; and awaked refreshed, for the Lord sustained me;” (1.) This is applicable to the common mercies of every night, which we ought to give thanks for alone, and with our families, every morning. Many have not where to lay their head, (but wander in deserts,) or, if they have, dare not lie down, for fear of the enemy; but we have laid us down in peace. Many lie down, and cannot sleep, but are full of tossings to and fro till the dawns of the day, through pain of body, or anguish of mind, or the continual alarms of fear in the night; but we lie down, and sleep in safety, though incapable of doing anything then for our own preservation. Many lie down, and sleep, and never wake again, they sleep the sleep of death, as the first-born of the Egyptians; but we lie down, and sleep, and awake again to the light and comfort of another day; and whence is it, but because the Lord has sustained us with sleep as with food? We have been safe under his protection, and easy in the arms of his good providence. (2.) It seems here to be meant of the wonderful quietness and calmness of David’s spirit, in the midst of his dangers. Having by prayer committed himself and his cause to God, and being sure of his protection, his heart was fixed, and he was easy. The undutifulness of his son, the disloyalty of his subjects, the treachery of many of his friends, the hazard of his person, the fatigues of his march, and the uncertainty of the event, never de-
prived him of an hour's sleep, nor gave any disturbance to his repose; for the Lord, by his grace and the consolations of his Spirit, powerfully sustained him, and made him easy. It is a great mercy, when we are in trouble, to have our minds stayed upon God, so as never either to eat or sleep with trembling and astonishment. (3) Some of the ancients apply it to the resurrection of Christ; in his sufferings, he offered up strong cries, and was heard; and therefore, was given him, and slept the sleep of death, yet he awaked the third day, for the Lord sustained him, that he should not see corruption.

4. That God had often broken the power, and restrained the malice, of his enemies; had smitten them upon the cheek-bone, (v. 7.) had silenced them and spoiled their speaking, blemished them and put them to shame, smitten them on the cheek reproachfully; had seized the mouth of his adversaries; for he had broken their teeth. Saul and the Philistines, who were sometimes ready to swallow him up, could not effect what they designed. The teeth that are gnashed or sharpened against God's people, shall be broken. When, at any time, the power of the church's enemies seems threatening, it is good to remember how often God has broken it; and we are sure that his arm is not shortened. He can stop their mouths, and tie their hands.

II. See with what confidence he looks forward to the dangers he had yet in prospect. Having put himself under God's protection, and often found the benefit of it,

1. His fears were all stilled and silenced, v. 6. With what a holy bravery does he bid defiance to the impotent menaces and attempts of his enemies! "I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that either in a foreign invasion, or in an intestine rebellion, set themselves, encamp, against me round about." No man seemed less safe; (his enemies are numerous, ten thousands; they are spiteful and resolute) "They have set themselves against me; nay, they have prevailed far, and seem to have gained their point; for they are against me round about on every side, thousands against one;" and yet no man was more secure; "I will not be afraid, for all this; they cannot hurt me, and therefore they shall not hurt me," a prudent method I take for my own preservation, I will not disquiet myself, distrust my God, nor doubt of a good issue at last." When David, in his flight from Absalom, bade Zadok carry back the ark, he spake doubtfully of the issue of his present troubles, and concluded, like an humble penitent, Here I am, let him do to me what seemeth him good, 2 Sam. xv. 26. But now, like a strong believer, he speaks confidently, and has no fear concerning the event. Note, A cheerful resignation to God is the way to obtain a cheerful satisfaction and confidence in God.

2. His prayers were quickened and encouraged, v. 7. He believed God was his Saviour, and yet prays; nay, he therefore prays, Arise, O Lord, save me, O my God. Promises of salvation do not supersede, but engage, our petitions for it. He will for this be inquired of.

3. His faith became triumphant. He began the psalm with complaints of the strength and malice of his enemies; but concludes it with exultation in the power and grace of his God, and now sees more with him than against him, v. 8. Two great truths he here builds his confidence upon, and fetches comfort from. (1.) That salvation belongeth unto the Lord; he has power to save, be the danger ever so great; it is his prerogative to save, when all other helps and succours fail; it is his property, it is his promise to those that are his, whose salvation is not of themselves, but of the Lord. Therefore all that have the Lord for their God, according to the tenor of the new covenant, are sure of salvation; for he is the God of salvation. (2.) That his blessing is upon his people; he not only has power to save them, but he has assured them of his kind and gracious intentions toward them. He has, in his word, pronounced a blessing upon his people; and we are bound to believe that that blessing does accordingly rest upon them, though there are not the visible effects thereof. Hence we may conclude, that God's people, though they may lie under the reproaches and censures of men, are surely blessed of him, who blesses indeed, and therefore can command a blessing.

In singing this, and praying it over, we must own the satisfaction we have had in depending upon God, and committing ourselves to him, and encourage ourselves, and one another, to continue still hoping, and quietly waiting for, the salvation of the Lord.

PSALM IV.

David was a preacher, a royal preacher, as well as Solomon; many of his psalms are doctrinal and practical as well as devotional; the greatest part of this psalm is so, in which he addresses the men of God, to the sons of men, (as Prov. viii. 4, 5.) to receive instruction. The title does not tell us, as that of the former did, that it was penned on any particular occasion, nor are we to think that all the psalms were occasional; though some were; but that many others were designed in general, for the instruction of the people of God, who attended in the courts of his house, the assisting of their devotions, and the directing of their conversations: such a one I take this psalm to be. Let us not make the prophecy of scripture to be of more private interpretation than needs must, 2 Pet. i. 20. Here, I. David begins with a short prayer; (v. 1.) and that prayer preaches. II. He directs his speech to the children of men, and, 1. In God's name, reproves them for the day of wrath, the day of the Lord, that they do to their own souls, v. 2. 2. He sets before them the happiness of godly people, for their encouragement to be religious, v. 3. He calls upon them to consider their ways, v. 4. 3. He exhorts them to serve God, and trust to him, v. 5. IV. He gives an account of his own experiences of the grace of God working in him, 1. Enabling him to choose God's favour for his strength, v. 6. 2. Filling his heart with confidence, v. 7. 3. Quieting his spirit in the assurance of the divine protection he was under, night and day, v. 8.

To the chief musician on Neginoth. A psalm of David.

1. H E A R me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer. 2. O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing? Selah. 3. But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the Lord will hear when I call unto him. 4. Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah. 5. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness; and put your trust in the Lord.

The title of the psalm acquaints us, that David, having penned it by divine inspiration for the use of the church, delivered it to the chief musician, or master of the song, who, according to that and some appointment of psalmody made in this time, which he was chiefly instrumental in the establishment of, presided in that service. We have a particular
account of the constitution, the modelling of the several classes of singers, each with a chief, and the share each bore in the work, 1 Chron. xxv. Some prophesied according to the order of the king, v. 2. Others prophesied with the harp, to give thanks, and to praise the Lord, v. 3. Of others, it is said, that they were to lift up the horn, v. 5. But of them all, that they were for song in the house of the Lord, (v. 6,) and were instructed in the songs of the Lord, v. 7. This psalm was committed to one of David's harpists when he was a child, 2 Sam. viii. 19. It is laid in the semi- lyrical style, (Hab. iii. 19,) which were played on with the hand; with music of that kind the chorists were to sing this psalm: and it should seem that then they only sung, not the people; but the New Testament appoints all Christians to sing, [Eph. v. 19. Col. iii. 16.] from whom it is expected that they do it decently, not artfully; and therefore there is not now so much occasion for musical instruments as there was then; the melody is to be made in the heart.

In these verses, I. David addresses himself to God, v. 1. Whether the sons of men, to whom he is about to speak, will hear, or whether they will forbear, he hopes and prays that God will give him a gracious audience, and an answer of peace; "Hear me when I call, and accept my petitions, grant my requests; and judge upon my adversaries; hear me, and answer me." All the advice God is giving is founded upon his taking of our prayers, and all the returns he is pleased to make to them, must be ascribed, not to our merit, but purely to his mercy. "Hear me for thy mercy-sake," is our best plea. Two things David here pleads further, 1. "Thou art the God of my righteousness; not only a righteous God thyself, but the Author of my righteous dispositions, who hast by thy grace wrought that good that is in me, hast made me a righteous man; therefore hear me, and so attest thine own work in me; thou art also the Patron of my righteous cause, the Protector of my wronged innocency, to whom I commit my way, and whom I trust to bring forth my righteousness as the light." When men condemn us unjustly, this is our comfort, It is God that justifies; he is the God of a believer's righteousness. 2. "Thou hast formerly enlarged me when I was in distress, enlarged my heart, and opened my mouth for the sake of my distresses; therefore now, Lord, have mercy upon me, and hear me." The experience we have had of God's goodness to us in enlarging us when we have been in distress, is not only a great encouragement to our faith and hope for the future, but a good plea with God in prayer; "Thou hast; wilt thou not? For thou art God, and changest not; thy work is perfect." II. He addresses himself to the children of men, for the conviction and conversion of those that are yet strangers to God, and that will not have the Messiah, the Son of David, to reign over them. 1. He endeavours to convince them of the folly of their impurity; (v. 2.) "O ye sons of men," (of great men, so some; men of high degree, understanding it of the partisans of Saul or Absalom,) "how long shall you oppose me and my government, and continue disaffected to me, while the influence of the false and groundless suggestions of those that wish evil to me?" Or, it may be taken more generally; God, by the psalmist, here reasons with sinners to bring them to repentance. "You that go on in the neglect of God and his worship, and in contempt of the kingdom of Christ and his government, consider what you do;" (1.) "You debase yourselves, for you are sons of men." (The word signifies man as a noble creature; ) "Consider the dignity of your nature, and the excellency of those powers of reason with which you are endowed, and do not act thus iniquitiously, and unbecoming yourselves." Let the sons of men consider and show themselves men. (2.) "You honour your Maker, and turn his glory into shame." They may well be taken as God's own words, charging sinners with the wrong they do him in his honour: or, if David's words, glory may be understood of God, whom he called his Glory, iii. 3. Idolaters are charged with changing the glory of God into shame, Rom. i. 23. Sinners do so by disobeying the commands of his law, despising the offers of his grace, and giving that affection and service to the creature, which are due to God only. Those that profane God's holy name, that ridicule his word and ordinances, and, while they profess to know him, in works deny him, do what in them lies to turn his glory into shame. (3.) "You put a cheat upon yourselves, you love vanity, and seek after learning, or lying, or that which is a lie. You are yourselves a prey, and lying, and you love so." Or, "You set your hearts upon that which will prove, at last, but vanity and a lie!" they that love the world, and seek the things that are beneath, love vanity, and seek lies; as they also do that please themselves with the delights of sense, and portion themselves with the wealth of this world; for these will deceive them, and so ruin them. "How long will you do this? Will you never be wise for yourselves, or consider the last, your duty and interest? When shall it once be?" Jer. xiii. 27. The God of heaven thinks the time long that sinners persist indishonouring him, and in deceiving and ruining themselves.

2. He shows them the peculiar favour which God has for good people, the special protection they are under, and the singular privileges to which they are entitled, v. 3. This comes in here, (1.) As a reason why they should not oppose or persecute him that is godly, or think to run him down. It is at their peril, if they offend one of these little ones, whom God has set apart for himself, Matth. xviii. 6. God reckons that those who touch them touch the apple of his eye; and he will make their persecutors to know it sooner or later. They have an interest in heaven, God will hear them, and therefore let none dare to do them any hurt, for God will hear their cry, and plead their cause. Exod. xxiii. 31. It is always taken for granted that David speaks of his own designation to the throne; he is the godly man, whom the Lord has set apart for that honour, and who does not usurp it, or assume it to himself; "The opposition, therefore, you give to him and to his advancement, is very criminal, for therein you fight against God, and it will be vain and ineffectual." God has, in like manner, set apart the Lord Jesus for himself, that Merciful One; and those that attempt to hinder his advancement will certainly be baffled, for the Father hears him always. Or, (2.) As a reason why they should themselves be good, and walk no longer in the counsel of the ungodly; "You have hitherto sought vanity; be truly religious, and you will be truly happy, here and for ever; for," [1.] "God will secure to himself his interest in you."

The Lord has set apart him that is godly, every particular act of his mercy, his especial choice, his eternal calling, in the most active dispensations of his providence, and operations of his grace; they are purified unto him a peculiar people. Godly men are God's separated, sealed, ones; he knows them that are his, has set his image and superscription upon them; he distinguishes them with uncommon favours; They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels. Know this; let godly people know it, and let them never alienate themselves from him to whom they
are thus appropriated; let wicked people know it, and take heed how they hurt those whom God protects. [2.] "God will secure to you an interest in himself," this David speaks with application; The Lord will hear when I call unto him. We should think ourselves happy, if we had the ear of the earthly prince; and is it not worth while, upon any terms, especially such easy ones, to gain the ear of the King of kings? Let us know this, and forsake lying vanities for our own mercies.

3. He warns them against sin, and exhorts them both to frighten and to reason themselves out of it; (v. 4.) "Stand in awe and sin not;" (Be angry and sin not, so the LXX, and some thanksgiving.) The apostle takes that exhortation up, Eph. iv. 28. and says, "Be not conformed to your own hearts." Be converted; and, in order thereunto, consider and fear." Note, (1.) We must not sin, nor miss our way, and so miss our aim. (2.) One good remedy against sin is to stand in awe. "Be moved," so some, in opposition to carelessness and carnal security. "Always keep up a holy reverence of the glory and majesty of God, and a holy dread of his wrath and curse, and dare not to provoke him." (3.) One good method of preventing and removing sin, is, to be frequent and serious in communing with our own hearts; "Talk with your hearts; you have a great deal to say to them, they may be spoken with at any time, let it not be unsaid." A thinking man is in a fair way to be a wise and a good man. "Commune with your hearts; examine them by serious self-reflection, that you may acquaint yourselves with them, and amend what is amiss in them; employ them in solemn pious meditation, and ask your conscience what is written upon them, which is good, and keep close to it. Consider your ways, and observe the directions here given, in order to the doing of this work well and to good purpose." [1.] "Choose a solitary time; do it when you lie awake upon your beds. Before you turn, you go to sleep at night," (as some of the heathen moralists have directed,) "examine your consciences with respect to what you have done that day, particularly what you have done amiss, that you may make amends of it. When you awake in the night, meditate upon God, and the things that belong to your peace." David himself practised what he here counsels others to do; (xiii. 6.) I remember thee on my bed; upon a sick-bed particularly we should consider our ways, and commune with our own hearts about them. [2.] "Compose yourselves into a serious frame; be still. When you have asked conscience a question, be silent, and wait for an answer; even in unquiet times, keep your spirits calm and quiet."

4. He counsels them to make conscience of their duty; (v. 5.) Offer to God the sacrifice of righteousness. We must not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well. They that were disaffected to David and his government, would soon come to a better temper, and return to their allegiance, if they would but worship God aright; and those that know the situation, let your thoughts have dominion in your heart; and God will be glad of the Mediator, the Son of David. It is required here from every one of us, (1.) That we serve him; "Offer sacrifices to him, your own selves first, and your best sacrifices." But they must be sacrifices of righteousness, good works; all the fruits of the reigning love of God and our neighbour, and all the instances of a religious conversation, which are better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices. "Let all your devotions come from an upright heart; let all your alms be sacrifices of righteousness." The sacrifices of the unrighteous, God will not accept, they are an abomination, Isa. i. 11, &c. (2.) That we confide in him. "First make conscience of offering the sacrifices of righteousness, and then you are welcome to put your trust in the Lord. Serve God without any difference of him, or any fear of losing by him. Honour him, by trusting in him only, and not in your wealth, or in the things that are true, in his providence, and lean not to your own understanding; trust in his grace, and go not about to establish your own righteousness or sufficiency."

In singing these verses, we must preach to ourselves the doctrine of the provoking nature of sin, the lying vanity of the world, and the unspeakable happiness of God's people; and we must press upon ourselves the duties of fearing God, conversing with our own hearts, and offering spiritual sacrifices; in praying over these verses, we must beg of God grace thus to think, and thus to do.

6. There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. 7. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. 8. I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.

We have here, I. The foolish wish of worldly people; There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Who will make us to see good? What good they meant, is intimated, v. 7. It was the increase of their corn and wine; all they desired was plenty of the wealth of this world, that they might enjoy abundance of the delights of sense. Thus far they are right, that they are desirous of good, and solicitous about it; but there are these things amiss in this wish, 1. They inquire, in general, "Who will make us happy?" but do not apply themselves to God, who alone can; and so they expose themselves to be ill-advised, and show they would rather be helden to any thing to God, for they would willingly drink, eat, drink, take what is alone meet to be eaten and drunk. May we not see in this wish a consequence? We may see, seeming good, sensible good; and they show no concern for the good things that are out of sight, and are the objects of faith only. The source of idolatry was a desire of gods that they might see, therefore they worshipped the sun; but, as we must be taught to worship an unseen God, so to seek an unseen good, 2 Cor. iv. 18. We look, with an eye of faith, further than we can see with an eye of sense. 3. They inquire for any good, for the chief good; all they want is outward good, present good, partial good, good meat, good drink, a good trade, and a good estate; and what are all these worth, without a good God, and a good heart? Any good will serve the turn of most men, but a gracious soul will not be put off so. This way, this wish, of carnal worldlings is their folly, and yet many there be that join in it; their doom will be accordingly; Son, remember that thou in the days of thy youth hast made thy good things, the penny thou didst agree for.

II. The wise choice which godly people make. David, and the pious few that adhered to him, dissented from that wish, and joined in this prayer, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. 1. He disagrees from the vote of the many; God had set him apart for himself by distinguishing favours, and therefore he sets himself apart by a distinguishing character. "They are for any good, for worldly good, but so an not; I will not say as they say; any good will not serve my turn; the wealth of the world will never make a portion for my soul, and therefore I cannot take up with it." 2. He and his friends agree in their
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choice of God’s favour as their felicity, that is it which, in their account, is better life and all the comforts of life.

(1.) That is it which they most earnestly desire and seek after; this is the breathing of their souls, “Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us;” most are for other things, but we for that. God people, as they are distinguished by their practices, so they are by their prayers, not the length and language of them, but the faith and fervency of them; they whom God has set apart, have a prayer by themselves, which, though others may speak the words of it, they only offer up in sincerity; and this is a prayer which they all say. Amen to; “Lord, let us have thy favour, and let us know that we have it, and we desire no more; the peace of God which passes all understanding, let us have with us, accept of us, manifest thyself to us, let us be satisfied of thy loving-kindness, and we will be satisfied with it.” Observe, Though David speaks of himself only, in the 7th and 8th verses, he speaks, in this prayer, for others also, “upon us,” as Christ taught us to pray, “Our Father.” All the saints come to the throne of grace on the same errand, and in this they are one, they all desire God’s favour as their chief good. We should heat it as for ourselves, as well as for others, for God’s favour there is enough for us all, and we shall have never the less for others sharing in what we have.

(2.) That is it in which, above any thing, they rejoice; [v. 7.] “Thou hast hereby often put gladness into my heart; not only supported and refreshed me, but filled me with joy unspeakable; and therefore that is it which I will pursue, which I will seek after all the days of my life.” When God puts gladness in the heart, he puts gladness in the heart; nor is any joy comparable to that which gracious souls have in the communications of the divine favour, no, not the joy of harvest, of a plentiful harvest, when the corn and wine increase. This is gladness in the heart, inward, solid, substantial, joy. The mirth of worldly people is but a flash, a shadow; even in laughter their heart is sorrowful, Prov. xiv. 13.

(3.) That it is which they entirely confide in, and in that confidence they are always easy, v. 8. He had laid him down, and slept, (iii. 5.) so he will still; “I will lay me down (having the assurance of thy favour) in peace, and with as much pleasure as those whose corn and wine increase, and who lie down as Boaz did in his threshing-floor, at the end of the heap of corn, to sleep there when his heart was merry;” (Ruth iii. 7.) “for thou only makest me to dwell in safety.” Though I am alone, yet I am not alone, for God is with me; though I have no guards to attend me, the Lord alone is sufficient to protect me; he can do it himself when all other defences fail. If he have the light of God’s countenance, [1.] He can enjoy himself. His soul returns to God, and reposeth itself in him as its Rest, and so he lays him down, and sleeps in peace. He has what he would have, and is sure that nothing can come amiss to him. [2.] He fears no disturbance from his enemies, sleeps quiet, and is very secure, because God himself has undertaken to keep him safe. When he comes to sleep the sleep of death, and to lie down in the grave, to make his bed in the darkness, he will then, with good old Simeon, depart in peace, (Luke ii. 29.) being assured that God will receive his soul, to be safe with himself, and that his body also shall be made to dwell in safety in the grave. (3.) He commits all his affairs to God, and contentedly leaves the issue of them with him. It is said of the husbandman, that, having cast his seed into the ground, he sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed springs and grows up, he knows not how, Mark iv. 26, 27. So a good man, having, by faith and prayer, cast his care upon God, sleeps and rests night and day, and is very easy, leaving it to his God to perform all things for him, and prepared to welcome his holy will.

In singing these verses, and praying over them, let us, with a holy contempt of the wealth and pleasure of this world, be insufficient to make us happy, earnestly seek the favour of God, and pleasingly solace ourselves in that favour; and, with a holy indifference about the issue of all our worldly concerns, let us trust entirely to the conduct and custody of the Divine Providence, and be satisfied that all shall be made to work for good to us, if we keep ourselves in the love of God.

PSALM V.

This psalm is a prayer, a solemn address to God, at a time when the psalmist was brought into distress by the malice of his enemies; many such times passed over David, nay, there was scarcely any time of his life to which this psalm may not be accommodated; for in this he was a type of Christ, that he was continually beset with enemies; and his powerful and prevalent appeals to God, when he was so beset, prove the first, and best, discovery of all God’s faith and triumphs over the powers of darkness, in the midst of his sufferings. In this psalm, I. David settles a correspondence between his soul and God, and promising to pray, and promising that God will certainly hear him, v. 1-3. II. He gives to God the glory, and takes to himself the comfort, of God’s holiness, v. 4-6. III. He declares his resolution to keep close to the public worship of God, v. 7. IV. He prayed, I. For himself, that God would grant him to witness God himself, Ps. xlii. 8. that God would destroy them, v. 9, 10. III. For all the people of God, that God would give them joy, and keep them safe, v. 11, 12. And this is all of great use to direct us in prayer.

To the chief musician upon Nehiloth. A psalm of David.

1. Give ear to my words, O Lord; consider my meditation. 2. Hearker unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray. 3. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up. 4. For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee. 5. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hastest all workers of iniquity. 6. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leas:ing: the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.

The title of this psalm has nothing in it peculiar, but that it is said to be upon Nehiloth, a word no where else used. It is conjectured, (and it is but a conjecture,) that it signifies wind instruments, with which this psalm was sung, as Neginoth was supposed to signify the stringed-instruments.

In these verses, David had an eye to God,

I. As a prayer-hearing God; such he has always been, ever since men began to call upon the name of the Lord, and yet is still as ready to hear prayer as ever. Observe how David here styles him, O Lord; (v. 1, 3.) Jehovah, a self-existent, self-sufficient, Being, whom we are bound to adore, and, "my King and my God, (v. 2.) whom I have avouched for my God, to whom I have sworn alle-
prayers to God as our Father in heaven; and let us always send them by the Lord Jesus, the great Mediator, and then they will be sure not to miscarry. All our prayers must be directed to God; his honour and glory must be aimed at as our highest end, if all prayers; let our first, and last prayer, be Hallowed. Glorified, be thy name; and then we may be sure of the same gracious answer to it that was given to Christ himself, I have glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again.

(4.) That he will patiently wait for an answer of peace; “I will look up; will look after my prayers, and hear what God the Lord will speak,” (Isa. 28: 8. Hab. ii. 1.) that, if he grant what I asked, I may expect that he will also answer such prayers as are not gainst his will. If I may have some hope, if I may continue to pray and wait, and may not faint.”

We must look up, or look out, as he that has shot an arrow looks to see how near it has come to the mark. We lose much of the comfort of our prayers, for want of observing the returns of them. Thus praying, thus waiting, as the lame man looked steadfastly on Peter and John, (Acts iii. 4.) we may expect that God will give ear to our words, and consider them, and to him we may refer ourselves, as David does, “I will not lift up mine eyes unto the stars, neither will I set mine hope on them; for the persecutors.”

II. As a sin-hating God, v. 4-6. David takes notice of this. 1. As a warning to himself, and all other praying people, to remember that, as the God with whom we have to do is gracious and merciful, so he is pure and holy; though he is ready to hear prayer, yet, if we regard iniquity in our heart, he will not hear our prayers, Ps. 51. 2. As an encouragement to his prayers against his enemies; they were wicked men, and therefore enemies to God, and such as he had no pleasure in. See here,

(1.) The holiness of God’s nature; when he says, “Thou art not a God that has pleasure in wickedness,” he means, “Thou art a God that hates it, as directly contrary to thine infinite purity and rectitude, and holy will.” Though the workers of iniquity prosper, yet none thence infer, that God has pleasure in wickedness, no not in that by which men pretend to honour him, as those do that hate their brethren, and cast them out, and say, “Let the Lord be glorified.” God has no pleasure in wickedness, though covered with a cloak of religion. Let those, therefore, who delight in sin, know that God has no delight in them; nor let any say, when he is tempted, “I am tempted of God,” for God is not the Author of sin, neither shall evil dwell with him; it shall not always be countenanced, and suffered to prosper.

Dr. Hammond thinks this refers to that law of Moses, which would not permit strangers, who persisted in their idolatry, to dwell in the land of Israel.

(2.) The justice of his government; “The foolish shall not stand in his sight,” shall not be smiled upon by him, nor admitted to attend upon him, nor shall they be acquitted in the judgment of the great day. Though the workers of iniquity should rise up for fools, and the hypocrites be the greatest of all fools; not fools of God’s making, those are to be pitied, he hates nothing that he has made, but fools of their own making, and those he hates. Wicked people hate God, justly therefore are they hated of him, and it will be their endless misery and ruin. “Those whom thou hatest, thou shalt destroy; and particularly two sorts of sinners, who are here marked for destruction.”[1] Those that are fools, that speak lying or lying, and those that are hypocrites. There is a particular emphasis laid on these sinners, (Rev. xxii. 8.) “All liars, and (ch. xxii. 15.) Whosoever loves and makes a lie; nothing is more contrary than this, and therefore nothing more hateful to the God of truth. [2] Those that are cruel,
Thou wilt abhor the bloody man; for inhumanity is no less contrary, no less hateful, to the God of mercy, whom mercy pleases. Liars and murderers are in a particular manner said to resemble the Devil, and to be his children, and therefore it may well be expected that God should abhor them. These were the characters of David's enemies; and such as these are still the enemies of Christ and his church, men perfectly lost to all virtue and honour; the worse they are, the surer we may be of their ruin in due time.

In soliciting these verses, and praying them over, we must engage and stir up ourselves to the duty of prayer, and encourage ourselves in it, because we shall not seek the Lord in vain; and must express our detestation of sin, and our awful expectation of that day of Christ's appearing, which will be the day of the perdition of ungodly men.

7. But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy; and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple. 8. Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness, because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face. 9. For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue. 10. Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels: cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against thee. 11. But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee. 12. For thou, Lord, wilt be the righteousness: with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.

In these verses, David gives three characters; of himself, of his enemies, and of all the people of God; and subjoins a prayer to each of them.

1. He gives an account of himself, and prays for himself, v. 7, 8. 1. He is steadfastly resolved to keep close to God and to his worship. Sinners go away from God, and so make themselves odious to his holiness, and obnoxious to his justice; "But as for me, that shall not keep me from thee." God's holiness and justice are so far from being a terror to the upright in heart, to drive them from God, that they are rather by them invited to cleave to him. David resolves, (1.) To worship God, to pay his homage to him, and give unto God the glory due unto his name. (2.) To worship him publicly; "I will come into thy house, the courts of thy house, to worship thee, with all thy faithful worshippers." David was much in secret worship, prayed often alone, (v. 2, 3.) and yet was very constant and devout in his attendance on the public worship. The duties of the closet are designed to prepare us for, not excuse us from, public ordinances. (3.) To worship him reverently, and with a due sense of the infinite distance there is between God and man; "In thy fear will I worship, with a holy awe of God upon my spirit." Heb. xi. 28. God is greatly to be feared by prayers. (4.) To thank God for his encouragement, in worship, from God himself only. [1.] From his infinite mercy: it is in the multitude of God's mercy, the inexhaustible treasures of mercy that are in God, and the innumerable proofs and instances of it which we receive from God, that David confides, and not in any merit of righteousness of his own, in his approaches to God. The mercy of God should ever be the foundation both of our hopes, and of our joy, in every thing wherein we have to do with him. [2.] From the instituted medium of worship, which was the temple, here called the temple of his holiness, as a type of Christ, the great and only Mediator, who sanctifies the service, as the temple sanctified the gold, and to whom we must have an eye in all our devotions, as they then had to the temple. 2. He earnestly prays that God, by his grace, would guide and preserve him always in the way of his duty; (v. 8.) Lead me in the right ways, because of mine enemies, Hebr. "because of the fear of mine enemies, which watch for my halting, and seek occasion against me." See here, (1.) The good use which David made of the malice of his enemies against him; the more curious they were in spying faults in him, that they might have whereof to accuse him, the more cautious he was to avoid sin and all appearances of it, and the more solicitous to be always found in the good way of God and duty. Thus, we may know the wisdom, and the wisdom of our enemies, or the way of our duty is here called God's way and his righteousness, because he subjoins to us by his just and holy laws, which if we sincerely set before us as our rule, we may in faith beg of God to direct us in all particular cases. How this prayer of David's was answered to him, see 1 Sam. viii. 14, 15.

II. He gives an account of his enemies, and prays against them, v. 9, 10. 1. If his account of them be true, as, no doubt, it is, they have a very bad character; and if they had not been bad men indeed, they could not have been enemies to a man after God's own heart. He had spoken (v. 6.) of God's hatting the bloody and deceitful man; "Now, Lord," says he, "that is the character of my enemies: they are deceitful, there is no trusting them, for there is no faithfulness in their mouth." They thought it was no sin to tell a deliberate lie, if it might but blemish David, and make him odious; "Lord, let me," says he, (v. 8.) "for such as these, are the men I have to do with, against whose slanders innocency itself is no security. Do they speak fair? Do they talk of peace and friendship? They flatter with their tongues; it is designed to cover their malice, and to gain their point the more secretly. Whatever they pretend of religion or friendship, two sacred things, they are true to neither, their inward part is wickedness itself, it is very wickedness. They are likewise bloody, for they through and through, cruel as the grave, gaping to devour and to swallow down, as insoluble as the grave, which never says, "It is enough," Prov. xxx. 15, 16. This is quoted, (Rom. iii. 13.) to show the general corruption of mankind, for they are all naturally prone to malice, Tit. iii. 3. The grave is opened for them all, and yet they are as open graves to one another. 2. If his prayer against them be heard, as, no doubt, it is, they are in a bad condition. As they are, and do, so they must expect to fare. He prays to God to destroy them, according to what he had said, (v. 6.) "Thee shall destroy men of this character." So let them fall; and sinners would soon throw themselves into ruin, if they were let alone. The psalmist prays that God would cast them out of his protection and
favour, out of the heritage of the Lord, out of the land of the living; and woe to those whom God casts out. They have by their sins deserved destruction; therefore is it enough to justify God in their utter rejection: "Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions by which they have filled up the measure of their iniquity, and are become ripe for ruin." Persecuting God's servants, fills the measure as soon as any thing, 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16. Nay, they may be easily made to fall by their own counsels; that which they do, to secure themselves, and do mischief to others, by the over-ruling providence of God, may be made the means of their destruction. Thus says 2 Samuel, x. 18, 19. "They have rebelled against thee; had they been only mine enemies, I could safely have forgiven them; but they are rebels against God, he's crown and dignity; they oppose his government, and will not repent, to give him glory, and therefore I plainly foresee their ruin." His prayer for their destruction comes not from a spirit of revenge, but from a spirit of prophecy, by which he foretold, That all who rebel against God will not only be destroyed by their own conversion, but if it be a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble his people, as we are told it is, (2 Thess. i. 6) we pray it may be done, whenever we pray, Father, thy will be done.

III. He gives an account of the people of God, and prays for them, concluding with an assurance of their bliss, which he doubted not of his own interest in. Observer.

The description he gives of God's people. They are the righteous; (v. 12) for they put their trust in God, are well assured of his power and all-sufficiency, venture their all upon his promise, and are confident of his protection in the way of their duty; and they love his name, are well-pleased with all that by which God has made himself known, and take delight in their acquaintance with him. This is true and pure religion, to live a life of complacency in God, and dependence on him.

His prayer for them; "Let them rejoice; let them have cause to rejoice, and hearts to rejoice; fill them with joy, with great joy and unspeakable; let them shout for joy, with constant joy and perpetual, let them ever shout for joy, with holy joy, and that which terminates in God; let them be joyful in thee, in thy favour, in thy salvation; not in any creature. Let them rejoice because thou coverest them, or overshadowest them, dwelllest among them." Perhaps it is an allusion to the pillar of cloud and fire, which was to Israel a visible token of God's special presence with them, and the special protection they were under. Let us learn of David to pray, not for ourselves only, but for others; for all good people, for all that trust in God, and love his name, though not in every thing of our mind, or in our interest. Let all that are entitled to God's promises, have a share in our prayers; grace, mercy, power, will, love Christ in sincerity. This is to concur with God.

3. His comfort concerning them, v. 12. Therefore he takes them into his prayers, because they are God's peculiar people; therefore he doubts not but his prayers shall be heard, and they shall always rejoice; for, (1.) They are happy in the assurance of God's blessing; Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; wilt command a blessing upon them. This is certain, and that which we may and with satisfaction expect; and therefore will make them truly so. Those whom thou blessest, they are blessed indeed. (2.) "They are safe under the protection of thy favour; with that thou wilt crown him," so some read it; "it is his honour, it will be to him a diadem of beauty, and make him truly great: with that thou wilt compass him, wilt surround him on every side as with a shield." A shield, in war, guards only one side but the favour of God is to the saints a defence on every side; like the hedge about Job, round about, so that, while they keep themselves under the divine protection, they are entirely safe, and ought to be entirely satisfied.

In singing these verses, and praying them over, we must by faith put ourselves under God's guidance and care, and then please ourselves with his mercy and grace, and with the prospect of God's triumphs, at last, over all his enemies, and his people's triumphs in him and in his salvation.

PSALM VI.

David was a weeping prophet as well as Jeremiah, and this psalm is one of his lamentations: either it was penned in a time, or, at least, calculated for a time, of great trouble, both outward and inward. Is any afflicted? Is any sick? Let him sing this psalm. The method of this psalm is very observable, and what we shall often meet with. He begins with doleful complaints, but ends with joyful praises; like Hannah, who went to prayer with a sorrowful spirit, but, when she had prayed, went her way, and her countenance was no more sad. Three things the psalmist is here complaining of; 1. Sickness of body. 2. Trouble of mind, arising from the sense of sin, the meritorious cause of pain and sickness. 3. The terrors of his enemies, upon occasion of both. Now here, 1. He pours out his complaints before God, deprecates his wrath, and begs earnestly for the return of his favour, v. 1-7. 2. He assures himself of an answer and prosperity, Lord, and, most importantly, to his full satisfaction, v. 8-10. This psalm is like the book of Job.

To the chief musician on Neginath upon Sheminith. A psalm of David.

1. O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. 2. Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed. 3. My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long? 4. Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: O save me for thy mercies' sake. 5. For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks? 6. I am weary with groaning; all the night will make I my bed to swim: I water my couch with tears. 7. Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.

These verses speak the language of a heart truly humbled under humbling providences, of a broken and contrite spirit under great afflictions, sent on purpose to awaken conscience, and mortify corruption. These heap up wrath, who cry not when God binds them; but those are getting more for mercy, and less for God's rebukes, sow their tears, as David does here.

Let us observe here,

1. The representation he makes to God of his grievances; he pours out his complaint before him; whither else should a child go with his complaints, but to his father? 1. He complains of bodily pain and sickness; (v. 2.) My bones are vexed: his bones and his flesh, like Job's, were touched. Though David was a king, yet he was sick and pained; his imperial crown would not keep his head from aching. Great men are men, and subject to the common calamities of human life. Though David was a stout man, a man of war from his youth, yet that will not secure him from distempers, which will soon make even the strong men to bow themselves. Though David was a good man, yet neither will his goodness keep him in health; Lord, behold, he wor-
thou lovest is sick. Let this help to reconcile us to pain and sickness, that it has been the lot of some of the best saints, and that we are directed and encouraged, by their example, to show before God our trouble in that case, who is for the body, and takes cognizance of its ailments. 2. He complains of inward trouble: My soul is also sore vexed; and that is much more grievous than the vexation of the bones. The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, if that be in good plight; but, if that be wounded, the grievance is intolerable. David's sickness brought his soul to his remembrance, he looked upon it as a token of God's displeasure against him; that was the vexation of his soul, that made him cry, I am weak, heal me. It is a sad thing for a man to have his bones and his soul vexed at the same time; but this has been sometimes the lot of God's own people: nay, and this completed this complicated trouble, that it was continued upon them a great while, which is here intimated in that exposition, (v. 3.) Thou, O Lord, how long? To the living God we must, at such a time, apply ourselves, who is the only Physician both of body and mind, and not to the Assyrans, not to the god of Ekron.

II. The impression which his troubles made upon him. They lay very heavy; he groaned till he was weary, wept till he made his bed to win, and watered his couch; (v. 6.) wept till he had almost wept his eyes out; (v. 7.) Mine eye is consumed because of grief. David had more courage and consideration than to mourn thus for any outward affliction; but, when sin sat heavy upon his conscience, and he was made to possess his iniquities, when his soul was wounded with the sense of God's wrath, and his withdrawals from him, then he takes on thus, and mourns in secret, and even his soul refuses to be comforted. This not only kept his eyes waking, but kept his eyes weeping. Note 1. It has often been the lot of the best men to be men of sorrows; our Lord Jesus himself was so; our way lies through a sea of tears, and we must accommodate ourselves to the temper of the climate. 2. It well becomes the greatest spirits to be tender and to relent, under the tokens of God's displeasure. David, who could face Goliath himself, and many another threatening enemy, with an undaunted bravery, yet melts into tears at the remembrance of sin, and under the apprehensions of divine wrath; and it is no diminution at all of his courage, but a further and a deeper token of true courage; "The Lord will move me to do that which I know not, but he proceeds, and with their retirements. The Pharisees disguised their faces, that they might appear unto men to mourn; but David mourns in the night upon the bed where he lay, communing with his own heart, and no eye was a witness to his grief, but the eye of Him who is all eye. Peter went out, covered his face, and wept. 4. Sorrow for sin ought to be great sorrow; so David's was; he wept so bitterly, so abundantly, that it watered his couch. The tears of wicked men are sweats of the soul, aches and pains, much to their grief. David's eye waxed old, because of his enemies, who rejoiced in his afflictions, and put bad constructions upon his tears. In this great sorrow, David was a type of Christ, who often wept, and who cried out, My soul is exceeding grievously vexed, Heb. v. 7.

III. The petitions which he offers up to God, in this sorrowful and distressed state. 1. That which he directs to God, whom he takes for the God of God. This was the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery; it was the infusion of that made it indeed a bitter cup; and therefore he prays, (v. 1.) O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, though I have deserved it, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. He does not pray, "Lord, rebuke me not; Lord, chasten me not," for, as many as God loves, he rebukes and chastens, as a father the son in whom he delights. He can bear the rebuke and chastening well enough, if God, at the same time, little his hands on the heads of all who are convicted of their sins, and by his Spirit make him to hear the joy and gladness of his loving-kindness; the affliction of his body will be tolerable, if he have but comfort in his soul. No matter what sickness make his bones ache, if God's wrath do not make his heart ache; therefore his prayer is, "Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath; let me not lie under the impressions of that, for that will sink me." Herein David was a type of Christ, who, under most complaint, in his sufferings, was, of the trouble of his soul, and of the suspension of his Father's smiles. He never so much as whispered a complaint of the rage of his enemies, "Why do they crucify me?" or the unkindness of his friends, "Why do you desert me?" But he cried with a loud voice, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Let us thus depurate the wrath of God more than any outward trouble whatsoever, and always take heed of treasuring up wrath against a day of affliction. 2. That which he desires as the greatest good, and which would be to him the restoration of all good, is, the favour and grace of God. He prays, (1.) That God would pity him, and look upon him with compassion; he thinks himself very miserable, and misery is the proper object of mercy. Hence he prays, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord; in wrath, remember mercy; and deal not with me in strict justice." (2.) That God would abate his sins, for it is the principal cause of God's displeasure; but he is willing to confess himself faulty, and have the necessary type of the pure and perfect mercy, and is often chiefly intended in that petition, Have mercy upon me. (3.) That God would put forth his power for his relief: Lord, heal me, (v. 2.) Save me, (v. 4.) speak the word, and I shall be whole, and all will be well. (4.) That he would be at peace with him; "Return, O Lord, receive me into thy favour again, and be reconciled to me. Thou hast seemed to depart from me, and neglect me, nay, to set thyself at a distance, as one angry; but now, Lord, return, and show thyself nigh to me." (5.) That he would especially preserve the inward man, and the interests of that, whatever becomes of the body; "O Lord, deliver my soul from sinning, from sinking, from perishing for ever." It is an unspeakable privilege, that we have a God to go to in our afflictions, and it is our duty to go to him, and thus to wrestle with him, and we shall not seek in vain.

IV. This whole petition enforces his petitions; not to move God, (he knows our cause, and the true merits of it, better than we can state it,) but to move himself. 1. He pleads his own misery, and that his misery had continued long; "I am weak, I am troubled, sore troubled; O Lord, how long shall I be so?" 2 He pleads God's mercy; thence we take some of our best encouragements in prayer; Save me, for thy mercies sake. 3. He pleads God's glory; (v. 5.) For in death there is no remembrance of thee; and when I shall return and comfort me, I will not only give thee thanks for my deliverance, and stir up others to join with me in these thanksgivings, but I will spend the new life thou shalt intrust me with, in thy service, and to thy glory; and, all the remainder of my days, I will preserve a grateful remembrance of thy favours to me, and be quickened thereby in all instances of service to thee; but if I die, I shall be cut short of thy comforting thee, and doing good to others; for in the very way, we will give thee thanks." Not but that separate souls live and act, and the souls of the faithful joyfully remember God, and give thanks to him. But, (1.) In the second death, (which, perhaps, David, being now troubled in soul under the wrath of God, had some dreadful apprehensions of,) there is no pleasing remembrance of God; devils and damned spirits.
he had wherewith to answer them that reproached him, for God was about to return in mercy to him, had now comforted his spirit, and would shortly complete his deliverance. (3.) Perhaps they had tempted him to do as they did, to quit his religion, and betake himself for ease to the pleasures of sin. But now, "Depart from me, I will never lend an ear to thee; for thou hast cursed God and die, but I will bless him and live." This good use we should make of God's mercies to us, we should thereby have our resolution strengthened never to have anything more to do with sin and sinners. David was a king, and he takes this occasion to renew his purpose of using his power for the suppression of sin, and the reformation of manners, lxxxv. 4.—ci. 3. When God has done great things for us, that should put us upon studying what we shall do for him. Our Lord Jesus seems to borrow these words from the mouth of his father David, when, having all judgment committed to him, he shall say, Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity, (Luke xiii. 27.) and so teaches us to say now, cxix. 115.

2. He assures himself that God was, and would be, propitious to him, notwithstanding the present intimations of wrath which he was under. (1.) He is confident of the promises of grace as certain as ever he is of the present torment which he is now making. While he is yet speaking, he is aware that God is good, (as Isa. lxv. 24. Dan. ix. 20.) and therefore speaks of it as a thing done, and repeats it with an air of triumph, "The Lord hath heard," and again, "The Lord hath heard." By the workings of God's grace upon his heart, he knew his prayer was graciously accepted, and therefore did not doubt but it would, in due time, be effectually answered. His tears had a voice, a loud voice, in the ears of the God of mercy; The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping; silent tears are not speechless ones: his prayers were cries to God; The Lord hath heard the voice of my supplication, has put his Fiat—Let it be done, to my petitions, and so it will appear shortly. (2.) Thence he infers the like favourable audience of all his other prayers; "He has heard the voice of my supplication, and therefore he will receive my prayer for you, give, and does not upbraid with forerunners."

3. He either prays for the conversion, or predicts the destruction, of his enemies and persecutors, v. 10. (1.) It may very well be taken as a prayer for their conversion; "Let them all be ashamed of the opposition they have given me, and the censures they have passed upon me. Let them be (as those penitents are) vexed at themselves for their own folly; let them return to a better temper and disposition of mind, and let them be ashamed of what they have done against me, and take shame to themselves." (2.) If they be not converted, it is a prediction of their confusion and ruin. They shall be ashamed and sore-vexed, (so it may be read,) and that justly; they rejoiced that David was vexed, (v. 2, 3.) and therefore, as usually, it returns upon themselves, they also shall be sore-vexed. They that will not give glory to God, shall have the most cutting of wounds, filled with everlasting shame.

In singing this, and praying over it, we must give glory to God, as a God ready to hear prayer, must own his goodness to us in hearing our prayers, and must encourage ourselves to wait upon him, and to trust in him, in the greatest straits and difficulties.

PSALM VII.

It appears by the title, that this psalm was penned with reference to the malicious imputations that David was held under by some of his enemies. Being thus wronged, 1. He applies himself to God for favour, v. 1, 2. He appeals to God concerning his innocency as
to those things whereof he was accused, v. 3. 5. III. He prayed to God to plead his cause, and judge for him against his persecutors, v. 6. 9. IV. He expresses his confidence in God, that he would do it, and would execute it. He puts the mischief upon the head of those that设计 it against him, v. 10. 16. V. He promises to give God the glory of his deliverance, v. 17. In this, David was a type of Christ, who was himself, and still is, in his members, thus injured, but will certainly be righted at last.

Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the Lord, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite.

1. O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me; 2. Lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver. 3. O LORD my God, if I have done this, if there be iniquity in my hands; 4. If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me; (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy;) 5. Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust. Selah. 6. Arise, O LORD, in thine anger; lift up thyself, because of the rage of mine enemies; and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded. 7. So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about: for their sakes, therefore, return thou on high. 8. The LORD shall judge the people: judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me. 9. O let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.

Shiggaion is a song or psalm; the word is used so only here and Hab. iii. 1. A wandering song, so sauc.: the matter and composition of the several parts being different, but artificially put together. A charming song, soothers; very delightful. David not only penned it, but sang it himself in a devout religious manner unto the Lord, concerning the words or affairs of Cush the Benjamite, that is, of Saul himself, whose barbarous usage of David despised him rather a Cushite, or Ethiopian, than a true born Israelite. Or, more likely, it was some kinsman of Saul, named Cush, who was an invertebrate enemy to David, misrepresented him to Saul as a traitor, and (which was unnecessary) exasperated Saul against him; one of those children of men, children of Belial indeed, whom David complains of, (1 Sam. xxvi. 19.) that made mischief between him and Saul. David, thus basely abused, has recourse to the Lord: the injuries men do us, should drive us to God, for to him we may commit our cause. Nay, he sings to the Lord, his spirit was not ruffled by it, nor cast down, but so composed and cheerful, that he was still in tune for sacred songs, and it did not occasion one jarring string in his harp. Thus let the injuries we receive from men, instead of provoking our passions, kindle and excite our devotions. In these verses, (1) He prays for God's protection, and cries to him for succour and shelter; (v. 1.) "Lord, save me, and deliver me from the power and malice of all them that persecute me, that they may not have their will against me." He pleads, (1) His relation to God. "Thou art my God, and, thencefore, whither else should I go but to thee? Thou art my God, and therefore my Shield; (Gen. xv. 1.) my God, and therefore I am one of thy servants, who may expect to be protected." (2) His confidence in God; "Lord, save me, for I depend upon thee; in thee do I put my trust, and not in any arm of flesh." (3) Men of honour will not fail those that repose a trust in them: especially, when they themselves have encouraged them to do so: which is our case. 3. The rage and malice of his enemies, and the imminent danger he was in of being swallowed up by them; "Lord, save me, or I am gone; he will tear my soul like a lion tearing his prey;" with so much pride, and pleasure, and power, so easily, so cruelly. St. Paul compares Nero to a lion, (2 Tim. iv. 17.) as David here compares Saul. 4. The failure of all other helpers; "Lord, be thou pleased to deliver me, for otherwise there is none to deliver," v. 2. It is the glory of God to help the helpless.

II. He makes a solemn protestation of his innocency, as to those things whereof he was accused, and by a dreadful imprecation appeals to God, the Searcher of hearts, concerning it, v. 3. 5. Observe, in general, 1. When we are falsely accused by men, it is a great comfort, if our own consciences acquit us.

—Heuxurum sabuenest esto,
Nil conscire sibi—
Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence,
Still to preserve thy conscious innocence.

Happy indeed, when not only they cannot prove their calumnies, (Acts xxiv. 13.) but when our hearts can disprove them, to our own satisfaction. 2. God is the Patron of wronged innocency. David had no cause to repine, nor to accuse, his prince, who should have righted him, was his sworn enemy; but he had the court of heaven to fly to, and a righteous Judge there, whom he could call his God. And here see,

(1.) What the indictment is, which he pleads not guilty to. He was charged with a truculent design against Saul's crown and life, that he compassed and imagined to depose and murder him, and, in order to that, conspired with him against him. This he utterly denies: he never did this, there was no iniquity of this kind in his hand, (v. 3.) he abhorred the thought of it. He never rewarded evil to Saul, when he was at peace with him, nor to any other, v. 4. Nay, as some think it should be rendered, he never rendered evil for evil, never did them mischief that had injured him.

(2.) What evidence he produces of his innocency: it is hard to prove a negative, and yet this was a negative which David could produce very good proof of; (v. 4.) I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy. By this it appeared, beyond contradiction, that David had no design against Saul's life—that, once and again, Providence so ordered it, that Saul lay at his mercy, and there were those about him, that would soon have dispatched him, but David generously and conscientiously prevented it, when he cut off his skirt, (1 Sam. xxxiv. 4.) and afterward, when he took away his spear, (1 Sam. xxxvi. 12.) to attest for him what he could have done. Saul himself owned both these to be undeniable proofs of David's integrity and good affection to him. If we render good for evil, and deny ourselves the gratifications of our passion, it may turn to us for a testimony, more than we think of, another day.

(3.) What doom he would submit to, if he were guilty; (v. 5.) Let the enemy persecute my soul to the death; and my good name when I am gone, let him lay my honour in the dust. This intimates, [1.] That, if he had been indeed injurious to others,
he had reason to expect that they would repay him in the same coin. He that has his hand against every man, must count upon it that every man's hand will be against him. [2.] That, in that case, he could not with any confidence go to God, and have of him, or plead his cause, as a presumptuous, dangerous thing for any that are guilty, and suffer justly, to appeal to God, as if they were innocent, and suffered wrongfully; such must humble themselves, and accept the punishment of their iniquity, and not expect that the righteous God will patronize their unrighteousness. [3.] That he was abundantly satisfied in himself, concerning his innocence; it is natural to us to wish well to those we regard, and therefore, a curse to ourselves, if we swear falsely, has been thought as awful a form of swearing as any other. With such an oath, or imprecation, David here ratifies the protestation of his innocence, which yet will not justify us in doing the like for every light and trivial cause; for the occasion here was important.

III. Having this testimony of his conscience concerning his innocence, he humbly prays to God to appear for him against his persecutors, and backs himself, not only with the proper persons, but one that knew how to order his cause before God.

1. He prays that God would manifest his wrath against his enemies, and plead their wrath against him; "Lord, they are unjustly angry at me, be thou justly angry with them, and let them know that thou art so," v. 6. In thine anger lift up thyself to the seat of judgment, and make thy power and justice conspicuous, because of the rage, the fury, the outbursts, (the word is plural,) of mine enemies. Thou needest not fear men's wrath against them, who have God's wrath for them. Who knows the power of his anger? 2. He prays that God would plead his cause; Awake for me to judgment; let my cause have a hearing to the judgment which thou hast commanded. That speaks, (1.) The divine power; as he blesses effectually, and is therefore said to command the blessing, so he judges effectually, and is therefore said to command the judgment, which is such as none can countermand; for it certainly carries execution along with it. (2.) The divine purpose and promise; It is the judgment which thou hast determined to pass upon all the enemies of thy people. Thou hast commanded the princes and judges of the earth to right the injured, and vindicate the oppressed; Lord, awake thyself to that judgment. He that loves righteousness, and requires it in others, will, no doubt, execute it himself. Though he seems to connive at wrong, as one asleep, he will awake in due time, (lxxxviii. 65.) and will make it to appear that the delays were no neglects. He prays, (v. 7.) Return thou on high, maintain thine own authority, resume thy royal throne of which they have despised the sovereignty, and the judgment-seat of which they have despised the sentence. Return on high, visibly, and in the sight of all, that they may be universally acknowledged that Heaven itself owns and proclaims, and thine own power make this to point at the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, who, when he returned to heaven, (returned on high in his exalted state,) had all judgment committed to him. Or, it may refer to his second coming, when he shall return on high to this world, to execute judgment upon all. This return his injured people wait for, and pray for, and to it they appeal from the unjust censures of men. He prays again, (v. 8.) Judge me, judge for me, give sentence on my side.

To enforce this suit, [1.] He pleads that his cause was now brought into the proper court; The Lord shall judge the people, v. 8. It is his place; it is his promise. God is the judge; "Therefore, Lord, judge me." He is the Judge of all the earth, and therefore, no doubt, he shall do right, and all will be obliged to acquiesce in his judgment. [2.] He insists upon his integrity as to all the matters in variance between him and Saul, and desires only to be judged according to his integrity, or to have his integrity, and the sincerity of his heart in all the steps he had taken toward his preferment. [3.] He foretells that it would be much for the glory of God, and the edification and comfort of his people, if God would appear for him; So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about; therefore do it for their sakes, that they may attend thee with their praises and services in the courts of thine house.

The period of sin; that it may be brought to an end in ourselves and others. When corruption is mortified, when every wicked way and thought are forsaken, and the stream which ran violently toward the world and the flesh, is driven back, and runs toward God and heaven, then the wickedness of the wicked comes to an end. When there is a general reformation of manners, when atheists and profane are convinced and converted, when a stop is put to the spreading of the infection of sin, so that evil men proceed no further, their folly being made manifest; when the wicked designs of the church's enemies are baffled, and their power broken, and the man of sin is destroyed; then the wickedness of the wicked comes to an end. And this is that which all that love God, and, for his sake, hate evil, desire and pray for. (2.) The perpetuity of righteousness; but establish the just. As we pray that the bad may be made good, so we pray that the good may be made better, that they may not be seduced by the wiles of the wicked, nor shocked by their malice; that they may be confirmed in their choice of the ways of God, and in their resolution to persevere therein; may be firm to the interests of God and religion, and zealous in their endeavours to bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end. His plea to enforce this: And let the wicked be put to confusion before the Lord, and the reins; and therefore he knows the secret wickedness of the wicked, and knows how to bring it to an end; and the secret sincerity of the just he is witness to, and has secret ways of establishing. As far as we have the testimony of an unbiased conscience for us, that in any instance we are wronged and injuriously reflected on us, we may, in singing these verses, lodge our appeal with the righteous God, and be assured that he will own our righteous cause, and will one day, in the last day at furthest, bring forth our integrity as the light.

10. My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart. 11. God judgeth the
righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. 12. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. 13. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors. 14. Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. 15. He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. 16. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate. 17. I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness; and will sing praise to the name of the Lord most high.

David, having lodged his appeal with God by prayer and a solemn profession of his integrity, in the former part of the psalm, in this latter part does, as it were, take out judgment upon the appeal, by faith in the word of God, and the assurance it gives of the happiness and safety of the righteous, and the certain destruction of wicked people that continue in iniquity.

1. David is confident that he shall find God his powerful Protector and Saviour, and the Patron of his oppressed innocency; (v. 10.) "My defence is of God. Not only, God is my Defender, and I shall find him so, but I look for defence and safety in no other; my hope for shelter in a time of danger is placed in God alone; if I have defence, it must be of God." My shield is upon God, so some read it; there is that in God which gives an assurance of protection to all that are his. His name is a strong tower, Ps. lxxviii. 10. Two things David builds this confidence upon. 1. The particular favour God has for all that are sincere; He saves the upright in heart, saves them with an everlasting salvation, and therefore will preserve them to his heavenly kingdom; he saves them out of their present troubles, as far as is good for them; their integrity and uprightness will preserve them. The upright in heart are safe, and ought to think themselves so, under the divine protection. 2. The general respect he has for justice and equity; God judgeth the righteous; he owns every righteous cause, and will maintain it in every righteous man, and will protect him. God is a righteous Judge, so some read it, who not only doeth righteousness himself, but will take care that righteousness be done by the children of men, and will avenge and punish all unrighteousness.

II. He is no less confident of the destruction of all his wicked persecutors, even as many of them as would not repent, to give glory to God. He reads their doom here, for their good, if possible, that they might cease from their enmity; or, however, for his own comfort, that he might not be afraid of them, nor aggrieved at their prosperity and success for a time. He goes into the sanctuary of God, and there understands, 1. That they are children of wrath; they are wicked, and are enemies. 2. The general respect which he has for justice and equity; God judgeth the righteous; he owns every righteous cause, and will maintain it in every righteous man, and will protect him. God is a righteous Judge, who not only doeth righteousness himself, but will take care that righteousness be done by the children of men, and will avenge and punish all unrighteousness. They are every day doing that which is provoking to him, and he resents it, and treasures it up against the day of wrath. As his mercies are new every morning toward his people, so his anger is new every morning against the wicked, upon the fresh occasions given for it by their renewed transgressions. God is angry with the wicked, even in the merriest and most prosperous of their days, even in the days of their devotion: for if they be suffered to prosper, it is in wrath; if they pray, their very prayers are turned into prayer against them. God abides upon them, (John iii. 36.) and continual additions are made to it. 2. That they are children of death, as all the children of wrath are; sons of perdition, marked out for ruin. See their destruction:

1. God will destroy them; the destruction they are reserved for is, destruction from the Almighty, which ought to be a terror to every one of us, for it comes from the wrath of God, (v. 15.) and is here intimated, [1.] That the destruction of sinners may be prevented by their conversion, for it is threatened, with that proviso; If he turn not from his evil way, if he do not let fall his enmity against the people of God, then let him expect it will be his ruin; but if he turn, it is implied that his sins shall be pardoned, and all shall be well. Thus even the threatenings of wrath are introduced with a gracious implication of mercy, enough to justify God for ever in the destruction of them that perish; they might have turned and lived, but they chose rather to go on and die, and their blood is therefore upon their own heads. [2.] That if it be not thus prevented by the conversion of the sinner, it will be prepared for him by the justice of God. In general, (v. 13.) He has prepared for him the instruments of death, of all that death which is the wages of sin. If God will slay, he will not want instruments of death for any creature; he has not the less and weakest may be made so when he pleases. First, Here is a variety of instruments, all which breathe threatenings and slaughter. Here is a sword which wounds and kills at hand, a bow and arrows which wound and kill at a distance, those who think to get out of the reach of God's vindictive justice. If the sinner flies from the iron weapon, yet the bow of steel shall strike him through, Job xxv. 24. Secondly, These instruments of death are all said to be made ready; God has them not to seek, but always at hand; judgments are prepared for scorners; Tothet is prepared of old. Thirdly, While God is preparing his instruments of death, he gives the sinners timely warning of their danger, and space to repent and prevent it. He is slow to punish, and long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish. Fourthly, The longer the destruction is delayed to give time for repentance, the sorer will it be, and the heavier will it fall, and lie for ever, if that time be not so improved, while God is waiting; the sword is in the whetting, and the bow in the drawing. Fifthly, The destruction of impenitent sinners, though it come slowly, yet comes surely; for it is ordained, they are of old ordained to it. Sixthly, Of all sinners, persecutors are set up as the fairest marks of divine wrath; against them, more than any other, God has ordained his arrows. They set God at defiance, but cannot set themselves out of the way of his arrows. (2.) They will destroy themselves, v. 14–16. The sinner is here described as taking a great deal of pains to ruin himself, more pains to damn his soul than, if directed aright, would save it. [1.] It is described by the pains of a labouring woman that brings forth a false conception, v. 14. The sinner's head with its politics concieves mischief, contrives it with a great deal of art, lays the plot deep, and keeps it close; the womb is her heart, for it is in her heart; its passions travails with iniquity, and is in pain to bring forth the malicious projects it is hatching against the people of God. But what does it come to when it comes to the birth? It is falsehood, it is a cheat upon himself, it is a lie in his right hand; he cannot compass what he intended; nor, if he gain his point, will he gain the satisfaction he promised himself; he brings forth wind; (Isa. xxxvi. 18.) stubble; (Isa. xxxvii. 11.)
death, (James i. 15.) that is, falsehood. [2.] By the
pangs of a labouring man, that works hard to dig a
pit, and then falls into it, and perishes in it.
First, This is true, in a sense, of all sinners; they
prepare destruction for themselves, by preparing
themselves for destruction; loading themselves with
guilt, and submitting themselves to their corrup-
tions. Secondly. It is justly true of those, who, in
cartvise mischief against the people of God, or
against their neighbours; by the righteous hand of
God it is made to return upon their own heads;
what they designed for the shame and destruction
of others proves to be their own confusion.

Nor let us jest; forthis is true:

There is no a juster law than, That the author of a
murderous contrivance should perish by it. Some
apply it to Saul, who fell upon his sword.

In singing this psalm, we must do as David here
does; (v. 17.) Praise the Lord according to his
righteousness; give him the glory of that gracious
protection under which he takes his afflicted peo-
ple, and of that just vengeance with which he will
pursue them that afflict them; thus we must sing
to the praise of the Lord most high, who, when his
enemies deal proudly, shows that he is above them.

PSALM VIII.
This psalm is a solemn meditation on, and adoration of,
the glory and greatness of God, of which we are all con-
cerned to think highly and honourably. It begins and
ends with the same acknowledgment of the transcendent
excellency of God's name. It is proposed for proof,
(v. v. 3, 4, 5.) for making known himself,
and his great name to us, v. 1. II. For making use of
the weakest of the children of men, by them to serve his
own purposes, v. 2. III. For making even the heavenly
bodies useful to man, v. 3, 4. IV. For making him to
have dominion over the creatures in this lower world,
and thereby placing him but little lower than the angels,
v. 5-8. This psalm is, in the New Testament, applied to
Christ, and the work of God in him. (1. Rom. xii.)
written over the doctrine given by the children of men
to him, (v. 2. Matt. xxi. 16.) and the honour put upon
the children of men by him, both in his humiliation,
when he was made little lower than the angels, and in
his exaltation, when he was crowned with glory and
honour, v. 5. Heb. ii. 6-8. 1 Cor. xv. 27. When we
are observing the glory of God in the kingdom of nature
and Providence, we should be led by that, and through
that, to the contemplation of his glory in the kingdom
of grace.

To the chief musician upon Gittith. A psalm of
David.

1. O LORD our Lord, how excellent is
thy name in all the earth! who hast
set thy glory above the heavens. 2. Out
of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast
thou ordained strength, because of thine
enemies; that thou mightest cast all the
enemy and the averger.

The psalmist here sets himself to give to God the
glory due to his name. Dr. Hammond grounds a
conjecture upon the title of this psalm, concerning
the occasion of penning it. It is said to be upon
Gittith, which is generally taken for the tune, or
musical contents of which this psalm was to be sung;
but he renders it upon the Gittith, that is,
Goliath the Gittite, whom he vanquished and slew;
(1 Sam. xvii.) that enemy was stilled by him who
was, in comparison, but a babe and a suckling.
The conjecture would be probable enough, but that
we find two other psalms with the same title, lxxxi.
and lxxiv.

Two things David here admires,
1. How plainly God displays his glory himself,
v. 1. He addresses himself to God with all humi-
lity and reverence, as the Lord, and his people's
Lord; O Lord, our Lord. If we believe that God
is the Lord, we must approach and acknowledge him
to be ours. He is ours, for he made us, protects us,
and takes special care of us. He must be ours, for
we are bound to obey him, and submit to him; we
must own the relation, not only when we come to
pray to God, as a plea with him to show us mercy,
but when we come to praise him, as an argument
with ourselves to give him glory: and we shall never
think we can do that with affection enough, if we
consider,

1. How bright God's glory shines even in this
lower world; How excellent is his name in all the
earth! The works of creation and Providence evince
and proclaim to all the world, that there is an in-
finitive Being, the Fountain of all being, power,
and perfection, the sovereign Ruler, powerful Protec-
tor, and bountiful Benefactor, of all the creatures. How
great, how illustrious, how magnificent, is his name
therein! This might and this glory is his name every
where; (Rom. i. 20.) if they shut their eyes against
it, that is their fault. There is no speech or
language, but the voice of God's name either is
heard in it, or may be. But this looks further, to
the gospel of Christ, by which the name of God, as
it is notified by divine revelation, which, before, was
great in Israel only, came to be so in all the earth,
the utmost ends of which have thus been made to
see God's great salvation, Mark xv. 15, 16.

How much brighter it shines in the upper
world; Thou hast set thy glory above the heavens.
(1.) God is infinitely more glorious and excellent than
the noblest of creatures, and those that shine bright-
est. (2.) Whereas we on this earth only hear God's
excellent name, and praise that, the angels and
blessed spirits above see his glory, and praise that,
and yet he is exalted far above even their blessing
and praise. (3) In the exaltation of the Lord Jesus
Christ, God is stunningly bright. He is the Brightness
of his Father's glory, and the express Image of his
person, God set his glory above the heavens, far
above all principalities and powers.

II. How powerfully he discovers it by the weak
est of his creatures; (v. 2.) Out of the mouth
of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength,
or perfected praise, the praise of thy strength, Matth.
xxi. 16. This bespeaks the glory of God, 1. In the
kingdom of nature. The care God takes of little
children, (when they first come into the world, the
most helpless of all animals,) the special protection
they are under, and the provision nature has made
for them, ought to be acknowledged by every one
of us, to the glory of God, as a great instance of his
power and goodness; and the more sensibly,
because we have all had the benefit of it, for to this we
owe it, that we died not from the womb, that the knees
then prevented us, and the breasts, that we should
suck. "This is such an instance of thy goodness, as
may for ever put to silence the enemies of thy glory,
who say, There is no God." 2. In the kingdom
of Providence; in the government of this lower
world he makes use of the children of men, some that
know him, and others that do not, (Isa. xlv. 4.)
and these such as have been babes and sucklings;
now, sometimes he is pleased to serve his own purposes
by the ministry of such as are still, in wisdom and
strength, little better than babes and sucklings. 3.
In the kingdom of grace, the kingdom of the Mes-
siah. It is here foretold, that, by the apostles, who
were looked upon but as babes, unlearned and igno-
rant men, (Acts iv. 13.) mean and despicable, and
by the foolishness of their preaching, the Devil's kingdom should be thrown down, as Jericho's walls were thrown down by the vulgar populace, who, after the battle, called the arm of the Lord, and the rod of his strength; this was ordained to work wonders, not out of the mouth of philosophers or orators, politicians or statesmen, but of a company of poor fishermen, who lay under the greatest external disadvantages; yea, we hear children crying, Howanna to the Son of David, when the chief priests and Pharisees owned him not, but despised and rejected him, as a sinner; (Matt. xxvi. 16.) and by it still the enemy. Sometimes the grace of God appears wonderfully in young children, and he teaches them knowledge, and makes them to understand doctrine, who are but newly weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts, Isa. xxviii. 9. Sometimes the power of God brings to pass great things in his church by very weak and unlikely instruments, and confounds the wise and mighty, by the base, and weak, and foolish, things of the world, that no flesh might glory in his presence, but the excellency of the power might the more evidently appear to be of God, and not of man, 1 Cor. i. 27, 28. This he does, because of his enemies, because they are insolent and haughty, that he may still them, may put them to silence, and put them to shame, and so be justly avenged on the avengers; see Acts iv. 14.—v. 16. The Devil is the great enemy and avenger, and by the preaching of the gospel he was, in a great measure, still, his oracles were silenced, the advocates of his cause were confounded, and unclean spirits themselves not suffered to speak.

In singing this, let us give God the glory of his great name, and of the great things he has done by the power of his gospel, in the chariot of which the exalted Redeemer rides forth, conquering and to conquer, and ought to be attended, not only with our praises, but with our best wishes. Praise is perfected, God is in the highest degree glorified, when strength is ordained out of the mouth of babes and sucklings.

3. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; 4. What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? 5. For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. 6. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things under his feet: 7. All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; 8. The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. 9. O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

David here goes on to magnify the honour of God, by recounting the honours he has put upon man, especially the man Christ Jesus. The condescension of God, in deeming himself fit to dwell among the elevations of the divine glory; how God has condescended in favour to man, the psalmist here observes with wonder and thankfulness, and recommends it to our thoughts. See here,

I. What it is that leads him to admire the condescending favour of God to man; it is his consideration of the lustre and influence of the heavenly bodies, which are within the view of sense; (v. 3.) I consider thy heavens, and there, particularly, the moon and the stars; why does he not take me, tice of the sun, which much excels them all? Probably because it was in a night-walk, by moonlight that the psalmist was moved to sing this psalm, and to make these considerations, with this meditation, when the sun was not within view, but only the moon and the stars, which, though they are not altogether so serviceable to man as the sun is, yet are no less demonstrations of the wisdom, power, and goodness, of the Creator. Observe, 1. It is our duty to consider the heavens. We see them, we cannot but see them; by this, among other things, man is distinguished from the rest of the creation. When the world was in its first state, that, while they are so framed as to look downward to the earth, man is made erect to look upward toward heaven; Or homini sublime dedit, calumque tuerti jussit.—To man he gave an erect countenance, and bade him gaze on the heavens, that thus he may be directed to set his affections on things above; for what we see has not its due influence upon us, unless we consider it. 2. We must always consider the heavens as God's heavens; not only as all the world is his, even the earth and the fulness thereof, but in a more peculiar manner; The heavens, even the heavens, are the Lord's, (cvxvi.) they are the place of the residence of his glory, and we are taught to call him Our Father in heaven. 3. They are therefore his, because they are the work of his fingers; he made them, he made them easily; the stretching out of the heavens needed not any outstretched arm, it was done with a word; he made them with very great curiosity and fineness, like a nice piece of work which the artist makes with his fingers. 4. Even the lesser lights, the moon and stars, show the glory and power of the Father of lights, and furnish us with matter for praise. 5. The heavenly bodies are not only the creatures of the divine power, but subject to the divine government; God not only made them, but ordained them; and the ordinances of heaven can never be altered. But how does this come in here, to magnify God's favour to man? (1.) When we consider how the glory of God shines in the upper world, we may well wonder that he should take cognizance of such a mean creature as man; that he who resides in that bright and blessed part of the creation, and governs it, should humble himself to behold the things done upon this earth; see cxiii. 5, 6. (2.) When we consider of what great use the heavens are to men on earth, and how the lights of heaven are divided among them, we may well say, "Lord, what is man, that thou shouldst settle the ordinances of heaven, with an eye to him and to his benefit, and that his comfort and convenience should be so much consulted in the making of the lights of heaven, and directing their motions?"

II. How he expresses this admiration; v. 4. "Lord, what is man! (Enoeh, sinful, weak, miserable, a creature not forgetful of his duty to thee, that thou art that great and full of honour, (so sinful a creature,) that he should be thus countenanced and favoured!"

Now this refers, 1. To mankind in general. Though man is a worm, and the son of man is a worm, (Job xxv. 6.) yet God puts a respect upon him, and shows him abundance of kindness; man is, above all the creatures in this lower world, the favourite and darling of Providence. For,

(1.) He is in a very honourable rank of beings.
We may be sure he takes place of all the inhabitants of this lower world, for he is made but a little lower than the angels, (v. 5.) lower indeed, because by his body he is allied to the earth, and to the beasts that perish, and yet by his soul, which is spiritual and immortal, he is superior to the highest angels, that he may be truly said to be but a little lower than they, and is in order next to them. He is but for a little while lower than the angels, while his great soul is cooped up in a house of clay, but the children of the resurrection shall be 

PSALMS, IX.

(2.) He is endued with noble faculties and capacities; he that crowned him with glory and honour, he that gave him his being has distinguished him, and qualified him for a dominion over the inferior creatures; for, having made him wiser than the beasts of the earth, and the fowls of heaven, (Job xxxv. 11.) he has made him fit to rule them, and it is fit that they should be ruled by him. Man's reason is his crown of glory; let him not profane that crown by disturbing the use of it, nor forfeit that crown by acting contrary to its dictates.

(3.) He is exalted to a sovereign dominion over the inferior creatures, under God, and is constituted their lord. He that made them, and knows them, and whose own they are, has made man to have dominion over them, v. 6. His charter, by which he holds this royalty, bears equal date with his creation, (Gen. i. 28.) and was renewed after the flood, Gen. ix. 2. God has put all things under man's feet, that he might serve himself; not only of the labour, but of the productions and lives, of the inferior creatures; they are all delivered into his hand, nay, they are all put under his feet. He specifies some of the inferior animals; (v. 7. 8.) not only sheep and oxen, which man takes care of and provides for, but the beasts of the field, as well as those of the fowl, yea, and those creatures which are most at a distance from man, as the fowl of the air, yea, and the fish of the sea, which live in another element, and pass unseen through the paths of the seas. Man's arts to take these; much more the use of them are much stronger, and many of them are much swifter, than he, yet, one way or other, he is too hard for them, Jam. iii. 7. Every kind of beasts, and birds, and things in the sea, is tamed, and has been tamed; he has likewise liberty to use them as he has occasion; Rise, Peter, kill and eat, Acts x. 15. Every time we partake of fish or of fowl, we realize this dominion which man has over the works of God's hands; and it is a reason for our subjection to God, our chief Lord, and to his dominion over us.

2. But this refers, in a particular manner, to Jesus Christ; of him we are taught to expound it, (Heb. ii. 6-8.) where the apostle, to prove the sovereign dominion of Christ, both in heaven and in earth, shows that he is that man, that son of man, here spoken of, whom God has crowned with glory and honour, and made to have dominion over the works of his hands. And it was much more that the greatest favours that showed to the human race, and the greatest honour that ever was put upon the human nature, were exemplified in the incarnation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus; these far exceed the favours and honours done us by creation and providence, though they also are great, and far more than we deserve.

We have reason humbly to value ourselves by it, and thankfully to admire the grace of God in it.

(1.) That Jesus Christ assumed the nature of man, and in that nature humbled himself. He became the Son of man, a partaker of flesh and blood; being so, God visited him; which some apply to his sufferings for us, for it is said, (Heb. ii. 5.) For the suffering of death, a visitation in wrath, he was crowned with glory and honour. God visited him; having laid upon him the iniquity of us all, he reckoned with him for it, visited him with a rod and with stripes, that we by them might be healed. He was, for a little while, (so the apostle interprets it, much lower than the angels, when he took upon him the form of a servant, and made himself of no reputation.

(2.) That, in that nature, he is exalted to be Lord of all. God the Father exalted him, because he had humbled himself; crowned him with glory and honour, the glory which he had with him before the worlds were; set him at his own right hand; constituted him not only the Head of the church, but Head over all things to the church; and gave all things into his hand, intrusted him with the administration of the kingdom of providence, in conjunction with, and subserviency to, the kingdom of grace. All the creatures are put under his feet; and, even in the days of his flesh, he gave some specimen of his power over them, as when he commanded the winds and the seas, and appointed a fish to pay his tribute. With good reason, therefore, does the psalmist conclude as he began, Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth, which has been honoured with the presence of the Redeemer, and is still enlight ened by his gospel, and governed by his wisdom and power! In singing this, and praying it over, though we must not forget to acknowledge, with suitable affections, God's common favours to mankind, particularly in the serviceableness of the inferior creatures to us, we yet must especially set ourselves to give glory to our Lord Jesus, by confessing that he is Lord, submitting to him as our Lord, and waiting to see all these things put under him, and all his enemies made his footstool.

PSALM IX.

In this psalm, I. David praises God for pleading his cause, and giving him victory over his enemies and the enemies of his country, (v. 1. 6.) and calls upon others to join with him in his songs of praise, v. 11. II. He prays to God, that he might have still further occasion to praise him, for his own deliverances and the confusion of his enemies, v. 13. 14. 19. 20. III. He triumphs in the assurance he had of God's judging the world, (v. 7. 8.) protecting his oppressed people, (v. 9. 10. 16.) and bringing his and their implacable enemies to ruin, v. 15. 17. This is very applicable to the kingdom of the Messiah, the enemies of which have been, in part, destroyed already, and shall be yet more and more, till they all be made his footstool; which we are to assure ourselves of; that God may have the glory, and we may take the comfort.

To the chief musician upon Math-labben. A Psalm of David.

I WILL praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart. I will show forth all thy marvellous works. 2. I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou Most High. 3. When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence. 4. For thou hast maintained my right and my cause, thou sattest in the throne judging right. 5. Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked; thou hast put out their name for ever and ever. 6. O thou enemy! destructions are come to a perpetual end; and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them. 7. But the Lord shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment; 8. And he shall judge the
world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness. 9. The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. 10. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

The title of this psalm gives a very uncertain sound concerning the occasion of penning it. It is upon Muth-labben, which some make to refer to the death of Goliath, others of Nabai, others of Absalom; but I incline to think it signifies only some tune, or musical instrument, to which this psalm was intended to be sung; and that the enemies he is here triumphing in the defeat of, are the Philistines, and the other neighbouring nations that opposed his father in the throne, whom he contested with, and subdued, in the beginning of his reign, 2 Sam. vi. 8.

In these verses,

I. David excites and engages himself to praise God for his mercies, and the great things he had of late done for him and his government, v. 1, 2.

Note. 1. God expects suitable returns of praise from those for whom he has done marvellous works. 2. If we would praise God really, we must praise him in sincerity, with our hearts, and not only with our lips, and be lively and fervent in the duty, with our whole heart. 3. When we give thanks for some one particular mercy, we should take occasion thence to remember former mercies, and so to show forth all his marvellous works. 4. Holy joy is the life of thankful praise, as thankful praise is the language of holy joy; I will be glad and rejoice in thee. 5. If we mean to be glad in God only; I will be glad and rejoice in thee, not in the gift so much as in the Giver. 6. Joy and praise are properly expressed by singing psalms. 7. When God has showed himself to be above the proud enemies of the church, we must take occasion thence to give glory to him as the Most High.

8. The triumphs of the Redeemer ought to be the triumphs of the redeemed; see Rev. xii. 10.—xix. 5.

II. He acknowledges the almighty power of God, as that which the strongest and stoutest of his enemies were no way able to contest with, or stand before, v. 3. But, 1. They are forced to turn back; their policy and their courage fail them, so that they cannot, they dare not, push forward in their enterprises, but retire with precipitation. 2. When once they turn back, they fall and perish; even their retreat will be their ruin, and they will save themselves no more by flying than by fighting. If Haman begin to fall before Mor-decai, he is a lost man, and shall prevail no more; see Esth. vi. 13. 3. The presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power, are sufficient for the destruction of his and his people's enemies. That is easily done, which a man does with his very presence; with that, God confounds his enemies, such a presence is. This verse sets forth, when our Lord Jesus, with one word, I am he, made his enemies to fall back at his presence; (John xviii. 6.) he could, at the same time, have made them perish. 4. When the enemies of God's church are put to confusion, we must ascribe it to the power, not of instruments, but of his presence, and give him all the glory.

III. He gives to God the glory of his righteousness, in his appearing on his behalf; (v. 4.) Thou hast maintained my right and my cause, my righteous cause: when that came on, thou satest in the throne, judging right. Observe, 1. God sits in the

throne of judgment; to him belongs to decide controversies, to determine appeals, to right the injured, and to punish the injuries; for he has said, Vengeance is mine. 2. We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, and that with him there is no unrighteousness. Far be it from God, that he should pervert justice. If there seems to us to be some irregularity in the present decisions of Providence, yet these, instead of shaking our belief of God's truthfulness, tend to strengthen the belief of the judgment to come, which will set all to rights. 3. Whoever disown and desert a just and injured cause, we may be sure that the righteous God will maintain it, and plead it with jealousy, and will never suffer it to be run down.

IV. He records, with joy, the triumphs of the God of heaven over all the powers of hell, and attends these triumphs with his praises, v. 5. By three steps the power and justice of God had proceeded against the heathen, and wicked people, who were enemies to the king God had lately set up upon his holy hill of Zion. 1. He had checked them; Thou hast rebuked the heathen; hast given them real proofs of thy displeasure against them. This he did, before he destroyed them, that they might have taken warning by the rebukes of Providence, and so have prevented their own destruction. (2.) He had cut them off; Thou hast destroyed cities, and rescued our nation from this great and strong nation, and some are made monuments of God's vindictive justice, and destructive power, in this world. (3.) He has buried them in oblivion and perpetual infamy; had put out their name for ever, that they should never be remembered with any respect.

V. He exults over the enemy whom God thus appears against; (v. 6.) Thou hast destroyed cities. Either, 1. Thou, O enemy, hast destroyed our cities, and all in them, in intention and imagination, that is, so far as the destination of them brought upon their country. It may be taken either way; for the psalmist will have the enemy to know. 1. That their destruction is just; and that God was but reckoning with them for all the mischief which they had done, and designed against his people. The malicious and vexatious neighbours of Israel, as the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and Syrians, had made incursions upon them, and wrought destruction and slaughter, and forced them to fight their battles, and destroyed their cities, and done what they could to make their memorial perish with them; but now the wheel was turned upon them, their destructions of Israel were come to a perpetual end, they shall now cease to spoil, and must themselves be spoiled, Isa. xxxiii. 1. 2. That it is total and final, such a destruction as should make a perpetual end of them, so that the very memorial of their cities should perish with them. So devouring a time is, and much more, such desolations do the righteous judgments of God make upon sinners, that great and populous cities have been reduced to such ruins, that their very memorial is perished, and those who have sought them could not find where they stood; but we look for a city that has stronger foundations.

VI. He comforts himself, and others, in God, and pleases himself in God. 1. With the thoughts of his eternity. On this earth we see nothing durable, even strong cities are buried in rubbish, and forgotten; but the Lord shall endure for ever, v. 7. There is no change of his being; his felicity, power, and perfection, are out of the reach of all the combined forces of hell and earth; they may put an end to our liberties, our privileges, our lives, but our God is still the same, and sits even upon the floods, unshaken, undisturbed, xxxi. 10.—vii. 2. 2. With the thoughts of his sovereignty both in
14. He has prepared his throne, has fixed it by his infinite wisdom, has fixed it by his infinite counsel. It is the great support and solace of good people, when the power of the church's enemies is threatening, and the posture of its affairs melancholy and perplexed, that God now rules the world, and will shortly judge the world.

3. With the thoughts of his justice and righteousness in all the administrations of his government. He does all, every day, he will do all; at the last day, according to the eternal, unalterable, rules of equity; (v. 8.) He shall judge the world, all persons and all controversies, shall minister judgment to the people, shall determine their lot both in this and in the future state, in righteousness and in uprightness, so that there shall not be the least colour of exception against it.

4. With the thoughts of that peculiar favour which God bears to his own people, and the special protection which he takes them under. The Lord, who endures for ever, is their everlasting Strength and Protection; he that judges the world, will be sure to judge for them, when at any time they are injured or distressed; (v. 9.) He will be a refuge for the oppressed; a high place, a strong place, for the oppressed, in time of trouble. It is the lot of God's people to be oppressed in this world, and to have troublesome times appointed to them; perhaps God may not immediately appear for them as their Deliverer and Avenger; but, in the midst of their distresses, they may by faith fly to him as their Refuge, and may depend upon his power and promise for their safety, so that no real hurt shall be done them.

5. With the thoughts of that sweet satisfaction and repose of mind which they have, that make God their Refuge; (v. 10.) "They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee, as I have done;" (for the grace of God is the same in all the saints,) "and then they will find, as I have found, that thou dost not forsake them that seek thee;" for the glory of God is the same towards all the saints.

Note, (1.) The better God is known, the more he is trusted. Those who know him to be a God of infinite wisdom, will trust him farther than they can see him: (Job xxxv. 14.) Those who know him to be a God of all mighty power, will trust him when creature-confidence fails, and they have nothing else to trust to, (2 Chron. xx. 12.) and those who know him to be a God of infinite grace and goodness, will trust him, though he slay them; (Job xiv. 14.) Those who know him to be a God of inviolable truth and faithfulness, will rejoice in his word of promise, and rest upon that, though the performance be deferred, and intermediate providences seem to contradict it. Those who know him to be the Father of spirits, and an everlasting Father, will trust him with their souls as their main care, and trust in him at all times, even to the end. (2.) The more God is trusted, the more he is sought unto prayer, shall be with him by faithful and fervent prayer, and by a constant care to approve ourselves to him in the whole course of our conversation. (3.) God never did, nor ever will, disown or desert any that duly seek to him, and trust in him. Though he afflict them, he does not leave them comfortless; though he seem to forsake them for a while, yet he will gather them with everlasting mercies.

11. Sing praises to the Lord, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings. 12. When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them: he forgettest not the cry of the humble. 13. Have mercy upon me, O Lord; consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that liestest me up from the gates of death: 14. That I may show forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in thy salvation. 15. The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made; in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. 16. The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgaion. Selah. 17. The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. 18. For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever. 19. Arise, O Lord: let not man prevail; let the heathen be judged in thy sight. 20. Put them in fear, O Lord; that the nations may know themselves to be but men. Selah.

In these verses, I. David, having praised God himself, calls upon and inquires others to praise him likewise, v. 11. Those who believe God is ready to be praised, not only desire to do that work better themselves, but desire that others also may join with them in it, and would gladly be instrumental to bring them to it; Sing praises to the Lord which dwelleth in Zion. As the special residence of his glory is in heaven, so the special residence of his grace is in his church, of which Zion was a type: there he meets his people with his promises and graces, and there he expects they should meet him with their praises and services. In all our praises, we should have an eye to God as dwelling in Zion, in a special manner present in the assemblies of his people, as their Protector and Patron. He resolved himself to show forth God's marvellous works, (v. 1.) and here he calls upon others to declare among the people his doings: he commands his own subjects to do it, for the honour of God, of their country, and of their holy religion; he courts his neighbours to do it; to sing praises, not, as hitherto, to their false gods, but to Jehovah who dwelleth in Zion, to the God of Israel, and to own among the heathen, that the Lord has done great things for his people Israel, xxxvi. 3, 4. Let them particularly take notice of the justice of God in avenging the blood of his people Israel on the Philistines, and their other wicked neighbours, who had, in making war upon them, used them barbarously, and given them no quarter, v. 12. When God comes to make inquisition for blood by his judgments on earth, before he comes to do it by the judgment of the great day, he remembers them, remembers every drop of the innocent blood which they have shed, and will return it sevenfold upon the head of the blood-thirsty; he will give them blood to drink, for they are worthy. This assurance he might well build upon that word, (Deut. xxxii. 43.) He will avenge the blood of his servants, and the blood of his martyrs. There is a day of blood; God will make inquisition for blood, when he will discover what has been shed secretly, and avenge what it has been shed unjustly; see Isa. xxvi. 21. Jer. li. 35. In that day, it will appear how precious the blood of God's people is to him, (xxxii. 14.) when it must all be accounted for. It will then appear that he has not forgotten the cry of the humble, neither the cry of their blood, nor the cry of their prayers, but that both are sealed up among his treasures.
II. David, having praised God for former mercies and deliverances, earnestly prays that God would still appear for him; for he sees not yet all things put under him. He prays, (1.) That God would be compassionate to him; (v. 13.) *Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble;* and he makes thus a general and general prayer for mercy, to be spoken for me, must depend upon mere mercy for relief." 2. That he would be concerned for him; he is not particular in his request, lest he should seem to prescribe to God; but refers himself to the wisdom and will of God, in this modest request; *"Lord, consider my trouble, and do for me as thou thinkest fit."* He pleads, (1.) The malice of his enemies, the trouble which he suffered of them that hated him, and those that envied his prosperity. (2.) That experience he had of divine succors, and the expectation he now had of the continuance of them, as the necessity of his case required; *"O thou that liestest me up, that canst do it, that hast done it, that wilt do it, whose prerogative it is to lift up thy people from the gates of death."* We are never brought so low, so near to death, but God can raise us up. If he has saved us from spiritual and eternal death, we may hence take encouragement of the power and grace of God, and have all other occasion of good cheer and very pleasant help to us. (3.) His sincere purpose to praise God, when his victories should be completed; (v. 14.) *"Lord, save me; not that I may have the comfort and credit of it, but that thou mayest have the glory, that I may show forth all thy praise, and that publicly, in the gates of the daughter of Zion;"* there God was said to dwell, (v. 11.) and there David would attend him, with joy in God's salvation, typical of the great salvation which was to be wrought out by the Son of David.

III. David by faith foresees and foretells the certain ruin of all wicked people, both in this world and in that to come. 1. In this world, v. 15, 16. God executes judgment upon them, when the measure of their iniquities is full, and does it so, as, (1.) To put shame upon them, and make their fall inglorious; for they sink into the pit which they themselves dugged, (viii. 15.) they are taken in the net which they themselves laid for the entangling of God's people, and they are snared in the work of their own hands. In all the struggles David had with the Philistines, they were the aggressors, 2 Sam. v. 17, 22. And other nations were subdued by those wars in which they embroiled themselves. The overruling providence of God frequently so orders it, that their persecutors and oppressors are brought to ruin by those very projects which they intended to be destructive to the people of God. Drunkards kill themselves; prodigals beggar themselves; the contentious bring mischief upon themselves; and thus men's sins may be read in their punishment, and it becomes visible to all, that the destruction of sinners is not only meritoriously, but efficiently, of themselves, which will fill them with the utmost confusion. (2.) So as to get honour to himself; *"The Lord is known, he makes himself known to them that hate him, and is feared by them that hate him;"* which is known that there is a God who judges in the earth; that he is a righteous God, and one that hates sin, and will punish it. In these judgments, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. The psalmist, therefore, adds here, a note extraordinary, commanding special regard, *Heighson;* it is a thing to be carefully observed and meditated upon. What we see of the judgments and what we believe of the judgment to come, ought to be the subject of our frequent and serious meditations. 2. In the other world; (v. 17.) *The wicked shall be turned into hell,* as captives into the prison-house, even all the nations that forget God. Note, (1.) Forgetfulness of God is the cause of all the wickedness of the wicked. (2.) There are nations of those that forget God, multitudes that live without God in the world, many great and many mighty nations, that never regard him, nor desire the knowledge of his ways. (3.) Hell will, at last, be the portion of these, and their portion is to be tormented and tormented; *Sheol, a pit of destruction, in which they and all their comforts will be for ever lost and buried. Though there be nations of them, yet they shall be turned into hell, like sheep into the slaughter-house; (xlii. 14.) and their being so numerous, will neither be any security or ease to them, nor any loss to God, or the least impeachment of his goodness.

IV. David prays that the righteous people of God may wait for his salvation, though it should be long deferred, v. 18. The needy may think themselves, and others may think them, forgotten for a while, and their expectation of help from God may seem to have perished, and to have been for ever frustrated; but he that believes does not make haste; the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak: we may build upon it as undeniably true, that God's people, God's elect shall not always be neglected by him, and shall not be without hopes from the promise. God will not only remember them, at last, but will make it appear that he never did forget them; it is impossible he should, though a woman may forget her sucking child.

V. He concludes with prayer, that God would humble the pride, break the power, and blast the projects, of all the wicked enemies of his church; *"Arise, O Lord, (v. 19.) stir up thyself, exert thy power, take thy seat, and deal with all these proud and daring enemies of thy people, and cause, and people."* 1. *"Lord, restrain them, and set bounds to their malice. Let not man prevail, consult thine own honour, and let not weak and mortal men prevail against the kingdom and interest of the almighty and immortal God. Shall mortal man be too hard for God, too strong for his Maker?"* 2. *"Lord, reckon with them, let the heathen be judged in thy sight, let them be plainly called to an account for all the dishonour done to thee, and the mischief done to thy people."* Impenitent sinners will be punished in God's sight; and, when their day of grace is over, the bowels even of infinite mercy will not relent toward them, Rev. xiv. 10. 3. *"Put them in fear, O Lord; (v. 20.) strike a terror upon them, make them afraid with thy judgments. God knows how to make the strongest and stoutest of men to tremble, and to flee when none pursues; and thereby he makes them know and own that they are but men, and God is the most weak men, unable to stand before the holy God; sinful men, the guilt of whose consciences makes them subject to alarms. Note, It is a very desirable thing, much for the glory of God, and the peace and welfare of the universe, that men should know, and consider, themselves to be but men, depending creatures, mutable, mortal, and accountable. In singing this, we must give to God the glory of his justice; in pleading by man, we must turn his and their enemies, and encourage ourselves to wait for the year of the redeemed and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion, even the final destruction of all anti-Christian powers and factions, to which many of the ancients apply this psalm.

**PSALM X.**

The Septuagint translation joins this psalm with the ninth, and makes them but one; but the Hebrew makes it a distinct psalm; the scope and style are certainly different. In this psalm, David complains of the wickedness of the wicked, describes the dreadful wrath of God against sin, and what his and their enemies, and encourage ourselves to wait for the year of the redeemed and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion, even the final destruction of all anti-Christian powers and factions, to which many of the ancients apply this psalm.
people) and notices the delay of God's appearing against them, v. 1.-11. 11. He prays to God to appear against them for the relief of his people, and comforts himself with the hopes that he would do so in due time, v. 12.-18.

1. Wh
dy standest thou afar off, O Lord? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble? 2. The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined. 3. For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth. 4. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. 5. His ways are always grievous; thy judgments are far above out of his sight: as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them. 6. He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity. 7. His mouth is full of cursing and deceitful fraud; under his tongue is mischief and vanity. 8. He sitteth in the lurking-places of the villages; in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor. 9. He lieth in wait secretly, as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net. 10. He crougeth, and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones. 11. He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it.

David, in these verses, discovers,

I. A very great affection to God and his favour; for, in the time of trouble, that which he complains of most feelingly, is, God's withdrawing his gracious presence; (v. 1.) "Why standest thou afar off, as one unconcerned in the indignities done to thy name, and the injuries done to thy people?" Note, God's withdrawals are very grievous to his people at any time, but especially in times of trouble. Outward deliverance is afar off, and is hidden from us, and then we think God is afar off, and we therefore want inward comfort; but that is our own fault, it is because we judge by outward appearance, we stand afar off from God by our unbelief, and then we complain that God stands afar off from us.

II. A very great indignation against sin, the sins that made the time perilous, 2 Tim. iii. 1. He beholds the transgressors, and is grieved, is amazed, and brings to his heavenly Father their evil report: not in a way of vain-glory, boasting before God that he was not as these publicans, (Luke xviii. 11.) nor in the sense of any personal resentments, piques, or passions, of his own; but as one that laid to heart that which is offensive to God, and all good men, and earnestly desired a reformation of manners. Passionate and satirical invectives against bad men do more hurt than good; if we will speak of their badness, let it be to God in prayer, for he alone can make them better.

This long representation of the wickedness of the wicked, is here summed up in the first words of it, (v. 2.) The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor; where two things are laid to their charge, pride and persecution; the former the cause of the latter. Proud men will have all about them to be of their mind, of their religion, to say as they say, to submit to their dominion, and acquiesce in their dictates; and those that either eclipse them, or will not yield to them, they malign, and hate with an inveterate hatred. Tyranny, both in state and church, owes its original to pride. The psalmist, having thus described a short prayer, a prayer in a parenthesis; which is an advantage, and no prejudice to the sense; Let them be taken, as proud people often are, in the devices that they have imagined, v. 2. Let their counsels be turned headlong, and let them fall headlong by them.

These two heads of the charge are here enlarged upon.

1. They are proud, very proud, and extremely conceited of themselves; justly, therefore, did he wonder that God did not speedily appear against them, for he hates pride, and resists the proud. (1.) The sinner proudly glories in his power and success. He boasts of his heart's desire, boasts that he can do all he pleases, (as if God himself could not control him,) and that he has all he wished for, and has carried his point. Ephraim said, I am become rich, I have found me out substance, Hos. xi. 8. "Now, Lord, is it for thy glory to suffer a sinful man thus to pretend to the sovereignty and felicity of a God?"

(2.) He proudly contradicts the judgment of God, which, we are sure, is according to truth; for he blesses the covetous, whom the Lord abhors. See how God and men differ in their sentiments of persons; God abhors covetous worldlings, who make money their god, and idolize it; he looks upon them as his enemies, and will have no communion with them; The love of money is the root of all evil. But proud persecutors bless them, and approve their sayings, xliv. 13. They applaud them as wise, whom God pronounces foolish; (Luke xii. 20.) they justify them as innocent, whom God condemns as deeply guilty before him; and they admire them as happy in having their portion in this life, whom God declares, upon that account, truly miserable; Thou, in thy lifetime, receivedst what good things doth God.

(3.) He proudly casts off the thoughts of God, and all dependence upon him, and devotion to him; (v. 4.) the wicked, through the pride of his countenance, that pride of his heart which appears in his very countenance, (Prov. vi. 17.) will not seek after God; nor entertain the thoughts of him; God is not in all his thoughts, not in any of them. All his thoughts are, that there is no God. See here, [1.] The nature of impiety and irreligion; it is, not seeking after God, and not having him in our thoughts. No inquiry is made after him, (Job xxxv. 10. Jer. ii. 6.) there is no desire toward him, no communion with him, and a secret wish to have no dependence upon him, and not to be beholden to him. Wicked people will not seek after God, that is, will not call upon him; they live without prayer, and that is living without God. They have many thoughts, many projects and devices, but no thoughts about God, no dependence on God; they are not pious, they are not religious.

[2.] The cause of this impiety and irreligion; and that is pride. Men will not seek after God, because they think they have no need of him, their own hands are sufficient for them; they think it a thing below them to be religious, because religious people are few, and mean, and despised, and the restraints of religion will be a disparagement to them.

(4.) He proudly makes light of God's commandments and judgments; (v. 5.) His ways are always grievous; he is very daring and resolute in his sin-
ful courses, he will have his way, though ever so tiresome to himself, and vexatious to others; he travails with pain in his wicked courses, and yet his pride makes him wilful and obstinate in them. God's judgments (what he commands, and what he threatens for the breach of his commands) are 

above of his sight; he is not sensible of his duty by the law of God, nor of his danger by the wrath and curse of God. Tell him of God's authority over him, he turns it off with this, that he never saw God, and therefore does not know that there is a God; he is in the height of heaven, and Quære supra nos nihil ad nos—We have nothing to do with them. 2. He turns the name of God's judgments, will be executed upon those that persist on still in their trespasses, and he will not be convinced that there is any reality in them; they are far above of his sight, and therefore he thinks they are mere bugbears.

(5.) He proudly despises all his enemies, and looks upon them with the utmost disdain; he puffs at them whom God is preparing to be a scourge and ruin to him, as if he couldûttle them all, and was able to make them of no great worth to him. But as it is impolitic to despise an enemy, so it is impious to despise any instrument of God's wrath.

(6.) He proudly sets trouble at defiance, and is confident of the continuance of his own prosperity; (v. 6.) He hath said in his heart, and pleased himself with the thought, I shall not be moved; my goods are laid up for many years, and I shall never be in adversity: like Babylon, that said, I shall be a lady for ever, Isa. xlvii. 7. Rev. xviii. 7. Those are nearest ruin, who thus set it furthest from them. 2. They are persecutors, cruel persecutors: for the gratifying of their pride and covetousness, and, in opposition to God and religion, they are very oppressive to all within their reach. Observe, concerning these persecutors:

(1.) That they are very bitter and malicious; (v. 7.) His mouth is full of cursing. Those he cannot do a real mischief to, yet he will spit his venom at, and breathe out the slaughter which he cannot execute. Thus have God's faithful worshippers been anathematized, and cursed, with bell, book, and candle. Where there is a heart full of malice, there is commonly a mouth full of curses.

(2.) That they are very false and treacherous. There is mischief designed, but it is hid under the tongue, not to be discerned, for his mouth is full of deceit and vanity; he has learned of the Devil to deceive, and so to destroy; with this his hatred is covered, Prov. xxvi. 26. He cares not what lies he tells, nor what oaths he breaks, nor what arts of dissimulation he uses to compass his ends.

(3.) That they are very cunning and crafty in carrying on their designs. They have ways and means that they intend, that they may the more effectually accomplish it. Like Esau, that cunning hunter, he sits in the lurking places, in the secret places, and his eyes are privy set to do mischief; (v. 8.) not because he is ashamed of what he does, (if he blushed, there were some hopes he would repent,) nor because he is afraid of the wrath of God, for he imagines God will never call him to an account, (v. 11.) but because his heart is afraid, lest the discovery of his designs should be the breaking of his head. Perhaps he refers particularly to robbers and highwaymen, who lie in wait for honest travellers, to make a prey of them and what they have.

(4.) That they are very cruel and barbarous. Their malice is against the innocent, who never provoked them; against the poor, who cannot resist them; and over whom it will be no glor'y to triumph. Those are perfectly lost to all honesty and honour, against whose mischievous designs neither innocence nor poverty will be any man's security. Those that have power, ought to protect the innocent, and provide for the poor; yet he will be the destroyer of them when God shall have occasion to be. And what do they aim at? It is to catch the poor, and draw them into their net, get them into their power only, to strip them only, but to murder them; they hunt for the precious life. They are God's poor people that they are persecuting, against whom they bear a mortal hatred, for his sake whose they are, and whose image they bear, and therefore they lie in wait to murder them; he lies in wait as a lion that thirsts after blood, and feeds with pleasure upon the prey. The Devil, whose agent he is, is compared to a roaring lion, that seeks not what, but whom, he may devour.

(5.) That they are base and hypocritical; (v. 10.) He crouches, and humbles himself, as beasts of prey do, that they may get their prey within their reach. This intimates, that the sordid spirits of persecutors and oppressors will stoop to any thing, though ever so mean, for the compassing of their wicked designs; witness the scandalous practices of Saul, when he hunted David. It intimates, besides, that they cover their malicious designs with the appearance of meekness and humility, and kindness to those they design the greatest mischief to; they seem to humble themselves, as if to take cognizance of the poor, and concern themselves in their concerns, when it is in order to make them fail, to make a prey of them.

(6.) That they are very impious and atheistical. v. 11. They could not thus break through all the laws of justice and goodness toward man, if they had not first shaken off all sense of religion, and risen up in rebellion against the light of its most sacred and self-evident principles; He hath said in his heart, God has forgotten. When his own conscience rebuked him for his wickedness, and threatened him with the consequences of it, and asked, how he would answer it to the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, he turned it off with this, God has forsaken the earth, Ezek. viii. 12.—ix. 9. This is a blasphemous reproach. [1.] Upon God's omniscience and providence, as if he could not, or did not, see what men do in this lower world. [2.] Upon his holiness and the rectitude of his nature, as if, though he did see, yet he did not dislike, but was willing to connive at, the most unnatural and inhuman villanies. [3.] Upon his justice and the equity of his government, as if, though he did see and dislike the wickedness of the wicked, yet he would never reckon with them, nor punish them for it, either because he could not, or durst not, or was not inclined to it. Let those that suffer by proud oppressors, hope that God will, in due time, appear for them; for those that are abusive to them, are abusive to God Almighty too.

In singing this, and praying it over, we should have our hearts much affected with a holy indignation at the wickedness of those that cast into their power compassion for the oppressed, and a pious zeal for the glory and honour of God, with a firm belief that he will, in due time, right the injured, and reckon with the injurious.

12. Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up thy hand: forget not the humble. 13. Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it. 14. Thou hast seen it; for thou beheld est mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand: the poor committed himself unto
15. Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man: seek out his wickedness till thou find none. 16. The Lord is King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land. 17. Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart; thou wilt cause thine ear to hear; 18. To judge the fatherless and the oppressor, that the man of the earth may no more oppress.

David here, upon the foregoing representation of the inhumanity and impiety of the oppressors, gives an address to God: Wherein observe 1. What he cries for; 1. That God would himself appear; (v. 12.) "Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up thine hand, manifest thy presence and providence in the affairs of this lower world. Arise, O Lord, to the confusion of those who say that thou hiddest thy face. Manifest thy power, exert it for the maintaining of thine own cause, lift up thine hand to give a fatal blow to these oppressors; let thine everlasting arm be made bare. 2. That he would appear for his people; "Forget not the humble, the afflicted, that are poor, that are made poorer, and are poor in spirit. Their oppressors, in their presumption, say that thou hast forgotten them; and they, in their despair, are ready to say the same; Lord, make it to appear that they are both mistaken." 3. That he would appear against their persecutors, v. 15. (1.) That he would disable them to do any further mischief, Break thou the arm of the wicked, take away his sport, and his delights. 4. That he would design and ordain the people to be ensnared, Job xxxiv. 30. We read of oppressors whose dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged, (Dan. vii. 12.) that they might have time to repent. (2.) That he would deal with them for the mischief they had done; "Seek out his wickedness; let that be all brought to light, which he thought should for ever lie undiscovered; let that be all brought to account, which he thought should for ever go unpunished. 5. That all the fruits of his evil deeds remain unreckoned for, none of his designs undeceived, and none of his partisans indestructed.

II. What he pleads, for the encouraging of his own faith in these petitions.

1. He pleads the great affronts which these proud oppressors put upon God himself; "Lord, it is thine own cause that we beg thou wouldest appear in, the enemies have made it so, and therefore it is not for thy glory to let them go unpunished;" (v. 13.) Wherefore do the wicked contends God? He does so; for he says, "Thou wilt not require it; thou wilt never call us to an account for what we do;" than which they could not put a greater indignity upon the righteous God. The psalmist here speaks with astonishment, (1.) At the wickedness of the wicked; "Why do they speak so impiously, why so abominably? It is a great trouble to good men, to think what contempt the wicked cast by the sin of sinners, upon his precepts, his promises, his threatenings, his favours, his judgments; all are despised and made light of. Wherefore do the wicked thus contend God? It is because they do not know him. (2.) At the patience and forbearance of God toward them; "Why are they suffered thus to contend God? Why does he not immediately vindicate himself, and take vengeance upon them?" It is because the day of reckoning is yet to come, when the measure of their iniquity is full.

2. He pleads the notice God took of the impiety and iniquity of these oppressors; (v. 14.) "Do the persecutors encourage themselves with a groundless fancy, that thou wilt never see it? Let the persecuted encourage themselves with a well-grounded faith, not only that thou hast seen it, but that thou dost behold it, even all the mischief that is done by the hands, and all the spite and malice that lurk in the hearts of these oppressors; it is all known to thee. 15. Thy hand is cast upon the Lord's adversaries, they have seen it, and dest behold it, but thou wilt require it, wilt recompense it into their bosoms, by thy just and avenging hand."

3. He pleads the dependence which the oppressor had upon him; "The poor commits himself unto thee, each of them does so, I among the rest. They rely on thee, as their Patron and Protector, they refer themselves to thee as their Judge, in whose determination they acquiesce, and at whose disposal they are entire. He that beareth his cause to thee," (so some read it,) "not prescribing, but subscribing, to thy wisdom and will. They thus give thee honour, as much as their oppressors dishonour thee. They are thy willing subjects, and put themselves under thy protection; therefore protect them."

4. He pleads the relation in which God is pleased to stand to us. (1.) As a great God, he is King for ever and ever. (2.) He is the Helper of the fatherless, he is the Judge, he is to administer justice for the restraint and terror of evil-doers, and the protection and praise of them that do well. To whom should the injured subjects appeal, but to the sovereign? Help, my Lord, O King; Avenger me of mine adversary. "Lord, let all that pay homage and tribute to thee as their King, have the benefit of thy government, and find thee their Refuge. Thou art an everlasting King, which no earthly prince is, and therefore canst and oughtest to be respected, and to be obeyed, and judged in all matters; to be a Father to the fatherless, (lxvii. 5.) a Helper of the helpless."

5. He pleads the experience which God's church and people had of God's readiness to appear for them. (1.) He had dispersed and extirpated their enemies; (v. 16.) The heathen are perished out of his land; the remainder of the Canaanites, the seven devoted nations, which have long been as thorns in the eyes, and goads in the sides, of Israel, are now, at length, utterly rooted out; and that is an encouragement to us to hope that God will, in like manner, break the arm of the oppressive Israelites, that were, in some respects, worse than heathens. (2.) He had heard and answered their prayers; (v. 17.) "Lord, thou hast many a time heard the desire of the humble, and never saidst to a distressed suppliant, Seek, in vain. Why may not we hope for the continuance and repetition of the wonders, the favours, which our fathers told us of?"

6. He pleads their expectations from God, pursuant to their experience of him, "Thou hast heard, therefore thou wilt cause thine ear to hear, as vi. 9. Thou art the same, and thy power, and promise, and relation, to thy people the same; and the work and workings of grace are the same in them; why therefore may we not hope that he who has been, will still be, will ever be, a God hearing prayer? They observe, (1.) In what method God hears prayer. He first prepares the heart of his people, and then gives them an answer of peace; or may
we expect his gracious answer, but in this way; so that God's working upon us, is the best earnest of his working for us. He prepares the heart for prayer, by kindling holy desires, and strengthening our most holy faith, fixing the thoughts, and raising the affections, and then he graciously accepts the prayer; he prepares the heart for the mercy itself that is wanting and prayed for; makes us fit to receive it, and use it well, and then gives it unto us. The preparation of the heart is from the Lord, and we must seek unto him for it, (Prov. xvi. 1.) and take that as a leading favour. (2.) What he will do, in answer to prayer, v. 18. [1.] He will plead the cause of the persecuted; will judge the fatherless and oppressed, will judge for them, clear up their innocency, restore their comforts, and recompense them for all the loss and damage they have sustained. [2.] He will put an end to the fury of the persecutors. Hitherto they shall come, but no further; here shall the proud waves of their malice be stayed; an effectual course shall be taken that the man of the earth may no more oppress. See how light the psalmist now makes of the power of that proud persecutor, whom he had been describing in this psalm, and how slightly he speaks of him, now that he had been considering God's sovereignty. First, He is but a man of the earth, a man out of the earth, so the word is; sprung out of the earth, and therefore mean, and weak, and hastening to the earth again. Why then should we be afraid of the fury of the oppressor, when he is but man that shall die, a son of man that shall be as grass? Isa. li. 12. He that protects us, is the Lord of heaven; he that persecuteth us, but a man of the earth. Secondly, God has him in a chain, and can easily restrain the remainder of his wrath, so that he cannot do what he would. When God speaks the javelin shall be his instruments, no more deceptive, (Rev. xx. 2.) no more oppressive. In singing these verses, we must commit religion's just, but injured, cause to God, as those that are heartily concerned for its honour and interests, believing that he will, in due time, plead it with jealousy.

PSALMS XI.

In this psalm we have David's struggle with, and triumph over, a strong temptation to distrust God, and betake himself to indirect means for his own safety in a time of danger. It is supposed to have been penned when he began to feel the resentments of Saul's envy, and had had the javelin in his hand, and the throne of Saul on his mind. He was then advised to run his country. "No," says he, "I trust in God, and therefore will keep my ground." Observe, I. How he represents the temptation, and perhaps parleys with it, v. 1. 3. If. How he answers it, and puts it to silence, with the consideration of God's dominion and providence, (v. 4.) his favour to the righteous, and the wrath which the wicked are reserved for, v. 5. 6. 7. In time of public fears, when the insults of the church's enemies were directly threatening, it will be profitable to meditate on this psalm.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

1. In the Lord put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Fly as a bird to your mountain? 2. For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart. 3. If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

Here is,

1. David's fixed resolution to make God his confidence; In the Lord put I my trust, v. 1. Those that truly fear God, and serve him, are welcome to put their trust in him, and shall not be made ashamed of their doing so. And it is the character of the saints, who have taken God for their God, that they make him their Hope: even when they have other things to stay themselves upon, yet they do not, they dare not, stay upon them, but on God only; gold is not their hope, nor horses and chariots their confidence, but God and his help. He speaks of a time when second causes frown, yet their hopes do not fail them, because the First Cause is still the same, is ever so. The psalmist, before he gives an account of the temptation he was in to distrust God records his resolution to trust in him, as that which he was resolved to live and die by.

2. His resentment of a temptation to the contrary; "How say ye to my soul, which has thus returned to God as its Rest, and reposes in him, Fly as a bird to your mountain? to be safe there out of the reach of the fowler." This may be taken, either,

(1.) As the serious advice of his timorous friends, so many understand it, and with great probability. Some, that were hearty well-wishers to David, when they saw how much Saul was exasperated against him, and how maliciously he sought his life, pressed him by all means to flee for the same to some place of shelter, and not depend on much of the divine help, which, if the psalmist's thought, was more likely to occasion the loss of his head than to save it. That which grieved him in this motion, was not that to flee now would savour of cowardice, and ill become a soldier, but that it would savour of unbelief, and would ill become a saint, who had so often said, In the Lord put I my trust. Taking it thus, the two following verses contain the reason with which these faint-hearted friends of David bucked this advice. They would have him flee. [1.] Because he could not be safe where he was; (v. 2.) "Observe," say they, "how the wicked bend their bow; Saul and his instruments aim at thy life, and the uprightness of thine heart will not be thy security." See what an entity there is in the wicked against the upright, in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman; what pains they take, what preparations they make, to do them a mischief; they firmly stick at nothing; they may not see the evil designed, to avoid it, nor others, to prevent it; no, nor God himself, to punish it. [2.] Because he could be no longer useful where he was; "For," say they, "if the foundations be destroyed," (as they were by Saul's mal-administration,) "if the civil state and government be unhinged and all out of course, (Ixxv. iii.—Ixxxxii. 5.) "what canst thou do with thy righteousness to redress the grievances?" Alas, it is to no purpose to attempt the saving of a kingdom so wretchedly shattered; whatever the righteous can do, signifies nothing. Abi in cellam, et die, Miserere mei, Domine—Away to thy cell, and there cry, Pity me, O Lord. Many are hindered from doing the service they might do to the public, in difficult times, by a despair of success.

(2.) It may be taken as a taunt wherewith his enemies bantered him, upbraiding him with the professions he used to make of confidence in God, and scornfully bidding him try what stead that would stand him in now. "You say, God is your Mountain; flee to him now, and see what the better you will be." Thus they endeavoured to shame the counsel of the poor, saying, There is no help for them in God, xiv. 6.—iii. 2. The confidence and comfort which the saints have in God, when all the hopes and joys in the external world, are a riddle to a carnal world, and are ridiculed accordingly.

Taking it thus, the two following verses are David's answer to this sarcasm. In which, [1.] He.
complains of the malice of those who did thus abuse him; (v. 2.) They bend their bow, and make ready their arrows; and we are told, (lxxiv. 3.) what they are, even bitter words, such words as these, by which they endeavour to discourage hope in God, which David felt as a sword in his bones. [2.] He resists them with a great confidence, v. 3. He looks upon this suggestion as striking at the foundations which every Israelite builds upon; "If you destroy the foundations, if you take good people off from their hope in God, if you can persuade them that their religion is a cheat and a jest, and can banter them out of that, you ruin them, and break their hearts indeed, and make them of all men the most miserable. The principles of religion and the foundations on which the faith and hope of the righteous are built. These we are concerned, in interest, as well as duty, to hold fast against all temptations to infidelity; for if these be destroyed, if we let these go, What can the righteous do? Good people would be undone, if they had not a God to go to, a God to trust to, and a future bliss to hope for.

4. The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. 5. The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth. 6. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup. 7. For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.

The shaking of a tree (they say) makes it take the deeper and faster root. The attempt of David's enemies to discourage his confidence in God, engages him to cleave so much the closer to his first principles, and to review them, which he here does, abundantly to his own satisfaction, and the silencing of all temptations to infidelity. That which was shocking to his faith, and has been so to the faith of many, has the effect of strengthening it in the hearts of the righteous, and the ways, and the straights and distresses which the best men are sometimes reduced to; hence such an evil thought as this, was apt to arise, Surely it is vain to serve God, and we may call the proud happy; but, in order to stifle and shame all such thoughts, we are here called to consider,

1. That there is a God, a God in heaven; The Lord is in his holy temple above; there he is out of our sight, but we are not out of his. [3.] We not the enemies of the saints insult over them, as if they were at a loss, and at their wit's end: no, they have a God, and they know where to find him, and how to direct their prayer unto him, as their Father in heaven. Or, He is in his holy temple, that is, in his church; he is a God in covenant and communion with his people, through a Mediator, of whom the temple was a type. We need not say, Who shall go up to heaven, to fetch us hence a God to trust in? No, the Word is nigh us, and God in the Word; his Spirit is in his saints, those living temples, and the Lord is that Spirit.

2. That this God governs the world; the Lord has not only his residence, but his throne, in heaven, and he has set the dominion thereof in the earth; (Job xxxviii. 33.) for, having prepared his throne in the heavens, his kingdom reigneth over all, ch. 19. Hence the heavens are said to rule, Dan. iv. 26. Let us by faith see God on his throne, on his throne of glory, infinitely transcending the splendour and majesty of earthly princes; on his throne of government, giving law, giving motion, and giving aim, to all the creatures; on his throne of judgment, rendering to every man according to his works; and on his throne of grace, to which his people may come boldly for mercy and grace; we shall then see no reason to be discouraged by the pride and power of oppressors, or any of the afflictions that attend the righteous.

3. That this God perfectly knows every man's true character; His eyes behold, his eye-lids try, the children of men; he not only sees them, but he sees through them; not only knows all they say and do, but knows what they think, what they design, and how they really stand affected, whatever they pretend. We may know what men seem to be, but he knows what they are, as the refiner knows what the value of the gold is, when he has tried it. God is said to try with his eyes, and his eye-lids, because he knows men, not as earthly princes know men, by report and representation, but by his own strict inspection, which cannot err, or be imposed upon. This may comfort us when we are deceived in men, even in men that we think we have tried, that God's judgment of men, we are sure, is according to truth.

4. That, if he afflict good people, it is for their trial, and therefore for their good, v. 5. The Lord tries all the children of men, that he may do them justice; but he tries the righteous, that he may do them good in their latter end, Deut. viii. 16. Let not that therefore shake our foundations, or discourage our hope and trust in God.

5. That, however persecutors and oppressors may prosper and prevail a while, they now lie under, and will for ever perish under, the wrath of God.

(1.) He is a holy God, and therefore hate them, and cannot endure to look upon them; The wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth; for nothing is more contrary to the rectitude and goodness of his nature. Their prosperity is so far from being an evidence of God's love, that their abuse of it does certainly make them the objects of his hatred. He that hates nothing that he has made, yet hates those who have thus ill-made themselves. Dr. Huet, of Bossuet, and others among the French, who profane the name of God; Lord trieth the righteous and the wicked; (distinguishes infallibly between them, which is more than we can do;) and he that loveth violence hateth his own soul, that is, persecutors bring certain ruin upon themselves, (Prov. viii. 36.) as follows here.

(2.) He is a righteous Judge, and therefore he will punish them, v. 6. Their punishment will be, [1.] Inevitable; Upon the wicked he shall rain snares. Here is a double metaphor, to denote the dreadful and unsparing punishment of wicked men. It shall be rained upon them from heaven, (Job xx. 23.) against which there is no fence, and from which there is no escape; see Josh. x. 11. Sam. ii. 10. It shall surprise them, as a sudden shower sometimes surprises the traveller in a summer's day. It shall be as snares upon them, to hold them fast, and keep them prisoners, till the day of reckoning comes. [2.] Very terrible; it is fire and brimstone, and a fiery tempest, which plagueth them, to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and very fitly, for that destruction was intended for a figure of the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude 7. The fire of God's wrath, fastening upon the brimstone of their own guilt, will burn certainly and furiously, will burn to the lowest hell, and to the utmost line of eternity. What a horrible tempest are the wicked hurried away in, at death!

What a lake of fire and brimstone must they make their bed in for ever, in the congregation of the dead and damned! That is it that is here meant:
PSALMS, XII.
that is it that shall be the portion of their cup, the
heritage appointed them by the Almighty, and allotted to them, Job xx. 29. This is the cup
trembling, which shall be put into their hands, which they must drink the dregs of, lxxv. 8.
Every man has the portion of his cup assigned him. They who choose the Lords for the Portion
of their cup, shall receive what they choose, and be for ever happy in their choice, (xvi. 5.) but they
who reject his grace, shall be made to drink the
cup of his fury, Jer. xxxv. 15. Isa. li. 17. II.ii. li. 16.
6. That, though honest good people may be run
down, and trampled upon, yet God does and will
own them, and favour them, and smile upon them,
and that is the reason why God will severely
reckon with persecutors and oppressors, because
those whom they oppress and persecuted, delivered to
him, who never toucheth them, toucheth
the apple of his eye, v. 7. (1.) He loves them, and
the work of his own grace in them. He is himself
a righteous God, and therefore loves righteousness
wherever he finds it, and pleads the cause of the
righteous that are injured and oppressed; he
delights to execute judgment for them, cit. 6. We
must herein be followers of God, must love righteous-
ess as he does, that we may keep our ways always
in his love. (2.) He looks graciously upon them:
His countenance doth behold the upright; he
is not only at peace with them, but well-pleased in
them, and he comforts them, and puts gladness into
their hearts, by letting them know that he is so.
He, like a tender Father, looks upon them with
pleasure, and they, like dutiful children, are
pleased and abundantly satisfied with his smiles.
They walk in the light of the Lord.
In singing this psalm, we must encourage and
courage; To trust in God at all times, must
decline upon him, to protect our innocence, and
make us happy, must dred his frowns as worse
than death, and desire his favour as better than life.

PSALM XII.
It is supposed that David penned this psalm, in Saul's
reign, when there was a general decay of honesty and
piety both in court and country, which he here com-
plains of to God, and very feelingly, for he himself suf-
ered by the treachery of his false friends, and the insol-
cence of his sworn enemies. 1. He begins here,
because there were none who showed him that which
he desired, v. 1, 2. He foretells the destruction of his
and threatening enemies, v. 3, 4. He assures
himself and others, that, how ill soever things went now,
(v. 5.) God would preserve and secure to himself his
own people, (v. 5, 7,) and would certainly make good
his promises to them, v. 6. Whether this psalm was
penned in Saul's reign or no, it is certainly calculated
for Saul's reign; and perhaps David, in spirit, foresaw
that some of his successors would bring things to as bad
a pass as is here described, and treasured up this psalm
for the use of the church then. O tempora, O mores!—
Oh the times and the manners!

To the chief musician upon Sheminith. A psalm
of David.
1. **HELP, Lord;** for the godly man
ceaseeth; for the faithful fall from
among the children of men. 2. They speak
vanity every one with his neighbour; with
flattering lips, and with a double heart, do
they speak. 3. The Lord shall cut off all
flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh
proud things; 4. Who have said, With
our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our
own: who is lord over us? 5. For the
oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the
needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I
will set him in safety from him that puffeth
at him. 6. The words of the Lord are
pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of
corruption, purified seven times. 7. Thou shalt
keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve
them from this generation for ever. 8. The
wicked walk on every side, when the vilest
men are exalted.

This psalm furnishes us with good thoughts for
bad times, in which, though the prudent will keep
silent, (Amos v. 13.) because a man may be made
an offender for a word, yet a man may comfort
himself, in such a day, with such suitable medita-
tions and prayers as are here got ready to our hand.
1. Let us see here, what it is that makes the
times bad, and when they may be said to be so.
Ask the children of this world, what it is, in their
account, that makes the times bad; they will tell
you, Scarcity of money, decay of trade, and the
desolations of war, make the times bad; but the
scripture lays the badness of the times upon causes
of another nature; (2 Tim. iii. 1.) Perilous times
shall come, for iniquity shall abound; and that is the
thing David here complains of.
1. When there is a general decay of piety and
honesty among men, such times are then truly bad;
(v. 1.) When the godly man ceases, and the faithful
fail. Observe how these two characters are here
put together, the godly and the faithful. As there
is no true policy, so there is no true piety, without
honesty. Godly men are faithful men, fast men, so
they have sometimes been called; their word is as
confirming as their oath, as binding as their bond;
they make conscience of being true both to God
and man. They are here said to cease and fail,
either by death, or by desertion, or by both. Those
that were godly and faithful were taken away, and
those that were left were sadly degenerated, and
were not what they had been; so that there were
few or no good people, that were Israelites indeed,
to be met with. Perhaps he means, that there were
no godly faithful men among Saul's courtiers; if he
means there were few or none in Israel, we hope he
was under the same mistake that Elijah was; he
thought he might alone speak, and not allow God
had 7000 who kept their integrity; (Rom. xi. 3.) or he means
that there were few in comparison; there was a
general decay of religion and virtue: the times are
bad, very bad, when it is so; not a man to be found,
that executes judgment, Jer. v. 1.
2. When dissimulation and flattery have cor-
ruped and debauched all conversation, then the
times are very bad; (v. 2.) when men are generally
so profligate, that they make no conscience of a lie,
and are so spirituall to design against their neighbours
the worst of mischiefs, and yet so base as to cover
the design with the most specious and plausible
pretences, and professions of friendship. Thus they
speak vanity, (falsehood and a lie,) every one to his
neighbour; with flattering lips and a double heart
they will kiss and kill, (as Job did Abner and
Amasa in David's own time,) smile in your face,
and cut your throat. This is the Devil's image
ample of a complication of malice and falsehood.
Their times are bad indeed, when there is no such
thing as sincerity to be met with; when an honest
man knows not whom to believe, nor whom to
trust, nor dares put confidence in a friend, in a
guide, Mic. vii. 5, 6. Jer. ix. 4, 5. Woe to those
who help to make the times thus perilous.
3. When the enemies of God, and religion, and
religious people, are impudent and daring, and
threaten to run down all that is just and sacred,
then the times are very bad; when proud sinners are arrived at such a pitch of impiety as to say, "With our tongue will we prevail against the cause of virtue, our lips are our own, and we may say what we will." Who is lord over us, either to restrain us, or to call us to an account?" v. 4. This bespeaks, (1.) A proud conceit of themselves, and confidence in themselves, as if the point were indeed gained by eating forbidden fruit, and they were as god independent and self-sufficient; infallible in their know ledge of good and evil, and therefore fit to be oracles; irresistible in their power, and therefore fit to be lawyers, that could prevail with their tongues, and, like God himself, speak and see if it be done. (2.) Sins of ingratitude, as if he had no propriety in them; Our lips are our own—an unjust pretension, for who made man's mouth, in whose hand is his breath, and whose is the air he breathes in. Their language would intimate that he has no authority either to command them, or to judge them; Who is lord over us? Like Pharaoh, Exod. v. 2. This is absurd and unreasonable as the former, for He in whom we live, and move, and have our being, must needs have the indisputable title, Lord over us. 4. When the poor and needy are oppressed, and abused, and puffed at, then the times are very bad: this is implied, (v. 5.) where God himself takes notice of the oppression of the poor, and the sighing of the needy; they are oppressed because they are poor, have all manner of wrong done them, merely because they are not in a capacity to right themselves. Being thus oppressed, they dare not speak for themselves, lest their defence should be made their offence; but they sigh, secretly, bemoaning their calamities, and pouring out their souls in sighs before God. If their oppressors be spoken to on their behalf, they puff at them, make light of their own sin, and the misery of the poor, and lay neither to heart; see x. 5. 5. When wickedness aboundeth, and goes barefaced, under the protection and countenance of those in authority, then the times are very bad, v. 7. When the worst men are exalted to places of trust and power, who, instead of putting the laws in execution against vice and injustice, and punishing the wicked according to their merits, patronise and protect them, give them countenance, and support their reputation, by their own example; then the wicked walk on every side, they swarm in all places, and go up and down seeking to deceive, debauch, and destroy, others: they are neither afraid nor ashamed to discover themselves; they declare their sin is Sodom, and there is none to check or control them. Bad men are base men, the vilest of men, and they are so, though they are ever so highly exalted in this world. Antiochus the illustrious, the scripture calls a vile person, Dan. xi. 21. But it is bad with a kingdom, when such are preferred; no marvel if wickedness then grows impudent and insolent. When the wicked bear rule, the people mourn. He who would live in this world should be ware of many things he is here furnished with for such bad times; when what times we may yet be reserved for, we cannot tell. When times are thus bad, it is comfortable to think, 1. That we have a God to go to, from whom we may ask and expect the redress of all our grievances. This he begins with; (v. 1.) "Help, Lord, for the angry man causeth. All other helps and helpers fail, the man and all fail; and men helping hand to support the dying cause of religion, they are gone, and therefore whether shall we seek but to thee?" Note, When godly faithful people cease and fail, it is time to cry, Help, Lord! The abounding of iniquity threatens a deluge. "Help, Lord, help the virtuous; few seek to hold fast their integrity, and to stand in the gap; help to save thine own interest in the world from sinking. It is time for thee, Lord, to work." 2. That God will certainly reckon with false and proud men, and will prove God enough and restrain them and close their tendence. They are above the control of men, and set them at defiance. Men cannot discover the falsehood of flatterers, nor humble the haughtiness of those that speak proud things; but the righteous God will cut off all flattering lips, that give the traitor's kiss, and speak words softer than oil, when war is in the heart; he will pluck out the tongue that speaks proud things against God and religion, v. 5. We may translate it as a prayer, May God cut off those false and spirituous lips; "Let lying lips be put to silence. 3. That God will, in due time, work deliverance for his oppressed people, and shelter them from the malicious designs of their persecutors; (v. 5.) New will I arise, saith the Lord. This promise of God, which David here delivered by the spirit of prophecy, is an answer to that petition which he put up to God by the spirit of prayer, "Help, Lord," says he, "I will put on the ground, a firm and effectual help." (v. 1.) It is seasonable, in the fittest time. [1.] When the oppressors are in the height of their pride and insolence, when they say, Who is lord over us? then is God's time to let them know, to their cost, that he is above them. [2.] When the oppressed are in the depth of their distress and despondency; when they are sighing like Israel in Egypt, by reason of the cruel bondage, then is God's time to appear for them, as for Israel, when they were most deserted, and Pharaoh was most elevated; New will I arise. Note, There is a time fixed for the rescue of oppressed innocency; that time will come, and we may be sure it is of all others the fittest time, cii. 13. It is effectual; I will set him in safety, or in salvation; not only protect him, but restore him to his former prosperity, will bring him out into a wealthy place; (lvvi. 12.) so that, upon the whole, he shall lose nothing by his sufferings. 4. That though men are false, God is faithful; though they are not to be trusted, God is. They speak vanity and flattery, but the words of the Lord are pure words, (v. 6.) not only all true, but all pure, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, or a crucible. It denotes, (1.) The sincerity of God's word; every thing is really as it is there represented, and not otherwise; it does not jest with us, nor impose upon us, nor has it any other design toward us than our own good. (2.) The preciousness of God's word; it is of great intrinsic value, like silver refined to the highest degree; it has nothing in it to depreciate it. (3.) The many proofs that have been given of its power and truth; it has been often tried, all the saints in all ages have trusted it, and so, tried it and it never deceived them, or frustrated their expectations; but they have all set to their seal that God's word is true, with an Experto crede—Trust the presage. They have found it so. Probably, this refers especially to these promises of succouring and relieving the poor and oppressed. Their friends put them in hopes that they will do something for them, and yet prove a broken reed; but the words of God are what we may rely upon; the less confidence is to be put in men's words, let us with the more assurance trust in God's word. 5. That God must secure his chosen remnant to himself, how bad soever the times are; (v. 7.) Thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever. This intimates, that, as long as the world stands, there shall be a generation of proud and wicked men in it, more or less, who will threaten with the wreathed arts to ruin religion, by wearing out the
saints of the most High, Dan. vii. 25. But let God alone to maintain his own interest, and to preserve his own people. He will keep them from this generation, (1.) From being debauched by them and drawn away from God, from mingling with them and learning their works; in times of general apostasy, the Lord knows that are his, and they shall be enabled to keep their integrity. (2.) From being destroyed and rooted out by them; the church is built upon a rock, and so well fortified, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. In the worst of times, God has his remnant, and in every age will reserve to himself a holy seed, and preserve that to his heavenly kingdom.

In singing this psalm, and praying it over, we must bewail the general corruption of manners, thank God that things are not worse than they are, but pray and hope that they will be better in God's due time.

PSALM XIII.

This psalm is the deserted soul's case and cure. Whether it was penned upon any particular occasion, does not appear; but, in general, 1. David sadly complains that God had long withdrawn from him, and delayed to relieve him, v. 1, 2. 2. He earnestly prays to God to consider his case, and comfort him, v. 3, 4. 3. He assures his own mind of an answer of God, and therefore concludes the psalm with joy and triumph, because he concludes his deliverance to be as good as wrought, v. 5, 6.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

1. **How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?** How long wilt thou hide thy face from me? 2. **How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?** how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me? 3. **Consider and hear me, O Lord my God; lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;** 4. Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved. 5. But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. 6. I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

David, in affliction, is here pouring out his soul before God; his address is short, but the method is very observable, and of use for direction and encouragement.

I. His troubles extort complaints; (v. 1, 2.) and the afflicted have liberty to pour out their complaint before the Lord, cit. title. It is some case to a troubled spirit, to resort to its griefs, especially to give vent to them at the throne of grace, where we are sure to find one who is afflicted in the afflictions of his people, and is troubled with the feeling of their infirmities; thither we have boldness of access by faith, and there we have freedom of speech, παραστασις. Observe here,

1. What David complains of. (1.) God's unkindness; so he construed it, and it was so too. So our conscience. He thought God had forgotten him, had forgotten his promises to him, his covenant with him, his former loving-kindness which he had showed him, and which he took to be an earnest of further mercy; had forgotten that there was such a man in the world, who needed and expected relief and succour from him. Thus Zedan said, *My God has forgotten me;* (Isa. xlii. 14.) Israel said, *My way is hid from the Lord, Isa. xli. 27.* Not that any good man can doubt the omniscience, goodness, and faithfulness, of God; but it is a peevish expression of prevailing fear, which yet, when it arises from a high esteem and earnest desire of God's favour, though it be indecent and culpable, shall be passed by and pardoned, for the second thought will retract it, and repent of it. God hid his face from him, so that he wanted that inward comfort in God which he used to have, and herein was a type of Christ upon the cross, crying out, *My God, why hast thou forsaken me?* God sometimes hides his face from his own children, and leaves them in the dark concerning their interest in him; and this they lay to heart more than any outward trouble whatsoever.

2. (His own uneasiness. [1.] He was racked with care that filled his head; I take counsel in my soul; "I am at a loss, and am inopea consiliis—have no friend to advise with, that I can put any confidence in, and therefore am myself continually projecting what-to-do to help myself; but the issue of my projects are likely to take effect, that I am at my wit's end, and in a continual agitation." Anxious cares are heavy burthens with which good people often load themselves more than they need. [2.] He was overwhelmed with sorrow that filled his heart; I have sorrow in my heart daily. He had a constant disposition to sorrow, and it preyed upon his spirits; not only in the night, when he was silent and solitary, but by day too, when lighter griefs are diverted and dissipate by conversation and business; yet, as it is the condition of most men, he is brought with it fresh occasions of grief; the clouds returned after the rain. The bread of sorrows is sometimes the saint's daily bread; our Master himself was a Man of sorrows. (3.) His enemies' insolence, which added to his grief. Saul, his great enemy, and others under him, were exalted over him, triumphed in his distress, pleased themselves with his grief, and promised themselves a complete victory over him. This he complained of, as reflecting dishonour upon God, and his power and promise.

2. How he expostulates with God hereupon; "How long shall it be thus?" And, "Shall it be thus for ever?" Long afflictions try our patience, and often tire it. It is a common temptation, when trouble lasts long, to think it will last always; depondency then turns into despair, and those that have long been without joy, begin, at last, to be without hope; "Lord, tell me, how long wilt thou hide thy face from me, that it shall not be for ever, but that thou wilt return, at length, in mercy to me, and then I shall the more easily bear my present troubles."
Nothing is more killing to a soul than the want of God's favour, nothing more reviving than the return of it (2.) That then his enemies would triumph, "Lest mine enemy say that I have it; lest Saul, lest Satan, be gratified in my fall." It would gratify the pride of his enemy; he will say, "I have prevailed, I have gotten the day, and been too hard for him and his God;" it would gratify the malice of his enemies; They will rejoice when I am moved. And will it be for God's honour to suffer them thus to trample upon all that is sacred both in heaven and earth? 11. But the prayers are soon turned into praises; (v. 5, 6.) But my heart shall rejoice, and I will sing to the Lord. What a surprising change is here in a few lines! In the beginning of the psalm, we have him drooping, trembling, and ready to sink into melancholy and despair; but, in the close of it, rejoicing in God, and elevated and enlarged in his praises. See the power of faith, the power of prayer, and how good it is to draw near to God. If we bring our cares and griefs to the throne of grace, and leave them there, we may go away like Hannah and our countenances will be no more sad, 1 Sam. i. 18. And here observe the method of his comfort.

1. God's mercy is the support of his faith. "My case is bad enough, and I am ready to think it deplorable, till I consider the infinite goodness of God; finding I have that to trust to, I am comforted, though I have no merit of my own. In former distresses I have trusted in the mercy of God, and I never found that it failed me; his mercy has in due time relieved me, and my confidence in it has in the mean time supported me. Even in the depth of this distress, when God hid his face from me, when without were fightings, and within were fears, yet I trusted in the mercy of God; and that was as an anchor in a storm, by the help of which, though I was tossed, I was not overset." And still I do trust in thy mercy; so some read it. "I refer myself to that, with an assurance that it will do for me at last." This he pleads with God, knowing what pleasure he takes in those that hope in his mercy, exilv. 11.

2. His faith in God's mercy filled his heart with joy in his salvation; for joy and peace come by believing, Rom. xvi. 13. Believing, ye rejoice, 1 Pet. i. 8. Having put his trust in the mercy of God, he is fully assured of salvation, and that his heart, which was now daily grieving, should rejoice in that salvation. Though weeping endure long, joy will return.

3. His joy in God's salvation would fill his mouth with songs of praise; (v. 6.) "I will sing unto the Lord, singing in remembrance of what he has done formerly; though I should never recover the peace I have had, I will die blessing God that ever I had it; he has dealt bountifully with me formerly, and he shall have the glory of this, however he is pleased to deal with me now. I will sing in hope of what he will do for me, though I am now in the midst of my troubles, so that all will end well, will end everlasting well. But he speaks of it as a thing past; He has dealt bountifully with me; because by faith he had received the earnest of the salvation, and he was confident of it as if it had been done already. In singing this psalm, and praying it over, if we have not the same complaints to make that David had, let us trust the God that we have not, dread and depriceive his work. Let us sympathize with those that are troubled in mind, and encourage ourselves in our most holy faith and joy.

PSALM XIV.

It does not appear upon what occasion this psalm was penned, nor whether it is upon any particular occasion. Some say, David penned it when Saul persecuted him; others, when Absalom rebelled against him. But they are mere conjectures, which have not certainty enough to warrant us in any opinion of them. The apostle, in quoting this part of this psalm, (Rom. x. 13, 14,) to prove that Jesus and Gentiles are all under sin, (v. 9,) and that all the world is guilty before God, (v. 19,) leads us to understand it, in general, as a description of the depravity of the human nature, the sinfulness of the sin we are conceived and born in, and the deplorable corruption of a great part of mankind, even of the world that lies in wickedness, 1 John v. 19. But as in those psalms which are designed to discover our nature, (in distress, and thus commonly an allusion to David himself, yes, and some passages that are to be understood primarily of him, as in ii. xvi, xxii, and others; so in this psalm, which is designed to discover our nature, the nature of David's enemies and persecutors, and the other oppressors of good men at that time, to whom some passages have an immediate reference. In all the psalms from the 5d to this, except the 8th, David had been complaining of those that hated and persecuted him, insulted him and abused him; now here he traces all those bitter streams to the fountain, the general corruption of nature, and sees that not his enemies only, but all the children of men, were thus corrupted. Here is 1. A charge exhibited against a wicked world, v. 1. II. The proof of the charge, v. 2. 3. III. A serious expostulation with sinners, especially with persecutors, upon it, v. 4. 5. 6. IV. A believing prayer for the salvation of Israel, and a joyful expectation of it, v. 7.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

1. THE fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt; they have done abominable works; there is none that doeth good. 2. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. 3. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. If we apply our hearts, as Solomon did, (Eccl. vii. 25.) to search out the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness, these verses will assist us in the search, and will show us that sin is exceeded beyond all measure. 4. The disease of mankind, and it appears here to be malignant and epidemic.

1. See how malignant it is, (v. 1.) in two things, (1.) The contempt it puts upon the honour of God; for there is something of practical atheism at the bottom of all sin; The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. We are sometimes tempted to think, "Surely there never was so much atheism and profaneness as there is in our days;" but we see the former days were no better; even in David's time there were those who had arrived at such a height of impiety, as to deny the very being of a God, and the first and self-evident principles of religion. Observe, [1.] The sinner here described; he is one that saith in his heart, There is no God; he is an atheist. There is no Elohim, no Judge or Governor of the world, no Providence presiding over the affairs of men. They cannot doubt of the existence of God, but still situation; and do not call him to account. 2. He will quit the world, it, and says this in his heart; it is not his judgment, but his imagination. He cannot satisfy himself that there is none, but he wishes there were none, and pleases himself with the fancy, that it is possible there may be none; he cannot be sure there is one, and therefore he is willing to think there is none. He dares not speak it out, lest he be confuted, and so undeceived, but he whispers it secretly in his heart, for the occurrence of any of his enemies, or the immodestness of himself in evil ways. [2.] The character of this sinner; he is a fool, he is simple and unstable; and this is an evidence of it; he is wicked and profane; and this is the cause of it. Note, Atheistical thoughts are very foolish wicked thoughts, and they are at the bottom of a great deal
of the wickedness that is in this world. The word of God is a dis-cerner of these thoughts, and puts a just brand on him. Thus it harboirs them. Numbers is his name, and folly is with him: for he thinks against the clearest light, against his own knowledge and convictions, and the common sentiments of all the wise and sober part of mankind. No man will say, There is no God, till he is so hardened in sin, that it is become his interest that there should be none to call him to account.

(2.) The disgrace and degradation it puts upon the nature of man. Sinners are corrupt, quite degraded. For what was in his innocent estate; They are become filthy, (v. 3.) putrid. All their faculties are so disorderly, that they are become odious to their Maker, and utterly incapable of answering the ends of their creation. They are corrupt indeed; for, [1.] They do no good, but are the unprofitable burtin of the earth; they do God no service, bringing him no honour, nor do themselves any real kindness. [2.] They do a great deal of hurt; they have done abominable works, for such all sinful works are; sin is an abomination to God, it is that abominable thing which he hates, (Jer. xlv. 4.) and, sooner or later, it will be to so the sinner, it will be found to be hateful, (xxxvi. 2.) an abomina-tion of desolation, making desolate, Matth. xxiv. 15. This follows upon their saying, There is no God: for that they profess they know God, but in works deny him, are abominable, and to every good work reprobate, Tit. i. 16.

2. See how epidemic this disease is; it has infected the whole race of mankind. To prove this, God himself is here brought in for a Witness, and he is an Eye-Witness, v. 2, 3. Observe, (1.) His inquiry; The Lord looked down from heaven, a place of prospect, which commands this lower world; thence, with an all-seeing eye, he took a view of all the children of men, and the question was, Whether there were any among them that did un-derstand themselves aright, their duty and God's will, and did seek God, and set him before them. He that made this search was not only one that could find out a good man, if he was to be found, though never so obscure; but one that would be glad to find out one, and would be sure to take notice of him, as of Noah in the old world. (2.) The result of this inquiry, v. 3. Upon search, upon his search, it appeared, They are all gone aside, the apostasy is universal; and perverted persons are become his enemies. Till the free and mighty grace of God has wrought a change, whatever good is in any of the children of men, or is done by them, it is not of themselves, it is God's work in them. When God had made the world, he looked upon his own work, and all was very good; (Gen. i. 31.) but, some time after, he looked upon man's work, and, behold, all was very bad, (Gen. vi. 5.) every operation of the three days' works, man was evil all the days of his life, and that continually. They are gone aside from the right way of their duty, the way that leads to happiness, and are turned into the paths of the destroyer. In singing this, let us lament the corruption of our own nature, and see what need we have of the grace of God; and since that which is born of the flesh is flesh, let us not marvel that we are told we must be born again.

4. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the Lord. 5. There were they in great fear: for God is in the generation of the righteous. 6. Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor; because the Lord is his refuge. 7. Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When the Lord bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

In these verses, the psalmist endeavours,

1. To convince sinners of the evil and danger of the way they are in, how secure soever they are in that way. Three things he shows them, which, it may be, they are not very willing to see, their wickedness, their danger, while they are apt to believe themselves very wise, and, good, and safe. See here, (1.) Their wickedness; this is described in four instances. [1.] They are them-selves workers of iniquity; they design it, they practise it, and take as much pleasure in it as ever any man did in his business. [2.] They eat up God's people with as much greediness as they eat bread; such an innate and inveterate enmity they have to them, and so heartily do they desire their ruin, because they really hate God, whose people they are. It is meat and drink to persecutors, to be doing mischief; it is as agreeable to them as their necessary food. They eat up God's people easily, daily, securely, without either check of conscience when they do it, or remorse of conscience when they have done it; as Joseph's brethren cast him into a pit, and then eat down to eat bread, Gen. xxxvii. 24, 25. [3.] They call not upon the Lord. Note, Those that care not for God's people, for God's poor, care not for God himself, but live in contempt of him. The reason why people run into all manner of wickedness, even the worst, is, because they do not call upon God for his grace. What good can be expected from those that live without prayer? [4.] They shame the counsel of the poor, and upbraid them with making God their Refuge, as David's enemies upbraided, him, (1. Samuel.) 1. Note, Those are very wicked indeed, and have a great deal to answer for, who not only shake off religion, and live without it themselves, but say and do what they can to put others out of conceit with it, that are well-inclined; with the duties of it, as if they were mean, melancholy, and unprofitable; and with the privileges of it, as if they were insufficient to make a man safe and happy. Those that banter religion and religious people, will find, to their cost, it is ill jesting with edged-tools, and danger that is a snare, and a deep ditch for them to fall into, as they do with the refuge. Be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong. He shows them, (2.) Their folly; They have no knowledge; this is obvious, if for they had any knowledge of God, if they did rightly understand themselves, and would but consider things as men, they would not be so abusive and barbarous as they are to the people of God. (3.) Their danger; (v. 5.) There were they in great fear; there, where they were in the highest degree hardened, their consciences condemned what they did, and filled them with secret terrors: they sweetly sucked the blood of the saints, but in their bowels it is turned, and become the gull of asps. Many instances there have been of proud and cruel persecutors, who have been made like Pashur, Magor-missabib—that Terrors to themselves, and all about them. They that will not fear God, perhaps may be made to fear at the shak ing of a leaf, and from the smallest cause: 2. He endeavours to comfort the people of God, (1.) With what they have; have God's presence; (v. 5.) He is in the generation of the righte-ous; they have his protection; (v. 6.) The Lord is their Refuge. This is as much their security, as it is the terror of their enemies, who may jeer them for their confidence in God, but cannot jeer them out of it. In the judgment-day, it will add to the terror and confusion of sinners, to see God own the
Psalm XV.

The scope of this short but excellent psalm, is to show us the way to heaven, and to convince us, that, if we would be happy, we must be holy and honest. Christ, who is himself the Way, and in whom we must walk as our Way, has also shown us the same way that is here prescribed. (Mat. xix. 17.) "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." In this psalm, I. By the question, (v. 1.) we are directed and excited to inquire the way. II. By the answer to that question, in the rest of the psalm, we are directed where to walk, v. 2. - 5. III. By the assurance given in the close of the psalm, of the safety and happiness of those who answer these characters, we are encouraged to walk in that way, v. 5.

A Psalm of David.

1 LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? 2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. 3 He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. 4 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. 5 He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.

Here is,

I. A very serious and weighty question concerning the characters of a citizen of Zion; (v. 1.) "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Let me know who shall go to heaven." Not, who by name (in this way, the Lord only knows them that are his) but who by description; "What kind of people are they whom thou wilt own, and crown with distinguishing and everlasting favours?" This supposes that it is a great privilege to be a citizen of Zion, an unspeakable honour and advantage; that all are not thus privileged, but a remnant only; and that men are not entitled to this privilege by their birth and blood; all shall not abide in God's tabernacle, that have Abraham to their father, but, according as men's hearts and lives are, accordingly will their lot be. It concerns us all to put this question to ourselves, Lord, what shall I be, and do, that I may abide in thy tabernacle? Luke xviii.

2. How it is expressed in Old Testament language. (1.) By the tabernacle we may understand the church militant, typified by Moses's tabernacle, fitted to a wilderness-state, mean and moveable. There God manifests himself, and there he meets his people, as of old in the tabernacle of the testimony, the tabernacle of meeting. Who shall dwell in this tabernacle? Who shall be accounted a true living member of God's church, admitted among the spiritual priests to lodge in the courts of this tabernacle? We are concerned to inquire this, because many pretend to a place in this tabernacle, that is not warranted in the matter. (2.) By the holy hill we may understand the church triumphant, alluding to mount Zion, on which the temple was to be built by Solomon. It is the happiness of glorified saints, that they dwell in that holy hill; they are at home there, they shall be for ever there. It concerns us to know who shall dwell there, that we make it sure to ourselves, that we shall have a place among them, and may then take the comfort of it, and rejoice in prospect of that holy hill.

3. A very plain and particular answer to this question. Those that desire to know their duty, with a resolution to do it, will find the scripture a very faithful director, and conscience a faithful monitor. Let us see then the particular character of a citizen of Zion.

1. He is one that is sincere and entire in his religion; He walketh uprightly, according to the principles of the law, (Gen. xi. 4.) "Walk before me, and be thou perfect," (it is the same word that is here used,) "and then thou shalt find me a God all-sufficient." He is really what he professes to be, is sound at heart, and can approve himself to God, in his integrity, in all he does; his conversation is uniform, and he is of a piece with himself, and endeavours to stand complete in all the will of God. His eye perhaps is weak, but it is single; he has his spots indeed, but he does not paint; an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile, John i. 47.

2. He is one that is conscientiously honest and just in all his dealings, faithful and fair to all with whom he has to do. He worketh righteousness; he walks in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord, and takes care to give all their due; is just both to God and man; and, in speaking to both, he speaks that which is the truth in his heart; his eyes, his ears, and his lips, are not out of feigned lips, nor dares he tell a lie, or so much as equivocate, in his converse or commerce with men. He walks by the rules of righteousness and truth, and scorns and abhors the gains of injustice and fraud; he reckons that that cannot be a good bargain, nor a saving one, which is made with a lie, and that he who wrongs his neighbour, though ever so plausibly, will prove, in the end, to have done the greatest injury to himself.

3. He is one that contrives to do all the good he can to his neighbours; but is very careful to do hurt to no man, and is, in a particular manner, tender of his
his family, than wrong his neighbour by breaking his oath. An oath is a sacred thing, which we must not think to play fast and loose with.

5. He is one that will not increase his estate by any unjust practices, v. 5. (1.) Not by extortion; he 

He putted not out his money to usury, that he may 
v. 5. (2.) Not by bowlery; for he would not make money 

the borrowers money, any more than for the owner of the land to demand rent from the occupant, money being, by art and labour, as improvable as land. But a citizen of Zion will freely lend to the poor, according to his ability, and not be content with usurious interest; and he will forbear to return those that are reduced by Providence.

(2.) Not by bribery; he will not take a reward against the innocent; if he be any way employed in the administration of public justice, he will not, for any gain, or hope of it, to himself, do any thing to the prejudice of a righteous cause.

III. The psalm concludes with a ratification of this character of the citizen of Zion; He is like Zion-hill itself, which can never be moved, but abides for ever, xxv. 1.

Every true living man will be one of the church, like the church itself, is built upon a Rock, which the gates of hell cannot prevail against. He that doeth these things, shall never be moved; shall not be moved for ever, so the word is. The grace of God shall always be sufficient for him, to preserve him safe and blameless to the heavenly kingdom; temptations shall not overcome him, trials shall not overwhelm him, nothing shall rob him of his present peace, or his future bliss.

In singing this psalm, we must teach and admonish ourselves, and one another, to answer the characters here given of the citizen of Zion, that we may never be moved from God's tabernacle on earth, and may arrive, at last, at that holy hill, where we shall be for ever out of the reach of temptation and danger.

PSALM XVI.

This psalm has something of David in it, but much more of Christ. It begins with such expressions of devotion as may be applied to Christ; but concludes with such confidence of his preservation (whether he be moved, or not, by the prevent corruption,) as must be applied to Christ, to him only, and cannot be understood of David, as both St. Peter and St. Paul have observed, Acts ii. 24.—xxiii. 36. For David died, and was buried, and saw corruption. I. David speaks of himself as a member of Christ, and so he speaks the language of all good Christians, professing his confidence in God; (v. 1.) his consent to him; (v. 2.) his affection to the people of God; (v. 3.) his adherence to the true worship of God; (v. 4.) and his entire complacency and satisfaction in God, and the interest he had in him, v. 5. - 7. II. He speaks of himself as a type of Christ, and so he speaks the language of Christ himself, who intimates, that all the blessings of the psalm is expressly, and at large, applied, Jer. ii. 25, &c. David speaks concerning him, (not concerning himself,) I fore-

saw the Lord always before my face, &e. And this he spake, being a prophet, v. 30, 31. He spake, 1. Of the special presence of God with him, his service and sufferings, v. 8. 2. Of the prospect which the Redeemer had of his own resurrection, and the glory that should follow, which carried him cheerfully through his undertaking, v. 9.-11.

Michtam of David.

1. P RESERVE me, O God : for in thee do I put my trust. 2. O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord; my goodness extendeth not to thee; 3. But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight. 4. Their sorrows shall be mul-
tliplied that hasten after another god: their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips. 5. The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup: thou maintest my lot. 6. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. 7. I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel; my reins also instruct me in the night-seasons.

This psalm is entitled Micha'am, which some translate a golden psalm, a very precious one, more to be valued by us than gold, yea than much fine gold; because it speaks so plainly of Christ and his resurrection, who is the true Treasure hid in the field of the Old Testament.

I. David here flies to God's protection with a cheerful believing confidence in it; (v. 1) "Preserve me, O God, from the deaths, and especially from the sins, to which I am continually exposed; for in thee, and in nothing else, do I put my trust. Trust in me, my faith commit themselves to the divine care, and submit themselves to the divine guidance, have reason to hope for the benefit of both. This is applicable to Christ, who prayed, Father, save me from this hour, and trusted in God that he would deliver him.

II. He recognizes his solemn dedication of himself to God, as his God; (v. 2.) "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord, and the lot of my inheritance." (xvi. 6.)

III. He devotes himself to the honour of God, in the service of the saints; (v. 2, 3.) My goodness extends not to thee, but to the saints. Observe, 1. Those that have taken the Lord for their Lord, must, like him, be good, and do good; we do not expect happiness without goodness. 2. Whatever good there is in us, or is done by us, we must humbly acknowledge that it extends not to God; so that we cannot pretend to merit any thing by it. God has no need of our services, he is not benefitted by them, nor can they add any thing to his infinite perfection and blessedness. The wisest, and best, and most useful men in the world, cannot be profitable to God, Job xxii. 2. —xxxx. 7. God is infinitely above us, and happy without us, and whatsoever good we do, it is all from him; so that we are indebted to him, not he, to us: David owns it, (1 Chron. xxix. 14.) Of thine own have we given thee. 3. If God be ours, we must, for his sake, extend our goodness to those that are his, to the saints in the earth; for what is done to them, he is pleased to take as done to himself, having constituted them his receivers. Note, (1.) There are saints in the earth; and saints on earth we must all be, or we shall never be saints in heaven. Those that are renewed by the grace of God, and devoted to the glory of God, are saints on earth. (2.) The saints in the earth are excellent ones, great, mighty, magnificent, ones, and yet some of them so poor in the world, that they needed to have David's goodness extended to them; for he can be none the more excellent by the grace he gives them. The right is more excellent than his neighbour, and then he accounts them excellent; they are precious in his sight and honourable, they are his jewels, his peculiar treasure. Their God is their Glory, and a Diadem of beauty to them. (3.) All that have taken the Lord for their God, delight in his saints as excellent ones, because they bear his image, and because he loves them. David, though a king, was so grieved to see all the offenders against God, even the meanest, which was a sign that his delight was in them. (4.) It is not enough for us to delight in the saints, but, as there is occasion, our goodness must extend to them; we must be ready to show them the kindness they need, distribute to their necessities, and abound in the labour of love to them. This is applicable to Christ. The salvation he wrought out for us was no gain to God, for our ruin would have been no loss to him; but the ruin of his enemies, and to God, and thereby does him infinite service.

IV. He disclaims the worship of all false gods, and all communion with their worshippers, v. 4. Where, 1. He reads the doom of idolaters, who hasten after other gods, being made upon their sides, and turning them to whereby as if they were afraid they would escape from them; their sorrows shall be multiplied, both by the judgments they bring upon themselves from the true God whom they forsake, and by the disappointment they will meet with in the false gods they embrace. They that multiply gods, multiply griefs, to themselves, for whoever thinks one God too little, will find two too many, and yet hundreds not enough. 2. He declares that true and devout men, and all such men, nor with their unfruitful works of darkness; "Their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer, not only because the gods they are offered to, are a lie, but because the offerings themselves are barbarous. At God's altar, because the blood made atonement, the drinking of it was most strictly prohibited, and the drink-offerings were of wine; but the Devil prescribed to his worshippers to drink of the blood of the sacrifices, to teach them cruelty. "I will have nothing to do" (says David), "with those bloody deities, nor so much as take their names into my lips with any delight in them, or respect to them." Thus must we hate idols and idolatry with a perfect hatred. Some make this also applicable to Christ and his undertaking, showing the nature of the sacrifice he offered; it was not the blood of bulls and goats, which was offered according to the law, (that was never named and did not exist,) but his own blood; showing also the multiplied sorrows of the unbelieving Jews, who hastened after another king, Cæsar, and are still hastening after another Messiah, whom they in vain look for.

V. He repeats the solemn choice he had made of God for his Portion and Happiness, (v. 5.) takes to himself the comfort of the choice, (v. 6.) and gives God the glory of it, v. 7. This is very much the language of a devout and pious soul in its gracious exercises.

1. Choosing the Lord for his Portion and Happiness. "Most men take the world for their chief good, and place their felicity in the enjoyments of it; but this I say, the Lord is the Portion of mine
inheritance, and of my cup; the Portion I make choice of, and will gladly take up with, how poor soever my condition is in this world. Let me have the love and favour of God, and be accepted of him; let me have the Lord's good communion with God, and satisfaction in the communications of his graces and comforts; let me have an interest in his promises, and a title by promise to everlasting life and happiness in the future state; and I have enough, I need no more, I desire no more, to complete my felicity. Would we do well and wisely for ourselves, we must take God, in Christ, to be, (1.) The Portion of our inheritance in the other world; heaven is an inheritance, God the Father himself, the saints; and those whose everlasting bliss is to enjoy him. We must take that for our inheritance, our home, our rest, our lasting, everlasting, good, and look upon this world to be no more ours, than the country through which our road lies, when we are in a journey. (2.) The Portion of our cup in this world, with which we are nourished and refreshed, and kept from fainting. Those have not God for theirs, who do not reckon his comforts the most reviving of all the blessings to themselves with the saints, and make use of them as sufficient to balance all the grievances of this present time, and to sweeten the most bitter cup of affliction.

2. Confiding in him for the securing of this portion; "Thou maintainest my lot. Thou that hast by promise made over thyself to me, to be mine, wilt graciously make good what thou hast promised, and never leave me to myself to forfeit this happiness, nor leave it in the power of my flesh, nor my own, or the world's, to rob it of it. Nothing shall pluck me out of thine hands, nor separate me from thy love, and the sure mercies of David." The saints and their bliss are kept by the power of God.

3. Rejoicing in this portion, and taking a complacency in it; (v. 6.) The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; those have reason to say so, that have God for their Portion, they have a worthy Portion, a goodly Heritage. What can they have better? What can they desire more? Return unto thy Rest, O my soul, and look no further. Note, Gracious persons, though they still covet more of God, never covet more than God; but, being satisfied of his loving-kindness, are abundantly satisfied with it, and envy not any their carnal mirth, and sensual pleasures and delights, but account themselves truly happy in what they have, and doubt not but to be completely happy in what they hope for. Those whose lot is cast, as David's was, in a land of light, in a valley of vision, where God is known and worshipped, have, upon that account, reason to say, The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; much more those who have not only the end, but the not, only Immanuel's land, but Immanuel's love.

4. Giving thanks to God for it, and for grace to make this wise and happy choice; (v. 7.) I will bless the Lord, and make me comfort; this comfort, to take him for my Portion and Happiness." So ignorant and foolish are we, that, if we be left to ourselves, our hearts will follow our eyes, and we shall choose our own delusions, and forsake our own mercies for lying vanities; and therefore, if we have indeed taken God for our Portion, and preferred spiritual and eternal blessings before those that are sensible and temporal, we must thankfully acknowledge, that we have been brought to a perfect rejecting and enabling us to make that choice. If we have the pleasure of it, let God have the praises of it.

5. Making a good use of it. God having given him counsel by his word and Spirit, his own reins also (his own thoughts) instructed him in the night-season; when he was silent and solitary, and retired from the world, then his own conscience (which is called the reins,) (Jer. xvii. 10.) not only reflected with comfort upon the choice he had made, but instructed concerning him concerning the duties arising out of this choice, catechized him, and engaged and quickened him to live as one that had God for his Portion, by faith to live upon him and to him. Those who have God for their Portion, and who will be faithful to him, must give their own consciences leave to deal thus faithfully and plainly with them.

All this may be applied to Christ, who made the Lord his Portion, and was pleased with that Portion, made his Father's glory his highest end, and made it his meat and drink to seek that, and to do his will, and delighted to prosecute his undertaking, pursuant to his Father's counsel, depending upon him to maintain his lot, and to carry him through his undertaking. We may also apply it to ourselves, in singing it, renewing our choice of God as ours, with a holy complacency and satisfaction.

8. I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. 9. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope: 10. For thou wilt not leave me; nor in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption. 11. Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

All these verses are quoted by St. Peter in his first sermon, after the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost; (Acts ii. 25-28.) and he tells us expressly, that David in them speaks concerning Christ, and particularly of his resurrection. Something we may allow here of the workings of David's own pious and devout affections toward God, depending upon his grace to perfect every thing that concerned him, and looking for the blessed hope, and a happy state, on the other side death, in the enjoyment of God; but in these holy elevations toward God and heaven he was carried by the spirit of prophecy, quite beyond the consideration of himself and his own case, to foretell the glory of the Messiah, in such expressions as were peculiar to that, and could not be understood of himself. The New Testament furnishes us with a key to let us into the mystery of these lines.

I. These verses must certainly be applied to Christ; of him speaks the prophet this, as did many of the Old Testament prophets, who testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, (1 Pet. i. 11.) and that is the subject of this prophecy: and it is known, as he himself so distinctly, concerning this, no doubt, among other prophecies in this psalm, Luke xxii. 44, 46.) that Christ should suffer, and rise from the dead, 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.

1. That he should suffer and die. This is implied here, when he says, (v. 8.) I shall not be moved; he supposed that he should be struck at, and have a dreadful shock given him, as he had in his agony, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, and he was at his last end. When he says, "My flesh shall rest," it is implied, that he must put off the body, and therefore must go through the pains of death. It is likewise plainly intimated, that his soul must go into a state of separation from the body, and that his body, so deserted, would be in imminent danger of seeing corruption; that he should not only die, but he
buried, and abide for some time under the power of death.

3. That he should be wonderfully borne up by the divine power, in suffering and dying. (1.) That he should not be moved, not driven off, from his undertaking, nor sink under the weight of it; that he should not fail, nor be discouraged, (Isa. xlii. 4.) but should proceed and persevere in it, till he could say, It is finished. Though the service was hard, and the encounter hot, and he trod the wine-press alone, yet he was not moved, nor was his heart buried, and he the only, say, glorify me with thine own self. (2.) That he should be re
cieved into the presence of God, to sit at his right hand. His being admitted into God’s presence, would be the acceptance of his service; and his being set at his right hand, the recompense of it. (3.) Thus, as a reward for the sorrows he underwent for our redemption, he should have a fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore; not only the glory he had with God, as God, before all worlds, but the joy and pleasure of a Mediator, in seeing his seed, and the success and prosperity of his under	aking, Isa. liii. 10, 11.

II. Christ being the Head of the body, the church, these verses may, for the most part, be applied to all good Christians, who are guided and animated by the Spirit of Christ; and, in singing them, when we have first given glory to Christ, in whom, to our everlasting comfort, they have had their accomplish-
ment, we may then encourage and edify ourselves and one another with them, and may hence learn,

1. That it is our wisdom and duty to set the Lord always before us, and to see him continually at our right hand, wherever we are, to eye him as our Chief Good and Highest End, our Owner, Ruler, and Judge, our gracious Benefactor, our sure Guide and strict Observer; and, while we do thus, we shall not be moved either from our duty or from our comfort. Blessed Paul set the Lord before him, when, though bounds and afflictions did abide him, he could bravely say, None of these things move me, Acts xx. 24.

2. That, if our eyes be ever toward God, our hearts and tongues may ever rejoice in him; it is our own fault if they do not. If the heart rejoice in God, out of the abundance of that let the mouth speak, to his glory, and the edification of others.

3. That dying Christians, as well as a dying Christ, may cheerfully put off the body, in a believing expectation of a joyful resurrection; My flesh also shall rest in hope. Our bodies have little rest in this world; but in the grave they shall rest as in their beds, Isa. liii. 8. We have little to hope for from this life, but we shall rest in hope of a better life; we may put off the body in that hope. Death destroys the hope of men, (Job xiv. 19.) but not the hope of a good Christian, Prov. xxxiv. 12.

He has hope in his death, living hopes in dying moments, hopes that the body shall not be left for ever in the grave, but, though it sees corruption for a time, it shall, at the end of the time, be raised to immortality; Christ’s resurrection is an earnest of ours, if we be his.

4. That those who live piously, with God in their eye, may die comfortably, with heaven in their eye. In this world, sorrow is our lot, but in heaven there is joy; all our joys here are empty and defective, but in heaven there is a fulness of joy; our pleasures here are transient and momentary, and such is the nature of them, that it is not fit they should be compared with the immortal pleasures that are pleasures for evermore; for they are the pleasures of immortal souls, in the immediate vision and fruition of an eternal God.

PSALM XVII.

David, being in great distress and danger by the malice of his enemies, does, in this psalm, by prayer address himself to God, his tried Refuge, and seeks shelter in him.

I. He appeals to God concerning his integrity, v. 1...
A Prayer of David.

1. 

HEAR the right, O Lord, attend unto my cry; give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips. 2. Let my sentence come forth from thy presence; let thine eyes behold the things that are equal. 3. Thou hast proved my heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing: I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress. 4. Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer. 5. Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not. 6. I have called upon thee; for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech. 7. Show thy marvellous loving-kindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them.

This psalm is a prayer. As there is a time to weep, and a time to rejoice, so there is a time for praise, and a time for prayer. David was now persecuted, probably, by Saul, who hunted him like a partridge on the mountains; without were fightings, within were fears, and both urged him as a suppliant to the throne of mercy.

He addresses himself to God in these verses, both by way of appeal, (Hear the right, O Lord; let my righteous cause have a hearing before thy tribunal, and give judgment upon it,) and by way of petition, Give ear unto my prayer, (v. 1) and again, (v. 6.) Incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech; not that God needs to be thus pressed with our impertinency, but he gives us leave thus to express our earnest desire of his gracious answers to our prayers. These things he pleads with God, for audience. 1. That he was sincere, and did not disagree with God in his prayer; it goeth not out of feigned lips. He meant as he spake, and the feelings of his mind agreed with the expressions of his mouth. Feigned prayers are fruitless; but if our hearts lead our prayers, God will meet them with his favour. 2. That he had been used to pray at other times, and it was not his distress and danger that now first brought him to his duty; I have called upon thee formerly, (v. 6.) therefore, Lord, hear me now. It will be a great comfort to us, if trouble, when it comes, finds the wheels of prayer a-going, for then may we come with the more boldness to the throne of grace. Tradesmen are willing to oblige those that have been long their customers. 3. That he was encouraged by his faith to expect God would take notice of his prayer; I knew thou wilt hear me, and therefore, O God, incline thine ear to me. Our believing dependence upon God is a good plea to enforce our desires toward him.

Let us now see,

1. What his appeal is; and there observe,

1. What the court is, to the cognizance and determination of which he makes his appeal; it is the court of heaven. "Lord, do thou hear the right, for Saul is so passionate, so prejudiced, he will not hear it. Lord, let my sentence come forth from thy presence," v. 2. Men sentence me to be pursued and slain, and wherefore? I appeal from them to thee." This he did in a public remonstrance before Saul's face, (1 Sam. xxiv. 12.) The Lord judge between me and thee; and he repeats it here in his private devotions. Note, (1.) The equity and extent of God's government and judgment are a very great support to injured innocence. If we are blackened, and abused, and misrepresented, by unrighteous men, it is our comfort that we have a righteous God to address ourselves to. The Lord is the Patron of the oppressed, whose judgment is according to truth, by the discoveries of which, every person and every cause will appear in a true light, strip of all false colours, and by the decisions of which, all unrighteous doings will be reversed, and to every man will be rendered according to his work. (2.) Sincerity dreads no scrutiny, no not that of God himself, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace. Lord, I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress; and it is the sincerity of God's omniscience as much the joy of the upright, as it is the terror of the hypocrites; and is particularly comfortable to those who are falsely accused, and in any wise have wrong done them.

2. What the evidence is, by which he hopes to make good his appeal; it is the trial God had made of him, (v. 3.) Thou hast proved mine heart. God's sentence is therefore right, because he always proceeds upon evidence. "I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress; but, could find nothing of that which his enemies charged him with. (2.) By providence. God had tried him by the fair opportunity he had, once and again, to kill Saul; he had tried him by the malice of Saul, the treachery of his friends, and the many provocations that were given him; so that, if he had been the man he was represented to be, it would have appeared; but, upon all these trials, there was nothing found against him, no proof at all of the things whereof they accused him. God tried his heart, and could witness to the integrity of that; but, for the further proof of his integrity, he himself takes notice of two things, concerning which his conscience bare him record. (1.) That he had fixed a resolution against all sins of the tongue; "I am purposed and fully determined, in the strength of God's grace, that my mouth shall not transgress," v. 3. But he proceeds upon his knowledge, which is more certain and infallible than that which men attain to by the closest views and the strictest searches. He knew God had tried him. (1.) By his own conscience, which is God's deputy in the soul. The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, with this God had searched him, and visited him in the night, when he communed with his own heart upon his bed. He had submitted to the search, and had seriously reviewed the actions of his life, to discover what was good, but could find nothing of that which his enemies charged him with. (2.) By providence. God had tried him by the fair opportunity he had, once and again, to kill Saul; he had tried him by the malice of Saul, the treachery of his friends, and the many provocations that were given him; so that, if he had been the man he was represented to be, it would have appeared; but, upon all these trials, there was nothing found against him, no proof at all of the things whereof they accused him.
man life, I have, by the direction of thy word, *kept me from the paths of the destroyer.* Some understand it particularly, that he had not been himself a destroyer of Saul, when it lay in his power, nor had he permitted others to be so, but said to Abishai, *Destroy him not,* 1 Sam. xxvi. 9. But it may be taken more generally; he kept himself from all evil works, and endeavoured, according to the duty of his place, to keep others from them too. 

Note, *First,* The ways of sin are paths of the destroyer, of the Devil, whose name is Abaddon, and Apollyon, as being in the hands of the Devil , by destroying them into the paths of sin. *Secondly,* It concerns us all to keep out of the paths of the destroyer, for if we walk in those ways that lead to destruction, we must thank ourselves if destruction and misery be our portion at last. *Thirdly,* It is by the word of God, as our guide and rule, that we must keep out of the paths of the destroyer, by observing its directions and admonitions, cxix. 9. *Fourthly,* If we carefully avoid all the paths of sin, it will be very comfortable in the reflection, when we are in trouble. If we *keep ourselves, that the wicked one touch us not with his temptations,* (1 John v. 18.) we may hope he shall not be able to touch us with his terrors.

II. What his petition is; it is, in short, this, That he might experience the good work of God in him, as an evidence of, and qualification for, the good will of God toward him: this is grace and peace from God the Father.

1. He prays for the work of God's grace in him; (v. 5.) "Hold up my goings in thy paths. Lord, I have, by thy grace, kept me from the paths of the destroyer; by the same grace, let me be kept in thy paths; let me not only be restrained from doing that which is evil, but quickened to abound always in that which is good. Let my goings be held in thy paths, that I may not turn back from them, nor turn aside out of them; let them be held up in thy paths, that I may not stumble, and fall into sin, that I may not trifle, and neglect my duty. Lord, as thou hast kept me hitherto, so keep me still." Those that are, through grace, going in God's paths, have need to pray, and do pray, that their goings may be held up in those paths; for we stand no longer than he is pleased to hold us, we go no further than he is pleased to lead us, bear us up, and carry us. David had been kept in the way of his duty hitherto, and yet he prays that would be his lot for the future, and therefore prays, "Lord, still hold me up." Those that would proceed and persevere in the way of God, must, by faith and prayer, fetch in daily fresh supplies of grace and strength from him. David was sensible that his way was slippery, that he himself was weak, and not so well fixed and furnished as he should be; that there were those who watched for his halting, and would improve the least slip against him; yet he prays, "Lord, keep my steps, that my foot slip not; that I may never say or do any thing that looks either dishonest, or distrustful of thee, and thy providence, and promise."  

2. He prays for the tokens of God's favour to him, v. 7. Observe here, (1.) How he eyes God, as the Protector and Saviour of his people, so he calls him, and thence he takes his encouragement in prayer; *O thou that savest by thy right hand thy people, that keepest in the shadow of thy wings those that put their trust in thee.* It is the character of God's people, that they trust in him; he is pleased to make them confidants, for his secret is with the righteous; and they make them their Trust, for to him they commit themselves. Those that trust in God, have many enemies, many that rise up against them, and seek their ruin; but they have one friend that is able to deal with them all, and if he be for them, no matter who is against them. He reckons it his honour to be their Saviour. His almighty power is engaged for them, and they have all found him ready to save them. The margin reads it, *O thou that savest them which trust in thee, from those that rise up against thy right hand.* Those that are enemies to the saints, are rebels against God and his right hand, and therefore, no doubt, he will, in due time, appear against them. (2.) What he expects and desires from God; *Show thy marvellous loving-kindness.* The word signifies, [1.] Distinguishing favours. "Set apart thy loving-kindnesses for me, put me not off with common mercies, but be gracious to me, as thou wertst to do to those who love thy name." [2.] Wonderful favours. "O make thy loving-kindness admirable; Lord, testify thy favour to me in such a way, that I and others may wonder at it." God's loving-kindness is marvellous, for the freedom and fulness of it; in some instances he shows it in a special manner, marvellous, (cxviii. 23.) and it will certainly appear so in the salvation of the saints, when Christ shall come to be glorified in the saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.

8. Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me under the shadow of thy wings, 9. From the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies who compass me about. 10. They are enclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly. 11. They have now compassed us in our steps; they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth; 12. Like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places. 13. Arise, O Lord, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword: 14. From men which are thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes. 15. As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

We may observe, in these verses, I. What David prays for. Being compassed about with enemies that sought his life, he prays to God to preserve him safe through all. His almighty power was engaged for him, to the crown to which he was anointed. This prayer is both a prediction of the preservation of Christ, through all the hardships and difficulties of his humiliation, to the glories and joys of his exalted state, and a pattern to Christians to commit the keeping of their souls to God, trusting him to preserve them to his heavenly kingdom. He prays, That he himself might be protected; (v. 8.) "Keep me safe, hide me close, where I may not be found, where I may not be come at. Deliver my soul, not only my mortal life from death, but my immortal spirit from sin." Those who put themselves under God's protection, may in faith implore the benefit of it. He prays that God would keep him, (1.) With as much care as a man keeps the apple of his eye with, which nature has wonderfully fenced, and teaches us to guard. If we keep God's
law as the apple of our eye, (Prov. vii. 2.) we may expect that God will so keep us; for it is said concerning his people, that whose touches them, touches the apple of his eye, Zech. ii. 8. (2.) With as much tenderness as the hen gathers her young ones under her wings, Christ uses the similitude, Matth. xxiii. 37. "Hide me under the shadow of thy wings, where I may be both safe and warm." Or, perhaps, it rather alludes to the wise man's cherubines shadowing the throne of majesty; "Let me be also under the protection of that glorious grace which is peculiar to God's Israel." What David here prays for, was performed to the Son of David our Lord Jesus, of whom it is said, (Isa. xliv. 2.) that God hid him in the shadow of his hand, hid him as a polished shaft in his quiver. David further prays, "Lord, keep me from the wicked, from men of the world." (1.) From being and doing, like them, from walking in their counsel, and standing in their paths, and sitting in their dainties. [2.] From being destroyed and run down by them. Let them not have their will against me, let them not triumph over me.

2. That all the designs of his enemies, to bring him either into sin or into trouble, might be defeated; (v. 13.) "Arise, O Lord, appear for me, dis-appoint him, and cast him down in his own eyes by the disappointment." While Saul persecuted Da-vid, (Luke xvi. 13.) he could not destroy him, he could not kill him, he could not cast him down, he could not do to him as he thought he had it in his power. And therefore Christ's enemies disappointed by his resurrection, who thought they had gained their point when they had put him to death!

II. What he pleads, for the encouraging of his own faith in these petitions, and his hope of speed-ing. He pleads,

1. The malice and wickedness of his enemies; "they are such as are not fit to be countenanced, such as, if I be not delivered from them by the special care of God himself, will be my ruin. Lord, see what wicked men they are that oppress me, and waste me, and run me down." (1.) They are very spiteful and malicious; they are our deadly enemies, that thirst after my blood, my heart's blood; enemies against the soul, so the word is. David's enemies did what they could to drive him to sin, and drive him away from God, they made him to hate his God, his other gods; (1 Sam. xxviii. 14.) I will therefore he had no comfort in them. Note, Those are our worst enemies, and we ought so to account them, that are enemies to our souls.

2. They are very secure and sensual, insolent and haughty, v. 10. They are inclined in their own fat, wrap themselves, hug themselves, in their own honour, and power, and plenty, and then make light of God, and set his judgments at defiance, (see, xxii. 7. Job iv. 27.) They wallow in pleasure, and proud themselves that to-morrow shall be as this day. And therefore with their mouth they speak proudly, glorifying in themselves, blaspheming God, trampling upon his people, and in-sulting him." See Rev. xiii. 5, 6. "Lord, are not such men as these fit to be mortified and humbled, and made to know themselves! Will it not be for thy glory to look upon these proud men and abase them?" (3.) They are restless and unwearyed in their attempts against me; they are ever seeking something else; or, (as some think,) "They are watchful and intent upon it, to do us a mischief; they are down-looked, and never slip an opportunity of compassing their design." (1.) The chief leader of them, (that was Saul,) is in a special manner bloody and barbarous, politic, and projecting, (v. 12.) like a lion that lives by prey, and is therefore greedy of it. It is as much the meat and drink of a wicked man to do mischief, as it is of a good man to do good. He is like a young lion lurking in secret places, disguising his cruel designs. This is fitly applied to Saul, who sought David on the rocks of the wild goats, (1 Sam. xxviii. 3.) and in the wilderness of Ziph, (ch. xxvi. 2.) where lions used to lurk for their prey.

2. The power God had over them, to control and restrain them. He pleads, (1.) "Lord, they are thy sword; and will any father suffer his sword to be drawn against his own children?" As this is a reason why we should patiently bear the injuries of others, that they are but the instruments of the trouble, (it comes directly from God, to whose will we are bound to submit,) it is an encouragement to us to hope both that their wrath shall be raised, and that the remainder thereof he will re- strain, that they are God's sword, which he can manage as he pleases, which cannot move without him, and which he will sheathe when he has done his work with it. (2.) "They are thy hand, by which thou dost chastise thy people, and make them feel the weight of thy judgments. He therefore expects deliverance from God's hand, because from God's hand the trouble came. Una eademque manus vulnus opemque tuli—The same hand wounds and heals. There is no flying from God's hand, but by flying to it. It is very comfortable, when we are in fear of the power of man, to see it dependent upon, and in subjection to, the power of God; see Isa. x. 6, 7, 15.

3. Their outward prosperity; (v. 14.) "Lord, appear against them, for." (1.) "They are entirely devoted to the world, and care not for that which is the favour. They are men of the world, actuated by the spirit of the world, walking according to the course of this world, in love with the wealth and pleasure of this world, eager in the pursuits of it, making them their business, and at ease in the en-joyments of it, making them their bliss. They have a share or portion in this life; they look upon the good things of this world as the chief things, and sufficient to make them happy, and they choose themselves agreeably, place their felicity in them, and aim at them as their chief good; they rest satisfied with them, their souls take ease in them, and they look no further, nor are in any care to provide for another life. These things are their consolation, (Luke vi. 24.) their good things, (Luke xvi. 25.) their re-sources, (Matth. xx. 13.) "Now, Lord, shall men of this character be supported and countenanced against those who honour the Lord, prevailing for thy favour before all the wealth in this world, and taking thee for their portion?" xvi. 5. (2.) They have abundance of the world, [1.] They have en-larged appetites, and a great deal wherewith to satisfy them; their bellies thou fillest with hid treas-ures. The things of this world are called treas-ures, because they are so accounted; otherwise, to apply them in comparison with eternal blessings, they are but small. They are hid in the several parts of the creation, and hid in the very propo-sals of Providence. They are God's hid treasures, for the earth is his, and the fulness thereof, though the men of the world think it is their own, and forget God's property in it. They that fare deliciously every day, have their bellies filled with these hid treasures; and they will but fill the belly, (1 Cor. vi. 13.) they will not fill the soul, they are not bred for that, nor can they satisfy, Isa. lv. 2.
1. I WILL love thee, O Lord, my strength.
2. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.
3. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.
4. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.
5. The sorrows of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me. In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.
6. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth. There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness his secret place: his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed; hailstones and coals of fire.
7. The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hailstones and coals of fire. Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them. Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils. He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters; he delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me. They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the Lord was my stay. He brought me forth also into a large place: he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

The title gives us the occasion of penning this psalm; we had it before, (2 Sam. xxii. 1.) only here we are told, that the psalm was delivered To the chief musician, or precentor, in the temple-songs. Note: The private compositions of good men, designed by them for their own use, may be service-

PSALM XVIII.

This psalm we read before in the history of David's life, 2 Sam. xxii. This was the first edition of it, here we have it revived, altered a little, and fitted for the service of the church. It is David's thanksgiving for the many deliverances God had wrought for him; these he desired always to preserve fresh in his own memory, and to diffuse and entail the knowledge of them. It is an admirable composition. The poetry is very fine, the images bold, the expressions lofty, and every word proper and significant. In this the poetry of faith, love, and joy, and praise, and hope, are here lively, active, and upon the wing. I. He triumphs in God, v. 1. 3. II. He magnifies the deliverances God had wrought for him, v. 4. 19. 31. He takes the comfort of his integrity, which God had thereby cleared up, v. 20. 58. IV. He gives to God the glory of all his achievements, v. 29. 42. V. He encourages himself with the expectation of what God would further do for him, and his, v. 43. 50.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who speak unto the Lord the words of this song in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul: and he said,
able to the public, that others may not only borrow light from their candle, but heat from their fire. Examples sometimes teach better than rules. And David is here called the servant of the Lord, as Moses was, not only as every good man is God's servant, but because, with his sceptre, with his sword, and with his pen, he greatly promoted the interests of God's kingdom in Israel. It was more his honour, that he was a servant of the Lord, than that he was king of a great kingdom; and so he himself accounted it, (cxxvi. 16.) "O Lord, truly I am thy servant." In these verses, 1. He triumphs in God and his relation to him. The first words of the psalm, I will love thee, O Lord, my Strength, are here prefixed as the scope and contents of the whole. Love to God is the first and great commandment of the law, because it is the principle of all our acceptable praise and obedience; and this use we should make of all the mercies God bestows upon us, our hearts should thereby be enlarged in love to him. This he requires, and will accept; and we are very ungrateful if we grudge him so poor a return. An interest in the person loved, is the lover's delight; this string, therefore, he touches, and on this he harps with much pleasure; (v. 2.) "The Lord, Jehovah, is my God," and then, "I am his Rock, his Fortress, all that I need, and can desire in my present distress." For there is that in God, which is suited to all the exigencies and occasions of his people that trust in him, "He is my Rock and Strength, and Fortress," that is, (1.) "I have found him so in the greatest dangers and difficulties." (2.) "I have chosen him to be so, disclaiming all others, and depending upon him alone to protect me." Those that truly love God, may thus triumph in him as theirs, and may with confidence call upon him, v. 3. This further use we should make of our deliverances, we must not only love God the better, but love prayer the better; call upon him as long as we live, especially in time of trouble, with an assurance, that so we shall be saved; for thus it is written, Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, Acts i. 21.

II. He sets himself to magnify the deliverances God had wrought for him, that he might be the more affected in his returns of praise. It is good for us to observe all the circumstances of a mercy, which magnify the power of God and his goodness to us.

1. The more imminent and threatening the danger was, out of which we were delivered, the greater is the mercy of the deliverance. David saw remembered how the forces of his enemies poured in upon him, which he calls the floods of Belial, shoals of the children of Belial, likely to overpower him with numbers; they surrounded him, compassed him about; they surprised him, and their means were very near seizing him, their snares prevented him; and when wounds were fightings, within were fears and sorrows, v. 4, 5. His spirit was overwhelmed, and he looked upon himself as a lost man; see cxxvi. 3.

2. The more earnest we have been with God for deliverance, and the more direct answer it is to our prayers, the more we are obliged to be thankful. David's deliverances were so, v. 6. David was found, and was saved, and was brought a praying-hearing God. If we pray as he did, we shall have as speed as he did. Though distress drives us to prayer, God will not therefore be deaf to us; nay, being a God of pity, he will be the more ready to succour us.

3. The more wonderful God's appearances are in any deliverance, the greater it is: such were the deliverance wrought for David, in which God's manifestation of his presence and glorious attributes is most magnificently described, v. 7, &c. Little appeared of man, but much of God, in these deliverances. (1.) He appeared a God of almightiness; for God made the earth to tremble, and moved even the foundations of the hills, v. 7, as of old at mount Sinai. When the men of the earth were struck with fear, then the earth might be said to tremble; when the great men of the earth were put into confusion, then the hills moved. (2.) He showed his anger and displeasure against the enemies and persecutors of his people. He was wrath, v. 7. His wrath smoked, it burned, it was fire, it was devouring fire, v. 8. It was a sore and grievous thing to them. (3.) He showed his anger and displeasure against himself; that is, against his distressed servants, v. 10. No opposition, no obstruction, can be given to him, who rides upon the wings of the wind, who rides on the heavens, for the help of his people, and, in his excellency, on the skies. (4.) He showed his condescension, in taking cognizance of David's case; he bowed the heavens and came down; (v. 9.) did not send an angel, but came himself, as one affected in the afflictions of his people. (5.) He wrapped himself in darkness, and yet commanded light to shine out of darkness for his people, Isa. xlv. 1. He is a God that hideth himself; for he made darkness his pavilion, v. 11. His glory is invisible, his counsels are unsearchable, and his proceedings unaccountable, and so, as to us, clouds and darkness are round about him; we know not the way that he takes, even when he is coming towards us in ways of mercy; but when his designs are secret, they are dark; for though he hide himself, he is the God of Israel, the Saviour, and, at his brightness, the thick clouds pass; (v. 12.) comfort returns, the face of affairs is changed, and that which was gloomy and threatening becomes serene and pleasant.

4. The greater the difficulties are that lie in the way of deliverance, the more glorious the deliverance is. For the rescuing of David, the waters were to be divided till the very channels were seen; the earth was to be cloven till the very foundations of it were disturbed, v. 15. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, and deep and many, waters out of which he was to be drawn, (v. 16.) as Moses, who had his name from being drawn out of the water literally, as David was figuratively. His enemies were strong, and they hated him; had he been left to himself, they had been too strong for him, v. 17. And they were too quick for him; for they prevented him in the day of his calamity, v. 18. But, in the midst of his troubles, he felt himself made hid under the throne, v. 19. Note, God will not only deliver his people out of their troubles in due time, but he will sustain them and bear them up under their troubles, in the mean time.

5. That which especially magnified the deliverance, was, that his comfort was the fruit of it, and God's favour was the root and fountain of it. (1.) It was an introduction to his preferment, v. 19. It brought him to a large place, where I had room, not only to turn, but to thrive in." (2.) It was a token of God's favour to him, and that made it doubly sweet; "He delivered me, because he delighted in me, not for my merit, but for his own grace and good-will." Compare this with 2 Sam. xv. 26. If he thus say, I have no delight in thee, here I am. We owe our salvation, that great deliverance, to the delight G
had in the Son of David, in whom he has declared himself to be well-pleased.

In singing this, we must triumph in God, and trust in him; and we may apply it to Christ the Son of David; the sorrows of death surrounded him, in his distress he prayed, (Heb. v. 7.) God made him to grow up to sit as a prince upon the throne before the sun; and the rocks to cleave, and brought him out, in his resurrection, into a large place, because he delighted in him and in his undertaking.

20. The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanliness of my hands hath he recompensed me.

21. For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God. 22. For all his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me. 23. I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.

24. Therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight. 25. With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright; 26. With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward. 27. For thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks. 28. For thou wilt light my candle; the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.

Here

1. David reflects, with comfort, upon his own integrity, and rejoices in the testimony of his conscience, that he had had his conversation in godly sincerity, and with not fleshly wisdom, 2 Cor. i. 12. His deliveries were an evidence of this, and this was the great comfort of his deliverances. His enemies had misrepresented him, and perhaps, when his troubles continued long, he began to suspect himself; but, when God visibly took his part, he had both the credit and the comfort of his righteousness. (1.) His deliveries cleared his innocence before men, and acquitted him from those crimes which he was falsely accused of. This he calls "rewarding him according to his righteousness, (v. 20, 24.)" determining the controversy between him and his enemies, according to the justice of his cause, and the cleanness of his hands, from that sedition, treason, and rebellion, with which he was charged. He had often appealed to God concerning his innocence; and now God had given judgment upon the appeal, (as he always will,) according to equity. (2.) They confirmed the testimony of his own conscience for him, which he here reviews with a great deal of pleasure, v. 21-23. His own heart knew him ready to attest it, [1.] That he had kept firm to his duty, and had not departed, not wickedly, not wilfully departed, from his God. They that forsake the ways of the Lord do, in effect, depart from their God, and it is a wicked thing to do so. But though we are conscious to ourselves of many a stumble, and many a false step taken, yet, if we recover ourselves by repentance, and go on in the way of our duty, it shall not be construed into a departure, for it is not a wicked departure, from our God. [2.] That he had kept his eye upon the rule of God's commands; (v. 22.) "All his judgments were before me; and I had a respect to them all, despised none as little, disliked none as hard; but made it my care and business to conform to them all. His statutes I did not put away from me, out of my sight, out of my mind, but kept my eye always upon them, and did not as those who, because they would quit the ways of the Lord, desire not the knowledge of those ways." [3.] That he had kept himself from his iniquity, and thereby had approved himself upright before God. Constant care to abstain from that sin, whatever it be, which most easily betrays us, and to mortify the habit of it, will be a good evidence for us, that we are upright before God. As David's deliveries cleared his integrity, so did the explanation of Christ clear his, and for ever roll away the approach that was cast upon him; and therefore he is said to be "justified in the Spirit," 1 Tim. iii. 16.

2. He takes occasion thence to lay down the rules of God's government and judgment, that we may know not only what God expects from us, but what we may expect from him, v. 25, 26. (1.) Those that show mercy to others, (even they need mercy, and cannot depend upon the merit, no not upon their works of mercy,) shall find mercy with God. Matt. v. 44. (2.) Those that misrepresent their covenants with God, and the relations wherein they stand to him, shall find him all that to them which he has promised to be. Wherever God finds an upright man, he will be found an upright God. (3.) Those that serve God with a pure conscience, shall find that the words of the Lord are pure words, very sure to be depended on, and very sweet to be delighted in. (4.) Those that resist God, and walk contrary to him, shall find that he will resist them, and walk contrary to them, Lev. xxvi. 21, 24.

3. Hence he speaks comfort to the humble; "Thou wilt save the afflicted people, that are wronged and bear it patiently;" but he speaks terror to the proud; "Thou wilt bring down high looks, that aim high, and expect great things for themselves, and look with scorn and disdain upon the poor and pious;" and he speaks encouragement to himself; "Thou wilt light my candle; thou wilt revive and comfort my sorrowful spirit, and not leave me melancholy; thou wilt recover me out of my troubles, and restore me to peace and prosperity; thou wilt make my honour bright, which is now eclipsed; thou wilt guide my way, and make it plain before me, that I may avoid the snares laid for me; thou wilt light my candle to work by, and give me an opportunity of serving thee, and the interests of thy kingdom among men." Let those that walk in darkness, and labour under many discouragements, in singing these verses, encourage themselves, that God himself will be a Light to them.

29. For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall. 30. As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried; he is a buckler to all those that trust in him. 31. For who is God that save the Lord? or who is a rock save our God? 32. It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect. 33. He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places. 34. He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms. 35. Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand
hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great. 36. Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip. 37. I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed. 38. I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet. 39. For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me. 40. Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies, that I might destroy them that hate me. 41. They cried, but there was none to save them: even unto the Lord, but he answered them not. 42. Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind; I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets. 43. Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; and thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me. 44. As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me. 45. The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places. 46. The Lord liveth; and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted. 47. It is God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people under me. 48. He delivereth me from mine enemies; yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man. 49. Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name. 50. Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and showeth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore.

In these verses,
I. David looks back, with thankfulness, upon the great things which God had done for him; he had not only wrought deliverance for him, but had given him victory and success, and made him triumph over those who thought to have triumphed over him. When we set ourselves to praise God for one mercy, we must be led by that to observe the many more with which we have been compassed about, and followed, all our days. Many things had contributed to David's advancement, and he owns the hand of God in them all, to teach us to do likewise, in reviewing the several steps by which we have risen to our prosperity. 1. God has given him all his skill and understanding in military affairs, which he was not bred up to, nor designed for; his genius leading him more to music and poetry, and a contemplative life; He teaches my hands to war, v. 34. 2. God had given him bodily strength to go through the business and fatigue of war; God girded him with strength, (v. 32, 39,) to that degree, that he could break even a bow of steel, v. 34. What service God designs men for, he will be sure to fit them for. 3. God had likewise given him great swiftness, not to flee from the enemies, but to fly upon them; (v. 33.)

He makes my feet like hind's feet, v. 36. "Thou hast enlarged my steps under me; but" (whereas those that take large steps, are apt to tread awry) "my feet did not slip." He was so swift that he pursued his enemies and overtook them, v. 37. 4. God had made him very bold and daring in his enterprises, and given him spirit proportionable to his strength. If a troop stood in his way, he made nothing of wading through them; if a wall, he made nothing of leaping over it. (v. 38.) If ram parts and bulwarks, he soon mounted them; and, by divine assistance, set his feet upon the high places of the enemy, v. 33. 5. God had protected him, and kept him safe, in the midst of the greatest perils; many a time he put his life in his hand, and yet it was wonderfully preserved; "Thou hast given me the shield of thy salvation, (v. 35.) and that has compassed me on every side: that I have been delivered from the strivings of the people who aimed at my destruction, I give my honour largely from the violent man," (v. 48.) Saul, who more than once threw a javelin at him. 6. God had prospered and succeeded him in his designs; he it was that made his way perfect, (v. 32.) and it was his right hand, that held him up, v. 33. 7. God had given him victory over his enemies, the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, and all that fought against Israel: those especially he means, (v. 39.) not excluding the Philistines, before his coming to the crown, and the partitions of Ab-salom and Sheba, who would have deposed him. He enlarges much upon the goodness of God to him in defeating his enemies, attributing his victories, not to his own sword or bow, or the valour of his mighty men, but to the favour of God; I pursued them, (v. 37.) I wounded them, (v. 38.) for thou hast girded me with strength, (v. 39.) else I could not bring the praise that is ascribed to God; Thou hast subdued them under me, v. 39.

Thou hast given me their necks, (v. 40.) not only to trample upon them, (as Josh. x. 24,) but to cut them off. Even those who hated David whom God loved, and were enemies to the Israel of God, in their distress, cried unto the Lord, but in vain, he answered them not. How could they expect he should, when it was he whom they fought against? And when he disowned them, (as he will all those that fight against him,) those who could succours could stand in stead; There was none to save them, v. 41. Those whom God has aban-doned are easily vanquished; They did I beat them small as the dust, v. 42. But those whose cause is just he avenges, (v. 47.) and those whom he favours will certainly be lifted up above those that rise up against them, v. 48. 8. God had raised him to the throne, and not only delivered him and kept him alive, but dignified him and made him great; (v. 35.) Thy gentleness has increased my discipline and instruction; so some. The good lessons David learned in his affliction prepared him for the dignity and power that were intended him; and the lessening of him helped very much to greater him. God made him not only a great conqueror, but a great ruler; Thou hast made me the head of the heathen; (v. 43.) all the neighbour- ing nations brought him to. See 2 Sam. viii. 6, 11. In all this, David was just, whom the Father brought safely through his conflicts with the powers of darkness, and made victo-rious over them, and gave to be Head over all things to his church, which is his body.

II. David looks up, with humble and reverent adorations of the divine glory and perfection; when God had, by his providence, magnified him, he endeavours, with his praises, to magnify God, to bless him and exalt him, v. 46. He gives honour to him, 1. As a living God, The Lord liveth, v. 44.
We had our lives at first from, and owe the
continuance of them to, that God who has life in
himself, and is therefore fitly called the living
God. The gods of the heathen were dead gods; the
best friends we have among men are dying friends; but
God lives, lives for ever, and will not fail those
that trust in him, but, because he lives, they shall
live also; for he is their Life. 2. As a finishing
God; As for him, he is not only perfect himself, but
his way is perfect, (v. 30.) He is known by his
name Jehovah, (Exod. 3. 1.) a name ful of perfections,
and perfection, when he begins, in providence as
well as creation, Gen. ii. 1. If it was God that
made David's way perfect, (v. 32.) much more is
his own so. There is no flaw in God's works, nor
any fault to be found with what he does, Escl. iii.
14. And what he undertakes he will go through with,
whatever difficulties lie in the way; what
God begins to build, he is able to finish. 3. As a
faithful God; The word of the Lord is tried. "I
have thought upon it," (says David,) "and it has not failed
me." All the saints, in all ages, have tried it,
and it never failed any that trusted in it. It
is tried as silver is tried, refined from all such mix-
ture and alloy as lessen the value of men's words.
David, in God's providences concerning him, takes
notice of the performance of his promises to him,
which, as it puts sweetness into the providence,
so it puts honour upon the promise. 4. As the
Protector and Deliverer of his people, v. 31. David
was made a Buckler to all those that trust in him; (v. 30.) he
shelters and protects them all, is both able
and ready to do so. 5. As a non-such in all this; (v.
31.) There is a God, and who is God, save Jeho-
vah? That God is a Rock, for the support and
shelter of his faithful worshippers; and who is a
Rock, save our God? Thus he not only gives
us to God, but encourages his own faith in him.
Note, (1.) Whoever pretend to be deities, it is
certain that there is no God, save the Lord; all
others are counterfeiters. Isa. xlv. 8. Jer. x. 10.
(2.) Whoever pretend to be our felicities, there is
no Rock, save our God; none that we can depend
upon to make us happy.

III. David looks forward, with a believing hope
that God would still do him good. He promises
himself, and the Church, that he should be completely
subdued, and that those of him that yet remained
should be made his footstool. That his govern-
ment should be extensive, so that even a people
whom he had not known should serve him, v. 43.
That his conquests, and, consequently, his accretions,
should be easy; As soon as they hear of me, they
shall obey me, v. 44. And that his enemies should
be convinced that it was to no purpose to oppose him
when he was armed, and therefore they shall not trust to them,
but be afraid out of their close places, having seen so much of David's
wisdom, courage, and success. Thus the Son of
David, though he sees not yet all things put under
him, yet knows he shall reign till all opposing rule,
principality, and power, shall be quite put down. 2.
That his seed should be for ever continued in the Messiah,
who, he foresaw, should come from him, v. 7. He shows mean to his ancient,
Messiah, to David himself, the God of Jacob in the
type, and to his seed for ever-
more. He saith not unto seeds, as of many, but
to his Seed, as of one, that is Christ, Gal. iii. 16. It is
he only that shall reign for ever, and of the in-
crease of whose government and peace there shall
be no end. Christ is called David, Hos. iii. 5.
God has called him his King, ii. 6. Great de-
liberation God does give, and will give, to him, and
to his church and people, here called his seed for
evermore.

In singing these verses, we must give God the
glory of the victories of Christ and his church
hitherto, and of all the deliverances and advance-
ments of the gospel-kingdom; and encourage our
selves and one another with an assurance, that the
church militant will be shortly triumphant, will be
eternally so.

PSALM XIX.

There are two excellent books which the great God has
published for the instruction and edification of the children
of men; this psalm treats of them both, and recom-
mands them both to our diligent study. 1. The book of
the creatures, in which we may easily read the power
and Godhead of the Creator; v. 1-6. II. The book of
the scriptures, which makes known to us the will of God
concerning our duty. He shows the excellency and
usefulness of that book, (v. 7-11.) and then teaches us how
to improve it, v. 12-14.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

1. The heavens declare the glory of God;
and the firmament showeth his handy-work. 2. Day unto day utter-

speech, and night unto night showeth
knowledge. 3. There is no speech nor language
where their voice is not heard. 4. Their
line is gone out through all the earth, and
their words to the end of the world. In
them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun;
5. Which is as a bridegroom coming out of
his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man
to run a race. 6. His going forth is from
the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto
the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from
the heat thereof.

From the things that are seen every day by all
the world, the psalmist, in these verses, leads us to
the consideration of the invisible things of God,
whose being appears incontestably evident, and
whose glory shines transcendently bright, in the
visible heavens, the structure and beauty of them,
and the order and influence of the heavenly bodies.
This instance of the divine power serves not only
to show the folly of atheists, who see there is a heaven,
and yet say, "There is no God;" who see the effect,
and yet say, "There is no cause;" but to show the
glow of idolaters also, and the vanity of their imagi-
nation, who, though the heavens declare the glory
of God, yet gave that glory to the lights of heaven,
which those very lights directed them to give to
God only, the Father of lights. Now observe here,
1. What is that which the creatures notify to us:
they are many ways useful and serviceable to us,
but in nothing so much as in this, that they declare
the glory of God, by showing his handy-works,
v. 1. They plainly speak themselves to be God's
handy-works; for they could not exist from eternity,
all succession and motion must have had a beginning;
they could not make themselves, that is a contra-
diction; they could not be produced by a casual hit
of atoms, that is an absurdity, fit rather to be ban-
tioned than reasoned with; therefore they must have
a Creator, who can be no other than an Eternal
Mind, infinitely wise, powerful, and good. Thus
it appears they are God's works, the work of his
fingers, (viii. 3.) and therefore they declare his
glory. From the excellency of the work, we may
easily infer the infinite perfection of its great Au-
thor. From the brightness of the heavens, we may
collect that the Creator is Light; their vastness of
extent bespeaks his immensity; their height his transcendency and sovereignty; their influence upon this earth, his dominion and providence, and universal beneficence: and all declare his almighty power, by which they were at first made, and continue to this day, according to the ordinances that were then settled.

II. What are some of those things which notify this?

1. The heavens and the firmament: the vast expanse of air and ether, and the spheres of the planets, and fixed stars. Man has this advantage above the beasts, in the structure of his body, that, whereas they are made to look downward, as their spirits must go, he is made erect, to look upward, because upward his spirit must shortly go, and his thoughts should now rise.

2. The constant and regular succession of day and night; (v. 2.) Day unto day, and night unto night, speak the glory of that God who first divided between the light and the darkness, and has, from the beginning to this day, preserved that established order without variation, according to God's covenant with Noah, (Gen. viii. 22.) that, while the earth remains, day and night shall not cease; to which covenant of providence, the covenant of grace is compared for its stability, Jer. xxxiii. 20. xxxi 35. The counterchanging of day and night, in so exact a method, is a great instance of the power which controls the earth. It is the kingdom of nature, so in that of providence, he forms the light, and creates the darkness, (Isa. xlv. 7.) and sets the one over-against the other. It is likewise an instance of his goodness to man; for he makes the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice, lxv. 8. He not only glorifies himself, but gratifies us, by this constant revolution; for, as the light of the morning befriended the business of the day, so the shadows of the evening befriended the repose of the night; every day and every night speak the goodness of God, and when they have finished their testimony, leave it to the next day, to the next night, to say the same.

3. The light and influence of the sun, do, in a special manner, declare the glory of God; for, of all the heavenly bodies, that is the most conspicuous in itself, and most useful to this lower world, which would be all dungeon, and all desert, without it. It is a very improbable conjecture, that David penned this psalm when he had the rising sun to view, and from the brightness of it took occasion to declare the glory of God. Concerning the sun, observe here, (1.) The place appointed him: in the heavens God has set a tabernacle for the sun. The heavenly bodies are called hosts of heaven, and therefore are fitly said to dwell in tents, as soldiers in their encampments: the sun is said to have a tabernacle set him, not only because he is in continual motion, and ne'er can be at rest, but because the mansion he has will, at the end of time, be taken down like a tent, when the heavens shall be rolled together like a scroll, and the sun shall be turned into darkness. (2.) The course assigned him: that glorious creature was not made to be idle, but his going forth (at least, as it appears to our eye) is from one point of the heavens, and his circuit thence to the opposite point, and thence (to complete his diurnal revolution) to the same point again; and this with such steadiness and constancy, that he can certainly tell the hour and the minute at which the sun will rise at such a place, any day to come. (3.) The brightness wherein he appears: he is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, richly dressed up and adorned, as fine as hands can make him, looking pleasantly himself, and making all about him pleasant; for the friend of the bridegroom rejoices greatly to hear the bridegroom's voice, John iii 29. (4.) The cheerfulness wherewith he makes his tour: though it seems a vast round which he has to walk, and he has not a moment's rest, yet, in obedience to the law of his creation, and for the service of man, he not only does it, but does it with a great deal of pleasure, and rejoices as a strong man to run a race. With such satisfaction did Christ, the Sun of righteousness, finish the work that was given him to do. (5.) His universal influence on this earth: there is a thing hid from the heat thereof. You must look among the bowels of the earth, which the sun has an influence upon.

III. To whom this declaration is made of the glory of God; it is made to all parts of the world; (v. 3, 4.) There is no speech nor language, (no nation, for the nations were divided after their tongues, Gen. x. 31, 32.) where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone through all the earth, (the equinoctial line suppose,) and with it, their words to the end of the world, proclaiming the eternal power of the God of nature, v. 4. The apostle uses this as a reason why the Jews should not be angry with him and others for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, because God had already made himself known to the Gentile world by the works of creation, and left not himself without witness among them, (Rom. x. 18.) so that they were without excuse, if they were idolaters, Rom. i. 20, 21. And those were without blame, who, by preaching the gospel to them, endeavoured to turn them from their idolatry. If God used these means to prevent their apostasy, and they proved ineffectual, the apostles did well to use other means to recover them from it. They have no speech or language, (so some read it,) and yet their voice is heard. All people may hear these natural immortal preachers speak to them, in their own tongue, the wonderful works of God.

In singing these verses, we must give God the glory of all the comfort and benefit we have by the lights of heaven, still looking above and beyond them to the Sun of righteousness.

7. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: 8. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes: 9. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. 10. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. 11. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward. 12. Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. 13. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. 14. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

God's glory, that is, his goodness to man, appears much in the works of creation, but much more in and by divine revelation. The holy scripture, as it is a rule both of our duty to God and of our expec-
PSALMS, XIX.

tation from him, is of much greater use and benefit to us than day or night, than the air we breathe in, or the light of the sun. The discoveries made of God by his works might have served, if man had retained his integrity; but, to recover him out of his fallen state, this other course must be taken; that must be done by the word of God. And here,

I. The psalmist gives an account of the excellent properties and uses of the word of God, in six sentences, (v. 7-9.) in each of which the name Jehovah is repeated; and no vain repetition, for the law has its authority and all its excellency from the Law-Maker. Here are six several titles of the word of God, to take in the whole of divine revelation, precepts, and promises, and especially the gospel. Here are several good properties of it, which prove its divine original, which recommend it to our affection, and which extol it above all other laws whatsoever; and here are several good effects of the law upon the minds of men, which show what it is designed for, what use we are to make of it, and how wonderful the efficacy of divine grace is, going along with it, and working by it.

1. The law of the Lord is perfect; it is perfectly free from that which is unsuitable, filled with all good and perfectly fitted for the end for which it is designed; it will make the man of God perfect, 2 Tim. iii. 17. Nothing is to be added to it, or taken from it. It is of use to convert the soul, to bring us back to ourselves, to our God, to our duty; for it shows us our sinfulness and misery in our departures from God, and the indispensible necessity of our return to him.

2. The testimony of the Lord (which witnesses for him to us sure, incontestably and inviolably sure, what we may give credit to, may rely upon, and may be confident it will not deceive us. It is a sure discovery of divine truth, a sure direction in the way of duty. It is a sure fountain of living comforts, and a sure foundation of lasting hopes. It is of use to make us wise, wise to salvation, 2 Tim. iii. 15. It will give us an insight into things divine, and a foresight of things to come. It will employ us in the best work, and secure to us our true interests. It may be in the hand of men, who are simple, poor contrivers as they may be for the present world, wise for their souls and eternities. Those that are humbly simple, sensible of their own folly, and willing to be taught, those shall be made wise by the word of God, xxv. 9.

3. The statutes of the Lord (enacted by his authority, and binding on all wherever they come) are right, exactly agreeing with the eternal rules and principles of good and evil, that is, with the right reason of man, and the right counsels of God. All God's precepts, concerning all things, are right, (cxxx. 128.) just as they should be; and they will set us to rights, if we receive them, and submit to them; and, because they are right, they rejoice the heart. The law, as we see it in the hands of Christ, gives cause for joy; and, when it is written in our hearts, it lays a foundation for lasting joy, by restoring us to right and peace.

The commandment of the Lord is pure; it is clear without darkness, it is clear, without dross and defilement. It is itself purified from all alloy, and is purifying to those that receive and embrace it. It is the ordinary means which the Spirit uses in enlightening the eyes; it brings us to a sight and sense of our sin and misery, and directs us in the way of duty.

4. The fear of the Lord (true religion and godliness, prescribed in the word, reigning in the heart, and practised in the life) is clean, clean itself, and will make us clean; (John xv. 3.) it will cleanse our way, cxxvi. 9. And it endures for ever; it is of perpetual obligation, and can never be repealed; the ceremonial law is long since done away, but the law concerning the fear of God is ever the same. Time will not alter the nature of moral good and evil.

5. The judgments of the Lord (all his precepts, which are founded in infinite wisdom) are true; they are grounded upon the most sacred and unquestionable truths; they are righteous, all consonant to natural equity; and they are so altogether, there is no unrighteousness in any of them, but they are all of a piece.

II. He expresses the great value he had for the word of God, and the great advantage he had, and hoped to have, from it, v. 10, 11.

How highly he prized the commandments of God: it is written, they are good for men, that they prefer their religion and the word of God, (1.) Far before all the wealth of the world; it is more desirable than gold, than fine gold, than much fine gold. Gold is of the earth, earthly; but grace is the image of the heavenly. Gold is only for the body, and the concerns of time; but grace is for the soul, and the concerns of eternity. (2.) Far before all the pleasures and delights of sense. The word of God, received by faith, is sweeter than honey, and the honey-comb. The pleasures of sense are the delight of brutes, and therefore desbase the great soul of man; the pleasures of religion are the delight of angels, and exalt the soul. The pleasures of sense are deceitful, will soon surfeit, and yet never satisfy; but those of religion are substantial and satisfying, and there is no danger of exceeding in them.

6. See what use he made of the precepts of God's word. By them is my soul warned. The word of God is a word of warning to the children of men; it warns us of the duty we are to do, the dangers we are to avoid, and the deluge we are to prepare for, Ezek. iii. 17.—xxxvii. 7. It warns the wicked not to go on in his wicked way, and warns the righteous not to turn from his good way. All that are indeed God's servants take this warning.

7. See what advantage he promised himself by his obedience to God's precepts; In keeping of them there is great reward. Those who make conscience of their duty, will not only be no losers by it, but unspeakable gainers. There is a reward, not only after keeping, but in keeping, God's commandments; a present great reward of obedience in obedience. Religion is health and honour, it is peace and pleasure; it will make our comforts sweet, and our crosses easy, life truly valuable, and death itself truly desirable.

8. He draw some good inferences from this pious meditation upon the excellency of the word of God. Such thoughts as these should excite in us devout affections, and then they are to good purpose.

1. He takes occasion hence to make a penitent reflection upon his sins; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Is the commandment thus holy, just, and good? Then who can understand his errours? By them is thy servant... From the provisions of the divine law he learns to call his sins his errors; if the commandment be true and righteous, every transgression of the commandment is an error, as grounded upon a mistake; every wicked practice takes rise from some corrupt principle; it is a deviation from the rule we are to work by, the way we are to walk in. From the extent, and strictness, and spiritual nature, of the divine law, he learns that his sins are so many, that he utterly despairs of the number of them, and so exceeding sinful, that he cannot understand the heinousness and malignity of them. We are guilty of many sins, which, through our carelessness and partiality to ourselves, we are not aware of: many we have been guilty of, which
we have forgotten; so that when we have been ever so particular in the confession of sin, we must con-
clude with an acknowledgment that God knows a great deal more evil of us, than we do of ourselves. In many things we all offend, and who can tell how often he offends? It is well that we are under grace, and not under the law, else we were undone.

2. He takes occasion hence to pray against sin; all the discoveries of sin made us by the law, should drive us to the throne of grace, there to pray, as David does here.

(1.) For mercy to pardon; finding himself unable to specify all the particulars of his transgressions, he cries out, Lord, cleanse me from my secret faults; not secret to God, so none are, nor only such as are secret to the world, but such as were hid from his own observation of himself. The best of men have reason to suspect themselves guilty of many secret faults, and to pray to God to cleanse them from that guilt, and not to lay it to their charge; for even our sins of infirmity and inadvertency, and our secret sins, would be our ruin, if God should deal with us according to the desert of them. Even secret faults are deluding, and render us unfit for communion with God; but when they are pardoned, we are cleansed from them, 1 John, i. 7.

(2.) For grace to help in time of need; having prayed that his sins of infirmity might be pardoned, he prays that presumptuous sins might be prevented,
v. 13. All that truly repent of their sins, and have them pardoned, are in care not to relapse into sin, nor to return again to folly, as appears by their prayers, which concur with David's here. Where observe, [1.] His petition; "Keep me from ever being guilty of a wilful presumptuous sin." We ought to pray that we may be kept from sins of in-
firmity, but especially from presumptuous sins, which most offend God, and wound conscience, which wither our comforts, and shock our hopes, "However, let none such have dominion over me, let me not be at the command of any such sin, nor be enslaved by it." [2.] His plea; "So shall I be upright; I shall appear upright; I shall preserve the evidence and comfort of my uprightness; and I shall be innocent from the great transgression;" so he calls a presumptuous sin, because no sacrifice was accepted for it, Numb. xv. 28.-30. Note, First, Presumptuous sins are very heinous and dan-
gersous; those that sin against the habitual convic-
tions and actual admonitions of their own consciences, in contempt and defiance of the law and its sanctions, that sin with a high hand, sin presumptuously, and it is a great transgression. Sec-
condly, Even good men ought to be jealous of them-
selves, and afraid of sinning presumptuously, yea, though through the grace of God they have hitherto been kept from them. Let none be high-minded, but fear; for as much as they have great need to pray to God, when we are push-
ing forward toward a presumptuous sin, to keep us back from it, either by his providence preventing the temptation, or by his grace giving us victory over it.

3. He takes occasion humbly to beg the divine acceptance of those his pious thoughts and affections, v. 14. Observe the connexion of this with what he before said, that God knows a great deal more evil of us, than we do of ourselves. In many things we all offend, and who can tell how often he offends? It is well that we are under grace, and not under the law, else we were undone.

(1.) What his services were; the words of his mouth, and the meditations of his heart, his holy affections offered up to God. The pious medita-
tions of the heart must not be smothered, but ex-
pressed in the words of our mouth, for God's glory, and the edification of others; and the words of our
mouth in prayer and praise must not be formal, but araising from the meditation of the heart, xliv. 1.

(2.) What was his care concerning these services; that they might be acceptable with God—else what do they avail us? Gracious souls must have all they aim at, if they be excepted of God, for that is their bliss. (3.) What encouragement he had to hope for this; because God was his Strength and his Re-
deemer. If we seek assistance from God as our Strength in our religious duties, we may hope to find acceptance with God of our duties; for by his strength we have power with him.

In singing this, we should get our hearts much affected with the excellency of the word of God, and deli-
ered into it; we should be much affected with the evil of sin, the danger we are in of it, and the danger we are in by it, and we should fetch in help from heaven against it.

PSALM XXX.

It is the will of God that prayers, intercessions, and thank-
givings, should be made, in a special manner, for kings, and all in authority. This is a prayer, and the next a thanksgiving, for the king. David was a martial prince, much in war. Either this psalm was penned upon occasion of some particular expedition of his, or, in general, they were to be used in the daily service of the church for him. In this psalm, we may observe, I. What it is they beg of God for the king, v. 1.-. 4. II. With what assurance they beg it. The people triumph; (v. 5.) The prince; (v. 6.) Both together; (v. 7, 8.) and so he concludes with a prayer to God for audiences, v. 9. In this, David may well be looked upon as a type of Christ, to whose kingdom, and its interests among men, the church was, in every age, a hearty well-wisher.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

1. The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee. 2. Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion. 3. Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt-sacrifice. Selah. 4. Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfill all thy counsel. 5. We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the Lord fulfill all thy petitions.

This prayer for David is entitled, a psalm of Da-
vil; nor was it any absurdity at all for him, who was divinely inspired, to draw up a directory, or form of prayer, to be used in the congregation for himself, and those in authority under him; nay, it is very proper for those who desire the prayers of their friends, to tell them particularly what they would have to be asked of God for them. Note, Even great and good men, and those that know well how to pray for themselves, must not despise, but earnestly desire, the prayers of others for them, even those that are their inferiors in all respects. Paul often begged of his friends to pray for him. Magistrates, and those in power, ought to esteem praying people, and encourage them to reckon them their strength, (Zech. xii. 5, 10.) and to do them what they can for them, that they may have an in-
terest in their prayers, and may do nothing to forfeit it. Now observe here.

I. What it is that they are taught to ask of God for the king.

1. That God would answer his prayers; The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble, (v. 1.) and the Lord fulfill all thy petitions, v. 5. Note, (1.) Even the greatest of men may be much in trouble. It was often a day of trouble with David himself,
of disappointment and distress, of treading down, and of perplexity. Neither the crown on his head, nor the grace in his heart, would exempt him from trouble. (2.) Even the greatest of men must be much in prayer. David, though a man of business, a man of war, was constant to his devotions; though he had prophets, and priests, and other good people, to pray for him, he did not think that excused him from praying for himself. Let none expect benefit by the prayers of the church, or of their ministers, or friends for them, who are capable of praying for themselves, and yet neglect it. The prayers of others for us must be desired, not to supersede, but to second, our own for ourselves. Happy the people that have praying princes, to whose prayers they may thus say, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." (2.) That God would protect his person, and preserve his life, in the perils of war; "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee, and set thee out of the reach of thine enemies." (1.) "Let God by his providence keep thee safe, even the God who preserved Jacob in the days of his trouble." David had mighty men for his guards, but he commits himself, and his people commit him, to the care of the almighty God. (2.) "Let God by his grace keep thee easy from any fear of outward danger." Prov. 3:5-6. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, into which the righteous run by faith, and are safe; let David be enabled to shelter himself in that strong tower, as he has done many a time."

3. That God would enable him to go on in his undertakings for the public good; that, in the day of battle, he would send him help out of the sanctuary, and strength out of Zion, not from common providence, but from the ark of the covenant, and the peculiar favour he bears to his chosen people Israel. That he would help him, in performance of the promises, and in answer to the prayers, made in the sanctuary. Mercies out of the sanctuary are the sweetest mercies, such as are the tokens of God's peculiar love; the blessing of God, even our own God. Strength out of Zion is spiritual strength, strength in the soul, in the inward man, and that it is we should most desire, both for ourselves and others, in services and sufferings.

4. That God would testify his gracious acceptance of the sacrifices he offered with his prayers, according to the law of that time, before he went out on this dangerous expedition; The Lord remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt-sacrifices, (v. 3.) or turn them to ashes; that is, "The Lord give thee the victory and success which thou didst by prayer with sacrifices ask of him, and thereby give as full proof of his acceptance of the sacrifice, as ever he did by kindling it with fire from heaven. By this we may now know that God accepts our spiritual sacrifices, if by his Spirit he kindles in our souls a holy fire of pious and divine affection, and with that makes our hearts burn within us.

5. That God would crown all his enterprises and noble designs for the public welfare with the desired success; (v. 4.) The Lord grant thee according to thine own heart. This they might in faith pray for, because they knew David was a man after God's own heart, and a man whose designs were pleasing to him. Those who make it their business to glorify God, may expect that God will, one way or other, gratify them; and they who walk in his counsel may promise themselves that he will fulfil their's; Thou shalt devise a thing, and it shall be established unto thee.

II. What confidence they had of an answer of peace to these petitions for themselves and their good King; (v. 5.) "He will rejoice in thy salvation. We, that are subjects, will rejoice in the preservation and prosperity of our prince;" or rather, "In thy salvation, O God, in thy power and promise to save, will we rejoice, that is it which we depend upon now, and which, in the issue, we shall have occasion greatly to rejoice in." Those that have their eye still upon the salvation of the Lord, shall have their hearts filled with the joy of that salvation; In the name of our God will we set up our banners. We rejoice in his name; we will see that our cause be good, and make his glory our end in every expedition; we will ask counsel at his mouth, and take him along with us; we will follow his direction, implore his aid, and depend upon it, and refer the issue to him." David went against Goliath in the name of the Lord of hosts, 1 Sam. xvii. 45. (2.) We will celebrate our victories in his name. When we lift up our banners in triumph, and set up our trophies, it shall be in the name of our God; he shall have all the glory of our success, and no instrument shall have any part of the honour that is due to him.

In singing this, we ought to offer up to God our hearty good wishes to the good government we are under, and to the prosperity of it. But we may look further; these prayers for David are prophecies concerning Christ the son of David, and in him they were abundantly answered; he undertook the cause of God's people, and made war upon the powers of darkness; in the day of trouble, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, the Lord heard him in that he feared; (Heb. v. 7.) sent him help out of the sanctuary, sent an angel from heaven to strengthen him, took cognizance of his offering, when he made his soul an offering for sin, and accepted his burnt-sacrifice, turned it to ashes; the fire that should have fastened upon the sinner, fastening upon the sacrifices, with which God was well-pleased, and he glorified him according to his own heart, made him to see of the travail of his soul, to his satisfaction, prospered his good pleasure in his hand, fulfilled all his petitions for himself and us; for, him the Father heareth always, and his intercession is ever prevailing.

6. Now know I that the Lord saveth his anointed: he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand. 7. "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God. 8. They are brought down and fallen; but we are risen, and stand upright. 9. Save, Lord: let the King hear us as we call. Here is...

1. Holy David himself triumphing in the interest he had in the prayers of good people; (v. 6.) "Now know I (I, that pen the psalm, know it) that the Lord saveth his anointed, because he hath stirred up the hearts of the seed of Jacob to pray for him." Note, It bodes well to any prince and people, and may justly be taken as a happy presage, when God pours upon them a spirit of prayer. If he see us seeking him, he will be found of us; if he cause us to hope in his word, he will establish his word to us. No power is so mighty with God, no power, not even the heavenly, are praying for him, he doubts not but that God will hear him, and grant him an answer of peace; which will, 1. Take its rise from above; he will hear him from his holy heaven, of which the sanctuary was a type, (Heb. ix. 23.) from the throne he hath prepared in heaven, of which the mercy-seat was a type. 2. It shall take its effect here below. He will hear him with the saving strength of his right hand he will give a real answer to his prayers, and the prayers of his friends for him, not by letter, or by word of mouth, but, which is much better, by his right hand, by the
PSALMS, XXI.

The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! 2. Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah. 3. For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head. 4. He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever. 5. His glory is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hath thou laid upon him. 6. For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.

David here speaks for himself in the first place, professing that his joy was in God's strength, and in his salvation, and not in the strength or success of his armies: He also directs his subjects hereby to rejoice with him, and to give God all the glory of the victories he had obtained; and all, with an eye to Christ, of whose triumphs over the powers of darkness David's victories were but shadows.

1. They here congratulate the king on his joys, and concur with him in them; (v. 1.) "The king rejoices, he uses to rejoice in thy strength, and so do we; what pleases the king, pleases us," 2Sam. iii. 36. Happy the people, the character of whose king it is, that he makes God's strength his confidence, and God's salvation his joy; that is pleased with all the advancements of God's kingdom, and trusts God to bear him out in all he does for the service of it. Our Lord Jesus, in his great undertaking, relied upon help from Heaven, and pleased himself with the prospect of that great salvation which he was thereby to work out.

2. They give God all the praise of these things, which were the matter of their king's rejoicing.

(1.) That God had heard his prayers; (v. 2.) Thou hast given him his heart's desire, (and there is no prayer accepted, but what is the heart's desire,) the very thing they begged of God for him, xx. 4. Note, God's gracious returns of prayer do, in a special manner, require our humble returns of praise. When God gives to Christ the heathen for his inheritance, gives him to see his seed, and accepts his intercession for all believers, he gives him his heart's desire.

(2.) That God had surprised him with favours, and much outdone his expectations; (v. 3.) Thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness. All our blessings are blessings of goodness, and are owing, not at all to any merit of ours, but purely, and only, to God's goodness. But the psalmist here reckons it, in a special manner, obliging, that these blessings were given in a preventing way: this fixed God's eye, enlarged his soul, and endeared his God, as one expresses it. When God's blessings come sooner, and prove richer, than we imagine, when they are given before we prayed for them, before we were ready for them, nay, when we feared the contrary; then it may be truly said, that he prevented us with them. Nothing, indeed, prevented

for the success God had blessed him with. Those whom we have prayed for, we ought to give thanks for, and particularly for kings, in whose prosperity we share. They are here taught, 1. To congratulate him on his victories, and the honour he had achieved, v. 1-6. 2. To consider the power of God for the completion of the victory, the enemies of his kingdom, v. 7-13. In this, there is an eye to the Messiah, the Prince, and the Glory of his kingdom; for to him divers passages in this psalm are more applicable than to David himself.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

as the foregoing psalm was a prayer for the king, that God would protect and prosper him; so this is a thanksgiving

saving strength of his right hand. He will make it to appear that he hears him, by what he does for him.

II. His people triumphing in God and their relation to him, and his revelation of himself to them, by which they distinguish themselves from those that live without God in the world. 1. See the difference between worldly people and godly people, in their confidences, v. 7. The children of this world trust in secret causes, and think all is well, if those do but smile upon them; they trust in chariots and horses, and the more of them they bring into the field, the more sure they are of success in their wars; probably, David has here eye to the Syrians, whose forces consisted much of chariots and horses, as we find in the history of David's victories over them, 2 Sam. viii. 4.—x. 18. "But," say the Israelites, "we neither have chariots and horses to trust to, nor do we want them, nor, if we had them, would we build our hopes of success upon that; but we will remember, and rely upon, the name of the Lord our God, upon the relation we stand in to him as the Lord our God, and the knowledge we have of him by his name," that is, all that whereby he makes himself known; this we will remember, and upon every remembrance of it will be encouraged. Note, Those who make God and his name their praise, may make God and his name their trust. 2. See the difference in the issue of their confidences, and by that we are to judge of the wisdom of the choice; things are as they prove; see who will be ashamed of their confidence, and who not, v. 8. "They that trust in their chariots and horses are brought down and fallen, and their chariots and horses were so far from saving them, that they helped to sink them, and made them the easier and the richer prey to the conqueror, 2 Sam. viii. 4. But we that trust in the name of the Lord our God, not only stand upright, and keep our ground, but are risen, and have got ground against the enemy, and have triumphed over them." Note, A believing obedient trust in God, and his name, is the surest way both to prevent and to establish, to rise and to stand upright, and this will stand us in stead, when creature-confidences fail those that depend upon them. III. They conclude their prayer for the king with a Hosanna, "Save now, we beseech thee, O Lord!" v. 9. As we read this verse, it may be taken as a prayer in God's eye, God might only not bless the king, "Save, Lord, give him success;" but that he would make him a blessing to them, "Let the king hear us, when we call to him for justice and mercy." Those that would have good of their magistrates, must thus pray for them, for they, as all other creatures, are that to us, (and no more,) that God makes them to be. Or, it may refer to the Messiah, that King, that King of kings; let him hear us when we call; let him come to us, according to the promise, in the time appointed; let him, as the great Master of requests, receive all our petitions, and present them to his Father. But many interpreters give another reading of this verse, by altering the pause, Lord, save the king, and hear us when we call; and so it is a summary of the whole psalm, and is taken into our English Liturgy. O Lord, save the king, and mercifully hear us, when we call upon thee.

When using these verses, we should encourage ourselves to trust in God, and stir up ourselves to pray earnestly, as we are in duty bound, for those in authority over us, that, under them, we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.

PSALM XXI.

as the foregoing psalm was a prayer for the king, that God would protect and prosper him; so this is a thanksgiving
Christ, but to mankind never was any favour more preventing than our redemption by Christ, and all the blessed fruits of his mediation.

(3.) That God had advanced him to the highest honour and the most extensive power; "Thou hast set a crown of pure gold upon his head, and kept it there, when his enemies attempted to throw it off." Note, Crowns are at God's disposal; no head wears them but God sets them there; whether in judgment to his land, or for mercy, the event will show. On the head of Christ God never set a crown of gold, but of thorns first, and then of glory.

(4.) That God had assured him of the perpetuity of his kingdom, and made him more for him than he was able either to ask or think; (v. 4.) "When he went forth upon a perious expedition, he asked his life of thee, which he then put into his hand, and thou not only gavest him that, but withal gavest him length of days for ever and ever; didst not only prolong his life far beyond his expectation, but didst assure him of a blessed immortality in a future state, and of the continuance of his kingdom in the Messiah that should come of his loins." See how God's grants often exceed our petitions and hopes, and infer thence, how rich he is in mercy to those that call upon him. See also, and rejoice in, the length of the days of Christ's kingdom. He was dead indeed, that we might live through him; but he is alive, and lives for evermore, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end; and because he thus lives, we shall thus live also.

(5.) That God had advanced him to the highest honour and dignity; (v. 5.) "His glory is great, far transcending that of all the neighbouring princes, in the salvation thou hast wrought for him and by him." The glory which every good man is ambitious of, is to see the salvation of the Lord; honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him, as a burthen which he must bear, as a charge which he must account for. Jesus Christ received from God the Father honour and glory, (2 Pet. 1. 17.) the glory which he had with him before the worlds were, John xvii. 5. And on him is laid the charge of universal government, and to him all power in heaven and earth is committed.

(6.) That God had given him the satisfaction of being the channel of all bliss to mankind; (v. 6.) "Thou hast set him to be blessings for ever, " (so the margin reads it.) "thou hast made him to be a universal, everlasting blessing to the world, in whom the families of the earth are, and shall be, blessed; and so thou hast made him exceeding glad with the countenance thou hast given to his undertaking, and to him in the prosecution of it." See how the spirit of prophecy gradually rises here to that which is peculiar to Christ, for none besides is blessed for ever, much less a blessing for ever to that eminency that the expression denotes: and of him it is said, the Lord made him full of joy with his countenance. In singing this, we should rejoice in his joy, and triumph in his exaltation.

7. For the king trusteth in the Lord; and, through the mercy of the Most High, he shall not be moved. 8. Thy hand shall find out all thine enemies; thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. 9. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them. 10. Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men. 11. For they intended evil against thee; they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform: 12. Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings against the face of them. 13. Be thou exalted, Lord, in thine own strength: so will we sing and praise thy power.

The psalmist, having taught his people to look back with joy and praise on what God had done for him and them, here teaches them to look forward with faith, and hope, and prayer, upon what God would further do for them; The king rejoices in God, (v. 1.) and therefore we will be thankful; the king trusteth in God, (v. 7.) therefore will we be encouraged. The joy and confidence of Christ our King, is the ground of all our joy and confidence.

1. They are confident of the stability of David's kingdom; Through the mercy of the Most High, and not through his own merit or strength, it shall not be moved. His prosperous state shall not be disturbed, his faith and hope in God, who is the Stay of his spirit, shall not be shaken. The mercy of the Most High, the divine goodness, power and dominion, is enough to secure our happiness, and therefore our trust in that mercy should be enough to silence all our fears. God being at Christ's right hand, in his sufferings, (xvi. 6.) and he being at God's right hand in his glory, we may be sure he shall not, he cannot, be moved, but continues ever.

2. They are confident of the destruction of all the impenitent, implacable, enemies of David's kingdom. The success with which God had blessed David's arms hitherto, was an earnest of the rest which God would give him from all his enemies round about; and a type of the total overthrow of all Christ's enemies, that would not have him to reign over them. Observe, (1.) The description of his enemies. They are such as hate him, v. 8. They hated David, because God had set him apart for himself; hated Christ, because they hated the light; but both were hated without any just cause, and in both God was hated, John xv. 23, 25. (2.) The designs of his enemies; (v. 11.) They intended evil against thee, and imagined a mischievous device; they pretended to fight against David only, but their design was to fight against God in him. They that aimed to unking David, aimed, in effect, to unking Jehovah. What is devised and designed against religion, and against the instruments God raises up to support and advance it, is very evil and mischievous, and God takes it as devised and designed against himself, and will so reckon for it. (3.) The disappointment of them; "They devise what they are not able to perform," v. 11. Their malice is impotent, and the instruments God raises up to support his people, to destroy his enemies, do so against their will. (4.) The destruction of them; (v. 8.) "Thy hand shall find them out, though ever so artfully disguised by the pretences and professions of friendship; though mingled with the faithful subjects of this kingdom, and hardly to be distinguished from them; though flying from justice, and abasing in their close places; yet thy hand shall find them out wherever they are. There is no escaping God's avenging power, and no going out of the reach of it. The seas and mountains will be no better shelter at last, than fig-leaves were at first. (5.) The destruction of them; it will be an utter destruction, (Luke xix. 27.) they shall be swallowed up and devoured, v. 9. Hell, the portion of all Christ's enemies, is the complete misery both of body and soul. Their fruit and their seed shall be destroyed, v. 10. The enemies of God's kingdom, in every age, shall fall under the same doom, and the whole generation of them will
4. Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. 5. They cried unto thee, and were delivered; they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. 6. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. 7. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, 8. He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. 9. But thou art he that took me out of the womb; thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. 10. I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou art my God from my mother's belly.

Some think they find Christ in the title of the psalm upon Ajeleth Shabar—The hind of the morning; Christ is as the swift hind upon the mountains of spices, (Cant. viii. 14.) as the loving hind and the pleasant roe, to all believers; (Prov. v. 19.) he giveth goodly words like Naphtali, who is compared to a hind let loose, Gen. xxix. 21. He is the hind of the morning, marked out by the counsels of God from eternity, to be run down by those dogs that compassed him, v. 16. But others think it denotes only the time to which the Psalm was set.

In these verses, we have,
1. A sad complaint of God's withdrawals, v. 1, 2. This may be applied to David, or any other child of God, in the want of the tokens of his favour, pressed with the burden of his displeasure, roaring under it, as one overwhelmed with grief and terror, crying earnestly for relief, and, in this case, apprehending himself forsaken of God, unhelped, unheard, yet calling him, again and again, "My God," and continuing to cry day and night to him, and earnestly desiring his gracious returns. Note, 1. Spiritual desertsions are the saints' sorest afflictions; when their evidences are clouded, divine consolations suspended, their communion with God interrupted, and the powers of God set in array against them, how sad are their spirits, and how sapless all their comforts! 2. Even their complaint of these.bartens is a good signal of their little and spiritual sensibilities. To cry out, "My God, why am I sick? why am I poor?" would give cause to suspect discontent and worldliness. But, Why hast thou forsaken me? is the language of a heart binding up its happiness in God's favour. 3. When we are lamenting God's withdrawals, yet still we must call him our God, and continue to call upon him as ours. When we want the faith of assurance, we must live by a faith of adherence; "Howbeit it be, yet doth God reign," Tit. ii. 12, verse, though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; though he do not answer me immediately, I will continue praying and waiting; though he be silent, I will not be silent. But it must be applied to Christ; for, in the first words of this complaint, he poured out his soul before God when he was upon the cross; (Matth. xxvii. 46.) probably he proceeded to the following words, and, some think, repeated the whole psalm, if not aloud, yet to himself, v. 26, 27, yet to himself. Note, (1.) Christ, in his sufferings, cried earnestly to his Father, for his favour and presence with him; he cried in the day-time upon the cross, and in the night-season when he was in his agony in the garden; he offered up strong crying and tears to him that was able to save him, and with some fear too, Heb. v. 7. (2.) Yet God forsook him, was far from helping him, and did not hear him, and this was it which he complains of
more than all his sufferings. God delivered him into the hands of his enemies; it was by his determinate counsel that he was crucified and slain, and he did not give insensible comforts; but Christ having made himself sin, for us, in conformity thereto, the Father laid him under the present impressions of his wrath and displeasure against sin. It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief, Isa. lii. 10. But even then he kept fast hold of his relation to his Father as his God, by whom he was made a reasonable being, and with whom he should shortly be glorified.

II. Encouragement taken, in reference hereunto, v. 3-5. Though God did not hear him, did not help him, yet, 1. He will think well of God; "But thou art holy, not unjust, untrue, or unkind, in any of thy dispensations; though thou dost not immediately come in to the relief of those afflicted people, yet thou lovest them, art true to thy covenant with them, and dost not countenance the iniquity of their persons," Hab. l.3. And as thou art infinitely pure and upright, thyself, so thou delightest in the services of thine uplifted people; Thou inhabitest the praises of Israel, thou art pleased to manifest thy glory, and grace, and special presence with thy people, in the sanctuary where they attend thee with their praises; there thou art always ready to receive their hommage, and of the tabernacle of meeting hast said, This is my rest for ever." This bespeaks God's wonderful condescension to his worshippers—that, though he is attended with the praises of angels, yet he is pleased to inhabit the praises of Israel. And it may comfort us in all our complaints—that, though God seen, for a while, to turn a deaf ear to them, yet he is so pleased with his people's praises, that he will, in due time, give them cause to change their note; Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him. Our Lord Jesus, in his sufferings, had an eye to the holiness of God, to preserve and advance the honour of that, and of his grace in inhabiting the praises of Israel, notwithstanding the irritations of their holy things. 2. He will take comfort from the experiences which the saints in former ages had of the benefit of faith and prayer; (v. 4, 5.) "Our fathers trusted in thee, cried unto thee, and thou didst deliver them; therefore thou wilt, in due time, deliver me, for never any that hoped in thee were made ashamed of their hope; never any that sought thee, sought thee in vain; for thou art a help to the helpless, and the same to thy people, that ever thou wast. They were our fathers, and thy people are beloved for the fathers' sake," Rom. xi. 28. The entail of the covenant is designed for the support of the seed of the faithful. He that was our fathers' God must be ours, and therefore will be ours. Our Lord Jesus, in his sufferings, supported himself with this—that all the fathers who were types of him in his sufferings, Noah, Joseph, David, Jonah, and others, were, in due time, delivered; and through them he supported himself, and the same to thy people, that ever thou wast. They were our fathers, and thy people are beloved for the fathers' sake," Rom. xi. 28. The entail of the covenant is designed for the support of the seed of the faithful. He that was our fathers' God must be ours, and therefore will be ours. Our Lord Jesus, in his sufferings, supported himself with this—that all the fathers who were types of him in his sufferings, Noah, Joseph, David, Jonah, and others, were, in due time, delivered; and through them he supported himself, and the same to thy people, that ever thou wast. They were our fathers, and thy people are beloved for the fathers' sake, Isa. l. 7.

III. The complaint renewed of another grievance, and that is, the contempt and reproach of men. This complaint is by no means so bitter as that before of God's withdrawals; but as that touches a gracious soul, so this a generous soul, in a very tender part, v. 6-8. Our fathers were honourable, the patriarchs, of whom it was said, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the same, in the eye of the world, Abraham, Moses, David; but Christ is a worm, and no man. It was great condescension that he became man, a step downward, that is, and will be, the wonder of angels; yet, as if it were too much, too great, to be a man, he becomes a worm, and no man. He was Adam—a mean man, and Enosh—a man of sorrows, but Is— not a considerable man; for he took upon him the form of a servant, and his visage was marred more than any man's, Isa. lii. 14. Man, at the best, is a worm; but he became a worm, and no man. If he had not made himself a worm, he could not have been trampeled upon as he was. The word signifies such a worm as was used in dying scarlet or purple; whence some make it as an allusion to his bloody sufferings. See what abuses were put upon him; 1. He was reproached as a bad man, as a blasphemer, a sabbath-breaker, a wine-bibber, a false prophet, an enemy to Caesar, a confederate with the Gentiles, and an inhabitant of the house of bondage, and with whom he should shortly be glorified.
from my coming into the world, unto this day. And
if, as soon as we became capable of exercising rea-
son, we put our confidence in God, and committed
ourselves and our way to him, we need not doubt
but he will always remember the kindness of our
youth, and the love of our enmity, Jer. ii. 2. This
is applicable to our Lord Jesus, over whose incar-
nation and birth the Divine Providence watched
with a peculiar care, when he was born in a stable,
laid in a manger, and immediately exposed to the
malice of Herod, and forced to flee into Egypt:
when he was a child, God loved him, and called him
ten. (Hos. xi. 1.) and the remembrance of this
comforted him in his sufferings; men reproached him
and reviled him, and were incensed against him.
Yet, but God had honoured him, and encouraged his con-

11. Be not far from me, for trouble is near;
for there is none to help. 12. Many bulls have com-
passed me: strong bulls of Ba-
shan have beset me round. 13. They gaped
upon me with their mouths, as a ravening
and a roaring lion. 14. I am poured out like
water, and all my bones are out of joint:
my heart is like wax; it is melted in the
midst of my bowels. 15. My strength is dried
up like a potsher'd; and my tongue cleaveth
to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into
the dust of death. 16. For dogs have com-
passed me; the assembly of the wicked have
enclosed me: they pierced my hands
and my feet. 17. I may tell all my bones:
they look and stare upon me. 18. They part
my garments among them, and cast lots
upon my vesture. 19. But be not thou far
from me, O Lord; O my strength, haste thee
to help me. 20. Deliver my soul from the
sword; my darling from the power of the dog.
21. Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou
hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

In these verses, we have Christ suffering, and
Christ praying: by which we are directed to look
for crosses, and to look up to God under them.
1. Here is Christ suffering: David indeed was
often in trouble, and beset with enemies; but many
of the particulars here specified are such as were
never true of David, and therefore must be appro-
priated to Christ in the depths of his humiliation.
1. He is here deserted by his friends; trouble and
distress are near, and there is none to help, none
to uphold, v. 11. He trod the wine-press alone; for
all his disciples forsook him, and fled. It is God's
honour to help, when all other helps and succours fail.
2. He is here insulted and surrounded by his ene-
emies, such as were of a higher rank, who, for their
strength and fury, are compared to bulls, strong
bulls of Bashan, (v. 12.) fat and fed to the full,
aughty and sour; such were the chief priests and
calders that persecuted Christ; and others of a lower
rank, who are compared to dogs, (v. 16.) filthy and
greedy, and unwearied in running him down.
There is an assembly of the wicked pitting against
him; (v. 16.) for the chief priests sat in council, to
consult of ways and means to take Christ. These
enemies were numerous and strong, and those of dif-
f'erent and clashing interests among themselves, as Herod and Pilate, have agreed to compass me. They have carried their plot far,
and seem to have gained their point, for they have
beset me round, v. 12. They have enclosed me, v. 16.
They are formidable, and threatening: (v. 13.)
They gazed upon me with their mouths, to show me
that they would swallow me up; and this, with as
much strength and fierceness as a roaring ravening
lions upon a lamb.
3. He is here crucified; the very manner of his
death is described, though never in use among the
Jews; They pierced my hands and my feet, (v. 16.)
which were nailed to the accursed tree, and the
whole body left so to hang, the effect of which must
needs be the most exquisite pain and torture. There
is no one passage, in all the Old Testament, which
the Jews have so industriously corrupted as this,
becoming it is such an eminent prediction of the death
of Christ, and so expressly expressed.
4. He is here dying, (v. 14, 15.) dying in pain
and anguish, because he was to satisfy for sin, which
brought in pain, and for which we must otherwise
have lain in everlasting anguish. Here is, (1.) The
dissolution of the whole frame of his body: I am
poured out like water, weak as water, and yielding
to the power of death, emptying himself of all the
supports of his human nature. (2.) The dislocation
of his bones; care was taken that not one of them
should be broken. (3.) His bosom was rent open
out of joint by the violent stretching of his body
upon the cross as upon a rack. Or it may denote
the fear that seized him in his agony in the garden,
when he began to be sore amazed; the effect of
which perhaps was, (as sometimes it has been of
great fear, Dan. v. 6.) that the joints of his bones
were loosened, and his knees smote one against another.
His bones were put out of joint, that he might put
the whole creation into joint again, which sin had
put out of joint, and might make our broken bones
to rejoice. (3.) The colliquation of his spirits; My
heart is like wax, melted to receive the impressions
of God's wrath against the sins he undertook to satu-
ify for; melting away like the vitals of a dying
man; as this satisfied for the hardness of our hearts,
so the consideration of it should help to soften them.
When Job speaks of his inward trouble, he says,
The Almighty makes my heart soft; (Job xxiii. 16.)
and see Ps. lxvii. 2. (4.) The failing of his natural
force; My strength is dried up; so that he became
parched and brittle like a potsher'd, the radical
moisture being wasted by the fire of divine wrath
preying upon his spirits. Who then can stand
before God's anger? or who knows the power
of it? If this were done in the green tree, what shall
be done in the dry? (5.) The clamminess of his
mouth, a usual symptom of approaching death; My
jaw cleaveth to my jaws; this was fulfilled by him
in his thirst upon the cross, (John xix. 28.) and in
his silence under his sufferings; for, as a sheep
before the shearsers is dumb, so he opened not his
mouth, nor objected against any thing done to him.
(6.) His giving up the ghost; Thou hast brought me
to the dust of death; I am just ready to drop into
the grave; for nothing less would satisfy divine jus-
tice. The life of the sinner was forfeited, and there-
dere the life of the sacrifice must be the ransom for
it. The sentence of death passed upon Adam was
thus expressed: Unto dust thou shalt return. And
therefore Christ, having an eye to that sentence in
his obedience to death, here uses a like expression;
Thou hast brought me to the dust of death.
He was stripped; the shame of nakedness was the
immediate consequence of sin; and therefore our
Lord Jesus was stripped of his clothes when he was
crucified, that he might clothe us with the robe of
righteousness, and that the shame of nakedness
might not appear. Now here we are told, (1.) How his body looked when it was thus stripped;
I may tell all my bones, v. 17. His blessed body
was lean and emaciated with labour, grief, and

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be meant of Satan, that old enemy who bruised the heel of the seed of the woman, the prince of this world, with whom he was to engage in close combat, and whom he saw coming, John xiv. 30. "Lord, save me from being overpowered by his terrors." He pleads, "Thou hast formerly heared me from the horns of the unicorn," that is, "saved me from him, in answer to my prayer." This may refer to the victory Christ had obtained over Satan and his temptations. (Matt. iv.) when the Devil left him for a season, (Luke iv. 13.) but now returned in another manner to attack him with his terrors. "Lord, thou gavest me the victory then, give it me now, that I may spoil principalities and powers, and cast out the prince of this world." Has God delivered us from the horns of the unicorn, that we be not tossed? Let that encourage us to hope that we shall be delivered from the lion's mouth, that we be not torn. He that has delivered, behold, and you. This prayer of Christ, no doubt, was answered, for the Father heard him always. And though he did not deliver him from death, yet he suffered him not to see corruption, but, the third day, raised him out of the dust of death, which was a greater instance of God's favour to him than if he had helped him down from the cross; for that would have hindered his undertaking, whereas his resurrection crowned it.

In singing this, we should meditate on the suffering and resurrection of Christ, till we experience in our own souls the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering.

22. I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. 23. Ye that fear the Lord, praise him: all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. 24. For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard. 25. My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him. 26. The meek shall eat and be satisfied; they shall praise the Lord that seek him: your heart shall live for ever. 27. All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindred of the nations shall worship before thee. 28. For the kingdom is the Lord's; and he is the governor among the nations. 29. All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him and none can keep alive his own soul.

A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. 31. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.

The same that began the psalm complaining, who was no other than Christ in his humiliation, ends it here triumphing, and it can be no other than Christ in his exaltation. And as the first words of the complaint were used by Christ himself upon the cross, so the first words of the triumph are expressly applied to him, (Heb. ii. 12.) and are made his own words; I will declare thy name unto my bre-
thorn, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. The certain prospect which Christ had of the joy set before him, not only gave him a satisfactory answer to his prayers, but turned his complaints into praises; he saw of the travail of his soul, and was well satisfied: witness that triumphant word wherewith he breathed his last; It is finished.

Five things are here spoken of, the view of which were the satisfaction and triumph of Christ in his sufferings:

1. That he should have a church in the world, and that those that were given from eternity should, in the fulness of time, be gathered in to him. This is implied here; that he should see his seed, Isa. iii. 10. It pleased him to think, 1. That by the declaring of God's name, by the preaching of the everlasting gospel in its plainness and purity, many should seek to him, called to him, and to God by him. And, for this end, ministers should be employed to publish this doctrine to the world, who should be so much his messengers and his voice, that their doing it should be accounted his doing it; their word is his, and by them he declares God's name. 2. That those who are thus called in, should be brought into a very near and dear relation to him as his brethren; for he is not only not ashamed, but greatly well pleased, to call them so; not to his church, but to himself. They are of the Gentiles also, who became fellow-heirs, and of the same body, Heb. ii. 11. Christ is our elder Brother, who takes care of us, and makes provision for us, and expects that our desire should be toward him, and that we should be willing that he should rule over us. 3. That these his brethren should be incorporated into a congregation, a great congregation; such is the universal church, the whole family of Israel, the whole body of men, which all the children of God that were scattered abroad, are collected, and in which they are united; (John xi. 52. Eph. i. 10.) and that they should also be incorporated into lesser societies, members of that great body, many religious assemblies for divine worship, on which the face of Christianity should appear, and in which the interests of it should be supported and advanced. 4. That these should be accounted the seed of Jacob and Israel, them 1. The blessing of Abraham might come, (Gal. iii. 14.) and to them might pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenant, and the service of God, as much as ever it did to Israel according to the flesh, Rom. ix. 4. Heb. viii. 10. The gospel-church is called the Israel of God, Gal. vi. 16.

II. That God should be greatly honoured and glorified in him by that church. His Father's glory was that which he had in his eye throughout the whole undertaking, (John xvii. 4.) particularly in his sufferings, which he entered upon with this solemn request, Father, glorify thy name, John xii. 27, 28. He foresees with pleasure,

1. That God would be glorified by the church that should be gathered to him; and that for this end they should be called and gathered in, that they might be unto God for a name and a praise. Christ by his ministers will declare God's name to his brethren, as God's mouth to them, and then by them, as the mouth of the congregation to God, will God's name be praised. All that fear the Lord, will praise him, (v. 23.) even every Israelite indeed. See cxviii. 2-4. -xxxv. 19, 20. The business of Christians, particularly in their solemn religious assemblies, is, to praise and glorify God, with a holy awe and reverence of his majesty; and therefore they are here called upon to praise God, are called upon to praise; it is their duty, to praise God, to give God the glory that is due to his name, to hallow his name, and magnify his name, and be a tree of praise in the land, Ps. cx. 14. And so it is here, verse 12, 13.

2. That God would be glorified in the Redeemer and in his undertaking. Therefore Christ is said to praise God in the church, not only because he is the Master of the assemblies in which God is praised, and the Mediator of all the praises that are offered up to God, but because he is the Matter of the church's praise. See Eph. iii. 21. All our praises must centre in the work of redemption, and a great deal of reason we have to be thankful, (1.) That Jesus Christ was owned by his Father in his undertaking, notwithstanding the apprehension he sometimes under that his Father had forsaken him; (v. 24.) he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted One, or despised the suffering Redeemer; but has graciously accepted it as a full satisfaction for sin, and a valuable consideration on which to ground the grant of eternal life to all believers. Though it was offered for us poor sinners, he did not despise or abhor it for our sakes, nor did he turn his face from him that offered it, as he was angry with his own son, because he interceded for David, he looked upon him as his enemy. But when he cried, Father, why hast thou forsaken me, when his blood cried for peace and pardon for us, he heard him. This, as it is the matter of our rejoicing, ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving. Those who have thought their prayers slighted and unheard, if they continue to pray and wait, will find they have not sought in vain. (2.) That he himself will go on with his undertaking, and complete it, as the Father has promised. Thus the Father says, I will pay my vows, v. 25. Having engaged to bring many sons to glory, he will perform his engagement to the utmost, and will lose none.

III. That all humble gracious souls should have a full satisfaction and happiness in him, v. 26. It comforted the Lord Jesus in his sufferings, that in and through him all true believers should have everlasting consolation. 1. The poor in spirit shall be rich in blessings, spiritual blessings; the hungry shall be filled, and have pabulum. Christ's sacrifice being accepted, the saints shall feast upon the sacrifice, as, under the law, upon the peace-offerings, and so partake of the altar; The meek shall eat and be satisfied; eat of the bread of life, feed with an appetite upon the doctrine of Christ's mediation, which is meat and drink to the soul that knows its own nature and case. They that hunger and thirst after righteousness in Christ, shall have all they can desire to satisfy them and make them easy, and shall not labour, as they have done, for that which satisfies not. 2. They that are much in praying, shall be much in thanksgiving; They shall praise the Lord, that seek him, because through Christ they are sure of finding him; in the hopes of which they have reason to praise him, even while they are seeking him; and the more earnest they are in seeking him, the more will their hearts be enlarged in his praises when they have found him. 3. The souls that are devoted to him shall be for ever happy with him; "Your heart shall labour for ever. Yours that are meek, that are satisfied in Christ, that continue to seek God; whatever becomes of your bodies, your hearts shall live for ever; the graces and comforts you have shall be perfected in everlasting life. Christ has said, Because I live, ye shall live also; (John xiv. 19.) and, therefore, that life shall be as sure, and as long, as his."

IV. That the church of Christ, and with it the kingdom of God among men, should extend itself to all corners of the earth, and should take in all sorts of people. 1. That it should reach far, v. 27, 28. That, whereas the Jews had long been the only professing people of God, now, all the ends of the world should come into the church, and, the partition wall being taken down, the Gentiles should be taken in. It is here prophesied, (1.) That they should be converted, they shall remember, and turn
to the Lord. Note, Serious reflection is the first step, and a good step it is, toward true conversion. We must consider, and turn. The prodigal came first to himself, and then to his father. (2.) That then they should be admitted into communion with God, and with the assemblies that serve him; They shall worship before him, for God is a fire, Jer. 7. 11. Consider, they that turn to God shall make conscience of worshipping before him. And good reason there is why all the kindreds of the nations should do homage to God, for, (v. 28.) The kingdom is the Lord's; his, and his only, is the universal monarchy: [1.] The kingdom of nature is the Lord Jehovah's, and his providence rules among the nations, and upon that account we are bound to worship him. So that the gift of the Christian religion is received from the general and universal law, and its principles and laws. Christ died to bring us to God, the God that made us, from whom we had revolted, and to reduce us to our native allegiance. [2.] The kingdom of grace is the Lord Christ's, and he, as Mediator, is appointed Governor among the nations; Head over all things to his church. Let every tongue therefore confess that he is Lord. 2. That it should be given to many of different ranks, v. 29. rich and poor, rich and poor, bond and free, meet in Christ. (1.) Christ shall have the homage of many of the great ones, they that be fat upon the earth, that live in pomp and power, they shall eat and worship; even they that fare deliciously, when they have eaten and are full, shall bless the Lord their God for their plenty and prosperity. (2.) The poor also shall receive his gospel. Those that go down to the dust, that sit in the dust, (exil. 7.) that can scarcely do so, shall be blest, Christ the Lord, as he reckons it his honour to be the poor man's King, (lxii. 12.) and whose protection does, in a special manner, draw their allegiance. Or this may be understood, in general, of dying men, whether poor or rich. See then what is our condition—we are going down to the dust to which we are sentenced, and where shortly we must make our bed. Nor can we keep alive our own souls; we cannot save our own, but we are the authors of our own spiritual and eternal life. It is therefore our great interest, as well as duty, to bow before the Lord Jesus, to give up ourselves to him to be his subjects and worshippers; for this is the only way, and it is a sure way, to secure our happiness when we go down to the dust. Seeing we cannot keep alive our own souls, it is our wisdom, by an obedient faith, to commit our souls to Jesus Christ, who is able to save them, and keep them alive, for ever. V. That the church of Christ, and with it the kingdom of God among men, shall continue to the end, through all the ages of time. Mankind is kept up in a succession of generations; so that there is always a generation passing away, and a generation coming up. Now, as Christ shall have honour from that which is passing away and leaving the world, (v. 29. they that go down to the dust shall bow before him, and it is good to die bowing before Christ himself, and not need to fear, as he that dies in the Lord,) so he shall have honour from that which is rising up, and setting out, in the world, v. 30. Observe, 1. Their application to Christ; A seed shall serve him, shall keep up the solemn worship of him, and profess and practise obedience to him as their Master and Lord. Note, God will have a church in the world, to the end of time; and, in order to that, there shall be a succession of professing Christians and gospel ministers, from generation to generation. A seed shall serve him; there shall be a remnant, more or less, to whom shall pertain the service of God, and to whom God will give grace to serve him: perhaps not the seed of the same persons, for grace does not run in a blood; he does not say their seed, but a seed; perhaps but few, yet enough to preserve the entail. 2. Christ's acknowledgment of them; They shall be accounted to him for a generation; he will be the same to them that used him, as he was to those who went before them; his kindess to his friends shall not die with them, but shall be drawn out to their heirs and successors, and instead of the fathers shall be the children, whom all shall acknowledge to be a seed that the Lord hath blessed, Isa. xvi. 9.—ixv. 23. The generation of the righteous, God will graciously own as his treasure, his children. 3. Their agency for him; (v. 3l.) They shall come, shall rise up in God's name, and shall declare to the virtue of the generation that is past, and to do the work of their own generation, but to serve the honour of Christ, and the welfare of souls, in the generations to come; they shall transmit to them the gospel of Christ (that sacred deposit) pure and entire, even to a people that shall be born hereafter; to them they shall declare two things, (1.) That there is an everlasting righteousness, which Jesus Christ has brought in. This righteousness of his, and not an other, he has done; he shall declare to be the foundation of all our hopes, and the fountain of all our joys. See Rom. i. 16, 17. (2.) That the work of our redemption, by Christ, is the Lord's own doing, (cxxxvii. 23.) and no contrivance of our's. We must declare to our children, that God has done this; it is his wisdom in a mystery, it is his arm revealed. In singing this, we must triumph in the name of Christ, as above every name; must give him honour and glory for ever and ever. Besides, though we should be in the assurance we have that there shall be a people praising him on earth, when we are praising him in heaven.

PSALM XXIII.

Many of David's psalms are full of complaints, but this is full of comforts, and the expressions of delight in God's great goodness, and dependence upon him. It is a psalm which has been sung by good Christians, and will be while the world stands, with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction. I. The psalmist here claims relation to God as a Shepherd, v. 1, II. He recounts his experience of the kind things God had done for him as his Shepherd, v. 2, 3, 5. III. Hence he infers, That he should want no good; (v. 1.) That he needed to fear no evil; (v. 4.) That God would feed him in a way of mercy; and therefore he resolves never to leave or forsake him in a way of duty, v. 6. In this, he has certainly an eye, not only to the blessings of God's providence, which made his outward condition prosperous, but to the communications of God's grace, received by a lively faith, and returned in a warm devotion, which filled his soul with joy unspeakable. And as in the foregoing psalm he represented Christ dying for his sheep, so here he represents Christians receiving the benefit of all the care and tenderness of that great and good Shepherd.

A Psalm of David.

1. THE Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. 3. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. 5. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil.
my cup runneth over. 6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

From three very comfortable premises, David, in this psalm, draws three very comfortable conclusions, and teaches us to do so too. We are saved by hope, and therefore that hope will not make us ashamed, because it is well-grounded. It is the duty of Christians to encourage themselves in the Lord their God; and we are here directed to take that encouragement both from the relation wherein he has been preserved, and from the experience we have had of his goodness, according to that relation.

I. From God's being his Shepherd, he infers that he shall not want any thing that is good for him, v. 1. See here,

1. The great care that God takes of believers; he is their Shepherd, and they may call him so. Time was, when David was himself a shepherd; he was taken from following the ewes great with young, (lxxxviii. 1.) to the care and tender affections of a good shepherd, toward his flock. He remembered what need they had of a shepherd, and what a kindness it was to them, to have one that was skillful and faithful; he once ventured his life to rescue a lamb. By this therefore he illustrates God's care of his people; and to this our Saviour seems to refer, when he says, I am the Shepherd of the sheep; the good Shepherd, John x. 11. He that is the Shepherd of Israel, of the whole church in general, (lxxx. 1.) is the Shepherd of every particular believer; the meanest is not below his cognizance, Isa. xi. 11. He takes them into his fold, and then takes care of them, protects them, and provides for them, with more care and constancy than a shepherd can, that makes it his business to keep the flock. If God be as a Shepherd to us, we must be as sheep, inoffensive, meek, and quiet, silent before the shearsers, nay, and before the butcher too, useful and sociable; we must know the Shepherd's voice, and follow him.

2. The great confidence which believers have in God; "If the Lord is my Shepherd, my Feeder, I may conclude I shall not want any thing that is really necessary and good for me." If David penned this psalm before his coming to the crown, though destined to it, he had as much reason to fear wanting as any man. Once he sent his men a-begging for him to Nahal, and another time went himself a-begging to Ahimelech; and yet, when he considers that God is his Shepherd, he boldly say, I shall not want. Let not those fear starving that are at God's finding, and have him for their Feeder. More is implied than is expressed; not only, I shall not want, but, "I shall be supplied with whatever I need; and if I have not everything I desire, I may conclude it is either not fit for me, or not good for me, or I shall have it in due time."

II. From his performing the office of a good Shepherd to him, he infers that he needs not fear any evil in the greatest dangers and difficulties he could be in, v. 2-4. He experiences the benefit of God's presence with him, and care of him now, and therefore expects the benefit of them when he most needs it. See here,

1. The comforts of a living saint: God is his Shepherd, and his God; all-sufficient to all intents and purpures, and in all the flowers and good things of this world, and so have we. See the happiness of the saints, as the sheep of God's pasture.

(1.) They are well-pleased, well-laid; He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. We have the supports and comforts of this life from God's good hand, our daily bread from him as our Father. The greatest abundance is but a dry pasture to a wicked man, who relishes that only in it which pleases the senses; but to a godly man, who tastes the goodness of God in all his enjoyments, and by faith relishes that, though he has but little of the world, it is a green pasture to his soul. 16. Prov. 6. 16, 17. God's ordinances are the green pastures in which food is provided for all believers; the word of life is the nourishment of the new man. It is milk for babes, pasture for the sheep, never barren, never eaten bare, never parched, but always a green pasture for faith to feed in. God makes his saints to lie down; he gives them quiet and contentment in their own minds, whatever their lot is; they are disposed and enabled to enjoy what passes every pasture green. Are we blessed with the green pastures of the ordinances? Let us not think it enough to pass through them, but let us lie down in them, abide in them: this is my rest for ever. It is by a constancy of the means of grace that the soul is fed.

(2.) They are well-guided, well-led; the Shepherd of Israel guides Joseph like a flock; and every believer is under the same guidance. He leadeth me beside the still water. The good shepherd must guide his flock himself, and by his providence, by his word, by his Spirit; disposes their affairs for the best, according to his counsel; disposes their affections and actions according to his command; directs their eye, their way, and their heart, into his love. The still waters, by which he leads them, yield them, not only a pleasant prospect, but many a cooling draught, many a reviving cordial, when they are thirsty and weary. God provides for his people, not only their food and rest, but refreshment also and pleasure. The consolations of God, the joys of the Holy Ghost, are these still waters by which the saints are led; streams which flow from the fountain of living waters, and make glad the city of our God. God leads his people, not to the standing waters which corrupt and gather filth, nor to the troubled sea, nor to the rapid rolling floods, but to the silent purling waters; for the still, but running, waters, agree best with those spirits that flow out toward God, and yet do it silently. The divine guidance they are under is stripped of its metaphor, (v. 3.) He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, in the way of my duty; in that he instructs me by his word, and directs me by conscience and providence. These are the paths in which all the saints desire to be led and kept, and never to turn aside out of them. And those only are led by the still waters of comfort that walk in the paths of righteousness. The way of duty is the truly pleasant way. It is the work of righteousness that is peace. In these paths we cannot walk, unless God both lead us into them, and lead us in them.

(3.) They are well-helped when any thing ails them; He restoreth my soul. [1.] He reduces me when I wander. No creature will lose itself sooner than a sheep, so apt it is to straying, and thus so unapt to find the way back. The best saints are sensible of their proneness to go astray like lost sheep; (cix. 176.) they miss their way, and turn aside into by-paths; but when God shows them their error, gives them repentance, and brings them back to their duty again, he restores the soul; and if he did not do so, they would wander endlessly, and be undone. When, after one sin, David's heart smote him sore, and he cried, O Lord, why hast thou done this unto me? God tells him, Thou art the man. God restored his soul. Though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, he will not suffer them to lie still in it. [2.] He recovers me when I am sick, and revives me when I am faint, and so restores the soul which was ready to depart. He is the Lord our God that heals us, Exod. xvi. 26. Many a time we had fainted, un-
of a dying saint; (v. 4.)

1. How highly he magnifies God's gracious vouchsafements to him; (v. 5.) “Thou preparest a table before me; thou hast provided for me all things pertaining both to life and godliness, all things requisite both for body and soul, for time and eternity;” such a bountiful Benefactor is God to all his people; and it becomes them abundantly to utter his great goodness, as David here, who acknowledges, (1.) That he had food convenient; a table spread, a cup filled, meat for his hunger, drink for his thirst. (2.) That he had it carefully and readily provided for him; his table was not spread with any thing that came next to hand; but prepared, and prepared before him. (3.) That he was not stinted, but had abundance; “My cup runs over; enough for myself, and my friends too.” (4.) That he had not only for necessity, but for ornament and delight; Thou anointedst my head with oil. Samuel anointed him king, which was a certain pledge of further favour; but this is rather an instance of the plenty with which God had blessed him, or an allusion to the extraordinary entertainment of special friends, whose heads they anointed with oil, Luke vii. 46. Nay, some think, he still looks upon himself as a sheep, but such a one as the poor man’s ewe-lamb, (2 Sam. xil. 3.) that did eat of his own meat, and drink of his own cup, and lay in his bosom; not only thus nobly, but thus tenderly, are the children of God looked after. Plentiful provision is made for their bodies, for their souls; for the life that now is, and for that which is to come. If Providence do not bestow upon us thus plentifully for our natural life, it is our own fault if it be not made up to us in spiritual blessings.

2. How confidently he counts upon the continuance of God's favours; (v. 6.) he had said, (v. 1.) I shall want; but now he speaks more positively, more securely; “My cup runs over; and mercies in abundance shall follow me all the days of my life.” His hope rises, and his faith is strengthened, by being exercised. Observe, (1.) What he promises himself—goodness and mercy, all the streams of it, flowing from the fountain; parcelling mercy, protecting mercy, sustaining, supplying, mercy. (2.) The manner of the conveyance of it; It shall follow me, as the water out of the rock followed the camp of Israel through the wilderness; as the shade of the rocky places and all conditions, shall be always ready. (3.) The continuance of it; It shall follow me all my life long, even to the last; for whom God loves, he loves to the end. (4.) The constancy of it; All the days of my life, as duly as the day comes; it shall be new every morning, (Lam. iii. 22, 23.) like the manna that was given to the Israelites daily. (5.) The certainty of it; Surely it shall. It is as sure as the sun shall rise, as the lights shall thus make it; and we know whom we have believed. (6.) Here is a prospect of the perfection of bliss in the future state. So some take the latter clause: “Goodness and mercy having followed me all the days of my life on this earth, when that is ended, I shall remove to a better world, to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, in our Father’s house above, where there are many mansions. With what I have, I am pleased much; with what I hope for,
more." All this, and heaven too! Then we serve a good Master.

3. How resolutely he determines to cleave to God and to his duty. We read the last clause as David's covenant with God; "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, (as long as I live,) and I will praise him while I have any being." We must dwell in his house as servants, that desired to have their ears bored to his door-post, to serve him for ever.

If God's goodness to us be, like the morning-light, which shineth and shone to the perfect day; let not ours to him be like the morning-cloud, and the early dew that passeth away. Those that would be satisfied with the fatness of God's house, must keep close to the duties of it.

**PSALMS XXIV.**

This psalm is concerning the kingdom of Jesus Christ; I. His providential kingdom, by which he rules the world, v. 1, 2. II. The kingdom of his grace, by which he rules in his church. 1. Concerning the subjects of that kingdom; their character, (v. 4, 6,) their charter, v. 5. 2. Concerning the King of that kingdom, and a summons to all to give him admission, v. 7, 10. It is supposed that the psalm was penned upon occasion of David's bringing up the ark to the place prepared for it; and that the intention of it, was, to lead the people above the pomp of external ceremonies to a holy life and faith in Christ, of whom the ark was a type.

A Psalm of David.

1. **THE earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein;** 2. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

Here is, I. God's absolute propriety in this part of the creation, where our lot is cast, v. 1. We are not to think that the heavens, even the heavens only, are the Lord's, and the numerous and bright inhabitants of the upper world, and that this earth, being so small and inconsiderable a part of the creation, and at such a distance from the royal palace above, is neglected, and that he claims no interest in it. No, even the earth is his, and this lower world; and David, prepared to speak on the glories of his glory in the heavens, yet his kingdom rules over all, and even the worms of this earth are not below his cognizance, nor from under his dominion.

(1.) When God gave the earth to the children of men, he still reserved to himself the property, and only let it out to them as tenants, or usufructuaries; *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;* the mines that are lodged in the bowels of it, even the richest; the fruits it produces; all the beasts of the forest, and the cattle upon a thousand hills; our lands and houses, and all the improvements that are made of this earth by the skill and industry of man, are all his. These indeed, in the kingdom of grace, are justly looked upon as emptiness; for they are vanity of vanities, nothing to a soul; but, in the kingdom of providence, they are fulness. *The earth is full of God's riches,* so is the great and wide sea also. All the parts and regions of the earth are the Lord's, all under his eye, all in his hand; so that, wherever a child of God goes, he may confit himself with this, that he does not go off his Father's ground. That which falls to our share of the earth and its productions, is but lent to us, it is the Lord's; what is our own against all the world, is not so against his claims. That which is most remote from us, as that which passes through the paths of the sea, or lies hid in the bottom of it, is the Lord's and he knows where to find it.

(2.) The habitable part of this earth (Prov. viii. 31.) is his in a special manner; the world, and they that dwell therein. We ourselves are not our own, our bodies, our souls, are not. All souls are mine, says God; for he is the Former of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits. Our tongues are not our own, they are to be at his service. Even those of the children of men are his, that know him not, nor own their relation to him. Now this comes in here, to show that though God is graciously pleased to accept the devotions and services of his peculiar chosen people, (v. 5-7,) it is not because he needs them, or can be benefited by them, for the earth is the Lord's, and him, and all in it, Exod. xix. 5. Ps. 28. 2. It is likewise to be applied to the dominion Christ has, as Mediator, over the utmost parts of the earth, which are given him for his possession: the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand, power over all flesh. The apostle quotes this scripture twice together in his discourse about things offered to idols, 1 Cor. x. 26, 28. If it be so in the shambles, eat it, and ask no questions, for the earth is the Lord's, it is God's good creature, and you have a right to it; but if one tell you it was offered to an idol, forbear, for the earth is the Lord's, and there is enough besides. This is a good reason why we should be content with our allotment in this world, and not envy others their's; *the earth is the Lord's, and may he not do what he will with his own, and give to some more of it, to others less, as it pleases him.*

II. The ground of this propriety; the earth is his by an indisputable title, *for he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods,* v. 2. It is his; for, (1.) He made it, formed it, founded it, and fitted it for the use of man. The matter is his, for he made it out of nothing; the form is his, for he made it according to the eternal counsels and ideas of his own mind. He made it himself, he made it for himself; so that he is sole, entire, and absolute. Over it, as over all he has made, he rules part, by part, from, and under, him; see lxxxix. 11, 12. (2.) He made it so as no one else could; it is the creature of Omnipotence, for it is founded upon the seas, upon the floods; a weak and unstable foundation (one would think) to build the earth upon, and yet, if Almighty power pleases, it shall serve to bear the weight of this earth. The waters which at first covered the earth, and rendered it void and desolate, shall, at the end of the week, be gathered together, and be no more, that the dry land might appear, and so they are as a foundation to it; see ciev. 8, 9. (3.) He continues it, he has established it, fixed it, so that, though one generation passes, and another comes, the earth abides, Eccl. i. 4. And his providence is a continued creation, cxix. 50. The founding of the earth upon the floods, should remind us how slippery and uncertain all earthly things are; their foundation is not only sand, but water; it is therefore our folly to build upon them.

3. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place? 4. He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

5. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. 6. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.

From this world, and the fulness thereof, the psalmist's meditations rise, of a sudden, to the great things of another world, the foundation of which is not on the seas, nor on the floods. The things of this world God has given to the children of men, and we are much indebted to his provi
dence for them; but they will not make a portion for us. And therefore,

1. Here is an inquiry after better things, v. 3. This earth is God's footstool; but, if we had ever so much of it, we must be here but awhile, must shortly go hence, and Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Who shall go to heaven hereafter, and, as an earnest of that, shall have communion with God in holy ordinances now? A soul that knows and considers its own nature, original, and immortality, when it has viewed the earth and the fulness thereof, will sit down unsatisfied; there is not found among all the creatures a help meet for man, and therefore no bank of God's town therein; will ask, What shall I do to rise to that high place, that hill, where the Lord dwells, and manifests himself, that I may be acquainted with him; and to abide in that happy, holy, place, where he meets his people, and makes them holy and happy? What shall I do that I may be of those whom God owns for his peculiar people, and who are his in another manner than the earth is his and its fulness? This question is as much the same with that, xv. 1. The hill of Zion, on which the temple was built, typified the church, both visible and invisible. When the people attended the ark to its holy place, David puts them in mind, that these were but patterns of heavenly things, and therefore that by them they should be led to consider the heavenly things themselves.

2. In answer to this inquiry; in which we have,

The properties of God's peculiar people, who shall have communion with him in grace and glory.

(1.) They are such as keep themselves from all the gross acts of sin. They have clean hands; not spotted with the pollutions of the world and the flesh. None that were ceremonially unclean might enter into the mountain of the temple, which signified that cleanness of conversation which is required in all those that have fellowship with God. The hands, lifted up in prayer, must be pure hands, no blot of unjust gain cleaving to them, nor any thing else that defiles the man, and is offensive to the holy God.

(2.) They are such as make conscience of being truly, that is, of being inwardly, as good as they seem to be outwardly; they have pure hearts. We make nothing of our religion, if we do not make heart-work of it. It is not enough that our hands be clean before men, but we must be so, and our hearts from wickedness, and not allow ourselves in any secret heart-impurities, which are open before the eye of God. Yet in vain do those pretend to have pure and good hearts, whose hands are defiled with the acts of sin. This is a pure heart, which is sincere and without guile in covenanting with God, which is carefully guarded, that the wicked one, the unclean spirit, touch it not, which is purified by faith, and conformed to the image and will of God, as we see here, ver. 1, and xi. 8.

(3.) They are such as do not set their affections upon the things of this world; as do not lift up their souls unto vanity, whose hearts are not carried out inordinately toward the wealth of the world, the praise of men, or the delights of sense; who do not choose these things for their portion, nor reach forth after them, because they believe them to be vanity, uncertain and unsatisfying.

8. They deal honestly both with God and man. In their covenant with God, and their contracts with men, they have not sworn deceitfully, nor broken their promises, violated their engagements, or taken any false oath. Those that have no regard to the obligations of truth, or the honour of God's name, are unfit for a place in God's holy hill.

5. They are a praying people; (v. 5.) The is the generation of them that seek him. In every age there is a remnant of such as these, men of this character, who are accounted to the Lord for a generation, xxiii. 30. And they are such as seek God, that they may give him his face. O Jacob, [v. 7.] They fly themselves to God, to seek him; not only in earnest prayer, but in serious endeavours to obtain his favour, and keep themselves in his love; who, having made it the top of their happiness, make it the top of their ambition, to be accepted of him, and therefore take care and pains to approve themselves to him. It is to the hill of the Lord that we must ascend, and, the way being up-hill, we must not only ascend it, but let ourselves be those that seek diligently. [2.] They join themselves to the people of God, to seek God with them; being brought into communion with God, they come into the communion of saints; conforming to the patterns of the saints that are gone before, some understand this; they seek God's face, as Jacob, (so some,) who was therefore summed Israel, because he wrestled with God and prevailed, and find him and found him; and, associating with the saints, and as their people, for a long time, they shall continue in the favour of God's church, (Rev. iii. 9.) shall be glad of an acquaintance with God's people, (Zech. viii. 23.) shall incorporate themselves with them, and, when they subscribe with their hands to the Lord, shall call themselves by the name of Jacob, Isa. xlv. 5. As soon as ever Paul was converted, he joined himself to the disciples, Acts, ix. 26. They shall seek God's face in Jacob, (so some,) in the assemblies of his people; Thy face, O Jacob; of Jacob; so our margin supplies it, and makes it easy. As all believers are the spiritual seed of Abraham, so all that strive in prayer are the spiritual seed of Jacob, to whom God never said, Seek ye me in vain. v. 2. The privileges of God's peculiar people, v. 5. They shall be made truly and for ever happy.

(1.) They shall be blessed: they shall receive the blessing from the Lord, all the fruits and gifts of God's favour, according to his promise; and those whom God blesses are blessed indeed, for it is his prerogative to command the blessing. (2.) They shall be justified, and sanctified. These are the spiritual blessings in heavenly things, which they shall receive, even righteousness, the very thing they hunger and thirst after, Matth. v. 6. Righteousness is blessedness, and it is from God only that we must expect it, for we have no righteousness of our own. They shall receive the reward of their righteousness, (so some,) the crown of righteousness which the righteous Judge shall give, 2 Tim. iv. 8. (3.) They shall be saved; for God himself will be the God of their salvation. Note, Where God gives righteousness, he certainly designs salvation. Those that are made meet for heaven, shall be brought safe to heaven, and then they will find what they have been seeking, to their endless satisfaction.

7. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. 8. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. 9. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. 10. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah.
and have much beauty in them. Here is, 1. Entrance once and again demanded for the King of glory; the doors and gates are to be thrown open, thrown wide open, to give him admission, for behold, he stands at the door, and knocks, ready to come in. 2. Inquiry once and again made concerning this mighty Prince, in whose name entrance is demanded: Who is this King of glory? As, when any knock at our door, it is common to ask, Who is there? 3. Satisfaction once and again given concerning the royal Person that makes the demand: It is the Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, the Lord of hosts, v. 8, 10. Now,

(1.) This splendid entry here described, it is probable, refers to the solemn bringing in of the ark into the tent David pitched for it, or the temple Solomon built for it; for when David prepared materials for the building of it, it was proper for him to prepare a psalm for the dedication of it. The porters are called upon to open the doors, and they are called everlasting doors, because much more durable than the door of the tabernacle, which was but a curtain. They are taught to ask, Who is this King of glory? And they that bear the ark are taught to answer, in the language before us, and very fitly, because the ark was a symbol or token of God's presence, Josh. iii. 11. Or, it may be taken as a poetical figure designed to represent the subject more affectingly: God, in his word and ordinances, is thus to be welcomed by us. [1.] With great readiness, he throw and gates must be thrown open to him. Let the word of the Lord come into the innermost and uppermost place in our souls; and, if we had 600 necks, we should bow them all to the authority of it. [2.] With all reverence, remembering how great a God he is, with whom we have to do, in all our approaches to him. (2.) Do butless it points at Christ, of whom the ark, with the mercy-seat, was a type. [1.] We may apply it to the ascension of Christ into heaven, and the welcome given to him there. When he had finished his work on earth, he ascended in the clouds of heaven, Dan. vii. 13, 14. The gates of heaven must then be opened to him, those doors that may be truly called everlasting, which had been shut against us, to keep the way of the tree of life, Gen. iii. 24. Our Redeemer found them shut, but, having by his blood made atonement for sin, he entered the holy place, (Heb. ix. 12,) as one having authority, he demanded entrance, not for himself only, but for us; for, as the Forerunner, he is for us entered, and has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. The keys not only of hell and death, but of heaven and life, must be put into his hand. His approach being very magnificent, the angels are brought in asking, Who is this King of glory? For angels keep the gates of the New Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 13. When I, the First-begotten, was translated into the upper world, the angels were to worship him; (Heb. i. 6.) and, accordingly, they here ask, with wonder, "Who is he? This that cometh with dyed garments from Bozrah? (Isa. lxiii. 1-3.) for he appears in that word as a Lamb that had been slain." It is answered, that he is strong and mighty, mighty in battle to save his people, and subdue his and their enemies. [2.] We may apply it to Christ's entrance into all men by his word and Spirit, that they may be his temples. Christ's presence in them is like that of the ark in the temple, it sanctifies them. Behold, he stands at the door and knocks, Rev. iii. 20. It is required, that the gates and doors of the heart be opened to him; not only as admission is given to a guest, but as possession is delivered to the rightful owner, after the title has been contested. This is the gospel call and demand: that we let Jesus Christ, the King of glory, come into our souls, and welcome him with hosannas, Blessed is he that cometh. That we may do this, the right question is here concerned to ask, Who this King of glory is? To acquaint ourselves with him whom we are to believe in, and to love above all. And the answer is ready; He is Jehovah, and will be Jehovah our righteousness, an all-sufficient Saviour to us, if we give him entrance and entertainment. He is strong and mighty, and the Lord of hosts; and therefore it is at our peril if we deny him entrance; for he is able to avenge the affront: he can force his way, and can break those in pieces, with his iron rod, that will not submit to his golden sceptre. In singing this, let our hearts cheerfully answer to this call, as it is in the first words of the next psalm, Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

PSALM XXV.

This psalm is full of devout affection to God; the out-goings of holy desires toward his favour and grace, and the lively acting of faith in his promises. We may learn out of it, I. Why it is proper for us to pray, v. 5-15. II. What we must pray for; the pardon of sin; (v. 6, 7, 18,) direction in the way of duty; (v. 4, 5,) the favour of God; (v. 16,) deliverance out of our troubles; (v. 17, 18,) preservation from our enemies; (v. 19, 20, 21,) and the salvation of the church of God, v. 29, 30. III. What we may plead in prayer; our confidence in God; (v. 2, 3, 5, 20, 21,) our distress, and the malice of our enemies; (v. 17, 19,) our sincerity, v. 21. IV. What precious promises we have to encourage us in prayer; of guidance and instruction, (v. 8, 9, 12,) the benefit of the covenant; (v. 10,) and the pleasure of communion with God, v. 13, 14. It is easy to apply the several passages of this psalm to ourselves in the singing of it; for we have often troubles, and always sins, to complain of, at the throne of grace.

A psalm of David.

1. UNTO thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. 2. O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed; let not mine enemies triumph over me. 3. Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause. 4. Show me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths. 5. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day. 6. Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies, and thy loving-kindness; for they have been ever of old. 7. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy goodness' sake, O Lord.

Here we have David's professions of desire toward God, and dependence on him. He often begins his psalms with such professions; not to move God, but to move himself, and to engage himself to answer those professions.

1. He professes his desire towards God; Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul, v. 1. In the foregoing psalm, (v. 4,) it was made the character of a good man, that he has not lift up his soul to vanity; and a call was given to the everlasting gates to lift up their heads for the King of glory to come in, v. 1. To which character, to which call, David here answers, "Lord, I lift up my soul, not to vanity, but to thee." Note, In worshipping God, we must lift up our souls to him.
Prayer is the ascent of the soul to God; God must be 
ed, and the soul employed. Susurrant corda— 
Up with your hearts, was anciently used as a call 
to devotion. With a holy contempt of the world 
and the things of it, by a fixed thought and act of 
faith, we set God before us, and let our desire 
toward him as the Fountain of our happiness.

2. He professes his dependence upon God, and 
seeks for the benefit and comfort of that dependence; 
(v. 2.) O my God, I trust in thee. His conscience 
witnessed for him, that he had no confidence in 
himself or in any creature, and that he had no diffi-
cence of God, or of his power or promise. He 
pleases himself with this profession of faith in God. 
Having put his trust in God, he was satis-
fied, and quiet from the fear of evil: and he 
pleads it with God, whose honour it is to help those 
that honour him by trusting in him. What men 
put a confidence in, is either their joy or their 
shame, according as it proves. Now David 
under the direction of faith, prays earnestly, (1.) 
That shame might not be his lot; "Let me not be 
ashamed of my confidence in thee; let me not be 
shaken from it by any prevailing fears, and let 
not this thought of shame be an obstacle to 
me, which I depend upon thee for; but, Lord, keep 
what I have committed unto thee." Note, If we make our con-
dence in God our stay, it shall not be our shame; 
and if we triumph in him, our enemies shall not 
triumph over us, as they would, if we should now 
sink under our fears, or should, in the issue, come 
short of our hopes. (2.) That it might not be the 
lot of any that trusted in God. All the saints have 
obtained a like precious faith; and therefore, doubt-
less, it will be alike successful in the issue. Thus 
the communion of saints is kept up, even by their 
praying one for another. True saints will make 
suppliants for all saints. It is certain that none 
who, by a believing attendance, wait on God, and, 
by a believing hope, wait for him, shall be made 
ashamed of it. (3.) That it might be the lot of the 
transgressors; Let them be ashamed, that transgress 
without cause, or vainly, as the word is. [1.] Upon 
none of their doings, from God, from David and his 
government, (so some,) without any occasion given them, not being able 
to pretend any iniquity they have found in God, or 
that in any thing he has wearied them. The 
weaker the temptation is, by which men are drawn 
to sin, the stronger the corruption is, by which 
they are driven to it. Those are the worst trans-
gressors that sin for sinner’s-sake. [2.] To no pur-
pose. They know their attempts against God are 
fruitsless; they imagine a vain thing, and therefore 
they will soon be ashamed of them.

3. He beggs direction from God in the way of his 
duty, (v. 4, 5.) Once again, he here prays to God 
to teach him. He was a knowing man himself, 
but the most intelligent, the most observant, both 
need and desire to be taught of God; from him we 
must be ever learning. Observe, (1.) What he 
desired to learn, the way of the Lord, his 
paths and his ways, his strong ways, his 
thoughts, his strong ways, his strong 
thoughts, his strong ways. The ways in which thou 
walkest toward me, which 
are all mercy and truth, (v. 10.) and the ways 
in which thou wouldst have me to walk toward 
you. Those are best taught who understand 
their duty, and know the good things they should 
do, Eccl. ii. 3. The paths of the Lord, and his 
truth, are the same; divine laws are all founded 
on this principle, all the way of God is a path of 
righteousness, and the way of the Lord is a 
way of truth, cxix. 30. Christ is both the 
Way and the Truth, and therefore we must learn 
Christ. (2.) What he desires of God, in order to 
this. [1.] That he would enlighten his under-
standing concerning his duty; “Show me thy way, 
and so teach me.” In doubtful cases, we should 
pray earnestly, that God would make it plain to us 
what he would have us to do. [2.] That he would 
incite his will to it, and strengthen him in it; 
“Lead me, and so teach me.” Not only as we 
lead one another, but also to lead ourselves; 
keep us from missing his way, but as we lead one that is weak 
and feeble, and faint, to help him forward in the 
way, and to keep him from fainting and falling. 
We go no further in the way to heaven, than God 
is pleased to lead us, and to hold us up. (3.) What 
he prays, (1.) His great expectation from God; 
Thou art the God of my salvation. Note, Those 
that choose the salvation of God as their end, and 
that commit their cause to God, are to 
boldly to him for direction in the way that leads 
to that end. If God save us, he will teach us, and 
lead us. He that gives salvation, will give instruc-
tion. (2.) His constant attendance on God; On 
thee do I wait all the day. Whence should a serv-
ant expect direction what to do, but from his own 
master, on whom he waits all the day? If we 
sincerely desire to know our duty, with a resolution 
to do it, we need not question but that God will 
dictate it to us.

4. He appeals to God’s infinite mercy, and cast 
up himself upon that, not pretending to any merit 
of his own; (v. 6.) "Remember, O Lord, thy tender 
mercy, and, for the sake of those mercies, lead 
me, and teach me; for they have been ever of old;" 
(1.) "Thou art always a merciful God; it is 
your nature, it is thy nature and property to show mercy.

(2.) Thy counsels and designs of mercy were 
from eternity, the vessels of mercy were, before 
all worlds, ordained to glory. (2.) "The in-
stances of thy mercy to the church in general, and 
to me in particular, were early and ancient, and 
constant hitherto; they began of old, and never 
ceased. Thou hast taught me from my youth up, 
teach me now." 

5. He is in a special manner earnest for the 
pardon of his sins; (v. 7.) "O remember not the 
sins of my youth. Lord, remember thy mercies, 
(v. 6.) which speak for me, and not my sins, which 
speak against me." Here is, (1.) An implicit 
confession of sin; he specifies particularly the sins 
of his youth. Note, Our youthful faults and follies 
should be matter of our repentance and humiliation 
long after, because time does not wear out the guilt 
of sin. Old people should mourn for the sinful 
mirth, and be in pain for the sinful pleasures, of 
their youth. He aggravates his sins, calling them 
transgressions; and the more holy, just, and 
good, the law is, which sin is the transgression of, 
the more exceeding sinful it ought to appear to us. 
(2.) An express petition for mercy; [1.] That he 
might be acquitted from guilt; "Remember not the 
sins of my youth; remember them not against me, 
lay them not to my charge, enter not into judgment 
with me for them. When God pardons sin, he 
is said to remember it no more, which denotes 
a permanent remission, he forgets, and I forget, [2.] That he might be accepted in God’s sight; "Re-
member thou me; think on me for good, and 
come in seasonably for my succour." We need desire 
no more to make us happy, than for God to re-
member us with favour. His plea is, “according 
to thy mercy, and for thy goodness-sake." Note, 
It is God’s goodness, and not ours; his mercy, and 
not our own merit, that must be our plea for the 
whole salvation of our souls, and all the glory of 
that salvation. This plea we must always rely upon, as those that 
are sensible of our poverty and unworthiness, and 
as those that are satisfied of the riches of God’s 
mercy and grace.

6. Good and upright is the Lord; there-
fore will he teach sinners in the way.
The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way. 10. All the paths of the \textsc{Lord} are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies. 11. For thy name’s sake, O \textsc{Lord}, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great. 12. What man is he that feareth the \textsc{Lord}? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose: 13. His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth. 14. The secret of the \textsc{Lord} is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.

God’s promises are here mixed with David’s prayers. Many petitions there were in the former part of the psalm, and many in the latter; and here, in the midst of the psalm, he meditates upon the promises, and by a lively faith sucks, and is satisfied, from these breasts of consolation; for the promises of God are not only the best foundation of prayer, telling us what to pray for, and encouraging our faith and hope in prayer; but they are a present answer to prayer. Let the prayer be made according to the promise, and then the promise may be read as a return to the prayer; and we are to believe the prayer is heard, because the promise will be performed. But, in the midst of the promises, we find one petition which seems to come in somewhat abruptly, and should have followed upon \textit{v.} 7. It is that, \textit{(v. 11.) Pardon mine iniquity.} But prayers for the pardon of sin are never intolerant; we mingle sin with all our actions, and therefore should mingle such prayers with all our devotions. He enforces this petition with a double plea. The former is very natural; “For thy name’s sake, pardon mine iniquity, because thou hast proclaimed thy name gracious and merciful, pardoning iniquity, for thy glory-sake, for thy promise-sake, for thine own sake.” Isa. xliii. 25. But the latter is very surprising; “Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great; and the greater it is, the more will divine mercy be magnified in the forgiveness of it.” It is the glory of a great God to forgive great sins, to forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin, Exod. xxxiv. 7. “It is great, and therefore I am undone, for even great, if my great mercy do not interpose for the pardon of it. It is great; I see it to be so.” The more we see of the heinousness of our sins, the better qualified we are to find mercy with God. When we confess sin, we must aggravate it.

Let us now take a view of the great and precious promises which we have in these verses, and observe them.

To whom these promises belong, and who may expect the benefit of them. We are all sinners; and can we hope for any advantage by them? Yes, \textit{(v. 8.) He will teach sinners, though they be sinners;} for Christ came into the world to save sinners, and, in order to that, to teach sinners, to call sinners to repentance.

These promises are sure to those who, though they have been sinners, have gone astray, yet now keep God’s word. To such, 1. As keep his covenant and his testimonies, he will teach them his paths, excepts for their rule, and his promises for their portion; as, having taken God to be them a God, live upon that, and, having given up themselves to be to him a people, live up to that. Though, through the infirmity of the flesh, they sometimes break the command, yet, by a sincere repentance, when at any time they do amiss, and a constant adherence by faith to God as their God, they keep the covenant, and do not break that. 2. To such as fear him, \textit{(v. 12.) and again, (v. 14.) as stand in awe of his majesty, and worship him in reverence, submit to his authority, and obey him with cheerfulness, dread his wrath, and are afraid of offending him.}

II. Upon what these promises are grounded, and what encouragement we have to build upon them. Here are too things which ratify and confirm all the promises.

1. The perfections of God’s nature. We value the promise by the character of him that makes it; we may therefore depend upon God’s promises, for good and upright is the \textsc{Lord}, and therefore he will be as good as his word. He is so kind that he cannot deceive us, so true that he cannot break his promise. \textit{Faithful is he who hath promised, who also will do it.} He was good in making the promise, and therefore will be upright in performing it.

2. The agreeableness of all he says and does, with the perfections of his nature; \textit{(v. 10.) All the paths of the \textsc{Lord} are mercy and truth, and all his providences, are mercy and truth; they are, like himself, good and upright.} All God’s dealings with his people are according to the mercy of his purposes, and the truth of his promises; all he does comes from love, covenant-love; and they may see in it his mercy displayed, and his word fulfilled. What a rich satisfaction may this be to good people, that, whatever afflictions they are exercised with, \textit{all the paths of the \textsc{Lord} are mercy and truth, and so it will appear when they come to their journey’s end.}

III. What these promises are.

1. That God will instruct and direct them in the way of their duty. This is most insisted upon, because it is an answer to David’s prayers; \textit{(v. 4, 5.) Show me thy ways, and lead me.} We should fix our thoughts, and act our faith, most on those promises which suit our present case. (1.) He will teach sinners in the way, because they are sinners, and therefore need teaching; when they see themselves sinners, and desire teaching, then he will teach them the way of reconciliation to God, the way to a well-grounded peace of conscience, and the way to eternal life. He does, by his gospel, make known this way to all, and, by his Spirit, open the understanding, and guide penitent sinners that inquire after it. The Devil leads men blindfold to hell, but God enables them thus to find the way of God, to see the true light, and so leads them to heaven. (2.) The meek will he guide, the meek will he teach; those that are humble and low in their own eyes, that are distrustful of themselves, desirous to be taught, and honestly resolved to follow the divine guidance; \textit{Speak, \textsc{Lord}, for thy servant hears.} These he will guide in judgment, that is, by the rule of the written word; he will guide them in that which is practical, which, and duty, and that so that they may keep conscience void of offence; and he will do it judiciously, (so some,) that is, he will suit his conduct to their case; he will teach sinners with wisdom, tenderness, and compassion, and as they are able to bear. He will teach them his way. All good people make God’s way their way, and desire to be taught that; and those that do so shall be taught and led in that way. (3.) \textit{Him that feareth the \textsc{Lord}, he will instruct in the way that he shall choose;} either in the way that God shall choose, or that the good man shall choose. It comes all to one, for he that fears the \textsc{Lord} choses the things that please him. If we choose the right way, he that directed our choice will direct our steps, and will lead us in it. If we choose wisely, God will give us grace to walk wisely.

2. That God will make them easy; \textit{(v. 13.) His soul shall dwell at ease, shall lodge in goodness, shall keep the cov-}
selves to the fear of God, and give up themselves to be taught of God, it is their own fault, if they be not easy. "The soul that is sanctified by the grace of God, and much more, that is comforted by the peace of God, dwells at ease. Even when the body is sick, and lies in pain, yet the soul may dwell at ease in God, may return to him, and repose in him, as its rest. Many things occur to make us uneasy, but there is enough in the covenant of grace to balance them all, and to make us easy.

3. That he will give to them and their's as much of this world as is good for them; "His seed shall inherit the earth. Next to our care concerning our souls, is our care concerning our seed, and God has a blessing in store for the generation of the upright. They that fear God shall inherit the earth, shall have a competency in it, and the comfort of it; and their children shall fare the better for their prayers, when they are gone.

4. That God will admit them into the secret of communion with himself; (v. 14.) The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. They understand his word, for if any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, John vii. 17. They that receive the truth in the love of it, and experience the power of it, best understand the mystery of it. They know the meaning of his providence, and what God is doing with them, better than others. "Shall I hide from Abraham the things that I do? Gen. xviii. 17. He calls them not servants, but friends, as he called Abraham. They know by experience the blessings of the covenant, and the pleasure of that fellowship which gracious souls have with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. This honour have all his saints.

15. Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net. 16. Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted. 17. The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses. 18. Look upon mine affliction, and my pain: and forgive all my sins. 19. Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred. 20. O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed: for I put my trust in thee. 21. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee. 22. Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.

David, encouraged by the promises he had been meditating upon, here renews his addresses to God, and concludes the psalm, as he began, with the professions of dependence upon God and desire toward him.

1. He lays before God the calamitous condition he was in. His feet were in the net, held fast and entangled, so that he could not extricate himself out of his difficulties, v. 15. He was desolate and afflicted, v. 16. It is common for those that are afflicted to be desolate; their friends desert them then, and they are themselves disposed to sit alone, and keep silence, Lam. iii. 28. David calls himself desolate and solitary, because he depended not upon his servants and soldiers, but relied as entirely upon God, as if he had no prospect that any help could come from any creature. Being in distress, in many distresses, the troubles of his heart were enlarged; (v. 17.) he grew more and more melancholy, and troubled in mind. Sense of sin afflicted him more than any thing else: that was that which broke and wounded his spirit, and made his outward troubles lie heavy upon him. He was in affliction and pain, v. 18. His enemies, that persecuted him, were malicious and malicious; and very barbarous, it was with a cruel hatred that they hated him, v. 19. Such were Christ's enemies, and the persecutors of his church.

2. He expressed the dependence he had upon God in these distresses; (v. 15.) Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord. Idolaters were for gods that they could see with their bodily eyes, and they had their eyes ever toward their idols, Isa. xvii. 7. 8. But it is an eye of faith that we must fix on God, with this Spirit, Zech. ix. 1. Our meditation of him must be sweet, and we must always set him before us: in all our ways, we must acknowledge him, and do all to his glory. Thus we must live a life of communion with God, not only in ordinances, but in providences, not only in the acts of devotion, but in the whole course of our conversation. David had the comfort of this, in his affliction; for, because his eyes were ever toward the Lord, he doubted not but he would pluck his feet out of the net; that he would deliver him from the corruptions of his own heart, (so some,) from the designs of his enemies against him, so others. Those that have their eye ever toward God, shall not have their feet long in the net. He repeats his profession of dependence upon God; (v. 20.) Let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee; and of expectation from him, I wait on thee, v. 21. It is good thus to hope, and quietly to wait, for the salvation of the Lord.

3. He prays earnestly to God for relief and succour.

1. For himself; see how he begs, (1.) For the remission of sin; (v. 18.) Forgive all my sins. Those were his heaviest burthen, and which brought upon him all his other burthens. He had begged (v. 7.) for the pardon of the sins of his youth, and (v. 11.) for the pardon of some one particular iniquity that was remarkably great, which, more than any thing, was his sin in the matter of Uriah. But here he prays, Lord, forgive all, take away all iniquity. It is observable, that, as to his affliction, he asks for no more than God's regard to it; "Look upon my affliction and my pain, and do with it as thou pleasest." But, as to his sin, he asks for no less than a pardon, Forgive all my sins. When at any time we are in trouble, we should be more concerned about our sins, to get them pardoned, than about our afflictions, to get them removed. (2.) For the peace of his soul. For the peace of his soul. His mind was troubled for God's withdrawals from him, and under the sense he had of his displeasure against him for his sin; and therefore he prays, (v. 16.) Turn thee unto me. And if God turn to us, no matter who turns from us. His condition was troubled, and, in reference to that, he prays, "O bring thou me out of my distresses. I see no way of deliverance open; but thou canst either find one, or make it for me."

He prays earnestly in reference to that, he prays, "O keep my soul from falling into their hands, or else deliver me out of their hands.

Four things he mentions by way of plea, to enforce these petitions; and refers himself and them to God's consideration. (1.) He pleads God's mercy; Have mercy upon me. Men of the greatest merits were undone, if they had not to do with a God of infinite mercy. (2.) He pleads his own misery, "O strengthen the afflicted and the sick, especially the troubles of his heart; all which made him the proper object of divine mercy. (3.) He pleads the iniquity of his enemies; "Lord, consider them, how cruel they are, and deliver me out of their hands." (4.) He pleads his own integrity, v. 21. Though he had owned himself guilty before God and had confessed his sins against him; yet,
as to his enemies, he had the testimony of his conscience, that he had done them no wrong; which was his comfort, when they hated him with cruel hatred; and he prays that this might preserve him. This intimates that he did not expect to be safe, any longer than he continued in his integrity and uprightness; and that, while he did continue in it, he did not doubt of being safe. Sincerity will be our best security in the worst of times. Integrity and uprightness will be a man’s preservation more than the wealth and honour of the world can be; they will preserve us in a heavenly kingdom. We should therefore pray to God to preserve us in our integrity, and then be assured that that will preserve us.

2. For the church of God; (v. 22.) Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles. David was now in trouble himself, but he thinks it not strange, since trouble is the lot of all God’s Israel. Why should any one member fare better than the whole body? David’s troubles were enlarged, and very earnest he was with God to deliver him; yet he forgets not the distresses of God’s church; for when we have ever so much business of our own at the throne of grace, we must still remember to pray for the public. Good men have little comfort in their own safety, while the church is in distress and danger. This prayer is a prophecy, that God would, at length, give David rest, and therewith give Israel rest from all his enemies, his heart and his flesh. It is a prophecy of the setting of the Messiah in due time to redeem Israel from his iniquities, (xxx. 8.) and so to redeem them from their troubles. It refers also to the happiness of the future state. In heaven, and in heaven only, will God’s Israel be perfectly redeemed from all troubles.

PSALM XXVI.

Holy David is, in this psalm, putting himself upon a solemn trial, not by God and his country, but by God and his own conscience; to both which he appeals touching his integrity, (v. 1, 2.) for the proof of which, he alleges, 1. His constant regard to God and his grace, v. 3. 2. His rooted antipathy to sin and sinners, v. 4, 5. 3. His sincere affection to the ordinances of God, and his care about them, v. 6, 7. Having thus proved his integrity, 1. He deprecateth the doom of the wicked, v. 9, 10. 2. He exalseth himself upon the mercy and grace of God; with a resolution to hold fast his integrity, and his hope in God, v. 11, 12. In singing this psalm, we must teach and admonish ourselves, and one another, what we must be, and do, that we may have the favour of God, and comfort in our own consciences; and comfort ourselves with it, as David does, if we can say, that in any measure we have, through grace, answered to these characters. The learned Annyraeus, in his argument of this psalm, suggests, that David is here, by the spirit of prophecy, carried out to speak of himself as a type of Christ, of whom what he here says of his spotless innocence, was fully and eminently true, and of him only, and to him we may apply it in singing this psalm. We are complete in him.

A psalm of David.

I JUDGE me, O Lord; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted at {o} in the Lord; therefore I shall not slide.

2. Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart. 3. For thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes; and I have walked in thy truth. 4. I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. 5. I have hated the congregation of evil-doers; and will not set with the wicked.

It is probable that David penned this psalm when he was persecuted by Saul and his party, who, to give some colour to their unjust rage, represented him as a very bad man, and falsely accused him of many high crimes and misdeemors, dressed him up in the skins of wild beasts, that they might bait him. Innocency is no fence to the name, though it is to the bosom, against the darts of calumny. Herein he was a type of Christ, who was made a reproach of men, and foretold to his followers, that they also must have all manner of evil said against them falsely. Now see what David does in this case.

I. He appeals to God’s righteous sentence; (v. 1.) “Judge me, O God; be thou Judge between me and my accusers, between the persecutor and the poor prisoner; bring me off with honour, and put them to shame that falsely accuse me.” Saul, who was himself supreme judge in Israel, was his adversary, so that he was in a controversy with him, he could appeal to no other than to God himself. As to his offences against God, he prays, Lord, enter not into judgment with me; (cxliii. 2.) Remember not my transgressions; (xxv. 7.) there he appeals to God’s mercy; but as to his offences against Saul, he appeals to God’s justice, and begs of him to judge for him, as, xliii. 1. Or thus; he cannot justify himself against the charge of sin, he owns his iniquity is great, and he is undone if God, in his infinite justice, do but consider his past conduct, and himself against the charge of hypocrisy, and has reason to hope, that, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, he is one of those that may expect to find favour with God. Thus holy Job often owns he has sinned, and yet he holds fast his integrity. Note, It is a comfort to those who are falsely accused, that there is a righteous God, who, sooner or later, will clear up their innocency, and a comfort to all who are sincere in religion, that God himself is a Witness to their sincerity.

II. He submits to his unerring search; (v. 2.) Examine me, O Lord, and prove me, as gold is proved, whether it be standard. God knows every man’s true character, for he knows the thoughts and intents of the heart, and sees through every disguise. David prays, Lord, examine me; which intimates that he was well pleased that God did know him, and truly desirous that he would discover him to himself, and plead his cause before the world. So sincere was he in his devotion to his God, and his loyalty to his prince, (in which he was suspected to be a pretender,) that he wished he had a window in his bosom, that whoever would, might look into his heart.

III. He solemnly protests his sincerity; (v. 1.) “I have walked in mine integrity; my conversation has agreed with my profession, and one part of it has been of a piece with another.” It is in vain to boast of our integrity, unless we can make it out, that by the grace of God, we have walked in our integrity, and that our conversation in the world has been in simplicity and godly sincerity.

He produces here several proofs of his integrity, which encouraged him to trust in the Lord as his righteous Judge, who would patronise and plead his righteous cause, with an assurance that he should come off with all reputation, (Therefore I shall not slide) and that they should not be suffered to cast him down from his excellency, to shake his faith, blemish his name, and prevent his coming to the crown, lxxi. 4. They that are sincere in religion may trust in God, that they shall not slide, that they shall not apostatize from their religion.

1. He had a constant regard to God and to his grace, v. 5. (1.) He aimed at God’s favour as his end, and chief good: Thy loving-kindness is before
mine eyes. This will be a good evidence of our sincerity, if what we do in religion, we do from a principle of love to God, and good thoughts of him as the best of beings, and the best of friends and benefactors, and from a grateful sense of God's goodness to us in particular, which he hath been pleased to bestow on us. If we set God's loving-kindness before us as our pattern, to which we endeavour to conform ourselves, being followers of him that is good in his goodness; (1 Pet. iii. 13.) if we set it before us as our great engagement and encouragement to our duty, and are afraid of doing anything to forfeit God's favour, and in care by all means to keep ourselves in his love; this will not only be a good evidence of our integrity, but a sure, lasting, great and apparent preservation in it. (2.) He governed himself by the word of God as his rule. "I have walked in thy truth, according to thy law, for thy law is truth." Note, Those only may expect the benefit of God's loving-kindness, that live up to his truths, and his laws that are grounded upon them. Some understand it of his conforming himself to God's example in truth and faithfulness, as well as in goodness and loving-kindness: Those certainly walk well, that are followers of God as dear children.

2. He had no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, nor with the workers of those works, v. 4, 5. By this it appeared he was truly loyal to his prince, that he never associated with those that were disaffected to his government, with any of those sons of Belial that despised him, 1 Sam. x. 27. He was in none of their cabals, nor joined with them in any of their intrigues; he cursed not the king, no not in his heart. And this also was an evidence of his faithfulness to his God, that he never associated with those who, he had any reason to think, were disaffected to religion, or were open enemies, or false friends, to its interests. Note, Great care to avoid bad company, is both a good evidence of our integrity, and a good means to preserve us in it. Now observe here, (1.) That this part of his protestation looks both backward upon the care he had hitherto taken in this matter, and forward upon the care he would still take. "I have not sit with them, and I will not go in with them." Note, Our good practices hitherto, are then evidences of our integrity, when they are accompanied with resolutions, in God's strength, to preserve in them to the end, and not to draw back; and our good resolutions for the future we may then take the comfort of, when they are the continuation of our good practices hitherto. (2.) That David shunned the company, not only of wicked persons, but of vain persons, that were wholly addicted to mirth and gaiety, and had nothing solid or serious in them. The company of such may perhaps be the more parrimous of the two to a good man, because he will not be so ready to stand upon his guard against the contagion of vanity, as against that of downright wickedness. (3.) That the company of dissemblers is as dangerous company as any other, and as hurtful to a man in several ways: They are a bad example to vanity, and to piety. Evil-doers pretend friendship to those whom they would decoy into their snares, but they dissemble: when they speak fair, believe them not. (4.) Though sometimes he could not avoid being in the company of bad people, yet he would not go in with them, he would not choose such for his companions, nor seek an opportunity of acquaintance and converse with them; he might fall in with them, but he would not by enlying, nor dissembling, or going in with them; or, if he happened to be with them, he would not sit with them, he would not continue with them; he would be in their company no longer than his business made it necessary: he would not concur with them, not say as they said, nor do as they did, as they that sit in the seat of the scorners, i. 1. He would not sit in counsel with them, upon ways and means to do mischief, nor sit in judgment with them, to condemn the generation of the righteous. (3.) We must not only in our practice avoid bad company, but in our principles and opinions we must have an aversion to it. David here says, not only "I have shunned it," but "I have hated it." cxxxix. 21. (6.) The congregation of evil doers, the club, the confederacy of them, is in a special manner hateful to good people. I have hated ecelesiam malignantium—the church of the malignants; so the vulgar Latin reads it. As good men, in concert, make one another better, and are enabled to do more, and more good, so may men, in conjunction, make one another worse, and do so much the more mischief. In all this, David was a type of Christ, who, though he received sinners, and ate with them, to instruct them and do them good, yet, otherwise, was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, particularly from the Pharisees, those dissemblers; thus too David was an example to Christians, when they join themselves to Christ, to save themselves from this untoward generation, Acts ii. 40.

6. I will wash my hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O Lord: 7. That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works. 8. Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth. 9. Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men: 10. In whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes. 11. But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me. 12. My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the Lord.

In these verses, I. David produces a further evidence of his integrity, which was the sincere affection he had to the ordinances of God, and the constant care he took about them, and the pleasure he took in them. Hypocrites and dissemblers may indeed be found attending on God's ordinances, as the proud Pharisee went up to the temple to pray with the penitent publican; but it is a good sign of sincerity, if we attend upon them, as David here tells us he did, v. 6-8.

1. He was very careful and conscientious in his preparation for holy ordinances. I will wash mine hands in innocency. He not only refrained from the society of sinners, but kept himself clean from the pollutions of sin, and this with an eye to the public service. To dear children, I. (1.) Habitual preparation; "I will wash my hands in innocency, I will carefully watch against all sin, and keep my conscience pure from those defilements which dishonour God's altar. "I will wash, and so will I compass the altar, knowing that otherwise I shall not be welcome." This is like that, (1 Cor. xii. 8.) Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat; so prepared. This denotes, (1.) Habitual preparation; "I will wash my hands in innocency, I will carefully watch against all sin, and keep my conscience pure from those defilements which dishonour God's altar. "I will wash, and so will I compass the altar, knowing that otherwise I shall not be welcome." This is like that, (1 Cor. xii. 8.) Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat; so prepared. This denotes, (1.) Habitual preparation; "I will wash my hands in innocency, I will carefully watch against all sin, and keep my conscience pure from those defilements which dishonour God's altar. "I will wash, and so will I compass the altar, knowing that otherwise I shall not be welcome." This is like that, (1 Cor. xii. 8.) Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat; so prepared. (2.) Actual preparation; it alludes to the ceremony of the priests' washing, when they went in to minister, Exod. xxx. 20, 21. Though David was no priest, yet, as every worshipper ought, he would look to the substance of that to which the priests were enjoined the shadow of. In our preparations for
solemn ordinances, we must not only be able to clear ourselves from the charge of reneging fidelity and by our consent our inward and outward sins (which was signified by washing the hands, Deut. xxii. 6,) but we must take pains to cleanse ourselves from the spots of remaining iniquity, by renewing our repentance, and making a fresh application of the blood of Christ to our consciences, for the purifying and pacifying of them. He that is washed, that is, in a justified state, has need thus to wash his feet, (John xiii. 10.) to wash his hands, to wash them in innocency; he that is penitent, is reformed—almost innocent; and he that is pardoned, is so far innocent, that his sins shall not be mentioned against him.

2. He was very diligent and serious in his attendance upon them; I will compass thine altar; ad- luding to the custom of the priests, who, while the sacrifice was in offering, walked round the altar, and, probably, the offerers likewise did so at some distance, offering a diligent regard to what was done, and a dutiful attendance in the service. "I will compass it; I will be among the crowds that do compass it, among the thickest of them." David, a man of honour, a man of business, a man of war, thought it not below him to attend with the multitude on God's altars, and could find time for that attendance. Note, (1.) All God's people will be sure to wait on God's altar, in obedience to his commands, and in pursuance of his favour. Christ is our Altar, and the altar in the Jewish church, which was fed by them, but an altar that we eat of, and live upon, Heb. xii. 10. (2.) It is a pleasant sight to see God's altar compassed, and to see ourselves among them that compass it.

3. In all his attendance on God's ordinances, he aimed at the glory of God, and was much in the thankful praise and adoration of him. He had an eye to the place of worship, as the place where God's honour dwelt, (v. 8.) and therefore made it his business there to honour God, and to give him the glory due to his name; to publish with the voice of thanksgiving all God's wondrous works. God's gracious works, which call for our thanksgiving, are all wondrous works, which call for our admiration. We ought to publish them, and tell of them, for his glory, and the excitement of others to praise him; and we ought to do it with the voice of thanksgiving, as those that are sensible of our obligations, by all those people of God, who are happy, and grate- tude the favours we have received from God.

4. He did this with delight, and from a principle of true affection to God and his institutions. Touching this, he appeals to God, "Lord thou knowest how dearly I have loved the habitation of thy house, (v. 8.) the tabernacle where thou art pleased to manifest thy residence among thy people, and receive their homage, the place where thine honour dwelt." He, and the people, put upon a consecra- tion into the countries of idolaters, and was hindered from attending God's altars, which perhaps his persecutors, that laid him under that restraint, did themselves upbraid him with as his crime. See 1 Sam. xx. 27. "But, Lord," says he, "though I cannot come to the habitation of thin house, I love it, my heart is there, and it is my greatest trouble that I am not there." Note, All that truly love God, and love the interests of God, who love him, love them, because in them he manifests his honour, and they have an opportunity of honouring him. Our Lord Jesus loved his Father's honour, and made it his business to glorify him; he loved the habitation of his house, his church among men, loved it, and gave himself for it, that he might build and consecrate it. Those who love communion with God, and delight in approaching to him, find it to be a constant pleasure, a comfortable evidence of their integrity, and a comfortable earnest of their endless felicity.

II. David, having given proofs of his integrity, earnestly prays, with bashful confidence toward God, (such as they have who have heard them not,) that he might not fall under the doom of the wicked; (v. 9, 10.) Gather not my soul with sinners. Here, 1. David describes these sinners, whom he looked upon to be in a miserable condition, so miserable, that he could not wish the worst enemy he had in the world to be in a worse. "They are bloody men, that thirst after blood, and lie under a great deal of guilt of blood. They do mis- chief, and mischief is always in their hands. Though they get by their wickedness, (for their right hand is full of bribes which they have taken to pervert justice,) yet that will make their case never the better; for what is a man profited, if he gain the world, and lose his soul?" 2. He dreads having his lot with them; he never loved them, nor associated with them, in this world, and therefore could in faith pray that he might not have his lot with them in the other world. Our souls must shortly be gath- ered, to return to God that gave them, and we will call for them again. See Job xxxiv. 14. It con- cerns us to consider whether our souls will then be gathered with saints or with sinners; whether bound in the bundle of life with the Lord for ever, as the souls of the faithful are, (1 Sam. xxx. 29.) or bound in the bundle of tares for the fire, Mat. xiii. 30. Death gathers us to our people, to those that are our people while we live, whom we choose to associate with, and with whom we cast our lot, to those death will gather us, and with them we must take our lot, to eternity. Balaam desired to die the death of the righteous. David dreaded dying the wicked death; so that both sides are of that mind, if we be of, and will live up to it, we are happy for ever. Those that will not be companions with sinners in their mirth, nor cast off their deities, may in faith pray not to be compa- nions with them in their misery, nor to drink of their cup, their cup of trembling.

III. David, with a holy humble confidence, com- mits himself to the grace of God, v. 11, 12. 1. He promises that by the grace of God he would perse- vere in his duty: "As for me, whatever others do, I will walk in mine integrity." Note, When the testimony of our consciences for us, that we have walked in our integrity, is comfortable to us, that should confirm and console us to continue therein. 2. He prays for the divine grace, both to enable him to do so, and to give him the comfort of it; "Redeem me out of the hands of my enemies, and be merciful to me, living and dying." Be we ever so confident of our integrity, yet still we must rely upon God's mercy, and the great redemption Christ has wrought out, and pray for the benefit of them.

He pleases himself with his steadiness; "My foot stands in his holy place, which shall not fall." This speaks, as one that found his resolutions fixed for God and godliness, not to be shaken by the tempta- tions of the world; and his comforts firm in God and his grace, not to be disturbed by the crosses and troubles of the world. 4. He promises him- self that he should yet have occasion to praise the Lord; that he should be furnished with matter for praises, that he should have a heart for praises; and that though he may know he is punished from public ordinances, yet he should again have an op- portunity of blessing God in the congregation of his people. Those that hate the congregation of evill- doers shall be joined to the congregation of the righteous, and join with them in praising God; and it is pleasant doing that in good company; the more the better, it is the more like heaven.
PSALM XXVII.

Some think David penned this psalm, before his coming to the throne, when he was in the midst of his troubles, and, perhaps, upon occasion of the death of his parents; but the Jews think he penned it, when he was old, upon occasion of the wonderful deliverance he had from the hands of the giant, when Ahijah appeared to him, (2 Sam. xxi. 16, 17,) and his people, thereupon, resolved he should never venture his life again in battle, lest he should quench the light of Israel. Perhaps it was not penned upon any particular occasion; but it is very probable, of a general and devout affections with which gracious souls are carried out toward God at all times, especially in times of trouble. Here is, 1. The courage and holy bravery of his faith, v. 1-3. 2. The compleancy he took in communion with God, and the beneficence he experienced by it, v. 4-6. III. His desire toward God, and his favour and grace, v. 7-9, 11, 12. IV. His expectations from God, and the encouragement he gives to others to hope in him, v. 10, 13, 14. And let our hearts be thus affected in singing this psalm.

A psalm of David.

1. THE LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? 2. When the wicked, even mine enemies and mine foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. 3. Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. 4. One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple. 5. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me: he shall set me up upon a rock. 6. And now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

We may observe here,

I. With what a lively faith David triumphs in God, glories in his holy name, and in the interest he had in him. 1. The Lord is my light, David's subjects called him the light of Israel, 2 Sam. xxvi. 17. And he was indeed a burning and a shining Light: but he owns that he shone, as the moon does, with a borrowed light; what light God darted upon him, reflected upon them; The Lord is my Light. God is a Light to his people, to show them the way when they are in doubt, to comfort and rejoice their hearts when ten Abashins sorrowed. It is in his light that they now walk on in their way, and in his light they hope to see light for ever. 2. He is my Salvation, in whom I am safe, and by whom I shall be saved. 3. He is the Strength of my life; not only the Protector of my exposed life, who keeps me from being slain, but the Strength of my frail, weak, life, who keeps me from fainting, sinking, and dying away. God, who is a believer's Light, is the Strength of his life; not only by whom, but in whom, he lives and moves. In God therefore let us strengthen ourselves.

II. With what an unwavering courage he triumphs over his enemies; no fortitude like that of faith. If God be for him, who can be against him? Whom should I fear? Of whom shall I be afraid? If Omnipotence be his guard, he has no cause to fear; if he knows it to be so, he has no disposition to fear. If God be his Light, he fears no shades; if God be his Salvation, he fears no corpses. He triumphs over his enemies; for he shews that they were already routed. His enemies came upon him, to eat up his flesh; aiming at no less, and assured of that; but they fell; not, "He smote them, and they fell," but, "They stumbled and fell;" they were so confounded and weakened, that they could not go on with their enterprise. Thus they that came to take Christ, with a word's speaking, were made to stagger, and fall to the ground, John xviii. 6. The ruin of some of his enemies was, he says, as the ruin of others; and his complete conquest of them all. And therefore, these being fallen, he is fearless of the rest; "Though they be numerous, a host of them; though they be daring, and their attempts threatening; though they encamp against me, an army against one man; though they wage war upon me, yet my heart shall not fear. Hosts cannot hurt us, if the Lord of hosts protect us: nay, in this assurance that God is for me, I will be confident." (Jer. xxvii. 26.)

III. With what a gracious earnestness he prays for a constant communion with God in holy ordinances, v. 4. It greatly encouraged his confidence in God, that he was conscious to himself of an entire affection to God and to his ordinances, and that he was in his element, when in the way of his duty, and in the way of increasing his acquaintance with God. If we delight in God above any creature, that may encourage us to depend upon him; for it is a sign we are of those whom he protects as his own. Or it may be taken thus. He desired to dwell in the house of the Lord, that there he might be safe from the enemies that surrounded him. Finding himself surrounded by threatening hosts, he does not say, "One thing have I desired, in order to my safety, that I may have my arms equipped to such a number," or that I may be master of such a city or such a castle; but "that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, and then I am well." Observe, 1. What it is he desires; to dwell in the house of the Lord. In the courts of God's house
the priests had their lodgings, and David wished he had been one of them. Disdainfully as some look upon God's ministers, one of the greatest and best of kings that ever was, would gladly have taken his lot, have taken his lodging among them. Or rather, he desires that he might duly and constantly attend on the public service of God, with other faithful Israelites, according as the duty of every day required. Therefore he longed to see an end of the wars in which he was now engaged; not that he might live at ease in his own palace, but that he might have leisure and liberty for that constant attendance in God's courts. Thus Hezekiah, a genuine son of David, wished for the recovery of his health, not that he might go up to the thrones of judgment, but that he might go up to the house of the Lord, Isa. xxxviii. 22. Note, All God's children desire to dwell in God's house; where should they dwell else? Not to sojourn there as a wayfaring man, that turns aside to tarry but for a night; or to dwell there for a time only, as the servant that abides not in the house for ever; but to dwell there all the days of their life; for we were made for it. Do you prize God's house? What will the praising of God be the blessedness of our eternity? Surely then we ought to make it the business of our time.

2. How earnestly he covets this; "This is the one thing I have desired of the Lord, and which I will seek after." If he were to ask but one thing of God, this should it be; for this he had at heart more than any thing. He desired it as a good thing; he desired it of the Lord as his gift, and a token of his favour. And, having fixed his desire upon it as the one thing needful, he sought after it; he continued to pray for it, and contrived his affairs so as that he might have this liberty and opportunity. Note, They that truly desire communion with God, will set themselves with all diligence to seek after it, Prov. xviii. 1.

3. What he had in his eye in it; he would dwell in God's house, not for the plenty of good entertainment that was there, in the feasts upon the sacrifices, nor for the music and good singing that were there, but to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. He desired to attend in God's courts, (1.) That he might have the pleasure of meditating upon God. He knew something of the beauty of the Lord, the infinite and transcendent amiableness of the Divine Being, and his perfections; his holiness is his beauty; (ex. 3.) his goodness is his beauty, Zech. ix. 17. The harmony of all his attributes is the beauty of his nature. With an eye of faith and holy love, we with pleasure bear this beauty, and observe more and more in it, that is amiable, that is admirable. When, with fixeness of thought, and a holy flame of devout affections, we contemplate God's glorious excellencies, and entertain ourselves with the tokens of his peculiar favour to us, this is that view of the beauty of the Lord which David here covets; and it is to be had in his ordinances, for there he manifests himself, and there he gives satisfaction of being instructed in his duty; for concerning this he would inquire in God's temple; Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? For the sake of these two things, he desired that one thing, to dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of his life; for blessed are they that do so, they will be still praising him, (lxxiv. 4.) both in speaking to him, and in hearing from him. Mary's sitting at Christ's feet; (Luke x. 41.) to hear his word, Christ calls the one thing needful, and the good part.

4. What advantage he promised himself, could he but have a place in God's house; (1.) There he should be quiet and easy; their troubles would not find him, for he should be hid in secret; there troubles would not reach him, for he should be set on high, v. 5. Joash, one of David's seed, was hid in the house of the Lord six years, and there, not only preserved from the sword, but reserved to the crown, 2 Kings xii. 2. The temple was thought a safe place for Nehemiah to abscond in, Neh. vi. 10. But the safety of believers is not in the walls of the temple, but in the God of the temple, and their comfort in communion with him. (2.) There he should be pleasant and cheerful; there he would offer sacrifice of joy, v. 6. For God's work is its own wages; there he would sing, yea he would sing praises to the Lord. Note, Whatever is the matter of our joy, ought to be the matter of our praise. And when we attend upon God in holy ordinances, we ought to be much in joy and praises. It is for the glory of our God, that we should sing in his ways: and whenever God lifts us up above our enemies, we ought to exalt him in our praise. Thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph, 2 Cor. ii. 14.

7. Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice; have mercy also upon me, and answer me. 8. When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek. 9. Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. 10. When my father and my mother forsook me, then the Lord will take me up. 11. Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies. 12. Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty. 13. I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. 14. Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.

David, in these verses, expresses,
1. His desire toward God, in many petitions. If he cannot now go up to the house of the Lord; yet, wherever he is, he can find a way to the throne of grace by prayer.
2. He humbly bespeaks, because he firmly believes he shall have, a gracious audience; "Hear, O Lord, when I cry, not only with my heart, but, as one in earnest, with my voice too." He bespeaks also an answer of peace, which he expects, not from his own merit, but God's goodness; Have mercy upon me, and answer me, v. 7. If we pray and believe, God will graciously hear and answer.
3. He takes hold of the kind invitation God had given him to this duty, v. 8. It is presumption for us to come into the presence of the King of kings, uncalled, nor can we draw near with any assurance, unless he hold forth to us the golden sceptre. David therefore, going to pray, fastens, in his thoughts, upon the call God had given him to the throne of his grace, and reverently touches, as it were, the top of the golden sceptre which was thereby held out to him. (Hear heart said unto thy heart, (so it begins in the original,) or of thee, Seek ye my face; he first revoked that, and preached that over again to himself; and that is the best preaching, it is hearing twice what God speaks once;) thou saidst, (so it may be supplied,) Seek ye my face; and then he
returns what he had so meditated upon, in this pious resolution, Thy face, Lord, will I seek. Observe here, (1.) The true nature of religious worship, it is seeking the face of God; this it is in God's precept, to the three, Oh face. He would have me seek him for himself, and make his favour our chief good; and this it is in the saint's purpose and desire, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek; and nothing less will I take up with." The opening of his hand will satisfy the desire of other living things; (exlv. 16) but it is only the shining of his face, that will satisfy the desire of a living soul, iv. 6, 7. (2.) The kind invitation of a gracious God to this duty: Thou shalt seek my face; it is, not a precept, but a promise; and his commanding us to seek, implies a promise of finding; for he is too kind to say, Seek ye me, in vain. God calls us to seek his face, in our conversion to him, and in our converse with him. He calls us, by the whispers of his Spirit and with our spirits, to seek his face; he calls us, by his word, by the stated returns of opportunities for his worship, and by special providences, merciful and afflictive. When we are foolishly making our course to living vanities, God is, in love to us, calling us in him to seek our own mercies. (3.) The ready compliance of a gracious soul with this invitation; the call is immediately returned, My heart answered, Thy face, Lord, will I seek. The call was general, "Seek ye my face;" but, like David, we must apply it to ourselves, "I will seek it." The word does us no good, when we transfer it to others, and do not ourselves accept the exhortation. The call was, Seek ye my face; the soul is express, Thy face, Lord, will I seek; like that, (Jer. iii. 22.) Behold, we come unto thee. A gracious heart readily echoes to the call of a gracious God, being made willing in the day of his power.

3. He is very particular in his requests.

(1.) For the favour of God, that he might not be shut out from that, (v. 9.) "Thy face, Lord, will I seek, in obedience to thy command; therefore hide not thy face from me; let me never want the reviving sense of thy favour; love me, and let me know that thou lovest me; not but thy servant away in anger." He owns he had deserved God's displeasure, but begs that, however God might correct him, he would not cast him away from his presence; for what is hell, but that?

(2.) For the continuance of his presence with him; "Thou hast been my Helper formerly, and thou art the God of my salvation; and therefore whither shall I go from thy spirit? or where shall I flee from thy presence? withdraw not the operations of thy power from me, for then I am helpless; withdraw not the tokens of thy good-will to me, for then I am comfortless." (3.) For the benefit of a divine guidance; (v. 11.) "Teach me thy way, O Lord; give me to understand the meaning of thy providences toward me, and make them plain to me. And give me to know my duty in every doubtful case, that I may not mista..." (4.) For the benefit of a divine protection; (v. 12.) "Deliver me not over to the will of mine enemies. Lord, let them not gain their point, for it aims at my life, and no less, and in such a way as that I have no fence against them, but thy power over their con-
Lord; whatever you do, grow not remiss in your attendance upon God. (2.) Keep up your spirits in the midst of the greatest dangers and difficulties. Be of good courage for his soul be fixed, trusting in God, and your minds stayed upon him, and then let none of these things move you. They that wait upon the Lord have reason to be of good courage.

PSALM XXVIII.

The former part of this psalm is the prayer of a saint militant, and now in distress, (v. 1-3.) to which is added the doom of God's implacable enemies, v. 4, 5. The latter part of the psalm is the thanksgiving of a saint triumphant, and delivered out of his distresses, (v. 6-8.) to which is added a prophetic prayer for all God's faithful loyal subjects, v. 9. So that it is hard to say which of these two conditions David was in, when he penned it. Some think he was now in trouble seeking God, but, at the same time, preparing to praise him for his deliverance, and by faith giving him thanks for it, because it was wrought. Others think he was now in triumph, but remembered, and recorded for his own and others' benefit, the prayers he made when he was in affliction, that the mercy might relish the better, when it appeared to be an answer to them.

A Psalm of David.

1. Unto thee will I cry, O Lord, my rock; be not silent to me: lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit. 2. Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle. 3. Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity; which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts. 4. Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert. 5. Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.

In these verses, David is very earnest in prayer. I. He prays that God would graciously hear and answer him, now that, in his distress, he called upon him, v. 1, 2. Observe his faith in prayer; O Lord, my Rock; denoting his belief of God's power, "He is a Rock;" and his dependence upon that power, "He is my Rock, on whom I build my hope. Observe his fervency in prayer; To thee will I cry, as one in earnest, being ready to sink, unless thou come in with suitable succour." And observe how solicitous he is to obtain an answer; "Be not silent to me, as one angry at my prayers; (lxxx. 4.) Lord, speak to me, answer me with good words, and comfortable words; (Zech. i. 13.) though the thing I pray for be not given me, yet let God speak to me joy and gladness, and make me to hear it. Lord, speak to me, in answer to my prayers; plead my cause, command deliverances for me; let me hear and answer the voice of my supplications.

Two things he pleads; 1. The sad despair he should be in, if God slighted him; "If thou be silent to me, and I have not the tokens of thy favour, I am like them that go down into the pit—I am a dead man, lost and undone; if God be not my Friend, appear not to me, and appear not for me, my hope and my help are perished." Nothing can be so cutting, so killing, to a gracious soul, as the want of God's favour, and the sense of his displeasure. I shall be like them that go down to hell; (so some understand it;) for what is the misery of the damned, light this, this is never silent to them, and deaf to their cry? Those are in some measure qualified for God's favour, and may expect it, who are thus possessed with a dread of his wrath, and to whom his frowns are worse than death. 2. The good hopes he had, that God would favour him; I lift up my hands towards thy holy oracle; which denotes, not only an earnest desire, but an earnest expectation, thence to receive an answer of peace. The most holy place within the veil, is here, as elsewhere, called the oracle; there the ark and the mercy-seat were, there God was said to dwell between the cherubims, and thence he spake to his people, Numb. vii. 89. That was a type of Christ, and it is to him that we must lift up our eyes and hands, for through him all good comes from God to us. It was also a figure of heaven; (Heb. ix. 24.,) and from God, as our Father in heaven, we are taught to expect an answer to our prayers. The scriptures are called the oracles of God, and to them we must have an eye, in our prayers and expectations. There is the word on which God hath caused and encouraged us to hope.

II. He deprecates the doom of wicked people, as before; (xxvi. 9.) "Gather not my soul with sinners." Lord, I attend thy holy oracle, draw me not away from that, with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity; (v. 10.) I am treading in the paths that are tumbled in the snares they have laid for me; they flatter and cajole me, and speak peace to me, but they have a design upon me, for mischief is in their heart, they aim to disturb me, may, to destroy me. Lord, suffer me not to be drawn away and ruined by their cursed plots; for they have, can have, no power, no success, against me, except it be given them from above. 2. "Save me from being infected with their sins, and from doing as they do. Let me not be drawn away by their false allurements, or their allurements, from thy holy oracle, (where I desire to dwell all the days of my life,) to practise any wicked works;" see cxxii. 4. Lord, never leave me to myself, to use such arts of deceit and treachery for my safety, as they use for my ruin. Let no event of providence be an invincible temptation to me, to draw me either into the imitation, or into the interest, of wicked people. Observe how David and men dread Perdition, when they are, and the best, the soundest, the safest, the most happy, the best in the world, they are in of being drawn aside into it; and therefore we should all pray earnestly to God for his grace to keep us in our integrity. 3. "Save me from being involved in their doom; let not me be led forth with the workers of iniquity, for I am none of them that speak peace, while war is in their hearts." Note, Those that are careful not to partake with sinners in their sins, have reason to hope that they shall not partake with them in their plagues, Rev. xviii. 4.

III. He imprecates the just judgments of God upon the workers of iniquity; (v. 4.) Give them according to their deeds. This is not the language of passion or revenge, nor is it inconsistent with the duty of praying for our enemies. But, 1. Thus he would show how far he was from complying with the workers of iniquity, and with what good reason he had been, and is, so greatly displeased at them; for otherwise he was convinced that they could not be made more miserable than they be to deal with according to their deeds. 2. Thus he would express his zeal for the honour of God's justice in governing the world; "Lord, they think all well that they do, and justify themselves in their wicked practices; Lord, give them after the work of their hands, and so make those about them, who think there is no harm in what they do, because it goes unpunished;" cxxiv.
1. 2. 3. This prayer is a prophecy, that God will, sooner or later, render to all impenitent sinners according to their deserts. If he has been done amiss be not undone by repentance, there will certainly come a reckoning day, when God will render to every man who persists in his evil deeds, according to them. It is a prophecy particularly of the destruction of destroyers; "They speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts; Lord, give them according to their deeds, let the spoilers be spoiled, and let them be treacherously dealt with. Behold, Lord, as we have done, so, and as we have dealt treacherously, so do; for they made not the Lord their strength, but their heart is turned to their wickedness."—Isa. xxxiii. 1. Rev. xviii. 6.—xiii. 10. Observe, He foretells that God will reward them, not only according to their deeds, but according to the wickedness of their endeavours; for sinners shall be reckoned with, not only for the mischief they have done, but for the mischief they would have done, which they designed, and did what they could to effect. And if God go by this rule, in dealing with the wicked, surely he will do so, in dealing with the righteous, and will reward them, not only for the good they have done, but for the good they have endeavoured to do, though they could not compass it.

IV. He foretells their destruction, for their contempt of God and his hand; (v. 5.) "Because they regard not the works of the Lord, and the operations of his hands, by which he manifests himself and speaks to the children of men; he shall destroy them in this world and in the other, and not built them up. ASUPREME REGARDSLESSNESS OF THE WORKS OF GOD IS THE CAUSE OF THE SIN OF SINNERS, AND SO BECOMES THE CAUSE OF THEIR RUIN. Why do men question the being or attributes of God, but because they do not duly regard his handy-works, which declare his glory, and in which the invisible things of him are clearly seen? Why do men forget God, and live without him, nay, affront God, and live in rebellion against him, but because they consider not the instances of the wrath of his which has never fallen heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men? Why do the enemies of God's people hate and persecute them, and devise mischief against them, but because they regard not the works God has wrought for his church, by which he has made it appear how dear it is to him? See Isa. v. 12.

In singing this, we must arm ourselves against all temptations to join with the workers of iniquity, and animate ourselves against all the troubles we may be threatened with by the workers of iniquity.

6. Blessed be the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications. 7. The Lord is my strength and my shield: my heart trusted in him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song will I praise him. 8. The Lord is their strength, and he is the saving strength of his anointed. 9. Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up for ever.

In these verses,
1. David gives God thanks for the answer given to his prayers, as affectionately as a father for a son; for reason, we.
6. Blessed be the Lord. How soon are the saints' sorrow turned into songs, and their prayers into praises! It was in faith that David prayed, (v. 2.) "Hear the voice of my supplications;" and by the same faith he gives thanks, (v. 6.) that God had heard the voice of his supplications. Note, 1. They that pray in faith may rejoice in hope. "He hath heard me, (graciously accepted me,) and I am as sure of a real answer as if I had it already." 2. What we win by prayer, we must wear with praise; has God heard our supplications? Let us then bless his name.

II. He encourages himself to hope in God for the perfecting of every thing that concerned him; having given to God the glory of his grace, (v. 6.) he is humbly bold to take the comfort of it, v. 7. This is the method of attaining peace; let it begin with praise that it is attainable. Let us first bless God, and then bless ourselves. Observe, 1. His dependence upon God; "The Lord is my Strength, and I will serve him, and carry me on, through all my services and sufferings. He is my Shield, to protect me from all the malice designs of my enemies against me. I have chosen him to be so, I have always found him so, and I expect he will still be so." 2. His experience of the benefit of that dependence; "My heart trusted in him, and in his power and promise; and it has not been in vain to do so, for I am helped, I have been often helped; not only God has given me, in his due time, the help I trusted to him for, but my very trust in him has heightened me in the mean time, and kept me from fainting." xviii. 13. The very actedings of faith are present aids to a dropping spirit, and often help it at a dead lift. 3. His improvement of this experience. He had the pleasure of it; therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth. The joy of a believer is seated in the heart, while, in the laughter of the fool, the heart is sorrowful. It is great joy, joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Note, A simple, unwearied regard to the means of grace, in due time greatly rejoice; it is joy and peace in believing that we are to expect. God shall have the praise of it; when my heart greatly rejoiceth, with my song will I praise him. Thus must we express our gratitude, it is the least we can do; and others will hereby be invited and encouraged to trust in him too.

III. He pleases himself with the interest which all good people, through Christ, have in God; (v. 8.) "The Lord is their Strength; not mine only, but the Strength of every believer." Note, The saints rejoice in their friends' comforts as well as their own; for as we have not the less benefit from the light of the sun, so neither from the light of God's countenance, for others' sharing therein; for we are sure there is enough for all, and enough for each. This is our communion with all saints, that God is their Strength and ours, Christ their Lord and ours, and for i. of them is as much in all Israel, because he is the saving Strength of his anointed, that is, 1. Of David in the type. God, in strengthening him that was their king, and fought their battles, strengthened the whole kingdom. He calls himself God's anointed, because it was the uction he had received, that exposed him to the envy of his enemies, and therefore entitled him to the divine protection. 2. Of Christ, his anointed, Messiah, in the anti-type. God was his saving Strength, qualified him for his undertaking, and carried him through it; see lxxxix. 21. Isa. xlix. 5.—l. 7, 9. And so he becomes their Strength, the Strength of all the saints; he strengthened them that is the church's Head, and from him diffuses strength to all the members; has commanded his strength, and so strengthened what he has wrought for us, lxviii. 28.—lxxxv. 17, 18.

3. He concludes with a short, but comprehensive, prayer for the church of God, v. 9. He prays for Israel, not as his people, "save my people, and bless mine inheritance," though they were so, but,

"thine." God's interest in them, lay nearer his heart than his own; We are they people, is a good plea, Isa. lxv. 9.—lxviii. 19. I am thine, save me, God's people are his inheritance, dear to him, and precious in his eyes; what little glory he has from this world, he has from them. The Lord's portion is his people. That which he begs of God for them,
is. 1. That he would save them from their enemies, and the dangers they were exposed to. 2. That he would bless them with all good, flowing from his favour, in performance of his promise, and amounting to a happiness for them. 3. That he would feed them; bless them with plenty, and especially the plenty of his ordinances, which are food to the soul. Rule them; so the margin. "Direct their counsels and actions aright, and overrule their affairs for good. Feed them and rule them; set pastors, set rulers, over them, that shall do their office with wisdom and understanding." 4. That he would lift them up for ever; lift them up out of their troubles and distresses; and do this, not only for those of that age, but for his people in every age to come, even to the end. "Lift them up into thy glorious kingdom, lift them up as high as heaven." (b) There, and there only, will the saints be lifted up for ever, never more to sink, or be depressed. Observe, Those, and those only, whom God feeds and rules, who are willing to be taught, and guided, and governed, by him, shall be saved, and blessed, and lifted up for ever.

PSALM XXIX.

It is the probable conjecture of some very good interpreters, that David penned this psalm upon occasion, and just at the time, of the great storm of thunder, lightning, and rain; as the eighth psalm was his meditation in a moonshine night, and the nineteenth in a sun-shine morning. It is good to take occasion, from the sensible operations of God's power upon the world, to give glory to him. So composed was David, and so cheerful, even in a dreadful tempest, when others trembled, that then he penned this psalm; for though the earth be removed, yet will I not fear. I. He calls upon the great one of the wise to give glory to him, v. 1, 2. II. To convince them of the greatness of that God whom they were to adore, he takes notice of his power and terror in the thunder, and lightning, and thunder-showers; (v. 3-9,) his sovereign dominion over the world, (v. 10,) and his special favour to his church, v. 11. Great and high thoughts of God should fill us, in singing this psalm.

A psalm of David.

1. Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength. 2. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. 3. The voice of the Lord is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth; the Lord is upon many waters. 4. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. 5. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. 6. He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. 7. The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire. 8. The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. 9. The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory. 10. The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever. 11. The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace.

In this psalm we have,

I. A demand of the homage of the great men of the earth to be paid to the great God. Every clap of thunder David interpreted as a call to himself, and other princes, to give glory to the great God. Observe, I. Who they are, that are called to this duty; "O ye mighty, (v. 1,) ye sons of the mighty, who have power, and on whom that power is devolved by succession and inheritance, who have royal blood running in your veins." It is much for the honour of the great God, that the great men of the earth, who pay their homage to him; and they are bound to do it, not only because, high as they are, he is infinitely above them, and therefore they must vail to him, but because they have their power from him, and are to use it for him, and this tribute of acknowledgement they owe to him for it. 2. How often this call is repeated; Give unto the Lord, and again, and a third time, Give unto the Lord. This intimates, that the mighty men are backward to this duty, and are with difficulty persuaded to it; but that it is of great consequence to the interests of God's kingdom among men, that princes should heartily espouse them. Jerusalem flourisheth, when the kings of the earth bring their glory and honour into it, Rev. xx. 24. 3. What they are called to; to give unto the Lord: not as if he needed any thing, or could be benefited by any gifts of ours, or as if we had any thing to give him that is not his own already; Who hath first given to him? (v. 9.) God's kingdom and glory are his own; and when he beguilest his own people of their own, you may be sure it is not for their own good. 4. The Lord gives his power over all dominion over us, he is pleased to interpret as a gift to him; "Give unto the Lord your own selves, in the first place, and then your services; give unto the Lord glory and strength, acknowledge his glory and strength, and give praise to him as a God of infinite majesty, and irresistible power; and what glory and strength he has, by his providence, intrusted you with, offer it to him, to be used for his honour in his service. Give him your crowns, let him wear them in his head; break your swords, your keys; put all into his hand, that you, in the use of them, may be to him for a name and a praise." Princes value themselves by their glory and strength; these they must ascribe to God, owning him to be infinitely more glorious and powerful than they.

This demand of homage from the mighty, may be looked upon as directed either to the grandees of David's own kingdom, the heads of the ten tribes, (a) it is to excite them to a more diligent and constant attendance at God's altars, in which he had observed them very remiss,) or to the neighbouring kings, whom he by his sword had made tributaries to Israel, and now would persuade to become tributaries to the God of Israel. Crowned heads must bow before the King of kings. What is here said to the mighty, is said to all, Worship God; it is the sum and substance of the everlasting gospel, Rev. xiv. 6, 7. Now we have here, (1,) The nature of religious worship; it is giving to the Lord the glory due to his name, v. 2. God's name is that whereby he has made himself known. There is a glory due to his name; it is impossible that we should give him all the glory due to his name; when we have said and done our best for the honour of God's name, still we come infinitely short of the merit of the subject; but, when we answer that revelation in which all of itself, and all the affections and adorations, then we give him some of that glory which is due to his name. If we would, in hearing and praying, and other acts of devotion, receive grace from God, we must make it our business to give glory to God. (2,) The rule of the performance of religious exercises; Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; which denotes, [1.] The Object of our worship; the glorious Majesty of God is called the beauty of holiness, 2 Chron. xx. 21. In the worship of God, we must have an eye to his beauty, and adore him,
not only as infinitely awful, and therefore to be feared above all, but as infinitely amiable, and therefore to be loved and delighted in above all; especially we must have an eye to the beauty of his holiness; this the angels fasten upon in their praises, Rev. iv. 8. Or, [2.] The place of worship. The sanctuary then was the beauty of holiness, xlviii. 1, 2. Jer. xvii. 12. The beauty of the sanctuary was, theconnecting and strengthening virtue, formed, with the divine appointment—the pattern in the mount. Now, under the gospel, solemn assemblies of Christians (which purity is the beauty of) are the places where God is to be worshipped. Or, [3.] The manner of worship. We must be holy in all our religious performances, devoted to God, and to his will and glory. There is a beauty in holiness, and it is that which puts an acceptable being upon all our acts.

II. Good reason given for this demand. We shall see ourselves bound to give glory to God, if we consider, 1. His sufficiency in himself, intimated in his name Jehovah, I am that I am; which is repeated here no less than eighteen times in this short psalm, twice in every verse but three, and once in two of those three; I do not recollect that there is the like in all the book of psalms. Let the mighty ones of the earth know him by this name, and sit in his presence with fear, for heroveth over all things. Let those that rule over men, know there is a God that rules over them, that rules over all. The psalmist here sets forth God’s dominion.

(1.) In the kingdom of nature. In the wonderful effects of natural causes, and the operations of the powers of nature, we ought to take notice of God’s glory and strength, which we are called upon to ascribe to him; in the thunder, and lightning, and all the works many.

[1.] His glory. In the Kingdom of nature. He is the God of glory that thunders, v. 3. It is God that thunders, it is the voice of his voice, (Job xxxvii. 2.) and it speaks him a God of glory; so awful is the sound of the thunder, and so bright the flash of its companion, the lightning; to the hearing and to the sight nothing is more affecting than these, as if by those two learning senses God would give such proofs of his glory to the minds of men, as should leave the most stupid indifferent. Some observe, there are some particular reasons why thunder should be called the voice of the Lord; not only because it comes from above, is not under the direction or foresight of any man, speaks loud, and reaches far, but because God often spake in thunder, particularly at mount Sinai, and by thunder discomfited the enemies of Israel. To speak it the voice of God of glory, it is here said to be upon the waters, upon many waters; v. 3. It reaches over the vast ocean, the waters under the firmament. It rattles among the thick clouds, the waters above the firmament. Every one that hears the thunder, (his ears being made to tingle with it,) will own that the voice of the Lord is full of majesty, (xxix. 4.) enough to make the highest humble—for none can thunder with a voice like him, and the proudest trembling—for if his voice be so terrible, what is his arm? Every time he speaks in thunder, let our hearts be thereby filled with godly fear, and love the thoughts of God, in the holy adorings and admiring of whom the power of godliness does so much consist. O Lord our God, thou art very great!

[2.] His power; (v. 4.) The voice of the Lord is powerful, as appears by the effects of it; for it works wonders; they that write natural histories relate the prodigious effects of thunder and lightning, even out of the ordinary course of natural causes, which must be resolved into the omnipotence of the God of nature. First, Trees have been rent and split by thunderbolts; (v. 5, 6.) The voice of the Lord, in the thunder, often brake the cedars, even those of Lebanon, the strongest, the stateliest. Some understand it of the violent winds which shook the cedars, and sometimes tore off their aspiring tops. Earthquakes also shook the ground itself, on which the trees grew, and made Lebanon and Sinion to dance; the wilderness of Kadesh also was in like manner shaken, (v. 8.) the trees by earthquake, and both by thunders, of which I incline to the latter terrifies the. The learned Dr. Hammond understands it of the consternation and conquest of the neighbouring kingdoms that warred with Israel, and opposed David; as the Syrians, whose country lay near the forest of Lebanon, the Amorites that bordered on mount Hermon, and the Moabites and Ammonites that lay about the wilderness of Kadesh. Secondly, Fires have been kindled by lightnings, and houses and villages consumed by them. Thirdly, The terror of thunder makes the hinds to calve sooner, and some think more easily, than otherwise they would. The wind is a timorous creature, and much affected with the noise of thunder and no movement, when sometimes proud and stout men have been presumptuous to fright it. The emperor Caligula would hide himself under his bed when it thundered. Horace the poet owns that he was reclaimed from atheism by the terror of thunder and lightning, which he describes somewhat like this here, lib. 1. ode 34. The thunder is said here to discover the forest, that is, it so terrifies the wild beasts of the forest, that they quit the dens and thickets in which they hid themselves, and so are discovered and dispossessed of their trees, and so discovers the ground that was shaded by them. Whenever it thunders, let us think of this psalm; and whenever we sing this psalm, let us think of the dreadful thunder-claps we have sometimes heard, and thus bring God’s word and his works together, that by both we may be directed and quickened to give unto him the glory due unto his name; and let us bless him that there is another voice of his beyond the natural voice, by which he now speaks to us, even the still small voice of his gospel, the terror of which shall not make us afraid.

(2.) In the kingdom of Providence, v. 10. God is to be praised as the Governor of the world of mankind. He sits upon the flood, he sits King for ever. He not only sits at rest in the enjoyment of himself, but he sits as King in the throne which he has prepared in the heavens, (ch. 19.) where he takes cognizance of, and gives orders about, all the affairs of the children of men, and does all according to his will, according to the counsel of his will. Observe, [1.] The power of his kingdom; He sits upon the flood. As he has founded the earth, so he has founded his own throne, upon the floods, xxiv. 2. The ebbings and flowings of this lower world, and the toses and revolutions of the affairs in it, give not the least shake to the repose or to the counsels of the Eternal Mind. The opposition of winds, and the floodings of the sea, are all overruled, but the Lord sits upon it; he crushes it, conquers it, and completes his own purposes, in despite of all the devices that are in men’s hearts. The word here translated the flood, is never used but concerning Noah’s flood, and therefore some think that is which is here spoken of. God did sit upon that flood, as a Judge executing the sentence of his justice upon the world of the ungodly, that was swept away by it. And he still sits upon the flood, restraining the waters of Noah, that they turn not again to cover the earth, according to his promise.
never to destroy the earth any more by a flood, Gen. ix. 11. Isa. liv. 9. {2.} The perpetuity of his kingdom; He sits King for ever; no period can, or shall, be put to his government. The administration of his kingdom is consonant to his counsels from eternity, and pursuant to his designs for eternity.

(3.) In the kingdom of grace; here his glory shines brightest. {1.} In the adoration he receives from the subjects of that kingdom, v. 9. In his temple, where his people attend his discoveries of himself and his mind, and to God's word and to his will there does every one speak of his glory; in the world, every man sees its, or, at least, may behold it after off; {Job xxxvi. 25.} but it is only in the temple, in the church, that it is spoken of to his honour. All his works do praise him, they minister matter for praise; but his saints only do bless him, and speak of his glory in his works, cxlv. 10. {2.} In the favours he bestows upon the subjects of that kingdom, v. 11. First, He will enable them for his service; He will give strength to his people, to fortify them against every evil work, and to furnish them for every good work; out of weakness they shall be made strong; nay, he will perfect strength in weakness. Secondly, He will encourage them in his service; He will bless his people with peace. Peace is a blessing of inestimable value, which God designs for all his people. The work of righteousness is peace; great peace have they that love thy law; but much more especially peace within the tribe of the righteouness is peace, it is endless peace. When the thunder of God's wrath shall make sinners tremble, the saints shall lift up their heads with joy.

**PSALM XXX.**

This is a psalm of thanksgiving for the great deliverances which God had wrought for David, penned upon occasion of the dedicating of his house of cedar, and sung in that pious solemnity, though there is not anything in it that has particular reference to that occasion. Some collect, from divers passages in the psalm itself, that it was penned upon his recovery from a dangerous fit of sickness, which might happen to be about the time of the dedication of his house. L. He here praises God for the deliverances he had wrought for him, v. 1. 3. II. He calls upon others to praise him too, and encourages them to trust in him, v. 4, 5. III. He blames himself for his former security, v. 6, 7. IV. He encourages the prayers and complaints he had made in his distress, v. 8. 10. With them he stirs up himself to be very thankful to God for the present comfortable change, v. 11, 12. In singing this psalm, we should not forget with thankfulness any like deliverances wrought for us, for which we must stir up ourselves to praise him, and by which we must be engaged to depend upon him.

*A psalm and song, at the dedication of the house of David.*

1. **I WILL extol thee, O Lord; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.** 2. **O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.** 3. **O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.** 4. **Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.** 5. **For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.**

It was the laudable practice of the pious Jews, and, though not expressly appointed, yet allowed and accepted, when they had built a new house, to dedicate it to God, Deut. xx. 5. David did so, when his house was built, and he took possession of it; (2 Sam. v. 11.) for royal palaces do as much need God's protection, and are as much bound to be at his service, as ordinary houses. Note, The houses we dwell in should, at our first entrance upon them, be dedicated to God, as little sanctuaries. We must solemnly commit ourselves, our families, and all our family affairs, to God's guidance and care; must pray for his presence and blessing, must take note of all our praiseworthy acts of his glory, and must resolve both that we will put away sin far from our tabernacles, and that we and our houses will serve the Lord, both in the duties of family worship, and in all instances of gospel obedience. Some conjecture that this psalm was sung at the re-dedication of David's house, after he had been driven out of it by Absalom, who had defiled it with his incest, and that it is a thanksgiving for the crushing of that dangerous rebellion.

In these verses,

1. David does himself give God thanks for the great deliverances he had wrought for him; (v. 1.)

"I will extol thee, O Lord; I will exalt thy name, and praise thee as One high and lifted up. I will do what I can to advance the interests of thy kingdom among men. I will extol thee, for thou hast lifted me up, not only up out of the pit in which I was sinking, but up to the throne of Israel. He restored me to the poor out of the dust. In consideration of the great things God has done to extol us, both by his providence and by his grace, we are bound, in gratitude, to do all we can to extol his name, though the most we can do is but little. Three things magnify David's deliverance:

1. That it was the defeat of his enemies. They were not suffered to triumph over him, as they should have done, (though it is a barbarous thing,) if he had died of this sickness, or perished in this distress: see xli. 11.

2. That it was an answer to his prayers; (v. 2.)

"I cried unto thee. All the expressions of the sense we have of our troubles should be directed to God, and every cry be a cry to him; giving way, in this manner, to our grief, will ease a burdened spirit. "I cried to thee, and thou hast not only heard me, but healed me, healed the disquieted body, healed the disturbed and disquieted mind, healed the disorder, distracted, affairs of the kingdom. It is what God glories in, I am the Lord that heal eth thee, (Exod. xxv. 26.) and we must give him the glory of it."

3. That it was the saving of his life; for he was brought to the last extremity, dropping into the grave, and ready to go down into the pit, and yet rescued, and kept alive, v. 3. The more imminent our danger has been, the more eminent our deliverances have been, the more comfortable are they to ourselves, and the more illustrous proofs of the power and goodness of God. A life from the dead ought to be spent in extolling the God of our life.

II. He calls upon others to join with him in praise, not only for the particular favours God had bestowed upon him, but for the general tokens of his goodness to all, to all his saints; (v. 4.)

"Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of all that is round about him; there is a remnant of such in this world, and so, from the remnant there is expected that they sing unto him; for they are created, and sanctified, made, and made saints, that they be to him for a name and a praise. His saints in heaven sing to him; why should not those on earth be doing the same work, as well as they can, in concert with them?"

1. They believe him to be a God of unspotted purity; and therefore let them sing to him; "Let them give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness;"
let them praise his holy name, for holiness is his memorial throughout all generations." God is a holy God; his holiness is his glory; that is the attribute which the holy angels, in their praises, fasten never upon him. Isa. xl. 8. We ought to bear much in the mention and remembrance of God's holiness; and holy souls can give thanks at the mention of God's holiness. It is matter of joy to the saints, that God is a holy God; for then they hope he will make them holy, more holy. None of all God's perfections carries in it more terror to the wicked, or more comfort to the godly, than his holiness. It is a good sign that we are in some measure to this day, in our hearts, rejoice and give thanks at the remembrance of it.

2. They have experienced him to be a God gracious and merciful; and therefore let them sing to him.

(1.) We have found his frowns very short; though we have deserved they should have been everlasting, and that he should have been angry with us, till he had consumed us, and should never have been reconciled, yet his anger endureth but for a moment, v. 5. When we offend him, he is angry; but, as he is slow to anger, and not soon provoked, so, when he is angry, upon our repentance and humiliation, his anger is soon turned away, and he is willing to be at peace with us. If he hide his face from his own children, and suspend the wonted tokens of his favour, it is but in a little wrath, and for a small moment; but he will gather them with everlasting kindness, Isa. liv. 7, 8. If weeping endure for a night, and it be a wea-some night, yet, as sure as the light of the morning returns after the darkness of the night, so sure will joy and comfort return in a short time, in due time, to the people of God; for the covenant of grace is as firm as the covenant of the day. This word has often been fulfilled to us in the letter; weeping has endured for a night, but the grief has been soon over, and the grievance gone. Observe, As long as God's anger continues, so long the saints' weeping continues; but if that be but for a moment, the affliction is but for a moment, and when the light of God's countenance is restored, the affliction is easily pronounced light and momentary.

(2.) We have found his smiles very sweet; In his favour is life, all good. The return of his favour to an afflicted soul, is as life from the dead; nothing can be more reviving. Our happiness is bound up in God's favour; if we have that, we have enough, whatever else we want. It is the life of the soul, it is spiritual life, the earnest of life eternal.

6. And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. 7. LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled. 8. I cried to thee, O LORD; and unto the LORD I made supplication. 9. What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth? 10. Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper. 11. Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; 12. To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

We have, in these verses, an account of three several states that David was in successively, and of the workings of his heart toward God in each of those states—what he said and did, and how his heart stood affected; in the first of which we may certainly learn what it is to be put to the test, and what we ought to do, and in the other two what we should be.

I. He had long enjoyed prosperity, and then he grew secure, and over-confident of the continuance of it; (v. 6, 7.) "In my prosperity, when I was in health of body, and God had given me rest from all mine enemies, I said I shall never be moved; I never thought either of having my body distempered, or my government disturbed, nor had any apprehensions of danger upon any account. Such was the complacency he had in his prosperity, that they opposed him, and such a confirmed interest he had in the hearts of his people, such a firmness of mind, and such a strong constitution of body, that he thought his prosperity fixed like a mountain; yet this he ascribes, not to his own wisdom or fortitude, but to the divine goodness, Thou, through thy favour, hast made my mountain to stand strong, v. 7. He does not look upon it as his heaven, (as worldly people do,) who make their prosperity their felicity, but only his mountain; it is earth still, only raised a little higher than the common level; this he thought, by the favour of God, would be perpetuated to him; imagining, perhaps, that, having had so many troubles in the beginning of his days, he had had his whole share, and should have none in his latter end; or that God, who had given him such tokens of his favour, would never frown upon him. Note, 1. We are very apt to dream, when things are well with us, that they will always be so, and never otherwise; To-morrow shall be as this day. As if we should think, when the weather is once fair, that it will be ever fair; whereas nothing is more certain than that it will change. 2. When we see ourselves deceived in our expectations, it becomes us to reflect, with shame, upon our security, as our folly, as David does here, that we may be wiser another time, and may rejoice in our prosperity as though we rejoiced not, because the fashion of it passes away.

II. On a sudden, he fell into trouble, and then he prayed to God, and pleaded earnestly for relief and succour. 1. His mountain was shaken, and he with it; it proved, when he grew secure, that he was least safe; "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled, in mind, body, or estate." In every change of his condition, he still kept his face upon God, and as he ascribed his prosperity to God's favour, so, in his adversity, he observed the hiding of God's face to be the cause of it. If God hide his face, a good man is certainly troubled, though no other calamity befall him; when the sun sets, night certainly follows, and the moon and all the stars cannot make day. 2. When his mountain was shaken, he lifted up his eyes above the hills. Prayer is a salve for every sore; he made use of it accordingly. Is any afflicted? is any troubled? let him call upon the LORD in the evening. Thus in God's prosperity he prayed. If God, in wisdom and justice, turn from us, yet it will be in us the greatest folly and injustice imaginable, if we turn from him. No, let us learn to pray in the dark; (v. 8.) I tried to thee, O LORD. It seems, God's withdrawals made his prayers the more vehement. We are here told, for it seems he kept account of it, (1.) What he pleaded; (v. 9.) That God would be no gainer by his death; What profit is there in my blood? imply that he would willingly die, if he could thereby do any real service to God, or his country, (Phil. ii. 17.) but he saw not what good could be done by his dying in the bed of sickness, as might be, if he had died in the bed of honour. "LORD," says he, "will thou sell one of thine own people for nought,
It is probable that David penned this psalm when he was persecuted by Saul; some passages in it agree particularly to the narrow escape he had at Keilah, (1 Sam. xxvii., 13.) then in the wilderness of Maon, when Saul marched on one side of the hill, and he on the other, and, soon after, in the cave in the wilderness of En-gedi; but that it was penned upon any of those occasions we are not told. It is a mixture of prayers and praises, and professions of confidence in God, all which do well together, and are helpful to one another. 1. David professes his cheerful confidence in God, and, in that confidence, prays for deliverance out of his present troubles, v. 1-8. II. He complains of the very unpleasant condition he was in, and, in the sense of his calamities, still prays that God would graciously appear for him against his persecutors, v. 9-18. III. He concludes the psalm with prayers and thanksgiving, good things to him, encouragement to himself and others to trust in him, v. 19-24.

To the chief musician. A Psalm of David.

1. IN thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness.

2. Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for a house of defence to save me. 3. For thou art my rock and my fortress: therefore, for thy name's sake, lead me and guide me.

4. Pull me out of the net that they have laid privy for me; for thou art my strength.

5. Into thy hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.

6. I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the Lord. 7. I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities; and hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a large room.

Faith and prayer must go together. He that believes, let him pray; I believe, therefore have I spoken: and he that prays, let him believe, for the prayer of faith is the prevailing prayer. We have both here.

1. David, in distress, is very earnest with God in prayer, for succour and relief. This cases a burdened soul. He cherishes in his heart a wish to be wonderfully supported and comforted the soul, in the expectation of them. He prays, 1. That God would deliver him, (v. 1.) that his life might be preserved from the malice of his enemies, and that an end might be put to their persecutions of him. That God, not only in mercy, but in righteousness, would deliver him, as a righteous Judge betwixt him and his unrighteous persecutors; that he would bow down his ear to his petitions, to his appeals, and deliver him, v. 2. It is a condescension in God to take cognizance of the case of the greatest and best of men; he humbles himself to do it. The psalmsist prays also that he would deliver him speedily, lest, if the deliverance were long deferred, his faith should fail. 2. That if he did not immediately deliver him out of his troubles, yet he would protect and shelter him in his troubles; "Be thou my strong Rock, invincible, impregnable, as a fastness framed by nature, and my House of defence, a fortress framed by art, and all to save me." Thus may we pray that God's providence would secure to us our lives and comforts, and that by his grace we may be enabled to think ourselves safe in him,Prov. xvii. 10. 3. That, his case having much in it of difficulty, both in respect of duty, and in respect of providence, he might be under the divine guidance; "Lord, lead me and guide me;" (v. 3.) so order my steps, so order my spirit, that I may never do any thing unlawful and unjustifiable, against my conscience; or unwise and indiscreet, against my interest." They that resolve to follow God's direction, may in faith pray for it. 4. That,
his enemies being very crafty, as well as very spiteful, God would frustrate and baffle their designs against him; (v. 4.) "Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me, and keep me from the sin, the trouble, the death, they aim to entrap me in." 2.

In this prayer, he gives glory to God, by repeated profession of his confidence in him, and dependence on him. This encouraged his prayers, and qualified him for the mercies he prayed for; (v. 1.) "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust, and not in myself, or any sufficiency of my own, or in any creature; let me never be ashamed, let me not be disappointed of any of that good which thou hast promised me, and which therefore I have promised myself in them.

1. He had chosen God for his Protector, and God had, by his promise, undertaken to be so; (v. 3.) "Thou art my Rock and my Fortress, by thy covenant with me, and my believing consent to that covenant; therefore be my strong Rock," v. 2. They that have in sincerity avouched the Lord for their's, may expect the benefit of his being so; for God's relations to us carry with them both name and thing. Thou art my Strength, v. 4. If God be our Strength, then it is evident that he will put his strength in us, and put forth his strength for us.

2. He gave up his soul in a special manner to him; (v. 5.) Into thine hands I commit my spirit. (1.) If David here looks upon himself as a dying man, by these words he resigns his departing soul to God, who gave it, and to whom, at death, the spirit returns. "Men can but kill the body, but I trust in God to redeem my soul from the power of the grave," ver. 15. He is willing, to die, if God will have it so; but let my soul fall into thine hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great. With these words, our Lord Jesus yielded up the ghost upon the cross, and made his soul an offering, a free-will offering, for sin, voluntarily laying down his life a ransom. By Stephen's example we are taught, in our dying moments, to eye Christ at God's right hand, and to commit our spirits to him; Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. But, (2.) David is here to be looked upon as a man in distress and trouble. And, (3.) His great care is about his soul, his spirit, his better part. Note, Our outward afflictions should increase our concern for our souls. Many think that while they are perplexed about their worldly affairs, and Providence multiplies their care about them, they may be excused if they neglect their souls; whereas the greater hazard our lives and secular interests lie at, the more we are concerned to look to our souls, that, though the outward man perish, the inward man may suffer no damage, (2 Cor. iv. 16.) and that we may keep possession of our souls, when we can keep possession of nothing else, Luke xxi. 19.

2.] He thinks the best he can do for his soul is, to commit it into the hand of God, and lodge that great trust with him. He had prayed, (v. 4.) to be plucked out of the net of outward trouble, but, as not despising upon that, God's will be done, he immediately let fall the net, and commits the spirit, the inward man, into God's hand; "Lord, however it goes with me, as to my body, let it go well with my soul." Note, It is the wisdom and duty of every one of us, solemnly to commit our spirits into the hands of God, to be sanctified by his grace, devoted to his honour, employed in his service, and fitted for his kingdom. That which encounters us without our spirits into the hand of God, is, that he has freely carried us there to redeem them; the particular redemptions of the Old Testament church, and the Old Testament saints, were typical of our redemption by Jesus Christ, Gen. xlvi. 16. The redemption of the soul is so precious, that it must have ceased for ever, if Christ had not undertaken it; but, by redeeming our souls, he has not only acquired an additional right and title to them, which obliges us to commit them to him as his own, but has showed the extraordinary kindness and concern he has for them, which encourages us to commit them to him, to be preserved to his heavenly kingdom; (2 Tim. i. 12.) "Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth; redeemed me according to a promise which thou wilt be true to."

III. He disclaimed all condescension with those that made an arm of flesh their confidence; (v. 6.) I have hated them that regard lying vanities; idolaters, (so some,) who expect aid from false gods, which are vanity and a lie; astrologers, and those that give heed to them, so others. David abhorred the use of enchantments and divinations; he consulted not, nor ever took notice of, the flight of birds, the entrails of beasts, good omens or bad omens; they are lying vanities, and he not only did not regard them himself, but hated the wickedness of those that did; he trusted in God only, and not in any creature; his interest in the court and country, his retreats or strongholds, even Goliath's word itself—these were lying vanities, which he could not depend upon, but trusted in the Lord only; v. 6. Jer. xvii. 5.

4. He committed himself, with his hope in God, and made himself, not only easy, but cheerful, with it, v. 7. Having relied on God's mercy, he will be glad and rejoice in it; and those know not how to value their hope in God, who cannot find joy enough in that hope to balance their grievances, and silence their griefs.

V. He encouraged himself in this hope, with the experiences he had had, of late, and formerly, of God's goodness to him, which he mentions to the glory of God; he that has delivered, doth, and will. 1. God had taken notice of his afflictions, and all the circumstances of them; "Thou hast considered my trouble, with wisdom to suit relief to it, with condescension and compassion regarding the low estate of thy servant." 2. He had observed the temper of his spirit, and the workings of his heart under his afflictions; "Thou hast known my soul in adversity, with a tender concern and care for it." God's heart is upon it when we are in trouble, to see whether they be humbled for sin, submissive to the will of God, and bettered by the affliction. If the soul, when cast down under affliction, has been lifted up in true devotion, he knows it. 3. He had rescued him out of the hands of Saul, when he had him safe enough in Keilah; (1 Sam. xxxiii. 7.) "Thou hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy, but set me at liberty, in a large room, where I may shift for my own safety." v. 8. Christ's using these words, (v. 5.) upon the cross, may warrant us to apply all this to Christ, who trusted in his Father, and was supported and delivered by him, and (because he humbled himself) highly exalted, which it is proper to think of, when we sing these verses, as also therein to acknowledge the experience we have had of God's gracious presence with us in our troubles, and to encourage ourselves to trust in him for the future.

9. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble; mine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my belly. 10. For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed.

11. I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neigh-
hours, and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without fled from me.
12. I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel. 13. For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. 14. But I trusted in thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my God. 15. My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me. 16. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies’ sake. 17. Let me not be ashamed, O Lord; for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave. 18. Let the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.

In the foregoing verses, David had appealed to God's righteousness, and pleaded his relation to him, and appealed to him here he appealed to his mercy, and pleads the greatness of his own misery, which made his case the proper object of that mercy. Observe,

1. The complaint he makes of his trouble and distress; (v. 9.) "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble, and need thy mercy." The remembrance he makes of his condition is not much unlike some even of Job's complaints.

2. His troubles had fixed a very deep impression upon his mind, and made him a man of sorrows. So great was his grief, that his very soul was consumed with it, and his life spent with it, and he was continually sighing, v. 9, 10. Herein he was a type of Christ, who was intimately acquainted with grief, and often in tears. We may guess by David's complexion, which was ruddy and sanguine, by his genius for music, and by his daring enterprises in his early days, that his natural disposition was both cheerful and firm, that he was apt to be cheerful, and not to lay trouble to his heart; yet here we see what he is brought to: he has almost wept out his eyes, and sighed away his breath. Let those that are airy and gay take heed of running into extremes, and never set sorrow at defiance; God can find out ways to make them melancholy, if they will not otherwise learn to be serious.

3. His body was affected with the sorrows of his mind; (v. 10.) "My strength falias, my bones are consumed, and all because of mine iniquity." As to Saul, and the quarrel he had with him, he could confidently insist upon his righteousness; but as it was an affliction God laid upon him, he owns he had deserved it, and freely confesses his iniquity to have been the procuring cause of all his trouble; and the sense of sin touched him to the quick, and wasted him more than all his calamities.

4. His friends were unknown, and became shy of him; but fear to accept acquaintance, when they saw him, they fled from him, v. 11. They durst not harbour him, nor give him any assistance, nor show him any countenance, not so much as to be seen in his company, for fear of being brought into trouble by it, now that Saul had proclaimed him a traitor, and out-lawed him. They saw how dear Abimelech the priest had paid for aiding and abetting him, though ignorantly; and therefore, though they could not but own he had a great deal of wrong done him, yet they had not the courage to appear for him. He was forgotten by them, as a dead man out of mind, (v. 12.) and looked upon with contempt as a broken vessel. They that showed him all possible respect, when he was in honour at court, now that he was fallen into disgrace, though unjustly, were strange to him. Such swallow-friends the world is full of, that are gone in winter. Let those that fall on the losing side, not think it strange, if they be thus deserted, but make sure a Friend in heaven, that will not fail them, and make use of him too.

5. His enemies were unjust in their censures of him; they would not have persecuted him as they did, if they had not first represented him as a bad man; he was a refreshment among all his enemies, but especially among his neighbours, v. 11. Those that had been the witnesses of his integrity, and could not but be convinced in their consciences that he was an honest man, were the most forward to represent him quite otherwise, that they might make it all the more favourable to him, he had the slander of many; every one had a stone to throw at him, because fear was on every side; they durst not do otherwise, for he that would not join with his neighbours to abuse David, was looked upon as disaffected to Saul. Thus the best of men have been ranked with the worst characters by those that resolved to give them the worst treatment.

6. His life was aimed at, and he went in continual peril of it. But if he was on every side, and he knew that, whatever counsel his enemies took against him, the design was not to take away his liberty, but to take away his life, (v. 13.) a life so valuable, so useful, to the good services of which all Israel owed so much, and which was never forfeited. Thus, in all the plots of the Pharisees and Herodians against Christ, still the design was to take away his life; such are the enmity and cruelty of the serpent's seed.

II. His confidence in God, in the midst of these troubles; every thing looked black and dismal round about him, and threatened to drive him to despair; "But I trusted in thee, O Lord, and that kept me from sinking." His enemies robbed him of his reputation among men, but they could not rob him of his comfort in God, because they could not drive him from his confidence in God. Two things he comforted himself with in his straits, and he intreated God to do so with him; 1. "Thou art my God; I have chosen thee for mine, and thou hast promised to be mine;" and if he be ours, and we can by faith call him so, it is enough, when we can call nothing else ours. "Thou art my God; and therefore to whom shall I go for relief, but to thee?" They need not be straitened in their prayers, who can plead this; for if God undertake to be our God, he will do that for us, which will answer the compass and vast extent of that engagement.

My times are in thy hand. Join this with the former, and it makes the comfort complete. If God have our times in his hand, he can help us; and if he be our God, he will help us; and then what can discourage us? It is a great support to those who have God for their God, that their times are in his hand; and he will be sure to order and dispose of them for the best to all those who commit their spirits also in his hand, to his care, in their times, as David here, v. 5. The time of life is in God's hands, to lengthen or shorten, imbitter or sweeten, as he pleases, according to the counsel of his will. Our times, all events that concern us, and the timing of them, these are at God's disposal; they are not in our own hands, for the way of man is not in himself, nor in our friends' hands, nor in our enemies' hands, but in God's; every man's judgment freethed from him. David does not, in his prayers, prescribe to God, but subscribe to him; "Lord, my
times are in thy hand, and I am well pleased that they are so, they could not be in a better hand; thy will be done."

III. His petitions to God; in this faith and confidence,
1. He prays that God would deliver him out of the hand of his enemies, (v. 15.) and save him; (v. 16.) and this, for his mercies sake, and not for any merit of his own. Our opportunities are in God's hand, (so some read it,) and therefore he knows how to choose the best and fittest time for our deliverance, and we must be willing to wait that time. When David had Saul at his mercy in the cave, those about him said, "This is the time in which God will deliver thee," 1 Sam. xxvii. 4. "No," says he, "the time is not come for my deliverance, till it can be wrought without sin; and I will wait for that time; for it is God's time, and that is the best time."

2. That God would give him the comfort of his favour in the mean time; (v. 16.) "Make thy face to shine upon thy servant;" let me have the comfortable tokens and evidences of thy favour to me, and that shall put gladness in my heart in the midst of all my griefs.

3. That his prayers to God might be answered, and his hopes in God accomplished; (v. 17.) "Let me not be ashamed of my hopes and prayers, for I have called upon thee, who never saith to thy people, Seek in vain, and hope in vain."

4. That shame and silence might be the portion of wicked people, and particularly of his enemies. They were confident of their success against David, and that they should run him down, and ruin him.

"Lord," says he, "let them be made ashamed of that confidence by the disappointment of their expectations." As those that opposed the building of the wall about Jerusalem, when it was finished, were much cast down in their own eyes, Neh. vi. 16. Let them be silent in the grave. Note, Death will silence the rage and clamour of cruel persecutors, whom reason would not silence. In the grave, the wicked cease from troubling. Particularly, he prays for, that is, he prophesies, the silencing of those that reproach and calumny the people of God; (v. 18.) Let lying lips be put to silence, that speak grievous things fraudily and contemptuously against the righteous. This is a very good prayer, (1.) Which we have often occasion to put to God; for they that set their mouth against the heavens, commonly revile the heirs of heaven. Religion, and the strict and serious professors of it, are everywhere spoken against. [1.] With a great deal of malice, they speak grievous things, on purpose to vex them, and hoping, with what they say, to do them a real mischief. They speak hard things, (so the word is,) which bear hard upon them, and by which they hope to fasten indelible characters of infamy upon them. [2.] With a great deal of falsehood; they are lying lips, taught by the father of lies, and serving his interest. [3.] With a great deal of scorn and disdain; they speak fraudily and contemptuously, as if the righteous, whom God has honoured, were the most despicable people in the world, and not worthy to be set with the dogs of their flock. One would think they thought it no sin to tell a deliberate lie, if it may but serve to expose a good man either to hatred or contempt. Hear, O our God, for we are despised. [2.] We may pray it in faith; for these lying lips are, as it were, put to silence by God's taking away of doing it. Sometimes he convinces the consciences of those that reproach his people, and turns their hearts; sometimes by his providence he visibly confutes their calumnies, and brings forth the righteousness of his people as the light. However, there is a day coming, when God will convince ungodly sinners of the falsehood of all the hard speeches they have spoken against his people, and will execute judgment upon them, Jude 14, 15. Then shall this prayer be fully answered, and to that day we should have an eye in the singing of it; engaging ourselves likewise, by well-doing, if possible, to silence the ignorance of foolish men, 1 Pet. iii. 15.

19. Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! 20. Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man; thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. 21. Blessed be the Lord; for he hath showed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city. 22. For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes; nevertheless thou hearest the voice of my supplications, when I cried unto thee. 23. O love the Lord, all ye his saints: for the Lord preserveth the faithful, and plenteously rewardeth the proud doer. 24. Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart; all ye that hope in the Lord.

We have three things in these verses:
1. The believing acknowledgement which David makes of God's goodness to his people in general, v. 19, 20.

1. God is good to all, but he is, in a special manner, good to Israel. His goodness to them is wonderful, and will be, to eternity, matter of admiration; Oh how great is thy goodness! How profound are the counsels of it; how rich are the treasures of it; how free and extensive are the communications of it! Those very persons whom men load with slanders, God loads with benefits and honours. Those who are interested in this goodness, are described to be such as fear God, and trust in him, as stand in awe of his greatness, and rely on his grace. This goodness is said to be laid up for them, and wrought for them. (1.) There is goodness laid up for them in the other world, an inheritance reserved in heaven; (1 Pet. i. 4.) and there is a goodness wrought for them in this world, God's goodness wrought in them. There is enough in God's goodness, both for the portion and inheritance of all his children, when they come to their full age, and for their maintenance and education, during their minority. There is enough in bank, and enough in hand. (2.) This goodness is laid up in his promise for all that fear God, to whom assurance is given that they shall want no good thing. But it is wrought, in the actual performance of the promise, for those that trust in him—that by faith take hold of the promise, put it in suit, and draw out to themselves the benefit and comfort of it. If what is laid up for us in the treasures of the everlasting covenant, be not wrought for us, it is our own fault; because we do not believe. But those that trust in God, as they have the comfort of his goodness in their own bosoms, so they have the credit of it, (and the credit of an estate goes far with some,) it is wrought for them before the sons of men; God's goodness to them puts an honour upon them, and rolls away their reproach; for all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed, Isa. lxi. 9.

2. God preserves man and beast; but he is, in a special manner, the Protector of his own people; (v. 20.)
Thou shalt hide them. As his goodness is hid and reserved for them, so they are hid and preserved for it. The saints are God's hidden ones. See here, (1.) The danger they are in, which arises from the pride of man, and from the strife of tongues; proud men insult over them, and would trample on them, and tread them down; contentious men pick quarrels with them, and where there are tongues at strife, good people often go by the worst. The pride of men endangers their liberty; the strife of tongues, in perverse disputings, endangers truth. But, (2.) See the defence they are under; Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence; in a pavilion. God's providence shall keep them safe from the malice of their enemies. He has many ways of sheltering them; when Baruch and Jeremiah were sought for, the Lord hid them, Jer. xxxvi. 26. God we shall keep them safe from the judgments that are abroad; to them they have no sting; they shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger, for there is no anger at them. His comforts shall keep them easy and cheerful; his sanctuary, where they have communion with him, shelters them from the fiery darts of terror and temptation; and the mansions in his house above, shall be shortly, shall be eternally, their hiding place from all ages and fear.

II. The thankful returns which David makes for God's goodness to him in particular, (v. 21, 22.) Having admired God's goodness to all the saints, he here owns how good he had found him.

1. Without were fightings; but God had wonderfully preserved his life; "He has showed me his marvellous loving kindness, he has given me an instance of his care of me, and favour to me, beyond what I could have expected." God's loving-Kindness consider'd is wonderful; but some instances of it, even in this world, are, in a special manner, marvellous in their eyes; as this here, when God preserved David from the sword of Saul, in caves and woods, as safe as if it had been in a strong city. In Keilah, that strong city, God showed him great mercy, both in making him an instrument to rescue the inhabitants out of the hands of the Philistines, and then in rescuing him from the same men, who would have ungratefully delivered him to the hands of his enemies. Ps. xxi. 5, 12. This was marvellous loving kindness indeed, upon which he writes, with wonder and thankfulness, Blessed be the Lord. Special preserves call for particular thanksgivings.

2. Within were fears; but God was better to him than his fears, v. 22. He here keeps an account, (1.) Of his own folly, in distrusting God, which he acknowledges to his shame; though he had express promises to build upon, and great experience of God's care concerning him, in many straits, yet he had entertained this hard and jealous thought of God, and could not forbear telling it him to his face, "I am cut off from before thine eyes; thou hast quite forsaken me, and I must not expect to be looked upon or regarded by thee any more. I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul, and so be cut off from before thine eyes, be ruined while thou lookest on," I Sam. xxxvii. 1. This he said, in his flight; (so some read it,) which denotes the distress of his affairs. Saul was just at his back, and ready to seize him, which made the temptation strong; in my haste, (so we read it,) which denotes the disturbance and discomposure of his mind, which made the temptation surprising, so that it found him off his guard. Note, It is a common thing to speak amiss, when we speak in haste, and without consideration; but to speak amiss in haste, we must repent of it at leisure, particularly that which we have said distrustfully of God. (2.) Of God's wonderful goodness to him notwithstanding; though his faith failed, God's promise did not; Thou heardest the voice of my supplication, for all this. He mentions his own unbelief as a fill to God's fidelity, serving to make his loving kindness the more marvellous, the more illustrious. When we have thus distrusted God, he might justly have taken us at our word, and brought our fears upon us, as he did on Israel, Num. xiv. 28. Isa. lxvi. 4. But he has pitied and pardoned us, and our unbelief has not made his promise and grace of none effect, for he knows our frame.

III. The exhortation and encouragement which he, hereupon, gives to all the saints, v. 23, 24.

1. He would have them set their love on God; (v. 23.) O love the Lord, all ye his saints. Those that have their own hearts full of love to God, cannot but desire that others also may be in love with him; for in his favour there is no need to fear a rival. It is the character of the saints, that they do love God, and yet they must be still called upon to love him, to love him more, and love him better, and give proofs of their love. We must love him, not only for his goodness, because he preserves the faithful, but for his justice, because he plentifully rewards the proud doer, (who would ruin those whom he preserves,) according to their pride. Some take it in a good sense; he plentifully rewards the magnificent (or excellent) doer, that is daringly good, whose heart, like Jehoshaphat's, is lifted up in the ways of the Lord. He rewards him that does well, but plentifully rewards him that does excellently well.

2. He would have them set their hope in God; (v. 24.) "Be of good courage; have a good heart on it, whatever difficulties or dangers you may meet with, the God you trust in shall by that trust strengthen your heart." They that hope in God believe to be of good courage, and let their hearts be strong, for, as nothing truly evil can befal them, so nothing truly good for them shall be wanting to them.

In singing this, we should animate ourselves, and one another, to proceed and persevere in our Christian course, whatever threatens us, and whoever frowns upon us.

PSALM XXXII.

This psalm, though it speaks not of Christ, as many of the psalms hitherto have; yet with what he has done, has yet a great deal of gospel in it. The apostle Paul in 1 Cor. xvi. 22. in this psalm, describes the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Rom. iv. 6. We have here a summary, I. Of gospel-grace in the pardon of sin; (v. 1, 2.) in divine protection; (v. 3.) and divine guidance, v. 8. II. Of gospel-duty. To confess sin; (v. 3. v.) to pray; (v. 6.) to govern ourselves wellly (v. 9, 10.) and to rejoice in God, v. 11. The way to obtain these privileges, is, to make conscience of these duties, which we ought to think of; of the former for our comfort, of the latter for our quickening, when we sing this psalm. Grotius thinks it was designed to sung on the day of atonement.

A psalm of David, Maschil.

1. BLESSED is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. 3. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old: through my roaring all the day long. 4. (For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me) my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. 5. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord;
and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. 6. For this shall every one that is
gaily pray unto thee in a time when thou
mayest be found: surely in the floods of
great waters they shall not come near unto
him.

This psalm is entitled Maschil, which some take
"to be only the name of the tune to which it was set,
and was to be sung. But others think it is significant;
our margin reads it, A psalm of David giving in-
struction; and there is nothing in which we have
more need of instruction than in the nature of true
blessedness, wherein it consists, and the way that
leads us to it. We must be under a Laden on the stomach,
without; there are divers things in which these
verses instruct us. In general, we are here taught,
that our happiness consists in the favour and grace
of God, and not in the wealth of this world; in spiri-
tual blessings, and not the good things of this
world. When David says, (I. 1.) Blessed is the
man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
and, (cxix. 1.) Blessed are the undefiled in the way;
the meaning is, "This is the character of the
blessed man; and he that has not this character,
cannot expect to be happy;" but when it is here
said, Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven,
the meaning is, "This is the ground of his blessed-
ness; this is that fundamental privilege from which
all the other ingredients of his blessedness flow."

In particular, we are here instructed,
I. Concerning the nature of the pardon of sin;
this is that which we all need, and are undone
without; we are therefore concerned to be very
solicitous and inquisitive about it. 1. It is the forgiv-
ning of transgression. Sin is the transgression of the
law; upon our repentance, the transgression is for-
given; the obligation to punishment, which we lay
under, by virtue of the sentence of the law, is va-
cated and cancelled; it is lifted off, (so some read it,)
that by the pardon of it we may be eased of a
burthen, a heavy burthen, like a load on the back,
that makes us sick, or a load on the spirits, that makes
us sink. The remission of sins gives rest and relief
to those that were weary and heavy-laden. Matth.
xi. 28. 2. It is the covering of sin, as nakedness is
covered, that it may not appear to our shame, Rev.
iii. 18. One of the first symptoms of guilt in our
first parents, was, blushing at their own nakedness.
Sin makes us loathsome in the sight of God, and
utterly unfit for communion with him, and when
conscience is awakened, it makes us loathsome to
ourselves too; but when it is pardoned, it is covered
with the robe of Christ's righteousness, like the
coats of skins wherein God clothed Adam and
Eve, (an emblem of the remission of sins,) so that
God is no longer displeased with us, but perfectly
reconciled. They are not covered from us; no,
My sin is ever before me, nor covered from God's
omiscience, but from his vindictive justice: when
his pardons sin, he remembers it no more, he casts it
behind his back, it shall be sought for, and not
found. The sinner, being thus reconciled to God,
begins to be reconciled to himself. 3. It is not
imputing of iniquity, not laying it to the sinner's
charge, not proceeding against him for it, accord-
ing to the strictness of the law, not dealing with
him as he deserves. The righteousness of Christ
being imputed to us, and we being made the righ-
teousness of God, while we have nothing in
ourselves that is not mayed. God having laid upon him the iniquity of us all, and
made him sin for us. Observe, Not to impute
iniquity, is God's act, for he is the Judge. It is God
that justifies.

II. Concerning the character of those whose sins
are pardoned, in whose spirit there is no guile: he
does not say, "There is no guile," (for who is
there that lives, and sins not?) but no guile; that
does not dissemble with God, in his professions of
repentance and faith, and in his prayers for peace
or pardon. For all that is sincere, is clear, and
means as he says; that does not repent, nor ask
a pardon, sin again, and then sin, with a purpose to repent
again, as a learned interpreter glosses upon it.
Those that design honestly, that are really what
they profess to be, those are the Israelites indeed,
in whom is no guile.

III. Concerning the happiness of a justified state;
Blessednesses are to the man whose iniquity is for-
given, all manner of blessings, sufficient to make
him contented and happy. But he that incurred the curse,
and obstructed the blessing; and then God will pour out blessings, till there be
no room to receive them. The forgiveness of sin,
is that article of the covenant, which is the reason
and ground of all the rest; For I will be mer-
ciful to their unrighteousness, Heb. vii. 12.

IV. Concerning the uncomfortable condition of
an unhumbled sinner, that sees his guilt, but is not
yet brought to feel its weight.
This David describes very pathetically, from his
own sad experience; (v. 3, 4.) While I kept si-
lence, my bones waxed old. Those may be said to
keep silence, who stifle their convictions, who,
when they cannot but see the evil of sin, and their
danger by reason of it, ease themselves by not
thinking of it, and diverting their minds to some-
thing else; as Cain to the building of a city; who
rey not at all, God binds them; who will not un-
burden their consciences by a penitent confession,
or seek for peace, as they ought, by faithful and
fervent prayer; and who choose rather to pine
away in their iniquities, than to take the method
which God has appointed of finding rest for their
souls; let such expect that their smothered convic-
tions will be a fire in their bones, and the wounds of
sin, not opened, will fester, and grow intolerably
painful. If conscience be seared, the case is so
much the more dangerous, if the sin be not made
out, it will be heard. The hand of divine wrath
will be felt lying heavy upon the soul, and the an-
guish of the spirit will affect the body; to that
degree David experienced it, so that when he was
young, his bones waxed old; and even his silence
made him roar all the day long, as if he had been
under some grievous pain and distemper of body;
when really the cause of all his uneasiness, was,
the struggle he felt in his own bosom between his
convictions and his corruptions. Note, He that cov-
er his sins shall not prosper; some inward trouble
is required in repentance, but there is much worse
in impenitency.

V. Concerning the true and only way to peace
of conscience. We are here taught to confess our sins,
that they may be forgiven; to declare them, that we
may be justified. This course David took; I ac-
knowledge my sin unto thee and no longer hid
it from thee. If the man be really convinced
of sin, and the comfort of the pardon of their sins, must take
shame to themselves by a penitent confession of
them. We must confess the fact of sin, and be par-
ticular in it; Thus, and thus have I done; confess
the fault of sin, aggravate it, and lay a load upon
ourselves for it; I have done very wickedly; confess
the justice of the punishment we have been under
for it; The Lord is just in all that is brought upon
us; and then he adds, and that the man who has
become more worthy to be called thy son. We must confess
sin with shame and holy blushing, with fear and
trembling.

VI. Concerning God's readiness to pardon sin to
those who truly repent of it; I said, I will confess;
Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

David is here improving the experience he had had of the comfort of pardoning mercy.

I. He speaks to God, and professes his confidence in him, and expectation from him; (v. 7.) having tasted the sweetness of divine grace to a penitent sinner, he cannot doubt of the continuance of that grace to a praying saint, and that in that grace he should find both safety and joy. 1. I sing comfortably to the music of my sin, and engage me the comfort of the pardon in mine own conscience; immediately I found rest to my soul. Note, God is more ready to pardon sin, upon our repentance, than we are to repent, in order to the obtaining of pardon. It was with much ado, that David was here brought to confess his sins; he was put to the rack before he was brought to it; (v. 3, 4.) he held out long, and would not surrender till it came to the last extremity; but when he did offer to surrender, see how quickly how easily, he obtained good terms; I did but say, I will confess, and thou forgavest. Thus the father of the prodigal saw his returning son when he was yet afar off, and ran to meet him with the kiss that sealed his pardon. What an encouragement is this to poor penitents; and what an assurance does it give us, that, if we confess our sins, we shall find God, not only faithful and just, but gracious and kind, to forgive us our sins.

II. Concerning the good use that we are to make of the experience David had had of God's readiness to forgive his sins; (v. 6.) For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee. Note, 1. All godly people are praying people. As soon as ever Paul was converted, Behold, he prays, Acts xix. 11. You may as soon find a living man without breath, as a living Christian without prayer. 2. The instructions given us concerning the happiness of those whose sins are pardoned, and the easiness of obtaining the pardon, should engage and encourage us to pray, and particularly to pray, God be merciful to us sinners. For this, shall every one that is well-inclined, be earnest with God in prayer, and come boldly to the throne of grace, with hopes to obtain mercy, Heb. iv. 16. 3. Those that would speed in prayer, must seek the Lord in a time when he will be found. When, by his providence, he calls them to seek him, and by his Spirit he stirs them up to seek him, they must go speedily to seek the Lord, (Zech. viii. 21.) and lose no time, lest death cut them off, and then it will be too late to seek him, Isa. lv. 6. Behold now is the accepted time, 2 Cor. vi. 2. 4. Those that are sincere and abundant in prayer, will find the benefit of it, when they are in trouble; Surely in the floods of great waters, they shall never come nigh them, to terrify them, or create them any uneasiness, much less shall they overwhelm them. Those that have God nigh unto them in all that which they call upon him for, as all upright, penitent, praying, people have, are so guarded, so advanced, that no waters, no great waters, no not floods of them, can come nigh them, to hurt them. As the temptations of the wicked one touch them not, so their sin doth not terrify them to evil world; these fiery darts, of both kinds, drop short of them.

7. Thou art my hiding-place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah. 8. I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. 9. Behold not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee. 10. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about. 11.

In this application of the foregoing doctrine concerning the blessedness of those whose sins are pardoned, here is a word to sinners, and a word to saints; and this is rightly dividing the word of truth, and giving to each their portion.

1. Here is a word of caution tc sinners, and a
good reason given for it. (1.) The caution is, not to be unruly and ungovernmental; (v. 9.) Be ye not as the horse, or the mule, which have no understanding. When the psalmist would reproach himself for the sin he reproached of, he compared himself to a horse before God; so foolish have I been and ignorant, (lxviii. 22.) and therefore warns others not to be so. It is our honour and happiness, that we have understanding, that we are capable of being governed by reason, and of reasoning with ourselves. Let us therefore use the faculties we have, and act rationally. The horse and mule must be managed with bit and bridle, lest they come near us, to do us a mischief, (v. 10.) and that they come near us, to do us service, that they may obey us, Jer. iii. 3. Let us not be like them; let us not be hurried by appetite and passion, at any time, to go contrary to the dictates of right reason, and to our true interest. If sinners would be governed and determined by these, they would soon become saints, and would not go a step further in their sinful courses; where there is renewing grace, there is no need of the bit and bridle of restraining grace. (2.) Many are called to forsake every sin, because the way of sin which we would persuade you to forsake, will certainly end in sorrow; (v. 10.) Many sorrows shall be to the wicked, which will not only spoil their vein and carnal mirth, and put an end to it, but will make them pay dear for it. Sin will have sorrow, if not repented of, everlasting sorrow. It was part of the sentence, I will greatly multiply thy sorrows. "Be wise for yourselves, therefore, and turn from your wickedness, that you may prevent those sorrows, those many sorrows." 

2. Here is a word of comfort to saints, and a good reason given for that too. (1.) They are assured that if they will but trust in the Lord, and keep close to him, mercy shall compass them about on every side, (v. 10.) so that they shall not depart from God, for that mercy shall keep them in, nor shall any real evil break in upon them, for that mercy shall keep it out. (2.) They are therefore commanded to be glad in the Lord, and to rejoice in him to that degree, as even to shout for joy, v. 11. Let them be so transported with this holy joy, as not to be able to contain themselves: and let them affect others with it, that they also may see that a life of communion with God is the most pleasant and comfortable life we can live, in this world. This is that present bliss which the upright in heart, and they only, are entitled to, and qualified for.

PSALM XXXIII.
This is a psalm of praise; it is probable that David was the penman of it, but we are not told so, because God would have us look above the merest writer, to that blessed Spirit that moved and guided them. The psalmist, in this psalm, I. Calls upon the righteous to praise God, v. 1. 3. It furnishes us with matter for praise. We may praise God, 1. For his justice, goodness, and truth, appearing in his word, and in all his works, v. 4. 5. 2. For his power appearing in the work of creation, v. 6. 9. 3. For the sovereignty of his providence in the government of the world, (v. 10, 11.) and again v. 16, 17. 4. For the care and grace he bears to his own chosen people, which encourages them to trust in him, (v. 12.) and again, v. 18. 22. We need not be at a loss for proper thoughts in singing this psalm, which so naturally speaks the pious affections of a devout soul toward God.

1. Rejoice, in the Lord, O ye righteous; for praise is comely for the upright.
2. Praise the Lord with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery, and an instrument of ten strings.
3. Sing unto him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise: 4. For the word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth.
5. He loveth righteousness and judgment, the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.
6. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made: and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. 7. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as a heap; he layeth up the depth in store-houses.
8. Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.
9. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.
10. The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect.
11. The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

Four things the psalmist expresseth in these verses. 1. The great desire he had that God might be praised: he did not think he did it so well himself, but that he wished others also might be employed in this work; the more the better in this concert, it is the more like heaven. 1. Holy joy is the heart and soul of praise, and that is here pressed upon all good people; (v. 1.) Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, so the foregoing psalm concluded, and so this begins; for all our religious exercises should both begin and end with a holy complacency and triumph in God as the best of beings, and best of friends. 2. Thankful praise is the breath and language of holy joy; and that also is here required of us; (v. 2.) "Praise the Lord; speak well of him, and give him the glory due to his name." 3. Religious songs are the proper expressions of thankful praise; those are here required; (v. 3.) “Sing unto him a new song, the best you have, not that which, by frequent use, is worn threadbare; but that which, being new, is most likely to move the affections; a new song for new mercies, and upon every new occasion, for those compassions which are new every morning.” Music was then used, by the appointment of David, with the temple songs, that they might be the better sung: and this also is here called for; (v. 2.) Sing unto him with the psaltery. Here is, (1.) A good rule for this duty; Do it skilfully, and with a loud noise; let it have the best both of head and heart; let it be done intelligently, and with a clear head; affectionately, and with a warm heart. (2.) A good reason for this duty; for praise is comely for the upright. It is well-pleasing to God; the garments of praise add much to the comeliness which God puts upon his people; and it is an excellent ornament to our profession; it becomes the upright, wherein God has not so much reason to give honour to him. The proper way to praise God in a comely manner, for they praise him with their hearts, that is praising him with their glory. Whereas the praises of hypocrites are awkward and uncomely, like a parable in the mouth of fools, Prov. xxvi. 7.

II. The high thoughts he had of God, and of his infinite perfections, v. 4. 5. God makes himself known to us, 1. In his works; he must for all divine perfection; in that which God, at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake to the children of men; and that is all right, there is nothing amiss in it: his commands exactly agree with the rules of equity and the eternal reasons of good and evil. His promises all are wise and good, and inviolably sure, and there is no iniquity in his threatenings, but
even those are designed for our good, by deterring us from evil. God's word is right, and therefore all our deviations from it are wrong, and we are then in the right when we agree with it. 2. In his works, and those are all done in truth, all according to his counsels, which are called the scriptures of truth, Dan. x. 21. The copy in all God's works agrees exactly with the great original, the plan laid in the Eternal Mind, and varies not in the least jot. God has made it to appear in his works, (1.) That he is a God of inflexible justice. He loveth righteousness and judgment. There is nothing but righteousness in the sentence he passes, and judgment in the execution of it. He never did or can do wrong to any of his creatures, but is always ready to right those that are wronged, and does it with delight. He takes pleasure in those that are righteous. He is himself the righteous Lord, and therefore loveth righteousness. (2.) That he is a God of inexhaustible bounty; the earth is full of his goodness, that is, of the proofs and instances of it. The benign influences which the earth receives from above, and the fruits it is thereby enabled to produce; the provision that is made both for man and beast, and the common blessings with which all the nations of the earth are blessed, plainly speak that the earth is full of his goodness; the darkest, the coldest, the hottest, and the most dry and desert part of it not excepted: what pity is it that this earth, which is so full of God's goodness, should be so empty of his praises; and that, of the multitudes that live upon his bounty, there are so few that live to his glory!

III. The conviction he was under of the almighty power of God, evidenced in the creation of the world. We believe in God, and therefore we praise him as the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, so we are here taught to praise him.

Observe, 1. How God made the world, and brought all things into being. (1.) How easily: All things were made by the word of the Lord, and by the breath of his mouth; Christ is the Word, the Spirit is the Breath, so that God the Father made the world, as he rules it, and redeems it, by his Son and Spirit. He spake, and he commanded, (v. 9.) and that was enough, there needed no more. With men, saying and doing are two things, but it is not so with God. When the Spirit of God came, with power over the world was made, so was man. The little world: God said, "Let us make man," and he breathed into him the breath of life. By the Word and Spirit the church is built, that new world, and grace wrought in the soul, that new man, that new creation.

What cannot that Power do, which, with a word, made a world? (2.) How effectually it was done; and it stood fast. What God does, he does it for a purpose, and it is perfect. Whatever God doth, it shall be for ever, Ecle. iii. 14. It is by virtue of that command to stand fast, that they continue to this day according to God's ordinance, cxix. 91.

2. What he made: He made all things, but notice is here taken, (1.) Of the heavens, and the host of them, v. 6. The visible heavens, and the sun, moon, and stars, their hosts; the highest heavens, and the sea, Rev. xiv. 6. 7. Of the treasures of them, v. 7. The earth wasat first covered with the water, and, being heavier, must of course subside and sink under it; but to show, from the very first, that the God of nature is not tied to the ordinary method of nature, and the usual operations of his powers, with a word's speaking, he gathered the waters together on a heap, that the dry land might appear, yet left them not to continue on a heap, but laid up the depth in storehouses; not only in the flats where the seas make their beds, and in which they are locked up by the sand on the shore as in store-houses, but in secret subterraneous caverns, where they are hid from the view of all, and reserved as in a store-house for that day when those foundations of the great deep were to be broken up; and they are still laid up there in store, for what use the great Master of the house knows best.

3. What use is to be made of this, v. 8. Let all the earth fear the Lord, and stand in awe of him, that is, let all the children of men worship him, and give glory to him, xcv. 5, 6. The everlasting gospel gives this as the reason why we must worship God, because he made the heaven and the earth, and the sea, Rev. xiv. 6, 7. Let us all fear him, that is, dread his wrath, and displeasure, and be afraid of having him our enemy, and standing it out against him. Let us not dare to offend him, who, having this power, no doubt, has all power in his hand. It is dangerous being at war with him, who has the host of heaven for his armies, and the depths of the sea for his magazines, and therefore it is wisdom to desire conditions of peace, see Jer. v. 22.

IV. The satisfaction he had in God's sovereignty and dominion, v. 10, 11. He overrules all the counsels of men, and makes them, contrary to their intention, serviceable to his counsels. Come and see, with an eye of faith, God in the throne, 1. Frustrating the devices of his enemies. He bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought, so that what they imagine against him and his kingdom proves a vain thing; (ii. 1.) the counsel of Ahithophel is turned into foolishness. Haman's plot baffled; though the design be laid never so deep, and the hopes raised upon it never so high, yet, if God says it shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass, it is all to no purpose. 2. Fulfilling his own decrees; The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever. It is immutable in itself, for he is in one mind, and who can turn him? The execution of it may be opposed, but cannot in the least be obstructed by any created power. Through all the revolutions of time God never changed his measures, but in every event, even that which to us is most surprising, the eternal counsel of God is fulfilled; nor can any thing prevent its being accomplished in its times. With what pleasure to ourselves may we, in singing this, give praise to God! How easy it is, according to this thought, to make us at all times, that God governs the world, that he did it in infinite wisdom before we were born, and will do it when we are silent in the dust.

12. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance. 13. The Lord looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men. 14. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. 15. He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works. 16. There is no king saved by the multitude of a host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. 17. A horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. 18. Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; 19. To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. 20. Our soul waiteth for the Lord, he is our help and
our shield. 21. For our heart shall rejoice in him; because we have trusted in his holy name. 22. Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.

We are here taught to give to God the glory, 1. Of his common providence towards all the children of men. Though he has endued man with understanding and freedom of will, yet he reserves to himself the government of him, and even of those very faculties by which he is qualified to govern himself.

2. The children of men are all under his eye, even their hearts are so; and all the motions and operations of their souls, which none know but they themselves, he knows better than they themselves, v. 13, 14. Though the residence of God's glory is in the highest heavens, yet thence he not only has a prospect of all the earth, but a particular inspection of all the inhabitants of the earth. He not only beholds them, but he looks upon them, he looks narrowly upon them (Gen. 11:6 Artic and ord) so narrowly, that not the least thought can escape his observation. Atheists think, that, because he dwells above in heaven, he cannot, or will not, take notice of what is done here in this lower world; but from thence, high as it is, he sees us all, and all persons and things are naked and open before him.

2. Their hearts, as well as their times, are all in his hand; He fashions their hearts. He made them at first, formed the spirit of each man within him, then when he brought him into being. Hence he is called the Father of Spirits: and this is a good argument to prove that he perfectly knows them; the artist that made the clock can account for the motions of every wheel. David uses this argument, with application to himself, xxxix. 1, 14. He still moulds the hearts of men, turns them as the rivers of water, which way soever he pleases, to serve his own purposes, darkens or enlightens men's understandings, stiffens or bows their wills, according as he is pleased to make use of them. He that fashions men's hearts fashions them alike; it is in hearts as in faces, though there is a great difference, and such a variety, as that no two faces are exactly of the same features, nor any two hearts exactly of the same temper, yet there is such a similitude, that, in some things, all faces and all hearts agree, as in water face answers to face, Prov. xxxii. 19. He fashions them together; (so some read it;) as the wheels of a watch, though of different shapes, sizes, and motions, are yet all put together, to serve one and the same purpose, so the hearts of men and their dispositions, however varying from each other, and seeming to contradict one another, are yet all overruled, to serve the divine purpose, which is one.

3. They, and all they do, are subject to his judgment; for he considers all their works, not only knows them, but weighs them, that he may render to every man according to his works, in the day, in the world, of retribution, in the judgment, and to eternity. 4. All the powers of the creature have a dependence upon him, and are of no account, of no avail at all, without him, v. 16, 17. It is much for the honour of God, that not only men, but all the creatures under heaven, that no force can act but in dependence on him, and by a power derived from him. (1.) The strength of a king is nothing without God; no king is sacred by his royal prerogatives, or the authority with which he is invested; for the powers that are of that kind are ordained of God, and are what he makes them, and no more. David was a king, and a man of war from his youth, and yet acknowledged God only to be his Protector and Saviour. (2.) The strength of an army is nothing without God; the multitude of a host cannot secure those under whose command they act, unless God make them a security to them. A great army cannot be sure of victory; for, when God pleases, one shall chase a thousand. (3.) The strength of a giant is nothing without God; a mighty man, such as Goliath was, is not delivered by his much strength, when his day comes to full; neither the firmness or activity of his body, he who works with the strength of his arm, and stand him in any stead, any further than God is pleased to give him success. Let not the strong man then glory in his strength, but let us all strengthen ourselves in the Lord our God, go forth, and go on, in his strength. (4.) The strength of a horse is nothing without God; (v. 17.) A horse is a vain thing for safety. In war, horses were then so highly accounted of, and so much depended on, that God forbade the Kings of Israel to use horses. (Deut. xix. 16.) lest they should be tempted to trust to them, and their confidence should thereby be taken off from God. David houghed the horses of the Syrians; (2 Sam. viii. 4.) here he houghs all the horses in the world, by pronouncing a horse a vain thing for safety in the day of battle. If the war-horse be unruly, and ill-managed, he may hurry his rider into danger, instead of carrying him out of danger. If he be called under him, he may be his death, instead of saving his life. It is therefore our interest to make sure God's favour towards us, and then we may be sure of his power engaged for us, and need not fear whatever is against us.

II. We are to give God the glory of his special grace. In the midst of his acknowledgments of God's providence, he pronounces those blessed that have Jehovah for their God, who governs the world, and has witherthall to help them in every time of need, while they were miserable, who had this and the other Baal for their God, which was so far from being able to hear and help them, that it was itself senseless and helpless; (v. 12.) Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, even Israel, who had the knowledge of the true God, and were taken into covenant with him, and all others who own God for theirs, and are owned by him; for they also, whatever nation they are of, are of the spiritual seed of Abraham. 1. It is their honour, when they take the Lord for their God, that they direct their homage and adoration there where it is due, and where the payment of it will not be in vain. 2. It is their happiness, that they are the people whom God has chosen for his own inheritance, whom he is pleased with, and honoured in, and whom he protects and takes care of, whom he cultivates and improves as a man does his inheritance, Deut. xxxii. 9. Now has this place a text, to the honour of divine grace, (1.) The regard which God has to his people, v. 18, 19. God beholds all the sons of men with an eye of observation, but his eye of favour and complacency is upon them that fear him; he looks upon them with delight, as the father on his children, as the bridegroom on his spouse, Isa. lxxii. 5. While those that depend on arms and armies, on chariots and horses, perish in the disappointment of their expectations, God, who has so often said he shall deliver their soul from death, when there seems to be but a step between them and it; if he do not deliver the body from temporal death, yet he will deliver the soul from spiritual and eternal death; their souls, whatever happens, shall live and praise him, either in this world, or in a better. From his bounty they shall be supplied with all necessaries—he shall keep them alive in
A psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed.

1. I WILL bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. 2. My soul shall make him boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. 3. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. 4. I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. 5. They looked unto him, and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed. 6. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. 7. The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. 8. O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. 9. O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. 10. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.

The title of this psalm tells us both who penned it, and upon what occasion it was penned. David, being forced, by the rage of Saul, to leave his country, sought for shelter as near as he could, in the land of the Philistines; there it was soon discovered who he was, and he was brought before the king, who, in the narrative, is called Achish, his proper name, here, Abimelech, his title; and, lest he should be treated as a spy, or one that came thither upon design, he feigned himself to be a madman, (such there have been in every age, that even by idiots men might be taught to give God thanks for the use of their reason,) that Achish might dismiss him as a contemptible man, rather than take cognizance of him as a dangerous man. And it had the effect he desired; by this stratagem he escaped the hand that otherwise would have handled him roughly. Now, 1. We cannot justify David in this dissimulation. It ill became an honest man to feign himself to be what he was not, and a man of honour to feign himself to be a fool and a madman. If, in sport, we mimic those who have not so good an understanding as we think we have, we forget that God might have made our case ours. 2. Yet we cannot but wonder at the composure of his spirit, and how far he was from any change of that, when he changed his behaviour. Even when he was in that fright, or rather in that danger only, his heart was so fixed, trusting in God, that even then he penned this excellent psalm, which has as much in it as the main of the other psalms in the Psalter. This psalm is no more a psalm in the all the book; and there is something curious in the composition, for it is what is called an alphabetical psalm, that is, a psalm in which every verse begins with each letter in its order, as it stands in the Hebrew alphabet. Happy they who can thus keep their temper, and keep their graces in exercise, even when they are tempted to change their behaviour. In this former part of the psalm, David commends and exalts himself to praise God. Though it was his fault that he changed his behaviour, yet it was God's mercy that he escaped, and the mercy was so much the greater, in that God did not deal with him according to the desert of his dissimulation, and we must in every thing give thanks. He resolves, 1. That he will praise
God constantly; I will bless the Lord at all times, upon all occasions. He resolves to keep up stated times for this duty; to lay hold on all opportuni\-ties for it, and to renew his praises upon every fresh occurrence that furnished him with matter. If we hope to spend our eternity in praising God, it is fit that we should spend as much as may be of our time in this work. 2. That he will praise him openly. God shall continually be in my mouth. Thus he would show how forward he was to own his obligations to the mercy of God, and how desirous to make others also sensible of theirs. 3. That he will praise him heartily; My soul shall make her boast in the Lord, in my relation to him, my interest in him, and expectations from him. It is not vain glory to glory in the Lord.

2. He calls upon others to join with him herein. He expects them all. (v. 2.) be humble shall hear the voice of both of my deliverance and of my thankfulness, and be glad that a good man has so much favour shown him, and a good God so much honour done him. Those have most comfort in God's mercies, both to others and to themselves, that are humble, and have the least confidence in their own merit and sufficiency. It pleased David to think that God's favours to him would rejoice the heart of every Israelite.

Three things he would have us all to concur with him in.

1. In great and high thoughts of God, which we should express in magnifying him, and exalting his name, v. 3. We cannot make God greater or higher than he is; but, if we adore him as infinitely great, and higher than the highest, he is pleased to reckon this magnifying and exalting him. This we must do together. God's praises sound best in concert, and so will praise the angels. The share in God's favour, as all the saints do, should concur in his praises; and we should be as desirous of the assistance of our friends in returning thanks for mercies, as in praying for them.

We have reason to join in thanksgiving to God, (1.) For his readiness to hear prayer, which all the saints have had the comfort of, for he never said to any of them, Seek ye me, in vain. [Gen. 17. 1.] David tells us that he has found him a prayer-hearing God; (v. 4.) I sought the Lord in my distress, entreated his favour, begged his help, and he heard me, answered my request immediately, and delivered me from all my fears, both from the death I feared, and from the disquietude and disturbance produced by my fear of it. The former he does by his providence working for us, the latter by his grace working in us, to silence our fears, and still the tumult of the spirits; this latter is the greater mercy of the two, because the thing we fear is our trouble only: but our unbelieving distrustful fear of it is our sin; nay, it is often more our torment too than the thing itself would be, which perhaps would only touch the bone and the flesh, while the fear would prey upon the spirits, and put us out of the possession of our own soul. David's prayers helped to silence his fears; having sought the Lord, and left his case with him, he could with greater confidence trust the event. But David was a great and eminent man, we may not expect to be favoured as he was; have any others ever experienced the like benefit by prayer? Yes, [2.] Many beside him have looked unto God by faith and prayer, and have been lightened by it, v. 5. It has wonderfully revived and comforted them; witness Hannah, who, when she had prayed, went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sordid. When we look to the world, we are darkened, we are perplexed, and at a loss; but when we look to God, from him we have the light both of direction and joy, and our way is made both plain and pleasant. These here spoken of, that looked unto God, had their expectations raised, and the event did not frustrate them, their faces were not ashamed of their confidence. But, perhaps, these also were persons of great eminency, like David himself, and, upon that account, were highly favoured, and might thus have the event as it was foretold; nay, [3.] This poor man cried, a single person, mean and inconsiderable, whom no man looked upon with any respect, or looked after with any concern; yet he was as welcome to the throne of grace as David, or any of his worthies; the Lord heard him, took cognizance of his case and of his prayers, and saved him out of all his troubles, v. 6. God will regard the prayer of the destitute, cii. 17. S. Is. 65. 25.

(2.) For the ministration of the good angels about us; (v. 7.) The angel of the Lord, a guard of angels, (so some,) but as unanimous in their service as if they were but one, or a guardian angel, encamps round about them that fear God, as the life-guard about the prince, and delivers them. God makes use of the attendance of the good spirits; for the protection of his people from the malice and power of evil spirits; and the holy angels do more good every day than we are aware of. Though in dignity and in capacity of nature they are very much superior to us, though they retain their primitive rectitude, which we have lost, though they have constant employment in the upper world, the employment of praising God, and are entitled to a constant rest and bliss there, yet, in obedience to their Maker, and in love to those that bear his image, they condescend to minister to the saints, and stand up for them against the powers of darkness; they not only visit them, but encamp round about them, acting for their good as really, though not as sensibly, as for Jacob's, (Gen. xxxii. 1.) and Elisha's, 2 Kings, vi. 17. All the glory be to the God of the angels.

2. He would have us to join with him in kind and good thoughts of God; (v. 8.) O taste, and see, that the Lord is good. The goodness of God includes benevolence to all creatures, and the benefit and beneficence of his providence and grace; and, accordingly, (1.) We must taste that he is a bountiful Benefactor, relish the goodness of God in all his gifts to us, and reckon that the savour and sweetness of them. Let God's goodness be rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel. (2.) We must see that he is a beautiful Being, and delight in the contemplation of his infinite perfections. By taste and sight we both make discoveries, and take complacency; taste, and see, God's goodness; take notice of it, and take the comfort of it, 1 Pet. ii. 3. He is good, for he makes all those truly blessed that trust in him; let us, therefore, be so convinced of his goodness, as thereby to be encouraged in the worst of times to trust in him.

3. He would have us join with him in a resolution to seek God and serve him, and continue in his fear; (v. 9.) O fear the Lord, ye his saints; when we think and see that he is good, we must not forget that he is great, and greatly to be feared; nay, even his goodness is the proper object of a filial reverence and awe. They shall fear the Lord and his goodness, Hos. iii. 5. Fear the Lord; worship him, and make conscience of your duty to him in every thing; not fear him and shun him, but fear him and seek him, (v. 10.) as a people seek unto their God; apply yourselves to him, and be not won over to yourselves in him. To encourage us to fear God and seek him, it is here promised that these that do so, even in this wanting world, shall want no good thing. Heb. They shall not want all good
thing; they shall so have of all good things, that they shall have no reason to complain of the want of any. As to the things of the other world, they shall have grace sufficient for the support of the spiritual life, 2 Cor. xii. 9. Ps. lxxxiv. 11. And as to this life, they shall have what is necessary to the support of it from the hand of God; as a Father, he will feed them with food convenient; what further comforts they desire, they shall have, as far as Infinite Wisdom sees good, and what they want in one thing shall be made up in another. What God denies them, he will give them grace to be content without, and then they do not want it. Deut. iii. 26. Paul had all, and abounded, because he was content, Phil. iv. 11, 18. Those that live by faith in God's all-sufficiency, want nothing; for in them they have enough. The young lions often lack, and suffer hunger; and they that live upon common providence, as the lions do, shall want that satisfaction which they have that live by faith in the promise. They that trust to themselves, and think their own hands sufficient for them, shall want, for bread is not always to the wise; but verily they shall be fed that trust in God, and desire to be at his finding. They that are ravenous, and prey upon all about them, shall want, but the meek shall inherit the earth; they shall not want, who with quietness work, and mind their own business; plain-hearted Jacob has potage enough, when Esau, the cunning hunter, is ready to perish for hunger.

11. Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. 12. What man is he that desireth life, and mayest many days, that he may see good? 13. Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. 14. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. 15. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. 16. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. 17. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. 18. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. 19. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. 20. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken. 21. Evil shall slay the wicked; and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. 22. The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants; and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

David, in this latter part of the psalm, undertakes to teach children; though a man of war, and anointed to be king, he did not think it below him; though now he had his head so full of cares, and his hands of business, yet he could find heart and time to give good counsel to young people, from his own experience. It does not appear that he had now any children of his own, at least, any that were grown up to a capacity of being taught; but, by divine inspiration, he instructs the children of his people. Those that were in years would not be taught by him, though he had offered them his service; (xxxii. 8.) but he has hopes that the tender branches will be more easily bent, and that children and young people will be more tractable; and therefore he calls this a congregated counsel unto them; (p. 11.) “Come, ye children, that are now in your learning age, and are now to lay up a stock of knowledge which you must live upon all your days; ye children, that are foolish and ignorant, and need to be taught.” Perhaps he intends especially those children whose parents neglected to instruct and catechise them; and it is as great a piece of charity to put these children to school whose parents are not in a capacity to teach them, as to feed those children whose parents have not bread for them. Observe, 1. What he expects from them; “Hearken unto me, leave your play, lay by your toys, and hear what I have to say to you; not only give me the hearing, but observe and obey me.” 2. What he undertakes to teach them—The fear of the Lord, inclusive of all the duties of religion. David was a famous musician, a statesman, a soldier; but he does not say to the children, “I will teach you to play on the harp, or to handle the sword or spear, or to draw the bow; or, I will teach you the maxims of state-policy;” but, I will teach you the fear of the Lord, which is better than all the arts and sciences, better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices. That is it which we should be solicitous both to learn ourselves, and to teach our children.

I. He supposes that we all aim to be happy; (v. 12.) What man is he that desireth life? that is, (as it follows,) not only to see many days, but to see good comfortable days; non est vivere, sed valere, vita—It is not our being, but our well-being, that is entitled to the name of life. It is asked, “Who wishes to live a long and pleasant life?” And it is easily answered, Who does not? Surely this must look further than time and this present world; for man’s life on earth, at best, consists of but few days, and those full of trouble. What man is he that would be eternally happy; that would see many days, as many as the days of heaven; that would see good in that world where all bliss is in perfection, without the least alloy; who would see that good before him now, by faith and hope, and enjoy it shortly? Who would? Alas, very few have that in their thoughts; most ask, Who will show us any good? Few ask, What shall we do to inherit eternal life? This question implies that there are some such.

II. He prescribes the true and only way to happiness, both in this world and that to come, v. 13, 14. Would we pass comfortably through the world, and out of the world, our constant care must be to keep a good conscience; and, in order to that, 1. We must learn to bridle our tongues, and keep it well; we shall do better if we say fewer amiss, to God’s honour, or our neighbour’s advantage; Keep thy tongue from evil speaking, lying and slandering. So great a way does this go in religion, that, if any offend not in word, the same is a perfect man; and so little a way does religion go without this, that it is said, respecting him who bridles not his tongue, His religion is vain. 2. We must be upright and sincere in every thing we say, and not falsify what we speak; for words must be the indications of our minds; our lips must not part from speaking guile either to God or man. 3. We must leave all our sins, and resolve we will have no more to do with them. We must depart from evil, from evil works and evil workers; from the sins others commit, and which we have formerly allowed ourselves in. 4. It is not enough not to do hurt in the world, but we must study to be useful, and live to some purpose. We must not only depart from evil, but we must do good; for good for
ourselves, especially for our own souls, employing them well, furnishing them with a good treasure, and fitting them for another world; and, as we have ability and opportunity, we must do good to others also. 5. Because nothing is more contrary to that love which never fails, which is the sum-mary both of law and gospel, both of grace and glory, than strife and contention, which bring confusion and every evil work; we must seek peace and pursue it; we must show a peaceable disposition, that there be nothing to break the peace, and to make mischief. If peace seem to flee from us, we must pursue it; follow peace with all men, spare no pains, no expense, to preserve and recover peace, be willing to deny ourselves a great deal, both in honour and interest, for peace-sake. These excellent directions in the way to life and good, are transcribed into the New Testament, and made part of our gospel-duty. (1 Pet. iii. 11, 12.) Perhaps David, in warning us that we speak no guile, reflects upon his own sin, in changing his behaviour. They that truly repent of what they have done amiss, will warn others to take heed of doing likewise.

III. He enforces these directions by setting before us the happiness of the godly in the love and favour of God, and the miserable state of the wicked under his displeasure. Here are life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse, plain stated before us, that we may choose life, and live. See Isa. iii. 10, 11.

1. Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with them, however they may bless themselves in their own way.

(1.) God is against them, and then they cannot but be miserable; sad is the case of that man who, by his sin, has made his Maker his Enemy, his Destroyer. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, v. 16. Sometimes God is said to turn his face from them, (Jer. xviii. 17.) because they have forsaken him; here he is said to set his face against them, because they have fought against him; and, most certainly, God is able to out-face the most proud and daring sinners, and can frown them into hell.

(2.) Ruin is before them; this will follow, of course, if God be against them, for he is able both to bless and to curse. The hell of the living shall be no place for them or theirs. When God sets his face against them, he shall not only cut them off, but cut off the remembrance of them, when they are alive, shall bury them in obscurity, when they are dead, shall bury them in oblivion. He shall root out their posterity, by whom they would be remembered; he shall pour disgrace upon their achievements, which they gloried in, and for which they thought they should have been remembered. It is certain that there is no lasting honour but that which comes from God. (2.) There shall be a sting in their death; Evil shall slay the wicked, v. 21. Their death shall be miserable; so it will certainly be, though they die in a bed of down, or in the bed of honour. Death, to them, has a curse in it, and is the King of terrors; to them it is evil, only evil. It is very well observed by Dr. Hammond, that the evil here, which slays the wicked, is the same word, vix, the singular number, that is used, (v. 19.) for the affliction of the righteous, to intimate that godly people have many troubles; and yet they do them not hurt, but are made to work for good to them, for God will deliver them out of them all; whereas, wicked people have fewer troubles; fewer evils befall them, perhaps but one, and yet that one may prove their utter ruin. One trouble, with a curse in it, kills and slays, and does execute; but many, with a blessing in them, are harmless, nay, godly.

[3.] Desolation will be their everlasting portion; that are wicked themselves, often hate the righteous, and the righteous hate them; and then he leads them with enmity to them and their righteousness; but they shall be desolate, shall be condemned as guilty, and laid waste for ever, shall be for ever forsaken and abandoned of God, and all good angels, and men; and those that are so are desolate indeed.

2. Yet, say to the righteous, it shall be well with them; all good people are under God's special favour and protection. We are here assured of it under a great variety of instances and expressions.

(1.) God takes special notice of good people, and takes notice who have their eyes ever to him, and who make conscience of their duty to him; The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, (v. 15.) to direct and guide them, to protect and keep them. Parents that are very fond of a child, will not let it be out of their sight; none of God's children are ever out of his eye, but on them he looks with a singular complacency, as well as with a watchful and tender concern.

(2.) They are sure of an answer of peace to their prayers. All God's people are a praying people, and they cry in prayer, which denotes great importance; but is it to any purpose? Yes, (1.) God takes notice of what we say; (v. 17.) They cry, and the Lord hears them, and hears them so as to make it appear he has a regard to them. His ears are open to their prayers, to receive them impatiently, to receive them readily and with delight. Though he has been a God hearing prayer, ever since men began to call upon the name of the Lord, yet his ear is not heavy. There is no rhetoric, nothing charming, in a cry, yet God's ears are open to it, as the tender mother's to the cry of her sucking child, which another would take no notice of; The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, v. 17. This intimates that it is the constant practice of good people, when they are in distress, to cry unto God, and it is their constant comfort that God hears them. (2.) He not only takes notice of what we say, but is ready to hear us for our relief; (v. 18.) He is nigh to them that are of a broken heart, and saveth them. Note, First, It is the character of the righteous, whose prayers God will hear, that they are of a broken heart and a contrite spirit, that is, humbled for sin, and emptied of self; they are low in their own eyes, and have a sense of their own merit and sufficiency, but in God only. Secondly, Those who are so have God nigh unto them, to comfort and support them, that the spirit may not be broken, more than is meet, lest it should fail before him. See Isa. lxvii. 15. Though God is high, and dwells on high, yet he is near to those, who, being of a contrite spirit, know how to value his favour, and will save them from sinking under their burdens; he is near them to good purpose.

(3.) They are taken under the special protection of the divine government; (v. 20.) He keepeth all his bones; not only his soul, but his body; not only his body in general, but every bone in it, not one of them is broken. He that has a broken heart, shall not have a broken bone; for David himself had found, that, when he had a contrite heart, the broken bones did not proceed. The men who were not broken, who would not expect to meet with any thing of Christ here, and yet this scripture is said to be fulfilled in him, (John xix. 36.) when the soldiers brake the legs of the two thieves that were crucified with him, but did not break his, they being under the protection of this promise, as well as of the type, even the paschal-lamb, a bone of him shall not be broken; the promises being made good to Christ, through him, are sure to all the seed. It does not
follow but that a good man may have a broken bone; but, by the watchful providence of God concerning him, it is often wonderfully prevented, and the preservation of his bones is the effect of this promise; if he have a broken bone, sooner or later it shall be made whole, at furthest at the resurrection, when that which is sown in weakness, shall be raised in power.

4.) They are, and shall be, delivered out of their troubles. [1.] It is supposed that they have the support of friends in this world, perhaps a greater share than others. In the world they must have tribulation, that they may be conformed both to the will of God, and to the example of Christ; (v. 19.) Many are the afflictions of the righteous, witness David and his afflictions, xxxix. 1. There are those that hate them, (v. 21.) and they are continually aiming to do them a mischief; their God loves them as his own, and God is their refuge, and no mischief can come to them, but that, between the mercy of Heaven, and the malice of hell, the afflictions of the righteous must needs be many. [2.] God has engaged for their deliverance and salvation; He delivers them out of their troubles; (v. 17, 19.) he saves them, (v. 18.) so that, though they may fall into trouble, it shall not be their ruin. This promise of their deliverance is explained, v. 22. Whatever troubles befall them, Psalms, he will not let them fall into their heart's part.

The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants from the power of the grave, (xlix. 15.) and from the sting of every affliction. He keeps them from sinning in their troubles, which is the only thing that would do them a mischief, and keeps them from despair, and from being put out of the possession of their own souls. Secondly, They shall not hinder their everlasting bliss; none of them that trust in him shall be desolate; they shall not be comfortless, they shall not be put out of their communion with God. No man is desolate, but he whom God has forsaken, nor is any man undone till he is in hell. Those that are God's faithful servants, that make it their care to please him, and their business to honour him, and, in doing so, trust him to protect and reward them, and, with good thoughts of him, refer themselves to him, have reason to be easy, whatever befalls them, for they shall be happy.

In singing these verses, let us be confirmed in the choice we have made of the ways of God; let us be quickened in his service, and greatly encouraged by the assurances he has given of the particular care he takes of all those that faithfully adhere to him.

PSALM XXXV.

David, in this psalm, appeals to the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, against his enemies, that hated and persecuted him. It is supposed that Saul and his party are the persons he means, for with them he had the greatest struggles. 1. He complains to God of the injuries they did him; they strove with him, fought against him, (v. 1.) persecuted him, (v. 9.) sought his ruin, (v. 4, 7.) accused him falsely, (v. 11.) abused him basely, (v. 15, 16.) and all his friends, (v. 20.) and triumphed over him, v. 21, 25, 26. 11. He pleads his own innocence, that he had a care there to preserve, (v. 7, 19.) but, on the contrary, had studied to oblige them, v. 12.-14. 11. He prays to God to protect and deliver him; and appear for him; (v. 1, 2.) to comfort him; (v. 4.) to encourage him; and rescue him, v. 7, 22. to plead his cause; (v. 23, 24.) to defeat all the designs of his enemies against him; (v. 3, 4.) to disappoint their expectations of his fall; (v. 19, 25, 26.) and, lastly, to confound them, and to triumph over them, v. 4. 1. He prophesies the destruction of his persecutors, v. 4, 6, 8. V. He promises himself that he shall yet see better days; (v. 9, 10.) and promises God that he will then attend him with his praises; 15. 19. 20. tells this psalm, and praying over it, we must take heed of applying it to any little peevish quarrels and enmities of our own, and of expressing by it any uncharitable revengeful resentment of injuries done to us; for Christ has taught us to forgive our enemies, and not to pray for them, but to pray for them, as he did; but, 1. We may comfort ourselves with the testimony of our conscience, confessing our own weakness, and concerning our innocence, with reference to those that are any way injurious to us, and with hopes that God will, in his own way, and time, right us, and, in the mean time, support us. 2. We may offer ourselves and our souls to the public enemies of Christ, and his kingdom, typified by David and his kingdom, to resent the indignities done to Christ's honour, to pray to God to plead the just and injured cause of his servants and our goodness, and to believe that God will, in due time, glorify his own name in the ruin of all the irreconcilable enemies of his church, that will not repent, to give him glory.

A Psalm of David.

1. Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me. 2. Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for my help.

3. Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.

4. Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt. 5. Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the Lord chase them. 6. Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the Lord persecute them. 7. For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, without cause they have dug for my soul. 8. Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath laid catch himself into that very destruction let him fall. 9. And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord: it shall rejoice in his salvation. 10. All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee, who deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?

In these verses, we have: 1. David's representation of his case to God, setting forth the restless rage and malice of his persecutors; he was God's servant, expressly appointed by him to be what he was, followed his guidance, and aimed at his glory in the way of duty, had lived (as St. Paul speaks) in all good conscience before God unto this day; and yet there were those that strove with him, that did their utmost to oppose his advancement, and made all the interest they could against him; they fought against him, (v. 1.) not only undermined him closely and secretly, but openly avowed their opposition to him, and set themselves to do him all the mischief they could. They persecuted him with an unwearied enmity, sought after his soul, (v. 4.) that is, his life, no less would satisfy their bloody minds; they aimed to disquiet his spirit, and put that into disorder; nor was it a sudden passion against him that they harboured, but invertebrate malice; they devised his hurt, laid their heads together, and set their wits on work, not only to do him a mischief, but to find out ways and means to ruin him. They treated him, who was the greatest blessing of his country, as if he had been the curse and plague of it; they
hunted him as a dangerous beast of prey; they digged a pit for him, and laid a net in it, that they might have him at their mercy, v. 7. They took a great deal of pains in persecuting him; for they digged a pit, (vii. 13.) and very close and crafty they were in carrying on their designs; the old serpent took them subtly, they hid their net from David and his friends; but in vain, for they could not hide it from God, who was last of all, and was quite as much for them. His enemy, especially Saul, was too strong for him, (v. 10.) for he had the army at his command, and assumed to himself the sole power of making laws and giving judgment, attainted and condemned whom he pleased, carried not a sceptre, but a javelin, in his hand, to cast at any man that stood in his way; such was the manner of the king, and all about him were compelled to do as he bade them, right or wrong. The king's word was a law, and every thing must be done according to his pleasure. He had a high hand; he has fields, and vineyards, and pre- ferments, at his disposal, 1 Sam. xxii. 7. But David is poor and needy, has nothing to make friends with, and therefore has none to take his part, but men (as we say) of broken fortunes; (1 Sam. xxii. 2.) and therefore no marvel that Saul spoiled him of what little he had got, and the interest he had made. If the kings of the earth set themselves against the Lord, and his anointed, what shall we then? (Ps. lvi. 5.) Note. It is no new thing for the most righteous men, and the most righteous cause, to meet with many mighty and malicious enemies; Christ himself is driven with, and fought against, and war made upon the holy seed; and we are not to marvel at the matter, it is a fruit of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent, against the seed of the woman.

II. His appeal to God concerning his integrity, and the justice of his cause. His enemies were not able to rebuke, much less to accuse, him, he might have appealed to his prince, as St. Paul did to Caesar; but when his prince wronged him, he appealed to his God, who is Prince and Judge of the kings of the earth; Plead my cause, O Lord, v. 1. Note. A righteous cause may, with the greatest satisfaction imaginable, be laid before a righteous God, and referred to him to give judgment upon it; for he perfectly knows the merits of it, holds the balance exactly even, and with him there is no partiality. We are ignorant how the causes were, without cause, his enemies; and that they had, without cause, digged pits for him, v. 7. Note. It will be a comfort to us, when men do us wrong, if our consciences can witness for us, that we have never done them any. It was so to St. Paul; (Acts xxv. 10.) To the Jew I have done no wrong. We are apt to justify our unaeasiness at the injuries men do us by this, That we never gave them any cause to use us so; whereas this should, more than any thing, make us easy, for then we may the more confidently expect that God will plead our cause.

III. His prayer to God to manifest himself both for him, and to him, in this trial. 1. For him; he prays that God would fight against his enemies, so as to disable them to hurt him, and defeat their designs against him; (v. 1.) that he would take hold of shield and buckler, for the Lord is a Man of war, (Exod. xv. 3.) and that he would stand up for his help, (v. 2.) for he had few that would stand up for him, and if he had ever so many, they would stand him in no stead without God: he prays that God would stop their way, that they might not overtake him when he fled from them: this prayer we may put up against our persecutors, that God would restrain them, and stop their way. 2. To him; say unto my soul, I am thy salvation; let me have inward comfort under all these outward troubles, to support my soul which they strike at. Let God be my salvation, not only my Saviour out of my present troubles, but my everlasting Bliss; let me have that salvation not only which he is the Author of, but which consists in his favour. And let me know it; let me have the comfortable assurance of it in my own breast. If God, by his Spirit, witness to our spirits, that he is our salvation, we have enough, we need desire no more, to make us happy; and this is a powerful support when men persecute us. If God be our Friend, no matter who is our enemy.

IV. His prospect of the destruction of his enemies, which he prays for, not in malice or revenge; we find how patiently he bore Shimei’s curses, &c. Let him curse, for the Lord has bidden him; and we cannot suppose that he, that was so meek in his conversation, should give vent to any intertemperate heat or passion in his devotion; but, by the spirit of prophecy, he foretells the just judgments of God, that would come upon them for their great wickednesses, their malice, cruelty, and perfidiousness, and especially their enmity to the counsels of God, the interests of religion, and that reformation which they knew David, if ever he had power in his hand, would be an instrument of. They seemed to be hardened in their sins, and to be of the number of those who have sinned unto death, and are not to be prayed for, Jer. vii. 16.—xi. 14.—xiv. 11. 1 John v. 18. As for Saul himself, David, it is probable he would have been glad to see it; he was an enemy to the great Samuel; and this would have enabled him to give his last freedom to that man, who had been his guide, and on whom he could have inflicted a just and necessary revenge; and this is the same thing as that forbidden Samuel to mourn for him, 1 Sam. xvi. 1. And these predictions look further, and read the doom of the enemies of Christ and his kingdom, as appears by comparing Rom. xi. 9, 10.

He here prays, 1. Against his many enemies; (v. 4-6.) Let them be confounded, &c. Or, as Dr. Hammond reads it, They shall be confounded, they shall be turned back. This may be taken as a prayer for general deliverance: v. 4. For they make no shame to their sins, and turn back from him; or, if they were not brought to repentance, that they might be defeated and disappointed in their designs against him, and so put to shame. But though they should, in some degree, prevail, yet he foresees that it would be to their own ruin at last; they shall be as chaff before the wind, so unable will wicked men be to stand before the judgments of God, and so certainly will they be driven away from him. It is the portion of the carcases of jerry, darkness and slipperness; (so the margin reads it;) the way of sinners is so, for they walk in darkness, and in continual danger of falling into sin, into hell; and it will prove so at last, for their foot shall slide in due time, Deut. xxxii. 35. But this is not the worst of it; even chaff before the wind, may perhaps be stopped, and find a place of rest, and though the way be dark and slippery, it is possible that a man may keep his footing; but it is here foretold that the angel of the Lord shall chase them, (v. 5.) so that they shall find no rest; shall persecute them, (v. 6.) so that they cannot possibly escape the pit of destruction. As God’s angels encamp about them that fear him, so they encamp against them that fight against him. They are the ministers of his justice, as well as of his mercy. Those that make God their Enemy make all the holy angels their enemies 2. He prays against his one mighty enemy; (v. 8.) Let destruction come upon him. It is probable that he means Saul, who laid snares for him, and aimed at his destruction. David vowed that his hand should not be upon him, he would not be judge in his own cause; but, at the same time, he foretold that the Lord would smite him, (1 Sam. xxvi. 10.) and here, that the net he had laid he should catch himself, and into that very destruction he should fall: which was remarkably fulfilled in the ruin of Saul, for he had laid a plot to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines, (1 Sam. xviii. 25.) that was the net which he hid.
tor him, under pretense of doing him honour, and in that very net was he himself taken, for he fell by the hand of the Philistines, when his day came to fall.

V. His prospect of his own deliverance, which, with committed his cause to God, he did not doubt of, v. 9, 10. 1. He hoped that he should have the comfort of it; "My soul shall be joyful, not in mine own ease and safety, but in the Lord, and in his favour, in his promises, and in his salvation, according to the promise." Joy in God, and in his salvation, is the only true solid satisfying joy. They whose souls are sorrowful in the Lord, who sow in tears, and sorrow after a godly sort, need not question but that in due time their souls shall be joyful in the Lord, for gladness is sown for them, and they shall at last enter into the joy of their Lord.

2. He promised that then God should have the glory of it; (v. 10.) All my sins shall be, Lord, who is like unto thee? (1.) He will praise God with the whole man, with all that is with him, and with all the strength and vigour of his soul, intimated by his bones, which are within the body, and are the strength of it. (2.) He will praise him as one of peerless and unparalleled perfection; we cannot express how great and good God is, and therefore must praise him by acknowledging him to be a none-such; Lord, who is like unto thee? No such praise, no such thanksgiving, can be brought to a triumphant tyranny. The formation of our bones so wonderfully, so curiously, (Excl. xi. 5. Ps. cxxxix. 16.) the serviceableness of our bones, and the preservation of them, and especially the life which, at the resurrection, shall be breathed upon the dry bones, and make them flourish as an herb, oblige every bone in our bodies, if it could speak, to say, Lord, who is like unto thee? and willingly to undergo any services or sufferings for him.

11. False witnesses did rise up: they laid to my charge things that I knew not. 12. They rewarded me evil for good, to the spoiling of my soul. 13. But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer returned unto mine own bosom. 14. I behaved myself as though I had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother. 15. But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together; yea, the objects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear me, and ceased not. 16. With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth.

Two very wicked things David here lays to the charge of his enemies, to make good his appeal to God against them; perjury and ingratitude.

I. Perjury, v. 11. When Saul would have David attainted of treason, in order to his being outlawed, perhaps he did it with the formalities of a legal prosecution, produced witnesses which are some treasonable words or overt-acts against him, and he being not present to clear himself, (or if he hadit had been all one,) Saul adjudged him a traitor; this he complains of here as the highest piece of injustice imaginable; False witnesses did rise up, who would swear any thing; they laid to my charge things that I knew not, nor ever thought of. See how much the honours, estates, liberties, and lives, even of the best men, lie at the mercy of the worst, against whose false outcry innocence itself is no fence; and what reason was he to acknowledge, with thankfulness, the hold God has of the consciences even of bad men, to which it is owing, that there is not more mischief done that way than is. This instance of the wrong done to David was typical, and had its accomplishment in the Son of David against whom false witnesses did arise, Matt. xxvi. 60. If we be at any time charged with what we are innocent of, let us not think it strange, as though it came under the hand of Satan to persecute him and his friends, who are the representatives of the prophets, even the great Prophet.

II. Ingratitude. Call a man ungrateful, and you can call him no worse; this was the character of David's enemies; (v. 12.) They rewarded me evil for good. A great deal of good service he had done to his king, witness his harp, witness Goliath's sword, witness the foreskins of the Philistines; and yet his king vowed his death, and he can no longer dwell in the land of his country. This is to the scoffing of his soul; this base unkind usage robs him of his comfort, and cuts him to the heart, more than any thing else.

Nay, he had not only deserved well of the public, but of those particular persons that were now most bitter against him. Probably, it was then well known whom he meant, it may be Saul himself for one, whom he was sent for to attend upon, when he was melancholy and ill, and to whom he was serious in his importunings to remove away the evil spirit, not with his harp, but with his prayer and prayers. All his particular and necessary, in the exercise of his spiritual powers, about his conversation with his Father, and the manifold gratification of his heart, he had a type, a figure, a shadow, in the history of David. But in the case of Saul, who was the most obnoxious to him, he had shown much respect and love. Herein he was a type of Christ, to whom this wicked world was very ungrateful; (John x. 32.) Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those do you stone me? David here shows,

1. He was a tender heart, and with what a cordial affection, he had carried it toward them in their afflictions, (v. 13, 14.) They were sick, Note, Even the palaces and courts of princes are not exempt from the jurisdiction of death, and the visitation of sickness. Now, when these people were sick, (1.) David mourned for them, and sympathized with them in their grief. They were not related to him, he was under no obligations to them, he would lose nothing by their death, but perhaps be a gainer by their death; and yet he was moved with compassion as he beheld his nearest relations, purely from a principle of compasion and humanity. David was a man of war, and of a bold stout spirit; yet was he thus susceptible of the impressions of sympathy, forgot the bravery of the hero, and seemed wholly made up of love and pity; it was a rare composition of hardness and tenderness, courage and compassion, in the same breast. Observe, He took it as for a brother or mother, which intimates that it is our duty, and well becomes us, to lay to heart the sickness, and sorrow, and death, of our near relations. Those that do not, are justly stigmatized as without natural affection.

(2.) He prayed for them; he discovered not only the tender affection of a man, but the pious affection of a saint. He was concerned for their precious souls, and since he could not otherwise be helpful to them, he helped them in his prayers to God for mercy and grace; and the prayers of a saint, that an interest in heaven, were of more value than perhaps they knew and considered. With his prayers he joined humiliation and self-affliction; both in his diet, he fasted, at least, from pleasant bread, and in his dress, he clothed himself with sackcloth, thus expressing his grief, not only for their affliction, but for their sin; for this was the guise and practice of a penitent. We ought to mourn for the sins of those that do not mourn for themselves. His fasting also put an edge upon his praying, and was an expression of the fervour of it; it was so intent in
his devotions, that he had no appetite to meat, nor
would allow himself time for eating; "My prayer
returned into mine own bosom; I had the comfort
of having done my duty, and of having approved my-
selves a loving neighbour, though I could not thereby
win upon them, nor make them my friends?" We
shall not lose by the good offices we have done to
any, how ungrateful soever they are, for our re-
jicing will be this, the testimony of our conscience.
2. He was base and insolently, and with what a brut-
ish vanity, and worse than basely, they had carried
it toward him; (v. 15, 16.) In mine adversity, they
rejoiced. When he fell under the frowns of Saul,
was banished the court, and persecuted as a crimi-
nal, they were pleased, were glad at his calamities,
and got together in their drunken clubs, to make
themselves and one another merry with the dis-
grace of this great favour. Well might he call them
objects, for nothing could be more vile and
sordid, than to triumph in the fall of a man of such
unstained honour, and consummate virtue. But
this was not all; (1.) They tore him, rent his good
name without mercy, said all the ill they could of
him, and fastened upon him all the reproach their
cursed wit and malice could reach to. (2.) They
grasped upon him with their teeth; they never spoke
of him but with the greatest indignation imagin-
able, as those that would have eaten him up, if they
could. David was the fool in the play, and his his-
appearant all the talk-talk of the hypocritical
mockers at feasts, it was the song of the drunkards,
the comedians, who may fitly be called hypocritical
mockers, (for what does a hypocrite signify, but a
stage-player?) and whose comedies, it is likely,
were acted at feasts and balls, chose David for their
subject, bantered and abused him, while the auditi-
ory, in token of their agreement with the plot, hummed, and 'grasped upon him with their teeth,' which has often been the hard fate of the best of men.
The apostles were made a spectacle to the world.
David was looked upon with ill-will, for no other
reason, than because he was caressed by the peo-
ple. It is a vexation of spirit which attends even a
right work, that for this a man is envied of his
neighbour, Eccl. iv. 4. And who can stand before
envy? Prov. xxvii. 4.

17. LORD, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my
darling from the lions. 18. I will give thee
thanks in the great congregation: I will
praise thee among much people. 19. Let
not them that are mine enemies wrongfully
rejoice over me; neither let them wink with
the eye that hate me without a cause. 20.
For they speak not peace; but they devise
deceitful matters against them that are quiet
in the land. 21. Yea, they opened their
mouth wide against me, and said, Aha, aha!
our eye hath seen it. 22. This thou hast
seen, O LORD; keep not silence: O LORD,
be not far from me. 23. Stir up thyself, and
awake to my judgment, even unto my cause,
my God and my Lord. 24. Judge me, O
LORD my God, according to thy righteousness;
and let them not rejoice over me. 25.
Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so
would we have it; let them not say, We
have swallowed him up. 26. Let them be
ashamed, and brought to confusion togeth-
ether, that rejoice at my hurt: let them be
clothed with shame and dishonour that mag-
nify themselves against me. 27. Let them
shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my
righteous cause: yea, let them say continu-
antly, Let the LORD be magnified, which
hath pleasure in the prosperity of his ser-
vant. 28. And my tongue shall speak of thy
righteousness and of thy praise, all the day
long.

In these verses, as before,
1. David describes the great injustice, malice, and
insolence, of his persecutors, pleading this with
God, as a plea to him, as a plea to his friends
against them, and appear against them. I. They were very
unrighteous, they were his enemies wrongfully, for
he never gave them any provocation; they hated
him without a cause; nay, for that for which they
ought rather to have loved and honoured him. This
is quoted with application to Christ, and is said to
be fulfilled in him; (John xv. 23.) They hated me
without a cause. 2. They were very rude; they
had not fixed in their hearts to show him common
civility; they spake not peace to him, for they had
ever the good manners to give him the time of the
day; like Joseph's brethren, that could not
speak peaceably to him, Gen. xxxvii. 4. 3. They
were very proud and scornful; (v. 21.) They open-
ed their mouth wide against me; they shouted and
huzzaed when they saw his fall; they bawled after
him, when he was forced to quit the court, "Aha,
aha, this is the day we longed to see." 4. They
were very malicious, and said, "Let him fall.
They devised deceitful matters, to trepan and ruin
them that are quiet in the land. Note, (1.) It is the
character of the godly in the land, that they are
the quiet in the land; that they live in all dutiful
submission to government and governors, in the Lord,
and endeavour, as much as in them lies, to live
peaceably with all men, however they have been
misrepresented as enemies to Caesar, and hurtful to
kings and province. I am for peace, cxx. 7. (2.)
Though the people or God are, and study to be, a
quiet people, yet it has been the common practice
of their enemies to devise deceitful matters against
them. All the hellish arts of malice and falsehood
are made use of to render them odious or despica-
able, their words and actions misconstrued, even
that which they abhor fathered upon them, laws
made to ensnare them. (Dan. vi. 4, &c.) and all to
ruin them and root them out. They that hated
David, thought so much of Haman, to lay hands
on him alone, that they contrived to involve all the
religious people of the land in the same ruin with him.
2. He appeals to God against them, the God to
whom vengeance belongs; appeals to his know-
ledge; (v. 22.) This thou hast seen. They had
falsely accused him, but God, who knows all things,
knew that he did not falsely accuse them, nor make
them worse than really they were. They carried on
their plots against him with great degree of secrecy;
(v. 15.) "I knew it not, till long after, when they
themselves gloried in it; but thine eye was upon
them in their close cabals, and thou art a Witness
of all they have said and done against me and thy people." He appeals to God's justice; *Awake to my judgment, even to my cause,* and let it have a hearing at thy bar; (v. 23) "Judge me, O Lord my God; pass sentence upon this appeal, according to the righteousness of thy nature and government." See this explained by Solomon; (1 Kings viii. 31, 32) and thou art appeased, to clear in heaven, and judge, by condemning the wicked, and justifying the righteous.

III. He prays earnestly to God, to appear graciously for him and his friends against his and their enemies, that by his providence the struggle might issue to the honour and comfort of David, and to the conviction and confusion of his persecutors.

1. He prays that God would act for him, and not stand by as a by-stander; (v. 17) "Lord, trampling with thou took on? How long wilt thou connive at the wickedness of the wicked? Rescue my soul from the destructions they are plotting against it; rescue my darling, my only one from the lions. My soul is my only one, and therefore the greater is the shame if I neglect it, and the greater the loss if I lose it; it is my only one, and therefore ought to be my darling, ought to be carefully protected and provided for. It is my soul that is in danger. Lord, remember me in particular; I am one of the Father of spirits, therefore claim thine own; it is thine, save it! Lord, keep not silence, as if thou didst consent to what is done against me! Lord, be not far from me," (v. 22) as if I were a stranger that thou art not concerned for; let not me be belied afar off, as the proud are."

2. He prays that his enemies might not have cause to rejoice; (v. 19) "Let them not rejoice over me, and again; (v. 24) not so much because it would be a mortification to him to be trampled upon by the objects, but because it would turn to the dishonour of God, and the reproach of his confidence in God; it would harden the hearts of his enemies in their wickedness, and confirm them in their enmity to him, and would be a great discouragement to all the pious Jews that were friends to his righteous cause. He prays that he might never be in such imminent danger, that they should say in their hearts, 'They have got him,' (v. 25)" for more that he might not be reduced to such extremity, that they should say, "We have swallowed him up;" for then they will reflect upon God himself. But, on the contrary, that they might be ashamed and brought to confusion together, (v. 26) as before, (v. 4) he desires his innocency might be so cleared, that they might be ashamed of the calumnies with which they had loaded him, that his interest might be so confirmed, that they might be ashamed of their designs against him, and their expectations of his ruin, that they might either be brought to that shame which would be a step towards their reformation, or that they might be their portion, which would be their everlasting misery.

3. He prays that his friends might have cause to rejoice, and give glory to God; (v. 27) notwithstanding the arts that were used to blacken David, and many false reports, and to frighten people from owning him, there were some that favoured his righteous cause, that knew he was wronged, and bore a good affection to him; and he prays for them; (1.) That they might rejoice with him in his joys. It is a great pleasure to all that are good, to see an honest man, and an honest cause, prevail and prosper; and those that heartily espouse the interests of God's people, and are willing to take their lot with them, they will rejoice in them, or they shall be trampled upon, shall, in due time, shunt for joy and be glad, for the righteous cause will, at length, be a victorious cause. (2.) That they might join with him in his praises, let them say continually, *The Lord be magnified,* by us and others, who hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant. Note, [1.] The great God has pleasure in the prosperity of good people, not only of his family, the church in general, but of every particular servant in his family; he has pleasure in the prosperity both of their temporal and of their spiritual affairs, and delights not in their griefs; for he does not afflict willingly; and we ought therefore to have pleasure in their prosperity, and not to envy it. [2.] When God, in his providence, shows his good-will to the prosperity of his servants, and the pleasure he takes in it, we ought to acknowledge it, with thankfulness, to his praise, and to say, *The Lord be magnified.*

Lastly, The mercy he hoped to win by prayer, he promises to wear with praise; "I will give thee thanks, as the Author of my deliverance; (v. 18) and *my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness, the justice of thy judgments, and the equity of all thy dispensations," and this, 1. Publicly, as one that took a pleasure in owning his obligations to God; so far was he from being ashamed of them, he will do in the great congregation, and among many people, that God might be honoured, and many edified. 2. Constantly; he will speak God's praise every day, (so it may be read,) and all the day long, for it is a subject that will never be exhausted, no not by the endless praises of saints and angels.

PSALM XXXVI.

It is uncertain when, and upon what occasion, David penned this psalm, probably when he was struck at, either by Saul, or by Absalom; for in it he complains of the madness of his enemies against him, but triumphs in the goodness of God to him. We are here led to consider, and it will do us good to consider seriously, I. The sinfulness of sin, and how mischievous it is; v. 1-4. II. The goodness of God, and how gracious he is; v. 5, 6, 7. To his own creatures in general, v. 5, 6, 2. To his own people in a special manner, v. 7-9. By this, the psalmist is encouraged to pray for all the saints, (v. 10,) for himself in particular, and his own preservation, (v. 11,) and to triumph in the certain fall of his enemies, v. 12. If, in singing this psalm, our hearts be duly affected with the hatred of sin, and satisfaction in God's loving kindness, we sing it with grace and understanding.

To the chief musician. A Psalm of David the servant of the Lord.

1. THE transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes. 2. For he flatteth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful. 3. The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit; he hath left off to be wise, and to do good. 4. He deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setbeth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil.

David, in the title of this psalm, is styled the servant of the Lord; why in this, and not in any other, except in xviii, title, no reason can be given; but so he was, not only as every good man is God's servant, but as a king, as a prophet, as one employed in serving the interests of God's kingdom among men, more immediately, and more eminently, than any other in his day. He glories in it, cxvi. 16. It is no disparagement, but an honour, to the greatest of men, to be the servants of the great God; it is the highest preferment a man is capable of in this world.

David, in these verses, describes the wickedness of the wicked, whether he means his persecutors in particular or all notorious gross sinners, in gene-
PSALMS, XXXVI.

r al, is not certain. But we have here sin in its causes, and sin in its colours, in its root, and in its branches.

I. Here is the root of bitterness, from which all the wickedness of the wicked comes. It takes rise, 1. From their contempt of God, and the want of a due regard to him; (v. 1.) "The transgression of the wicked, (as it is described afterward, v. 3, 4.) saith within my heart, makes me to conclude within myself, that there is no fear of God before his eyes; for if there were, he would not talk and act so extravagantly as he does; he would not, he durst not, break the laws of God, and violate his covenants with him, if he had any awe of his majesty, or dread of his wrath." Filly therefore it is brought into the form of indictments by our law, that the criminal, not having the fear of God before his eyes, did so and so.

The wicked did not openly renounce the fear of God, but their transgressions which it secretly into the minds of all those that knew any thing of the nature of piety and impiety. David concluding, concerning those who lived at large, that they lived without God in the world.

2. From their conceit of themselves, and a cheat they wilfully put upon their own souls; (v. 2.) He flattereth himself in his own eyes; while he goes on in sin, he thinks he does wisely and well for himself, and that he does not offend against the law, and danger of his wicked practices; he calls evil good, and good evil: his licentiousness he pretends to be but his just liberty; his fraud passes for his prudence and policy: and his persecuting the people of God, he suggests to himself, is a piece of necessary justice. If his own conscience threaten him for what he does, he says, God will not require it, I shall have peace though I go on. Note, Sin- ners are self-destroyers, by being self-flatterers; they could not deceive others, if they did not deceive themselves. But will the cheat last always? No, the day is coming, when the sinner will be undeceived, when his iniquity shall be found to be hateful. Iniquity is a hateful thing; it is that abominable thing which the Lord hates, and which his pure and jealous eye cannot endure to look upon. It is hurtful to the sinner himself, and therefore ought to be hateful; but it is not so; he makes less of it than he should, for the cause of the secular profit, and sensual pleasure, which may attend it; yet the meat in his bowels will be turned, it will be the gall of asps; (Job xxi, 13, 14.) when their consciences are convinced, and sin appears in its true colours, and makes them a terror to themselves, when the cup of trembling is put into their hands, and they are made to drink the dregs of it, then their iniquity will be found hateful, and their self-flattery their unseizable folly, and an aggravation of their condemnation.

II. Here are the cursed branches which spring from this root of bitterness. The sinner defies God, and even defies himself, and then what can be expected, but that he should go all to naught? These two were the first inlets of sin. Men do not fear God, and therefore they flatter themselves; and this,

1. They make no conscience of what they say, true or false, right or wrong; (v. 3.) The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit; contrived to do wrong, and yet to cover it with specious and plausible pretences. It is no marvel, if those that deceive themselves contrive how to deceive all mankind; for whom will they be true to that are false to their own souls?

2. What little good there has been in them is gone; the sparks of virtue extinguished, their convictions baffled, their good beginnings come to nothing; they have left off to be wise, and to do good. They seemed to have been under the direction of wisdom, and the government of religion, but they have broken these bonds in sunder; they have shaken off their religion, and therewith their wisdom. Note, They that leave off to do good, leave off to be wise.

3. Having left off to do good, they contrive to do hurt, and to be vextious to those about them that are good, and do good; (v. 4.) He devises mischief with his own heart; Note, (1.) On their own 
imagination; when men leave off doing good, they go off praying, leave off their attendance on God's ordinances, and their duty to him, the Devil easily makes them his agents, his instruments to draw those that will be drawn, into sin, and with respect to those that will not, to draw them into trouble. Those that leave off to do good, begin to do evil; the Devil, being an apostate from his innocency, soon became a tempter to Eve, and a persecutor of the patriarchs. Abel. (2.) It is bad to do mischief, but it is worse to devise it, to do it deliberately and with resolution, to set the wits a-work to contrive to do it most effectually, to do it with plot and management; with the subtlety, as well as the malice, of the old serpent; to devise it upon the bed, where we should be meditating upon God and his word, Mic. ii. 1. This argues the sinner's heart fully set in him to do evil.

4. Having plunged into the way of sin, that way that is not good, that has good neither in it, nor at the end of it, they persist, and resolve to persevere, in that way. He sets himself to execute the mischief he has devised, and nothing shall be withholden from him, which he has purposed to do, though it be ever so contrary both to his duty and to his true interest. If sinners did not steel their hearts, and brazen their faces, with obstinacy and impudence, they could not go on in their evil ways, in such a direct opposition to all that is just and good.

5. Doing evil themselves, they have no dislike at all of it in others. He abhors not evil, but, on the contrary, takes pleasure in it, and is glad to see others as bad as himself. Or, this may bespeak his impenitency in sin. They that have done evil, if God give them repentance, abhor the evil they have done, and themselves because of it; it is bitter in the reflection, however sweet it was in the commission. Those hardened sinners have such seared stupified consciences, that they never reflect upon their sins afterward with any regret or remorse, but stand to what they have done, as if they could justify it before God himself.

Some think that David, in all this, particularly means Saul, who had cast off the fear of God, and left off all goodness; who pretended kindness to him, when he gave him his daughter to wife, but, at the same time, was devising mischief against him. But we are under no necessity of limiting ourselves so in the exposition of it; there are too many among us to whom the description applies, which is to be greatly lamented.

5. Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens, and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. 6. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O Lord, thou preservest man and beast. 7. How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. 8. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. 9. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.
10. O continue thy loving-kindness unto them that know thee, and thy righteousness to the upright in heart. 11. Let not the foot of pride come against me, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me. 12. There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.

David, having looked round with grief upon the wickedness of the wicked, here looks up with comfort upon the goodness of God; a subject as delightful as the former was distasteful, and very proper to be set in the balance against it. Observe,

1. His meditations upon the grace of God. He sees the world polluted, himself endangered, and God dishonored, by the transgressions of the wicked; but, of a sudden, he turns his eye, and heart, and speech to God; How ever it be, yet thou art good. He here acknowledges,

1. The transcendent perfections of the Divine Nature. Among men, we have often reason to complain, There is no truth or mercy, (Hos. iv. 1.) no judgment nor justice, Isa. v. 7. But all these may be found in God, without the least alloy. Wherever we may err, or amiss, in the world, we are sure there is nothing missing, nothing amiss, in him who governs it.

(1.) He is a God of inexhaustible goodness; Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens. If men shut up the bowels of their compassions, yet, with God, at the throne of his grace, we shall find mercy. When men are devising mischief against us, God's thoughts concerning us, if we cleave closely to him, are thoughts of good. On earth, we meet with little content, but a great deal of discontent and unemploy ment; but in the heavens, where the mercy of God reigns in perfection, and to eternity, there is all satisfaction; there, therefore, if we would be easy, let us have our conversation, and there let us long to be. How bad soever the world is, let us never think the worse of God, or of his government; but, from the abundance of wickedness that is among men, let us take occasion, instead of reflecting upon God's pun ishments, to magnify his mercy. Those who see that he bears so much with those that so impudently provoke him; nay, and causes his sun to shine, and his rain to fall, upon them. If God's mercy were not in the heavens, infinitely above the mercies of any creature, he would, long ere this, have drowned the world again. See Isa. I. 8. 9. Hos. xi. 9.

(2.) He is a God of inviolable truth; Thy faith fulness reaches unto the clouds. Though God suffers wicked people to do a great deal of mischief, yet he is, and will be, faithful to his threatenings against sin, and there will come a day when he will reckon with them; he is faithful also to his covenant with his people, which cannot be broken, not one jot or tittle of the promises of it defeated by all the malice of earth and hell. This is matter of great comfort to all good people, that, though men are false, God is faithful; men speak vanity, but the words of the Lord are pure words. God's faith fulness reaches so high, that it does not change with the weather, as men's does, for it reaches to the skies, so it should be read, (as some think,) above the clouds, and all the changes of the lower region.

(3.) He is a God of incontestable justice and equity; Thy righteousness is like the great mountains, so immovable and inflexible itself, and so confirmed by God's thoughts, that no power on earth or in hell can prevail against it; so much truth is more certain or more plain than that, This the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and that he never did, nor ever will, do any wrong to any of his creatures. Even when clouds and darkness are round about him, yet judgment and justice are the inhabitants of his throne, xxvii. 2.

(4.) He is a God of unsearchable wisdom and design; Thy judgments are a great deep, not to be fathomed with the line and plummet of any finite understanding. As his power is sovereign, which he owes not any account of to us, so his method is singular and mysterious, which cannot be accounted for by us. How ever it is, in the sea, world; for we have his faith in the great waters. We know that he does all wisely and well, but what he does we know not now, it is time enough to know hereafter.

2. The extensive care and beneficence of the Divine Providence; Thou preservest man and beast, not only protectest them from mischief, but supplyest with that which is needful for the support of life. The beasts, though not capable of knowing and comprehending graciously provided for; their eyes wait on him, and he giveth them their meat in due season. Let us not wonder that God gives food to bad men, for he feeds the brute-creatures; and let us not fear but that he will provide well for good men; he that feeds the young lions will not starve his own children.

3. The peculiar favour of God to the saints. Observe, (1.) Their character; (v. 7.) they are such as are able, by the excellency of God's loving-kindness, to find their trust under the shadow of his wings. [1.] God's loving-kindness is precious to them; they relish it, they taste a transcendent sweetness in it, they admire God's beauty and benignity above any thing in this world, nothing so amiable, so desirable. Those know not God, that do not admire his loving-kindness; and those know not themselves that do not earnestly covet it. [2.] They therefore repose an entire confidence in him; for they have acknowledged themselves unworthy of his protection, and then think themselves equal to find themselves easy, as the chickens under the wings of the hen, Matth. xxiii. 37. It was the character of proselytes, that they came to trust under the wings of the God of Israel; (Ruth ii. 12.) and what more proper to gather proselytes than the excellency of his loving-kindness? What more powerful to engage our complacency to him and on him? Those that are thus drawn by love, will cleave to him. (2.) Their habitation is secure, happy, the people whose God is the Lord, for in him they have, or may have, or shall have, a complete happiness.

[1.] Their desires shall be answered; (v. 8.) They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; their wants supplied, their cravings gratified, and their capacities filled; in God all-sufficient they shall have enough, all that which an enlightened, enlarged soul can desire or receive. The gains of the world and the delights of sense will surfeit, but never satisfy, Isa. iv. 2. But the communications of divine favour and grace will satisfy, but never surfeit. A gracious soul, though still desiring more of God, never desires more than God. The gifts of Providence so far satisfy them that are content with such things as they have; I have all, and abound, Phil. iv. 18. The benefit of holy ordinances is the fatness of God's house, sweet to a sanctified soul, and strengthening to the spiritual and divine life, with this they are abundantly satisfied; they desire nothing more, in this world, than to live a life of communion with God, and to have the comfort of the promises. But the full, the abundant, satisfaction is reserved for the future state, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Every vessel will be full there.

[3.] Their joys shall be constant; Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. There are pleasures that are truly divine; They are thy pleasures; not only which come from thee
as the Giver of them, but which terminate in thee as the Matter and Centre of them."... as pure to the eternal mind. There is a river of these pleasures, always full, always fresh, always flowing. There is ever in the Spirit, Isa. 58:11. These pleasures of some putrid middle-water, those of faith are pure and pleasant, clear as crystal, Rev. xxi. 1. God has not only provided this river of pleasures for his people, but he makes them to drink of it; works in them a gracious appetite to these pleasures, and by his Spirit fills their souls with joy and peace in believing. In heaven, they shall be for ever drinking of those pleasures that are at God's right hand, satiated with a fulness of joy, Ps. 16:11.

[3.] Life and light shall be their everlasting bliss and portion, v. 9. Having God himself for their felicity, First, In him they have a fountain of life, from which those rivers of pleasure flow, v. 8. The God of nature is the Fountain of natural life; in him we live, and move, and have our being; the God of grace is the Fountain of spiritual life. All the strength and comfort of a sanctified soul, all its gracious principles, powers, and performances, flow from God. God's Spirit and his operations fill all the sensibilities of divine things, and all its motions toward them: he quickens whom he will; and whoever will, may come, and take from him of the waters of life freely. He is the Fountain of eternal life; the happiness of glorified saints consists in the vision and fruition of him, and in the immediate communications of his love, without interruption or fear of cessation. Secondly, In him they have life in perfection. All wisdom, knowledge, and joy; so included in this light; In thy light we shall see light, that is, 1. "In the knowledge of thee in grace, and the vision of thee in glory, we shall have that which will abundantly suit and satisfy our understandings." That divine light which shines in the scripture, and especially in the face of Christ, the Light of the world, has all truth in it. When we come to see God face to face, within the veil, we shall see light in perfection, we shall know enough then, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. 2. John iii. 20. "He that believeth on him shall have the light of life now; by the communications of thy grace to us, and the return of our devout affections to thee, and in the fruition of thee shortly in heaven, we shall have a complete felicity and satisfaction. In thy favour we have all the good we can desire." This is a dark world, we see little comfort in it; but in the heavenly light there is true light, and no false light, light that is lasting, and never wastes. In this world, we see God, and enjoy him by creatures and manners; in heaven, God himself shall be with us. (Rev. xxi. 3.) and we shall see and enjoy him immediately.

II. We have here David's prayers, intercessions, and holy triumphs, grounded upon these meditations.

1. He intercedes for all saints, begging that they may always experience the benefit and comfort of God's favour and grace. v. 10. (1.) The persons he prays for are those that know God, that are acquainted with his actions, and to whom he knows he owes much for theirs: the upright in heart, that are sincere in their profession of religion, and faithful both to God and man: those that are not upright with God, do not know him as they should. (2.) The blessing he begs for them, is, God's loving-kindness, that is, the tokens of his favour toward them; and his righteousness, that is, the workings of his grace in them; or his loving-kindness and righteousness are his goodness, according to our promises; they are mercy and truth. (3.) The manner in which he desires this blessing may be conveyed: Oh continue it, draw it on, as the mother draws out her breasts to the child, and then the child draws out the milk from the breasts. Let it be drawn out to a length equal to the line of eternity itself; the happiness of the saints in heaven will be in perfection, and yet in continual progression, as some think; for the fountain there will be always full, and the streams always flowing. In the meantime it is a supply of those blessings in this life, of which this psalm is a type.

2. He prays for himself, that he might be preserved in his integrity and comfort; (v. 11.) "Let not the foot of pride come against me, to trip up my heels, or trample upon me; and let not the hand of the wicked, which is stretched out against me, prevail to remove me, either from my purity and integrity, by any temptation, or from my peace and comfort, by any trouble." Let not those who fight against God, triumph over him who desire to cleave to him. They that have experienced the pleasure of communion with God, cannot but desire that nothing may ever remove them from him.

3. He rejoices in hope of the downfall of his enemies, in due time; (v. 12.) "There where they thought to have gained the point against me, they are themselves fallen; taken in that snare which they laid for me." There, in the other world, (so some,) there where the saints stand in the judgment, and are already placed in the happiness of bliss, the fruits of iniquity are cast in the judgment, are cast down into hell, into the bottomless pit, out of which they shall, assuredly, never be able to rise, from under the insupportable weight of God's wrath and curse. It is true, we are not to rejoice, when any particular enemy of ours falls; but the final overthrow of all the workers of iniquity, will be the everlasting triumph of glorified saints.

PSALM XXXVII.

This psalm is a sermon, and an excellent useful sermon it is; calculated not (as most of the psalms) for our devotion, but for our conversion; there is nothing in it for amusement or praise, but it is all instruction; it is Maschiol—a teaching psalm; it is an exposition of some of the hardest chapters in the book of Providence, the advancement of the wicked, and the disgrace of the righteous, a solution of the difficulties that arise thereupon, and an exhortation to conduct ourselves as becomes us, under such dark dispensations. The work of the prophets, (and David was one,) was to explain the law. Now the law of Moses had promised temporal blessings to the Israelites, but this law pronounced temporal miseries against the disobedient, which principally referred to the body of the people, the nation as a nation; and, when they came to be applied to particular persons, were instances of particular blessings. The wicked of the destruction and ruin which the wicked are nigh to, (v. 2, 9, 10, 20, 30, 36, 38,) and the salvation and protection which the righteous are sure of, from all the malicious designs of the wicked, as v. 4, 5, 18, 19, 37, 38, 39, 40. Because of the particular mercy God has in store for all good people, and the favour he shows them, v. 11, 16, 18, 19, 22-25, 28, 29, 37. III. He prescribes very good remedies against this sin, and against the wicked, and great encouragement to use those remedies, v. 34. In singing this psalm, we must teach and admonish one another rightly to understand the providence of God, and to accommodate ourselves to it; at all times carefully to follow God, and to patiently to bear the event with God, and to believe that, how black soever things may look for the present, it shall be well with them that fear God, that fear before him.

A psalm of David.

1. FRAY not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity: 2. For they shall
We do well for our own souls, we shall see little reason to envy those that do so ill for theirs.

Here are three excellent precepts, which we are to be ruled by; and, to enforce them, three precious promises, which we may rely upon.

1. We must make God our Hope in the way of duty, and then we shall have a comfortable subsistence in the world; v. 1. (1.) It is required that we trust in the Lord, and do good, that we may dwell in God, and conform to Him. The life of religion lies much in a believing reliance on God, his favour, his providence, his promise, his grace, and a diligent care to serve him and our generation, according to his will. We must not think to trust in God, and then live as we list; no, it is not trusting God, but tempting him, if we do not make conscience of our duty to him; nor must we think to do good, and then to trust to ourselves, and our own righteousness and strength; no, we must both trust in the Lord, and do good. And then, (2.) It is promised that we shall be provided for in this world; So shalt thou dwell in the land, and verity thou shalt be fed. He does not say, "So shalt thou get preferment, dwell in a palace, and be feasted." This is not necessary; a man's life consists not in the abundance of these things; but, "Thou shalt have a place to lie down, in, and every day. The Lord is thy portion, the valley of vision, and thou shalt have food convenient for thee." This is more than we desire, it is as much as a good man will intend for, (Gen. xxxviii. 20.) and it is enough for one that is going to heaven. Thou shalt have a settlement, a quiet settlement, and a maintenance, a comfortable maintenance; Verity thou shalt be fed, (so some read it,) thou shalt be fed by faith, as the just are said to live by faith, and it is good living, good feeding, according to the promises. "Verity thou shalt be fed, as Elijah in the famine, with what is needful for thee." God himself is a Shepherd, a Feeder, to all those that trust in him, xxi. 1.

2. We must make God our heart's delight, and then we shall have our heart's desire; v. 4.) we must not only depend upon God, but solace ourselves in him. We must be well pleased that there is a God, that he is such a one as he has revealed himself to be to us. If he is good, we must delight ourselves in his beauty, bounty, and benignity; our souls must return to him, and repose in him, as their Rest, and their Portion, for ever. Being satisfied of his loving-kindness, we must be satisfied with it, and make that our exceeding joy, xliii. 4. We were commanded (v. 3.) to do good, and then follows this command, to delight in God, which is as much a privilege as a duty. If we make conscience of obedience to God, we may then take the comfort of a complacency in him. And even this pleasant duty of delighting in God, has a promise annexed to it, which is very full and precious, enough to recompense the hardest services; He shall give thee the desires of thy heart. He has not promised to gratify all the appetites of the body, and the humours of the fancy, but to grant all the desires of the heart, all the cravings of the renewed sanctified soul. What is the desire of the heart of a good man? It is this, to know, and love, and live to, God, to please him, and to be pleased in him.

3. We must make God our Guide, and submit in every thing to his guidance and disposal; and then all our affairs, even those that seem most intricate and perplexed, shall be made to issue well, and to our satisfaction, v. 5, 6.

(1.) The duty is very easy; and if we do it aright, it will make the way easy. Come thou this way to the Lord; roll thy way upon the Lord, so the man reads it, Prov. xvi. 3. Ps. lv. 22. Cast thy burden upon the Lord, the burden of thy care, 1 Pet. v. 7. We must roll it off ourselves, so as not to afflic and
perplex ourselves with thoughts about future events, (Matth. vi. 23.) not to cumber and trouble ourselves either with the contrivance of the means, or with the expectation of the end, but refer it to God, leave it to him, by his wise and good providence to order and dispose of all our concerns, as he pleases; Re
tell thy way unto the Lord; (so the LXX) that is, 'By prayer spread the case, and all the care about it, before the Lord.' (as Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpah, Judg. xi. 11.) 'and then trust in him to bring it to a good issue, with a full satisfaction that all is well that God does.' We must do our duty, (that must be our care,) and then leave the event with God; 'Sit still, and see how the matter will fall,' Ruth iii. 18. We must follow Providence, and not force it; subscribe to Infinite Wisdom, and not prescribe.

(2.) The promise is very sweet; [1.] In general, "He shall bring that to pass, whatever it is, which thou hast committed to him, if not to thy contrivance, yet to thy content. He will find means to extricate thee out of thy straits, to prevent thy fears, and bring about thy purposes, to thy satisfaction." [2.] In particular, "He will take care of thy reputation, and bring thee out of thy difficulties, not only with confidence, but with triumph. He will bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day;" (v. 6.) that is, "He shall make it to appear, that thou art an honest man, and that is honour enough." First, It is implied that the righteousness and judgment of good people, may, for a time, be clouded and eclipsed, either by remarkable rebukes of Providence, (Job's great afflictions darkened his righteousness,) or by the malicious censures and reproaches of men, who give them bad names, which they no way deserve, and lay to their charge things which they know not. Secondly, It is promised that God will, in due time, roll away the reproach they are under, clear up their innocence, and bring forth their righteous-
ness, to their honour; perhaps in this world, at fur-
thest, in the great day, Matth. xiii. 43. Note, If we take care to keep a good conscience, we may leave it to God to take care of our good name.

7. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. 8. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. 9. For evil-doers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. 10. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. 11. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. 12. The wicked plottheth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. 13. The Lord shall laugh at him; for he seeth that his day is coming. 14. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation. 15. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. 16. A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. 17. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the Lord upholdeth the righteous. 18. The Lord knoweth the days of the upright; and their inheritance shall be for ever. 19. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time; and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. 20. But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume, into smoke shall they consume away.

In these verses, we have,
I. The foregoing precepts inculcated; for we are so apt to disquiet ourselves with needless, fruitless, discontented and distrusts, that it is necessary there should be precept upon precept, and line upon line, to suppress them, and arm us against them.

Let us rest in the Lord, for he is good; 'Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him;' (v. 7.) be well reconciled to all he does, and acquiesce in it, for that is best that is, because it is what God has appointed; and be well satisfied that he will still make all to work for good to us, though we know not how or which way. Be silent to the Lord," so the word is; not with a sullen, but a sub-
misive, silence. A patient bearing of what is laid upon us, and a patient expectation of what is further
pointed out to us, are as much our interest, as they are our duty; for it will make us always easy, and there is a great deal of reason for it, for it is making a virtue of necessity.

2. Let us not compose ourselves at what we see in this world; "Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his wicked way; who, though he is a bad man, yet thrives and grows rich and great in the world; no nor because of him who does mis-
chief with his power and wealth, and brings wicked
devices to pass against those that are virtuous and
good, who seems to have gained his point, and to have run them down; if thy heart begins to rise at it, stroke down thy folly, and cease from anger;" (v. 8.) check the first stirrings of discontent and envy, and do not harbour any hard thoughts of God and his providence upon this account; be not angry at any thing that God does, but forbear that wrath; it is the worst kind of wrath that can be.

Note, A fretful, discontented, spirit lies open to many temptations; and those that indulge it are in danger of doing evil.

II. The foregoing reasons, taken from the ap-
proaching ruin of the wicked, notwithstanding their prosperity, and the real happiness of the righteous, notwithstanding their troubles, are here much enlarged upon, and the same things repeated in a pleasing variety of expression.

We are cautioned (v. 7.) not to envy, the wicked, either worldly prosperity, or the success of their plots against the righteous. The reasons here given respect these two temptations severally.

God's people have no reason to envy the worldly prosperity of wicked people, nor to grieve or be uneasy at it.

(1.) Because the prosperity of the wicked will soon be at an end; (v.9.) 'Evil-doers shall be cut off by some sudden stroke of divine justice, in the midst of their prosperity; what they have got by sin, will not only flow away from them, (Job xx. 28.) but they shall be carried away with it. See the end of these men, (lxxviii. 17.) how dear their ill-got gain will cost them, and yet you will be far from envying them, or from being willing to espouse their lot, for
better, for worse. Their ruin is sure, and it is very near; (v. 10.) Yet a while longer, and the wicked shall not be what they now are; they are brought into desolation in a moment, lxiii. 19. Have a little patience, for the Judge stands before the door, Jam. 5. 9. Moderate your passion, and hold in your hand; (Phil. iv. 5.) and when it comes, it will be an utter ruin, and he and shall be extirpated, the day that comes shall leave him neither root nor branch; (Mal. iv. 1.) thou shalt diligently consider his place, where but the other day he made a mighty figure, but it shall not be, you will not find it; he shall leave nothing valuable, nothing honourable, behind him. To the same purport, (v. 20.) The wicked shall fall for their own iniquity, for the time of their joy shall be the period of all their joy, and a passage to endless misery; Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, but undone, for ever undone, are the dead that die in their sins. The wicked are the enemies of the Lord; such they make themselves, who will not have him to reign over them, and as such he will reckon with them; They shall consume as the fat of lambs, they shall consume into smoke. Their prosperity, which gratifies their sensuality, is but the prelude to their ruin, for such lambs, but loose and washy; and when their ruin comes, they shall fall as sacrifices to the justice of God, and be consumed as the fat of the sacrifices was upon the altar, whence it ascended in smoke. The day of God’s vengeance on the wicked, is represented as a sacrifice of the fat of the kidneys of rams; (Isa. xxxiv. 6.) for he will be honoured by the ruin of his enemies, as he was by the sacrifices; damned sinners are sacrifices, Mark ix. 49. This is a good reason why we should not envy them their prosperity; while they are fed to the full, they are but in the fattening for the day of sacrifice, like a lamb in a large flasce; (Hos. iv. 16.) and the more they prosper, the more will God be glorified in their ruin. (2.) Because the condition of the righteous, even in this life, is every way better, and more desirable, than that of the wicked, v. 16. In general, a little that a righteous man has of the honour, wealth, and pleasure of this world, is better than the riches of many wicked. Observe, [1.] The wealth of the world is so dispensed by the Divine Providence, that it is often the lot of good people to have but a little of it, and of wicked people to have abundance of it; for thus God would show us that the things of this world are not the best things, for if they were, those would have most, that are best and dearest to God. [2.] That a godly man’s little is really better than a wicked man’s much; see Prov. xv. 16. 17. xvi. 8. xxxiii. 6. A godly man’s estate, though ever so little, is better than a wicked man’s estate, though ever so much, for it comes from a better hand, from a hand of special love, and not merely from a hand of common providence; it is enjoyed by a better title, God gives it to them by promise, (Gal. iii. 18.) it is theirs by virtue of their relation to Christ. There is that in it of all things, and it isput into a better hand, it is sanctified in those who receive by the blessing of God; unto the pure all things are pure. Tit. i. 15. A little where with God is served and honoured, is better than a great deal prepared for Bala, or for a base lust. The promises here made to the righteous, secure them such a happiness that they need not envy the prosperity of evil-doers. Let them know to their cost, (1.) First. That they shall inherit the earth, as much of it as Infinite Wisdom sees good for them; they have the promises of the life that now is, 1 Tim. iv. 8. If all the earth were necessary to make them happy, they should have it. All is theirs, even the world, and things present, as well as things to come, 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22. They have it by inheritance, a safe and honourable title, not by permission only and connivance. When evil-doers are cut off, the righteous sometimes inherit what they gathered; the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just, Job xvii. 17. Prov. xiii. 22. This promise is here made, 1. To those that live in the fear of God, and those that wait upon the Lord, as dependants on him, expectants from him, and suppliants to him, shall inherit the earth, as a token of his present favour to them, and an earnest of better things intended for them in the other world. God is a good Master that provides plentifully and well, not for his working servants, but for his waiting servants. 2. To those that live a quiet and peaceable life, who were neither guilty of sin, nor guilty of sin, nor guilty of unbelief or enmity to those that wait upon the Lord, as dependants on him, expectants from him, and suppliants to him, shall inherit the earth. They are in least danger of being injured and disturbed in the possession of what they have; and they have most satisfaction in themselves, and consequently the sweetest relish of their creature-comforts. Our Saviour has made this a gospel promise, and a confirmation of the blessing he pronounced on the meek, Matth. v. 5. Secondly, That they shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace, v. 11. Perhaps they have not abundance of wealth to delight in, but they have that which is better, abundance of peace, inward peace and tranquillity of mind, peace with God, and then peace in God, that great peace which they have that love God’s law, whom nothing shall offend; (exix. 163.) that abundance of peace which is in the kingdom of Christ; (lxiii. 7.) that peace which the world cannot give, (John xiv. 27.) and which the world cannot have, Isa. lii. 21. This they shall delight themselves in, and in it they shall have a continual feast; while they that have abundance of wealth do but cumber and perplex themselves with it, and have little delight in it. Thirdly, That God knows their days, v. 18. He takes particular notice of them, of all they do, and of all that happens to them. He keeps account of the days of their service, and not one day’s work shall go unrewarded; and of the days of their suffering, that for those also they may receive a recompense. He knows their fair days, and has pleasure in their prosperity; he knows their cloudy and dark days, the days of their affliction, and, as the day is, so shall the strength be. Fourthly, That their inheritance shall be for ever. Their time on earth is reckoned by days, which will soon be numbered; God takes cognizance of them, and gives them the blessings of every day in its day; but it was never intended that their in- heritance should be confined within the limits of these days; so, that must be the portion of an immortal soul, and therefore must last as long as that lasts, and will run parallel with the longest line of eternity itself; Their inheritance shall be for ever; not their inheritance in the earth, but that incorruptible, indefeasible, one, which is laid up for them in heaven. They that are sure of an everlasting inheritance in heaven, and that other world have no reason to envy the wicked their transitory possessions and pleasures in this world. Fifthly, That, in the worst of times, it shall go well with them; (v. 19.) They shall not be ashamed of their hope and confidence in God, nor of the profession they have made of religion; for the comfort of that will stand them in stead, and be a real support to them, in evil times. When others droop, and are in great distress and strait, they shall have reason to rejoice and be glad of heart; in fine, Observe, even in the days of famine, when others are dying for hunger round about them, they shall be satisfied, as Elijah was; some way or other God will provide food convenient for them, or give them hearts to be satisfied and content without it; so that, if they should be hardly bestead and hungry, they shall not (as the wicked do) fret themselves, and
curse their king and their God, (Isa. viii. 21.) but rejoice in God as the God of their salvation, even when the fig-tree does not blossom, Hab. iii. 17, 18.

2. Good people have no reason to fret at the occasional success of the designs of the wicked against the just; though they do bring some of their wicked devices to pass, which makes us fear they will gain their point, and bring them all to ruin; yet let us consider of the coming, and not fret ourselves so as to think of giving up the cause. For,

(1.) Their plots will be their shame, v. 12, 13. It is true, the wicked plotteth against the just, there is a rooted enmity in the seed of the wicked one against the righteous seed; their aim is, if they can, to destroy their righteousness; if that fall, then to destroy them. With this end in view, they have acted with a great deal of art and policy, contrivance, (they aim to do,) they practise against the just, and of cursed zeal and fury, they grasp upon them with their teeth; so desirous are they, if they could get it into their power, to eat them up, and so full of rage and indignation are they, because it is not in their power; but by all this they do but make themselves ridiculous; the Lord shall laugh at them, ii. 4, 5. They are proud and insolent, but God shall pour contempt upon them; he is not only displeased with them, but he despises them and all their attempts vain and ineffectual, and their malice as impotent and in a chain; for he sees that his day is coming, that is, [1.] The day of God's reckoning, the day of the revelation of his righteousness, which now seems clouded and eclipsed. Men have their day now; this is your hour, Luke xxii. 53. But God will have his day shortly, a day of recompenses, a day which will set all to rights, and render that ridiculous which is plaisted for glorious; he is going to stand for judgment; (1 Cor. iv. 3) God's day will give a decisive judgment. [2.] The day of their ruin, the wicked man's day, the day set for his fall, that day is coming; which denotes delay, it is not yet come, but certainly it will come. The believing prospect of that day will enable the virgin, the daughter of Zion, to despise the rage of her enemies, and laugh them to scorn, Isa. xxxvii. 22.

(2.) Their attempts will be their destruction, v. 14, 15. See here, [1.] How barbarous they are in their designs against good people. They prepare instruments of death, the sword and the bow, no less will serve; they hunt for the precious life; that which they design, is, to cast down and slay; it is the blood of the saints they thirst after. They carry on the design very far, and it is near to be put in execution; they have drawn the sword, and bent the bow; and all these military preparations are made against the helpless, the poor, and needy; this shows them to be very cowardly; and against the guileless, such as be of upright conversation, that never gave them any provocation, nor offered injury to them, or any other person; this shows them to be very wicked. Uprightness itself will be no fence against their malice. But, [2.] How justly their malice recoils upon themselves; their sword shall turn into their own heart; which implies the preservation of the righteous from their malice, and the filling up of the measure of their own iniquity by it. Sometimes that very thing proves to be their own destruction, which they projected against their harmless neighbours; however, God's sword, which their provocations have drawn against themselves, will give them their death's wound.

(3.) Those that are not suddenly cut off, shall yet be so disabled to do any further mischief, that the interests of the church shall be effectually secured; Their bones shall be broken; (v. 15,) the instruments of their cruelty shall fail them, and they shall lose those whom they had made tools of, to serve their bloody purposes with; nay, their arms shall be broken, so that they shall not be able to go on with their enterprises. But the Lord upholdeth the righteous, so that they neither sink under the weight of their afflictions, nor are crushed by the violence of their enemies. He upholds them both in their integrity, and in their prosperity, and they that are so upheld by the Rock of ages, have no reason to envy the wicked the support of their broken reeds.

21. The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous showeth mercy, and giveth. 22. For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off. 23. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; and he delighteth in his way. 24. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. 25. I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. 26. He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed. 27. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore. 28. For the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. 29. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever. 30. The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. 31. The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. 32. The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seetheth to slay him. 33. The Lord will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.

These verses are much to the same purport with the foregoing verses of this psalm, for it is a subject worthy to be dwelt upon. Observe here,

1. What is required of us, as the way to our happiness; which we may learn both from the characters here laid down, and from the directions here given. If we would be blessed of God,

1. We must make conscience of giving every body their own; for the wicked borroweth, and payeth not again, v. 21. It is the first thing which the Lord our God requires of us, that we do justly, and render to all their due. It is not only a shameful paltry thing, but a sinful wicked thing, not to repay what we have borrowed. Some make this an instance, not so much of the wickedness of the wicked, as of the misery and poverty to which they are reduced by the just judgment of God, that they shall be necessitated to borrow for their supply, and they be in no capacity to repay again, and so lie at the mercy of their creditors. Whatever some men seem to think of it, as it is a great sin for those that are able to deny the payment of their just debts, so it is a great misery not to be able to pay them.

2. We must be ready to all acts of charity and beneficence; for as it is an instance of God's good ness to the righteous, that he puts it into the power of his hand to be kind, and to do good, (and so some understand it,) God's blessing increases his little, to that degree that he has abundance to spare for the relief of others; so it is an instance of the goodness of the righteous man, that he has a heart propor-
tonable to his estate; he shows mercy, and gives, v. 21. He is ever merciful, or every day, or all the day, merciful, and lends, and sometimes there is as true charity in lending as in giving; giving and lending are then acceptable to God, when they come from a merciful disposition in the heart, which, if it be sincere, will be constant, and will keep us from being rendered unprofitable. He that is truly merciful will be ever merciful.

3. We must leave our sins, and engage in the practice of serious godliness; (v. 27.) Depart from evil, and do good; cease to do evil, and abhor it; learn to do well, and cleave to it. This is true religion.

4. We must abound in good discourse, and with our tongues must glorify God, and edify others. It is part of the character of a righteous man, (v. 30.) That his mouth speaketh wisdom; not only he speaks wisely, but he speaks wisdom, like Solomon himself, for the instruction of those about him; his tongue talks not of things idle and impertinent, but of judgment, that is, of the word and providence of God, and the rules of wisdom for the right ordering of the conversation. Out of the abundance of a good heart will the mouth speak that which is good, and edify others.

5. We must have our wills brought into an entire subjection to the will and word of God; (v. 31.) The law of God, of his God, is in his heart; and in vain do we pretend that God is our God, if we do not receive his law into our hearts, and resign ourselves to the government of it. It is but a jest and mockery to speak wisdom, and to talk of judgment, (v. 30.) unless we have the law in our hearts, and walk as we speak. The law of God must be a commanding, ruling, principle in the heart; it must be a light there, a spring there, and then the conversation will be regular and uniform, none of his steps will slide; it will effectually prevent backsliding into sin, and the uneasiness that follows from it.

II. What is assured to us, as instances of our happiness and comfort, upon these conditions.

1. That we should have the blessing of God, and that he should bestow the spring, the sweetness, and security, of all our temporal comforts and enjoyments; (v. 22.) Such as be blessed of God, as all the righteous are, with a Father's blessing, by virtue of that shall inherit the earth, or the land, for so the same word is translated, v. 29. the land of Canaan, that glory of all lands. Our creature-comforts are then comforts indeed to us, when we see them flowing from the blessing of God, from his favour, his promise, and his covenant with us; and if we are sure of the blessing of God, we are sure not to want any thing that is good for us in this world. The earth shall yield us her increase, if God, as our own God, gives us his blessing, lxvii. 6. And as those whom God blesses are thus blessed indeed, for they shall inherit the land; so those whom he curses are cursed indeed, and they shall be cut off; and rooted out; and their extirpation by the divine curse will set off the establishment of the righteous, by the divine blessing, and be a fail to it.

2. That God will direct and dispose of our actions and affairs, so as may be most for his glory; (v. 23.) The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; by his grace and holy Spirit he directs the thoughts, affections, and designs, of good men; he has all hearts in his hand, but theirs by their own consent; by his providence he overrules the events of the world, to the glory of his own name, and plain before them, both what they should do, and what they may expect. Observe, God orders the steps of a good man; not only his way in general, by his written word, but his particular steps, by the whispers of conscience, saying, This is the way, walk in it. He does not always show him his way at a distance, but leads him step by step, as children are led, and so keeps him in a continual dependence upon his guidance; and this, (1.) Because he delights in his way, and is well-pleased with the paths of righteousness wherein he walks. The Lord knows the way of the righteous, (i. 6.) it knows it will, favor, and does as he pleased. (2.) That he may delight in his way. Because God orders according to his own will, therefore he delights in it: for as he loves his own image upon us, so he is well-pleased with what we do under his guidance.

3. That God will keep us from being ruined by our falls either into sin or into trouble; (v. 24.) Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down. (1.) A good man may be overtaken in a fault, but the grace of God shall recover him to repentance, so that he shall not be utterly cast down. Then he may, for a time, lose the joys of God's salvation, yet they shall be restored to him; for God shall uphold him with his hand, uphold him with his free spirit. The root shall be kept alive, though the leaf wither; and there will come a spring after the winter. (2.) A good man may be in distress, his affairs embarrased, his spirits sunk, but he shall not be utterly cast down. God will be the Strength of his heart, when his flesh faileth, and will uphold him with his comforts, so that the spirit he has made shall not fail before him.

4. That he shall not want the necessary supports of this life, (v. 25.) I have been young, and now am old; and, among all the changes I have seen in men's outward condition, and the observations I have made upon them, I never saw the righteous forsaken of God and man, as I have sometimes seen wicked people profits, and mankind; may never go about the earth; nor do I ever remember to have seen the seed of the righteous reduced to that extremity as to beg their bread. David had himself begged his bread of Abimelech the priest, but it was when Saul hunted him; and our Saviour has taught us to except the case of persecution for righteousness sake out of all the temporal promises, (Mark x. 30.) because that has such peculiar honours and comforts attached to the abased, such blessings, as the apostle reckons it, Phil. i. 29.) than a sense of grievance. But there are very few instances of good men, or their families, that are reduced to such extreme poverty as many wicked people bring themselves to by their wickedness. He had not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread; forsaken, so some expound it. If they do want, God will raise them up friends to help them, without a scandalous exposing themselves to the reproach of common beggars; or if they go from door to door for meat, it shall not be with despair, as the wicked man that wanders abroad for bread, saying, Where is it? Job xv. 22. Nor shall he be denied, as the prodigal, that would fain have filled his belly, but no man gave unto him, Luke xxv. 16. Nor shall he grudge, if he be not satisfied, as David's enemies, when they wandered up and down for meat, lix. 15. Some make this promise relate especially to those that are chariable and liberal to the poor, and to intimate that David never observed any that brought themselves to poverty by their charity; it is withholding more than is meet that tends to poverty, Prov. xi. 4.

5. That God will not desert us, but graciously protect us in our difficulties and straits; (v. 28.) The Lord loves judgment; he delights in doing righteousness, and he hath set his face against the enemy of his people, (i. 6.) and against them who mistake, and bring themselves to judgment for righteousness sake; and therefore he forsook not his saints in affliction, when others make themselves strange to them, and become shy of them; but he takes care that they be preserved for ever, that the saints in every age be taken under his protection, that the
succession be preserved to the end of time, and that particular saints be preserved from all the temptations, and through all the trials, of this present time, to that happiness which shall be for ever. He will preserve them to his heavenly kingdom, that is, a preservation for ever, 2 Tim. iv. 18. Ps. xii. 7.

6. That we shall have a comfortable settlement in this world, and in a better when we leave this. That we shall dwell forever (Ps. xxxviii. 27.) and be set off, as the seed of the wicked, v. 28. That we shall inherit the land which the Lord our God gives us, and dwell therein for ever, v. 29. They shall not be tossed that make God their Rest, and are at home in him. But on this earth there is no dwelling for ever, no continuing city; it is in heaven only, that city which has foundations, that the righteous shall dwell for ever; that will be their everlasting habitation.

7. That we shall not become a prey to our adversaries, that seek our ruin, v. 32, 33. There is an adversary that takes all opportunities to do us a mischief, a wicked one that watches the righteous, (as a roaring lion watches his prey,) and seeks to slay them; there are wicked men that do so, that are very subtle; they watch the righteous, that they may have an opportunity to do them a mischief effectually, and may have a pretence wherewith to justify themselves in the doing of it; and they are very sly, for they seek to slay him: but it may very well be applied to the wicked one, the Devil, that old serpent, who has his wiles to entrap the righteous, his devices which we should not be ignorant of; that great red dragon, who seeks to slay them; that roaring lion, who goes about continually, restless and raging, and seeking whom he may devour. But it is here promised that he shall not prevail, neither Satan nor his instruments (1.) He shall not prevail as a field-adversary; The Lord will not leave him in his hand; he will not permit Satan to do what he would, nor will he withdraw his strength and grace from his people, but will enable them to resist and overcome him, and their faith shall not fail, Luke xxii. 31, 32. A good man may fall into the hands of a messenger of Satan, and be sorely buffeted, but God will not leave him in his hands, 1 Cor. x. 13. (2.) He shall not prevail as a law-adversary; God will not condemn him unless he is judged, though he be urged to do it by the accuser of their brethren, that accuses them before our God day and night. His false accusations will be thrown out, as these exhibited against Joshua, (Zech. iii. 1, 2.) The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan. It is God that justifies, and then who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?

34. Wait on the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it. 35. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree; 36. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. 37. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. 38. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. 39. But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord; he is their strength in the time of trouble. 40. And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.

The psalmist’s conclusion of this sermon, (for that is the nature of this poem,) is of the same purport with the whole, and inculcates the same things.

I. The duty we are pressed upon us is still the same, to wait on the Lord, and keep his way; duty is ours, and we must mind it, and make conscience of it, keep God’s way, and never turn out of it, nor loiter in it, keep close, keep going; but events are God’s, and we must refer ourselves to him for the disposal of them; we must wait on the Lord, attend the motions of his providence, carefully observe them, and conscientiously accommodate ourselves to them. If we make conscience of keeping God’s way, we may with cheerfulness wait and commit to him our way; and we shall find him a good Master both to his working servants and to his waiting servants.

II. The reasons to enforce this duty are much the same too, taken from the certain destruction of the wicked, and the certain salvation of the righteous. This good man, being tempted to envy the prosperity of the wicked, that he might fortify himself against the temptation, goes to the sanctuary of David’s Psalms, (2.) the Lord understands their end, and thence gives us to understand it, and by comparing that with the end of the righteous, baffles the temptation, and puts it to silence. Observe,

1. The misery of the wicked, at last, however they may prosper a while. The end of the wicked shall be cut off; (v. 36.) and that cannot be well, that will undoubtedly end so ill. The wicked, in their prosperity, will not be cut off from all good, and all hopes of it; a final period will be put to all their joys, and they will be forever separated from the fountain of life to all evil. (1.) Some instances of the remarkable ruin of wicked people David had himself observed in this world; that the pomp and prosperity of sinners would not secure them from the judgments of God, when their day was come to fail; (v. 33, 36.) I have seen a wicked man, (the word is singular,) suppose Saul, or Ahithophel, (for Davi d was an old man when he penned this psalm,) in great power, formidable, (so some render it,) the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, carrying all before him with a high hand, and seeming to be firmly fixed, and finely flourishing, spreading himself like a green bay-tree, which produces all leaves and no fruit; like a native home-born Israelite, (so Dr. Hammond,) likely to take root. But what became of him? Eliphaz, long before, had learned, when he saw the foolish taking root, to curse his habitation, Job v. 3. And David saw cause for it; for this bay-tree is withered away as soon as the fig-tree Christ cursed; he was withering away as a dream, as a shadow, such was he, and all the pomp and power he was so proud of; he was gone in an instant, he was not, I sought him with wonder, but he could not be found. He had acted his part, and then quitted the stage, and there was no more of him; (2.) The total and final ruin of sinners, of all sinners, will shortly be made as much a spectacle to the saints, as they are now sometimes made a spectacle to the world; (v. 34.) When the wicked are cut off; (and cut off they certainly will be,) thou shalt see it, with awful adorations of the divine justice. The transgressors shall be destroyed together, v. 38. In this world, God singles out here one sinner, and then another, and so on; but he made an example in terrains—as a warning; but in the day of judgment there will be a general destruction of all the transgressors, and not one shall escape. They that have sinned together shall be
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PSALMS, XXXVIII.

This is one of the penitential psalms; it is full of grief and complaint, from the beginning to the end. David's sins and his afflictions are the cause of his grief and the matter of his complaint. It would seem to be the beginning of his penitence, and in pain, which reminded him of his sins, and helped to humble him for them; he was, at the same time, deserted by his friends, and persecuted by his enemies, so that he had been cut off from all friends and from all sympathy. 1. Of God's displeasure and of his own sin, which provoked God against him, v. 1, 5. II. Of his bodily sickness, v. 6, 10. III. Of the unkindness of his friends, v. 11, IV. Of injuries which his enemies did him, pleading his good conduct toward them, yet confessing his sins against God, v. 12, 20. Lastly, He concludes the psalm with earnest prayers to God, for his gracious presence and help, v. 21, 22. In singing this psalm, we ought to be much affected with the malignity of sin; and if we have not such troubles as are here described, we know not how soon we may have, and therefore we must sing of them by way of preparation, and we know that others have them, and therefore we must sing of them by way of sympathy.

A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance.

1. O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath; neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.
2. For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.
3. There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.
4. For mine iniquities are gone over my head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.
5. My wounds stink, and are corrupt, because of my foolishness.
6. I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.
7. For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease; and there is no soundness in my flesh.
8. I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the dishueness of my heart.
9. LORD, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee.
10. My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.
11. My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.

The title of this psalm is very observable; it is a psalm 'to bring to remembrance'; the 70th psalm, which was likewise penned in a day of affliction, is so entitled. It is designed, 1. To bring to his own remembrance; we will suppose it penned when he was sick and in pain, and then it teaches us that times of sickness are times to bring to remembrance; to bring the sin to remembrance, for which God contended with us; to awaken our consciences to deal faithfully and plainly with us, and set our sins in order before us, for our humiliation. In a day of adversity, consider. Or we may suppose it penned after his recovery, but designed as a record of the convictions he was under, and the workings of his heart when he was in affliction, that, upon every review of this psalm, he might call to mind the good impressions then made upon him, and make a fresh improvement of them. To the same purport was the writing of Hezekiah, when he had been sick. 2. To put others in mind of the same things which he was himself mindful of, and to teach them what to think, and what to say, when they are sick and in affliction; let them think as he did, and speak as he did.

I. He deprecates the wrath of God and his displeasure in his affliction; (v. 1.) O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath. With this same petition he began another prayer, for the visitation of the sick, v. 1. This was most upon his heart, and should most upon ours, when we are in affliction; that, however God rebukes and chastens us, it may not be in wrath and displeasure, for that will be wormwood and gall in the affliction and misery. Those that would escape the wrath of God, must pray against that, more than any outward affliction, and be content to bear any outward affliction, while it comes from, and consists with, the love of God.

II. He bitterly laments the impressions of God's
displeasure upon his soul; (v. 2). Thine arrows stick fast in me. Let Job's complaint (ch. vi. 4.) expand itself, as if by the arrows of the Almighty he means the terrors of God, which did set themselves in array against him. He was under a very melancholy, frightful, apprehension of the wrath of God against him for his sins, and thought he could look for nothing but judgment and fiery indignation to devour him. God's arrows, as they are sure to hit the mark, so they are sure to stick where they hit, to stick fast, till he is pleased to draw them out, and to bind up his hand in his bosom, and wound and slay his terrors. This will be the everlasting misery of the damned—the arrows of God's wrath will stick fast in them, and the wound will be incurable. "Thy hand, thy heavy hand, presses me sore, and I am ready to sink under it; not only lies hard upon me, but it lies long; and who knows the power of God's anger, the weight of his hand?" Sometimes God shot his arrows, and stretched forth his hand, for David, (xviii. 14.) but now against him; so uncertain is the continuance of divine comforts where yet the continuance of divine grace is assured. He complains of God's wrath, as that which inflicted the bodily distemper he was under; (v. 3.) There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger. The bitterness of it, infused in his mind, affected his body; but that was not the worst, it caused the disequilibrium of his heart, by reason of which he forgot the courage of a soldier, the dignity of a prince, and all the cheerfulness of the sweet psalmist of Israel, and resorted terribly, v. 8. Nothing will disquiet the heart of a good man so much as the sense of God's anger; which shows what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands. The way to keep the heart quiet, is, to keep ourselves in the love of God, and to do nothing to offend him.

III. He acknowledges his sin to be the procuring, provoking, cause of all his troubles, and groans under the load of guilt than any other load, v. 3. He complains that his flesh had no soundness, his bones had no rest, so great an agitation he was in. "It is because of thine anger; that kindles the fire which burns so fiercely," but, in the next words, he justifies God herein, and takes all the blame upon himself. "It is because of my sin. I have deserved it, and so have brought it upon myself; my own iniquities do correct me." If our trouble be the fruit of God's anger, we may thank ourselves, it is our sin that is the cause of it. And all the rest of it is sin that makes us so. If there were not sin in our souls, there would be no pain in our bones, no illness in our bodies.

It is sin, therefore, that this good man complains most of. 1. As a burthen, a heavy burthen; (v. 4.) "Mine iniquities are gone over my head, as proud waters over a man that is sinking and drowning, or as a heavy burthen upon my head, pressing me down, more than I am able to bear," May we be so under the weight of our sin.

The power of sin dwelling in us is a weight; (Heb. xii. 1.) All are clogged with it, it keeps men from soaring upward and pressing forward; all the saints are complaining of it as a body of death they are loaded with, Rom. vii. 24. The guilt of sin committed by us is a burthen, a heavy burthen; it is a burthen to God, he is pressed under it, (Amos ii. 13.) a burthen to the whole creation, which groans under it, Rom. viii. 21, 22. Accordingly, John writes to the sinner himself, either a burthen of repentance, when he is pricked to the heart for it, labouring, and is heavy laden, under it; or a burthen of ruin, when it sinks him to the lowest hell, and will for ever detain him there; it will be a talent of lead upon him, Zech. v. 8. Sinners are said to bear their iniquity. Threatenings are burthens. 2. As wounds, dangerous wounds; (v. 5.) "My wounds stick and are corrupt; (as wounds in the body, rankle and fester, and grow foul, for want of being cleansed and washed after,) and it is through my own foolishness." Sins are wounds, (Gen. iv. 23.) painful, mortal, wounds. Our wounds by sin are often in a bad condition, no care taken of them, no application made to them, and it is owing to the sinner's foolishness, in not confessing sin, xxxii. 3. 4. A slight sore neglected may prove of fatal consequence, and so may a slight sin, slighted and left unrepented of.

IV. He considers the consequences of his afflictions, and gives ease to his grief, by giving vent to it, and pouring out his complaint before the Lord.

1. He was troubled in mind, his conscience was pained, and he had no rest in his own spirit; and a wounded spirit who can bear? He was troubled, or distorted, bowed down greatly, and went mourning all the day long, v. 6. He was always pensive and melancholy, which made him a burthen and terror to himself. His spirit was feeble and sore-broken, and his heart disquieted, v. 7. Herein David, in his sufferings, was a type of Christ, who, being in his agony, cried out, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful. This is a sorner affliction than any other in this world; whatever God is pleased to lay upon us, we have no reason to complain, as long as he preserves to us the use of our reason and the peace of our consciences.

2. He was sick and weak in body; his loins filled with a loathsome disease, some swelling, our necks, or inflammation; some think a plague-sore, such as Hezekiah's boil; and there was no soundness in his flesh, but, like Job, he was all over dismembered. See, (1.) What vile bodies those are which we carry about with us; what grievous diseases they are liable to; and what an offence and grievance they may soon be made by some diseases to the souls that animate them, as they always are a cloud and clog. (2.) That the bodies both of the greatest kings and the best of men have in them the same seeds of diseases that the bodies of others have, and are liable to the same disorders. David himself, though so great a prince, and so great a saint, was not exempt from the most grievous diseases; there was no soundness even in his flesh; probably this was after his sin in the matter of Uriah, and thus did he smart in his flesh for his fleshly lusts. When, at any time, we are dismembered in our bodies, we ought to remember how God has been dishonoured in and through our bodies. He was broken, v. 8. His heart panted, and was in a continual palpitation, v. 10. His strength and limbs failed him; as for the light of his eyes, that was gone from him, either with much weeping, or by a dejection of rheum upon them, or through the lowness of his spirits, and the frequent returns of fainting.

Note. Sickness will tame the strongest body; and the stoutest spirit. David was famed for his courage and great exploits; and yet, when God condescended with him by bodily sickness, and the impressions of his wrath upon his mind, his hair is cut, his heart fails him, and he is become weak as water. Therefore let not the strong man glory in his strength, nor any man set grief at defiance, however it may be thought at a distance.

3. His friends were unkiond to him; (v. 11.) My friends were unknown to me. Our friends may change their looks to us, on the first day of our mirth now stand aloof from my sore; they would not sympathize with him in his griefs, nor so much as come within hearing of his complaints, but, like the priest and Levite, (Luke x. 31.) passed by on the other side. Even his kinsmen, that were bound to him by blood and alliance, stood afar off. See what little reason we have to trust in man, or to wonder if we be disappointed in
one has something or other to propose, that may be a mischief to me.” Mischief, covered and carried on by deceit, may well be called a snare.

3. “They are very insolent and abusive; when my foot slips, when I fall into any trouble, or when I make any mistake, misplace a word, or take a false step, they magnify themselves against me, and are ready to found a charge of malice, and to promise themselves that it will ruin my interest, and that, if I slip, I shall certainly fall and be undone.”

4. “They are not only unjust, but very ungrateful; they hate me wrongfully; (v. 19.) I never did them any ill turn, nor so much as bore them any ill-will, nor ever gave them any provocation; nay, they render evil for good, v. 20. Many a kindness I have done them; for which I might have expected a return of kindness less; for my love they call my adversaries,” cix. 4. Such a rooted enmity is in the hearts of wicked men to goodness for its own sake, that they hate it, even then when they themselves have the benefit of it; they hate prayer, even in those that pray for them; and hate peace, even in those that would be at peace with them; but very ill-natured those are whom no courtesy will oblige, who are rather exasperated by it.

5. “They are very impious and devilish; they are my adversaries merely because I follow the thing that good is;” they hated him, not only for his kindness to them, but for his devotion and obedience to God; they hated him because they hated God, and all that bear his image. ‘If we suffer ill for doing well, we must not think it strange; from the beginning it was so; Cain slew Abel, because his works were righteous; nor must we think it hard, because it will not always be so; for so much the greater will our reward be.

6. They are many and mighty; they are lively, they are strong, they are multiplied: (v. 19.) Lord, how are they increased that trouble me? iii. 1. Holy David was weak and faint, his heart panted, and his strength failed, he was melancholy and of a sorrowful spirit, and persecuted by his friends; but, at the same time, his wicked enemies were strong and lively, and their number increased; let us not therefore be surprised if God’s enemies, by their outward condition, none knows love or hatred by all that is before them. It should seem that David, in this, as in other complaints he makes of his enemies, has an eye to Christ, whose persecutors were such as are here described, perfectly lost to all honour and virtue. None hate Christianity, but such as have first divested themselves of the first principles of humanity, and broken through its most sacred bonds.

II. He reflects, with comfort, upon his own peaceable and pious behaviour, under all the injuries and indignities that were done him. It is then only that our enemies do us a real mischief, when they provoke us to sin; (Neh. vi. 13.) when they prevail to put us out of the possession of our own souls, and drive us from God and our duty; if by divine grace we are enabled to prevent this mischief, we quench their fiery darts, and are saved from harm; if still we hold fast our integrity and our peace, can it hurt us? This David did here.

1. He kept his temper, and was not ruffled or discomposed by any of the slights that were put upon him, or the mischievous things that were said or done against him; (v. 13, 14.) “I, as a deaf man, heard not; I took no notice of the affronts put upon me, did not resent them, nor was put into disquiet or by any of the mischiefs they used, or study to return the injury.” Note, The less notice we take of the unkindness and injuries that are done us, the more we consult the quiet of our own minds. Being deaf, he was dumb, as a man in

our expectations of kindness from men. Adversity tries friendship, and separates between the precious and the vile. It is our wisdom to make sure a Friend in heaven, who will not stand aloof from our sore, and from whose love no tribulation or distress shall be able to separate us. David, in his troubles, was a type of Christ in his agony, Christ on his cross, feeble and sore-broken, and then desert-ed by his friends and kinsmen, who beheld afar off.

Lastly, In the midst of his complaints he con-forts himself with the cognizance God graciously took both of his griefs and of his prayers; (v. 9.) “Lord, all my desire is before thee; thou knowest what I want, and what I would have, my groaning is not hid from thee. Thou knowest the burthen I groan under, and the blessings I groan after.” The groanings which cannot be uttered are not hid from him that searches the heart, and knows what is the mind of the Spirit, Rom. viii. 26, 27. In singing this, and praying it over, whatever burthen lies upon our spirits, we should by faith cast it upon God, and all our care concerning it, and then be easy.

12. They also that seek after my life lay snares for me; and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long. 13. But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. 14. Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproves. 15. For in thee, O Lord, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God. 16. For I said, Hear me; lest otherwise they should rejoice over me: when my foot slippeth, they magnify them-selves against me. 17. For I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me. 18. For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin. 19. But mine enemies are lively, and they are strong; and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied.

20. They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries; because I follow the thing that good is.

21. Forsake me not, O Lord: O my God, be not far from me. 22. Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation.

In these verses,
1. David complains of the power and malice of his enemies, who, it should seem, not only took occasion, from the weakness of his body, and the trouble of his mind, to insult over him, but took advantage thence to do him a mischief. He has a great deal to say against them, which he humbly offers as a reason why God should appear for him, as (xxv. 19.) Consider mine enemies.

2. “They are very subtle and politic; they lay snares, they imagine deceits, and herein they are restless and unwearyed, they do it all the day long; they speak mischievous things one to another; every
whose mouth there are no reproofs; he was as silent as if he had nothing to say for himself, for fear of putting himself into a heat, and incensing his enemies yet more against him; he would not only not recriminate upon them, but not so much as vindicate himself, lest his necessary defence should be construed his offence. Though they sought after his life, and his silence might be taken for confession of his guilt, yet he was as a dumb man that opens not his mouth. Note, When our enemies are most clamorous, it is, generally, our prudence to be silent, or to say little, lest we make bad worse. David could not hope by his mildness to win upon his enemies, or by his soft answers to turn away their wrath, for they were men of such base spirits, that they rendered him evil for good; and yet he carried it thus meekly toward them, that he made them the better the worse. He did not argue with these men, nor give way to his own heat, and forfeit the divine protection, though he could justify himself, before God he will judge and condemn himself; (v. 18.) "I will declare mine iniquity, and not cover it, I will be sorry for my sin, and not make a light matter of it;" and this helped to make him silent under the rebukes of Providence, and the reproaches of men. Note, If we be truly penitent for sin, that will make us patient under afflication, and particularly so under unjust enemies. Two things are required in repentance, (1.) Confession of sin; "I will declare mine iniquity; I will not only in general own myself a sinner, but I will make a particular acknowledgment of what I have done amiss."

We must declare our sins before God freely and fully, and with their aggravating circumstances, that we may give glory to God, and take shame to ourselves. (2.) Contrition for sin; "I will be sorry for it." he will have sorrow; every true penitent grieves for the dishonour of God, and the wrong he has done to himself; "I will be in care or fear about my sin," (so some,) "in fear lest it ruin me, and in care to get pardoned." IV. He concludes with very earnest prayers to God for his gracious presence with him, and seasonable powerful succour in his distress; (v. 21, 22.) "Forsake me not, O Lord, though my friends forsake me, and though I desverse to be forsaken by them." (v. 7.) He would be as ready as others when the heart is ready to fear them." Nothing goes so far to the heart of a good man in affliction, than to be under the apprehension of God's deserting him in wrath; nor does any thing therefore come more feelingly from his heart than this prayer, "Lord, be not thou far from me; make haste for my help; for I am ready to perish, and in danger of being lost, if relief do not come quickly. God gives us leave, it only to call upon him when we are in trouble, but to come to him in that posture. He promised, He that shall come to God, whom I serve, and on whom I depend to hear me out; and my Salvation, who alone art able to save me, who hast engaged thyself by promise to save me, and from whom alone I expect salvation. Is any afflicted, let him thus pray, let him thus plead, let him thus hope, in singing this psalm.

PSALM XXXIX.

David seems to have been in a great strait, when he penned this psalm, and, upon some account or other, very uneasy; for it is with some difficulty that he conquers his passion, and composes his spirit, himself to take that good counsel which he had given to others, (37.) to rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him, without fretting; for it is best to give the good advice than to take it. (1.) It was a very good example, of quietness under affliction. What was the particular trouble which gave occasion for the conflict David was now in, does not appear. Perhaps it was the disease, the sickness of the body, the surprise of the trial of his patience, and that suggested to him these meditations of mortality; and, at the same time, it should seem too, himself was weak and ill, and under some pre- vailing weakness, which might dispirit him. His condition had advantages against him, and watched for his halting, that they might have something to reproach him for. Thus aggrieved, 1. He relates the struggle that was in his breast, between care and comfort, between passion and prayers, v. 1-3. He meditates upon the doctrine of man's frailty and mortality, and prays to God to instruct him in it, v. 4-6. He applies himself to God for the pardon of his sins, the removal of his afflictions, and the lengthening out of his life till he was ready for death, v. 7-13. This is a funeral psalm, and very
proper for the occasion; in singing it, we should get our hearts duly affected with the brevity, uncertainty, and calamitous state, of human life; and those on whose consciences God has, by death, made breaches, will find this psalm of great use to them, in order to their obtaining of what we ought much to aim at under such an affliction, which is, to get it sanctified to us for our spiritual benefit, and to get our hearts reconciled to the holy will of God in it.

To the chief musician, even to Jeduthun. A psalm of David.

I

SAID, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. 2. I was dumb with silence; I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred. 3. My heart was hot within me; while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue, 4. Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. 5. Behold, thou hast made my days as a hand-breadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah. 6. Surely every man walketh in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain; he healeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

David here recollects, and leaves upon record, the workings of his heart under his afflictions; and it is good for us to do so, that what was thought amiss, may be amended, and what was well thought of, may be improved the next time.

1. He remembered the covenants he had made with God, to walk circumspectly, and to be very cautious both of what he did, and what he said. When, at any time, we are tempted to sin, and are in danger of falling into it, we must, call to mind the solemn vows we have made against sin, against the particular sin we are upon the brink of. God can, and will, remind us of them; (Jer. ii. 20.) Thou say'st, I will not transgress; and therefore we ought to remind ourselves of them. So David did here.

2. He remembers that he had resolved, in general, to be very cautious and circumspect in his walking; (v. 1.) I said, I will take heed to my ways; and it was well said, and what he would never in, and therefore must never gainsay. Note, (1.) It is the great concern of every one of us, to take heed to our ways, that is, to walk circumspectly, while others walk at all adventures. (2.) We ought steadfastly to resolve that we will take heed to our ways, and frequently to renew that resolution; fast bind, fast find. (3.) Having resolved to take heed to our ways, we must, upon all occasions, remind ourselves of that resolution, for it is a covenant never to be forgotten, but which we must be always mindful of.

2. He remembers that he had in particular covenanted against tongue sins—That he would not sin with his tongue. That he would not speak amiss, either to offend God, or offend the generation of the right way; (Jer. ii. 17.) A word not so good as we could wish, not to sin in thought; but if an evil thought should arise in his mind, he would lay his hand upon his mouth, and suppress it, that it should go no further: and this is so great an attainment, that if any offend not in word, the same is a perfect man; and so needful a one, that he who seems to be reli-

gious, but bridles not his tongue, his religion is vain.

David had resolved, (1.) That he would, at all times, watch against tongue sins. “I will keep a bridle, or muzzle, upon my mouth;” a bridle upon it, as upon an unruly horse, to guide and direct it, to check and curb it, to keep it in the right way, and on a good path; when he was watching in the habit, is the bridle upon the head; watchful-

ness in the act and exercise, is the hand upon the bridle, a muzzle upon it, as upon an unruly dog that is fierce, and does mischief; by particular steadfast resolution, corruption is restrained from breaking out at the lips, and so is muzzled. (2.) That he would double his guard against them, when there was most danger of scandal; when the wicked is before me, how can I keep from being in company with the wicked, he would take heed of saying any thing that might harden them, or give occasion to them to blaspheme. If good men fall into bad company, they must take heed what they say. Or, when the wicked is before me, in my thoughts. When he was contemplating the pride and power, the prosperity and flourishing estate, of evil-doers, he was tempted to speak amiss; and therefore then he would take special care what he said. Note, the stronger the resolution is, the stronger the resolution must be against it.

II. Pursuant to these covenants, he made a shift, with much ado, to bridle his tongue; (v. 2.) I was dumb with silence, I held my peace even from good. His silence was commendable; and the greater the provocation was, the more praise-worthy was his silence. Watchfulness and resolution, in the strength of God’s grace, will do more toward the bridling of the tongue than we can imagine, though it be an un evil. But what shall we say of his keeping silence even from good? Was it his wisdom, that he restrained good discourse when the wicked were before him, because he would not cast pearls before swine? I rather think it was his weakness; because he might not say anything, he would say nothing, but ran into an extreme, which was a rethor to the law, for that prescribes a mean between extremes. The same law which forbids all corrupt communication, forbids also that, which is good, and to the use of edifying, Eph. iv. 29.

III. The less he spoke, the more he thought, and the more warmly. Binding the discomposed part, did but draw the humour to it; My sorrow was stirred, my heart was hot within me, v. 3. He could bridle his tongue, but he could not keep his passion under; though he suppressed the smoke, that was as a fire in his bones, and while he was musing upon his afflictions, and upon the prosperity of the wicked, the fire burned. Note, Those that are of a fretful discontented spirit, ought not to pore much, for, while they suffer their thoughts to dwell upon the causes of the calamity, the fire of their discontent is fed with fuel, and burns the more furiously. Impatience is a sin that has its ill cause within ourselves, and that is musing, and its ill effects upon ourselves, and that is less than burning. If there were we could prevent the mischief of ungoverned passions, we must redress the grievance of un gover ned thoughts.

IV. When he did speak, at last, it was to the purpose; At the last, I spoke with my tongue; some make what he said, to be the breach of his good purpose, and that, in what he said, he sinned with his tongue; and so they make what follows, to be a passionate wish, that he might die like Elijah, Kings i. 9. But I rather take it to be, not the breach of his good purpose, but the reformation of his mistake in carrying it too far; he had kept silence from good, but now he would so keep silence no longer. He had no thing to say to the wicked that were before him,
for to them he knew not how to place his words, but, after long musing, the first word he said, was, a prayer, and a devout meditation upon a subject, which it will be good for us all to think much of.

He prays to God, that we may be able of the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the near approach of death; (v. 4.) Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days. He does not mean, "Lord, let me know how long I shall live, and when I shall die," we could not, in faith, pray such a prayer, for God has no where promised to let us know, but has, in wisdom, locked up that knowledge among the secret things which belong not to us, nor would it be good for us to know it, but let it be a subject to consider, "I know mine end," means, "Lord, give me wisdom and grace to consider it."

The living know that they shall die, (Eccl. ix. 5.) but few care for thinking of it; we have therefore need to pray, that God by his grace would conquer that aversion which is in our corrupt hearts, to the thoughts of death. "Lord, make me to consider," (1.) What death is; it is my end, the end of my life, and all the employments and enjoyments of life; it is the end of all men. (2.) It is a final period to our state of probation and preparation, and an awful entrance upon a state of recompense and retribution. To the wicked man, it is the end of all his joys; to a godly man, it is the end of all his griefs. "Lord, give me to know my end, to be better acquainted with death, to make it more familiar to me, (Job xvii. 14.) and to be more affected with the greatness of the change. Lord, give me to consider what a serious thing it is to die."

(2.) "How near it is; Lord, give me to consider the measure of my days, that they are measured in the counsel of God; the end is a fixed end, so the word signifies, My days are determined; (Job xlv. 5.) and that the measure is but short; "My days will soon be numbered and finished." When we look upon death as a thing at a distance, we are tempted to adjourn the necessary preparations for it; but when we consider how short life is, we shall see ourselves concerned to do what our hand finds to do, not only with all our might, but with all possible expedition. (3.) That it is continually working in us; "Lord, give me to consider how frail I am, how scanty the stock of life is, and how faint the spirits, which are as the oil, to keep that lamp burning. We find, by daily experience, that the earthly house of this tabernacle is mouldering and going to decay; "Lord, make me to consider this, that we may secure mansions in the house not made with hands."

2. He meditates upon the brevity and vanity of life, pleasing it with God's mercy under the burdens of life, as Job often, and pining it with himself, for his quickening to the business of life. (1.) Man's life on earth is short, and of no continuance, and that is a reason why we should sit close to it, and prepare for the end of it; (v. 5.) He who has not made life his chief end breaks breathes, the breaths, a certain dimension, a small one, and the measure whereof we have always about us, always before our eyes; we need no rod, no pole, no measuring line, wherewith to take the dimension of our days, nor any skill in arithmetic wherewith to compute the number of them; no, we have the standard of them at our fingers' end, and there is no multiplication of it, it is but one hand breadth in all. Our time is short, and God has made it so; for our time is long with him; it is short, and he knows it to be so; "It is as nothing before thee." He remembers how short our time is, lxxxxx. 47. "It is nothing in comparison with thee," so some. All time is nothing to God's eternity, much less our share of time. (2.) Man's life on earth is vain, and of no value, and therefore it is folly to be fond of it, and wisdom to make sure of a better life. Adam is Abel, man is vanity, in his present state; he is not what he seems to be, has not what he promised himself; he shall all that until lie at a continual uncertainty, and if there were not another life after this, all things considered, he were made in vain. He is vanity; he is mortal, he is mutable. Observe how emphatically this truth is expressed here. [1.] Every man is vanity, without exception; high and low, rich and poor, all meet in this. [2.] He is so at his best estate, when he is young, and strong, and healthful, in wealth and honour, and the height of prosperity; when he is most easy, and merry, and secure, and thinks himself most happy.

[3.] He is altogether vanity, as vain as you can imagine. All man is all vanity, so it may be read; every thing about him is uncertain, nothing is substantial and durable but what relates to the new man. [4.] Verily he is so. This is a truth of undoubted certainty, but which we are very unwilling to believe, and need to have solemnly attested to us, as indeed it is by frequent instances. [5.] Selah is annexed, as a note commanding observation. "Stop here, and pause a while, that you may take time to consider and apply this truth, that every man is vanity."

We ourselves are so.

Now, for the proof of the vanity of man, as mortal, he here mentions three things, and shows the vanity of each of them, v. 6. First, The vanity of our joys and honours: Surely every man walks (even when he walks in state, when he walks in measure,) as a shadow, in an image, in a vain show. When he makes a figure, his fashion passes away, and his great pomp is but great fancy, Acts xxv. 23. It is but a show, and therefore a vain show, like the rainbow, the gaudy colours of which must needs vanish and disappear quickly, when the substratum is but a cloud, a vapour; such is life, (Jam. iv. 14.) and therefore such are all the gaieties of it. Secondly, The vanity of our griefs and fears; Surely they are disquieted in vain. Our disquietudes are often groundless; we vex ourselves without any just cause, and the occasions of our trouble are often the creatures of our own fancy and imagination: and they are always fruitless; we disquiet ourselves in vain, for we cannot, with all our disquietment, alter the nature of things, nor the counsel of God; things will be as they are, when we have disquieted ourselves ever so much about them. Thirdly, The vanity of our cares and toils. He takes a great deal of pains to show this, and they are but a cloud of man's musings in the furrows of the field, good for nothing, unless they be spread. But when he has filled his treasures with his trash, he knows not who shall gather them, nor to whom they shall descend when he is gone: for he shall not take them away with him. He asks not, For whom do I labour? and that is his folly, Eccl. iv. 8. But if he did ask, he could not tell whether he should be a wise man or a fool, a friend or a foe; (Eccl. ii. 19.) This is vanity.

7. And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee. 8. Deliver me from all my transgressions; make me not the reproach of the foolish. 9. I was dumb, and opened not my mouth; because thou didst it. 10. Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thy hand. 11. When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou maketh his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity. Selah. 12. Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; hold
not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were. 13. O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.

The psalmist, having meditated on the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the vanity and vexation of spirit that attend all the comforts of life, here, in these verses, turns his eyes and heart heavenward. When there is no solid satisfaction to be had in the creature, it is to be found in God, and in communion with him; and to him we should be driven by our appointments in the world. David here expresses,

I. His dependence on God, v. 7. Seeing all is vanity, and man himself is so, 1. He despairs of a happiness in the things of the world, and disclaims all expectation from it: "Now, Lord, what wait I for? Even nothing from the things of sense and time; I have nothing to wish for, nothing to hope for, from this earth." Note, The consideration of the vanity and frailty of human life, should deaden our desires to the things of this world, and lower our expectations from it. If the world be such a thing as this, God deliver me from having or seeking my portion in it. We cannot count upon constant health and prosperity, nor upon comfort in any relation, for it is all as uncertain as our continuance here. "Now, though I have sometimes foolishly promised myself this and the other, from the world, now I am of another mind." 2. He still holds happiness and satisfaction in God: My hope is in thee. Note, When creature-confidences fail, it is our comfort that we have a God to go to, a God to trust to, and we should thereby be quickened to take so much the faster hold of him by faith.

II. His submission to God, and his cheerful acquiescence in his holy will, v. 9. If our hope be in God for a happiness in the other world, we may well afford to reconcile ourselves to all the dispensations of his providence concerning us in this world; "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, in a way of complaint and murmuring." He now again recovered that serenity and sedateness of mind which were disturbed, v. 2. Whatever comforts he is deprived of, whatever crosses he is burdened with, he will be easy; "because thou didst it;" it did not come to pass by chance, but according to the counsel of God. We may here see, 1. A good God doing all, and ordering all events concerning us. Of every event we may say, "This is the finger of God, it is the Lord's doing," whoever were the instruments. 2. A good man, for that reason, saying nothing against it. He is dumb, he has nothing to object, no question to ask, no dispute to raise upon it. All that God does is well done.

III. His desire toward God, and the prayers he puts up to him; Is any afflicted? Let him pray, as David here,

1. For the pardoning of his sin, and the preventing of his shame, v. 8. Before he prays, (v. 10.) Remove thy stroke from me, he prays, (v. 8.) "Deliver me from all mine offences, from the guilt I have contracted, the punishment I have deserved, and the power of corruption I have beencaptivated by." When God forges our sins, he delivers us from them, when he delivers us from them all. He pleads, Make me not a reproach to the foolish. Wicked people are foolish people; and then they show their folly most, when they think to show their wit, by scoffing at God's people. When David prays that God would pardon his sins, and not make him a reproach, it is to be taken as a prayer for peace of conscience; ("Lord, leave me not to the power of melancholy, which the foolish will laugh at me for;") and as a prayer for grace, that God would never leave him to himself, so far as to do any thing that might make him a reproach to bad men. Note, This is a good reason why we should both watch and pray against sin, because the credit of our profession is nearly concerned in the preservation of our integrity.

2. For the removal of his affliction, that he might speedily be eased of his present burdens; (v. 10.) Remove thy stroke away from me. Note, When we are under the correcting hand of God, our eye must be to God himself, and not to any other, for relief. He only, that inflicts the stroke, can remove it; and we may then, in faith, and with satisfaction, pray that our afflictions may be removed, when our ways are pleasant, (Isa. xxxviii. 17.) and when, as here, the psalmist is saying, "I am sick, and have no work, and we are humbled under the hand of God. (1.) He pleads the great extremity he was reduced to by his affliction, which made him the proper object of God's compassion; I am consumed by the blow of thy hand. His sickness prevailed to that degree, that his spirits failed, his strength was wasted, and his body emaciated. "The blow, or conflict, of thy hand has brought me even to the gates of death." Note, the strongest resolutions, and the best of men cannot bear up under, much less make head against, the power of God's wrath. It was not his case only, but any man will find himself an unequal match for the Almighty, v. 11. When God, at any time, contends with us, when with rebukes he corrects us, [1.] We cannot imitate the equity of his controversy, but must acknowledge that he is righteous in it; for, whenever he corrects man, it is for iniquity. Our ways and our doing procure the trouble to ourselves, and we are beaten with a rod of our own making. It is the yoke of our transgressions, though it be bound with his hand, Lam. i. 14. [2.] We cannot oppose the effects of his controversy, but he will be too hard for us. As we have nothing to move in arrest of his judgment, so we have no way of escaping the execution. God's rebukes make man's beauty to consume away like a moth; we often see, we sometimes feel, how much the body is weakened and decaying by knowledge in a little time; the countenance is changed; where are the ruddy cheek and lip, the sprightly eye, the lively look, the smiling face? It is the reverse of all this that presents itself to view. What a poor thing is beauty; and what fools are they that are proud of it, or in love with it, when it will certainly, and may quickly, be consumed thus! Some make the moth to represent man, who is as easily crushed as a moth with the touch of a finger, Job i. 9. Others make it to represent the divine rebukes, which silently and insensibly waste and consume us, as the moth does the garment. All which abundantly proves what he had said before, that surely every man is vanity, weak and helpless; so he will be found when God comes to contend with him.

(2.) He pleads the good impressions made upon him by his affliction. He hoped that the end was accomplished for which it was sent before it could be removed in mercy; and unless an affliction has done its work, though it may be removed, it is not removed in mercy. [1.] It had set him a weeping, and he hoped God would take notice of that; when the Lord God called to mourning, he answered the call, and accommodated himself to the dispensation, and therefore could, in prayer, pray that God would not, thy peace at my tears, v. 12. He that does not have a reproach to bear, and whose children are the children of men, much less his own children, will not hold his peace at their tears, but will either speak deliverance for them, (and if he speak, it is done,) or, in the mean time, speak comfort to them, and make them to hear joy and gladness.
had set him a praying; and afflictions are sent to stir up prayer. If they have that effect, and, when we are afflicted, we pray more, and pray better, than before, we may hope that God will hear our prayer, and give ear to our cry; for the prayer which, by his providence, he gives occasion for, and which, by his Spirit of grace, he indites, shall not return void. [3.] It had helped to weary him from the world, and, in the midst of his distress, he had begun, more than ever, to look upon himself as a stranger and sojourner here, like all his fathers, not at home in this world, but travelling through it to another, to a better, and would never reckon himself at home till he came to heaven. He pleads it with God; "Lord, take cognizance of me, and of my wants and burdens, for I am a stranger here, and therefore meet with strange usage; I am slighted and oppressed as a stranger; and whence should I expect relief from, than from that other country to which I belong?"

Lastly, He prays for a reprove yet a little longer; (v. 13.) "O spare me, ease me, raise me up from this illness, that I may recover strength both in body and mind, that I may get into a more calm and composed frame of spirit, and may be better prepared for another world, before I go hence by death, and shall be no more in this world." We may make this to be the prayer of a passionate soul, that God would send him help quickly, or it would be too late, like that, Job x. 20, 21. But I rather take it as a pious prayer, that God would continue him here, till by his grace he had made him fit to go hence, and that he might finish the work of life, before his life was finished; Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee.

PSALM XL.

It should seem, David penned this psalm, upon occasion of his deliverance, by the power and goodness of God, from some great and pressing trouble, by which he was in danger of being overwhelmed; probably, it was some trouble of mind, arising from a sense of sin, and of God's displeasure against him for it; whatever it was, the same Spirit that indited his praises for that deliverance, was in him, at the same time, a Spirit of prophecy, testifying of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Thus; if ever he was aware, he was led to speak of Christ's undertaking, and the discharge of his undertaking, in words that must be applied to Christ only; and therefore how far the praises that here go before Christ's undertaking, and the prophecies that follow, may safely and profitably be applied to him, it will be worth while to consider. In this psalm, I. David records God's favour to him, in delivering him out of his deep distress, with thankfulness to his praise, v. 1-5. II. That he takes occasion to speak of the work of our redemption by Christ, v. 6-10. III. That gives him encouragement to pray to God for mercy and grace, both for himself and for his friends, v. 11-17. If, in singing this psalm, we mix faith with the prophecy of Christ, and join in sincerity with the praises and prayers here offered up, we make melody with our hearts to the Lord.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

1. WA I TED patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. 2. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. 3. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord. 4. Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust; and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. 5. Many, O Lord my God, are thy won-

derful works when thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.

In these verses, we have,

I. The great distress and trouble that the psalmist had been in. He had plunged into a horrible pit, and into miry clay, (v. 2.) out of which he was brought himself, and God held him back from drowning himself sinking yet further. He says nothing, here, either of the sickness of his body, or the insults of his enemies, and therefore we have reason to think it was some inward disquiet, and perplexity of spirit, that was now his greatest grievance. Despondency of spirit, under the sense of God's withdrawals, and prevailing doubts and fears about the eternal state, are indeed a horrible pit many are in, and have been so to many a dear child of God.

II. His humble attendance upon God, and his believing expectations from him in those depths; I waited patiently for the Lord, v. 1. Waiting, I waited. He expected relief from no other than from God; the same hand that tears, must heal, that smites, must bind up, (Hos. vi. 1.) it will never be done. From God he expected relief, and having no other to expect, or to doubt it would come in due time. There is power both in God to help the weakest, and grace enough in God to help the unworthiest, of all his people that trust in him. But he waited patiently; which intimates that the relief did not come quickly; yet he doubted not but it would come, and resolved to continue believing, and hoping, and praying, till it did come. Those whose expectation is from God may wait with assurance, but must wait with patience. Now this is very applicable to Christ. His agony, both in the garden, and on the cross, was the same continued, and it was a horrible pit and miry clay. Then was his soul troubled and exceeding sorrowful; but then he prayed, Father, glorify thy name; Father, save me; then he kept hold of his relation to his Father, "My God, my God," and thus waited patiently for him.

III. His comfortable experience of God's goodness to him in his distress, which he records for the honour of God, and his own and others' encouragement.

1. God answered his prayers; He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. Those that wait patiently for God, though they may wait long, do not wait in vain. Our Lord Jesus was heard, in that he feared, Heb. v. 7. Nay, he was sure that the Father heard him always. 2. He showed his fears, and stilled the tumult of his spirits, and gave him a settled peace of conscience; (v. 2.) He brought me out of that horrible pit of despondency and despair, scattered the clouds, and shone bright upon my soul, with the assurances of his favour; and not only so, but set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. Those that have been under the prevalence of a religious melancholy, and by the grace of God have been delivered, may apply this very feeling to themselves; they are brought up out of a horrible pit. (1.) The mercy is completed by the setting of their feet upon a rock, where they find firm footing, are as much elevated with the hopes of heaven, as they were, before, cast down with the fears of hell. Christ is the Rock on which a poor soul may stand fast, and on whose mediation alone between us and God we can build any solid hopes or satisfaction. (2.) It is continued in the establishment of their goings. Where God has given a
steadfast hope, he expects there should be a steady, regular, conversation; and if that be the blessed fruit of it, we have reason to acknowledge, with abundances of thankfulness, the riches and power of
his grace.
3. He filled him with joy, as well as peace, in believing; "He has put a new song in my mouth; he has given me cause to rejoice, and a heart to rejoice." He was brought, as it were, into a new world. See Rom. vi. 10. His new song, even praise to our God; for to his praise and glory, must all our songs be sung. Fresh mercies, especially such as we never before received, call for new songs. This is applicable to our Lord Jesus, in his reception to paradise, his resurrection from the grave, and his exaltation to the joy and glory set before him; he was brought out of the horrible pit, set upon a rock, and had a new song put in his mouth.

IV. The good improvement that should be made of this instance of God's goodness to David.

1. David's experience would be an encouragement to many to hope in God, and, for that end, he leaves it here upon record; Many shall see, and fear, and trust in the Lord. They shall fear the Lord and his justice, which brought David, and the Son of David, into that horrible pit; and shall say, The Lord shall distinguish; This shall he done to the dry? They shall fear the Lord and his goodness, in filling the mouth of David, and the Son of David, with new songs of joy and praise. There is a holy, reverent, fear of God, which is not only consistent with, but the foundation of, our hope in him. They shall not fear him and shun him, but fear him and trust in him, in their greatest straights, not doubting but to find him as able and ready to help them as David did, in his distress. God's deserting us, and our great, Continued encouragement to trust in God; when it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief for our sins, he demanded our debt from him; and when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand, he made it to appear that he had accepted the payment he made, and was satisfied with it; and what greater encouragement can we have to fear and worship God, and to trust in him? (Ps. xxii. 23. v. 1, 2.)

The psalmist invites others to make God their Hope, as he did, by pronouncing those happy that do so; (v. 4.) "Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his Trust, and him only; that has great and good thoughts of him, and is entirely devoted to him, and respects not the proud; does not do as they do that trust in themselves, nor depends upon those who proudly encourage others to trust in them, for both the one and the other turn aside to lies, as indeed all those that do turn aside from God." This is applicable, particularly, to our faith in Christ. Blessed are they that trust in him, and in his righteousness alone, and respect not the proud Pharisees, that set up their own righteousness in competition with that, that will not be governed by their dictates, nor turn aside to lies, with the unbelieving Jews, who submit not to the righteousness of God, Rom. x. 3. Blessed are they who escape that temptation.

2. The joyful sense he had of this mercy, led him to observe, with thankfulness, the many other favours he had received from God, v. 5. When God puts new songs into our mouth, we must not forget our former songs, but repeat them; "Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, both for me and others; this is but one of many." Many are the benefits with which we are daily loaded, both by the providence, and by the grace, of God. (1.) They are his works; not only the gifts of his bounty, but the operations of his power; he works for us, he works in us, and thus he favours us with matter, not only for thanks, but for praise. (2.) They are wonderful; the contrivance of them admirable; his condescension to us, in bestowing them upon us, admirable; eternity itself will be short enough to be spent in the admiration of them. (3.) All his wonderful works are the product of his thoughts to us-ward. He does all, according to the counsel of his own will, (Eph. i. 11.) the purposes of his grace which he purposed in himself, according to the counsel of his will, (Eph. i. 11.) These are the projects of infinite wisdom, the designs of everlasting love; (1 Cor. ii. 7. Jer. xxxiii. 3.) thoughts of good, and not of evil, Jer. xxix. 11. His gifts and callings will therefore be without repentance, because they are not sudden resolves, but the result of his thoughts, his many thoughts, to us-ward. (4.) They are innumerable; they cannot be methodised, or reckoned up in order; there is an order in all God's works, but they are so many that present themselves to our view at once, that we know not where to begin, nor which to name next; the order of them, and their natural references and dependencies, and how the links of the golden chain are joined, are a mystery to us, and what we shall not be able to account for, till the vail be rent, and the mystery of God finished. Nor can they be counted, not the heads of them; when we have said the most we can, of the wonders of divine love to us, we must conclude with an Et cetera, and adore the depth, despairing to find the bottom.

6. Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. ; Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me; 8. I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. 9. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips. O Lord, thou knowest. 10. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation.

The psalmist, being struck with amazement at the wonderful works that God had done for his people, is strangely carried out here to foretell that work of wonder which excels all the rest, and is the foundation and foretaste of all, that of our redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ. God's thoughts, which were to us-ward concerning that work, were the most curious, the most copious, the most gracious, and therefore to be most admired. This paragraph is quoted by the apostle, (Heb. x. 5, &c.) and applied to Christ, and his undertaking for us. As in the institutions, so in the devotions, of the Old Testament, there is more of Christ than perhaps the Old Testament saints were aware of; and when the apostle would speak of the Redeemer's voluntary undertaking of his work, he does not fetch his account out of the book of God's secret counsels, which belong not to us, but from the things revealed. Observe,

1. The utter insufficiency of the legal sacrifices to atone for sin, in order to our peace with God and our happiness in him; Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; thou wouldest not have the Redeemer to offer them; something he must have to offer, but not these; (Heb. viii. 3.) therefore he must not be of the house of Aaron, Heb. vii. 14.
Or, In the days of the Messiah, burnt-offering and sin-offering will be no longer required, but all those ceremonial institutions will be abolished. But that is not all; even while the law concerning them was in full force, it might be said, God did not desire them, nor accept them, for they could in no way yield the guilt of sin by satisfying God's justice; the life of a sheep, which is so much inferior in value to that of a man, (Matth. xii. 12,) could not pretend to be an equivalent, much less an expedient, to preserve the honour of God's government and laws, and repair the injury done to that honour by the sin of man. They could not take away the terror of sin, by pacifying the conscience, nor the power of wicked influence; nor could they counteract the fear of Him, who is the fountain of the life of a sheep, which is so much inferior in value to that of a man

it was written of him. 1. In the close rolls of the divine decree and counsel; there it was written, that his ear was opened, and he said, Lo, I come, there the covenant of redemption was recorded, the counsel of peace between the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost; and he had an everlasting commandment he received of his Father. 2. In the letters patent of the Old Testament, Moses and all the prophets testified of him; in all the volumes of that book something or other was written of him, which he had an eye to, that all might be accomplished, John xix. 28.

V. The pleasure he took in his undertaking; having freely offered himself to it, he did not fail, nor shew that it was a wretched business; but, to the contrary, did experience satisfaction to himself; (v. 8, 9;) I delight to do thy will, O my God; it was, to Christ, his meat and drink to go on with this work appointed to him; (John iv. 34.) and the reason here given, is, Thy law is within my heart; it is written there, it rules there, it is an active commanding principle there. It is meant of the law, concerning the work and office of the Mediator, what he was to do and suffer; this law was dear to him, and had an influence upon him in his whole undertaking. Note, When the law of God is written in our hearts, our duty will be our delight.

VI. The publication of the gospel to the children of men, even in the great congregation, v. 9, 10. The same that, as a Priest, wrought out redemption for us, as a Prophet, by his own preaching first, then by his apostles, and still by his word and Spirit, makes it known to us. The great salvation began to be spoken by the Lord, Heb. ii. 5. It is the gospel of Christ, that is preached to all nations. Observe, 1. What it is that is preached; it is righteousness, (v. 9;) God's righteousness, (v. 10;) the everlasting righteousness which Christ has brought in; (Dan. ix. 24.) compare Rom. i. 16, 17. It is God's faithfulness to his promise, and the salvation which had long been looked for. It is God's loving-kindness and his truth, his mercy according to his word. Note, In the work of our redemption, we ought to take notice how bright all the divine attributes shine, and give to God the praise of each of them. 2. To whom it is preached; to the great congregation, (v. 9;) and again, v. 10. When Christ was here on earth, he preached to multitudes, thousands at a time. The gospel was preached both to Jews and Gentiles, to great congregations of both. Solemn religious assemblies are a divine institution, and in them the glory of God, in the face of Christ, ought to be both praised, to the glory of God, and preached for the edification of men. 3. How it is preached; freely and openly; I have not restrained my lips, I have not hid it, I have not concealed it. This intimates, that whoever undertook to preach the gospel of Christ, would be in great temptation to hide it and conceal it, because it must be preached with great contention, and in the face of great opposition; but Christ himself, and those whom he calls to that work, set their faces as a flint. (Isa. v. 22.) They were sufficiently carried on in it. It is well for us, that they were so, for by this means our eyes come to see this joyful light, and our ears to hear this joyful sound; which otherwise we might for ever have perished in ignorance of.

11. Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord: let thy loving-kindness and thy truth continually preserve me. 12. For innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of my
head; therefore my heart faileth. 13. Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me: O Lord, make haste to help me. 14. Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward, and put to shame, that wish me evil. 15. Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame, that say unto me, Aha, aha! 16. Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The Lord be magnified. 17. But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.

The psalmist, having meditated upon the work of redemption, and spoken of it in the person of the Messiah, now comes to make improvement of the doctrine of his mediation between us and God, and therefore speaks in his own person. Christ having done his Father's will, and finished his work, and given orders for the preaching of the gospel to every creature, we are encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace, for mercy and grace.

I. This may encourage us to pray for the mercy of God, and to put ourselves under the protection of that mercy; (v. 11.) "Lord, thou hast not spared thy Son, nor withheld him; withhold not thou thy tender mercies then, which thou hast laid up for us in him; for wilt thou not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32.) "Let thy loving-kindness and thy truth continually preserve me." The best saints are in continual danger, and see themselves undone, if they be not continually preserved by the grace of God; and the everlasting loving-kindness and truth of God are that which we have to depend upon for our preservation to the heavenly kingdom, lxi. 7.

II. This may encourage us, in reference to the guilt of sin, that Jesus Christ has done that towards our discharge from it which sacrifice and offering could not do. See here, 1. The frightful sight he had of sin, v. 12. This was that which made the discovery he was now favoured with, of a Redeemer, very welcome to him. He saw his iniquities to be evils, the worst of evils; he saw that they compassed him about; in all the reviews of his life, and his reflections upon each step of it, still he discovered something amiss. The threatening consequences of his sin surrounded him; look which way he would, he saw some mischief or other waiting for him, which he was conscious to himself his sins had deserved. He saw them taking hold of him, arresting him, as the bulwark does the poor debtor; he saw them to be innumerable, and more than the hairs of his head. Convinced, awakened, consciences are apprehensive of danger from the numberless number of the sins of infirmity, which seem small as hairs, but, being numerous, are very dangerous; Who can understand his errors? God numbers our hairs, (Matth. x. 30.) which yet we cannot number; so he keeps an account of our sins, which we cannot account. The sight of them oppressed him, that he could not look up, or lift up his head; I am not able to look up, much less could he keep up his heart; therefore my heart fails me. Note, The sight of our sins in their own colours would drive us to distraction, if we had not at the same time some sight of a Saviour. 2. The careful course he had to God, under the sense of sin; (v. 10.) seeing himself brought by his sins to the very brink of ruin, eternal ruin, with what a holy passion does he cry out, "Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me; (v. 13.) O save me from the wrath to come, and the present terrors I am in, through the apprehensions of that wrath; I am undone, I die, I perish, without speedy relief. In a case of this nature, where the bliss of an immortal soul is concerned, delays are dangerous; therefore, O Lord, make haste to help me."

III. This may encourage us to hope for victory over our spiritual enemies, that seek after our souls to destroy them; (v. 14.) they meditate about continually seeking to devour. If Christ has triumphed over them, we, through him, shall be more than conquerors. In the belief of this, we may pray, with humble boldness, let them be ashamed and confounded together, and driven backward, v. 15. Both the conversion of a sinner, and the glorification of a saint, are great disappointments to Satan, who does this among us, with all his power and subtlety, to hinder both; now, our Lord Jesus having undertaken to bring about the salvation of all his chosen, we may in faith pray, that, both these ways, that great adversary may be confounded. When a child of God is brought into that horrible pit, and the miry clay, Satan cries, Aha, aha, thinking he has gained his point; but he shall rage when he sees the brand plucked out of the fire, and shall be desolate, for a reward of his scorn. The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan. The accuser of the brethren is cast out.

IV. This may encourage all that seek God, and love his salvation, to rejoice in him, and to praise him, v. 16. See here, 1. The character of good people; conformably to the laws of natural religion, they seek God, desire his favour, and in all their exigencies apply themselves to him, as a people should seek unto their God; conformably to the laws of revealed religion, they love his salvation, that great salvation of which the prophets insisted and searched diligently, which the Redeemer undertook to work out when he said, Lo, I come. All that shall be saved love the salvation, not only as a salvation from hell, but a salvation from sin. 2. The happiness secured to good people by this prophetic prayer; They that seek God shall rejoice and be glad in him, and with good reason, for he will not only be found of them, but will be their happiness. But, saith he, Their salvation shall be filled with the joy of his salvation, and shall say continually, The Lord be magnified; and thus they shall have a heaven upon earth; blessed are they that are thus still praising God.

Lastly, This may encourage the saints, in distress and affliction, to trust in God, and comfort themselves in him, v. 17. David himself was one of these, I am poor and needy; a king, perhaps, now on the throne, and yet, being troubled in spirit, he calls himself poor and needy, lest and undone, without a Saviour; in want and distress, yet the Lord thinketh upon me, in and through the Mediator, by whom we are made accepted. Men forget the poor and needy, and seldom think of them; but God's thoughts toward them, which he had spoken of, (v. 5.) are their support and comfort. They may assure themselves that God is their Help in trouble, their troubles, and will be, in due time, their Deliverer out of all their trouble; they will make no long tarrying; for the vision is for an appointed time, and therefore, though it tarry, we may wait for it, for it shall come; it will come, it will not tarry.

PSALMS XL.

God's kindness and truth have often been the support and comfort of the saints, when they have had most experience of men's unkindness and treachery. David here found them so upon a sick bed; he found his enemies very barbarous, but his God very gracious. 1. He here
comforts himself in his communion with God under his sickness, by faith receiving and laying hold of God's promises to him, (v. 1, 3.) and lifting up his heart in prayer to God: He here represents the malice of his enemies against him, their false accusations of him, their spiteful reflections upon him, and their insolent conduct toward him, v. 5, 9. He leaves his case with God, not doubting but that he would own and favor their enemies, v. 10, 11, and so the psalm concludes with a doxology, v. 13. Is any afflicted with sickness? let him sing the beginning of this. Is any persecuted by enemies? let him sing the latter end of it; and we may and should so meditate as if we were committed to the calamities and comforts of good people in this world.

To the chief musician. A Psalm of David.

1. BLESSED is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. 2. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. 3. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness. 4. I said, O Lord, be merciful unto me; heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.

In these verses we have,

I. God's promises of succour and comfort to those that consider the poor; and we may suppose that David makes mention of these, with application, either, 1. To his friends, who were kind to him, and very considerable of his case, now that he was in affliction; Blessed is he that considers poor David. Here and there he met with one that sympathized with him, and was concerned for him, and kept up their good opinion of him, that, notwithstanding his afflictions, while his enemies were so insolent and abusive to him; on these he pronounced this blessing, not doubting but that God would recompense to them all the kindness they had done him, particularly when they also came to be in affliction. The provocations which his enemies gave him did but endear his friends so much the more to him: or, 2. To himself: he had the testimony for him, and had considered the poor; that, when he was in honour and power at court, he had taken cognizance of the wants and miseries of the poor, and had provided for their relief, and therefore was sure God would, according to his promise, strengthen and comfort him in his sickness. Here is a comment upon that promise; Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Observe,

(1.) What the mercy is which is required of us, it is to consider the poor or afflicted, whether in mind, body, or estate: these are we to consider with prudence and tenderness; we must take notice of their affliction, and inquire into their state; must sympathize with them, and judge charitably concerning them; we must wisely consider the poor; we must ourselves be instructed by the poverty and affliction of others; it must be Maschil to us, that is the word here used.

(2.) What the mercy is that is promised to us, if we thus show mercy; He that considers the poor, if he cannot relieve them, yet he considers them, and has a compassionate concern for them, and, in relieving them, does it considerately and with discretion, shall be considered by his God: he shall not only be recompenced in the resurrection of the just, but he shall be blessed upon the earth; this branch of goodness, as much as any other, has the promise of the life that now is, and is usually recompensed with temporal blessings. Liberality to the poor is the surest and safest way of thriving; such as practise it may be sure of Seasonable and effectual relief from God.

[1.] In all troubles; He will deliver them in the day of evil, so that, when the times are at the worst, it shall go well with them, and they shall not fall into the calamities in which others are involved; if any be hid in the day of the Lord's anger, they shall. Those who thus distinguish themselves from those that have hard hearts, God will distinguish from those that have hard usage. And, in danger! He will preserve and keep them alive; and those who have a thousand times forfeited their lives, as the best have, must acknowledge it as a great favour if they have their lives given them for a prey. He does not say, "They shall be preserved," but, "They shall be preserved and kept alive, when the arrows of death fly thick round about them." Do their enemies threaten them? God will not deliver them into the will of their enemies; and the most potent enemy we have can have no power against us, but what is given him from above. The good-will of a God that loves us, is sufficient to secure us from the ill-will of all that hate us, men or devils! and that good-will we may promise ourselves an interest in, if we have considered the poor, and helped to relieve and rescue them.

[2.] Particularly in sickness; (v. 3.) The Lord will strengthen him, both in body and mind, upon the bed of languishing, on which he had long lain sick, and he will make all his bed; a very condescending expression, alluding to the care of those that nurse and tend sick people, especially of mothers for their children when they are sick, which is to make their beds easy for them; and that bed must needs be well-made which God himself has the making of. He will make all his bed from head to foot, and as it was his to turn his bed, so he will turn his bed, (so the word is,) to shake it up, and make it very easy; or, he will turn it into a bed of health. Note, God has promised his people that he will strengthen them, and make them easy, under their bodily pains and sicknesses. He has not promised that they shall never be sick, nor that they shall not lie long languishing, nor that their sickness shall not be unto death; but he has promised to enable them to bear their affliction with patience, and cheerfully to wait the issue; the soul shall by his grace be made to dwell at ease, when the body lies in pain.

II. David's prayer, directed and encouraged by these promises; (v. 4.) I said, Heal my soul. It is good for us to keep some account of our prayers, that we may not unsay, in our practices, any thing that we said in our prayers. Here is, 1. His humble petition; Lord, be merciful to me. He appeals to mercy, as one that knew he could not stand the test of strict justice. The best saints, even those that have been merciful to the poor, have not made God their Debtor, but must throw themselves on his mercy. When we are under the rod, we must thus recommend ourselves to the tender mercy of our God; Lord, heal my soul. Sin is the sickness of the soul, pordening mercy heals it, renewing grace heals it; and this spiritual healing we should be more carful for, that our sins are not strictly our own; the public confession; "I have sinned against thee, and therefore my soul needs healing; I am a sinner, a miserable sinner, therefore, God, be merciful to me," Luke xviii. 13. It does not appear that this has any reference to any particular gross act of sin, but, in general, to his many sins of iniquity, which his sickness set in order before him, and the dread of the consequences of which made him pray, Heal my soul.

5. Mine enemies speak evil of me; When
shall he die, and his name perish? 6. And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; when he goeth abroad, he telleth it. 7. All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt. 8. An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him: and now that he lieth, he shall rise up no more.

9. Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me. 10. But thou, O Lord, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them. 11. By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me. 12. And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever. 13. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.

David often complains of the insolent conduct of his enemies toward him, when he was sick, which, as it was very barbarous in them, so it could not but be very grievous to him. They were not, indeed, arrived at that modern pitch of wickedness, of poisoning his meat and drink, or giving him something to make him sick; but, when he was sick, they insulted over him; (v. 5.) Mine enemies speak evil of me; designing thereby to grieve his spirit, to ruin his reputation, and so to sink his spirits. I. They longed for his death; When shall he die, and his name perish with him? He had but an uncomfortable life, and yet they grudged him that; but it was a useful life, he was, upon all accounts, the greatest ornament and blessing of his country; and yet, it seems, there were some who were sick of him, as the Jews were of Paul, crying out, Away with such a fellow from the earth. We ought not to desire the death of any; but to desire the death of useful men, for their usefulness, has much in it of the venom of the old serpent. They envied him his name, and the honour he had won, and doubted not but, if he were dead, that would be laid in the dust with him; yet, see how they were mistaken; when he had served his generation, he did die; (Acts xiii. 36.) but did his name perish? No, it lives and flourishes, to this day, in the sacred writings, and will, to the end of time; for the memory of the just is, and shall be, blessed.

II. They picked up every thing they could, to reproach him with; (v. 6.) "If he come to see me," (as it has always been reckoned a piece of neighbourly kindness to visit the sick,) "he speaks vanity; he pretends friendship, and that his errand is to mourn with me, and to comfort me; he tells me he is very sorry for me; and if you will not give me my wish, I will curse you to my health; but it is all flattery and falsehood." We complain, and justly, of the want of sincerity in our days, and that there is scarcely any true friendship to be found among men; but it seems, by this, that the former days were no better than these; David's friends were all compliment, and had nothing of that affection for him in their hearts which they made profession of; nor was that the worst of it; it was not only a case of deceit, but they came to see that, they might make themselves ridiculous upon everything he said or did, and might represent it as they pleased to others, with their own comments upon it, so as to render him odious or ridiculous; His heart gathereth iniquity to itself; puts ill constructions upon every thing; and then, when he goes among his companions, he tells it them, that they may tell it others; Report, say they, and we will report it, Jer. xx. 13. If he complained much of his ill, they would reproach him for his pusillanimity; if he scarcely complained at all, they would reproach him for his stupidity. If he prayed, others would mock him; if he reproved sinners, they would mock him; if he did not for shame speak out, and which, if they did, they knew would be confuted; whisperers and backbiters are put together among the worst of sinners, Rom. i. 29, 30. They whispered, that their plot against him might not be discovered, and so defeated; there is seldom whispering, (we say,) but there is lying, or some mischief on foot. Those whisperers devised evil to David; concluding he would die, if he contrived quickly, theycontrived how to broach all the measures he had concert for the public good, to prevent the prosecution of them, and to undo all that he had hitherto been doing; this he calls devising hurt against him; and they doubted not but to gain their point; An evil disease, a thing of Belial, say they, clears fast unto him; the reproach with which they had loaded his name, they hoped, would clear so fast to it, that it would wither with him, and then they should gain their point; they went by a modern and usual method of reproach, which is, to cast upon his honour thereheto—Fling an abundance of calumny, and part will be sure to stick. The disease he is now under will certainly make an end of him; for it is the punishment of some great enormous crime, which he will not be brought to repent of, and proves him, however he has appeared, a son of Belial; or, it is inflicted by Satan, who is called Belial, the wicked one, 2 Cor. vi. 13. It is (according to a loose way of speaking, they have) "as a devilish disease, and therefore it will clear fast to him, and now that he lieth, now that his distemper prevails so far as to oblige him to keep his bed, he shall rise up no more, we shall be rid of him, and divide the spoil of his preferments." We are not to think it strange, if, when good men are sick, there be those that hope for their death, as well as those that fear it, which makes the world not worthy of them, Rev. xi. 10.

IV. There was one particularly, in whom he had reposed a great deal of confidence, that took part with his enemies, and was as abusive to him as any of them; (v. 9.) My own familiar friend; probably, he means Ahithophel, who had been his bosom friend, and prime minister of state, in whom he trusted as one inviolably firm to him, and whose advice he relied much upon, in dealing with his enemies, who did eat of his bread, with whom he had been very intimate, and whom he had taken to sit at the table with him; nay, whom he had maintained and given a livelihood to, and so oblied, both in gratitude and interest, to adhere to him. They had their maintenance from the king's palace, did not think it meet for them to see the king's dishonour, (Ezra iv. 14.) much less to do him dishonour; yet this base and treacherous confidant of David's, forgot all the eaten bread, and lifted up his heel against him that had lifted up his head; not only deserted him, but insulted him, which endeavoured to supplant them. Those are wicked indeed, whom no courtesy done them, nor confidence reposed in them, will oblige; and let us not
1. He prayed to God that they might be disappointed. He said nothing to them, but turned himself to God; “O Lord, be thou merciful to me, for they are unmerciful,” v. 10. He had prayed in revenge; David knew that if he could but procure an opportunity of making it appear that he bears no malice to those that have been injurious to him, but, on the contrary, that he is ready to do them any good office. Or, “That, as a king, I may put them under the marks of my just displeasure, banish them the court, and forbid them my table for the future;” which would be a necessary piece of justice, for warning to others. Perhaps in this prayer is couched a prophecy of the execution of his design, on whom God raised up, that he might be a just Avenger of all the wrongs done to him and to his people, particularly by the Jews, whose utter destruction followed, not long after.

2. He assured himself that they would be disappointed; (v. 11.) “By this I know that thou favourst me and my interest, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.” They hoped for his death, but he found himself, through mercy, recovering, and thus he added to the comfort of his recovery. That it would be a disappointment to his adversaries; they would be crest-fallen and wretchedly ashamed, and there would be no occasion to upbraid them with their disappointment, they would fret at it themselves. Note, Though we may not take a pleasure in the fall of our enemies, we may take a pleasure in the frustrating of their designs against us. (2.) That that would be a token of God’s favour to him, and a certain evidence that he did favour him, and would continue to do so. Note, When we can discern the favour of God to us, in any mercy personal or public, that doubles it, and sweetens it.

3. He depends upon God, who had thus delivered him from many an evil work, to preserve him to his heavenly kingdom, as blessed Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 18. “As for me, farasmuch as thou favourdest me, as a fruit of that favour, and to qualify me for the continuance of it, thou hast holiest me in mine integrity; and, in order to that, settest me before thine face, hast thine eye always upon me for good;” or, “Because thou dost, by thy grace, uphold me in my integrity, I know that thou wilt, in thy glory, set me for ever before thy face.” Note, (1.) When at any time we suffer in our reputation, our chief concern should be about our integrity, and then we may cheerfully leave it to God to secure our reputation. (2.) The man in the world holds his integrity no longer than God upholds him in it; for by his grace we are what we are; if we be left to ourselves, we shall not only fall, but fall away. (3.) It is a great comfort to us, that, however weak we are, God is able to uphold us in our integrity, and will do it, if we commit the keeping of it to him. (4.) If the grace of God did not take a constant care of us, we should not be upheld in our integrity; his eye is always upon us, else we should soon find ourselves in the utmost disorder. God now upholds in their integrity, he will set before his face for ever, and make happy in the vision and fruition of himself; “He that endures to the end, shall be saved.”

4. The psalm concludes with a solemn doxology, or adoration of God as the Lord God of Israel, v. 13. It is not certain whether this verse pertains to this particular psalm; if so, it teaches us this, That a believing heart, in our preservation through grace to glory, is enough to fill our hearts with joy, and our mouths with everlasting praise, even in our greatest straits; or, this verse may have been added as the conclusion of the first book of Psalms, which is reckoned to end here; the like being subjoined to lxixii., lxxxiix., cixi., and then it teaches us to make God the Omega, who is the Alpha, to make him the End, who is the Beginning, of every good work. We have seen (1.) To give glory to God as the Lord God of Israel, v. 13. II. To give glory to God, as the Lord God of Israel, v. 13. III. To give glory to God, as the Lord God of Israel, v. 13. People who have done great and kind things for them, and has more and better in reserve. (2.) To give him glory as an eternal God, that has both his being and his blessedness from everlasting and to everlasting. (3.) To do this with great affection and fervour of spirit; intimated in the double seal set to it; Amen and Amen; Be it so now, be it so to all eternity. We say, Amen to it, and let all others say, Amen, too.

PSALM XLI.

If the book of Psalms be, as some have styled it, a mirror, or looking-glass, of pious and devout affections, this psalm, in particular, deserves, as much as any one psalm, to be so entitled, and is as proper as any other to kindle and excite such in us; gracious desires are here strong and fervent; gracious hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, and here struggling, but the pleasure (passion comes off a conqueror. Or we may take it for a conflict between sense and faith; sense objecting, and faith answering. I. Faith begins with holy desires toward God, and communication to him, v. 1, 2. II. Sense complains of the darkness and cloudiness of the present condition, aggravated by the remembrance of the former enjoyments, v. 3, 4. III. Faith silences the complaint with the assurance of a good outcome, at last, v. 5. IV. Sense repeats its complaints of the present dark and melancholy state, v. 6, 7. V. Faith holds up the heart, notwithstanding, with hope that the day will dawn, v. 8. VI. Sense repeats its lamentations, (v. 9, 10.) and sighs out the same remonstrance it had before made of its grievances. VII. Faith gets the last word, (v. 11.) for the silence of the complaints of sense, and though it be almost the same with that, (v. 5.) yet now it prevails and carries the day. The title does not tell us who was the Sense of this psalm, but, most probably, it was David; and we may conjecture it was penned by him at a time when, either by Saul’s persecution, or Absalom’s rebellion, he was driven from the sanctuary, and cut off from those who were waiting upon God’s preservation of him. The spirit of it is the same with the former, and therefore we may presume it was penned by the same hand, and upon the same or a like occasion. In singing it, we may use either outward actions, or even inward directions; but not both at once to ourselves the melancholy expressions we find here; if not, we must, in singing them, sympathize with those whose case they speak too plainly, and thank God it is not our case. But if we can, both inwardly and outwardly express and excite holy desires toward God, and dependence on him, we must earnestly endeavour to bring our minds up to.

To the chief musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah.

1. As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after
thee, O God. 2. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appeare before God? 3. My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? 4. When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy-day. 5. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

Holy love to God, as the Chief Good, and our Felicity, is the power of godliness, the very life and soul of religions without which, all external professions and performances are but a shell and carcasse: now here we have some of the expressions of that love. Here is, 1. Holy love, thirsting; love upon the wing, soaring upward in holy desires toward the Lord, and toward the remembrance of his name; (v. I, 2.) "My soul hangeth, thirsteth, for God, for nothing more than God, but still for more and more of him. Now observe, 1. When it was that David thus expressed his vehement desire toward God. It was, (1.) When he was thus debarr'd from his outward opportunities of waiting on God; when he was banished to the land of Jordan, a great way off from the courts of God's house. Note, Sometimes God teaches us effectually to know the worth of mercies by the want of them, and whets our appetite for the means of grace, by cutting us short in those means. We are apt to loathe that manna, when we have plenty of it, which will be very precious to us, if ever we come to know the scarcity of it. (2.) When he was deprived, in a great measure, of the inward comfort he used to have in God; he now went mourning, but he went on panting. Note, If God, by his grace, has wrought in us sincere and earnest desires toward him, we may take comfort from these, when we want those ravishing delights we have sometimes had. If God be becoming other to us after God is as sure an evidence that we love him, as rejoicing in God. Before the psalmist records his doubts, and fears, and griefs, which had sorely shaken him, he premiseth this, That he looked upon the living God as his Chief Good, and had set his heart upon him accordingly, and was resolved to live and die by him; and, casting anchor thus at first, he rides out the storm. 2. He overtime of his desire, and what it is he thus thirsts after. (1.) He pants after God, he thirsts for God; not the ordinances themselves, but the God of the ordinances. A gracious soul can take little satisfaction in God's courts, if it do not meet with God himself there; "Oh that I knew where I might find him! That I might have more of the tokens of his favour, the graces and comforts of his Spirit, and the earthen's of his glory." (2.) He has, herein, an eye to God, as the living God, that God in himself, and is not satisfied with any ordinance which gives him all and happiness to those that are his; the living God, not only in opposition to dead idols, the works of men's hands, but to all the dying comforts of this world, which perish in the using. Living souls can never take up their rest any where short of a living God. (3.) He longs to come and appear before God; to make himself known to him, as being conscious to himself of his own sincerity; to attend on him as a servant appears before his master, to pay his respects to him, and receive his commands; to give an account of himself, as one from whom our judgment proceeds. To appear before God is as much the desire of the upright, as it is the dread of the hypocrite. The psalmist knew he could not come into God's courts, but he must incur expense, for so was the law, that none should appear before God empty; yet he longs to come, and will not grudge the charges.

3. What is the degree of this desire. It is very incommensurable with the condition of his soul that thirsts, which bespeaks not only the sincerity, but the strength, of his desire; his longing for the water of the well of Bethlehem was nothing to this. He compares it to the panting of a hart, or deer, which is naturally hot and dry, especially of a hunted buck, after the water-brooks. Thus earnestly do a gracious soul desire communion with God; thus impatient is it in the want of that communion; so impossible does it find it to take up in any thing short of that communion; and so insatiable is it in taking the pleasures of that communion, when the opportunity of it returns, still thirsting after the full enjoyment of him in the heavenly kingdom.

II. Holy love, mourning for God's present withdrawals, and the want of the benefit of solemn ordinances; (v. 3.) "My tears have been my meat day and night, during this forced absence from God's house." His circumstances were sorrowful, and he accommodated himself to them, received the impressions, and returned the signs, of sorrow; even the royal prophet was a weeping prophet, when he wanted the comforts of God's house. His tears were mingled with his meat; nay, they were his meat, day and night; he fed, he feasted, upon his own tears, when there was such just cause for them; and it was a satisfaction to him, that he found his heart so much affected with a grievance of this nature. Observe, He did not think it enough to have shed a tear or two, at parting from the sanctuary, to weep a farewell-prayer, when he took his leave, but, as long as he continued under a forced absence from that place of his delight, he never looked up, but wept, day and night. Note, Those that are deprived of the benefit of public ordinances, constantly miss them, and therefore should constantly mourn for the want of them, till they are restored to them again.

Two things aggravat his grief: 1. The reproaches with which his enemies teased him; They continually say unto me, Where is thy God? (1.) Because he was absent from the ark, the token of God's presence; judging of the God of Israel by the gods of the heathen, they concluded he had lost his God. Note, Those are mistaken, who think that, when they have robbed us of our Bibles, and our ministers, and our solemn assemblies, they have robbed us of our God: for though God has tied us to them, when they are to be bound, he has not tied himself to them. We know where our God is, and where to find him, when we know not where his ark is, nor where to find that. Wherever we are, there is a way open heavenward. (2.) Because God did not immediately appear for his deliverance, they concluded that he had abandoned him; but herein also they were deceived: it does not follow that the saints have lost God, because God has left their friends. However, by this base reflection on God and his people, they added affliction to the afflicted and that was what they aimed at. Nothing is more grievous to a gracious soul, than that which is intended to shake its hope and confidence in God. 2. The remembrance of his former liberties and enjoyments, v. 4. Son, remember thy good things, is a great aggravation of evil things; so much do our
for our dejections, we must charge ourselves to hope in God; when the soul embraces itself, it sinks; if it catch hold on the power and promise of God, it keeps the head above water. Hope in God, (1) That he shall have glory from us; "I shall yet praise him; I shall experience such a change in my estate, that I shall not want matter for praise; and such a change in my spirit, that I shall not want a proper occasion to give pleasure to the crown of heaven and happiness of a man, and the greatest desire I have of every good man, to be unto God for a name and a praise. What is the crown of heaven's bliss but this, that there we shall be for ever praising God? And what is our support under our present woes but this, that we shall yet praise God, that they shall not prevent, or abate, our endless hallelujahs? (2) That we shall have comfort in him. We shall praise God, in God's help of his counsellors, for his favour, and the support we have by it, and the satisfaction we have in it. Those that know how to value and improve the light of God's countenance, will find in that a suitable, seasonable, and sufficient, help, in the worst of times, and that which will furnish them with constant matter for praise. David's believing expectation of this kept him from sinking, nay, it kept him from drooping; his harp was a palliative cure of Saul's melancholy, but his hope was an effectual cure of his own.

6. O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar. 7. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water-sprouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. 8. Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. 9. I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? 10. As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; whilst they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? 11. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

Complaints and comforts here, as before, take their turn, like day and night, in the course of nature.

1. He complains of the dejections of his spirit, but comforts himself with the thoughts of God, v. 6. 1. In his troubles; his soul was disquieted, and he goes to God, and tells him so, O my God, my soul is cast down within me. It is a great support to us, when upon any account we are distressed, that we have liberty of access to God, and liberty of speech before him, and praise. I shall yet praise him, I shall have a just cause to praise, a just cause to praise him, whosoever he be, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

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soul is plunged; therefore, to prevent its sinking, I will remember thee, meditate upon thee, and call upon thee, and do thou that will do to keep up my spirit.’ Note, The way to forget the sense of our miseries, is, to remember the God of our mercies. It was an uncommon case, when the psalmist remembered God, and was comforted, and therefore had recourse to that expedient now. He was now driven to the utmost borders of the land of Canaan, to shelter himself from his persecutors; sometimes to the country about Jordan, when discovered there, to the land of the Hermonites, or to a hill called Mizar, or the little hill; but, (1.) Wherever he went, he took his religion along with him; in all these places, he remembered God, and lifted up his heart to him, and kept his secret communion with him. This is the comfort of the banished, the wanderers, the travellers, of that wretched state; that, where his heart was so much upon, and which lay so near it. Though the billows of sorrow and displeasure against him, but comforts himself with the hopes of the return of his favour in due time.

1. He saw his troubles coming from God’s wrath, and that discouraged him; (v. 7.) ‘Deep calls unto deep, one affliction comes upon the neck of another, as if it were called to hasten after it; and thy water-spouts give the signal, and sound the alarm, of war.’ It may be meant of the terrors and terrors of his mind, under the apprehensions of God’s anger. One frightful thought summoned another, and made way for it, as is usual in melancholy people; he was overpowered and overwhelmed with a deluge of grief, like that of the old world, when the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up. Or, it is an allusion to a ship at sea, in a great storm, tossed by the roaring waves, which go over it, evil. 25. What is the man that is born of woman, that at any time, we must call them God’s waves and his billows, that we may humble ourselves under his mighty hand, and may encourage ourselves to hope, that, though we be threatened, we shall not be ruined; for the waves and billows are under a divine check, The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of these many waters. Let not good men think it strange, if they be exercised with many and various trials, and if they come thick upon them; God knows what it does, and so shall they shortly. Jonah, in the while’s belly, made use of these words of David, Jon. ii. 3. (they are exactly the same in the original,) and of him they were literally true, All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me; for the book of psalms is contrived so as to reach every one’s case.

2. He expected his deliverance to come from God’s faithfulness; (v. 8.) ‘Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness. There is a certainty; He will command his loving-kindness; the promise is certain, it will not always be so; Non si male nec et aliem sic evit—Though affairs are now in an evil plight, they may not always be so. After the storm, there will come a calm, and the prospect of this supported him, when deep called unto deep. Observe, (1.) What he promised himself from God; The Lord will command his loving-kindness. He eyes the favour of God, as the fountain of all good; he looked for, that is life, that is better life, that is life with that. God will gather those from whom he has, in a little while, hid his face, Isa. liv. 7, 8 God’s conferring of his favour, is called his commanding it; this intimates the freeness of it, we cannot pretend to merit it, but it is bestowed in a way of sovereignty, he gives like a king; it intimates also the efficacy of it; he speaks his loving-kindness, and makes us to hear it; speaks, and it is done. He commands deliverance, (xlv. 4.) commands the blessing, (cxxxiii. 3.) as one having authority. By commanding his loving-kindness, he commands down the waves and billows, that they shall obey him. This he will do in the day-time, for God’s loving-kindness will make day in the soul, at any time. Though weeping has endured for a night, a long night, yet joy will come in the morning. (2.) What he promised for himself to God. If God command his loving-kindness for him, he will meet it, and bid it welcome with his best affections and devotions. [1.] He will rejoice in God; In God’s day, in God’s house, in God’s presence, in God’s love, in God’s mercy, in God’s grace; in God’s promise, in God’s faithfulness, in God’s duty, in God’s ways, in God’s commands. The mercies we receive in the day, we ought to return thanks for at night; when others are sleeping, we should be praising God. See cxix. 62. At midnight, will I rise to give thanks. In silence and solitude, when we are retired from the huries of the world, we must be pleasing ourselves with the thoughts of God’s goodness. Or in the night of affliction; [2.] Before the day dawns, in which God commands his loving-kindness, I will sing songs of praise in the night. Under all this, though the saints can rejoice in hope of the glory of God, singing in hope, and praise in hope, Rom. v. 2, 3. It is God’s prerogative to give songs in the night, Job xxxix. 10. [2.] He will seek to God in a constant dependence upon him; My prayer shall be to the God of my life. Our believing expectation of mercy must not supersede, but quicken, our prayers for it. God is the God of our life, in whom we live and move and have our being. He comforts; and therefore to whom should we apply ourselves by prayer, but to him? And from him what good may not we expect? It would put life into our prayers, in them to eye God as the God of our life; for then it is for our lives, and the lives of our souls, that we stand up to make request.

III. He complains of the insolence of his enemies, and yet comforts himself in God as his Friend, v. 11.

1. His complaint is, that his enemies oppressed and reproached him, and this made a great impression upon him. (1.) They oppressed him to that degree, that he went mourning, from day to day, from place to place, v. 9. He did not break out into indecent passions, though abused as never man was, but he silently wept out his grief, and went mourning; and for this we cannot blame him, it must needs grieve a man that truly loves his country, and seeks the good of it, to see himself persecuted and hardly used, as if he were an enemy to it. Yet David ought not hence to have concluded that God had forgotten him, and cast him off, nor thus to have expostulated with him, as if he did him as much wrong in suffering him to be trampled upon, as they did that trampled upon him; Why go I mourning? And why hast thou forgotten me? We may complain to God, our afflictions are not allowed thus to continue against us. (2.) They reproached him so cuttily, that it was a sword in his bones, v. 10. He had mentioned before what the reproach was that touched him thus to the quick, and here he repeats it, They say daily unto me, Where is thy God? A reproach which was therefore very grievous to him, both because it reflected dishonour upon God, and was intended to discourage his hope in God, which he had enough to do to keep up in any measure, and much with his tears and to feel of itself.

2. His comfort is, that God is his Rock, v. 14.
A Rock to build upon, a Rock to take shelter in; the Rock of ages, in whom is everlasting strength, would be his Rock, his Strength in the inner man, both for doing and suffering. To him he had access with confidence, to God his Rock; he might say what he had to say, and be sure of a gracious audience. He therefore repeats what he had said, (v. 5.) and concludes with it, (v. 11.) *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* His griefs and fears were clamorous and troublesome, they were not silenced, though they were again and again answered; but here, at length, his faith came off a conqueror, and forced the enemies to quit the field. And he gains this victory, (1.) by his own faith, (2.) by his own courage; choosing himself, as before, for his dejections and disquietudes, and encouraging himself to trust in the name of the Lord, and to stay himself upon his God. Note, It may be of great use to us, to think our good thoughts over and again, and if we do not gain our point with them at first, perhaps we may the second time; however, where the heart goes along with the words, it is no vain repetition. We have need to press the same thing over and over, and put it into our hearts, and all little enough. (2.) By adding one word to it; there, he hoped to praise God for the salvation that was in his countenance; here, “I will praise him,” says he, “as the Salvation of my countenance, from the present cloud that is upon it; if God smile upon me, that will make me look pleasant, look up, look forward, look round, with pleasure.” He adds, and *my God,* “related to me, in covenant with me; all that he is, all that he has, in mind, according to the true intent and meaning of the promise;” this thought enabled him to triumph over all his griefs and fears; God’s being with the saints in heaven, and being their God, is that which will *wipe away all tears from their eyes,* Rev. xxii. 3, 4.

**PSALM XLIII.**

This psalm, it is likely, was penned upon the same occasion with the former, and, having no title, may be looked upon as an appendix to it; the malady presently returning, he had immediate recourse to the same remedy, because he had entered it in his book, with a *probatum est* upon it. The 2d verse of this psalm is almost the very same with the 9th verse of the foregoing psalm; this is exactly the same with the 11th verse of that. Christ himself, who had the Spirit without measure, when there was occasion, prayed a second and third time, saying the same words, Matt. xxvi. 44. In this psalm, 1. He appeals to God concerning the injuries that were done him by his enemies, v. 1, 2. II. He prays to God to restore to him the free enjoyment of public ordinances again, and promises to make a good improvement of them, v. 3, 4. III. He endeavours to still the tumult of his own spirit, with a lively hope and confidence in God; (v. 5.) If, in singing this psalm, we labour after these, we sing with grace in our hearts.

1. **Judge me,** O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation; O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. 2. For thou art the God of my strength; why dost thou cast me off? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? 3. O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. 4. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God. 5. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise him, *who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

David here makes his application to God by faith and prayer, as his Judge, his Strength, his Guide, his Joy, his Hope, with suitable affections and expressions.

I. As his Judge, his righteous Judge, who, he knew, would judge him, and who, (being conscious of his own integrity,) he knew, would judge for him; (v. 1.) *Judge me, O God, and plead my cause.*

There were those that accused him, against them he had to do; and forthwith he cast out his court, where he stood unjustly convicted and condemned, he appeals to the court of heaven, the supreme judicature; praying to have their judgment given against him, reversed, and his innocence cleared. There were those that had injured him, against them he is plaintiff, and exhibits his complaint to him who is the Avenger of wrong, praying for justice for himself, and upon them. Observe, 1. Who his enemies were, with whom he had this struggle. Here was a single body of men, whom he calls an *ungodly or unmerciful nation;* those that are unmerciful make it appear that they are ungodly, for those that have any fear or love of their master will have compassion on their fellow-servants. And here was one bad man the head of them, a deceitful and unjust man; most probably, Saul, who not only showed no kindness to David, but dealt most perfidiously and dishonestly with him. If Absalom was the man he meant, his character was no better. As long as there are such bad men out of hell, and nations of them, it is not strange that good men, who are yet out of heaven, meet with hard and base treatment. Some think that David, by the spirit of prophecy, calculated this psalm for the use of the Jews in their captivity in Babylon, and that the Chaldeans are the ungodly nation here meant; to them it was very applicable, but only as other like scriptures, none of which are of private interpretation. God might design it for their use, whether David did or no. 2. What is his prayer with reference to them; *Judge me.* As to the quarrel God had with him for sin, he prays, “*Enter not into judgment with me,* for then I shall be condemned,” but as to the quarrel his enemies had with him, he prays, “Lord, judge me, for I know that I shall be justified, *plead my cause against them,* take my part, and in thy providence appear on my behalf.” He that has an honest cause may expect that God will plead it. “*Plead my cause!* I pray thee to deliver me from them, that they may not have their will against me.” We must reckon our cause sufficiently pleaded, if we be delivered, though our enemies be not destroyed.

II. As his Strength, his all-sufficient Strength; so he eyes God, (v. 2.) *Thou art the God of my strength, my God, my Strength,* from whom all my strength is derived, in whom I strengthen myself, whom I call for my strength and help. 1. I am weak as water, and utterly unable either to do or suffer any thing for thee.” David now went mourning, destitute of spiritual joys, yet he found God to be the God of his strength. “If we cannot comfort ourselves in God, we may stay ourselves upon him, and may have spiritual supports when we want spiritual delights. David here pleads this with God; “*Thou art the God on whom I depend as a peculiar virtue, why thou hast turned against me?*” This was a mistake; for God never cast off any that trusted in him, whatever melancholy apprehensions they may have had of their own state. “*Thou art the God of my strength; why then is mine enemy too strong for me, and why go I mourning because of his oppressive power?*” It is hard to reconcile the mighty force of the church’s ene-
mies with the almighty power of the church's God; but the day will reconcile them, when all his enemies shall become his footstool.

III. As his Guide, his faithful Guide; (v. 3.) Lead me, bring me to thy holy hill. He prays, 1. That God by his providence would bring him back from his banishment to his former state, and to the free enjoyment of the privileges of God's sanctuary. His heart is upon the holy hills and the tabernacles, not upon his family-comforts, his court-preferences, or his diversions; he could bear the want of these, but he is impatient to see God's tabernacles again; nothing so amiable in his eyes as those; thither he would be brought back. In order to this, he prays, "Send out thy light and thy truth, to lead me, to the holy hill, to the Spirit of light and truth, who supplies the want of Christ's bodily presence, to lead us into the mystery of godliness, and to guide us in the way to heaven." When God sends his light and truth into our hearts, those will guide us to the upper world in all our devotions, as well as in all our aims and expectations; and if we conscientiously follow that light and that truth, they will certainly bring us to the holy hill above.

IV. As his Joy, his exceeding Joy. If God guide him to his tabernacles, if he restore him to his former liberties, he knows very well what he has to do; Then will I go unto the altar of God, v. 4. He will get as near as he can unto God, his exceeding Joy. Note, 1. Those that come to the tabernacles, should come to the altar; those that come to ordinances, should qualify themselves to come, and then come to special ordinances, to those that are most affecting and most binding. The nearer we come, the closer we cleave, to God, the better. 2. Those that come to the altar of God, must see to it that therein they come unto God, and draw near to him with the heart, with a true heart: we come in vain to holy ordinances, if we do not in them come to the holy God. 3. Those that come unto God, must come to him as their exceeding Joy, not only as their fitness. But as their present Joy; and as the Spirit, which is thy favour, which is light, and the performance of thy promise, which is truth. We need desire no more to make us happy, than the good that flows from God's favour, and is included in his promise. That mercy, that truth, is enough, is all; and when we see these in God's providences, we see ourselves under a very safe conduct. Note, Those whom God leads, he leads to his holy hill, and to his tabernacles; those therefore who are led by the Spirit of God, have the assurance of their acceptance, and the promise of their salvation. 4. When we go to God as our exceeding Joy, our comforts and joy must be the matter of our present prayer and praise. Upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God. David excelled at the harp; (1 Sam. xvi. 16, 18.) and with that in which he excelled he would praise God; for God is to be praised with the best we have; it is fit he should, who is the best.

V. As his Hope, his never-failing Hope, v. 5. Here, as before, David quarrels with himself for his dejections and despondencies, and owns he did ill to yield to them, and that he had no reason to do so; Why art thou cast down, O my soul? He then quiets himself in the believing expectation he had of giving glory to God; Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him; and of enjoying glory with God, He is the Health of my countenance, and my God. This is what we cannot too much insist upon, for it is what we must live and die by.

PSALM XLIV

We are not told either who was the penman of this psalm, or when, and upon what occasion, it was penned; upon a melancholy occasion, we are sure, not so much to the penman himself, (then we could have found occasions enough for it in the history of David and his afflictions,) but to the church of God in general; and therefore, we suppose it penned by David, yet we must attribute it purely to the spirit of prophecy, and must conclude that that spirit (whatever he himself had) had in view the captivity of Babylon, or the sufferings of the Jewish church under Antiochus, or rather, the afflicted state of the Christian church in its early days, (to which v. 22. is applied by the apostle, Rom. viii. 36.) and indeed in all its days on earth, for it is its determined lot; and to be in the kingdom of heaven through many tribulations. And if we could not apply any gospel-psalms pointing at the privileges and comforts of Christians, why should we not have one pointing at their trials and exercises? It is a psalm calculated for a day of fasting and humiliation, upon occasion of some public calamity, either pressing or threatening. In it the church is taught, 1. To own with thankfulness, to the glory of God, the great things God had done for their fathers, v. 1. 2. To exhibit a memorial of their present calamitous estate, v. 9. 16. 3. To file a protestation of their integrity and adherence to God, notwithstanding, v. 17. 22. 4. To lodge a petition at the throne of grace for succour and relief, v. 22. 28. In singing this psalm, we ought to give God the praise of what he has formerly done for his people, to represent our own grievances, or sympathize with those parts of the church that are in distress, to engage ourselves, whatever happens, to cleave to God and duty, and then cheerfully to wait the event.

To the chief musician for the sons of Korah, Maschil.

1. We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old; 2. How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out. 3. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them. 4. Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob. 5. Through thee will we push down our enemies; through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us. 6. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. 7. But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us. 8. In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever. Selah.

Some observe, that most of the psalms that are entitled Maschil, psalms of instruction, are sorrowful psalms; for afflictions give instructions, and sor-
row of spirit opens the ear to them; Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest and teachest.

In these verses, the church, though now trampled upon, calls to remembrance the days of her triumph, of her triumph in God, and over her enemies. This is very largely mentioned here. 1. As an aggravation of the present distress. The yoke of servitude cannot but lie very heavy on the necks of those that used to wear the crown of victory; and the tokens of God's displeasure must, at least, grieve those to whom those that have been long accustomed to the tokens of his favour. 2. As an encouragement to hope that God would yet turn again their captivity, and return in mercy to them; accordingly he mixes prayers and comfortable expectations with his record of former mercies. Observe,

1. Their commemoration of the great things God had formerly done for them. In general; (v. 1.) Our fathers have told us what work thou didst in those days. Observe, 1. The many operations of providence are here spoken of as one work; "They have told us the work which thou didst;" for there is a wonderful harmony and uniformity in all that God does, and the many wheels make but one wheel; (Ezek. x. 13.) my works make but one work. 2. It is a debt which every age owes to posterity, to keep an account of God's works of wonder, and to transmit the record of them to the next generation. Those that have enjoyed God's goodness and favours have an obligation to tell those that come after them what God did in their days, we are bound to tell those that come after us what he has done in our days, and let them do the like justice to those that shall succeed them; thus shall one generation praise his works to another; (cxxxiv. 4.) the fathers of the children shall make known his truth, Isa. xxxviii. 19. 3. We must not only make mention of the work God has done in our own days, but must also acquaint ourselves with God's work for our children, with what he did in the times of old, long before our own generation. It is not enough of this we have in the scripture a sure word of history, as sure as the word of prophecy. 4. Children must diligently attend to what their parents tell them of the wonderful works of God, and keep it in remembrance, as that will be of great use to them. 5. Former experiences of God's power and goodness are strong supports to faith, and powerful pleas in the presence of God. See how Gideon insists upon it, Judg. vi. 13. Where have all his miracles which our fathers told us of? In particular, their fathers had told them.

(1.) How wonderfully God planted Israel in Canaan at first, v. 2. 3. He drove out the natives, to make room for Israel, afflicted them, and cast them out, gave them as dust to Israel's sword, and as driven stubble to their bow. The many complete victories which Israel obtained over the Canaanites, under the command of Joshua, or by the Canaanites, under the command of Joshua, were not to be attributed to themselves, nor could they challenge the glory of them; [1.] They were not owing to their own merit, but to God's favour and free grace; It was through the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour to them. Not for thy righteousness, or the uprightness of thy heart, dost God drive them out from before thee, (Deut. ix. 5, 6.) but because God would perform the oath which he swore unto their fathers, Deut. vii. 8. The Lord promises to allow us, the more comfort it administers to us, that we may see all our successes and enlargements coming to us from the favour of God and the light of his countenance. [2.] They were not owing to their own might, but to God's power engaged for them, without which all their own efforts and endeavours would be vain. It was not by their own sword that they got the land in possession, though they had great numbers of mighty men; nor did their own arm save them from being driven back by the Canaanites, and put to shame; but it was God's right hand and his arm. He fought for Israel, else they had fought in vain; it was through him that they did valiantly and victoriously. It was God that planted Israel in that good land, as the careful husbandman plants a tree, from which he promises himself fruit. See xxx. 8. This is applicable to the planting of the Christian church in the world, by the preaching of the gospel. Paganism was wonderfully driven out, as the Canaanites, not all at once, but piece by piece, little by little, not by any human policy or power, (for God had said, ix. 6.) but by the weak and foolish things of the world, but by the wisdom and power of God; Christ by his Spirit went forth conquering and to conquer; and the remembrance of that is a great support and comfort to those that groan under the yoke of antichristian tyranny; for to the state of the church under the power of the New Testament Babylon, some think, (and particularly learned Amyraldus,) the complaints in the latter part of this psalm may very fitly be accommodated. He that by his power and goodness planted a church for himself in the world, will certainly support it by the same power and goodness; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

(2.) How frequently he had given them success against their enemies that attempted to disturb them in the possession of that good land; (v. 7.) Thou hast, many a time, saved us from our enemies, and made us a name to them that hate us; witness the successes of the Judges, how the nations that oppressed Israel. Many a time have the persecutors of the Christian church, and those that hate it, been put to shame by the power of truth, Acts xii. 10.

II. The good use they make of this record, and had formerly made of it, in consideration of the great things God had done for their fathers of old. They had taken God for their sovereign Lord, had sworn allegiance to him, and put themselves under his protection; (v. 4.) Thou art my King, O God. He speaks in the name of the church, as (xxiv. 12.) Thou art my King of old; God, as a king, has made laws for his church, provided for the peace and good order of it, judged for it; pleaded its cause, fought its battles, and protected it; it is his kingdom in the world, and ought to be subject to him, and to pay him tribute; or, the psalmist might have chosen this name, Where is thy King, Whither shall I go with my petitions, but to thee? The favour I ask is not for myself, but for thy church." Note, It is every one's duty to improve his personal interest at the throne of grace, for the public welfare and prosperity of the people of God; as Moses, "If I have found grace in thine eyes, guide thy people," Exod. xxxiii. 13.

2. They had always applied themselves to him by prayer for deliverance, when at any time they were in distress; Command deliverances for Jacob. Observe, (1.) The enlargedness of their desire; they pray for deliverances, not one, but many, as many as they had need of, how many soever they were, a series of deliverances, a deliverance from every danger. 2. The strength of their faith in the power of God; they do not say, Work deliverances, but, Command them, which denotes his doing it easily and instantly, (v. 6.) God has made a great weak, and the murrain was the end of the faith of the centurion, (Matth. viii. 8.) Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed; it denotes also his doing it effectually; "Command it, as one having authority, whose command will be obeyed;" Where the word of a king is, there is power, much more the word of the King of kings. 3. They had trusted and triumphed in him. As he owned it was not their own sword and bow that had saved them, (v. 3.) so neither did they trust to their own sword or bow to save them for the future; (v. 6.) I will not trust in my bow, nor in any
of my military preparations, as if those would stand me instead without God; no, through thee will we push down our enemies; (v. 5.) we will attempt it in thy strength, relying only upon that, and not upon the number or valour of our forces; and, having thee on our side, we will not doubt of success in the attempt. Through thy name, by virtue of thy wisdom directing us, thy power strengthening us, and working for us, and thy promise securing success to us, we shall, we will, tread them under that rise up against us.

They made him their Joy and Praise; (v. 8.) "In God we have boasted, in him we do, and will boast, every day, and all the day long." When their enemies boasted of their strength and success, as Sennacherib and Rabshakeh hectored Hezekiah, they owned they had nothing to boast of, in answer thereunto, but their relation to God, and their interest in him; and if he were for them, they could set all the world at defiance. Let him that glories, glory in the Lord, and let that for ever exclude all other boasting. Let those that trust in God, make their boast in him, for they know whom they have trusted; let them boast in him all the day long, for it is a subject that can never be exhausted. But let them withal praise his name for ever; if they have the comfort of his name, let them give unto him the glory due to it.

9. But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies. 10. Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy; and they which hate us spoil for themselves. 11. Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat; and hast scattered us among the heathen. 12. Thou seluest thine people for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by their price. 13. Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us. 14. Thou makest us a by-word among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people. 15. My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me, 16. For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth; by reason of the enemy and avenger.

The people of God here complain to him of the low and afflicted condition that they were now in, under the prevailing power of their enemies and oppressors, which was the more grievous to them because they were now trampled upon, who had always been used, in their struggles with their neighbours, to win the day and get the upper hand; and because those were now their oppressors, whom they had many a time triumphed over and made tributaries; and especially because they had boasted in their God, with great assurance that he would still protect and prosper them, which made the distress they were in, and the disgrace they were under, the more shameful. Let us see what the complaint is.

1. That they wanted the usual tokens of God's favour to them, and presence with them. (v. 8.) "Thou hast cast off; thou seest me, hast cast me off, and our cause, and to have cast off thy wonted care of us, and concern for us, and so hast put us to shame, for we boasted of the constancy and perpetuity of thy favour. Our armies go forth as usual, but they are put to flight, we gain no ground, but lose what we have gained, for thou goest not forth with them, for, if thou didst, which way soever they turned, they would prosper; but it is quite contrary." Note, God's people, when they are cast down, are tempted to think themselves cast off, and forsaken of God; but it is a mistaken. Hath God cast away his people? God forbid, Rom. 11. 2. That they were put to the worst before their enemies in the field of battle; (v. 10.) Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy, as Joshua complained when they met with a repulse at Ai; (Josh. vii. 8.) "We are dispirited, and have lost the ancient valor of Israelites; we flee, we fall, before those that used to flee and fall before us; and then they that hate us have the plunder of our camp, and often cut, and strip, and plunder, and do reckoned all their own that they can lay their hands on. Attempts to shake off the Babylonish yoke have been ineffectual, and we have rather lost ground by them." 3. That they were doomed to the sword and to captivity; (v. 11.) "Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat. They make no more scruple of killing an Israelite than of killing a sheep; nay, in the very act of the butcher, they make a trifle of it, they take a pleasure in it, as a hungry man in his meat; and we are led with as much ease, and as little resistance, as a lamb to the slaughter; many are slain, and the rest scattered among the heathen, continually insulted by their malice, or in danger of being infected by their iniquities." They looked upon themselves as bought and sold, and charged it upon God, Thou seluest thy people; when they should have charged it upon their own sin; for your iniquities have you sold yourselves; (Isa. lii. 1.) However, thus far was it, that they looked above the instruments of their trouble, and kept their eye upon God, as well knowing that their worst enemies had no power against them, but what was given them from above; they own it was God that delivered them into the hands of the ungodly, as that which is sold is delivered to the bayer. Thou seluest them for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by their price; intimating, that they could have suffered this contentedly, if they had been sure that it would have redounded to the glory of God, and that his interest might have been some way served by their sufferings; but it was quite contrary, Israel's distress was God's dishonour, so far from being a Gainer, in his glory by the sale of them, that it should seem he was greatly a Loser by it; see Isa. lii. 5. Ezek. xxxvi. 20.

IV. That they were loaded with contempt, and all possible ignominy was put upon them. In this also they acknowledge God, "Thou makest us a reproach; thou bringest those calamities upon us which occasion the reproach, and thou permittest their virulent tongues to smite us." They complain, 1. That they were publicly ridiculed and hated, and were looked upon as the most contemptible people under the sun; their troubles were turned to their reproach, and upon the account of them they were derided. 2. That their neighbours, those about them, from whom they could not withdraw, were most abusive to them, v. 13. 3. That the heathen, the people that were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and aliens to the covenants of promise, made them their sport. Yes, they are the sport of their God, as triumphing in their fall, v. 14. 4. That the reproach was constant and incessant; (v. 15.) My confusion is continually before me. The church in general, the psalmist in particular, were continually teased and vexed with the insults of the enemy. To those that are going down, every one cries, "Down with them." 5. That it was very grievous, and in
a manner overwhelmed him; The shame of my face has covered me. He blushed for sin, or rather for the dishonour done to God, and then it was a holy blushing. 6. That it reflected upon God himself; the reproach which the enemy and the avenger cast upon them, was downright blasphemy against God, v. 16. and 2 Kings xix. 3. There was therefore strong reason to believe that God would appear for them. As there is no trouble more grievous to a generous and ingenious mind than reproach and calumny, so there is none more grievous to a holy gracious soul than blasphemy and dishonour done to God.

17. All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant. 18. Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way; 19. Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death. 20. If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god; 21. Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart. 22. Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. 23. Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast us not off for ever. 24. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression? 25. For our soil is bowed down to the dust; our belly cleaveth unto the earth. 26. Arise for our help, and redeem us, for thy mercies sake.

The people of God, being greatly afflicted and oppressed, here apply themselves to him; whither else should they go?

1. By way of appeal, concerning their integrity, which he only is an infallible Judge of, and which he will certainly be the Reward of.

Two things they call God to witness to.

1. That though they suffered these hard things, yet they kept close to God, and to their duty; (v. 17.) "All this is come upon us, and it is as bad perhaps as bad can be, yet have we not forgotten thee, neither cast off the thoughts of thee, nor deserted the worship of thee; for though we cannot deny but that we have dealt foolishly, yet we have not dealt foolishly in thy covenant, so as to cast thee off, and take to other gods. Though idolaters were our conquerors, we did not therefore entertain any more favourable thoughts of their idols and idolatries; though thou hast seemed to forsake us, and withdraw from us, yet we have not therefore forsaken thee." The trouble they had been long in was very great; "We have been sore-broken in the place of dragons, among men as fierce, and furious, and cruel, as dragons; we have been covered with the shadow of death, we have been under deep melancholy, and apprehensive of nothing short of death; we have been wrapped up in obscurity, and buried alive; and thou hast thus broken us, thou hast thus covered us; (v. 19.) yet we have not harboured any hard thoughts of thee, nor meditated a retreat from thy service; though thou hast slain us, we have continued to trust in thee; our heart is not turned back, we have not secretly withdrawn our affections from thee, neither have our steps, either in our religious worship, or in our conversation, declined from thy way, (v. 16.) the way which thou hast appointed us to walk in." When the heart turns back, the steps will soon decline; for it is the evil heart of unbelief that inclines us to depart from God. Note, We may the better bear our troubles, when pressing soever, if in them we still hold fast our integrity. While our troubles do not drive us from God, we must not suffer them to drive us from our comfort in God; for he will not leave us, if we do not leave him.

For the proof of their integrity, they take God's omniscience to witness, which is as much the comfort of the upright heart, as it is the terror of hypocrites; (v. 20, 21.) "If we have forgotten the name of our God, under pretence that he had forgotten us in our distress, have stretched out our hands to a strange god, as more likely to help us, shall not God search this out? Shall he not know it more fully and distinctly, than we know that which we have with the greatest care and diligence searched out? Shall he not judge it, and call us to an account for it?" Forgetting God was a heart sin, and stretching out the hand to a strange god was often a secret sin, Ezek. viii. 12. But heart sins and secret sins are known to God, and must be reckoned for. For God is an infallible Judge of all the secrets of the heart.

2. That therefore they suffered these hard things, because they kept close to God and to their duty; (v. 22.) "It is for thy sake that we are killed all the day long, because we stand related to thee, are called by thy name, call upon thy name, and will not worship other gods." In this, the Spirit of prophecy had reference to those who suffered, even unto death, for the testimony of Christ, to whom it is applied, v. 23. and xi. 36. of our soul. They were put to such lingering deaths, that they were in the killing all the day long; so universally was this practised, that, when a man became a Christian, he reckoned himself as a sheep appointed for the slaughter.

II. By way of petition, with reference to their present distress, that God would, in his own due time, work deliverance for them. Their request is very importunate, Awake, arise, v. 25. and Thee for all us; (v. 26.) thee specially and powerfully to our relief, lxxxi. 2. Stir up thy strength, and come and save us. They complained, (v. 12.) that God had sold them; here they pray, (v. 26.) that God would redeem them, for there is no appealing from God, but by appealing to him; if he sell us, it is not any one else that can redeem us; the same hand that tears, must heal, that smites, must bind up, Hos. vi. 1. They complained, (v. 9.) Thou hast cast us off; but here they pray, (v. 23.) "Cast us not off for ever; let us not be finally forsaken of God." The expostulations are very moving; Why sleepest thou? v. 23. He that keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps; but, when he does not immediately appear for the deliverance of his people, they are tempted to think he sleeps. The expression is figurative, as (lxxxviii. 63.) Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep; but it was applicable to Christ in the letter; (Matth. viii. 24.) he was asleep when his disciples were in a storm, and they awoke him, saying, Lord, save us, we perish. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, that we may not see thee and the light of thy countenance?" Or, "that thou mayest not see us and our distresses? Thou forgettest our affliction and our oppression, for it still continues, and we see no way open for our deliverance."

And lastly, The pleas are very proper; not their own merits and righteousness, though they had the testimony of their consciences concerning their integrity, but they plead the poor sinner's pleas.
1. Their own misery, which made them the proper objects of the divine compassion; (v. 25.) "Our soul is bowed down to the dust, under prevailing grief and fear; we become as creeping things, the most despicable animals, our belly cleaves unto the earth, we cannot lift up ourselves, neither revive our own drooping spirits, nor recover ourselves out of our low and sad condition, and we lie exposed to be trodden on by every insulting foe." 2. God’s mercy; "O redeem us for thy mercy-sake; we depend upon the goodness of thy nature, which is the glory of thy name, (Exod. xxxiv. 6.) and upon those sure mercies of David, which are conveyed by the covenant to all his spiritual seed."

PSALM XLV.

This psalm is an illustrious prophecy of Messiah the Prince; it is all over gospel, and points at him only, as a Bridegroom espousing the church to himself, and as a king ruling in it, and ruling for it. It is probable that our Saviour has reference to this psalm when he compares the kingdom of heaven, more than others, to a nuptial solemnity, the solemnity of a royal nuptial, Matt. xxii. 2.—xxv. 1. We have no reason to think it has any reference to Solomon's marriage with Pharaoh's daughter; if I thought it had reference to any other than the mystical marriage between Christ and the church, I would rather apply it to some of David's marriages, because he was a man of war, such a one as the bridegroom here is described to be, which Solomon was not. But I take it to be purely and only meant of Jesus Christ; of him speaks the prophet this, of him and of no other man; and to him (v. 6, 7.) it is applied in the New Testament, (Heb. 1. 8.) nor can it be understood of any other person. The prophet speaks of the solemnity of the soul to the chief musician upon Shoshannim, for the sons of Korah, Maschil. A song of loves.

1. My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. 2. Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. 3. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. 4. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. 5. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.

Some make Shoshannim, in the title, to signify an instrument of six strings; others take it in its primitive signification for lilies or roses, which, probably, were strewed, with other flowers, at nuptial solemnities; and these are applicable to Christ, who calls himself the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the valleys, Cant. ii. 1. It is a song of loves, concerning the holy love that is between Christ and his church. It is a song of the well-beloved, the virgin, the companions of the bride, (v. 14.) prepared to be sung by them; the virgin company, that attend the Lamb on mount Zion, are said to sing a new song, Rev. xiv. 3, 4.

The preface (v. 1.) speaks, 1. The dignity of the subject. It is a good matter, and it is pity that such a moving art as poetry should ever be employed about the dead. 2. It is touching the King, King Jesus, and his kingdom and godhead. Note, Those that speak of Christ, speak of a good matter, no subject so noble, so copious, so fruitful, so profitable, and so well-becoming us; it is a shame that this good matter is not more the matter of our discourse. 2. The excellency of the management; this song was a confession with the mouth, of faith in the heart, concerning Christ and his church. 1. The title is as well digested as it well deserved; My heart is inditing it, which, perhaps, is meant of that Spirit of prophecy that dictated the psalm to David; that Spirit of Christ which was in the prophets, 1 Pet. i. 11. But it is applicable to his devout meditations and affections in his heart, out of the abundance of which his mouth spake. Things concerning Christ ought to be thought of by us with all possible seriousness, with fixedness of thought, and a fire of holy love; especially when we are to speak of such superlative things, as Christ and divine things, when we speak, from the heart, that which has warmed and affected us; and we should never be rash in speaking of the things of Christ, but weigh well beforehand what we have to say, lest we speak amiss. See Eev. v. 2. (2.) It was well expressed; I will speak of the things which I have made. He would express himself, [1.] With all possible clearness, as one that did himself understand, and was affected with, the things he spake of. Not, "I will speak the things I have heard from others," that is speaking by rote; but, "the things which I have myself studied." Note, What God has wrought in our souls, as well as what he has wrought for them, we must declare to others, lxvi. 16. [2.] With all possible cheerfulness, freedom, and fluency; "My tongue is as the pen of a ready writer, guided by my heart in every word, as the pen is by the hand." We call the prophets the fummen of scripture, whereas really they were but the pen. The tongue of the most subtle disputant, and the most eloquent orator, is but the pen with which God writes what he pleases. Why should we quarrel with the pen, if bitter things be written against us; or idolize the pen, if it write in our favour? David not only spake what he thought of Christ, but wrote it, that it might spread the farther, and last the longer. His tongue was as the pen of a ready writer, that there should be nothing slip. When the heart is inditing a good matter, it is pity but the tongue should be as the pen of a ready writer, to leave it upon record.

In these verses, the Lord Jesus is represented,

1. As most beautiful and amiable in himself. It is a marriage song; and therefore the transcendental excellencies of Christ are represented by the beauty of the royal Bridegroom; (v. 2.) Thou art fairer than the children of men. 2. As a saviour for the children of men. He proposed (v. 1.) to speak of the King, but immediately directs his speech to him. They that have an admiration and affection for Christ, love to go to him and tell him so. Thus we must profess our faith, that we see his beauty, and our love, that we are pleased with it; Thou art fair, thou art fairer than the children of men. Note, Jesus Christ is in himself, and in the eyes of all believers, more amiable and lovely than the children of men.
believe shall be saved; so much terror, and there
fore majesty, in that word, He that believes not,
shall be damned; that we may well say, in the
chariot of that gospel, which these words are the
sum of, the Redeemer rides forth in glory and ma-
jesty. In thy majesty ride prosperously, v. 4.
Prosper thou; ride thou; this speaks the promise
of his Father, that he should prosper according to
the good pleasure of the Lord; that he should di-
volve with the strong, in recompense of his suf-
fierings. Those three explications of this word
from God says, Prosper, Isa. li. 10. 12. And it den-
ges the good wishes of his friends, praying that he
may prosper in the conversion of souls to him, and
the destruction of all the powers of darkness that
rebel against him: Thy kingdom come; Goon and
prosper.
3. The glorious cause in which he is engaged;
because of truth, meekness, and righteousness,
which were, in a manner, sunk and lost among men,
and with which Christ came to retrieve and rescue.
(1.) The gospel itself is truth, meekness, and righ-
eteousness; it commands by the power of truth and
righteousness; for Christianity has these, incontes-
tsibly, on its side, and yet it is to be promoted by
meekness and gentleness, 1 Cor. iv. 12, 13. 2 Tim.
ii. 25. (2.) Christ appears in it, in his truth, meek-
ness, and righteousness, and these are his glory and
majesty, and because of these he shall prosper.
For his gentleness and meekness enable him to
believe on him because he is true, to learn of him be
cause he is mighty, and to serve him because he is
gentle, xi. 29.) the gentleness of Christ is of mighty
force. 2 Cor. x. 1. Men are brought to submit to
him because he is righteous, and rules with equity.
(3.) The gospel, as far as it prevails with men, sets
up in their hearts truth, meekness, and righteous-
ness, rectifies their mistakes by the light of truth,
controls their passions by the power of meekness,
and governs their hearts and lives by the laws of
righteousness. Christ came, by setting up his king-
dom among men, to restore those glories to a dege-
nerate world, and to maintain the cause of those just
and rightful rulers under him, that by error, ma-
lace, and iniquity, had been deposited.
4. The success of his expedition; “Thy right
hand shall teach thee terrible things; thou shalt ex-
perience a wonderful divine power going along with
thy gospel, to make it victorious; and the effects of
it will be terrible things.” (1.) In order to the con-
version of the nations, he must have such terri-
ble things to be done; the heart must be pricked,
conscience must be startled, and the terrors of the
Lord must make way for his consolations; this is
done by the right hand of Christ. The Com-
forter shall continue, John xvi. 8. (2.) In the con-
quest of the gates of hell, and its supporters, in the
destruction of Judaism and Paganism, terrible things
will be done, which will make men’s hearts fail
them for fear, (Luke xxii. 26.) and great men and
chief causes are given to the heathen nations to
make war on them, Rev. vi. 15. The next verse des-
cribes these terrible things; (v. 5.) Thine arrows
are sharp in the heart of the king’s enemies. [1.] Those
that were by nature enemies are thus wounded, in
order to their being reduced and reconciled. Con-
victions are like the arrows of the bow, which are
sharp in the heart on which they fasten, and bring
good that to fall under Christ, in subject to his laws
and service through his grace and merit. They shall
be broken, Matth. xxvi. 44. [2.] Those that persist
in their enmity are thus wounded, in order to
their being ruined. The arrows of God’s terrors are
sharp in their hearts, whereby they shall fall
under him, so as to be made his footstool, cx. 1.
These that would not have him to reign over them
shall be brought forth and slain before him; (Luke
xix. 27.) those that would not submit to his golden
sceptre shall be broken to pieces by his iron rod
6. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. 7. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

8. All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.

9. Kings' daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.

We have here the royal Bridgroom filling his throne with judgment, and keeping his court with splendid ornament.

1. He here fills his throne with judgment. It is God the Father that says to the Son here, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; as appears Heb. i. 8, 9, where this is quoted to prove that he is God, and has a more excellent name than the angels. The Mediator is God, else he had neither been able to do the Mediator's work, nor fit to wear the Mediator's crown. Concerning his government, observe,

1. The eternity of it: it is for ever and ever. It shall continue on earth throughout all the ages of time, in despite of all the opposition of the gates of hell; and, in the blessed fruits and consequences of it, it shall last as long as the days of heaven, and run parallel with the line of eternity itself. Perhaps, even then the glory of the Redeemer, and the blessedness of the redeemed, shall be in a continual infinite progression; for it is promised, that not only of his government, but of the increase of his kingdom and peace, there shall be no end (Isa. ix. 7.) even then when the kingdom shall be delivered up to God, even the Father, (1 Cor. xv. 24.) the throne of the Redeemer will continue.

2. The equity of it; The sceptre of thy kingdom, the administration of thy government is right, exactly according to the eternal counsel and will of God, which is the eternal rule and reason of good and evil. Whatever Christ does, he does none of his own right; but what is his duty, that, he suffers wrong; He loves righteousness and hates wickedness, v. 7. He himself loves to do righteousness, and hates to do wickedness: and he loves those that do righteousness, and hates those that do wickedness: by the holiness of his life, the merit of his death, and the great design of his gospel, he has made it to appear that he loves righteousness, (for, by his example, his satisfaction, and his precepts, he has brought in an everlasting righteousness,) and that he hates wickedness, for never did God's hatred of sin appear so as it did in the sufferings of Christ.

3. The establishment and elevation of it; Therefore God, even thy God, (Christ, as Mediator, called God his God, (John xx. 17.) as commissioned by him, and the Head of those that are taken into covenant with him,) he has anointed thee with the oil of gladness; therefore, that is, (1.) in order to this righteous government of thine, God has given thee his Spirit, that divine unction, to qualify thee for thine undertaking," Isa. lxi. 1. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me. What God called him to be fitted him for, Isa. xlii. 2. The Spirit is called the oil of gladness, because of the delight wherewith Christ was filled, in carrying on his undertaking. He was anointed with the Spirit above all his fellows, above all those that were anointed, whether priests or kings. (2.) In recompense of what thou hast done and suffered for the advancement of righteousness, and the destruc...
robes woven with gold thread, or with a gold chain, and other ornaments of gold. This is the bride, the Lamb's wife, whose graces, which are her ornaments, are compared to fine linen, clean and white. (Rev. xix. 8.) for their purity; here to gold of Ophir, for their costliness; here to gold of Ophir, as a food to the satiated, as a drink to the glutted, as a drest up in the apparel of the Son of God. So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him. And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour. The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needle-work: the virgin companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace. Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

This latter part of the psalm is addressed to the royal bride, standing on the right hand of the royal Bridegroom, God, who said to the Son, Thou art become for ever and ever, says this to the church, whom, upon the account of her espousals to the Son, he here calls his daughter. He tells her of the duties expected from her, which ought to be considered by all those that come into relation to the Lord Jesus; "Hearken therefore, and consider this, and incline thine ear; submit to those conditions of thine espousals, and bring thy will to comply with them." For a method of profiting by the word of God; He that has ears, let him hear, let him hearken diligently; he that hearkens, let him consider and weigh it duly; he that considers, let him incline and yield to the force of what is laid before him. And what is that is here required? She must renounce all others; "Forget thine own people and thy father's house, according to the law of marriage. Retain not the affection thou hast had for them, nor covet to return to them again: banish all such remembrance, not only of thy people that were dear to thee, but of thy father's house that were dearer, as may incline thee to look back, as Lot's wife to Sodom. When Abraham, in obedience to God's call, had quitted his native soil, he was not so much as mindful of the country whence he came out. This shows, (1.) How necessary it was for those who were converted from Judaism or Paganism to the faith of Christ, wholly to cast out the old leaven, and not to bring into their Christian profession, either the Jewish ceremonies, or the heathen idolatries, for these would make such a mongrel religion in Christianity as the Samaritans had. (2.) How necessary it is for us all, when we give up our names to Jesus Christ, to hate father and mother, and all that is dear to us in this world, in comparison, to love them less than Christ and his honour, and our interest in him, Luke xiv. 26.

Here is good encouragement given to the royal bride, thus entirely to break off from her former alliances; So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty; which intimates that the mixing of her old rites and customs, whether Jewish or Gentile, with her religion, would blasmish her beauty, and would hazard her interest in the affections of the royal Bridegroom; but that if she entirely conform to his will, he would delight in her; the beauty of holiness, both of soul and body, of this particular believer, is, in the sight of Christ, of great price, and very amiable. Where that is, he says, This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it. Among the golden candlesticks he walks with pleasure, Rev. ii. 1.

2. She must reverence him, must love, honour, and obey him: He is thy Lord, and worship thou him. The church is to be subject to Christ, as the wife to the husband, (Eph. v. 24,) to call him Lord, as Sarah called Abraham, as the apostle called Christ, as the church in iii. 6.) and so not only to submit to his government, but to give him divine honours; we must worship him as God, and our Lord; for this is the will of God, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father; nay, in so doing, it is reckoned that they honour the Father; if we confess that Christ is Lord, and pay our homage to him accordingly, it is to the glory of God the Father, Phil. ii. 11.

II. He tells her of the honours designed for her. 1. Great court should be made to her, and rich presents brought her; (v. 12.) "The daughter of Tyre," a rich and splendid city, "the daughter of the King of Tyre shall be there with a gift; every royal family round about shall send a branch as a representative of the whole, to seek thy favour, and to make an interest in thee; even the rich among the people, whose wealth might be thought to discourage thee from the appearance of that beauty which shall entreat thy favour, for his sake, to whom thou art espoused, that by thee they may make him their Friend;" the Jews, the pretending Jews, who are rich to a proverb, (as rich as a Jew,) shall come and worship before the church's feet in the Philadelphian period, and shall know that Christ has loved her, Rev. iii. 9. When the Gentiles, being converted to the faith of Christ, join themselves to the church, they shall bring presents to Christ, as the Gospel commends them. 5. Rom. xiv. 16. When with themselves they devote all they have to the honour of Christ, and the service of his kingdom, they then come with a gift.

2. She shall be very splendid, and highly esteemed in the eyes of all, (1.) For her personal qualifications, the endowments of her mind, which every one shall admire; (v. 13.) The king's daughter is all glorious within. Note, The glory of the church is spiritual glory, and that is indeed all glory; it is the glory of the soul, and that is the man; it is glory in God's sight, and it is an earnest of eternal glory. The glory of the saints falls not within the view of a carnal eye; as their life, so their glory, is hid with Christ in God, neither can the natural man know it, for it is spiritually discerned; but those who do so discern it, highly value it. Let us see here what is that true glory which we should be ambitious of, that which makes a fair show in the flesh, but which is in the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, (1 Pet. iii. 4,) whose praise is not of men, but of God, Rom. ii. 29. (2.) For her rich apparel; though all her glory is within, that for which she is truly valuable, yet her clothing also is of wrought gold; the conversation of Christians, in which they appear in the world, must be enriched with good works, not gay and gaudy ones, like paint and flourish, but substantially good, like gold; and it must be accurate and exact, like wrought gold, which is worked with a great deal of care and caution.
3. Her nuptials shall be celebrated with a great deal of honour and joy; (v. 14, 15.) She shall be brought to the king, as the Lord God brought the woman to the man, (Gen. ii. 25.) to symbolize the mystic union of Christ and his church. None are brought to Christ, but whom the Father brings, and he has undertaken to do it; none besides are so brought to the king, (v. 14.) as to enter into the king's palace, v. 15. This intimates a two-fold bringing of the spouse to Christ. (1.) In the conversion of souls to Christ; then they are espoused to him, privately contracted, as chaste virgins, 2 Cor. xi. 2. Rom. vii. 4. (2.) In the completing of the mystical body, and the glorification of all the saints, at the end of time; then the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall be made completely ready, when all that belong to the election of grace shall be called in, and called home, and all gathered together to Christ, 2 Thess. ii. 1. Then is the marriage of the Lamb come, (Rev. xix. 7.—xxi. 2.) and the virgins go forth to meet the bridegroom, Matth. xxv. 1. Then they shall enter into the king's palace, into the heavenly mansions, to be ever with the Lord. In both these espousals, observe, to the honour of the royal bride. [1.] Her wedding-clothes: raiment of needle-work, the righteousness of Christ, the graces of the Spirit; both curiously wrought by divine wisdom. [2.] Her bride-maids; the virgins her companions, the wise virgins who have oil in their vessels as well as in their lamps, those who, being joined to the church, cleave to it and follow it, these shall go into the marriage. [3.] The mirth with which the nuptials will be celebrated; With gladness and rejoicings shall she be brought, when the prodigal is brought home to his father, it is meet that we should make merry and be glad; (Luke xv. 32.) and when the marriage of the Lamb is come, let us be glad and rejoice; (Rev. xix. 7.) for the day of his espousals is the day of the gladness of his heart, Cant. iii. 11. 4. The scene of this marriage shall be illustrious; (v. 16.) Instead of the fathers shall be thy children. Instead of the Old Testament church, the economy of which was waxen old, and ready to vanish away, (Heb. viii. 13.) as the fathers that are going off, there shall be a New Testament church, a Gentile church, that shall be grafted into the same olive, and partake of its root and fruitfulness; (Rom. xi. 17.) more and more eminent shall be the children of just deserts, than the children of the married wife, Isa. liv. 1. This is the Church of the New Testament; the same in truth, though in form different from that, (Isa. lxi. 10.) He shall see his seed; and these shall be made princes in all the earth, there shall be some of all nations brought into subjection to Christ, and so make princes, made to our God kings and priests, Rev. i. 6. Or it may intimate that there should be a much greater number of Christian kings than ever there was of Jewish kings; these in Canaan only, these in all the earth; making fathers of many nations, the chief of whom shall suck the breast of kings. They are princes of Christ's making; for by him kings reign, and princes decree justice.

5. The praise of this marriage shall be perpetual, in the praises of the royal Bridegroom; (v. 18.) I will make thy name to be remembered. His Father has given him a name above every name, and here promises to make it perpetual, by keeping up a succession of more names after him; he shall bear up his name; which shall thus endure for ever, (Isa. lxxi. 17.) by being remembered in all the generations of time; for the entail of Christianity shall not be cut off. "Therefore, because they shall remember thee in all generations, they shall praise thee for ever and ever." They that help to support the honour of Christ on earth, shall in heaven see his glory, and share in it, and be for ever praising him. We believe the hope of our everlasting happiness in the other world, let us always keep up the remembrance of Christ, as our only help, when we think on his suffering, in our generation; and, in assurance of the perpetuating of the kingdom of the Redeemer in the world, let us transmit the remembrance of him to succeeding generations, that his name may endure for ever, and be as the days of heaven.

PSALM XLVI.

This Psalm encourages us to hope and trust in God, and his power, and providence, and gracious presence, with his church, in the worst of times, and directs us to give him the glory of what he has done for us, and what he will do, probably, it was penned upon occasion of David's victories over the neighbouring nations, (2 Sam. xvii. 25.) and the rest which God gave him from all his enemies round about. We are here taught, I. To take comfort in God, when things look very black and threatening, v. 1.—4. II. To mention, to his praise, the great things he has wrought for his church against its enemies, v. 6.—9. III. To assure ourselves that God, who has glorified his own name, will glorify it yet again, and to comfort ourselves with that, v. 10, 11. We may, in singing it, apply it, either to our spiritual enemies, and the encouragement we have to hope, that, through Christ, we shall be more than conquerors over them, or to the public enemies of Christ's kingdom in the world, and their threatening their enemies' peace and happiness, and the security and serenity of mind, when they seem most formidable. It is said of Luther, that, when he heard any discouraging news, he would say, Come, let us sing the 46th Psalm.

To the chief musician for the sons of Korah. A song upon Alamoth.

1. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble: 2. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; 3. Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. 4. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. 5. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.

The Psalmist here teaches us, by his own example, 1. To triumph in God, and his relation to us, and presence with us, especially when we have had some fresh experiences of his appearing in our behalf; (v. 1.) God is our Refuge and Strength; we have found him so, he has engaged to be so, and he ever will be so. Are we pursued? God is our Refuge, to whom we may flee, and in whom we may be safe, and think ourselves so; secure in the good ground, Prov. xviii. 10. Are we oppressed by troubles? have we work to do, and enemies to grapple with? God is our Strength, to bear us up under our burthens, to fit us for all our services and sufferings; who will by his grace put strength into us, and in whom we may stay ourselves. Are we in distress? He is a Help, to do all that for us which we need, a present Help, the good word is, whom we have found to be so, a Help on which we may write Probatus est, as Christ is called a tried stone, Isa. xxviii. 16. Or, a Help at hand, one that we shall never have to seek for, but that is always near. Or, a Help sufficient, a Help accommodated to every case and exigence; whatever it is, he is a very present Help; we cannot desire a better Help, nor shall ever find the like in any creature.
II. Totriumph over the greatest dangers; God is our Strength and our Help, a God all-sufficient to us; therefore will we not fear. Those that with a holy reverence fear God, need not with any amazement to be afraid of the power of hell or earth. If God be for us, who can be against us, to do us any harm? It is our duty, it is our privilege, to be thus fearless; it is an evidence of a clear conscience, of an holy fear of God, for we have God to trust in, and his providence and promises; "We will not fear, though the earth be removed, though all our creature-con-"

fidences fail us, and sink us; nay, though that which should support us threaten to swallow us up, as the earth did Korah," for whose sons this psalm was penned, and, some think, by them, yet, while we keep close to God, and have him for us, we will not fear, for we have no cause to fear;

—Si frater illusior orbis, Improv. on Hor. 
—Let Jove's dread arm with thunder rend the spheres, Beneath the embers of worlds undaunted he appears.

Observe here,

1. How threatening the danger is. We will suppose the earth to be removed, and thrown into the sea, even the mountains, the strongest and finest parts of the earth, to be buried in the unfathom'd ocean; we will suppose the sea to roar and rage, and make a dreadful noise, and its fuming billows to insult the shore with so much violence as even to shake the mountains, v. 2. Though kingdoms and states be in confusion, embroiled in wars, tossed with tumults, and their governments in continual revolution; though their powers combine against the church and people of God, aim at no less than their ruin, and go very near to gain their point; yet will we not fear, knowing that all these troubles will end well for the church. See xcviii. 4. If the earth be removed, those that have laid up their treasures on earth, and set their hearts upon it; but not those who have laid up for themselves treasures in heaven, and who expect to be then most happy, when the earth, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Let those be troubled at the troubling of the waters, who build their confidence on such a floating foundation, but not those who are led to the Rock that is higher than they, and find firm footing upon that Rock, and their God. The danger of this danger is, considering how well-guarded the church is, and that interest which we are concerned for. It is not any private particular concern of our own that we are in pain about; no, it is the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the most High; it is the ark of God, for which our hearts tremble. But when we consider what God has provided for the comfort and safety of his church, we shall see reason to have our hearts fixed, and set above the fear of evil tidings. Here is,

(1.) Joy to the church, even in the most melancholy and sorrowful times; (v. 4.) There is a river, the streams wherein shall make it glad, even then when the waters of the sea roar, and threaten it. It alludes to the waters of Siloam, which went softly by Jerusalem; (Isa. viii. 6, 7.) though of no great depth or breadth, yet the waters of it were made sacred by the precepts of faith in God, and Hezekiah's time, Isa. xxxii. 10, 11. But this must be understood spiritually; the covenant of grace is the river, the promises of which are the streams, or, the Spirit of grace is the river, (John vii. 38, 39.) the comforts of which are the streams, that make glad the city of our God. God's word and ordinances are rivers and streams with which God makes his saints glad in cloudy and dark days. God himself is to his church a Place of broad rivers and streams, Isa. xxxviii. 21. The streams that make glad the city of God are not rapid, but gentle, like those of Siloam. Note, The spiritual comforts, which are conveyed to the saints by soft and silent whispers, and which come not with observation, are sufficient to balance the most loud and noisy threatenings of an angry and malicious world.

(2.) Establishment to the church, though heaven and earth are shaken, yet God is in the midst of her, she shall not be removed. God has assured his church of his special presence with her, and concern for her; his honour is embarrased in her, he has set up his tabernacle in her, and has undertaken the protection of it, and therefore she shall not be moved, that is, [1.] Not destroyed, nor removed, as the earth may be, v. 2. The church shall survive the world, and be in bliss when it is in ruins. It is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. [2.] Not disturbed, not much moved, with fears of the issue. If God be for us, if God be with us, we need not be moved at the most violent attempts made against us.

(3.) Deliverance to the church, though her dangers be very great; God shall help her; and who then can hurt her? He shall help her under her troubles, that she shall not sink; nay, that the more she is afflicted, the more she shallmultiply. God shall help her out of her troubles, and that right early, as Jove's anger, very speedily, for he is a present Help, (v. 1.) and very seasonably, then when things are brought to the last extremity, and when the relief will be most welcome. This may be applied by particular believers to themselves; if God be in our hearts, in the midst of us, by his word dwelling richly in us, we shall be established, we shall be helped; let us therefore trust and not be afraid; all is well, and will end well.

6. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melt-

ed.

7. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. 8. Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. 9. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. 10. Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. 11. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

These verses give glory to God, both as King of nations, and as King of saints.

1. As King of nations, ruling the world by his power and providence, and over-ruling all the affairs of the children of men to his own glory; he does according to his will among the inhabitants of the earth, and none may say, What does thou?

1. He checks the rage, and breaks the power, of the nations that oppose him and his interests in the word; (v. 6.) The heathen raged at David's coming to the throne, and at the setting up of the kingdom of the Son of David; compare it. 1, 2. The kingdoms were moved with indignation, and rose in tumultuous, furious manner, to oppose it; but God uttered his voice, spoke to them in his wrath, and they were moved in another sense, they were struck into confusion and consternation, put into disorder, and all their measures broken; the earth itself melted under them, so that they found no firm footing, their earthly hearts failed them for fear, and dissolved like snow before the sun. Such a melting of the spirits of the enemies, is described, Judg. v. 4, 5, and see Luke xxii. 25, 26.
2. When he pleaseth to draw his sword, and give it commission, he can make great havoc among the nations, and lay all waste; (v. 8.) Come, behold the works of the Lord, they are to be observed, (lxvi. 5.) and to be sought out, cxxi. 2. All the operations of Providence must be considered as the works of the Lord, and his attributes and purposes must be taken notice of in them. Particularly, take note of the instruments he has used, the commission among the enemies of his church, who thought to have laid the land of Israel desolate. The destruction they designed to bring upon the church has been turned upon themselves. War is a tragedy which commonly destroys the stage it is acted on; David carried the war into the enemies' country; and Oh what desolations did it make there! Cities were burnt, countries laid waste, armies of men cut off and laid in heaps upon heaps. Come and see the effects of desolating judgments, and stand in awe of God; say, How terrible art thou in thy works? lxvi. 3. Let all that oppose him, see this with terror, and expect the same cup of trembling to be put into their hands; let all that fear him, and trust in him, see it with pleasure, and not be afraid of the most formidable powers armed against the church. Let them gird themselves, but they shall be broken to pieces.

3. When he pleases to sheathe his sword, he puts an end to the wars of the nations, and crowns them with peace, v. 9. War and peace depend on his word and will, as much as storms and calms at sea do, cvii. 25, 29. He makes wars to cease unto the end of the earth; sometimes in pity to the nations, that they may have a breathing time, when, by long wars with each other, they have run themselves out of breath. Both sides perhaps are weary of desolations he has visited on them; his expedients are found out for accommodation; martial princes are removed, and peace-makers set in their room; and then the bow is broken by consent, the spear cut asunder, and turned into a pruning-hook, the sword beaten into a plough-share, and the chariots of war burned, there being no more occasion for them; or rather it may be meant of what he does, at other times, in favour of his own people. He has no more need of them now, who were waged against them, and designed for their ruin. He breaks their enemies' bow that was drawn against them; No weapon formed against Zion shall prosper, Isa. liv. 17. The total destruction of Gog and Magog is propheticall described by the burning of their weapons of war; (Ezek. xxxix. 9, 10.) which intimates likewise the church's perfect security and assurance of lasting peace, which made it needless to lay up those weapons of war for their own service. The bringing of a long war to a good issue, is a work of the Lord, which we ought to behold with wonder and thankfulness.

II. As King of saints, and as such we must own that great and marvellous are his works, Rev. xv. 3.

He does, and will do, great things.

1. For his own glory; (v. 10.) Be still, and know that I am God. (1.) Let his enemies be still, and threaten no more, but know it to their terror, that he is God, one infinitely above them, and that certainly be too hard for them; let them rage no more, for it is all in vain, he that sits in heaven laughs at them; and, in spite of all their impotent malice against his name and honour, he will be exalted among the heathen, and not only among his own people, he will be exalted in the earth, and not only in the church; his name and glory will have their own way, and do their own will; but let them know that God will be exalted, he will have his way, will do his own will, will glorify his own name, and wherein they dealt boldly, he will be above them, and make them know that he is so. (2.) Let his own people be still; let them be calm and sedate, and tremble no more, but know, to their comfort, that the Lord is God, he is God alone, and will be exalted above the heathen; let him alone to maintain his honour, to fulfil his own counsels, and to support his own interest in the world. The field is desolated, yet let us not be dejected, for we are sure that God will still be exalted, and that may satisfy us; he will work for his great name, and then no matter what becomes of our little names. When we pray, Father, glorify thy name, we ought to act faith upon the answer given to that prayer, when Christ himself prayed it; I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again, Amen, Lord, so be it.

2. For his people's safety and protection. He triumphs in the former, I will be exalted; they triumph in this, (v. 7.) and again v. 11. It is the burthen of the song, "The Lord of hosts is with us; he is on our side, he takes our part, is present with us and President over us; The God of Jacob is a Refuge, to whom we may flee, and in whom we may confide, and be sure of safety." Let all believers triumph in this. (1.) They have the presence of a God of power, of all power; The Lord of hosts is with us, is the Lord of hosts, for he has all the creatures, which are called the hosts of heaven and earth, at his beck and command, and he makes what use he pleases of them, as the instruments either of his justice or of his mercy. This sovereign Lord is with us, sides with us, acts with us, and has promised he will never leave us. Hosts may be against us, but we need not fear them, if the Lord of hosts be with us. (2.) They are under the protection of God in covenant, who not only is able to help them, but is engaged in honour and faithfulness to help them. He is the God of Jacob, not only Jacob the person, but Jacob the people; nay, and of all praying people, the spiritual seed of wrestling Jacob; and he is our Refuge, by whom we are sheltered, and in whom we are satisfied, who by his providence secures our welfare, when there are no fighting, and who by his grace quiets our minds, and establishes them, when we are at war. The Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob, has been, is, and will be, with us; has been, is, and will be, our Refuge: the original includes all; and well may Selah be added to it; Mark this, and take the comfort of it, and say, If God be for us, who can be against us?

PSALM XLVII.

The scope of this psalm is to stir us up to praise God, to stir up all people to do it; and, I. We are directed in a manner to do it, publicly, cheerfully, and intelligently, v. 1, 6, 7, 11. We are furnished with matter for praise. 1. God's majesty, v. 2. His sovereign and universal dominion, v. 3. The great things he has done, and will do, for his people, v. 4, 5. I see a case, that this psalm was penned upon occasion of the bringing up of the ark to mount Zion, which v. 5. seems to refer to; God is gone up with a shout, but it looks further, to the execution of Christ into the heavenly Zion, after he had finished his undertaking on earth, and to the setting up of his kingdom in the world, to which the heathen should become willing subjects. In singing this psalm, we are to remember the time, and to consider in the heart, the joyful triumph in his exaltation, and to celebrate his praises, confessing that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

To the chief musician. A psalm for the sons of Korah.

O CLAP your hands, all ye people, shout unto God with the voice of triumph: 2. For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth. 3. He shall subdue the people under us,
and the nations under our feet. 4. He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob, whom he loved. Selah.

The psalmist, having his own heart filled with great and good thoughts of God, endeavours to engage all our hearts to the best work of praise; as one convinced that God is worthy of all blessing and praise, and as one grieved at his own and others' backwardness to, and barrenness in, this work. Observe, in these verses,

I. Who are called upon to praise God; "all ye people, all ye people of Israel:" those were his own subjects, and under his charge, and therefore he will engage them to praise God, for on them he had a Divine claim; and influence. We never can choose, he and his house, he and his people, shall praise the Lord. Or, "all ye people and nations of the earth:" and so it may be taken as a prophecy of the conversion of the Gentiles, and the bringing of them into the church; see Rom. xv. 11.

II. What they are called upon to do; "O clap your hands, in token of your own joy and satisfaction in what God has done for you; of your approbation, and your admiration, of what God has done in his Church; and of your indignation against all the enemies of God's glory, Job xxxvii. 23. Clap your hands, as men transported with pleasure, that cannot contain themselves; shout unto God, not to make him hear, (his ear is not heavy,) but to make all about you hear, and take notice how much you are affected and filled with the works of God. Shout with the voice of triumph in him, and in his power and goodness, that others may join with you in the triumph." Note, Such expressions of praise and devout affection as to some may seem indecent and improper, ought not to be hastily censured and condemned, much less ridiculed, because, if they come from an upright heart, God will accept the strength of the affection, and excuse the weakness of the expressions of it.

III. What is suggested to us as matter for our praise.
1. That the God with whom we have to do, is a God of awful majesty; (v. 2.) The Lord most High is terrible. He is infinitely above the noblest creatures, higher than the highest; there are those perfections in him that are to be revered by all, and particularly that power, holiness, and justice, that are to be dreaded by all those that contend with him.

2. That he is a God of sovereign and universal dominion; he is a King that reigns alone, and with an absolute power; a King over all the earth; all the creatures, being made by him, are subject to him, and therefore he is a great King; the King of kings.

3. That he takes a particular care of his people, and their concerns, has done so, and ever will.

(1.) In giving them victory and success, (v. 3.) subduing the people and nations under them, both those that stood in their way, (xlv. 2.) and those that were enemies to them. This, God had done for them, witness the planting of them in Canaan, and their continuance there unto this day. This they doubted not but he would still do for them by his servant David, who prospered, which way soever he turned his victorious arms; but this looks forward to the kingdom of the Messiah, which was to be set over all the earth, and not confined to the Jewish nation only. Jesus Christ shall subdue the Gentiles; he shall subdue never others, but to the word signifies, not for slaughter, but for preservation. He shall subdue their afflictions, and make them a willing people in the day of his power; shall bring their thoughts into obedience to him, and reduce them, which had gone astray, under the guidance of the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, 1 Pet. ii. 25.

(2.) In giving them rest and settlement; (v. 4.) In short, choose our inheritance for us. He had chosen the land of Canaan to be an inheritance for Israel, it was the land which the Lord their God spied out for them; see Deut. xxxiii. 8. This justified their possession of that land, and gave them a good title; and this sweetened their enjoyment of it, and made it comfortable; they had reason to think it a happy lot, and to be satisfied in it, when it was that which Infinite Wisdom chose for them. And the setting up of God's sanctuary in it, made it the excellency of Jacob, (Amos iv. 8.) and he chose so good an inheritance for Jacob, because he loved him, Deut. vii. 8. Apply this spiritually, and it bespeaks, [1.] The happiness of the saints, that God himself has chosen their inheritance for them, and it is a godly heritage: he has chosen it, who knows the soul, and what will serve to make it happy; and he has chosen so well, that he himself has undertaken to be the Inheritance of his people, (Amos iv. 14.) and he has laid up for them in the other world an inheritance incorruptible, 1 Pet. i. 4. This will be indeed the excellency of Jacob, for whom, because he loved them, he prepared such a happiness as eye has not seen. [2.] The faith and submission of the saints to God. This is the language of every gracious soul, "God shall choose my inheritance for me; let him appoint me my lot, and I will acquiesce in the appointment. He knows what is best for me better than I do myself, and therefore I will have no will of my own but what is resolved into his."

3. God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. 6. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises. 7. For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding. 8. God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. 9. The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: he is greatly exalted.

We are here most earnestly pressed to praise God, and to sing his praises; so backward are we to this duty, that God have need to be urged to it by precept upon precept, and line upon line; so we are here, (v. 6.) Sing praises to God, and again, Sing praises, Sing praises to our King, and again, Sing praises. This intimates that it is a very necessary and excellent duty, that it is a duty we ought to be frequent and abundant in; we may sing praises again and again in the same words, and it is no vain repetition, if it be done with an affection, and a spirit that disprop[r]ess the praise. This is the case with the praise of God, (Deut. viii. 1.) Should not subjects praise their king? God is our God, our King, and therefore we must praise him; we must sing his praises, as those that are pleased with them, and that are not ashamed of them. But here is a needful rule subjoined; (v. 7.) Sing ye praises with understanding, with Moschil. 1. "Intelligently: as those that do yourselves understand why and for what reasons you praise God, and what is the meaning of the service." This is the gospel rule, (1 Cor. xiv. 15.) To sing with the spirit, and with the understanding also; it is only with the heart that we make melody to the Lord, Eph. v. 19. It is not an acceptable service, if it be not a reasonable service. (2.) "Instructively: as those
that desire to make others understand God's glorious perfections, and to teach them to praise him. Three things are mentioned in these verses as justifying their praises, and each of them will admit of a double sense:

I. We must praise God going up; (v. 5.) God is gone up with a shout; which may refer, 1. To the carying up of the ark to the hill of Zion, which was done with great solemnity, David himself dancing before it; the priests, it is likely, blowing the trumpets, and the people following with their loud huzzas. The ark being the instituted token of God's special presence with them, when that was brought up by warrant from him, he might be said to go up. The emerging of God's ordinances out of obscurity, in order to the more public and solemn administration of them, is a great favour to any people, which they have reason to rejoice in, and give thanks for. 2. To the ascension of our Lord Jesus into heaven, when he had finished his work on earth, Acts i. 9. Then God went up with a shout, the shout of a King, of a Conqueror, as one who, having spoiled principalities and powers, then led captivity captive, lxviii. 18. He went up as Mediator, typified by the ark, and the mercy-seat over it, and was brought as the ark was into the most holy place, into heaven itself; see Heb. ix. 24. We read not of a shout, or the sound of a trumpet, at the ascension of Christ, but they were the inhabitants of the upper world, those sons of God, that then shouted for joy, Job xxxviii. 7. He shall come again in the same manner as he went; (Acts i. 11.) and we are sure that he shall come again with a shout and the sound of a trumpet.

II. We must praise God reigning, v. 7, 8. God is not only our King, and therefore we owe our homage to him, but he is King of all the earth, (v. 7.) over all the kings of the earth, and therefore, in every place, the incentive of praise is to be chiefly directed to him. This may be understood in two senses:

1. Of the kingdom of providence. God, as Creator, and the God of nature, reigns over the heathens, disposes of them, and all their affairs, as he pleases, though they know him not, nor have any regard to him. He sits upon the throne of his holiness, which he has prepared in the heavens, and there he rules over all, even over the heathen, serving his own purposes by them and upon them. See here the excellence of them; all around his throne, all are submitted to his allegiance; even the heathen, that serve other gods, are ruled by the true God, our God, whether they will or no. See the equity of his government; it is a throne of holiness, on which he sits, whence he gives warrants, orders, and judgment, in which we are sure there is no iniquity. 2. Of the kingdom of the Messiah. Jesus Christ, who is God, and whose throne is for ever and ever, reigns over the heathen, as the most conspicuous branch of his administration of the providential kingdom, but he shall set up the kingdom of his grace in the Gentile world, and rule in the hearts of multitudes that were bred up in heathenism, Eph. ii. 12, 13. This the apostle speaks of as a great mystery, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, Eph. iii. 6. Christ sits upon the throne of his holiness, his throne in the heavens, where all the administrations of his government are exercised. It's holiness is intended to advance holiness among the children of men.

III. We must praise God as attended and honoured by the princes of the people, v. 9. This may be understood, 1. Of the congress or convention of the states of Israel, the heads and rulers of the several tribes, at the solemn feasts, or to dispatch the public business of the nation. It was the honour of Israel, that they were the people of the God of Abraham, as they were Abraham's seed, and taken into his covenant; and, thanks be to God, this blessing of Abraham is come upon the isles of the Gentiles, Gal. iii. 14. It was their happiness, that they had a settled government, princes of their people, who were the shields of their land; magistracy is the shield of a nation. And it is a great mercy to any people to have this shield; especially when their princes, their shields, belong unto the Lord, are devoted to his honour, and their power is employed in his service; for then he is greatly exalted. It is likewise the honour of God, that, in another sense, the shields of the earth do belong to him; magistracy is his institution, and he serves his own purposes by it in the government of the world, turning the hearts of kings, and the rulers, which way soever he pleases. It was well with Israel when the princes of their people were gathered together to consult for the public welfare. The unanimous agreement of the great ones of a nation in the things that belong to its peace, is a very happyomen, which proclaims abundance of blessings. 2. It may be applied to the calling of the Gentiles into the church of Christ, and taken as a prophecy, that, in the church, the kings of the earth and their people should join themselves to the church, and bring their glory and power into the New Jerusalem; that they should all become the people of the God of Abraham, to whom it was promised that he should be the father of many nations. The volunteers of the people, so it may be read; it is the same word that is used, (cx. 5.) Thy people shall be willing; for those that are gathered to Christ are not forced, but made freely willing, to be his. When the shields of the earth, the ensigns of royal dignity, (1 Kings xiv. 27, 28.) are surrendered to the Lord Jesus, as the keys of a city are presented to the conqueror or sovereign, when princes use their power for the advancement of the interests of religion, then Christ is greatly exalted.

PSALM XLVIII.

This psalm, as the two former, is a triumphant song; some think it was penned on occasion of Jehoshaphat's victory, 2 Chron. xx. xxvii. Others of Senecas arrival in Rome, and of the army laid siege to Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time; but, for aught I know, it might be penned by David, upon occasion of some eminent victory obtained in his time; yet not for that, but for this, that it might be applicable also to the glorious victories of the church, of which Jerusalem was a type, especially when it shall come to be a church triumphant, the heavenly Jerusalem, (Heb. xii. 22.) the Jerusalem which is above, Gal. iv. 26. Jerusalem is here praised, I. For its relation to God, v. 1, 2. II. For God's care of it, v. 3. III. For the terror it strikes upon its enemies, v. 4, 7. IV. For the pleasure it gives to its friends, who delight to think, 1. Of what God has done, does, and will, do, for it, v. 8. 2. Of the gracious discoveries he makes of himself, and for that holy city, v. 9, 10. 3. Of the effectual provision which is made for it, as for the church, v. 11, 12. I. We have here a view of the perpetuity of God's covenant with the children of Zion, v. 14. In singing this psalm, we must be affected with the privilege we have as members of the gospel-church, and must express and exult our sincere good-will to all its interests.

A song and psalm for the sons of Korah.

1. GREAT is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. 2. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is mount Zion; on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge. 4. For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. 5. They saw it, and so they mar-
The situation must needs be every way agreeable, when Infinite Wisdom chose it for the place of the sanctuary; and that which made it beautiful, was, that it was the mountain of holiness, for there is a beauty in holiness. This earth is, by sin, covered with deformity, and therefore justly might that spot of ground, which was thus be adorned with holiness, be called the joy of the whole earth, that is, what the whole earth had reason to rejoice in, that God would thus in very deed dwell with man upon the earth.

Mount Zion was on the north side of Jerusalem, and so was a shelter to the city from the cold and bleak winds that blew from that quarter; or, if fair weather was expected out of the north, they were thus directed to look Zion-ward for it.

II. That the kings of the earth were afraid of it. That God was known in their palaces for a Refuge, they had had a late instance, and a very remarkable one. Whatever it was,

1. They had had but too much occasion to fear their enemies; For the kings were assembled, v. 4.

The neighbouring princes were confederate against Jerusalem, their heads and horns, their policies and powers, were combined for its ruin; they were as assembled with all their forces, they passed, advanced, and marched together, not doubting but they should soon make themselves masters of that city which should have been the joy, but was the envy, of the whole earth.

2. God made their enemies to fear them. The very sight of Jerusalem struck them into a consternation, and gave check to their fury; as the sight of the tents of Jacob frightened Balaam from his purpose to curse Israel, Numb. xxiv. 2. They saw it and marvelled, and basted away, v. 5. Not Veni, vidi, vici—I came, I saw, I conquered; but, on the contrary, Veni, vidi, victus sum— I came, I saw, I was defeated. Not that there was anything to be seen in Jerusalem that was so very formidable; but the sight of it brought to mind what they had heard concerning the special presence of God in that city, and the divine protection it was under, and God impressed such terrors on their minds thereby, as made them retire with precipitation. Though they were kings, though they were many, though they were mighty, yet, when they knew themselves an unequal match for Omnipo
tence, and therefore fear came upon them, and pain, v. 6. Note, God can dispirit the stoutest of his church's enemies, and soon put them in pain that live at ease. The fright they were in upon the sight of Jerusalem is here compared to the threes of a woman in travail, which are sharp and grievous, which sometimes come suddenly, (1 Thess. v. 3.) which cannot be avoided, and which are effects of sin and the curse. The defeat hereby given to their designs upon Jerusalem is compared to the dreadful work made with a fleet of ships by a violent storm, when some are split, others shattered, all dispersed; (v. 7.) Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east-wind; effects at sea lie thus exposed. The terrors of God are compared to an east-wind; (Job xxviii. 20, 21.) these shall put them into confusion, and break all their measures. Who knows the power of God's anger?

3. As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever Selah. 9. We have thought of thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple.

10. According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is full of righteousness. 11. Let Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments
12. Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. 13. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following.

14. For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death.

We have here the good use and improvement which the people of God are taught to make of his late glorious and gracious appearances for them against their enemies, that they might work for their good.

I. Let our faith in the word of God be hereby confirmed. If we compare what God has done with what he has spoken, we shall find, that as we have heard, so have we seen, (v. 8.) and what we have seen, obliges us to believe what we have heard.

1. As we have heard done in former providences, in the days of old, so have we seen done in our own days. Note, God’s latter appearances for his people, against his and their enemies, are consonant to his former appearances, and should put us in mind of them. 2. As we have heard in the promise and prediction, so have we seen in the performance and accomplishment. We have heard that God is the Lord of hosts, and that Jerusalem is the city of our God, is dear to him, is his particular care; and now we have seen it, we have seen the power of our God, we have seen his goodness, we have seen his care and concern for us; that he is a Wall of fire round about Jerusalem, and the glory in the midst of her. Note, In the great things that God has done, and is doing, for his church, it is good to take notice of the fulfilling of the scriptures; and this would help us the better to understand both the providence itself, and the scripture that is fulfilled in it.

II. Let our hope of the stability and perpetuity of the church be hereby encouraged. "From what we have seen, compared with what we have heard, in the city of our God, we may conclude, that God will establish it for ever." This was not fulfilled in Jerusalem, that city was long since destroyed, and all its glory laid in the dust; but has its accomplishment in the gospel-church; we are sure that shall be finished for ever, it is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. (Matt. xvi. 18.) God himself has undertaken the establishment of it; it is the Lord that has founded Zion, Isa. xiv. 32. And what we have seen, compared with what we have heard, may encourage us to hope in that promise of God, upon which the church is built.

III. Let our minds be hereby filled with good thoughts of God. "Fred with what we have heard, and with what we see, for we may as well expect to think much of God’s loving-kindness, whenever we meet in the midst of his temple," v. 9. All the streams of mercy that flow down to us, must be run up to the fountain of God’s loving-kindness. It is not owing to any merit of ours, but purely to his mercy, and the peculiar favour he bears to his people. This, therefore, we must think of with delight, think of frequently, and fixedly. What subject can we dwell upon more pleasant, more profitable? We must have God’s loving-kindness always before our eyes, (xxxvi. 3.) especially when we attend upon him in his temple. When we enjoy the benefit of public ordinances undisturbed, we meet in his temple, and there is none to make us afraid, we should take occasion thence to think of his loving-kindness.

IV. Let us give to God the glory of the great things which he has done for us, and mention them to his honour. (v. 10.) "According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise, not only in Jerusalem, but to the ends of the earth." But if we review the deliverance of Jerusalem, God had made himself a name; he had gloriously discovered his wisdom, power, and goodness, and made all the nations about sensible of it; and so was his praise; that is, some, in all parts, would be found giving glory to him accordingly. As far as his name goes, his praise will go, at least, it should go, and, at length, it shall go, when the ends of the world shall praise him, xxvii. 27. Rev. x. 11. Some, by his name, thought especially that glorious name of his, the Lord of hosts; according to that name, so is his praise; for all the creatures, even to the ends of the earth, are under his command. But his people must, in a special manner, acknowledge his justice in all he does for them; “Righteousness fills thy right hand; all the operations of thy power are consonant to the eternal rules of equity.

V. Let all the members of the church in particular, take to themselves the comfort of what God does for his church in general; (v. 11.) "Let mount Zion rejoice, the priests and Levites that attend the sanctuary, and then let all the daughters of Judah, the country-towns, and the inhabitants of them, be glad; let the women, in their songs and dances, as usual on occasion of public joys, celebrate with thankfulness this great salvation which God has wrought for them." Note, When we have given God the praise, we may then take the pleasure of the extraordinary deliverances of the church, and be glad because of God’s judgments, the operations of his providence, all which we may see wrought in wisdom, (therefore called judgments,) and working for the good of his church.

VI. Let us diligently observe the instances and evidences of the church’s beauty, strength, and safety, and faithfully transmit our observations to those that shall come after us; (v. 12, 13.) Walk about Zion. Some think this refers to the ceremonies of the triumph; let these who are employed in that solemnity, walk round the walls, as they did, (Neh. xii. 31.) singing, and praising God. In doing this, let them tell the towers, and mark well the bulwarks.

1. That they might magnify the late wonderful deliverance God had wrought for them. Let them observe, with wonder, that the towers and bulwarks of Zion, which are in all their strength, and none of them damaged; the palaces are in their beauty, and none of them blemished; there is not the least damage done to the city by the kings that were assembled against it; (v. 4.) "Tell this to the generation following, as a wonderful instance of God’s care of his holy city, that the enemies should not only not ruin or destroy it, but not so much as hurt or deface it. 2. That they might fortify themselves against the fear of the like threatening danger, another time. And so, (1.) that they may keep up their constancy in the strong-hold of Zion. Let the daughters of Judah see the towers and bulwarks of Zion, with pleasure, equal to the terror with which the kings, their enemies, saw them, v. 5. Jerusalem was generally looked upon as an impregnable place, as appears, Lam. iv. 12. All the inhabitants of the world would not have believed that an enemy should have entered the gates of Jerusalem; nor could they have imagined that a people so weak in number, could have set up their defence. Set your heart to her bulwarks. This intimates that the principal bulwarks of Zion were, not the objects of sense, which they might set their eye upon, but the objects of faith, which they must set their hearts upon; it was well enough fortified, indeed, both by nature and art; but its bulwarks, that were mostly to be relied upon, were the special presence of God in it, the beauty of holiness he had put upon it, and the promises he had made.
concerning it. "Consider Jerusalem's strength, and tell it to the generations to come, that they may do nothing to weaken it, and that, if at any time it be in distress, they may not basely surrender it to the enemy as not tenable." Calvin observes here, that when they are directed to transmit to posterity a particular account of the towers, and bulwarks, and palaces of Jerusalem, it is intimated, that, in proportion of time, these would and the world would remain no longer to be seen; for, otherwise, what need was there to preserve the description and history of them? When the disciples were admiring the buildings of the temple, their Master told them, that in a little time one stone of it should not be left upon another, Matt. xxiv. 1, 2. Therefore, (2.) This must certainly be applied to the gospel-church, that mount Zion, Hebr. xii. 22. If Consider the towers, and bulwarks, and palaces, of that, that you may be invited and encouraged to join yourselves to it, and embark in it. See it founded on Christ, the Rock fortified by the divine power, guarded by him that neither slumbers nor sleeps. See what precious ordinances are its palaces, what precious promises are its bulwarks; tell this to the generation following, that they may with purpose of heart espouse its interests, and cleave to it, Hebrews x. 18. God, in the assurances we have of his everlasting loving-kindness, v. 14. Tell this to the generation following, transmit this truth as a sacred deposit to your posterity, That this God, who has now done such great things for us, is our God for ever and ever; he is constant and unchangeable in his love to us and care for us. 1. If God be our God, he is ours for ever, not only through all the ages of time, but to eternity; for it is God's everlasting blessedness of glorified saints, that God himself should be with them, his Spirit, Rev. xxi. 3. 2. If he be our God, he will be our Guide, our faithful constant Guide, to show us our way, and to lead us in it; he will be so, even unto death, which will be the period of our way, and will bring us to our rest. He will lead and keep us, even to the last. He will be our Guide above death; so some. He will so guide us, as to set us above the reach of death, so that it shall not be able to have the mastery of us; but he will place us by our Guide beyond death; so others. He will conduct us safe to a happiness on the other side death, to a life in which there shall be no more death. If we take the Lord for our God, he will conduct and convey us safe to death, through death, and beyond death; down to death, and up again to glory.

PSALM XLIX.
This psalm is a sermon, and so is the next. In most of the psalms, we have the penman praying or praising; in these, we have him preaching, and it is our duty, in singing psalms, to teach and admonish each other one another. The scope and design of this discourse is, to convince the men of this world of their sin and folly in setting their hearts upon the things of this world, and so to persuade them to seek the treasures of a better world; as also comfort the people of God, in reference to their own troubles, and the grief that arises from the prosperity of the wicked. I. In the preface, he proposes to awaken world, to the conviction of the vanity of the world, and to comfort himself and other good people in a day of distress, v. 4, 5. II. In the rest of the psalm, 1. He endeavours to convince sinners of their folly in doing upon the wealth of the world, by showing them, (1.) That they cannot, with all their wealth, save their friends from death, v. 6, 9. (2.) They cannot save themselves from death, v. 10. (3.) They cannot secure themselves a happiness in this world, v. 11, 12. Much less, (4.) Can they secure to themselves the prosperity of the world, v. 14. 2. He endeavours to comfort himself and other good people, (1.) Against the fear of death, v. 15. (2.) Against the fear of the prospering power of wicked people, v. 16, 20. In singing this psalm, let us receive these instructions and be wise.

To the chief musician. A psalm for the sons of Korah.
1. H E A R this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world: 2. Both low and high, rich and poor together. 3. My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding. 4. I will incline mine ear to a parable; I will open my dark saying upon the harp. 5. Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?

This is the psalmist's preface to his discourse concerning the vanity of the world, and its insufficiency to make us happy; and we seldom meet with an introduction more solemn than this; for there is no part of the divine word more highly weighed, in weight and importance, and the consideration of which will be of more advantage to us.

I. He demands the attention of others to that which he was about to say; (v. 1, 2.) Hear this, all ye people; hear it and heed it, hear it and consider it; what is spoken once, hear twice; Hear and give ear, lxxi. 9, 11. Not only, "Hear, all ye Israelites, and give ear all the inhabitants of Canaan," (v. 2.) but, "Hear, all ye people, and give ear, all inhabitants of the world; for this doctrine is not peculiar to those that are blessed with divine revelation, but even the light of nature witnesses to it. All men may know, and therefore let all men consider, that their riches will not profit them in the day of death. Both low and high, both rich and poor, must come together, to hear the word of God; let both, therefore, hear this with application. Let those that are high and rich in the world, hear of the vanity of their worldly possessions, and let them be proud of them, nor secure in the enjoyment of them, but lay them out in doing good, that with them they may make to themselves friends; let those that are poor and low, hear this, and be content with their little, and not envy those that have abundance. Poor people are as much in danger from an inordinate desire toward the wealth of the world, as rich people from an inordinate delight in it.

He gives good reasons why his discourse shall be regarded; (v. 3.) My mouth shall speak of wisdom; what he had to say, I. Was true and good. It is wisdom and understanding, it will make these wise and intelligent that receive it, and submit to it. It is not doubtful but certain, not trivial but weighty, not a matter of nice speculation, but of admirable use, to guide us in the right way to our great end. 2. It was what he had himself well-digested. What his mouth spake was the meditation of his heart; (v. xli. 14.—xlv.) it was wise God put into his mind, what he had himself seriously considered, and was fully apprized of the meaning of, and convinced of the truth of. That which ministers speak from their own hearts is most likely to reach the hearts of their hearers. II. He engages his own attention; (v. 4.) I will incline mine ear to a parable. It is called a parallel, not because it is figurative and obscure, but because it is a fair and direct discourse concerning the vanity of the world. It is the same word that is used concerning Solomon's proverbs. The psalmist will himself incline his ear to it. This intimates, 1. That he was taught by it the Spirit of God, and did not speak of himself. Those that undertake to teach others, must first learn themselves. 2. That he thought himself nearly concerned in it, and was resolved not to venture his own soul upon that bottom which he dashed others from venturing their upon. 3. That he would not expect others should attend to
that which he himself did not attend to as a matter of the greatest importance. Where God gives the tongue of the learned, he first wakes the ear to hear as the learned, Isa. 1. 4.

III. He promises to make the matter as plain, and as affecting, as he could; I will open my dark saying upon the harp. What he learned for himself, he would not conceal or confine to himself, but would communicate, for the benefit of others. 1. Some understood it not, it was a riddle to them; tell them of the vanity of the things that are seen of the reality and weight of invisible things, and they say, Ah, Lord God, doth he not speak parables? For the sake of such, he would open this dark saying, and make it so plain, that he that runs might read it. 2. Others understood it well enough, but they were not removed by it, it never affected them, and, for their sake, he would open it upon the harp, and try that expedient to work upon them, to see if it might turn them. This verse may find him who a sermon flies. Herbert.

IV. He begins with the application of it to himself, and that is the right method in which to treat of divine things; we must first preach to ourselves, before we undertake to admonish or instruct others. Before he comes to set down the folly of carnal security, (v. 6.) he here lays down, from his own experience, the self-conceit and comfort of a holy gracious security, which they enjoy who trust in God, and not in their worldly wealth; Wherefore should I fear? he means, Wherefore should I fear their fear, (Isa. viii. 12.) the fears of worldly people? 1. "Wherefore should I be afraid of them? Wherefore should I fear in the days of trouble and persecution, when the indignity of my heels, or of my suppliants that endeavour to trip up my heels, shall come upon me, and they shall surround me with their mischievous attempts? Why should I be afraid of those, all whose power lies in their wealth, which will not enable them to redeem their friends? I will not fear their power, for it cannot enable them to ruin me." The great men of the world will not appear at all formidable, when we consider what little stead their wealth will stand them in. We need not fear their casting us down from our excellency, who cannot support themselves by their policy. "Wherefore should I be afraid like them?" The days of old age and death are the days of evil, Eccl. xii. 1. In the day of judgment, the indignity of our heels, or of our steps, our past sins, will compass us about, will be set in order before us. Every work will be brought into judgment, with every secret thing; and every one of us must give account of himself. In these days, worldly wicked people will be afraid; nothing more dreadful to them, that have set their hearts upon the world, than to think of leaving it; death to them is the king of terrors, because, after death, comes the judgment, when their sins will surround them as so many furies; but wherefore should a good man fear death, who has God with him? xxiii. 4. When his inequities compass him about, he sees them all pardoned, his conscience is purified and pacified, and then, even in the judgment-day, when the hearts of others fail them for fear, they can lift up their heads with joy, Luke xxi. 26, 28. Note, The children of God, though ever so poor, are in this truly happy, above the most prosperous of the children of this world, that they are well-guarded against the terrors of death, and the judgment to come.

6. They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; 7. None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; 8. (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever;) 9. That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption. 10. For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others. 11. Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. 12. Nevertheless, man being in honour abideth not; he is like the beasts that perish. 13. This their way is their folly; yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah. 14. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling.

In these verses, we have,

I. A description of the spirit and way of worldly people, whose portion is in this life, xvii. 14. —xlix. 6. —xlix. 11. It is taken for granted that they have wealth, and a multitude of riches, (v. 6.) houses and lands of inheritance, which they call their own. iv. 11. God often gives abundance of the good things of this world to bad men, who live in contempt of him, and rebellion against him—by which it appears, that they are not the best things in themselves, for then God would give most of them to his best friends; and that they are not the best things for us, for then they would not have so much of them, who, being marks of his displeasure, are to be repined for by their prosperity, Prov. xxxi. 3. A man may have abundance of the wealth of this world, and be made better by it, may thereby have his heart enlarged in love, and thankfulness, and obedience, and may do that good with it which will be fruit abounding to his account; and therefore it is not men's having riches that denominates them worldly, but their setting their hearts upon them as the best things; and such worldly people are here described;

1. They repose confidence in their riches; They trust in their wealth, (v. 6.) they depend upon it as their portion and happiness, and expect that it will secure them from all evil, and supply them with all good, and that they need nothing else, neither God himself. Their gold is their hope, (Job xxxiv. 24.) and so it becomes their god. Thus our Saviour explains the difficulty of the salvation of rich people, (Mark x. 24.) How hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! See 1 Tim. vi. 17.

2. They take a pride in their riches; They boast themselves in the multitude of them, as if they were sure tokens of God's favour, and certain proofs of their own ingenuity and industry. My might, and the power of my hand, have gotten me this wealth; as if they made them truly great and happy, and more happily excelt their neighbours. They boast that they have all they would have, (x. 3.) and can set all the world at defiance; I sit as a queen, and shall be a lady for ever; therefore they call their lands after their own names, hoping thereby to perpetuate their memory; and, if their lands do retain the names by which they called them, it is but a poor honour; but they often change their names when they change their owners.

3. They flatter themselves with an expectation of the perpetuity of their worldly possessions; (v. 11.) Their inward thought is, that their houses shall con-
time for ever, and with this thought they please themselves. Are not all thoughts inward? Yes; but it
intimates, (v. 10.) that this thought is only rooted in their minds, is rolled and revolved there, and care-
fully lodged in the innermost recesses of their hearts.
A godly man has thoughts of the world, but they are his outward thoughts; his inward thought is reserved for God and heavenly things; but a worldly man has only some foreign floating thoughts of the things of the world, while his fixed thought, his inward thought, is about the world; that lies nearest his heart, and is upon the throne there. (3.) There is ugly-
ciously concealed; they cannot, for shame, say that they expect their houses to continue for ever, but, in-
wardly, they think so. If they cannot persuade themselves that they shall continue for ever, yet they are so foolish as to think their houses shall, and their dwelling-places—suppose they should, what good will that do them, when they shall be no longer theirs? But they will not; for the world passes away, and the fashion of it: all things are decreed by the teeth of time.

II. A demonstration of their folly herein. In
general, (v. 13.) This their way is their folly. Note, The way of worldliness is a very foolish way: they that lay up their treasure on earth, and set their affections on things below, act contrary both to right reason and to their true interest. God himself pronounced him a fool that thought his goods were laid up for many years. (1.) For as much as they have a portion for his soul, Luke xii. 19, 20. And yet their posterity approve their sayings, agree with them in the same sentiments, say as they say, and do as they do, and tread in the steps of their world-
liness. Note, The love of the world is a disease that runs in the blood; men have it by kind, till the grace of God cures it.

To prove the folly of carnal worldlings, he shows, 1. That, with all their wealth, they cannot save the
friend that they have in the world, nor purchase a reprieve for him when he is under the arrest of death; (v. 7-9.) None of them can by any means redeem his brother; his brotherworldling, who would give him counter-security out of his own estate, if he would but bai] for him: and gladly he would, in hopes that he might do the same kindness for him another time. But their words will not be taken one for another, nor one for the ransom of another man's life. God does not value it, it is of no account with him; and the true value of things is as they stand in his books. His justice will not accept it by way of commutation or equivalent. The Lord of our bro-
ther's life is the Lord of our estate, and may take both, if he please, without either difficulty to him-
self or wrong to us; and therefore one cannot be ransom for another. We cannot bribe death, that our debt to it we should live, much less that he should live for ever, in this world, nor bribe the grave, that he should not see corruption; for we must needs die, and return to the dust, and there is no discharge from that war. What folly is it to trust to that, and boast of that, which will not en-
able us so much as for one hour to respite the execu-
tion of the sentence of death upon a parent, a child, or a friend that is to us our own soul? It is cer-
tainly a most unprofitable purchase, a foolish and wasteful expence; and, if purchased, is only precious, and creaseth for ever; life, when it is going, cannot be arrested, and when it is gone, it cannot be recalled, by any human art, or worldly price. But this looks further, to the eternal redemption which was to be wrought out by the Messiah, whom the Old Testament saints had an eye to as the Re-
demer. Immortality is a jewel of too great a va-

value to be purchased by the wealth of this world.

We are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. The learned

Dr. Hammond applies the 8th and 9th verses ex-
pressly to Christ: "The redemption of the soul shall be precious, shall be high-priced, it shall cost very dear; but, being once wrought, it shall cease for ever, it shall never need to be redeemed," Heb. i. 25, 26.—x. 12. And he, the Redeemer, shall yet live for ever, and shall not see corruption; he shall rise again before he sees corruption, and they shall live for evermore," Rev. i. 18. Christ did that for us which, all the riches of the world could never purchase; he gave his life for us: therefore rather he is dearer to us than any worldly things. Christ did that for us which a brother, a friend, could not do for us, no not one of the best estate or interest; and therefore those that love father or brother more than him, are not wor-
thy of him. This likewise shows the folly of worldly people, who sell their souls for that which would never buy them.

2. That, with all their wealth, they cannot secure
themselves from the stroke of death. The world-
liness see, and it vexes him to see it, that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, v. 10. Therefore he cannot but expect that it will, at length, come to his own turn; he cannot find any encouragement to hope that he himself shall con-
tinue for ever, and therefore foolishly comforts him-
self with this, that, though he shall not, his house shall. Some rich people are wise, they are poli-
cially, but they cannot out-wit death, nor evade his stroke, with all their treasures. (1.) They are fools and brutish, (Fortuna favet fatuis—Fools are fortune's favourites,) these, though they do no good, yet perhaps do no great hurt, in the world: but that shall not excuse them, they shall perish, and be taken away by death, as well as the wise that did mischief with their craft. Or by the wise and the foolish we may understand the godly and the wicked; the godly die, and their death is their deliverance; the wicked perish, their death is their destruction; but, however, they leave their wealth to others. (1.) They cannot continue with it, nor will it serve to procure them a reprieve. That is a frivolous plea, though once it served a turn; (Jer. xlii. 8.) Say us not, for we have treasures in the field. (2.) They cannot carry it away with them, but must leave it behind them. (3.) They cannot foresee who will enjoy it when they have left it; (Jer. xi. 15.) let not him that thinketh himself wise confound himself, that no one knows what is to be. (4.) They know not, perhaps to a fool, (Ecc. ii. 19,) perhaps to an enemy.

And as men's wealth will stand them in no stead in a dying hour, so neither will their honour; (v. 12.) Man, being in honour, abides not. We will sup-
pose a man advanced to the highest pinnacle of pre-
ferment, as great and happy as the world can make him; man in splendour, man at his best estate, sur-
rounded and supported with all the advantages he

can desire; yet then he abides not, his honour does not continue, that is a fleeting shadow, he himself does not. He carries not all night; this world is an
inn, in which his stay is so short, that he can scarcely be said to get a night's lodging in it; so little rest is there in these things; he has but a bauling-time; He is like the beasts that perish; he must as cer-

tainly die as the beasts, and his death will be as final a period as theirs. (2.) Men's estates are as in the hand of the body likewise will putrify as theirs do; and (as Dr. Hammond observes) frequently the greatest honours and wealth, unjustly gotten by the parent, descend not to any one of his posterity, (as the beasts, when they die, leave nothing behind them to their young ones, but the wide world to feed in,) but fall into other hands immediately, for which he never designed to gather them. Then their condition on the other side death will be very miserable. The world they dote upon, will not only not save them from death, but will sin.
them so much the lower into hell; (v. 14.) Like sheep they are laid in the grave. Their prosperity did but feed them like sheep for the slaughter, (Hos. iv. 16.) and then death comes and shuts them up in the grave, like fat sheep in a fold, to be brought forth to the day of wrath, Job xxi. 30. Multitudes of them, like flocks of sheep dead of some disease, are thrown into the grave, and there death shall feed on them, the second death, the worm that dies not, Job xxix. 40. Their own guilty corpses were not, as usual, consumed by various vultures, shall come down continually preying upon them, with, Son, remember, Luke xvi. 25. Death insults and triumphs over them, as it is represented in the fall of the king of Babylon, at which hell from beneath is moved, Isa. xiv. 9, &c. While a saint can ask proud Death, Where is thy sting? Death will ask the proud sinner, Where is thy wealth, thy portion? and the more he was fattened with prosperity, the more sweetly will death feed on him. And in the morning of the resurrection, when all that sleep in the dust shall awake, (Dan. xii. 2.) the upright shall have dominion over them; shall not only be advanced to the highest dignity and honour, when they are filled with everlasting shame and contempt, elevated to the highest heavens, when they are sunk to the lowest hell; but they shall be assessors with Christ in passing judgment upon them, and shall applaud the justice of God in their ruin. When the rich man in hell begged that Lazarus might bring him a drop of water to cool his tongue, he owned that that upright man had dominion over him, as the foolish virgins also owned the dominion of the wise, and that they lay much at their mercy, when they begged, Give us of your oil. Let this comfort us, in reference to the oppressions which the upright are now often groaning under, and the dominion which they feel have over them, and we shall not be astonished, when the tables are turned, (Esther i. 1.) and the upright will have the dominion. Let us now judge of things, as they will appear at that day. But what will become of all the beauty of the wicked? Alas! that shall all be consumed in the grave from their dwelling; all that upon which they valued themselves, and for which others earossed and admired them, was all adventitious and borrowed, and they found it to be vanity and vexation of spirit, in their own native deformity. The beauty of holiness is that which the grave, that consumes all other beauty, cannot touch, or do any damage to. Their beauty shall consume, the grave, or hell, being a habitation to every one of them; and what beauty can be there where there is nothing but the blackness of darkness for ever?

15. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave; for he shall receive me. Selah. 16. Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased: 17. For, when he dieth, he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him; 18. Though, while he lived, he blessed his soul; (and men will praise thee when thou dost well to thyself;) 19. He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. 20. Man, that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.

Good reason is here given to good people, why they should not be afraid of death. There is no cause for that fear, if they have such a comforatable prospect as David here has of a happy state on the other side death, v. 15. He had showed (v. 14.) how miserable the dead are that die in their sins; here he shows how blessed the dead are that die in the Lord. The distinction of men's outward condition, how great a difference soever it makes in life, makes none at death; rich and poor meet in the grave: but the distinction of men's spiritual state, though, in this life, it makes a small difference, where all things come alike to all, yet, at and after death, it makes a very great one; Now he is comforted, and thou art comforted. The righteous has hope in his death, so he has not been concerned with his soul. Note, The believing hopes of the soul's redemption from the grave, and reception to glory, are the great support and joy of the children of God in a dying hour. They hope, 1. That God will redeem their souls from the power of the grave; which includes, (1.) The preserving of the soul from going to the grave with the body. The grave has a power over the body, by virtue of the sentence, (Gen. iii. 19.) and it is cruel enough in executing that power, (Cant. viii. 6.) but it has no such power over the soul; it has power to silence, and imprison, and consume, the body; but the soul then moves, and acts, and converses, more freely than ever; (Rev. vi. 9, 10.) it is immortal and immortal. When death breaks the dark-lantern, yet it does not extinguish the candle that was pent up in it. (2.) The re-uniting of the soul, the body, and the grave, which is often put for the life; that indeed falls under the power of the grave for a time, but it shall, at length, be redeemed from it, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life. The God of life, that was its Creator at first, can and will be its Redeemer at last. (3.) The salvation of the soul from eternal ruin; "God shall redeem my soul from the sheol of hell, the wrath to come, that pit of destruction into which the wicked descend." It is a great comfort to dying saints, that they shall not be hurt by the second death, (Revel. ii. 11.) and therefore the first death has no sting, and the grave no victory. 2. That he will receive them to himself. He redeems their souls, that he may receive them, (xxxii. 3.) Into thy hands I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed it. He will receive them into his favour, will admit them into his kingdom, into the mansions prepared for them, (John xiv. 2, 3.) those everlasting habitations, Luke xvi. 19. II. Why they should not be afraid of the prosperity and power of wicked people in this world, which, as it is their pride and joy, has often been the envy, and grief, and terror, of the righteous; which yet, all things considered, there is no reason for. 1. He supposes they will be under a strong temptation to envy the prosperity of sinners, and to be afraid that they will carry all before them with a high hand, that with their wealth and interest they will run down religion and religious people, and that they will be found the truly happy people: for he supposes, (1.) That they are made rich, and so are enabled to give law to all about them, and have every thing at command; Pecunia obiedunt omnibus et omnino—Every person and every thing obeys the commanding influence of money. (2.) That the glory of their house, from very small beginnings, as it increased and grew, makes men haughty, insolent, and imperious, v. 16. Thus they seem to be the favourites of Heaven, and therefore formidable. (3.) That they are very easy and secure in themselves and in their own minds; (v. 18.) In his life-time, he blessed his soul; he thought himself a very happy man, such an one as he would be, because he was prosperous in the world. He blessed his soul, as that rich fool who said to his soul, "Soul, take thine ease, and be not disturbed either with cares and fears about the world, or with
wicked fathers, whose sayings he approved, and
whose steps he trod in, his fathers who would not
hearken to the word of God, Zech. vi. 4. He shall
go to be there where they are that shall never see
light, shall never have the least glimpse of comfort
or joy, but shall dwell in utter darkness. Be not
afraid then of the pomp and the power, the
wealth and the property, the glory, the
honour, the pleasure, the profits of wicked
people; for the end of the man that is in honour,
if he be not wise and good, will be miserable; if
he understand not, he is to be pitied rather than envied.
A fool, a wicked man, in honour, is really as despi-
cable an animal as any under the sun; he is like the
beasts that perish; (v. 20.) nay, it is better to be a
beast, than to be a man that makes himself like a
beast. In men in honour, that understand, that know
right, and can do the right thing, and that do good to
those who are under them, like good gods, and as
children of the Most High. But men in honour, that understand not, that are proud,
and sensual, and oppressive, are as beasts, and
they shall perish, like the beasts, ingloriously as to
this world, though not, like the beasts, indemnified as
to another world. Let prosperous sinners therefore
be afraid for themselves, but let not even suffering
saints be afraid of them.

PSALM L.

This psalm, as the former, is a psalm of instruction, not of
prayer or praise; it is a psalm of reproof and admonition,
in singing which, we are to teach and admonish one
another. In this psalm we are to bring our minds to
right feeling and thinking, and to guard our souls against
all sin, and for this purpose the psalmist brings home
the words of God. He begins (v. 1.) by putting
the rebukes and admonitions of conscience. All is
well, and will be well for ever." Note, [1.] It is
of great consequence to consider what that is in
which we bless our souls, upon the score of which
we think well of ourselves. Believers bless them-
selves in the God of truth, (Isa. lxv. 16.) and think
themselves happy, if he be theirs; carnal people
beg for the rewards of the world, and think themselves
happy if they have abundance of that. [2.] There are many whose precious souls
lie under God's curse, and yet they do themselves
bless; they applaud that in themselves which
God condemns, and speak peace to themselves,
when God denounces war against them. Yet this
is not all. (4.) They are in good reputation among
their neighbours; "Men and women may see thee up,
as having done well for thyself in raising
such an estate and family." This is the sentiment
of all the children of this world, that those do best
for themselves that do most for their bodies, by
heaping up riches, though, at the same time,
nothing is done for the soul, nothing for eternity; and
accordingly they bless the covetous, whom the Lord
abhorreth, x. 3. If men were to be our judges, it were
our wisdom thus to recommend ourselves to their
good opinion, that we might be pitied rather than envied
of men, if God condemn us? Dr. Hammond
understands this of the good man here spoken to, for
it is the second person, not of the wicked man spoken
of; "He, in his life-time, blessed his soul, but
shalt he be praised for doing well unto thyself.
The worldling magnified himself; but thou that dost
not, like him, speak well of thyself, but dost well for
thyself, in securing thy eternal welfare, thou shalt
be praised, if not of men, yet of God, which will
be thing everlastingly glorious.
2. He suggests that which is sufficient to take off
the strength of the temptation, by directing us to
look forward to the end of prosperous sinners; 
(Lxxiii. 17.) "Think what they will be, in the other
world, and you will see no cause to envy them what
they are, and have, in this world." (1.) In the other world, they will be far
better for the all the wealth and prosperity; they
will have nothing in common with which, will not
last so long as they must; (v. 17.) When he
dies, it is taken for granted that he goes into another
world himself, but he shall carry nothing away with
him of all that which he has been so long heaping up.
The greatest and wealthiest cannot therefore
be the happiest, because they are never the better
for their living in this world; as they came naked
into it, they shall go naked out of it. But those
have something to show in the other world, for
their living in this world, who can say, through grace,
that though they came corrupt, and sinful, and spiritually
naked, into it, they go renewed, and sancti-
fied; and well-clothed with the righteousness of
Christ, out of it. They that are rich in the graces
and comforts of the Spirit, have something which,
when they die, they shall carry away with them,
something which death cannot strip them of, nay,
which death will be an improvement on; but as the
worldly possessions, as we brought nothing into
the world, (what we have we had from others,) so it is
certain that we shall carry nothing out, but leave it
to others, 1 Tim. vi. 7. They shall descend, but
their glory, that which they called and counted
their glory, and gloried in, shall not descend after
them, to lessen the disgrace of death and the
grave, to bring them off in the judgment, or abate the
terminations of it. The glory that will descend with
us, is not earthly glory will descend after us.
(2.) In the other world, they will be infinitely the worse
for all their abuses of the wealth and prosper-
ity they enjoyed in this world, (v. 19.) The soul
shall go to the generation of his fathers, his worldly

It is probable that Asaph was not only the chief musician, who was put to a tune to this psalm, but that he was himself the penman of it; for we read that in Hezekiah's time they praised God in the words of David, and of Asaph the seer, 2 Chron. xxxii. 30.

Here is,

I. The court called, in the name of the King of kings; (v. 1.) The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken by His anointed, His servant David, in the words of judgment, power, justice, and mercy, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. God is the Judge, the Son of God came for judgment into the world, and the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of judgment. All the earth is called to attend, not only because the controversy God had with his people Israel, for their hypocrisy and ingratitude, might safely be referred to any man of reason; nay, let the house of Israel itself judge between God and his vineyard; (Isa. v. 1.) But because, when the kingdom of the Messiah should be set up, all should be instructed in the evangelical worship, and invited to join in it, (see Mal. i. 11. Acts x. 33.) and because, in the day of final judgment, all nations shall be gathered together, to receive their doom, and every man shall give an account of himself to God.

II. The judgment set, and the Judge taking his seat. As, when God gave the law to Israel in the wilderness, it is said, He came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir, and shined forth from mount Paran, and came with ten thousands of his saints, and then from his right hand went a fiery law; (Deut. xxxiii. 2.) so, with allusion to that, when God comes to prove them for their hypocrisy, and to send forth his gospel to supersede the legal institutions, it is said, Who shall come from Seir, and Gilead shall be sought out, and then from the top of Sinai, v. 2. Because in Zion his oracle was now fixed, thence his judgments upon that provoking people were denounced, and thence the oracles issued for the execution of them; (Jer. vii. 1.) Blow us the trumpet in Zion. Sometimes there are more than ordinary appearances of God's presence and power working with and by his word and ordinances, for the convincing of men's consciences, and the forming and refining of his church; and then God, v. 3, whose dwellings are in Zion, may be said to shine out of Zion. Moreover, he may be said to shine out of Zion, because the gospel, which is spiritual worship, was to go forth from mount Zion, (Isa. ii. 3. Mic. iv. 2.) and the preachers of it were to begin at Jerusalem, (Luke xxiv. 47.) and Christians are said to come unto mount Zion, to receive their instructions, H. b. xii. 22, 28. Zion is here called the perfection of beauty, because it was the holy hill; and holiness is indeed the perfection of beauty. 2. Tha he shall come, and not keep silence, shall no longer seem to wink at the sins of men, as he had done, (v. 21.) but shall show his displeasure at them, and shall also cause that mystery to be published to the world by his holy apostles, which had long lain hid, that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, (Eph. iii. 5, 6.) and that the partition-wall of the ceremonial law should be taken down; this shall now no longer be done; the law shall go forth from mount Zion, God shall come, and shall not keep silence, but shall make those to hear his judgment that would not hearken to his law. 3. That his appearance should be very majestic and terrible: a fire shall devour before him. The fire of his judgments shall make way for the rebukes of his word, in order to the awakening of the hypocritical nation of the Jews, that the sinners in Zion, being afraid of that devouring fire, (Isa. xxx. 3.) be mightily startled out of their sins. When his gospel-kingdom was to be set up, Christ came to send fire on the earth, Luke xiii. 49. The Spirit was given in cloven tongues as fire, introduced by a rushing mighty wind, which was very tempestuous, Acts ii. 3. And in the last judgment, Christ shall come in flaming fire, 2 Thess. i. 8. See Dan. vii. 9. Heb. x. 27. 4. That as on mount Sinai he came with ten thousands of his saints, so he shall now call to the heavens from above, to take notice of this solemn process, (v. 4.) as Moses often called heaven and earth to witness against Israel, (Deut. iv. 26. — xxxvii. 28. — xxxviii. 1.) and God himself, Isa. liii. And the judgment of the great day will be attested and applauded by heaven and earth, by saints and angels, even all the holy myriads.

III. The parties summoned; (v. 5.) Gather my saints unto me This may be understood, either, 1. Of saints indeed; "Let them be gathered to God through Christ; let the few pious Israelites be set by themselves," for to them the following denunciations of hypocrit, and wicked do not belong; rebukes to hypocrites ought not to be terrors to the upright. When God will reject the services of those that only offered sacrifice, resting in the outside of the performance, he will graciously accept those who, in sacrificing, make a covenant with him, and so attend to, and answer, the end of the institution of sacrifices. The design of the preaching of the gospel, and his setting up of Christ's kingdom, was, to gather together in one body, the children of God, John xi. 22. And, at the second coming of Jesus Christ, all the saints shall be gathered together unto him, (2 Thess. ii. 1.) in his assessors with him in the judgment, for the saints shall judge the world, 1 Cor. vi. 2. Now it is here given as a character of the saints, that they have made a covenant with God by sacrifice. Note, (1.) Those only shall be gathered to God as his saints, who have, in sincerity, covenanted with him, who have taken him to be their God, and given up themselves to be to him his people, and thus have joined themselves unto the Lord. (2.) It is only by sacrifice, by Christ the great Sacrifice, (from whom all the legal sacrifices derived what value they had,) that we poor sinners can covenant with God, so as to be accepted of him. There must be an atonement made for the breach of the first covenant, before we can be admitted again into covenant. Or, 2. It may be understood of saints in profession, such as the people of God, who are called a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation, 1 Pet. ii. 9. They were, as a body politic, taken into covenant with God, the covenant of peculiarity, and it was done with great solemnity by sacrifice, Exod. xxiv. 4. "Let them come and hear what God has to say to them; let them receive the reproofs God sends them now by his prophets, and the gospel he will, in due time, send them by his Son; which shall supersede the ceremonial. If these be slighted, let them expect to hear from God and his Son, and to be judged by that word which they will not be ruled by."

IV. The issue of this solemn trial foretold; (v. 6.) The heavens shall declare his righteousness; those heavens that were called to be witnesses to the trial; (v. 4.) the people in heaven shall say, Hallelujah. True and righteous are his judgments, Rev. xiv. 1. 2. The righteousness of God, in all the rebukes of his judgments. In the breach, in the establishment of his gospel, (which brings righteousness, and in which the righteousness of God is revealed,) and especially in the judgment of the great day, is what the heavens will declare. 1. It will be universally known, and proclaimed to all the world. As the heavens declare the glory, the wisdom, and power, of God the Creator, (xix. 1.) so they shall no longer openly declare the glory, the justice, and righteousness, of God the Judge; and so God doth hereby proclaim both, that there is no speech nor tongue where their voice is not heard, as it follows...
2. It will be incontestably owned and proved; who can deny what the heavens declare? Even sinners’ own consciences will subscribe to it, and hell as well as heaven will be forced to acknowledge the righteousness of God. The reason given, is, for God is Judge himself, and therefore, (1.) He will be just; for it is impossible he should do any wrong to any of his creatures, he never did, nor ever will. When men are employed to judge for him, they may do unjustly: but when he is Judge himself, there can be no injustice done. (2.) Is God righteous, who takes vengeance? The apostle, for this reason, startles at the thought of it; God forbid! for then how should God judge the world? Rom. iii. 5. 6.

7. Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. 8. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices, or thy burnt-offerings, to have been continually before me. 9. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds: 10. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. 11. I know all the fowls of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field are mine. 12. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. 13. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? 14. Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High: 15. And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

III. He respects to the best sacrifices of prayer and praise, to those which, under the law, were preferred before all burnt-offerings and sacrifices, and on which then the greatest stress was laid, and which now, under the gospel, come in the room of those carnal ordinances which were imposed until the times of reformation. He shows us here, (v. 14, 15.) what is good, and what the Lord our God requires of us, and will accept, when sacrifices are slighted and superseded. 1. We must make a pertinent acknowledgment of our sins; offer to God
confession; so some read it, and understand it of the confession of sin, in order to our giving glory to God, and taking shame to ourselves, that we may never return to it. A broken and contrite heart is such a heart which God will not despise, li. 17. If the sin was not abandoned, the sin-offering was not accepted.

2. We must give God thanks for his mercies to us; Ofer to God thanksgiving, every day, often every day, (Seven times a day will I praise thee,) and upon special occasions; and this shall please the Lord, if it come from a humble thankful heart, full of love to him, and joy in him, better than an ox or bee. which that has horns and hoofs, lxx. 30, 31.

3. We must make conscience of performing our covenants with him; Pay thy vows to the Most High, forsake thy sins, and do thy duty better, pursuant to the solemn promises thou hast made to him to that purport. When we give God thanks for any mercy we have received, we must be sure to pay the vows we made to him when we were in pursuit of the mercy, else our thanksgivings will not be accepted. Dr. Hammond applies this to the great goodness of God to the church, in which we are to give thanks to God for his great love in sending his Son to save us, and to pay our vows of love and duty to him, and to give alms. Instead of all the Old Testament types of a Christ to come, we have that blessed memorial of a Christ already come. 4. In the day of distress, we must apply ourselves to God by faithful and fervent prayer; (v. 15.) Call upon me in the day of trouble, and not upon any other; Our troubles, though we see them coming from God's hand, must drive us to him, and not drive us from him. We must thus acknowledge him in all our ways, depend upon his wisdom, power, and goodness, and refer ourselves entirely to him, and so give him glory. This is a cheaper, easier, readier, way of seeking his favour, than by a peace-offering; and yet more acceptable. 5. When he, in answer to our prayers, delivers us, as he has promised to do in such a way and time as he shall think fit, we must glorify him, not only by a grateful mention of his favour, but by living to his praise. Thus must we keep up our communion with God; meeting with him our prayers when he afflicts us, and with our praises when he delivers us.

16. But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? 17. Seeing thou hastest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. 18. When thou savest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. 19. Thou giveth thy mouth to evil, and thy tongueframeth deceit. 20. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderer thine own mother's son. 21. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself; but I will reproue thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. 22. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. 23. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God.

God, by the psalmist, having instructed his people in the right way of worshipping him, and keeping up their communion with him, here directs his speech to the wicked, to hypocrites, whether they were such as professed the Jewish or the Christian religion: hypocrisy is wickedness, for which God will judge. Observe

1. The charge drawn up against them.

1. They are charged with invading and usurping the honours and privileges of religion; (v. 16.) What hast thou to do, O wicked man, to declare my statutes? This is a challenge to those that are really profane, but seemingly godly, to show what title they have to the cloak of religion, and by what authority they wear it, when they use it only to cover and conceal the abominable impulses of their hearts and lives. Let them make out their claim to it if they can. Some think it points prophetically at the Scribes and Pharisees, that were the teachers and leaders of the Jewish church, at the time when the kingdom of the Messiah, and that evangelical way of worship spoken of in the foregoing verses, were to be set up. They violently opposed that great re- volution, and used all the power and interest which they had by sitting in Moses's seat to hinder it; but the account which our blessed Saviour gives of them, (Matth. xxiii.) and St. Paul, (Rom. ii. 21, 22,) makes this expostulation here agree very well to them. They took on them to declare God's statutes, but they hated Christ's instruction; and therefore what had they to do, to expound the law, who rejected the gospel? But it is applicable to all those that are practisers of iniquity, and yet professors of piety, especially if withal they be peculiarly guilty of it. Note, It is very absurd in itself, and a great affront to the God of heaven, for those that are wicked and ungodly, to declare his statutes, and to take his covenant in their mouths. It is very possible, and too common, for those that declare God's statutes to others, to live in disobedience to them themselves; and for those that take God's covenant in their mouths, in their hearts to continue their covenant with sin and unbelief; but they are guilty of an usurpation, they take to themselves an honour which they have no title to, and there is a day coming, when they will be thrust out as intruders, Friend, how camest thou in hither? 2. They are charged with transgressing and violating the laws and precepts of religion.

(1.) They are charged with a daring contempt of the word of God; (v. 17.) Thou hastest instruction. They loved to give instruction, and to tell others what they understood, for they fed their pride, and made them look great, and by way of cutting up those who did not live in the same clothing; but they hated to receive instruction from God himself, for that would be a check upon them, and a mortification to them; "Thou hastest discipline, the reproofs of the word, and the rebukes of Providence." No wonder that these who hate to be reformed hate the means of reformation; Thou castest my words behind thee. They seemed to set at naught the word of God, even when they sat in Moses's seat, and undertook to teach others out of them; (Rom. ii. 19,) but in their conversations they cast God's Word behind them, and did not care for seeing that rule which they were resolved not to be ruled by. This is despising the commandment of the Lord. (2.) A close confederacy with the worst of sinners; (v. 18.) When thou savest a thief, instead of reproving him and witnessing against him, as thou shouldst have done, when thou knowest his statutes, thou consentedst with him, didst approve of his practices, and desire to be a partner with him, and to share in the profits of his cursed trade; and thou hast been partaker with adulterers, hast done as they did, and encouraged them to go on in their wicked courses; hast done these things, and hast had pleasure in them that do them;" Rom. i. 32. (3.) A constant persisting in the worst of tongue-sins; (v. 19.) Thou givest thy mouth to evil; not only allowest
thyself in, but diddest thyself wholly to, all manner of evil speakings.  
[1.] Lying; Thy tongue
frames deceits, which denotes contrivance and
deliberation in lying. It knits or links deceit; so some.
One lie begets another, and one fraud requires an-
other to cover it.  
[2.] Slaughtering; (v. 20.) "Thou 
sithest, and speakest against thy brother, dost basely
abuse and misrepresent him, magisterially judge
and censure him, and pass sentence upon him, as
though his heart, and all that must stand or
fall, whereas he is thy brother, as good as thou art,
and upon the level with thee, for he is thine own
mother's son.
He is thy near relation, whom thou
oughtest to love, to vindicate, and stand up for, if
others abused him; yet thou dost thyself abuse him,
whose faults thou oughtest to cover and make the
best of; if really he had done amiss, yet thou dost
more falsely and unjustly charge him with that which
is indeed, and that in which he knows, thou hast
done. 
The acts of sinners will be proved upon
them, beyond contradiction, in the judgment of the
great day; "I will reprove thee, or convince thee,
so that thou shalt have not one word to say for thy-
self." The day is coming when impenitent sinners
will have their mouths for ever stopped, and be
struck speechless. What confusion will they be
filled with, when God shall set their sins in order
before their eyes? They would not see their sins to
their face, but hide them by deceit, and cover them,
and endeavoured to forget them, nor
would they suffer their own consciences to put them
in mind of them; but the day is coming when God
will make them see their sins to their everlasting
shame and terror; he will set them in order, original
sin, actual sins, sins against the law, sins against
the gospel, against the first table, against the second
table, sins of childhood and youth, of riper age,
and old age. He will set them in order, and call them
out in order, against the criminal, and asked what they have to say against him.

III. The Judge's patience, and the sinner's abuse
of that patience; "I kept silence, did not give thee
any disturbance in thy sinful way, but let thee alone
to take thy course; sentence against thine evil works
was respited, and not executed speedily." Note,
The patience of God is very great toward provoking
sinners. He sees their sins, and hates them; it would
be neither difficulty nor damage to him, to punish
them, and yet he waits to be gracious, and gives
them space to repent, that he may render them in-
excusable if they repent not. His patience is the
more wonderful, because the sinner makes such an
ill use of it; "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether
such a one as thyself, as weak and forgetful as thy-
self, as false to my word as thyself, nay, as much a
friend to sin as thyself." Sinners take God's silence
for content, and, by that delay, as they have, and
therefore think they are reproved, the more
are their hearts hardened; but, if they turn not, they
shall be made to see their error when it is too late,
and that the God that provokes is just, and holy,
and terrible, and not such a one as themselves.

IV. The fair warning given of the dreadful doom
of hypocrites; (v. 22.) "Now consider this, ye that
forget God; consider that God knows, and keeps
accounts of, all your sins; that he will call you to an
account for them; that patience, abused, will turn
into the greater wrath; that though you forget God,
your duty to him, he will not forget you, and
your rebellions against him: consider this in time,
before it be too late; for if these things be not con-
sidered, and the consideration of them improved,
he will tear you in pieces, and there will be none to
deliver." It is the doom of hypocrites to be cut in
sunder, Matt. xxv. 31. Note, 1. Forgetfulness of
God is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the
wicked. They do not fear God. 2. They do not yet do
obey him, do certainly forget him. 3. The God
forget themselves; and it will never be right with
them, till they consider, and so recover them-
selves. Consideration is the first step toward conver-
sion. 4. Those that will not consider the warnings
of God's word will certainly be torn in pieces by the exe-
cutions of his wrath. 4. When God comes to tear
sinners in pieces, there is no delivering them cut of
his hand. They cannot deliver themselves, nor can
any friend they have in the world deliver them.
V. Full instructions given to us all, how to prevent
this fearful doom. Let us hear the conclusion of
the whole matter; we have it, v. 23, which directs us
what to do, that we may attain our chief end.

1. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and we are
here told, that whom offers praise glorifies him,
whether he be Jew or Gentile, those spiritual sacri-
fices shall be accepted from him. We must praise
God for his glory, and for his name sake, as he
himself was pleased, as every sacrifice was directed; put it into the hands
of the Priest, our Lord Jesus, who is also the Altar;
see that it be made by fire, sacred fire, that it be
kindled with the flame of holy and devout affection;
we must be fervent in spirit, praising the Lord.
This he is pleased, in infinite condescension, to
interpret as glorifying him. Hereby we give him the
glory due to his name, and do what we can to ad-
vance the interests of his kingdom among men.
2. Man's chief end, in connection with that, to
enjoy God; and we are here told that those who
order their conversation aright shall see his salva-
tion. (1.) It is not enough for us to offer praise, but
we must withal order our conversation aright.
Thanksgiving is good, but thanks-living is better.
(2.) Those that would have their conversation right
must take care and pains to order it; to dispose it
according to rule; to understand their way, and to
direct it, that the conversation may make sure their
salvation: them God will make to see his salvation;
for it is a salvation ready to be revealed; he will make them to see it
and enjoy it, to see it, and to see themselves happy
for ever in it. Note, The right ordering of the con-
versation is the only way, and it is a sure way, to
obtain the great salvation.

PSALM LI.

Though David penned this psalm upon a very particular occasion, yet it is of as general use as any of David's
psalms; it is the most eminent of the penitential psalms,
and most expressive of the several passages of peni-
tential singing. And truly indeed, that in our devout addresses
to God, we should have anything else to do than to praise
God, for that is the work of heaven; but we make other
work for ourselves, by our own sins and follies; we must
come to the throne of grace in the posture of penitent
men, to confess our sins, and sue for the grace of God; and
if therein we would take with us words, we can no where
find any more apposite than in this psalm, which is the
record of David's penitent frame; it is as expressive of
David's penitence as the story of the repentance of
Uriah, which was the greatest blishment upon his charac-
ter; all the rest of his faults were nothing to this; it is
said of him, (1 Kings xv. 5.) That he turned not aside
from the commandment of the Lord's servant, saith
the samesmith in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. In this psalm,
1. He confesses his sin, v. 3. 8. 5. He prays earnestly
for the pardon of his sin, v. 1, 2, 7, 9. 3. For peace of	conscience, v. 8, 10. 4. For grace to go and sin no
more, v. 10, 11, 14. V. For liberty of access to God, v.
15. He promises to do what he could for the good
of the souls of others, (v. 13.) and for the glory of God, v. 16, 17, 19. And lastly, concludes with a prayer for Zion and Jerusalem, v. 18. Those whose consciences charge them with any gross sin should, with a believing regard to Jesus Christ, the Mediator, again and again pray over this psalm; nay, though we have not been guilty of adultery and murder, or any like enormous crime, yet, in singing it, and praying over it, we may very sensibly apply it to all our souls, and thus do with suitable affections, we shall, through Christ, find mercy to pardon, and grace for seasonable help.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

1. HAVE mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. 2. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3. For I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. 4. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. 5. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. 6. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

The title has reference to a very sad story, that of David's fall. But, though he fell, he was not utterly cast down, for God graciously upheld him, and raised him up. 1. The sin which, in this psalm, he laments, was, the folly and wickedness he committed with his neighbour's wife; a sin not to be spoken of, or thought of, without detestation. His debauching of Bathsheba was the inlet to the all the other sins that followed; it was as the letting forth of water. This sin of David's is recorded for warning to all. He who would not take heed lest he fall. 2. The repentance which, in this psalm, he expresses, he was brought to by the ministry of Nathan, who was sent of God to convince him of his sin, after he had continued above nine months (for ought that appears) without any particular expressions of remorse and sorrow for it. But though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, and to lie a great while in it, yet he will, by some means or other, recover them to repentance, bring them to himself, and to their right mind, again. Herein, generally, he uses the ministry of the word, which yet he is not tied to. But those that have been overtaken in any fault, ought to reckon a faithful reproof the greatest kindness that can be done them, and a wise reprover their best friend. Let the righteous smite me, and it shall be excellent oil. 3. David, being convinced of his sin, poured out his soul to God in prayer for mercy and grace. Whither should backsliding children return, but to the Lord their God, from whom they have backslidden, and who alone can heal their backslidings? 4. He drew up, by divine inspiration, the workings of his heart toward God, upon this occasion, into a psalm, that it might be often repeated, and long after reviewed; and this he committed to the chief musician, to be sung in the public service of the church, when he would be of use to the public, is the repentance, which he would have to be generally taken notice of; his sin having been notorious, that the psalter might be as wide as the wound. Those that truly repent of their sins shall not be ashamed to own their repentance; but, having lost the honour of innocents, will rather covet the honour of penitents. 2. As a pattern to others, both to bring them to repentance by his example, and to instruct them, in their repentance, what to do, and what to say. Being converted himself, he thus strengthens his brethren; (Luke xxii. 32.) and, for this cause he obtained mercy, 1 Tim. i. 10.

In these verses, he pleads his case and reasons his case. 1. David's humble petition, v. 1, 2. His prayer is much the same with that which our Saviour puts into the mouth of his penitent publican in the parable; God be merciful to me a sinner! Luke xviii. 13. David was, upon many accounts, a man of great merit; he had not only done much, but suffered much, in the cause of God; and yet, when he is convinced of sin, he does not only balance his other deeds with his good deeds, nor can he think that his services will alone be for his offences; but he goes to God's infinite mercy, and depends upon that only for pardon and peace; Have mercy upon me, O God. He owns himself obnoxious to God's justice, and therefore casts himself upon his mercy, and it is certain that the best man in the world is undone, if God be not merciful to him. Observe, 1. What his plea is for this mercy; "Have mercy upon me, O God, not according to the dignity of my birth, as descended from the royal race of Judah, of the tribe of Judah, not according to my public services as Israel's champion, or my public honours as Israel's king;" his plea is not, Lord, remember David and all his afflictions, how he vowed to build a place for the ark; (cxxxii. 1, 2.) a true penitent will make no mention of any such thing; but, "Have mercy upon me for thy mercy's sake." I have nothing to plead with thee, but, (1.) The freeness of thy mercy, according to thy loving-kindness, thy clemency, the goodness of thy nature, which inclines thee to pity the miserable. (2.) The fulness of thy mercy. There is in thee not only loving-kindness and tender mercies, but abundance of it, a multitude of tender mercies for the forgiveness of many sinners, of many sins, to multiply pardons as we multiply transgressions. 2. What is the particular mercy that he begs; the pardon of sin. Bint out my transgressions, as a debt is blotted or crossed out of the book, when either the debtor has paid it, or the creditor has remitted it; "Wipe out my transgressions, that they may not appear to demand judgment against me, nor stare me in the face, to my confusion and terror." The blood of Christ, sprinkled upon the conscience, to purify and pacify that, blots out the transgression, and, having reconciled us to God, will reconcile us to ourselves, v. 2. "Wash me through and through from mine iniquity; wash my soul from the guilt and stain of my sin by thy mercy and grace; for it is only from a ceremonial pollution that the water of separation will avail to cleanse me. Multiply to wash me; the stain is deep, for I have lain long soaking in the guilt, so that it will not easily be got out. Oh wash me much, wash me throughly; cleanse me from my sin." Sin defiles us, renders us abominable in the sight of the holy God, and uneasy to ourselves; it unites us for communions with God, in grace or glory. When God pardons sin, he cleanses us from it, so that we become acceptable to him, easy to ourselves, and have liberty of access to him. Nathan had assured David, upon his first profession of repentance, that his sin was pardoned, The Lord has taken away thy sin, thou shalt not die; (2 Sam. xii. 13.) yet he prays, Wash me, clean me from my sin, and blot out my iniquity for God will be sought unto, even for that which he abhorreth; and those whose sins are pardoned must pray that the pardon may be more and more cleared up to them. God had forgiven him, but he could not forgive himself; and therefore he is thus importu-
nate for pardon, as one that thought himself unworth-

1. He was very free to own his guilt before God; I ac-

2. He had such a deep sense of it, that he was continually thinking of it, 

3. My was fore we was law and judged to truth thee, the 

4. It is ever against me; (so some) “I see it before me as an enemy, accusing and threatening me.” David was, upon all occasions, put in mind of his sin, and was willing to be so, for his further abasement. He never walked on the roof of his house without a penitent reflection on his unhappy walk there, when from thence he saw Bathsheba; never lay down to sleep, without a sorrowful thought of the bed of his uncleanness; never sat down to meat, never sent his servant on an errand, or took his pen in hand, but it put him in mind of his mak-

5. He was, and yet, having sinned, he willingly accommodates himself to the place and posture of a penitent. The best men, if they sin, should give the best example of repentance.

6. It is good to be particular in the confession of sin, that we may be the more express in praying for pardon, and so may have the more comfort in it. We ought to reflect upon the particular heads of our sins of iniquity, and the particular circumstances of our gross sins.

7. He aggravates the sin which he confesses, and lays a lord upon himself for it; Against thee, and in thy sight. Hence our Saviour seems to bow down the confession which he puts into the mouth of the returning prodigal; I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, Luke xv. 18.

8. This is what we call original sin, because it is as ancient as our original, and because it is the original of all our actual transgressions. This is that foolishness which is bound in the heart of a child, the proneness to evil, and backwardness to good, which is the burden of the regenerate, and the ruin of the unregenerate; it is a bent to backslide from God.
III. David's acknowledgment of the grace of God: (v. 6.) both his good-will toward us, (Thou desirest truth in the inward parts,) "Thou wouldest have us all honest and sincere, and true to our profession;" and his good work in us, "In the hidden part thou hast made," or shalt make, "me to know wisdom." Note, 1. Truth and wisdom will greatly tend toward making me a good man. A clear head and a sound heart (prudence and sincerity) bespeak the man of God perfect. 2. What God requires of us, he himself works in us, and he works it in the regular way, enlightening the mind, and so gaining the will. But how does this come in here? (1.) God is hereby justly and cleared; "Lord, thou wast not the Author of my sin; there is no blame to be laid upon thee; but I alone made it, for this, hast, many a time admonished me to be sincere, and hast made me to know that, which, if I had duly considered it, would have prevented my falling into this sin; had I improved the grace thou hast given me, I had kept mine integrity." (2.) The sin is hereby aggravated; "Lord, thou dostest truth; but where was it when I dissembled with Uriah? Thou hast made me to know wisdom; but I have not lived up to what I have known." (3.) He is hereby encouraged, in his repentance, to repent more. If God would graciously accept of him; for, [1.] God had made him sincere in his resolutions never to return to folly again; Thou desirest truth in the inward part; this is that which God has an eye to, in a returning sinner, that in his spirit there be no guile, xxxii. 2. David was conscious to himself of the uprightness of his heart toward God, in his repentance, and therefore doubted not but God would accept him. [2.] He hoped that God would enable him to make good his resolutions, that, in the hidden part, in the new man, which is called the hidden man of the heart, (1 Pet. iii. 4.) he would make him to know wisdom, so as to discern and avoid the designs of the tempter, another time. Some read it as a prayer; "Lord, in this instance, I have done foolishly; for the future, make me to know wisdom. Where there is truth, God will give wisdom; those that sincerely endeavour to do their duty, shall be taught their duty."

7. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 3. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. 9. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. 10. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. 11. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. 12. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit. 13. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

See here, 1. What David prays for; many excellent petitions he here puts up; to which, if we do but add, for Christ's sake, they are as evangelical as any other. 2. He prays that God would cleanse him from his sins, and the defilement he had contracted by them; (v. 7.) "Purge me with hyssop; pardon my sins, and let me know that they are pardoned, that I may be restored to those privileges which by sin I have forfeited and lost." The expression here alludes to a ceremonial distinction, that of cleansing the leper, or those that were unclean by the touch of a body, by sprinkling water, or blood, or both, upon them, with a bunch of hyssop, by which they were, at length, discharged from the restraints they were laid under by their pollution. "Lord, let me be as well assured of my restoration to thy favour; and to the privilege of communion with thee, as the Jews thereby assured of their re-admission to their former privileges. Cleansed by gospel-grace; Purge me with hyssop, with the blood of Christ applied to my soul by a lively faith, as water of purification was sprinkled with a bunch of hyssop. It is the blood of Christ, which is therefore called the blood of sprinkling, (Heb. xii. 24.) that purges the conscience from dead works, from that guilt of sin, and dread of God, which shut us out of communion with him, as the touch of a dead body, under the law, shut a man out from the courts of God's house. If this blood of Christ, which cleanses from all sin, cleanse us from our sin, then we shall be clean indeed, Heb. x. 2. If we be washed in this fountain opened, we shall be whiter than snow; not only acquitted, but accepted; so those are, that are justified; (Isa. i. 18.) Though your sins have been as scarlet, they shall be white as snow.

2. He prays that, his sins being pardoned, he might have the comfort of that pardon. He asks not to be comforted, till first he is cleansed; but if sin, the bitter root of sorrow, be taken away, he can pray in faith, "Make me to hear joy and gladness;" (v. 8.) let me have a well-grounded peace, of thy creating, thy speaking, so that the bones which thou hast broken by convictions and threatenings, may rejoice, may not only be set again, and cleansed from the pain, but may be sensibly comforted, and, as the prophet speaks, may flourish, as a plant, or as an herb." Note, (1.) The pain of an heart truly broken for sin, may well be compared to that of a broken bone; and it is the same Spirit who, as a Spirit of bondage, smites and wounds, and, as a Spirit of adoption, heals and binds up. (2.) The comfort and joy that arise from a sealed pardon to a penitent sinner, are as refreshing as perfect ease from the most exquisite pain. (3.) It is God's work, not only to cleanse, but to speak this joy to our hearts, and to make us hear it, and take the comfort of it. He earnestly desires that God would lift up the light of his countenance upon him, and so put gladness into his heart; that he would not only be reconciled to him, but, which is a further act of grace, let him know that he was so.

3. He prays for a complete and effectual pardon. This is that which he is most earnest for, as the foundation of his comfort; (v. 9.) "Hide thy face from my sins; be not provoked by them to deal with me as I deserve; they are more before me, let them be cast behind thy back; blot out all mine iniquities out of the book of thine account; blot them out, as a cloud is blotted out and dispelled by the beams of the sun," Isa. xlv. 22.

4. He prays for sanctifying grace; and this every true penitent is as earnest for, as for pardon and peace, v. 10. He does not pray, "Lord, preserve me my reputation," as Soul, I have sinned, yet honour me before this people. No, his great concern is, to get his corrupt nature changed; the sin he had been guilty of, was, (1.) An evidence of its impurity, and therefore he prays, Create in me a clean heart, O God. He now saw, more than ever, what an unclean heart he had, and sadly laments it, but sees it is not in his own power to change it, and it is these very beggs of God, (whose prevenient grace it is to create,) that he prays, that he may have a clean heart. He only that made the heart, can new make it; and to his power nothing is impossible. He created the world by the word of his power, as the God of nature, and it is by the word
of his power as the God of grace that we are clean, (John xv. 3.) that we are sanctified, John xvii. 17. (2.) It was the cause of its disorder, and undid much of the good work that had been wrought in him; and therefore, if you, my Lord, shew a right spirit within me; repair the defile of spirit's strength, which this sin has been the cause of, and set me to rights again. Renew a constant spirit within me; so some. He had, in this matter, discovered much inconsistency and inconsistency with himself, and therefore prays, “Lord, fix me for the time to come, that I may never in like manner depart from thee.”

And prays for the continuance of God’s goodwill toward him, and the progress of his good work in him, v. 11. (1.) That he might never be shut out from God’s favour; “Cast me not away from thy presence, as one whom thou abhorrest, and cast not endure to look upon.” He prays, that he might not be thrown out of God’s protection, but that, wherever he went, he might have the divine presence with him, might be under the guidance of his wisdom, and in the custody of his power, and that he might not be forbidden communion with God; “Let me not be banished thy courts, but always have liberty of access to thee by prayer.” He does not deprecate the temporal judgments which God by Nathan had threatened to bring upon him; “God’s will be done;” but, “Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath. If the sword come into my house never to depart from it, yet let me have a God to go to in my distresses, and all shall be well.” (2.) That he might never be deprived of God’s grace; “Take not thy holy Spirit from me.” He knew he had by his sin grieved the Spirit, and provoked him to withdraw; and that, because he also was flesh, God might justly have said that his Spirit should no more move with him, or work upon him, Gen. vi. 3. This he dreads, more than any thing; we are undone, if God take his holy Spirit from us. Saul was a sad instance of this. How exceeding sinful, how exceeding miserable, was he, when the Spirit of the Lord was departed from him! David knew it, and therefore begs thus earnestly; “Lord, whatsoever thou take from me, my children, my crown, my life, yet take not thy holy Spirit from me,” (see 2 Sam. vii. 15.) “but continue thy holy Spirit with me, to perfect the work of my repentance, to prevent my relapse into sin, and to enable me to discharge my duty both as a prince, and as a psalmist.”

6. He prays for the restoration of divine comforts, and the perpetual communications of divine grace, v. 12. David finds two ill effects of his sin; (1.) It had made him sad, and therefore he prays, Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation. A child of God knows no true nor solid joy, but the joy of God’s salvation, joy in God his Saviour, and in the hope of eternal life. By wilful sin we forfeit this joy, and deprive ourselves of it; our evidences cannot last when our得罪s against God. And so again, when we give ourselves so much cause to doubt of our interest in the salvation, how can we expect the joy of it? But when we truly repent, we may pray and hope that God will restore to us those joys. They that sow in penitential tears, shall reap in the joys of God’s salvation, when the times of refreshing shall come. (2.) It had made him weak, and therefore he prays, Uphold me with thy free Spirit; I am ready to fall. Uphold me, my Lord, sustain me; my own spirit” (though the spirit of a man will go far toward the sustaining his infirmity) “is not sufficient, if I be left to myself, I shall certainly sink; therefore uphold me with thy Spirit, let him counter-work the evil spirit that would cast me down from mine excellency. Thy Spirit is a free spirit, a free agent himself, working freely,” (and that makes those free, whom he works upon, for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;) “thy ingenious princely Spirit.” He was conscious to himself of having acted, in the matter of Uriah, very disingenuously, and unlike a prince; this behaviour was base and paltry: “Lord, says he, “let thy Spirit inspire my soul, not with base and generous principles, that I may always act as becomes me.” A free spirit will be a firm and fixed spirit, and will uphold us. The more cheerful we are in our duty, the more constant we shall be to it.

II. See what David here promises, v. 13. Observe, 1. What good work he promises God; “I will teach transgressors thy ways.” David had been himself a transgressor, and therefore could speak experimentally to transgressors, and resolves, finding himself found mercy with God in the way of repentance, to teach others God’s ways; (1.) Our way to God by repentance; he would teach others that had sinned, to take the same course that he had taken, to humble themselves, to confess their sins, and seek God’s face; and, (2.) God’s way to wards us in pardoning mercy; how ready he is to receive those that return to him. He taught the former by his own example, for the direction of sinners in repenting; he taught the latter by his own experience, for their encouragement. By this psalm he is, and will be to the world’s end, teaching transgressors, telling them what God had done for his soul. Note, Penitents should be preachers; Solomon was so, and blessed Paul. 2. What good effect he promises himself from this doing this; “Sinners shall be converted unto thee, and shall neither persist in their wanderings from thee, nor despair of finding mercy in their returns to thee.” The great thing to be aimed at in teaching transgressors, is, their conversion to God; that is a happy point gained, and happy they that are instrumental to contribute towards it, Jam. v. 20.

14. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation; and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. 15. O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth thy praise. 16. For thou desirlest not sacrifice, else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt-offering. 17. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. 18. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. 19. Then shall thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt-offering, and whole burnt-offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

1. David prays against the guilt of sin, and prays for the grace of God, enforcing both petitions from a plea taken from the glory of God, which he promises with thankfulness to show forth. 2. He prays against the guilt of sin, that he might be delivered from that, and promises that then he would praise God, v. 14. The particular sin he prays against, is, blood-guiltiness, which was no less guilty of, having slain Uriah with the sword of the children of Ammon. Hitherto, perhaps, he had stopped the mouths of conscience with that frivolous excuse, that he did not kill him himself; but now he was convinced that he was the murderer, and, hearing the blood cry to God for vengeance, he cries to God for mercy, “Deliver
from blood-guiltiness, let me not lie under the guilt of the kind I have contracted, but let it be pardoned to me, and let me never be left to myself to contract the like guilt again." Notre, It is certain to us that when man is cleansed of the guilt of blood. In this prayer, he eyes God as the God of salvation. Note, Those to whom God is the God of salvation, he will deliver from guilt; for the salvation he is the God of, is, salvation from sin. We may therefore plead this with him, "Lord, thou art the God of my salvation, therefore deliver me from the dominion of sin." He promises, that, if God would deliver him, his tongue should sing aloud of his righteousness; God should have the glory both of pardoning mercy, and of preventing grace. God's righteousness is often put for his grace, especially in the great business of justification and sanctification. This he would confess himself in, and therefore sing of; and this he would endeavour both to acquaint and to affect others with; he would sing aloud of it. This all these should do that have had the benefit of it, and owe their all to it. (2.) He prays for the grace of God, and promises to improve to that grace to his glory; (v. 15.) "O Lord, open thou my lips, not only that I may teach and instruct sinners," (which the best preacher cannot do to any purpose, unless God give him the opening of the mouth, and the tongue of the learned,) "but that my mouth may show forth thy praise; not only that I may have abundant matter for praise, but a heart enlarged in praise." Guilt had closed his lips, had gone near to stop the mouth of prayer; he could not for shame, he could not for fear, come into the presence of that God whom he knew he had offended, much less speak to him; his heart condemned him, and therefore he had little confidence toward God: it cast a damp particularly upon his prayers; when he had lost the joys of his salvation, his heart was hung upon the willow-trees; therefore he prays, "O Lord, open my lips, put not my heart in time for praise again." Those that are tongue-tied by reason of guilt, the assurance of the forgiveness of their sins says effectually, "Ephphatha—Be opened;} and when the lips are opened, what should they speak but the praises of God, as Zuckarias did? Luke i. 64. II. David offers the sacrifice of a penitent, contrite, heart, as that which he knew God would be pleased to accept. He knew well that the sacrificing of beasts was, in itself, of no account with God; (v. 16.) Thou desirest not sacrifice, (else would I give it with all my heart to obtain pardon and peace,) thou delightest not in burnt-offering. Here see how glad David would have been to give thousands of rams, to make atonement for sin. Those that are thoroughly convinced of their misery and danger, by reason of sin, would spare no cost to obtain the remission of it. Misc. 6, 7. But is it true that so little God valued this? As trials of obedience, and types of Christ; he did, indeed require sacrifices to be offered; but he had no delight in them for any intrinsic worth or value they had; Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not. As they cannot make satisfaction for sin, so God cannot take any satisfaction in them, any otherwise than as the offering of them is expressively of love and delight to him. He knew also how acceptable true repentance is to God; (v. 17.) The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. See here, (1.) What the good work is, that is wrought in every true penitent; a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart. It is a work wrought upon the heart; that is it that God looks at, and requires, in all religious exercises, particularly in the exercises of repentance. It is a sharp wound there, no less than the breaking of the heart; not in despair, (as we say, when a man is undone, His heart is broken,) but a necessary humiliation, and sorrow, for sin. It is a heart breaking with itself, and breaking from its sin; it is a heart pliable to the word of God, and patient under the word of God; it is a heart public and private, broken into obedience; it is a heart that is tender, like Josiah's, and trembles at God's word. Oh that there were such a heart in us! (2.) How graciously God is pleased to accept of this; it is the sacrifices of God; not one, but many, it is instead of all burnt-offering and sacrifice. The breaking of Christ's body for sin, is the only sacrifice of atonement, for no sacrifice but that could take away sin; but the breaking of the hearts of sinners is a sacrifice of acknowledgment, a sacrifice of God, for to him it is offered up; he requires it, he prepares it, (he provides this lamb for a burnt-offering,) and he will accept of it. That which pleased God, was, not the feeding of a beast, and making much of it, but killing it; so it is not the pumperning of our flesh, but the mortifying of it, that God will accept. The sacrifice was bound, was bled, was burnt; so the penitent heart is bound by convictions, bleeds in contrition, and then burns in holy and solemn zeal for and for God. The sacrifice was offered upon the altar that sanctified the gift; so the broken heart is acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ; there is no true repentance without faith in him; and this is the sacrifice which he will not despise. Men despise that which is broken, but God will not. He despised the sacrifice of torn and broken beasts, but he will not despise that of a torn and broken heart. He will not overlook it, he will not reject or it; though it make God no satisfaction for the wrong done him by sin, yet he does not despise it. The proud Pharisee despised the broken-hearted publican; and he thought very meanly of himself, but God did not despise him. More is implied than is expressed; the great God overlooks heaven and earth, to look with favour upon a broken and contrite heart. Isa. lixi. 1, 2.—lvi. 15. III. David intercedes for Zion and Jerusalem, with an eye to the heathen of God. See what concern he had, 1. For the good of the church of God; (v. 18.) Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion, that is, (1.) "To all the particular worshippers in Zion, to all that love and fear thy name; keep them from falling into such wounding, wasting, sins as these of mine; defend and succour all that fear thy name." Those that have been in spiritual troubles themselves, know how to pity and pray for those that are in like manner afflicted. Or, (2.) To the public interests of Israel. David was sensible of the wrong he had done to Judah and Jerusalem by his sin; how it had weakened the hands, and saddened the hearts, of good people, and opened the mouths of their adversaries; he was likewise afraid lest he, being a public person, his sin should bring judgments upon the city and kingdom, and therefore he prays to God to secure and deliver those that were spoiling his land, and that had damaged and endangered. He prays, that God would prevent those national judgments which his sin had deserved, that he would continue those blessings, and carry on that good work, which it had threatened to retard and put a stop to. He prays, not only that God would do good to Zion, as he did to other places, by his providence, but that he would do it in his good pleasure, with the peculiar favour he bore to Zion, and the love he bore to David; that he would put his name there; that the walls of Jerusalem, which perhaps were now in the building, might be built up, and that good work finished. Note, [1.] When we have most business of our own, and greatest importance at the throne of grace, yet then we must not forget to pray for the church of God; nor, our Master has taught us in our daily prayers to...
PSALMS, LII.

David, no doubt, was in very great grief, when he said to Abiathar, (1 Sam. xxii. 22.) I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house, which were put to death by David's malicious information; to give some vent to that grief, and to gain some relief to his mind under it, he penned this psalm, wherein, as a prophet, and therefore with as good an authority as if he had been now a prince upon the throne, I. He arraigns Doeg for what he had done, v. 1. II. He accuses him, con- victs him, and aggravates his crimes, v. 2. 4. III. He passes sentence upon him, v. 5. IV. He foretells the triumphs of the righteous in the execution of the sentence, v. 6, 7. V. He comforts himself in the mercy of God, and the assurance he had that he should yet praise him, v. 8, 9. In singing this psalm, we should conceive a detestation of the sin of lying, foresee the ruin of those that persist in it, and please ourselves with the assurance of the preservation of God's church and people, in spite of all the malicious designs of the children of Satan, that father of lies.

To the chief musician, Maschil. A psalm of Da- vid, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.

1. WHY boastest thou thyself in mis- chief, O mighty man? the goodness of God endureth continually. 2. Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs, like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. 3. Thou lovest evil more than good, and lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah. 4. Thou lovest all-deceiving words, O thou deceitful tongue. 5. God shall likewise destroy thee for ever: he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling-place, and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah.

The title is a brief account of the story which the psalm refers to. David now at length, saw it nece- ssary to quit the court, and shift for his own safety; for fear of Saul, who had once and again attempted to murder him. Being unprovided with arms and victuals, he, by a wife, got Ahimelech the priest to furnish him with both; Doeg an Edomite happened to be there; and he went and informed Saul against Ahimelech, representing him as confederate with a traitor; upon which accusation, Saul grounded a very bloody warrant, to kill all the priests; and Doeg, the preacher, was the executioner, 1 Sam. xxii. 9, &c.

In these verses, David avails the case fairly with this proud and mighty man, v. 1. Doeg, it is probable, was mighty in respect of bodily strength; but, if he was, he gained no reputation by his easy victory over the unarmed priests of the Lord: it is no honour for these that wear a sword, to hector these that wear an ephod. However, he was, by his office, a mighty man, for he was set over the servants of Saul, chamberlain of the household. This was that he could not only do an injury to the person, but he was, in effect, to do mischief, but in the mischief he did. Note, It is bad to do ill, but it is worse to boast of it, and glory in it, when we have done; not only not to be ashamed of a wicked action, but to justify it; not only to justify it, but to magnify it, and value ourselves upon it. They that glory in their sin, glory in their shame; and then it becomes yet more shameful; mighty men are often mischievous men, and boast of their heart's desire, v. 3. It is uncertain how the following words come. The goodness of God endures continually. Some make it the wicked man's answer to this question. The patience and forbearance of God (the great proofs of his goodness) are abused by sinners, to the hardening of their hearts in their wicked ways; because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily; nay, because God is continually doing them good, therefore they boast in mischief; as if their prosperity in their wickedness was an evidence that there is no harm in it. But it is rather to be taken as an argument against him, to show, 1. The sinfulness of his sin; "God is continually doing good, and those that therein are like him, have reason to glory in their being so: but thou art continually doing mischief, and therein art utterly unlike him, and contrary to him, and yet gloriest in being so." 2. The folly of it: "Thou thinkest, with the mischief which thou dost, that thou art wise (as some fool art), and wastis thyself, and wast proud over the wickedness of his tongue, (that unruly evil full of deadly poison,) and the wickedness of his heart, which was an evidence of. Four things he charges him with. 1. Malice; his tongue does mischief, not only prickling like a needle, but cutting like a sharp razor. Scornful bantering words would not content him: he loved devouring words, words that would ruin the priests of the Lord whom he hated. He was particularly engrossed in this deception: he knew that he did this mischief with; (v. 4.) he loved lying, (v. 3.) and this sharp razor did work deceitfully, (v. 2.) that is, before he had this occasion given him to discover his malice against the priests, he had acted very plainly toward them; though he was an Edomite, he attended the altars, and brought his offerings; and paid his res- pects to the priests, as decently as any Israelite; wherein he put force, (cf. 1 Sam. xix. 24. "You shall be the Lord's") but thus he gained an opportunity of doing them so much the greater mis- chief. Or, it may refer to the information itself, which he gave in against Ahimelech; for the matter of fact was, in substance, true, yet it was misrepresented, and false colours put upon it; and therefore he might well be said to love lying, and to have a deceitful tongue. He told the truth, but not all the
truth, as a witness ought to do; had he told that David made Amnon believe he was then going upon Saul's errand, the kindness he showed him would have appeared to be not only not traitorous, but contradictory to his respect for him. It will not save us from the guilt of lying, to be able to say, "There was some truth in what we said," if we pervert it, and make it to appear otherwise than it was. 3. Subtlety in sin: "Thy tongue devises mischief; it speaks the mischief which thy heart devises." The more there is of craft and contrivance in any wickedness, the more there is of the Devil in it. 4. Affection to sin: "Thou lovest evil more than good; that which is evil thou delightest in, and hast no delight but that which is good; thou takest delight in lying, and makest no conscience of doing right. Thou wouldest rather please Saul, by telling a lie, than please God, by speaking truth." Those are of Doeg's spirit, who, instead of being pleased (as we ought all to be) with an opportunity of doing a man a kindness in his body, estate, or good name, are glad when they have a fair occasion to do a man a mischief, and readily close with an opportunity of that kind; that is lowly in the sight of God. It is bad to speak devouring words, but it is worse to love them, either in others or in ourselves. III. He reads his dooms, and denounces the judgments of God against him for his wickedness; (v. 5.) "Thou hast destroyed the priests of the Lord, and cut them off, and therefore God shall likewise destroy thee for ever." Sons of perdition actively, shall be sons of perdition passively, as Judas and that multitude of sin, destroyed by God shall be destroyed; those especially that hate, and persecute, and destroy, the priests of the Lord, his ministers, and people, who are made to our God priests, a royal priesthood, shall be taken away with a swift and everlasting destruction. Doeg is here condemned: 1. To be driven out of the church; He shall pluck thee out of the tabernacle, not thy dwelling-place, but God's; so it is most probably understood. 2. To be cut off from the favour of God, and his presence, and all communion with him, and shall have no benefit either by oracle or offering. Justly was he deprived of all the privileges of God's house, who had been so mischievous to his servants; he had come sometimes to God's tabernacle, and attended in his courts, but he was detained there, he was weary of his service, and sought an opportunity to deface his family; it was very fit, therefore, that he should be taken away, and plucked out thence; we should forbid one of our house, that should serve us so. Note, We forfeit the benefit of ordinances, if we make an ill use of them. 2. To be driven out of the world; "He shall root thee out of the land of the living, in which thou thoughtst thyself so deeply rooted." When good men die, they are transplanted from the land of the living on earth, the nursery of the plants of righteousness, to that in heaven, the garden of the Lord, where they shall abide; but when wicked men, they are rooted out of the land of the living, to perish for ever; as fuel to the fire of divine wrath. This will be the portion of those that contend with God.

3. The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him: 7. Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness. 8. But I am like a green olive-tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever. 9. I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done it: and I will wait on thy name; for it is good for thy saints.

David was at this time in great distress, the mischief Doeg had done him was but the beginning of his sorrows; and yet here we have him triumphing, and that is more than rejoicing, in tribulation. Blessed Paul, in the midst of his troubles, is in the midst of his triumphs. (1 Cor. ii. 14.) David here triumphs, I. In the fall of Doeg. Yet this should look like personal revenge, he does not speak of it as his own act, but the language of other righteous persons. They shall observe God's judgments on Doeg, and speak of them; 1. To the glory of God; They shall see and fear; (v. 6.) they shall reverence the justice of God, and stand in awe of him, as a God of almighty power, before whom the proud sinners cannot stand, and before whom, therefore, we ought every one of us to humble ourselves. Note, God's judgments on the wicked should strike an awe upon the righteous, and make them afraid of offending God, and incurring his displeasure, exix. 120. Rev. xiv. 3, 4. 2. To the shame of Doeg. They shall laugh at him, not with a ludicrous, but a rational, serious, laughter, as he that sits in heaven shall laugh at him, ii. 4. He shall appear ridiculous, and worthy to be laughed at. We are told how they shall apprehend God's just judgments on him; (v. 7.) Lo, this is the man that made not God his Strength. The fall and ruin of a wealthy mighty man, cannot but be generally taken notice of, and every one is apt to make his remarks upon it; now this is the remark which the righteous should make upon Doeg's fall, that no better could come of it, since he took the wrong method of establishing himself in his wealth and power. If a newly-erected fabric falls down, every one immediately inquires, where was the fault in the building of it? Now, that which ruined Doeg's prosperity, was, (1.) That he did not build it upon a rock; He made not God his Strength, he did not think that the continuance of his prosperity depended upon the favour of God, and therefore took no care to make sure that favour, nor to keep himself in God's love, made no conscience of his duty to him, nor sought him for the least. These wretchedly deceived themselves, that they could do it themselves in their power and wealth without God and his Strength. (2.) That he did build it upon the sand. He thought his wealth would support itself; He trusted in the abundance of his riches, which, he imagined, were laid up for many years; nay, he thought his wickedness would help to support it; he was resolved to stick at nothing, for the securing and advancing of his honour and power; right or wrong, he would get what he could, and keep what he had, and be the ruin of any one that stood in his way; and this, he thought, would strengthen him; they may have any thing that will make conscience of nothing. But now see what it comes to; see what untempered mortar he built his house with, now that it is fallen, and himself buried in the ruins of it. II. In his own stability; (v. 8, 9.) "This mighty man is plucked up by the roots; but I am like a green olive-tree, planted and flourished; he is turned out of God's favour, but I am established in it, not detained, as Doeg, by any thing but the abundant satisfaction I meet with there." Note, Those that by faith and love dwell in the house of God, shall be like green olive-trees there; the wicked are said to flourish like a green bay-tree, (xxxvii. 35.) which bears no useful fruit, though it have abundance of large leaves; but the righteous flourish like a green olive-tree, which is fat as well as flourishing, (xcli. 14.) and with its fatness honours God and man, (Judg. ix. 9.) deriving its root and fatness from the good Olive, Rom. xi. 17.
PSALMS, LIII.

To the chief musician upon Mahalath, Maschil. A psalm of David.

1. THE fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: *there is none* that doeth good. 2. God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were *any* that did understand, that did seek God. 3. Everyone of them is gone back; they are altogether become filthy: *there is none* that doeth good, no, not one. 4. Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread: they have not called upon God. 5. There were they in great fear where no fear was; for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee: thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them. 6. Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

This psalm was opened before, and therefore we shall here only observe, in short, some things concerning sin, in order to the increasing of our scowr for it and hatred of it.

1. The fact of sin; is that proved? Can the charge be made out? Yes, God is a Witness to it, an unexceptionable witness: from the place of his holiness he looks on the children of men, and sees how little good there is among them, v. 2. All the sinfulness of their hearts and lives is naked and open before him.

2. The fault of sin; is there any harm in it? Yes, it is iniquity, (v. 1. 4.) it is an unrighteous thing; it is that which has no good in it, (v. 1. 3.) it is an evil thing; it is the worst of evils, it is that which breaketh through and through such an evil world as it is; it is going back from God, v. 3.

3. The fountain of sin; how comes it that men are so bad? Surely, it is because there is no fear of God before their eyes: *they say in their hearts,* "There is no God at all to call us to an account, none that we need to stand in awe of." Men's bad practices flow from their bad principles; if they pretend to know God, yet in works, because in thoughts, they dishonour him.

4. The folly of sin; he is a fool, (in the account of God, whose judgment we are sure is right,) that harbours such corrupt thoughts; atheists, whether in opinion or practice, are the greatest fools in the world. They that do not seek God, do not understand, they are like brute beasts that have no understanding; for man is distinguished from the brutes, not so much by the powers of reason, as by a capacity for religion. The workers of iniquity, whatever they pretend to, have no knowledge; those may truly be said to know nothing, that do not know God, v. 4.

5. The filthiness of sin; sinners are corrupt, (v. 1.) their nature is vitiated and spoiled, and the more noble the nature is, the more vile it is when it is degraded; as that of the angels, *Corrupto optimo est hessemo,—Nothing, when corrupted, is so bad as the best.* They that are the baddest, are such as look upon the holy God, and it renders them so; whereas otherwise he hates nothing that he has made. It makes men filthy, altogether filthy; wilful sinners are offensive in the nostrils of the God of heaven and of the holy angels. What decency soever prais
sinners pretend to, it is certain that wickedness is the greatest delusion in the world. Come to what a degree of barbarity it brings men at last; when men's hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, see their cruelty to their brethren, that are born of their bone—because they will not run with them to the same excess of riot, they eat them up, as they eat bread; as if they were not only become beasts, but beasts of prey. And see their contempt of God at the same time; they have not called upon him, but seem to be beholden to none but themselves.

7. The fear and shame that attend sin; (1.) There were they in great fear, who had made God their Enemy; their own guilty consciences frightened them, and filled them with horror, though otherwise there was no apparent cause of fear; the wicked flees when none pursues. See the ground of this fear; it is because God has formerly scattered the bones of those that encumbered against his people; not only broken their power, and dispersed their forces, but slain them, and reduced their bodies to dry bones, like those scattered at the grave's mouth, clxi. 7. Such will be the fate of those that lie siege to the camp of the saints, and the beloved city, Rev. xx. 9. The apprehensions of this cannot but put those into frights that eat up God's people. This enables the virgin, the daughter of Zion, to put them to shame, and expose them, because God has despised them; to laugh at them, because he that sits in heaven laughs at them. We need not look upon those enemies with fear, whom God looks upon with contempt. If he despises them, we may.

Lastly, The faith of the saints, and their hope and power touching the cure of this great evil; (v. 6.) There will come a Saviour, a great salvation, a salvation from sin. Oh that it might be hastened! for it will bring in glorious and joyful times. There were those in the Old Testament times, that looked and hoped, that prayed and waited, for this redemption. (1.) God will, in due time, save his church from the sinful malice of its enemies, which would bring joy to Jacob and Israel, that had long been in a mournful melancholy state. Such salvations were often wrought, and all typical of the everlasting triumphs of the glorious church. (2.) He will save all believers from their own iniquities, that they may not be led captive by them, which will be everlasting-betrayed! David to Saul, by informing him where he was, and putting him in a way how to seize him. This they did twice; (1 Sam. xxii. 19—xxvi. 1) and it is upon, to their everlasting infamy. The psalm is sweet; the former half thereof, was meditated while he was in his distress, and put into writing when the danger was over, with the addition of the two last verses, which speak his thankfulness for the deliverance, which yet looked forward, even to the end of his days, in the midst of his fright. Here, I. He complains to God of the malice of his enemies, and prays for help against them, v. 1..3. II. He comforts himself with an assurance of the divine favour towards him, the workmen, was mediated; and, in due season, his enemies would be confounded, and he delivered, v. 4.—7. What time we are in distress, we may comfortably sing this psalm.

To the chief musician on Neginoth, Maschil. A psalm of David, when the Ziphims came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us? of my mouth. 3. For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them. Selah.

We may observe here,

1. The great distress that David was now in, which the title gives an account of. The Ziphims came of their own accord, and informed Saul where David was, with a promise to deliver him into his hand. One would have thought, when David was retired into the country, he should not have been pursued; into a desert country, he should not have been discovered; and into his own country, he should not have been betrayed; and yet it seems he was. Never let a good man expect to be safe and easy, till he comes to heaven. How treacherous, how officious, were these Ziphims! It is well that God is faithful, for men are not to be trusted, Mic. vii. 5.

2. His prayer to God for succour and deliverance, v. 1, 2. He appeals to God's strength, by which he was able to help him, and to his name, by which he was engaged to help him; and begs he would save him from his enemies, and judge him, plead his cause, and judge for him. David has no other plea to depend upon than God's name, no other power to depend upon than God's strength, and those he makes his refuge and confidence. This would be sufficient for the off curve of his enemy, whether it was Saul or Saul, for even in his flight, when he had not opportunity for a solemn address to God, he was ever and anon lifting up to heaven; Hear my prayer, which comes from my heart, and give ear to the words of my mouth.

3. His plea, which is taken from the character of his enemies, v. 3. (1.) They are strangers; such were the Ziphims, unworthy the name of Israelites; (2.) They have used me more basely and barbarously than the Philistines themselves would have done. The worst treatment may be expected from those who, having broken through the bonds of relation and alliance, make themselves strangers. (2.) They are oppressors; such was Saul, who, as a king, should have used his power for the protection of all his good subjects, but abused it for their destruction.

Nothing is so grievous as oppression in the seat of judgment, Ex. xii. 16. Paul's greatest perils were for his own countrymen, and by false brethren; (2 Cor. xi. 26.) and so were David's. (3.) They were very formidable and threatening; they not only hated him and wished him ill, but they rose up against him in a body, joining their power to do him a mischief. (4.) They were very spiteful and malicious; They seek after my soul; they hunt for the precious life, no less will satisfy them. We may, in faith, pray that God would not by his providence give success, lest it should look like giving countenance to such cruel bloody men. (5.) They were very preposterous and atheistical, and, for this reason, he thought God was concerned in honour to appear against them; They have not set God before them; they have quite cast off the thoughts of God, they do not consider that his eye is upon them, that, in fighting against his people, they fight against him, nor have they any dread of the certain fatal consequences of such an unequal engagement. Note, God's people have nothing to do but to trust in him, and be sure that his judgment is to be expected; nay, what wickedness will not such men be guilty of? What bonds of nature, or friendship, or gratitude, or covenant, will hold those that have broken through the fear of God? Selah; Mark this. Let us all be sure to set God before us at all times: If we do not, we are in danger of becoming desperate.

4. Behold, God is my helper: the Lord is with them that uphold my soul. 5. He
shall reward evil unto mine enemies: cut them off in thy truth. 6. I will freely sacrifice unto thee; I will praise thy name, O Lord, for it is good. 7. For he hath delivered me out of all trouble; and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.

We have here the lively actions of David's faith in his prayer, by which he was assured the issue would be comfortable, though the attempt upon him was formidable.

1. He was sure that he had God on his side; that God took his part; (v. 4) he speaks it with an air of triumph and exultation, "Behold, God is my Help," he would say; and if he be for us, we shall have such help in him, that we need not fear any power engaged against us. Though men and devils aim to be our destroyers, they shall not prevail while God is our Helper; "The Lord is with them that uphold my soul," (Ps. cxviii. 7.) "The Lord taketh my part with them that help me." There are some that uphold me, and God is one of them; he is the principal one; none of them could help me, but he would help them. Every creature is friendly to us (and no more) that God makes it to be. He means, "The Lord is he that upholds my soul, and keeps me from tiring in my work, and sinking under my burthen." He that by his providence upholds all things, by his grace upholds the souls of his people. God, who will, in due time, save his people, does, in the mean time, sustain them, and bear them up, so that the spirit he has made shall not fail before him.

2. God, taking part with him, he doubted not but his enemies should both fall and fall before him; (v. 5.) "He shall reward evil unto mine enemies that observe me, seeking an opportunity to do me a mischief. The evil they designed against me, the righteous God will return upon their own heads." David would not render evil to them, but he knew God would; "I am a deaf man heard not, for thou wilt hear. The enemies we forgive, if they repent not, God will judge: and, for this reason, we must not avenge ourselves, because God has said, Vengeance is mine. But he prays, Cut them off in thy truth. This is not a prayer of malice, but a prayer of faith, for it has an eye to the word of God, and only desires the performance of that. There is truth in God's threatenings, as well as in his promises, and sinners that repent not will find it so to their cost.

3. He promises more: he thanks God for all the experience he had of his goodness to him; (v. 6.) "I will sacrifice unto thee. Though sacrifices were expensive, yet, when God required that his worshippers should in that way praise him, David would not only offer them, but offer them freely, and without grudging. All our spiritual sacrifices must, in this sense, be free-will offerings, for God loves a cheerful giver. Yet he will not only bring his sacrifice, which was but the shadow, the curse may; he will mind the substance. I will praise thy name. A thankful heart, and the calves of our lips giving thanks to his name, are the sacrifices God will accept; "I will praise thy name, for it is good. Thy name is not only great but good, and therefore to be praised; to praise thy name is not only what we are bound to, but it is good, it is pleasant, it is profitable; it is good for us, (xcli. 1.) therefore I will praise thy name." 4. He speaks of his deliverance as a thing done; (v. 7.) I will praise thy name, and say, "He has delivered me; this shall be my song then." That which he rejews in, is, a complete deliverance; He has delivered me from all trouble; and a deliverance to his heart's content; Mine eye has seen its desire upon mine enemies; not seen them cut off and ruini

ed, but forced to retreat; tidings brought to Saul that the Philistines were upon him, (1 Sam. xxxii. 27, 28.) All David desired, was, to be himself safe; when he saw Saul draw off his forces, he saw his desire; He has delivered me from all trouble. Either, (1.) With this thought David comforted himself when he was in distress, "He has delivered me from all trouble hitherto, and many a time I have gained my point, and seen my desire on mine enemies; therefore he will deliver me out of this trouble." We should thus, in our greatest straits, encourage ourselves with our past experiences. Or, (2.) With this thought he magnified his present deliverance, and the triumphs over, that it was the earnest of his further deliverance. He speaks of the completing of his deliverance as a thing done, though he had as yet many troubles before him; because, having God's promise for it, he was as sure of it as if it was done already. "He that has begun to deliver me from this trouble, shall deliver me from all troubles, and shall, at length, give me to see my desire upon mine enemies." This may, perhaps, point at Christ, of whom David was a type; God would deliver him out of all the troubles of his state of humiliation, and he was perfectly sure of it; and all things are said to be put under his feet; for though we see not yet all things put under him, yet we are sure he shall reign till all his enemies be made his footstool, and he shall see his desire upon them. However, it is an encouragement to all believers to make that use of their particular deliverances which St. Paul does, (like David here) vers. 17, 18. He that delivered me from the mouth of the lion shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me to his heavenly kingdom.

PSALM LV.

It is the conjecture of many expositors, that David penned this psalm upon occasion of Absalom's rebellion, and that the particular enemy he here speaks of, that dealt treacherously with him, was Ahithophel; and some will therefore make David's troubles here typical of Christ's suffering, and Ahithophel's treachery a figure of Judas's, because they both hanged themselves. But there is nothing in it that is particularly applied to Christ in the New Testament. David himself often penned this psalm. 1. He prays that God would manifest his favour to him, and pleads his own sorrow and fear, v. 1. 2. He prays that God would manifest his disposal of his enemies, against whom he was already ravaged by the hand of Ahithophel; v. 9. 3. He prays that God would be magnified in his hands, that he might bear all the heat of the great wickedness and treachery, (v. 9.) and again, v. 20, 21. 4. He assures himself that God would, in due time, appear for him against his enemies, comforts himself with the sure hope of God's protection; v. 19. 5. He prays for God's favor, and trust in God, (v. 16., 19.) and again, v. 22, 23. In singing this psalm, we may, if there be occasion, apply it to our own troubles; if not, we may sympathize with those to whose case it comes nearest, foreseeing that there will be, at last, indignation and wrath to the persecutors, a salvation and joy to the persecuted.

To the chief musician on Neginoth, Maschil. A psalm of David.

1. GIVE ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication. 2. Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise; 3. Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me. 4. My heart is sore pained within me; and the tears of death are fallen upon me. 5. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. 6. And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would fli
away, and be at rest. 7. Lo then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness.

Selah. 8. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.

In these verses, we have,
I. David praying. Prayer is a salve for every sore, and a relief to the spirit under every burden; 
Give ear to my prayer, O God, v. 1, 2. He does not set down the petitions he offered up to God in his distress, but begs that God would hear the prayers which, at every period, his heart lifted up to God, and grant an answer of peace to them; Attend to me, hear me, Saul. 
Saul would not hear his petitions, his other enemies regarded not his pleas, but, "Lord, be thou pleased to hearst to me. Hide not thyself from my supplication; either as one unconcerned, and not regarding it, nor seeming to take any notice of it, or as one displeased, angry at me, and therefore at my prayer." If we, in our prayers, sincerely lay open ourselves, our case, our hearts, to God, we have reason to hope that he will not hide himself, his favours, his comforts, from us.

II. David weeping; for in this he was a type of Christ, that he was a man of sorrows, and often in tears; (v. 2.) "I mourn in my complaint," (or, in my meditation, my melancholy musings,) "and I make a noise; I cannot forbear such sighs and groans, and other expressions of grief, as discover it to those about me." Great griefs are sometimes noisy and clamorous, and thus are, in some measure, lessened, while those increase that are stified, and have no vent given them. But what was the matter? v. 3. It is because of the voice of the enemy, the menaces and insulks of Absalom's party, that swelled, and hectarced, and stirred up the people to cry out against David, and shout him out of his palace and capital city, as afterwards the chief priests stirred up the mob to cry out against the Son of David, Away with him, crucify him. Yet it was not the voice of the enemy only that fetched tears from David's eyes, but their oppression, and the hardship he was under through them; They made my heart sad. They could not justly charge David with any maladministration in his government, could not prove any act of oppression or injustice upon him, but they加载ed him with calumnies. Though they found no iniquity in him, relating to his trust as a king, yet they cast all manner of iniquity upon him, and represented him to the people as a tyrant fit to be expelled. Immencity itself is no security against violent and lying tongues. They hated him themselves, nay, in wrath they hated him; there was in their enmity both the heat and violence of anger, or sudden passion, and the implacableness of hatred and rooted malice; and therefore they studied to make him odious, that others also might hate him.

This made him mourn, and the more, because he could remember the time when he was the darling of the people, and answered to his name, David, a beloved one.

III. David trembling, and in great consternation. We may well suppose him to be so, upon the breaking out of Absalom's conspiracy, and the general defection of the people, even those that he had little reason to suspect.

1. See what fear seized him. David was a man of great boldness, and in some very eminent instances he had signalized his courage, and yet, when the danger was reduced, and in the attitude of his heart he failed him; let not the stout man therefore glory in his courage, any more than the strong man in strength. Now that David's heart is sore-pained within him, the terror of death are fallen upon him, v. 4. Fearfulness of mind and trembling of body came upon him, and horror covered and overwhelmed him; (v. 5.) when without are fightings, no marvel that within are fears; and, if it was upon the ocean of Absalom's rebellion, we may suppose that the remembrance of his sin in the matter of Uriah, which God was now reckoning with him for, added as much more to the fright. Sometimes David's faith made him, in a manner, fearless, and he could boldly say, when surrounded with enemies, I will not be afraid what man can do unto me. But at other times his fears prevail and tyrannize; for the best men are not always alike strong in faith.

2. See how desirous he was, in this fright, to retire into a desert, any whither to be far enough from hearing the voice of the enemy, and seeing their oppressions. He said, (v. 6.) said it to God in prayer, said it to himself in meditation, said it to his friends in complaint, Oh that I had wings like a dove! Much as he had been sometimes in love with Jerusalem, now that it was become a rebellions city, he longed to get clear of it, and, like the prophet, wishes he had in the wilderness a lodging place of way-faring men, that he might leave his freagle, and go from them, for they were an assembly of treacherous men, Jer. ix. 2.

3. This agrees very well with David's resolution upon the breaking out of that plot, Arise, let us flee, and make speed to depart, 2 Sam. xv. 14.

Observe (1.) How he would make his escape; he was so surrounded with enemies, that he saw not how he could escape but upon the wing, and therefore he wished, Oh that I had wings, not like a hawk that flies strongly, but like a dove that flies swiftly; he wishes for wings, not to fly upon the prey, but to fly from the birds of prey, for such his enemies were. The wings of a dove were most agreeable to him who was of a dove-like spirit, and therefore the wings of a eagle would not become him. The dove flies low, and takes shelter as soon as she can, and thus would David fly.

(2.) What he would make his escape from; from the wind, storm, and tempest, the tumult and ferment that the city was now in, and the danger to which he was exposed. Herein he was like a dove that cannot endure noise.

(3.) What he aimed at, in making this escape; not victory, but flight; "I would fly away, and be at rest, v. 6. I would fly any whither, if it were to a barren frightful wilderness, ever so far off, so I might be quiet," v. 7. Note, Peace and quietness, in silence and solitude, are what the wisest and best of men have most earnestly coveted, and the more when they have been vexed and wearied with the noise and clamour of those about them. Gracious souls wish to retire from the hurry and bustle of this world, that they may sweetly enjoy God and themselves; and, if there be not in their own persons a piece of side heaven, it is they that enjoy it in those retirements. This makes death desirable to a child of God, that it is a final escape from all the storms and tempests of this world, to perfect and everlasting rest.

9. Destroy, 0 Lord, and divide their tongues: for I have seen violence and strife in the city. 10. Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof; mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it. 11. Wickedness is in the midst thereof; deceit and guile depart not from her streets. 12. For it was not an enemy that reproached me: then could I have borne it; neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself.
13. But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance.

14. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.

15. Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell; for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.

David here complains of his enemies, whose wicked plots had brought him, though not to his faith's end, yet to his wit's end, and prays against them by the spirit of prophecy.

Observe here,

1. The character he gives of the enemies he feared. They were of the worst sort of men, and his description of them agrees very well with Absalom and his accomplices.

2. He complains of the city Jerusalem, which strangely fell in with Absalom and fell off from David, so that he had none there, but his own guards and servants, that he could reprove any confidence in. How is that faithful city become a harlot! David did not take the representation of it from others; but with his own eyes, and with a sad heart, did himself see nothing but violence and strife in the city; (v. 9.) for, when they grew disaffected and disloyal to David, the people mischief one to another. If he walked the rounds upon the walls of the city, he saw that violence and strife went about it day and night, and mounted its guards, v. 10. All the arts and methods which the rebels used for the fortifying of the city, were made up of violence and strife, and there were no remains of honesty or love among them. If he looked into the heart of the city, mischief and injury, mutual wrong and vexation, were in the midst of all. Wickedness, all manner of wickedness, is in the midst thereof; Jusqu' a datun sceleri - Wickedness was legalized. Deceit and guile, and all manner of treacherous dealing, departed not from her streets, v. 11. It may be meant of their base and barbarous usage of David's friends, and such as they knew were firm and faithful to him; they did them all the mischief they could, by fraud or force. Is this the character of Jerusalem, the royal city, and which is the heart of the house of Israel? Unhappy Jerusalem, soon after the thrones of judgment and the testimony of Israel were both placed there! Is this the city that men call the perfection of beauty? Lam. ii. 15. Is Jerusalem, the head quarters of God's priests, so ill taught? Can Jerusalem be ungrateful to David himself, its own illustrious founder, so that he cannot reside in it? Let us not be surprized at the corruptions and disorders of this church on earth, but long to see the New Jerusalem, where there is no violence or strife, no mischief or guile, and into which no unclean thing shall enter, nor any thing that disquiets.

2. He complains of one of the ring-leaders of the conspiracy, that had been very industrious to foment jealousies, to misrepresent him and his government, and to incense the city against him; it was one that reproached him, as if he either abused his power, or neglected the use of it, for that was Absalom's malicious suggestion: There is no man deft of the king to hear thee; 2 Sam. xv. 3. That and similar accusations were industriously spread among the people; and who was most active in it? "Not a sworn enemy, not Shimei, or any of the nonjurors; then I could have borne it, for I should not have expected better from them;" (and we find how patiently he did bear Shimei's curses.) "not one that professed to hate me, then I should have stood by my guard against him, would have hid myself and my counsels from him, so that it would not have been in his power to betray me; but it was thou, a man mine equal," v. 13. The Chaldee-paraphrase names Ahithophel as the person here meant, and nothing in that plot seems to have discouraged David so much as to hear that Ahithophel was among the conspirators with Absalom, (2 Sam. xv. 31.) for he was the king's counsellor, 1 Chron. xxvii. 35. "It was thou, a man, mine equal, one whom I esteemed as myself, a friend as mine own soul, to whom I had communicated all my secrets, and who knew my heart as I knew his, as the very right hand of my flesh, with whom I advised, and by whom I was directed in all my affairs, whom I made president of the council, and prime-minister of state; my intimate acquaintance and familiar friend; this is the man that now abuses me. I have been kind to him, but I find him thus basely ungrateful; I have put a trust in him, but I find him thus basely treacherous, nay, and he could not have done me the one half of the mischief he does; I had not showed him so much honor. All this must needs be very grievous to an ingenuous mind, and yet this was not all; this traitor had seemed a saint, else he had never been David's bosom friend; (v. 14.) "We took counsel together, spent many an hour together, with a great deal of pleasure in religious discourse;" or, as Dr. Hammond reads it, "We joined ourselves together to the assembly; I gave him the right-hand of fellowship in holy ordinances, and then we walked to the house of God in the day-time, together." Note, (1.) There always has been, and always will be, a mixture of good and bad, sound and unsound, in the visible church, between whom, perhaps, for a long time, we can discern no difference; but the Searcher of hearts does. David, who went to the house of God in his sincerity, had Ahithophel in company with him, who went in his hypocrisy. The Pharisee and the Publican went together to the temple, the one imprudent, and the other hypocritical. They that are perfect, and they that are not, will be made manifest. (2.) Carnal policy may carry men on very far, and very long, in a profession of religion, while it is in fashion, and will serve a turn. In the court of pious David, none was more devout than Ahithophel, and yet his heart was not right in the sight of God. (3.) We must not wonder, if we be badly deceived in some that have made great pretensions to religion, and have given us much reason to have confidence in them. David, himself, though a very wise man, was thus imposed upon, which may make similar disappointments the more tolerable to us.

II. His prayers against them, which we are both to stand in awe of, and to comfort ourselves in; as prophecies, but not to copy into our prayers against any particular enemies of our own. He prays,

1. That God would dispose them, as he did the Babel-builders; (v. 9.) "Destray, O Lord, and divide their tongues; blast their counsels, by making them to disagree among themselves, and clash with one another. Send an evil spirit among them, that they may not understand one another, but be envious and jealous one of another." This prayer was answered in the turning of Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness, by setting up the counsel of Hushai against it. God often destroys the church's enemies by dividing them; nor is there a surer way to the destruction of any people than their division. A kingdom, an interest, divided against itself, cannot long stand.

2. That God would destroy them, as he did Da than and Abiram, and their associates, who were confederates against Moses, whose throat being an open sepulchre, the earth therefore opened, and swallowed them up. This was then a new thing, and it would have stood to show God's power; but he prays that it might now be repeated, or something equivalent; (v. 15.) "Let death seize upon them by divine warrant, and let them go down quick into
hell; let them be dead, and buried, and so, utterly destroyed, in a moment; for wickedness is wherever it are, it is in the midst of them. "The souls of the impenitent sinners go down quick, or alive, into hell, for they have a perfect sense of their miseries, and shall therefore live still, that they may be still miserable. This prayer is a prophecy of the utter, the final, the everlasting, ruin of all those who, whether secretly or openly, oppose and rebel against the Lord’s Messiah.

16. As for me, I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me. 17. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice. 18. He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me: for there were many with me. 19. God shall hear and afflict them, even he that abideth of old. Selah. Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God. 20. He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him; he hath broken his covenant. 21. The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords. 22. Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. 23. But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee.

In these verses, I. David perseveres in his resolution to call upon God, being well assured that he should not seek him in vain; (v. 16.) "As for me, let them take what course they please to secure themselves, let violence and strife be their guards, prayer shall be mine: this I have found comfort in, and therefore this will I abide by; I will call upon God, and, contrary to what most men do, I will trust the Lord and be saved." Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, in a right manner, shall be saved, Rom. x. 13. He resolves to be both fervent, and frequent, in this duty. 1. He will pray fervently; I will pray and cry aloud. "I will meditate," (so the former word signifies,) "I will speak with my own heart, and the prayer shall come thence." Then we pray aright, when we pray with all that is within us; think first, and then pray over our thoughts; for the true nature of prayer is, lifting up the heart to God. Having meditated, he will cry, he will cry aloud: the fervour of his spirit in prayer shall be expressed, and yet more excited, by the intenseness and earnestness of his voice. 2. He will pray frequently, every day, and three times a day, evening, and morning, and at noon. It is probable that this had been his constant practice, and he resolves to continue it. No doubt he was in his distress. Then we may come the more boldly to the throne of grace in trouble, when we do not then first begin to seek acquaintance with God, but it is what we have constantly practised, and the trouble finds the wheels of prayer going. They that think three meals a day little enough for the body, ought much more to think three solemn prayers a day little enough for the soul, and to count it a pleasure, not a task. As it is fit that in the morning we pray with the day, with God, and in the evening close it with him, so it is fit that in the midst of the day we should exercise a while to converse with him. It was Daniel’s practice to pray three times a day; (Dan. vi. 10.) and noon was one of Peter’s hours of prayer, Acts x. 9. Let not us be weary of praying often, for God is not weary of hearing; "He shall hear my voice, and not blame me for coming too often, but the oftener the better, the more welcome." II. He assures himself that God would, in due time, give an answer of peace to his prayers. 1. That he himself should be delivered, and all the foes he fears will have; those fears with which he was much disordered, (v. 4, 5.) by the exercise of faith were now silenced, and he begins to rejoice in hope; (v. 18.) God has delivered my soul in peace, that is, he will deliver it; David is as sure of the deliverance as if it were already wrought. His enemies were at war with him, and the battle was against him, but God delivered him in peace, brought him off with as much comfort as if he had never been in danger. If he did not deliver him in victory, yet he delivered him in peace, inward peace, he delivered his soul in peace; by patience and holy joy in God he kept possession of that; these are safe and easy whose hearts and minds are kept by that peace of God which passes all understanding, Phil. iv. 7. David, in his fright thought all were against him; but now he sees there were many with him, more than he imagined, his interest was advanced both when he expected, and this he gives to God the glory of; for it is he that raises us up friends when we need them, and makes them faithful to us. There were many with him, for though his subjects deserted him, and went over to Absalom, yet God was with him, and the good angels. With an eye of faith he now sees himself surrounded, as Elisha was, with chariots of fire, and horses of fire, and therefore triumphs thus, There are many with me, more with me than against me, 2 Kings vi. 16, 17. 2. That his enemies should be reckoned with, and brought down. They had frightened him with their menaces, (v. 3.) but here he says enough to frighten them, and make them tremble with more reason, and no remedy, for they could not ease themselves of their fears, as David could, by faith in God.

(1.) David here gives their character, as the reason why he expected God would bring them down.

[1.] They are impious and profane, and stand in no aw of God, of his authority or wrath; (v. 19.) "Because they have no changes, no afflictions, no interruption to the constant course of their prosperity, no crosses to empty them from vessel to vessel, therefore they fear not God, they live in a constant neglect and contempt of God and religion, which is the cause of all their other wickedness, and by which they are certainly marked for destruction.

[2.] They are treacherous and false, and will not be held by the most sacred and solemn engagements; (v. 20.) "He has put forth his hand against such as he at peace with him, that never provoked him, nor gave him any cause to quarrel with them; nay to whom he had given all possible encouragement to the contrary; he has put forth his hand against those whom he had given his hand to, and has broken his covenant, both with God and man, has perfidiously violated his engagement to both," than which nothing makes men riper for ruin.

[3.] They are base and hypocritical, pretending friendship while they design mischief; (v. 21.) "The words of his mouth" (probably he means Ahab’s) particularly; "were smoother than butter, and softer than oil, so courteous was he and obliging, so free in his professions of respect and
kindness, and the proffers of his service; yet, at the same time, war was in his heart, and all this courtes"y was but a stratagem of war, and those very words had such a mischievous design in them, that they never did draw and could design to stab them. They smile in a man's face, and cut him through at the same time, as Job, that kissed and killed. Satan is such an enemy; he flatters men into their ruin; when he speaks fair, believe him not.

(2.) David here foretells their ruin.

[1.] God shall afflict them, and bring them into straits and frights, and recompense tribulation to them that have troubled his people, and this, in answer to the upbraidings of his enemies. I will be still hard and afflict them, hear the cries of the oppressed, and speak terror to their oppressors, even he that abides of old, who is God from everlasting, and without end, and who sits Judge from the beginning of time, and has always presided in the affairs of the children of men. Mortal men, though ever so high and strong, will easily be crushed by an eternal God, and are a very unequal match for him. The saints have comforted themselves with, in reference to the three saving powers of the church's enemies; (Hab. i. 12.) An enemy not from everlasting, O Lord?

[2.] God shall bring them down, not only to the dust, but to the pit of destruction; (v. 23.) to the bottomless pit, which is called destruction, Job xxxvi. 6. He afflicted them, (v. 19.) to see if that would humble and reform them; but they not being wrought upon by that, he shall, at last, bring them to ruin. Those that are not reclaimed by the threatenings of affliction, will certainly be brought down into the pit of destruction. They are bloody and deceitful men, the worst of men, and therefore shall not live out half their days, not half so long as men ordinarily live, and as they might have lived in a course of nature, and as they themselves expected to live. They shall live as long as the Lord of life, the righteous Judge, has appointed, with whom the number of our months is; but he has determined to cut them off, by an untimely death, in the midst of their days. They were bloody men, and cut others off, and therefore God will justly cut them off: they were deceitful men, and defrauded others of the one half perhaps of what was their due; and now God will cut them short, though not of that which was their due, yet of that which they counted upon.

III. He encourages himself, and all good people, to confidence in God and with confidence in him. He himself resolves to do so; (v. 23.) I will trust in thee, in thy providence, and power, and mercy, and not in my own prudence, strength, or merit; when bloody and deceitful men are cut off in the midst of their days, I shall still live by faith in thee. And this he will have others to do; (v. 22.) Cast thy burden upon the Lord, whoever thou art, that art burdened, and whatever the burden is. Cast thy grief upon the Lord, as some read it; Whereupon God has promised, (Psa. 55.) that he will comfort them that are afflicted, who endeavor to enjoy, commit them all to his custody, and particularly commit the keeping of thy soul to him. Or, "Whatever it is that thou desirest God should give thee, leave it to him to give it thee in his own way and time." Cast thy care upon the Lord, so the LXX, to which the apostle refers, 1 Pet. v. 7. Care is a burden, it makes the heart stoop; (Prov. xlix.) and we must cast it upon God by faith and prayer, commit it to his hands, and he will do as seems him good, and we will be satisfied. To cast our burden upon God, is, to stay ourselves on his providence and promise, and to be very easy in the assurance that all shall work for good. If we do so, it is promised, 1. That he will sustain us, both support and supply us; will himself carry us in the arms of his power, as the nurse carries the sucking-child, will strengthen our spirits so by his Spirit, as that they shall sustain the infirmity. He has not promised to free us immediately from that trouble which gives rise to our cares and fears; but he will provide that we be not tempted above what we are able, and that we shall be able to bear as we are tempted. 2. That he will never suffer the righteous to be moved, to be so shaken by any troubles, as to quit either their duty to God, or their comfort in him. However, he will not suffer them to be moved for ever; (as some read it;) though they fall, they shall not be utterly cast down.

PSALM LVI.

It seems by this, and many other psalms, that, even in times of the greatest trouble and distress, David never hung his harp upon the willow-trees, never unstrung it, or laid it by; but that, when his dangers and fears were greatest, he was still in tune for singing God's praises. He was so confident in God, being assured that he took his part, comforting himself with this, that therefore he was safe, and should be victorious, and that, while he lived, he should praise God, v. 3, 4, 8-13. How pleasantly may a good Christian, in singing this psalm, praise God, and adore him for what he will do, as well as for what he has done.

To the chief musician upon Jonath-elem-rechokim, Michtani of David, when the Philistines took him in Gath.

1. Be merciful unto me, O God; for man would swallow me up: he fighting daily oppresseth me. 2. Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O thou Most High. 3. What time I am afraid I will trust in thee. 4. In God I will praise his word; in God I have put my trust: I will not fear what flesh can do unto me. 5. Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil. 6. They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul. 7. Shall they escape by iniquity? in thine anger cast down the people, O God.

David, in this psalm, by his faith throws himself into the hands of God, then when he had by his fear and folly thrown himself into the hands of the Philistines; it was when they took him in Gath, whither he fled for fear of Saul, forgetting the quarrel they had with him for killing Goliath; but they soon put him in mind of it, 1 Sam. xxi. 10, 11. Upon that occasion he changed his behaviour, but God, who would not suffer his people to fall into the snare of his enemies, penned both this psalm and the 54th. This is called Michtam—A golden psalm. So some other psalms are entitled, but this has something peculiar in the title; it is upon Jonath-elem-rechokim, which signifies, The silent dove afar off. Some apply that to David himself, who wished for the wings of a dove on which to fly away. He was innocent and inoffensive, mild and patient, as a dove, as was at this time driven from his nest, from the sanctuary, (xxviii. 3.) He was forced to wander afar off, to seek for shelter in distant countries, there he was like the doves of the valleys, mourning and melancholy; but silent, neither murmuring against God, nor railing at the instruments of his trouble; herein a type of Christ, who was as a sheep, dumb before the shearsers, and a
pattern to Christians, who, wherever they are, and whatever injuries are done them, ought to be as silent doves.

In this part of the psalm, He complains to God of the malice and wickedness of his enemies, to show what reason he had to fear them, and what cause, what need, there was, that God should appear against them; (v. 1) Be merciful unto me, O God. That petition includes all the good we come to the throne of grace for; if we obtain mercy there, we obtain all we can desire; and need no more to make us happy. It implies likewise our best plea, not our merit, but God's mercy, in which we can boast; He might have found mercy with God, for with men he could find no mercy. When he fled from the cruel hands of Saul, he fell into the cruel hands of the Philistines; "Lord," (says he,) "be thou merciful to me now, or I am undone." The mercy of God is what we may flee to, and trust to, and in faith pray for, when we are surrounded on all sides with difficulties and dangers.

He complains,

1. That his enemies were very numerous; (v. 2) "They be many that fight against me, and think to overpower me with numbers; take notice of this, O thou most High, and make it to appear that, wherein they deal proudly, thou art above them. It is a point of honour to come into the help of one against many. And if God be on our side, how many soever they are that fight against us, we may, upon good grounds, boast, that there are more with us, for (as that great general said) "How many do we reckon for him?"

2. That they were very barbarous; they would swallow him up, (v. 1) and again, v. 2. They sought to devour him; no less would serve, they came upon him with the utmost fury, like beasts of prey, to eat up his flesh, xxxii. 2. Man would swallow him up, those of his own kind, from whom he might have expected humanity. The ravenous beasts prey not upon those of their own species; yet a bad man would devour a good man, if he could. "They are men, weak and frail; make them to know that they are so," ix. 20.

3. That they were very unanimous; (v. 6) They gather themselves together; though they were many, and of different interests among themselves, yet they united and combined against David, as Herod and Pilate against the Son of David. That they were very powerful; quite too hard for him, if God did not help him; "They fight against me;" (v. 2) They oppress me; (v. 1) I am almost overcome and borne down by them, but still reduced to the last extremity.

4. That they were very subtle and crafty; (v. 6) "They hide themselves; they industriously cover their designs, that they may the more effectually prosecute and pursue them. They hide themselves as in their den, that they may mark my steps; they observe every thing I say and do, with a critical eye, that they may have something to accuse me of." Thus Christ's enemies watched him, Luke xx. 20. Or, "They have an eye upon all my motions, that they may gain an opportunity to do me a mischief, and may lay their snares for me.

5. That they were very spiteful and malicious; they put invidious constructions upon every thing he said, and did, however honestly meant, and profoundly expressed; (v. 5) "They writhe; they wrote the word, put them upon the rack, to extort that out of them which was never in them;" and so they made him an offender for a word, (Isa. xxix. 21.) misrepresenting it to Saul, and aggravating it, to incense him yet more against him. They made it their whole business to ruin David, all their thoughts were against him for evil, which put evil interpretations upon all his words.

7. That they were very restless and unwearied, they continually waited for his soul, it was the life, the precious life, they hunted for; it was his death they longed for, v. 6. They fought daily against him, (v. 1.) and would daily swallow him up, (v. 2.) and every day they wrested his words, v. 5. Their malice would not admit the least external symptoms, or the acts of hostility, but they were continually pressing at him. Such as this, is the enmity of Satan and his agents against the Kingdom of Christ and the interests of his holy religion, which if we cordially espouse, we must not think it strange to meet with such treatment as this, as though some strange thing happened to us. Our betters have been thus used; worse may be expected of us.

II. He encourages himself in God, and in his promises, power, and providence, v. 3, 4. In the midst of his complaints, and before he has said what he has to say of his enemies, he triumphs in the divine protection. 1. He resolves to make God his Confidence, then when dangers were most threatening, and all other confidences failed; "What time I am afraid, in the day of my fear, when I am most terrified from without, and most timorous within, then will I trust in thee, and thou shalt silence. Note, There are some times which are, in a special manner, times of fear with God's people; in these times, it is their duty and interest to trust in God as their God, and to know whom they have trusted. This will fix the heart, and keep it in peace. 2. He resolves to make God's promises the matter of his praises, and so we have reason to make them; (v. 3) "In God I will praise, not only his work which he has done, but his word which he has spoken; I will give him thanks for a promise, though not yet performed; in God, in his strength, and by his assistance, I will both glory in his word, and give him the glory of it." Some understand, by his word, his providences, every event that he orders and appoints; "When I speak well of God, with him I will speak well of every thing that he does." 3. Thus supported, he will bid defiance to all adverse powers; "When in God I have put my trust, I am safe, I am easy, and I will not fear what flesh can do unto me; it is but flesh, and cannot do much; nay, it can do nothing but by divine permission." As we must not trust to an arm of flesh, when it is engaged for us, so we must not be afraid of an arm of flesh when it is stretched out against us.

III. He foresees, and foretells, the full effects of those that fight against him, and of all others that think to establish themselves in and by any wicked practices; (v. 7.) Shall they escape by iniquity? They hope to escape God's judgments, as they escape men's, by violence and fraud, and the arts of injustice and treachery; but shall they escape? No, they certainly shall not; the sin of sinners will never be their security, nor will either their impudence or their hypocrisy bring them off at God's bar; God will, in his anger, cast down, and cast out, such people, Heb. ii. 6-8. "Nose derision raised so high, or settled so firmly, but that the justice of God cannot bring them down, both from their dignities, and from their confidences; Who knows the power of God's anger; how high it can reach, and how forcibly it can strike?"
12. Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee. 13. For thou hast delivered my soul from death; wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?

Several things David here comforts himself with, in the day of his distress and fear.

I. That God took particular notice of all his grievances and all his griefs, v. 8. 1. Of all the inconveniences of his state; Thouittest my wanderings, my fittings, so the old translation. David was now but a young man, (under thirty,) and yet he had had many removes, from his father’s house to the court, thence to the enemies, and now driven out of everything where he had even a place to rest any where; hunted like a partridge upon the mountains; continual terrors and toils attended him; but this comforted him, that God kept a particular account of all his motions, and numbered all the weary steps he took, by night or by day. Note, God takes cognizance of all the afflictions of his people; and he does not cast out from his care and love those whom he has cast out from the comfort of the world, and where he would fain find a place, but not allowed to rest any where; (v. 2.) Put thy tears into thy bottle, to be preserved and looked upon; nay, I know they are in thy book, the book of thy remembrance. God has a bottle and a book for his people’s tears, both those for their sins, and those for their afflictions. This intimates, (1.) That he observes them with compassion and tender concern; he is afflicted in their afflictions, and knows their souls in adversity. As the blood of his saints, and their deaths, are precious in the sight of the Lord, so are their tears, not one of them shall fall to the ground. I have seen thy tears, 2 Kings 5. 1. I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself, Jer. xxxii. 18. (2.) That he will remember them, and review them, as we do the accounts we have booked. Paul was mindful of Timothy’s tears, (2 Tim. i. 4.) and God will not forget the sorrows of his people. The tears of God’s persecuted people are bottled up, and sealed among God’s treasures; and when these books come to be opened, they will be found vials of wrath which will be poured out upon their persecutors, whom God will surely reckon with for all the tears they have forced from his people’s eyes; and they will be breasts of consolation to God’s mourners, whose sackcloth will be turned into garments of praise. God will comfort his people according to the time wherein he has afflicted them, and give to them to reap in joy, who sowed in tears. What was sown a tear, will come up a pearl.

II. That his prayers would be powerful for the defeat and discomfiture of his enemies, as well as for his own support and encouragement; (v. 9.) When I cry unto thee, then shall my enemies turn back; I need no other weapon than prayers and tears; this I know, for God is for me, to plead my cause, to protect and deliver me; and if God be for me, who can be against me so as to prevail? The sions have God for them; they may know it; and to him they must cry when they are surrounded with enemies; which, if they do in faith, they shall find a divine power exerted and engaged for them; their enemies shall be made to turn back; their spiritual enemies, against whom we fight best upon our knees, Eph. vi. 12.

III. That his faith in God would set him above the fear of man, v. 10, 11. Here he repeats, with a strong pathos, what he had said; (v. 4.) In God will I praise his word: I will firmly depend upon the promise, for the sake of him that made it, who is true and faithful, and has wisdom, power, and goodness, enough to make it good.” When we give credit to a man’s bill, we honour him that drew it; so when we do, and suffer, for God, in a dependence upon his promise, not staggering at it, we give glory to God, we praise his word, and so give praise to him. And, if ever, this has put himself out of himself, and then I will not fear what man shall do unto me; for he has no power but what he has given him from above.

IV. That he was in bonds to God; (v. 12.) Thy vows are upon me, O God; not upon me as a burden which I am loaded with, but as a badge which I glory in, as that by which I am known to be thy menial servant; not upon me as fetters that hamper me, and such (superstitions vows,) but upon me as a bridle that restrains me, and directs me in the way of duty. Thy vows are upon me, the vows I have made to thee, to which thou art not only a Witness, but a Party, and which thou hast commanded and encouraged me to make.” It is probable that he means especially these vows which he had made to God in the day of his trouble and distress, which he would retain the remembrance of, and acknowledge the obligation of, when his bright was over. Note, It ought to be the matter of our consideration and joy, that the vows of God are upon us; our baptismal vows, renewed at the Lord’s table, our occasional vows under convictions, under corruptions, by these we are bound to live to God.

V. That he should still have more and more occasion to praise him; I will render praises unto thee. This is part of the performance of his vows; for vows of thankfulness properly accompany prayers for mercy, and, when the mercy is received, must be made good. When we study what we shall render, this is the least we can resolve upon, to render praises to God. Poor returns for rich receivings! Two things he will praise God for; 1. For what he had done for him; (v. 13.) Thou hast delivered my soul, my life, from death, which was just ready to seize me. If God has delivered us from sin, either from the consideration of it by preventing grace, or from the punishment of it by prolonging mercy, we have reason to own that he has thereby delivered our souls from death, which is the wages of sin. If we, who were by nature dead in sin, are quickened together with Christ, and are made spiritually alive, we have reason to own that God has delivered our souls from death. 2. For what he would do for him; Thou hast delivered me from death, and hast given me a new life, and thereby hast given me an earnest of further mercy, that thou wilt deliver my feet from falling: thou hast done the greater, and therefore thou wilt do the lesser; thou hast begun a good work, and therefore thou wilt carry it on, and perfect it.” This may be taken either as the matter of his prayer, pleading his experience, or as the matter of his faith, raising his expectations; and this is that know how to praise in faith, will give God thanks for mercies in promise and prospect, as well as in possession. See here, (1.) What David hopes for, that God would deliver his feet from falling either into sin, which would wound his conscience, or into the appearance of sin, from which his enemies would take occasion to wound his good name.
PSALMS, LVI.

This psalm is very like that which goes next before it; it was penned upon a like occasion, when David was both in danger of trouble, and in temptation to sin; it begins as that did, Be merciful to me; the method also is the same; 1. He begins with prayer and complaint, yet not without some assurance of speedy in his request; 1. 2. He concludes with joy and praise, v. 7-11. So that hence we may take direction and encouragement, both in our supplications, and in our thanksgivings, and may offer both to God in singing this psalm.

To the chief musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.

1. Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. 2. I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me. 3. He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth. 4. My soul is among lions; and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. 5. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth. 6. They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. Selah.

The title of this psalm has one word new in it, Al-taschith—Destroy not. Some make it to be only some known tune to which this psalm was set, others apply it to the occasion and matter of the psalm; Destroy not; that is, David would not let Saul be destroyed, when now in the cave there was a fair opportunity of doing it, and his servants would fain have done it; No, says David, destroy him not, 1 Sam. xxiv. 4, 6. Or rather, God would not let David be destroyed by Saul; he suffered him to per-


3. That all his expectation is from God; (v. 3.) He shall send from heaven, and save me. They that make God their only Refuge, and fly to him by faith and prayer, may be sure of salvation, in his way and his time, and according to his will. Whatever he expects the salvation; from heaven. Look which way he will, on this earth, refuge fails, no help appears: but he looks for it from heaven; that they lift up their hearts to things above, may from thence expect all good. (2.) What the salvation is that he expects; he trusts that God will save him from the reproach of those that would swallow him up, that aimed to ruin him, and, in the mean time, did all they could to vex him. Some read it, He shall send from heaven to save me, for he designed in himself to shame that would swallow me up; he has disappointed their designs against me hitherto, and therefore he will perfect my deliverance. (3.) What he will ascribe his salvation to; God shall send forth his mercy and truth. God is good in himself, and faithful to every word that he has spoken, and so he makes it appear when he works deliverance for his people. We need no more to make us happy, than to have the benefit of the mercy and truth of God, xxv. 10.  

11. He represents the power and malignity of his enemies; (v. 4.) My soul is among lions; so fierce and furious was Saul, and those about him, against David, that he might have been as safe in a den of lions, as among such men, who were continually roaring against him, and ready to make a prey of him. They are set on fire, and breathe nothing but flame; they set on fire the course of nature, infusing one another against David, and they were themselves set on fire of hell, Jam. iii. 6. They were sons of men, from whom one might have expected something of the reason and compulsion of a man; but they were beasts of prey in the shape of men; their teeth, which they grasped upon him, and with which they hoped to tear him to pieces, and to eat him up, were spears and arrows fitted for mischief and murders; and their tongue, with which they cursed him, and wounded his reputation, was as a sharp sword to cut and kill; see xlii. 10. A spiteful tongue is a dangerous weapon, wherewith Satan's instruments fight against God's people. He describes their malicious projects against him, (v. 6.) and shows the issue of them; They have prepared a net for my steps, in which to take me, that I might not again escape out of their hands; they have digged a pit before me, that I might, ere I was aware, run headlong into it. See the policies of the church's enemies; see the pains they take to do mischief. But let us see what comes of it. 1. It is indeed some disturbance to David; My soul is bowed down. It made him droop, and hung the head, to think that there should be those that bore him so much ill-will. But, 2. It was destruction to themselves; they digged a pit for David, into the midst whereof they are fallen. The more they digged against David, returned it against them, and swallowed them that were the authors of their counsels; then when Saul was pursuing David, the Philistines were invading him; nay, in the cave, when Saul thought David should fall into his hands, he fell into the hands of David, and lay at his mercy.  

III. He prays to God to glorify himself and his own great name; (v. 5.) Whatever comes of me and my interest, be thou exalted, O God, above all heavens, be thou praised by the holy angels, the four creatures, the seraphim, and the cherubim; and let thy glory be above, or over all the earth, let all the inhabitants of this earth be brought to know and praise thee. Thus God's glory should lie nearer our hearts, and we should be more concerned for it, than for any particular interests of our own. When David was in the greatest distress and dis-
3. How he pleases himself, and (as I may say) even prides himself, in the work of praise; so far is he from being ashamed to own his obligations to God, and dependence upon him, that he resolves to praise him among the people, and to sing unto him among the nations, v. 9. This intimates, (1.) That his own heart was much affected and enlarged in praising God; he would even make the earth ring with his sacred songs, that all might take notice how much the heavens and the earth are filled with the glory of God; (2.) That he desired to bring others in to join with him in praising God; he will publish God's praises among the people, that the knowledge and fear and love of God might be spread, and the ends of the earth might see his salvation. When David was driven out into heathen lands, he would not only not worship their gods, but he would openly avow his veneration for the God of Israel, would take his religion along with him, and ever he went, would endeavour to bring others in love with it, and leave the sweet savour of it behind him. David, in his psalms, which fill the universal church, and will to the end of time, may be said to be still praising God among the people, and singing to him among the nations; for all good people make use of his words in praising God. Thus St. John, in his writings, is said to prophesy again before many people, Rev. x. 4.

4. He begins his prayer with matter for praise, v. 10. That which was the matter of his hope and comfort, (God shall send forth his mercy and his truth, v. 3.) is here the matter of his thanksgiving. Thy mercy is great unto the heavens, great beyond conception and expression; and thy truth unto the clouds, great beyond discovery, for what eye can reach that which is wrapped up in the clouds? God's mercy and truth reach to the heavens, for they will fill all the earth as a sea will spread and fill all the sea; and God will raise in their hearts and build their hopes upon them. God's mercy and truth are praised even to the heavens, that is, by all the bright and blessed inhabitants of the upper world, who are continually exalting God's praises to the highest, while David on earth is endeavouring to spread his praises to the furthest, v. 9.

5. How he leaves it at last to God to glorify his own name; (v. 11.) Be thou exalted, O God. The same words which he had used, (v. 3.) to sum up his prayers in, he here uses again, (and no vain repetition,) to sum up his praises in; "Lord, I desire to exalt thy name, and that all the creatures may exalt it; but what can the best of us do towards it? Lord, take the work into thine own hands; do thyself, be thou exalted, O God. In the praises of the church triumphant, thou art exalted to the heavens, and in the praises of the church militant, thy glory is throughout all the earth; but thou art above all the blessing and praise of both, (Neh. ix. 5.) and therefore, Lord, exalt thyself above the heavens, and above all the earth: Father, glorify thine own name: Thou hast glorified it, glorify it yet again."

PSALM LVIII.

It is the probable conjunction of some (amraulous particularly,) that before Saul began to persecute David by force of arms, he would beben to humble him, he formed a process against him by course of law, upon which he was condemned, unheard, and attained as a traitor by the great council, or supreme court of judicature, and was to be put out of the land an outlawed wolf, whom any man might kill, and no man might protect. The elders, in order to curry favour with Saul, having passed this bill of attainder, it is supposed that David penned this psalm on the occasion. He describes their sin, and aggravates that; v. 1. 2. He imprecates and foretell their ruin, and the judgments which the righteous God would bring upon them for their injustice, v. 6. 9. Which would redound, 1. To the comfort of the saints, v. 10. 2. To the glory of God, v. 11. Sin appears here both exceeding sinful and exceeding dangerous, and God a just Avenger of wrong, with which we should be affected in singing this psalm.

To the chief musician, Al-taschith, Michamh of Da· vid.

1. Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation? do ye judge uprightly

O ye sons of men? 2. Yea, in heart you work wickedness; you weigh the violence of your hands in the earth. 3. The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. 4. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent; they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; 5. Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.

We have reason to think that this psalm refers to the malice of Saul and his janizaries against David, because it bears the same inscription (Al-taschith, and Michamch of David) with that which goes before and that which follows, both which appear, by the title, to have been penned with reference to that persecution through which God preserved him, (Al-taschith David's purpose,) and therefore the psalms he then penned were precious to him, Michamch, David's jewel, as Dr. Hammond translates it.

In these verses, David, not as a king, for he was not yet come to the throne, but as a prophet, in God's name arraigns and convicts his judges, with more authority and justice than they showed in prosecuting him. Two things he charges them with; 1. The corruption of their government. They were a congregation, a bench of justices, nay, perhaps, a congress or convention of the states, from whence one might have expected fair dealing, for they were men learned in the laws, had been brought up in the study of these statutes and judgments, which were so righteous, that those of other nations were not to be compared with them. One would not have thought a congregation of such could be bribed and biased with pensions, and yet, it seems, they were, because the son of Kish could do that for which the king of Judah was reproved by God; xxii. 7. He had vineyards, and fields, and preferments, to give them, and therefore, to please him, they would do any thing, right or wrong. Of all the melancholy views which Solomon took of this earth and its grievances, nothing vexed him so much as to see, that, in the place of judgment, wickedness was there, Eccl. iii. 16. So it was in Saul's time.

1. The judges would not do right, would not protect or vindicate oppressed innocence; (v. 1.) "Do ye indeed speak righteousness, or judge uprightly? No, you are far from it, your own consciences cannot but tell you that you do not discharge the trust reposed in you as magistrates, by which you are obliged to be a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well. Is this the justice you pretend to administer? Is this the patronage, this the countenance, which an honest man, and an honest cause, can expect? Are your hands raised up to God against men, mortal and dying, and that you stand upon the same level, before God, with the meanest of these you trample upon, and must yourselves be called to an account and judged. You are sons of men, and therefore we may appeal to yourselves, and to that law of nature which is written in every man's heart, Do ye indeed speak righteousness? And will not your second thoughts correct what you have done?" Note, It is good for us often to reflect upon what we say, with this serious question, Do we indeed speak
righteousness? that we may unsay what we have spoken amiss, and may proceed no further in it.

2. They did a great deal of wrong; they used their power for the support of injury and oppression; (v. 5.) In heart you work wickedness. It intimates that they wrought with a great deal of plot and management, not by surprise; but with premeditation, and with a view of constituting both it, and resolution it. The more there is of the heart, in any act of wickedness, the worse it is, Eccl. viii. 11. And what was their wickedness? It follows, "You weigh the violence of your hands in the earth," (or in the land,) "the peace of which you are appointed to be the conservators of." They did all the violence and injury they could, either to enrich, or avenge, themselves, and they weighed it, the way they did it, not with a growl of craft and caution; "You frame it by rule and lines," (so the word signifies,) "that it may effectually answer your mischievous intentions; such masters are you of the art of oppression." (2.) They did it under colour of justice. "They held the balances (the emblem of justice) in their hands, as if they designed to do right, and right is expected from them, but the result is violence and oppression, which are perfectly gross, effectually from hand to heart, and being practised under the pretext of law and right.

II. The corruption of their nature. This was the root of bitterness from which that gall and wormwood sprang; (v. 3.) The wicked, who, in heart, work wickedness, are estranged from the womb, estranged from God and all good, alienated from the divine life, and its principles, powers, and pleasures, Eph. iv. 18. A sinful state is a state of estrangement from the acquaintance with God, and service of him, which we were made for. Let none wonder that these wicked men dare do such things, for wickedness is bred in the bone with them, they brought it into the world with them, they have in their natures a strong inclination to it, they learned it from their wicked parents, and have been trained up in it by a bad education; they are called, and not miscalled, transgressors from the womb, one can therefore expect no other than that they will deal very treacherously; see Isa. xlviii. 8. They go astray from God and their duty as soon as they be born, as soon as possibly they can; the foolishness that is bound up in their hearts, appears with the first operations of reason; as the wheat springs up, the tares spring up with it. Three instances are here given of the corruption of nature.

1. Falsehood. They soon learn to speak lies, and bend their tongues, like their brows, for that purpose, Jer. ix. 3. How soon will little children tell a lie, to excuse a fault, or in their own commendation! No sooner can they speak than they speak to God's dishonour; tongue-sins are some of the first of our actual transgressions.

2. Malice. Their poison (their ill-will, and the spite they bore to goodness and all good men, particularly to David) was like the poison of a serpent, invisible, venomous, and very mischiefous, from which their malice and rage derived. We pity a dog that is poisoned by accident, but hate a serpent that is poisonous by nature. Such was the cursed enmity in the serpent's brood, against the Lord and his anointed.

3. Untractableness. They are malicious, and nothing will work upon them, no reason, no kind-ness, to mollify them, and bring them to a better temper. Their teeth are like teeth of a lion, and their ears like the ears of a bear, v. 4, 5. The psalmist, having compared these wicked men, whom he here complains of, to serpents, for their poisonous malice, takes occasion thence, upon another account, to compare them to the deaf adder or viper, concerning which there was then this vulgar tradition, that, whereas by music, or some other art, they had a way of charm-ing serpents, so as either to destroy them, or, at least, disable them to do mischief, this deaf adder would lay one ear to the ground, and step the other with her tail, so that she could not hear the voice of the enchantment, and so defeated the intention of it, and secured herself. The using of this combination need not vitiate the story, nor, if it were true, justify the use of this enchantment; for it is only an illusion to the report of such a thing, to illustrate the obstinacy of sinners in a sinful way. God's design, in his word and providence, is, to cure serpents of their malignity; to this end, how wise, how powerful, how well-chosen, are the charms! How restless the right words? But all in vain, with most men; and what is the reason? It is, they are hard-hearted they will not hearken. None so bad as those that will not hear; we have piped unto men, and they have not danced; how should they, when they have stopped their ears?

6. Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth; break out the great teeth of the young lions, O Lord. 7. Let them melt away as waters which run continually: when he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces. 8. As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away; like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun. 9. Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in his wrath. 10. The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. 11. So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

In these verses, we have,

1. David's prayers against his enemies, and all such enemies of God's church and people; for it is as enemies of the latter that he looks upon them, so that he was actuated by a public spirit, in praying against them, and not by any private revenge.

2. He prays that they might be disabled to do any further mischief; (v. 6.) Break their teeth, O God. Not so much that they might not feel themselves, as that they might not be able to make prey of others, iii. 7. He does not say, "Break their necks," (no, let them live to repent, slay them not, lest my people forget,) but, "Break their teeth, for they are lions, they are young lions, that live by rapine."

3. That they might be disappointed in the plots they had already laid, and might not gain their point. "Then he bendeth his bow, and takes aim to shoot his arrows at the upright in heart, let them be as cut in pieces, v. 7. Let them fall at his feet, and never come near the mark."

4. That they and their interest might waste and come to nothing; that they might melt away as waters that run continually, as the waters of a land-flood, which, though they seem formidable for a while, soon soak into the ground, or return to their channels; or, in general, as water is still on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again, but gradually dries away, and disappears. Such shall the floods of ungodly men be, which sometimes make us afraid; (xviii. 4.) so shall the proud waters be reduced, which threaten to go over our soul, cxxiv. 4, 5. Let us by faith then see what they
11. His prediction of their ruin; (v. 9.) "Before your pots can feel the heat of a fire of thorns made under them, which they will presently do, for it is a quick fire, and violent while it lasts, so speedily, with such a hasty and violent flame, God shall hurry them away, as terribly and irresistibly as with a whirlwind, as it were alive, as it were in fury." The proverbial expressions are somewhat difficult, but the sense is plain; 1. That the judgments of God often surprise wicked people in the midst of their jollity, and hurry them away of a sudden. When they are beginning to walk in the light of their own fire, and the sparks of their own kindling, they are made to lie down in sorrow; (Isa. l. 11.) and their laughter proves like the crackling of thorns under a pot, the comfort of which is soon gone, here they can say, Alas, I am warm, Eccl. vii. 6. 2. That there is no standing before the destruction of God; that the Almighty never knows the power of God's anger? When God will take sinners away dead or alive, they cannot contest with him; The wicked are driven away in their wickedness.

Now there are two things which the psalmist promises himself as the good effects of sinners' destruction.

1. That saints would be encouraged and comforted by it; (v. 10.) The righteous shall rejoice, when he sees the vengeance; the pomp and power, the prosperity and success, of the wicked, is a discouragement to the righteous; they sunder their hearts, and weaken their hands, and are sometimes a strong temptation to them to question their foundations, lxiii. 2, 13. But, when they see the judgments of God hurrying them away, and just vengeance taken on them for all the mischief they have done to the people of God, they rejoice in the satisfaction thereby given to their doubts, and the confirmation thereby given to their faith in the providence of God, and his justice and righteousness in governing of the world; they shall rejoice in the victory thus gained over that temptation, by seeing their end, lxiii. 17. He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked; there shall be abundance of blood shed; (lxviii. 23.) and it shall be as great a refreshment to the saints, to see God glorified in the ruin of sinners, as it is to a weary traveller to have his feet washed. It shall likewise contribute to their satisfaction; the sight of the vengeance shall make them tremble before God, (cxix. 120.) and shall convince them of the evil of sin, and the obligations they lie under to that God who pleads their cause, and will suffer no man to do them wrong, and go unpunished for it. The joy of the saints, in the destruction of the wicked, is then a holy joy, and justifiable, when it helps to make them holy, and to purify them from sin.

2. That sinners would be convinced and convinced by it, v. 11. The vengeance God sometimes takes on the wicked in this world, will bring men to say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous. Any man may draw this inference from such providences, and many a man shall, who, before, denied even these plain truths, or doubted of them. Some shall have this confession extorted from them, others shall have their minds so changed, that they shall willingly own it, and thank God, who has given them to see it, and see it with satisfaction, That God is just and righteous, That he is (1.) The judgment of his servants and saints; Verily, (however it be, so it may be read,) there is a fruit to the righteous; whatever damage a man may sustain, whatever hazard he may run, and whatever hardship he may undergo for his religion, he shall not only be no loser by it, but an unspeakable gainer, in the issue. Even in this world there is a reward for the righteous, they shall be recompensed in the earth. They shall be taken notice of, honoured, and protected, that seemed slighted, despised, and abandoned.

(2.) That he is the righteous Governor of the world, and will surely reckon with the enemies of his kingdom; verily, however it be, though wicked people prosper and bid defiance to Divine Justice, yet it shall be made to appear, to their confusion, that the world is not governed by chance, but by a Being of infinite wisdom and justice; there is a God to the earth, though he has prepared his throne in the heavens. He deals in all the affairs of the children of men, and directs and disposes them according to the counsel of his will, to his own glory; and he will punish the wicked, not only in the world to come, but in the earth, where they have laid up their treasure, and promised themselves a happiness; in the earth, that the Lord may be known by the judgments which he shall execute among the earth, that they may be taken as exceptions of a judgment to come. He is a God, (so we read,) not a weak man, nor an angel, nor a mere name, not (as the atheists suggest) a creature of men's fear and fancy, nor a deified hero, not the sun and moon, as idolaters imagined; but a God, a self-existent, perfect, Being; he it is that judges the earth; his favour therefore let us seek, from whom every man's judgment proceeds, and to him let all judgment be referred.

PSALMS LIX.

This psalm is of the same nature and scope with six or seven foregoing psalms; they are all filled with David's complaints of the malice of his enemies, and of their cursed and cruel designs against him; his prayers and prophecies against them; and his comfort and confidence in God as his God. The first is the language of nature, and may be allowed; the second of a prophetic spirit, looking forward to Christ and the enemies of his kingdom, and therefore not to be drawn by a precedent; the third of grace and a most holy faith, which is to be imitated by every one of us. In this psalm, 5. He prays to God to defend and deliver him from his enemies, representing them as very bad men, barbarous, malicious, and desirous of his destruction. He reserves and foretells the destruction of his enemies, which he would give to God the glory of, v. 8, 17. As far as it appears that any of the particular enemies of God's people fall into the hands of the psalmist, we should read this psalm, read their doom, and foresee their ruin.

To the chief musician, At-taschith, Michamit of David; when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him.

1. D ELIVER me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me. 2. Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men. 3. For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul; the mighty are gathered
against me; not for my transgression, nor for my sin, 0 Lord. 4. They run and prepare themselves without my fault: awake to help me, and behold. 5. Thou, therefore, 0 Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit all the heathen: be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah.

They return at evening: they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. 7. Behold, they belch out with their mouth: swords are in their lips; for who, say they, doth hear?

The title of this psalm acquaints us particularly with the occasion on which it was penned; it was when Saul sent a party of his guards to beset David's house in the night, that they might seize him and kill him; we have the story, 1 Sam. xix. 11. It was when his hostilities against David were newly begun, and he had but just before narrowly escaped Saul's javelin. These first eruptions of Saul's malice could not but put David into disorder, and be both grievous and terrifying, and yet he kept up his communion with God, and such a composure of mind, so that he was never out of frame for prayer and praises; happy was he whose intercourse with him was not interrupted or broken in upon by their cares, or griefs, or fears, or any of the hurries (whether outward or inward) of an afflicted state.

In these verses,

1. David prays to be delivered out of the hands of his enemies, and that their cruel designs against him might be defeated; (v. 1, 2) "Deliver me from mine enemies, 0 my God; thou art God, and canst deliver me; my God, under whose protection I live, and thou hast promised me to be a God all-sufficient, and therefore, in honour and faithfulness, thou wilt deliver me. Set me on high out of the reach of the power and malice of them that rise up against me, and above the fear of it. Let me be safe, and see myself so, safe and easy, safe and satisfied. Oh deliver me, and save me!"

He cries out as one ready to perish, and that had his eye to God only for salvation and deliverance. He descants upon the excellency of his case, and how God had promised him to be a sufficient God, and therefore he appeals to his name, and his character, and his promise, and God's past dealings with him, that will deliver him. Thus the disciples, in the storm, awoke Christ, saying, Master, save us, we perish. And thus earnestly should we pray daily, to be defended and delivered from our spiritual enemies, the temptations of Satan, and the corruptions of our own hearts, which war against our spiritual life.

2. He prays for deliverance. Our God gives us leave, not only to pray, but to plead with him, to order our cause before him, and to fill our mouth with arguments; not to move him, but to move ourselves; David does so here.

1. He pleads the bad character of his enemies; they are workers of iniquity, and therefore not only his enemies, but God's enemies; they are bloody men, and therefore not only his enemies, but enemies to all mankind; "Lest, let not the workers of iniquity prevail against one that is a worker of righteousness; nor bloody men against a merciful man."

2. He pleads their malice against him, and the imminent danger he was in from them; (v. 3) "Their spite is great, they aim at my soul, my life, my better part; they are subtle and very politic, they lie in wait, taking an opportunity to do me a mischief; they are all mighty, men of honour, and get their unlawful ends, and interest in court and country; they are in a confederacy, they are united by league, and actually gathered together against me; combined both in consultation and action. They are very ingenious in their contrivances, and very industrious in their attempts. The French, in the beginning of their invasion, prepared themselves, with the utmost speed and fury, to do me a mischief."

He takes particular notice of the brutish carriage of the messengers that Saul sent to take him; (v. 6) "They return at evening from the posts assigned them in the day, to apply them selves to their works of darkness, (their night-work, which may well be their day-shame,) and then they make a noise like a hound in pursuit of the lamb."

Thus did David's enemies, when they came to take him, raise an out-cry against him as a rebel, a traitor, a man not fit to live; with this clamour they went round about the city, to bring a bad reputation upon David, if possible, to set the mob against him, at least, to prevent their being incensed against them, which otherwise they had reason to fear they would be, so much was David their darling. Thus the persecutors of our Lord Jesus, who are compared to dogs, (xxii. 16.) ran him down with noise, for else they could not have taken him, at least, not on the feast-day, for there would have been an uproar among the people. They belch out with their mouth the malice that boils in their hearts, v. 7. Swords are in their lips; reproaches that wound my heart with grief, (xlii. 10.) and slanderers that stab my reputation. They were continually suggesting that which would, and what, Saul's sword against him, and David's false accusations. The sword, perhaps, may be intended in Saul's hand, if it had not been first in their lips.

3. He pleads his own innocence, not as to God, he was never backward to own himself guilty before him, but as to his persecutors; what they charged him with was utterly false, nor had he ever said or done any thing to deserve such treatment from them; (v. 5.) Not for my transgression, nor for mine iniquity, is this the cause of my distress, nor is this the cause of this people's destruction, or these things." And again, (v. 4.) without my fault. Note, (1.) The innocence of the godly will not secure them from the malignity of the wicked. Those that are harmless, like doves, yet, for Christ's sake, are hated of all men, as if they were noisier than serpents, and obnoxious accordingly. (2.) Though our innocence will not secure us from troubles, yet it will greatly support and comfort us under our troubles; our own testimony of our conscience for us, that we have behaved ourselves justly, so that these that behave themselves ill toward us, will be very much our rejoicing in the day of evil. (3.) If we are conscious to ourselves of our innocence, we may with humble confidence appeal to God, and beg of him to plead our injured cause, which he will do in due time.

4. He pleads that his enemies were profane and atheistical, and bolstered themselves up in their enmity to David, with the counsel of God; For who (say they) doth hear? v. 7. Not God himself, x. 11.—xxiv. 7. Note, It is not strange, if these regard not what they say, who have made themselves believe that God regards not what they say.

III. He refers himself and his cause to the just judgment of God, v. 5. "The Lord, the Judge, be Judge between me and my persecutors!" In this appeal to God, he has an eye to him as the Lord of hosts, who is the power to judge, head of all creatures, even hosts of angels, at his command; he views him also as the God of Israel, to whom he was, in a peculiar manner, King and Judge, not doubting that he would appear on the behalf of these that were upright, that were Israelites indeed. When Saul's hosts persecuted him, he had recourse to God as the Lord of all hosts; when these maligned him, whose spirit were strangers to the northward of Israel, he had recourse to him as the God of Israel. He desires, that is, he is very sure,
that God will awake to visit all the nations, will make an early and exact inquiry into the controversies and quarrels that are among the children of men; there will be a day of visitation, (Isa. x. 3.) and to that day David refers himself, with this solemn appeal, Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors; Selah; Mark that. 1. If David had been conscious to himself that he was a wicked transgressor, he would not have expected to find mercy; but as to his enemies, he could say he was no transgressor at all; (v. 3, 4.) "Not for my transgression, and therefore thou wilt appear for me." As to God, he could say he was no wicked transgressor; for, though he had transgressed, he was a penitent transgressor, and did not obstinately persist in what he had done amiss. 2. He knew his enemies were wicked transgressors, wilful, malicious, and hardened, in their transgressions, both against God and man, and therefore he uses for justice against them; judgment without mercy. Let not those expect to find mercy, who never showed mercy, for such are wicked transgressors.

8. But thou, O Lord, shalt laugh at them; thou shalt have all the heathen in derision. 9. Because of his strength will I wait upon thee: for God is my defence. 10. The God of my mercy shall prevent me: God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies. 11. Slay them not, lest my people forget: scatter them by thy power; and bring them down, O Lord our shield. 12. For the sin of their mouth, and the words of their lips, let them even be taken in their pride; and for cursing and lying which they speak. 13. Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they may not be; and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. Selah. 14. And at evening let them return, and let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. 15. Let them wander up and down for meat, and grudge, if they be not satisfied. 16. But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble. 17. Unto thee, O my strength, I will sing: for God is my defence, and the God of my mercy.

David here encourages himself, in reference to the threatening power of his enemies, with a pious resolution to wait upon God, and a believing expectation that he should yet praise him.

1. He resolves to wait upon God; (v. 9.) "Because of his strength," (either the strength of his enemies, the fear of which drove him to God, or because of God's strength, the hope of which drew him to God,) "will I wait upon thee, with a believing dependence upon thee, and confidence in thee." It is our wisdom and duty, in times of danger and difficulty, to wait upon God; for he is our Defence, our High-Place, in whom we shall be safe. He hopes

1. That God will be to him a God of mercy; (v. 10.) "The God of my mercy shall prevent me with the blessings of his goodness, and the gifts of his mercy; prevent my fears, prevent my prayers, and be better to me than my own expectations." It is very comfortable to us, in prayer, to eye God, not only as the God of mercy, but as the God of our mercy, the Author of all good in us, and the Giver of all good to us. Whatever mercy there is in God, it is laid up for us, and is ready to be laid out upon us. Justly does the psalmist call God's mercy his mercy, for all the blessings of the new covenant are called the sure mercies of David; (Isa. iv. 3.) and they are especial with him, because he was so merciful.

2. That he will be to his persecutors a God of vengeance. His expectation of this he expresses partly by way of prediction, and partly by way of petition, which come all to one; for his prayer that it might be so, amounts to a prophecy that it shall be so. Here are several things which he foretells concerning his enemies, or observers, that sought occasions against him, and opportunity to do him a mischief; in all which he should see his desire, not a passionate or revengeful desire, but a believing desire, upon them, v. 10. (1.) He foresees that God would expose them to scorn, as they had indeed made themselves ridiculous; (v. 8.) "They think God does not hear them, does not heed them; but thou, O Lord, shalt laugh at them for their folly, to think that he who planted the car, shall not hear, and thou shalt have not them only for sinners, but other such henchmen people that live without God in the earth;" (v. 8.) Note, Atheists and persecutors are worthy to be laughed at, and had in derision. See Ps. ii. Prov. i. 26. Isa. xxxvii. 22.

(2.) That God would make them standing monuments of his justice; (v. 11.) Slay them not; let them not be killed outright, lest my people forget. If the execution be soon done, the impressions of it will not be deep, and therefore will not be durable, but will quickly pass away, and be forgotten. Those men for the present, but they are soon forgotten; for which reason he prays that this might be gradual, "Scatter them by thy power, and let them carry about with them, in their wanderings, such tokens of God's displeasure as may spread the notice of their punishment to all parts of the country." Thus Cain himself, though a murderer, was not slain, lest the vengeance should be forgotten, but was sentenced to be a fugitive and a vagabond. Note, When we think God's judgments come slowly upon sinners, we must conclude that God has wise and holy ends in the gradual proceedings of his wrath. "So scatter them, as that they may never again unite to do mischief, bring them down, O Lord, our Shield." If God has undertaken the protection of his people as their Shield, he will, doubtless, humble and absolve all those that fight against them out.

(3.) That they might be dealt with according to their deserts; (v. 12.) For the sin of their mouth, even for the words of their lips; (for every word they speak his sin in it,) let them for this be taken in their pride, even for their cursing others, and themselves, (a sin Saul was subject to, 1 Sam. xiv. 28, 44.) and lying. Note, [1.] There is a great deal of malignity in tongue-sins, more than is commonly thought of. [2.] Cursing, and lying, and speaking proudly, are some of the worst of the sins of the tongue; and that man is truly miserable whom God deals with according to the deserts of these, making his own tongue to fall on him.

(4.) That God would glorify himself, as Israel's God and King, in their destruction; (v. 13.) "Consume them in wrath, consume them; follow them with one judgment after another, till they be utterly ruined, let them be insensible, but gradually, wasted that they themselves, while they are in the consuming, may know, and that the standers-by may likewise draw this inference from it, That God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth." Saul and his party think to rule and carry all before.
them, but they shall be made to know that there is a Higher than they; that there is one who does not see the good for evil. The design of God's judgments is to convince men that the Lord reigns, that he fulfils his own counsels, gives law to all the creatures, and disposes all things to his own glory, so that the greatest of men are under his check, and he makes what use he pleases of them. He rules in Jacob, for there he keeps his court, there he is known, and his name is great; but he rules to the end of the earth; for all nations are without the stories of his kingdom. He is the king of the ends of the earth, even over those that know him not, but he rules for Jacob; so it may be read; he has an eye to the good of his church in the government of the world; the administrations of that government, even to the ends of the earth, are for Jacob his servant's sake, and for Israel's his elect, Isa. xiv. 4.

(5.) That he would make their sin their punishment; (v. 14.) and v. 6. Their sin was, hunting for David, to make a prey of him; their punishment should be, that they should be reduced to such extreme poverty, that they should hunt about for meat to satisfy their hunger, and should miss of it, as they missed of David. Thus they should be, not cut off at once, but scattered, (v. 11.) and gradually consumed; (v. 15.) they that die by famine die by inches, and feel themselves die, Lam. iv. 9. He foretells, that they should hunger and thirst. To beg their bread from door to door. [1.] That they should do it with the greatest regret and reluctancy imaginable; to beg they are ashamed, (which makes it the greater punishment to them,) and therefore they do it at evening, when it begins to be dark, that they may not be seen; at the time when other beasts of prey creep forth, civ. 20. [2.] That yet they should be very clamorous and loud in their complaints, which would proceed from a great indignation at their condition, which they cannot in the least degree reconcile themselves to; They shall make a noise like a dog. When they were in quest of David, they made a noise like an angry dog snarling and barking; now, when they are in quest of meat, they shall make a noise like an hungry dog howling and wailing. Those that repent of their sins, mourn, when in trouble, like doves; those whose hearts are hardened, make a noise, when in trouble, like dogs; Prov. vi. 27. and seek for the face of the Lord, See Hos. vii. 14. They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled in their beds for corn and wine. [3.] That they should meet with little relief, but the hearts of people should be very much hardened toward them; so that they should go round about the city, and wander up and down for meat, (v. 15.) and should get nothing but by dint of importunity, according to our marginal reading, If they be not satisfied, they will cry with a loud voice, that what people do give them is not with good-will, but only to be rid of them, lest by their continual coming they weary them. [4.] That they should be instable, which is the greatest misery of all in a poor condition; They are err'dly dogs which can never have enough, (Isa. lvi. 11.) and they grudge if they be not satisfied. A contentious man, if he has not what he would have, yet does not grudge, does not quarrel with Providence, but desires more; so, if that what God is their belly, if that be not filled, and its appetites gratified, fall out both with God and themselves. It is not poverty, but discontent, that makes a man unhappy.

II. He expects to praise God; that God's providence would find him matter for praise, and that God's grace would work in him a heart for praise, v. 16, 17. Observe, v. 1. What he would praise God for. (1.) He would praise his power and his mercy, both should be the subject matter of his song. Power, without mercy, is to be feared; with power, without power, is not what a man can expect much benefit from; but God's power, by which he is able to help us, and his mercy, by which he is inclined to help us, will justly be the everlasting praise of all the saints. (2.) He would praise him, because he had, many a time, and all along, found him his Defence, and his Refuge, in the day of trouble. God brings his people into trouble, that they may experience his power; and, having mercy in protection, and after in punishment, may have occasion to praise him. (3.) He would praise him, because he had still a dependence upon him, and a confidence in him, as his Strength to support him and carry him on in his duty, his Defence to keep him safe from evil, and the God of his mercy to make him happy and easy. He that is all this to us, is certainly worthy of our best affections, praises, and services.

2. How he would praise God. (1.) He would sing. As that is a natural expression of joy, so it is an instituted ordinance for the exerting and exciting of holy joy and thankfulness. (2.) He would sing aloud, as one much affected with the glory of God, that was not ashamed to own it, and that desired to affect others with it. He will sing of God's power, but he will sing aloud of his mercy; the consideration of that raises his affections more than anything else. (3.) He would sing aloud in the morning; When his privy was written to be made void, then was God's compassion anew every morning, and therefore it is fit to begin the day with his praises. (4.) He would sing unto God, (v. 17.) to his honour and glory, and with him in his eye. As we must direct our prayers to God, so to him we must direct our praises, and must look up, making melody to the Lord.

PSALM LX.

After many psalms which David penned in a day of distress, this comes, which was calculated for a day of triumph; it was penned after he was settled in the throne upon occasion of an illustrious victory which God blessed his forces with over the Syrians and Edomites; it was when David was in the zenith of his prosperity, and the affairs of his kingdom seem to have been in a better posture than ever they were either before or after. See 2 Sam. viii. 3, 15. 1 Chron. xviii. 3, 12. David, in prosperity, was a devout and loyal subject of God in this psalm, I. He reflects upon the bad state of the public interests, for many years, in which God had been contending with them, v. 1-5. II. He takes notice of the happy issue of things, which he expects, and prays for the deliverance of God's Israel from their enemies, v. 5-11. III. He triumphs in hope of their victories over their enemies, and begun to God to carry them on and complete them, v. 6-12. In singing this psalm, we may have an eye both to the acts of the church, and to the state of our own souls, both which have their struggles.

To the chief musician upon Shushan-eduth, Micham of David, to teach; when he strove with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, when Job returned and smote of Edom in the valley of Salt twelve thousand.

1. 0 GOD, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again. 2. Thou hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it; heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh. 3. Thou hast shown thy people hard things; thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment. 4. Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah. 5. That thy beloved may
be delivered, save with thy right hand, and hear me.

The title gives us an account, 1. Of the general design of the psalm; it is Michtam—David's jewel, and it is to teach. The Levites must teach it to the people, and by it teach them both to trust in God, and to triumph in him; we must in it teach ourselves and one another. In a day of public rejoicing, we have need to be taught to do this joy of the Lord, and to terminate it in him, to give none of that praise to the meanest of our deliverances which is due to him only, and to encourage our hopes with our joys. 2. Of the particular occasion of it: It was at a time, (1.) When he was at war with the Syrians, and still had a conflict with them, both those of Mesopotamia, and those of Zobah. (2.) When he had gained a great victory over the Edomites, by his forces under the command of Joab, who had left 12,000 of the enemy dead upon the spot. He had an eye to both these concerns, in this psalm: he is in care about his strife with the Assyrians, and, in reference to that, he prays; he is rejoicing in his success against the Edomites, and, in reference to that, he triumphs with a holy confidence in God, that he would complete the victory. We have our cares, at the same time that we have our joys, and they may serve for a balance to each other, that neither may exceed. They may likewise furnish us with matter both for prayer and praise, for both must be laid, before God with suitable affections and devotions. If one point be gained, yet in another we are still striving; the Edomites are vanquished, but the Syrians are not; therefore let not him that girds on the harness, boast as if he had put it off.

In these verses, which begin the psalm, we have, 1. A melancholy memorial of the many disgraces and disappointments which God had, for some years past, put the people under. During the reign of Saul, especially in the latter end of it, and during David's struggle with the House of Saul, while he reigned over Judah only, the affairs of the kingdom were much perplexed, and the neighbouring nations were vexatious to them. 1. He complains of hard things which they had seen, which they had suffered, (v. 3.) while the Philistines and other ill-disposed neighbours took all advantages against them. God sometimes shows even his own people hard things in this world, that they may be refined by their trials. God may yield us grace in that case in him only. He owns God's displeasure to be the cause of all the hardships they had undergone; "Thou hast been displeased by us, displeased against us, (v. 1.) and in thy displeasure hast cast us off, and scattered us, hast put us out of thy protection; else our enemies could not have prevailed thus against us. They had never made a prey of us, if thou hadst not broken the staff of bands, (Zech. xi. 14.) by which we were united, and so scattered us." Whatever our trouble is, and whoever are the instruments of it, we must own the hand of God, his righteous hand, in it. 3. He laments the ill effects and consequences of the miscarriages of the late years. The whole nation was in a confusion; Thou hast made the earth to tremble, or the land. The generality of the people had dreadfull apprehension of the issue of these things: the good people themselves were in a consternation; they had "no drink to drink the abhorrable banquet;" we were like men intoxicated, and at our wit's end, not knowing how to reconcile these dispensations with God's promises and his relation to his people; we are amazed, can do nothing, nor know what we to do." Now this is mentioned here, to teach, that is, for the instruction of the people. When God is turning his hand in our favours, it is good to remember our former calamities. (1.) That we may retain the good impressions they made upon us, and may have them revived. Our souls must still have the afflication and the misery in remembrance, that they may be humbled within us, Lam. iii. 19, 20. (2.) That God's goodness to us, in relieving and raising us up, may be more magnified; for it is as life from the dead, so strange, so refreshing. Our calamities serve as foils to our joys. (3.) That we may not be secure, but may always regard our hopes. In these things, how soon we may be returned into the furnace again, which we were lately taken out of, as the silver is when it is not thoroughly refined.

II. A thankful notice of the encouragement God had given them to hope, that, though things had been long bad, they would now begin to mend; (v. 4.) "Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, (for, as bad as the times are, there is a remnant among us that do fear thee—by name, for God, and which thou hast a tender concern,) that it may be displayed by thee, because of the truth of thy promise which thou wilt perform, and to be displayed by them, in defence of truth and equity," xlv. 4. This banner was David's government, the establishment and enlargement of it over all Israel; the pious Israelites, who feared God, and had a regard to the divine designation of David to the throne, took his elevation as a token for good, and liked the David of God. It united them, as soldiers are gathered together to their colours; they that were scattered, (v. 1.) divided among themselves, and so, weakened and exposed, coalesced in him, when he was fixed upon the throne. 2. It animated them, and put life and courage into them, as the soldiers are heartened by the sight of their banner. 3. It struck a terror upon their enemies, to whom they could now hang out a flag of defiance. Christ, the Son of David, is given a banner to the end of the days. (Isa. xl. 9.) for a Banner to those that fear God; in him, as the Centre of their unity, they are gathered together in one; to him they seek, in him they glory and take courage; his love is the banner over them, in his name and strength they wage war with the powers of darkness, and under him the church becomes terrible as an army with banners.

III. An humble petition for seasonable mercy. 1. That God would be reconciled to them, though he had broken the staff of bands, and scattered them. In his displeasure their calamities began, and therefore in his favour their prosperity must begin; O turn thyself to us again; (v. 1.) smile upon us, and take part with us; be at peace with us, and in that peace we shall have peace. Tranquillus Deus, tranquillat omnia—A God at peace with us, spreads peace over all the scene. 2. That they might be reconciled to one another, though they had been broken and wretchedly divided among themselves; "Heal the breaches of our land, (v. 2.) not only the breaches made upon us by our enemies, but the breaches made among ourselves by our unhappy divisions." Those are breaches which the folly and corruption of man makes, and which nothing but the wisdom and grace of God can make up and repair, by pouring out a spirit of love and peace, by which only a shaken shattered kingdom is set up to rights, and saved from ruin. 3. That they might be preserved out of the hands of their enemies; (v. 5.) "That thy beloved may be delivered, and not made a prey of, save with thy right hand, with thine own power, and by such instruments as thou art pleased to make the men of thy right hand, and hear me." They that fear God, they are dear to him as the apple of his eye; they are often in distress, but they shall be delivered; God's own right hand shall save them, for they that have his heart have his hand; Save them, and hear me. Note, God's praying people
may take the general deliveries of the church, as answers to their prayers in particular. If we improve what interest we have at the throne of grace for blessings for the public, and those blessings be bestowed, beside the shape we have with them, on the benefit of them, we may each of us say, with peculiar satisfaction, "God has therein heard me, and answered me."

6. God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice: I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. 7. Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of my head; Judah is my lawgiver. 8. Moab is my wash-pot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, triumph thou because of me. 9. Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom? 10. Wilt not thou, O God, which hast cast us off? and thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies? 11. Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man. 12. Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.

David is here rejoicing in hope, and praying in hope; such are the triumphs of the saints, not so much upon the account of what they have in session, as of what they have in prospect; (v. 6.) "God has spoken in his holiness; he has given me his word of promise, has sworn by his holiness, and he will not lie unto David;" (Ixxxix. 35.) therefore I will rejoice, and please myself with the hopes of the performance of the promise, which was intended for more than a pleasing promise." Note, God's word of promise, being a firm foundation of hope, is a full fountain of joy to all believers.

I. David here rejoices; and it is in prospect of two things:

1. The perfecting of this revolution in his own kingdom. God having spoken in his holiness that David shall be king, he doubts not but the kingdom is all his own, as sure as if it were already in his hand; I will divide Shechem, a pleasant city in mount Ephraim, and mete out the valley of Succoth, as my own; (v. 7.) Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine, and both entirely reduced. Ephraim would furnish him with soldiers for his life-guards and his standing forces, Judah would furnish him with able judges for his courts of justice; and thus Ephraim would be the strength of his head, and Judah his lawgiver. Thus may an active believer triumph in the promises, and take the comfort of all the good contained in them; for they are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus, who has spoken in his holiness, and then pardoned in mine, paid the days of mine, heaven mine, God himself mine; All is yours, for you are Christ's, 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.

2. The conquering of the neighbouring nations, which had been vexatious to Israel, were still dangerous, and opposed the throne of David, v. 8. Moab shall be enslaved, and put to the utmost drudgery; The Meabites became David's servants, 2 Sam. viii. 14. It is part of David's own, which was signified by drawing off his shoe over it, Ruth iv. 7. As for the Philistines, let them, if they dare, triumph over him as they had done; he will soon force them to change their note: rather let those that know their own interest, triumph because of him; for it would be the greatest kindness imaginable to them, to be brought into subjection to David, and communion with Israel.

But the war is not yet brought to an end; there is a strong city, Rabbah (perhaps) of the children of Ammon, which yet holds out; Edom is not yet subdued. Now, (1.) David is here inquiring for help to carry on the war; Who will bring me into the strong city? What shall I do, since I cannot depend upon, to make me master of the enemies' country, and their strong holds? They that have begun a good work, cannot but desire to make a thorough work of it, and to bring it to perfection. (2.) He is expecting it from God only; "Wilt not thou, O God? For thou hast spoken in thine holiness; and wilt not thou be as good as thy word?" He takes notice of the favours of Providence they had been under, Thy hand was already powerful; what shall we do now? let us not go forth with our armies; when they were defeated and met with disappointments, they owned it was because they wanted, that is, because they had forfeited, the gracious presence of God with them; yet they do not therefore fly from him, but rather take so much the faster hold of him; and the less he has done for them of late, the more they hoped he would do. At the same time that they own God's justice in what was past, they hewed in his mercy what was to come. Though thou hast cast us off, yet thou wilt not contend with ever, thou wilt not always chide; though thou hast cast us off; yet thou hast begun to show mercy; and wilt thou not perfect what thou hast begun?" The Son of David, in his sufferings, seemed to be cast off by his Father, when he cried out, Why hast thou forsaken me? And yet, even then, he obtained a glorious victory over the powers of darkness and their strong city, a victory which will undoubtedly be completed at last, for he is gone forth conquering and to conquer. The Israel of God, his spiritual Israel, are likewise through him, more than conquerors. Though sometimes they may be tempted to think that God has cast them off, and may be foiled in particular conflicts, yet God will bring them into the strong city at last; Vincimus in praelio, sed non in bello—We are foiled in a battle, but not in the whole war. A lively faith in the promise will assure us, not only that the God of peace shall tread Satan under our feet shortly, but that it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom.

II. He prays in hope. His prayer is, Give us help from trouble, v. 11. Even in the day of their triumph, they see themselves in trouble, because still in war, which is troublesome even to the prevailing side. None, therefore, can delight in war, but those that love to fish in troubled waters. The help from trouble they pray for, is preserving them, those were at war with. Though now they were conquerors, yet, (so uncertain are the issues of war,) unless God gave them help in the next engagement, they might be defeated; therefore, Lord, send us help from the sanctuary. Help from trouble is rest from war, which they prayed for, as those that contended for equity, not for victory, Sic querimus facere, Thus we seek for peace.

The hope with which they themselves, in this prayer, has two things in it. 1. A deficiency of themselves, and all their creature-confidence; Vain is the help of man. Then only are we qualified to receive help from God, when we are brought to own the insufficiency of all creatures to do that for us which we expect him to do. 2. A confidence in God, and in his power and promise; (v. 12.) Wilt thou not, O God, do with us after all things? If we are to do victoriously; for he it is, and he only, that shall tread down our enemies, and shall have the praise of it." Note, (1.) Our confidence in God must be so far from superseding, that it must encourage and quicken, our endeavours in the way of our duty. "I thought it is God that performs all things for us, yet there is something to be done by us.
Psalms, LXI.

David, in this psalm, as in many others, begins with a sad heart, but concludes with an air of pleasantness; begins with prayers and tears, but ends with songs of praise. Thus the soul, by being lifted up to God, returns to the enjoyment of itself. It should seem, David was driven out and banished when he penned this psalm, whether by Saul or Absalom is uncertain; some think by Abasalom, because he calls himself the king; (v. 6) but that refers to the King Messiah. David, in this psalm, resolves to persevere in his duty, encouraged thereto both by his experience of God's power and by his expectations. 1. He will call upon God, because God had protected him, v. 1-3. II. He will call upon God, because God had provided well for him, v. 4, 5. III. He will praise God, because he had an assurance of the coming of God's kingdom; v. 6-8. So that, in singing this psalm, we may find that which is very expressive both of our faith and of our hope, of our prayers and of our praises; and some passages in this psalm are very peculiar.

To the chief musician upon Neginah. A psalm of David.

1. Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. 2. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the Rock that is higher than I. 3. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. 4. I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever; I will trust in the covert of thy wings. Selah.

In these verses, we may observe, 1. David's close adherence and application to God by prayer in the day of his distress and trouble; "Whatever comes, I will cry unto thee;" (v. 2) not cry to other gods, but to thee only; not fall out with thee because thou afflictst me, but still look unto thee, and wait upon thee; not speak to thee in a cold and careless manner, but cry to thee with the greatest importunity and fervency of spirit, as one that will not let thee go, except thou bless me." This he will do, (1.) Notwithstanding his distance from the sanctuary, the house of prayer, where he used to attend in the court of requests; "From the end of the earth, or of the land, from the remotest and obscure corner of the country, will I cry unto thee." Note, Wherever we are, we may have liberty of access to God, and may go to him by a way open to the throne of grace, Undique ad celos tantundem est vice—Heaven is equally accessible from all places. "Nay, because I am here in the end of the earth, in sorrow and solitude, therefore I will cry unto thee." Note, That which separates us from our other comforts, should drive us so much the nearer to God, the Fountain of all comfort. (2.) Notwithstanding the dejection and despondency of his spirit; "Though my heart is overburdened, it is not sunk, so swollen, but that it may overflow up to God in prayer; if it is not capable of being thus raised, it is certainly too much cast down." Nay, because my heart is ready to be overwhelmed, therefore I will cry unto thee, for thereby it will be supported and relieved." Note, Weeping must quicken praying, and not deaden it. Is any afflicted? let him pray. Jam. v. 13. Ps. cii. title.

2. The particular petition he put up to God, when his heart was overwhelmed, and he was ready to sink; Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I; that is, (1.) "To the Rock which is too high for me; (2.) To get up to, unless thou help me to it. Lord, give me such an assurance and satisfaction of my own safety as I can never attain to but by thy special grace working such a faith in me." (2.) "To the Rock on the top of which I shall be set further out of the reach of my troubles, and nearer the serene and quiet region, than I can by any power or wisdom of my own." God's power and promise are a rock that is higher than we; those are safe that are in him. We cannot get upon this rock, unless God by his power assist us; I will put thee in the chief of the rock, Exod. xxxiii. 22. We should, therefore, by faith and prayer, put ourselves under the divine conduct, that we may be taken under the divine direction.

3. His desire and expectation of an answer of peace. He begs in faith; (v. 1.) "Hear my cry, O God, attend unto my prayer; let me have the pre- sent comfort and knowing that I am heard, (xx. 6.) and in due time let me have that which I pray for." 4. The ground of this expectation, and the plea he uses to enforce his petition; (v. 3.) "Thou hast been a Shelter for me, I have found in thee a Rock higher than I; therefore I trust thou wilt still lead me to that Rock." Note, Past experiences of the benefit of trusting in God, as they should engage us still to keep close to him, so they should encourage us to hope that it will not baffle our desire. "Thou hast been my strong Tower from the enemy, and thou art as strong as ever, and thy name as much a refuge to the righteous as ever it was," Prov. xviii. 10.

5. His resolution to continue in the way of duty to God, and dependence on him, v. 4. (1.) The service of God shall be his constant work and business: all those must make it so, who expect to find God their Shelter and Strong Tower; none but his most faithful servants have the benefit of his protection; I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever. David was now banished from the tabernacle, which was his greatest grievance; but he is assured that God, by his providence, would bring him back to his tabernacle, because he had, by his grace, wrought in him such a kindness for his tabernacle, as that he was resolved to make it his perpetual residence, xxvii. 4. He speaks of abiding in it for ever, because the tabernacle was a type and figure of heaven, Heb. ix. 8, 9, 24. Those that dwell in God's tabernacle, as it is a house of duty, during their short ever on earth, shall dwell in that tabernacle which is the house of glory, during an endless ever. (2.) The grace of God and the covenant of peace shall be his constant comfort; I will make my refuge in the covert of his wings, as the chickens seek both warmth and safety under the wings of the hen. Those that have found God a Shelter to them, ought to trust to him in all their straits. This advantage they have that abide in God's tabernacle, that in the time of trouble he shall there hide them.

5. For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name. 6. Thou wilt prolong the king's life; and his years as many generations. 7. He shall abide before God for ever: O prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him. 8. So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows.
In these verses, we may observe,
1. With what pleasure David looks back upon what God had done for him formerly; (v. 5.) Thou, O God, hast heard my vows, that is, (1.) "The vows themselves which I made, and with which I bound my soul; thou hast taken notice of them; thou hast accepted them, because made in sincerity, and been well pleased with them; thou hast been mindful of them, and put me in mind of the same every day."
2. With what assurance he looks forward to the continuance of his life; (v. 6.) Thou shalt prolong the king's life. This may be understood, either, (1.) Of himself; if it was penned before he came to the crown, yet, being anointing by Samuel, and knowing what was in the hearts of men, both in his father's, and other's, he might assure himself, God would call himself the king, though now persecuted as an outlaw; or, perhaps, it was penned when Absalom sought to dethrone him, and forced him into exile. There were these arts aimed to shorten his life, but he trusted to God to prolong his life, which he did to the age of man set by Moses, that is, 70 years; which, being spent in serving his generation according to the will of God, (Acts xiii. 36.) might be reckoned as many generations, because many generations would be the better for him. His resolution was, to abide in God's tabernacle for ever, (v. 4.) in a way of duty; and now his hope is, that he shall abide before God for ever, in a way of comfort. Those abide to good purpose in this world that abide before God; that serve him, and walk in his fear; and they that do so shall abide before him for ever. He speaks of himself in the third person, because the psalm was delivered to the chief musician for the use of the church, and he would have the people, in singing it, to be encouraged with an assurance, that, notwithstanding the malice of his enemies, their king, as they wished, should live for ever. Or, (2.) Of the Messiah, the King of whom he was a type; it was a comfort to David to think, whatever became of him, that the years of the Lord's Anointed should be as many generations, and that of the increase of his government and peace, there should be no end. The Mediator shall abide before God for ever, for he always appears in the presence of God for us, and ever lives, making intercession; and because he lives, we shall live also.
3. With what importunity he begs of God to take him and keep him always under his protection; O prepare mercy and truth which may preserve him God's promises, and our faith in them, are not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage, prayer. David is sure that God will prolong his life, and therefore prays that he would preserve it. Not that he would provide mercy and truth for himself, but that God would provide for his safety, according to the promise. We need not desire to be better secured than under the protection of God's mercy and truth. This may be applied to the Messiah; Let him be sent in the fulness of time, in performance of the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, Micah viii. 20. Luke i. 72, 73.
4. With what cheerfulness he vows the grateful returns of duty to God; (v. 8.) So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever. Note, God's preservation of us calls upon us to praise him; and therefore we should desire to live, that we may praise him; Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee. We must make praising God the work of our time, even to the last, as long as our lives are prolonged, we must continue praising God; and then it shall be made the work of our eternity, and we shall be praising him for ever; that I may daily perform my vows. His praising God was itself the performance of his vows, and it disposed his heart to the performance of his vows in other instances. Note, (1.) The vows we have made we must conscientiously perform. (2.) Praising God, and paying our vows to him, must be our constant daily work; every day we must be doing something towards it, because it is all but little in comparison with what is to be done in eternity. We daily receive fresh mercies, and because, if we think much to do it daily, we cannot expect to be doing it eternally.

PSALM LXII.

This psalm has nothing in it directly either of prayer or praise, nor does it appear upon what occasion it was penned, nor whether upon any particular occasion, whether mournful or joyful. But in it, I, David, with a great deal of pleasure, expressed my own confidence in God, and dependence upon him, and encourages himself to continue waiting on him, v. 1.-7. II. With a great deal of earnestness, he excites and encourages others to trust in God like himself; no, not in mere word, but in practise, v. 8. 12. In singing it, we should stir up ourselves to wait on God.

To the chief musician, to Jeduthun. A psalm of David.

1. TRULY my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation. 2. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence: I shall not be greatly moved. 3. How long will ye imagine mischief against a man? ye shall be slain all of you: as a bowing wall shall ye be, and as a toppling fence. 4. They only consult to cast him down from his excellency; they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah. 5. My soul, wait thou only upon God: for my expectation is from him. 6. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence: I shall not be moved. 7. In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God.

In these verses, we have,
1. David's profession of dependence upon God,
and upon him only, for all good; (v. 1.) Truly my soul waiteth upon God. Nevertheless, (so some), or, "However it be, whatever difficulties or dangers I may meet with, though God be not upon me, and yet I will with all my might, and by all means possible, come to him, as if he were my sure friend and companion, and expectantly had a doubtful event, with an entire satisfaction in his righteousness and goodness, however it be. Is not my soul subject to God? So the LXX. So it is, certainly so ought it to be; our wills must be melted into his will. "My soul has respect to God, for from him cometh my salvation." He doubts not but his salvation will come, though now he was threatened and in danger; and he expects it to come from God, and from him only: it hoped for from hills and mountains, Jer. iii. 23. Ps. cxxxi. 2. "From him I know it will come, and therefore on him will I patiently wait till it does come, for his time is the best time." We may apply it to our eternal salvation, which is called the salvation of God, (i. 23.) from him that comes; he prepared it for us, he prepares us for it, and preserves us to it, and therefore let our souls wait on him, to be conducted through this world to that eternal salvation, in such way as he thinks fit.

II. The ground and reason of this dependence: (v. 2.) He only is my Rock and my Salvation, he is my Defence. 1. "He has been so many a time; in him I have found shelter, and strength, and succour; he has, by his grace, supported me, and borne me up, under my troubles, and, by his providence, defended me from the insults of my enemies, and delivered me out of the troubles into which I was plunged; and therefore I trust he will deliver me," 2 Cor. i. 10. 2. "He only can be my Rock and my Salvation; creatures are insufficient, they are nothing without him, and therefore I will look above them to him." 3. "He has by covenant undertaken to be so. Even he that is the Rock of ages, is my Rock; he that is the God of salvation, is my Salvation; he that is the Most High, is my High Place; and all the confidences I have in him, I have all the reason in the world to confide in him." 

III. The improvement he makes of his confidence in God.
1. Trusting in God, his heart is fixed. "If God is my Strength and mighty Deliverer, I shall not be greatly mov'd, I shall not be undone and ruined; I may be shaken, but I shall not be sunk." Or, "I shall not be much disturb'd and disquieted in my heart or breast. I may be put into some fright, but I shall not be afraid with any amazement, nor so as to be put out of the possession of my own soul. I may be perplexed, but not in despair," 2 Cor. iv. 8. This hope in God will be an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast.
2. His enemies are slighted, and all their attempts against him looked upon by him with contempt, v. 3, 4. If God be for us, we need not fear what man can do against us. I will not be mov'd, nor be mis'd and malis'cous. Hither: (1.) Gives a character of his enemies. They imagine mischief, design it with a great deal of the serpent's venom, and contrive it with a great deal of the serpent's subtlety, and this against a man, one of their own kind, against one single man, that is not an equal match for them, for they are many; they continued their malicious prosecution, though Providence often defeated their malicious designs. How long will ye do it? will ye never be convinced of your error? will your malice never have spent itself? They are unanimous in their consultations, to cast an excellent man down from his excellency, as by best man from his in legitimy, to entangle him in such a manner, that the only thing that can effectually cast us down from our excellency; to thrust a man, whom God has exalted, down from his dignity, and so to fight against God. Envy was at the bottom of their malice; they were grieved at David's advancement, and therefore plotted, by diminishing his character, and blackening that, (which was casting him down from his excellency,) to hinder his promotion. In order to this, they calumny him, and love to heap up bad characters given of him, and such bad reports raised and spread concerning him, as they themselves know to be false; they delight in lies. And as they make no conscience of lying concerning him, to do him a mischief, so they make no conscience of lying to him, to conceal the mischief they design, and accomplish it the more effectually; they bless with their mouth, they compliment David to his face, but they curse inwardly; in their hearts they wish him all mischief, and privately are plotting against him, and in their cabals carrying on some evil design or other, by which they hope to ruin him; it is dangerous putting our trust in men who are thus false; but God is faithful. (2.) He reads their doom, pronounces a sentence of death upon them, not as a king, but as a prophet; Ye shall be slain, all of you, by the righteous judgments of God. Soul and his servants were slain by the Philistines on mount Gileon, according to this prediction; those who seek the ruin of God's chosen, are but preparing ruin for themselves. God's church is built upon a rock which will stand; but they that fight against it, and its patrons and protectors, shall be as a bowing wall and a tottering fence, which, having a rotten foundation, sinks with its own weight, falls of a sudden, and buries those in the ruins of it that are but themselves under the shadow and shelter of it. David, having put his confidence in God, therefore foresees the over throw of his enemies, and, in effect, sets them at defiance, and bids them do their worst.
3. He is himself encouraged to continue waiting upon God; (v. 5, 6.) My soul, wait thou only upon God. Note, The good we do, we should stir up ourselves to continue doing, and to do yet more and more, as those that have, through grace, experienced the fit of it. We have found it good to wait upon God, and therefore let us continue to continue, to charge our souls, and even charm them, into such a constant dependence upon him, as may make us always easy. He had said, (v. 1.) From him cometh my salvation; he says, (v. 5.) My expectation is from him. His salvation was the principal matter of his expectation; let him have that from God, and he expects no more. His salvation being from God, all his other expectations are from him. If God will save me, I shall not demand much more; if he will grant me what he pleases with me, and I will acquiesce in his dispositions, knowing they shall all turn to my salvation," Phil. i. 19. He repeats (v. 6.) what he had said concerning God, (v. 2.) as one that was not only assured of it, but greatly pleased with it, and that dwelt much upon it, in his thoughts: He only is my Rock and my Salvation, he is my Defence, I know he is; but there is more, I shall not be greatly mov'd; I shall not be, I shall be more than highly mov'd; more faith is acted, the more active it is; Crescit eundo—It grows by being exercised. The more we meditate upon God's attributes and promises, and our own experience, the more ground we get of our fears, which, like Haman, when they begin to fall, shall fall before us, and we shall be kept in perfect peace, Isa. xxxvi. 3. And as David's faith in God advances to an unshaken stayedness, so his joy in
God improves itself into a holy triumph; (v. 7.) In God is my salvation and my glory. Where our salvation is, there our glory is; for what is our salvation, but the glory to be revealed; the eternal weight of glory: And there our glorying must be.

In God let us boast all the day long. "The rock of my strength, my strong rock, on which I build my hopes, and stay myself, and my refuge, to which I flee for shelter when I am pursued, is in God, and in him alone: Upon whom two things I place my trust to; the more I think of it, the better satisfied I am in the choice I have made." Thus does he delight himself in the Lord, and then ride upon the high places of the earth, Is. Ixviii. 14.

8. Trust in him at all times, ye people; pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah. 9. Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity. 10. Trust not in oppression, become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them. 11. God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God. 12. Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work.

Here we have David's exhortation to others to trust in God, and wait upon him, as he had done. Those that have found the comfort of the ways of God themselves, will invite others into those ways; there is enough in God for all the saints to draw from, and we shall have never the less for others sharing the same in us.

I. He counsels all to wait upon God, as he did, v. 8. Observe, 1. To whom he gives this good counsel, Ye people, that is, All people; all shall be welcome to trust in God, for he is the Confidence of all the ends of the earth, Is. Ixv. 5. Ye people of the house of Israel; (so the Chaldees,) they are especially engaged and invited to trust in God, for he is the God of Israel; and should be received as such by all the other nations of the earth. 2. What the good counsel is which he gives. (1.) To confide in God; "Trust in him; deal with him, and be willing to deal upon trust; depend upon him to perform all things for you, upon his wisdom and goodness, his power and promise, his providence and grace. Do this at all times. We must have an habitual confidence in God always, must live a life of dependence upon him; must so trust in him at all times, as not at any time to put that confidence in ourselves, or in any creature, which is to be put in him only: and we must have an actual confidence in God upon all occasions; trust in him upon every emergency, to guide us when we are in doubt, to protect us when we are in danger, to supply us when we are in want, to strengthen us for every good work and work. (2.) To converse with God; Pour out your heart before him; the expression seems to allude to the pouring out of our faults and besetting sins before the Lord. When we make a penitent confession of sin, our hearts are therein poured out before God, 1 Sam. vii. 6. But here it is meant of prayer, which, if it be as it should be, is, the pouring out of the heart before God. We must lay our grievances before him, offer up our desires to him with all humble freedom, and then entirely refer ourselves to his disposal, patiently submitting our wills to his: this is pouring out our hearts.

What encouragement he gives us to take this good counsel, God is a Refuge for us; not only my Refuge, (v. 7.) but a Refuge for us all, even as many as will flee to him, and take shelter in him.

II. He cautions us to take heed of misplacing our confidence, in which, as much as in any thing the heart is deceitful, Jer. xvii. 5-9. They that trust in God truly, (v. 1.) will trust in him only, v. 5.

1. Let us not trust in the men of this world, for they are broken reeds; (v. 9.) Surely men of low degree are vanity, utterly unable to help us, and more often than not to be a snare to us, that we cannot trust to. Men of low degree, one would think, might be relied on for their multitude and number, their bodily strength and service; and men of high degree, for their wisdom, power, and influence: but men of neither degree are to be depended on; nay, of the two, men of high degree are mentioned in terms more disparaging; for they are liars, which do not only vanity, but iniquity. We are not so apt to depend upon men of low degree, as upon the king and the captain of the host, who, by the figure they make, tempt us to trust in them, and so, when they fail us, prove a lie. But, lay them in the balance, the balance of the scripture, or, rather, make trial of them, see how they will prove, whether they will answer your expectations from them or no, and you will write them down as liars, which do not only vanity, but iniquity.

2. Let us not trust in the wealth of this world, let not that be made our strong city; (v. 10.) Trust not in oppression, riches got by fraud and violence; because, where there is a great deal, it is commonly got by indirect scraping or saving; our Saviour calls it the mammon of iniquity, Luke xvi. 9. "Trust not in the arts of getting more. Think not, either because you have got abundance, or are in the way of getting, that therefore you are safe enough; for this is becoming vain in robbery, cheating yourselves while you think to cheat others."

He that trusted in the abundance of his riches, strengthened himself in his wickedness; (v. 7.) but, at the end, he will be a fool, Jer. xvii. 11. Let none be so stupid as to think they can support themselves in any degree of support from riches in this sin. Nay, because it is hard to have riches, and not to trust in them, if they increase, though by lawful and honest means, we must take heed lest we let out our affections inordinately toward them; "Set not your heart upon them; be not eager for them, do not take a complacency in them as the rest of your souls, nor put a confidence in them as your portion; be not ever-solicitous about them, do not value yourselves and others by them; make not the wealth of the world your chief good and highest end; in short, do not make an idol of it." This we are most in danger of doing when they increase; when the grounds of the rich man brought forth plentifully, then he said to his soul, Take thine ease in these things, Luke xii. 19. It is a smiling world that is most likely to draw the heart away from God, on whom only it should be set.

III. He gives a very good reason why we should make God our Confidence, because he is a God of infinite power, mercy, and righteousness, v. 11, 12.

This he himself was well assured of, and would have us be assured of it. God has spoken once, twice have I heard this, that is, 1. "God has spoken it, and I have heard it, once, yea twice. He has spoken it, and I have heard it by the light of reason, which easily infers it from the infinite, perfect Being, and from his works both of creation and providence. He has spoken it, and I have heard it, once, yea twice, that is, many a time, by the events that have concerned me in particular.
A psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

1. O GOD, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; 2. To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

The title tells us when the psalm was penned, when David was in the wilderness of Judah; that is, in the forest of Hareth, 1 Sam. xxii. 5. Or, in the wilderness of Ziph, 1 Sam. xxiii. 15. 1. Even in Canaan, though a fruitful land, and the people numerous, yet there were wildernesses, places less fruitful, and less inhabited, than other places. It will be so in the world, in the church, but not in heaven; there it is all city, all paradise, and no desert ground; the wilderness there shall blossom as the rose. 2. The best and dearest of God's saints and servants may sometimes have their lot cast in a wilderness, which speaks them lonely and solitary, desolate and afflicted, wanting wandering, and unsettled, and quite at a loss what to do with themselves. 3. None of the straits and difficulties of a wilderness may be put out of mind, as out of tune for sacred songs; but even then it is our duty and interest to keep up a cheerful communion with God. There are psalms proper for a wilderness, and we have reason to thank God that it is the wilderness of Judah we are in, not the wilderness of Sin.

David, in these verses, stirst up himself to take hold on God,

I. By a lively active faith; O God, thou art my God. Note, In all our addresses to God, we must eye him as God, and cur God, and this will be our comfort in a wilderness-state. We must acknowledge that God is, that we speak to one that really exists, and is present with us, when we say, O God, which is a serious word; pitly it should ever be used as a by-word. And we must own his authority over us, and propriety in us, and our relation to him; Thou art my God, mine by creation, and therefore my rightful Owner and Ruler, mine by covenant, and my own consent. We must speak it with the greatest pleasure to ourselves, and thankfulness to God, as those that are resolved to abide by it; O God, thou art my God.

II. By pious and devout affections, pursuant to the choice he had made of God, and the covenant he had made with him.

1. He resolves to seek God, and his favour and grace. Thou art my God, and therefore I will seek thee, for, should not a people seek unto their God? Isa. viii. 19. We must seek him; we must covet his favour as our chief good, and consult his glory as our highest end; we must seek acquaintance with him by his word, and seek mercy from him by prayer. We must seek him, (1.) Early, with the utmost care, as those that are afraid of missing him; we must begin our days with him, begin every day with him; EARLY will I seek thee. (2.) Earnestly, "My soul thirsteth for thee, and my flesh longeth for thee; my whole man is affected with this pursuit, here in a dry and thirsty land." Observe, [1.] His complaint in the want of God's favourable presence. He was in a dry and thirsty land; so he reckoned it, as so much because it was a wilderness, as because it was at a distance from the ark, from the word and sacraments. This world is a weary land, so the word is; it is so to the worldly that have their portion in it, it will yield them no true satisfaction; it is so to the godly that have their passage through it, it is a valley of Baca, they can promise themselves little from it. [2.] His importunity for

PSALMS, LXIII.

This psalm has in it as much of warmth and lively devotion, as any of David's psalms. In so little space, the sweetest of Paul's epistles were those that bore date out of a prison, so some of the sweetest of David's psalms were those that were penned, as this was, in a wilderness. That which grieved him most in his banishment was, the want of public ordinances; these he here longs to be restored to the enjoyment of; and the present want did but whet his appetite. Yet it is not the ordinances, but the God of the ordinances, that his heart is upon. And here are, 1. His desire toward God, v. 1, 2. His esteem of God, v. 3, 4. His satisfaction in God, v. 5, 6. His secret communion with God, v. 6, 7. His joyful dependence upon God, v. 7, 8. VI. His holy triumph in God over his enemies, and in the assurance of his own safety, v. 9, 11. A devout and pious soul has little need of direction how to sing this psalm, so naturally does it speak its own genuine language; and an unsanctified soul, that is unenlightened and unadorned with divine things, is scarcely capable of singing it with understanding.
that presence of God; My soul thirsteth, longeth, for thee. His want quenched his desires, which were very intense; he thirsted as the hunted hart for the water-brooks; he would take up with nothing short of it. His desires were also impulsive; he longed, he languished, till he should be restored to the liberty of God's ordinances. Note, Gracious souls are as much in their outward circumstances as if they were in the tabernacle; to see it in secret, as I have seen it in the solemn assembly. Note, When we want the benefit of public ordinances, we should desire and endeavour to keep up the same communion with God in our retirements, that we have had in the great congregation. A closet may be turned into a little sanctuary.

Ezekiel had the visions of the Almighty in Babylon, and John, in the isle of Patmos. When we are alone, we may have the Father with us, and that is enough.

To see thy power, and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. That is, (1.) To see it here in this wilderness, as I have seen it in the tabernacle; to see it in secret, as I have seen it in the solemn assembly." Note, When we want the benefit of public ordinances, we should desire and endeavour to keep up the same communion with God in our retirements, that we have had in the great congregation. A closet may be turned into a little sanctuary.

Ezekiel had the visions of the Almighty in Babylon, and John, in the isle of Patmos. When we are alone, we may have the Father with us, and that is enough.

To see thy power, and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. That is, (2.) To see it again in the sanctuary, as I have formerly seen it there. He长得, he languished, till he should be restored to the liberty of his wilderness, not that he might see his friends again, and be restored to the pleasures and gaieties of the court, but that he might have access to the sanctuary; not to see the priests there, and the ceremony of the worship, but to see thy power and glory; he does not say, as I have seen them, but as I have seen thee. We cannot see the essence of God, but we see him, in seeing by faith his attributes and perfections. These sights David here plea.ses himself with the remembrance of; those were precious minutes which he spent in communion with God, he loved to remember; they made his heart glad, they took away the wilderness, the loss of, and longed to be restored to. Note, That which has been the delight, and is the desire, of gracious souls, in their attendance on solemn ordinances, is, to see God, and his power and glory in them.

3. Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. 4. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. 5. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips; 6. When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches.

How soon are David's complaints and prayers turned into praises and thanksgivings! After two verses that speak his desire in seeking God, here are some that speak his joy and satisfaction in having found him. Faithful prayers may quickly be turned into joyful praises, if it be not our own fault. Let the hearts of those rejoice that seek the Lord, (cv. 3.) and let them praise him for working those desires in them, and giving them assurance that he will satisfy them. David was now in a wilderness, and yet had his heart much enlarged in blessing God. Even in affliction, we need not want matter for praise, if we have but a heart to it. Observe,

1. What David will praise God for; (v. 3.) Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, than life; life, and all the comforts of life; life in its best estate; long life and prosperity. God's loving-kindness is, in itself, and in the account of all the saints, better than life. It is our spiritual life, and that is better than temporal life, xxx. 5. It is better, a thousand times, to die in God's favour, than to live under his wrath. David, in the wilderness, finds, by his own experience, that God's loving-kindness is better than life; and, Therefore (see xxvii. 16.), those lips shall praise thee. Note, Those that have their hearts refreshed with the tokens of God's favour, ought to have them enlarged in his praises. A great deal of reason we have to bless God that we have better provisions, and better possessions, than the wealth of this world can afford us; and that, in the service of God, and in communion with him, we have better employments, and better enjoyments, than we could have in the business and converse of this world.

II. How he will praise God, and how long, v. 4. He resolves to live a life of thankfulness to God, and dependence on him. Observe, 1. His manner of blessing God; Thus will I bless thee; thus, as I have now begun; the present devout affections shall not pass away, like the morning cloud, but shine more and more, like the morning sun. Or, God will have that power, that perseverance and energy with which I have prayed to thee.

2. His continuance and perseverance therein; I will bless thee while I live. Note, Praising God must be the work of our whole lives; we must always retain a grateful sense of his former favours, and repeat our thanksgivings for them; we must every day give thanks to him for the benefits with which we are daily loaded. We must in every thing give thanks; and not be put out of frame for this duty by any of the afflictions of this present time. Whatever days we live to see, how dark and cloudy soever, though the days come, of which we say, We have no pleasure in them, yet still every day must be a thanksgiving day, even to our dying day. In this work we must spend our time, because in this work we hope to spend a blessed eternity. 3. His constant regard to God upon all occasions, which should accompany his praises of him; I will lift up my hands in thy name. We must have an eye to God's name, to all that by which he has made himself known, in all our prayers and praises, which we are taught to begin with, Hallowed be thy name, and to conclude with, Thine is the glory. This we must have an eye to in our work and warfare; we must lift up our hands to our duty, and against our spiritual enemies, in God's name, in the strength of his Spirit and grace, xxxi. 16. Zech. x. 12. We must make all our praises in God's name; to him we must engage ourselves, and in a dependence upon his grace. And when we lift up the hands that hang down, in comfort and joy, it must be in God's name; from him our comforts must be fetched, and to him they must be devoted; In thee do we boast all the day long.

III. With what pleasure and delight he would praise God, v. 5. 1. With inward complacency; We will be satisfied with good; not only as with bread, which is nourishing, but as with marrow, which is pleasant and delicious, Isa. xxxv. 6. David hopes he shall return again to the enjoyment of God's ordinances, and then he shall thus be satisfied, and the more for his having been for a time under restraint. Or, if not, yet in God's loving-kindness, and in conversing with him in solitude, he shall be thus satisfied. Note, There are times of great bearing on the soul, God's mercy in them, which gives abundant satisfaction to a soul, xxxvi. 8.—lxv. 4. And there is that in a gracious soul, which takes abundant satisfaction in God, and communion with him. The saints have a contentment with God, they desire no more than his favour to make them happy; and they have a transcend-
ent complacency in God, in comparison with which all the delights of sense are sapless and without relish; as puddle-water in comparison with the wine of the best vintage. 2. With outward expression of this satisfaction; he will praise God with joyful lips. He will praise him, (1.) Openly; his mouth and lips shall praise God. When with the heart man believes, and is thankful, with the mouth confession must be made of both, to the glory of God; not that the performances of the mouth are accepted without the heart, (Matt. xv. 8.) but out of the abundance of the heart the mouth must speak, (xiv. 1.) both for the expressiveness of our own devout affections and for the edification of others. (2.) Cheerfully. Thus we must praise God with joyful lips; we must address ourselves to that and other duties of religion with great cheerfulness, and speak forth the praises of God from a principle of holy joy. Praising lips must be joyful lips.

IV. How he would entertain himself with thoughts of God when he was most retired; (v. 6.) I will praise thee, when I remember thee upon my bed. We must praise God, upon every remembrance of him. Now that David was shut out from public ordinances, he abounded the more in secret communion with God, and so did something toward making up his loss. Observe here,

1. How David employed himself in thinking of God. God was in all his thoughts, which is the reverse of the wicked man's character; x. 4. The thoughts of God were ready to him; I remember thee; when I go to think, I find thee at my right hand, present to my mind. This subject should first offer itself, as that which we cannot forget or overlook. And they were fixed in him; I meditate on thee. Thoughts of God must not be transient thoughts, passing through the mind, and abiding thoughts, dwelling in the mind.

2. When David employed himself thus; Upon his bed, and in the night-watches. David was now wandering and unsettled, but, wherever he came, he brought his religion along with him. Upon my beds, so some: being hunted by Saul, he sel'dom lay, two nights together, in the same bed; but, wherever he lay, if, as Jacob, upon the cold ground, and with a stone for his pillow, good thoughts of God lay down with him. David was so full of business, all day, shifting for his own safety, that he had scarcely leisure to apply himself solemnly to religious exercises, and therefore it was the more incumbent upon him, during the vigil of his mind, and the necessity of his thoughts, to remember God, may be at ease, and repose themselves. Perhaps an hour's pious meditation will do us more good than an hour's sleep would have done; see xvi. 7. — xvii. 3. — iv. 4. — cxix. 62. There were night-watches kept in the tabernacle for praising God, (cxxxiv. 1.) in which, probably, David, when he had liberty, joined with the Levites, now that he could not keep place with them, he kept time with them, and wished himself among them.

7. Because thou hast been my help: therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. 8. My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me. 9. But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. 10. They shall fall by the sword; they shall be a portion for foxes. 11. But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that swareth by him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

David, having expressed his desires toward God, and his praises of him, here speaks his confidence in him, and his joyful expectations from him; (v. 7.) In the shadow of thy wings I will rejoice; alluding either to the wings of the cherubims, stretched out over the ark of the covenant, between which God is said to dwell; (cf. I will rejoice in thine oracles, and in covenant and communion with thee;) or to the wings of a fowl, under which the helpless young ones have shelter, as the eagle’s young ones, (Exod. xix. 4. Deut. xxxii. 11.) which speaks the divine power; and the young ones of the common hen, (Matt. xxiii. 37.) which speaks more of divine tenderness. It is a phrase often used in the psalms, (xvii. 8. — xxxvi. 7. — lii. 1.—lxxi. 4.—xci. 4.) and no where else in this sense, except Ruth ii. 12. where Ruth, when she became a proselyte, is said to trust under the wings of the God of Israel. It is our duty to rejoice in the shadow of God's wings, which denotes our reception of him by faith and prayer, as naturally as the chickens, when they are cold or frightened, run by instinct under the wings of the hen. It intimates also our reliance upon him as able and ready to help us, and our refreshment and satisfaction in his care and protection. Having committed ourselves to God, we must be easy and pleasant, and quiet from the fear of evil.

Now let us see further.

What were the supports and encouragements of David's confidence in God. Two things were as preps to that hope, which the word of God was the only foundation of.

1. His former experiences of God's power in relieving him; Because thou hast been my Help, when other helps and helpers failed me, therefore: I will still rejoice in thy salvation, will trust in thee for the future, and will do it with delight and holy joy. Thou hast been not only my Helper, but my Help; for where are the gods of the nations, which are the doing, nor could any creature have been helpful to us, but by him. Here we may set up our Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto the Lord has helped us, and must therefore resolve that we will never desert him, never distrust him, nor ever drop in our walking with him.

2. The present sense he had of God's grace carrying him on in these pursuits; (v. 8.) My soul follows hard after thee, which speaks a very earnest desire, and a serious, vigorous, endeavour to keep up communion with God; if we cannot always have God in our embraces, yet we must always have him in our eye, reaching forth toward him as our Prize, Phil. iii. 14. To press hard after God, is to follow him close, as those that are afraid of losing the sight of him, and to follow him fast, as those that long to be with him. This David did, and we were only mad that we were not yet attained what we are in the pursuit of. It is by the power of God, that is, his right hand, that we are kept from falling. Now this was a great encouragement to the psalmist to hope that he would, in due time, give him that which he so earnestly de-
sired, because he had by his grace wrought in them those desires, and kept them up.

II. What it was that David triumphed in the hopes of.

1. That his enemies should be ruined, v. 9, 10. There were those that sought his soul to destroy it; not only his life (which he struck at, both to prevent his coming to the crown, and because they envied and hated him for his wisdom, piety, and usefulness,) but his soul, which they sought to destroy by banishing him from God's ordinances, which are the nourishment and support of the soul, so doing what they could to starve it; and, by sending him to serve other gods, so, doing what they could to poison it, 1 Sam. xxxvi. 19. But he foresees, and foretells, (1.) That they shall fall into the lower part of the earth; to the grave, to hell; their enmity to David would be their death and their damnation; their ruin, their eternal ruin. (2.) That they shall fall by the sword; by the sword of God's wrath and his justice; by the sword of man, Job xix. 28, 29. They shall die a violent death, Rev. xiii. 10. This was fulfilled in Saul, he fell by the sword, his own sword; David foretold this, yet he would not execute it when it was in the power of his hand, once and again; for precepts, not prophecies, are our rule. (3.) That they shall be a portion for foxes; either their dead bodies shall be a prey to ravenous beasts, (Saul lay a good while unburied,) or their houses and estates shall be a habitation for wild beasts, Isa. xxxiv. 14. Such as this will be the doom of Christ's enemies, that oppose his kingdom and interest in the world; Bring them forth, and slay them before me, Luke xix. 27.

2. That the himself should gain his point at last, (v. 11,) that he should be advanced to the throne to which he had been anointed; The king shall rejoice in God. (1.) He calls himself the king, because he knew himself to be so in the divine purpose and designation; thus Paul, while yet in the conflict, writes himself more than a conqueror, Rom. viii. 37. Believers are made kings, though they are not to have the dominion till the morning of the resurrection. (2.) He doubts not but that though he was now sorrowing in tears, he should reap in joy; The king shall rejoice. (3.) He resolves to make God the Alpha and Omega of all his joys; he shall rejoice in God. Now this is applicable to the glories and joys of the exalted Redeemer. Messiah the Prince shall rejoice in God; he is already entered into the joy set before him, and his glory will be completed at his second coming.

Two things would be the good effect of his advancement:

[1.] It would be the consolation of his friends. Every one that swears to him, that is, to David, that comes into his interest, and takes an oath of allegiance to him, shall glory in his success; or that swears by him, that is, by the blessed name of God, and not by any idol; (Deut. vi. 13,) and then it means all good people, that make a sincere and open profession of God's name; they shall glory in God; they shall glory in David's acknowledged success; They that believe on him, will be glad when they see me. They that heartily espouse the cause of Christ, shall glory in his victory at last. If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him.

[2.] It would be the confusion of his enemies; The mouth of them that speak lies, of Saul, and Doeg; and others that misrepresented David, and insulted over him, as if his cause was desperate, shall be quite stipped; they shall not have a word more to say against him, but will be for ever silenced and shamed. Apply this to Christ's enemies, to those that speak lies to him, as all hypocrites do, that tell him they love him, while their hearts are not with him; their mouth shall be stopped with that word, Thou knowest you not whence you are; they shall be for ever speechless, Matt. xxii. 12. The mouths of those also that speak lies against him, that pervert the right ways of the Lord, and speak ill of his holy religion, will be stopped, in that day when the Lord shall come to reckon for all the hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. Christ's second coming will be the everlasting triumph of all his faithful friends and followers, who may therefore now triumph in the believing hopes of it.

PSALM LXIV.

This whole psalm has reference to David's enemies, persecutors, and slanderers; many such were, and a great deal of trouble they gave him, almost all his days, so that we need not guess at any particular occasion of penning this psalm. I. He prays to God to preserve him from their malicious designs against him, v. 1, 2. He gives a very bad character of them, as men marked for ruin by their own wickedness, v. 3—6. III. By the spirit of prophecy, he foretells their destruction, which would redound to the glory of God, and the encouragement of his people, v. 7—10. In singing this psalm, we must observe the effect of the old enmity that is in the seed of the woman against the seed of the serpent; and assure ourselves that the serpent's head will be broken, at last, to the honour and joy of the holy seed.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

1. Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer; preserve me from life from fear of the enemy. 2. Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity: 3. Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words; 4. That they may shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not. 5. They encourage themselves in an evil matter; they commune of laying snares privily; they say, Who shall see them? 6. They search out iniquities; they accomplish a diligent search; both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, is deep.

David, in these verses, puts in before God a representation of his own danger, and of his enemies' character, to encourage his petition that God would protect him, and punish them.

I. He earnestly begs of God to preserve him; (v. 1, 2.) Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer; grant me the thing I pray for: and this is it, Lord, preserve my life from fear of the enemy, from the enemy that I am in fear of. He makes request for his life, which is, in a particular manner, dear to him, because he knows it is designed to be very serviceable to God and the preservation of the life, for fear has tormented; particularly the fear of death, by reason of which some are, all their life-time, subject to bondage. He prays, Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked, from the mischief which they secretly consult among themselves to do against me, and from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity,
who join forces, as they join counsels, to do me a mischief." Observe, The secret counsel ends in an insurrection; treasonable practices begin in treasonable confederacies and conspiracies. "Hide me from them, that they may not find me, that they may not reach me. Let me be safe under thy protection."

II. He complains of the great malice and wickedness of his enemies; "Lord, hide me from them, for they are aiming mine eyes against me; they are dangerous men, that will stick at nothing; so that I am undone, if thou do not take my part."

1. They are very spiteful in their calumnies and reproaches; v. 3, 4. They are described as military men, with their sword and bow, archers that take aim exactly, secretly and suddenly shoot at the harmless bird that apprehends not herself in any danger. But, (1.) Their tongues are their swords, flaming with two-edged swords, draw swords, drawn in anger, with which they cut, and wound, and kill, the good name of their neighbour. The tongue is a little member, but, like the sword, it boosts great things, Jan. iii. 5. It is a dangerous weapon. (2.) Bitter words are their arrows. Scurrilous reflections, opprobrious nicknames, false representations, slanderers and calumnies, the fiery darts of the wicked one, are shot at their hapless soul. For these their malice sends their bows, to send out these arrows with so much the more force. (3.) The upright man is their mark, against him their spleen is, and they cannot speak peaceably either of him or to him. The better any man is, the more he is envied by those that are themselves bad, and the more ill is said of him. (4.) They manage it with a great deal of art and subtlety; they shoot in secret, that those they shoot at may not discover them, and avoid the danger, for if they shoot in the sight of any bird. And suddenly do they shoot, without giving a man lawful warning, or any opportunity to defend himself. Cursed be he that thus smites his neighbour secretly, in his reputation, Deut. xxvii. 24. There is no guard against a pass made by a false tongue. (5.) Herein they fear not; they are confident of their success, and doubt not but by these methods they shall gain the point which their masters aim at. Or, rather they fear not the wrath of God, which will be the portion of a false tongue. They are impudent and daring in the mischief they do to good people, as if they must never be called to an account for it.

2. They are very close, and very resolute, in their malicious projects, v. 5. (1.) They strengthen and corroborate themselves and one another in this evil matter, and, by joining together in it, they make one another the more bitter and the more bold; Fortiter calumniari, aliquid atheretrum—Let on an abundance of reproach; part will be sure to stick. It is bad to do a wrong thing, but worse to encourage ourselves and one another in it, that is doing the Devil's work for him. It is a sign that the heart is hardened to the highest degree, when it is thus fully set to do evil, and fears no censures. It is the office of conscience to discourage men in an evil matter, but, when that is buffeted, the case is desperate. (2.) They consult with themselves and one another how to do the most mischief, and most effectually; They commune of laying snares privately. All their communion is in sin, and all their communication is how to sin securely. They held councils of war for finding out the most effectual expeditious to do mischief, every snare they lay was talked of before God, and was laid with all the contrivance of their wicked wits combined. (3.) They please themselves with an atheistical conceit that God himself takes no notice of their wicked practices; they say, Who shall see them? A practical disbelief of God's omniscience is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked.

3. They are very industrious in putting their projects in execution; (v. 6.) They search out iniquity, they take a great deal of pains to find out some iniquity or other to lay to my charge, they dig deep, and look far back, and put things to the utmost stretch, that they may have something to accuse me of; or, They are industrious to find out new arts of doing mischief, in which they accomplish a diligent search; they go through and over it, and spare neither cost nor labour; evil men dig up mischief. Half the pains that many take to damn their souls, would serve to save them. They are masters of all the arts of mischief and destruction, for the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, are deep; deep as hell, desperately wicked, who can know it? By the unaccountable wickedness of their hearts, and of their will, they show themselves to be, both in subtlety and malignity, the genuine offspring of the old serpent.

7. But God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded. So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see them shall flee away. 9. And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God: for they shall wisely consider of his doing. The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory.

We may observe here,

I. The judgements of God which should certainly come upon the most vicious persecutors of David. Though they encouraged themselves in their wickedness, here is that which, if they would believe and consider it, was enough to discourage them. And it is observable how the punishment answers the sin. 1. They shot at David secretly and suddenly, to wound him; but God shall shoot at them, for he ordains his arrows against the persecutors; (vii. 13.) against the face of them, xxi. 12. And God's arrows will hit surer, and fly swifter, and strike deeper, than theirs do, or can, in very many arrows, but they are only bitter words, and words are but wind; the curse causeless shall not come; but God has one arrow that will be their death, his curse, which is never causeless, and therefore shall come; with it they shall be suddenly wounded, their wound by it will be a surprise upon them, because they were secure, and not apprehensive of any danger. 2. Their tongues fell upon him, but God shall make their own tongues to fall upon themselves. They do it by the desert of their sin, God does it by the justice of his wrath, v. 8. When God deals with men according to the desert of their tongue-sins, and brings those mischiefs upon them, which they have passionately and maliciously imprecated upon others, then he makes their own tongues to fall upon them; and it is weight enough to sink a man to the lowest hell, like a talent of lead. Many have cut their own throats, and damned their own souls, with their tongues, and it will be an aggravation of their condemnation; O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; art smote in the words of thy mouth. If thou scornest, thou alone shall bear it. They that love cursing, it shall come unto them. Sometimes men's secret wickedness is brought to light by their own confession, and then their own tongue falls upon themselves.

II. The influence which these judgements should have upon others; for it is done in the open sight of all, Job xxxiv. 26.
1. Their neighbours shall shun them, and shift for their own safety; they shall flee away, for fear of partaking in their plagues, and being involved in their ruin, so dreadful will it be, and such a noise will it make in the country; they shall flee away, the men of Ashdod did from the sight of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, Numb. xvi. 27. Some think this was fulfilled in the death of Saul, when not only his army was dispersed, but the inhabitants of the neighbouring country were so terrified with the fall, not only of their king but of his three sons, that they quitted their cities and fled, 1 Sam. xxxi. 7.

2. Spectators shall reverence the providence of God therein, v. 9. (1.) They shall understand and observe God's hand and work; and so we, as we were wont to do by the dispensations of Providence, (Hos. xiv. 9.) They shall wisely consider his doing. There is need of consideration and serious thought rightly to take the matter of fact, and need of wisdom to put a true interpretation upon it. God's doing is well worth our considering, (Ecc. vii. 13.) but it must be considered wisely, that we put not a corrupt gloss upon a pure text. (2.) They shall be affected with a holy awe of God, upon the consideration of the Word and the works of God. All men (all that have any thing of the reason of a man in them) shall fear and tremble because of God's judgments, cxix. 120. They shall fear to do the like; fear being found persecutors of God's people; Smite the scorners, and the simple shall beware. (3.) They shall declare the work of God; they shall speak to one another, and to all about them, of the justice of God in punishing persecutors; what we wish to consider ourselves, we should wisely consider others, for their caution and the glory of God; This is the finger of God.

3. Good people shall, in a special manner, take notice of it, and it shall affect them with a holy pleasure, v. 10. (1.) It shall increase their joy; The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, not glad of the misery and ruin of their fellow-creatures, but glad that God is glorified, and his word fulfilled, and the cause of injured innocence pleaded effectually. (2.) It shall encourage their faith; they shall commit themselves to him in the way of duty, and be willing to venture for him with an entire confidence in him. (3.) Their joy and faith shall both express themselves in a holy boasting; All the upright in heart, that keep a good conscience and approve themselves to God, shall glory, not in themselves, but in the favour of God, in his righteousness and goodness, their relation to him and interest in him; Let them that glory, glory in the Lord.

PSALM LXV.

In this psalm, we are directed to give to God the glory of his power and goodness, which is Ps. cxxi. 1. In the kingdom of God, v. 1. Hearing prayer, v. 2. Pardoningsin, (v. 3.) Satisfying the souls of the people, (v. 4.) Protecting and supporting them, v. 5. II. In the kingdom of Providence, fixing the mountains, (v. 6.) Calming the sea, v. 7. Preserving the regular succession of day and night, (v. 8.) And making the earth fruitful, v. 9.-13. These are blessings we are all indebted to God for, and therefore we may easily accommodate this psalm to our own situation, singing it.

To the chief musician. A psalm and song of David.

1. PRAISE waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed. 2. O thou that earrest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come. 3. Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away. 4. Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple. 5. By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation; who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea:

The psalmist here has no particular concern of his own, at the throne of grace, but begins with an address to God, as the master of an assembly, and the mouth of a congregation; and observe,

1. How he gives glory to God, v. 1. By humble thankfulness; Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion; waits in expectation of the mercy desired, waits till it arrives, that it may be received with thankfulness and praise to God; when God is coming toward us with his favours, we must go forth to meet him with our praises, and wait till the day dawn. Praise waits with an entire satisfaction in thy holy will, and dependence on thy mercy; when we stand ready in every thing to give thanks, then praise waits for God. Praise waits thine acceptances; the Levites by night stood in the house of the Lord, ready to sing their songs of praise at the morning; Ps. xxxiii. 12.) and when their praise is waited for; Praise is silent unto thee, (so the word is,) as wanting words to express the great goodness of God, and being struck with a silent adoration at it. As there are holy groanings which cannot be uttered, so there are holy adorations which cannot be uttered, and yet shall be accepted by him that searches the heart, and knows what is the mind of the spirit. Our praise is silent, that the praises of the blessed angels, who excel in strength, may be heard. Let it not be told him that I speak, for if a man offer to speak forth all God's praise surely he shall be swallowed up, Job xxxvii. 20. Before thee, praise is rejected as silence, so the Chaldee; so far exalted is God above all our blessing and praise. Praise is due to God from all the world, but it waits for him in Zion only, in his church, among his people; all his works praise him, they minister matter for praise, but his saints only bless him by actual adorations. The redeemed church sing their new song upon mount Zion, Rev. xiv. 1. 3. In Zion was God's dwelling-place, ixvi. 2. 2. Happy they who dwell with him there, for they will be still praising him. 2. By sincere faithfulness; Unto thee shall the vow be performed, the sacrifice shall be offered up, which was vowed. We shall not be accepted in our thanksgivings to God for the mercies we have received, unless we make conscience of paying the vows which we made when we were in pursuit of the mercy; for better it is not to vow, than to vow, and not to pay. 2. What he gives him glory for.

1. For hearing prayer; (v. 2.) Praise waits for thee; and why is it so ready? (1.) Because thou art ready to grant our petitions. O thou that hearest prayer, thou canst answer every prayer, for thou art able to do for us more than we are able to ask or think, (Eph. iii. 20.) and thou wilt answer every prayer of faith, either in kind or kindness. It is much for the glory of God's goodness, and the encouragement of ours, that he is a God hearing prayer, and has taken it among the titles of his honour to be so; and we are much wanting to ourselves, if we do not take all occasions to give him his title. (2.) Because, for that reason, we are ready to run to him with what we have. Therefore, because thou art a God hearing prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come; justly does every man's praise wait for thee, because every man's prayer waits on thee, when he is in want or distress, whatever he does at other times. Now only the seed of Israel come to thee, and the proselytes to
and that suffices them, they have enough, they desire no more.

4. For the glorious operations of his power on their behalf; (v. 5.) By terrible things in righteousness, and terrors will thou answer us, O God of our salvation. This may be understood of the rebukes with which God in his providence sometimes gives to his own people; he often answers them by terrible things, for the awakening and quickening of them, but always in righteousness; he neither does them any wrong, nor means them any hurt, for even then he is the God of their salvation. See Isa. xliv. 15. But it is rather to be understood of his judgments upon their enemies; God answers his people's prayers by the destructions made, for their sakes, among the heathen, and the recompense he renders to their proud oppressors, as a righteous God, the God to whom vengeance belongs, and as the God that protects and saves his people. By wonderful things, (so some read it,) things which are very surprising, and which we looked not for, Isa. lxiv. 3. Or by things which strike an awe upon us, thou wilt answer us; the holy freedom that we are admitted to in God's courts, and the nearness of our approach to him, must not at all abate our reverence and godly fear of him; for he is terrible in his holy places.

5. For the care he takes of all his people, however distressed, and withissoever dispersed: he is the Confidence of all the ends of the earth, of all the saints all the world over, and not theirs only that were of the seed of Israel: for he is the God of the Gentiles, as well as of the Jews; the Confidence of them that are afar off from his holy temple, and its courts, that dwell in the island of the Gentiles; or that are in distress upon the sea. They trust in thee, and cry to thee, when they are at their wit's end. civ. 27, 28. By faith and prayer we may keep up our communion with God, and fetch in comfort from him, wherever we are, not only in the solemn assemblies of his people, but afar off upon the sea.

6. Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains; being girded with power: 7. Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people. 8. They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid of thy tokens: thou maketh the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice. 9. Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. 10. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; thou settlest the furrows thereof; thou makest it soft with showers; thou blessest the springing thereof. 11. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness. 12. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness; and the little hills rejoice on every side. 13. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn: they shout for joy, they also sing.

That we may be the more affected with the wonderful condescensions of the God of grace, it is of use to observe his power and sovereignty as the God of nature; the riches and bounty of his providential kingdom.
I. He establishes the earth, and it abides, cxix. 90. (v. 6.) By his own strength, he setteth fast the mountains; did set them fast at first, and still keeps firm, though they are sometimes shaken by earthquakes.

II. He stills the sea, and it is quiet, v. 7. The sea, in a storm, makes a great noise, which adds to its threatening terror; but, when God pleases, he commands silence among the waves and billows, and lays them to sleep, turns the storm into a calm quickly, civ. 29. And by this change in the sea, as well as by the firmness of the mountains, the unchangeable, both out of the earth, it appears that he, whose the sea and the dry land are, is girded with power. And by this, our Lord Jesus gave of his divine power, that he commanded the winds and waves, and they obeyed him. To this instance of the quieting of the sea, he adds, as a thing much of the same nature, that he stills the tumult of the people, the common people. Nothing is more unruly and disagreeable than tumults in a mob, the insurrections of the rabble; yet even these God can pacify, in secret ways, which they themselves are not aware of. Or, it may be meant of the out- range of the people that were enemies to Israel, ii. 1. God has many ways to still them, and will for ever silence their tumults.

III. He reneweth the morning and evening; and their revolution is constant, v. 8. This regular succession of day and night may be considered, 1. As an instance of God's great goodness, so it strikes an awe upon all. They that dwell in the utmost parts of the earth are afraid at thy signs or tokens; they are by them convinced that there is a supreme Deity, a sovereign Monarch, before whom they ought to fear and tremble; for in these things the invisible things of God are clearly seen; and therefore they are said to be set for signs, Gen. i. 14. Many of them, that dwell in the remote and dark corners of the earth, were so afraid at these tokens, that they were driven to worship them, (Deut. iv. 19.) not considering that they were God's tokens, undeniable proofs of his power and godhead, and therefore they should have been led by them to worship him. 2. As an instance of God's great goodness, and so it brings comfort to all; Thou makest the outgoings of the morning, before the sun rises, and of the evening, before the sun sets, to rejoice. As it is God that scatters the light of the morning, and draws the curtains of the evening, so he does both in favour to man, and makes both to rejoice, gives occasion to us to rejoice in both; so that, how contrary soever light and darkness are to each other, and how invisible soever the partition between them, (Gen. i. 4.) both are equally welcome to the world in their season: it is hard to say which is more welcome to us, the light of the morning, which befriends the business of the day, or the shadows of the evening, which befriend the repose of the night. Does the watchman wait for the morning? so does the hireling earnestly desire the shadow. Some understand it of the morning and evening sacrifice, which good people greatly rejoiced in, and in which God was constantly honoured. Then makest them to sing, so the word is; for, every morning and every evening, songs of praise were sung by the Levites, it was their charge of duty at every day required. We are to look upon the daily worship, alone, and with our families, to be both the most needful of our daily occupations, and the most delightful of our daily com-forts; and if therein we keep up our communion with God, the outgoings both of the morning and of the evening are thereby made truly to rejoice.

IV. He waters the earth, and makes it fruitful; on this instance of God's power and goodness he enlarges very much. The psalm being, probably, penned upon occasion, it is clear that a more than ordinary plentiful harvest, or of a seasonable rain after long drought. How much the fruitfulness of this lower part of the creation depends upon the influence of the upper, is easy to observe; if the heavens be as brass, the earth is as iron; which is a sensible intimation to a stupid world, that every good and perfect gift is from above, omnia desuper—all from above; we must lift up our eyes above the hills, lift them up to the heavens, where the original springs of all blessings are, be of good cheer, and thither must our praises return; as the first-fruits of the earth were, in the heave-offerings, lifted up towards heaven, by way of acknowledgment that hence they were derived. All God's blessings, even spiritual ones, are expressed by his raining righteousness upon us.

Now observe how the common blessing of rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, is here described. It is with these there is an instance made of the fruitfulness and goodness of God; which is here set forth by a great variety of lively expressions. (1.) God, that made the earth, hereby visits it, sends to it, gives proof of his care of it, v. 9. It is a visit in mercy, which the inhabitants of the earth ought to return in praises. (2.) God, that made it dry land, hereby waters it, in order to its fruitfulness; though the productions of the earth flourished before God had caused it to rain, yet even then, it was the intention, and watered the whole face of the ground, Gen. ii. 5, 6. Our hearts are dry and barren, unless God himself be as the dew to us, and water us; and the plants of his own planting he will water, and make them to increase. (3.) Rain is the river of God, which is full of water, the clouds are the springs of this river, which do not flow at random, but in the channel which God cuts out for it. The showers of rain, as the rivers of water, turn which way soever he pleases. (4.) This river of God enriches the earth, which without it would quickly be a poor thing. The riches of the earth, which are produced out of its surface, are abundantly more useful and serviceable to man than those which are hid in its bowels; we might live well enough without silver and gold, but not without corn and grass.

2. How much benefit is derived from it to the earth, and man upon it:

(1.) To the earth itself; the rain in season gives it a new face; nothing is more reviving, more refreshing, than the rain upon the new-mown grass; (lxii. 6.) even the ridges of the earth, off which the rain seems to slide, are watered abundantly, for they drink in the rain which comes often upon them; the furrows of it, which are turned up by the plough, in order to the seediness, are settled by the rain, and made fruitful by the seed; which is derived from this blessing by being made soft. That which makes the soil of the heart tender, settles it; for the heart is established with that grace. Thus the springing of the year is blessed; and if the spring, that first quarter of the year, be blessed, that is an earnest of a blessing upon the whole year, which God is therefore said to crown with his goodness, (v. 11.) to compass it on every side as the head is compassed with a crown, and to complete the joy of it, as the setting of a crown is said to crown it. And his paths are said to drop fatness; for whatever fatness there is in the earth, which impregnates its productions, it comes from the outgoings of the divine goodness. Wherever God goes, he leaves the tokens of his
mercy behind him, (Joel i. 13, 14.) and makes his path thus to shine after him. These communications of God's goodness to this lower world are very extensive and diffusive; (v. 12.) They drop upon the pastures, and furnish the pastures of the inhabited land. The deserts, which man takes no care of, and receives no profit from, are under the care of the Divine Providence, and the profits of them redound to the glory of God, as the great Benefactor of the whole creation, though not immediately to the benefit of man; and we ought to be thankful not only for that which serves us, but for that which serves any part of the creation, and renders it beautiful to the beholder of the Creator. The wilderness, which makes not such returns as the cultivated grounds do, receives as much of the rain of heaven as the most fruitful soil; for God doth good to the evil and unthankful. So extensive are the gifts of God's bounty, that in them the hills, the little hills, rejoice on every side, even the north-side, that lies most from the sun. Hills are not above the need of God's providence; little hills are not below the cognizance of the Creator. But as, when he pleases, he can make them tremble, (Exv. 6.) so, when he pleases, he can make them rejoice.

(2.) To man upon the earth. God, by providing rain for the earth, prepares corn for man, v. 9.

As for the earth, out of it comes bread, (Job xxviii.) 5. for out of it comes corn; but every grain of corn that comes out of it, God himself prepares; and therefore he provides rain for the earth, that thereby he may prepare corn for man, under whose feet he has put the rest of the creatures, and for whose use he has fitted them. When we consider that the yearly produce of the corn is not only an operation of the same power that raises the dead, but an instance of that power not much unlike it, as appears by that of our Saviour, (John xii. 24.) and that the constant benefit we have from it, is an instance of that goodness which endures for ever, we shall have reason to think that it is no less than a God that prepares corn for us. Corn and cattle are the two staple commodities with which the husbandman, who deals immediately in the fruits of the earth, is enriched; and both are owing to the divine goodness in watering the earth, v. 13. To this it is owing that the pastures are clothed with flocks, v. 13. So well stock'd are the pastures, that they seem to be covered over with the cattle that live in them, and yet the pasture not overcharged; so well fed are the cattle, that they are the ornament and the glory of the pastures in which they are fed. The valleys are so fruitful, that they seem to be covered over with corn, in the time of harvest. The lowest parts of the earth are commonly the most fruitful, and one acre of the humble valleys is worth five of the loftiest mountains. But both corn-ground and pasture-ground, answering to the land of their creation, are still to shout for joy, and sing; because they are serviceable to the honour of God and the comfort of man, and because they furnish us with matter for joy and praise. As there is no earthly joy above the joy of harvest, so there were none of the feasts of the Lord, among the Jews, solemnized with greater expressions of thankfulness than the feast of in-gathering at the end of the year, Exod. xxiii. 16. Let all these communications, the height of the mercy, be daily partake of, increase our love to God, as the best of beings, and engage us to glorify him with our bodies, which he thus provides so well for.

PSALM LXVI.

This is a thanksgiving-psalm; and it is of such universal use and application, that we need not suppose it penned upon any particular occasion. All people are here called upon to praise God, I. For the general instances of his sovereign dominion and power in the whole creation, v. 1.-7. II. For the special tokens of his favour in the church, his peculiar people, v. 8.-12. And then, III. The psalmist praiseth God for his own experiences of his goodness to him in particular, especially in answering his prayers, v. 13.-20. If we have learned in everything to give thanks for ancient and modern mercies, published and secret, shall we now fail to learn how to sing this psalm with grace and understanding.

To the chief musician. A song or psalm.

1. MAKE a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands: 2. Sing forth the honour of his name; make his praise glorious. 3. Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee. 4. All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing to thy name. Selah. 5. Come and see the works of God; he is terrible in his doing toward the children of men. 6. He turned the sea into dry land: they went through the flood on foot: there did we rejoice in him. 7. He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah.

In these verses, the psalmist calls upon all people to praise God, all lands, all the earth, v. 1.; all the inhabitants of the world that are capable of praising God. 1. This speaks the glory of God, that he is worthy to be praised by all, for he is good to all, and furnishes every nation with matter for praise. 2. The duty of man, that all are obliged to praise God; it is part of the law of creation, and therefore is required of every creature. 3. A prediction of the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ; the time should come when all lands should praise God, and this incense should in every place be offered to him. 4. A hearty good-will which the psalmist had to this good work of praising God; he will abound in it himself, and wishes that God might have his tribute paid him by all the nations of the earth, and not by the land of Israel only. He excites all lands, (1.) To make a joyful noise to God: holy joy is that devout affection which should animate all our praises; and though it is not making a noise in religion that God will accept of, (hypocteres are said to cause their voice to be heard on high, Isa. lviii. 4.) yet, in praising God, [1.] We must be hearty and zealous, and must do, what we do, with all our might, with all that is within us; [2.] We must be open and public, as those that are not ashamed of our Master; and both these are implied in making a noise, a joyful joy. (2.) To sing with pleasure, and to sing forth, for the edification of others, the honour of his name, of all that whereby he has made himself known, v. 2. That which is the honour of God's name, ought to be the delight of our praise. (3.) To make his praise glorious, as far as we can. In praising God, we must do it so as to glorify him, and that must be the scope and drift of all our praises. Rock in it your greatest glory to praise God; so some. It is the highest honour the creature is capable of, to be the Creator for a name and a praise.
sent forth, it shall not return void, but shall bring all the earth, more or less, to worship God, and sing unto him. In gospel-times God shall be worshipped by singing of psalms: they shall sing to God, that is, sing to his name, for it is only to his declarative glory, that by which he has made himself known, not to his essential glory, that we can contribute anything by our praises.

That we may be furnished with matter for praise, we are here called upon to consider and see the works of God, of which we are to praise him, whether we do or no; and the reason why we do not praise him more and better, is, because we do not duly and attentively observe them. Let us therefore see God's works, and observe the instances of his wisdom, power, and faithfulness, in them, (v. 5.) and then speak of them, and speak of them to him, (v. 3.) say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works, terrible in thy doing.

1. God's works are wonderful in themselves, and such as, when duly considered, may justly fill us with amazement. God is terrible, that is, admirable in his works, through the greatness of his power, which is such, and shines so bright, so strong, in all he does, that it may be truly said there are not any works like unto his works. Hence he is said to be fearful in praises, Exod. xv. 11. In all his doings toward the children of men, he is terrible, and to be eyed with an holy awe. Much of religion lies in a respect to the Divine Providence.

2. They are formidable to his enemies, and have many a time forced and frightened them into a feigned submission; (v. 3.) Through the greatness of thy power, before which none can stand, shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee, they shall lie unto thee, (so the word is,) they shall be compelled, sore against their wills, to make their peace with thee upon any terms. Remember, also, the objection, which is so often held against natural religion, that is, so proper a means of propagating religion; nor can there be much joy of such prostrates to the church as will in the end be found liars unto it, Deut. xxxiii. 29.

3. They are comfortable and beneficial to his people, v. 6. When Israel came out of Egypt, he turned the sea into dry land before them, which encouraged them to follow God's guidance through the wilderness; when they were to enter Canaan, for their encouragement in their wars, Jordan was divided before them, and they went through that flood on foot; and such foot, so signally owned by heaven, might well pass for cavalry, rather than infantry, in the wars of the Lord. There did the enemies tremble before them; (Exod. xv. 14, 15. Josh. v. 1.) but there did we rejoice in him; both trust his power, (for relying on God is often expressed by rejoicing in him,) and sing his praise, v. 12. There did we rejoice; our ancestors did, and we in their loins. The joys of our fathers were our joys, and we ought to look upon ourselves as sharers in them.

4. They are commanding to all. God by his works keeps up his dominion in the world; (v. 7.) He rules by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations. (1.) God has a commanding eye; from the throne of his glory he surveys all the habitants of the world, and he has a clear and full view of them all. His eyes run to and fro through the earth; the most remote and obscure nations are under his inspection. (2.) He has a commanding arm; his power rules, rules for ever, and is never weakened, never obstructed; strong is his hand, and high is his right hand. Hence he infers, Let not the rebellious exalt themselves; let not those who are revolting and rebellious hearts dare to rise up in any overt acts of rebellion against God, as Adonijah exalted himself, saying, I will be king; let not those that are in rebellion against God exalt themselves, as if there were any probability that they should gain their point; no, let them be still, for God hath said, I will be exalted, and man can not gainsay it.

3. O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard; 9. Which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved. 10. For thou, O God, hast proved us: and thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. 11. Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidest affliction upon our loins. 12. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads: we went through fire and through water; but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.

In these verses, the psalmist calls upon God's people in a special manner to praise him. Let all lands do it, but Israel's land particularly. Bless our God; bless him as ours, a God in covenant with us, and that takes care of us as his own. Let them make the voice of his praise to be heard; (v. 8.) for from whom should it be heard, but from those who are his peculiar favourites and select attendants? Two things we have reason to bless God for.

I. Common protection; (v. 9.) He holdeth our soul in life, that it may not drop away of itself; for, being continually in our hands, it is apt to slip through our fingers. We must own that it is the good providence of God that keeps life and soul together, and his visitation that preserves our spirit; he futs our soul in life; so the word is. He that gave us our being, by a constant renewed act upholds us in our being, and his providence is a continued and an unchanging care and protection. When we are ready to faint and perish, he restores our soul, and so puts it, as it were, into a new life, giving new comforts. Non est vivere, sed valere vita—It is not existence, but happiness, that deserves the name of life. But we are apt to stumble and fall, and are exposed to many destructive accidents, killing disasters as well as killing diseases; and therefore as to these also we are guarded by the divine power; he suffers not our disasters, nor does he leave us unprovided for, which we ourselves were not aware of our danger from. To him we owe it that we have not, long ere this, fallen into endless ruin. He will keep the feet of his saints.

II. Special deliverance from great distress. Observe.

1. How grievous the distress and danger were, v. 11, 12. What particular trouble of the church this refers to, does not appear; it might be the trouble of some private persons or families only. But, whatever it was, they were surprised with it, as a bird with a snare, inclosed and entangled in it, as a fish in a net; they were pressed down with it, and kept under as with a load upon their loins, v. 11. But they owned the hand of God in it; we are never in the net, but God brings us into it, never under affliction, but God; yet, it is his hand; it is upon us. Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let the prayer of faith save him from fire and water? We went through both, afflictions of different kinds; the end of one trouble was the beginning of another; when we had got clear of one sort of dangers, we found ourselves involved in dangers of another sort. Such may be the troubles of the best of God's saints, but he has promised, When thou passest through the waters, through the fire, I will be with thee, Isa. xliii. 2. Yet prove and cruel may be the fire and water, and more so; Be ware of men, Matt. x. 17. When men rose up against us, that was fire and water, and all that is
threatening; (cxxiv. 2, 3, 4.) and that was the case here; "Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads, to trample upon us and insult over us; to hector and abuse us, nay, and to make perfect slaves of us; they have said to our souls, Bow down, that we may go over," Isa. ii. 23. While it is the pleasure of good princes to rule in the hearts of their subjects, it is the pride of tyrants to ride over their heads. The all-powerful church in this also owns the hand of God, "Thou hast caused them thus to abuse us;" for the most furious oppressor has no power but what is given him from above.

2. How gracious God's design was, in bringing them into this distress and danger. See what the meaning of it is, (v. 10.) Thou, O God, hast proved us, and tried us. Then we are likely to get good by our afflictions, when we look upon them under this notion, for then we may see God's grace and love at the bottom of them, and our own honour and benefit in the end of them. By afflictions we are proved as silver in the fire. (1.) That our graces, by being tried, may be made more evident, and so we may be approved, as silver, when it is touched and marked sterling, and this will be to our praise at the appearing of Jesus Christ, (1 Pet. i. 7.) and perhaps in this world: Job's integrity and constancy were manifested by his afflictions. (2.) That our graces, by being exercised, may be made more strong and active, and so we may be improved, as silver, when it is refined by the fire, and made more clear from its dross; and this will be to our unspeakable advantage, for thus we are made partakers of God's holiness, Heb. xii. 10. Public troubles are for the purifying of the church, Dan. xi. 35. Rev. ii. 10. Deut. viii. 2.

3. How glorious that grace was at last. The troubles of the church will certainly end well; these do so. For (1.) The outlet of the trouble is happy. They are in fire and water, but they get through them; "We went through fire and water, and did not perish in the flames or floods." Whatever the troubles of the saints are, blessed be God, there is a way through them. (2.) The inlet to a better state is much more happy; Thou broughtest us out into a well-watered place, for the word is, like the gardens of the Lord, and therefore fruitful. God brings his people into trouble, that their comforts afterward may be the sweeter, and that their affliction may thus yield the peacable fruit of righteousness, which will make the poorest place in the world a wealthy place.

13. I will go into thy house with burnt-offerings; I will pay thee my vows, 14. Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble. 15. I will offer unto thee burnt-sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams: I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah. 16. Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. 17. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was exulted with my tongue. 18. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: 19. But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. 20. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.

The psalmist, having before stirred up all people, and all God's people in particular, to bless the Lord, here stirs up himself, and engages himself to do it.

I. In his devotions to his God, v. 13-15. He had called upon others to sing God's praises, and to make a joyful noise with them; but, for himself, his resolutions go further, and he will praise God,

1. By costly sacrifices, which, under the law, were offered to the honour of God. All people had not wherewithal to offer these sacrifices, or wanted zeal enough to urge them on; but he would, David, for his part, being able, is a willing Soul in this chargeable way to pay his homage to God; (v. 13.) I will go into thy house with burnt-offerings. His sacrifices should be public, in the place which God had chosen; "I will go into thy house with them." Christ is our Temple, to whom we must bring our spiritual gifts, and by whom they are sanctified. They should be the best of the kind; burnt-sacrifices, which, as such, were probably the choicest, and most beloved, and such as would be most acceptable at his own table. God, who is the best, must be served with the best we have. The feast God makes for us is a feast of fat things, full of marrow; (Isa. xxv. 6.) and such sacrifices should we bring to him. He will offer bullocks with goats, so liberal would he be in his return of praise, not straitening himself to offer sacrifices which cost him nothing, but that which cost him a great deal; and this with the incense of rams, that is, with the fat of rams, which being burnt upon the altar, the smoke of it would ascend like the smoke of incense. Or, rams with incense. The incense typifies Christ's intercession, without which the fattest of our sacrifices will not be accepted.

2. By a conscientious performance of these vows. We do not pray that God will give us our deliverance out of trouble, unless we make conscience of paying the vows we made when we were in trouble. This was the psalmist's resolution, (v. 13, 14.) I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered when I was in trouble. Note, (1.) It is very common, and very commendable, when we are under the pressure of any affliction, or in the pursuit of any mercy, to make vows, and solemnly to speak of the good things we expect before the Lord; to bind ourselves to fast, to pray, and to do many more things to our duty; not as if this were an equivalent, or valuable consideration, for the favour of God, it is only a qualification for receiving the tokens of that favour. (2.) The vows which we made when we were in trouble, must not be forgotten when the trouble is over, but be carefully performed, for better it is not to vow, than to vow and not pay.

II. In his declarations to his friends, v. 16. He calls together a congregation of good people to hear his thankful narrative of God's favours to him; "Come, and hear, all ye that fear God, for, 1. You will join with me in my praises, and help me in giving thanks." And we should be as desirous of the assistance of those that fear God, in returning thanks for the mercies we have received, as in praying for those we want. 2. You will be edified and encouraged, if you think you have a right to say; The humble shall hear of it, and be glad, (xxxiv. 2.) They that fear thee will be glad when they see me, (cxxxiv. 7.) and therefore let me have their company, and I will declare to them, not to vain carnal people, that will banter it, and make a jest of it," (pearls are not to be cast before swine,) "but to them that fear God, and will make a good use of it, I will declare what God has done for my soul; not in pride and vain-glory, that he might be thought more a favourite of heaven than other people, but for the honour of God, to which we owe this as a just debt, and for the edification of others. Note, God's people should communicate their experiences to each other; we should take all occasions to tell
one another of the great and kind things which God has done for us, especially which he has done for our souls, the spiritual blessings with which he has blessed us in heavenly things; these should be most affected with ourselves, and therefore with these we should be desirous to affect others.

Now what was it that God had done for his soul? (1.) He had wrought in him a love to the duty of prayer, and had given him a heart for that duty, (v. 17.) "I cried unto him with my mouth; but if God, among other things done for our souls, had not given us the spirit of adoption, teaching and enabling us to cry, Abba, Father, we should never have done it. That God has given us leave to pray, a command to pray, encouragements to pray, and (to crown all) a heart to pray, is what we have reason to mention, with thankfulness, to his praise; and the more, if we cried in符合的 heart, he was exulted with our tongue, if we were enabled by faith and hope to give glory to him then, when we were seeking for mercy and grace from him, and to praise him for mercy in prospect, though it be not yet in possession. By crying to him do we indeed exult him. He is pleased to reckon himself honoured by the humble believing prayers of the upright, and this is a great thing which he has done for our souls, that he has pleased so far to deal with us, that, in seeking our own welfare, we seek his glory. His exaltation was under my tongue, so it may be read; I was considering in my mind how I might exalt and magnify his name. When prayers are in our mouths, praises must be in our hearts.

(2.) He had wrought in him a dread of sin as an enemy to prayer; (v. 18.) "If I regard iniquity in my heart, I know very well the Lord will not hear me." The Jewish writers, some say, had them that have the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, put a very corrupt gloss upon these words; "If I regard iniquity in my heart, that is, say they, If I allow myself only in heart-sins, and iniquity does not break out in my words and actions, God will not hear me, that is, he will not be offended with me, will take no notice of it, so as to lay it to my charge; as if heart-sins were no sins, in God's account; the falseness of this is the Saviour has shown in his spiritual expositions of the law, Mat. v. But the sense of this place is plain; If I regard iniquity in my heart, that is, "If I have favourable thoughts of it, if I love it, indulge it, and allow myself in it, if I treat it as a friend, and bid it welcome, make provision for it, and am loath to part with it, if I roll it under my tongue as a sweet morsel, though it be but a heart-sin that is thus countenanced and made much of, if I delight in it after the inward man, will not hear my prayer, will not accept it, or be pleased with it, nor can I expect an answer of peace to it." Note, Iniquity, regarded in the heart, will certainly spoil the comfort and success of prayer; for the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. They that continue in love and league with sin, have no interest either in the promise or in the Mediator, and therefore cannot expect success in prayer.

(3.) He had graciousy granted him an answer of peace to his prayers; (v. 19.) "But verily God has heard me; though, being conscious to myself of much amiss in me, I began to fear that my prayers would have been rejected, yet, to my comfort, I found that God was pleased to regard them." This God did for his soul; by answering his prayer, he gave him a token of his favour, and an evidence that he had when he cried to him with our mouth, he therefore concludes, (v. 20.) Blessed be God. The two foregoing verses are the major and minor propositions of a syllogism; If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear my prayers, that is the proposition; but verily God has heard me, that is the assumption, from which he might have rationally inferred, "Therefore I do not regard iniquity in my heart;" but, in stead of taking the comfort to himself, he gives the praise to God, Blessed be God. Whatever are the premises, God's glory must always be the conclusion; God has heard me, and therefore blessed be God. Note, What we win by prayer, we must wear with praise. Mercies, in answer to prayer, do, in a sense, to speak the manner, oblige us to be thankful. He has not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy; lest it should be thought that the deliverance was granted for the sake of some worthiness in his prayer, he ascribes it to God's mercy. This he adds by way of correction, "It was not my prayer that fetched the deliverance, but his mercy that sent it." Therefore God does not turn away our prayer, because he does not turn away his own mercy, for that is the foundation of our hopes, and the fountain of our comforts, and therefore ought to be the matter of our praise.

PSALM LXVII.

This psalm relates to the church, and is calculated for the public. Here is, 1. A prayer for the prosperity of the church of Israel, v. 1. 2. A prayer for the conversion of the Gentiles, v. 5. 3. A prayer for the progress of the church, v. 2. 5. 3. A prospect of happy and glorious times, when God shall do this, v. 6. 7. Thus was the psalmist carried out by the spirit of prophecy, to foretell the glorious estate of the church of Zion, in which Jewish and Gentile church shall unite into one fold, this psalm being of which blessed work ought to be the matter of our joy and praise, and the completing of it of our prayer and hope, in singing this psalm.

To the chief musician on Neginoth. A psalm or song.

I. GOD be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us. Selah. 2. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. 3. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. 4. O let the nations be glad, and sing for joy; for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Selah. 5. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. 6. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. 7. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

The composition of this psalm is such as denotes the penman's affections to have been very warm and lively; by which spirit of devotion he was elevated to receive the spirit of prophecy concerning the enlargement of God's kingdom.

1. He begins with a prayer for the welfare and prosperity of the church then in being, in the happiness of which he should share, and think himself happy. 2. Our Saviour, in teaching us thus, Our Father, has intimated that we ought to pray with and for others; so the psalmist here prays not, God be merciful to me, and bless me, but to us, and bless us; for we must make supplication for all saints, and be willing and glad to take our lot with them. We are here taught, Thy all our happiness comes from God's mercy, and takes rise in that; and therefore the first thing prayed for is, God be merciful to us, and bless us, as if he were willing to us sinners, and pardon our sins, (Luke xiii. 13.) to us miserable sinners, and help us out of our miseries. 2. That it is conveyed by God's blessing, and secured in that; God bless us, give us an interest in his promises, and confer
upon us all the good contained in them. God's speaking well to us, amounts to his doing well for us. God be blessed; a comprehensive prayer; it is
ity such excellent words should ever be used
slightly and carelessly, and as a by-word. 3. That
it is completed in the light of his countenance; God
cause his face to shine upon us, God by his grace
qualify us for his favour, and then give us the tokens
of his favour. We need desire no more to make us
happy, than to have God's face shine upon us, to
have God love us, and let us know that he loves us;
The shine with us; so the main part of the
work of our endeavour, and let it crown that endea-
vour with success. If we by faith walk with God,
we may hope that his face will shine with us.
II. He passes from this to a prayer for the con-
version of the Gentiles; (v. 2.) That thy way may
be known upon earth. "Lord, I pray not only that
thou wilt be merciful to us and bless us, but that
thou wilt be merciful to all mankind, that thy way
may be known upon earth." Thus public-spirited
must we be in our prayers, Father in heaven, hol-
lowed be thy name, thy kingdom come. We shall
have never the less of God's mercy, and blessing,
and favour, for others coming in to share with us.
Or it may be taken thus, "God be merciful to us
Jews, and bless us, that thereby thy way may be
known upon earth; that, by the peculiar distinguishing
tokens of thy favour to us, others may be allured
to seek and find themselves to us, saying, He will
go with you, for the Psalms have heard that God is with
you." Zech. viii. 23. These verses, which point at
the conversion of the Gentiles, may be taken, 1. As
a prayer; and so it speaks the desire of the Old
Testament saints; so far were they from wishing to
monopolize the privileges of the church, that they
desired nothing more than the throwing down of the
inclosure, and the laying open of the advantages.
See then how the spirit of the Jews, in the days of
Christ and his apostles, differed from the spirit of
their fathers. The Israelites indeed, that were of
old, desired that God's name might be known among
the Gentiles, those counterfeit Jews were enraged
at the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles; no-
thing in Christianity exasperated them so much as
that did. 2. As a prophecy; that it shall be as he
here prays. Many scripture-prophecies and pro-
mises are wrapt up in prayers, to intimate, that the
saving work of God's kingdom is so wrought that
the prayer is as sure as the performance of
God's promises.

Three things are here prayed for, with reference to
the Gentiles.

(1.) That divine revelation might be sent among
them, v. 2. Two things he desires might be
known upon earth, even among all nations, and not to
the nation of the Jews only. 1. God's way, the rule
duty; "Let them all know, as well as we do, what
is good, and what Evil God requires of them; let them
be blessed and honoured with the same righteous statutes and judgments, which are
so much the praise of our nation, and the envy of all
its neighbours," Deut. iv. 8. 2. His saving health, or
his salvation; the former is wrapt up in his law,
this in his gospel. If God makes known his way to
us, and we walk in it, he will show us his saving
health, I. 23. They that have themselves experi-
enced the sweetness of God's salvation, cannot but
expect the comfort of his salvation, cannot but desire
and pray that they may be known to others, even
among all nations. All upon earth are bound to
walk in God's way, all need his salvation, and there
is in it enough for all; and therefore we should pray,
that both the one and the other may be made known
to all.

(2.) That divine worship may be set up among
them, as it will be where divine revelation is re-
cieved and embraced; (v. 3.) "Let the people praise
thee, O God, let them have matter for praise, let
them have hearts for praise; yea, let not only some,
but all the people praise thee;" all nations in their
national capacity, so ran the psalmist's prayer, under
repeat, (v. 5.) as that which the psalmist's heart
was very much upon. They that delight in praising
God themselves, cannot but desire that others also
may be brought to praise him; that he may have
the honour of it, and they may have the benefit of
it. It is a prayer, [1.] That the gospel might be
preached to them, and then they would have cause
indeed to praise God, and in the day-spring after a
long and dark night. "Orietur sol, et spero, that the
sun is risen. Acts viii. 8. [2.] That they might be con-
verted and brought into the church, and then they
would have a disposition to praise God, the living
and true God, and not the dumb and dead thing
dees they had worshipped, Dan. v. 4. Then their hard
thoughts of God would be silenced, and they would
see him, in the gospel-glasse, to be love itself, and the
proper object of praise. [3.] That they might be
incorporated into sacred assemblies, and might
praise God in a body, that they might all together
praise him with one mind and one mouth. Thus a
face of religion appears upon a land, when God is
publicly owned, and the ordinances of religious wor-
ship are duly celebrated in religious assemblies.

(3.) That the divine government may be acknow-
ledged and cheerfully submitted to; (v. 4. ) O let
the nations be glad, and sing for joy. Holy joy, joy in
God, and in his name, is the heart and soul of
profitable praise. That all the people may praise thee, let
the nations be glad. They that rejoice in the Lord
always, will in every thing give thanks. The joy
he wishes to the nations, is, holy joy; for it is joy in
God's dominion, joy that God has taken to himself
his great power, and has reigned, which the uncon-
verted nations are angry at, Rev. xi. 17, 18. Let
them be glad. [1.] That the kingdom is the Lord's,
Isa. xxiv. 23. That he, as an absolute Sovereign, shall
govern the nations upon earth. That by the reign
of his providence he shall overrule the affairs of
kings and princes, according to the counsel of his will,
though they neither know him nor own him; and
that in due time he shall discipline all nations by the
preaching of his gospel, (Matth. xxviii. 19.) and set
up the kingdom of his grace among them, upon the
ruin of the Devil's kingdom. That he shall make
them a willing people in a truth that shall have power,
and even the kingdom of this world shall become the
kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ. [2.] That
every man's judgment proceed from the Lord;
"Let them be glad that thou shalt judge the peo-
ple righteousness, that thou shalt give a law and gospel
which shall be a righteous rule of judgment, and
shall pass an unerring sentence, according to that
rule, upon all the children of men; against which
there will be no exceptions, so let us be glad that
they are not to be judged by another's judgment but
that judges us is the Lord, whose judgment we are
sure is according to truth.

III. He concludes with a joyful prospect of all
good, when God shall do this, when the nations shall
be converted, and brought to praise God.
1. The lower world shall smile upon them, and
they shall have the fruits of that; (v. 6.) Then shall
the earth yield her increase again, not but that God
gave rain from heaven, and gave fruitfulness to the
nation, even when they sat in darkness; (Acts xiv. 17.)
But, when they were converted, the earth yielded
its increase to God; the meat and the drink then be-
came a meat-offering and a drink-offering to the
Lord our God; (Joel ii. 14.) and then it was fruitful
to some good purpose. Then it yielded its increase
more than before, to the comfort of men, who
through Christ acquired a covenant-right to the
fruits of it, and had a sanctified use of it. Note, The su-
PSALMS, LXVIII.

This is a most excellent psalm, but in many places the genuine sense is not easy to come at; for in this, as in some other scriptures, there are things dark and hard to be understood. It does not appear when, or upon what occasion, David penned this psalm; but probably, it was when, God having given him rest from all his enemies round about, he brought the ark (which was both the token of God's presence and a type of Christ's mediation) from the house of Obed-edom to the tent he had pitched for it in Jerusalem, and set up the setting up of the ark in the midst of the land. 1. He begins with prayer, both against God's enemies, (v. 1, 2,) and for his people, v. 3. II. He proceeds to praise, which takes up the rest of the psalm, calling upon all to praise God, (v. 4, 26, 32,) and suggesting many things as matter for praise. 

I. The goodness and goodness of God, v. 4–6. II. The wonderful works God had wrought for his people formerly, bringing them through the wilderness, (v. 7, 8,) settling them in Canaan, (v. 9, 10,) giving them victory over their enemies, (v. 11, 12,) and delivering them out of the hands of their oppressors, v. 13, 14. 3. The special presence of God in his church, (v. 15–17.) 4. The ascension of Christ, (v. 18,) and the salvation of his people by him, v. 19, 20. 5. The victories which Christ would obtain over his enemies, and the favours he would bestow upon his church, v. 21–26. 6. The enlargement of the church by the unnumbered converts to it, v. 27–31. So he concludes the psalm with a victorious acknowledgment of the glory and grace of God, v. 32, 33. With all these great things we should endeavour to be duly affected in singing this psalm.

To the chief musician. A psalm or song of David.

1. Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him. 2. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God. 3. But let the righteous be glad: let them rejoice before God; yea, let them exceedingly rejoice. 4. Sing unto God, sing praises unto his name; extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him. 5. A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation. 6. God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains; but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.

In these verses, I. David prays that God would appear in his glory; 1. For the confusion of his enemies; (v. 1, 2,) "Let God arise, as a Judge to pass sentence upon them, as a General to take the field and do execution upon them; and let them be scattered, and flee before him, as unable to keep their ground, much less to make head against him. Let God arise, as the sun when he goes forth in his strength; and the children of Israel shall be scattered; and the ends of the earth shall be afraid of the rising of the sun. Let them be driven away as smoke by the wind, which ascends as if it would eclipse the sun, but is presently dispelled, and there appears no remainder of it; Let them melt as wax before the fire, which is quickly dissolved." Thus does David comment upon Moses's prayer, and not only repeat it, with application to himself and his own times, but enlarge upon it, to direct us how to make use of scripture-prayers. Nay, it looks further to the Redeemer's victory over the enemies of his kingdom, for he was the Angel of the covenant, that guided Israel through the wilderness. Note, (1.) There are, and have been, and ever will be, such as are enemies to God, and hate him; that join in with the old serpent against the kingdom of God among men, and against the seed of the woman. (2.) They are the wicked, and none but the wicked, that are enemies to God; the children of the wicked one. (3.) Though we are to pray for our enemies as such, yet we are to pray against God's enemies as such, against their enmity to him, and all their attempts upon his kingdom. (4.) If God but arise, all his impatient impecunious enemies, that will not repent to give him glory, will certainly and speedily be scattered, and driven away, and made to perish at his presence; for none ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered. The day of judgment will be the day of the complete and final perdition of ungodly men, (2 Pet. iii. 7,) who shall melt like wax before that flaming fire in which the Lord shall then appear, 2 Thess. i. 8. 

2. For the comfort and joy of his own people; (v. 3.) "Let the righteous be glad, that are now in sorrow, let them rejoice before God, in his favourble presence. God is the Joy of his people, let them rejoice with him: let them come before God, let them exceedingly rejoice, let them rejoice with gladness." Note, Those who rejoice in God have reason to rejoice with exceeding joy; and this joy we ought to wish to all the saints, for it belongs to them, Light is shown for the righteous.

II. He prays God for his glorious appearances, and calls upon us to praise him, to sing to his name, and extol him, as God that infinitely great; (v. 4.) He rides upon the heavens, by his name JAH. He is the Spring of all the motions of the heavenly bodies, directs and manages them, as he that rides in the chariot, sets it a-going; has a supreme command of the influences of heaven; he rides upon the heavens for the help of his people, (Deut. xxxiii. 26,) so
swiftly, so strongly, and so much above the reach of opposition. He rules these by his name Jah, or Jehovah, a self-existent, self-sustaining Being, the Founder of all being, the Ruler of all motion, and perfection; this is his name for ever. When we thus extol God, we must rejoice before him; holy joy in God will very well consist with that reverence and godly fear wherewith we ought to worship him.

2. As a gracious God, a God of mercy, and tender compassion. He is great, but he despises not any, no not the meanest; nay, being a God of great power, he uses his power for the relief of those who are distressed, ver. 8. The fatherless, the widows, the solitary, find him a God all-sufficient to them. Observe how much God's goodness is his glory. He that rides on the heavens, by his name Jah, one would think, should have immediately been made as King of kings and Lord of lords, and the sovereign Director of all the affairs of states and nations; he is so, but this he rather glories in, that he is a Father to the fatherless. Though God be high, yet has he respect to the lonely. Happy they that have an interest in such a God as this. He that rides upon the heavens is a Father worth having; thrice happy is the people whose God is the Lord.

(1.) When families are bereaved of their head, God takes care of them, and is himself their Head; and the widows and the fatherless children shall find that in him which they have lost in the relation that is removed, and infinitely more and better. He is a Father of the fatherless, to pity them, to bless them, to teach them, to provide for them, and to portion them. He will preserve them alive, (Jer. xliv. 11.) and with them he shall find mercy, Hos. xiv. 3. They have liberty to call him Father, and to plead their relation to him as their Guardian, ex. xlvi. 9—x. 14, 18. He is a Judge or Patron of the widows, to give them counsel, and to do them right; to own them, and plead their cause, Prov. xxiii. 23. He has an ear open to all their complaints, and a heart open to all their wants. He is so in his holy habitation; which may be understood either of the habitation of his glory in heaven, (there he has prepared his throne of judgment, which the fatherless and widow have free recourse to, and are under the protection of, ix. 4, 7.) or, of the habitation of his grace on earth; and so it is a direction to the widows and fatherless, how to apply themselves to God; let them go to his holy habitation, to his word and ordinances, and apply the grace of his hand, and find comfort in him.

(2.) When families are to be built up, he is the Founder of them; God sets the solitary in families, brings them into comfortable relations that were lonely, gives them a convenient settlement that were unsettled; (ex. xlix. 9.) he makes those dwell at home that were forced to seek for relief abroad, (so Dr. Hammond,) putting them that were destitute into a way of getting their livelihood, which is a very good way; and this is a work for God to do, that he may have glory in it.

3. As a righteous God. (1.) In relieving the oppressed; he brings out those that are bond with chains, and sets them at liberty, who were unjustly imprisoned, and brought into servitude. No chains can detain those whom God will make free. (2.) In reckoning with the oppressors; The rebellious dwell in a dry land, and have no comfort in that which they have got by fraud and injury. The hard service inflicted on the land to which the rebellion have forfeited the blessing of God, which is the juice and fatness of all our enjoyments. Israel were brought out of Egypt into the wilderness, but were there better provided for than the Egyptians themselves, whose land, if Niphlus failed them, as it sometimes did, was a dry land.

7. O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness; Selah: 8. The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel. 9. Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary. 10. Thy congregation hath dwelt therein: thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor. 11. The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those that published it.

12. Kings of armies did flee apace; and she that tarried at home divided the spoil. 13. Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. 14. When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was white as snow in Salmon. The psalmist here, having occasion to give God thanks for the great things he had done for him and his people of late, takes occasion thence to praise him for what he had done for their fathers in the days of old. Fresh mercies should put us in mind of former mercies, and revive our grateful sense of them. Let it never be forgotten.

1. That God himself was the Guide of Israel through the wilderness; when he had brought them out of their chains, he did not leave them in the dry land, but himself went before them, in a march through the wilderness, v. 7. It was not a journey but a march, for they went as soldiers, as an army with banners. The Egyptians promised themselves that the wilderness would shut them in, but they were deceived; God's Israel having him for their Leader, marched through the wilderness, and were not lost in it. Note, If God bring his people into a wilderness, he will be sure to go before them in it, and bring them out of it. Cant. viii. 5.

II. That he manifested his glorious presence with them at mount Sinai, v. 8. Never did any people see the glory of God, nor hear his voice, as Israel did, Deut. iv. 32, 33. Never had any people such an excellent law given them; so expounded, so enforced. Then the earth shook, and the neighbouring countries, it is likely, felt the shock; terrible thunders there were, accompanied, no doubt, with thunder-showers, in which the heavens seemed to drop; while the divine doctrine dropped as the rain, Deut. xxxiii. 2. Sinai itself, that vast mountain, that long ridge of mountains, was moved at the presence of God; see Judg. v. 4, 5. Deut. xxxiii. 2. Hab. iii. 3. This terrible appearance of the Divine Majesty, as it would possess them with a fear and dread of him, so it would encourage their faith in him, and do them good. Whatever mountains of difficulty lay in the way of their happy settlement, he that could move Sinai itself, could remove them, could get over them.

III. That he provided very comfortably for them both in the wilderness and in Canaan; (v. 9, 10.) Thou didst send a plentiful rain, and hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor. This may refer, 1. To the victorious act of their camp with manna in the wilderness, which was rained upon them, as well as also the quails, (xxxviii. 24, 27.) and it might be fitly called a rain of liberality or munificence, for it was a memorable instance of the divine bounty. This confirmed the camp of Israel, (here called God's inheritance, because he had chosen them to be a peculiar treasure to himself,) when it was weary, and ready to perish; this confirmed their faith, and was
a proof of God's power and goodness. Even in the wilderness God found a comfortable dwelling for Israel, which was his congregation. Or, 2. To the seasonable supplies granted them in Canaan, that land flowing with milk and honey, which is said to drink water of the rocks of Deut. xi. 11. 

V. This is applicable to the victories obtained by the exalted Redeemer, for those that are his, over death and hell. By the resurrection of Christ our spiritual enemies were made to flee, their power was broken, and they were for ever disabled to hurt any of God's people. This victory was first noticed by the women (the she-publishers) to the disciples, (Matth. xxviii. 7.) and by them it was preached to all the world; while believers that tarry at home, that did not see it, neither write it down, nor publish it, enjoyed the benefit of it, and divide the spoil.

V. That, from a low and despaired condition, they had been advanced to splendid and prosperity. When they were bond-slaves in Egypt, and afterward, when they were oppressed sometimes by one potent neighbour, and sometimes by another, they did, as it were, lie among the pots or rubbish, as despised broken vessels, or as vessels in which there was no pleasure—they were black, and dirty, and dishonoured. But God, at length, delivered them from the pots; (Ixxxvi. 6.) and in David's time they were in a fair way to be one of the most prosperous kingdoms in the world, amiable in the eyes of all about them, like the wings of a dove covered with silver, v. 13. "And so, says Dr. Hammond, under Christ's kingdom, the heathen idolaters, that were brought to the basest and most despicable condition of any creatures, worshipping wood and stone, and given up to the vilest lusts, should, from that day forth, take comfort, as one of the service of Christ, and the practice of all Christian virtues, the greatest inward beauties in the world." It may be applied also to the deliverance of the church out of a suffering state, and the comforts of particular believers after their despondencies.

15. The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan; a high hill, as the hill of Bashan. 16. Why leap ye, ye high hills? this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever. 17. The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the holy place. 18. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them. 19. Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even God of our salvation. Selah. 20. He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death. 21. But God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses.

David, having given God praise for what he had done for Israel in general, as the God of Israel, (v. 8.) here comes to give him praise as Zion's God in a special manner; compare ix. 11. Sing praises to the Lord which dwelleth in Zion, for which reason Zion is called the hill of God. 1. He compares it with the hill of Bashan, and other high and fruitful hills, and prefers it before them, v. 15, 16. It is true, Zion was but little and low, in comparison with them, and was not covered over with flocks and herds as they were, yet, upon this account, it has the pre-eminence above them all, that it is the hill of God, the hill which he de- sires to dwell in, and which he favoureth above all others. 2. Note, It is much more honourable to be holy to God, than to be high and great in the world. "Why leap ye, ye high hills? Why do you insult over poor Zion, and boast of your own height? This is the hill which God has chosen, and therefore, though you exceed it in bulk, and be first-rates, yet, because on this the royal flag is hoisted, you must all strike sail to it. "Zion was especially honourable, because it was a type of the gospel-church, which is therefore called mount Zion, (Heb. xii. 22.) and this is intimated here, when he said, The Lord will dwell in it for ever, which must have its accomplishment in the gospel Zion. There is no kingdom in the world comparable to the kingdom of the Redeemer, ne
city comparable to that which is incorporated by the gospel-charter, for there God dwells, and will dwell for ever.

II. He compares it with mount Sinai, of which he had spoken, (v. 8.) and shows that it has the She-power of Sin and Satan in it, that the effectual is not as sensibly, as Sinai itself had, v. 17. Angels are the chariots of God, his chariots of war, which he makes use of against his enemies; his chariots of conveyance, which he sends for his friends, as he did for Elijah, and Lazarus is said to be carried by the angels; his chariots of state, in the midst of which he shows his glory and power. They are vastly numerous; twenty thousands, even thousands multiplied, is comprised of angels in the heavenly Jerusalem, Heb. xi. 22. The enemies David fought with had chariots; (2 Sam. viii. 4.) but what were they, for number or strength, to the chariots of God? While David had them on his side, he needed not to fear those that trusted in chariots and horses, xx. 7. God appeared on mount Sinai, attended with myriads of angels, by whose dispensation the law was given, Acts vii. 52. He comes with ten thousands of saints, Dan. vii. 14. And still in Zion God manifests his glory, and is really present, with a numerous retinue of his heavenly hosts, signified by the cherubims, between which God is said to dwell. So that, as some read the last words of the verse, Sinai is in the sanctuary; the sanctuary was to Israel instead of mount Sinai, whence they received divine oracles. Our Lord Jesus has these chariots at command; when the First Begotten was brought into the world, it was with this charge. Let all the angels of God worship him; (Heb. i. 6.) they attended him upon all occasions, and he is now among them, angels, principalities, and powers, being made subject to him, 1 Pet. iii. 22. And it is intimated in the New Testament, that the angels are present in the solemn religious assemblies of Christians, 1 Cor. xi. 10. Let the woman have a veil on her head, because of the angels; and see Eph. iii. 10.

III. The glory of mount Zion was, the King whom God set on the holy hill, (v. 6.) who came to the daughter of Zion, Matth. xxi. 5. Of his ascension the psalmist here speaks, and to it is expressly applied, (Eph. iv. 8.) Thou hast ascended on high; (v. 18.) compare xlvii. 5, 6. Christ's ascending on high is here spoken of as a thing past, so sure was it; and spoken of to his honour, so great was it. It may include his whole exalted state, but points especially at his ascension into heaven to the right hand of the Father, which was as much our advantage as his advancement. For, 1. He then triumphed over the gates of hell; he led captivity captive; he led his captives in triumph, as great conquerors used to do, making a show of them openly, Col. ii. 15. He led those captives who had led us captives, and who, if he had not interposed, would have held us captive for ever. Nay, he led captivity itself captive, having quite broken the dungeon and the prison of death, he was the Captivity of captivity, Hos. xiii. 14. This speaks the complete victory which Jesus Christ obtained over our spiritual enemies; it was such, that through him we also are more than conquerors, that is, triumphers, Rom. viii. 37. 2. He then opened the gates of heaven to all believers; Thou hast received gifts for men; he gave gifts to men, so the apostle reads it, Eph. iv. 8. For he received power on his hands from the anointing of the Spirit was poured, that from him it might descend to the skirts of his garments. And he gave what he had received; having received power to give eternal life, he bestows it upon as many as were given him, John xvii. 2. Thou hast received gifts for men, not for angels; fallen angels were not to be made saints, nor standing angels made gospel ministers, Heb. ii. 5. Not for Jews only, but for all men; whoever will may reap the benefit of these gifts. The apostle tells us what these gifts were, (Eph. iv. 11.) prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, the institution of a gospel-ministry, and the three; that we have for both which are to be valued as the gifts of Heaven, and the fruits of Christ's ascension. Thou hast received gifts in man; so the margin; that is, in the human nature which Christ was pleased to clothe himself with, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-Priest in things pertaining to God. In him, as Mediator, all fulness dwells, that from his fulness we might receive. To magnify the kindness of his love, of Christ taketh his seat to receive gifts for us, the psalmist observes, (1.) The forefathers had made of them. He received them for the rebellious also, for those that had been rebellious; so all the children of men had been in their fallen state; perhaps it is especially meant of the Gentiles, that had been enemies in their minds by wicked works, Col. i. 21. For them these gifts are received, to them they are given, that they might lay hold on their arms, that their eminence might be slain, and that the Lord might set up his throne over them. This magnifies the grace of Christ exceedingly, that through him rebels are, upon their submission, not only pardoned, but preferred. They have commission given them under Christ, which some say, in our law, amounts to the reversing of an attainer, Christ came to a rebellious world not to condemn it, but that through him it might be saved. (2.) The favour designed us in them; He received gifts for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them; that he might set up his throne, and Christ might dwell in the hearts of particular persons that had been rebellious. The gracious intention of Christ's undertaking was to rear up the tabernacle of God among men, that he might dwell with them, and they might be living temples to his praise, Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

IV. The glory of Zion's King, is, that he is a Saviour and Benefactor to all his willing people, and a consuming Fire to all those that persist in rebellion against him, v. 19., 21. We have here good and evil, life and death, the blessing and the curse, set before us, like that, (Mark xvi. 16.) He that believeth shall be saved; he that believes not shall be damned. 1. They that take God for their God, and so give upon themselves to him to be his people, shall be loaded with his benefits, and to them he will be a God of salvation. If in sincerity we avouch God to be our God, and seek to him as such, (1.) He will continually do us good, and furnish us with occasion for praise. Having mentioned the gifts Christ received for us, (v. 18.) fitly does he subjoin, in the next words, Blessed be the Lord, for it is owing to the mediation of Christ, that his people live comfortably, and are daily loaded with benefits. So many, so weighty, are the gifts of God's bounty to us, that he may be truly said to load us with them; he pours out blessings till there be no room to receive them, Mal. iii. 10. So constant are they, and so unwearyed is he in doing us good, that he daily loads us with them, according as the necessity of every day requires. (2.) He will, at length, be glorious among us, and will give them the everlasting salvation, the salvation of God, which he will show to them that order their conversation aright, (1. 25.) the salvation of the soul. He that daily loads us with benefits will not put us off with present things for a portion, but will be the God of our salvation;
and what he gives us now, he gives as the God of salvation, pursuant to the great design of our salvation. He is our God, and therefore he will be the God of eternal salvation to us, for that only will answer the vast extent of his covenant-relation to us as our God. But has he power to complete this salvation? Yes, certainly, for unto God the Lord belong the issues from death. The keys of hell and death are put into the hand of the Lord Jesus, Rev. i. 18. He can and will judge an escape from death himself in his resurrection, has both authority and power to rescue those that are his from the dominion of death, by altering the property of it to them when they die, and giving them a complete victory over it when they shall rise again; for the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. And to those that shall thus for ever escape death, and shall find such an outlet from it as not to be hurt of the second death, to them surely all deliverance from temporal death are mercies indeed, and come from God as the God of their salvation. See 2 Cor. i. 10.

2. They that persist in their enmity to him, will certainly be ruined, (v. 21.) God shall wound the head of his enemies, of Satan the old serpent, of whom it was by the first promise foretold, that the Seed of the woman should break his head, Gen. iii. 15. He shall destroy all the powers of the nations, whether Jews or Gentiles, that oppose him and his kingdom among men, ex. 6. He shall wound the heads over many countries; of all those, whoever they are, that will not have him to reign over them, for those he accounts his enemies, and they shall be brought forth and slain before him, Luke xix. 27. He will wound the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses. Note, Those who go on still in their trespasses, and hate to be reformed, God looks upon as his enemies, and will treat them accordingly. In calling the head the hairy scalp, perhaps there is an allusion to Absalom, whose bushy hair was his halter. Or it denotes either the most fierce and barbarous of his enemies, who let their hair grow, to make themselves look the more frightful; or the most fine and delicate of his enemies, who are nice about their hair. He neither delivers them in his own person, nor delivers them from the fatal wounds which Divine Justice will give to the heads of those that go on in their sins.

22. The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan; I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea: 23. That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same. 24. They have seen thy goings, O God; even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary. 25. The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the damsels playing with timbrels. 26. Bless ye God in the congregations, even the Lord from the fountain of Israel. 27. There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the princes of Judah and their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali. 28. Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us. 29. Because of the temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee. 30. Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people, till every one submit himself with pieces of silver; scatter thou the people that delight in war. 31. Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.

In these verses, we have three things.

I. The gracious promise which God makes of the redemption of his people, and their victory over his and their enemies; (v. 22, 23.) The Lord said, in his own gracious purpose and promise, "I will do great things for my people, as the God of their salvation," v. 20. God will not fail the expectations of those who by faith take him for their God. It is promised, 1. That he will set them in safety from their danger, as he had done formerly: I will again bring them from the depths of the sea, as he did Israel, when he brought them out of the slavery of Egypt into the case and liberty of the wilderness; and I will again bring them from Bashan, as he did Israel, when he brought them from their wants and wanderings in the wilderness into the fulness and settlement of the land of Canaan; for the land of Bashan was on the other side Jordan, where they had wars with Sihon and Og, and whence their next removal was into Canaan. Note, The former appearances of God's power and goodness for his people should encourage their faith and hope in him for the future, that what he has done he will do again. He will set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people; (Isa. xi. 11.) and we may perhaps see repeated all the wonders which our fathers told us of. But this is not all; 2. That he will make them victorious over their enemies; (v. 23.) That thy feet may be dipped, as the footman in the blood of the powerful, in the blood of thy enemies; as the footman of Saul shed like water in great abundance, and the tongue of thy dogs may lap in the same. Dogs licked the blood of Ahab; and, in the destruction of the anti-Christian generation, we read of blood up to the horses' bridles, Rev. xiv. 20. The victories with which God blessed David's forces over the enemies of Israel are here prophesied of; but as types of Christ's victor over death and the grave, for himself, and for all believers, in his resurrection and theirs by virtue of his) out of the earth; and of the destruction of the enemies of Christ and his church, who shall have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy.

II. The welcome entertainment which God's own people shall give to these glorious discoveries of his grace, both in his word and in his works. Has he spoken in his holiness? Has he said he will bring again from Bashan? What then is required of us in return to this?

1. That we observe his motions; (v. 24.) "They have seen, thy people have seen, thy goings, O God; while others regard not the work of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, they have seen the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary." See here, (1.) How an active faith appropriates God; he is God and King; but that is not all, he is my God and my King. Though he thus take him for theirs, may see him, in all his outgoings, acting as their God, as their King, for their good, and in answer to their prayers. (2.) Where God's most remarkable outgoings are; even in the sanctuary, in and by his word and ordinances; and among his people, in the gospel-church especially, in and by which is made known the manifold wisdom of God. These outgoings of his in the sanctuary for our instruction, the outgoings of the morning and the evening, and more loudly proclaim his eternal power and godhead. (3.) What is our duty in reference to these outgoings?
ings, which is to observe them. This is the finger of God; surely God is with us of a truth.
2. That we give him glory in the most devout and solemn manner. When we see his going in his sanctuary,

(1.) Let those that are immediately employed in the service of the temple praise him, v. 25. It was asserted that the Levites, some of whom were singers, and others players on instruments, who had the nearest views of his outings in his sanctuary, should lead in his praises. And, it being a day of extraordinary triumph, among them were damnsel playing with timbrels, to complete the concert.

"Thy God" (God the Father) "has commanded thy strength," has made thee strong for himself, as the man of his right hand, (Ixx. 17.) has treasured up strength in thee for us; therefore we pray, that thou, O Son, wilt strengthen what thou hast wrought for us, will accomplish thine undertaking for us, by finishing thy good work in us." III. The powerful invitation and inducement which would thereby be given to those that are without, to come in and join themselves to the church, v. 29—31. "This was in part fulfilled by the success which the preachers to the Jewish religion in the days of David and Solomon had; but it was to have its full accomplishment in the conversion of the Gentile nations to the faith of Christ, and the making of them fellow-heirs, and of the same body, with the seed of Israel, Eph. iii. 6.

1. Some shall submit for fear; (v. 30.) "The company of shearmen, that stand it out against Christ and his gospel, that are not willing to be ruled by him, that persecute the preachers and profaners of his church, that are turned every one of them according to his own inclinations, as a multitude of bulls, fat and wanton as the calves of the people," (which is a description of those Jews and Gentiles that opposed the gospel of Christ, and did what they could to prevent the setting up of his kingdom in the world,) "Lord, rebuke them, abate their pride, assuage their malice, and confound their devices, till conquered by the convictions of their consciences, and the many checks of providence, they come to know and own, at length, to submit themselves with pieces of silver, with gladness to make their peace with the church upon any terms." Even Judas submitted himself with pieces of silver, when he returned them with this confession, I have betrayed innocent blood. And see Rev. iii. 9. Many, by being rebuked, have been happily saved from being ruined. But as for those that will not submit, notwithstanding these rebukes, they play for their dispersion, which amounts to a prophecy of it; Scattered thou the people that delight in war, who take such a pleasure in opposing Christ, that they will never be reconciled to him. This may refer to the unbelieving Jews, who delighted in making war upon the holy seed, and would not submit themselves, and were therefore scattered over the face of the earth. David had himself been a man of war; but could appeal to God, that he never delighted in war and bloodshed for its own sake; as for those that did, and therefore would not submit to the fairest terms of peace, he does not doubt but God would scatter them. Those are left to all the sacred principles of humanity, as well as Christianity, that can delight in war, and take a pleasure in contention; let them expect, that sooner or later, they shall have enough of it, Isa. xxxiii. 1. Rev. xiii. 10.

2. Others shall submit willingly; (v. 29, 31.) Because of thy temple at Jerusalem, (this David speaks of in faith, for the temple of Jerusalem was not built in his time, only the materials and model were prepared,) kings shall bring presents unto thee, rich presents shall be brought, such as are fit for kings to bring. Even kings themselves, that stand much upon the punctilios of honour and prerogative, shall court the favour of Christ, at a great expense. The temple is God's temple, that beauty in the service of God; the temple was sanctified with him, and in the gospel of Christ, which went forth from Jerusalem, that is enough to invite kings themselves to bring presents to God, to present themselves to him as living sacrifices, and with themselves the best performances. He mentions Egypt and Ethiopia, two countries out of which

2. Some make this whole verse to be a believer's address to the Messiah, whom David calls God, as he had done, xlv. 6, 8. "Thy God" (God the Father) "has commanded thy strength," has made thee strong for himself, as the man of his right hand, (Ixxx. 17.) has treasured up strength in thee for us; therefore we pray, that thou, O Son, wilt strengthen what thou hast wrought for us, will accomplish thine undertaking for us, by finishing thy good work in us."
subjects and supplicants were least to be expected; (v. 31.) Princes shall come out of Egypt, as ambassadors to seek God's favour, and submit to him; and they shall be accepted, for the Lord of Hosts shall thereupon bless them, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, Isa. xix. 25. Even Ethiopia, that had stretched out her hand to God, in prayer, in presents, and to take hold on him, and that soon; Agree with thine adversary quickly. Out of all nations some shall be gathered in to Christ, and be owned by him.

32. Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord; Selah: 33. To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens which were of old: lo, he doth send out his voice, and that a mighty voice. 34. Ascribe ye strength unto God; his excellency is over Israel, and his strength is in the clouds. 35. O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places: the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people. Blessed be God.

The psalmist, having prayed for, and prophesied of, the conversion of the Gentiles, here invites them to come in and join with the devout Israelites in praising God, intimating that their accession to the church would be the matter of their joy and praise; (v. 32.) Let the kingdoms of the earth sing praises to the Lord; they all ought to join in it, and when they become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ, they will do it. God is here proposed to them as the proper Object of praise, upon several accounts.

1. Because of his supreme and sovereign dominion; He rides upon the heavens of heavens, which were of old; (v. 33.) compare v. 4. He has, from the beginning, nay, from before all time, prepared his throne; he sits on the circuit of heaven; guides all the motions of the heavenly bodies; and, from the highest heavens, which are the residence of his glory, dispenses the influences of his power and goodness to this lower world.

2. Because of his awful and terrible majesty; He sends out his voice, and that a mighty voice; which may refer either generally to the thunder, which is called the voice of the Lord, and is said to be powerful and full of majesty, (xxxix. 3, 4;) or in particular to that thunder in which God spake to Israel at mount Sinai.

3. Because of his mighty power; Ascribe ye strength unto God; (v. 34.) acknowledge him to be a God of such irresistible power, that it is folly to contend with him, and wisdom to submit to him; acknowledge that he has power sufficient both to protect his faithful subjects, and to destroy his stubborn adversaries; and give him the glory of all the instances of his omnipotence. Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. We must acknowledge his power, (1.) In the kingdom of grace. His excellency is over Israel; he shows his sovereign care in protecting and governing his church; that is the excellency of his power, which is employed for the good of his people. (2.) In the kingdom of providence: His strength is in the clouds, whence comes the thunder of his power, the small drops of rain, and the great rain from heaven. Though God has his strength in the clouds, yet he condescends to gather his Israel under the shadow of his wings, Deut. xxxiii. 26.

4. Because of the glory of his sanctuary, and the wonders wrought there; (v. 35.) O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places. God is to be admired and adored with reverence and godly fear by all those that attend him in his holy places, that receive his oracles, that observe his operations according to them, and that pay their homage to him. He displays that out of his holy places, which speaks aloud that he will be sanctified in those that come nigh unto him. Out of heaven, his holy place above, he does, and will, show himself a terrible God. Nor is any attribute of God more dreadful to sinners than his holiness.

5. Because of the grace bestowed upon his people; The God of Israel is he that gives strength and power unto his people, which the gods of the nations, that were vanity and a lie, could not give to their worshippers; how should they help them, when they could not help themselves? All Israel's strength against their enemies came from God; they owned they had no might of their own, 2 Chron. xx. 12. And all our sufficiency for our spiritual work and warfare is from the grace of God. It is through Christ strengthening us that we can do all things, and not otherwise; and therefore he must have the glory of all we do, (cxxxv. 1;) and our humble thanks for enabling us to do it, and accepting the work of his own hands in us. If it be the God of Israel that gives strength and power unto his people, they ought to say, Blessed be God. If all be from him, let all be to him.

PSALM LXIX.

David penned this psalm, when he was in affliction; and in it, 1. He complains of the great distress and trouble he was in; and earnestly begs of God to relieve and succor him; (v. 1-6.) 2. He gives an account of the judgments of God upon his persecutors, v. 22-29. 3. He concludes with the voice of joy and praise, in an assurance that God would help and succor him, and would do well for the church, v. 30-36. Now, in this, David was a type of Christ, and all the predictions in this psalm are applied to Christ in the New Testament, and are said to have their accomplishment in him, v. 4, 9, 21; and v. 22. refers to the enemies of Christ. So that (like the 22d psalm) it begins with the humiliation, and ends with the exaltation, of Christ, one branch of which was the destruction of the Jewish nation for persecuting him, which the imprecations here are predictions of. In singing this psalm, we must have an eye to the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that followed; not forgetting the sufferings of Christians too, and the glory that shall follow them; for it may lead us to think of the ruin reserved for the persecutors, and the rest reserved for the persecuted.

To the chief musician upon Shoshannim. A psalm of David.

1. SAVE me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. 2. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. 3. I am weary of my crying; my throat is dried; mine eyes fail while I wait for my God. 4. They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongly, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away. 5. O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee. 6. Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel. 7. Because for thy sake I have borne reproach: shame hath covered my face. 8. I am become a stran-
ger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children. 9. For the zeal of thy house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me. 10. When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach. 11. I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb unto them. 12. They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I was the song of the drunkards.

In these verses, David complains of his troubles, intermixing with those complaints some requests for relief.

I. His complaints are very sad, and he pours them out before the Lord, as one that hoped thus to ease himself of a burthen that lay very heavy upon him.

1. He complains of the deep impressions that his troubles made upon his spirit; (v. 1, 2.) "The waters of affliction, those bitter waters, are come unto my soul; not only threaten my life, but disquiet my mind; they fill my head with perplexing cares, and my heart with oppressive grief; so that I cannot enjoy God and myself as I used to." We shall bear up under our troubles, if we can but keep them from our hearts; but when they put us out of the possession of our own souls, our case is bad. The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but what shall we do when the spirit is wounded? That was David's case here. His thoughts sought for something to confide in, and with which to support his hope, but he found nothing; he sunk in deep mire, where there was no standing, no firm footing; the considerations that used to support and encourage him, now failed him, or were out of the way, and he was ready to give himself up for gone. He sought for something to comfort himself with, but found himself in deep waters that overflowed him, overwhelmed him. He was like a sinking drowning man, in such confusion and constellation. This points at Christ's sufferings in his soul, and the inward agony he was in, when he said, Now is my soul troubled; and My soul is exceeding sorrowful; for it was his soul that he made an offering for sin. And it instructs us, when we are in affliction, to commit the keeping of our souls to God, that he may be neither sorded with discontent, nor sink into despair.

2. He complains of the long continuance of his troubles; (v. 5.) I am weary of my crying. Though he could not keep his head above water, yet he cried to his God, and the more death was in his view, the more life was in his prayers; yet he had not immediately an answer of peace given in, no, nor so much of that support and comfort in praying, which God's people used to have; so that he was almost overpowered by the sense of crying, grew hoarse, and his throat so dried, that he could cry no more. Nor had he his wonted satisfaction in believing, hoping, and expecting relief, Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God; he had almost looked his eyes out, in expectation of deliverance. Yet his pleading this with God, is an indication that he is resolved not to give up believing and praying. His throat is dried, but his heart is not; and what the soul does, the mouth speaks. The Lord Jesus, on the cross, cried out, Why hast thou forsaken me? Yet, at the same time, he kept hold of his relation to him, My God, my God.

3. He complains of the malice and multitude of his enemies, their injustice and cruelty, and the hardships they put upon him, v. 4. They hated him, they would destroy him, for hatred aims at the destruction of the person hated; but what was his iniquity, what was his sin, what provocation had he given them, that they were so spiteful toward him? None at all; "They hate me without cause, and there is no deceit in my tongue," (Ps. 120.1.) "I will not set my mind upon evildoers, when the wicked seekth my soul to cast it down," (Ps. 119.135.) Our Saviour answered it to himself, (John xv. 25.) They hated me without a cause. We are apt to use this, in justification of our passion against those that hate us, that we never gave them cause to hate us. But it is rather an argument why we should bear it patiently, because then we suffer as Christ did, and may then expect that God will right us; "They are mine enemies wrongfully, for I have been to them good," (Ps. 57.6.) and see where unrighteousness reigns so much, we must not wonder if we meet with those that are our enemies wrongfully. Let us take care that we never do wrong, and then we may the better bear it, if we receive wrong. These enemies were not to be despised, but were very formidable, both for their number, They are more than the hairs of mine head, (Christ's enemies were numerous, they that came to seize him were a great multitude; how were they increased that troubled him?) and for their strength, They are mighty, in authority and power. We are weak, but our enemies are strong; for we wrestle against principalities and powers. Then I restored that which I took not away. Applying this to David, (1.) It was what his enemies compelled him to; they made him suffer for that offence which he had never been guilty of. (2.) It was what he consented to, that, if possible, he might pacify them, and make them to be at peace with him, and he might have insisted upon the laws of justice and honour, the former not requiring, and the latter commonly thought to forbid, the restoring of that which we took not away, for that is to wrong ourselves both in our wealth and in our reputation. Yet the case may be such sometimes, that it may become our duty. Blessed Paul, though free from all men, yet, for the honour of Christ, and the edification of the church, made himself a servant to all. But, applying it to Christ, it is an observable description of the satisfaction which he made to God for our sin by his blood; Then he restored that which he took not away; he underwent the punishment that was due to us, paid our debt, suffered for our offence. God's glory, in some instances of it, was taken away by the sir of man; man's honour, and peace, and happiness, were taken away; it was not he that took them away, but yet by his death and atonement.

4. He complains of the unkindness of his friends and relations, and this is a grievance which with an irascible mind cuts as deep as any other; (v. 8.) I am become a stranger to my brethren; they make themselves strange to me, and use me as a stranger, are shy of conversing with me, and ashamed to own me. This was fulfilled in Christ, whose brethren did not believe on him, (John vii. 5.) who came from his mother's womb, and not by his brethren. (John i. 11.) and who was forsaken by his disciples, whom he had been free with as his brethren.

5. He complains of the contempt that was put upon him, and the reproach with which he was continually loaded. And in this, especially, his complaint points at Christ, who for our sakes submitted to the greatest disgrace, and made himself of no reputation; we having by sin injured God in his honour, Christ became the sin offering, and he was forsaking himself of the honour due to him by an incarnate Deity, but by submitting to the greatest dishonours that could be done to any man. Two things David here takes notice of as aggravations of the indignities done him: (1.) The ground and matter of the reproach, v. 10, 11. They ridiculed him for that by which he both humbled himself and honoured God. When men lift themselves up in pride and vain glory, they are justly laughed at for it; but David chastened his soul, and clothed himself with sack-
cloth, and, from his abusing himself, they took occasion to trample upon him. When men dis honour God, it is just that it turn to their dishonour; but when David, purely in devotion to God, and to testify his respect to him, wept, and chastened his soul with fasting, and manused with his garments, the instruments used to do; instead of commending his devotion, and recommending it as a great example of piety, they did all they could both to discourage him in it, and to prevent others from following his good example, for that was his reproach; they laughed at him, as a fool, for mortifying himself thus; and even for this he became a proverb to them; they made him the common subject of their banter. We must not think it strange if we be ill-spoken of for that which is well done, and in which we have reason to hope that we are accepted of God. Our Lord Jesus was stoned for his good works, (John x. 32.) and, when he cried, Eli, Eli, My God, my God, was ban tered, as if he called for Elias. (2.) The persons that reproached him, v. 12. [1.] Even the gravest, and the most honourable, from whom better was expected; They that sit in the gate speak against me, and their reproaches for the dictates of senators, and the decrees of judges, and are credited accordingly. [2.] The meanest, and the most despicable, the objects, (xxxv. 15.) the scum of the country, the children of fools, yea, the children of base men; (Job xxx. 8.) and he was the song of the drunkards, they made themselves and their companions merry with him. See the bad consequences of the sin of drunkenness; it makes men desirers of those things are good, 2 Tim. iii. 5. When the king was made sick with bottles of wine, he stretched out his hand with scorners, Hos. vii. 5. The bench of the drunkards is the seat of the scornful. See what is common the lot of the best of men; they that are the praise of the wise, are the song of fools: but it is easy to those that rightly judge of things, to despise being thus despised.

II. His confessions of sin are very serious; (v. 5.) "O God, thou knowest my foolishness, both what is, and what is not; my sins that I am guilty of are not hid from thee, and therefore thou knowest how innocent I am of those crimes which they charge upon me." Note, Even then when, as to men's unjust accusations, we plead Not guilty, yet, before God, we must acknowledge ourselves to have deserved all that is brought upon us, and much worse. This is the genuine confession of a penitent, who knows that he cannot prosper in covering his sins, and that therefore it is his wisdom to acknowledge it, because it is naked and open before God. 1. He knows the corruption of our nature; Thou knowest the foolishness that is bound up in my heart. All our sins take rise from our foolishness. 2. He knows the transgressions of our lives; they are not hid from him, no not our heart-sins, no not those that are committed most secretly. They are all done in his sight, and are never past, though they be covered and pardoned. This may be applied to Christ, for he knew no sin, yet he was made sin for us; and God knew it, nor was it hid from him, when he pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief.

III. His supplications are very earnest. 1. For himself; (v. 1.) "Save me, O God, save me from sinking, from despairing." Thus Christ was heled in that he feared that he was saved from letting fall the burden of our sinning, Heb. v. 7. 2. For his friends; (v. 6.) Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, and that seek thee, O God of Israel, (under these two characters we ought to seek God, and in seeking him to wait on him, as the God of hosts, who has all power to help, and as the God of Israel in covenant with his people, whom therefore he is engaged in honour and truth to help,) let not them be ashamed and confounded for my sake. This intimates his fear, that, if God did not appear for him, it would be a discouragement to all other good people, and would give them occasion to think it over them; it intimates too his earnest desire, that, wherewith or became of him, all that seek God, and wait upon him, might be kept in heart, and in countenance, and might neither be discouraged in themselves, nor exposed to contempt from others. If Jesus Christ had not been owned and accepted of his Father in his sufferings, all that seek God, and wait for him, had been ashamed and confounded; but they have received him accepted in his name come boldly to the throne of grace. IV. His plea is very powerful, v. 7, 9. Reproach was one of the greatest of his burdens; "Lord, roll away the reproach, and plead my cause, for, 1. It is for thee that I am reproached, for serving thee and trusting in thee; For thy sake I have borne reproach. Those that are evil spoken of for well doing, may with an humble confidence leave it to God to bring forth their righteousness as the light. It is easy that I am reproached. The zeal of thine house has eaten me up, has made me forget myself, and do that which they wickedly turn to my reproach. They that hate thee and thy house, for that reason hate me, because they know how zealously affected I am to it. That is it that has made them ready to eat me up, and has eaten up all the love and respect I had among them." They that blasphemed God, and spoke ill of his word and ways, did therefore reproach David, for believing in his word, and walking in his ways. Or it may be considered as an instance of David's zeal for God's house, that he resented all the indignities done to God's name, as if they had been done to his own name. He laid to heart all the dishonour done to God, and the contempt cast upon religion; these he laid nearer to his heart than any outward troubles of his own. And therefore he had reason to hope God would interest himself in the reproaches cast upon him, because he had always interested himself in the reproaches cast upon God. Both the parts of this verse are applied to Christ: (1.) It was an instance of his love to his Father, that, the zeal of his house did even eat him up, when he whipped the buyers and sellers out of the temple, which minded his disciples of this text, John ii. 17. (2.) It was an instance of his self-denial, and that he was so far interested in himself, that the reproaches cast upon him, that reproached God fell upon him, (Rom. xvi. 8.) and therein he set us an example.

13. But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O Lord, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me: in the truth of thy salvation. 14. Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters. 15. Let not the water-flood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me. 16. Hear me, O Lord; for thy loving-kindness is good: turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies. 17. And hide not thy face from thy servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily. 18. Draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it: deliver me, because of mine enemies. 19. Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour; my adversaries
are all before thee. 20. Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. 21. They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

David had been speaking before of the spiteful reproaches which his enemies cast upon him; But as for me, my prayer is unto thee. They spoke ill of him for his fasting and praying, and for that he was made the song of the drunkards; but, notwithstanding that, he resolved to continue on for the love of God, and therefore was not sooner for well-doing, we must never be jereed out of it. Those can bear but little for God, and their confessing of his name before men, that cannot bear a scoff and a hard word, rather than quit their duty. David's enemies were very abusive to him, but this was his comfort, that he had a God to go to, with whom he would lodge his cause. They think to carry their cause by insolence and calumny; but I use other methods, saith the psalmist, and that is, O Lord, and it was in an acceptable time; not the less acceptable for being a time of affliction. God will not drive us from him, though it is need that drives us to him; nay, it is the more acceptable, because the misery and distress of God's people make them so much the more the objects of his pity: it is seasonable for him to help them, when all other helps fail, and they are undone, and feel that they are, if they do not help them. We find this expression used concerning Christ, (Isa. xlix. 8.) In an acceptable time have I heard thee. Now observe

I. What his requests are.

1. That he might have a gracious audience given to his complaints, the cry of his affliction, and the desire of his heart. Hear me; (v. 3.) and again, Hear me, O Lord; (v. 16.) Hear me speedily; (v. 17.) not only hear what I say, but grant what I ask. Christ knew that the Father heard him always, John xi. 42. 2. That he might be rescued out of his troubles; might be saved from sinking under the load of grief; Deliver me out of the mire; let me not stick in it, (so some,) but help me out, and set my feet on a rock, xl. 2.) might be saved from his enemies, that they might not swallow him up, nor have their will against him; Let me be delivered from them that hate me, as a lamb from the paw of the lion, v. 14. Though I came into deep waters, (v. 2.) where I am ready to conclude that the floods will overflow me, yet let my fears be prevented, and silenced; let not the water-flood, though it flow upon me, overflow me, v. 15. Let me not fall into the gulf of despair, let not that deep swallow me up, let not that pit shut her mouth upon me, for then I am undone. He gave himself for lost, in the beginning of the psalm, yet now he has his head above water, and is not so weary of crying as he thought himself. That God would do this, (v. 3.) God would shore him, and not hide his face from him, v. 17. The tokens of God's favour to us, and the light of his countenance shining upon us, are enough to keep our spirits from sinking in deepest mire of outward troubles, nor need we desire any more to make us safe and easy, v. 18. Draw nigh to my soul, to manifest thyself to it, and that shall redeem it.

II. What his pleas are, to enforce these petitions. This pleads God's mercy and truth; (v. 12.) In the multitude of thy mercy hear me. There is a mercy in God, a multitude of mercies, all kinds of mercy, inexhaustible mercy, mercy enough for all, enough for each; and hence we must take our encouragement in praying. The truth also of his salvation, the truth of all those promises of salvation which he has made to those that trust in him, is a further encouragement. He repeats his argument taken from the mercy of God; 4. Hear me, for thy loving-kindness is good; it is so in itself, it is rich, and plentiful, and abundant, it is so in the account of all the saints, they are so precious to them, it is their life, their joy, their all; Oh, let me have the benefit of it! Turn to me, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies," v. 16. See how highly he speaks of the goodness of God; in him there are mercies, tender mercies, and a multitude of them. If we think well of God, and continue to do so, under the greatest hardships, we need not fear but God will do well for us; for he takes pleasure in them that hope in his mercy, cxlv. 11.

2. He pleads particularly the reproach he was under, and the indignities that were done him; (v. 19.) Thou hast known my reproach, my shame, and my dishonour. See what a stress is laid upon this: for, in the sufferings of Christ for us, perhaps not less a cause; and more to the satisfaction he made for sin, which has been so indelibly imprinted upon his honour, than the reproach, and shame, and dishonour, he underwent; which God took notice of, and accepted, as more than an equivalent for the everlasting shame and contempt which our sins had deserved, who therefore must by repentance take shame to ourselves, and bear the reproach of our youth. And if at any time we be called out to suffer reproach, and shame, and dishonour, for his sake, this may be our argument, our ground of prayer. It is before-hand with us, so he will not be behind-hand with us. The psalmist speaks the language of an ingenuous nature, when he says, (v. 20.) Reproach has broken my heart, I am full of heaviness; for it bears hard upon one that knows the worth of a good name, to be oppressed with a had one; but, when we consider what a name it is to be dis honoured for God, and what a favour to be counted worthy to bear this name, (as they deemed it, Acts v. 41.) we shall see there is no reason at all why it should sit so heavy, or be any heart-breaking to us.

3. He pleads the insolence and cruelty of his enemies; (v. 18.) Deliver me because of mine enemies, because they were such as he had before described them; (v. 4.) Mine adversaries are all before thee, (v. 19.) thou knowest what sort of men they are, what danger I am in from them, what enemies they are to thee, and how much thou art reflected upon in what they do and design against me. One instance of their barbarity is given, (v. 21.) They gave me gall for my meat, (the word signifies a bitter herb, and is often joined with wormwood,) and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. This was literally fulfilled in Christ, and did so directly point to him, that he would not say It is finished, till this was fulfilled; and, in order that his enemies might have occasion to fulfil it, he said, I thirst, John xix. 28, 29. Some think that the hyssop which they put to his mouth, with vinegar, was the bitter herb which they gave him with the vinegar for his meat. See how particularly the sufferings of Christ were foretold, which proves the scripture to be the word of God; and how exactly the predictions were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, which proves him to be the true Messiah. This is he that should come, and we are to look for no other.

4. He pleads his own distress and affliction; (v. 20.) I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; they all disliked him, like the brooks in summer. This was fulfilled in Christ, for in his sufferings all his disciples forsook Vol. III—3 E.
him and fled. We cannot expect too little from men, miserable comforters are they all; nor can we expect too much from God, for he is the Father of mercy, and the God of all comfort and consolation.

22. Let their table become a snare before them; and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap. 23. Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake. 24. Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them. 25. Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents. 26. For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded. 27. Add iniquity unto their iniquity; and let them not come into thy righteousness. 28. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous. 29. But I am poor and sorrowful: let thy salvation, J God, set me up on high.

These imprecations are not David's prayers against his enemies, but prophecies of the destruction of Christ's persecutors, especially the Jewish nation, which our Lord himself foretold with tears, and which was accomplished about forty years after the death of Christ. The two first verses of this paragraph are expressly applied to the judgments of God upon the unbelieving Jews by the apostle, (Rom. xi. 9, 10.) and therefore the whole must look that way. The rejection of the Jews for rejecting Christ, as it was a signal instance of God's justice, and an earnest of the vengeance which God will at last take on all that are obstinate in their infidelity, so it was, and continues to be, a convincing proof of the truth of the Christian religion; one great objection against it, at first, was, that it set aside the ceremonial law; but its doing so was effectually justified, and that objection removed, when God so remarkably set it aside by the utter destruction of the temple, and the shinking of those, with the Mosaic economy, that obstinately adhered to it, in opposition to the gospel of Christ.

Let us observe here,

1. What the judgments are which should come upon the crucifiers of Christ; not upon all of them, for there were those who had a hand in his death, and yet repented, and found mercy, (Acts ii. 23.—iii. 14, 15.) but upon those of them and their successors, who justified it by an obstinate infidelity, and rejection of his gospel, and by an invertebrate enmity to his disciples and followers. See 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16. It is here foretold.

1. That their sacrifices and offerings should be mischief and prejudice to them; (v. 22.) Let their table become a snare. The altar of the Lord, which is called his table and theirs, because, in feasting upon the sacrifices, they were partakers of the altar: this should have been for their welfare or peace, for the altar was round, like a table, and a trap to them, for by their affection and adherence to the altar they were held fast in their infidelity, and hardened in their prejudices against Christ, that altar which they had no right to eat of who continued to serve the tabernacle, Heb. xii. 10.

Or, it may be understood of their common creature-comforts, even their necessary food; they had given Christ gall and vinegar, and therefore judgment shall their meat and drink be made gall and vinegar to them. When the supports of life and delights of sense, through the corruption of our nature, become an occasion of sin to us, and are made the food and fuel of our sensuality, then our table is a snare, which is a good reason why we should never feed ourselves without fear, Jude 12.

2. That they should never have the comfort either of that knowledge, or of that peace, which believers are blessed with in the gospel of Christ. v. 23. That they should be given up, (1.) To a judicial blindness; Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and their heart hardened. Their sin was, that they would not see, but shut their eyes against the light, loving darkness rather; their punishment was, that they should not see, but be given up to their own hearts' lusts, which were hardening; and the god of this world should be permitted to blind their minds, 2 Cor. iv. 4. This was foretold concerning them, (Isa. vi. 10.) and Christ ratified it, Matth. xiii. 14, 15. John xii. 40. (2.) To a judicial distemper, which opens the way to comfort, such as that of Paul, (Acts ix. 6.) he trembled and was astonished; but this is a terror that shall never end in peace, but shall make their loins continually to shake, through horror of conscience, as Belshazzar, when the joints of his loins were loosed. Let them be driven to despair, and filled with constant confusion. This was fulfilled in the desperate counsels of the Jews, when the Romans came upon them. 3. That they should fall and lie under God's anger and fiery indignation; (v. 24.) Pour out thine indignation upon them. Note, Those who reject God's great salvation proffered to them, may justly fear that his indignation will be poured out upon them; for they that submit not to the Son of his love, will certainly be made the generation of his wrath. It is the doom passed on those who believe not in Christ, that the wrath of God abideth on them, (John iii. 36.) he takes hold of them, and will never let them go. Salvation itself will not save those that are not willing to be ruled by it. Behold the goodness and severity of God!

4. That their place and nation should be utterly taken away, the very thing they were afraid of, and to prevent which, as they pretended, they persecuted Christ; John xxi. 48. (v. 23.) Let their habitation be desolate, which was fulfilled when their country was utterly wasted, their temples and churches, and for their sakes, was ploughed as a field, Mic. iii. 12. The temple was the house which they were in a particular manner proud of; but this was left unto them desolate, Matth. xxviii. 38. Yet that is not all, it ought to be some satisfaction to us, if we be cut off from the enjoyment of our possessions, that others will have the benefit of them when we are dislodged; but is here added, Let none dwell in their tents, which was remarkably fulfilled in Judah and Jerusalem, for, after the destruction of the Jews, it was long ere the country was inhabited to any purpose. But this is applied particularly to Judas, by St. Peter, Acts i. 20. For he being felo de se— a suicide, we may suppose his estate was confiscated, so that his habitation was desolate, and no man of his kindred dwelt therein.

5. That their way to ruin should be down-hill, and nothing should stop them, nor any power to prevent it. This is the case of the world Jews, as they were, and we may say, of all men, by reason of their discussing to themselves, to add iniquity to iniquity. Those that are bad, if they be given up to their own hearts' lusts, will certainly be worse; they will add sin to sin, they will add rebellion to their sin, Job xxxiv. 37. It is said of the Jews, that they filled up their sin always, 1 Thess. ii. 16. Add the punishment of iniquity to their iniquity, so some read it, for the same word signifies both sin and punishment, so close is their connexion, that punishment in sin, God will reckon for it. But those that have multiplied to sin, may yet find mercy, for
God multiplies to pardon, through the righteousness of the Mediator; and therefore, that they might be precluded from all hope of mercy, he adds, Let them not come into thy righteousness, to receive the benefits of the righteousness of God, which is by faith in a Mediator, Phil. iii. 9. Not that God shuts out any from that righteousness, for the gospel excludes none that do not by their unbelief exclude themselves; but let them be left to take their own course, and they will never come into this government; for, being ignorant of the demands of God's righteousness, and going about to establish the merit of their own, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. They have been too proud and self-willed, that they will not come into God's righteousness, shall have their doom accordingly; themselves have decided it, they shall not come into his righteousness. Let them not expect any benefit by it, that are not willing and glad to be beholden to it.

6. That they should be cut off from all hopes of happiness; (v. 28.) Let them be blasted out of the book of the living, let them not be suffered to live any longer they live, the mere mischiefs they do. Multitudes of the unbelieving Jews fell by sword and famine, and none of those who had embraced the Christian faith perished among them; the nation, as a nation, was blasted out, and became not a people. Many understand it of their rejection from God's covenant, and all the privileges of it; that is the book of the living; the commonwealth of Israel itself; Israel according to the flesh, now become alienated from that covenant of promise, which hitherto it has had the monopoly of. Let it appear that they were never written in the Lamb's book of life, but reprobat silver let men call them, because the Lord has rejected them. Let them not be written with the righteous; let them not have a place in the congregation of the saints, when they shall all be gathered in the general assembly of those whose names are written in heaven. i. 3.

II. What the sin is, for which these dreadful judgments should be brought upon them; (v. 26.) They persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and talk to the grief of thy wounds. 1. Christ was he whom God had smitten, for it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and he was esteemed stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, and therefore men hid their faces from him, Isa. lIII. 3, 4, 10. They persecuted him when he was wounded, a reprobate in his days. They cried, Crucify him, crucify him. Compare that of St. Peter with this; (Acts ii. 23.) though he was delivered by the counsel and foreknowledge of God, it was with wicked hands that they crucified and slew him. They talked to the grief of the Lord Jesus when he was upon the cross, saying, He trusted in God, let him deliver him, than which nothing could be said more grieving. 2. The suffering saints were smitten, wounded, bruised in his days, when they cried, Crucify him, crucify him. Compare of that of St. Peter; (Acts iii. 13.) though he was delivered by the counsel and foreknowledge of God, it was with wicked hands that they crucified and slew him. They talked to the grief of the Lord Jesus when he was upon the cross, saying, He trusted in God, let him deliver him, than which nothing could be said more grieving.

30. I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. 31. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs. 32. The humble shall see this, and be glad: and your heart shall live that seek God. 33. For the Lord heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners. 34. Let the heaven and earth praise him, the seas, and every thing that moveth therein: 35. For God will save Sion, and will build the cities of Judah; that they may dwell there, and have it in possession. 36. The seed also of his servants shall inherit it; and they that love his name shall dwell therein.

The psalmist here, both as a type of Christ, and as an example to Christians, concludes a psalm with holy joy and praise, which he began with complaints and remonstrances of his griefs.

1. He resolves to praise God himself, not doubting but that therein he should be accepted of him; (v. 30, 31.) I will praise the name of God, not only with my heart, but with my song, and magnify him with thanksgiving. For he is pleased to reckon himself magnified by the thankful praises of his people. It is intimoted that all Christians ought to glorify God with their praises, psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. And this shall please the Lord, through Christ, the Mediator of our praises as well as of our prayers, better than the most valuable of the legal sacrifices, (v. 31.) on ox or bullock. This is a plain intimation, that in the days of the Messiah an end should be put not only to the sacrifices of atonement, but to those of praise and acknowledgment, which were instituted by the ceremonial law; instead of them, spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving are accepted; the calves of our lips, not the calves of the stall, Heb. xiii. 15. It is a great comfort to us, that humble and thankful praises are more pleasing to God than the most costly pompous sacrifices are, or ever were.

2. He encourages other good people to rejoice in God, and to continue to seek his face; (v. 32, 33.) The humble shall see this, and be glad. They shall observe, to their comfort, (1.) The experiences of the saints. They shall see how ready God is to hear the poor, when they cry to him, and to give them that which they call upon him for; how far he is from despising his prisoners, though men despise them; he favours them with his gracious visits, and will find a time to enlarge them. The humble shall see this, and be glad.

(2.) The exaltation of the Saviour, for of
him the psalmist had been speaking, and of himself as a type of him. When his sorrows are over, and he enters into the joy that was set before him, when he is heard, and discharged from his imprisonment in the grave, the humble shall look upon it and be glad, and they that seek God through Christ, shall live and be comforted; concluding that, if they suffer with him, they shall also reign with him.

3. He calls upon all the creatures to praise God; the heavens above, earth, and sea, and the inhabitants of each, Ps. 8. Heaven and earth, and the dwellers of both, were made by him, and therefore let heaven and earth praise him. Angels in heaven, and saints on earth, may each of them in their respective habitations furnish themselves with matter enough for constant praise. Let the sea, though mute to a proverb, praise the Lord, for the sea is his, and he made it.

The praises of the world must be offered for God's favours to his church, v. 35, 36. For God will save Zion, the holy mountain, where his service was kept up. He will save all that are sanctified and set apart to him, all that employ themselves in his worship, and all those over whom Christ reigns; for he was King upon the holy hill of Zion. He has mercy in store for the cities of Judah, of which tribe Christ was. God will do great things for the church, in which let all that wish well to it, rejoice. (Psalms 145:4.) It shall be peopleed and inhabited. There shall be a temple built to it, and it shall be served.

The cities of Judah shall be built, particular churches shall be formed and incorporated according to the gospel-model, that there may be a remnant to dwell there, and to have it in possession, to enjoy the privileges conferred upon it, and to pay the tribute and services required from it. They that love his name, that have a kindness for religion in general, shall embrace the Christian religion, and take their place in the Christian church; they shall dwell therein, as citizens, and of the household of God. (2.) It shall be perpetuated and inherited. Christianity was not to be res uniuss retatis—a transitory thing; no, the seed of his servants shall inherit it, God will secure and raise up for himself a seed to serve him, and they shall inherit the privileges of their fathers; for the promise is to you and your children, as it was of old, I will be a God to their seed for ever. The land of promise shall never be lost for want of seeds. For God out of stones raise up children unto Abraham, and will do it rather than the entail shall be cut off.

David shall never want a man to stand before him. The Redeemer shall see his seed, and prolong his days in them, till the mystery of God shall be finished, and the mystical body completed. And since the holy seed is the substance of the world, and if that were all, we sometimes pray to over the prayers we have formerly made to God, upon like occasions, which may be done with new affections. David here prays that God would send, I. Help to himself, v. 1. II. Help to his enemies, v. 2, 3. II. Joy to his friends, v. 5. These were the five last verses of Ps. xl. He seems to have intended this short prayer to be, both for himself and us, a salve for every sore, and therefore to be always in mind; in singing, we may all make it our own, and pray for those who ever are.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance.

1. Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O Lord.

2. Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul: let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt. 3. Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that say, Aha, aha! 4. Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified. 5. But I am poor and needy; make haste unto me, O God: thou art my help and my deliverer, O Lord: make no tarrying.

The title tells us that this psalm was designed to bring to remembrance, to put God in remembrance of his mercy and promises; for so we are said to do, when we pray to him, and plead with him; (Isa. xlii. 26.) Put me in remembrance. Not that the Eternal Mind needs a remembrance, but this honour he is pleased to put upon the prayer of faith. It was rather to put himself and others in remembrance of former affections, that we may never be careless, and always in exercise of some of the former devotions, that, when the clouds return after the rain, we may have recourse to the same means, which we have formerly found effectual for fetching in comfort and relief. We may in prayer use the words we have often used before; our Saviour in his agony prayed thrice, saying the same words; so David here uses the words he had used before, yet not without some alterations, to show that he did not design to tie himself or others to them as a form. God looks at the heart, not at the words.

1. David here prays that God would make haste to relieve and succour him; (v. 1, 5.) I am poor and needy, in want and distress, and much at a loss within myself. Poverty and necessity are very good pleas in prayer to a God of infinite mercy, who despises not the sighing of a cent'rie heart, and has pronounced a blessing upon the poor in spirit; who fills the hungry with good things. He prays, (1.) That God would hasten to him on his troubles and in his troubles in due time. (2.) That in the mean time he would come in to him, to help him under his troubles, that he might not sink and faint. (3.) That he would do this quickly; Make haste, (v. 1) and again, (v. 5.) Make haste, make no tarrying. Sometimes God seems to delay helping his own people, that he may excite such earnest desires as these. He that believes does not make haste; so as to anticipate the divine counsels, so as to force a way of escape, or to take any unlawful methods of relief; but he may make haste by going forth to meet God in humble prayer, that he would hasten the desired succour. "Make haste unto me, for the longing desire of my soul is toward thee; I shall perish, if I be not speedily helped; I have no other to expect relief from; thou art my Help and my Deliverer. Thou hast engaged to be with me, that I may depend upon thee to be so to me; I have often found thee so; and thou art sufficient, all-sufficient, to be so; therefore make haste to me,"

2. He prays that God would fill the faces of his enemies with shame, v. 2, 3. Observe, (1.) Hews he describes them; they sought after his soul, his life, to destroy that; his mind, to disturb that; to draw him from God to sin, and to despair; they desired his hurt, his ruin; whom, no calamity befell him, or threatened him, they said, "Aha, aha, so would we have it, we shall gain our point now, and see him ruined." Thus spiteful, thus inscient, were they. (2.) What his prayer is against them: "Let them be ashamed; let them be brought to repentance, so filled with shame, as that they may
seek thy name; (lxxxiii. 16.) let them see their fault and folly, in fighting against those whom thou dost protect, and be ashamed of their envy, Isa. xxvi. 11. However, let their designs against me be frustrated, and their measures broken; let them be turned back from their malicious pursuits, and then they will be ashamed and confounded, and, like the enemies of the Hebrews, much cast down in their own eyes, Neh. vi. 16.

3. He prays that God would fill the hearts of his friends with joy; (v. 4.) that all those who see God, and love his salvation, who desire it, delight in it, and depend upon it, may have continual matter for joy and praise, and hearts for both; and then he doubts not but he may put in for a share of the blessing he prays for, and so may we, if we answer the character. (1.) Let us make the service of God our great business, and the favour of God our great delight and pleasure, for that is seeking him, and loving his salvation. Let the pursuit of a happiness in God be our great care, and the enjoyment of it our great satisfaction. A heart to love the salvation of the Lord, and to prefer it before any secular advantages whatsoever, so as cheerfully to quit all, rather than hazard our salvation, is a good evidence of our interest in it, and title to it. (2.) Let us then be assured, that if it be not our own fault, the joy of the Lord shall fill our minds, and the high praises of the Lord shall fill our mouths. Those that seek God, if they seek him early, and seek him diligently, shall rejoice and be glad in him, for their seeking him is as an evidence of his good will to them, and an earnest of their finding him, v. 3.

There is joy even in seeking God, for it is one of the fundamental principles of religion, That God is the Rewarder of all those that diligently seek him. Those that love God's salvation shall say with pleasure, with constant pleasure, (for praising God, if we make it our continual work, will be our continual feast,) Let God be magnified, as he will be, to eternity, in the salvation of his people. All who wish well to the comfort of the saints, and to the glory of God, cannot but say a hearty amen to this prayer, that those who love God's salvation may say continually, Let God be magnified.

PSALM LXXI.

David penned this psalm in his old age, as appears by several passages in it; which makes many think it was penned at the time of Absalom's rebellion; for that was the greatest trouble he had for some days. It may be occasioned by Sheba's insurrection, or some trouble that happened to him in that part of his life, of which it was foretold, that the sword should not depart from his house. But he is not over-particular in representing his case, because he intended it for the general use of God's people in their afflictions, especially those they meet with in their declining years; for this psalm, above any other, is fitted for the use of the old disciples of Jesus Christ. I. His thoughts begin with this assurance, (v. 1.) prayers that God would deliver and save him, (v. 2, 4.) and cast him off, (v. 9.) or be far from him, (v. 12.) and that his enemies might be put to shame, v. 13. He pleads his conditions of God; (v. 1, 2.) the experience he had had of help from God; (v. 6.) and the malice of his enemies against him, v. 10, 11. II. He concludes the psalm with believing prayers, v. 14, &c. Never was his hope more established, v. 16, 18, 20, 21. Never was his heart and hope more enlarged, v. 13, 19, 22, 24. He is in an ecstasy of joyful praise; in the singing of it, we too should have our faith in God encouraged, and our hearts raised in blessing his holy name.

In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be put to confusion. 2. Deliver me in my righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me. 3. Be thou my strong habitation, whereto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me, for thou art my rock and my fortress. 4. Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man. 5. For thou art my hope, O Lord God: thou art my trust from my youth. 6. By thee have I been hidden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise shall be continually of thee. 7. I am as a wonder unto many: but thou art my strong refuge. 8. Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thine honour all the day. 9. Cast me not off in the time of old age: forsake me not when my strength faileth. 10. For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together, 11. Saying, God hath forsaken him; persecute and take him: for there is none to deliver him. 12. O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste to my help. 13. Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered with reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt.

Two things, in general, David here prays for; That he might not be confounded, and That his enemies and persecutors might be confounded.

1. He prays that he might never be made ashamed of his dependence upon God, nor disappointed in his believing expectations from him. With this petition every true believer may come boldly to the throne of grace; for God will never dash the hope that is of his own raising. New observe here,

1. How David professes his confidence in God, and with what pleasure and grateful variety of expression he repeats his prayers and that confidence, still presenting the profession of it to God, and pleading it with him. We praise God, and so please him, by telling him, (if it be indeed true,) what an entire confidence we have in him; (v. 1.) 'In thee, O Lord, and in thee only, do I put my trust. Whatever others do, I choose the God of Jacob for my Help. They that are entirely satisfied with God's all-sufficiency, and the truth of his promise, and in dependence upon that, as sufficient to make them amends, are freely willing to do and suffer, to lose and venture, for him, may truly say, In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust. Those that will deal with God, must deal upon trust; if we are shy of dealing with him, it is a sign we do not trust him. Thou art my Rock and my Fortress, (v. 3.) and again, Thou art my Refuge, my strong Refuge; (v. 7.)

I fly to thee, and am sure to be safe in thee, and under thy protection. If thou secure me, none can hurt me. Thou art my Hope and my Trust; (v. 5.) thou hast proposed thyself to me in thy word as the proper Object of my hope and trust; I have hoped in thee, and never found it vain to do so.'

2. How his confidence in God is supported and encouraged by his experiences; (v. 5, 6.) 'Thou hast been my Trust from my youth; ever since I was capable of discerning between my right hand and my left. I have found that God has been a great deal of reason to do so; for by thee have I been hidden up from the womb.' Ever since he had the use of his reason, he had been a dependent upon God's goodness, because ever since he had a being, he had been a monument of it. Nete, The consi
deration of the gracious care which the Divine Providence took of us in our birth and infancy, should engage us to an early piety, and constant devotedness to his honour. He that was our Help from our birth, ought to be our Hope from our youth. If we received so much mercy from God before we are capable of thinking and service, we should lose no time when we are capable. This comes in here as a support to the psalmist in his present distress; not only that God had given him his life and being, bringing him out of his mother's bowels into the world, and providing that he should not die from the womb, nor give up the ghost when he came out of the belly; but that he had betimes made him one of his family; Thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels, and kept me in the arms of thy grace, under the shadow of thy wings, into the bond of thy covenant; thou tookest me into thy church, as a son of thine handmaid, and born in thine house, cxvi. 16. And therefore, (1.) I have reason to hope that thou wilt protect me; thou hast held me up hitherto, wilt not let me fall now; thou that madest me, wilt not forsake the work of thine own hands; thou that helpedst me, when I could not help myself, wilt not abandon me now that I am as helpless as I was then. (2.) Therefore I have reason to resolve that I will devote myself unto thee; My praise shall therefore be continually of thee; I will make it my business every day to praise thee, and will take all occasions to do it.

3. What his requests to God are, in this confidence.

(1.) That he might never be put to confusion, (v. 1.) that he might not be distressed much with the négríness of his characters, and so made ashamed of his expectation. Thus we may all pray in faith, that our confidence in God may not be our confusion. Hope of the glory of God is hope that makes not ashamed.

(2.) That he might be delivered out of the hand of his enemies; (v. 2.) Deliver me in thy righteousness; as thou art the righteous Judge of the world, pleading the cause of the injured, and punishing the injurious, cause me some way or other to escape, (God will, with the temptation, make a way to escape, I Cor. x. 13.) Incline thine ear unto my prayers, and, in answer to them, save me out of my troubles, v. 4. Deliver me, O my God, out of the hands of those that are ready to pull me in pieces. Three things he pleads for deliverance; [1.] The encouragement God had given him to expect it; Thou hast given commandment to save me; (v. 3.) thou hast promised to do it; and such efficacy is there in God's promises, that they are often spoken of as commands; like that, Let there be light, and there was light. He speaks, and it is done. [2.] The character of his enemies; they are wicked, unrighteous, cruel, men, and it will be for the honour of God to appear against them, (v. 4.) for he is a holy, just, and good, God. [3.] The many eyes that were upon him; (v. 7.) I am as a wonder unto many; every one that seeth me shall be afraid; but upon the extraordinary troubles as I am fallen into, and such extraordinary confidence as I prefer to have in God. Or, I am looked upon as a monster, am one whom every body shuns, and therefore am undone if the Lord be not my Refuge. Men abandon me, but God will not.

(3.) That he might always find rest and safety in God; (v. 3.) Be thou my strong Habitation; be that place of my resort always, that is my Rock, whereby I may continually resort. They that are at home in God, that live a life of communion with him, and confidence in him, that continually resort unto him by faith and prayer, having their eyes ever toward him, may promise themselves a strong Habitation in him, such as never will fail of itself, nor can ever be broken through by any invading power; and they shall be welcome to resort to him continually upon all occasions, and not be upbraided as coming too often.

(4.) That he might have continual matter for thanksgiving to God, and might be continually employed in that pleasant work; (v. 8.) Let my mouth be like a psalm; with it I will sing of thy testimonies, and declare thy commands, and profess my faith, and make my complaints, and then I shall not be ashamed of my hope, but my enemies will be ashamed of their insolence. They that love God, love to be praising him, and desire to be doing it all the day; not only in their morning and even devotions, not only seven times a day, (cxxxix. 164.) but all the day, to intermix with all they say something or other that may redound to the honour and praise of God. They may do this, and they shall do this; they hope to be doing it eternally in a better world.

(5.) That he might not be neglected now in his declining years; (v. 9.) Cast me not off now in the time of my old age, forsake me not when my strength fails. Observe here, [1.] The natural sense he had of the infirmities of age; My strength fails; where there was strength of body, and vigour of mind, strong sight, a strong voice, strong limbs, alas! Old age they fail; the life is continued, but the strength is taken away. Or the image may be turned the other way, and that he does not forsake me, (v. 20.) which is the right sense, the true sense, xeron, xc. 10. [2.] The gracious desire he had of the continuance of God's presence with him under these infirmities; Lord, cast me not off, do not then forsake me. This intimates that he should look upon himself as undone, if God should abandon him; to be cast off and forsaken of God is a thing to be dreaded at any time, especially in the time of old age, and when our strength fails us; for it is God that is the Strength of our heart. But it intimates that he had reason to hope God would not desert him; the faithful servants of God may be comfortably assured that he will not cast them off in old age, nor forsake them when their strength fails them. He is a Master that is not wont to cast off old servants. In this confidence, David here prays again, (v. 12.) O God, be not far from me, let me not be under the apprehension of thy withdrawals; for then I am miserable; O my God, a God in covenant with me, make haste for my help, lest I perish before help come. I. He prays that his enemies might be made ashamed of their designs against him. Observe, 1. What it was which they unjustly said against him, v. 10, 11. Their plot was deep and desperate, it was against his life; They lay wait for my soul, (v. 10.) and are adversaries to that, v. 13. Their powers and policies were combined, they took counsel together, and very insolent they were in their conduct; they say, God has forsaken him, persecute and take him. Here their promises are utterly false, because that a good man was in great trouble, and had continued long in it, and was not so soon delivered as perhaps he expected, therefore God had forsaken him, and would have no more to do with him. All are not forsaken of God, who think so; they are often delivered who others think to be so, because as their promises were false, so their inference was barbarous. If God has forsaken him, then persecute and take him, and doubt not but to make a prey of him. This is talking to the grief of one whom God hath smitten, lxix. 26. But they endeavor to discourage David, as Si macherib endeavored to intimidate Hezekiah, by suggesting that God was his Enemy, and fought against him; Am I the first who pitted to thee of thy enemies? or shall I destroy it? Is. xxxvii. 10. It is true, if God has forsaken a man, there is none to deliver him; but therefore to insult over him, ill becomes those who are conscious to themselves that they deserve to be for ever forsaken of God. But rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, though I fall, I shall rise He
14. But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more. 15. My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. 16. I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only. 17. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. 18. Now also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsaile me not, until I have showed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come. 19. Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee? 20. Thou, which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. 21. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side. 22. I will also praise thee with the psaltery, even thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel. 23. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed. 24. My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long: for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt. David is here in a holy transport of joy and praise, arising from his faith and hope in God; we have both together, (v. 14.) where there is a sudden and remarkable change of his voice, his fears are all silenced, his hopes raised, and his prayers turned into thanksgivings, "Let mine enemies say what they will, to drive me to despair, I will hope continually, hope in all conditions, in the most cloudy and dark day; I will live upon hope, and will hope to the end."

David's confidence is founded upon the faith he has in God's promises.
saints, and that will help to extenuate them, and make them seem light. He does not say, "Thou hast burdened me with those troubles," but "showed them me;" as the tender father shows the child the rod to keep him in awe. [5.] Though God's people be not always in danger of the loss of great things, yet, it seems, (as long as we do live here,) much trouble he can revive them, and raise them up. Are they dead? He can quicken them again. See 2 Cor. i. 9. Are they buried, as dead men out of mind? He can bring them up again from the depths of the earth, can cheer the most dropping spirit, and raise the most sinking interest. [4.] If we have a due regard to the hand of God in our troubles, we may promise ourselves, in due time, a deliverance out of them. Our scenes being so much and so great, there shall be no hinderance to our joyful resurrection from the depths of the earth; witness our great Master, to whom this may have some reference; his Father showed him great and sore troubles, but quickened him and brought him up from the grave. (3.) He hopes that God will not only restore him out of his troubles, but would advance his honour and joy more than ever; (v. 21.) "Thou shalt not only restore me to my greatness again, but shalt increase it, and give me a better interest, after this shock, than before; thou shalt not only comfort me, but comfort me on every side, so that I shall see nothing black or threatening on any side." Note, Sometimes God makes his people's troubles contribute to the increase of their greatness, and their sun shines the brighter for having been under a cloud. If he makes them contribute to the increase of their godliness, that will prove in the end the increase of their greatness, their glory; and if he comfort them on every side, according to the time and degree wherein he has afflicted them on every side, they will have no reason to complain. When our Lord Jesus was quickened again, and brought back from the depths of the earth, his greatness was increased, and he entered on the joy set before him. (4.) He hopes that all his enemies will be brought to confusion, v. 24. He speaks of it with the greatest assurance as a thing done, and triumphs in it accordingly; They are confounded, they are brought to shame, that seek my hurt. His honour would be their disgrace, and his comfort their vexation. II. Let us now see how his heart is enlarged in joy and praises; how he rejoices in hope, and sings in hope, for we are saved by hope. 1. He will speak of God's righteousness and his salvation, as great things, things which he was well accustomed with, and much affected with, which he desired God might have the glory of, and others might have the comfortable knowledge of; (v. 15.) My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness, and thy salvation; and again, (v. 24.) My tongue shall talk of thy righteousness, and this, all the day. God's righteousness, which David seems here to be in a particular manner affected with, includes a great deal; the rectitude of his nature; the equity of his providence; the whole of his actions, and the divine laws; has given us to be ruled by; the righteous promises he has given us to depend upon; and the everlasting righteousness which his Son has brought in for our justification. God's righteousness and his salvation are here joined together; let no man think to put them asunder, nor expect salvation without righteousness, 1. 23. If these two are made the object of his desire, let them be made the subjects of our discourse and praises; for they are subjects that can never be drawn dry. 2. He will speak of them with wonder and adoration; as one astonished at the dimensions of divine love and grace, the height and depth, the length and breadth, of it; "I know not the numbers thereof;" (v. 15.) Though I cannot give a particular account of thy favours to me, they are so many, so great; (if I would count them, they are more in number than the sand, ch. 5.) yet, knowing them to be numberless, I will be still speaking of them, for in them I shall find new matter," v. 19. The righteousness and salvation of God, which is done by him for his people is very great; put both together, and we shall say, O God, who is like unto thee? This is praising God, acknowledging his perfections and performances to be, (1.) Above our conception; they are very high and great; so high, that we cannot apprehend them; so great that we cannot comprehend them. (2.) Without any parallel; no being like him, no works like his; O God, who is like unto thee? One of his works, then, renders him, no angel, no king. God is our refuge; we do not rightly praise him, if we do not own him to be so.

3. He will speak of them with all the expressions of joy and exultation, v. 22, 23. Observe, (1.) How he would eye God in praising him. [1.] As a faithful God; I will praise thee, even thy truth. God is made known by his word; if we praise that, and the truth of that, we praise him. By faith we set to our seal that God is true; and so we praise his truth. [2.] As a God in covenant with him; "O my God, whom I have consented to, and avouched for mine." As in our prayers, so in our praises, we must look up to God as our God, and give him the glory of our interest in him and relation to him. [3.] As the Holy One of Israel; Israel's God in a peculiar manner, glorious in his holiness among that people, and faithful to his covenant with them. It is God's honour, that he is a Holy One; it is his people's honour, that he is the Holy One of Israel. (2.) Observe how he will express his joy and exultation; [1.] With his hand, in sacred music, with the psaltery, with the harp; at these David excelled, and the best of his skill shall be employed in setting forth God's praises to such advantage as might affect others. [2.] With his lips, in sacred songs; "Unto thee will I sing, to thine honour; and with a desire to be accepted of thee. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee, knowing they cannot be better employed." [3.] In both, with his heart; "My soul shall rejoice, which thou hast redeemed." Note, First, Holy joy is the very heart and life of thankful praise. Secondly, We do not make melody to the Lord, in singing his praises, if we do not do it with our hearts. My lips shall rejoice, but that is nothing; lip-labour, though ever so well laboured, if that be all, is but lost labour in serving God; the soul must be at rest, and with all. As we are to use our bodies to glorify his Holy Spirit; so all else about us is worth little. Thirdly, Redeemed souls ought to be joyful, thankful souls. The work of redemption ought, above all God's works, to be celebrated by us in our praises. The Lamb that was slain, and has redeemed us to God, must therefore be counted worthy of all blessing and praise.

PSALM LXXII.

The foregoing psalm was penned by David when he was old, and, it should seem, so was this too; for Solomon was not then seven years old for him, but was penning for himself, this for his son and successor, and with these two, the prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended, as we find in the close of this psalm. If we have but God's word to guide us while we regulate good offices concerning those that shall come after us, that they shall be praising God on earth when we are praising him in heaven, it is enough. This is entitled a psalm for Solomon; it is probable that he was by the blessed Spirit dictated to him, when, a little before he died, by divine direction, he settled the succession, and gave orders to proclaim Solomon king, 1 Kings i. 30, &c. But, though Solomon's name is here made use of, Christ's kingdom is here preached under the type and figure of Solomon's. David knew what the divine oracle was, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his
1. **GIVE** the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king’s son.

This verse is a prayer for the king, even the king’s son.

1. We may apply it to Solomon; **Give him thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness;** make him a man, a king; make him a good man, a good king. (1) It is the prayer of a father for his child; a dying blessing, such as the patriarchs bequeathed to their children. The best thing we can ask of God for our children, is, that God will give them wisdom and grace to know and do their duty; that is better than gold. Solomon learned to pray for himself as his father had prayed for him, not that God would give him riches and honour, but a wise and understanding heart. It was a comfort to David, it was the crown of his own blessedness. (2) It is the prayer of a king for his successor. David had executed judgment and justice during his reign, and now he prays that his son might do so too. Such a concern as this we should have for posterity, desiring and endeavouring that those who come after us may do God more and better service in their day than we have done in ours. Those have little love either to God or man, and are of a very narrow selfish spirit, who care not what becomes of the world and the church when they are gone. (3) It is the prayer of subjects for their king. It should seem, David penned this psalm for the use of the people, that they, in singing, might pray for Solomon. Those who would live quiet and peaceable lives, must pray for kings and all in authority, that God would give them his judgments and righteousness.

2. We may apply it to Christ; not that he who intercedes for us needs us to intercede for him. But, (1) It is a prayer of the Old Testament church for sending the Messiah, as the church’s King, King on the holy hill of Zion, of whom the King of kings had said, Thou art my Son, ii. 6, 7. “Hasten his coming, to whom all judgment is committed,” and we must thus hasten the second coming of Christ, when he shall judge the world in righteousness. (2) It is an expression of the saving reception which all true believers take in the authority which the Lord Jesus has received from the Father: “Let him have all power both in heaven and earth, and be the Lord our Righteousness; let him be the great Trustee of divine grace for all that are his; give it him, that he may give it us.”

2. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment.

3. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness.

4. He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. 5. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. 6. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth. 7. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. 8. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. 9. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. 10. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. 11. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him. 12. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. 13. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy, 14. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence; and precious shall their blood be in his sight. 15. And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised. 16. There shall be a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. 17. His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.

This is a prophecy of the prosperity and perpetuity of the kingdom of Christ, under the shadow of the reign of Solomon. It comes in, 1. As a plea to enforce the prayer; “Lord, give him thy judgments, and thy righteousness, and then he shall judge thy people with righteousness, and shall answer the end of his elevation, v. 2. Give him thy grace, and then thy people, committed to his charge, will have the benefit of it.” Because God loved Israel, he made him king over them to do judgment and justice, 2 Chron. ix. 8. We may in faith wrestle with God for that grace which we have reason to think will be of common advantage to his church. 2. As an answer of peace to the prayer. As by the prayer of faith we return answers to God’s promises of mercy, so by the promises of mercy God returns answers to our prayers of faith. That this prophecy must refer to the kingdom of the Messiah, is plain, because there are many passages in it which cannot be applied to the reign of Solomon. There was indeed a great deal of righteousness and peace, at first, in the administration of his government; but, before the end of his reign, there were both trouble and unrighteousness. The kingdom here spoken of is to last as long as the sun, but Solomon’s was soon extinct. Therefore even the Jewish expositors understand it of the kingdom of the Messiah. Let us observe the many great and precious promises here made, which were to have their full ac-
complishment only in the kingdom of Christ; and yet some of them were in part fulfilled in Solomon's reign.

1. That it should be a righteous government; (v. 2.) He shall judge thy people with righteousness. Compare Isa. xi. 4. All the laws of Christ's kingdom are consonant to the eternal rules of equity; the chancery it creaks, to relieve against the rigours of an broken law, is indeed a court of equity; and against the sentence of his last judgment there will lie no exception. The peace of his kingdom shall be supported by righteousness; (v. 3.) For he shall judge the people with justice, and the nations with his truth. That is, (says Dr. Hammond,) both the superi- and the inferior courts of judicature in Solomon's kingdom. There shall be abundance of peace, v. 7. Solomon's name signifies peaceable, and such was his reign; for in Israel enjoyed the victories of the foreign reign, and preserved the tranquillity and repose of that reign. But peace is, in a special man- ner, the glory of Christ's kingdom, for, as far as it prevails, it reconciles men to God, to themselves, and to one another, and slays all enmities; for he is our Peace.

II. That it should be a peaceable government; The mountains shall be brought down, and the little hills; (v. 3.) that is, (says Dr. Hammond,) both the supe- rior and the inferior courts of judicature in Solomon's kingdom. There shall be abundance of peace, v. 7. Solomon's name signifies peaceable, and such was his reign; for in Israel enjoyed the victories of the foreign reign, and preserved the tranquillity and repose of that reign. But peace is, in a special man- ner, the glory of Christ's kingdom, for, as far as it prevails, it reconciles men to God, to themselves, and to one another, and slays all enmities; for he is our Peace.

III. That the poor and needy should be, in a particular manner, taken under the protection of this government; (v. 4.) He shall deliver the needy, and will rescue the poor, who are God's poor, that are impoverished by keeping a good conscience, and those shall be provided for with a distinguishing care, shall be judged for with judgment, with a particular cognizance taken of their case, and a particular vengeance taken for their wrongs. The poor of the people, and the children of the needy, he will be sure to judge, as to save, v. 4. This is insisted upon again, (v. 12, 13.) intimating that Christ will be sure to carry his cause on behalf of his injured poor. He will deliver the needy that lie at the mercy of their oppressors, the poor also, both because they have no helper, and it is for his honour to help them; and because they cry unto him, and he has promised, in answer to their prayers, to help them; they by prayers commit themselves unto him, x. 14. He will spare the needy that throw themselves on his mercy, and will not be rigorous and severe with them, he will spare them, and to the world, and to his church, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the king- dom of heaven. Christ is the poor man's King.

IV. That proud oppressors shall be reckoned with; He shall break them in pieces; (v. 4.) shall take away their power to hurt, and punish them for all the mischief they have done. This is the office of a good king, Parcerre subjecta, et debellare superbo—To spare the vanquished, and debate the victorious. The Devil is the great oppressor, whom Christ will break in pieces, and of whose kingdom he will be the destruction; with the breath of his mouth shall he slay that wicked one, (Isa. xi. 4.) and shall deliver the souls of his people from deceit and violence, v. 14. He shall save from the power of Satan, both as an old serpent working by deceit to ensnare them, and as a roaring lion working by violence to terrify and devour them. So precious shall the destruction of Satan be, and the destruction of his instruments, without being reckoned for,Christ is a King, who, though he calls his subjects sometimes to resist unto blood for him, yet is not prodigal of their blood, nor will ever have it parted with, but upon a valuable consideration to his glory and theirs, and the filling up of the measure of their enemies' iniquity.

V. That religion shall flourish under Christ's go- vernment; (v. 5.) They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure. Solomon indeed built the temple; and in the face of God was well kept up, for some time, under his government, but it did not last long; this, therefore, must point at Christ's kingdom, all the subjects of which are brought to, and kept in, the fear of God; for the Christian religion has a direct tendency to, and a powerful influence upon, the support and advance- ment of natural religion. Faith in Christ will set up, and keep up, the fear of God; and therefore this is the everlasting gospel that is preached, Fear God, and give honor to him. Rev. xiv. 7. And as Christ's government promotes devotion toward God, so it promotes both justice and charity among men; (v. 7.) In his days shall the righteous flourish; righteousness shall be practised, and those that practise righteousness shall be preferred. Righ- teousness shall abound, and be in reputation, shall command, and be in power. The law of Christ, written in the heart, disposes men to be honest and just, and to render to all their due; it likewise dis- poses men to live in love; and so it produces abund- ance of peace, and beats swords into ploughshares. Both holiness and love shall be perpetual in Christ's kingdom, and shall never go to decay, for the sub- jects of it shall fear God as long as the sun and moon endure; Christianity, in the profession of it, having got footing in the world, shall keep its ground till the end of time, and having, in the power of it, got footing in the world, shall last long. The earth is filled, by death, the sun, and the moon, and the stars, that is, the bodily senses, are darkened. Through all the changes of the world, and all the changes of life, Christ's kingdom will support itself; and if the fear of God continues as long as the sun and moon, abundance of peace will. The peace of the church, the peace of the soul, shall run parallel with its purity and piety, and last as long as these last.

VI. That Christ's government shall be the most comfor- table to his faithful loving subjects; (v. 6.) He shall, by the graces and comforts of his Spirit, come down like rain upon the mown grass; not on that which is cut down, but that which is left growing, that it may spring again, though it was beheaded. The gospel of Christ distils as the rain which softens the ground that was hard, moistens that which was dry, and so makes it green and fruitful, Isa. lv. 10. Let our hearts drink in the rain, Heb. vii. 11. Solomon's kingdom shall be extended very far, and greatly enlarged; considering, 1. The extent of his territories; (v. 8.) He shall have dominion from sea to sea, from the South sea to the North, or from the Red sea to the Mediterranean; and from the river Euphrates, or Nile, to the ends of the earth. Solomon's dominion was very large, (1 Kings iv. 21.) according to the promise, Gen. xvi. 18. But no sea, no river, is named, that it might, by these proverbial expressions, speak the universal monarchy of the Lord Jesus. His gospel has been, or shall be, preached to all nations, (Matt. xxiv. 14.) and the kingdoms of the world shall become his kingdoms. (Rev. xv. 15.) when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in. His ter- ritories shall be extended to those countries, (1.) That were strangers to him; They that dwell in the wilderness, cut of all high roads, that seldom hear of the true religion. (2.) That were enemies to him, and had fraught against him; They shall lick the dust, they shall be brought down, and laid in the dust, shall bite the ground for vexation, and be so hunger-bitten, that
given of his wisdom, justice, and goodness; Daily shall he be praised. By praying daily in his name, we give him honour. Subjects ought to speak well of the government that is a blessing to them; and much more ought all Christians to praise Jesus Christ, daily to praise him; for they owe their all to him, and to him they lie under the highest obligations.

IX. That under his government there shall be a wonderful increase both of meat and mire and, both of the fruits of the earth in the country, and of the people inhabiting the cities. v. 16. The country shall grow rich; saw but a handful of corn on the tops of the mountains, whence one would expect but little, and yet the fruit of it shall shake like Lebanon. Even upon the tops of the mountains, the earth shall bring forth by handfuls; that is an expression of great plenty; (Gen. xli. 47.) as the grass upon the house-top is said to be where with the mower fills not his hand. This is applicable to the wonderful productions of the seed of the gospel in the days of the Messiah. A handful of that seed, sown in the mountainous and barren soil of the Gentile world, shall bring forth greater than the increase of Lebanon; and, fruit that shock like Lebanon. The fields were white to the harvest, John iv. 35. Math. ix. 37. The grain of mustard-seed grew up to a great tree. 2. The towns shall grow populous; They of the city shall flourish like grass, for number, for verdure. The Gospel-church, the city of God among men, shall have all the marks of prosperity, many shall be added to it, and those that are, shall be happy in it.

X. That his government shall be perpetual, both to his honour, and to the happiness of his subjects. The Lord Jesus shall reign for ever, and of him only this must be understood, and set at all of Solomon. It is Christ only that shall be feared throughout all generations, (v. 5.) and as long as the sun and moon endure, v. 7. The honour of the prince is immortal, and shall never be sullied; (v. 17.) His name shall endure for ever, in despite of all the malicious attempts and endeavours of the powers of darkness to eclipse the lustre of it, and to cut off the line of it; it shall be preserved, it shall be perpetuated, it shall be propagated. As the names of earthly princes are continued in their posterity, so Christ is in himself; Filiiabur nomen eius—His name shall descend to posterity; all nations, while the world stands, shall call him blessed; shall bless God for him, continually speak well of him, and think themselves happy in him. To the end time, and to eternity, his name shall be celebrated, shall be made use of; every tongue shall confess it, and every knee shall bow before it. The happiness of the people is universal too, it is complete, and everlasting; men shall be blessed, truly and for ever blessed, in him. This plainly refers to the promise made unto the fathers, that in the Messiah all the nations of the earth should be blessed, Gen. xii. 3.

18. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. 19. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen. Amen. 20. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

Such an illustrious prophecy as is in the foregoing verses of the Messiah and his kingdom, may fitly be concluded, as it is here, with hearty prayers and praises.
for the prophecy and promise, v. 18, 19. So sure is every word of God, and with so much satisfaction may we rely upon it, that we have reason enough to give thanks for what he has said, though it be not yet done. We must own, that, for all the great things he has done for the world, the church, for the children of men, for his own children, in the works of providence, in the kingdom of grace, for all the power and trust lodged in the hands of the Redeemer, he is worthy to be praised; we must stir up ourselves and all that is within us to praise him after the best manner, and desire that all others may do it. Blessed be the Lord, that is, blessed be his glorious name; for it is only in his name that we can contribute any thing to his glory and blessedness, and yet that is as well as any other name. Let it be blessed for ever, it shall be blessed for ever, it deserves to be blessed for ever, and we hope to be for ever blessing it. We are here taught to bless the name of Christ, and to bless God in Christ, for all that he has done for us by him. We must bless him, (1.) As the Lord God, as a self-existent, self-sufficient, Being, and our Sovereign Lord. (2.) As the God of Israel, in covenant with that people, and work shewn by his hand, and does them and does those to the ends of the earth unto Jacob and the mercy to Abraham. (3.) As the God who only does wonderful things, in creation and providence, and especially this work of redemption, which exceeds them all. Men’s works are little common trifling things, which, however, without him, they could not do. But God does all by his own power, and they are wondrous things which he does, and such as will be the eternal admiration of saints and angels.

2. He is earnest in prayer for the accomplishment of this prophecy and promise; Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; as it will be when the kings of Tarshish, and the isles, shall bring presents to him. It is sad to think how empty the earth is of the glory of God, how little service and honour he has from a world to which he is such a beneficent. All these, therefore, that wish well to the honour of God, and the welfare of mankind, cannot but wish that the earth may be filled with the discoveries of his glory, suitably returned in thankful acknowledgments of his glory. Let every heart, and every mouth, and every assembly, be filled with the high praises of God. We shall see how earnest David is in this prayer, and how much his heart is in it, if we observe, (1.) How he shuts up the prayer with a double seal; “Amen and Amen, again and again I say, I say it, and let all others say the same, so be it; Amen to my prayer, Amen to the prayers of all the saints to this purpose; Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come.” (2.) How he even shuts up his life with this prayer, v. 20. This was the last psalm that ever he penned, though not placed last in this collection; he penned it when he lay on his death-bed, and with this he breathes his last; “Let God be glorified, let the kingdom of the Messiah be set up, and kept up in the world, and I have enough.” With this let the prayers of David the son of Jesse be ended; even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.”

**PSALM LXXIII.**

This psalm, and the ten that next follow it, carry the name of David; it is in the titles of them, “If he was the penman of them, (as many other parts of Scripture are,) we rightly refer them psalms of Asaph. If he was only the chief musician, to whom they were delivered, our marginal reading is right, which calls them psalms for Asaph. It is probable that he penned them for we read of the words of David, and of Asaph the seer, which were used in praising God, in Hezekiah’s time, 2 Chron. xxxix. 30. Though the Spirit of prophecy, by sacred songs, descended chiefly on David, who is therefore styled the sweet psalmist of Israel, yet God put some of that Spirit upon those about him. This is a psalm of great use; it gives us an account of the conflict which the psalmist had with a strong temptation to envy the prosperity of wicked people. He begins his account with a sacred principle, which he held fast, and, by the help of which, he kept his ground, and carried his point, v. I. He then tells us, I. How he got into the temptation, v. 2-14. II. How he got out of the temptation, and gained a victory over it, v. 15-20. III. How he got by the temptation, and was the better for it, v. 21-28. In singing this psalm, we fortify ourselves against the like temptation, we do not use it in vain. The experiences of others should be our instructions.

A psalm of Asaph.

1. **TRULY God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.** 2. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. 3. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. 4. For there are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm. 5. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. 6. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. 7. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. 8. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. 9. They set their mouth against the heavens; and their tongue walketh through the earth. 10. Therefore his people return hither; and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them: 11. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High? 12. Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. 13. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. 14. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.

This psalm begins somewhat abruptly. Yet God is good to Israel, so the margin reads it: he had been thinking of the prosperity of the wicked, while he was thus musing, the fire burned, and, at last, he spake by way of check to himself for what he had been thinking of; “However it be, yet God is good.” Though wicked people receive many of the gifts of his providential bounty, yet we must own that he is, in a peculiar manner, good to Israel; they have favours from him, which others have not.

The psalmist designs an account of a temptation he was strongly assaulted with—to envy the prosperity of the wicked; a common temptation, which has tried the graces of many of the saints. Now, in this account,

I. He lays down, in the first place, that great principle which he is resolved to abide by, and not to quit while he was perusing with this temptation, v. 1. Job, when he was entering into such a temptation, fixed for his principle, the omniscience of God; Times are not hidden from the Almighty, Job xxiv. 1. Jeremiah’s principle is, the justice of God; Righteous art thou, O God, when I plea with thee, Jer. xii. 1. Habakkuk’s principle is, the holiness of God; Thou art of purer eyes than
to behold iniquity, Hab. i. 13. The psalmist's here, is, the goodness of God. These are truths which cannot be shaken, and which we must resolve to live and die by. Though we may not be able to reconcile all the disposals of Providence with them, we must believe they are reconcilable. Note, Good thoughts of God will fortify us against many of Satan's temptations. Truly God is good; he had had many thoughts in his mind concerning the worst things that could happen to him, last, but he beth at him; For all this, God is good, good to Israel, even to those that are of a clean heart. Note, 1. Those are the Israel of God that are of a clean heart, purified by the blood of Christ, cleansed from the pollutions of sin, and entirely devoted to the glory of God. An upright heart is a clean heart; cleanness is truth in the inward part. 2. God, who is good to all, is, in a special manner, good to his church and people, as he was good to his people of old. God was good to Israel in redeeming them out of Egypt, taking them into covenant with himself, giving them his laws and ordinances, and, in the various providences that related to them; he is, in like manner, good to all them that are of a clean heart, and, whatever happens, we must not think otherwise.

II. He comes, now, to relate the shock that was given to him, in God's distinguishing grace to Israel, by a strong temptation to envy the prosperity of the wicked, and therefore to think that the Israel of God are no happier than other people, and that God is no kinder to them than to others. He speaks of it as a very near escape, that he had not been quite foiled and overthrown by this temptation, v. 2. But, as for me, though I was so well satisfied in the goodness of God to Israel, yet my heart was almost gone, the tempter had almost tripped me up, and I staggered. Shortly after, being stirred up, I had had to quitting my religion, and given up all my expectations of benefit by it, for I was envious at the foolish.” Note, 1. The faith even of strong believers may sometimes be sorely shaken, and ready to fail them. There are storms that will try the firmest anchors. 2. Those that shall never be quite undone, are sometimes very near it, and, in their own apprehension, as good as gone. The ruin of a precious soul, that shall live for ever, had once a very narrow turn of its life; almost and well nigh ruined, but a step between it and fatal apostasy, and yet snatched as a brand out of the burning, which will for ever magnify the riches of divine grace in the nations of them that are saved.

Now let us take notice of the process of the psalmist's temptation, what he was tempted with, and tempted to do.

(1.) He observed that foolish wicked people have sometimes a very great share of outward prosperity. He saw, with grief, the prosperity of the wicked, v. 3. Wicked people are really foolish people, and act against reason and their true interest, and yet every one of them sees their prosperity.

[1.] They seem to have the least share of the troubles and calamities of this life; (v. 5.) They are not in the troubles of other men, even of wise and good men, neither are they plagued like other men, but seem as if, by some special privilege, they were exempted from the common lot of sorrows. If they meet with some little trouble, it is nothing to what others endure, that are less sinners, and yet greater sufferers.

[2.] They seem to have the greatest share of the comforts of this life. They live at ease, and bathe themselves in pleasures, so that their eyes stand out with fatness, v. 7. See what the excess of pleasure is; the moderate use of it enlightens the eye, but they indulge themselves inordinate in the delights of sense have their eyes ready to start out of their heads. Epicures are really their own tormentors, by putting a force upon nature, while they pretend to gratify it. And well may they feed themselves to the full, who have more than heart could wish, more than they themselves ever thought of, or expected to be masters of. They have, at least, more than an humble, quiet, contented, heart could wish, yet not so much as they themselves wish for. There are many who have a great deal of this life in their hands, but nothing of the other life in their possession. They are ungodly, which is, without the fear and worship of God, and yet they prosper and come on in the world, and not only are rich, but increase in riches, v. 12. They are looked upon as thriving men; while others have much ado to keep what they have, they are still adding more, more honour, power, pleasure, by increasing in riches; They are the prosperous of the age, so some read it.

[2.] Their end seems to be peace; this is mentioned first, on account of its being so strange; for it was never thought to be the peculiar privilege of the godly; (xxxvi. 37.) yet, to outward appearance, it is often the lot of the ungodly; (v. 4.) There are no bands in their death. They are not taken off by a violent death; they are foolish, and yet die not as fools die; for their hands are not bound, nor their feet put in fetters, 2 Sam. iii. 33, 34. They are not taken off by an untimely death, like the fruit forced from the tree before it is ripe; but their days are left to hang, till, through old age, they gently drop off themselves. They do not die of sorne and painful diseases, there are no pangs, no agonies, in their death, but their strength is firm to the last, so that they scarcely feel themselves die. They are of those who die in their full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet; not of those that die in the bitterness of soul; (v. 5.) They never eat with pleasure, Job xxx. 25, 25. Nay, they are not bound without the terrors of conscience in their dying moments, they are not frightened either with remembrance of their sins, or the prospect of their misery; but die securely. We cannot judge of men's state on the other side death, either by the manner of their death, or the frame of their spirits in dying. Men may die like lambs, and yet have their place with the goats.

(2.) He observed that they made a very bad use of their outward prosperity, and were hardened by it in their wickedness, which very much strengthened the temptation he was in to fret at it. If it had done them any good, if it had made them less provoking to God, or less oppressive to man, it would never have vexed him; but it had quite a contrary effect upon them.

[1.] It made them very proud and haughty, because they live at ease; Pride compasses them as a chain, v. 6. They show themselves (to all that see them) to be puffed up with their prosperity, as men show their ornaments; The pride of Israel testifies to his face, Hos. v. 5. Isa. i. 9. Pride ties on their chain, or necklace; so Dr. Hammond reads it. It is no harm to wear a chain or necklace; but when pride ties it on, when it is worn to gratify a vain mind, it ceases to be an ornament. It is not so much with what apparel is, (though we have rules for that, 1 Tim. ii. 9.) as what principle does it on, and with what spirit it is worn. And as the pride of sinners appear in their dress, so it doth in their talk; They speak loftily; (v. 8.) they affect great swelling words of vanity, (2 Pet. ii. 18.) bringing of themselves, and disdaining all about them. Out of the abundance of the pride that is in their heart they speak big.

[3.] It made them oppressive to their poor neighbours; (v. 6.) Violence covers them as a garment. What they have got by fraud and oppression, they
keep and increase by the same wicked methods, and care not what injury they do to others, nor what violence they use, so they may enrich and aggrandize themselves. They are corrupt, like the giants, the sinners of the old world, when the earth was filled with violence, Gen. vi. 11, 13. They care not what mischief they do, either for mischief-sake, or for their own advantage-sake. They speak wickedly concerning opponents and themselves in it; they that speak well of sin, speak wickedly of it. They are corrupt, that is, dissolved in pleasures, and every thing that is luxurious; (so some;) and then they deride and speak maliciously, they care not whom they wound with the poisoned darts of calumny, from on high they speak oppression.

[3.] It made them very insolent in their carriage, toward both God and man; (v. 9.) They set their mouth against the heavens; putting contempt upon God himself and his honour, bidding defiance to him, and his power and justice; they cannot reach the heavens with their hands, to shake God's throne, else they would; but they show their ill-will by setting their mouth against the heavens. Their tongue also walks through the earth, and they take liberty to abuse all that come in their way. No man's greatness or goodness can satisfy him; for the good things they had, and would have taught them to use them well, that they were not willing to believe God had any knowledge of them, that he took any notice of their wickedness, or would ever call them to an account. As if because he is Most High, he could not, or would not, see them, Job xxii. 12, 13. Whereas because he is Most High, therefore he can, and will, take cognizance of all the children of men, and of all their doings, and things. What he affords it to the God of infinite knowledge, from whom all knowledge is, to ask, Is there knowledge in him? Well may he say, (v. 12.) Behold, these are the ungodly. (3.) He observed, that, while wicked men thus prospered in their impiety, and were made more impious by their prosperity, good people were in great affliction, and he himself in particular, which very much strengthened the temptation he was in to quarrel with Providence.

[1.] He looked abroad, and saw many of God's people greatly at a loss; (v. 10.) "Because the wicked are so very daring, therefore his people return hither; they are at the same pause, the same plunge, that I am at; they know not what to say to it, any more than I do, and the rather, because waters of a full cup are wrung out to them; they are not only made to drink, and to drink deep, of the bitter cup of affliction, but to drink all; care is taken that they lose not a drop of that unpleasant potion, the waters are wrung out unto them, that they may have the dregs of the cup. They pour out abundance of tears when they hear wicked people blaspheme God, and speak profanely," as David did, cxxix. 135. These are the waters wrung out to them.

[2.] He looked at home, and felt himself under the same temptations, yea, which the wicked used were sunning themselves in its smiles; (v. 14.) "For my part," says he, "All the day long have I been plagued with one affliction or another, and chastened every morning, as duly as the morning comes." His afflictions were great, he was chastened and plagued; the returns of them were constant, every morning with the morning, and they continued, without intermission, all the day long. This he thought was very hard, that, when those who blasphemed God were in prosperity, he, that worshipped God, was under such great affliction. He spake feelingly when he spake of his own troubles; there is that in the affirmative, which he supposed was not in the negative.

[4.] From all this arose a very strong temptation to cast off his religion. [1.] Some, that observed the prosperity of the wicked, especially comparing it with the afflictions of the righteous, were tempted to deny a Providence, and to think that God had forsaken the earth. In this sense some take v. 11. There are these, even among God's professing people, that say,—How does God know? Surely all things are left to blind fortune, and not disposed of by an all-seeing God." Some of the heathen, upon such a remark as this, have asked, Quis frater esse Deos.—Who will believe that there are Gods? [2.] Though the psalmist's feats were not so far gone as to question God's omniscience, yet he was tempted to question the benefit of religion, and to say, (v. 13.) Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and have, to no purpose, washed my hands in innocency. So here he tells it to be religious; it is to cleanse our hearts, in the first place, by repentance and regeneration, and then to wash our hands in innocency, by an universal reformation of our lives. It is not in vain to do this; not in vain to serve God and keep his ordinances; but good men have been sometimes tempted to say, "It is in vain, and "Religion is a thing that there is nothing to be got by," because they see wicked people in prosperity. But however the thing may appear now, when they are pure in heart, they that are cleansing ones, shall see God, (Mic. vi. 8.) they will not say that they have closed their hearts in vain.

15. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. 16. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me. 17. Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. 18. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. 19. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terror. 20. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awaketh, thou shalt despise their image.

We have seen what a strong temptation the psalmist was in to envy prospering profaneness; now here we are told how he kept his footing, and got the victory.

1. He kept up a respect for God's people, and with that he restrained himself from speaking what he had thought amiss, v. 15. He got the victory by degrees, and this was the first point he gained; he was ready to say, Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and thought he had reason to say it; but he kept his mouth with this consideration; "If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should myself revolt and apostatize from, and so give the greatest offence imaginable to, the generation of thy children." Observe here, 1. Though he thought amiss, he took the trouble to think it over, and he had conceived. Note, It is bad to think ill, but it is worse to speak it, for that is giving the evil thought an Imprimatur.—A public sanction; it is allowing it, giving consent to it, and publishing it.
A. Because light soning;" for this reason, he may think what thing children. 
2. The reason why he would not speak it, was, for fear of giving offence to those whom God owned for his children. 
Note. (1.) There are a people in the world, that are the generation of God's children, a set of men that hear and love God as their Father. (2.) They must be very careful not to say or do any thing which may justly offend any of these little ones, (Matt. xviii. 6.) especially which may offend the generation of them, may sadden their hearts, or weaken their hands, or shake their interest. (3.) There is nothing that can give more general offence to the generation of God's children, than to say that we have cleansed our heart in vain, or that it is in vain to serve God; for there is nothing more contrary to the most ancient, and approved experience, than that we should have no thing that grieves them more, than to hear God thus reflected on. (4.) Those that wish themselves in the condition of the wicked, do, in effect,quit the tents of God's children.

II. He foresaw the ruin of wicked people; by this he baffled the temptation, as by the former he gave some check to it. Because he durst not speak what he had thought, for fear of giving offence he began to consider whether he had any good reason for that thought; (v. 16.) "I endeavoured to understand the meaning of this unaccountable dispensation of Providence; but it was too painful for me, I could not conquer it by the strength of my own reasoning;" it was a problem, not to be solved by the mere light of nature, for, if there were not another life after this, we could not fully reconcile the prosperity of the wicked with the justice of God; but (v. 17.) he went into the sanctuary of God, he plunged his soul up into the attributes of God, and the things revealed which belong to us and to our children; he consulted the scriptures, and the lips of the priests who attended the sanctuary; he prayed to God to make this matter plain to him, and to help him over this difficulty; and, at length, he understood the wretched end of wicked people, which he plainly foresaw to be such, that, even in the height of their prosperity, they were rather to be pitied than envied, for they were but ripening for ruin. 

Note. 1. There are many great things, and things needful to be known, which will not be known otherwise than by going into the sanctuary of God, by the word and prayer. The sanctuary therefore must be the resort of a tempted soul. 2. We must judge of persons and things as they appear by the light of divine revelation, and then we shall judge righteous judgments, particularly of the measure of our own mercies, which are very often, well, everlasting well; but nothing well that ends ill, everlasting ill. The righteous man's afflictions end in peace, and therefore he is happy; the wicked man's enjoyments end in destruction, and therefore he is miserable. 

(1.) The prosperity of the wicked is short and uncertain; the high places in which Providence sets them, are slippery places, (v. 18.) where they cannot long keep footing; but when they do climb higher, the very attempt will be the occasion of their sliding and falling. Their prosperity has no firm ground, it is not built upon God's favour or his pleasure, but is of a nature, which no one can call his own. 2. Their destruction is sure, and sudden, and very great. This cannot be meant of any temporal destruction; for they were supposed to spend all their days in wealth, and their death itself had no bands in it; In a moment they go down to the grave, so that even that which could scarcely be called their destruction; it must therefore be meant of eternal destruction. They flourish for a time, but are undone for ever. [1.] Their ruin is sure and inevitable; he speaks of it as a thing done; They are cast down; for their destruction is as certain as if it were already accomplished. He speaks of it as God's doing, and therefore it cannot be resisted; Thou castest them down, it is destruction from the Almighty, (Job i. 15.) from the glory of his power, 2 Thess. ii. 9. Who can support those whom God will cast down, on whom God will lay burdens? [2.] It is swift and sudden; Their damnation slumbers not; for how are they brought into desolation as in a moment! v. 19. It is easily effected, and will be a surprise to themselves and all about them. [3.] It is severe and very dreadful. It is a total, final, ruin; They are utterly consumed with terrors. It is the misery of the damned, that the terrors of the Almighty, the terrors of God; this is the Almighty, that deals with them upon their guilty consciences, which can neither shelter them from them, nor strengthen them under them; and therefore not their being, but their bliss, must needs be utterly consumed by them; not the least degree of comfort or hope remains to them; the higher they were lifted up in their prosperity, the sorier will their fall be when they are cast down into desuctions, (for the word is plural,) and suddenly brought into desolation.

(5.) Their prosperity is therefore not to be envied at all, but despised rather; quad erat demonstrandum—which was the point to be established; v. 20. As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awaketh, or when they awake, (as some read it,) thou shalt despise their image, their shadow, and make it to vanish. In the day of the great judgment, (so the Chaldee paraphrase reads it,) when they are awaked out of their graves, thou shalt, in that day, despise their image, and make them to rise to shame and everlasting contempt.

See here, [1.] What their prosperity now is; it is but an image, a vain show, a fashion of the world that passes away; it is not real, but imaginary, and it is only a corrupt imagination that makes it a happiness; it is not substance, but a mere shadow; it is not what it seems to be, nor will it prove what we promise ourselves from it; it is as a dream, which may please us a little, while we are asleep, yet, even when we awake, we find it so. A hungry man dreams that he eats, but he awakes, and his soul is empty, Is. xxxix. 8. A man is never the more rich or honourable for dreaming he is so. Who therefore will envy a man the pleasure of a dream? [2.] What will be the issue of it; God will awake to the dream, and make it vanity and vexation of spirit. The sponginess that we now understand, is not because; they shall be made to awake out of the sleep of their carnal security, and then God shall despise their image; he shall make it appear to all the world how despicable it is; so that the righteous shall laugh at them, li. 6, 7. How did God despise that rich man's image, when he said, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee! Luke xii. 18, 20. We ought to be of God's mind, for his judgment is according to truth, and not to adore and envy that which he despises, and will despise;
for, sooner or later, he will bring all the world to be of one mind.

21. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. 22. So foolish was I and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee. 23. Nevertheless, I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by my right hand. 24. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. 25. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. 26. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. 27. For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish; thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. 28. But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works.

Behold Samson’s riddle again unriddled, Out the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness; for we have here an account of the good improvement which the psalmist made of that sordid temptation with which he had been assaulted, and by which he was almost overcome. He that stumples and does not fall, by recovering himself takes so much the longer steps forward. It was so with the psalmist here; divers good lessons he learned from his temptation, his struggles with it, and his victories over it. Nor would God suffer his people to be tempted, if his grace were not sufficient for them, not only to save them from harm, but to make them gainers by it; even this shall work for good.

I. He learned to think very humbly of himself, and to abase and accuse himself before God; (v. 21, 22.) he reflects with shame upon the disorder and danger he was in, and the vexation he gave himself, by entertaining the temptation, and plying with it; My heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins, as one afflicted with the acute pain of the stone in the region of the kidneys. If evil thoughts at any time enter into the mind of a good man, he does not roll them under his tongue as a sweet morse, but they are grievous and painful to him; temptation was to Paul as a thorn in the flesh, 2 Cor. xii. 7. This particular temptation, the working of envy and discontent, is as painful as any other; where it constantly rests, it is the rottenness of the bones, (Prov. xiv. 30.) where it does but occasionally come, it is the pricking of the reins. Fretfulness is a corruption that is its own correction.

Now, in the reflection upon it, 1. He owns it was his folly thus to vex himself; So foolish was I to be my own tormentor. Let peevish people thus reproach themselves for, and shame themselves out of, their discontent; What a fool am I thus to make myself uneasy without a cause! 2. He owns it was his ignorance to vex himself at this; So ignorant was I of that which I might have known, and which, if I had known it aright, would have been sufficient to have silenced my murmurs. I was as a beast, Behemoth, a great beast, before thee. Beasts mind present things only, and never look before at what is to come; and so did I. If I had not been a great fool, I should never have suffered such a senseless temptation to have prevailed over me so far. What to envy wicked men upon account of their prosperity? To be ready to wish myself one of them, and to think of changing conditions with them? So foolish was I. Note, If good men do, at any time, through the surprise and strength of temptation, think, or speak, or act, amiss, when they see their error, they will reflect upon it with sorrow, and shame, and self-abhorrence; will call themselves fools for it; Surely I am more brutish than any man, Prov. xxx. 2. 2. Since David, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10.

II. He took occasion hence to own his dependence on God, and to make to him an act of praise; I. To the grace of God; 2. "Nevertheless, foolish as I am, I am continually with thee, and in thy favour, thou hast holden me by my right hand." This may refer, either, 1. To the care God had taken of him, and the kindness he had showed him, all along from his beginning hitherto. He had said, in the hour of temptation, (v. 14.) All the day long have I been plagued; but here he corrects himself for that passionate complaint. Though, God had, chanced to mark me, he had not cast me oft; notwithstanding all the cresses of my life, I have been continually with thee, I have had thy presence with me, and thou hast nigh unto me in all that I have called upon thee for; and therefore, though perplexed, yet not in despair. Though God has sometimes written bitter things against me, yet he has still holden me by my right hand, both to keep me, that I should not desert, or cast me off from him, and to prevent my sinking and fainting under my burdens, and to lead me by my way in the wilderness through which I have walked. If we have been kept in the way with God, kept close to our duty, and upheld in our integrity, we must own ourselves indebted to the free grace of God for our preservation; Having obtained help of God, I continue hitherto. And if he has thus maintained the spiritual life, the earnest of eternal life, we ought not to complain, whatever calamities of this present time we have met with. Or, 2. In the late experience he had had of the power of divine grace in carrying him through this strong temptation, and bringing him off a conqueror; I was foolish and ignorant, and yet thou hast had compassion on me, and taught me, (Heb. v. 2.) and kept me under thy protection; for the unworthiness of man is no bar to the free grace of God. We must ascribe our safety in temptation, and our victory over it, to the grace of God, not to our own wisdom or prudence. If we have been steadfast in our work, we need not rejoice in it; but in God's grace. If we have been foolish and ignorant, yet not in despair, but that thou hast holden me by my right hand, and so kept me from falling.

III. He encouraged himself to hope that the same God who had delivered him from this evil work, would preserve him to his heavenly kingdom, as St. Paul does; (2 Tim. iv. 18.) I am now upheld by thee, therefore thou shalt guide me with thy counsel; leading me, as thou hast done hitherto, many a difficult step; and, since I am now continually with thee, thou shalt afterward receive me to glory, v. 24. This completes the happiness of the saints, so that they have no reason to envy the worldly prosperity of sinners. Note, 1. All those who commit themselves to God, shall be guided with his counsel, with the counsel both of his Word and of his Spirit, the best Counsellors. The psalmist had like to have paid dear for following his own counsels in this temptation, and therefore resolves, for the future, to take God's advice, which shall never be wanting to those that duly seek it, with a resolution to follow it. 2. All those that are guided and led by the counsel of God in this world, shall be received to his kingdom in a prosperous manner. When God's glory in us the end we aim at, he will make our glory with him the end we shall for ever be happy in. Upon this consideration, let us never envy sinners, but rather bless ourselves in our own blessedness. If
God direct us in the way of our duty, and prevent our turning aside out of it, he will afterward, when our state of trial and preparation is over, receive us to his kingdom and glory; the believing hopes and prospects of which will reconcile us to all the dark providences that now puzzle and perplex us, and ease us of the pain we have been put into by some that would have us be unhappy.

IV. He was hereby quickened to cleave the closer to God, and very much confirmed and comforted in the choice he had made of him; (v. 25, 26.) his thoughts here dwell with delight upon his own happiness in God, as much greater than the happiness of the ungodly that prospered in the world. He saw little reason to envy them what they had in the creature, when he found how much more and better, sure and sweeter, comforts he had in the Creator, and what cause he had to congratulate himself on this account. He had complained of his afflictions; (v. 14.) but this makes them very light and easy, All is well, if God be mine. We have here the breathings of a sanctified soul toward God, and its repose in him, as that to a godly man really, which the prosperity of a worldly man is to him in conceit and imagination; Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is not one to desire a soul in heaven in all the psalms, more expressive than this of the perpetual and devout affections of a soul to God; here it soars up toward him, follows hard after him, and yet, at the same time, has an entire satisfaction and complacency in him.

1. It is here supposed that God alone is the Felicity and Chief Good of man. He, and he only, that made the soul, can make it happy; there is none in heaven, none in earth, that can pretend to do it besides him.

2. Here are expressed the workings and breathings of a soul toward God accordingly. If God be our Felicity,

(1.) Then we must have him; (Whom have I but thee?) we must choose him, and make sure to ourselves an interest in him. What will it avail us that he is the Felicity of souls, if he be not the Felicity of our souls, and if we do not by a lively faith make sure to ourselves that we are an everlasting covenant?

(2.) Then our desire must be toward him, and our delight in him; the word signifies both; we must delight in what we have of God, and desire what we yet further hope for. Our desires must not only be offered up to God, but they must all terminate in him; desiring nothing more than God, but still more and more of him; this includes all our prayers, Lord, give us thyself; as that includes all promises, I will be to them a God. The desire of our souls is to thy name.

(3.) We must prefer him in our choice and desire before any other. [1.] There is none in heaven but thee, none to seek to, or trust in, none to court or covet acquaintance with, but thee. God is in himself more glorious than any celestial being, (lxvi. 6.) and must be, in our eyes, infinitely more desirable. Excellent beings there are in heaven, but God only can make them happy. His favour is infinitely more to us than the refreshment of the dews of heaven, or the benign influence of the stars of heaven; more than the friendship of the saints in heaven, or the good offices of the angels there. [2.] I desire none on earth beside thee; not only none in heaven, a place at a distance, which we have but little acquaintance with, but none on earth neither, who have so many friends, and where much of our present interest and concern lies. Earth draws away the desires of most men, and yet I have none on earth, no persons, no things, no possessions, no delights, that I desire beside thee, or with thee, in comparison or competition with thee.

We must desire nothing beside God, but what we desire for him; (Noli proter re, nisi proter re—Nothing be side thee, except for thy sake;) nothing but what we desire from him, and can be content without, so that it be made up in him. We must desire nothing beside God, as needful to be a partner with him in making us happy.

V. This must be our rule in all our ways, and we are to rest ourselves in God with an entire satisfaction, v. 26. Observe here, [1.] Great distress and trouble supposed; My flesh and my heart fail. Note, Others have experienced, and we must expect, the failing both of flesh and heart. The body will fail by sickness, age, and death; and that which touches the bone and the flesh, touches us in a tender part, that part of ourselves which we have been but too fond of; when the flesh fails, the heart is ready to fail too; the conduct, courage, and comfort fail. [2.] So the relief provided in this distress; But God is the Strength of my heart, and my Portion for ever. Note, Gracious souls, in their greatest distresses, rest upon God as their spiritual Strength, and their eternal Portion. First, He is the Strength of my heart: the Rock of my heart, a firm Foundation, which will bear my weight, and not sink under it. God is the Strength of my heart; I have found him, and I do love him; I will not rest satisfied with my God, until I become happy in him. In the distress supposed, he had put the case of a double failure, both flesh and heart fail; but in the relief, he fastens on a single support, he leaves out the flesh and the consideration of that, it is enough that God is the Strength of his heart. He speaks as one careless of the body, (Let that fail, there is no remedy,) but as one concerned about the soul, to be strengthened in the inner man. Secondly, He is my Portion for ever; he will not only support me while I am here, but make me happy when I go hence. The saints choose God for their Portion, they have him for their Portion, and it is their happiness that he will be their Portion; A Portion that will last as long as the immortal soul lasts.

VI. He was fully convinced of the miserable estate of all wicked people. This he learned in the sanctuary, upon this occasion, and he would never forget it; (v. 27.) Lo, they that are far from thee; if we do not apprehend ourselves as in the same state with them, we are not ready for the Almighty to depart from them, shall certainly perish; so shall their doom be; they choose to be far from God, and they shall be far from him for ever; thou shalt justly destroy all them that go a whoring from thee, all apostates, that in profession have been betrothed to God, but forsake him, their duty to him, and their communion with him, to embrace the bosom of a stranger. The doom is severe, no less than perishing, and being destroyed. It is universal; They shall all be destroyed without exception. It is certain; Thou hast destroyed; it is as sure to be done as if done already, and the destruction of some ungodly men is an earnest of the perdition of all. God himself undertakes to do it, into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall; Thus, though infinite in goodness, wilt reckon for thine inured honour and abused patience, and will destroy them that go a whoring from thee.

VI. He was greatly encouraged to cleave to God, and to confide in him, v. 28. If they that are far from God shall perish, then, I. Let this constrain us to live in communion with God; if it fare so ill with those that live at a distance from him, then it is good, very good, the chief good, that good for a man, in this life, which he should most carefully pursue and secure. It is best for me to draw near to God, and to confide in God, and be confided in by him, that the original may take in both. But for my part, I would read it, the approach of God is good for me. Our drawing near to God takes rise from his drawing near to us, and it is the happy meeting that...
makes the bliss. Here is a great truth laid down, that it is good to draw near to God; but the life of it lies in the application; “It is good for me.” Those are the wise, who know what is good for themselves; “It is good, says he, (and every good man agrees with him in it,) it is good for me to draw near to God; it is my duty, it is my interest.”

Let us therefore live in a continual dependence upon him; “I have put my trust in the Lord God, and will never go a whoring from him after any creature-confidence.” If wicked men, notwithstanding all their prosperity, shall perish and be destroyed, then let us trust in the Lord God, in him, not in them, (see cxvi. 3-5.) in him, and not in our worldly prosperity; let us trust in God, and neither fret at the evil that may befall them; let us trust in him for a better portion than theirs is. While we do so, let us not doubt but that we shall have occasion to praise his name. Let us trust in the Lord, that we may declare all his works. Note, Those that with an upright heart put their trust in God, shall never want matter for thanksgiving to him.

**PSALM LXXIV.**

This psalm does so particularly describe the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, by Nebuchadnezzar and the army of the Chaldeans, and can as well be applied to any other event we meet with in the Jewish history, that interpreters incline to think, either, it was penned by David, or Asaph in David’s time, with a prophetic reference to that sad event. He Kane is not evidently a prophecise; or, that it was penned by another Asaph, who lived at the time of the captivity, or by Jeremiah, (for it is of a piece with his Lamentations,) or some other prophet, and, after the return out of captivity, was the inspired productions of Asaph, who were called by his name, for the public service of the church. That was the most eminent family of the singers in Ezra’s time. See Ezra ii. 41.iii. 10. Neh. xi. 17. 22.-xii. 35. 66. The deplorable case of the people of God, at that time, is here spread before the Lord, and left with him. The prophet, in the name of the church, I. Puts in complaining pleas of the miseries they suffered, for the quickening of their desires in prayer, v. 1. 11. II. He puts in comfortable pleas for the encouraging of their faith in prayer, v. 12. 17. III. He concludes with divers petitions to God for deliverances, v. 18. 23. In singing it, we must be affected with the former desolations of the church, for we are members of the same body, and may apply it to any present distresses or desolations of any part of the Christian church.

**Maschil of Asaph.**

1. O GOD, why hast thou cast us off for ever? why dost thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture? 2. Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old: the rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwell. 3. Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations: even all that the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary. 4. Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations; they set up their ensigns for signs. 5. A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees. 6. But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers. 7. They have cast fire into thy sanctuary; they have defiled by casting down the dwelling-place of thy name to the ground. 8. They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land. 9. We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long. 10. O God, how long shall the adversary reproach! shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever! 11. Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck it out of thy bosom.

This psalm is entitled Maschil, a psalm...give instruction, for it was penned in a day of affliction, which is intended for instruction; and this instruction, in general, it gives us. That, when we are, upon any account, in distress, it is our wisdom and duty to apply ourselves to God by faithful and fervent prayer, and we shall not find it in vain to do so.

Three things they here complain of.

I. The displeasure of God against them, as that which was the cause and bitterness of all their calamities. They look above the instruments of their trouble, who, they knew, could have no power against them, unless it were given them from above, and keep their eye upon God, by whose determined counsel they were delivered up into the hands of wicked and unreasonable men. Observe the liberty they take to expostulate with God; (v. 1.) we hope, not too great a liberty, for Christ himself, upon the cross, cried out, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? So the church here, O God, why hast thou forsaken us for ever? Here they speak according to their present dark and melancholy apprehensions; for otherwise, Has God cast away his people? God forbid, Rom. xi. 1. The people of God must not think that because they are cast off, they are therefore cast off; that because men cast them off, therefore God does; and that because he seems to cast them off for a time, therefore they are really cast off for ever: yet this expostulation intimates, that they dreaded God’s casting them off more than any thing, that they desired to be owned of him, whatever they suffered from men, and were desirous to know wherefore he thus contended with them; Why doth thine anger smoke? Why does it burn in thee, and burneth as a fire, so that it cannot be put out? Why doth it set in the body of thy members? Why doth thy anger smoke, or burn in thee, and not be put out? We ask this, and all about us take notice of it, and ask, What means the heat of this great anger? Deut. xxxix. 24. Compare v. 20. where the anger of the Lord and his jealousy are said to smoke against sinners.

Observe what they plead with God, now that they lay under the tokens and apprehensions of his wrath.

1. They plead their relation to him; “We are the sheep of thy pasture, the sheep wherewith thou hast been pleased to stock thy pasture, thy peculiar people, whom thou art pleased to set apart for thyself, and design for thine own glory. That the wolves worry the sheep is not strange; but was ever any shepherd thus displeased at his own sheep? Remember, we are thy congregation, (v. 2.) incorporated by thee and for thee, and devoted to thy praise; we are the rod, or tribe, of thine inheritance, whom thou hast been pleased to claim thine especial property in, above other people, (Deut. xxxix. 9.) and from whom thou hast received the rents and issues of praise and worship, more than from the neighbouring nations. Nay, a man’s inheritance may lie at a great distance, but we are pleading for mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt, which has been the place of thy peculiar delight and residence, thy demesne and mansion.”

2. They plead the great things God had done for them, and the greatest expense he had been at upon them; “It is thy congregation, which thou hast not only made with a word’s speaking, but purchased of old by many miracles of mercy, when they were first formed into a people; it is thine inheritance,
which then hast redeemed when they were sold into servitude;" God gave Egypt to run for their ransom, gave men for them, and people for their life. Isa. xliii. 3, 4. "Now, Lord, wilt thou now abandon a people that cost thee so dear, and has been so dear to thee?" And if the redemption of Israel out of Egypt was an encouragement to hope that he would not cast them off, much more reason have we to hope that God will not cast off any whom Christ has redeemed with his own blood: but the people of his purchase shall be for ever the people of his praise.

3. They plead the calamitous state that they were in; (v. 3.) "Lift up thy feet; come with speed to repair the desolations that are made in thy sanctuary, which otherwise will be perpetual and irreparable." It has been sometimes said, that the divine vengeance strikes with iron hands, yet it comes with leaden feet; and then those who wait for the day of the Lord, thy, Lord, sit up thy feet. magnify thyself in the outgoings of thy providence. When the desolations of the sanctuary have continued long, we are tempted to think they will be perpetual; but it is a temptation; for God will avenge his own elect, will avenge them speedily, though he bear long with their oppressors and persecutors.

11. They complain of the outrage and cruelty of their enemies; not so much, no not at all, of what they had done to the prejudice of their secular interests; there are no complaints of the burning of their cities and ravaging of their country, but only what they had done against the sanctuary and the synagogue. The concerns of religion should lie nearer our hearts, and affect us more, than any worldly concern whatsoever. The desolation of God's house should grieve us more than the desolation of our houses; for the matter is not great what becomes of us and our families in this world, provided God's name may be sanctified, his kingdom may come, and his will be done.

1. He complains of the desolations of the sanctuary, as Daniel, ch. ix. 17. The temple at Jerusalem was the dwelling-place of God's name, and therefore the sanctuary, or holy place, v. 7. In this, the enemies did wickedly, (v. 3.) for they destroyed it in downright contempt of God and affront to the whole body of God's elect and congregations; there where God's faithful people attend on him with an humble, reverent, silence, or softly speaking, they roared in a riotous, revelling manner, being elated with having made themselves masters of that sanctuary, of which they had sometimes heard formidable things. (2.) They set up their ensigns for signs, the banners of their army they set up in the temple, (Israel's strongest castle, as 'long as they kept close to God,) as trophies of their victory. There where the signs of God's presence used to be, now the enemy had set up their ensigns. This daring defiance of God and his power touched his people in a tender part. (3.) They took a pride in destroying the carved work of the temple. As much as, formerly, men thought it an honour to lend an hand to the building of the temple, and he was thought famous who helped to fell the timber that was then going on, now what have the nations themselves upon their agency in destroying it, v. 5. Thus, as formerly those were celebrated for wise men that did service to religion, so now they are cried up for wits that help to run it down. Some read it thus, They show themselves, as one that lifts up axes on high in a thicket of trees, for so do they break down the carved work of the temple; they make no more scruple of breaking down the rich wainscoat of the temple, than woodcutters do of hewing trees in the forest, such indignation have they at the sanctuary, that the most curious carving that ever was seen is beaten down by the common soldiers, without any regard had to it, either as a dedicated thing, or as a piece of exquisite art. (4.) They set fire to it, and so violated or destroyed it to the ground, v. 7. The Chaldeans burnt the house of God, that stately, costly, fabric, 2 Chron. xxxix. 19. And the Romans left not there one stone upon another (Matt. xxiv. 2.) razing it, razing it even to the foundations, till Zion, the holy mountain, was, by Titus Vespasian, ploughed as a field.

II. The branches of the desolations of the synagogues, or schools of the prophets, which, before the captivity, were in use, though much more after. There God's word was read and expounded, and his name praised and called upon, without altars or sacrifices. These also they had a spite to; (v. 8.) Let us destroy them together; not only the temple, but all the places of religious worship, and the worshippers with them; let us destroy them together, let them be consumed in the same flame. Pursue to this impious resolve, they burst up all the synagogues of God in the land, and laid them all waste. So great was their rage against religion, that the religious houses, because religions, were all levelled with the ground, that God's worshippers might not glorify God, and edify one another, by meeting in solemn assemblies.

III. The great aggravation of all these calamities, was, that they had no prospect at all of relief, nor could they foresee an end of them; (v. 9.) "We see our enemy's sign set up in the sanctuary, but we see not our signs, none of the tokens of God's presence, no hopeful indications of approaching deliverance; there is no more any prophet to tell us how long the trouble will last, and when things concerning us shall have an end; that the hope of an issue, at last, may support us under our troubles." In the captivity in Babylon, they had prophets, and had been told how long the captivity should continue, but the day was cloudy and dark, (Ezek. xxxiv. 12.) and they had not as yet the comfort of these gracious discoveries; God spake once, yea, twice, good words and comfortable words, but they perceived them not. Observe, They do not complain, "We see not our armies, there are no men of war to command our forces, nor any to go forth with our hosts;" but, "no prophets, none to tell us how long."

This is the state upon expostulating with God, as delaying, 1. To assert his honour, (v. 10.) How long shall the adversary reproach, and blaspheme thy name? In the desolations of the sanctuary, our chief concern should be for the glory of God, that that may not be injured by the blasphemies of those who persecute his people for his sake, because they are his; and therefore our inquiry should be, not "How long shall we be troubled," but "How long shall God be blasphemed." (2.) To exert his power; (v. 11.) Why withdrawest thou thy hand, and dost not stretch it out, to deliver thy people, and destroy thine enemies? Pluck it out of thy bosom, and be not as a man astonished, as a man that cannot save, or will not," Jer. xiv. 9. When the power of enemies is most threatening, it is most comfortable to fly to the power of God.

12. For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. 13. Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength; thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters. 14. Thou brakest the heads of Leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness. 15. Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood; thou driedst up mighty rivers
16. The day is thine, the night also is thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun.

17. Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter.

The lamenting church fastens upon something here, which she calls to mind, and therefore hath she hope, (as Lam. iii. 21.) with which she encourages herself, and silences her own complaints.

Two things quiet the minds of those that are here assembled for God.

I. That God is the God of Israel, a God in covenant with his people; (v. 12.) God is my King of old. This comes in both as a plea in prayer to God, (xlv. 4. Thou art my King; O God,) and as a prop to their own faith and hope, to encourage them selves to expect deliverance, considering the days of old, lxxxvii. 5. The church speaks as a complex body, the same in every age, and therefore calls God, "My King, my King of old." or, "from everlasting." He of old put himself into that relation to them, and appeared and acted for them in that relation; as Israel's King, he wrought salvation in the midst of the nations of the earth; for what he did, in the government of the world, tended toward the salvation of his church.

Several things are here mentioned, which God had done for his people, as their King of old, which encouraged them to commit themselves to him, and depend upon him. 1. He had divided the sea before them, when they came out of Egypt, not by the strength of Moses or his rod, but by his own strength; and he that could do that could do any thing. 2. He had destroyed Pharaoh and the Egyptians; Pharaoh was the leviathan, the Egyptians were the dragons, fierce and cruel. Observe, (1.) The victory obtained over these enemies; God brake their heads, baffled their plots; as when Israel, the more they were afflicted by them, multiplied the more; God crushed their powers, though complicated, ruined their country by ten plagues, and, at last, drowned them all in the Red sea; This is Pharaoh and all his multitude, Ezek. xxxi. 18. It was the Lord's doing, none besides could do it, and he did it with a strong hand and outstretched arm. This was typical of Christ's victory over Satan and his kingdom, pursuant to the first promise, that the Seed of the woman should break the serpent's head. (Gen. iii. 15.) The improvement of this victory was for the encouragement of the church; Thou gavest him to be meat to the people of Israel, now going to inhabit the wilderness. The spoil of the Egyptians enriched them; they stripped their sin, and so got the Egyptians' arms and weapons, as before they had got their jewels. Or rather, this providence was meat to their faith and hope, to support and encourage them in reference to the other difficulties they were likely to meet with in the wilderness. (2.) God was part of the spiritual meat which they were all made to eat of. Note, The breaking of the heads of the church's enemies, is the joy and strength of the hearts of the church's friends. Thus the companions make a banquet even of leviathan, Job xli. 6. (3.) God had both ways altered the course of nature, both in fetching streams out of the rock, and turning streams into rock, v. 15. [1.] He had dissolved the rock into water, and made, in Leviathan, the sea, wherein the sun and the moon; (so some read it;) and every one knows whence it was brought, out of the rock, out of the flinty rock. Let this never be forgotten, but let it especially be remembered, that the Rock was Christ, and the waters out of it his spiritual drink. [2.] He had concealed the waters into rock: Thou driedst up mighty, rapid, rivers, Jordan particularly, at the time when it overflowed all its banks. He that did these things could now deliver his oppressed people, and break the yoke of the oppressors, as he had done formerly; nay, he would do it, for his justice and goodness, his wisdom and truth, are still the same, as well as his power.

II. That the God of Israel is the God of nature, v. 16. 17. It is he that orders the regular successions and revolutions, 1. Of day and night; he is the Lord of all time; the evening and the morning are of his ordaining; it is he that opens the eyelids of the morning light, and draws the curtains of the evening shadow. He has prepared the moon and the sun; (so some read it;) the two great lights, to rule by day and night alternately. The preparing of them denotes their constant readiness, and exact observance of their time, which they never miss a moment. 2. Of summer and winter; "Thou hast appointed all the bounds of the earth, and the different climates of its several regions, for thou hast made summer and winter, the frigid and the torrid zones; neither, the constant warmth, nor the annual coolness; nor the several seasons." Herein we are to acknowledge God, from whom all the laws and powers of nature are derived; but how does this come in here? (1.) He that had power at first to settle, and still to preserve, this course of nature, by the diurnal and annual motions of the heavenly bodies, has certainly all power both to save and to destroy, and with him nothing is impossible, nor any difficulties or oppositions insuperable. (2.) He that is faithful to his covenant with the day and, with the night, and preserves the ordinances of heaven inviolable, will certainly make good his promise to his people, and never cast off those whom he has chosen, Jer. xxxi. 35. 36. —xxxii. 20. 21. His covenant with Abraham and his seed is as firm as that with Noah and his sons, Gen. viii. 21. (3.) Day and night, summer and winter, being counterchanged in the course of nature, throughout all the borders of the earth, we can expect no other than that peace and peace, prosperity and adversity, should be, in like manner, counterchanged in all the borders of the church. We have, as much reason to expect affliction as to expect night and winter. But we have then no more reason to despair of the return of comfort, than we have to despair of day and summer.

18. Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O Lord; and that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name. 19. O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the multitude of the wicked: forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever. 20. Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. 21. O let not the oppressed return ashamed: let the poor and needy praise thy name. 22. Arise, O God, plead thine own cause: remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily. 23. Forget not the voice of thine enemies: the tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth continually.

The psalmist here, in the name of the church, most earnestly begs that God would appear for them against their enemies, and put an end to their present troubles; to encourage his own faith, he in terests God in this matter; (v. 22.) Arise, O God, plead thine own cause. This we may be sure he will do, for he is jealous for his own honour; whatever is his own cause, he will plead it with a strong hand, will appear against those that oppose it, and
with and for those that cordially espouse it. He will arise and plead it, though for a time he seems to neglect it; he will stir up himself, will manifest himself, will do his own work in his own time. Note, The cause of religion is God's own cause, and he will certainly plead it.

Nor to make it out that the cause is God's, he pleads,

I. That the persecutors are God's sworn enemies; "Lord, they have not only abused us, but they have been, and are, abusive to thee; what is done against us, for thy sake, does, by consequence, reflect upon thee. But that is not all, they have directly and immediately reproached thee, and blasphemed thy name;" v. 18. This is what they really did, as they triumphed as if they had now got the mastery of the God of Israel, of whom they had heard such great things. As nothing grieves the saints more, than to hear God's name blasphemed, so nothing encourages them more to hope that God will appear against their enemies, than when they are arrived at such a pitch of wickedness as to reproach God himself; this fills the measure of their sins space, and hastens their ruin. The psalmist insists much upon this. We dare not answer their reproaches, Lord, do thou answer them. Remember that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name, (v. 18.) and that still the foolish man reproaches thee daily. Observe the character of those that reproach God; they are foolish. As atheism is folly, (xiv. 1.) profaneness and blasphemy are no less so. Perhaps they are cried up for the wits of the age, that ridicule religion and sacred things; but really they are the greatest fools, and will shortly be made to appear so before all the world. And yet see their malice; They reproach God daily, as constantly as his faithful worshippers pray to him and praise him; see their impudence; They do not hide their blasphemous thoughts in their own bosoms, but proclaim them with a loud voice; (Forget not the voice of thine enemies, v. 23.) and this, with a daring defiance of divine justice; They rise up against thee, and by their blasphemies even wage war with heaven, and take up arms against the Almighty. Their noise and tumult ascend continually, (so some,) as the cry of Sodom came up before God, calling for vengeance, Gen. xviii. 21. It increases continually; (so we read it;) they grow worse and worse, and are hardened in their impieties by their successes. Now, Lord, remember this, do not forget it. God needs not to be put in remembrance by us of what he has to do for us, but thus we must show our concern for his honour, and believe that he will vindicate us.

II. That the persecuted are his covenant-people.

1. See what distress they are in; they are fallen into the hands of the multitude of the wicked, v. 19. How are they increased that trouble them! There is no standing before an enraged multitude, especially like these, armed with power; and as they are numerous, so are they barbarous, and hence the expression, they are full of the habitations of cruelty. The land of the Chaldeans, where there was none of the light of the knowledge of the true God, (though otherwise it was famed for learning and arts,) was indeed a dark place; the inhabitants of it were alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that was in them; and therefore they were cruel; where there was no true divinity, there was scarcely to be found common humanitv; they were especially cruel to the remnant of God, because of their having much knowledge, who eat them up, xiv. 4. They are oppressed, (v. 21.) because they are poor and unable to right themselves; they are oppressed, and so made poor.

2. See what reason they had to hope that God would appear for their relief, and not suffer them to be always thus trampered upon. Observe how the psalmist pleads with God for them; (1.) "It is thy turtle-dove that is ready to be swallowed up by the multitude of the wicked," v. 19. The church is a dove, for harmlessness and mildness, innocency and inoffensiveness, purity and fruitfulness; a dove, for mourningfulness in a day of distress; a turtle-dove for fidelity, and the constancy of it. Less turtle-doves and pigeons were the only fowls that were offered in sacrifice to God. "Shall thy turtle-dove, that is true to thee, and devoted to thine honour, be delivered, its life and soul and all, into the hand of the multitude of the wicked, to whom it will soon become an easy and acceptable prey? Lord, it will be thine honour to help the weak, especially to the humble thing, to their sorrow and distress, and the congregation of thy poor, and they are not the less thin for their being poor; (for God has chosen the poor of this world, Jam. ii. 5.) but they have the more reason to expect thou wilt appear for them, because they are many, it is the congregation of thy poor; let them not be abandoned and forgotten for ever." (3.) "They are in covenant with thee; and wilt thou not have respect unto the covenant? v. 20. wilt thou not perform the promises thou hast, in thy covenant, to thee? Wilt thou not own them whom thou hast brought into the bond of the covenant?" When God delivers his people, it is in remembrance of his covenant, Lev. xxvi. 42. "Lord, though we are unworthy to be respected, yet have respect to the covenant." (4.) "They trust in thee, and boast of their relation to thee, and expectations from thee; O let them not return ashamed of their hope, (v. 21.) as they will be, if thou be delivered to the power of their enemies." If thou deliver them, they will praise thy name, and give the glory of their deliverance. Appear, Lord, for those that will praise thy name, against those that blaspheme it.

PSALM LXXV.

Though this psalm is attributed to Asaph, in the title, yet it does so exactly agree with David's circumstances, at his coming to the crown after the death of Saul, that most interpreters apply it to that juncture, and suppose that either Asaph penned it, in the person of David, as his poet-laureat; (probably, the substance of the psalm was some speech which David made to a convention of the states, at his accession to the government, and Asaph turned it into verse, and published it in a poem, for the better spread abroad its message among the people,) or that David penned it, and delivered it to Asaph as a preconer of the temple. In this psalm, I. David returns God thanks for bringing him to the throne, v. 1, 2. II. He promises to lay out himself for the public good, in the service of God, which power God had given him, v. 2, 3, 10. III. He checks the insolence of those that opposed his coming to the throne, v. 4, 5. IV. He fetches a reason for all this from God's sovereign dominion in the affairs of the children of men, v. 6-8. In singing this psalm, we must give to God the glory of all the revolutions of states and kingdoms, believing that they are all according to his counsel, and that he will make them all to work for the good of his church.

To the chief musician, Al-taschith. A psalm or song of Asaph.

1. UNTO thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks for that thy name is near, thy wondrous works declare. 2. When I shall receive the congregation, I will judge uprightly. 3. The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it. Selah. 4. I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly; and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn: 5. Lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck.
In these verses,
I. The psalmist gives to God the praise of his advancement to honour and power, and the other great things he had done for him and for his people Israel; (v. 1.) Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, for all the favours thou hast bestowed upon us; and again, unto thee do we give thanks; for our thanksgivings must be often repeated. Did not Moses see the pillar of cloud and fire as an everlasting proof of it; and shall we think it will suffice once or twice to give thanks, when we have obtained it? Not only I do give thanks, but we do; and I and all my friends. If we share with others in their mercies, we must join with them in their praises; "Unto thee, O God, the Author of our mercies; and we will not give that glory to the instruments which is due to thee only. For that thy name is near, that the complete accomplishment of thy promise made to David is not far off, thy wondrous works, which thou hast already done for him, declare." Note. 1. There are many works which God does for his people, that may truly be called wondrous works, out of the common course of providence, and quite beyond our expectation. 2. These wondrous works declare the nearness of his name; they show that he himself is at hand, nigh to us in what we call upon him for, and that his help is nigh unto those that are afraid. 3. This is the ground of our expectation in pursuance of his purpose and promise. 3. When God's wondrous works declare the nearness of his name, it is our duty to give him thanks, again and again to give him thanks.

II. He lays himself under an obligation to use his power well, pursuant to the great trust reposed in him; (v. 2.) When I shall receive the congregation, I will judge uprightly. Here he takes it for granted, that God would, in due time, perfect that which concerned him, that though the congregation was very slow in gathering to him, and great opposition was made to it, yet, at length, he should receive it: for what God has spoken in his holiness, he will perform by his wisdom and power. Being thus in expectation of the mercy, he promises to make conscience of his duty; "When I am a judge, I will judge, and judge uprightly; not as those that went before me, who either neglected judgment, or, which was worse, sold the cause, and would not do the right, the just, the God-determined, and power, or did hurt." Note. 1. Those that are advanced to posts of honour, must remember they are posts of service, and must set themselves with diligence and application of mind to do the work to which they are called. He does not say, "When I shall receive the congregation, I will take my ease, and take state upon me, and leave the public business to others;" but, "I will mind it myself." 2. Public trusts are to be managed with great integrity; they that judge, must judge uprightly, according to the rules of justice, without respect of persons.

III. He promises himself that his government would be a public blessing to Israel, v. 3. The present state of the kingdom was very bad; "The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved; and no marvel, when the former reign was so dissolutive, that all went to rack and ruin. There was a general corruption of manners, for want of putting the laws in execution against vice and profaneness. They were divided one from another, for want of centering, as they ought to do, in the government God had appointed. They were all to pieces, two against three, and three against two, crumbled into factions and parties, which was likely to issue in ruin; but I bear up the pillars of it. Even in Saul's time, he said what he could for the public welfare; but he hoped, that, when he had himself received the congregation, he should do much more, and should not only prevent the public ruin, but recover the public strength and beauty. Now, 1. See the chief of parties; they melt and dissolve a land and the inhabitants of it. 2. See how much one head frequently holds up. The fabric had sunk, if David had not held up the pillars of it. This may well be applied to Christ and his government. The world and all the inhabitants of it were dissolved by sin, man's apostasy threatening the destruction of the whole creation; but Christ bore up the pillars of it, however a whole world flocked against him, saving his people from their sins, and into his hand the administration of the kingdom of Providence is committed, for he upholds all things by the word of his power, Heb. i. 3.

IV. He checks those that opposed his government, that were against his accession to it, and obstructed the administration of it, striving to keep up that vice and profaneness which he had made it his business to suppress; (v. 4, 5.) I said unto the fools, Dealt not foolishly. He had said so to them in Saul's time, when he had not power to restrain them, yet he had wisdom and grace to reprove them, and to give them good counsel; though they bore themselves high, upon the favour of that unhappy prince, he cautioned them not to be too presumptuous. Or rather, he does now say so to them. As soon as he came to the crown, he issued out a proclamation against all foreign kingdoms, and here we have the contents of it. 1. To the simple speaking sinners, the fools in Israel, that corrupted themselves, to them he said, "Dealt not foolishly; do not act so directly contrary both to your reason and to your interest as you do, while you walk contrary to the laws God has given Israel, and the promises he has made to David." Christ, the Son of David, gives us this counsel, issues out this edict, Dealt not foolishly. He who is made of God to us Wisdom, bids us be wise for ourselves, and not make fools of ourselves. 2. To the proud daring sinners, the wicked, that set God himself at defiance, he says, "Lift not up the horn; boast not of your power and prerogatives, persist not in your contempt and contempt of the government set over you; lift not up your horn on high, as though you could have what you will, and do what you will; speak not with a stiff neck, in which is an iron sinew, that will not be broken by the power of reasoning, nor by commands from heaven, but for they that will not bend, shall break; they whose necks are stiffened, are so to their own destruction." This is Christ's word of command in his gospel, that every mountain will be brought low before him, Isa. xl. 4. Let not the anticristian power, with its heads and horns, lift up itself against him, for it shall certainly be broken to pieces; what is said with a stiff neck, must be said again with a broken heart, or we are undone. Pharaoh said with a stiff neck, Who is the Lord? But God made him know, to his cost.

6. For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south: 7. But God is the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another. 8. For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them. 9. But I will declare for ever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob. 10. All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off; but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.

In these verses, we have two great doctrines laid down, and two good inferences drawn from.
them, for the confirmation of what he had before said.

1. Here are two great truths laid down concerning God's government of the world, which we ought to mix faith with, both pertinent to the occasion.

1. That from God alone kings receive their power, (v. 6, 7,) and therefore to God alone David would give the praise of his advancement; having his power from God, he would use it for him, and therefore they were fools that lifted up the horn against him. They were set up in the states and kingdoms, and are surprised at the sudden disgrace of some, and elevation of others; we are all full of such changes, when they happen; but here we are directed to look at the Author of them, and are here taught where the original of power is, and whence promotion comes. Whence comes promotion in kingdoms, to the sovereignty of them? And whence comes preferment in kingdoms, to places of power? The idea of promotion and advancement, not upon the will of the people, nor the latter on the will of the prince, but both on the will of God, who has all hearts in his hands; to him therefore those must look who are in pursuit of preferment, and then they begin right. We are here told, (1.) Negatively; which way we are not to look for the fountain of power: Promotion comes neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south, nor from the north. (2.) Positively; it is from God, and therefore they that are raised not upon the will of men, nor the latter on the will of the prince, but both on the will of God, who has all hearts in his hands; to him therefore those must look who are in pursuit of preferment, and then they begin right. We are here told, (1.) Negatively; which way we are not to look for the fountain of power: Promotion comes neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south, nor from the north. (2.) Positively; it is from God, and therefore they that are raised not upon the will of men, nor the latter on the will of the prince, but both on the will of God, who has all hearts in his hands; to him therefore those must look who are in pursuit of preferment, and then they begin right.

2. That from God alone must all receive their doom; (v. 8.) In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, which he puts into the hands of the children of men, a cup of providence, mixed up (as he thinks fit) of many ingredients; a cup of affliction; the sufferings of Christ are called a cup, Matt. xxv. 30. John xvi. 11. The gods of God's people are the cup of the Lord's right hand, Hab. ii. 16. The wine is red, denoting the wrath of God, which is infused into the judgments executed on sinners, and is the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery. It is red as fire, red as blood, for it burns, it kills. It is full of mixture, prepared in wisdom, so as to answer the end: there are mixtures of mercy and grace in the cup of affliction, when it is put into the hands of God's own people; mixtures of the curse, when it is put into the hands of the wicked; it is wine mingled with gall. These 1. xvi. 1. Where we read of the angels pouring out the vials of God's wrath upon the earth. Some drops of this wrath may light on good people; when God's judgments are abroad, they have their share in common calamities; but, (2.) The dregs of the cup are reserved for the wicked. The calamity itself is but the vehicle into which the wrath and curse is infused, the top of which has little of the bitter wine; but, when that is gone down, and then shall fall to the share of sinners; they have the dregs of the cup now, in the terrors of conscience, and hereafter, in the torments of hell. They shall wring them out, that not a drop of the wrath may be left behind, and they shall drink them, for the curse shall enter into their bowels like water, and like oil into their bones. The cup of the Lord's indignation will be to them a cup of trembling, everlasting trembling, Rev. x. 10. The more the heathens dip in the world, is full of mixture, but the worst is at the bottom. The wicked are reserved unto the day of judgment.

2. Here are two good practical inferences drawn from these great truths, and they are the same purposes of duty that he began the psalm with. This being so, 1. He will praise God, and give him glory, for the power to which he had advanced him; (v. 9.) I will give praise for every good and precious work which he does, v. i. He will praise God for his elevation, not only at first, while the mercy was fresh, but for ever, so long as he lives; the exaltation of the Son of David will be the subject of the saints' everlasting praises. He will give God, not only as his God, but as the God of Jacob; knowing it was for Jacob his servant's sake, and because he loved his people Israel, that he made him king over them. (2.) A host will be prepared, the great ends for which it was put into his hands, (v. 10.) as before, v. 4. According to the duty of the higher powers, (1.) He resolves to be a terror to evildoers, to humble their pride, and break their power; "Though not all the heads, yet all the horns of the wicked will I cut off, with which they push their poor neighbours; I will disable them to do mischief." Thus God promises to raise up carpenters which should fray the horns of the Gentiles that had scattered Judah and Israel, Zech. i. 18.-21. (2.) He resolves to be a Protection and Praise to them that do well; The horns of the righteous shall be exalted; they shall be preferred and put into places of power; and they that are good, and have hearts to do good, shall not want ability and opportunity for it. This agrees with David's resolutions, cf. 3, &c. Herein David was a type of Christ, who with the breath of his mouth shall slay the wicked, and shall exalt the horn of the righteous, cxii. 9.

PSALM LXXXVI.

This psalm seems to have been penned upon occasion of some great victory obtained by the church over some threatening enemy or other, and designed to grace the triumph. 1. xvi. 11. The fallen ones were, it is supposed, when many good interpreters conjecture, that it was penned when Sennacherib's army, then besieging Jerusalem, was entirely cut off by a destroying angel in Hezekiah's time; and several passages in the psalm are very applicable to that work of wonder; but there was a
To the chief musician on Neginoth. A psalm or song of Asaph.

1. In Judah is God known; his name is great in Israel. 2. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion. 3. There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword; Selah. 4. Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey. 5. The stout-hearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep; and none of the men of might have found their hands. 6. At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep.

The church is here triumphant, even in the midst of its militant state. The psalmist, in the church’s name, triumphs here in God, the Centre of all our triumphs.

I. In the revelation God had made of himself to them, v. 1. It is the honour and privilege of Judah and Israel, that among them God is known, and whose name is great, and which name he knew, as he pleased to make himself known; and they are happy to whom he discovers himself. Happy people that have their land filled with the knowledge of God; happy persons that have their hearts filled with that knowledge! In Judah God was known, so as he was not known in other nations, which made the favour the greater; inasmuch as it was distinguishing, ex. 19, 20.

II. In the tokens of God’s special presence with them in his ordinances, v. 2. In the whole land of Judah and Israel God was Known, and his name was great; but in Salem, in Zion, were his tabernacle and his dwelling-place; there he kept court, there he received the homage of his people by their sacrifices, and entertained them by the feasts upon the sacrifices; thither they came, to address themselves to him, and thence by his oracles he issued out his orders; there he recorded his name; and of that place he said, Here will I dwell, for I have desired it. It is the glory and happiness of a people to have God among them by his ordinances; but his dwelling-place is a tabernacle, a moveable dwelling; yet a little while is that light with us.

III. In the victories they had obtained over their enemies; (v. 3.) There brake he the arrows of the bow. Observe how threatening the danger was, though Judah and Israel, Salem and Zion, were thus privileged, yet war is raised against them, and the weapons of war are furnished. Here are bow and arrows, shield and sword, and all for battle; but all are broken and rendered useless. And it was done there, 1. In Judah and Israel, in favour of that people near to God. While the weapons of war were used against other nations, they answered their end, but, when turned against that holy nation, they were immediately broken. The Chaldee paraphrases it thus, When the house of Israel did his will, he placed his majesty among them, and there he brake the arrows of the bow; while they kept close to his service, they were great and safe, and every thing went well with them. Or, 2. In the tabernacle and dwelling-place in Zion, there he brake the arrows of the bow; it was done in the field of battle, and yet it is said to be done in the sanctuary, because done in answer to the prayers which God’s people there made to him, and in performance of the promises which he there made to them; of both which, see that instance, 2 Chron. xx. 5, 14. Public successes are owing as much to what is done in the church, as to what is done in the camp.

Now this victory redounded very much. (1.) To the immortal honour of Israel’s God; (v. 4.) Thou art, and hast manifested thyself to be, more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey. [1.] “Than the great and mighty ones of the earth in general, who are high, and think themselves firmly fixed like mountains, but are really mountains of evil, or of no stability at all. It is their glory to destroy; it is thine to deliver.” [2.] “Than our invaders in particular: when they besieged the cities of Judah, they cast up mounts against them, and raised batteries; but thou art able to protect us, than they are to annoy us.” Wherein the enemies of the church deal proudly, it will appear that God is above them.

(2.) To the perpetual disgrace of the enemies of Israel, v. 5. They were stout-hearted, men of great courage and resolution, flushed with their former victories, enraged against Israel, confident of success; they were men of might, robust, and fit for service; they had chariots and horses, which were then greatly valued and trusted to in war, xx. 7. But all this force was of no avail when it was levelled against Jerusalem. [1.] The stout-hearted have despoiled and disarmed themselves; (so some read this verse when it is followed as it should be, v. 7.) They have weakened and destroyed themselves. They have slept, not the sleep of the righteous, who sleep in Jesus, but their sleep, the sleep of sinners, that shall wake to everlasting shame and contempt. [2.] The men of might can no more find their hands, than the stout-hearted can their spirit. As the bold men are cowed, so the strong men are lamed, and cannot so much as find their hands, to save their own heads, much less to hurt their enemies. [3.] The chariots and horses may be truly said to be cast into a dead sleep, when their drivers and their riders were so. God did but speak the word, as the God of Jacob, that commands deliverances for Jacob, and, at his rebuke, the chariot and horse were both cast into a dead sleep; when the men were laid dead upon the spot by the destroying angel, the chariot and horse were not at all formidable. See the power and efficacy of God’s rebukes. With what pleasure may we Christians apply all this to the advantages we enjoy by the Redeemer! It is through him that God is known; it is in him that God’s name is great; to him it is owing that God has a tabernacle and a dwelling-place in his church. He it was that vanquished the strong man armed, spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly.

7. Thou, even thou, art to be feared; and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry! 8. Thou didst cause judgment to
be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still, 9. When God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth. Selah. 10. Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. 11. Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God: let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared. 12. He shall cut off the spirit of princes: he is terrible to the kings of the earth.

This glorious victory, with which God had graced and blessed his church, is here made to speak three things.

I. Terror to God's enemies; (v. 7.-9.) "Thou even thou, art to be feared; thy majesty is to be revered, thy sovereignty to be submitted to, and thy justice to be dreaded by those that have offended thee." Let all the world learn by this event to stand in awe of the great God. 1. Let all be afraid of his wrath against the daring impiety of sinners; Who may stand in thy sight, from the minute that thou weekest against him? and be a consuming Fire, how can chaff and stubble stand before him, though his anger be kindled but a little, i. 12. Let all be afraid of his jealousy for oppressed innocency, and the injured cause of his own people; "Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven, then when thou didst arise to save all the meek of the earth; (v. 8, 9.) and then the earth feared, and was still, waiting what would be the issue of those glorious appearances of thine." Note, (1.) God's people are the meek of the earth, (Zeph. ii. 3.) the quiet in the land, (xxxv. 20.) that can bear any wrong, but do none. (2.) Though the meek of the earth are by their meekness exposed to injury, yet God will, sooner or later, appear for their salvation, and plead their cause. (3.) When God comes to save all the meek of the earth, he will cause judgment to be heard from heaven; he will, make the world know that he is angry at the oppressors of his people; and will make some of them, who were once his enemies, as done against himself. The righteous God loneth, keep silence, yet, sooner or later, he will make judgment to be heard. (4.) When God is speaking judgment from heaven, it is time for the earth to compose itself into an awful and reverent silence; The earth feared, and was still, as silence is made by proclamation, when the court sits. Be still, and know that I am God, xlv. 10. Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord, for he is raised up to judgment, Zech. ii. 13. Those that suppose this psalm to have been penned upon the occasion of the routing of Sennacherib's army, take it for granted that the descent of the destroying angel, who did the execution, was accompanied with thunder, by which God caused judgment to be heard from heaven, and that the earth feared, that is, there was an earthquake, but it was soon over. But this is altogether uncertain.

II. Comfort to God's people, v. 10. We live in a very provoking world, we often feel much, and are apt to fear more, from the wrath of man, which seems boundless. But this is a great comfort to us, 1. That, as far as God permits the wrath of man to break forth at any time, he will make it turn to his praise, will bring honour to himself, and serve his own purposes by it; Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, not only by the checks and given to it, when it shall be forced to confess its own impotency, but even by the liberty given to it for a time. The hardships which God's people suffer by the wrath of their enemies are made to redound to the glory of God and his grace; and the more the heathen rage and plot against the Lord and his Anointed, the more will God be praised for setting his King upon his holy hill of Zion, in spite of them. i. 1, 6. When the heavenly hosts make this the matter of their thanksgiving-songs, that God has taken to him his great power, and has reigned, though the nations were angry, (Rev. xi. 17, 18.) and the voice of man adds lustre to the praises of God. 2. That what will not turn to his praise, shall not be suffered to break out; The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. Men must never permit sin, because they cannot check it when they will; but God can. He can set bounds to the wrath of man, as he does to the raging sea; Hitherto it shall come, and no further; here shall its proud waves be stayed. God restrained the remainder of Sennacherib's rage, for he put a hook in his nose, and a bridle in his jaws; (Isa. xxxvii. 29.) and though he permitted him to talk big, he restrained him from doing what he designed.

III. Duty to all, v. 11, 12. Let all submit themselves to this great God, and become his loyal subjects. Observe, 1. The duty required of us all, that are about him, that have any dependence upon him, or any occasion to approach to him; and who is there that is not affected to love, every one of us commanded to do our homage to the King of kings; Vow and pay; take an oath of allegiance to him, and make conscience of keeping it. Vow to be his, and pay what you vow. Bind your souls with a bond to him, (for that is the nature of a vow,) and then live up to the obligations you have laid upon yourselves; for better it is not to vow, than to vow and not to pay. And, having taken him for our King, let us take him for our Lawgiver and our Sovereign, 1 Sam. x. 27. Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land, Isa. xvi. 1. Not that God needs any present we can bring, or can be benefited by it; but thus we must give him honour, and own that we have our all from him. Our prayers and praises, and especially our hearts, are the presents we should bring to the Lord our God. 2. The reasons to enforce this duty; Render to all their due, fear to whom fear is due; and is it not due to God? Yes; (1.) He ought to be feared; He is the Fear, the word is: his name is glorious and fearful; and he is the proper Object of our fear; with him is terrible majesty. The God of Abraham is called the Fear of Isaac; (Gen. xxxi. 42.) and we are commanded to make him our Fear, Isa. viii. 13. When we bring presents to him, we must have an eye to him as greatly to be feared; for he is terrible in his holy places. (2.) He will be feared, even by them who think it their safety to be feared; (v. 12.) He shall cut off the spirit of princes; he shall slip it off as easily as we slip off a flower from the stalk, or a bunch of grapes from the vine; so the word signifies. He can dispirit those that are most daring, and make them heartless; for he is, or will be, terrible to the kings of the earth; and, sooner or later, if they be not so wise as to submit themselves to him, he will force them to call in; to rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from his wrath, Rev. vi. 16. Since there is no contending with God, it is as much our wisdom as it is our duty to submit to him.

**PSALM LXXXVII.**

This psalm, according to the method of many other psalms, begins with sorrowful complaints, but ends with comfortable encouragements. The complaints seem to be of personal grievances, but the encouragements relate to the public concerns of the church, so that it is not certain whether it was penned upon a personal or a public account. If they were private troubles that he was
my trouble I sought the Lord. Note, Days of trouble must be days of prayer, days of inward trouble especially, when God seems to have withdrawn from us; we must seek him, and seek till we find him. In the day of his trouble, he did not seek for the diversion of business or recreation, to shake off his trouble on any but himself; for, we see, he cast and grace. Those that are under trouble of mind must not think to drink it away, or laugh it away, but must pray it away. My hand was stretched out in the night, and ceased not; so Dr. Hammond reads the following words, as speaking the incessant importunity of his prayers. Compare cxli. 5, 6.

II. His melancholy grief. Grief may then be called melancholy indeed. 1. When it admits of no intermission; such was his; My soul, or wound, ran in the night, and bled inwardly, and it ceased not, no, not in the time appointed for rest and sleep. 2. When it admits of no consolation; and that also was his case; My soul refused to be comforted; he had no mind to hearken to those that would be his comforters. As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart, Prov. xxxv. 20. Nor had he any mind to think of these things that would be his comforters. He was cut off from them for a long time, and indulged himself in sorrow. Those that are in sorrow, upon any account, do not only prejudice themselves, but affront God, if they refuse to be comforted.

III. His melancholy musings. He pored so much upon the trouble, whatever it was, personal or public, that, 1. The methods that should have relieved him did but increase his grief, v. 3. (1.) One would have thought that the remembrance of God should have comforted him, but it did not; I remembered God, and was troubled, as poor Job; (ch. xxiii. 15.) I am troubled at his presence when I consider, I am afraid of him. When he remembered God, his thoughts fastened only upon his justice, and wrath, and dreadful majesty; and thus God himself became a Terror to him. (2.) One would have thought that pouring out his soul before God should have given him ease, but it did not; he complained, His soul was overwhelmed and drowned in the load. The means of his present relief were denied him, v. 4. He could not enjoy sleep, which, if it be quiet and refreshing, is a parenthesis to our griefs and cares; "Thou holdest mine eyes waking with thy terrors, which make me full of tossings to and fro until the dawning of the day." He could not speak, by reason of the disorder of his thoughts, the tumult of his spirits, and the confusion his mind. In short silence even from good, while his heart was hot within him; he was ready to burst like a new bottle. (Job xlix. 19.) and yet so troubled, that he could not speak and refresh himself. Grief never presys so much upon the spirits as when it is thus smothered and pent up.

IV. His melancholy reflections; (v. 5, 6.) "I have considered the days of old, and compared them with the present days; and our former prosperity does but aggravate the present calamity. "Nay, for we cannot wonder that our fathers told us of." Melancholy people are apt to pore altogether upon the days of old, and the years of ancient times, and to magnify them, for the justifying of their own uneasiness and discontent at the present posture of affairs. But say not thou that the former days were better than these, because it is more than thou knowest whether they were or no. Excl. vii. 10. Neither let the remembrance of the comforts we have lost make us unthankful for those that are left or impatient under our crosses.

Particularly, he called to remembrance his song in the night, the comforts with which he had supported himself in his former sorrows, and entertained
himself in his former solitude; these songs he remembered, and tried if he could not sing them over again; but he was out of tune for them, and the remembrance of that pour out his soul in him, xlii. 4. See Job xxx. 10.

V. His melancholy fears and apprehensions: "I communi of mine own heart, v. 6. Come, my soul, what will be the issue of these things? what can I think of them? and what can I expect they will come to at last? I made diligent search into the causes of my trouble, inquiring wherefore God con tended with me, and what would be the end of it. And thus I began to reason, Will the Lord cast off for ever, as he does for the present? He is not now favourable; and will he be favourable no more? His mercy is now gone; and is it clean gone for ever? His promise now fails; and does it fail for evermore? God is not now gracious; but has he forgotten to be gracious? His tender mercies have been withheld, perhaps in wisdom; but are they shut up, shut up in anger?" v. 7.-9. This is the language of a disconsolate deserted soul, walking in darkness, and having no light; a case not uncommon even with those that fear the Lord, and obey the voice of his servant, Isa. i. 10. He may here be looked upon, 1. As groaning under a sore trouble; God hid his face from him, and withdrew the usual tokens of his favour. Note, Spiritual trouble is, of all others, most grievous to a gracious soul; nothing wounds and pierces it like the apprehensions of God's being angry, the suspending of his favour, and the superseding of his promise; this wounds the spirit, and who can bear that? 2. As grappling with a strong temptation. Note, God's own people, in a cloudy and dark day, may be tempted to make desperate conclusions about their own spiritual state, and the condition of God's church and kingdom in the world, and, as to both, to give up all for gone. We may be tempted to think that God has abandoned his desolate, disconsolate servant, has not taken his head, has not taken hold of his hair, has not taken his heart and supersedes of his promise; this wounds the spirit, and who can bear that? 3. As asking such peevish questions, let faith answer them from the scripture; Will the Lord cast off for ever? God forbid, Rem. xi. 1. No, The Lord will not cast off his people, xxiv. 14. Will he be favourable no more? Yes, he will, for though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion: Lxxvi. iii. 32. Is his mercy clean gone for ever? No; his mercy endures for ever; as it is from everlasting, it is to everlasting, cii. 17. DOTH his promise fail for evermore? No; it is impossible for God to lie, Heb. vi. 18. Hath God forgotten to be gracious? No; he cannot deny himself, and his own name, which he hath proclaimed gracious and merciful, Exod. xxxiv. 6. Has he in anger shut up his tender mercies? No; he has mercy on thousands: (Lxxvi. ii. 23.) and therefore, How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? Hos. vi. 8, 9.

Thus was he going on with his dark and dismal apprehensions, when, on a sudden, he first checked himself with that word, Selah; "Stop there, go no further, let us hear no more of these unbelieving surmises;" and he then chid himself; (v. 10.) I said, Truth is hid, until I be brought as a stone, so that it is not well said, and therefore, Why art thou cast down, O my soul? I said, "This is mine affliction" (so some understand it,) "this is the calamity that falls to my lot, and I must make the best of it; every one has his affliction, his trouble in the flesh; and this is mine, the cross I must take." Or rather, "This is my sin, it is mine iniquity, the plague of my own heart." These doubts and fears proceed from the want and weakness of faith, and the corruption of a distempered mind. Note, (1.) We all know that concerning ourselves of which we must say, "This is our infirmity, a sin that most easily besets us." (2.) Despondency of spirit, and distrust of God, under affliction, are too often the infirmities of good people and, as such, are to be reflected upon by us with sorrow and shame, as by the psalmist here; This is my infirmity. When, at any time, it is working in us, we must thus suppress the rising of it, and not suffer the evil spirit to speak. We must argue down the insurrections of unbelief, as the psalmist here; But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. He had been considering the years of ancient times, (v. 5.) the blessings formerly enjoyed, the remem brance of which did only add to his grief; but now he considered them as the years of the right hand of the Most High; that those blessings of ancient times came from the Ancient of days, from the power and sovereign disposal of his right hand, who is over all, God blessed for ever; and this satisfied him; for may not the Most High with his right hand make what changes he pleases?

11. I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember thy wonders of old. 12. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings. 13. Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God! 14. Thou art the God that dost wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people. 15. Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah. 16. The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee: they were afraid; the depths also were troubled, 17. The clouds poured out water; the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad. 18. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook. 19. Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. 20. Thou leadest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

The psalmist here recovers himself out of the great distress and plague he was in, and silences his own fears of God's casting off his people, by the remembrance of the great things he had done for them formerly, which, though he had in vain tried to quiet himself with, (v. 5, 6.) yet he tried again, and, upon this second trial, found it not in vain. It is good to remember, that the proverbs are meant for the strengthening of faith, though they do not produce effectual at first; *I will remember, surely I will, what God has done for his people of old, till I can thence infer a happy issue of the present dark dispensations," v. 11, 12. Note, 1. The works of the Lord, for his people, have been wondrous works. 2. They are recorded for us, that they may be remembered by us. 3. That we may have benefit by the remembrance of them, which shall come upon them, and dwell upon them in our thoughts, and must talk of them, that we may inform ourselves, and others, further concerning them. 4. The due remembrance of the works of God will be a powerful antidote against distrust of his promise and goodness; for he is God, and changes not. If he begin, he will finish his work, and bring forth the top-stone.

Two things, in general, satisfied him very much.
I. That God's way is in the sanctuary, v. 13. It is in holiness, so some. When we cannot solve the particular difficulties that may arise in our constructions of the Divine Providence, this we are sure of, in general, That God is holy in all his works, that they are all worthy of himself, and consonant to the eternal purity and rectitude of his nature. He has holy ends in all he does, and will be sanctified in them. This is the great reason why his way is according to his promise, which he has spoken in his holiness, and made known in the sanctuary; what he has done is according to what he has said, and may be interpreted by it; and, from what he has said, we may easily gather that he will not cast off his people for ever. God's way is for the sanctuary, and for the benefit of it. All he does is intended for the good of his church.

II. That God's way is in the sea; though God is holy, just, and good, in all he does, yet we cannot give an account of the reasons of his proceedings, nor make any certain judgment of his designs; His path is in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known, v. 19. God's ways are like the deep waters, which cannot be fathomed; (xxxvi. 6.) like the way of a ship in the sea, which cannot be tracked; Prov. xxx. 18, 19. God's proceedings are always to be acquiesced in, but cannot always be accounted for.

He specifies some particulars, for which he goes as far back as the infancy of the Jewish church, and from which he gathers, 1. That there is no God to be compared with the God of Israel; (v. 13.) Who is so great a God as our God? Let us first give to God the glory of the great things he has done for his people, and acknowledge him therein great above all comparison; and then we may proceed to the dispensation of Himself; he has done, and encourage ourselves with it. 2. That he is a God of almighty power; (v. 14.) Thou art the God that alone dost wonders, above the power of any creature; thou hast, visibly, and beyond any contradiction, declared thy strength among the people.

What God has done for his church, has been a standing declaration of his almighty power, for the church has made bare his everlasting arm.

(1.) God divided the Red sea before them; (v. 16.) The waters gave way, and a lane was made through that crowd instantly, as if they had seen God himself at the head of the armies of Israel, and had retired for fear of him. Not only the surface of the waters, but the depths, were troubled, and opened to the right and to the left, in obedience to his word of command.

(2.) He divided the Red sea before them; (v. 16.) The waters gave way, and a lane was made through that crowd instantly, as if they had seen God himself at the head of the armies of Israel, and had retired for fear of him. Not only the surface of the waters, but the depths, were troubled, and opened to the right and to the left, in obedience to his word of command.

(3.) He destroyed the Egyptians; (v. 15.) The cloud and the fire, which was a pillar of fire, like an umbrella over the camp of Israel, sheltered it from the shower, in which, as in the deluge, the waters that were above the firmament concurred with those that were beneath the firmament to destroy the rebels. Then the skies sent out a sound, thine arrows also went abroad; which is explained, (v. 18.) The voice of thy thunder was heard in the heaven, that is, the sound which the skies sent forth; The lightnings lightened the world; those are the arrows which went abroad, by which the host of the Egyptians was discomfited with so much terror, that the earth of the adjacent coast trembled and shook. Thus God's way was in the sea, for the destruction of Egypt. There was not only renovation for the salvation of his people; and yet, when the waters returned to their place, his footsteps were not known; (v. 19.) there was no mark set upon the place, as there was afterward in Jordan, Josh. iv. 9. We do not read, in the story of Israel's passing through the Red sea, that there were thunder and lightnings, and an earthquake; yet there might be, and Josephus says there were, such displacements of the waters, as God laid open the way, that it may refer to the thunders, lightnings, and earthquakes, that were at mount Sinai; when the law was given.

(4.) He took his people Israel under his own guidance and protection; (v. 20.) Thou leidest thy people like a flock. They being weak and helpless, and apt to wander like a flock of sheep, and lying exposed to the beasts of prey, God went before them with an eye of care and tenderness of a Shepherd, that they might not fail. The pillar of cloud and fire led them, yet that is not here taken notice of, but the agency of Moses and Aaron, by whose hand God led them; they could not do it without God, but God did it with and by them. Moses was their governor, Aaron their high-priest; they were guides, overseers, and rulers, to Israel, and by them God led them. The right and happy administration of the two great ordinances of magistracy and religion, the one of the one, and the other, as it were, a double pillar of cloud and fire, was to Israel in the wilderness.

The psalm concludes abruptly, and does not apply those ancient instances of God's power to the present distresses of the church, as one might have expected. But, as soon as the good man began to meditate on these things, he found he had gained his point; his very entrance upon this matter gave him light, and he saw that it was but a strange miracle, yet as great a mercy, to any people, as the pillar of cloud and fire was to Israel in the wilderness.

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PSALM LXXVIII.

This psalm is historical; it is a narrative of the great mercy God shewed unto his people, of the great sins with which they had provoked him; and the many tokens of his displeasure they had been under for their sins. The psalmist began, in the foregoing psalm, to relate God's wonders of old, for his own encouragement in a difficult time; there he broke off abruptly, but here resumes the subject, for the edification of the church, and enlarges much upon it; showing not only how good God had been to them, which was an earnest of further finishing mercy, but how the church, basely, and unmercifully, went on in sin, and provoked him in their sins toward God, which justified him in correcting them as he did at this time, and forbade all complaints. Here is, I. The preface to this church-history, commanding the attention of the present age to it, and recommending it to the study of the generations to come, v. 1-8. II. The history itself from Moses to David; it is put into a psalm or song, that it might be the better remembered, and transmitted to posterity, that it might be a monument of the sins he bore with the people here related, more than they would be with a bare narrative of them. The general scope of this psalm we have, v. 9-11. where notice is taken of the present rebukes they were under, (v. 9.) the sin which they sinned in, and the rebukes, (v. 10.) and the mercies of God to them formerly, which aggravated that sin, v. 11. As to the particulars, we are here told, 1. What wonderful works God had wrought for them in bringing them out of Egypt, (v. 12...16.) providing for them in the wilderness, (v. 23...29.) plaguing and ruining their enemies, (v. 43...53.) and, at length,
putting them in possession of the land of promise, v. 54, 55. 2. How ungrateful they were to God for his favours to them; how many and great provocations they were guilty of. How they murmured against God, and distrusted him, (v. 17, 20.) and did but counteract repentance and submission when he punished them, (v. 54, 55.) grieving and tempting him, v. 40, 42. How they affronted God with their idolatries, after they came to Canaan, v. 56, 58. 3. How God had justly punished them for their sins, (v. 21, 22.) in the wilderness where he led them to the sweet-singer of their praises, v. 29, 30, and now, of late, when the ark was taken by the Philistines, v. 39, 64. 4. How graciously God had spared them, and returned in mercy to them, notwithstanding their provocations. He had forgiven them formerly, (v. 58, 59;) and now, of late, had removed the judgments they had brought upon themselves, and brought them under a happy establishment, both in church and state, v. 65, 72. As the general scope of this psalm may be of use to us, in the singing of it, to put us upon recollecting what God has done for us, and for his church formerly, and what we have done against him, so the particulars also may be of use to us, for warning against those sins of unbelief and ingratitude which Israel of old was notoriously guilty of, and the record of which was preserved for our learning. These things happened unto them for examples, 1 Cor. x. 11. Heb. iv. 11.

Maschil of Asaph.

1. GIVE ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. 2. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, which our fathers have told us, v. 3. They are the words of the most ancient of our fathers, whom our fathers heard and knew, and are the records of works that he hath done. 5. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; 6. That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children: 7. That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God; but keep his commandments: 8. And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God.

These verses, which contain the preface to this history, show that the psalm answers the title; it is indeed Maschil, a psalm to give instruction; if we receive not the instruction it gives, it is our own fault. Here,

1. The psalmist demands attention to what he wrote; (v. 1.) Give ear, O my people, to my law. Some make these the psalmist's words; David, as a king, or Asaph, in his name, as his secretary of state, and Deut. x. 19, which speaks of all Israel, here calls upon the people, as his people committed to his charge, to give ear to his law. He calls his instructions his law or edict, such was their commanding force in themselves; every good truth, received in the light and love of it, will have the power of the law upon the conscience; yet that was not all, David was a king, and he would interpose his royal power for the edification of his people. If God, by his grace, make great men good men, they will be capable of doing more good than others, be-
tribe of Levi and the house of Aaron, so he appointed that parents should train up their children in the knowledge of his law; and when they were grown up, they must arise, and declare them to their children, (v. 6.) that, as one generation of God's servants and worshippers passes away, another generation may arise, and the promises and forms of the earth, may be fulfilled even and thus God's name among men may be as the days of heaven.

(2.) The providences of God concerning them, both in mercy and in judgment. The former seem to be mentioned for the sake of this; since God gave order that his laws should be made known to posterity, it is requisite that with them his works also should be made known, the fulfilling of the promises made to the obedient, and the threatenings denounced against his disobedient. Let these be told to our children and our children's children.

[1.] That they may take encouragement to conform themselves to the will of God, v. 7. That, not forgetting the works of God wrought in former days, they might set their hope in God, and keep his commandments, might make his command their rule, and his covenant their stay; those only may with confidence hope for God's salvation, that make conscience of obeying his commandments. The works of God, duly considered, will very much strengthen our resolution both to set our hope in him, and to keep his commandments, for he is able to bear us out in both.

[2.] That they may take warning not to conform themselves to the example of their fathers; (v. 8.) That they might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation. See here, First, What was the character of their fathers; though they were the seed of Abraham, taken into covenant with God, and, for aught we know, the only professing people he had then in the world, yet they were stubborn and rebellious, and walked contrary to God, in direct opposition to his will; they did indeed profess relation to him, but they did not set their hearts right, they were not cordial in their engagements to God, nor inward with him in their worship of him, and therefore their spirit was not steadfast with him, but upon every occasion they flew off from him. Note, Hypocrisy is the high road to apostasy; those that do not set their hearts right, will not be steadfast with God, but play fast and loose. Secondly, What was a charge to the children; That they be not as their fathers. Note, Those that are descended from wicked and ungodly ancestors, if they will but consider the word and works of God, may see reason enough not to tread in their steps. It will be no excuse for a vain conversation, that it was received by tradition from our fathers; (1 Pet. i. 18.) for what we know of them, that was evil, must be an admonition to us, that we dread that which was so pernicious to them, as we would shun those courses which they took, that were ruining to their health or estates.

9. The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. 10. They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law; 11. And forgot his works, and his wonders that he had showed them. 12. Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zaan. 13. He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made the waters to stand as a heap. 14. In the day-time also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. 15. He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. 16. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers. 17. And they sinned yet more against him, by provoking the Most High in the wilderness. 18. And they tempted God in their heart, by asking meat for their lust. 19. Yea, they spake against God: they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?

Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people? Therefore the Lord heard this, and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel. 22. Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation; 23. Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, 24. And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. 25. Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full. 26. He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven; and by his power he brought in the south wind. 27. He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea; 28. And he let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations. 29. So they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire; 30. They were not estranged from their lust: but while their meat was yet in their mouths, 31. The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel. 32. For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works. 33. Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble. 34. When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and inquired early after God: 35. And they remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer. 36. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues: 37. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant. 38. But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath: 39. For he remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.

In these verses,

1. The psalmist observes the late rebukes of Providence that the people of Israel had been under, which they had brought upon themselves by their dealing treacherously with God, v. 9-11. The children of Ephraim, in which tribe Shiloh was, though they were well armed, and shot with
bows, yet turned back in the day of battle. This seems to refer to that shameful defeat which the Philistines gave them in Eh's time, when they took the ark prisoner, 1 Sam. iv. 10, 11. Of this the psalmist here begins to speak, and, after a long digression, returns to it again, v. 61. Well might that event be thus fresh in mind, in David's time, above forty years after, for the ark, which in that memorable battle was seized by the Philistines, though it was quickly recovered, did never again come into the temple nor the king's presence, but was carried away out of obscurity, till David fetched it from Kirjath-jearim to his own city. Observe, 1. The shameful cowardice of the children of Ephraim, that warlike tribe, so famed for valiant men, Joshua's tribe; the children of that tribe, though as well armed as ever, turned back, when they came to face the enemy. Note, Weapons of war stand men in little stead without a martial spirit, and that is gone, if God be gone. Sin dispirits man, and saith away the heart. 2. The causes of their cowardice, which were no less shameful; and these were, (1.) A shameful violation of God's law, and their covenant with him; (v. 10.) they were basely treacherous and perfidious, for they kept not the covenant of God, and basely stubborn and rebellious, (as they were described, v. 8.) for they peremptorily refused to walk in his law, and, in effect, told him to his face that they would not heartily seek him. This shameful ingratitude to God for the favours he had bestowed upon them; they forgot his works and his wonders, his works of wonder which they ought to have admired, v. 11. Note, Our forgetfulness of God's works is at the bottom of our disobedience to his laws. II. He takes occasion hence to consult precedents, and to compare this with their fathers' case; who were not unmindful of God's kindnesses to them, and ungrateful to their Founder and great Benefactor, and were therefore often brought under his displeasure. The narrative in these verses is very remarkable, for it relates a kind of struggle between God's goodness and man's badness, and mercy, at length, rejoices against judgment. 1. God did great things for his people Israel, when he first incorporeized them, and formed them into a people, and gave them the land of their fathers, and not only in their sight, but in the sight of their children, and for their benefit; so strange, so kind, that one would think they should never be forgotten. What he did for them in the land of Egypt is barely mentioned here, (v. 12.) but afterward resumed, v. 43. He proceeds here to show, (1.) How he made a lane for them through the Red sea, and caused them, gave them courage, to pass through, though the waters stood over their heads, as a heap, v. 13. See Isa. lxiii. 12, 13. Where God is said to lead them by the hand, as it were, through the deep, that they should not stumble. (2.) How he provided a guide for them through the untried paths of the wilderness; (v. 14.) he led them step by step, in the day-time, by a cloud, which also sheltered them from the heat, and all the night with a light of fire, which perhaps warmed the air, at least, made the darkness of night less frightful, and perhaps kept off wild beasts. Zach. ii. 5. (3.) How he furnished their camp with fresh water, in a dry and thirsty land where no water was; not by opening the bottles of heaven, (that had been a common way,) but by broaching a rock; (v. 15, 16.) He clave the rocks in the wilderness, which yielded water, though they were not capable of receiving it either from the clouds above, or the springs beneath. Out of the dry and hard rock he gave them drink, not distilled as out of an alembic, drop by drop, but in streams running down like rivers, and as out of the great depths. God gives abundantly, and is rich in mercy; he gives seasonably, and sometimes makes us to feel the want of mercies, that we may the better know the worth of them. This water, which God gave Israel out of the rock, was the more valuable, because it was spiritual drink, and that Rock was Christ. 2. When God began thus to bless them, they began to affront him; (v. 17.) They sinned yet more against him, more than they had done in Egypt, though there they were bad enough, Ezek. xx. 8. They bore the miseries of their servitude better than the difficulties of their deliverance. (1.) They dissembled at their task-masters, so as they did at Moses and Aaron; as if they were delivered to do all these abominations, Jer. vii. 10. As sin sometimes takes occasion by the commandment, so at other times it takes occasion by the deliverance, to become more exceeding sinful; They provoked the Most High; though he is Most High, and they knew themselves an unequal match for him, yet they provoked him, and even bid defiance to his justice. And this in their badness, where he had them at his mercy, and therefore they were bound in interest to please him; and where he showed them so much mercy, and therefore they were bound in gratitude to please him; yet there they said and did that which they knew would provoke him; They tempted God in their heart, v. 18. Their sin began in their heart, and thence it took its malignity; They do always err in their heart, Heb. iii. 8. (2.) They also wrought their patience to the utmost, whether he would bow with them or no; and, in effect, bid him do his worst. Two ways they provoked him; (1.) By desiring, or rather demanding, that which he had not thought fit to give them; They asked meat for their lust. God had given them meat for their hunger, in the manna, wholesome pleasant food, and in abundance; he had given them meat for their fathers' sake, and the manna, which he brake in pieces, ixxx. 14. But all this had been in vain, it could not serve; they must have meat for their lust, dainties and varieties to gratify a luxurious appetite. Nothing is more provoking to God than our quarrelling with our allotment, and indulging the desires of the flesh. (2.) By distrusting his power to give them what they desired. This was tempting God indeed! They charged him to give them flesh; and if he did not, they would not go up, v. 23. This was a kind of insolence because he could not see what would not serve; they must have meat for their lust, dainties and varieties to gratify a luxurious appetite. What an unreasonable, insatiable, thing is luxury! Such a mighty thing did these epicures think a table well furnished to be, that they thought it was more than God himself could give them in that wilderness; whereas, the beasts of the forest, and all the fowls of the mountains, are his, I. 10, 11. Their disbelief of God's power was so much the worse, in that they did at the same time own that he had done as much as that came to; (v. 20.) Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, which they and their cattle drank of. And whether is it easier to furnish a table in the wilderness, which a rich man can do, or to fetch water out of a rock, which the greatest potentate on the earth cannot do? Never did unbelief, though always unreasonable, ask so absurd a question; "Can he that melted down a rock into streams of water, give bread also?" Or, can he, that has given bread, provide flesh also? Is any thing too hard for Omnipotence? When once
the ordinary powers of nature are exceeded, God has made bare his arm, and we must conclude nothing is impossible with him. Be it ever so great a thing that we ask, it becomes us to own, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst.

3. God justly resented the provocation, and was much displeased with them; (ver. 21.) The Lord heard this, and was wrath. Note, God is a Witness to all our murmurings and distrusts; he hears them, and threatens vengeance against them. A fire was kindled for this against Jacob, the fire of the Lord burnt among them, Numb. xi. 1. Or, it may be understood of the fire of God's anger which came up against Israel. To unbelievers our God is himself a consuming Fire. Those that will not believe the power of God's mercy, shall feel the power of his indignation, and be made to confess, that it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands. Nowhere are we told,

(1.) Why God thus resented the provocation, ver. 22. Because by this it appeared that they believed not in God, they did not give credit to the revelation he had made of himself to them, for they durst not commit themselves to him, nor venture themselves with him; They trusted not in the salvation he had begun to work for them; for then they would not thus have questioned its progress. Those cannot be said to trust in God's salvation as their felicity at last, who do not trust in his providence for food convenient in the way to it. That which aggravated their unbelief, was, the experience they had of the power and goodness of God, ver. 23-25. He had given them undeniable proofs of his power, not only on earth beneath, but in heaven above; for he commanded the clouds from above, as one that had created them, and commanded them into being; he made what use he pleased of them. Usually, by their showers, they contributed to the earth's producing corn; but now, when God so commanded them, they showered down corn themselves, which is therefore called here the corn of heaven; for heaven can do the work without the earth, but not the earth without heaven. God, who has the key of the clouds, opened the doors of heaven, that is more than opening the windows, which yet is spoken of as a great blessing, Mal. iii. 10. To all that by faith and prayer, ask, seek, and knock, these doors shall not be shut, and the corn will be showered down upon the earth, Ps. ciii. 18. The providence of God for the heaven is rich in mercy to all that call upon him; he not only keeps a good house, but keeps open house. Justly might God take it ill that they should distrust him, when he had been so very kind to them, that he had rained down manna upon them to eat, substantial food, daily, duly, enough for all, enough for each; Man did eat angels' food, such as angels, if they had occasion for food, would eat and be thankful; or rather such as was given by the ministry of angels, and (as the Chalder rends it) such as descended from the dwelling of angels. Every one, even the least child in Israel, did eat bread of the mighty; (so the margin reads it;) the weakest stomach could digest it, and yet it was so nourishing, that it was strong meat for strong men. And though the provision was so good, yet they were not stinted, nor ever reduced to short allowance; for he sent them meat to the full; if they gathered little, it was to the full, over and above; and even then, there was no lack, Exod. xvi. 18. The daily provision God makes for us, and has made ever since we came into the world, though it has not so much of miracle as this, has no less of mercy, and is therefore a great aggravation of our distrust of God.

(2.) How he expressed his resentment of the provocation; not in denying them what they so importunately asked, but in granting it to them. [1.] Did they question his power? He soon gave them a sensible conviction that he could furnish a table in the wilderness. Though the winds seem to blow where they list, yet, when he pleased, he could make them his caterers to fetch in provisions, ver. 26. He caused an east-wind to blow, and a south-wind, either a south-east-wind, or an east-wind, first to bring in the quails from that quarter, and then a south-wind to bring in more from that quarter; so that he rained flesh upon them, and that of the most delicious sort, more than they had ever before known; but they could not abide the abundance of it, as dust, as the sand of the sea, (ver. 27.) so that the meanest Israelite might have sufficient; and it cost them nothing, no, not the pains of fetching it from the mountains, for He let it fill in the midst of their camp, round about their habitation, ver. 28. We have the account, Numb. xi. 31, 32. See how good God is, even to the evil and unthankful, and wonder that his goodness does not overcome their base ingratitude. See what little reason we have to judge of God's love by such gifts of his bounty as these; dainty bits are no tokens of his peculiar favour; Christ gave dry bread to the disciples that he loved, but a sop dipped in the sauce to Judas that betrayed him. [2.] Did they defy his justice, and boast that they had gained their point? He made them pay dear for their quails, for, though he gave them their own desire, they were not estranged from their lusts; (ver. 29, 30,) their appetite was insatiable, they were more than filled, and yet they were not satisfied; for they knew not what it was that they would have. If it were mere lust, it is content with nothing, and the more it is humoured, the more humourous it grows. They that indulge their lust will never be estranged from it. Or it intimates that God's liberality did not make them ashamed of their ungrateful lustings, as it would have done, if they had had any sense of honour. But what came of it? While the meat was yet in their mouth, rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, the wrath of God came upon them, and they lusted, (Ezek. xxviii. 18) the fattest of them, (ver. 31) those that were most luxurious, and most daring. See Numb. xi. 33, 34. They were fed as sheep for the slaughter: the butcher takes the fattest first. We may suppose there were some pious and contented Israelites, that did eat moderately of the quails, and were never the worse; for it was not the meat that poisoned them, but their own lust. Let epicures and sensualists here read their doom; the end of those who make a god of their own lust is destruction. Phil. iii. 13. The prosperity of fools shall destroy them, and their ruin will be the greater.

4. The judgments of God upon them did not reform them, nor attain the end, any more than his mercies; (ver. 32.) For all this, they sinned still, they murmured and quarrelled with God and Moses as much as ever. Though God was wrath, and smote them, yet they went on forwardly in the way of their heart; (Isa. lvii. 7,) they believed not for his wonderful works. Though his works of justice were as wondrous, and as great proofs of his power as his works of mercy, yet they were not wrought upon them to wondrous, nor convinced how much it was their interest to make him their Friend. These hearts are hard indeed, that will neither be melted by the mercies of God, nor broken by his judgments.

5. They persisting in their sins, God proceeded in his judgments, but they were judgments of another sort, rather of punishment than of correction. They had been there two days. He punished them, not now with such acute diseases as that which slew the fattest of them, but a lingering chronic distemper; (ver. 33,) Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, in the wilderness, and their years in trouble. By an irreversible doom they were condemned to wear out thirty-eight tedious years in the wilderness, which, indeed, were consumed in vanity; for in all those years there was not a step taken nearer Canaan, but they were
turned back again, and wandered to and fro as in a labyrinth, not one stroke straught toward the conquest of which they had not erring, but in trouble, for their carcasses were condemned to fall in the wilderness, and there they all perished, but Caleb and Joshua.  
Note, Those that sin still, must expect to be in trouble still. And the reason why we spend our days in so much vanity and trouble, why we live with so little comfort, and to so little purpose, is, because we do not live by faith.

6. Under these rebukes, they professed repentance, but they were not coryndal and sincere in it. (1.) Their profession was plausible enough; (ν. 34, 35.) *When he slew them,* or condemned them to be slain, *then they sought him,* they confessed their fault, and begged his pardon. When some were slain, others in a fright cried to God for mercy, and promised they would reform, and be very good; then *they returned to God,* and inquired early after him. So one would take them to be such as desired to find him. And they pretend thus far, because they had forgotten it formerly, now they remembered that God was their Rock, and therefore, now that they needed him, they would fly to him, and take shelter in him; and now they remembered that the high God was their Redeemer, who brought them out of Egypt, and to whom, therefore, they might come with boldness. Afflictions are sent to put us in mind of God as our Rock and our Redeemer; for, in prosperity, we are apt to forget him. They were not sincere in his professions. (ν. 36, 37.) *They did but flatter him* with their mouth, as if they thought by fair speeches to prevail with him to revoke the sentence, and remove the judgment, with a secret intention to break their word when the danger was over; they did not return to God with their whole heart, but feignedly, Jer. iii. 10. All their professions, prayers, and promises, were extorted by the rack; it was plain that they did not mean as they said, for they did not adhere to it; they thawed in the sun, but froze in the shade; they did but *lie to God with their tongues,* for *their heart was not with him,* nor was right with him, as appeared by the issue, *for they were not steadfast* in his covenant. They were not sincere in their reformation, for they were not constant; and, by thinking thus to impose upon a heart-searching God, they really put as great an affront upon him as by any of their reflections. 

They pitched not to the right of the judgments which were threatened, and in part executed; (ν. 38, 39.) *But he,* being *full of compassion,* forgave their iniquity. One would think this counterfeit repentance should have filled up the measure of their iniquity. What could be more provoking than to lie thus to the holy God, than thus to keep back part of the price, the chief part? Acts v. 3. And yet, he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity thus far, that he did not destroy them, and cut them off from being a people, as he justly might have done, but spared their lives till they had reared another generation which should enter into the promised land. *Destroy it not,* for *a blessing is in it,* Isa. lxv. 8. *Many a time he turned his anger away,* for he is Lord of his anger, and *did not stir up all his wrath,* to deal with them as they deserved. And why did he not? Not because their rage could not have turned any lose; for, if it did not cause he was full of compassion, and, when he was going to destroy them, *his repentings were kindled together,* and he said, *How shall I give thee up,* Ephraim? *How shall I deliver thee,* Israel? Hos. xi. 8. (2.) Because, though they did not rightly remember that he was their Rock, he remembered that *they were but flesh.* He considered the corruption of their nature, which inclined them to evil, and was pleased to make that an excuse for his sparing them, though it was really no excuse for their sin. See Gen. vi. 3. He considered the weakness and frailty of their nature, and what an easy thing it would be to crush them; *They are as a wind that passeth away,* and cometh not again. They may soon be taken off; but, when they are gone, they are gone irrecoverably, and then what will become of the covenant with Abraham? They are flesh, they are wind; whence it was easy to argue, they may justly, they may immediately, be cut off, and there would be no loss of them; but God argueth on the contrary, therefore he will not destroy them; for the true reason is, *He is full of compassion.*

40. How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert! 41 Yea, they turned back, and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. 42. They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy: 43. How he had wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Zaan: 44. And had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink. 45. He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them. 46. He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust. 47. He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore-trees with frost. 48. He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts. 49. He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them. 50. He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence; 51. And smote all the first-born in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham: 52. But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. 53. And he led them on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. 54. And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain, which his right hand had purchased. 55. He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents. 56. Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies; 57. But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow. 58. For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. 59. When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel: 60. So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men; 61. And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand. 62. He gave his people over also
unto the sword; and was wroth with his inheritance. 63. The fire consumed their young men; and their maidens were not given to marriage. 64. Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made no amentation. 65. Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine. 66. And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts; he put them to a perpetual reproach. 67. Moreover, he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim: 68. But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion, which he loved. 69. And he built his sanctuary like high palaces, like the earth which he hath established for ever. 70. He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheep-folds: 71. From following the ewes great with young, he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. 72. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

The matter and scope of this paragraph are the same with the former, showing what great mercies God had bestowed upon Israel, how provoking they had been, what judgments he had brought upon them for their sins, and yet how, in judgment, he remembered mercy at last. Let not those that receive mercy from God be thereby imboldened to sin, for the mercies they receive will aggravate their sin, and hasten the punishment of it; yet let not those that are under divine rebukes for sin be discouraged from repentance, for their punishments are means of repentance, and shall not prevent the mercy God has yet in store for them. Observe,

1. The sins of Israel in the wilderness again reflected on him; they were the unquenchable thirst for enjoyment; (v. 41.) How often did they provoke him in the wilderness? Not once, or twice, but many a time; and the repetition of the provocation was a great aggravation of it, as well as the place; (v. 17.) God kept an account how often they provoked him, though they did not; (Num. xiv. 22.) They have tempted me these ten times. By provoking him they did not so much anger him as grieve him, for he looked upon them as his children, Israel is my son, my first-born; and the unblуд, disrespectful, behaviour of children does more grieve than anger the tender parents; they lay it to heart, and take it unkindly, Isa. i. 2. They grieved him, because they put him under a necessity of afflicting them; which he did not willingly. After they had humbled themselves before him, they turned back and tempted God, as before, and limited the Holy One of Israel, prescribing to him what proofs he should give of his power and presence with them, and what methods he should take in leading them, and providing for them. They limited him to their way, and their time, as if he did not observe that they quarrelled with him. It is presumption for us to limit the Holy One of Israel; for, being the Holy One, he will do what is most for his own glory; and, being the Holy One of Israel, he will do what is most for their good; and we both imitate his wisdom, and betray our own pride and folly, if we go about to prescribe how he shall do with him. This which occasions their limiting God for the future, was, their forgetting of his former favours; (v. 42.) They remembered not his hand, how strong it is, and how it had been stretched out for them, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy, Pharaoh, that great enemy who sought their ruin. There are some days made remarkable by signal deliverances, which might never to be forgotten, for the remembrance of them would encourage us in our greatest straits.

2. The mercies of God to Israel, which they were unmindful of when they tempted God, and limited him; this catalogue of the works of wonder which God wrought for them, begins higher, and is carried down further, than that before, v. 12, &c.

1. This begins with their deliverance out of Egypt, and the plagues with which God compelled the Egyptians to let them go: these were the signs God wrought in Egypt, (v. 43.) the wonders he wrought in the field of Zoan, that is, in the country of Zoan, as we say, in Agro N. meaning in such a place.

Divers of the plagues of Egypt are here specified, which speak aloud the power of God, and his favour to Israel, as well as terror to his and their enemies. As, (1.) The turning of the waters into blood: they had made themselves drunk with the blood of God’s people, even the infant’s, and now God gave them blood to drink, for they were worthy, v. 44. (2.) The flies and frogs which infected them, mixture of insects in swarms, in shoals, which destroyed them; (v. 45.) For God can make the weakest and most despicable animals instruments of his wrath, when he pleases; what they want in strength may be made up in number. (3.) The plague of locusts, which devoured their increase, and that which they had labour’d for, v. 46. They are called God’s great army, Joel ii. 25. (4.) The hail, which destroyed their trees, especially their vines, the weakest of trees, (v. 47.) and their cattle, in work, of their flocks of sheep, the weakest of their cattle, which were killed with hot thunderbolts; (v. 48.) and the frost, or concealed rain, (as the word signifies,) was so violent, that it destroyed even the sycamore trees. (5.) The death of the first-born was the last and sorest of the plagues of Egypt, and that which perfected the deliverance of Israel; it was first in intention, (Exod. iv. 23.) but last in execution; for, if it had been prevented; but it is here largely described, v. 49-51. [1.] The anger of God was the cause of it; wrath was now come upon the Egyptians to the uttermost; Pharaoh’s heart having been often harden’d after lesser judgments had softened it, God now stirred up all his wrath; for he cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, anger in the highest degree; wrath and indignation the cause, and trouble, tribulation, and anguish, (Rom. ii. 8, 9.) the effect. This from on high he cast upon them, and did not spare, and they could not fleer out of his hands, Job xxvii. 22. He made a way, or, as the word is, He weighed a path, to his anger; he did not cast it upon them uncertainly, but by weight; his anger was weighed with the greatest exactness in the balances of justice; for, in his greatest displeasure, he never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures; the path of his anger was always weighed. [2.] The angels of God were the instruments employed in this execution; He sent evil angels among them; not evil in their own nature, but in respect to the errand upon which they were sent; they were destroying angels, or angels of punishment, which passed through all the land of Egypt, with orders, according to the weighed paths of God’s anger, not to kill all, but the first-born only. Good angels become evil angels, to execute vengeance on the children of their enemies, must never expect the holy angels to be their friends. [3.] The execution itself was very severe; He spared not their soul from death but suffered death to ride in triumph among them and gave their life over to the pestilence, which cut
the thread of life off immediately; for he smote all the first-born in Egypt (v. 51.) the chief of their strength, the hopes of their respective families; children are the parents’ strength, and the first-born the defense of them. Hence it became Israel was precious in God’s sight, he gave men for them, and people for their life, Isa. xiii. 4.

By these plagues on the Egyptians, God made a way for his own people to go forth like sheers; distinguishing between them and the Egyptians, as the shepherd divides between the sheers and the goats, having set his own mark on those sheep, by the blood of the lamb sprinkled on their door-posts. He made them go forth like sheers, not knowing what they went, and guided them in the wilderness, like as a shepherd guides his flock, with all possible care and tenderness, v. 52. He led them on safely, though in dangerous paths, so that they feared not, that is, they needed not to fear; they were indeed frightened at the Red sea, (Exod. xiv. 10.) but that was said to them, and done for them, which effectually silenced their fears. But the sea overwhelmed their enemies, that ventured to pursue them into it, v. 53. It was a lane to them, but a grave to their persecutors.

2. It is carried on as far as their settlement in Canaan; (v. 54.) He brought them to the border of his sanctuary, to that land, in the midst of which he set up his sanctuary, which was, as it were, the centre and metropolis, the crown and glory, of it; that is a happy land which is the border of God’s sanctuary. This was the happiness of that land, that there God was known, and there were his sanctuary and dwelling-place, lxvi. 1, 2. The whole land in general, and Zion in particular, was the mountain which his right hand had purchased, which by his own power he had set apart for himself. See xxiv. 3. He made them to ride on the high places of the earth, Isa. lxi. 14. Deut. xxxii. 13. They found the Canaanites in the full and quiet possession of that land, but God cast out the heathen from them, not only took away their title to it, as the Lord of the whole earth, but himself executed the judgment given against them, and, as Lord of hosts, turned them out of it, and made his people Israel tread upon their high places, dividing each tribe an inheritance by line, and making them to dwell in the houses of those whom they had destroyed. God could have turned the unhinged, uncultivated, wild land which Canaan was now, as we may say, the same extent as Canaan) into fruitful soil, and have planted them there; but the land he designed them was to be a type of heaven, and therefore must be the glory of all lands; it must likewise be fought for, for the kingdom of heaven suffers violence.

III. The sins of Israel after they were settled in Canaan; (v. 56-58.) The children were like their fathers, and brought their old corruptions into their new land; though God had shown them his way, yet they tempted and provoked the most high God still. He gave them his testimonies, but they did not keep them; they began very promisingly, but when they turned back, gave God good words, but dealt unfaithfully, and were like a deceitful bow, which seemed likely to send the arrow to the mark, but, when it is drawn, breaks, and drops the arrow at the archer’s foot, or, perhaps, makes it recoil in his hand. There was much of their iniquity; no evidence to be put in their promises or professions. They seemed sometimes devoted to God, but they presently turned aside, and provoked him to anger with their high places and their graven images. Idolatry was the sin that did most easily beset them, and which, though they often professed their repentance for, they as often relapsed into. It was spiritual adultery either to worship idols, or to worship God by images, as if he had been an idol, and therefore by it they are said to move him to jealousy, Deut. xxxii. 16, 21.

IV. The judgments God brought upon them for these sins. Their place in Canaan would no more secure them in a sinful way, than their descent from Israel; You only have I known among all the earth, therefore I will punish you, Amos iii. 2. Idolatry is winked at among the Gentiles, but not in Israel. 1. God was displeased with them; (v. 59.) When God heard this, when he heard the cry of their iniquity, which came up before him, he was wrath, he took it very heinously, as well he might, and he greatly abhorred Israel, whom he had greatly loved; and delighted in them. That had been the people of his own choice, because of the Abode of his wrath. Presumptuous sins, idolatries especially, render even Israelites odious to God’s holiness, and obnoxious to his justice. 2. He deserted his tabernacle among them, and removed the defence which was upon that glory, v. 60. God never leaves us till we leave him, never withdraws till we have driven him from us. His name is Jealous, and he is jealous God; and therefore no marvel if a people whom he had so tendered to himself be loathed and rejected, and he refuse to conhabit with them any longer, when they have embraced the bosom of a stranger. The tabernacle at Shiloh was the tent God had placed among men, in which God would in very deed dwell with men upon the earth; but when his people treacherously forsook it, he justly forsook it, and then all its glory departed. Israel has small joy of the tabernacle without the presence of God in it. 3. He gave up all into the hands of the enemy. Those whom God forsakes become an easy prey to the destroyer. The Philistines are sworn enemies to the Israel of God, and no less so to the God of Israel, and yet God will make use of them to be a scourge to his people.

(1.) God permits them to take the ark prisoner, and carry it off as a trophy of their victory, to show that he had not only forsaken the tabernacle, but even the ark itself, which shall now be no longer a token of his presence; (v. 61.) He delivered his strength into captivity, as if it had been weakened and overcome, and his glory fell under the disgrace of being abandoned into the enemy’s hand. We have the story, 1 Sam. iv. 11. When the ark is become as a stranger among Israelites, no marvel if it soon be made a prisoner among Philistines. (2.) He suffers the armies of Israel to be routed by the Philistines; 1 Sam. v. 26, 27. He carried over unto the sword, to the sword of his own justice, and of the enemy’s rage, for he was wrath with his inheritance; and that wrath of his was the fire which consumed their young men in the prime of their time, by the sword or sickness, and made such a devastation of them, that their maidens were not praised, were not given in marriage, which is honourable in all; because there were no young men left to them to carry on the race, to, and hence the distresses and calamities of Israel were so mighty and various, that the joys of marriage-solemnities were judged unseasonable; and it was said, Blessed is the womb that beareth not. General destructions produce a scarcity of men; (Isa. xiii. 12.) I will make a man more fierce than fine gold, so that seven women shall take hold of one man, Isa. iv. 1.—iii. 25. Yet this was not the worst. (3.) Even their priests, who had placed the ark between the altar, and Phinehas; justly they fell, for they were an iniquity, a reproach, and a stench before the Lord exceedingly; and their priesthood was so far from being their protection, that it aggravated their sin, and hastened their fall; justly did they fall by the sword, because they exposed themselves in the field of battle, without call or warrant; we throw ourselves out of God’s protection, when we go out of our place, and out of
the way of our duty. When the priests fell, their words made no lamentation, v. 64. All the ceremonies of mourning were lost and buried in substantial grief; the widow of Phinehas, instead of lamenting her husband's death, died herself, when she had called her son Ichabod, 1 Sam. iv. 19, &c.

V. God's return. Joshua, and his gracious appearance for them after this. We read not of their repentance and return to God, but God was grieved for the miseries of Israel, (Judg. xvi.) and concerned for his own honour, fearing the wrath of the enemy, lest they should behave themselves strangely, Deut. xxxii. 27. And therefore then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, (v. 65.) and like a mighty man that shouldest by reason of wine; not only like one that is roused out of a sleep, but who had recovered himself from the slumber which, by drinking, he was overcome with, who then regards that which before he seemed wholly to neglect, but like one that is refreshed with sleep, and whose heart is made glad by the sober and moderate use of wine, and therefore the more lively and vigorous, and fit for business. When God had delivered the ark of his strength into captivity, as one jealous of his honour, he soon put forth the arm of his strength to rescue it; starting up his strength to do great things for his people.

1. He plagued the Philistines who held the ark in captivity, v. 66. He smote them with emerods in the hinder parts, wounded them behind, as if they were fleeing from him, even then when they thought themselves more than conquerors. He put them to reproach, and they themselves helped to make it a perpetual reproach, by the golden images of their emerods, which they returned with the ark for a thank-offering. (1 Sam. vi. 5.) to remain in perpetuum rememoriam—as a perpetual memorial. Note, Sooner or later, God will glorify himself by putting disgrace upon his enemies, then when they are most elevated with their successes.

2. He provided a new settlement for his ark, after it had, been some months in captivity, and some years in obscurity. He did indeed refine the tabernacle of Joseph, he never sent it back to Shiloah, in the year of the jubilee, p. 67. The ruins of Gath place were standing monuments of divine justice. Go, see what I did to Shiloh, Jer. vii. 12. But he did not wholly take away the glory from Israel; the moving of the ark is not the removing of it; Shiloah has lost it, but Israel has not; God will have a church in the world, and a kingdom among men, though this or that place may have its candlestick removed; nay, the rejection of Shiloh is the election of Zion, as, long after, the fall of the Jews was the riches of the Gentiles, Rom. xi. 12. When God chose not the tribe of Ephraim, of which tribe Joshua was, he chose the tribe of Judah, (v. 68.) because of that tribe Jesus was to be, who is greater than Joshua. Kirjath-jearim, the place to which the ark was brought after its rescue out of the hands of the Philistines, was in the tribe of Judah; there it took possession of that tribe; and throne was removed to a place of eminence. Solomon which he loved, (v. 68.) which was beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth; there it was, that he built his sanctuary like high palaces, and like the earth. David indeed erected only a tent for the ark, but a temple was then designed and prepared for, and finished by his son; and that was, (I.) A very stately place. It was built like the palaces of princes, and the great men of the earth, nay, it was like to the temple which Solomon built it, and yet here it is said, God built it, for his father had taught him, perhaps with reference to this undertaking, that except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it, cxxvii. 1. which is a psalm for Solomon. (2.) A very stable place, like the earth; though not to continue as long as the earth, yet, while it was to continue, it was as firm as the earth, which God upheld by the word of his power, and it was not finally destroyed till the gospel-temple was erected, which is to continue as long as the sun and moon endure. (lxxxix. 36, 37.) Against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.

3. He set a good government over them; a monarch, and a monarch after his own heart. He chose David his servant out of all the thousands of Israel, and put the sceptre into his hand, out of whose loins Christ was to come, and who was to be a type of him, v. 70. Concerning David, observe here,

(1.) The meanness of his beginning. His extraction indeed was great, for he descended from the prince of the tribe of Judah, but his education was poor: he was bred, not a scholar, not a soldier, but a shepherd, he was taken from the sheep-folds, as Moses was, for God delights to put honour upon the humble and diligent, to raise the poor out of the dust, and to set them among princes; and some times finds those most fit for public action that have been the last in their time in solitude and contemplation. The Son of man came not in the glory of kings, but in meekness and humility.

(2.) The greatness of his advancement. God preferred him to feed Jacob his people, v. 71. It was a great honour that God put upon him, in advancing him to be a king, especially to be king over Jacob and Israel, God's peculiar people, near and dear to him; but withal it was a great trust reposed in him, when he was charged with the government of those that were God's own inheritance. God advanced him to the throne, that he might feed them, not that he might feed himself; that he might do good, not that he might make his family great. It is the charge given to all the under-shepherds, both magistrates and ministers, that they feed the flock of God.

(3.) The happiness of his management. David, having so great a trust put into his hands, obtained mercy of the Lord, to be found both skilful and faithful in the discharge of it; (v. 72.) So he fed them, he ruled them and taught them, guided and protected them. [1.] Very honestly; he did it according to the integrity of his heart, aiming at nothing but the glory of God, and the good of the people committed to his charge; the principles of his religion were the maxims of his government, which he uniformly observed and maintained with carnel policy, but with godly sincerity, by the grace of God. In every thing he did, he meant well, and had no by-end in view. [2.] Very discreetly; he did it by the skilfulness of his hands; he was not only very sincere in what he designed, but very prudent in what he did, and chose out the most proper means in pursuit of his end, for his God did instruct him to discretion. Happy the people that are under such a government! and praise God, he did not cease to show them his finishing, crowning, instance of God's favour to Israel; for David was a type of Christ, the great and good Shepherd, who was humbled first, and then exalted, and of whom it was foretold, that he should be filled with the spirit of wisdom and understanding, and should judge and reprove with equity.
Isa. xi. 3, 4. On the integrity of his heart and the skilfulness of his hands all his subjects may entirely rely, and of the increase of his government and people there shall be no end.

PSALM LXXIX.

This psalm, if penned with any particular event in view, is with most probability made to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and the woesful havoc made of the Jews under Nebuchadnezzar. It is set to the same tune, as I may say, with the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and that weeping prophet borrow s two verses out of it, (v. 6, 7.) and makes use of them in his prayer, Jer. x. 25. Some think it was penned long before, by the spirit of prophecy, prepared for the use of the church in that cloudy and dark day. Others think that it was penned then by the spirit of prayer, set forth by a prophet named Asaph, probably written for the sons of Asaph. Whatever the particular occasion was, we have here, I. A representation of the very deplorable condition that the people of God were in at this time, v. 1.-5. II. A petition for God's succour and relief; that their enemies might be reckoned with, (v. 6, 7, 10, 12.) that their sins might be pardoned, (v. 8, 9.) and that they might be delivered, v. 11. III. A plea taken from the readiness of his people to praise him, v. 12. In lines of the church's peace and prosperity, this psalm may, in the singing of it, give us occasion to bless God that we are not thus trampled on and insulted. But it is especiallyseasonable in a day of treading down, and perplexity, for the exciting of our desires toward God, and the encouragement of our faith in him, as the church's Patron.

A psalm of Asaph.

1. O GOD, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps. 2. The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. 3. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them. 4. We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. 5. How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire?

We have here a sad complaint exhibited in the court of heaven. The world is full of complaints, and so is the church too, for it suffers, not only with it, but from it, as a lily among thorns. God is complained of; whither should children go for their grievances, but to their father, to such a father as is able and willing to help? The heathen are complained of, who, being themselves aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, were sworn enemies to it. Though they knew not God, nor owned him, yet God having them in a chain, the church very justly appeals to him against them, for he is King of nations, to overrule them, to judge among the heathen, and the King of saints, to favour and protect them.

I. They complain here of the anger of their enemies, and the outrageous fury of the oppressor, exerted,

1. Against places, v. 1. They did all the mischiefs could, (1.) To the holy land; they invaded that, and made inroads into it; "The heathen are come into thine inheritance, to plunder that, and lay it waste." 2. Against the king, v. 2, 3. "The king was dearer to the heathen Israelites, as it was God's inheritance, than as it was their own; as it was the land in which God was known, and his name was great, than as it was the land in which they were bred and born, and which they and their ancestors had been long in possession of. Note, Injuries done to religion should grieve us more than even those done to common right, nay, to our own right. We should better bear to see our own inheritance wasted than God's inheritance. This psalmist had mentioned it in the foregoing psalm, as an instance of God's great favour to Israel, that he had cast out the heathen before them, Lxxviii. 55. But see what a change sin makes; now the heathen are sorrowed to pour out in upon them. (2.) Against their city: "They have reduced Jerusalem to heaps, heaps of rubbish, such heaps as are raised over graves, so some. The inhabitants were buried in the ruins of their own houses, and their dwellingplaces became their sepulchres, their long homes. (3.) To the holy house; that sanctuary which God had built like high palaces, and which was thought to be established as the earth, was now laid level with the ground; Thy holy temple have they defiled, making it waterless, by casting into it, and laying it waste. God's own people had defiled it by their sins, and therefore God suffered their enemies to defile it by their insolence. 2. Against persons, against the bodies of God's people; further their malice could not reach. (1.) They were prodigal of their blood, and killed them without mercy; their eye did not spare, nor did they give any quarter; (v. 3.) Their blood have they shed like water, wherever they met with them, round about Jerusalem, in all the avenues to the city; whoever went out, or entered, was drenched in the blood of the sword. Abundance of human blood was shed, so that the channels of water ran with blood. And they shed it with no more reluctance or regret than if they had spilt so much water, little thinking that every drop of it will be reckoned for in the day when God shall make inquisition for blood. (2.) They were abusive to their dead bodies; when they had killed them, they would let none bury them. Nay, even that very express charitable offering of the dead, even God's servants, the flesh of his saints, whose names and memories they had a particular spite at, they digged up again, and gave them to be meat to the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth; or, at least, they left those so exposed, whom they slew, they hung them in chains, which was in a particular manner grievous to the Jews to see, because God had given them an express law against it, Ex. xxi. 14, as a breach of their oath. (3.) They made a most abominable human usage of Christ's witnesses is foretold; (Rev. xi. 9.) and thus even the dead bodies were witnesses against their persecutors. This is mentioned, (says Austin, De Civitate Dei, lib. 1. cap. 12.) not as an instance of the misery of the persecuted, (for the bodies of the saints shall rise in glory, however they became meat to the birds and the fowls,) but of the malice of the persecutors.

3. Against their names; (v. 4.) "We that survive are become a reproach to our neighbours, they all study to abuse us, and load us with contempt, and represent us as ridiculous, or odious, or both; upbraiding us with our sins and with our sufferings, or giving the lie to our relation to God, and expectations from him; so that we are become a scorn and derision to them that are round about us." If God's professing people degenerate from what they profess and from what others are, they must expect to be told of it; and it is well if a just reproof will help to bring us to a true repentance. But it has been the lot of the gospel-Israel to be made unjustly a reproach and derision; the apostles themselves were counted as the offscouring of all things.

II. They wonder more at God's anger, v. 5. They discern in the anger of their neighbours, and this they complain most of, "How long, LORD, wilt thou be angry? Shall it be, for ever? This intimates, that they desired no more than that God would be reconciled to them, that his anger might be turn-
ed away, and then the remainder of men's wrath would be restrained. Note, Those who desire God's favour as better than life, cannot but dread and deprecate his wrath as worse than death.

6. Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name: 7. For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling-place. 8. O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us; for we are brought very low. 9. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name; and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake. 10. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? let him be known among the heathen in our sight, by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed. 11. Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die: 12. And render unto our neighbours seven-fold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord. 13. So we thy people, and sheep of thy pasture, will give thee thanks for ever; we will show forth thy praise to all generations.

The petitions here put up to God, are very suitable to the present distresses of the church, and they have pleas to enforce them, interwoven with them, taken mostly from God's honour. 1. They pray that God would so turn away his anger from them, as to turn it upon those that persecuted and abused them; (v. 6.) "Pour out thy wrath, the full vials of it, upon the heathen; let them wring out their fears and tears of grief, and drink them." This prayer is, in effect, a prophecy, in which the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Observe here, (1.) The character of those he prays against; they are such as have not known God, nor called upon his name. The reason why men do not call upon God, is, because they do not know him, how able and willing he is to help them. They that persist in ignorance of God, and neglect of prayer, are the ungodly, who live without God in the world. There are kingdoms that know not God, and obey not the gospel, but neither their multitude, nor their force united, will secure them from his just judgments. (2.) Their crime; they have devoured Jacob, v. 7. That is crime enough, in the account of Him, who reckons that those who touch his people, touch the apple of his eye. They have not only disturbed, but devoured Jacob; not only reproached upon his dwelling-place, the land of Canaan, but have laid it waste by plundering and depopulating it. (3.) Their condemnation. "Pour out thy wrath upon them; do not only restrain them from doing further mischief, but reckon with them for the mischief they have done." 2. They pray for the pardon of sin, which they own to be the procuring cause of all their calamities. How inequitable soever men were, God was righteous in permitting them to do what they did. They pray, (1.) That God would not remember against them their former iniquities; (v. 8.) either their own former iniquities, that now, when they were old, they might not be made to possess the iniquities of their youth; or the former iniquities of their people, the sins of their ancestors. In the captivity of Babylon, former iniquities were brought to account; but God purposed to do so not (Jer. xxxi. 29, 30), so they pray, "Remember not against us our first sins;" which some make to look as far back as the golden calf, because God said, In the day when I visit, I will visit for this sin of theirs upon them, Exod. xxxii. 34. If the children by repentance and reformation cut off the enmity of the parents' sin, they may in faith pray that God will not remember them, against them. When God pardons sin, he blots it out of remembrance. (2.) That he would purge away the sins they had been lately guilty of, by the guilt of which their minds and consciences had been defiled; Deliver us, and purge away our sins, v. 9. Then deliverances from trouble are granted in love, and are mercies indeed, when they are grounded upon the pardon of sin, and flow from that; we should therefore be more earnest with God in prayer for the removal of our sins, than for the removal of our afflictions, and the pardon of them is the foundation and sweetness of our deliverances.

3. They pray that God would work deliverance and salvation for them, and bring their troubles to a good end, and that speedily; Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us, v. 8. They had no hopes but from God's mercies, his tender mercies; their case was so deplorable, that they looked upon themselves as the proper objects of divine compassion, and so near to despair, that, unless divine mercy did our need interpose to prevent their ruin, they were undone. This whets their importunity, "Lord, help us; Lord, deliver us; help us under our troubles, that we bear them well; help us out of our troubles, that the spirit may not fail. Deliver us from sin, from sinking." Three things they plead, (1.) The great distress they were reduced to; "We are brought very low, and, being low, shall be lost, if thou help us not. The lower we are brought, the more need we have of help from heaven, and the more will divine power be magnified in raising us up. (2.) Their dependence upon him; "Thou art the God of our salvation, who alone canst help; salvation belongs to the Lord, from whom we expect help, for in the Lord alone is the salvation of his people." They who make God the God of their salvation, shall find him so. (3.) The interest of his own honour in their case; they plead merit for theirs, He is the Lord thy name; pardon us for thy name's sake. The best encouragements in prayer are those that are taken from God only, and those things whereby he has made himself known. Two things are insinuated in this plea. [1.] That God's name and honour would be greatly injured, if he did not deliver them; for those that derided them, blasphemed God, as if he were weak and could not help them, or were not the same God; (v. 10.) "Wherefore should the heathen say; Where is their God? He has forsaken them, and forgotten them; and this they get by worshippershipping a God whom they cannot see." N'il fretster nubes, et cali numeri adorant. Juv.—They adore no other Divinity than the clouds and the sky. That which was their praise, (That they served a God that is everywhere,) was now turned to their reproach, as if they needed a God they could not see. [2.] "Lord," say they, "Make them appear that thou art, by making it to appear that thou art with us and for us; that when we are asked, Where is your God? we may be able to say, He is nigh unto us in all that which we call upon him for; and you see he is so by what he doth for us." [2.] That God's name and honour would be greatly advanced, if he did deliver them; his mercy would be glorified in delivering them that were so miserable.
and helpless. By making bare his everlasting arm on
their behalf, he would make unto himself an
everlasting name; and their deliverance would be a
type and figure of the great salvation, which, in the
fulness of time, Messiah the Prince would work out,
to the glory of God's name.
4. They pray that God would avenge them on
their adversaries, (1.) For their cruelty and bar-
barity; (v. 10.) Let the avenging of our blood
'answer to our content' (v. 9.) to let it be
known among the heathen; let them be made sensible
that what judgments are brought upon them are
punishments of the wrong they have done to us; let
this be in our sight, and 'by this means let God be
known among the heathen, as the God to whom ven-
gence belongs,' (xxv. 1.) and the God that espouses
his people's cause." Those that have intoxicated
themselves with the blood of the saints, shall have
blood given them to drink, for they are worthy
(2.) For their insolence and scorn; (v. 12.) "Render
to them their reproach. The indignities which by
word and deed they have done to the people of God,
himself, and his name, let them be repaid to them
with interest." The reproach wherewith men have
reproached us only, we must leave it to God, whether
he will render it to them or no, and must pray that
he would forgive them; but the reproach wherewith
they have blasphemed God himself, we may in faith
pray that God would render it seven-fold into their
bosoms, so as to strike at their hearts, to humble them,
and bring them to repentance. This prayer is a pro-
phesy of the same import with that of Ezekiel, That
God will convince sinners of all their hard speeches
which they have spoken against him, (Jude xvi.) and
will return them into their own bosoms by everlasting
terrors at the remembrance of them.
5. They pray that God would make a way for
the prisoners, especially the con-
demned prisoners, v. 11. The case of their brethren,
who were fallen into the hands of the enemy, was
very sad; they were kept close prisoners, and be-
cause they durst not be heard to bemoan themselves,
they vented their griefs in deep and silent sighs. All
their breathing was sighing, and so was their pray-
ing. They were appointed to die, as sheep for the
slaughter, and had received the sentence of death
without appeal: this declares the case, and the poet,
and priest recommends, (1.) To the divine pity; "Let
their sighs come up before thee," and be thou pleased
to take cognizance of their moans. (2.) To the
divine power; "According to the greatness of thy
arm, which no creature can contest with, preserve
thou those that are appointed to die, from the death
to which they are appointed." Man's extremity is
God's opportunity to appear for his people. See
2 Cor. 1. 5-10.
Lastly, They promise the returns of praise for
the answers of prayer; (v. 13.) So we will give thee
thanks for ever. Observe, (1.) How they please
themselves with their relation to God; "Though
we are oppressed and brought low, yet we are the
sheep of thy pasture, not disowned and cast off by
thee for all this; We are thine, save us." (2.) How
they promise themselves an opportunity of praising
God for their deliverance, which they therefore de-
sire, and would bid welcome, because it would
furnish them with matter for thanksgiving, and put
their hearts in tune for that excellent work, the
work of heaven. (3.) How they oblige themselves
not only to give God thanks at present, but to
show forth his praise unto all generations, that is, to
do all they could, both to perpetuate the remembrance
of God's favours to them, and to engage their pos-
terity to keep up the work of praise. (4.) How
they plead this with God; "Lord, appear for us,
against our enemies; for, if we get the better,
they will blaspheme thee; (v. 12.) but if we de-
covered, we will praise thee. Lord, we are that
people of truce, which thou hast formed for those
to show forth thy praise; if we be cut off, whence
shall that rent, that tribute, be raised?" Note,
These lives that are entirely devoted to God's praise
are assuredly taken under his protection.

PSALM LXXX.
This psalm is much to the same purport with the foregoing.
Some think it of the captivity of David, between the sep-
tation and captivity of the ten tribes, as the foregoing
psalm of the face. But many were the distresses of
the Israel of God, many perhaps which are not recorded
in the sacred history, some whereof might give occasion
for the drawing up this psalm, which is proper to be sung
in the day of Jacob's trouble; and if, in singing it, we
express a true love to the church, and a hearty concern
for its interest, with a firm confidence in God's power to
be to us all, it is owing to the great celebration, it shall
be sung among his people, and with our hearts to the Lord. The psalmist here, 1. Begs for
the tokens of God's presence with them, and favour
to them, v. 1-3. II. He complains of the present re-
bores they were under, v. 4-7. III. He illustrates the
present desolations of the church, by the comparison
of a vine and a vineyard, which had flourished, but was now
destroyed, v. 8-16. IV. He concludes with prayer to
God for the preparing of mercy for them, and the pre-
paring of his people for mercy; and a prayer of praise,
as many psalms before and after, relates to the public interests
of God's Israel, which ought to lie nearer to our hearts
than any secular interest of our own.

To the chief musician upon Shoshannim-Eduth.
A psalm of Asaph.

1. GIVE ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou
that leadest Joseph like a flock;
thou that dwellest between the cherubims,
shine forth.

2. Before Ephraim, and Ben-
jamin, and Manasseh, stir up thy strength,
and come and save us. 3. Turn us again,
O God, and cause thy face to shine; and
we shall be saved.

4. O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry
against the prayer of thy people?

5. Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest
them tears to drink in great measure.

6. Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours;
and our enemies laugh among themselves.

7. Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause
thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.
The psalmist here, in the name of the church,
appliex himself to God by prayer, with reference to
the present afflicted state of Israel.

He entreats God's favour for them; (v. 1, 2.)
that is all in all to the sanctuary when it is desolate,
and is to be sought in the first place. Observe,
(1.) How he eyes God in his address, as the Shep-
herd of Israel, whom he had called the sheath of
his pasture, (lxix. 13.) under whose guidance and
care Israel was, as the sheep under the care and
conduct of the shepherd. Christ is the great and
good Shepherd, to whom we may in faith commit
the custody of his sheep that were given to him.
He leads Joseph like a flock, to the best pastures,
and out of the way of danger; if Joseph follow him
not as obsequiously as the sheep do the shepherd, it
is his own fault. He dwells between the cherubims,
where he is ready to receive petitions, and to give
directions; the mercy-seat was between the cheru-
bims; and it is very comfortable, in prayer, to lock
up to God as sitting on a throne of grace, and that
It is so, as if he shewed the mansion of the God
whence the mercy-seat was the propitiatory.

(2.) What he expects and desires from God; that he would
give ear to the cry of their miseries, and of their
prayers; that he would shine forth both in his own glory, and in favour and kindness to his people; that he would show himself, and smile on them; that he would stir up his strength, that he would excite it, and exert it: it had seemed to slumber; so Lord, awaken it,” his cause met with great opposition, but that is because he is able to overpower it; “Lord, put forth thy strength so much the more, and come for salvation to us; be to thy people a powerful Help, and a present Help; Lord, do this before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,” that is, “in the sight of all the tribes of Israel, let them see it to their satisfaction.” Perhaps these three tribes are named, because they were the tribes which formed that squadron or army which passed through the wilderness, followed next after the tabernacle; so that before them the ark of God’s strength rose to scatter their enemies.

2. He complains of God’s displeasure against them. God was angry, and he dreads that more than any thing, v. 4. (1.) It was great anger; he apprehended that God was angry against the prayer of his people; not only that he was angry notwithstanding the prayers of his people, but he was so angry that he was ready to turn away his wrath from them; but that he was angry with their prayers, though they were his own people that prayed. That God should be angry at the sins of his people, and at the prayers of his enemies, is not strange; but that he should be angry at the prayers of his people, is strange indeed. He not only delayed to answer them, (that he often does, in love,) but he was displeased at them. If he be really angry at the prayers of his people, we may be sure it is because they ask amiss, Jam. v. 3. They pray, but they do not wrestle in prayer, their ends are not right, or there is some secret sin harboured and indulged in them; they do not lift up pure hands, but they lift up hands with wrath and doubting. But perhaps it is only in their own apprehension; he seems angry with their prayers, when really he is not; for thus will he try their patience and perseverance in prayer; as Christ tried the woman of Canaan when he said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it to dogs. (2.) It was anger that had continued a great while; “How long wilt thou be angry? We have still continued praying, and yet are still under thy frowns.”

Now the tokens of God’s displeasure, which they had been long under, were both their sorrow and shame. [1.] Their sorrow; (v. 5.) Thou feedest them with the bread of tears, they eat their meat from day to day in tears, this is the vinegar in which they dipped their morsel, xli. 3. They had tears given them to drink, not now and then a taste of that bitter cup, but in great measure. Note, There are many that spend their time in sorrow, who yet shall spend their eternity in joy. [2.] It was their shame, v. 6. God, by frowning upon them, made them a strife unto their neighbours, each strake which should expose them most; and such a cheap and easy pray, were they made to them, that all the strife was, who should have the stripping and plundering of them. Their enemies laughed among themselves to see the frights they were in, the straits they were reduced to, and the disappointments they met with. When God is displeased with his people, we must expect to see them in tears, and their enemies in triumph.

3. He exhorts them earnestly for prevailing grace, in order to their access with God, and their salvation: Turn us again, O God, v. 3. Turn us again, O God of hosts; (v. 7.) and then cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved. It is the bithorn of the song, for we have it again, v. 19. They are conscious to themselves that they have gone astray from God and their duty, and have turned aside into sinful ways, and that this was it that provoked God to hide his face from them, and to give them up into the hand of their enemies; and therefore they desire to begin their work at the right end; “Lord, turn us to thee in a way of repentance and reformation, and then, no doubt, thou wilt return to us in a way of mercy and deliverance.”

Observe, (1.) No salvation but from God’s favour; “Cause thy face to shine, let us have thy love and the light of thy countenance, and then we shall be saved.” (2.) No obtaining favour with God unless we be converted to him. We must turn again to God from the world and the flesh, and then he will cause his face to shine upon us. (3.) No conversion to God but by his own grace, that we frame our doings to turn to him, (Hos. v. 4.) and then pray earnestly for his grace, Turn thou me, and I shall be turned, pleading that gracious promise, (Prov. i. 23.) Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you. The prayer here is for a national conversion; in this method we must pray for national mercies, what that is amiss may be amended, and then our grievances would be soon redressed. National holiness would secure national happiness.

8. Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt; thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. 9. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. 10. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. 11. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. 12. Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? 13. The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it. 14. Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts, look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; 15. And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself. 16. It is burnt with fire; it is cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance. 17. Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself. 18. So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. 19. Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts; cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.

The psalmist is here presenting his suit for the Israel of God, and pressing it home at the throne of grace, pleading with God for mercy and grace for them. The church is here represented as a vine, (v. 8, 14.) and a vineyard, v. 15. The Root of this vine is Christ, Rom. xi. 18. The branches are believers, John xv. 5. The church is like a vine, weak, and needing support, unsightly, and having an unpromising outside, but spreading and fruitful, and its fruit most excellent; the church is a choice and noble tree; we have reason to acknowledge the goodness of God, that he has planted such a vine in the wilderness of this world, and preserved it to this day. Now observe here.

1. How the vine of the Old Testament church was planted at first. It was brought out of Egypt with a high hand, the heathen were cast out of Ca-
naan to make room for it; seven nations to make room for that one. *Thou didst sweep before it*; so some read, (v. 9.) to make clear work; the nations were swept away as dirt with the besom of destruction. God, having made room for it, and planted it, caused it to take deep root by a happy establishment of their government both in church and state; and yet it was not overstocked, v. 10. The hills of Canaan were covered with their shadow, and the branches, though they extended themselves far, like those of the vine, yet were not weak like them, but as strong as those of the goodly cedars. Israel not only had abundance of men, but those mighty men of valour.

2. They extended their conquests and dominion to the neighbouring countries; (v. 11.) *She sent out her boughs to the sea,* the great sea westward, and her branches to the river southward, the river of Damascus northward, or rather, the river Euphrates eastward, Gen. xxv. 18. Nebuchadnezzar's greatness is represented by a flourishing tree, Dan. iv. 20, 21. But it is observable here concerning this vine, that it is praised for its shadow, its boughs, and its branches, but not a word of its fruit, for Israel was an empty vine, Hos. x. 1. God came, looking for grapes, but behold, wild grapes, Isa. v. 2. And if a vine do not bring forth fruit, no tree so useless, so worthless, Ezek. xx. 2, 6.

III. How it was wasted and ruined; "Lord, thou hast done great things for this vine, and why shall it be all undone again? If it were a plant not of God's planting, it were not strange to see it rooted up; but shall God desert and abandon that which he himself gave to be?" (v. 12.) *Why hast thou then broken down her hedges?* There was a good reason for this change in God's way toward them; this noble vine was become the degenerate plant of a strange vine, (Jer. ii. 21.) to the reproach of its great Owner, and then no marvel if he took away its hedge; (Isa. v. 5.) yet God's former favours to this vine are urged as pleas in prayer to God, and improved as encouragements to faith, that for all this God would not wholly cast them off. Observe, 1. The malice and enmity of the Gentile nations against Israel; as soon as ever God broke down their hedges, and left them exposed, troops of enemies presently brake in upon them, that waited for an opportunity to destroy them. Thy that passed by the way, plucked at them; the bough out of the wood and the wild beast of the field were ready to ravage it, v. 13. But, 2. See also the restraint which these cruel enemies were under, for, till God had broken down their hedges, they could not pluck a leaf of this vine. The Duke of Buckingham, though this was God's broken hedge round about him, Jb. i. 10. See how much it is the interest of our people to keep themselves in the favour of God, and then they need not fear any wild beast of the field, Jb. xxv. 23. If we provoke God to withdraw, our defence is started from us, and we are undone. The displeasing state of Israel is described; (v. 16.) It is burnt with fire, it is cut down; the people are treated like thorns and briars, that are cut down at the end; it is burnt to ashes; and nor longer like vines that are protected and cherished; they perish not through the rage of the wild beast and the bower, but at the rebuke of thy countenance; that was it which they dreaded, and to which they attributed all their calamities. It is well or ill with us, according as we are under God's smiles or frowns.

IV. What their requests were. To God hereupon. *That God would help the vine;* (v. 14, 15.) that he would graciously take cognizance of its case, and do for it as he thought fit; "Return, we beseech thee, O Lord of hosts, for thou hast broken down our hedges, v. 15. *Look down from heaven, to which thou hast returned, on this place of prospect, whence thou seest all the wrongs that are done us; that place of power, whence thou canst send effectual relief; from heaven, where thou hast prepared thy throne of judgment, to which we appeal, and where thou hast prepared a better country for those that are Israelites indeed; thence give a gracious look, thence make a gracious visit, to this vine. Take our woful condition into thy compassionate consideration, and for the pure fruits of thy pity we refer ourselves to thee. Only behold the vineyard, or rather the root, which thy right hand hath planted, and which therefore we hope thy right hand will protect; that branch which thou madest strong for thyself, to show forth thy praise, (Isa. xliii. 21.) that with the fruit of it then mightest be honoured, Lord, it is formed by thyself, and for thyself, and therefore it may with observable repetition claim its own, and be thine own care;" As for God, his work is in order. What we read the Branch, in the Hebrew is the Son, (Ben.) whom in thy counsel thou hast made strong for thyself. That branch was to come out of the stock of Israel; My servant the Branch, Zech. iii. 8. And therefore, till he was come, Israel in general, and the house of David in particular, must be preserved and upheld, and kept in being. He is in the vine, John xv. 1. Isa. xi. 2. *Destroy it not, for that a blessed branch;" (v. 16.)

2. That he would help the vine-dresser; (v. 17, 18.) "Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand," that king (whoever it was) of the house of David, that was now to go in and cut before them; "let thy hand be upon him, not only to protect and cover him, but to own him, and strengthen him, and give him success. We have this phrase, Ezra vii. 9. And I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was with me. Then the king of the house of God's right hand, as he was the representative of their state, which was dear to God, as his Benjamin, the son of his right hand; as he was president in their affairs, and an instrument in God's right hand of much good to them, defending them from themselves and from their enemies, and directing them in the right way; and as he was under-shepherd for him who was the great Shepherd of Israel. Prince, who have power, must remember that they are sons of men; of Adam, so the word is; that, if they are strong, it is God that has made them strong, and he has made them so for himself, for they are his ministers to serve the interest of his Kingdom, any men; which if they do in sincerity, his hand shall be upon them; and we should pray in faith that it may be so, adding this promise, that, if God will adhere to our governors, we will adhere to him, and will not go back from thee; we will never desert a cause which we see that God espouses, and is the Patron of. Let God be our Leader, and we will follow him. Adding also this prayer, "Quick en us, put life into us, revive our dying interests, revive our drooping spirits, and then we will call upon thy name. We will continue to do so upon all occasions, having found it not in vain to do so." We cannot call upon God's name in a right manner, unless he can be called upon us; but we cannot have him come into our souls, that puts liveliness into our prayers.

But many interpreters, both Jewish and Christian, apply this to the Messiah, the Son of David, the Protector and Saviour of the church, and the
KeePER of the vineyard. (1.) He is the Man of God's right hand, to whom he has srawn by his right hand, so the Chaldees; whom he has exalted to his right hand, and who is indeed his right hand, the Arm of the Lord, for all power is given to him. (2.) He is that Son of man whom he made strong for himself for the glorifying of his name, and the advancing of the interests of his kingdom among men. (3.) God's hand is upon him throughout his whole undertaking, to bear him out and carry him on, to protect and animate him, that the good pleasure of the Lord might prosper in his hand. (4.) The stability and constancy of believers are entirely owing to the grace and strength which are laid up for us in Jesus Christ, lxviii. 28. In him is our strength found, by which we are sustained and preserved to the end. Let thy hand be upon him, on him let our help be laid, who is mighty, let him be made able to save to the uttermost, and that will be our security; so will not we go back from thee.

Lastly, the Psalm concludes with the same petition that had been put up twice before, and yet it is no vain repetition; (v. 13.) Turn us again. The title given to God rises, (v. 3.) O God, v. 7.) O God of our fathers, (v. 13.) O Lord of hosts. When we come to God for his grace, his good will towards us, and his good work in us, we should earnestly, continue instant in prayer, and pray more earnestly.

PSALM LXXXI.

This Psalm was penned, as is supposed, not upon occasion of any particular proceeding but for the solemnity of a particular ordinance, either that of the new moon in general, or that of the feast of trumpets, on the new moon of the seventh month, Lev. xxiii. 24. Num. xxix. 1. When David, by the Spirit, introduced the singing of psalms into the temple-service, this psalm was intended for that day, to excite and assist the proper devotions of it. All the psalms are profitable; but if one psalm be more suitable than another to the day, and the observations of it, we should choose that. The two great intentions of our religious assemblies, and which we ought to have in our eye in our attendance on them, are answered in this psalm, which are, to give glory to God, and to receive instruction from God; to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple: accordingly, by this psalm we are assisted, on our solemn feast-days, in praising God for what he is to his people, (v. 1. -3.) and for what he has done, (v. 4.) pruning and mortifying one another concerning the obligations we lie under to God, (v. 8. -10.) the danger of revolting from him, (v. 11, 12.) and the happiness we should have, if we would but keep close to him, v. 13. -16. This, though spoke primarily of Israel of old, is written for our learning, and is therefore to be sung with application.

To the chief musician upon Gittith. A psalm of Asaph.

1. SING aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. 2. Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery. 3. Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast-day. 4. For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob. 5. This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt; where I heard a language that I understood not. 6. I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots. 7. Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder; I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah.

When the people of God were gathered together in the solemn day, the day of the feast of the Lord, they must be told that they had business to do, for we do not go to church to sleep, or to be idle; no, there is that which the duty of every day requires; work of the day, which is to be done in its day. And hence...

I. The worshippers of God are excited to their work; and are taught, by singing this psalm, to stir up both themselves and one another to it, v. 1. -3. Our errand is, to give unto God the glory due unto his name, and in all our religious assemblies we must mind this as our business. 1. In doing this, we must eye God as our Strength, and as the God of Jacob, v. 1. He is the Strength of Israel, as a people, for he is a God in covenant with them, who will powerfully protect, support, and deliver them, who fights their battles and makes them valiantly and victoriously. He is the Strength of every Israelite; by his grace we are enabled to go through all our services, sufferings, and conflicts; to him, as our Strength, we must pray, and we must sing praise to him, as the God of all the wrestling seed of Jacob, with whom we have a spiritual communion. 2. We must do this by all the expressions of holy joy and triumph. It was then to be done by musical instruments, by all the psalms, and especially this psalm; playing the trumpet, some think, in remembrance of the sound of the trumpet on mount Sinai, which waxed louder and louder; it was then, and is now, to be done, by singing psalms, singing aloud, and making a joyful noise. The pleasantness of the harp, and the awfulness of the trumpet, intimate to us that God is to be worshipped with cheerfulness and holy joy, with reverence and godly fear. Singing aloud, and making a noise, imply that we must be warm and affectionate in praising God; that we must with a hearty good will show forth his praise, as those that are not ashamed to own our dependence on him, and obligations to him; and that we should join many together in this work, the more the better, it is the more like heaven. 3. This must be done in the time appointed. No time is amiss for praising God; (Seven times a day will I praise thee; nay, at midnight will I sing praise.) But when the assembly are together, it is prescribed, and especially as there are times appointed, not for God to meet us, (he is always ready,) but for us to meet one another, that we may join together in praising God. The solemn feast-day must be a day of praise; when we are receiving the gifts of God's bounty, and rejoicing in them, then it is proper to sing here his praises.

II. They are here directed in their work.

1. They must look up to the divine institution, which is the foundation of all religious worship, as we have an eye to the command, (v. 4.) This was a statute for Israel, for the keeping up of a face of religion among them; it was a law of the God of Jacob, which all the seed of Jacob are bound by, and must be subject to. Note, Praising God is not only a good thing, which we do well to do, but it is our indispensable duty, which we are obriged to do, as it is at our peril if we neglect it; and in all our religious exercises we must be subject to the institution, as our warrant and rule; "This I do, because God has commanded me; and therefore I hope he will accept me;" then it is done in faith.

2. They must look back upon those operations of Divine Providence, which is the memorial of. This solemn service was ordained for a testimony, (v. 5.) a standing traditional evidence, for the attesting of the matters of fact. It was a testimony to Jacob, which was to show that God had done for their fathers, and would be a testimony against them, if they should be ignorant of them, and forget them.

(1.) The psalmist, in the people's name, puts himself in mind of the general work of God on Is-
I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust; and they walked in their own counsels. 13. Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! 14. I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. 15. The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever. 16. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.

God, by the psalmist, here speaks to Israel, and, in them, to us, on whom the ends of the world are come.

I. He demands their diligent and serious attention to what he was about to say; (v. 8.) "Hear, O my people; who should hear me, if my own people will not? I have heard and answered thee; now, wilt thou hear me? Hear what is said with the greatest solemnity, and the most unquestionable certainty, for it is what I will testify unto thee. Do not only give me the hearing, but hearken unto me, and be advised by me, be ruled by me." Nothing could be more reasonably or more justly expected, and yet God puts an if upon it. "If thou hearken unto me, it is thine interest to do so, and yet it is questionable whether thou wilt or no, for thy neck is an iron sinew."

II. He puts them in mind of their obligation to him, as the Lord their God and Redeemer; (v. 10.) I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, this is the preface to the ten commandments, and a powerful reason for the keeping of them, showing that they are bound to it in duty, interest, and gratitude, all which bonds we break at our peril, as we shall be disoblige

III. He gives them an abstract both of the precepts and of the promises which he gave them as the Lord, and their God, upon their coming out of Egypt. 1. The great command was, That they should have no other gods before him; (v. 9.) There shall no strange god be in thee, none beside me. Other gods might be called strange gods, for it was very strange that any person, who had the true and living God for their God, should hanker after any other. God is jealous in this matter, for he will not suffer his glory to be given to another; and therefore in this matter they must be circumspect, Exod. xxi. 13. 2. The great promise was, That God himself, as a God all-sufficient, would be nigh unto them in all that which they called upon him for, Deut. iv. 7. That, if they would adhere to him as their powerful Protector and Ruler, they should always find him their bountiful Benefactor. Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it, as the young ravens that cry open their mouths wide, and the old ones fill them. See here, (1.) What is our duty; to raise our expectations from God, and enlarge our desires toward him. We cannot look for too little from the creature, nor too much from the Creator. They are not straitened in him; why therefore should we be straitened in our own bosoms? (2.) What is God's promise; I will fill thy mouth with good things, cii. 5. There is enough in God to fill our treasures, (Prov. viii. 21.) to replenish every hungry soul, (Jer. xxxi. 25.) to supply all our wants, to answer all our desires, and to make us completely happy. The pleasures of sense will surfeit, and never satisfy; (Is. lv. 2.) divine pleasures will satisfy, and never surfeit. And we may have enough from God, if we pray for it in faith; Ask, and it shall be given you; he gives libe-
rally, and upbraids not. God assured his people Israel, that it should be their own fault, if he did not do as great and kind things for them as he had done for their fathers. Nothing should have been thought too good, too much, to give them, if they would but have kept close to God. He would none of me have given them such and such things, 2 Sam. xii. 8.

IV. He charges them with a high contempt of his authority as their Lawgiver, and his grace and favour as their Benefactor, v. 11. He had done much for them, and designed to do more; but all in vain: “My people would not hearken to my voice, but turned a deaf ear to all I said.” Two things he complains of: 1. Their disobedience to his commandings and his voice, so as never any people did; but they would not hearken to it, they would not be ruled by it, neither by the law, nor by the reason of it. 2. Their dislike of his covenant-relation to them; They would none of me. “They acquiesced not in my word,” so the Chaldee. God was willing to be to them a God, but they were not willing to be to him a people; they did not like his terms. “I would have gathered them, but they would not.” They had none of him; and why had they not? It was not because they were not, they were fairly invited into covenant with God; it was because they could not, for the word was nigh them, even in their mouth and in their heart: but it was purely because they would not. God calls them his people, for they were bought by him, bound to him, by a thousand ties, and yet even they have not hearkened, have not obeyed; Israel, the seed of Jacob my friend, set me at nought, and would have none of me. Note, All the wickedness of God’s wicked world is owing to the wilful rejection of the word of life. The reason why people are not religious, is, because they will not be so.

V. He justifies himself with this, in the spiritual judgments he had brought upon them; (v. 12.) So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lusts, which would be more dangerous enemies, and more mischievous oppressors, to them, than any of the neighbouring nations ever were. God withdrew his Spirit from them, took off the bridle of his grace, left them to themselves, and justly; they will do as they will, and therefore let them do as they will: Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone.

It is a righteous thing with God to give those up to their own hearts’ lusts that indulge them, and give up themselves to be led by them; for why should his Spirit always strive? His grace is his own, and he is Debor to no man, and yet, as he never gave his grace to any that could say they deserved it, so he never took it away from any, but such as had first forfeited it; They would none of me, so I gave them up, let them take their course; and see what follows; they walked in their own counsels, in the way of their heart, and in the sight of their eye, both in their worship, and in their conversations. I left them to do as they would, and then they did all they were ill; they walked in their own counsels, and not according to the counsel of God and his advice. God therefore was not the Author of their sin, he left them to the lusts of their own hearts, and the counsels of their own heads; if they do not well, the blame must lie upon their own hearts, and the blood upon their own heads.

VI. He testifies his good will to them, in wishing they had done well for themselves. He saw how sure their ruin was, when they were delivered up to their own lusts, and how much worse than being given up to Satan, which may be in order to reformation, (1 Tim. i. 20.) and to salvation, 1 Cor. v. 5. But to be delivered up to our own hearts’ lusts, is to be sealed under condemnation. He is filthy, let him be filthy still; what fatal precipices will not these hurry a man to? Now, here God looks upon them with pity, and shows that it was with reluctancy he thus abandoned them to their folly and fate; How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? Hos. xi. 8, 9. So here, Oh that my people had hearkened! See Isa. lviii. 18. Thus Christ lamented the obstinacy of Jerusalem; If you had been wise, how gladly have I have walked in the light of my countenance! Luke xxi. 42. The expressions here are very affecting, (v. 13.-16.) designed to show, 1. How unwilling God is that any should perish, and desires that all should come to repentance. He delights not in the ruin of sinful persons or nations. 2. What enemics sinners are to themselves, and what an aggravation it will be of their misery, that they might have been happy upon such easy terms.

Observe here, (1.) The great mercy God had in store for his people, and which he would have wrought for them, if they had been obedient. [1.] He would have given them victory over their enemies, and would soon have completed the reduction of them. They should not only have kept their ground, but have gained their point, against the remaining Canaanites, and their encroaching vexatious neighbours; (v. 14.) I should have subdued their enemies; and it is God only that is to be depended on for the success of our undertakings. [2.] If God had put them to the expense and fatigue of a tedious war, he would soon have done it; for he would have turned his hand against their adversaries, and then they had not been able to stand before them. It intimates how easily he would have done it, and without any difficulty; with the turn of a hand; nay, with the breath of his mouth shall he slay the wicked, Isa. xi. 4. If he but turn his right hand, the nations of the wicked will submit themselves to him; (v. 15.) and though they are not disposed to love him, yet they shall be made to fear him, and to confess that he is too hard for them, and that it is in vain to contend with him. God is honoured, and so is his Israel, by the submission of those that have been in rebellion against them, though it be but a forced and feigned submission. [3.] He would have confirmed and perpetuated their posterity, and established it upon sure and lasting foundations. In despite of all the attempts of the enemies of God against them, their time should have endured for ever, and they should never have been disturbed in the possession of the good land God had given them, much less evicted, and turned out of all possession. [4.] He would have given them great plenty of all good things; (v. 16.) He should have fed them with the finest of the wheat, with the best grain, and best of all the kind. Wheat was the staple-criminality of Canaan, and they expected a deal of it, Ezek. xxvii. 17. He would not only have profited for them the best sort of bread, but with honey out of the rock would he have satisfied them. Beside the precious products of the fruitful soil, that there might not be a barren spot in all their land, even the cloths of the rock should serve for bee-hives, and in them they should find honey in abundance. See Deut. xxxii. 13, 14. In short, God designed to make them every way easy and happy.

(2.) The duty God required from them as the condition of all this mercy. He expected no more then that they should hearken to him, as a scholar to his teacher, to receive his instructions; as a servant to his master, to receive his commands; and that they should walk in his ways, those ways of the Lord which are right and pleasant, that they should observe his statutes and his ordinances, and attend the intimations of his providence, there was nothing unreasonable in this.

(3.) Observe how the reason of the withholding of the mercy is laid in their neglect of the duty; If they had hearkened to me, I would soon have
subdued their enemies. Note, National sin and disobedience is the great and only thing that retards and obstructs national salvation and deliverance.

When I would have healed Israel, and set every thing to rights among them, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and so a stop was put to the cure, Hos. vii. 1. We are apt to say, "If such a method had been taken, such an instrument employed, with such a show of power, and such an appearance, but we mistake; if we had hearkened to God, and kept to our duty, the thing had been done, but it is sin that makes our troubles long, and salvation slow. And this is that which God himself complains of, and wishes it had been otherwise. Note, Therefore God would have us do our duty to him, that we may be qualified to receive favour from him. He therefore delights in our serving him, not because he is the better for it, but because we shall be.

PSALM LXXXII.

This psalm is calculated for the meridian of princes' courts, and courts of justice, not in Israel only, but in other nations; yet it was probably penned particularly for the use of the magistrates of Israel, the great Sanhedrim, and their other elders, who were in places of power, and perhaps by David himself at that time. This psalm is designed to make kings wise, and to instruct the judges of the earth, as ii. 10. to tell them their duty, as 2 Sam. xxiii. 3. and to tell them of their faults, as lvi. 1. We have here, I. The dignity of magistrates, and their dependence on God. II. The duty of magistrates, v. 3. 4. III. The degeneracy of bad magistrates, and the mischief they do, v. 2. 5. IV. Their doom read, v. 6. 7. V. The desire and prayer of all good people, that the kingdom of God may be set up more and more, v. 8. Though magistrates may most closely apply this psalm to themselves, yet we may any of us sing it with understanding, when we give glory to God in singing it, as presiding in all public affaires, not as judges over the people, but in the name of God, and ready to punish the most powerful in justice, and when we comfort ourselves with the belief of his present government, and with the hopes of his future judgment.

A psalm of Asaph.

1. GOD standeth in the congregation of the mighty: he judgeth among the gods. 2. How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah. 3. Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. 4. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked. 5. They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course.

We have here, 1. God's supreme presidency and power in all councils and courts, asserted and laid down, as a great truth necessary to be believed both by princes and subjects; (v. 1.) God stands, as chief Director, in the congregation of the mighty, the mighty One in council—for in the council of the prince, the supreme Magistrate, and he judges among the gods, the inferior magistrates; both the legislative and the executive power of princes is under his eye and his hand. Observe here, 1. The power and honour of magistrates, they are the mighty; they are so in authority, for the public good; it is a great power that they are intrusted with, and they ought to be mighty in wisdom and courage. They are, in the Holy testament, God's agents; and God is used for these subordinate governors, that is, under him, for the sovereign Ruler of the world. They are Elohim; angels are so called, both because they are great in power and might, and because God is pleased to make use of their service in the govern-
The pains told that it was as great an evil as any Solomon saw under the sun, when he observed the place of judgment, that iniquity was there, Ecc. iii. 16. Isa. v. 7. They not only accepted the persons of the rich, because they were rich, though that is bad enough, but (which is much worse) they accepted the persons of the wicked, because they were wicked; they not only countenanced them in their wickedness, but loved them the better for it, and fell in with their interests. Woe unto thee, O land, when thy judges are such as these!

2. What was the cause of this sin. They were told plainly enough that it was their office and duty to protect and deliver the poor, it was many a time given them in charge, yet they judge unjustly, for they know not, neither will they understand. They do not care to hear their duty, they will not take pains to study it, they have no desire to take things right; and if things wrong be done, it is often done by the persons of interest, not by reason or justice; a gift in secret blinds their eyes. They know not, because they will not understand; none so blind as those that will not see. They have baffled their own consciences, and so they walk on in darkness, not knowing or caring what they do or whither they go. They that walk on in darkness are walking on to everlasting darkness.

3. What were the consequences of this sin; All the foundations of the earth, or of the land, are out of order when justice is perverted, what good can be expected? The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved, as the psalmist speaks in a like case, Lxxv. 3. The miscarriages of public persons are public mischiefs.

6. I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the Most High: 7. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes. 8. Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.

We have here,

1. Earthly gods abased and brought down. v. 6.
2. The dignity of their character is acknowledged; (v. 6.) I have said, ye are gods. They have been honoured with the name and title of gods; God himself called them so in the statute against treasonable words; (Exod. xxii. 28.) Thou shalt not revile the gods. And if they have this style from the Fountain of honour, who can dispute it? But what is man, that he should be thus magnified? He called them gods, because unto them the word of God came, so our Saviour expounds it; (John x. 35.) they had a commission from God, and were delegated and appointed by him to be the shields of the earth, the conservators of the public peace, and revenue-givers to execute wrath upon those that disturb it, Rom. xii. 4. All of them are in this sense children of the most High. God has put some of his honour upon them, and employs them in his providential government of the world, as David made his sons chief rulers. Or, "Because I said, Ye are gods, ye have carried the honour further than was intended, and have imagined yourselves to be the children of the most High," as the king of Babylon, (Dan. iv. 25.) made himself to be god of the Babylonian empire, and the king of Tyre, (Ezek. xxviii. ii.) Thou hast set thy heart as the heart of God. It is a hard thing for men to have so much honour put upon them by the hand of God, and so much honour paid them, as

ought to be by the children of men, and not to be proud of it and puffed up with it, and so to think of themselves above what is meet. But here follows a mortifying consideration; Ye shall die like men. This may be taken, either, (1.) As the punishment of bad magistrates, such as judged unjustly, and by their miserable rule. The origin of the word is of course; God will reckon with them, and will cut them off in the midst of their pomp and prosperity; they shall die like other wicked men, and fall like one of the heathen princes, and their being Israelites shall not secure them, any more than their being judges; or like one of the angels that sinned; or like one of the giants of the old world. Compare this with that which Elishu observed concerning the mighty oppressors in his time; (Job xxxiv. 26.) He striketh them as a parent strikes his children, and as the king of the world ordains. Let those that abuse their power, know that God will take both it and their lives from them; for wherein they deal proudly, he will show himself above them. Or, (2.) as the period of the glory of all magistrates in this world; let them not be puffed up with their honour, or neglect their work, but let the consideration of their mortality, be both mortifying to their pride, and quickening of their duty. It is no security for the public to ensure for immortality, ye shall die like men, like common men, and, like one of them, ye, O princes, shall fall. Note, Kings and princes, all the judges of the earth, though they are gods to us, are men to God, and shall die like men, and all their honour shall be laid in the dust. Mors secptra ligonibus requat—Death mingles sceptres with shades.

2. The God of heaven exalted and raised high. v. 8. The psalmist finds it requisite to reason with these cruel oppressors, they turned a deaf ear to all he said, and walked on in darkness, and therefore he looks up to God, appeals to him, and begs of him to take unto himself his great power; Arise, O God, judge the earth; and, when he prays that he would do it, he believes that he will do it; Thou shalt inherit all nations. This has respect, (1.) To the kingdom of providence; God governs the world, sets up and puts down whom he pleased; he inherits all nations, he robs the conquerors of their dominion over them, to dispose of them as a man does of his inheritance; this we are to believe, and to comfort ourselves with, that the earth is not given so much into the hands of the wicked, the wicked rulers, as we are tempted to think it is, Job xix. 24. But God has reserved the power to himself, and overrules them. In this faith we must pray, "Arise, O God, judge the earth, appear against those that judge unjustly; set up their eyes over all the nations, and be the Governor over them, i. 8.—xxxi. 28. Let the second coming of Christ set to rights all these disorders. There are two words with which we may comfort ourselves and one another, in reference to the mismanagements of power among men; one is, (Rev. xix. 6.) Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth; the other is, (Rev. xxi. 20.) Surely, I come quickly.

PSALM LXXXIII.

This psalm is the last of those that go under the name of Asaph. It is composed, as most of the others, by a publice account, with reference to the insults of the church’s enemies, who sought its ruin. Some think it was penned.
upon occasion of the threatening descent which was made upon the land of Judah, in Jeoshaphat's time, by the Moabites and Ammonites, those children of Lot here spoken of, (v. 8.) who were at the head of the alliance, and to whom all the other states had their auxiliaries. We have the story, 2 Chron. xx. 1. where it is said, The children of Moab and Ammon, and others besides them, invaded the land. Others think it was penned with reference to all the confederacies of the heathen nations against Israel, from first to last. The psalmist here makes an appeal and application, I. To God's knowledge, by a presentation of their designs and endeavours to destroy Israel, v. 1.-8. II. To God's justice and jealousy, both for his church, and for his own honour, by an earnest prayer for the defeat of their attempt, that the church might be preserved, the enemies humbled, and God glorified, v. 9. 18. This, in the singing of it, we may apply to the enemies of the gospel-church, all antichristian powers and factions, representing to God their confederacies against Christ and his kingdom, and rejoicing in the hope that all their projects will be baffled, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church.

A song or psalm of Asaph.

1. **KEEP not thou silence, O God:** hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God. 2. For, 'Jo thine enemies do a tumult; and they that hate thee have lifted up the head. 3. They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thine hidden ones. 4. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. 5. For they have consulted together with one consent; they are confederate against thee: 6. The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites: of Moab, and the Hagarenes 7. Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines, with the inhabitants of Tyre; 3. Assur also is joined with them: they have helped the children of Lot. Selah.

The Israel of God were now in danger and fear, and great distress; and yet their prayer is called, A song or psalm, for singing psalms is not unseasonable, no, not when the harps are hung upon the willow-trees.

I. The psalmist here begs of God to appear on the behalf of his injured threatened people; (v. 1.) **"Keep not thou silence, O God, but give judgment for us against those that do us an apparent wrong."** Thus Jeoshaphat prayed upon occasion of that invasion; (2 Chron. xx. 11.) Behold, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession. Sometimes God seems to connive at the unjust treatment which is given to his people; he keeps silence, as one that either did not observe it, or did not concern himself in it; he holds his peace, as if he would observe an exact neutralit, and let them fight it out; he is still, and gives not the enemies of his people any disturbance or opposition, but seem to sit by, as a man astonished, or as a mighty man that cannot save. Then he gives us leave to call upon him, as here, **"Keep not thou silence, O Lord, speak to us by thy prophets, for our encouragement against our fears;"** (as he did in reference to that invasion, 2 Chron. xx. 14, &c.) **"Lord, speak for us by thy providence, and speak against our enemies special deliverance to us, and disappointment to them."** God's speaking is his acting; for with him saving and doing are the same thing.

II. He here gives an account of the grand alliance of the neighbouring nations against Israel, which he begs of God to break, and blast the projects of.

Now observe here,

1. Against whom this confederacy is formed; it is against the Israel of God, and so, in effect, against the God of Israel. Thus the psalmist takes care to interest God in their cause, not doubting but that, if it appeared that they were for God, God would make it to appear that he was for them, and then they might know that their enemies were out of their power who then could be against them? **"Lord," says he, "they are thine enemies, and they hate thee."** All wicked people are God's enemies, (the carnal mind is enmity against God,) but especially wicked persecutors; they hated the religious worshippers of God, because they hated God's holy religion, and the worship of him. This was that which made God's people so zealous against them—that they fought against them; **"They are confederate against thee," v. 5. Were our interest only concerned, we could the better bear it, but when God himself is struck at, it is time to cry, Help, Lord! **Keep not thou silence, O God.** He proves that they are confederate against God, for they are so against the people of God, who are near and dear to him, his son, his first-born, his portion, and the lot of his inheritance; he may truly be said to fight against me, this confederacy for the destruction of his church, to destroy my family, and ruin my estate. **"Lord," says the psalmist, "they are thy enemies, for they consult against thy hidden ones."** Note, God's people are his hidden ones; hidden, (1.) In respect of secrecy; their life is hid with Christ in God; the world knows them not; if they knew them, they would not hate them as they do. (2.) In respect of safety; God takes them under his special protection, hides them in the hollow of his hand; and yet, in defiance of God and his power, and promise to secure his people, they will consult, and ruin them, and cast them down from their excellency, (lxxi. 4.) and so make a prey of those whom the Lord has set apart for himself; iv. 3. They resolve to destroy those whom God resolves to preserve.

2. How this confederacy is managed; the Devil is at the bottom of it, and therefore it is carried on, (1.) With a great deal of heat and violence; **Thine enemies make a tumult together, their tumultuous cries reach the heavens;** v. 2. **The nations are angry, Rev. xi. 18.** They are noisy in their clamours against the people, whom they hope to run down with their loud calumnies; this comes in as a reason why God should not keep silence: **"The enemies talk big, and talk much; Lord, let them not talk all, but do thou speak to them in thy wrath,"** ii. 5. (2.) With a great deal of pride and insolence; They have lifted up the head in confidence of their success, they are so elevated, as if they could overtop the Most High, and overpower the Almighty. (3.) With a great deal of art and policy; They have taken crafty counsel, v. 3. The subtility of the old serpent appears in their management, and they contrive, by all possible means, though ever so base, ever so bad, to gain their point. They are profound to make slaughter. (Hos. v. 2.) as if they could cut off Infinite Wisdom. (4.) With a great deal of uniomity; whatever separate clashing interest they have among themselves, against the people of God they consult with one consent, (v. 5.) nor is Satan's kingdom divided against itself. To push on this unholy war, they lay their heads together, and their horns, and their hearts too. **"Fas est et ab hoste docteri—Even an enemy may instruct.** Do the enemies of the church act with one consent to destroy it? Are the kings of the earth of one mind to give their power and honour to the beast? And shall not the church's friends be unanimous in serving her interests? If Herod and Pilate are made friends, that they may
join in crucifying Christ, surely Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Peter, will soon be made friends, that they may join in preaching Christ.

3. What it is that is aimed at in this confederacy; they consult not like the Gibeonites to make a league with Israel, that they might strengthen themselves by such a desirable alliance, which had been their wisdom: they consult, not only to the wings of Israel, to recover their new conquests, and check the progress of their victorious arms; not only to keep the balance even between them and Israel, and to prevent their power from growing exertivant; this will not serve; it is no less than the utter ruin and extirpation of Israel that they design; (v. 4.) "Come, let us cut them off from being a nation, as they cut off the seven nations of Canaan; let us leave them neither root nor branch, but lay their country so perfectly waste, that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance, no not in history;" for with them they would destroy their Bibles, and burn all their records. Such is the enmity of the serpent's seed against the seed of the woman. It is the secret wish of wicked men, that the church of God might not have a being in the world, that there might be no such thing as religion among mankind; having banished the light of God's world, they would gladily see the whole earth as well rid of it; all its laws and ordinances abolished, all its restraints and obligations shaken off, and all that preach, profess, or practise it, cut off; this they would bring it to, if it were in their power; but he that sits in heaven shall laugh at them.

4. Who they are that are drawn into this confederacy; the nations that entered into this alliance are here mentioned; (v. 6.-8.) the Edomites and Ishmaelites, both descendants from Abraham, lead the van, for the apostates from the church have been its most bitter and spiteful enemies, witness Julian. These were allied to Israel in blood, and yet in alliance against Israel. There are no bonds of nature so strong, but the spirit of persecution has broken through them; The brother shall betray the brother to death. Moab and Ammon were the children of righteous Lot; but are incestuous, so a descendant. The Philistines were long a thorn in Israel's side, and very vexatious; how the inhabitants of Tyre, who, in David's time, were Israel's firm allies, come in among their enemies, I know not, but that Assur, that is, the Assyrian, also is joined with them, is not strange, or that (as the word is) they were an arm to the children of Lot. See how numerous the enemies of God's church have always been; Lord, how are they increased that trouble it! God's heritage was a speckled bird, all the birds round about were against her; (Jer. xii. 9.) which highly magnifies the power of God in preserving to himself a church in the world, in despite of the combined force of earth and hell.

9. Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison: 10. Which perished at En-dor; they became as dung for the earth. 11. Make their nobles like Oreb and like Zeeb; yea, all their princes as Zebah and Zalmunna: 12. Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession. 13. O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. 14. As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame seteth the mountains on fire, 15. So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm. 16. Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O Lord. 17. Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish: 18. That men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth.

The psalmist here, in the name of the church, prays for the destruction of these confederate forces, and, in God's name, foretells it: for this prayer, that it might be so, amounts to a prophecy that it shall be so; and this prophecy reaches to all the enemies of the gospel-church; whoever they be that oppose the kingdom of Christ, here they may read their doom.

The prayer is, in short, that these enemies, who were confederate against Israel, might be defeated in all their attempts, and that they might prove their own ruin, and so God's Israel might be preserved and perpetuated. Now this is here illustrated, 1. By some precedents; let that be their punishment which has been the fate of others who have combined with them. 2. The defeat and desolation of former confederations may be pleaded in prayer to God, and improved for the encouragement of our own faith and hope; because God is the same still that ever he was, the same to his people, and the same against his and their enemies; with him is no variableness. 1. He prays that their armies might be destroyed as the armies of former enemies had been; (v. 9, 10.) Do to them as to the Midianites; let them be routed, and routed as the Midianites were, more than by Gideon's 300 men. Do to them as to the army under the command of Sisera, who was general under Jabin king of Canaan, which God discomfitted (Judg. iv. 15.) at the brook Kishon, near to which was Endor; they became as dung on the earth, their dead bodies were thrown like dung, laid in heaps, or spread, to fertilize the ground; they were trodden to dust by Barak's small, but victorious, army; and this was fittingly made a precedent here, because Deborah made it so to aftertimes when it was fresch; (Judg. v. 31.) So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord, that is, So they shall perish. 2. He prays that their leaders might be destroyed as they had been formerly; the common people would not have been so mischievous, if their princes had not set them on, and therefore they are particularly prayed against, v. 11, 12. Observe, (1.) What their malice was against the Israel of God; they said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession, (v. 12.) the pleasant places of God, so the word is, by which we may understand the land of Canaan, which was a pleasant land, and was Emmanuel's land; or, the temple, which was indeed God's pleasant place; (Isa. lxiv. 11.) or, (as Dr. Hammond suggests,) the pleading of sins, which these Arabians, who traded in cattle, did, in a particular manner, seek after. The princes and nobles aimed to enrich themselves by this war; and their arms must be made as dung for the earth, to serve their covetousness and their ambition. (2.) What their lot should be; they shall be made like Oreb and Zeeb, two princes of the Midianites, who, when their forces were routed, were taken in their flight by the Ephraimites, and slain, Zeeb and Zalmunna, whom Gideon himself slew, Judg. viii. 21. "Let these enemies of ours be made as easy a prey to us, as they were to the conquerors then." We may not prescribe to God, but we may pray to God that he will deal
with the enemies of his church in our days, as he did with those in the days of our fathers.

II. He illustrates it by some similitudes, and prays,

1. That God would make them like a wheel, (v. 13.) that they might be in continual motion, unquiet, unsettled, and giddy, in all their counsels and resolves; that they might roll down easily and speedily to their own ruin. Or, as some think, that they might be broken by the judgments of God, as the wheel is broken, and so defeated by God, which was then used in threshing. Thus, when a wise king scattereth the wicked, he is said to bring the wheel over them, Prov. xx. 26. They that trust in God have their hearts fixed; they that fight against him are unfixed, like a wheel.

2. That they might be chased as stubble, or chaff, before the fierce wind. The wheel, though it continually turn round, is fixed on its own axis; but let them have no fixation but the light stubble; which has, which the wind hurries away, and nobody desires to save it, but is willing it should go, Ps. i. 4. Thus shall the wicked be driven away in his wickedness, and chased out of the world.

3. That they might be consumed, as wood by the fire, or as briars and thorns, as fern or furze, upon the mountains, by the flames, v. 14. When the stubble is dry, it will consume itself; but at last, under some hedge, in some ditch or other, he prays that they might not only be driven away as stubble, but burnt as stubble. And this will be the end of wicked men, (Heb. vi. 8.) and particularly of all the enemies of God's church. The redemption of these comparisons we have; (v. 15.) So persecute them with thy temppest, persecute them to their utter ruin, and make them afraid with thy storm. See how sinners are made miserable; the storm of God's wrath raises terrors in their own hearts, and so they are made completely miserable.

God can deal with the proudest and most daring sinner that has bid defiance to his justice, and can make him afraid as a grasshopper. It is the torment of devils, that they tremble.

III. He illustrates it by the good consequences of their confusion, v. 16-18. He prays here that God, having filled their hearts with terror, would thereby fill their faces with shame, that their persons might be ashamed of their enmity to the people of God, (Isa. xxxvi. 11.) ashamed of their folly in acting both against Omnipotence itself, and their own true interest. They did what they could to put God's people to shame, but the shame will, at length, return upon themselves.

Now, 1. The beginning of this shame might be a means of their conversion: "Let their limbs work and baffled in their attempts, that they may seek thy name, O Lord. Let them be put to a stand, that they may have both leisure and reason to pause a little, and consider who it is that they are fighting against, and what an unequal match they are for him, and may, therefore, humble and submit themselves, and desire conditions of peace. Let them be made to fear thy name, and perhaps that will bring them to seek thy name." Note, That which we should earnestly desire and beg of God for our enemies and persecutors, is, that God would bring them to repentance, and we should desire their abasement in order to this; no other confusion to them, than what may be a step toward their conversion.

2. If it did not prove a means of their conversion, the perfecting of it would redound greatly to the honour of God; if they will not be ashamed and repent, let them be put to shame and perish; if they will not be troubled and burned, which would soon put an end to all their trouble, a happy end, let them be troubled for ever, and never have peace; this will be for God's glory; (v. 18.) that other men may know and own, if they themselves will not, that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, (that incomunicable, though not ineffable, name,) art the Most High over all the earth. God's triumphs over his and his church's enemies, will be incontestable proofs, (1.) That he is, according to his name JEHOVAH, a self-existent, self-sufficient, being, that has all power and perfection in himself. (2.) That he is the most high God, sovereign Lord of all, above all gods, above all kings, above all that exalt themselves, and pretend to be high. (3.) That he is so, not only over the land of Israel, but over all the earth, even those nations of the earth that do not know him, or own him, for his kingdom rules over all. These are great and unquestionable truths, but men will hardly be persuaded to know and believe them; therefore the psalmist prays that the destruction of some might be the conviction of others. The final ruin of all God's enemies, in the last day, will be the effectual proof of this, before angels and men; when the everlasting shame and contempt to which sinners shall rise, (Dan. xii. 2.) shall redound to the everlasting honour and praise of that God to whom vengeance belongs.

PSALMS, LXXXIV.

Though David's name be not in the title of this psalm, yet we have reason to think he was the penman of it, because it becribes the state of his excellent spirit, and is so like to the 63d psalm, which he composed before it. It is supposed that David penned this psalm when he was forced, by Absalom's rebellion, to quit his city, which he lamented his absence from, not so much because it was the royal palace, as because it was his seat of worship. This psalm, which contains the pious breathings of a gracious soul after God, and communion with him. Though it be not entitled, yet it may fitly be looked upon, as a psalm or song for the sabbath-day, the day of our solemn assemblies. The psalmist here with great devotion expresses his affection, I. To the ordinances of God; his value for them, (v. 1.) his desire toward them, (v. 2, 3.) his conviction of the happiness of those that did enjoy them, (v. 4, 7.) and his placing of his hopes and happiness so very much in the enjoyment of them, v. 10. II. To the God of the ordinances: his desire toward him, (v. 8, 9.) his faith in him, (v. 11.) and his conviction of the happiness of those that put their confidence in him, v. 12. In singing this psalm, we should have the same devout affections working toward God, that David had, and then the singing of it will be very pleasant.

To the chief musician upon Gittith. A psalm for the sons of Korah.

1. HOW amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! 2. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. 3. Yea, the sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosi, my King, and my God. 4. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah. 5. Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. 6. Who passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well: the rain also filleth the pools. 7. They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.

The psalmist here, being by force restrained from waiting upon God in public ordinances, by the want of them is brought under a more sensible conviction than ever of the worth of them. Observe, I. The wonderful beauty he saw in holy institu
ts; (v. 1.) How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! Some think that he here calls God the Lord of hosts, that is, in a special manner of the angels, the heavenly hosts, because of the presence of the angels in God's sanctuary; they attended the Shechinah, and were (as some think) signified by the 473 tabernacle. God's house was a building, and his temple is it: it is spoken of as more than one, (thy tabernacles,) because there were divers courts in which they were accommodated, and because the tabernacle itself consisted of a holy place, and a most holy. How amiable are these! How lovely is the sanctuary in the eyes of all that are truly sanctified! Gracious souls see a wonderful, an inexpres-
sible, beauty in holiness, and in holy work. A tabernacle was a mean habitation, but, the distinction of external circumstances makes holy or-
dinances not at all the less amiable, for the beauty of holiness is spiritual, and their glory is within.

II. The longing desire he had to return to the enjoyment of public ordinances, or rather of God in them, v. 2. It was an entire desire; body, soul, and spirit, concurred in it, he was not conscious to him-
self of any rising thought to the contrary; it was an intense desire; it was like the desire of the amb-
ti-hermeneut of a hare, and of a more proper hare, that he is seen to be a hare by his eyes, he is taken into his place in God's courts, and almost impatient of delay. Yet it was not so much the courts of the Lord that he coveted, but he cried out, in prayer, for the living God himself. Oh that I might know him, and be again taken into communion with him! 1 John i. 3. Ordinances are empty things, if we meet not with God in the ordinances.

III. His gratitude, the happiness of the little birds that made their nests in the buildings that were ad-
joining to God's altars, v. 3. This is an elegant and sur-
prising expression of his affection to God's altars; The sparrow has found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself. These little birds, by the instinct and direction of nature, provide habitations for themselves in houses, as other birds do in the woods, both for their own repose, and in which to lay their young; some such David supposes there were in the buildings for God's courts of God's house, and wishes himself with them. He would rather live in a bird's nest high God's altars, than in a palace at a distance from them. He sometimes wished for the wings of a dove, on which to fly into the wilder-
ness; (iv. 6.) here for the wings of a sparrow, that he might fly undiscovered into God's courts; and, though to watch as a sparrow alone upon the house-
top, is the description of a very melancholy state and spirit, (cii. 7.) yet David would be glad to trade it for his lot, provided he might be near God's altars. It is better to be serving God in solitude, than serving sin with a multitude. The word for a sparrow signifies any little bird, and (if I may offer a conjecture) perhaps, when, in David's time, music was introduced so much into the sacred service, both vocal and instrumental, to complete the harmony, they had singing-birds in cages hang about the court, and sang while Zion's ministers took notice of to the glory of God, civ. 12.) and David envies the happiness of these, and would gladly change places with them. Observe, David envies the happiness not of those birds that flew over the altars, and had only a transient view of God's courts, but of those that had nests for them-

cells there; David will not think it enough to so-
journ in God's house as a way-faring man that turns as he pleases, (iv. 6.) but he will have his nest, and his repose, (cii. 7.) and that near God, in his house, here he will dwell. And he takes notice that these birds not only have nests for themselves there, but that there they lay their young; for those who have a place in God's courts themselves, cannot but desire that their children also may have in God's


house, and within his walls, a place and a name, that they may feed their kids beside the shepherds' tents. Some give another sense of this verse; "Lord, by thy providence thou hast furnished the birds with nests and resting-places, agreeable to their nature, and to them they have free recourse, but that altar, which is my nest, my resting-place, of which an amorous bird was of her nest, I cannot have access to. Lord, wilt thou provide better for thy birds than for thy babes? As a bird that wanders from her nest, so am I, now that I wander from the place of God's altars, for that is my place; (Prov. xxvi. 8.) I shall never be easy till I return to my place again." Note, Their souls are at home, at rest, in God, cannot but desire a settlement near his ordi-

nances. Those who are in the courts of God's house, have the other eye, as well as we, must in all our attendance on God, have an eye both to the satisfaction and to the intercession of Christ. And, lastly, Observe how he eyes God in this address; Thou art the Lord of hosts, my King, and my God. Where should a poor dis tressed subject seek for protection but with his king? There should we hope for a happy progress in God's house, for the King of kings is there, and all his attendants, that serve him. His house is furnished with all things necessary for the work, and furnished to them of every want as we desire, he takes them by infinite grace. His house is furnished with infinite grace. There is that in the house of God, which will enable those that desire it to keep a good table, because they have good work; (Prov. xxxi. 6.) they will be still praising thee; and if there be a heaven upon earth, it is in praising God, in continually praising him. Apply this to his house above; blessed are they that dwell there, angels and glorified saints, for they rest not day nor night from praising God. Let us therefore spend as much of our time as may be in that blessed work in which we hope to spend a joyful eternity.

IV. His acknowledgment of the happiness both of the ministers and of the people that had liberty of attendance on God's altars; "Blessed are they; oh when shall I return to the enjoyment of that blessedness?

1. Blessed are the ministers; the priests and Le-
vites, who have their residence about the tabernacle, and are, in their courses, employed in the service of it; (v. 4.) Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, that are at home there, and whose business lies there. He is so far from pitying them as confined to a constant attendance, and obliged to perpetual serious ness, that he would sooner envy them than the greatest princes in the world. There are those that bless the covetous, but he blesses the religious. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; (not be-
cause they have good wages, a part of every sacrifice for themselves, which would enable them to keep a good table, because they have good work;) they will be still praising thee; and if there be a heaven upon earth, it is in praising God, in continually praising him. Apply this to his house above; blessed are they that dwell there, angels and glorified saints, for they rest not day nor night from praising God. Let us therefore spend as much of our time as may be in that blessed work in which we hope to spend a joyful eternity.

2. Blessed are the people, the inhabitants of the country, who, though they do not constantly dwell in God's house, as the priests do, yet have liberty of access to it, at the times appointed for their solemn feasts, the three great feasts, at which all the males were obliged to give their attendance; Deut. xvi. 16. David was so far from receiving this for a heavy task, that he doth not only commend it to those that are there, but pronounces blessed those that shall thus spend their time, that he envies the happiness of those who might thus attend, v. 5.-7.

Those whom he pronounces blessed, are here described; (1.) They are such as act in religion from a rooted principle of dependence upon God, and devoted-
ness to him; Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, who makes thee his Strength, and strongly stays himself upon thee; (cii. 7.) he who is thus fortified in his strength, which he runs for safety, Prov. xviii. 10. Happy is the man whose hope is in the Lord his God, Ps. x. 4.—cxliv. 5. Those are truly happy, who go forth, and go on, in the exercises of religion, not in their own strength, (for then the work is sure to miscarry,) but in the strength of the
grace of Jesus Christ, from whom all our sufficiency is. David wished to return to God's tabernacles again, that he might strengthen himself in the Lord, for fear and suffering.

(2.) They are such as have a love for holy ordinances, in whose heart are the ways of them, that is, who, having placed their happiness in God as their End, rejoice in all the ways that lead to him, all those means by which their graces are strengthened, and their communion with him kept up. They not only walk in these ways, but they have them in their hearts, they lay them near their hearts; no pleasure or delight, no pleasure or delight, lies nearer than this. Note, Those who have the new Jerusalem in their eye, must have the ways that lead to it in their heart, must mind them, their eyes must look straight forward in them, must ponder the paths of them, must keep close to them, and be afraid of turning aside to the right hand or to the left. If we make God's promise our strength, we must make God's word our rule, and walk by it.

(3.) They are such as will break through difficulties and discouragements, in waiting upon God in holy ordinances, v. 6. When they come up out of the country to worship at the feasts, their way lies through many a dry and sandy valley, (so some,) in which they are ready to perish for thirst; but, to guard against that inconveniency, they dig little pits to receive and keep the rain water, which is ready to fall, and so profit by their reception. When they make the pools, the rain of heaven fills them; if we be ready to receive the grace of God, that grace shall not be wanting to us, but shall be sufficient for us at all times; their way lay through many a weeping valley, so Baca signifies, that is, as others understand it, many watery valleys, which, in wet weather, when the rain filled the pools, either through the rising of the waters, or through the dryness of the way, were impassable; but, by draining and trenching them, they made them passable, and thus prepared for the benefit of those who went up to Jerusalem. Care should be taken to keep those roads in repair that lead to church, as well as those that lead to market. But all this is intended to show, [1.] That they had a good will to the journey. When they were to attend the solemn feasts at Jerusalem, they would not be kept back by bad weather, or bad ways, nor make their journey only for the sake of the delights of the way, but, by mending the roads, and so preparing for the way of duty, and for the reception of those who went up to Jerusalem, and he that observes the wind shall not sow, [2.] That they made the best of the way to Zion, contrived and took pains to mend it where it was bad, and bore, as well as they could, the inconveniences that could not be removed. Our way to heaven lies through a valley of Baca, but even that way may be made a well, if we make a due improvement of the comforts God has provided for the pilgrims to the heavenly city.

(4.) They are such as are still pressing forward till they come to their journey's end, at length, and do not take up short of it; (v. 7.) They go from strength to strength; their company increases by the accession of more out of every town they pass through, till they become very numerous; those that were near said till those that were further off called on them and said, Look unto me, and let us go to the house of the Lord; (cxxii. 1, 2.) that they might go together in a body, in token of their mutual love. Or, the particular persons, instead of being fatigued with the tediousness of their journey, and the difficulties they met with, the nearer they came to Jerusalem, were the more lively and cheerful, and so went stronger and stronger, Job xvii. 9. Thus it is promised that they that wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength, Isa. xl. 31. Even where they are weak, there they are strong. They go from virtue to virtue; (so some;) it is the same word that is used for the virtuous woman; they that press forward in their Christian course, shall find God adding grace to their graces, John i. 16. They shall be changed from glory to glory, 2 Cor. iii. 18, from one degree of glorious grace to another; till, at length, every one of them appear before God in Zion, to give glory to him, and receive blessings from him. Note, They who grow in grace, shall, at last, be perfect in glory. The Chaldee reads it, They go from the house of the sanctuary to the house of doctrine; and the pains which they have taken about the law shall appear before God, whose majesty dwells in Zion. We must go from one duty to another; from prayer to that word, from practising what we have learned to learn more; which, if we do, the benefit of it will appear, to God's glory, and our own everlasting comfort.

8. O Lord of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah. 9. Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed. 10. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. 11. For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. 12. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.

Here.

I. The psalmist prays for audience and acceptance with God, not mentioning particularly what he desired God would do for him; he needed to say no more, when he had professed such an affectionate desire to attend for the ordinances of God, which now he was restrained and besought from all his desire was, in that profession, plainly before God, and his longing, his groaning, were not hid from him; therefore he prays, (v. 8, 9.) only that God would hear his prayer, and give ear, that he would behold his condition, behold his good affection, and look upon his face, which way it was set, and how his countenance discovered the longing desire he had toward God's courts; he calls himself (as many think) God's servant, or God's anointed, and anointed by God, and anointed for him. In this petition, 1. He has an eye to God, under several of his glorious titles. As the Lord God of hosts, who has all the creatures at his command, and therefore has all power both in heaven and earth; as the God of Jacob, a God in covenant with his own people, a God who never said to the praying seed of Jacob, Seek ye me, in vain; and as God our Shield, who takes his people under special protection, pursuant to his covenant with Abraham his father, (Gen. xv. 1.) Fear not, Abraham, I am thy Shield. When David could not be hid in the secret of God's tabernacle, (Ps. xxxvii. 5.) being at a distance from it, yet he hoped to find God his shield ready to him, wherever he was. 2. He has an eye to the Mediator; for of him I rather understand those words, Look upon the face of thy Messiah, thine Anointed One; for of his anointing David speaks strongly. In all our addresses to God, we must desire that he would look upon the face of Christ, accept us for his sake, and be well-pleased with us in him; we must look with an eye of faith, and then God will have an eye of favour look upon the face of the Anointed, who does show his face, when we, without him, dare not show ours.

II. He pleads his love to God's ordinances, and his dependence upon God himself.

1. God's courts were his choice, v. 10. A very great regard he had for holy ordinances, he valued
them above any thing else, and he expresses his value for them. (1.) By preferring the time of God's worship before all other time; A day spent in thy courts, in attending on the services of religion, wholly abstracted from all secular affairs, is better than a thousand, not a thousand in thy courts, but any where else in this world, though in the midst of all the delights of the children of men. Better than a thousand, he does not say days, you may supply it with years, with ages, if you will, and yet David will set his hand to it. "A day in thy courts, a sabbath-day, a holy-day, a fast-day, though but one day, would be very welcome to me; nay," (as some of the rabbins paraphrase it,) "though I were to die for it the next day, yet that would be more sweet than years spent in the business and pleasure of this world. One of these days shall, with its pleasure, chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, to shame, as not worthy to be compared." (2.) By preferring the place of worship before any other place; and to be a door-keeper, rather be in the meanest place and office, in the house of my God, than dwell in state, as master, in the tents of wickedness. Observe, He calls even the tabernacle a house, for the presence of God in it made even those curios more stately than a palace, and more strong than a castle. It is the house of my God; the covenant-interest he had in God as his God, was the sweet string on which he laid his hand; this was the covenant, I, upon good ground, call God theirs, delight in the courts of his house. I would rather be a porter in God's house, than a prince in those tents where wickedness reigns; rather lie at the threshold, so the word is; that was the beggar's place, Acts iii. 2. "No matter," (says David,) "let that be my place rather than none." The Pharisees loved synagogues well enough, provided they might have the uppermost seats there, (Matthew xxi. 23.) but that many David is not solicitous about that, if he may but be admitted to the threshold, he will say, Master, it is good to be here. Some read it, I would rather be fixed to a post in the house of my God, than live at liberty in the tents of wickedness, alluding to the law concerning servants, who, if they would not go out free, were to have their ear bored to the door-post, Exod. xxii. 5, 6. David loved his house, and preferred it to all else, that was desired to be tied to this service for ever, to be more free to it, but never to go out free from it, preferring bonds to duty far before the greatest liberty to sin. Such a superlative delight have holy hearts in holy duties; no satisfaction in their account comparable to that in communion with God.

2. God himself was his Hope, and Joy, and all. Therefore he loved the house of his God, because his expectation was from his God, and there he used to communicate his. (1.) What God is, and will be, to his people. The Lord God is a Sun and Shield; we are here in darkness, but if God be our God, he will be to us a Sun, to enlighten and enliven us, to guide and direct us; we are here in danger, but he will be to us a Shield, to secure us from the fiery darts that fly thick about us; with his favour he will compass us as with a shield. Let us therefore always walk in the light of the Lord, and never throw ourselves out of his protection, and we shall find him a Sun to supply us with all good, and a Shield to shelter us from all evil. (2.) What he does, and will, bestow upon them; The Lord will give grace and glory. Grace signifies both the good will of God towards us, and the good work of God in us; glory signifies both the honour which he now puts upon us, in giving us the adoption of sons, and that which he has prepared for us in the inheritance of sons. God will give them grace in this world as a preparation for glory, and glory in the other world as the perfection of grace; both are God's gift, his free gift. And as, on the one hand, wherever God gives grace, he will give glory, (for grace is glory begun, and is an earnest of it,) so, on the other hand, he will give glory hereafter to none to whom he does not give grace now, or who receive his grace in vain. And if God will give grace and glory, which are the two great things that concur to make us happy in both worlds, we may be sure that no good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly. (3.) It is the character of all good people, that they walk uprightly, that they worship God in spirit and in truth, and have their conversation in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity; and such may be sure that God will withhold no good thing from them, that is requisite to their comfortable passage through this world; make sure grace and glory and other things shall be added; this is a comprehensive promise, and is such an assurance of the present comfort of the saints, that, whatever they desire and think they need, they may be sure, that, either Infinite Wisdom sees it is not good for them, or Infinite Goodness will give it them in due time. Let it be our care to walk uprightly, and then let us trust God to give us every thing that is good for us.

Lastly, He pronounces them blessed, who put their confidence in God, as he did, v. 12. They are blessed, who have the liberty of ordinances, and the privilege of God's house. But though we should be debarred from being there as we would be, therefore debarred from blessedness, if we trust in God. If we cannot go to the house of the Lord, we may go by faith to the Lord of the house, and in him we shall be happy, and may be easy.

PSALM LXXXV.

Interpreters are generally of opinion that this psalm was penned after the return of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, when they still remained under some tokens of God's displeasure, which they here pray for the removal of. And nothing appears to the contrary, but that it might be penned then, as well as Ps. cxxxvii. They are the public interests that lie near the psalmist's heart here, and the psalm is penned for the great congregation. The church was here in a deluge; above, there were clouds, below were waves, everything was dark and dismal; the church is like Noah in the ark, between life and death, between hope and fear; being so, I. Here is the dove sent forth in prayer. The petitions here, against sin and wrath, (v. 4.) and for mercy and grace, v. 7. The pleas are taken from former favours, (v. 1., 3.) and present distresses, v. 5, 6. II. Here is the dove returning with an olive-branch of peace, and good tidings, the psalmist returns his benefactor, (v. 8.) and then recounts the favours to God's Israel, which, by the spirit of prophecy, he gave assurance of to others, and, by the spirit of faith, he took the assurance of to himself, v. 9., 13. III. Here, in this psalm, we may be assisted in our prayers to God both for his church in general, and for the land of our nativity in particular. The former part will be of use to direct our desires; the latter to encourage our faith and hope in those prayers.

To the chief musician. A psalm for the sons of Korah.

1. LORD, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob. 2. Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people; thou hast covered all their sin. Selah. 3. Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger. 4. Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease. 5. Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations? 6. Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may re-
joyce in thee? 7. Show us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation.

The church, in affliction and distress, is here, by direction from God, making her application to God; so kindly he is pleased, to give relief to the poor and afflicted. The distressed he sets upon their knees, and hearkens to their prayers. He consults with his Spirit in the heart, and in the heart, he indites their petitions, and puts words into their mouths. The people of God, in a very low and weak condition, are here taught how to address themselves to God.

1. They are to acknowledge with thankfulness the great things God had done for them; (v. 1-3.) "Thou hast done so, and so for us and our fathers." Not only the people, but all the privileges, which would not drown the remembrance of former mercies; but even then when we are brought very low, we must call to remembrance past experiences of God's goodness, which we must take notice of, with thankfulness, to his praise. They speak of it here with pleasure, 1. That God had showed himself propitious to their land, and had smiled upon it as his own; "Thou hast clothed with favour thy land, as thine, with distinguishing favours." Note, The God of all grace is the spring-head of all good, and the fountain of happiness, to nations, as well as to particular persons. It was by the favour of God that Israel got, and kept possession of, Canaan; (xlv. 3.) and if he had not continued very favourable to them, they had been ruined a many time. 2. That he had rescued them out of the hands of their enemies, and restored them to their liberty; "Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob, and settled those converts in their own land again, that had been driven out, and were strangers in a strange land, prisoners in the land of their oppressors." The captivity of Jacob, though it may continue long, will be brought back in due time. 3. That he had not dealt with them according to the desert of their provocation; (v. 2.) "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, and not punished them as in justice thou mightest." Thou hast covered all their sin." When God forgives sin, he covers it; and when he covers the sin of his people, he covers it all. The bringing back of their captivity was then an instance of God's favour to them, when it was accompanied with the pardon of their iniquity. 4. That he had not continued his anger against them so far, and so long, as they had reason to fear; (v. 3.) "Having covered all their sin, thou hast taken away all thy wrath against them;" God's anger ceases; God is pacified, if we are purged. See what the pardon of sin is; "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, that is, "Thou hast turned thine anger from waxing hot, so as to consume us in the flame of it. In compassion to us, thou hast not stirred up all thy wrath; but, when an intercessor has stood before thee in the gap, thou hast turned thine anger." II. They pray to God for grace and mercy, in reference to their present distress; this is inferred from the former; "Thou hast done well for our fathers; do well for us, for we are the children of the same covenant. 1. They pray for converting grace; "Turn us, O God of our salvation, in order to the turning of our captivity; turn us from iniquity; turn us to thyself, and to our duty; turn us, and we shall be turned. All those whom God will save will turn, and will turn to the good; there is no salvation. 2. They pray for the removal of the tokens of God's displeasure which they were under; "Cause thine anger towards us to cease, as thou didst many a time a cause to cease in the days of our fathers, when thou didst take away thy wrath from them." Observe the method, "First turn us to thee, and then cause thine anger to turn from us." When we are reconciled to God, then, and not till then, we may expect the comfort of his being reconciled to us. 3. They pray for the manifestation of God's good will to them; (v. 7.) "Show us thy mercy, O Lord; show thyself merciful to us: not only have mercy on us, but let us have the comfortable evidences of that mercy; let us know that thou hast mercy on us, and mercy in store for us." 4. They pray that God would, graciously to them, and gloriously to himself, appear on their behalf; "Grant us thy salvation: grant it by thy promise, and then, no doubt, thou wilt work it by thy providence." Now, The vessels of God's mercy are the heirs of his salvation; he shows mercy to these to whom he grants salvation; for salvation is of mere mercy.

III. They are taught humbly to expostulate with God concerning their present troubles, v. 5, 6. Where observe, 1. What they dread and deprecate; "Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? We are undone if thou art, but we hope thou wilt not. Wilt thou draw out thine anger unto all generations? No; that art gracious, slow to anger, and swift to show mercy, and wilt not contend for ever. Thou wast not angry with our fathers for ever, but didst soon turn thyself from the fierceness of thy wrath; why then wilt thou be angry with us for ever? Are not thy mercies and compassions as plentiful and powerful as ever they were? Impenitent sinners will be angry with for ever; for, what is hell but the wrath of God drawn out unto endless generations? But shall a bowstring be drawn so long? But wilt thou be angry with us for ever? 2. What they desire and hope for; "Wilt thou not revive us again; (v. 6.) revive us with comforts spoken to us, revive us with deliveries wrought for us? Thou hast been favourable to thy land formerly, and that revived it; wilt thou not again be favourable, and so revive it again?" God had granted to the children of the captivity some reviving in their bondage, Ezra ix. 8. Their return out of Babylon was as life from the dead. Ezek. xi. 11, 12. Now, Lord, (say they,) wilt thou not revive us again, and put thy hand again the second time to gather us in? Isa. xi. 11. Ps. cxxvi. i, 4. Revive thy work in the midst of the years, Hab. iii. 2. "Re..." (1.) "That thy people may rejoice; and so we shall have the comfort of it," Ps. xiv. 7. Give them life, that they may have joy. (2.) "That they may rejoice in thee; and so thou wilt have the glory of it." If God be the Fountain of all our mercies, he must be the Centre of all our joys.

8. I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly. 9. Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land. 10. Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. 11. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven. 12. Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good: and our land shall yield her increase. 13. Righteousness shall go before him, and shall set us in the way of his steps.

We have here an answer to the prayers and ex postulations in the foregoing verses.

I. In general, it is an answer of peace; this the psalmist is soon aware of, (v. 8.) for he stands upon his watch-tower to hear what God will say unto him, as the prophet, (Hab. ii. 1, 2.) I will hear what God the Lord will speak. This intimates, 1. The stilling of his passions, his grief, his fear, and the tumult of his spirit; "Compose thyself, O my soul, in an humble silence to attend upon God,
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wait his motions. I have spoken enough, or too much; now I will hear what God will speak, and welcome his holy will; What saith my Lord unto his servants? [1.] If we would have God to hear what we say to him, we must be ready to say what he says to us by his word. 2. The raising of his expectations; now that he has been at prayer, he looks for something very great, and very kind, from the God that hears prayer. When we have prayed, we should look after our prayers, and stay for an answer. Now, observe here, [1.] What it is that he promises himself from God, in answer to his prayers; He will speak peace to his people, and to his saints. [2.] What he does, not only speak peace, but make peace for them who are God's people, set apart for him, subject to him, and who shall be saved by him. All his people are his saints, sanctified by his grace, and devoted to his glory; these may sometimes want peace, when without are fightings, and within are fears; but, sooner or later, God will speak peace to them; if he do not command outward peace, yet he will suggest inward peace; speaking that to their hearts by his Spirit, which he has spoken to their ears by his word and ministry, and making them to hear joy and gladness. [2.] What use he makes of this expectation. [1.] He takes the comfort of it; and so must we; "I will hear what God the Lord will speak, hear the assurances he gives of peace, in answer to prayer." When God speaks peace, we must not be deaf to it, but with all humility and thankfulness receive it. [2.] He cautions the saints to do the duty which this calls for; But let them not turn again to folly; for thus these terms, and no other, that peace is to be expected. To those, and those only, peace is spoken, who turn from sin; but if they return to it again, it is at their peril. All sin is folly, but especially backsliding; it is egregious folly to turn to sin after we have seemed to turn from it, to turn it after God has spoken peace! God is for peace, but, when he speaks, such are for war.

II. Here are the particulars of this answer of peace; he doubts not but all will be well in a little time, and therefore gives us the pleasing prospect of the flourishing estate of the church in the five last verses of the psalm, which describes the peace and prosperity that God, at length, blessed the children of the captivity with; when, after a great deal of toil and agitation, at length they gained a settlement in their own land. But it may be taken, 1. As a promise also to all who fear God and work righteousness, the peace and prosperity of the church is the certain evidence of the kingdom of the Messiah, and the blessings with which that kingdom should be enriched. Here is,

[1.] Help at hand; (v. 9.) "Surely his salvation is nigh, nigh to us, higher than we think it is; it will soon be effectual, how great soever our difficulties and distresses are, when God's time is come, and that time is not far off." When the tale of bricks is doubled, then is Egypt's end; when wall is taken down, when trouble is high, salvation is nigh; for God is a very present Help in time of trouble to all who are his; whereas salvation is far from the wicked, cxix. 155. This may fitly be applied to Christ the Author of eternal salvation; it was the comfort of the Old Testament saints, that though they lived not to see that redemption in Jerusalem which they waited for, yet they were still set high, and would be welcome, to all that fear God.

[2.] Honour secured; "That glory may dwell in our land, that we may have the worship of God settled and established among us; for that is the glory of a land. When that goes, Ichabod—the glory is departed; when that stays, glory dwells." This may refer to the Messiah, who was to be the Glory of his people Israel, and who came and dwelt among them, (John i. 4.) for which reason their land is called Immanuel's land, Isa. viii. 8.

(3.) Graces meeting, and happily embracing; (v. 10, 11.) "Mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, shall be in his tabernacle." [1.] Of the reformation of the people and of the government, in the administration of which all those graces should be conspicuous and commanding. The rulers and ruled shall all be merciful and true, righteous and peaceable; when there is no truth nor mercy, all goes to ruin, Hos. iv. 1. Isa. lix. 14, 15. But when these meet in the management of all affairs, when these give aim, when these give law, when these make and keep peace, when they are righteous, when they do good, there is a prosperous state, a flourishing church, to the grass of the earth, and of righteousness, that it is showered down like rain from heaven, then things go well. When in every congregation mercy and truth meet, in every embrace righteousness and peace kiss, and common honesty is indeed common, then glory dwells in a land, as the sin of reigning dishonesty is a reproach to any people. [2.] Of the return of God's favour, and the continuance of it thereafter. When a people return to God, and adhere to him, in a way of duty, he will return to them, and abide with them, in a way of mercy. So some understand this, Man's truth, and God's mercy, man's righteousness and God's peace, meet together. If God finds us true to him, to one another, to ourselves, we shall find him merciful. If we make conscience of righteousness, we shall have the comfort of peace.

If truth spring out of the earth, which is, (as Dr. Hammond understands it,) out of the heart of the sinner, he makes the proper soil for it to grow in, righteousness. God's mercy, shall look down from heaven, as the sun does upon the world, when it sheds its influence on the productions of the earth, and cherishes them.

[3.] Of the harmony of the divine attributes in the Messiah's undertaking. In him, who is both our Salvation and our Glory, mercy and truth are met together; God's mercy and truth, and his righteousness and peace, have kissed each other; that is, the great affair of our salvation is so well contrived, so well concerted, that God may have mercy upon poor sinners, and be at peace with them, without any wrong to his truth and righteousness. He is true to the threatening, and just in his government, and yet pardons sinners, and takes them into covenant with himself. Christ, as Mediator, brings heaven and earth together again, which sin had set at variance; through him truth springs out of the earth, the earth being made new by the new covenant, and his heart, and then righteousness looks down from heaven, for God is just, and the Justifier of them which believe in Jesus; or it may denote, that, in the kingdom of the Messiah, these graces shall flourish and prevail, and have a universal command.

(4.) Great plenty of every thing desirable; (v. 12.) The Lord shall give that which is good, every thing that he sees to be good for us; all good comes from God, and is given for the good of his people. Righteousness, have a sovereign influence on men's hearts and lives, all good may be expected; if we thus seek the righteousness of God's kingdom, other things shall be added; Matth. vi. 33. "When the gospel of the glory dwells in our land, then it shall yield its increase, for soul-prosperity will either bring outward prosperity along with it, or sweeten the want of it. See Ps. lxxii. 13.)" The righteousness of his promise which he has made to us, assuring us of happiness—the righteousness of sanctification, that good work which he has wrought in us, these shall go before him to prepare his way, both to raise our expectations of his favour, and to qualify us for it; and this shall go before us also, and be our guide to set us in the way of his steps, that is, to encourage our hopes, and guide our
practice, that we may go forth to meet him when he is coming towards us in ways of mercy. Christ, the Sun of righteousness, shall bring us to God, and put us into the way that leads to him; John Baptist, a preacher of righteousness, shall go before Christ, to prepare his way. Righteousness is a sure guide both in meeting God, and in following him.

PSALM LXXXVI.

This psalm is entitled a prayer of David; probably it was not penned upon any particular occasion, but was a prayer he often used himself, and recommended to others for their use, especially in a day of affliction. Many think that David penned this prayer as a type of Christ, and that the days of his flesh offered up strong cries, Heb. v. 7. David, in this prayer, (according to the nature of that duty,) I. Gives glory to God, v. 8. 10, 12, 13. II. Seeks for grace and help from God; that God may hear his prayers, v. 1, 6, 7. preserve and save him, and be merciful to him; (v. 2, 3, 16.) that he would give him joy, and grace, and strength, and put honour upon him, v. 4, 11, 17. He pleads God's goodness, (v. 5, 15.) and the mercies of his enemies, v. 14. In singing this, we must, as David did, lift up our souls to God with application.

A prayer of David.

1. Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me; for I am poor and needy. 2. Preserve my soul, for I am holy: O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee. 3. Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily. 4. Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. 5. For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plentiful in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. 6. Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications. 7. In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me.

This psalm was published under the title of a prayer of David: not as if David sang all his prayers, but into some of his songs he inserted prayers; for a psalm will admit the expressions of any pious and devout affections. But it is observable how very plain the language of this psalm is, and how little there is in it of poetical flights or figures, in comparison with some of his other psalms; for the flourishers of wit are not the proper ornaments of prayer.

Now here we may observe,

1. The petitions he puts up to God. It is true, prayer accidentally may preach, but it is most fit that (as it is in this prayer) every passage should be directed to God, for such is the nature of prayer as it is here described, (v. 4.) Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul, as he had said, xxx. 1. In all psalm prayer, the soul must ascend upon the wings of faith and holy desire, and be lifted up to God to meet the communications of his grace, and in an expectation raised very high of great things from him.

1. He begs that God would give a gracious audience to his prayers; (v. 1.) Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me. When God hears our prayers, it is fitly said that he bows down his ear to them, for it is admirable condescension in God that he is pleased to take notice of such mean creatures as we are, and that he harkens to our prayers (as he repeats this again; v. 6.) "Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer, a favourable ear, though it be whispered, though it be stammered, attend to the voice of my supplications." Not that God needs to have his affections stirred up by any thing that we can say; but thus we must express our desire of his favour. The Son of David spake it with assurance and pleasure; (John xi. 41, 42.) Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; and I know that thou hearest me always.

2. He begs that God would take him under his spiritual protection. So be the Author of his salvation: (v. 2.) Preserve my soul, and rescue me from all evil. It was David's soul that was God's servant; for those only serve God acceptably that serve him with their spirits. David's concern is about his soul; if we understand it of his natural life, it teaches us, That the best self-preservation is to commit ourselves to God's keeping, and by faith and prayer to make our Creator our Preserver. But it may be understood of his spiritual life; the life of the soul is distinct from the body; "Preserve my soul." "Men show no mercy, we ourselves deserve no mercy, but, Lord, for mercy sake, be merciful to me." 3. He begs that God would look upon him with an eye of pity and compassion; (v. 3.) Be merciful to me, O Lord. It is mercy in God to pardon our sins, and to help us out of our distresses; but these are included in this prayer. God is merciful to me. "Men show no mercy, we ourselves deserve no mercy, but, Lord, for mercy sake, be merciful to me." 4. He begs that God would fill him with inward comfort; (v. 4.) Rejoice the soul of thy servant. It is God only that can put gladness into the heart, and make the soul to rejoice, and then, and not till then, the joy is full; as it is the duty of those who love God's ways to serve him with gladness, so it is their privilege to be filled with joy and peace in believing; and they may in faith pray, not only that God will preserve their souls, but that he will rejoice their souls, and the joy of the Lord will be their strength. Observe, When he prays, Rejoice my soul, he adds, For unto thee do I lift up my soul. Then we may expect comfort from God, when we take care to keep up our communion with God; prayer is the nurse of spiritual joy.

11. The pleas with which he enforces these petitions.

1. He pleads his relation to God and interest in him; "Thou art my God, to whom I have devoted myself, and on whom I depend, and I am thy servant, (v. 2.) in subjection to thee, and therefore looking for protection from thee." 2. He pleads distress; "Hear me, for I am poor and needy, therefore I want thy help, therefore none else will hear me." God is the poor man's King, whose glory it is to save the souls of the needy; they who are poor in spirit, who see themselves empty and necessitous, are most welcome to the God of all grace.

3. He pleads God's good will towards all that seek him; (v. 5.) "To thee do I lift up my soul in desire and expectation: for thou, Lord, art good;" and whither should beggars go but to the door of the poor man's King? The goodness of God's nature is a great encouragement to us in our distresses to him. His goodness appears in two things, giving and forgiving. (1.) He is a sin-pardoning God; not only can he forgive, but he is ready to forgive; more ready to forgive than we are to repent. I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest, xxxii. 5. (2.) He is a prayer-hearing God; he is plentiful in mercy, very full, and very free, both rich and liberal unto all them that call upon him; he has wherewithal to supply all their needs, and is open-handed in granting that supply. 4. He pleads God's good work in himself, by which he had qualified him for the tokens of his favour. Three things were wrought in him by divine grace, which he looked upon as.emblems of all good.
(1.) A conformity to God; (v. 2.) I am holy, therefore preserve my soul; for those whom the Spirit sanctifies he will preserve. He does not say this in pride and vain-glory, but with humble thankfulness to God; I am one whom thou hast made meet, so the margin reads it, whom thou hast set apart for thyself; if God has begun a good work of grace in us, we must own that the time was a time of love; then was I in his eyes as one that found favour; and whom God hath taken into his favour he will take under his protection. All his saints are in thy hand, Deut. xxxiii. 3. Observe, I am needy, (v. 1.) yet I am holy; (v. 2.) holy and yet needy; foal in the world; they that preserve purity in their greatest poverty may assure themselves that God will preserve their comforts, will preserve their souls.

(2.) A confidence in God; Save thy servant that trusteth in thee. They that are holy must, nevertheless, not trust in themselves, or in their own righteousness, but only in God and his grace. They that trust in God may expect salvation from him.

(3.) A disposition to communion with God; he hopes God will answer his prayers, because he had inclined him to pray. [1.] To be constant in prayer; I cry unto thee, daily, and all the day. It is thus our duty to pray always, without ceasing, and to continue constant in prayer; and therefore we may hope to have our prayers heard, which we make in time of trouble, if we have made conscience of the duty at other times, at all times. It is comfortable if an affliction finds the wheels of prayer a-going, and that they are not then to be set a-going. [2.] To be inward with God in prayer; to lift up his soul to him, v. 4. Then we may hope that God will meet us with his mercies, when we in our prayers send forth our souls as it were to meet him. [3.] To be, in a special manner, earnest with God in prayer, when he was in affliction; (v. 7.) "In the day of my trouble, whatever others do, I will call upon thee, and commit my case to thee, for thou wilt hear and answer me, and I shall not seek in vain, as those did who cried, O Baal, hear us; but there was no voice, nor any that regarded, 1 Kings xviii. 29.

3. Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto thy works. 9. All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name. 10. For thou art great, and dost wondrous things: thou art God alone. 11. Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name. 12. I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart; and I will glorify thy name for evermore. 13. For great is thy mercy toward me; and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell. 14. O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul, and have not set thee before them. 15. But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious; long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth. 16. O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me: give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thy handmaid. 17. Show me a token for good: that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed: because thou hast hasted me, and comforted me.

David is here going on in his prayer.

1. He gives glory to God; for we ought in our prayers to praise him, ascribing kingdom, power, and glory, to him, with the most humble and reverent adorations.

2. As a being of unparalleled perfection, such a one, that there is none like him, nor any to be compared with him, v. 8. Among the gods, the false gods, whom the heathens worshipped, the angels, the kings of the earth, among them all, there is none like unto thee, O Lord; none so wise, so mighty, so good; none so there any works like unto thy works: which is an undeniable proof that there is none like him; his own works praise him, and the best way we have of praising him, is, by acknowledging that there is none like him.

2. As the Fountain of all being, and the Centre of all praise; (v. 9.) "Thou hast made all nations, made them all of one blood, they all derive their being from thee, and have a constant dependence on thee, and therefore they shall come and worship before thee, and glorify thy name." This was in part fulfilled in the multitude of proselytes to the Jewish religion in the days of David and Solomon, but was to have its full accomplishment in the days of the Messiah, when some out of every kingdom and nation should be effectually brought in to praise God, Rev. vii. 9. It was by Christ that God made all nations, for without him was not any thing made that was made, and therefore, through Christ, and by the power of his gospel and grace, all nations shall be brought to worship before God, Isa. lxvi. 23.

3. As a Being infinitely great; (v. 10.) "Therefore all nations shall worship before thee, because as King of nations thou art great, thy sovereignty absolute and incontestable, thy majesty terrible and insupportable, thy power universal and irresistible, thy riches vast and inextinguishable, thy dominion boundless and unquestionable; and, for the proof of this, thou dost wondrous things, which all nations admire, and whence they might easily infer that thou art God alone, not only none like thee, but none beside thee." Let us always entertain great thoughts of this great God, and be filled with holy admiration of this God who doth wenders; and let him alone have our hearts, who is God alone.

4. As a Being infinitely good. Man is bad, very wicked and vile; (v. 15.) no mercy is to be expected from him. Be dead, and O Lord, art not only compassionate, but full of compassion, and in him mercy rejoiceth against judgment. He is long-suffering towards us, though we forfeit his favour, and provoke him to anger, and he is plenteous in mercy and truth, as faithful in performing as he was free in promising.

5. As a kind Friend and bountiful Benefactor to him. We ought to praise God as good in himself, but we do it most feelingly, when we observe how he has been kind to us. God dwells upon with most pleasure, v. 12. 13. He had said, (v. 9.) All nations shall praise thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name. It is some satisfaction to a good man, to think that others shall praise and glorify God, but it is his greatest care and pleasure to do it himself. "Whatever others do," (says David,) "I will praise thee, O Lord my God, not only as
the Lord, but as my God; and I will do it with all mine heart; I will be ready to do it, and cordial in it; I will do it with cheerfulness and liveliness, with a sincere regard to thy honour; for I will glorify thy name, not for a time, but for evermore. I will do it as long as I live, and hope to be doing it to eternity.· With good reason does he resolve to be thus particular in praising God, because God had shown him particular favours; For great is thy mercy toward me.

The fountain of mercy is inexhaustibly full, the streams of mercy are inestimably rich; when we speak of God's mercy to us, it becomes us thus to magnify it, Great is thy mercy toward me. Of the greatness of God's mercy, he gives this instance, Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell; from death, so great a death, as St. Paul, (2 Cor. i. 18.) says, 'The lowest hell;' and this is a form of speech that should greatly enlarge their hearts in praising the mercy of God, which they are obliged to glorify for evermore. So glorious, so gracious, a rescue from everlasting misery, justly requires the return of everlasting praise.

II. He prays earnestly for mercy and grace from God. He complains of the restless and implacable malign of his enemies against him; (v. 14.) "Lord, be thou for me; for thy enemies consist of Rabbi P's people, and they were proud men, that looked with disdain upon poor David. (Many are made persecutors by their pride.) They were violent men, that would carry all before them by force, right or wrong; they were terrible, formidable, men, (so some,) that did all they could to frighten all about them. He notices their number; there are assemblies of them, they work with the world, and meddle with courts; or men for conversation, and met in clubs. But, being assembled, they were the more capable of doing mischief. He notices their cunning to David: "They rise up against me in open rebellion; they not only plot, but they put their plots in execution as far as they can; and the design is not only to depose David, but to destroy him; they seek after my life to slay me, or put an end to me, if it lay in their power." And, lastly, He makes their distance and estrangement from God, which were at the bottom of their enmity to David; "They have not set thee before them; and what good can be expected from those that have no fear of God before their eyes? Lord, appear against them, for they are thine enemies as well as mine."

His petitions are, 1. He prays for tokens of God's grace in him, v. 11. He prays that God would give him, (1.) An understanding heart, that he would inform and instruct him concerning his duty: "Teach me thy way, O Lord, the way that thou hast appointed me to walk in; when I am in doubt concerning it, make it plain to me what I should do, let me hear thy voice, saying, This is the way." Isa. xxx. 21. David was well-educated in the things of God, and yet was sensible of the need of further instruction, and many a time could not trust his own judgment; Teach me thy way, I will walk in thy truth. One would think it should be, Teach me thy truth, and I will walk in thy way; but it comes all to one, it is the way of truth that God teaches, and that we must choose and walk in, Ps. cxix. 30. Christ is the Way and the Truth, and we must both learn Christ and walk in him. We cannot walk in God's way and truth, unless he teach us; and, if we expect he should teach us, we must resolve to be governed by his teachings, Isa. ii. 3. (2.) An upright heart; "Unite my heart to fear thy name; make me sincere in religion; a hypocrite has a double heart, let mine be single, and entire for God; not divided between him and the world; not straggling from him. Our hearts are apt to wander, and hang loose; our powers and faculties scatter after a thousand foolish things; we have therefore need of God's grace to unite them, that we may serve God with all that is within us, and all little enough to be employed in his service. "Let my heart be fixed for God, and firm and faithful to him, and fervent in serving him, that is an united heart."

2. For the tokens of God's favour to him, v. 16, 17. Three things he here prays for, (1.) That God would speak peace and comfort to him; "O turn unto me, as to one thou lovest, and hast a kind and tender concern for; my enemies turn against me, my friends turn from me, Lord, do thou turn to me, and have mercy upon me; it will be a comfort to me to know that thou pitiest me." (2.) That God would work deliverance for him, and set him in safety; "Give me thy strength; put strength into me, that I may have help against the enmity of my enemies, and that I may be saved out of the hands of those that seek my ruin." He pleads relation; "I am thy servant; I am so by birth, as the son of thine handmaid, born in thy house, and therefore thou art my rightful Owner and Proprietor, from whom I may expect protection. I am thine, save me." The children of godly parents, who were betimes dedicated to the Lord, may plead it with him; if they come under the influence of his Spirit, they are entitled to the privileges of it. (3.) That God would put reputation on him; "Show me a token for good; make it to appear to others as well as to myself, that thou art doing me good, and designing further good for me. Let me have some unquestionable illustrious instances of thy favour to me, that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed of their enmity to me, as they will have reason to be, when they perceive, he that loveth God, and God loveth him, is comforted; and that therefore they have been striving against God, opposing one whom he owns, and that they have been striving in vain to ruin and vex one whom God himself has undertaken to help and comfort." The joy of the saints shall be the shame of their persecutors.

PSALM LXXXVII.

The foregoing psalm was very plain and easy, but in this are things dark and hard to be understood. It is an encomium of Zion, as a type and figure of the gospel-church, to which what is here spoken is very applicable. Zion, for the temple's sake, is here preferred, 1. Before the rest on the throne of Canaan, as least crowned with special tokens of God's favour, v. 1. 2. Before any other place or country whatsoever, as being replenished with more eminent men, and with a greater plenty of divine blessedness, v. 4. Some think it was penned to express the joy of God's people when Zion was in a flourishing state; others think it was penned to encourage their faith and hope when Zion was in ruins, and was to be rebuilt after the captivity; though no man cared for the figure. (Jer. xxx. 17.) This is Zion, where man seeketh after; yet God had done great things for her, and spoken glorious things of her, which should all have their perfection and accomplishment in the gospel-church, so that therefore we must have an eye, in singing this psalm.

A psalm or song for the sons of Korah.

1. HIS foundation is in the holy mountains. 2. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings
of Jacob. 3. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah.

Some make the first words of the psalm to be part of the title; it is a psalm or song, whose subject is the holy mountains; the temple built in Zion upon mountains. That is the foundation of it, the argument, or beginning of the psalm. Or, we may suppose the psalmist had now the tabernacle or temple in view, and was contemplating the glories of it, and at length breaks out into this expression, which has reference, though not to what he had written before, yet to what he had thought of; every one knew what he meant when he had said thus abruptly, Its foundation is in the holy mountains.

Three things are here observed, in praise of the temple.

1. That it was founded on the holy mountains, v. 1.
   The church has a foundation, so that it cannot sink or totter; Christ himself is the Foundation of it, which God has laid. The Jerusalem above is a city that has foundations. The foundation is upon the mountains; it is built high, the mountain of the Lord's house is established upon the top of the mountains, Ps. lix. 1. It is built on mountains, the mountains are rocky, and on a rock the church is built. The world is founded upon the seas; (xxiv. 2.) which are continually ebbing and flowing, and are a very weak foundation; Babel was built in a plain, where the ground was rotten; but the church is built upon the everlasting mountains, and the perpetual hills; for sooner shall the mountains depart, and the hills be removed, than the covenant of God's peace shall be disannulled, and on that the church is built, Isa. li. 1. The foundation is upon the holy mountains. Holiness is the strength and stability of the church; that is it which will support it, and keep it from sinking; not so much that it is built upon mountains, as that it is built upon holy mountains; upon the promise of God, for the confirming of which he has sworn by his holiness; upon the sanctification of the Spirit, which will secure the happiness of all the saints.

2. That God had expressed a particular affection for it; (v. 2.) The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, of the temple, of the houses of doctrine, (so the Chaldee,) more than all the dwellings of Jacob, whether in Jerusalem, or any where else in the country. God had said concerning Zion, This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell; there he met his people, and conversed with them, received their homage, and showed them the tokens of his favour, and therefore we may conclude how well he loves those gates. Note, (1.) God has a love for the dwellings of Jacob, a gracious regard to religious families, and accepts their family-worship. (2.) Yet he loves the gates of Zion better, not only better than any, but better than all, of the dwellings of Jacob. God was worshipped in the dwellings of Jacob, and family-worship is family-duty, which must by no means be neglected; yet, when they come in competition, public worship (ceteris paribus—other things being equal,) is to be preferred before private.

3. That there was much said concerning it in the word of God; (v. 3.) Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. We are to judge of things and persons by the figure they make, and the estimate put upon them, in and by the scripture. Many base things were spoken of the city of God by the enemies of it, to render it mean and odious, but by him whose judgment we are sure is according to truth, of glories things are spoken of it; God said of the temple, Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually; I have sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever, 2 Chron. vii. 16. Beautiful for situation is mount Zion, Ps. lxxxvi. 2. These are glorious things. Yet more glorious things are spoken of the gospel-church; it is the spouse of Christ, the purchase of his blood, it is a peculiar people, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Let us not be ashamed of the church of Christ in its meanest conditions, nor of any that belong to it, nor disown our relation to it, though it be turned from its glory: it is given to our reproach, since such glorious things are spoken of it, and not one iota or tittle of what is said shall fall to the ground.

4. I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me; behold, Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia: this man was born there. 5. And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her; and the Highest himself shall establish her. 6. The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there. Selah. 7. As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there: all my springs are in thee.

Zion is here compared with other places, and preferred before them; the church of Christ is more glorious and excellent than the nations of the earth.

1. It is owned that other places have their glories; (v. 4.) I will make mention of Rahab, that is, Egypt, and Babylon, to them that know me, and are about me, and with whom I discourse about public affairs; behold Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia, or rather Arabia; we shall observe that this man was born there; here and there one famous for an excellence and knowledge than others have produced, that was a native of these countries; here and there one that becomes a proselyte, and a worshipper of the true God. But some give another sense of it; that it is a prophecy or promise of bringing the Gentiles into the church, and uniting them in one body with the Jews. God says, I will reckon them my people as much as Israel, when they shall receive the gospel of Christ, and own them as born in Zion, born again there, and admitted to the privileges of Zion as freely as a true-born Israelite. They that were strangers and foreigners, become fellow citizens with the saints, Eph. ii. 19. A Gentile convert shall stand upon a level with a native Jew; compare Isa. xix. 23—25. The Lord shall say, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.

2. It is proved that the glory of Zion outshines them all, upon many accounts; for,

(1.) Zion shall produce many great and good men that shall be famous in their generation, v. 5. Of Zion it shall be said by all her neighbours, that this and that man was born in her, many men of renown for wisdom and piety, and especially for acquaintance with the words of God and the visions of the Almighty. Many prophets and kings, who should be the greater favourites of Heaven, and greater blessings to the earth, than ever were bred in Egypt or Babylon. The worthies of the church far exceed those of heathen nations, and their names will shine brighter than in perpetual records. A man, a man was born in her; by which some understand Christ, that Man, that Son of man, who is far dearer to the people of men, he was born at Bethlehem near Zion, and was the glory of his people Israel. The greatest honour that ever was upon the Jewish nation, was, that of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, Rom. ix. 5. Or this may also be applied to the conversion of the Gen-
ticles; Of Zion it shall be said, that the law which went forth out of Zion, the gospel of Christ, shall be an instrument to beget many souls to God, and the Jerusalem that is from above shall be acknowledged the mother of them all.

(2.) Zion's interest shall be strengthened and settled by an almighty power. The Highest himself shall undertake to establish her, who can do it effectually; the accession of proselytes out of divers nations shall be by the hand of that almighty force and division, that it shall contribute greatly to Zion's strength; for God himself, having founded her upon an everlasting foundation, whatever convulsions and revolutions there are of states and kingdoms, and however heaven and earth may be shaken, these are things which cannot be shaken, but must remain.

(3.) Zion's sons shall be registered with honour; (v. 6.) The Lord shall count, when he writes up, the people, and takes a catalogue of the nation, that this race was born there, and so is a subject by birth, by the first birth, being born in his house—by the second birth, being born again of his Spirit. When God comes to return with the children of men, that he may render to every man according to his works, he shall observe who was born in Zion, and consequently enjoyed the privileges of God's sanctuary, to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the service, of God, Rom. viii. 34. to them all, and therefore of them much will be required, and the account will be accordingly; five talents must be improved by those that were intrusted with five. I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, and where thou wast born. Selah. Let those that dwell in Zion mark this, and live up to their profession.

(4.) Zion's songs shall be sung with joy and tri triumph. As well the singers, as the players on instruments, shall praise to the Lord. There was much to the honour of Zion, and is to the honour of the gospel-church, that there God is served and worshipped with rejoicing; his work is done, and done cheerfully; see lviii. 25. All my springs are in thee, O Zion: so God says; he has deposited treasures of grace in his holy ordinances, there are the springs from which those streams take rise, which make glad the city of our God, xlv. 4. So the poet says, reckoning the springs, from which his dry soul may spring up to an inward, sanctifying, in the word and ordinances, and in the communion of saints; the springs of the joy of a carnal worldling lie in wealth and pleasure, but the springs of the joy of a gracious soul lie in the word of God and prayer. Christ is the true Temple; all these springs are in him, and from him all our streams flow; it pleased the Father, and all believers are well pleased with it too, that in him should all fulness dwell.

PSALM LXXXVIII.

This psalm is a lamentation; one of the most melancholy of all the psalms; and it does not conclude, as usually the melancholy psalms do, with the least intimation of comfort or joy but, from first to last, it is mourning and woe. It is not upon a public account that the psalmist here complains, (here is no mention of the afflictions of the church,) but only upon a personal account, especially trouble of mind, and the grief impressed upon his spirits, both by his outward afflictions, and by the remembrance of his sins, and the fear of God's wrath. It is reconciling to the psalmist's soul, to think of this. It is well when our fears are thus turned into the right channel, and we take occasion from our worldly grievances to sorrow after a godly sort. In this psalm, we have, I. The description of the spirit that the psalmist was in, v. 3—6. II. The wrath of God, which was the cause of that pressure, v. 7. 15. 417. III. The wickedness of his friends, v. 8. 18. IV. The application he made to God by prayer, v. 1, 2, 9, 13. V. His humble expostulations and pleadings with God, v. 10, 12, 14. Those who are in trouble of mind may sing this psalm feelingly; those that are not ought to sing it thankfully, blessing God that it is not their case.

A song or psalm for the sons of Korah. To the chief musician upon Mahalath Leannoth, Maschil of Heman the Ezravite.

1. LORD of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee. 2. Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry; 3. For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh unto the grave. 4. I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man that hath no strength: 5. Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand. 6. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. 7. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Selah. 8. Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; thou hast made me an abomination unto them: I am shut up, and I cannot come forth. 9. Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction: LORD, I have called daily upon thee; I have stretched out my hands unto thee.

It should seem, by the titles of this and the following psalm, that Heman was the penman of the one, and Ethan of the other. There were two of these names, who were sons of Zerah the son of Judah, 1 Chron. ii. 4, 6. There were two others famed for wisdom, (1 Kings iv. 31.) where, to magnify Solomon's wisdom, he is said to be wiser than Heman and Ethan. Whether the Heman and Ethan, who were Levites and precentors in the songs of Zion, were the same, we are not sure, nor of which of these, nor whether any of these, were the penmen of these psalms; there was a Heman that was one of the chief singers, who is called the king's seer or prophet, in the words of God; (1 Chron. xxv. 5.) it is probable that this is he, and that we could see no comfort for himself, an instructor and comforter of others, and yet himself putting comfort away from him.

The very first words of the psalm are the only words of comfort and support in all the psalm. There is nothing about him but clouds and darkness; but, before he begins his complaint, he calls God the God of his salvation, which intimates, both that he looked for salvation, and as things were, and that he looked up to God for the salvation, and depended upon him to be the Author of it.

Now here we have the psalmist,

1. A man of prayer, one that gave himself to prayer at all times, but especially now that he was in affliction: for is any afflicted? Let him pray. It is his comfort, that he had prayed, it is his complaint, that, notwithstanding his prayer, he was still in affliction. He was, (v. 1.) very earnest in prayer; I have cried unto thee, (v. 1.) and have stretched out my hands unto thee, (v. 9.) as one that would take hold on thee, and even catch at the mercy, with a holy fear of coming short and missing of it. (2.) He was very frequent and constant in prayer; I have called upon thee daily, (v. 9.) pray, day and night, v. 1. For thus men ought always to pray, and not to faint; God's own elect cry day and night to him, not only morning and evening, beginning every day and every night with prayer, but
spending the day and night in prayer. This is indeed praying always; and then we shall speed in prayer, when we continue in prayer. (3.) He directed his prayer to God, and from him expected and desired an answer; (v. 2.) "Let my prayer come before thee, to be accepted of thee, not before men, to be seen of them, as the Pharisees' prayers." He does not desire that men should hear them, but, "Lord, incline thou thine ear unto my cry, for to that I refer myself, give what answer to it thou pleasest."

2. He was a man of sorrows, and therefore some make him, in this psalm, a type of Christ, whose complaints on the cross, and sometimes before, were much to the same purport with this psalm. He cries out, (v. 3.) "My soul is full of troubles;" so Christ said, "Now is my soul troubled; and, in his agony, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, like the psalmist's here, even unto death, for he says, My life draws nigh unto the grave." Heman was a very wise man, and a good man, a man of God, and a singer too, and one may therefore suppose him to be a man of a cheerful spirit, and yet now a man of sorrowful spirit, troubled in mind, and upon the brink of despair. Inward trouble is the sorest trouble, and that which, sometimes, the best of God's saints and servants have been severely exercised with. The spirit of man, of the greatest of men, will not always sustain the infirmity, but will droop and sink under it; who then can bear a wounded spirit?

3. He looked upon himself as a dying man, whose heart was ready to break with sorrow; (v. 3.) "Free among the dead, one of that ghastly corporation; like the slain that lie in the grave, whose rotting and perishing nobody takes notice of, or is concerned for; nay, whom thou rememberest no more, to protect or provide for the dead bodies, but they become an easy prey to corruption and the worms, they are cut off from thy hand, which was once employed in supporting them, and reaching out to them; but now there is no more occasion for it, they are cut off from it, and cut off by it;" (for God will not stretch out his hand to the grave, Job xxx. 24.) "thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, as low as possible, my condition low, my spirits low, in darkness, in the deeps, (v. 6.) sinking, and seeing no way open of escape, brought to the last extremity, and ready to give up all for gone." Thus greatly may good men be afflicted, and such dismal apprehensions may there be concerning their afflictions, and such dark conclusions may their sometimes be ready to make concerning the issue of them, through the power of melancholy and the weakness of faith.

4. He complained most of God's displeasure against him, which infused the wormwood and the gall into the affliction and the misery; (v. 7.) Thy wrath lies hard upon me; could he have discerned the favour and love of God in any sentence, it had lain light upon him; but it lay hard, very hard, upon him, so that he was ready to sink and faint under it. The impressions of this wrath upon his spirits, were God's waves with which he afflicted him, which rolled upon him, one on the neck of another, so that he scarcely recovered from one dark thought, before he was oppressed with another; these waves beat against him with noise and fury; not some, but all, of God's waves, doubtless with afflicting him, and bearing him down. Even the children of God, love may sometimes apprehend themselves children of wrath, and no outward trouble can lie so hard upon them as that apprehension.

5. It added to this affliction, that his friends deserted him, and made themselves strange to him. When we are in trouble, it is some comfort to have those about us, that love us and sympathize with us, but this good man had none such; which gives him occasion not to accuse them, or charge them with treachery, ingratitude, and inhumanity, but to complain to God, with an eye to his hand in this part of the affliction; (v. 8.) "They have put away mine acquaintance far from me. Providence had removed them, or rendered them incapable of being serviceable to him, or alienated their affections from him, for every creature is that to us (and no more) that God makes it to be; if our old acquaintance be shy of us, and those we expect kindness from prove unkind, we must bear that with the same patient submission to the divine will that we do other afflictions, Job xix. 13. Nay, his friends were not only strange to him, but even hated him, because he was poor and in distress; Thou hast made me an abomination to them; they are not only shy of me, but sick of me, and I am looked upon by them, not only with contempt, but with abhorrence." Let none think it strange concerning such a trial as this, when Heman, who was so famed for wisdom, was yet, when the world frowned upon him, neglected, as a vessel in which is no pleasure.

6. Lastly, He looked upon his case as helpless and deplorable; "I am shut up, and I cannot come forth, a close prisoner, under the arrests of divine wrath, and no way open of escape." He therefore lies down and sinks under his troubles, because he sees not any probability of getting out of them. For thus he means himself; (v. 9.) Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction; sometimes giving vent to grief by weeping gives some ease to a troubled spirit. Yet weeping must not hinder praying; we must sow in tears, My eye mourneth, but I cry unto thee daily; let prayers and tears go together, and they shall be accepted together; I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears.

10. Wilt thou show wonders to the dead? shalt the dead arise and praise thee? Selah.

11. Shalt thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction?

12. Shalt thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? 13. But unto thee have I cried, O Lord; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee. 14. Lord, why easiest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me? 15. I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up; while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. 16. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off. 17. They came round about me daily like water, they compassed me about together. 18. Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.

In these verses, I. The psalmist expostulates with God concerning the present deplorable condition he was in; (v. 10.-12.) "Wilt thou do a miraculous work to the dead, and raise them to life gain? Shall those that are dead and buried rise up to praise thee? No, they leave it to their children to rise up in their rooms to praise God, not to force what they should do it; and wherefore should they rise? Wherefore should they live, but to praise God? The life we are born to at first, and the life we hope to rise to at last, must thus be spent. But shall thy loving-kindness to thy people be declared in the grave, either by those, or to those, that lie buried there? And thy faithfulness to thy promise, shall that be told in destruction;
shall they wonders be wrought in the dark, or known there; and thy righteousness in the grave, which is the land of forgetfulness, where men remember nothing, nor are themselves remembered? Departed souls may indeed know God's wonders, and declare his faithfulness, justice, and loving-kindness, if their eyes can furnish comfort in comfort, nor return them in praise.

Now we will not suppose these expostulations to be the language of despair, as if he thought God could not help him, or would not, much less do they be- speak any disbelieve of the resurrection of the dead at the last day; but he thus pleads with God for speedy relief; "Lord, thou art good, thou art faithful, thou art righteous; these attributes of thine will be made known in my deliverance, but, if it be not hastened, it will come too late; for I shall be dead, and past relief, dead, and not capable of receiving any comfort, very shortly." Job often pleaded this, Job vii. 8.—x. 21.

II. He resolves to continue instant in prayer, and the more so because the deliverance was deferred; (v. 13.) "Unto thee have I cried many a time, and found comfort in it, and therefore I will continue to do so; in the morning shall my prayer be made known to the Lord." Note, Though our prayers be not answered immediately, yet we must not therefore give over praying, because the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and not lie. God therefore delays the answer, that he may try our patience and perseverance in prayer. He resolves to seek God early, in the morning, when his spirits were lively, and before the business of the day began to crowd in; in the morning, after he had been tossed with cares, and sorrowful thoughts in the silence and solitude of the night; My prayer shall prevent thee. Not as if he could wake sooner to pray, than God to hear and answer, for He neither slumbers nor sleeps; but it intimates that he would be up earlier than ordinary to pray; would prevent, that is, go before his usual hour of prayer. The greater our afflictions are, the more solicitous and serious we should be in prayer. "My prayer shall present itself before thee, and I will betimes rise with thee, and shall not stay for the encouragement of the beginning of mercy, but reach out towards it with faith and expectation, even before the day dawns." God often prevents our prayers and expectations with his mercies, let us prevent his mercies with our prayers and expectations.

III. He sets down what he will say to God in prayer.

1. He will humbly reason with God concerning the abject afflicted condition he was now in; (v. 14.) "Lord, why castest thou off my soul? What is it that provokes thee to treat me as one abandoned? Show me wherefore thou contendest with me." He speaks it with wonder that God should cast off an old servant; should cast off one that was resolved not to cast him off; "No wonder men cast me off; but, Lord, why dost thou, whose gifts and callings are without repentance?" He speaks as one angry at me, that either hast no favour for me, or will not let me know it. Nothing grieves a child of God so much as God's hiding his face from him, nor is there anything he so much dreads as God's casting off his soul. If the sun be clouded, that darkens the earth; but if the sun should abandon the earth, and quite cast it off, what a dungeon would it be?

2. He will humbly repeat the same complaints he had made before, until God have mercy on him. Two things he represents to God as his grievances. (1.) That God was a Terror to him; I suffer thy terrors, v. 15. He had continual frightful apprehensions of the wrath of God against him for his sins, and the consequences of that wrath. It terrified him to think of God, and of falling into his hands, appearing before him to receive his doom from him. He sweat and trembled at the apprehension of God's displeasure against him, and the terror of his judgments. Even those that are designed for God's favours may yet, for a time, suffer his terrors. The spirit of adoption is first a spirit of bondage to fear. Poor Job complains of the terrors of God setting themselves in array against him, Job vi. 4. The psalmist here explains himself, and tells us what he means by God's terrors, even his fierce wrath. Let us see what dreadful impressions those terrors made upon him, and how deep they went. (2.) He had shrunk away his life; "I am so afflicted with them, that I am ready to die, and" (as the word is) "to give up the ghost. Thy terrors have cut me off," v. 16. What is hell, that external excision, by which damned sinners are for ever cut off from God and all happiness, but God's terrors fastening and praying upon their guilty consciences? [2.] They had almost taken away the use of his reason; When I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted; so that his contemplations and thoughts of the terrors of the Lord had driven him away many, and upon some good men, who have thereby been put quite out of the possession of their own souls; a most pitious case, and which ought to be looked upon with great compassion.

This had continued long; From my youth up, I suffer thy terrors; he had been from his childhood afflicted with melancholy, and trained up in sorrow under the discipline of that school. If we begin our days with trouble, and the days of our mourning have been prolonged a great while, let us not think it strange, but let tribulation work patience. It is observable that Heman, who became eminently wise and good, was afflicted and ready to die, and suffered God's terrors, from his youth up; thus many have found it was good for them to bear the yoke in their youth, that sorrow has been much better for them than laughter would have been, and that, being much afflicted, and often ready to die, when they were young, they have, by the grace of God, got such an habitual seriousness, and weanedness from the world, as have been of great use to them all their days. Sometimes those whom God designs for eminent services, are prepared for them by exercises of this kind. [4.] His affliction was now extreme, and worse than ever. God's terrors now came round about him, so that from all sides he was assaulted with variety of troubles, and he had no comfortable gage from any point of the compass. They brake in upon him together like an inundation of water; and this daily, and all the day; so that he had no rest, no respite, not the least breathing time, no lucid intervals, nor any gleam of hope. Such was the calamitous state of a very wise and good man; he was so surrounded with terrors, that he could find no place of shelter, nor lie any where under the wind.

(2.) That no friend had in the world was a comfort to him; (v. 18.) Lover and friend hast thou not far from me; some are dead, others at a distance, and perhaps many unkind. Next to the comforts of religion are those of friendship and society; therefore to be friendless is (as to this life) almost to be comfortless; and to those who have had friends, but have lost them, the calamity is the more grievous; with this the psalmist shows his complaint, as if this was the reason he had so completely his friends, and made the finishing stroke to this melancholy piece. If our friends are put far from us by scattering providences, nay, if by death our acquaintance are removed into darkness, we have reason to look upon it as a sore affliction, but must acknowledge and submit to the hand of God in it.
PSALM LXXXIX.

Many psalms that begin with complaint and prayer, end with joy and praise; but this begins with joy and praise, and ends with sad complaints and petitions; for the psalmist first recounts God's former favours, and then with the consideration of them aggravates the present grievances. It is uncertain when it was penned; only, in general, that it was at a time when the house of David was woefully eclipsed; some think it was at the time of the captivity of Babylon, when king Zedekiah was insulted over, and abused, by Nebuchadnezzar, and then they make the title to signify that the psalm was committed by the pen of a song of Ethan the son of Zerah, called Maschil; others suppose it to be penned by Ethan, who is mentioned in the story of Solomon, who, outliving that glorious prince, but exceeding his father, built new houses to the house of David in the next reign by the revolt of the ten tribes. 1. The psalmist, in the joyful, pleasant, part of the psalm, gives glory to God, and takes comfort to himself and his friends. This he does more briefly, more briefly also mercy speaks) (v. v. 4.) but more largely in the following verses, wherein, 1. He adores the glory and perfection of God, v. 5 . . 14. 2. He pleases himself in the happiness of those that are admitted into communion with him, v. 15 . . 18. 3. He builds all his hope upon God's covenant with David, as a type of Christ, v. 19 . . 37. II. In the melancholy part of the psalm, he laments the calamitous state of the family, v. 38 . . 49. He expostulates with God upon it, (v. 46 . . 49.) and then concludes with prayer for redress, v. 50, 51. In singing this psalm, we must have high thoughts of God, a lively faith in his covenant with the Redeemer, and a sympathy with the afflicted parts of the church.

Maschil of Ethan the Ezrathite.

1. I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.

2. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.

3. I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, 4. Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.

The psalmist has a very sad complaint to make of the deplorable condition of the family of David at this time; and yet, he begins and ends the psalm with a song of praise; for we must, in every thing, in every state, give thanks; thus we must glorify the Lord in the fire. We think, when we are in trouble, that we get ease by complaining; but we do more, we get joy, by praising. Let our complaints, therefore, be turned into thankings; and in these verses we find that which will be matter of praise and thanksgiving for us in the worst of times, whether upon publick occasions or private.

1. However it be, the everlasting God is good and true, v. 1. Though we may find it hard to reconcile present dark providences with the goodness and truth of God, yet we must abide by this principle, That God's mercies are inexhaustible, and his truth inviolable; and these must be the matter of our joy and praise; "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever;" singing a praising song to God's honor, a pleasant song for my own solace, and Maschil, an instructing song, for the edification of others." We may be for ever singing God's mercies, and yet the subject will not be drawn dry. We must sing of God's mercies as long as we live, train up others to sing of them when we are gone, and hope to be singing of them in heaven, world without end; and this is singing of the mercies of the Lord for ever. With my mouth, and with my pen, (for I make known thy faithfulness to all generations; assuring posterity from my own observation and experience, that God is true to every word that he has spoken, that they may learn to put their trust in God, lxxviii. 6.

2. However it be, the everlasting covenant is firm and sure, v. 2 . . 4. Here we have, (1.) The psalmist's faith and hope; "Things now look black, and threaten the utter expirition of the house of David; but I have said, and I have warrant from the word of God to say it, that mercy shall be built up for ever." As the goodness of God's nature is to be the matter of our song, (v. 1.) so much more the mercy that is built for us in the covenant; it is still increasing, like a house in the building up, and shall continue our rest for ever, like a house built up. It shall be built up for ever; for the everlasting habitations we hope for in the new Jerusalem are of this building. If mercy shall be built for ever, then the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down, shall be raised out of its ruins, and build itself as in the days of old, Amos ix. 11. Therefore mercy shall be built up for ever, because thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens. Though our expectations are, in some particular instances, disappointed, yet God's promises are not disannulled; they are established in the very heavens, that is, in his eternal counsels; they are above the changes of this lower region, and out of the reach of the opposition of hell and earth. The stability of the material heavens is an emblem of the truth of God's word; the heavens may be cloud ed by vapours arising out of the earth, but they can not be touched, they cannot be changed.

(2.) An abstract of the covenant upon which this faith and hope are built; I have said it, says the psalmist, for God hath sworn it, that the heirs of promise might be entirely satisfied of the immutability of his counsel. He brings in God speaking, (v. 3.) over to the comfort of his people, "I have made a covenant, and therefore will make it good." The covenant is made with David, the covenant of royalty is made with him, as the father of his family, and with his seed through him, and for his sake; representing the covenant of grace made with Christ as Head of the church, and with all believers as his spiritual seed. David is here called God's chosen, and his servant; and, as God is not changeable, he can not recede from his people, "I am not unrighteous to cast off one that served him. Two things encourage the psalmist to build his faith on this covenant; [1.] The ratification of it; it was confirmed with an oath; The Lord has sworn, and he will not repent. [2.] The perpetuity of it; the blessings of the covenant were not only secured to David himself, but were entailed on his family; it was promised that his family should continue; Thy seed will I establish for ever, so that David shall not want a son to reign; (Jer. xxxiii. 20, 21.) and that it should continue a royal family; I will build up thy throne to all generations, to all the generations of time. This has its accomplishment only in Christ, of the seed of David, who lives for ever, to whom God has given the throne of his father David, and of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end. Of this covenant the psalmist will return to speak more largely, v. 19, &c.

5. And the heavens shall praise thy works, O Lord; thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints. 6. For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord? 7. God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him. 8. O Lord God
of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?

9. Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.

10. Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain: thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm. 11. The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world, and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them. 12. The north and the south thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name. 13. Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand. 14. Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.

These verses are full of the praises of God. Observe,

I. Where, and by whom, God is to be praised.

1. God is praised by the angels above; The heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord; (v. 5.) that is, “the glorious inhabitants of the upper world continually celebrate thy praises:” Bless the Lord, ye his angels, cii. 20. The works of God are wonders even to them that are best acquainted, and most intimately conversant, with them; the more God’s works are known, the more they are admired and praised. This should make us love heaven, and long to be there, that there we shall have nothing else to do than to praise God and his wonders.

2. God is praised by the assemblies of his saints on earth; (praise waiteth for him in Zion;) and though they fall so far short of the praises of angels, yet God is pleased to take notice of them, and accept of them, and reckons himself honored by them. “Thy faithfulness, and the truth of thy promise, that rock on which the church is built, shall be praised in the congregation of the saints, who owe their all to that faithfulness, and whose constant comfort it is that there is a promise, and that he is faithful who has promised.” It is expected from God’s saints on earth that they praise him; who, if they do not? Let every saint praise him, but especially the congregation of saints, when they come together, let them join in praising God; the more the better, it is the more like heaven. Of the honour done to God by the assembly of the saints, he speaks again; (v. 7.) God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints; saints should assemble for religious worship, that they may publicly own their relation to God, and may stir up one another to give honour to him, and, in keeping of the worship, may maintain the communion of saints. In religious assemblies, God has promised the presence of his grace, but we must also, in them, have an eye to his glorious presence, that the familiarity we are admitted to may not breed the least contempt; for he is terrible in his holy places, and therefore greatly to be feared. A holy awe of God must fall upon us, and fill us, in all our approaches to God, even in the midst of our religious services, we shall be added by the solemnity of public assemblies. God must be had in reverence of all that are about him, that attend him continually as his servants, or approach him upon any particular errand. See Lev. x. 3. Those only serve God acceptably who serve him with reverence and godly fear, Heb. xii. 28.

11. What it is to praise God; it is to acknowledge him: to be a Being of unparalleled perfection, such a one that there is none like him, nor any to be compared with him, v. 6. If there be any beings that can pretend to vie with God, surely they must be found among the angels; but they are infinitely short of him; Who in the heaven can be compared with the Lord, so as to challenge any share of the reverence and adoration which are due to him only, or to set up in rivalry with him for the homage of the children of men? They are sons of the mighty, but which of them can be likened unto the Lord? Nobles are princes’ peers; some parity there is between them, but none between God and the angels; they are not their peers. To whom shall ye liken me, or shall I be equal saith the Holy One. Isa. xl. 25. This is insisted on again, (v. 8.) Who is a strong Lord like unto thee? No angel, no curiously potentate, whatsoever, is comparable to God, or has an arm like him, or can thunder with a voice like him. Thy faithfulness is round about thee; that is, “thine angels, who are round about thee, attending thee with their praises, and ready to go on thine errands, are all faithful.” Or rather, “In every thing thou dostst, willst, or hast, didst, or art to do, to approve thyself faithful to thy word, above whatever prince or potentate was.” Among men, it is too often found that those who are most able to break their word are least careful to keep it; but God is both strong and faithful; he can do every thing, and yet will never do an unjust thing.

II. What we ought, in our praises, to give God the glory of. Several things are here mentioned.

1. The command God has of the most uncontrollable creatures; (v. 9.) Thou rulest the raging of the sea, than which nothing is more frightful or threatening, nor more out of the power of man to give check to; it can swell no higher, roll no further, beat no harder, continue no longer, nor do any more hurt, than God suffers it. “When the waves thereof arise, thou canst immediately, I would think, subdue them asleep, still them, and make them quiet, and turn the storm into a calm.” This coming in here can act of omnipotence, what manner of man, then, was the Lord Jesus, whom the winds and seas obeyed?

2. The victories God has obtained over the enemies of his church; his ruling the raging of the sea, and quelling its billows, was an emblem of this; (v. 10.) Thou hast broken Rahab; many a proud enemy, so it signifies; Egypt in particular, which is sometimes called Rahab; broken it in pieces, as it were, that it should rise no more, and make head again.” The head being broken, thou hast scattered the remainder with the arm of thy strength.” God has more ways than one to deal with his and his church’s enemies; we think he should slay them immediately, but sometimes he scatters them, that he may send them abroad to be monuments of his justice, lx. 11. The remembrance of the breaking of Egypt in pieces is a comfort to the church, in reference to the present power of Babylon; for God is still the same.”

3. The incontestable property he has in all the creatures of the upper and lower world; (v. 11, 12.) “Men are honoured for their large possessions; but the heavens are thine, O Lord, the earth also is thine; therefore we praise thee, therefore we trust in thee, therefore we will not fear what man can do against us. The world and the fulness thereof, all the riches contained in it, all the inhabitants of it, both high and low, are thy property, for thou hast created them.” And the Foudam may justly claim to be the Owner. He specifies, (1.) The remotest parts of the world, the north and south, the countries that lie under the two poles, which are uninhabited and little known; “Thou hast created them, and therefore knowest them, takest care of them, and hast tributes of praise from them.” The north is said to be hung over
the empty places; yet what fulness there is there.

God is the owner of it. (2.) The highest parts of the world; he mentions the two highest hills in Canaan; " Tabor and Hermon," (one lying to the west, the other to the east.) " these shall rejoice in thy name, for they are under the care of thy providence, and they produce offerings for thine altar."

The little hills are said to rejoice in their own fulness, because they are considered as opposed to the higher mountain in Galilee, on the top of which Christ was transfigured; and then, indeed, it might be said to rejoice in that voice which was there heard, This is my beloved Son.

4. The power and justice, the mercy and truth, with which he governs the world, and rules in the affairs of the children of men, v. 13, 14. (1.) God is able to do every thing; for he is the Lord God Almighty. His arm, his hand, is mighty and strong, to save his people, and to destroy his and their enemies; none can either resist the force, or bear the weight, of his mighty hand. High is his right hand, to reach the highest, even those that set their nets among the stars; (Amos ix. 2, 3. Obad. iv.) his right hand is exalted in what he has done, for in thousands of instances he has signalized his power, cxviii. 16. (2.) He never did, nor ever will do, any thing that is either unjust or unwise: for righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. None of all his dictates or decrees ever varied from the rules of equity and wisdom, nor could ever any charge God with unrighteousness or folly. Justice and judgment are the preparing of his throne, (so some,) the establishment of it, so others; the preparations for his government in his counsels from eternity, and the establishment of it in its consequences to eternity, are all justice and judgment.

v. 3. He always does that which is kind to his people, and consonant to the word which he has spoken; "Mercy and truth shall go before thy face, to prepare thy way, as harbinger to make room for thee; mercy in promising, truth in performing; truth in being as good as thy word, mercy in being better." How praiseworthy are these in great men, much more in the great God, in whom they are in perfection!

15. Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. 16. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. 17. For thou art the glory of their strength; and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted. 18. For the Lord is our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our King.

The psalmist, having largely showed the blessedness of the God of Israel, here shows the blessedness of the Israel of God. As there is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, so, happy art thou, O Israel, there is none like unto thee, O people, especially as a type of the gospel-Israel, consisting of all true believers, whose happiness is here described.

1. Glorious discoveries are made to them, and glad tidings of good brought to them; they hear, they know, the joyful sound, v. 15. This may allude, (1.) To the shout of a victorious army, the shout of a king, Numb. xxix. 21. Israel has the tokens of God's presence with them in their wars; the sound of the going in the top of the mulberry tree, Mic. vii. 15. They were thus clothed with the splendor of the Lord, Zech. vi. 11. and they often returned making the earth ring with their songs of triumph; these were joyful sounds. It may allude, (2.) To the sound that was made over the sacrifices, and on the solemn feast-day, lxxxi. 1–3. This was the happiness of Israel, that they had among them the free and open profession of God's holy religion, and abundance of joy in their sacrifices. It may allude, (3.) To the sound of the jubilee-trumpet; a joyful sound it was to servants and debtors, to whom it proclaimed release. The gospel is indeed a joyful sound; a sound of victory, of the things to come, Ps. lxv. 18, in which the abundant fulness of the world, which they shall possess in abundance of rains, blessed are the people that hear it, and know it, and bid it welcome.

2. Special tokens of God's favour are granted them; They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance; they shall govern themselves by thy conduct, guided by thine eye; and they shall delight themselves in thy consolations; they shall have the favour of God, they shall know that they have it, and it shall be continual matter of joy and rejoicing to them; they shall go through all the exercises of a holy life under the powerful influences of God's loving-kindness, which shall make their duty pleasant to them, and make them sincere in it, aiming at this, as their end, to be accepted of the Lord. We then walk in the light of the Lord when we fetch all our comforts from God's favour, and are very careful to keep ourselves in his love.

The saying, They shall be exalted, is a great argument for a religion that wants matter for joy; blesses God's people for, in his view of them, hereby he has made himself known, if it be not their own fault, they shall rejoice all the day. They that rejoice in Christ Jesus, and make God their exceeding joy, have enough to balance their grievances, and silence their griefs; and therefore their joy is still, (1 John i. 4.) and constant; it is their duty to rejoice evermore.

Their relation to God is their honour and dignity; they are happy, for they are high. Surely in the Lord, in the Lord Christ, they have righteousness and strength, and so are recommended by him to the divine acceptance; and therefore in him shall all the seed of Israel glory, Isa. xlvi. 24, 25. So it is here, v. 16, 17. (1.) "In thy righteousness shall they be exalted, and not in any righteousness of their own." We are exalted out of danger, and into honour, purely by the righteousness of Christ, which we have, both for dignity and for display.

(2.) "Thou art the glory of their strength," that is, "thou art their Strength, and it is their glory that thou art so, and what they glory in." Thanks be to God, who always causes us to triumph. (3.) "In thy favour, which, through Christ, we hope for, our horn shall be exalted;" the horn denotes beauty, plente, and power; these they have who are made accepted in the Beloved. What greater preference can be more capable of in this world than to be God's favourites?

5. Their relation to God is their protection and safety; (v. 18.) "For our shield is of the Lord," so the margin; "and our king is from the Holy One of Israel." If God be our Ruler, he will be our Defender; and who is he, then, that can harm us? It was the happiness of Israel that God himself had the erecting of their bulwarks, and the calling of them a holy nation; so, as some take it; or rather, that he was himself a Wall of fire round about them, and, as a Holy One, the Author and Centre of their holy religion; he was their King, and so their Glory in the midst of them. Christ is the Holy One of Israel, that Holy Thing; and in nothing was that peculiar people more blessed than in this, that He was born King of the Jews. New this account of the blessedness of God's Israel comes in here as that to which it was hard to reconcile their present calamitous state.

19. Then thou spakest in vision to thy Holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen
of the people. 20. I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him; 21. With whom my hand shall be established; mine arm also shall strengthen him. 22. The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him. 23. And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. 24. But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him; and in my name shall his horn be exalted. 25. I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers. 26. He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation. 27. Also I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth. 28. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. 29. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. 30. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; 31. If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; 32. Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. 33. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. 34. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. 35. Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. 36. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. 37. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.

The covenant God made with David and his seed was mentioned before; (v. 3, 4.) but in these verses it is enlarged upon, and pleaded with God, for favour to the royal family, now almost sunk and ruined; yet certainly it looks at Christ, and has its accomplishments in him much more than in David; nay, some passages here are scarcely applicable at all to David, but must be understood of Christ only, who is therefore called David's King; (Hos. iii. 5.) and very great and precious promises they are which are here made to the Redeemer, which are strong foundations for the faith and hope of the redeemed to build upon. The comforts of our redemption flow from the covenant of redemption, all our springs are in that, Isa. lv. 3. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David, Acts xiii. 34. Now here we have an account of these sure mercies. Observe, I. What assurance we have of the truth of the promise, which may encourage us to build upon it. We are here told, 1. How it was spoken; (v. 19.) Thou speakest in vision to thy Holy One. God's promise to David, which is especially referred to here, was spoken in vision to Nathan the prophet, 2 Sam. vii. 12.-17. Then when the Holy One of Israel and their King, (v. 18.) then he appointed David to be his viceroy. But to all the prophets, those holy ones, he speaks in vision concerning Christ, and to him himself especially, who had lain in his bosom from eternity, and was made perfectly con- quainted with the whole design of redemption, Mat. xi. 27. 2. How it was sworn to, and ratified. (35.) Once have I sworn by my Holiness, that darlings of duty. In swearing by his Holiness, he swears by himself, for he will, as soon cease to be as he otherwise than holy. His swearing being done, he does not need to swear again, as David did; (1 Sam. xx. 17.) for his word and oath are two immutable things. As Christ was made a Priest, so he was made a King, by an oath; (Heb. vii. 21.) for his kingdom and priesthood are both unchangeable.

II. The choice made of the person to whom the promise is given, v. 19, 20. David was a king of God's own choosing, so is Christ, and the before both are called God's kings, Ps. ii. 6. David was greater than a man of courage, and fit for business; he was chosen out of the people; not out of the princes, but the shepherd's God found him out, exalted him, and laid help upon him, and ordered Samuel to anoint him. But this is especially to be applied to Christ; 1. He is one that is mighty, every way qualified for the great work he was to undertake, able to save to the uttermost; mighty in strength for he is the Son of God; mighty in love, for he is able experimentally to compassion those that are tempted. He is the mighty God, Isa. ix. 6. He is chosen out of the people, one of us, bone of our bone, that takes part with us of flesh and blood; being ordained for men, he is taken from among men, that his terror might not make us afraid. 3. God has found him. He is a Saviour of God's own providing, for the salvation, from first to last, is purely the Lord's doing; he has found the ransom, Job xxxiii. 24. We could never have found a person fit to undertake this great work, Rev. v. 3, 4. 4. God has laid help on him; not only helped him, but treasured up help in him for us; laid it as a charge upon him to help fallen man up again, to help the chosen remnant to heaven; In me is thy help, Is. xii. 9. 5. He has exalted him, by constituting him the Prophet, Priest, and King, of his church; clothing him with power, raising him from the dead, and setting him at his own right hand. Whom God chooses and uses he will exalt. 6. He has anointed him, has qualified him for his office, and so confirmed him in it, by giving him the Spirit, not by measure, but without measure, infinitely above his fellows. He is called Messiah, or Christ, the Anointed. 7. All this he designed him to be his own servant, for the accomplishing of his eternal purpose, and the advancement of the interest of his kingdom among men.

III. The promises made to this chosen one, to David in the type, and the Son of David in the antitype, in which not only gracious, but glorious, things are spoken of him. 1. With reference to himself, as king and God's servant, and what makes for him, makes for all his loving subjects; this is here promised, (1.) That God would stand by him and strengthen him in his undertaking; (v. 19.) With him my hand not only shall be, but shall be exalted upon the promise; shall be so established, that he shall by it be established and confirmed in all his offices, so that none of them shall be undermined and overthrown, though by the man of sin they shall all be encroached and fought against. Christ had a great deal of work to do, and hard usage to go through, but He that gave him commission gave him forces sufficient for the execution of his commission; Mine arm also shall strengthen my people to break through and bear up under all his difficulties. No good work can miscarry in the hand of those whom God himself undertakes to strengthen. (2.) That he should be victorious over his enemies, that they should not encroach upon him;
(v. 22.) The son of wickedness shall not exalt upon him, nor afflict him. He that at first brake the peace would set himself against him that undertook to make peace, and do what he could to blast his design; but he could only reach to bruise his heel, further he could not exact upon him or afflict him. Christ became a Surety for our debt, and thereby Satan and death thought to have gained advantage against him; but he satisfied the deman-This is a comment upon these words in Nathan's message concerning Solomon: (for he also was a type of Christ as well as David:) I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son, (2 Sam. vii. 14.) and the relation shall be owned on both sides. (1.) He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father. It is probable that Solomon did so; but we are sure Christ did so, in the days of his flesh, when he offered up strong cries to God, and called him holy Father, (Mark xi. 1.) and therefore it was necessary to declare to ourselves to him as our Father in heaven. Christ, in his agony, cried unto God, Thou art my Father, (Matt. xxvi. 39, 42.) O my Father, and, upon the cross, Father, forgive them; Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. He looked upon him likewise as his God, and therefore he perfectly obeyed him, and submitted to his will in his whole undertaking; (he is my God and your God, John xxi. 17.) and as Rock of his side, who would bear him up, and bear him out, in his undertaking, and make him more than a Conqueror, even a complete Saviour, and therefore, with an undaunted resolution, he endured the cross, despising the shame, for he knew he should be both justified and glorified. (2.) I will make him my First-born. I see not how this can be applied to David; it is Christ's prerogative to be the First-born of every creature, and, as such, the Heir of all things, Col. i. 15. Heb. i. 2, 6. When all power was delivered to Christ, (Rev. xxi. 5.) then all things were delivered unto him by the Father, then God made him his First-born, and far higher, more great and honourable, than the kings of the earth, for he is the King of kings, angels, authori-While with his throne; now this will be differently understood, according as we apply it to Christ or David.

(1.) If we apply it to David, by his seed we are to understand his successors, Solomon and the following kings of Judah, who descended from the loins of David; it is supposed that they might degenerate, and not walk in the spirit and steps of the first-born, but in their own; and therefore God did not expect to come under divine rebukes, such as the house of David was at this time under, v. 38. But let this encourage them, that, though they were corrected, they should not be abandoned or disinherit-This refers to that part of Nathan's message, (2 Sam. vii. 14, 15.) If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him, but my mercy shall not depart from him. Thus far David's seed and throne did endure for ever, that, notwithstanding the wick-This kingdom extended itself to the great sea, and the Red sea, to the river of Egypt, and the river Eu-phrates. But it is in the kingdom of the Messiah that this has its full accomplishment, and shall have more and more, when the kingdoms of this world shall become as the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ, (Rev. xi. 15.) and the staves shall be for his kingdom. (5.) That he should own God as his Father, and Christ would own him as his Son, his First-born, v. 26, 27. This is a comment upon these words in Nathan's message concerning Solomon: (for he also was a type of Christ as well as David:) I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son, (2 Sam. vii. 14.) and the relation shall be owned on both sides. (1.) He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father. It is probable that Solomon did so; but we are sure Christ did so, in the days of his flesh, when he offered up strong cries to God, and called him holy Father, (Mark xi. 1.) and therefore it was necessary to declare to ourselves to him as our Father in heaven. Christ, in his agony, cried unto God, Thou art my Father, (Matt. xxvi. 39, 42.) O my Father, and, upon the cross, Father, forgive them; Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. He looked upon him likewise as his God, and therefore he perfectly obeyed him, and submitted to his will in his whole undertaking; (he is my God and your God, John xxi. 17.) and as Rock of his side, who would bear him up, and bear him out, in his undertaking, and make him more than a Conqueror, even a complete Saviour, and therefore, with an undaunted resolution, he endured the cross, despising the shame, for he knew he should be both justified and glorified. (2.) I will make him my First-born. I see not how this can be applied to David; it is Christ's prerogative to be the First-born of every creature, and, as such, the Heir of all things, Col. i. 15. Heb. i. 2, 6. When all power was delivered to Christ, (Rev. xxi. 5.) then all things were delivered unto him by the Father, then God made him his First-born, and far higher, more great and honourable, than the kings of the earth, for he is the King of kings, angels, authori- and the staves shall be for his kingdom. (5.) That he should own God as his Father, and Christ would own him as his Son, his First-born, v. 26,
tual seed, the heirs of the righteousness of faith, Rom. xi. 7.

(2.) If we apply it to Christ, by his seed we are to understand his subjects, all believers, his spiritual seed, the children which God has given him, Heb. ii. 13. This is that seed which shall be made to endure for ever, and his throne in the midst of them, in the church, in the heart, as the days of heaven. To the end Christ shall be king in the world to come and honour him; He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days. This holy seed shall endure for ever in a glorified state, when time and days shall be no more; and thus Christ's throne and kingdom shall be perpetuated; the kingdom of his grace shall continue through all the ages of time, and the kingdom of his glory to the endless ages of eternity.

[1.] The continuance of Christ's kingdom is here made doubtful by the sins and afflictions of his subjects; their iniquities and calamities threaten the ruin of it. This case is here put, that we may not be offended when it comes to be a case in fact, but that we may reconcile it with the stability of the covenant, and be assured of that notwithstanding.

First, It is here supposed that there will be much amiss in the subjects of Christ's kingdom. His children may forsake God's laws, (v. 30.) by omissions, and thus violate the statutes, (v. 31.) by commissions. There are spots, which are the spots of God's children, Deut. xxxii. 5. Many corruptions there are in the bowels of the church, as well as in the hearts of those who are members of it, and these corruptions break out.

Secondly, They are here told that they must smart for it; (v. 32.) I will visit their transgression with a rod, their transgression sooner than that of others; you only have I known, says the Lord; I will visit them; Amos vii. 2. Their being related to Christ, shall not excuse them from being called to an account. But observe what affliction is to God's people, 1. It is but a rod, but not an axe, not a sword; it is for correction, not for destruction. This denotes gentleness in the affliction, it is the rod of men, such a rod as men use in correcting their children; and it denotes a design of good in it by the affliction, such a rod as yields the peacable fruit of correction.

2. It is in the hand of God; (I will visit them;) he who is wise, and knows what he does, gracious, and will do what is best. 3. It is a rod which they shall never feel the smart of, but when there is great need; If they break my law, then I will visit their transgression with the rod, but not else. Then it is requisite that God's honour be vindicated, and that they be humbled and reduced.

[2.] The continuance of Christ's kingdom is made certain by the inviolable promise and oath of God, notwithstanding all this; (v. 33.) Nevertheless, my kindness will I not totally and finally take from him. First, "Notwithstanding their provocations, yet my covenant shall not be broken." Note, Afflictions are not only consistent with covenant-love, but to the people of God they flow from it. Though David's seed be chastened, it does not follow that they are disinterested; they may be cast down, but they are not cast off. God's favour is continuing to his people. 1. For Christ's sake; in him the mercy is laid up for us, and God says, I will not take it from him; (v. 33.) I will not lie unto David, v. 35. We are unworthy, but he is worthy. 2. For the covenant's sake; My faithfulness shall not fail, my covenant will I not break. It was supposed that they had broken God's statutes, profaned and polluted them, so the word signifies, But, says God, I will not break, I will not profane and pollute, my covenant; it is the same word. That which is said and sworn, is, that God will have a church in the world, as long as sun and moon endure, v. 36, 37. The sun and moon are faithful witnesses in heaven of the wisdom, power, and goodness, of the Creator, and shall continue while time lasts, which are the measurers of; but the seed of Christ shall be established for ever, as lights of the world while the world stands, to shine in it, and when it is at an end, they shall be established lights, shining in the firmament of the Father.

38. But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed. 39. Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant; thou hast profaned his crown, by casting it to the ground. 40. Thou hast broken down all his hedges; thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin. 41. All that pass by the way spoil him; he is a reproach to his neighbours. 42. Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries; thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice. 43. Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword, and not made him to stand in the battle. 44. Thou hast made his glory to cease, and cast his throne down to the ground. 45. The days of his youth hast thou shortened; thou hast covered him with shame. Selah. 46. How long, Lord? wilt thou hide thyself for ever? shall thy wrath burn like fire? 47 Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? 48. What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah. 49. Lord, where are thy former loving-kindnesses, which thou swearest unto David in thy truth? 50. Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants; how I do bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people; 51. Where with thine enemies have reproached, O Lord; wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed. 52. Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen, and amen.

In these verses, we have,

1. A very melancholy complaint of the present deplorable state of David's family, which the psalmist thinks hard to be reconciled to the covenant God made with David. Thou saidst thou wouldest not take away thy loving-kindness, but thou hast cast off. Sometimes, it is no easy thing to reconcile God's providences with his promises, and yet we are sure they are reconcilable, for God's works fulfil his word, and never contradict it.

2. David's heart seems to have lost its interest in God, which was the greatest strength and beauty of it. God had been pleased with his anointed, but now he was wroth with him; (v. 38.) had entered into covenant with the family, but now, for aught he could perceive, he had made void the covenant, not broken some of the articles of it, but cancelled it, v. 39. We misconstrue the runebes of Providence, if we think they make void the covenant. When the great Anointed One, Christ himself, was upon the cross, God seemed to have cast him off, and was wroth with, and yet did not make void his.
covenant with him, for that was established for ever. 

The honour of the house of David was lost, and laid in the dust; Thou hast profaned his crowns, (which was always looked upon as sacred,) by casting it to the ground, to be trampled on, v. 39. Thou hast made his glory to cease, (so uncertain is all earthly glory, and so soon does it wither,) and thou hast cast his throne down to the ground, not only deterred the king, but put a period to the kingdom, v. 44. If it were penned in Rehoboam's time, as it was in the greatest part of the kingdom, five parts of six; if in Zedekiah's time, it was more remarkably true of the poor remainder. Note, Thrones and crowns are uttering things, and are often laid in the dust, but there is a crown of glory reserved for Christ's spiritual seed, which faeth not away. 

3. It was exposed, and made a prey to all the neighbours, who insulted over that ancient and honourable family; (v. 40.) Thou hast broken down all his hedges, all those things that were a defence to them, and particularly that hedge of protection which they thought God's covenant and promise had made about them, and thou hast made even his strong holds a ruin, so that they were rather a reproach to them than any shelter. All that pass by the way shoulh him, (v. 41.) and make an easy prey of him; see lxxx. 12, 13. The enemies talk insolently; He is a reproach to his neighbours, who triumph over his fall from six to one. Nay, every one helps forward the calamity, (v. 42.) "Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries, not only given them power, but inclined them to turn their power this way." If the enemies of the church lift up their hand against it, we must see God setting up their hand, for they could have no power, unless it were given them from above. But when God does permit them to do mischief to his church, it pleases him; "Thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice; and this is for thy glory, that those who hate thee, shall have the pleasure to see the tears and troubles of those that love thee?"

4. It was disabled to help itself; (v. 43.) "Thou hast turned the edge of his sword, and made it blunt, that it cannot do execution as it has done; and (which is worse) thou hast turned the edge of his spirit, and taken off his courage, and hast not made him to stand as he used to do in the battle." The spirit of Rehoboam was a Francis of Assisi; a man of peace, the avoidance of war, makes him, nor can we stand with any strength or resolution, further than God is pleased to uphold us. If men's hearts fail them, it is God that dispirits them, but it is sad with the church, when those cannot stand who should stand up for it. 

5. It was upon the brink of an inglorious exit; (v. 45.) The days of his youth hast thou shortened; it is ready to be cut off, like a young man in the flower of his age. This should intimiate that it was penned in Rehoboam's time, when the house of David was but in the days of its youth, and yet waxed old, and began to decay already. Thus it was covered with shame, and it was turned very much to its reproach, that a family, which, in the first and second reign, looked so great, and made such a figure, should, in the third, dwindle and look so little as the house of David did in Rehoboam's time. But it may be applied to the captivity in Babylon, which, in comparison with that of Jeroboam, was not so ignominious, but in the days of the captivity, the days of the youth of that kingdom. However, the kings then had remarkably the days of their youth shortened, for it was in the days of their youth, when they were about thirty years old, that Jehoiachim and Zedekiah were carried captives to Babylon. 

From all this complaint let us learn, (1.) What work sin makes with families, noble royal families, with families in which religion has been uppermost, when posterity degenerates, it falls into disgrace and iniquity stains their glory. (2. How apt we are to think that the promise of the church in something external, and to think the promise fails, and the covenant is made void, if we be disappointed of that; a mistake which we now are inexcusable if we fall into, since our Master has so expressly told us that his kingdom is not of this world. 

II. A very pathetic expostulation with God upon this. Four things they plead with God for mercy. 

1. The long continuance of the trouble; (v. 46.) For how long wilt thou make us to dwell in captivity? What is this captivity ever? That which grieved them most, was, that God himself, as one displeased, did not appear to them by his prophets to comfort them, did not appear for them by his providences to deliver them, and that he had kept them long in the dark; it seemed an eternal night, when God was withdrawn; Thou hidest thyself for ever. Nay, God not only hid himself from them, but seemed to set himself against them; "Shall thy wrath burn like fire? How long shall it burn? Shall it never be put out? What is hell, but the wrath of God, burning for ever? And is that the lot of thine anointed?"

2. The shortness of life, and the certainty of death; "Lord, let thine anger cease, and return thou, in mercy to us, remembering how short my time is, and how sure the period of my time. Lord, since my life is so transitory, and will, ere long, be at an end, let it not be always miserable, that I should remain all this time, in the midst of hell, without a hope of help, nor of a happy end." Job pleads thus, ch. x. 20, 21. And, probably, the psalmist here urges it in the name of the house of David, and the present prince of that house, the days of whose youth were shortened, v. 45. 

(1.) He pleads the shortness and vanity of life; (v. 47.) Remember how short my time is, how transitory I am, say some; therefore unable to bear the power of thy wrath, and therefore a proper object of thy pity. Wherefore hast thou made all men in vanity? Unto what vanity hast thou created all the sons of Adam? Now, this may be understood either, [1.] As speaking a great truth. If the ancient loving-kindnesses spoken of, (v. 49.) be forgotten, (those relating to another life,) man is indeed made in vain; considering man as mortal, if there were not a future state on the other side, we might be ready to think that man was made in vain, and was in vain endowed with the noble powers and noble endowments. It was not God's will, but the designs, and desires; but God would not make man in vain, therefore, Lord, remember those loving-kindnesses. Or, [2.] As bespeaking a strong temptation that the psalmist was in. It is certain, God has not made all men, nor any man, in vain, Isa. xliv. 18. For, First, If we think that God has made man in vain, because so many have short lives, and long afflictions, in this world, it is true that God has made them so, but it is not true that therefore they are the less happy. The days of the troubled, the days full of trouble, may yet glorify God, and do some good, may keep their communion with God, and get to heaven, and then they are not made in vain. Secondly, If we think that God has made man in vain, because the most of men neither serve him, nor enjoy him, it is true, that, as to themselves, they were made in vain, better for them had they not been born, than not to be born again; but it was not owing to the enjoyment of God, but to the neglect of God. Thirdly, If we think that God has made all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of evil, and these whom he is not glorified by, he will be glorified upon. 

(2.) He pleads the universality and unavoidableness of death; (v. 48.) What man? (what strong man, so the word is) "is he that liveth, and shall not see death? The king himself, of the house of
David, is not exempted from the sentence, from the stroke: Lord, since he is under a fatal necessity of dying, let not his whole life be made thus miserable. Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? No, he shall not when his time is come. Let him not, therefore, be delivered into the hand of the grave, by the miseries of a dying life, till his time is come. 10 We must learn here, that death is the end of all men; our eyes must shortly be closed to see death; there is no discharge from that war, nor any balm to be taken to save us from the prison of the grave. It concerns us, therefore, to make sure a happiness on the other side of death and the grave; that, when we fail, we may be received into everlasting habitations.

3. The next plea is taken from the kindness God had for, and the covenant he made with, his servant David; (v. 49.) "Lord, where are thy former loving-kindnesses, which thou showedst, nay, which thou swornst to David in thy truth, and in thy mercy? Wilt thou fail of doing what thou hast promised? Wilt thou undo what thou hast done? Art not thou still the same? Why then may not we have the benefit of the former sure mercies of David?" God's unchangeableness and faithfulness assure us that God will not cast off those whom he has chosen and covenanted with.

4. The last plea is taken from the insinuation of the enemies, and the inactivity done to God's servants; (v. 50.) "Remember, Lord, the reproach, and let it be rolled away from us, and returned upon our enemies." (1.) They were God's servants that were reproached, and the abuses done to them reflected upon their Master, especially since it was for serving him that they were reproached. (2.) The reproach cast upon God's servants was a very grievous barter to all that were concerned for the honour of God; "I bear in my bosom the reproach of all the Gentiles every day, and my iniquities are as a heavy burden upon me; it is what I lay much to heart, and can scarcely keep up my spirits under the weight of." (3.) "They are thine enemies who do thus reproach us; and wilt thou not appear against them as such?" (4.) They have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed. They reflected upon all the steps which the king had taken in the course of his administration, tracked him in all his motions, that they might make invidious remarks upon every thing he has said, done, or written. If we may apply it to Christ, the Lord's Messiah, they reproached the Jews with his footsteps, the slowness of his coming. They have reproached the delays of the Messiah; so Dr. Hammond. They called him, He that should come; but, because he was not yet come, because he did not now come to deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, when they had none to deliver them, they told them he would never come, they must give over looking for him. The scoffers of the latter days do, in like manner, reproach the footsteps of the Messiah, when they ask, Where is the promise of his coming? 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4. The reproaching of the footsteps of the anointed, some refer to the serpent's bruising of the heel of the Seed of the woman; or, to the sufferings of Christ's followers, who tread in his footsteps, and are reproached for his name's sake.

2. He concludes with praise, even after this sad complaint; (v. 52.) Blessed be the Lord for evermore, Amen, and amen. Thus he confronts the reproaches of his enemies; the more others blaspheme God, the more we should bless him. Thus he corrects his own complaints, chiding himself for quarrelling with God's providences, and questioning his promises; let both these sinful passions be silenced with the praises of God. However it be, yet God is good, and we will never think hardly of him; God is true, and we will never dis-trust him. Though the glory of David's house be stained and sulled, this shall be our comfort, that God is blessed for ever, and his glory cannot be eclipsed. If we would have the comfort of the stability of God's promise, we must give him the praise of it; in blessing God, we encourage ourselves. Here is a double Amen, according to the double signification Amen; so it is, God is blessed for ever; Amen; be it so, let God be blessed for ever. He began the psalm with thanksgiving, before he made his complaint, (v. 1.) and now he concludes it with a doxology. They who have God thanks for what he has done, may give him thanks also for what he will do; God will follow those with his mercies, who, in a right manner, follow him with their praises.

PSALM XC.

The foregoing psalm was supposed to be penned as late as the captivity in Babylon; this, it is plain, was penned as early as the deliverance out of Egypt, and yet they are put close together in this collection of divine songs. This psalm was penned by Moses, (as appears by the title,) the most ancient penman of sacred writ. We have upon record a praising song of his, (Exod. xv.) which is alluded to, (Rev. xvi. 3.) and an instructing song of his, (Deut. xxxii.) But this is of a different nature from that, for it is not so evident; it is suspected that this psalm was penned upon occasion of the sentence passed upon Israel in the wilderness for their unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion, that their canes should be turned into serpents, that the wilderbeast would be wasted away by a series of miseries for 38 years together, and that none of them that were then of age should enter Canaan. This was calculated for their wanderings in the wilderness, as that other song of Moses (Deut. xxxii. 19, 21.) was for their settlement in Canaan. We have the story to which this psalm seems to refer, Num. xiv. Probably, Moses penned this prayer, to be daily used, either by the people in their tents, or, at least, by the priests in the tabernacle service, through their tedious fatigue in the wilderness. In it, I. Moses comforts himself and his people with the eternity of God, and their interest in him, v. 1, 2. II. He humbles himself and his people, and prays with the wilderness, for the comfort of his servant, v. 3-8. III. He submits himself and his people to the righteous sentence of God passed upon them, v. 7-11. IV. He commits himself and his people to God by prayer for divine mercy and grace, and the return of God's favour, v. 12, 13. Though it seems to have been penned upon this particular occasion, yet it is very applicable to the frailty of human life in general, and, in singing it, we may easily apply it to the years of our passage through the wilderness of this world, and it furnish us with meditations and prayers very suitable to the solemnity of a funeral.

A prayer of Moses, the man of God.

LORD, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. 2. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. 3. Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men. 4. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. 5. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. 6. In the morning it florieth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth. This psalm is entitled a prayer of Moses; where, and in what volume, it was preserved from Moses's time till the collection of psalms was begun to be made, is uncertain; but, being divinely inspired, it was under a special protection; perhaps it was
written in the book of Jasher, or the book of the wars of the Lord. Moses taught the people of Israel to pray, and put words into their mouths, which they might make use of in turning to the Lord. Moses is here called the man of God, because he was a prophet, the father of the prophets, and an eminent type of Christ. 

In these verses, we are taught;
1. To give God the praise of his care concerning his people at all times, and concerning us in our days; (v. 1.) Lord, thou hast been to us a Habitation, or Dwelling-place; a Refuge, or Help, in all generations. Now that they were fallen under God's displeasure, and he threatened to abandon them, they plead his former kindnesses to their ancestors. Can it be expected that the gods of the heathen fathers the patriarchs, who dwelt there in tabernacles; but then God was their Habitation, and, wherever they went, they were at home, at rest, in him. Egypt had been a land of bondage to them for many years, but even then was their Refuge; and in him that poor oppressed people lived, and were kept in being. Note, True believers are at home in God, and that is their comfort, in reference to the distresses and troubles they meet with in this world. In him we may repose and shelter ourselves, as in our Dwelling-place.

2. To give God the glory of his eternity; (v. 2.) Before the mountains were brought forth, before he made the highest part of the dust of the world, (as it is expressed, Prov. viii. 26.) before the earth fell in travail; or, as we may read it, before thou hast formed the earth and the world, that is, before the beginning of time, thou hadst a being, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God; an eternal God, whose existence has neither its commencement nor its period with time, nor is measured by the successions and revolutions of it; but who art the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, without beginning of days, or end of life, or change of time. Note, Against all the grievances that arise from our own mortality, and the mortality of our friends, we may take comfort from God's immortality; we are dying creatures, and all our comforts in the world are dying comforts, but God is an ever-living God, and they shall find him so, who have him for theirs.

3. To own God's absolute sovereign dominion over man, and his irresistible, incontestable, power to dispose of him as he pleases; (v. 3.) Thou turnest man to destruction, with a word's speaking, when thou pleasest, to the destruction of the body, of the soul, and the life; and thou sayest, Return, ye children of men. (1.) When God is, by sickness, or other afflictions, turning men to destruction, he does thereby call men to return unto him, that is, to repent of their sins, and live a new life. This God speaketh once, yea, twice, "Return unto me, from whom ye have revolted," Jer. iv. 1. (2.) When God is threatening to turn men to destruction, to bring them to death, and they have received a season of time within these times, sometimes he wonderfully recovers them, and says, as the English Translation reads it, Again thou sayest, Return to life and health again. For God kills, and makes alive again, brings down to the grave, and brings up. (3.) When God turns men to destruction, it is according to the general sentence passed upon all, which is this, "Return, ye children of men, one as well as another; return to your first principles, let the broken vial be filled again; [let us depart and not return (Gen. iii. 19) and let the soul return to God who gave it.]" Eccl. xii. 7. (4.) Though God turns all men to destruction, yet he will again say, Return, ye children of men, at the general resurrection, when, though a man dies, yet he shall live again; and then shalt thou call, and I will answer; (Job xiv. 14, 15.) thou shalt bid me return, and I shall return. The body, the soul, shall both return and unite again.

4. To acknowledge the infinite disproportion there is between God and men, v. 4. Some of the patriarchs lived near a thousand years; Moses knew it very well, and had recorded it; but what is their long life, to the eternal years of God. At eternal years, to us, are a long period, which we cannot expect to survive; or, if we could, it is what we could not retain the remembrance of; but it is, in thy sight, as yesterday, as one day, as that which is fittest in mind; nay, it is but as a watch of the night, which was but three hours. (1.) A thousand years are nothing to God's eternity, they are less than a day, than an hour, to a thousand years; betwixt a minute and a thousand years is as the time of a man's life is to the time of an insect's. (2.) To the patriarchs, there was none to live long. The lives of the patriarchs were nothing to God, not so much as the life of a child (that is born and dies the same day) is to theirs. (2.) All the events of a thousand years, whether past or to come, are as present to the Eternal Mind, as what was done yesterday, or the last hour, is to us, and more too. God will say, at the great day, to those whom he turns to destruction, Return, arise ye dead. But it might be objected against the doctrine of the resurrection, that it is a long time since it was expected, and it is not yet come. Let that be no difficulty, for a thousand years in God's sight are as but one day. 

5. To see the frailty of man, and his vanity, even at his best estate, (v. 5, 6.) look upon all the children of men, and we shall see. (1.) That their life is a dying life; Thou carriest them away as with a flood, that is, they are continually gliding down the stream of time into the ocean of eternity; the flood is continually flowing, and they are carried away with it; as soon as we are born, we begin to die, and every day of our life carries us so much nearer death; or we are carried away violently and irresistibly, as with a flood of waters, as with an inundation, which sweeps away all before it; or, as the old world was carried away with Noah's flood. Though God promised not so to drown the world again, yet death is a constant deluge. (2.) That it is a dreaming life. Men are carried away as with a flood, and yet they are as a sleep; they consider not their own frailty, nor are aware how near they approach to an awful eternity. Like men asleep, they imagine great things to themselves, till death awakes them, and puts an end to the pleasing dream. Time passes unobserved by us, as it does with men asleep; and, when it is over, it is as nothing. (3.) That it is a short and transient life, like that of the grass, which grows up and flourishes in the morning, looks green and pleasant, but in the evening the mowers cut it down, and it immediately withers, changes its colour, and loses all its beauty. Death will change us shortly, perhaps suddenly; and it is a great change that death will make with us in the little time. Man in his prime, does but flourish as the grass, which is weak, and low, and tender, and exposed; and which, when the winter of old age comes, will wither of itself: but he may be mown down by disease or disaster, as the grass is, in the midst of summer. All flesh is as grass.

6. For we are consumed by thine anger and by thy wrath are we troubled. 8 Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. 9 For all our days are passed away in thy wrath; we spend our years as a tale that is
PSALMS, XC.

10. The days of our years are three-score years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow: for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. 11. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear; so is thy wrath.

Moses had, in the foregoing verses, lamented the frailty of human life in general; the children of men are as a sleep, and as the grass; but here he teaches the people of Israel to confess before God that righteous sentence of death which they were under in a special manner, and which by their sins they brought upon themselves; their share in the common lot of mortality was not enough, but they are, and must live and die, under peculiar tokens of God's displeasure: here they speak of themselves; We Israelites are consumed and troubled, and our days are passed away. 1. They are here taught to acknowledge the wrath of God to be the cause of all their miseries; We are consumed, we are troubled, and it is by thine anger and thy wrath that the days of our lives are passed away in thy wrath, v. 9. The afflictions of the saints often come purely from God's love, as Job's; but the rebukes of sinners, and of good men for their sins, must be seen coming from the anger of God, who takes notice of, and is much displeased with, the sins of Israel. We are too apt to look upon death as no more than a debt owing to nature; whereas it is not so; if the nature of man had continued in its primitive beauty and rectitude, there had been no such debt owing to it; it is a debt to the justice of God, a debt to the law. Sin entered into the world, and death by sin. Are we consumed by decays of nature, the infirmities of age, or any chronic disease? We must ascribe it to God's anger. Are we troubled by any surprising stroke? That also is the fruit of God's wrath, which is thus revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Then let us be taught to confess their sins, which had provoked the wrath of God against them; (v. 8.) Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, even our secret sins. It was not without cause that God was angry with them; he had said, Provoke me not, and I will do you no hurt; but they had provoked him, and will own that, in passing this severe sentence upon them, he justly punished them; (1.) For their open contempts of him, and the daring affronts they had given him; Thou hast set our iniquities before thee. God had herein an eye to their unbelief and murmuring, their distrusting of his power, and their despising of the pleasant land: these he set before him, when he passed that sentence on them; those kindled the fire of God's wrath against them, and kept good things from them. (2.) For their more hidden departures from him; Thou hast set our secret sins, those which go no further than the heart, and are at the bottom of all the overt acts, thou hast set these in the light of thy countenance; thou hast discovered these, and brought these also to the account, and made us to see them, who before overlooked them. Secret sins are known to God, and shall be reckoned for. Those who in heart return into Egypt, who set up idols in their heart, shall be dealt with as revolters or idolaters. See the folly of those who go about to minister for them, for they cannot cover them. 3. They are taught to look upon themselves as dying and passing away, and not to think either of a long life, or of a pleasant one; for the decree gone forth against them is irreversible; (v. 9.) All our days are likely to be passed away in thy wrath, under the tokens of thy displeasure; and, though we are not quite deprived of the residue of our years, yet we are likely to spend them as a tale that is told. The 38 years, which, after this, they were away in the wilderness, were not the subject of the sacred history, for little or nothing is recorded of what was happened to them between the 38th and the 40th. After they came out of Egypt, their time was perfectly tried away, and was not worthy to be the subject of a history, but only of a tale that is told; for it was only to pass away time, like telling stories, that they spent these years in the wilderness; all that while, they were in the consuming, and another generation was in the raising. When they came out of Egypt, there were not one feeble heart among the people; (38. 23, 27.) before they were all feeble. Their joyful prospect of a prosperous glorious life in Canaan was turned into the melancholy prospects of a tedious inglorious death in the wilderness; so that their whole life was now as insignificant a thing as ever any winter-tale was. That is applicable to the state of every one of us in the wilderness of this world; We spend our years, we bring them to an end, each year, and all, at last, as a tale that is told. And so the 40th year, (so long,) which soon disappears; as a thought, (so soon,) than which nothing more quick; as a word, which is soon spoken, and then vanishes into air; or, as a tale that is told. The spending of our years is like the telling of a tale. A year, when it is past, is like a tale when it is told. Some of our years are as a pleasant story, others as a tragical one; most mixt, but all short and transient: that which was long in the doing may be told in a short time, our years, when they are gone, can no more be recalled than the word that we have spoken. The loss and waste of our time, which imply our fault and folly, may be thus complained of: we should spend our years, like the despatch of business, with care and industry; but, alas! we do spend them like the telling of a tale, idle, and to little purpose, carelessly, and without regard. Every year passed as a tale that is told; but what was the number of them? As they were vain, so they were few, (v. 10.) 70 or 80 at most, which may be understood, either, (1.) Of the lives of the Israelites in the wilderness; all those that were numbered when they came out of Egypt, above 20 years old, were to die within 38 years; they numbered those only that were able to go forth to war, most of whom, we may suppose, were between 20 and 40, who therefore must have all died before 80 years old, and many before 60, and, perhaps, even 40, which was far short of the years of the lives of their fathers. And those that lived to 70 or 80, yet, being under a sentence of consumption, and a melancholy despair of ever seeing through this wilderness-state, their strength, their life, was nothing but labour and sorrow, which otherwise would have been made a new life, by the joys of Canaan. See what work sin made. Or, (2.) To the lives of men in general, ever since the days of Moses, and the age of man, which is sad, for men for men to live about 100 years, or near 150; but since, 70 or 80 is the common stint, which few exceed, and multitudes never come near. We reckon those who have lived to the age of man, and to have had as large a share of life as they had reason to expect, who live to be 70 years old; and how short a time is that compared with eternity! Moses was the first that committed divine revelation to writing, which, before then, had been transmitted by tradition only. He was, perhaps, the first who drew the line between the world and the church, and was the first who taught the apostles, that the world was not to be courted, and the church to be preferred to it; and therefore there were not now the same reasons for men's living long that there had been. If, by reason of a strong constitution, some reach to 80 years, yet their strength then is what they have little joy of, it does but serve to
prolong their misery, and make their death the more tedious; for even their strength then is labour and sorrow, much more their weakness; for the years are come which they have no pleasure in. Or, it may be taken thus: Our years are 70, and the years of some, by reason of strength, are 80; but the breadth of our years, (for so the latter words signify, rather than strength,) the whole extent of their days ancient and laboured; and, in the sweat of our face we must eat bread, our whole life is toilsome and troublesome; and, perhaps, in the midst of the years we count upon, it is soon cut off; and we fly away; and do not live out half our days.

4. They are taught by all this to stand in awe of the wrath of God; (v. 11.) Who knows the power of thine anger? (1.) None can perfectly comprehend it. The psalmist speaks as one afraid of God's anger, and amazed at the greatness of the power of it; who knows how far the power of God's anger can reach, and how deep it can wound? The angels that sinned knew experimentally the power of God's anger; damned sinners in hell know it; but which of us can fully comprehend or describe it? (2.) Few do seriously consider it as they ought. Who knows it, so as to improve the knowledge of it? Those who make a mock at sin, and make light of Christ, surely do not know the power of God's anger.

For, according to thy fear, so is thy wrath; God's wrath is equal to the apprehensions which the most thoughtful serious people have of it; let men have ever so great a dread upon them of the wrath of God, it is not greater than there is cause for, and than the nature of the thing deserves. God has not in his word represented his wrath more terrible than really it is; nay, what is felt in the other world is infinitely to old ages, is but labour in this world. Who among us can dwell with that devouring fire?

12. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Return, O Lord, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

These are the petitions of this prayer, grounded upon the foregoing meditations and acknowledgments. Is any afflicted? Let him learn thus to pray.

1. For a sanctified use of the sad dispensation they were now under. Being condemned to have our days shortened, "Lord, teach us to number our days;" (v. 12.) Lord, give us grace duly to consider how few they are, and how little a while we have to live in this world. Note, (1.) It is an excellent art rightly to number our days, so as not to be out in our calculation, as he was who counted upon many years to come; when, that night, his soul was required of him. (2.) It is a wholesome apprehension of the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the near approach of death and eternity. We must so number our days, as to compare our work with them, and mind it accordingly with double diligence, as those that have no time to trifle. (2.) Those that would learn this arithmetic, must pray for divine instruction, must go to God, and beg of him to teach them by his Spirit to put them upon considering, and to give them a good understanding.

2. That turning away of God's anger from them; that, though the decree was gone forth, and was past revocation, there was no remody, but they must die in the wilderness; "Yet return, O Lord, be thou reconciled to us, and let it repent thee concerning thy servants;" (v. 13.) send us tidings of peace to comfort us again after these heavy tidings. How long must we look upon ourselves as under thy wrath, and when shall we have some token given us of our restoration to thy favour? We are thy servants, thy people; (Isa. lix. 2.) will thou change thy way towards us? In answer to this prayer, and to show their profession of faith, (Numb. xiv. 39, 40.) God, in the next chapter, proceeded with the laws concerning sacrifices, (Numb. xv. 1, &c.) which was a token that it repented him concerning his servants, for if the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he would not have showed them such things as these.

3. For comfort and joy in the returns of God's favour to them, v. 14, 15. They pray for the mercy of God; "O satisfy us with thy mercy, not only that we may rejoice and be glad, not only for a time, upon the first indications of thy favour, but all our days, though we are to spend them in the wilderness." With respect to these that make God their chief Joy, as their joy may be full, (1 John i. 4.) so it may be constant, even in this vale of tears; it is their own fault if they are not glad all their days, for his mercy will furnish them with joy in tribulation, and nothing can separate them from it. (2.) That it would be a sufficient balance to their former griefs; "Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us;" (3.) that the days of our joy in thy favour be as many as the days of our pain for thy displeasure have been, and as pleasant as those have been gloomy. Lord, thou wert to set the one over against the other; (Eccl. vii. 14.) do so in our case; let it suffice that we have drunk so long of the cup of trembling, now put into our hands the cup of XL, let us therefore be content with the return of God's loving-kindness, as a sufficient recompense for all their troubles.

4. For the progress of the work of God among them notwithstanding, v. 16, 17. (1.) That he
would manifest himself in carrying it on; *"Let thy work appear upon thy servants;* let it appear that thou hast wrought upon us, to bring us home to thyself, and to thy name. Thou art a father to thy servants, and art their God, who livest for ever."

In praying for God's grace, *God's glory must be our end; and we must therein have an eye for our children as well as for ourselves.* This divine privilege also may experience God's glory appearing upon us, so as to change them into the same image, from glory to glory. Perhaps, in this prayer, they distinguish between themselves and their children, for so God distinguished in his late message to them; (Num. xiv. 31.) To our cases shall fall in this wilderness, but thy little ones will I bring into Canaan; "Lord," say they, "let thy work appear upon us, to reform us, and bring us to a better temper, and then let thy glory appear to our children, in performing the promise to them which we have forfeited the benefit of." (2.) That he would countenance and strengthen them in carrying it on, in doing their part towards it. [1.] That he would smile upon them in it; *Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us;* let it appear that God favours us; let us have God's ordinances kept up among us, and the tokens of God's presence with his ordinances; (v. 11.) *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty;* he that by faith chooses God for his Guardian shall find all that in him which he needs or can desire. Note, 1. It is the character of a true believer, that he *dwells in the secret place of the Most High;* he is at home in God, returns to God, and reposits in him as his Rest; he acquaints himself with inside religion, and makes heart-work of the service of God; he *chooses to converse with himself in solitude.* 2. It is the privilege and comfort of those that do so, that they abide under the shadow of the Almighty; he shelters them, and comes between them and every thing that would annoy them, whether storm or sunshine. They shall not only have an admittance, but a residence, under God's protection; he will be their Rest and Refuge for ever.

**PSALM XCI.**

Some of the ancients were of opinion that Moses was the penman, not only of the foregoing psalm, which is expressly said to be his, but also of the eight that next follow it; but that cannot be, for Ps. xcvi. is expressly said to be penned by David, and long after Moses, Heb. iv. 7. It is probable that this psalm was penned by David, for it is a writ of protection for all true believers, not in the name of king David, or under his broad seal, he needed it himself, especially if the psalm was penned, as some conjecture, in the time of the pestilence, which was sent for his numbering of the people, but in the name of the King of kings, and under the broad seal of Heaven. Observe, I. The psalmist's own resolution to take God for his Keeper, (v. 2.) from this he gives directness to others, v. 9. II. The promises which are here made, in God's name, to all those that do so in sincerity. 1. They shall be taken under the peculiar care of Heaven, v. 1. 2. They shall be delivered from all malice and designs of their enemies, (v. 3, 5, 6.) and that by a distinguishing preservation, v. 7, 8. 3. They shall be the charge of the holy angels, v. 10. 12. 4. They shall triumph over their enemies, v. 13. 5. They shall be the special favours of God himself, v. 14.-16. In singing this, we must shelter ourselves under, and then solemnise ourselves in, the divine protection. Many think, that to Christ, as Mediator, these promises do particularly belong, (Isa. xlii. 2.) not because to him the Devil applied one of these promises, (Matt. iv. 6.) but because to him they are very applicable, and, coming through him, they are more sweet and sure to all believers.

1. *He* that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. 2. I will say of the Lord, *He is my refuge, and my fortress;* my God; in him will I trust. 3. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. 4. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. 5. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day. 6. Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth in noon-day. 7. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. 8. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold, and see the reward of the wicked.

In these verses, we have, I. A great truth laid down in general, That all those who live a life of communion with God, are constantly safe under his protection, and may therefore preserve a holy serenity, and security of mind, at all times, (v. 1.) *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty;* he that by faith chooses God for his Guardian shall find all that in him which he needs or can desire. Note, 1. It is the character of a true believer, that he *dwells in the secret place of the Most High;* he is at home in God, returns to God, and reposits in him as his Rest; he acquaints himself with inside religion, and makes heart-work of the service of God; he *chooses to converse with himself in solitude.* 2. It is the privilege and comfort of those that do so, that they abide under the shadow of the Almighty; he shelters them, and comes between them and every thing that would annoy them, whether storm or sunshine. They shall not only have an admittance, but a residence, under God's protection; he will be their Rest and Refuge for ever.

II. The psalmist's comfortable application of this to himself; (v. 2.) I will say of the Lord, whatever others say of him, *"He is my Refuge, I choose him as such, and confide in him. Others made idols their refuge, but I will say of Jehovah, the true and living God, He is my Refuge: any other is a refuge of lie; He is a Refuge that will not fail me; for he is my Fortress and Strong-hold."* Idolaters called their idols *Mahuzzim, their most strong-hold;"* Dan. iii. 90. But they who devoted them- selves; those only secure themselves that make the Lord their God their Fortress. There being no reason to question his sufficiency, fitly does it follow, *In him will I trust.* If Jehovah be our God, our Refuge, and our Fortress, what can we desire, which we may not be sure to find in him? He is neither fickle, nor false, nor weak, nor mortal; he is God and not man, and therefore there is no danger of being disappointed in him. *We know whom we have trusted.*
III. The great encouragement he gives to others to do likewise; not only from his own experience of the divine care over them (as it might be a fal-
lacy,) but from the truth of God's promise, in which there neither is, nor can be, any deceit; (v. 3, 4, &c.) Surely he shall deliver thee. Those who have them-
selves found the comfort of making God their Re-

guge, cannot but desire that others may do so. Now here it is promised,

1. That believers shall be kept from those mis-
chiefs which they are in imminent danger of, and which are known to them by the voice of the fowler, which is laid unscen, and catches the unwary prey on a sudden; and from the noisome testitence, which seizes men unawares, and against which there is no guard. This promise protects,

(1.) The natural life, and is often fulfilled in our preservation from those dangers which are very threatening, and very near, whilst yet we ourselves are not apprehensive of them, any more than the bird is of the snare of the fowler. We owe it, more than we are sensible, to the care of the Divine Providence, that we have been kept from infectious diseases, and out of the hands of the wicked and unreasonable.

(2.) The spiritual life, which is protected by Divine Grace from the temptations of Sat-

an, which are as the snares of the fowler, and from the contagion of sin, which is the noisome pestilence. He that has given grace to be the glory of the soul, will create a defence upon all that glory.

2. That God himself will be their Protector; they must needs be safe who have him for their Keeper, and successful for whom he undertakes; (v. 4.) He shall cover thee, shall keep thee secret, (xxxi. 20.) and so keep thee safe, xxvii. 5. God protects be-

lievers, (1.) With the greatest tenderness and affection; intimated in that, He shall cover thee with his feathers, under his wings, which alludes to the hen gathering her chickens under her wings, Matth. xxiii. 37. By natural instinct, she not only protects them, but calls them under that protection, when she sees them in danger; not only keeps them safe, but cherishes them and keeps them warm. To this the great God is pleased to compare his care of his peo-

ple, who are helpless as the chickens, and easily made a prey of, but are invited to trust under the wings of the divine promise and providence, which is the periphasy of a prolethne to the true religion, theaddress of a mother towards her infant. This is the refuge of Israel, Ruth ii. 12. (2.) With the greatest pow-
er and efficacy; wings and feathers, though spread with the greatest tenderness, are yet weak, and easily broken through, and therefore it is added, His truth shall be thy shield and buckler, a strong defence. God is as willing to guard his people as the hen is to guard the chickens, and as able as a man of war in armour.

3. That this will not only keep them from evil, but from the fear of evil, v. 5, 6. Here is, (1.) Great
danger supposed, the mention of it is enough to frighten us; night and day we lie exposed, and those that are apt to be timorous, will, in neither period, think themselves safe. When we are retired into our chambers, our beds, and have made all as safe as we can about us, yet there is terror by night, from thieves and robbers, winds and storms, besides those things that are the creatures of fire and innumerable, the most frightful of all; we read of fear in the night, Cant. iii. 8. There is also a pestilence that walketh in darkness, as that which slew the first-born of the Egyptians, and the army of the Assyrians. No locks or bars can shut out diseases, while we carry about with us in our bodies the seeds of them. But surely in the day-time, when we can look about us, we are not so much in danger; yes, there is an arrow that fleeth by day too, and yet unseen; there is a destruction that wasteth at high-
noon, when we are awake, and have all our friends about us; even then we cannot secure ourselves, nor can we secure others. It was in the day-time that that pestilence wasted which was sent to chastise David for numbering the people, on occasion of which some think this psalm was penned. But, (2.) Here is great security promised to believers in the midst of this danger: Thou shalt not be afraid, God by his grace will keep thee from disquieting distrustful fear, (that fear which hath torment,) in the midst of the greatest dangers. Wisdom shall keep thee from being foolishly afraid, and faith shall keep thee from being inordinately afraid. Thou shalt not be afraid of the arrow, as knowing that, though it may hit thee, it cannot hurt thee; if it take away the natural life, yet it shall be so far from doing any prejudice to the spiritual life, that it shall be its perfec-

lion. A believer needs not fear, and therefore should not fear, any arrow, because the point is off; O death, where is thy sting? It is also under divine direction, and will suit where God appoints, and not otherwise. Every bullet has its commission. Whatever is done, our heavenly Fa-
ther's will is done; and we have no reason to be afraid of that.

4. That they shall be preserved in common ca-
lamities, in a distinguishing way; (v. 7.) When
death rides in triumph, and diseases rage, so that thousands and ten thousands fall, by sickness, or fall by the sword in battle, fall at thy side, at thy right hand, and the sight of their fall is too frighten thee, and if they fall by the pestilence, their falling so near thee may be likely to infect thee; yet it shall not come nigh thee, the death shall not, the fear of death shall not. Those that preserve their purity in times of general corruption, may trust God with their safety in times of general desolation. When multitudes die round about us, though thereby we must be awakened to prepare for our own death, yet we must not be afraid with any amazement, no make ourselves subject to bondage, as many do all their lifetime, through fear of death, Heb. ii. 15. The sprinkling of blood secured the first-born of Israel, when thousands fell. Nay, it is promised to God's people, that they shall have the satisfaction of seeing, not only God's promises fulfilled to them, but his threatenings fulfilled upon those that hate them; (v. 8.) Only with thine eyes shall thou behold and see the ruins of the wicked, which perhaps refers to the destruction of the first-born of Israel, and the pestilence, which was both the punishment of the oppressors and the enlargement of the oppressed; this Israel saw, when they saw themselves unhurt, untouched. As it will aggravate the damnation of sinners, that with their eyes they shall behold and see the reward of the righteous, (Luke xii. 28.) so it will magnify the salvation of the saints, that with their eyes they shall behold and see the destruction of the wicked, Isa. lxvi. 24.

9. Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, 10. There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. 11. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. 12. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. 13. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. 14. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath
known my name. 15. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. 16. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation.

Here are more promises to the same purport with those in the foregoing verses, and they are exceeding great and precious, and sure to all the seed. 1. The psalmist assures believers of divine protection, from his own experience; and that which he says is the word of God, and what we may rely upon. Observe, 1. The character of those who shall have these promises. They are the children of God, his saints. They have been made thereby to live in God; to know him, and to love him; to be his children, to be the seed of Israel, and to be of the seed of the patriarchs. The promises of God have the same effect with the word of God; it is the same as if God had said expressly, I have given thee such and such promises. 2. The promises themselves. They are much the same with that, v. 1. They are such as make the most High their Habitation, (v. 9.) as are continually with God, and rest in him, as make his name both their Temple and their strong Tower, as dwell in love, and so dwell in God. It is our duty to be at home in God, to make our choice of him, and then to live our life in him as our Habitation; to converse with him, and delight in him, and depend upon him; and then it shall be our privilege to be at home in God; we shall be welcome to bring a part of ourselves to his own habitation, without any let, hindrance, or molestation, from the arrests of the law, or the clamours of conscience; then too we shall be safe in him, shall be kept in perfect peace, Isa. xxvi. 3. To encourage us to make the Lord our Habitation, and to hope for safety and satisfaction in him, the psalmist intimates the comfort he had in doing so; "He whom thou makest thy Habitation is my Refuge; and I have found him firm and faithful, and in him there is room enough, and shelter enough, both for thee and me." In my father's house there are many mansions, one needs not crowd another, much less crowd out another. 2. The promises that are sure to all those who have thus made the most High their Habitation.

1. That, whatever happens to them, nothing shall hurt them; (v. 10.) There shall no evil befall thee; though trouble and affliction befal thee, yet there shall be no real evil in it, for it shall come from the love of God, and shall be sanctified; it shall come, not for thy hurt, but for thy good; and though, for the present, it be not joyous but grievous, yet, in the end, it shall yield so well, that thou thyself shalt own no evil befell thee. It is not an evil, an only evil, but there is a mixture of good in it, and a product of good. "Many waters cannot quench love, nor can a river; Nay, not thy person only, but thy dwelling, shall be taken under the divine protection; there shall no plague come nigh that; nothing to thee or thine any damage." Nihil accidere bona viri nulli potest.—No evil can befall a good man. Seneca de Providentia.

2. That the angels of light shall be serviceable to them, v. 11, 12. This is a precious promise, and speaks a great deal both of honour and comfort to the saints, nor is it ever the worse for its being quoted and abused by the Devil in tempting Christ, Math. iv. 6. Observe, 1. The charge given to the angels concerning the saints. He who is the Lord of the angels, who gave them their being, and gives laws to them, whose they are, and whom they were made to serve, he shall give his angels a charge over thee; not only over the church in general, but over every particular saint; it is the charge of the Lord their God; and this is the charge they have from him. It denotes the great care God takes of the saints, in that the angels themselves shall be charged with them, and employed for them. The charge is, to keep thee in all thy ways; here is a limitation of the promise; They shall keep thee in thy ways, that is, "as long as thou keepest in the way of thy duty;" they that go out of the way, put themselves out of God's protection; this word the Devil left out, when he quoted it to enforce a temptation, knowing how much it made against him. But observe the extent of the promise; it is to keep thee in all thy ways; even where there is no apparent danger, yet we need it, and where there is the most imminent danger, we shall have it. Wherever the saints go, the angels are charged with them, as the servants are with the children.

2. The care which the angels take of the saints, pursuant to this charge; They shall bear thee up in their hands, which denotes both their great ability and their great affection. They are able to bear up the saints out of the reach of danger, and they do it with all the tenderness and affection wherewith the psalmist carres the little child about in her arms. It speaks us helpless, and them helpful. They are descending in their ministrations; they keep the feet of the saints, lest they dash them against a stone, lest they stumble and fall into sin and into trouble.

3. That the powers of darkness shall be triumphed over by them; (v. 13.) Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder; the Devil is called a roaring lion, 1 Pet. v. 8.; the adder, is the serpent, the old serpent, the red dragon; so that to this promise the apostle seems to refer in that, (Rom. xvi. 20.) The God of peace shall tread Satan under your feet. Christ has broken the serpent's head, spoiled our spiritual enemies, (Col. ii. 15.) and through him we are more than conquerors; for Christ calls us, as Joshua called the captains of Israel, to come and set our feet on the necks of vanquished enemies. Some think that this promise had its full accomplishment in Christ, and the miraculous power which he had over the whole creation, healing the sick, casting out devils, and particularly putting it into his disciples' commission, that they should take up serpents, Mark xvi. 18. It may be applied to that care of the Divine Providence by which we are preserved from ravenous noxious creatures, (The wild beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee, Job v. 25.) now, and have ways and means of taming them, Lam. iii. 7.

II. He brings in God himself speaking words of comfort to the saints, and declaring the mercy he has in store for them, v. 14.-16. Some make this to be spoken to the angels as the reason of the charge given them concerning the saints, as if he had said, "Take care of them, for they are dear to me, and I have a tender concern for them."

And now, as before, we must observe.

To whom these promises do belong; they are described by three characters. 1. They are such as know God's name. His nature we cannot fully know; but by his name he has made himself known, and with that we must acquaint ourselves. 2. They are such as have set their love upon him; and they who rightly know him, will love him, will place their love upon him, as the only adequate Object of it, will let out their love toward him with pleasure and interest, and will fix their love upon him with a resolution never to remove it from any rival. 3. They are such as call upon him, as by prayer keep up a constant correspondence with him, and in every difficult case refer themselves to him.

2. What the promises are, which God makes to the saints.

1. That he will, in due time, deliver them out of trouble; I will deliver him, (v. 14.) and again, (v. 15.) delivereth him that is living and dying; a deliverance in trouble, and a deliverance out of trouble. If God proportions the degree and continuance of our troubles to our strength, if he keeps us from offending him in our troubles, and makes our death our discharge, at length, from all our troubles, then this promise is fulfilled. See xxxiv. 19. 2 Tim. iii. 11.—iv. 18.
PSALMS, XII.

(2.) That he will, in the mean time, be with them in trouble, v. 15. If he does not immediately put a period to their afflictions, yet they shall have his gracious presence with them in their troubles; he will take notice of their sorrows, and **know their souls in adversity**; will visit them graciously by his word and Spirit, and converse with them, will take their part, will support and comfort them, and sanctify their afflictions to them, which will be the surest token of his presence with them in their troubles.

(5.) That he will exalt and dignify them; **I will** **shew him high,** v. 16. In the reach of trouble, above the stormy region, on a rock above the waves, Isa. xxxiii. 16. They shall be enabled, by the grace of God, to look down upon the things of this world with a holy contempt and indifference, and to look up to the things of the other world with a holy ambition and concern; and then they are set on high. **I will honour him;** those are truly honourable whom God puts honour upon, by taking them into covenant and communion with himself, and designing them for his kingdom and glory. John xvi. 26.

(6.) That they shall have a sufficiency of life in this world; (v. 16.) **With length of days** will I **satisfy him;** [1.] They shall live long enough; they shall be continued in this world till they have done the work they were sent into this world for, and are ready for heaven; and that is long enough. Who would wish to live a day longer than God has some work to do, either by him or **upon** him? [2.] They shall live it long enough, for God has given grace shall warm them from the world, and make them willing to leave it. A man may die young, and yet die full of days, **satur dierium—satisfied with living.** A wicked worldly man is not satisfied, no not with long life: he still cries, **Give, give;** but he that has his treasure and heart in another world, has soon enough of this, he would not live always.

(7.) That they shall have an eternal life in the other world: this crowns the blessedness; I will show him my salvation; show him the Messiah, so some; good old Simeon was then satisfied with long life, when he could say, **Mine eyes have seen thy salvation;** nor was there any greater joy to the Old Testament saints, than to see Christ's day, though at a distance. More probably, the salvation may denote the better country, that is, the heavenly, which the patriarchs desired and sought; he will show him that, bring him to that blessed state, the felicity of which consists so much in seeing that face to face which we here see through a glass darkly; and, in the mean time, he will give him a precept of it. All these promises, some think, point primarily at Christ, and had their accomplishment in his resurrection and exaltation.

God both of mercy and judgment, the ruin of sinners and the joy of saints, three times counterchanged. 1. The wicked shall perish, (v. 7.) but God is eternal, v. 8. 2. God's enemies shall be cut off, but David shall be exalted, v. 9, 10. 3. David's enemies shall be confounded (v. 11.) but all the righteous shall be fruitful and flourishing, v. 12, 15. In singing this psalm, we must take pleasure in giving to God the glory due to his name, and triumph in his works.

A psalm or song for the sabbath-day.

1. **If** it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High: 2. To show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night, 3. Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound.

4. For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work; I will triumph in the works of thy hands. 5. O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep. 6. A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this.

This psalm was appointed to be sung, at least, it usually was sung, in the house of the sanctuary on the sabbath-day, that day of rest, which was an instituted memorial of the work of creation, of God's rest from that work, and the continuance of it in his providence; for the Father worketh hitherto. Note, 1. The sabbath day must be a day not only of holy rest, but of holy work; and the rest is in order to the work. 2. The proper work of the sabbath is praising God; a very sabbath-day must be a thanks-giving-day; and all the other services of the day must be in order to this, and therefore must by no means thrust this into a corner. One of the Jewish writers refers it to the kingdom of the Messiah, and calls it, A psalm or song for the age to come, which shall be all sabbath. Believers, through Christ, enjoy that sabbatism which remains for the people of God, (Heb. iv. 9.) the beginning of the everlasting sabbath.

These verses, 1. We are called upon and encouraged to praise God; (v. 1-3.) It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord. Praising God is good work; it is good in itself, and good for us; it is our duty, the rent, the tribute, we are to pay to our great Lord; we are unjust if we withhold it; it is our privilege that we are admitted to praise God, and have hope to be accepted in it; it is good, for it is pleasant and profitable; work that is its own wages; it is the work of angels, the work of heaven. It is good to give thanks for the mercies we have received, for that is the way of fetching in further mercy; it is fit to sing to his name, who is Most High, exalted above all blessing and praise. Now observe here, 1. How we must praise God; we must do it by showing forth his loving-kindness and his faithfulness. Being convinced of his glorious attributes and perfections, we must show them forth, as those that are greatly affected with them ourselves, and desire to affect others with them likewise. We must show forth, not only his greatness and majesty, his holiness and justice, which magnify him, and strike an awe upon us, but his loving-kindness and his faithfulness; for his goodness is his glory, (Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19.) and by these he proclaims his name. His mercy and truth are the great supports of our faith and hope; and the great encouragements of our love and obedience; these, therefore, we must show forth as our pleas in prayer, and the matter of our joy.

PSALM XCII.

Is a groundless opinion of some of the Jewish writers, (who are the interpreters of the Vulgate,) that this psalm was penned and sung by Adam in innocence, the first sabbath. It is inconsistent with the psalm itself, which speaks of the workers of iniquity, when as yet sin had not come. It is probable that it was penned by David, and, being the 16th of the 150, it speaks of the business of the sabbath, is here recommended, v. 1. - 3. II. God's works, which gave occasion for the sabbath, are here celebrated as great and unsearchable in general, v. 4. In particular, with reference to the works both of providence and redemption, the psalmist sings unto
This was then done, not only by singing, but by music joined with it, upon an instrument of ten strings; (v. 3.) but then it was to be with a solemn sound, not that which was gay, and apt to dissipate the spirits, but that which was grave, and apt to fix them.

2. When we must praise God; in the morning, and every night, not only on sabbath-days, but every day; it is that which the duty of every day requires; we must praise God, not only in public assemblies, but in secret, and in our families; showing forth, to ourselves and those about us, his loving-kindness and faithfulness. We must begin and end every day with praising God; must give him thanks every morning, and fresh expressions, and reflect on the goodness of the day comes in upon us; and, every night, when we are again composed and retired, and are recollecting ourselves; we must give him thanks every morning for the mercies of the night, and every night for the mercies of the day; going out and coming in, we must bless God.

II. We have an example set before us in the psalmist himself, both to move us to, and to direct us in it. (v. 4.) The Lord shall make me glad through thy work. Note, 1. Those can best recommend to others the duty of praise, who have themselves experienced the pleasantness of it.

"God's works are to be praised, for they have many a time rejoiced my heart; and therefore, whatever others may think of them, I must think well, and speak well, of them." 2. If God has given us the joy of his works, there is all the reason in the world why we should give him the honour of them. Has he made our hearts glad? Let us then make his praises glorious. His God made us glad, through the works of his providence for us, and of his grace in us, and both through the great work of redemption.

1. Let us then thence fetch encouragement for our faith and hope; so the psalmist does; I will triumph in the works of thy hands. From a joyful remembrance of what God has done for us, we may raise a joyful prospect of what he will do, and triumph in the assurance of it, triumph over all opposition, 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14.

2. Let us thence fetch encouragement for holy adorings and admirings of God; (v. 5.) O Lord, how great are thy works! Great beyond conception, beyond expression! The products of great power and wisdom, of great consequence and importance; men's works are nothing to them. We cannot comprehend the greatness of God's works, and therefore must reverently and awfully wonder at them, and even stand amazed at the magnificence of them.

"Men's works are little and trifling, for their thoughts are shallow; but, Lord, thy works are great, and such as cannot be measured; for thy thoughts are very deep, and such as cannot be fathomed." God's counsels as much exceed the contrivances of our wisdom, as his works do the efforts of our power. His thoughts are above our thoughts, as his ways are above our ways, Isa. lv. 7. 8. Oh the depth of God's designs! Rom. xi. 33. The greatness of God's works should lead us to consider the depth of his thoughts, that counsel of his own will, according to which he doeth all things. What a compass his thoughts fetch, and to what a length they reach!

III. We are admonished not to neglect the works of God, by the character of those who do, v. 6. They are brutish, who do not know, who do not understand; they cannot understand; God's works are, who will not acquaint themselves with them, or give him the glory of them; they regard not the work of the Lord, nor consider the operation of his hands; (xxviii. 5.) particularly, they understand not the meaning of their own prosperity, which is spoken of; (v. 7.) they take it as a pledge of their happiness, whereas it is a preparative for their ruin. If there are so many who know not the designs of Providence, nor care to know them, those who through grace are acquainted with them, and love to be so, have the more reason to be thankful.

7. When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever: 8. But thou, Lord, art most high for evermore. 9. For, lo, thine enemies, O Lord, for, lo, thine enemies shall perish, all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. 10. But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of a unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil. 11. Mine eye also shall see my desire on mine enemies; and mine ears shall hear my desire of the wicked that rise up against me. 12. The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. 13. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. 14. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing. 15. To show that the Lord is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

The psalmist had said, (v. 4.) that from the works of God he would take occasion to triumph; and here he does so.

1. He triumphs over God's enemies, (v. 7, 9, 11.) triumphs in the foresight of their destruction; not as it would be the misery of his fellow-creatures, but as it would redound to the honour of God's justice and holiness.

He is confident of the ruin of sinners.

1. Though they are flourishing; (v. 7.) When the wicked spring as the grass in spring, (so numerous, so thick, so green, and growing so fast,) and all the workers of iniquity do flourish in pomp and power, and all the instances of outward prosperity, are easy and many, and succeed in their enterprises, one would think that all this was in order to their being happy, that it was a certain evidence of God's favour, and an earnest of something as good or better in reserver but it is quite otherwise; it is, that they shall be destroyed for ever. The very prosperity of fools shall slay them, Prov. i. 32. The sheep that are designed for the slaughter are put into the fattest pasture.

2. Though they are daring, v. 9. They are thine enemies, and impudently avow themselves to be so; they are contrary to God, and they fight against God; they are in rebellion against his crown and dignity, and therefore it is easy to foresee that they shall perish; for who ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered? Note, All the inimical workers of iniquity shall be deemed and taken as God's enemies, and as such they shall perish and be scattered. Christ reckons those his enemies that will not have him to reign over them; and they shall be brought forth and slain before him. The workers of iniquity are now associated, and closely linked together, in a combination against God and his kingdom; but they shall be scattered and disabled to help one another against the just judgment of God. In the world to come, they shall be separated from the congregation of the righteous, so the Chaldee, Ps. i. 5.

3. Though they had a particular mantle against
the psalmist, and, upon that account, he might be tempted to fear them, yet he triumphs over them; (v. 11.) "Mine eye shall see my desire on mine enemies that rise up against me; I shall see them not only disabled to do me any further mischief, but reckoned with for the mischief they have done me, and brought either to repentance or ruin;" and this was his desire concerning them. In the Hebrew it is no more than thus, Mine eye shall look on mine enemies, and mine ear shall hear of the wicked. He does not say what he shall see, or what he shall hear. He declares, in his heart, and hearken that in which God will be glorified, and in which he will therefore be satisfied. This perhaps has reference to Christ, to his victory over Satan, death, and H. II., the destruction of those that persecuted and crucified him, and opposed his gospel, and to the final ruin of the impenitent at the last day. They that rise up against Christ will fall before him, and be made his footstool. H. II. He triumphs in God, and his glory and grace. (1.) In the grace of making and keeping the tree of life (v. 3.) But thou, O Lord, art Most High for evermore. The workers of iniquity, who fight against us, may be high for a time, and think to carry all before them with a high hand, but thou art High, Most High for evermore; their height will be humbled and brought down, and thine is everlasting." Let us not, therefore, fear the pride and power of evil men, nor be discouraged by their impotent menaces, for the moth shall eat them up and destroy them, but God's righteousness shall be for ever, Isa. li. 7, 8. 2. In the grace of God; his favour, and the fruits of it. (1.) To himself; (v. 10.) "Thou, O Lord, that art thyself Most High, shall exalt my horn." The great God is the Fountain of honour, and he, being high for evermore, himself will exalt his people for ever, for he is the Praise of all his saints, cxlviii. 14. The wicked are forbidden to lift up the horn, (Is. xxiv. 4, 5.) but those that serve God and the interest of his kingdom with their honour and power, and commit them to him to keep them, to raise them, to use them, and to dispose of them, as he pleases, may hope that he will exalt their horn as the horn of an unicorn, to the greatest height, either in this world or the other; My horn thou shalt exalt, when thine enemies perish; for then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, when the wicked shall be darkened. He adds, I shall be anointed with fresh oil, which be-speaks a fresh confirmation in his office to which he had been anointed, or abundance of plenty, so that he should have fresh oil as often as he pleased, or renewed comforts to revive him when his spirits drooped; grace is the anointing of the Spirit; when this is given to help in the time of need, and is received, as there is occasion, from the fulness that is in Christ Jesus, we are then anointed with fresh oil. Some read it, When I grow old, thou shalt anoint me with fresh oil. My old age shall thou exalt with rich mercy; so the Seventy. Compare v. 14. They shall bring forth fruit in old age. The comforts of God's Spirit, and the joys of his salvation, shall be a refreshing oil to the hoary heads that are found in the way of righteousness. (2.) To all the saints. They are here represented as trees of righteousness, Isa. lx. 3. Ps. l. 3. Observe, [1.] The good place they are fixed in; they are planted in the house of the Lord, v. 13. The trees of righteousness do not grow of themselves, they are planted, not in common soil, but in paradise, in the house of the Lord. Trees are not planted in a house; but God's trees are said to be planted in his house; because it is from his grace, by his word and Spirit, that they receive all the sap and virtue, and keep it alive, and make this fruitful. They fix themselves to holy ordinances, take root in them, abide by them, put themselves under the divine protection, and bring forth all their fruits to God's honour and glory. [2.] The good plight they shall be kept in. It is here promised, First, That they shall grow, v. 12. Where God gives true grace, he will give more grace; God's trees shall grow higher, like the cedars, the tall cedars in Lebanon; they shall grow nearer heaven, and nearer the heart of God, and nearer the upper world: they shall grow stronger, like the cedars, and fitter for use. He that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger. Secondly, That they shall flourish, both in the credit of their profession, and in the comfort and joy of their own souls. They shall be cheerful themselves, and respected by all about them. They shall flourish like the palm-tree, which has a stately body, (Cont. vii. 7.) and large boughs, Lev. xxiii. 40. (Judg. xxi. 5.) Dates, the fruit of it, are very pleasant, but it is especially alluded to here, as being evergreen. The wicked flourish as the grass, (v. 7.) which is soon withered, and the righteous as the palm-tree, which is long-lived, and which the winter does not change. It has been said of the palm-tree, Sub pendere crescit—The more it is pressed down, the more it grows; so the righteous flourish under their burthens; the more they are afflicted, the more they flourish, and the more they triumph. Of the Lord, there their root is, they flourish in the courts of our God, there their branches spread, Their life is hid with Christ in God. But their light also shines before men. It is desirable that those who have a place, should have a name, in God's house, and within his walls, Isa. liv. 5. Let good Christians aim to excel, that they may be eminent and may flourish, and so may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, as flourishing trees towards the courts of a house. And let those who flourish in God's courts give him the glory of it; it is by virtue of this promise, They shall be fat and flourishing. Their flourishing without is from a fatness within, from the root and fatness of the good olive, Rom. xi. 17. Without a living principle of grace in the heart, the profession will not be long flourishing; but where that is, the leaf also shall not wither, Ps. l. 3. The trees of the Lord are full of sap, civ. 16. H. III. Thirdly, That they shall be fruitful; were there nothing but leaves upon them, they would not be trees of any value; but they shall still bring forth fruit, the products of sanctification, all the instances of a lively devotion and a useful conversation, good works, by which God is glorified, and others are edified. These are the fruits of righteousness, in which it is the privilege, as well as the duty, of the righteous to abound; and it is the matter of a promise, as well as the matter of a command. It is promised that they shall bring forth fruit in old age. Other trees, when they are old, leave off bearing, but in God's trees the strength of grace does not fail with the strength of nature. The last days of the saints are sometimes their best days, and their last work their best work. This indeed shows that they are upright; perseverance is the best evidence of sincerity; it shows that they believe the promises, and faithful to every word that he has spoken, and that he is constant to the work which he has begun. As it is by the promises that believers first partake of a divine nature, so it is by the promises that that divine nature is preserved and kept up; and therefore the power it exerts is an evidence that the Lord is upright, and so he will show himself with an upright man, xvii. 25. This is the plainest triumph: He is my Rock, and
there is no unrighteousness in him. I have chosen him for my Rock on which to build, in the clefts of which to take shelter, on the top of which I set my feet. I have found him a Rock, strong and steadfast, and his word as firm as a Rock. I have found (and let every one speak as he finds) "that there is no unrighteousness in him." He is as able, and will be as kind, as his word makes him to be. All that ever trusted in God found him faithful and all-sufficient, and none were ever made ashamed of their hope in him.

PSALM XCVIII.

This short psalm sets forth the honour of the kingdom of God among men, to his glory, the terror of his enemies, and the comfort of all his loving subjects. It relates both to the kingdom of his providence, by which he upholds and governs the world, and especially to the kingdom of his grace, by which he secures the church, sanctifies and preserves it. The administration of both these kingdoms is put into the hands of the Messiah, and to him, doubtless, the prophet here bears witness, and to his kingdom, speaking of it as present, because sure; and because, as the Eternal Word, even before his incarnation, he was Lord of all. Concerning God's kingdom glorious things are here spoken. 1. He has other kings their royal robes; so has he, v. 1. 2. Have they their throne? So has he, v. 2. 3. Have they their enemies whom they subdue and triumph over? So has he, v. 3, 4. 4. Is it their honour to be faithful and holy? So it is his, v. 5. In singing this psalm, we forget ourselves, if we forget Christ, to whom the Father has given all power both in heaven and in earth.

1. The Lord reigneth; he is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself: the world also is established, that it cannot be moved. 2. Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting. 3. The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. 4. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea. 5. Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, for ever.

Next to the being of God, there is nothing that we are more concerned to believe and consider than God's dominion, that he is God, and that he reigns; (v. 1.) not only that he is King, of right, and is the Owner and Proprietor of all persons and things, but that he is King, in fact, and does direct and dispose of all the creatures and all their actions, according to the counsel of his own will. This is celebrated here, and in many other psalms: The Lord reigns. It is the song of the gospel-church, of the glorified church; (Rev. xiv. 6.) Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigns. Here we are told how he reigns.

1. The Lord reigns gloriously; He is clothed with majesty. The majesty of earthy princes, compared with God's terrible majesty, is but like the glimmerings of a glow-worm compared with the brightness of the sun when he goes forth in his strength. Are the enemies of God's kingdom great and formidable? Yet let us not fear them, for God's majesty will eclipse them.

2. He reigns powerfully: He is not only clothed with majesty, as a prince in his court, but he is clothed with strength, as a general in the camp. He has wherewithal to support his greatness, and to make it truly formidable. See him not only clad in robes, but clad in armour; both strength and honour are his clothing. He can do every thing, and with him nothing is impossible. (1.) With this power he has girded himself; it is not derived from any other, nor does the executing of it depend upon any other, but he has it of himself, and with it does whatsoever he pleases. Let us not fear the power of man, which is borrowed and bounded, but fear God, who is girded to kill, and cast into hell. (2.) To this power it is owing that God is now upon earth. This world also is established; it was so at first, by the creating power of God, when he founded it upon the seas; it is so still, by that Providence which upholds all things, and is a continued creation; it is so established, that though he has hanged the earth upon nothing, (Job xxvi. 7.) yet it cannot be moved; all things continue to this day, according to his ordinance. Note, The preserving of the powers of nature, and the course of nature, is what the God of nature must have the glory of; and we, who have the benefit thereof daily, are very careless and ungrateful, if we give him not the glory of it.

3. He reigns eternally; (v. 2.) Thy throne is established of old. (1.) God's right to rule the world is founded in his making it; he that gave being to it, do doubt, may give law to it, and so his title to the government is incontestable; Thy throne is established, it is a title without a flaw in it; and it is ancient, it is established of old, from the beginning of time, before any other rule, principality, or power, was erected; as it will continue, when all other rule, principality, and power, shall be put down, (1 Cor. xv. 24.) (2.) The whole administration of his government was settled in his eternal counsels, before all worlds; for he doth all according to the purpose which he purposed in himself. The chariots of Providence came down from between the mountains of brass, from those decrees which are fixed as the everlasting mountains; (Zech. vi. 1.) Thou art from everlasting, and therefore thy throne is established of old; because God himself was from everlasting, his throne and all the determinations of it were so too; for in an Eternal Mind there could not but be eternal thoughts.

4. He reigns triumphantly, v. 3, 4. We have here, (1.) A threatening storm supposed; The floods have lifted up, O Lord, (to God himself the remonstrance is made,) the floods have lifted up their voice, which speaks terror; nay, they have lifted up their waves, which speaks real danger; altitudes to a tempestuous sea, such as the wicked are compared to, Isa. lvi. 20. The heathen rage, (Ps. ii. 1.) and think to ruin the church, to overwhelm it like a deluge, to sink it like a ship at sea. The church is said to be tossed with tempests, (Isa. liv. 11.) and the floods of ungodly men make the saints afraid, Ps. xviii. 4. We may apply it to the tumults that are sometimes in our own bosoms, through which the soul is cast into disorder, and are ready to overthrow its graces and comforts, but, if the Lord reigns there, even the winds and seas shall obey him. (2.) An immoveable anchor cast in this storm; (v. 4.) The Lord himself is mighty. Let this keep our minds fixed. (1.) That God is on high, above them, which denies his safety; they cannot reach him; (xxix. 10.) it denotes also his sovereignty; they are called by his name, and are his; so if they rebel, Exod. xviii. 11. (2.) That he is mighty, does more wondrous things than the noise of many waters; they cannot disturb his rest or rule; they cannot defeat his designs and purposes. Observe, The power of the church's enemies is but as the noise of many waters; there is more of sound than substance in it; Pharaoh king of Egypt is but
PSALMS, XCIV.

This psalm was penned when the church of God was under hatches, oppressed and persecuted; and it is an appeal to God, as the Judge of heaven and earth, and an address to him, to appear for his people against his and their enemies. Two things this psalm speaks, 1. Conviction and terror to the persecutors, (v. 1-11.) showing them their danger and folly, and arguing with them. II. Comfort and peace to the persecuted, (v. 12-23.) assuring them both from God's promise, and from the psalmist's own experience, that their troubles would end well, and God would, in due time, appear to their joy, and the confusion of those who set themselves against them. In singing this psalm, we must look abroad upon the pride of oppressors with a holy indignation, and the tears of the oppressed with a holy compassion; but, at the same time, look upward to the righteous Judge, with an entire satisfaction, and look forward, to the end of all these things, with a pleasing hope.

1. 0 LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself. 2. Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud. 3. Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? 4. How long shall they utter and speak hard things? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves? 5. They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thy heritage: 6. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. 7. Yet they say, The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. 8. Understand, ye brutish among the people; and, ye fools, when will ye be wise? 9. He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? 10. He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know? 11. The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.

In these verses we have,

1. A solemn appeal to God against the cruel oppressors of his people, v. 1, 2. This speaks terror enough to them, that they have the prayers of God's people upon them, who every day and night to him to avenge them of their adversaries; and shall not he avenge them speedily? Luke xvi. 3, 7. Observe here,

1. The titles they give to God, for the encouraging of their faith in this appeal; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth; and thou Judge of the earth. We may with holiness appeal to him; for, (1.) He is Judge, supreme Judge, Judge alone, from whom every man's judgment proceeds. He that gives law, gives sentence upon every man, according to his works, by the rule of that law. He has prepared his throne for judgment. He has indeed appointed magistrates to be avengers under him; (Rom. xiii. 4.) but he is the Avenger in chief, to whom even magistrates themselves are accountable; his throne is the last refuge (the dernier resort, as the law speaks) of oppressed innocence. He is universal Judge, not of this city or country only, but Judge of the earth, of the whole earth: none are exempt from his jurisdiction; nor can it be alleged against an appeal to him in any court, that it is coram non judice—before a person not judicially qualified. (2.) He is just; as he has authority to avenge wrong, so it is his nature, and property, and honour. This also is implied in the title here given to him, and repeated with such an emphasis, O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, who will not suffer might always to prevail against right. This is a good argument why we not avenge ourselves, because God has said, Vengeance is mine; and it is dazing presumption to usurp his prerogative, and step into his throne. Rom. xii. 19. Let this alarm those who do wrong, whether with a close hand, so as not to be discover'd, or with a high hand, so as not to be controlled. There is a God, to whom vengeance belongs, who will certainly call them to an account; and let it encourage those who suffer wrong, to bear it with silence, committing themselves to him—whom judges righteously.

2. What it is they ask of God; (1.) That he would glorify himself; and get honour to his own name. Wicked persecutors thought God was withdrawn, and had forsaken the earth; "Lord," say they, "show thyself; make them known that thou art; and let the wicked be; humble; and let them be taken away." "The Lord shall avenge the cause of the afflicted; and shall cleave the heads of them that were exalted in their position." The enemies thought God was conquered, because his people were; "Lord," say they, "lift up thyself, be thou exalted in thy own strength. Lift up thyself, to be seen, to be feared; and suffer not thy name to be trampled upon and run down." (2.) That he would mortify the oppressors: Render a reward to the proud; that is, "Reckon with them for all their insinuations, and the injuries they have done to their people." These prayers are prerequisites, which speak terror to all the sons of violence. The righteous God will deal with them according to their merits.

II. An humble complaint to God of the pride and cruelty of the oppressors, and an expostulation with him concerning it, v. 3-6. Where observe,

1. The character of the enemies they complain against; they are wicked, they are workers of iniquity, they are bad, very bad, themselves, and...
therefore they hate and persecute those whose goodness shames and condemns them. These are wicked indeed, and workers of the worst iniquity, lost to all honor and virtue, who are cruel to the innocent, and hate the righteous.

2. This is their barbarous carriage which they complain of. (1.) They are insolent, and take a pleasure in magnifying themselves. They talk high, and talk big, they triumph, they speak loud things, they boast themselves, as if their tongues were their own, and their hands too, and they were accountable to none for what they say or do, and as if the day were their own, and they doubted not but to carry the cause against God and his religion.

This is distressful to the saints; that triumph and boast, are apt to speak hardly of others; but there will come a day of reckoning for all their high speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against God, his truths, and ways, and people, Jude 15. (2.) They are impious, and take a pleasure in running down God’s people because they are his; (v. 5.) “They break in pieces thy people, O Lord; break their assemblies, their estates, their families, their persons, and pieces, and do all they can to afflict thine heritage, to grieve them, to crush them, to run them down, to root them out.” God’s people are his heritage; there are those that, for his sake, hate them, and seek their ruin. This is a very good plea with God, in our intercessions for the church; “Lord, it is thine, thou hast a property in it, it is thine heritage, thou hast a pleasure in it, and out of it the rent of thy glory in this world issue.” And will thou suffer these wicked men to trample upon it thus? (3.) They are inhuman, and take a pleasure in wronging those that are least able to help themselves; (v. 6.) they not only oppress and impoverish, but they slay, the widow and the stranger; not only neglect the fatherless, and make a prey of them, but murder them, because they are weak and exposed, and sometimes lie at their mercy. Those whom they should protect from injury, they are most injurious to; perhaps because God has taken them into his particular care. Who would think it possible that any of the children of men should be thus barbarous?

3. A modest pleading with God concerning the continuance of the persecution; “Lord, how long shall they do thus?” And again, How long? When shall this wickedness of the wicked come to an end?

III. A charge of atheism exhibited against the people of God, and an expostulation with them upon that charge.

1. Their atheistical thoughts are here discovered; (v. 7.) yet they say, The Lord shall not see. Though the cry of their wickedness is very great and loud, though they rebel against the light of nature, and the dictates of their own consciences, yet they have the confidence to say, “The Lord shall not see;” he will not only wink at small faults, but shut his eyes at great ones too; or they think he has taken God it so artfully, under colour of religion and religion, perhaps, that it will not be adjudged murder. The God of Jacob, though his people pretend to have such an interest in him, does not regard it, either as against justice, or as against his own people; he will never call them to an account for it: thus denying God’s government of the world; bantering his covenant with his people, and setting the judgment to shame and falling short of it.

2. They are here convicted of folly and absurdity; he that says, either that Jehovah the living God shall not see, or that the God of Jacob shall not regard, the injuries done to his people, Nahal is his name, and folly is with him; and yet here he is fairly reasoned with, for his conviction and conversion, to prevent his confusion; (v. 8.) “Understand, ye bratish among the people, and let reason guide you.” Note, The atheistical, though they set up for wits, and philosophers, and politicians, yet are really the brutish among the people; if they would but understand, they would believe. God, by the prophet, speaks thus, as if we thought the time long till men would be men, and understood and considered; “Ye fools, when ye be wise, so wise as to know that God sees and regards all you say and do, and to speak and act accordingly, as those that must give account?” Note, None are so bad, but means are to be used for the reclaiming and reforming of them; none so brutish, so foolish, but it should be tried whether they may not yet be made wise; while there is life, there is hope.

To evidence the folly of those that question God’s omniscience and justice, the psalmist argues, (1.) From the works of creation, (v. 9.) the formation of human bodies, which, as it proves that there is a God, proves also that God has, infinitely and transcendently in himself, all those perfections that are in any creature. He that planted the ear, (and it is planted in the head, as a tree in the ground,) who he not hear? No doubt, he shall be more and better than we can. He that formed the eye, (and curiously it is formed above any part of the body anatomists know, and let us know by their dissections,) shall he not see? Could he give, would he give, that perfection to a creature which he has not in himself? Note, [1.] The powers of nature, are all derived from the God of nature. See Exod. iv. 11. [2.] By the knowledge of creatures we may be led a great way toward the knowledge of God; if, by the knowledge of our own bodies, and the organs of sense, so as to conclude, that, if we can see and hear, much more can God; then certainly by the knowledge of our own souls and their noble faculties. The gods of the heathen had eyes and saw not, ears and heard not; our God has no eyes or ears, as we have, and yet we must conclude he both sees and hears, because we have our sight and hearing from him, and are accountable to him for our use of them.

(2.) He argues from the works of providence, v. 10. He that chastises the heathen for their polytheism and idolatry, shall not he much more correct his own people for their atheism and profaneness? He that chastises the children of men for oppressing and wronging one another, shall not he correct those that profess to be his own children, and call themselves so, and yet persecute those that are really so? Shall we be under his correction, under whose government the world is? Does he regard, as King of nations, and shall he not much more regard, as the God of Jacob? Dr. Hammond gives another very probable sense of this; He that instructs the nations, that is, gives them his law, shall not he correct, shall he not judge them according to that law, and call them to an account for their violations of it? In vain was the law given, if we will not receive and regard it. Does he argue, that the same word signifies to chastise and to instruct, because chastisement is intended for instruction, and instruction should go along with chastisement.

(3.) He argues from the works of grace; He that teaches man knowledge, shall he not know? He not only, as the God of nature, has given the light of reason, but, as the God of grace, has given the light of revelation; no man what is true wisdom and understanding; and he that does this, shall he not know? Job xxxviii. 23, 28. The flowing of the streams is a certain sign of the fulness of the fountain. If all knowledge is from God, no doubt, all knowledge is in God. From this general doctrine of God’s omniscience, he not only confutes the atheists, who said, “The Lord shall not see, (v. 7.)
he will not take cognizance of what we do; but awakens us all to consider, that God will take cognizance even of what we think; (v. 11.) The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are vanity. [1.] He knows those thoughts in particular, concerning God's commanding at the wickedness of the wicked, and knows them to be vain; and laughs at the folly of those, who by such fond conceits buoy themselves up in sin. [2.] He knows all the thoughts of the children of men, and knows them to be, for the most part, vain; that the imaginations of the thoughts of men's hearts are evil, only evil, and that continually. Even in good thoughts there is a fickleness and inconstancy, which may well be called vanity. It concerns us to keep a strict guard upon our thoughts, because God takes particular notice of them. Thoughts are words to God, and vain thoughts are provocations.

12. Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law; 13. That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked. 14. For the Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance: 15. But judgment shall return unto righteousness; and all the upright in heart shall follow it. 16. Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers? or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity? 17. Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence. 18. When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O Lord, held me up. 19. In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul. 20. Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law? 21. They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood. 22. But the Lord is my defence; and my God is the rock of my refuge. 23. And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; yea, the Lord our God shall cut them off.

The psalmist, having denounced tribulation to them that trouble God's people, here assures them that they are troubled of rest. See 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. He speaks comfort to suffering saints, from God's promises and his own experience.

1. From God's promises, which are such as not only save them from being miserable, but secure a happiness to them; (v. 12.) Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest. Here he looks above the instruments of trouble, and eyes the hand of God, which gives it another name, and puts quite another colour upon it. The enemies break in pieces God's people, (v. 5.) they aim at no less; but the truth of the matter is, that God by them chastens his people, as the father the son, so by his judgments, and the persecutors are only the rod he makes use of. Howbeit they mean not so, neither doth their heart think so, Isa. x. 5.-7. Now it is here promised.

1. That God's people shall get good by their sufferings; when he chasteneth them, he will teach them, and blessed is the man who is thus taken under a divine discipline; for none teaches like God. Note, (1.) The afflictions of the saints are fatherly chastenings, designed for our instruction, reformation, and improvement. (2.) When the teachings of the word and Spirit go along with the rebukes of Providence, they then both bespeak man blessed, and help to make them so; for then they are marks of adoption, and means of sanctification. When we are chastened, we must pray to be taught, and look into the law as the best expositor of Providence. It is not the chastening itself that does good, but the teaching that goes along with it, and is the exposition of it.

2. That they should see through their sufferings; (v. 13.) That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity. Note, (1.) There is a rest remaining for the people of God after the days of their adversity, which, though they may be many and long, shall be numbered and finished in due time, and shall not last always. He that sends the trouble will send the rest, that he may comfort them according to the time that he has afflicted them. (2.) God therefore teaches his people by their troubles, that he may prepare them for deliverance, and so give them rest from their troubles; that, being reformed, they might be relieved, and the affliction, having done its work, may be removed. 3. That they shall see the ruin of those that are the instruments of their sufferings; which is the matter of a promise, not as gratifying any passion of theirs, but as redounding to the glory of God; Until the pit is digged, or rather, while the pit is in digging, for the wicked, God is ordering peace for his people in some time that he is ordering his arrows against the persecutors.

4. That though they may be cast down, yet certainly they shall not be cast off, v. 14. Let God's suffering people assure themselves of this, that whatever their friends do, God will not cast them off, nor throw them out of his covenant or out of his care; he will not forsake them, because they are his inheritance, which he will not quit his title to, nor suffer himself to be disseised of. St. Paul comforted himself with this, Rom. xi. 1.

5. That, bad as things are, they shall mend, and though they are now out of course, yet they shall return to their due and ancient channel; (v. 15.) Judgment shall return unto righteousness; the seeming disorders of Providence (for real ones there never were) shall be rectified. God's judgment, his government, looks sometimes as if it were at a distance from righteousness, while the wicked prosper, and the best men meet with the worst usage; but it shall return to righteousness again, either in this world, or, at the furthest, in the judgment of the great day, which will set all to rights. Then all the upright in heart shall be after it; they shall follow it with their praises, and with entire satisfaction; they shall return to a prosperous and flourishing condition, and shine forth out of obscurity; they shall all appropriate themselves to the glory of Divine Providence, and with suitable affections attend all its motions. They shall walk after the Lord, Hos. xi. 10. Dr. Hammond thinks this was most eminently fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem first, and afterward of heathen Rome, the crucifiers of Christ, and persecutors of Christians, and the rest which the churches had thereby; Then judgment returned even to righteousness, to Righteousness, as to God, and to God's people, who, then, were as much comforted as before, they had been troubled on.

II. From his own experiences and observations. 1. He and his friends had been oppressed by cruel and impenurious men that had power in their hands, and abused it by abusing all good people with it. They were themselves evil-doers, and workers of iniquity; (v. 16.) they abandoned them-
settles to all manner of impiety and immorality, and then their throne was a throne of iniquity, v. 20. Their dignity served to put a reputation upon sin, and their authority was employed to support it, and to bring about their wicked designs. It is pity that ever a throne, which should be a terror to evildoers, and a protection and praise to them that do well, should be the seat and shelter of iniquity. That is a throne of iniquity which, by the policy of its council, frames mischief, and by its magistracy enacts and turns it into a law. Iniquity is despised enough, even when human laws are against it, which often prove too weak to give an effectual check to it; but how insolent, how mixinuous, is it when it is backed by a law? Iniquity is not the better, but much the worse, for being enacted by law; nor will it excuse those that practise it, to say, that they did but do as they were bidden. These workers of iniquity, having framed mischief by a law, take care to see the law executed; for the seamen themselves together against the soul of the righteous, who dare not keep the statutes of Omri, nor the law of the house of Ahab; and they condemned the innocent blood for violating their decrees. See an instance in Daniel's enemies; they framed mischief by a law, when they obtained an impious edict against prayer, (Dan. vi. 7.) which when Daniel would not obey, they assembled round about him, (v. 13.) and shed innocent blood to the lions. The best benefactors of mankind have often been thus treated, under colour of law and justice, as the worst of malefactors.

2. The oppression they were under bore very hard upon them, and oppressed their spirits too. Let not suffering saints despair, though, when they are persecuted, they find themselves perplexed and cast down; it was so with the psalmist here; His wounds were wonderfully made, while his wit's end, and knew not what to say or do; he was, in his own apprehension, at his life's end, ready to drop into the grave, that land of silence. St. Paul, in a like case, received a sentence of death within himself, 2 Cor. i. 8, 9. He said, "My foot slippeth;" (v. 18.) I am going irretrievably, there is no remedy, I must fall, I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul; my hope fails me, I do not find such a death as he offers; I am not without a refuge, he says; I have not found." See Ps. lxiii. 2. He had a multitude of perplexed entangled thoughts within him concerning the case he was in, and the construction to be made of it; and concerning the course he should take, and what was likely to be the issue of it.

3. In this distress, they sought for help and succour, and some relief. (1.) They looked about for it, and were disappointed; (v. 16.) "Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? Have I any friend who, in love to me, will appear for me? Has justice any friend who, in a pious indignation at unrighteousness, will plead my injured cause?" He looked, but there was none to save, there was none to uphold. Note, When on the side of the oppressors there is power, it is no marvel if the oppressed have no comforter, none that dare own them, or speak a good word for them, Excl. iv. 1. When St. Paul was brought before Nero's throne of iniquity, no man stood by him, 2 Tim. iv. 16. (2.) They looked up for it, v. 20. They humbly expostulate with God; "Lord, shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee? Wilt thou countenance and support these tyrants in their wickedness? We know thou wilt not." A throne has fellowship with God, when it is a throne of justice, and answers the end of the erecting of it; for him kings reign, and when they reign for him, their judgments are his, and he owns them as his ministers, and whoever resists them, or rises up against them, shall receive to themselves damnation; but when it becomes a throne of iniquity, it has no fellowship with God. Far be it from the just and holy God, that he should be the Patron of those, or even of princes and those that sit in thrones; yea, though they be the thrones of the house of David.

4. They found succour and relief in God, and in him only; when other friends failed, in him they had a faithful and powerful Friend; and it is recommended to all God's suffering saints to trust in him. (1.) God helps at a dead lift; (v. 17.) "When I cried almost out of silence, then the Lord was my Help, kept me alive, kept me from falling, and I had made him my Help, by putting my trust in him, and expecting relief from him, I could never have kept possession of my own soul; but living by faith in him has kept my head above water, has given me breath, and something to say." (2.) God's goodness is the great support of sinking spirits; (v. 18.) "When I said, My foot slips in; into despair, then thy mercy, O Lord, held me up, kept me from falling, and defended the design of those who consulted to cost me down from mine excellency," ix. 4. We are beholden not only to God's power, but to his pity, for spiritual supports; Thy mercy, the gifts of thy mercy, and my hope in thy mercy, held me up. God's right hand sustains his people, when they look on their right hand and on their left, and there is no strength to be held; and we are then prepared for his gracious support, when we have opened ourselves to him, under weakness and inability to stand by our own strength, and come to God, to acknowledge it, and to tell him how our foot slips.

(3.) Divine consolations are the effectual relief of troubled spirits; (v. 19.) "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, which are noisy like a multitude, crowding and justling one another like a multitude, and very unruly and ungovernable; in the multitude of them, I will set my face." This is a gracious thought, thoughts, thy comforts delight my soul; and they are never more delightful than when they come in so seasonably to silence my unquiet thoughts, and keep my mind easy." The world's comforts give but little delight to the soul, when it is hurried with melancholy thoughts, they are songs to a heavy heart; but God's comforts will reach the soul, and not the fancy only, and will bring with them that peace and satisfaction for which the smiles of the world cannot give, and which the frowns of the world cannot take away.

5. God is, and will be, as a righteous Judge, the Patron and Protector of right, and the Punisher and Avenger of wrong; this the psalmist had both the assurance of and the experience of.

(1.) He will right the injured; (v. 22.) "When none else will, or can, or dare, shelter me, The Lord is my Defence, to preserve me from the evil of my troubles, from sinking under them, and being ruined by them; and he is the Rock of my refuge, in the clefts of which I may take shelter, and on the top of which I may set my feet, to be out of the reach of danger." God is his people's Refuge; to whom they may flee, in whom they are safe, and may be secure; he is the Rock of their refuge, so strong, so firm, impregnable, immovable, as a rock; natural fastnesses sometimes exceed artificial fortifications.

(2.) He will recompense with the injurious; (v. 23.) He shall render to them their own iniquity; he shall deal with them according to their deserts; and that very mischief which they did and designed against God's people, shall be brought upon themselves; it follows, He shall cut them off in their wickedness. A man cannot be more miserable than his own wickedness will make him, if God visit it upon him; it will cut him in the remembrance of it; it will cut him off in the recompense of it. This the psalmists.
concludes with the triumphant assurance of; Yea, the Lord our God, who takes our part, and owns us for his, shall cut them off from any fellowship with him, and so shall make them completely miserable, and their pomp and power shall stand them in no stead.

**PSALM XC V.**

For the expounding of this psalm we may borrow a great deal of light from the apostle’s discourse, (Heb. iii. and iv.) it appears both to have been penned by David, and to have been calculated for the days of the Messiah; for it is there said expressly, (Heb. iv. 7.) that the day here spoken of, (v. 7.) is to be understood of the gospel-day, in which God speaks to us by his Son, in a voice which is heard in the earth, as all the psalms are to be heard beside that of Canaan. In singing psalms, it is intended, 1. That we should make melody unto the Lord: this we are excited to do, and assisted in doing, being called upon to praise God, (v. 1, 2.) as a great God, (v. 3-5.) and as our gracious Benefactor, v. 6. 2. That we should teach and admonish ourselves, and one another; and we are taught and warned to hear God’s voice, (v. 7.) and not to harden our hearts, as the Israelites in the wilderness did, (v. 2, 5.) lest we fall under God’s wrath, and fall short of his rest, as they did, v. 10. 11. This psalm must be sung with a holy reverence of God’s majesty, and a dread of his justice, with a desire to please him, and a fear to offend him.

1. **O COME, let us sing unto the Lord;** let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. 2. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. 3. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. 4. In his hand are the deep places of the earth; the strength of the hills is his also. 5. The sea is his, and he made it; and his hands formed the dry land. 6. O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. 7. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

The psalmist says, as often elsewhere, stirs up himself and others to praise God; for it is a duty which ought to be performed by the most lively affections, and which we have great need to be excited to, being very often backward to it, and cold in it. Observe, 1. How God is to be praised. 1. With holy joy and delight in him. The praising song must be a joyful noise; (v. 1.) and again, v. 2. Spiritual joy is the heart and soul of thankful praise. It is the will of God, (such is the condescension of his grace,) to have glory to him, as a Being infinite, perfect and blessed, we should at the same time, rejoice in him, as our Father and King, and a God in covenant with us. 2. With humble reverence and a holy awe of him; (v. 6.) "Let us worship, and bow down, and kneel before him, as becomes those who know what an infinite distance there is between us and God, how much we are in danger of his wrath, and in need of his mercy." Though bodily exercise, as the psalmist sets little, yet certainly it is our duty to glorify God with our bodies by the outward expressions of reverence, seriousness, and humility, in the duties of religious worship. 3. We must praise God with our voice; we must speak forth, sing forth, his praises out of the abundance of a heart filled with love, and joy, and thankfulness; Sing to the Lord, make a noise, a joyful noise to him, with psalms; as those who are ourselves much affected with his greatness and goodness, are forced to own ourselves so, are desirous to be more and more affected therewith, and would willingly be instrumental to kindle and inflame the same pious and devout affection in others also. 4. We must praise God in concert, in the solemn nature of it; "Come, let us sing; let us join in singing to the Lord; not others without me, nor I alone, but others with me. Let us come together before his presence, in the courts of his house, where his people are wont to attend him, and to expect his manifestations of himself." Whenever we come into God’s presence, we must come with thanksgiving that we are admitted to such a favour; and whenever we come before God’s presence, let us set ourselves before him, and present ourselves to him in the ordinances which he has appointed.

II. Why God is to be praised, and what must be the matter of our praise; we do not want matter, it was well if we did not want a heart. We must praise God,

1. Because he is a great God, and Sovereign Lord of all, v. 3. He is great, and therefore greatly to be praised. He is infinite and immense, and has all perfection in himself. (1.) He has great power; he is a great King above all gods; above all deputed deities, all magistrates, to whom he said, Ye are gods; he manages them all, and serves his own purposes by them, and to him they are all accountable; above all counterfeit deities, all pretenders, all usurpers; he can do that which none of them can do; he can do, and will, famish and vanquish them all. (2.) He has great possessions. This lower world is here particularly specified; we reckon those great men who have large territories, which they call their own against all the world, which yet are a very insconsiderable part of the universe; how great then is that God whose the whole earth is, and the fulness thereof; not only under whose feet it is, as he has an incontestable dominion over all the creatures, and a property in them, but in whose hand it is, as he has the actual directing and disposing of all; (v. 4.) even the deep places of the earth, which are out of our sight, subterraneous springs and mines, are in his hand; and the height of the hills, which are out of our reach, whatever grows or feeds upon them, is his also. This may be taken figuratively; the meanness of the children of men, who are as the low places of the earth, are not beneath his cognizance; and the greatest, who are as the strength of the hills, are not above his control. Whatever strength is in any creature, it is derived from God, and employed for him; (v. 5.) The sea is his, and all that is in it; (the waves fulfil his word;) it is his, for he made it, gathered its waters, and fixed its shores; the dry land, though given to the children of men, is his too, for he still reserved the property to himself; it is his, for his hands formed it, when his word made the dry land appear. He is the Author of all, and without dispute, the Owner of all. This being a gospel psalm, we may very well suppose that it is the Lord Jesus whom we are here taught to praise; he is a great God; the Mighty God is one of his titles, and God over all, blessed for evermore; as Mediator, he is a great King above all gods; by him kings reign; and angels, principalities, and powers, are subject to him; by him, as the Eternal Word, as the Author of all things, all the universe is subject to him, he should be the Restorer and Reconciler of all, who was the Creator of all, Col. i. 16, 20. To him all power is given both in heaven and in earth, and into his hand all things are delivered. It is he that sets one foot on the sea, and the other on the earth, as sovereign Lord of both; (Rev. x. 2.) and therefore to him we must sing our songs of praise, and before him we must worship and bow down.
2. Because he is our God; not only has a dominion over us, as he has over all the creatures, but stands in special relation to us; (v. 7.) He is our God, and therefore it is expected we should praise him: who will, if we do not? What else did he make us for, but that we should be to him for a name and a praise?

(1.) He is our Creator, and the Author of our being; we must kneel before the Lord our Maker, v. 6. He knelt before some texts which they themselves made; we kneel before a God who made us and all the world; and who is therefore our rightful Proprietor; for his we are, and not our own.

(2.) He is our Saviour, and the Author of our blessedness. He is here called the Rock of our salvation; (v. 1.) not only the Founder, but the very Foundation, of that Work of wonder, on whom it is built. That Rock is Christ; to him therefore we must sing our songs of praises, to him also upon the throne, and to the Lamb.

(3.) We are therefore his, under all possible obligations; we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand; all the children of men are so; they are fed and led by his providence, which cares for them, and conducts them, as the shepherd the sheep. We must praise him, not only because he made us, but because he preserves and maintains us, and our breath and ways are in his hand. All the church's children are in a special manner so; Israel are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand; and therefore he demands their homage in a special manner. The gospel-church is his flock, Christ is the great and good Shepherd of it; we, as Christians, are led by his hand into the green pastures, by him we are protected and well-provided for, to his honour and service we are entirely devoted as a peculiar people, and therefore to him must be glory in the churches, (whether it be in the world or no,) throughout all ages, Eph. iii. 21.

7. — To-day, if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness. When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: 11. Unto whom I sware in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest.

The latter part of this psalm, which begins in the middle of a verse, is an exhortation to those that sing gospel-psalms to live gospel-lives, and to hear the voice of God's word; otherwise, how can they expect that he should hear the voice of their prayers and praises?

Observe, 1. The duty required of all those that are the people of Christ's pasture, and the sheep of his hand. He expects that they hear his voice, for he has said, My sheep hear my voice, John x. 27. We are his people, say they. Are you so? Then hear his voice. If you call him Master, or Lord, then do the things which he says, and be his willing obedient people. Hear the voice of his doctrine, of his law, and, in both, of his Spirit; hear and heed; hear and yield, Hear his voice, and not the voice of a stranger. If you will hear his voice, to-day, as a wise man; that you would hear his voice! That ye should be so wise, and do so well for yourselves; like that, If thou hadst known; (Luke xix. 42.) that is, Oh that thou hadst known! Christ's voice must be heard to-day; this the Apostle lays much stress upon, applying it to the gospel-day. While he is speaking to you, see that you attend to him, for this day of your opportunities will not last always; improve it therefore, while it is called to-day, Heb. iii. 13, 15. Hearing the voice of Christ is the same with believing; To-day, if by faith you accept the gospel offer, well and good, but to-morrow it may be too late. In a matter of such vast importance, nothing more dangerous than delay.

II. The sin they are warned against, as inconsistent with the believing obedient ear required, and that is, hardness of heart. If ye will hear his voice, and profit by what you hear, then do not harden your hearts; for the seed sown on the rock never brought any fruit to perfection. The Jews therefore believed not the gospel of Christ, because their hearts were hardened; they were blind to the evil of sin, and of their danger by reason of sin, and therefore they regarded not the offer of salvation; they would not bend to the yoke of Christ, nor yield to his demands; and, if the sinner's heart be hardened, it is his own act and deed, (he hardening it himself,) and he alone shall bear the blame for ever.

III. The example they are warned by, which is that of the Israelites in the wilderness: Take heed of sinning likewise; and, if ever you did, lest you be shut out of the everlasting rest, as they were out of Canaan. Be not, as your fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, ix. 8. Thus here, Harden not your heart, as you did, that is, your ancestors, in the provocation, or in Meribah, the place where they quarrelled with God and Moses, (Exod. xvii. 2-7.) and in the day of temptation in the wilderness, v. 8. So often did they provoke God by their distrusts and murmuring, that the whole time of their continuance in the wilderness might be called a day of temptation, or Massah, the other name given to that place, (Exod. xvii. 7.) because they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us, or is he not? This was in the wilderness, where they could not help themselves, but lay at God's mercy, and where God wonderfully helped them, and gave them such sensible proofs of his power, and tokens of his favour, as never any people had before or since.

Note. 1. Days of temptation and days of provocation: nothing is more offensive to God than disbelief of his promise, and despair of the performance of it, because of some difficulties that seem to lie in the way. 2. The more experience we have had of the power and goodness of God, the greater is our sin, if we distrust him. What, to tempt him in the wilderness, where we live upon him! This is as monstrous as it is absurd and unreasonable. 3. Hardness of heart is at the bottom of all our distrusts of God, and quarrels with him. That is a hard heart which receives not the impressions of divine discoveries, and conforms not to the intentions of the divine will, which will not melt, which will not bend. 4. The sins of others ought to be warnings to us not to tread in their steps. The murmings of Israel were written for our admonition, 1 Cor. x. 11.

Now here observe,

(1.) The charge drawn up, in God's name, against the unbelieving Israelites, v. 9, 10. God here, many ages after, complains of their ill conduct toward him, with the expressions of high resentment. [1.] Their sin was unbelief: they tempted God and provoked him; they questioned whether they might take his word, and insisted upon further inquiry, he being called forward to Canaan, by sending spies; when those discouraged them, they protested against the sufficiency of the divine power and promises; and would make a captain, and return into Egypt, Numb. xiv. 3, 4. This is called rebel
PSALMS, XCVI.

This psalm is part of that which was delivered into the hand of Asaph and his brethren; (1 Chron. xvi. 7.) by which it appears, both that David was the penman of it, and that it has reference to the bringing up of the ark to the city of David. Whether that long psalm was made first, and this afterward taken out of it, or this made first, and afterward borrowed to make up that, is not certain; but this is certain, that, though it was sung at the translation of the ark, it looks farther, to the kingdom of Christ, and is designed to celebrate the glories of that kingdom, especially that of the constitution of it, of which the apostle, in Heb. x. 1. 2. speaks. A call given to all people to praise God, to worship him, and give glory to him, as a great and glorious God, v. 1.-9. II. Notice given to all people of God's universal government and judgment, which ought to be the matter of universal joy, v. 10.-18. In singing this psalm, we ought to have our hearts filled with great and high thoughts of the glory of God and the grace of the gospel, and with an entire satisfaction in Christ's sovereign dominion, and in the expectation of the judgment to come.

1. **O** SING unto the LORD a new song; sing unto the LORD all the earth.

2. Sing unto the LORD, bless his name: show forth his salvation from day to day.

3. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.

4. For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. 5. For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens.

6. Honour and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

7. Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength; 8. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts.

9. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him all the earth.

These verses will be best expounded by pious and devout affections working in our souls toward God, with a high veneration for his majesty and transcendent excellence. The call here given us to praise God is very lively, the expressions are raised and repeated, to all which the echo of a thankful heart should make agreeable returns. We are here required to honour God.

1. With songs, v. 1, 2. Three times we are here called to sing unto the LORD: sing to the Father, to the Son, to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, when the morning stars sang together, is now, in the church triumphant, and shall be, in the church triumphant. We have reason to do it often, and we have need to be often reminded of it, and stirred up to it. Sing unto the LORD, that is, "Bless his name, speak well of him, that you may bring..."
others to think well of him." 1. Sing a new song, an excellent song, the product of new affections, clothed with new expressions. We speak of nothing more desirable than an old song, but the newness of a song recommends it; for there we expect something surprising. A new song is a song for new favours, for those compassion which are new every morning. A new song is a New Testament song, a song of praise for the new covenant, and the precious privileges of that covenant. A new song is a song that shall be ever new, and shall never wax old or vanish away; it is an everlasting song, that shall never be antiquated, or out of date. 2. Let all the earth sing this song, not the Jews only, to whom the covenant was given, but all the Gentiles also; his worshippers, who could not sing the Lord's song in [would not sing it to] a strange land; but let all the earth, all that are redeemed from the earth, learn and sing this new song, Rev. xiv. 3. This is a prophecy of the calling of the Gentiles; all the earth shall have this new song put into their mouths, shall have both cause and call to sing it. 3. Let the subject-matter of this song be his salvation; the great salvation which was to be wrought out by the new and living way of Jesus; that must be showed forth as the cause of this joy and praise. 4. Let these songs be sung constantly, and not only in the times appointed for the solemn feasts, but from day to day; it is a subject that can never be exhausted. Let day unto day utter this speech, that, under the influence of gospel-devotions, we may daily exemplify a gospel-conversation.

II. With sermons, (v. 3.) Declare his glory among the heathen, even his wonders among all people. 1. Salvation by Christ is here spoken of as a work of wonder, and that in which the glory of God shines very bright; in showing forth that salvation, we declare God's glory as it shines in the face of Christ. 2. This salvation was, in the Old Testament times, as heaven's happiness is now, a glory to be revealed; but, in the fulness of time, it was declared, and a full discovery made of that even to babes, which prophets and kings desired and wished to see, and might not. 3. What was then discovered was declared only among the Jews, but it is now declared among the heathen, among all people; the nations which long sat in darkness now see this great light. The apostles' commission to preach the gospel to every creature, is copied from this here; Declare his glory among the heathen.

III. With religious services, v. 7-9. Hitherto, though in every nation they that feared God, and wrought righteousness, were accepted of him, yet instituted ordinances were the peculiarities of the Jewish religion: but, in gospel-times, the kindreds of the people shall be invited and admitted into the service of God, and be as welcome as ever the Jews were. The court of the Gentiles shall no longer be an outward court, but shall be had in common with the court of Israel. All the earth is here summoned to fear the Lord, to worship him according to his appointment. Let every one offered to his name, Mal. i. 11. Zech. xiv. 17. Isa. lxxvi. 23. This indeed spake mortification to the Jews, but withal it gave a prospect of that which would redound very much to the glory of God, and to the happiness of mankind.

Now observe how the acts of devotion to God are here described. 1. We must give unto the Lord; not as if God needed any thing, or could receive any thing, for he is full, and he gives not that which is his own before; much less be benefitted by it; but we must, in our best affections, adorations, and services, return to him what we have received from him, and do it freely, as what we give; for God loves a cheerful giver. It is debt, it is rent, it is tribute, it is what must be paid, and, if not, will be recovered, and yet if it come from holy love, God is pleased to accept it as a gift. 2. We must acknowledge God to be the sovereign Lord, and pay homage to him accordingly; (v. 7.) Give unto the Lord glory and strength, glory and eminence, or dominion, so sense. As king, he is of the red with rebes of glory, and girt with the girdle of power, and we must submit to both; Thine is the kingdom, and therefore thine is the power and the glory. "The giving to God, do not take it to yourselves, nor give it to any creature." 3. We must give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name, that is, to the discovery he has been pleased to make of himself to the children of men. In all the acts of religious worship, this he expects, which we must aim at, to honour God, to pay him some of that revenue which he gives us to use him as the best of beings, and the Fountain of our being. 4. We must bring an offering into his courts. We must bring ourselves in the first place; the offering up of the Gentiles, Rom. xvi. 16. We must offer up the sacrifices of praise continually, (Heb. xiii. 15.) must often appear before God in public worship, and never appear before him empty. 5. We must worship him in the beauty of holiness, in the solemn beauty of holiness, as it is always religiously observed, the beauty of which is their holiness, that is, their conformity to the rule: we must worship him with holy hearts, sanctified by the grace of God, devoted to the glory of God, and purified from the pollutions of sin. 6. We must fear before him; all the acts of worship must be performed from a principle of the fear of God, and with a holy awe and reverence.

In the midst of these calls to praise God, and give glory to him, glorious things are here said of him, both as motives to praise and matter of praise. The Lord is great, and therefore greatly to be praised, (v. 4.) and to be feared; great and honourable to his attendants, great and terrible to his adversaries. Even the new song proclaims God great as well as good; for his goodness is his glory; and when the everlasting gospel is preached, this is it, Fear God, and give glory to him, Rev. xiv. 6, 7. (1.) He is great in his sovereignty over all that pretend to be deities; none dare vie with him; He is to be feared above all gods, all princes, who were often defied after their deaths, and even while they lived were adored as petty gods; or rather, all idols, the gods of the nations, v. 5. All the earth being called to sing the new song, they must be convinced that the Lord Jehovah, to whose honour they must sing it, is the One only living and true God, infinitely above all rivals and pretenders; he is great, and they are little; he is all, and they are nothing; so the word used for idols signifies; for we know that an idol is nothing in the world, 1 Cor. viii. 4. (2.) He is great in his right, even to the noblest part of the creation; for it is his own work, and derives its being from him: The Lord made the heavens, and all their hosts; they are the work of his fingers, (vii. 3.) so nicely, so curiously, as they may be great, and yet may be little, and of no fashion or form; the creatures of men's fancies; but our God, the Creator of the sun, moon, and stars, those lights of heaven, which they imagined to be gods, and worshipped as such. (3.) He is great in the manifestation of his glory both in the upper and lower world; among his angels in heaven, and his saints on earth; (v. 6.) Splendour and majesty are before him, in his immediate presence above, where the angels cover their faces, as unable to bear the dazzling lustre of that glory. Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary, both that above and this below. In God there is everything that is awful, and yet every thing that is amiable. If we attend him in his sanctuary, we shall behold his beauty, for God is Love, and experience his
strength, for he is our Rock. Let us therefore go forth, in his strength, enwrapped with his beauty.

10. Say among the heathen, that the Lord reigneth: the world also shall be established; that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously. 11. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. 12. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice. 13. Before the Lord: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth; he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.

We have here instructions given to those who were to preach the gospel to the nations, what to preach; or to those who had themselves received the gospel, what account to give of it to their neighbors, what to say among the heathen; and it is an illustrious prophecy of the setting up of the kingdom of Christ upon the ruins of the Devil's kingdom, which began immediately after his ascension, and will continue in the doing till the mystery of God be finished.

1. Let it be told that the Lord reigns, the Lord Christ reigns, that King whom God determined to set upon his holy hill of Zion. See how this was first said among the heathen by Peter, Acts iv. 6. Some of the ancients added a gloss to this, which by degrees crept into the text, The Lord reigneth from the tree; so Justin Martyr, Austin, and others, quote it; meaning the cross, when he had this title written over him, The King of the Jews. It was because he became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, that God exalted him, and gave him a name above every name, a throne above every throne. Some of the heathen came to inquire after him that was born King of the Jews, Matt. ii. 2. Now let them know that he is come, and his kingdom is set up.

2. Let it be told that Christ's government will be the world's happy settlement; The world also shall be established, that it shall not be moved. The natural world shall be established; the standing of the world, and its stability, are owing to the mediation of Christ. Sin had given it a shock, and still threatens his ruin: Christ as its own parent, unites all things, and preserves the course of nature. The world of mankind shall be established, shall be preserved, till all that belong to the election of grace are called in, though a guilty provoking world. The Christian religion, as far as it is embraced, shall establish states and kingdoms, and preserve good order among men. The church in the world shall be established, (so some,) that it cannot be moved; for as it is by a rock; and the grass of heaven shall never prevail against it; it is a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

3. Let them be told that Christ's government will be incontestably just and righteous; He shall judge the people righteously, (v. 10.) judge the world with righteousness and with his truth, v. 13. Judging is here put for ruling; and though this may be extended to the general judgment of the world at the last, it has an especial reference to the Messianic (v. 3. v. 5.) yet it refers more immediately to Christ's first coming, and the setting up of his kingdom in the world by the gospel. He says himself, For judgment am I come into this world; (John ix. 39.—xii. 31.) and declares that all judgment was committed to him, John v. 22, 27. His ruling and judging with righteousness and truth, signifies, (1.) That all the laws and ordinances of his kingdom shall be consonant to the rules and principles of eternal truth and equity, that is, to the rectitude and justice of God. (2.) That his administrations of government shall be just and faithful, and according to what he has said. (3.) That he shall rule in the hearts and consciences of men by the commanding power of truth, and the Spirit of righteousness and sanctification. When Pilate asked our Saviour, Art thou a king? he answered, For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness into the truth; (John xviii. 37.) he ruled by his truth, commands men's wills by informing their judgments.

4. Let them be told that his coming draws nigh; that this King, this Judge, standeth before the door, for he cometh, for he cometh. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, said so, Behold, the Lord cometh, Judges 14. Between this and his first coming the revolutions of many ages intervened, and yet he came at the set time, and so sure will his second coming be; though it is now long since it was said, Behold, he comes in the clouds, (Rev. i. 7.) and he is not yet come. See 2 Pet. iii. 4, &c.

5. Let them be called upon to rejoice in this honour that is put upon the Messiah, and this great trust that is to be lodged in his hand; (v. 11, 12.) Let heaven and earth rejoice, the sea, the field, and all the trees of the wood. The dialect here is poetical; the meaning is, (1.) That the days of the Messiah will be joyful days, and, as far as his grace and government extend, will bring joy along with them; we have reason to give that place, that soul, joy, into which Christ was admitted. See an instance of both; (Acts viii.) when Somaria received the gospel, there was great joy in that city; (v. 8.) and when the eunuch was baptized, he went on his way rejoicing, v. 39. (2.) That it is the duty of every one of us to bid Christ and his kingdom welcome; for though they come conquering and to conquer, yet they come peacefully. Hosanna, Blessed be he that cometh; and again, Hosanna, Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, Mark xi. 9, 10. Not only let the daughter of Zion rejoice that her King cometh, (Zech. ix. 9.) but let all rejoice. (3.) That the whole creation will have reason to rejoice in the setting up of Christ's kingdom, even the sea, and the field; for as by the sin of the first Adam the whole creation was made subject to vanity, so by the presence of the second Adam it shall, some day, to his honor, and we make the last, be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God, Rom. viii. 20, 21. (4.) That there will, in the first place, be joy in heaven, joy in the presence of the angels of God; for when the First-begotten was brought into the world, they sang their anthems to his praise, Luke ii. 14. (5.) That God will graciously accept the holy joys and praises of all the Candidate for glory, and the children of the kingdom of Christ, be their capacity ever so mean. The sea can but roar, and how the trees of the wood can show that they rejoice, I know not; but he that searches the heart knows what is the mind of the Spirit, and understands the language, the broken language, of the weakest.

PSALM XCVI.

This psalm dwells upon the same subject, and is set to the same tune, with the foregoing psalm. Christ is the Alpha and the Omega of both; they are both penned, and are both to be sung, to the same key and air of Messianic time. (v. 31.) yet it refers more immediately to Christ's first coming, and the setting up of his kingdom in the world by the gospel. He says himself, For judgment am I come into this world; (John ix. 39.—xii. 31.) and declares that all judgment was committed to him, John v. 22, 27. His ruling and judging with righteousness and truth, signifies, (1.) That all the laws and ordinances of his kingdom
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THE LORD reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad therefor. 2. Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. 3. A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about. 4. His lightnings enlighten the world: the earth saw, and trembled. 5. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the LORD of the whole earth. 6. The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory. 7. Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him all ye gods.

What was to be said among the heathen in the forementioned psalm, (xvi. 10.) is here said again, (v. 1.) and is made the subject of this psalm, and of psalm xcix. The LORD reigns; that is the great truth here laid down. The Lord Jehovah reigns; he that made the world governs it; he that gave being gives motion and power, gives law and commission, gives success and event; every man's judgment proceeds from the Lord, from his counsel and providence, and in all affairs, both public and private, he performs the thing which he himself has appointed. The Lord Jesus reigns; the providential kingdom is twisted in with the mediatorial, and the administration of both is in the hand of Christ; who therefore is both the Head of the church, and Head over all things to the church. The kingdom of Christ is so constituted, that,

I. It may be matter of joy to all; and it will be so, if he be not their own lust. Let the earth rejoice; for hereby it is established; (xcvii. 10.) it is hallowed and enriched; and, indeed, rescued from the vanity which by sin it is made subject to. Not only let the people of Israel rejoice in him, as King of the Jews, and the daughter of Zion, as her King, but let all the earth rejoice in his elevation; for the kingdoms of the world shall, more or less, sooner or later, become his kingdoms; let the multitude of isles, the many or great isles, be glad thereof. This is applicable to our country, which is a great isle, and has many belonging to it; however, it speaks comfort in general to the Gentiles, whose countries are called the isles of the Gentiles, Gen. x. 5. There is enough in Christ for the multitude of the isles to rejoice in; for though many have been made happy in him, yet still there is room.

All have reason to rejoice in Christ's government. 1. In the equity of it. • There is an incontestable justice in all the acts of his government, both legislative and judicial; sometimes indeed clouds and darkness are round about him, his dispensations are altogether unaccountable, his way is in the sea, and his faith in the great waters; we are not aware of what he designs, what he drives at; nor is it fit that we should be let into the secrets of his government; there is a depth in his counsels which we must not pretend to fathom; but still righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne; a golden temple of just reigns beyond the reach of any but his administration. In this he resides, for it is his habitation. In this he rules, for it is the habitation of his throne. His commandments are, and will be, all righteous. Righteousness and judgment are the basis of his throne; (so Dr. Hammond,) for there-

for his throne is for ever and ever, because his sceptre is a right sceptre, xlv. 6. The throne is established in righteousness. Even the heavens declare his righteousness; (v. 5.) it is as conspicuous and as illustrious as the heavens themselves. The angels of heaven will declare it, who are employed as messengers in the administration of his government, and to make mention of his acts, of both his creatures. His righteousness is incontestable; for who can contradict or dispute what the heavens declare? I. 6.

2. In the extent of it in the upper and lower world.

(1.) All the men on earth are under his government; either he is served by them, or he serves himself by them. All the people see his glory, or see in him, v. 2. The glory of God, the face of Christ, was made to shine in distant countries, among many people, more or less, among all people; the gospel was preached, for aught we know, in all languages, Acts ii. 5, 11. Miracles were wrought in all nations, and so all the people saw his glory. Have they not heard? Rom. x. 18.

(2.) All the angels in heaven are so; perhaps we should not have found this truth in those words, Heb. i. 6.) to worship him all ye gods, if we had not been directed to it by the inspired apostle, who, from the Septuagint version of those words, makes the Messiah to be introduced into the upper world, at the ascension, with this charge, (Heb. i. 6.) Let all the angels of God worship him; which helps us to a key to this whole psalm, and shows us that it must be applied to the exalted Redeemer, who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; which intimates that all power is given him both in heaven and earth, angels, and all visible and invisible powers being made subject unto him, 1 Pet. iii. 22. This speaks the honour of Christ, that he has such worshippers; and the honour of all good Christians, that they have such fellow-worshippers.

II. Christ's government, though it may be matter of joy to all, will yet be matter of terror to some, and it is their own fault that it is so, v. 3–5, 7. Observe;

When the kingdom of Christ was to be set up in the world, after his ascension, it would meet with many enemies, and much opposition would be given to it. He that reigns to the joy of the whole earth, yet, as he has his subjects, so he has his enemies, (v. 3.) that not only will not have him to reign over them, but would not have him to reign at all; that not only will not enter into the kingdom of heaven themselves, but do all they can to hinder those that are entering, Mat. xxv. 13. This was fulfilled in the calamities of the unbelieving Jews to the gospel of Christ, and the violent persecution which in all places they stirred up against the preachers and professors of it. These enemies are here called hills, (v. 5.) for their height and strength, and immoveable obstinacy. They were the princes of this world that crucified the Lord of glory, 1 Cor. ii. 8. Ps. ii. 2.

2. The opposition which the Jews gave to the setting up of Christ's kingdom turned to their own ruin. Their persecuting of the apostles, and forbidding them to speak to the Gentiles, filled up their sin, and brought wrath upon them to the uttermost, 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16. That wrath is here compared, (1.) To consuming fire which goes before him, and burns up his enemies, that have made themselves like chaff and stubble, and have set the briers and thorns before him in battle, Isa. xxvii. 4. This fire毁灭ing fire proceeds from his presence, it goes down upon the hills, but will even melt the hills themselves like wax, v. 5. When our God appears as a consuming Fire, even rocks will be wax before him. The most resolute and daring opposition will be baffled at the presence of the Lord. His very pro-
sence is enough to shame and sink it, for he is the Lord of the whole earth, by whom all the children of men are manageable, and to whom they are accountable. Men hate and persecute God's people, because they think him absent; that the Lord has forsaken the earth; but when he manifests his presence, his glory, and his power, he is feared by all his people, and delights in them, as the sun does in all his  

The earth saw and trembled, and the ears of all that heard were made to tingle. This was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nations by the Romans, about forty years after Christ's resurrection, which, like fire, wholly destroyed their people, and, destroying all their neighbours; (Deut. xxxix. 24.) but the heavens declare God's righteousness in it, and all the people, to this day, see his glory, in those last remaining monuments of his justice, the scattered Jews.

3. Idolaters also would be put to confusion by the setting up of Christ's kingdom; (v. 7.) Confounded be all they who serve graven images, the Gentile-world, who did service to them that by nature are no gods, (Gal. iv. 20.) who boast themselves of idols as their protectors, and therefore will not cease to serve idols, or to set up their graven images, till they are ashamed of them. Let them be ashamed that serve graven images. (1.) This is a prayer for the conversion of the Gentiles, that those who have been so long serving dumb idols may be convinced of their error, ashamed of their folly, and may, by the power of Christ's gospel, be brought to serve the only living and true God, and may be as much ashamed of their idols as ever they were proud of them. See Isa. ii. 20, 21. (2.) This is a prophecy of the ruin of those that would not be reformed and reclaimed from their idolatry; they shall be confounded by the destruction of paganism in the Roman empire, which was fulfilled about three hundred years after Christ, so much to the terror of idolaters, that some think it was the revolution under Constantine that made even the mighty men say to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us, Rev. vi. 15, 16. This prayer and prophecy are still in force against antichristian idolaters, who may here read their doom; Confounded be all they that worship graven images. See Jer. xviii. 13.

8. Sion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced, because of thy judgments, O Lord. 9. For thou, Lord, art high above all the earth; thou art exalted far above all gods. 10. Ye that love the Lord, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked. 11. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. 12. Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

The kingdom of the Messiah, like the pillar of cloud and fire, as it has a dark side toward the Egyptians, so it has a bright side toward the Israel of God, that it may be kept up in spite of opposition; and then the earth saw and trembled, (v. 4.) but Zion heard, and was glad, very glad, to hear of the conversion of some, and of the confusion of others, that is, the conquest of all that stood it out against Christ. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; for, behold, thy king comes unto thee, Zech. ix. 9. And not Zion only, where the temple was, but even the daughters of Judah, rejoiced; the common people, the inhabitants of the villages, they shall triumph in Christ's victories. The command (v. 1.) is, Let the earth rejoice; but it is only the sons of Zion and the daughters of Judah that do rejoice. All should bid the kingdom of the Messiah welcome, but few do. No heaven can be without sinner.

I. The reasons that are given for Zion's joy in the government of the Redeemer. The faithful servants of God may well rejoice and be glad; 1. Because God is glorified, and whatever rewards to his honour is very much his people's pleasure. They rejoice because of thy judgments, O Lord; which may take in both the judgments of his mouth, and the judgments of his hand, the word of his gospel, and his works wrought for the propagating of it, the miracles, and marvellous providences; for in these we must own, 'Thou, Lord, art high above all the earth; (v. 9.) thou hast manifested thy sovereignty in the kingdom of nature, and thy command of all its powers; and thy dominion over all nations, over all hearts; thou art exalted above all gods; all deputed gods, that is, princes; all counterfeit gods, that is, idols. The exaltation of Christ, and the advancement of God's glory among men thereby are made manifest, and hơn all, the glory of the kingdom of God, which is the mighty work of God to save his people.'

2. Because care is taken for their safety. Those that pay allegiance to Christ, as a King, shall be sure of his protection; princes are the shields of the earth, Christ is so to his subjects, they may put their trust under his shadow, and rejoice in it; for, (v. 10.) He preserves the souls of the saints; he preserves their lives as long as he has any work for them to do, and wonderfully delivers them many a time out of the hand of the wicked, their persecutors that thirst after their blood; for precision in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. But something more is meant than their lives; for they that will be his disciples must be willing to lay down their lives, and not inden for the securing of them. It is the immortal soul that Christ preserveth, the inward man, which may be renewed more and more when the outward man decays. He will preserve the souls of his saints from sin, from apostasy, and despair, under their greatest trials; he will deliver them out of the hands of the wicked one that seeks to devour them; he will preserve them safe to his heavenly kingdom, 2 Tim. iv. 18. They have therefore reason to be glad, being thus safe.

3. Because provision is made for their comfort; those that rejoice in Christ Jesus, and in his exultation, have fountains of joy treasured up for them, which will be opened sooner or later; (v. 11.) Light is sown for the righteous, that is, gladness for the upright in heart. The subjects of Christ's kingdom are bid to expect tribulation in the world; they must suffer by its malice, and must not share in its myrrh; yet let them know, to their comfort, that light is sown for them, it is designed and prepared for them; what is sown will come up again in due time; though, like a winter seedness, it may lie long under the cloths, and seem to be lost and buried, yet it will come up in a great season; God's goodness shall be sure of a harvest in the appointed weeks. They that sow in tears, shall, without fail, reap in joy, exxxvi. 5, 6. Christ told his disciples, at parting, (John xvi. 20.) You shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. Gladness is sure to the upright in heart, to those only that are sincere in religion. The joy of the hypocrite is but for a season; there is no serenity and joy lasting sincerity.

II. The rules that are given for Zion's joy.

1. Let it be a pure and holy joy; *Ye that love the Lord Jesus, that love his appearing and kingdom, that love his word and his exaltation, see that ye hate evil, the evil of sin, every thing that is offen-
PSALMS, XC VIII.

This psalm is to the same purport with the two foregoing psalms, and is a prophecy of the kingdom of the Messiah, and the setting of it up in the world, and the bringing of the Gentiles to it. The Chaldee entitles it a prophetic psalm. It sets forth, 1. The glory of the Redeemer, v. 1—3. II. The very need of the redeemed, v. 4—9. If we in a right manner give to Christ this glory, and upon right grounds take to ourselves this joy, in singing this psalm, we sing with understanding. If they who saw Christ's day at a distance, and in the promise only, must rejoice and triumph thus, much more reason have we to do so, when we see these things accomplished, and share in the better things provided for us, Heb. xi. 40.

A psalm.

1. O SING unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory. 2. The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen. 3. He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

We are here called upon again to sing unto the Lord a new song, as before, xcvi. 1. "Sing a most excellent song, the best song you have." Let the song of Christ's love be like Solomon's on that subject, Song. ii. 7—12: "A new song, such a song as had never been sung before; for this is a mystery which was hid from ages and generations. Converts sing a new song, very different from what they had sung; they change their wonder, and change their joy, and therefore change their note. If the grace of God put a new heart into our breasts, it will therewith put a new song into our mouths. In the new Jerusalem there will be new songs sung, that will be new to eternity, and never wax old. Let this new song be sung to the praise of God, in consideration of these four things:

1. The wonders he hath wrought; He has done marvellous things, v. 1—4. The work of our salvation by Christ is a work of wonders. If we take a view of all the steps of it, from the contrivance of it, and the counsels of God concerning it before all time, to the consummation of it, and its everlasting consequences when time shall be no more, we shall say, God has in it done marvellous things; it is all his doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. The more it is known, the more it will be admired.

2. The conquests he has won: His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him the victory, v. 5—10. In other words, the Redeemer has surmounted all the difficulties that lay in the way of our redemption, has broken through them all, and was not discouraged by the services or sufferings appointed him. He has subdued all the enemies that opposed it, has gotten the victory over Satan, disarmed him, and cast him out of his strongholds, has spoiled principalities and powers, Col. ii. 15. has taken the fury from the mighty, Isa. xlix. 24. and given death his death's wound; he has gotten a clear and complete victory, not only for himself but for us also, for we through him are more than conquerors. He got this victory by his own power, there was none to help, none to uphold, none that durst venture into the service; but his right hand and his holy arm, which are therefore always stretched out with good success, because they have nothing to do with the flesh, but in a good cause; these have gotten him the victory, have brought him relief or deliverance. God's power and faithfulness, called here his right hand and his holy arm, brought relief to the Lord Jesus, in raising him from the dead, and exalting him personally to the right hand of God; so Dr. Hammond.

3. The discoveries he has made to the world of the work of redemption. What he has wrought for us he has revealed to us, and both by his Son; the gospel-revelation is that on which the new kingdom is founded; The word which God sent, Acts x. 36. The opening of the sealed book is that which is to be celebrated with songs of praise, (Rev. v. 8.) because it was brought to light the mystery which had long been hid in God. Observe, (1.) The subject of this discovery; his salvation and his righteousness, v. 3. Righteousness and salvation are always one together, as Isa. lxii. 10—xlvii. 13.—ii. 3, 6, 8. Salvation does not stand alone, and righteousness itself, and righteousness the way in which it was wrought, by the righteousness of Christ. Or, the salvation includes all our gospel-privileges, and the righteousness all our gospel-duties: both are made known, for God has joined them together, and we must not separate them. Or, righteousness is here put for the way of our justification by Christ, which is revealed in the gospel to be by faith, Rom. i. 17. (2.) The meaning of this discovery; he has actually showed it, not in types and figures as under the law, but it is written as with a sun-beam, that he that runs may read it. Ministers are appointed to preach it with all plenitude of speech. (3.) The extent of this discovery; it is made in the sight of the heathen, and not of the Jews only; All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God; for to the Gentiles was the word of salvation sent. (4.) The end of this discovery; it is intended to fulfill the promises of the Old Testament, in this; (v. 3.) He has remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel. God had mercy in store for the seed of Abraham, and had given them many and great assurances of the kindness he designed them in the latter days; and it was in pursuance of all these, that he raised up his Son Jesus to be not only a Light to lighten the Gentiles, but the Glory of his people Israel; for he sent him, in the first place, to
bless them. God is said, in sending Christ, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember the holy covenant, Luke i. 72. It was in consideration of that, and not of their merit.

4. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth; make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. 5. Sing unto the Lord with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. 6. With trumpets, and sound of cornet, make a joyful noise before the Lord the King. 7. Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. 8. Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together. 9. Before the Lord: for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.

The setting up of the kingdom of Christ is here represented as a matter of joy and praise. 1. Let all the children of men rejoice in it, for they all have, or may have, benefit by it. Again and again we are here called upon by all ways and means possible to express our joy, and give praise in it: Make a joyful noise, as before, xcv. 1. 2. Make a loud noise, as those that are affected with those glad tidings, and are desirous to affect others with them; Rejoice and sing praise; sing Hosanna; (Matt. xxi. 9.) sing Hallelujahs, Rev. xix. 6. Let him be welcomed to the throne, as new kings are, with acclamations of joy and loud shouts, till the earth ring again, as when Solomon was proclaimed, 1 Kings i. 40. And let the shouts of the creatures, as singers and players on instruments, (Ps. lxixvii. 7.—lxviii. 25.) as is usual in such solemnities. (1.) Let sacred songs attend the new King; "Sing praise, sing with the voice of a psalm. Express your joy; thus proclaim it, thus excite it yet more, and thus propagate it among others. (2.) Let these be ass sted with sacred music, not only with the soft and gentle melody of the harp, but, since it is a victorious King, whose glory is to be celebrated, who goes forth conquering and to conquer, let him be proclaimed with the martial sound of the trumpet and cornet, v. 6. Let all this joy be directed to God, and expressed in a solemn religious manner; Make a joyful noise to the Lord, v. 4. Sing to the Lord; (v. 5.) do it before the Lord, the King, v. 6. Carnal mirth is an enemy to this holy joy. When David danced before the ark, he pleaded that it was before the Lord; and the piety and devotion of the intention not only vindicated what he did, but commend ed it. We must rejoice before the Lord, whenever we draw near to him, (Deut. xii. 12.) before the Lord Jesus, and before him, not only as the Saviour, but as the King, the King of kings, the church's King, and our King.

2. Let the inferior creatures rejoice in it, v. 7—9. This is to the same purport with what we had before set forth; Let the sea roar, and let that be called, not as it used to be, a dreadful noise, but a joyful noise; for the coming of Christ, and the salvation wrought out by him, have quite altered the property of the troubles and terrors of this world, so that when the floods lift up their voice, lift up their waves, we must not construe that to be the sea roaring against us, but rather rejoicing with us. Let the floods express their joy, as men do when they clap their hands; and let the hills that tremble for fear, before God, when he came down to give the law at mount Sinai, dance for joy, before him, when his gospel is preached, and that word of the Lord goes forth from Zion in a still small voice; Let the hills be joyful together before the Lord. This intimates that the kingdom of Christ would be a blessing to the whole creation; but that, as the inferior creatures declare the glory of the Creator, (xix. 1.) so they declare the glory of the Redeemer, for by him all things not only subsist in their being, but consist in their order. It intimates likewise, that the children of men would be wanting in paying their due respects to the Redeemer, and to God, that he might make him his honour from the sea and the floods, which would shame the stupidity and ingratitude of mankind. And perhaps respect is here had to the new heavens and the new earth, which we yet, according to his promise, look for; (2 Pet. iii. 13.) and this second mention of his coming, after the like, (Ps. xcvi.) may principally refer to his second coming, when all these things shall be dissolved as to be refined; then shall he come to judge the world with righteousness. In the prospect of that day all that are sanctified do rejoice, and even the sea, and the floods, and the hills, would rejoice, if they could. One would think that Virgil had these psalms in his eye, as well as the oracles of the Cuman Sibyl, in his fourth eclogue, where he either ignorantly, or basely, applies to Asinus Pollio the ancient prophecies, which at that time were expected to be fulfilled; for he lived in the reign of Augustus Caesar, which was the highest of Sali vour's birth. He owns they looked for the birth of a child from heaven, that should be a great blessing to the world, and restore the golden age.

Jann nova porgenes eolo demittitur alto—
A new race descends from the holy sky;
and that should take away sin;
Te deus, si qua manent acersis vestigia nostri,
Irrisa perpetuo sollicita terras—
Thou dost apply eternal care to every stain of corruption.
And free the world from alarm.

Many other things he says of this long-looking for child, which Ludovicus Vives, in his notes on that eclogue, thinks applicable to Christ; and he concludes, as the psalmist here, with a prospect of the rejoicing of the whole creation herein:

Aspice, venturo latentur ut omnia aequo—
See, how this promised age makes all rejoice.

And if all rejoice, why should not we?

PSALM XCIX.

Still we are celebrating the glories of the kingdom of God among men, and are called upon to praise him, as in the foregoing psalms; but those psalms looked forward to the times of the gospel, and prophesied of the graces and comforts of those times; this psalm seems to dwell more upon the Old Testament dispensation, and the manifestation of God's glory and grace in that. The Jews were not, in expectation of the Messiah's kingdom and the evangelical worship, to neglect the divine regi men they were then under, and the ordinances that were then given them, but in them to see God reigning, and to worship before him according to the law of Moses. Prophecies of good things to come, must nobly instruct our es teem of good things present. "To Israel indeed perhaps the promises, which they were bound to believe; but to them pertained also the giving of the law, and the service of God, which they were also bound dutifully and conscientiously, Rom. xiii. 11—12. for this they are called to do, in this psalm; where yet there is much of Christ, for the government of the church was in the hands of the Eternal Word before he was incarnate; and, besides that, he was here considered in very many respects and figures of evangelical worship. The people of Israel are here required to praise and exalt God, and to worship before him, in consideration of these two things: I. The happy constitution of the temple, and government were under, both in sacred and civil things, v. 1—5. II. Some instances of the happy administration of it, v. 6—9. In singing this psalm, we must set ourselves to exalt the name of God, as it is made known to us in the gospel, which we have much more reason to do than they had who lived under the law.
1. THE Lord reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved. 2. The Lord is great in Zion, and he is high above all people. 3. Let them praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy. 4. The king’s strength also loveth judgment; thou dost establish equity: thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob. 5. Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy.

The foundation of all religion is laid in this truth, That the Lord reigns. God governs the world by his providence, governs the church by his grace, and doeth every thing according to his will. We are to believe not only that the Lord loves, but that the Lord reigns. This is the triumph of the Christian church, and here it was the triumph of the Jewish church, that Jehovah was their King; and hence it is inferred, Let the people tremble, that is, (1.) Let even the subjects of this kingdom tremble; for the Old Testament dispensation had much of terror in it; at Mount Sinai, Israel, and even Moses himself, did tremblingly flee to God, and there he was terrible in his holy places; even when he appeared in his people’s behalf, he did terrible things. But we are not now come to that mount that burned with fire, Heb. xii. 18. Now that the Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice: then he ruled more by the power of holy fear, now of holy love. (2.) Much more let the enemies of this kingdom tremble; for he will either bring them into obedience to his golden sceptre, or crush them with his fiery sword. The Lord reigns, thou art terrible among king. Heaven and earth shall be shaken, and the Lord will be revealed in his glory. The heaven that cannot be shaken, shall remain, Heb. xii. 27. In these is continuance, Isa. lxiv. 5.

God’s kingdom, set up in Israel, is here made the subject of the psalmist’s praise.

1. God presided in the affairs of religion; He sitteth between the cherubims, (v. 1.) as on his throne, to give law by the oracles thence delivered: as on the mercy-seat, to receive petitions. This was the honour of Israel, that they had among them the Sheechinah, or special presence of God, attended by the holy angels: the temple was the royal palace, and the Holy of holies was the presence-chamber. The Lord is great in Zion; (v. 2.) there he is known and praised, (xxvi. 1, 2.) there he is adored as great, more than any where else; he is high there above all people; as that which is high is exposed to view, and looked up to, so in Zion the perfections of the divine nature appear more conspicuous and more glorious than any where else. Therefore let them that dwell in Zion, and worship there, praise thy great and terrible name, and give thee the glory due unto it, for it is holy. The holiness of God’s name makes it truly great to his friends, and terrible to his enemies, v. 3. This is that which they above adore, Holy, holy, holy.

2. He was all in all, in their civil government, v. 4. As in Jerusalem was the testimony of Israel, whether the tribes went up, so there were set thrones of judgment, (cxxx. 4, 5.) their government was a theocracy: he raised up David to rule over them, (and some think this psalm was penned upon occasion of his quiet and happy settlement in the throne,) and he is the king whose strength loves judgment. He is strong, all his strength he has from God, and his strength is not abused for the oppression of the weak, as the power of great princes often is, but it loves judgment; he does justice with his power, and does it with delight; and herein he was a type of Christ, to whom God would give the throne of his father David, to do judgment and justice. He has power to crush, but his strength loves judgment; he does not rule with rigour, but with moderation, with wisdom, and with tenderness. The people of Israel had a good king; and he did not abuse his power, but they are here taught to look up to God, as he is by whom their kingdom reigns. Thou dost establish equity; God gave them those excellent laws by which they were governed; and thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob, not only by his immediate provisions often executed and enforced his own laws, but look care for the administration of justice among them by civil magistrates, who reign by him, and by him did decree justice. Their judges judged for God, and their judgments were just. 2 Chron. xix. 6.

Putting these two things together, we see what was the happiness of Israel above any other people, as Moses had described it, (Deut. iv. 7, 8.) that they had God so nigh unto them, sitting between the cherubims, and that they had statutes and judgments so righteous, by which equity was established, and God himself ruled in Jacob; from which he infers this command to that happy people; (v. 3.) Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool; give him the glory of the good government you are under, as it is now established, both in church and state.” Note, (1.) The greater the public mercies are, which we have a share in, the more we are obliged to bear a part in the public homage paid to God: the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, especially, ought to be the matter of our praise. (2.) When we draw nigh to God, we must worship him, our hearts must be filled with high thoughts of him, and he must be exalted in our souls. (3.) The more we abase ourselves, and the more prostrate we are before God, the more we exalt him. We must worship at his footstool, at his ark, which was as the footstool to the mercy-seat between the cherubims; or, we must cast ourselves down upon the pavement of his courts; and good reason we have to be thus reverent, for he is holy; and his holiness should strike and awe upon us, as it does on the angels themselves, Isa. vi. 2, 3.

6. Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name: they called upon the Lord, and he answered them. 7. He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them. 8. Thou answerest them. O Lord our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions. 9. Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his holy hill: for the Lord our God is holy.

The happiness of Israel in God’s government is here further made out by some particular instances of his administration, especially, with reference to those that were, in their generation, the prime leaders, and more active and useful governors, of that people, Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, in the former of whom the theocracy or divine government began, (for they were employed to form Israel into a people,) and in the last of whom that form of government, in a great
measure, ended; for when the people rejected Samuel, and urged him to resign, they are said to reject God himself, that he should not be so immediately in their hands as he had been, (1 Sam. viii. 7) for now they would have a king, like all the nations. Moses, as well as Aaron, is said to be among his priests, for he executed the priest’s office till Aaron was settled in it, and he consecrated Aaron and his sons; therefore the Jews call him the Priest of the priests.

Now concerning these three chief rulers obse(bled:

1. The intimate communion they had with God, and the wonderful favour to which he admitted them. None of all the nations of the earth could produce three such men as these, that had such an intercourse with Heaven, and whom God knew by name, Exod. xxxiii. 17.

Here is, (1.) Their gracious observance of God: no kingdom had men that honoured God so as these three men of the kingdom of Israel did. They honoured him, (1.) By their prayers. Samuel, though not among his priests, yet was among them that called on his name; and for this they were all famous, They called upon the Lord; they relied not on their own wisdom or virtue, but in every emergency had recourse to God, toward him was their desire, and on him their dependence. [2.] By their obedience; They kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them; they made conscience of their duty; and in every thing made God’s word and law their rule, as knowing; that, unless they did so, they could not expect their prayers should be answered, Prov. x.xviii. 9. Moses did all according to the pattern showed him; it is often repeated, According to all that God commanded Moses, so did he: Aaron and Samuel did likewise. Those were the greatest men and most honourable, that were most eminent for keeping God’s testimonies, and conforming to the rule of his word.

(2.) God’s gracious acceptance of them; He answered them, and granted them the things which they called upon him for: they all wonderfully prevailed with God in prayer; miracles were wrought at their special instance and request; nay, he not only condescended to do that for them which they desired, as a prince for a petitioner, but he communed with them as one friend familiarly converses with another; (v. 7.) He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar. He often spake to Samuel, from his childhood the word of the Lord was good in his mouth, and probably, sometimes he spake to him by a bright cloud overshadowing him: however, to Moses and Aaron he often spake out of the famous cloudy pillar, Exod. xvi. 10. Numb. xii. 5. Israel are now reminded of this, for the confirming of their faith, that though they had not every day such sensible tokens of God’s presence as the cloudy pillar was, yet to them that were their first founders, and to him that was their great reformer, God was pleased thus to manifest his presence.

2. The good offices they did to Israel. They interceded for the people, and for them also they obtained many an answer of peace. Moses stood in the gap, and Aaron between the living and the dead; and when Israel was in distress, Samuel cried unto the Lord for them, 1 Sam. vii. 9. This is here referred to; (v. 8.) Thou answerest them, O Lord our God, and, at their prayer, thou didst fulﬁll the requisition which they prayed for; and though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions, yet thou didst not cut them off from being a people, as their sin deserved. “Thou wast a God that was propitious for them,” (so Dr. Hammond,) for their sakes, and sparedst the people at their request, then, when thou wast about to take vengeance of their inventions, when thy wrath was so highly provoked against them, that it was just ready to break in upon them, to their utter overthrow.” These were some of the many remarkable instances of God’s demigod in Israel, more than in any other nation, for which the people are again called upon to praise God; (v. 9.) Exalt the Lord our God, on account of what he has done for us formerly, as well as of late, and worship at his holy hill of Zion, on which he has now set his temple, and will shortly set his Kings, (ii. 6.) the former a type of the latter: there, as the centre of unity, let all God’s Israel meet, with their adorations, for the Lord our God is holy, and appears so, not only in his holy law, but in his holy-gospel.

PSALM C.

It is with good reason that many sing this psalm very frequently in their religious assemblies, for it is very proper both to express, and to excite, pious and devout affections toward God in our approach to him in holy ordinances; if our hearts go along with the words, we shall make a melody in it to the Lord. The Jews say it was penned to be sung with their thank-offerings; perhaps it was; but we say that as there is nothing in it peculiar to their economy, so its beginning with a call to all lands to praise God, plainly extends it to the gospel-church. Here, I. We are called upon to praise God, and rejoice in him, v. 1, 2, 4. II. We are furnished with matter for praise; we must praise him, considering his being and relation to us, (v. 3.) and his mercy and truth, v. 5. These are plain and common things, and therefore the more fit to be the matter of devotion.

A psalm of praise.

1. MAKE a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. 2. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before his presence with singing. 3. Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves: we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. 4. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. 5. For the Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

Here

1. The exhortations to praise are very important; the psalm does indeed answer to the title, A psalm of praise; it begins with that call which of late we have several times met with, (v. 1.) Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands, or all the earth, all the inhabitants of the earth. When all nations shall be disciplined, and the gospel preached to every creature, then this summons will be fully answered to. But if we take the foregoing psalm to be (as we have opened it) a call to the Jewish church to rejoice in the advent of the Messiah, which the Jews were under, (as the four psalms before it were calculated for the days of the Messiah,) this psalm, perhaps, was intended for proselytes, that came over out of all lands to the Jews’ religion. However, we have here,

1. A strong invitation to worship God; not that God needs us, or any thing we have or can do, but it is his will that we should serve the Lord, should devote ourselves to his service, and employ ourselves in it; and that we should not only serve him in all instances of obedience to his law, but that we should come before his presence in the ordinances which he has appointed, and in which he has promised to manifest himself, (v. 2.) that we should enter into his gates, and into his courts, (v. 4.) that we should attend upon him among his servants, and keep there where he keeps court. In all acts of religious worship, whether in secret or in our fundi
1. We come into God's presence, and serve him; but it is in public worship especially that we enter into his gates, and into his courts. The people were not permitted to enter into the holy place, there the priests only went in to minister; but let the people be thankful for their place in the courts of God's holiness, to which they were admitted, and where they gave their attendance.

2. Great encouragement given us, in worshipping God, to do it cheerfully; (v. 2.) Serve the Lord with gladness. This intimates a prediction that in gospel-times there should be special occasion for joy; and it prescribes this as a rule of worship; Let God be served with gladness. By holy joy we do really serve God; it is an honour to him to rejoice with him in his kingdom. Gospel-worshippers should be joyful worshippers; if we serve God in uprightness, let us serve him with gladness; we must be willing and forward to it; glad when we are called to go up to the house of the Lord, (cxxii. 1.) looking upon it as the comfort of our lives to have communion with God; and we must be pleasant and cheerful in it, must say, It is good to be here; approaching to God in every duty, as to God our exceeding joy, xlii. 4. We must consider ourselves possessed of a heavenly treasure, not only songs of joy, but songs of praise; (v. 4.) Enter into his gates with thanksgiving. We must not only comfort ourselves, but glorify God with our joy, and let him have the praise of that which we have the pleasure of. Be thankful to him, and bless his name; that is, (1.) We must take it as a favour to be admitted into his service, and give him thanks that we have liberty of access to him, that we have ordinances instituted, and opportunity continued of waiting upon God in these ordinances. (2.) We must intermix praise and thanksgiving with all our services; this golden thread must run through every duty, (Heb. xiii. 15.) for it is the work of angels. In every thing give thanks; in every ordinance, as well as in every providence.

II. The matter of praise, and motives to it, are very important, v. 3, 5. Know ye what God is in himself, and what he is to you. Note, Knowledge is the Mother of devotion, and of all obedience; blind sacrifices will never please a seeing God. "Know it; consider and apply it, and then you will be more close and constant, more inward and serious, in the worship of him." Let us know then these seven things concerning the Lord Jehovah, with whom we have to do, in all the acts of religious worship: 1. That the Lord he is God, the only living and true God; that he is a Being infinitely perfect, self-existent, and self-sufficient, and the Foundation of all being; he is God, and not a man as we are. He is an eternal Spirit, incomprehensible and independent; the first Cause, and last End. The heathen worshipped the creature of their own fancy; the workmen made it, therefore it is not God; we worship him that made us and all the world; he is God, and all other pretended deities are vanity and a lie, and such as he has triumphed over.

2. The Father is the Lord of hosts. It is he that has made us, and not we ourselves. I find that I am, but cannot say, I am that I am, and therefore must ask, Whence am I? Who made me? Where is God my Maker? And is it the Lord Jehovah. He gave us being, gave us this being; he is both the Former of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits. We did not, could not, could not make, ourselves; it is God's prerogative to be his own Cause, our being is derived and dependent on him.

3. That therefore he is our rightful Owner. The Mazorites, by altering one letter in the Hebrew, read it, He made us, and his we are, or to him we belong. Put both the readings together, and we learn, that because God made us, and not we our-
dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. 7. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight. 8. I will early destroy all the wicked of the land, that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord.

David here cuts out to himself and others a pattern both of a good magistrate, and a good master of a family; if these were careful to discharge the duty of their place, it would contribute very much to the honor of God. C. 1.

I. The chosen subject of the psalm; (v. 1.) I will sing of mercy and judgment; that is, 1. Of God's mercy and judgment, and then it looks back upon the dispensations of Providence that had respected him since he was first anointed to be king; during which time he had met with many a rebuke, and much hardship, on the one hand, and yet, on the other hand, had many wonderful deliverances wrought for him, and favours bestowed upon him; often he will sing unto God. Note, (1.) God's provinences concerning his people are commonly mixed—mercy and judgment; God has set the one against the other, and appointed them April-days, showers and sun-shine. It was so with David and his family; and when there was mercy in the return of the ark, there was judgment in the death of Uzziah. (2.) When God in his providence exercises us with a mixture of mercy and judgment, it is our duty to sing, and sing unto him, both of the one and of the other; we must be suitably affected with both, and make suitable acknowledgments to God for both. The Chaldee paraphrase of this is observable; If thou bestowedst mercy upon me, or If thou bring any judgment upon me, before thee, O Lord, will I sing my hymns for all. Whatever our outward condition is, whether joyful or sorrowful, still we must give glory to God, and sing praises to him; neither the laughter of a prosperous condition, nor the tears of an afflicted condition, must put us out of tune for sacred songs. Or, 2. It may be understood of David's mercy and judgment; he would, in this psalm, promise to be merciful, and just, or wise, for judgment is often put for discretion. To do justly, and love mercy, is the sum of our duty; these he would covenant to make conscience of in that place and relation to which God had called him; and this, in consideration of the various providences of God that had occurred to him. Family-mercies, and family-afflictions, are both of them calls to family-religion. David puts his vow into a song or psalm, that he might the better keep it in his own mind, and frequently repeat it, and that it might the better be communicated to others, and preserved in his family, for a pattern to his sons and successors.

II. The general resolution David took up to conduct himself carefully and conscientiously in his court, v. 2. We have here, 1. A good purpose concerning his conversation—concerning his conversation in general, how he would behave himself in every thing; he would live by rule, and not at large, not walk at all adventures; he would, though a king, by a solemn covenant, bind himself to his good behaviour—and concerning his conversation in his family particularly, not only how he would walk with his family, but how he would walk within his house, where he was more out of the eye of the world, but where he still saw himself under the eye of God. It is not enough to put on our religion when we go abroad, and appear before men; but we must govern ourselves by it in our families. Those that are

in public stations are not thereby excused from care in governing their families; nay rather, they are more concerned to set a good example of ruling their own houses well, 1 Tim. iii. 4. When David had his hands full of public affairs, yet he returned to his house; 2 Sam. vi. 20. He resolves, (1.) To act conscientiously, and with integrity, to walk in a perfect way, in the way of God's commandments, that is a perfect way, for the law of the Lord is perfect. This he will walk in, with a perfect heart, with all sincerity, not dissenting either with God or men. When we make the word of God our rule, and are ruled by it, the glory of God our end, and aim at it, then we walk in a perfect way, with a perfect heart. (2.) To act conscientiously, and with integrity, to walk wisely; I will understand, or instruct myself in a perfect way; so some. I will walk circumspectly. Note, We must all resolve to walk by the rules of Christian prudence, in the ways of Christian piety. We must never turn aside out of the perfect way, under pretence of behaving ourselves wisely; but, while we keep to the good way, we must be wise as serpents. 2. Here is a good prayer; O when wilt thou come to me? a prayer that God would come to him, and dwell with him in it; and those may expect God's presence, that walk with a perfect heart, in a perfect way. If we compare the account which the historian gives of David, (1 Sam. xviii. 14.) we shall find how exactly it answers his purpose and prayer, and that neither was in vain. David, as he purposed, behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and, as he prayed, the Lord was with him.

III. His particular resolution to practise no evil himself; (v. 3.) "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes; I will not design or aim at any thing but what is for the glory of God, and the public welfare." He will never have it in his eye to enrich himself by impoverishing his subjects, or enlarge his own prerogative by encroaching on their property. In all our worldly business, we must see that that be right and good which we set our eyes upon, and not any forbidden fruit; and that we never seek that which we cannot have without sin. It is the character of a good man, that he shuts his eyes from seeing evil, Isa. xxxiii. 15. "Nay, I hate the works of them that turn aside from the paths of equity; (Job xxxvi. 7.) not only I avoid it, but I abhor it, it shall not cleave to me. If any blot of injustice should come on my hands, it shall be washed off quickly." IV. His further resolution not to keep bad servants, nor to employ those about him that were vicious. He will not content themselves, nor show them any favour, lest thereby he should harden them in their wickedness, and encourage others to do like them. He will not converse with them himself, nor admit them into the company of his other servants, lest they should spread the infection of sin in his family. He will not confide in them, nor put them in power under him; for they who hated to be reformed would certainly hinder every thing that is good.

When he comes to mention particulars, he does not mention drunkards, adulterers, murderers, or blasphemers; such gross sinners as these he was in no danger of admitting into his house; nor did he need to covenant particularly against, having fellowships with them, but he mentions those others who were less scandalous, but no less dangerous, and in reference to whom he needed to stand upon his guard with caution, and to behave himself wisely.

1. He will have nothing to do with spiteful malicious people, who are ill-natured, and will bear a grudge a great while, and care not what mischief
they do to those they have a pique against; (v. 4.) A soward heart, one that delights to be cross and stubborn, will depart from me, as not fit for society, the bond of which is love. I will not know, that is, I will have no acquaintance or conversation, if I can help it, with such a wicked person; for a little of the leaven of malice and wickedness will leaven the whole lump.

2. Nor with slanderers, and those who take a pleasure in wounding their neighbour's reputation secretly; (v. 5.) Whoso privily slanders his neighbour, either in his face or behind his back, and writes him the praises of a good name, him will I cut off from my family and court. Many endeavour to raise themselves into the favour of princes by unjust representations of persons and things, which they think will please their prince; If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked, Prov. xxix. 12. But David will not only not hearken to them, but will prevent the preferment of those that hope thus to curry favour with him; he will punish not only those that falsely accuse one another in open court, but those that privily slander one another. I wish David had remembered this yow, in the case of Me-Phiboseth and Ziba.

3. Nor with hasty, concited, ambitious, people; none do more mischief in a family, in a court, in a church, for only by pride comes contention; Therefore, him that has a high look, and a proud heart, will I not suffer; I will have no patience with his insolent pride and arrogant manner. From a believer, for it is certain that they do not aim at doing good, but only at aggrandizing themselves and their families. God resists the proud, and so will David.

4. Nor with false deceitful people, that scruple not to tell lies, or commit frauds; (v. 7.) He that worketh deceit, though he may insinuate himself into my family, yet, as soon as he is discovered, he shall not dwell within my house. Some great men know how to serve their own purposes by such as are skilful to deceive, and are fit tools for them to work by; but David will make use of no such agents for him; He that tells lies, shall not tarry in my sight, but shall be expelled the house with indignation. Herein David was a man after God's own heart, for a proud look and a lying tongue are things which God hates; and he was also a type of Christ, who will, in the great day, banish from his presence all that love and make a lie, Rev. xxi. 15.

V. His resolution to put those in trust under him that were honest and good; (v. 6.) Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful in the land. In choosing his servants, and ministers of state, he kept to the land of Israel, and would not employ foreigners; none shall be preferred but true-born Israelites, and those such as were Israelites indeed, the faithful in the land, for even in that land there were those that were unfaithful. Those faithful ones his eyes shall be upon, to discover them and find them out, for they were modest, did not crowd into the city to court preferment, but lived retired in the land, in the country, out of the way of it. Those are commonly most fit for places of honour and trust that are least fond of them; and therefore wise princes will spy out such in their recesses and privacies, and take them to do great things for them. He that walks in a perfect way, that makes conscience of what he says and does, he shall serve me; the kingdom must be searched for honest men to make courtiers of; and if any man is better than another, he must be preferred. This was a good resolution of David's; but either he did not keep to it, or else his judgment was imposed upon, when he made Abihophel his right hand. It should be the care and endeavour of all masters of families, for their own sakes and their children's, to take such servants into their families as they have reason to hope favor God. The Son of David has his eyes upon the faithful in the land; his secret is with them, and he will dwell with him. Saul chose servants for their goodwill, (1 Sam. viii. 16.) but David for their goodness.

Lastly, His resolution to extend his zeal to the reformation of the city and country, as well as of the court; (v. 8.) I will early destroy all the wicked of the land, all that are discovered and convicted; the law shall have its course against them. He would do his utmost to destroy all the wicked, so that there might be none left that were notoriously wicked. He would do it early; he would not wait, to spare time, and spare no pains, he would be forward and zealous in promoting the reformation of manners and suppression of vice; and those must rise betimes that will do any thing to purpose in that work. That which he aimed at, was, not only the securing of his own government, and the peace of the country, but the honour of God in the purity of his church, That I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord; not Jerusalem only, but the whole land was the city of the Lord; so is the gospel-church. It is the interest of the city of the Lord to be purged from wicked doers, who both blemish it and weaken it; and it is therefore the duty of all to do what they can, in their places, toward so good a work, and to be zealously affected in it. The day is coming when the Son of David shall cut off all wicked doers from the New Jerusalem, for there shall not enter into it any that do iniquity.

PSALMS CII.

Some think that David penned this psalm at the time of Absalom's rebellion; others that Daniel, Nehemiah, or some other that was in captivity in Babylon, because he seems to speak of the ruin of Zion, and of a time set for the rebuilding of it, which Daniel understood by books, Dan. x. 2. Of perhaps the psalmist was himself in great affliction, which he complains of in the beginning of this psalm, but (as in Ps. lxviii. and elsewhere) he comforts himself under it with the consideration of God's eternity, and the church's prosperity and perpetuity, how much soever it was now disconsolate, the time would be when the city of the Lord: so is the gospel-church. It is the interest of the city of the Lord to be purged from wicked doers, who both blemish it and weaken it; and it is therefore the duty of all to do what they can, in their places, toward so good a work, and to be zealously affected in it. The day is coming when the Son of David shall cut off all wicked doers from the New Jerusalem, for there shall not enter into it any that do iniquity.

A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord.

1. H E A R my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto thee. 2. Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call, answer me speedily. 3. For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as a hearth. 4. My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread. 5. By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my skin. 6. I am like a pelican of the wilderness; I am like an owl of the...
PSALMS, or, and to free them. For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping; 10. Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down. 11. My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass.

The title of this psalm is very observable: it is a prayer of the afflicted; it was composed by one that was himself afflicted, afflicted with the church, and for it; on those the was reduced by his afflictions, afflic-
tions of that kind lie heavier than any other. It is calculated for an afflicted state, and is intended for the use of others that may be in the like distress; for whatsoever things were written before time, were written designedly for our use. The whole word of God is of use to direct us in prayer; but here, as often elsewhere, the Holy Ghost has drawn up our petition for us, has put words into our mouths; (Hos. xiv. 2.) Take with thee words. Here is a prayer in the hearts and hands of the afflicted; let them set, not their hands, but their hearts, to it, and present it to God. Note. 1. It is often the lot of the best saints in this world to be sorely afflict ed. 2. Even good men may be almost overwhelmed with their afflictions, and may be ready to faint under them. 3. When our state is afflicted, and our spirits overwhelmed, it is our duty and interest to pray, and by prayer to pour out our complaints before the Lord; while the heavens are free with him, and the liberty of speech we have before him, as well as liberty of access to him; it in
timates, also, what an case it is to an afflicted spirit to unburthen itself by an humble representation of its grievances and griefs.

Such a representation we have here; in which, 1. The psalmist humbly begs of God to take notice of his affliction, and of his prayer in his affliction; he may pray for mercy. It should be our care that God would graciously hear us; for, if our prayers be not pleasing to God, they will be to no purpose to ourselves. Let this therefore be in our eye, that our prayer may come unto God, even to his ears, (xviii. 6.) and, in order to that, let us lift up the prayer, and our souls with it. 2. It may be our hope that God will graciously hear us, because he has appointed us to seek him, and has promised we shall not seek him in vain. If we put up a prayer in faith, we may in faith say, Hear my prayer, O Lord! (1.) "Manifest thyself to me; hide not thy face from me in displeasure, when I am in trouble. If thou dost not immediately free me, yet let me know that thou favourest me; if I see not the operations of thy hand for me, yet let me see the smiles of thy face upon me." God's hiding his face is trouble enough to a good man, even in his prosperity; (xxx. 7.) Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled; but if, when we are in trouble, God hides his face, the case is sad indeed. (2.) "Manifest thyself for me; not only hear me, but answer me; grant me the deliverance I am in want of, and in pursuit of; answer me speedily, even in the day when I call." When troubles press hard upon us, God gives us leave to be thus pressing in prayer; yet with humility and patience.

I. His body was maccerated and emaciated, and he was become a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones. As prosperity and joy are represented by making fat the bones, and the bones flourishing like an herb, so great trouble and grief are here represented by the contrary; My bones are burnt as a hearth, (v. 3.) they cleave to my skin, (v. 5.) my heart is unsted, and withered like grass; (v. 4.) it touches the vitals, and there is a sensible decay there. I am withered like grass, (v. 11.) scorched with the burning heat of my troubles. If we be thus brought low and miserable, we should not think it strange; the body is like grass, weak, and of the earth, no wonder then that it withers.

2. He was very melancholy, and of a sorrowful spirit. He was so taken up with the thoughts of his troubles, that he forgot to eat his bread; (v. 4.) he had no appetite to his necessary food, nor could he relish it. When God hides his face from a soul, the delights of sense will be sapsless things. He was always sighing and groaning, as one pressed above his measure; (v. 5.) and this wasted him, and exhaust ed his spirits; he affected solitude, as melancholy people do; his friends deserted him, and were shy of him, and he cared as little for their company; (v. 6, 7.) "I am like a pelican of the wilderness, or a bittern, (so some,) that make a doleful noise; I am like an owl, that affects to lodge in deserted ruined buildings; I watch, and am as a sparrow upon the house-top. I live in a garret, and there spend much of my time, and am melancholy-minded, and mourning myself." Those who do thus, when they are in sorrow, humour themselves indeed; but they prejudice themselves, and know not what they do, nor what advantage they hereby give to the tempter. In affliction, we should sit alone, to consider our ways, (Lam. iii. 28.) but not sit alone, to indulge an inordinate grief.

3. He was evil spoken of by his enemies, and all mankind were against him. When his friends went off from him, his foes set themselves against him; (v. 8.) Mine enemies reproach me all the day; designing thereby both to create vexation to himself, (for an ingenuous mind regrets reproach,) and to bring an odium upon him before men. When they could not otherwise reach him, they shot these arrows at him, even bitter words; in this they were unwearyed, they did it all the day, it was a continual dropping. His enemies were very out of breath to make manifest this, and very much and unresistible. They are sworn against me; as the Jews that bound themselves with an oath that they would kill Paul; or, They have sworn against me as accusers, to take away my life.

4. He fasted and wept under the tokens of God's displeasure; (v. 9, 10.) "I have eaten ashes like bread; instead of eating my bread, I have laid down in dust and ashes, and I have mingled my drink with weeping; when I should have refreshed myself with drinking, I have only cased myself with weeping." And what is the matter? He tells us; (v. 10.) Because of thy wrath. It was not so much the trouble itself that troubled him, as the wrath of God which he was under the apprehensions of, as the cause of the trouble. This, this was the wormwood and the gall, in the affliction and the misery; Thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down, that which we cast to the ground, with a design to dash it to pieces, we lift up first, that we may throw it down with the more violence; or, "Thou hast formerly lifted me up in honour, and joy, and uncommon prosperity; but the remembrance of that aggravates the present grief, and makes it the more grievous." We must eye the hand of God both in lifting us up, and casting us down, and say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord, who both gives and takes away." 5. He looked upon himself as a dying man, My days are consumed like smoke, (v. 3.) which vanishes away quickly. Or, They are consumed in smoke, of which nothing remains.
they are like a shadow that declines. (v. 11.) like the evening-shadow, or a forerunner of approaching night. Now all this, though it seems to speak the psalmist’s personal calamities, and therefore is properly a prayer for a particular person afflicted, yet is supposed to be a description of the afflictions of the church of God, with which the psalmist sympathizes, making public grievances his own. The mystical body of Christ is sometimes like the psalmist’s body here, withered and farcated, nay, like dead and dry bones. The church sometimes is forced into the wilderness, seems lost, and gives up herself for gone, under the tokens of God’s displeasure.

12. But thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever, and thy remembrance unto all generations. 13. Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come. 14. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof. 15. So the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory. 16. When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. 17. He will regard the prayer of the desolate, and not despise their prayer. 18. This shall be written for the generation to come; and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord. 19. For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; 20. To hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose those that are appointed to death; 21. To declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem; 22. When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord.

Many exceeding great and precious comforts are here thought of, and mustered up, to balance the foregoing complaints; for unto the upright there arises light in the darkness, so that though they are cast down, they are not in despair. It is bad with the psalmist himself, bad with the people of God; but he has many considerations to revive himself with.

I. We are dying creatures, and our interests and comforts dying, but God is an everliving, everlasting, God; (v. 12.) “My days are like a shadow; there is no remedy, night is coming upon me; but thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever.” Our life is transient, but thine is permanent; our friends die, but thou our God diest not; what threatened us cannot touch thee; our names will be written in the dust, and buried in oblivion, but thy remembrance shall be unto all generations, to the end of time, nay, to eternity, thou shalt be known and honoured. A good man loves God better than himself, and therefore can balance his own sorrow and death with the pleasing thought of the unchangeable blessedness of the Eternal Mind. God endures for ever, his church’s faithful Patron and Protector; and his honour and perpetual remembrance being very much bound up in her interests, we may be confident that they shall not be neglected.

II. Poor Zion is now in distress, but there will come a time for her relief and succour; (v. 13.) Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion; the hope of deliverance is built upon the goodness of God; “Thou wilt have mercy upon Zion; for she is become an object of thy pity;” and upon the power of God, “Thou shalt arise and have mercy, shalt stir up thyself to do it, shalt do it in contemplation of all the opposition made by the church’s enemies;” the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this. That which is very encouraging, is, that there is a time set for the deliverance of the church, which not only will come some time, but will come at the time appointed, the time which is appointed, the very time, and therefore it is the best time; at the time which Eternal Truth has fixed it to, and therefore it is a certain time, and shall not be forgotten or further adjourned. At the end of 70 years, the time to favour Zion, by delivering her from the daughter of Babylon, was to come, and at length it did come.

Zion was now in ruins, that is, the temple that was built in the city of David; the favouring of Zion is the building of the temple up again, as it is explained, v. 16. This is expected from the favour of God; that will set all to rights, and nothing but that, and therefore Daniel prays, (Dan. ix. 17.) Cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary, which is desolate. The building up of Zion is as great a favour to any people as they can desire. No blessing more desirable to a ruined state than the restoring and re-establishing of their church privileges.

Now this is here wished for, and longed for. Because the Lord should be kind to Zion’s friends; (v. 14.) Thy servants take pleasure even in the stones of the temple, though they were thrown down and scattered, and favour the dust, the very rubbish and ruins, of it. Observe here, that when the temple was ruined, yet the stones of it were to be had for a new building, and there were those who encouraged themselves with that, for they had a favour even for the dust of it. Those who truly love the church of God, love it when it is in sedition as well as when it is in prosperity; and it is a good ground to hope that God will favour the ruins of Zion, when he puts it into the heart of his people to favour them, and to show that they do so by their prayers and by their endeavours; as it is also a good plea with God for mercy for Zion, that there are those who are so affectionately concerned for her, and are waiting for the salvation of the Lord.

Because it should be kind to Zion’s neighbours, v. 15. It will be a happy means perhaps of their conversion, at least, of their conviction; for so the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, shall have high thoughts of him and his people, and even the kings of the earth shall be affected with his glory; they shall have better thoughts of the church of God than they have had, when God by his providence thus puts an honour upon it; they shall be afraid of doing any thing against it, when they see God taking its part; nay, they shall say, We will go with you, for we have seen that God is with you, Zech. viii. 23. Thus it is said, (Esth. viii. 17.) that many of the people of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

3. Because it would redound to the honour of Zion’s God; (v. 16.) When the Lord shall build up Zion; they take it for granted it will be done, that is, in his own due time; and therefore it is expedient, that the Lord shall shine in his glory and then appear in his glory; and, for that reason, all that have made his glory their highest end desire it and pray for it. Note, The edifying of the church will be the glorifying of God, and therefore we may be assured it will be done in the set time. They that pray in faith, Father, glorify thy name, may receive the same answer to that prayer which was given to Christ himself by a voice from heaven, I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again, though now for a time it may be eclipsed.

III. The prayers of God’s people now seem to be
slighted, and no notice taken of them, but they will be reviewed, and greatly encouraged; (v. 17.) He will regard the prayer of the destitute. It was said, (v. 16.) that God will appear in his glory, such a glory as kings themselves shall stand in awe of, v. 13. When great men appear in their glory, they are apt to look with disdain upon the poor they apply to them, and yet God will not do so. Observe, 1. The meanness of the petitioners; they are the destitute: it is an elegant word that is here used, which signifies the heath in the wilderness, a low shrub, or bush, like the hyssop of the wall. They are supposed to be in a low and broken state, enriched with spiritual blessings, but destitute of temporal good things; the poor, the weak, the desolate, the script; thus variously is the word rendered; or it may signify that low and broken spirit which God looks for in all that draw nigh to him, and which he will graciously look upon. This will bring them to their knees; destitute people should be praying people, 1 Tim. v. 2. The favour of God to them, notwithstanding their meanness; He will regard their prayer, and will look at it, will peruse their petition, (2 Chron. vi. 40.) and he will not despise their prayer. More is implied than we have here; the Lord will be pleased with it, and will return an answer of peace to it, which is the greatest honour that can be put upon it. But it is thus expressed, because others despise their praying; they themselves fear God will despise it; and he was thought to despise it, while their affliction was prolonged, and their prayers lay unanswered. When we consider our own meanness and vileness, our darkness and deadness, and the manifold defects in our prayers, we have cause to expect that our prayers will be received with disdain in heaven; but we are here assured of the contrary, for we have an Advocate with the Father, and are under grace, not under the law.

This instance of God's favour to his praying people, though they are destitute, will be a lasting encouragement to prayer; (v. 18.) This shall be written for the generation to come, that none may despise; though they be destitute, nor think their prayers unheeded, because they have not an answer to them immediately. The experiences of others should be our encouragements to seek unto God and trust in him. And, if we have the comfort of the experiences of others, it is fit that we should give God the glory of them; The people which shall be created shall praise the Lord for what he has done both for them and for their predecessors; many that are now unborn, by reading the history of the church, shall be brought upon to turn presbyteries. The people that shall be created anew by divine grace, that are a kind of first-fruits of his creatures, shall praise the Lord for his answers to their prayers when they were more destitute.

IV. The prisoners under condemnation unjustly, seem as sheep appointed for the slaughter, but care shall be taken for their discharge; (v. 19, 20.) God was looked down from the height of his sanctuary, from heaven, where he has prepared his throne, to that high place, that holy place; thence did the Lord behold the earth, for it is a place of prospect, and nothing of this earth is, or can be, hid from his all-seeing eye; he looks down, not to take a view of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, but to do acts of grace, to hear the groaning of the prisoners; (which we should desire to be out of the hearing of) and not only to hear them, but to help them, to carry them out of that and the gates of death, then when there is but a step between them and death. Some understand it of the release of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon; God heard their groaning there, as he did when they were in Egypt, (Exod. iii. 7, 9.) and came down to deliver them.

God takes notice not only of the prayers of his afflicted people, which are the language of grace, but even of their groans, which are the language of nature. See the divine pity in hearing the prisoners' groans, and the divine power in loosing the prisoners bonds, even when they are appointed to death, and are pinioned and double-shackled. We have an instance in Peter, Acts xii. 9.

Such instances as these of the divine condescension and compassion, will help, 1. To declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and to make it appear that he answers his name which he himself proclaimed, The Lord God, gracious and merciful, and this declaration of his name in Zion shall be the matter of his praise in Jerusalem, v. 21. If God by his providences declare his name, we must by our conduct make it clear, both in the name of the Messiah, which is said to be the echo of his name, God will discharge his people that were prisoners and captives in Babylon, that they may declare his name in Zion, the place he has chosen to put his name there, and his praise in Jerusalem, at their return thither; in the land of their captivity they could not sing the songs of Zion, (cxxxvii. 3, 4.) and therefore God brought them again to Jerusalem, that they might sing them there. For this end, God gives liberty from bondage; Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name; (exil. 7.) for this, he gives life from the dead; Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee, exix. 175. 2. They will help to draw in others to the worship of God; (v. 22.) When the people of God are gathered together at Jerusalem, (as they were, after their return out of Babylon,) many out of the kingdoms joined with them to serve the Lord. This was fulfilled, (Ezra vi. 21.) where we find that not only the children of Israel that were come out of captivity, but many that had separated themselves from them among the heathen, did keep the feast of unleavened bread with joy. But it may look further, at the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ in the latter days. Christ has proclaimed liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to the them that were bound, that they may declare the name of the Lord in the gospel-church, in which Jews and Gentiles shall unite.

23. He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days. 24. I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are throughout all generations. 25. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands. 26. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: 27. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. 28. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.

We may here observe, 1. The imminent danger that the Jewish church was in, of being quite extirpated and cut off by the captivity in Babylon; (v. 23.) He weakened my strength in the way. They were for many ages in the way to the performance of the great promise made to their fathers concerning his Messiah, longing as much for it as ever a traveller did to be at his journey's end; the legal institutions led them in the way; but when the ten tribes were lost in Assyria, and the two almost lost in Babylon, the strength
that nation was weakened, and, in all appearance, its day shortened, for they said, Our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts, Ezek. xxxvii. 11. And then what comes of the promise that shall attend and be the reward of Jacob, and the Messiah out of the family of David? If these fail, the promise fails. This the psalmist speaks of as in his own person, and it is very applicable to two of the common afflictions of this time. 1. To be sickly; bodily distempers soon weaken our strength in the way, make the keepers of the house to tremble, and the strong men to bow themselves. 2. To be short-lived; where the former is felt, this is feared; when, in the midst of our days, according to a course of nature, our strength is weakened, what can we expect but that the number of our months should be cut off in the midst; and what should we do but provide accordingly? We must own God's hand in it, for in his hand our strength and time are; and must reconcile it to his love, for it has often been the lot of those that have used their strength well, to have it weakened; and of those that could very ill be spared, to have their days shortened.

II. A prayer for the continuance of it; (v. 24.) "O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days; let not this poor church be cut off in the midst of the days assigned it by the promise; let it not be cut off till the Messiah is come, Destroy it not, for that blessing is in her," Isa. lxv. 8. She is a criminal, but, for the sake of that blessing which is in her, she pleads for a reprieve. This is a prayer for the afflicted, and which, with submission to the will of God, we may in faith put up, that God would not take us away in the midst of our days, but that, if it be his will, he would spare us to do him further service, and to be made riper for heaven.

III. A plea to enforce this prayer, taken from the eternity of the Messiah promised, v. 25-27. The apostle quotes these verses, (Heb. i. 10-12.) and tells us; He saith this to the Son, and in that exposition we must acquiesce. It is very commonly supposed that this plea observe how to illustrate the eternity of the Creator; he compares it with the mutability of the creature; for it is God's sole prerogative to be unchangeable.

1. God made the world, and therefore had a being before it from eternity; the Son of God, the Eternal Word, made the world. It is expressly said, All things were made by him, and without him was not anything that was made; and therefore they are the same was in the beginning, from eternity, with God, and was God, John i. 1-3. Col. i. 16. Eph. iii. 9. Heb. i. 2. Earth and heaven, and the hosts of both, include the universe and its fulness, and these derive their being from God by his Son; (v. 23.) "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, that is founded on the seas, and on the floods, and yet it abides; much more shall the church, which is built on a rock, abide, for the work of thy hands, and by thee are all their motions and influences directed." God is therefore the Fountain, not only of all being, but of all power and dominion. See how fit the great Redeemer is to be intrusted with all power, both in heaven and in earth, since he himself, as Creator of both, perfectly knows both, and is entitled to both. 2. God will unmake the world again, and therefore shall have a being to eternity; (v. 26, 27.) They shall perish, for thou shalt change them by the same almighty power that made them, and therefore, no doubt, thou shalt endure; thou art the same. God and the world, and Christ and the creature, are rivals for the highest and uppermost place in the soul of man, the immediate object. What is here said, one would think, were enough to decide the controversy immediately, and to determine, as for God and Christ. For, (1.) A portion in the creature is fading and dying; They shall perish, they will not last so long as we shall last; the day is coming when the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up; and then what will become of the God that has laid up the treasure in it? Heaven and earth shall wax old as a garment; not by a gradual decay, but, when the set time comes, they shall be set aside like an old garment that we have no more occasion for; As a vesture shall thou change them, and they shall be changed; not annihilated, but altered, it may be, so that they shall not be at all the same, but new heavens and a new earth. See God's sovereign dominion over heaven and earth; he can change them as he pleases, and when he pleases, and the creature shall be subject to, in the revolutions of day and night, summer and winter, are earnest of their last and final change, when the heavens and time shall be no more. (2.) A portion in God is perpetual and everlasting; Thou art the same, subject to no change; and thy years have no end, v. 27. Christ will be the same in the same performance that he was in the promise; the same to his innermost power in captivity that he was to his church at liberty. Let not the church fear the weakening of her strength, or the shortening of her days, while Christ himself is both her Strength and her Life; he is the same, and has said, Because I live, ye shall live also. Christ came in the fulness of time, and set up his kingdom in spite of the power of the Old Testament Babylon, and he will keep it up in spite of the New Testament Babylon.

IV. A confirmation of an answer to this prayer; (v. 28.) The children of thy servants shall continue; since Christ is the same, the church shall continue from one generation to another; from the eternity of the Head, we may infer the perpetuity of the body, though often weak and distempered, and even at death's door. They that hope to wear out the saints of the Most High will be mistaken. Christ's servants shall have children; those children shall have a seed, a succession of professing people; the church is as old as the world, is under the influence of that blessing, Be fruitful and multiply. These children shall continue, not in their own persons, by reason of death, but in their seed, which shall be established before God, that is, in his service, and by his grace; the entail of religion shall not be cut off while the world stands, but, as one generation of good people passes away, another shall come, and thus the throne of Christ shall endure.

PSALMS CIII.

This psalm calls more for devotion than exposition; it is a most excellent psalm of praise, and of general use. The psalmist, I. Stirs up himself and his own soul to praise God, (v. 1.) for his favour to him in particular, (v. 5.) to let himself be in general, and to all good men, to whom he is, and will be, just, and kind, and constant, (v. 6., 18.) and for his government of the world, v. 19. II. He desires the assistance of the holy angels, and all the works of God, in dealing with his enemies. In writing this psalm, we must in a special manner get our hearts affected with the goodness of God, and enlarged in love and thankfulness. A psalm of David.

1. BLESS the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. 2. Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits: 3. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases; 4. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; 5. Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle.'

David is here communing with his own heart, and he is no fool that thus talks to himself, and excites his own soul to that which is good. Observe, how he stirs up himself to the duty of praise; v. 1, 2. 1. It is the Lord that is to be blessed and spoken of, for he is the Fountain of all good, whatever are the channels or cisterns; it is to his name, his holy name, that we are to consecrate our praise, giving thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. 2. It is the soul that is to be employed in blessing God, and all that is within us. We make nothing of our religious performances, if we do not make heart-work of them; if that which is within us, may, if all that is within us, be not engaged in them. The work requires the inward man, the whole man, and all little enough. 3. In order to our return of praises to God, there must be a grateful remembrance of the mercies we have received from him; Forget not all his benefits. If we do not give thanks for them, we do forget them; and that is unjust as well as unkind; since in all God's favours there is so much that is memorable; "O my soul, to thy shame be it spoken, thou hast forgotten many of his benefits; but surely thou wilt not forget them all, for thou shouldest not have forgotten any." II. How he furnishes himself with abundant matter for praise, and that which is very affecting; "Come, my soul, consider what God has done for thee. 1. "He has pardoned thy sins, (v. 3.) he has forgiven, and doth forgive, all thine iniquities." This is mentioned first, because, by the pardon of sin, that is taken away which kept good things from us, and we are restored to the favour of God, which bestows good things on us. Think what the provocation was, it was iniquity, and yet pardoned; how many the provocations were, and yet all pardoned; He has forgiven all our trespasses. It is a continued act; he is still forgiving, as we are still sinning and repenting. 2. "He has cured thy sickness." The corruption of nature is the sickness of the soul, it is its disorder, and threatens its death; this is cured in sanctification; when sin is mortified, the disease is healed; though complicated, it is all healed. Our crimes were capital, but God saves our lives by pardoning them; our diseases were mortal, but God saves our lives by healing them. These two go together, for as for God, his work is perfect, and not done by halves; if he take away the guilt of sin by pardoning mercy, he will break the power of it by renewing grace. Where Christ is made Righteousness to any soul, he is made Sanctification, 1 Cor. i. 30.

3. "He has rescued thee from danger." A man may be in peril of life, not only by his crimes, or his diseases, but by the power of his enemies; and therefore here also we experience the divine goodness; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction, (v. 4.) He sent the Chaldeans from the second death. The redemption of the soul is precious, we cannot compass it, and therefore are the more indebted to divine grace that has wrought it out to him who has obtained eternal redemption for us. See Job xxxiii. 24, 25.

4. "He has not only saved thee from death and ruin, but has made thee truly and completely happy, with honour, pleasure, and long life. (1.) "He has given thee true honour and great honour; no less than a crown; He crowns thee with his loving-kindness and tender mercies," and what greater dignity is a poor soul capable of, than to be advanced into the love and favour of God? This honour have all his saints. What is the crown of glory but God's favour? (2.) "He has given thee true pleasure; He satisfieth thy mouth with good things," (v. 5.) It is only the favour and grace of God, that can give satisfaction to a soul, can suit its capacities, supply its needs, and answer to its desires; nothing but divine wisdom can undertake to fill its treasures; (Prov. viii. 21.) other things will surfeit, but not satiate, Excl. vi. 7. Isa. lv. 2. (3.) "He has given thee a prospect and pledge of long life; Thy youth is renewed like the eagle." The eagle is long-lived, and, as naturalists say, when she is near 100 years old, casts all her feathers, (as indeed she changes them in a great measure every year at molting time,) and fresh ones come, so that she becomes young again. When God, by the graces and comforts of his Spirit, recovers his people from their decays, and fills them with new life and joy, which is to them an earnest of eternal life and joy, then they may be said to return to the days of their youth, Job xxxiii. 25.

6. The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. 7. He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. 8. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. 9. He will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger for ever. 10. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. 12. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. 13. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. 14. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. 15. As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth: 16. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. 17. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; 18. To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

Hitherto the psalmist had only looked back upon his own experiences, and thence fetched matter for praise; here he looks abroad, and takes notice of his favour to others also, for in them we should rejoice, and give thanks for them; for the Lord is fed at a common table, and sharing in the same blessings.

1. Truly God is good to all; (v. 6.) He executes righteousness and judgment, not only for his own people, but for all that are oppressed; for, even in common providence, he is the Patron of wronged innocence, and, one way or other, will plead the cause of those that are injured against their oppressors. It is his honour to humble the proud, and help the helpless.
II. He is in a special manner good to Israel, to every Israelite indeed, that is of a clean and upright heart.

1. He has revealed himself and his grace to us; (v. 7.) He made known his ways unto Moses, and by him his acts to the children of Israel; not only by his rod to those who then lived, but by his pen to those who have since lived. Dr. Dallas says the first grand and greatest of divine favours with which the church is blessed; for God restores us to himself by revealing himself to us, and gives us all good by giving us knowledge. He has made known his acts and his ways, his nature, and the methods of his dealing with the children of men, that they may know both what to conceive of him, and what to expect from him; so Dr. Hammond. Or, by his acts we may understand his precepts, the the which he requires us to walk in; and by his acts, or designs, (as the word signifies,) his promises and purposes as to what he will do with us. Thus fairly does God deal with us.

2. He has never been rigorous and severe with us, but always tender, full of compassion, and ready to forgive.

(1.) It is in his nature to be so; (v. 8.) The Lord is merciful and gracious; this was his way which he made known to Moses at mount Horeb, where he thus proclaimed his name, (Exod. xlv. 6, 7,) in answer to Moses’s request, (ch. xxxiii. 13.) I beseech thee, show me thy way, that I may know thee. It is my way, says God, to pardon sin. [1.] He is not so soon angry, v. 8. He is slow to anger, not extreme to mark what we do amiss, nor ready to take advantage against us. He bears long with those that are very provoking, deters punishing, that he may give space to repent, and does not speedily execute the sentence of his law. He could not be thus slow to anger, if he were not plentiful in mercy, the very Father of mercies. [2.] He is not long angry; for, (v. 9.) He will not always chide, though we always offend, and deserve chiding. Though he signifies his displeasure against us for our sins, by the rebukes of Providence, and the reproaches of our own consciences, and thus cause grief, yet he will have compassion, and will not always keep us in pain and terror, not for our sins, but, after the manner of bondages, will give the spirit of adoption. How unlike are those to God, who always chide, who take every occasion to chide, and never know when to cease! What would become of us, if God should deal so with us? He will not keep his anger for ever, against his own people, but will gather them with everlasting mercies, Isa. lvi. 8.—lvii. 16.

(2.) We have found him so; we, for our parts, must own that he has not dealt with us after our sins, v. 10. The scripture says a great deal of the mercy of God, and we may all set to our seal, that it is true, that we have experienced it. If he had not been a God of patience, we had been in hell long ago; but he has not rewarded us after our iniquities; so they will say who know what sin deserves. He has not inflicted the judgments which we have merited, nor delivered us of the comforts which we have forfeited; which would make us think the worse, and not the better, of sin; for God’s patience should lead us to repentance, Rom. ii. 4.

3. He has pardoned our sins; not only mine iniquity, (v. 3.) but our transgressions; (v. 12.) though it is of our own benefit, by the pardoning mercy of God, that we are to take the comfort, yet of the benefit others have by it we must give him the glory. Observe, (1.) The transcendence of God’s mercy, (v. 13.) What God’s mercy is high above the earth, (so high, that the earth is but a point to the vast expanse,) so God’s mercy is above the merits of those that fear him most: so much above and beyond them, that there is no proportion at all between them; the greatest performances of man’s duty cannot demand the least tokens of God’s favour as a debt, and therefore all the seed of Jacob will join with him in owning themselves less than the least of all God’s mercies, Gen. xxxii. 10. Observe, God’s mercy is thus great toward them that fear him, not toward them that trifle with him. We must fear God, and his goodness. (2.) The fulness of his pardons, if we consider the fulness of his mercy; (v. 12.) As far as the east is from the west, so are his mercies toward them that fear him. The sins of believers shall not be remembered no more, shall not be mentioned unto them, they shall be sought for, and not found. If we thoroughly forsake them, God will thoroughly forgive them.

4. He has pitied our sorrows, v. 13, 14. Observe, (1.) Whom he pitied; them that fear him, all good people, who in this world may become objects of pity on account of the grievances to which they are not only born, but born again. Or it may be understood of those who have not yet received the spirit of adoption, and are yet trembling at his word; those he pitied, Jer. xxxi. 18, 20. (2.) How he pitied; as a father pitied his children, and does them good as there is occasion. God is a Father to them that fear him, and owns them for his children, and he is tender of them as a father. The father pitied his children that are weak in knowledge, and instructed them; pitied them when they are forward, and bears with them; pitied them when they are sick, and comforts them; pitied them; (Isa. lv. 18.) When they were as little children, up, up again; pitied them when they have offended, and forgives them, and when they are wronged, and rights them; thus the Lord filleth them that fear him. (3.) Why he pitied; for he knew our frame. He has reason to know our frame, for he framed us; and, having himself made man of the dust, he remembered that he is dust, not only by constitution, but by sentence; Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. (4.) He pitied the frailty of our souls, how little we can do, and accordingly from us, how little we can bear, and lays accordingly upon us; in all which appears the tenderness of his compassion.

5. He has perpetuated his covenant-mercy, and thereby provided relief for our frailty, v. 15-18. See here.

(1.) How short man’s life is, and of what uncertain continuance; the lives even of good men and good men are so; and neither their greatness nor their goodness can alter the property of them; As for man, his days are as grass, which grows out of the earth, rises but a little way above it, and soon withers, and returns to it again. See Isa. xl. 6, 7. Man, in his best estate, seems somewhat more than grass, he flourishes and looks gay; yet then he is but like a flower of the field, which, though distinguished a little from the grass, will wither with it. The flower of the garden is commonly more choice and valuable, and, though in its own nature withering, will last the longer for its being sheltered by the garden wall, and the gardener’s care; but the flower of the field, (to which life is here compared) is not only withering in itself, but exposed to the cold blasts, and liable to be corrupt, and wrung on by the beasts of the field. Man’s life is not only wasting of itself, but it is often anticipated by a thousand accidents. When the flower is in its perfection, a blasting wind, unseen, unlooked for, passes over it, and it is gone; it hangs the head, drops the leaves, dwindles into the ground again, and the place thereof,
which was proud of it, now knows it no more. Such a thing is man: God considers it, and pities him; let him consider his end, and be wise, for God will be holy, dead to this world, and thoughtful of another.

(2.) How long and lasting God's mercy is to his people; (v. 17, 18.) it will continue longer than their lives, and will survive their present state. Observe, [1.] The description of these to whom this mercy belongs; they are such as fear God, such as are truly religious, from principle. First, They live a life of faith; for they keep God's commandments, have taken hold of it, they keep hold of it, fast hold, and will not let it go. They keep it as a treasure, keep it as their portion, and would not for all the world part with it, for it is their life. Secondly, They live a life of obedience; they remember his commandments to do them, else they do not keep his covenant. Those only shall have the benefit of God's promises that make conscience of his precepts. See who they are that have a good memory, as well as a good understanding, (ex. 10.) those that remember God's commandments, not to talk of them, but to do them, and to be ruled by them. [2.] The continuance of the mercy which belongs to such as these: it will last them longer than their lives on earth, and therefore they need not be troubled though their lives be short, since death itself will be no abridgment, no infringement, of their bliss. God's mercy is better than life, for it will outlive it. If God's glory be their life, (Isa. 57:19.) then shall the mercy of the Lord be from everlasting to everlasting; from everlasting in the councils of it, to everlasting in the consequences of it; in their election before the world was, and their glorification when this world shall be no more; for they are destined to the inheritance, (Eph. i. 11.) and look for the mercy of the Lord, the Lord Jesus, unto eternal life. Secondly, To their seed, which shall be kept up to the end of time; (c. ii. 28.) His righteousness shall be their treasure; God's children and children's children; provided they tread in the steps of their predecessors' piety, and keep his covenant, as they did, then shall mercy be preserved to them, even to a thousand generations.

19. The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. 20. Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. 21. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his that do his pleasure. 22. Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion: bless the Lord, O my soul. Here is,

I. The doctrine of universal providence laid down, v. 19. He has secured the happiness of his peculiar people by promise and covenant, but the order of mankind, and the world in general, he secures by common providence. The Lord has a throne of his own, a throne of glory, a throne of government; he that rules all rules absolutely, without all a given by him; he has prepared his throne, has fixed and established it that it cannot be shaken; he has ordained all the measures of his government, and does all according to the counsel of his own will. He has prepared it in the heavens, above us, and out of sight; for he holds back the face of his throne, and spreads a cloud upon it, (Job xxvi. 9.) yet can himness judge through the dark cloud, Job xxii. 13. Hence the heavens are said to rule, (Dan. iv. 26.) and we are led to consider this by the influence which even the visible heavens have upon this earth, their dominion, Job xxxviii. 33. Gen. i. 16. But though God's throne is in heaven, and there he keeps his court, and thither we are to direct to him, (our Father which art in heaven,) yet his kingdom rules over all. He takes cognizance of all the inhabitants, and all the affairs, of this lower world, and disposes all persons and things according to the counsel of his will, to his own glory; (Dan. iv. 35.) His kingdom rules over all kings, and all kingdoms, and from it there is no exempt jurisdiction.

II. This inference drawn from it; if all are under God's dominion, all must do him homage. 1. Let the holy angels praise him; (v. 20, 21.) Bless the Lord, ye his angels; and again, Bless the Lord, all ye his hosts, ye ministers of his. David had been stirring up himself and others to praise God, and here, in the close, he calls upon the angels to do it: not as if they needed any excitement of ours to praise God, they do it continually; but thus he expresses his high thoughts of God as worthy of the adorations of the holy angels; thus he quickens himself and others to the duty, with this consideration, That it is the work of angels; and comforts himself, in reference to his own weakness and defect in the performance of this duty, with this consideration, That there is a world of holy angels who dwell in God's house, and are still praising him. In short, the blessed angels are glorious attendants upon the blessed God. Observe, (1.) How well qualified they are to do this great work, for they excel in strength; they are mighty in strength, so the word is: they are able to bring great things to pass, and to abide in their work without weariness. And they are as willing as they are able; they are willing to know their work; for they hearken to the voice of his word; they stand expecting commission and instructions from their great Lord, and always behold his face, (Matt. xvi. 9.) that they may take the first import of his mind. They are willing to do their work; they do his commandments, (v. 20.) they do his pleasure, (v. 21.) they dispute not any divine command, but readily address themselves to the execution of them: nor do they delay, but fly swiftly. They do his commandments at hearing; or, as soon as they hear the voice of his word; so Dr. Hammond. To obey is better than sacrifice; for angels obey, but men do not, such as sacrifice not; (Gen. ii. 7.) they are his angels, and ministers of his; his, for he made them, and made them for himself; his, for he employs them, though he does not need them; his, for he is their Owner and Lord, they belong to him, and he has them at his beck. All the creatures are his servants, but not as the angels that attend the presence of his glory. Soldiers, and seraphims, and all good subjects, serve the king, but not as the courtiers do, the ministers of state, and those of the household.

[1.] They occasionally serve God in this lower world; they do his commandments, go on his errands, (Dan. ix. 21.) fight his battles, (2 Kings vi. 17.) and minister for the good of his people, Heb. i. 14. [2.] They continually praise him in the upper world; they began betimes to do it, (Job xxxviii. 7.) and it is still their business, from which they rest not day or night, Rev. iv. 8. It is God's glory, that he has such attendants, but more his glory, that he neither needs their services for his own benefit, nor can be without them.

2. Let all his works praise him; (v. 22.) all, in all places of his dominion; for, because they are his works, they are under his dominion; and they were made, and are ruled, that they may be unto him for a name and a praise. All his works, that is, all the children of men, in all parts of the world, let them all praise God; yea, and the inferior creatures too, which are God's works also, let them praise him objectively, though they cannot actually do it; (xxiv. 10.) yet all this shall not excuse David from
When we are addressing ourselves to any religious service, we must stir up ourselves to take hold on God in it; (Isa. lxxv. 7.) so David does here. “Come, my soul, where art thou? What art thou thinking of? Here is work to be done, good work, angels’ work; set about it in good earnest, let all thy powers and faculties be engaged and employed in it; Bless the Lord, O my soul.”

In these verses:

I. The psalmist looks up to the divine glory shining in the upper world, of which, though it is one of the things not seen, faith is the evidence. With what reverence and holy awe does he begin his meditation with that acknowledgment, O Lord my God, thou art very great! It is the joy of the saints, that he will be that God to a great God; the grandeur of the prince is the pride and pleasure of all the good subjects. The majesty of God is here set forth by divers instances, alluding to the figure which great princes in their public appearances covet to make, their equipage, compared with his, (even of the eastern kings, who most affected pomp,) is but as the light of a glow-worm, compared with that of the sun when he goes forth in his strength. Princes appear great.

1. In their robes: and what are God’s robes? Thou art clothed with honour and majesty, v. 1. God is seen in his works, and these bespeak him infinitely wise and good, and all that is great. Thou coverest thyself with light, as with a garment, v. 2. God is light, (1 John i. 5.) the Father of lights; (Jam. i. 17.) he dwells in light, (1 Tim. vi. 16.) he clothes himself with it. The residence of his glory is in the highest heaven, that light which was created at the first day, Gen. i. 3. Of all visible beings, light comes nearest to the nature of a spirit, and therefore with that God is pleased to cover himself, that is, to reveal himself under that similitude, as men are seen in the clothes with which they cover themselves; and so only, for his face cannot be seen.

2. In their palaces, or pavilions, when they take the field: and what is God’s palace, and his pavilion? He stretches out the heavens like a curtain; (v. 2.) so he did at first, when he made the firmament, which in the Hebrew has its name from its being expanded or stretched out, Gen. i. 7. He made it to divide the waters as a curtain divides between two apartments: so he does still; he now stretches out the heavens like a curtain, keeps them upon the stretch, and they continue to this day according to his ordinance. The regions of the air are stretched out about the earth, like a curtain about a bed, to keep it warm, and drawn between us and the upper world, to break its dazzling light; for though God covers himself with light, yet, in compassion to us, he makes darkness his pavilion; thick clouds are a covering to him. The vastness of this pavilion may lead us to consider how great, how very great, he is, that fills heaven and earth. He has his chambers, his upper rooms, so the word signifies, the beams whereof he lays in the waters, the waters that are above the firmament, (v. 2.) as he has foundations the earth upon the seas and floods, the waters beneath the firmament. Though air and water be fluid bodies, yet, by the divine power, they are kept as tight and as firm in the place assigned them, as a chamber is with beams and rafters. How great a God is he, whose presence-chamber is thus reared, thus fixed!

3. In their coaches of state, and their stately houses, whose add much to the magnificence of their entries: but God makes the changes of his counsels, in which he rides strongly, swiftly, and far above out of the reach of opposition, when at any time he will act by uncommon providences in the government of this world. He descended in a cloud, as in a chariot, to mount Sinai, to give the law, and to mount Tabor,
to proclaim the gospel, (Matt. xvii. 5.) and he
walks (a gentle pace indeed, yet stately) upon the
wings of the wind. See xviii. 10, 11. He
communds the winds, directs them as he pleases, and serves
his own purposes by them.

4. In their retinue or train of attendants: and here
also God is very great; for (v. 4.) he maketh his angels
spirits. This is quoted by the apostle, (Heb. i. 7.) to
prove the pre-existence of Christ as the word of God.

The earth and the firmament are said to be his angels and his
ministers, for they are under his dominion, and at his
disposal; they are winds, and a flame of fire, that is,
a flame, in wind and fire, so some; or, they are
as swift as winds, and pure as flames; or he maketh them
spirits, so the apostle quotes it. They are
spiritual beings; and, whatever vehicles they may
have proper to their nature, it is certain they have not bodies, as we have.
Being spirits, they are so
much the further removed from the incumbrances of the human
nature, and so much the nearer allied to the glories of the divine
nature. And they are
bright and quick, and ascending as fire, as a flame of
fire. In Ezekiel's vision, they ran and returned like a
flash of lightning, Ezek. i. 14. Thence they are
called Seraphim, burners. Whatever they are, they
are what God made them, what he still makes
them; they derive their being from him, having the
beginning of life from him, and the continuance of life
by him, and he makes what use he pleases of them.

II. He looks down, and looks about, to the power
of God shining in this lower world. He is not so
taken up with the glories of his court, as to neglect even the
remoter of his territories; no, not the sea
and dry land.

1. He has founded the earth; (v. 5.) though he has
hung it upon nothing, (Job xxvi. 2.) neither has
his greatness been equalled by its own weight; yet it is
as immovable as if it had been laid upon the surest
foundations. He has built the earth upon her basis,
so that though it has received a dangerous shock
by the sin of man, and the malice of hell strikes at it,
yet it shall not be removed for ever, that is, not
till the end of time, when it must give way to the
new earth. Dr. Hammond's paraphrase of this is
worth noting: "God has fixed so strange a place for
the earth, that being a heavy body, one would
think it should fall every minute; and yet, which
way soever we would imagine it to stir, it must,
contrary to the nature of such a body, fall upwards,
and so can have no possible ruin but by tumbling
into heaven."

2. He has set bounds to the sea; for that also is his.
(1.) He brought it within bounds in the creation.
At first, the earth, which, being the more
porous body, would subside of course, was covered with
the deep, (v. 6.) the waters were above the
mountains; and so it was unfit to be, as it was designed,
a habitation for man; and therefore, on the third
day, God said, Let the waters under the heaven be
gathered unto one place, and let the dry land appear,
Gen. i. 9. This command of God is here
called his rubuke, as if he gave it because he was
pleased that the earth was thus covered with water; and not fit for man to dwell on. Power went
along with this word, and therefore it is also called here the voice of his
thunder, which is a mighty voice and produces strange effects, v. 7. At thy rubuke as if they were made sensible that they were out of
their place, they fled, they hastened away; (they
called, and not in vain, to the rocks and mountains
to cover them:) as it is said, on another occasion, (lxvii. 16.) The waters saw thee, O God, the waters
witnessed, and the rocks stood up; and as these fluid
bodies received the impression of God's terror, But
was the Lord displeased against the rivers? No
it was for the salvation of his people, Hab. ii. 8, 13.
So here God rebuked the waters for man's sake, to
prepare room for him; for men must not be made as
the fishes of the sea, (Hab. i. 14.) they must have air
to breathe in. Immediately, therefore, with all
speed, the waters retired, v. 8. They go over hill
and dale, (as we say,) go up by the mountains, and
down by the valleys; they will neither stop at the
former, nor lodge in the latter, but make the best of
their way to the place which thou hast founded for
them, and there they make their bed. Let the ob-
sequiousness even of the unstable waters teach us
obedience to the word and will of God: for shall
man alone of all the creatures be obstinate? Let
their retiring to, and resting in, the place assigned
them, teach us to acquiesce in the disposals of that
wise providence which appoints us the bounds of our
habitation.

(2.) He keeps it within bounds, (v. 9.) The
waters are forbidden to pass over the limits set
them; they may not, and therefore they do not, turn again
to cover the earth. Once they did, in Noah's flood,
because God bade them, but never since, because he
forbids them, having promised not to drown the
world again. God himself glories in this instance
of his power, (Job xxxviii. 8, &c.) and uses it as an
argument with us to fear him, Jer. v. 22. This, if
duly considered, would keep the world in awe of the
Lord and his goodness, That the waters of the sea
would soon cover the earth, if God did not restrain
them.

10. He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which
run among the hills. 11. They give drink to every beast of the field: the
wild asses quench their thirst. 12. By
them shall the fowls of the heaven have their
habitation, which sing among the branches.
13. He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied, with
the fruit of thy works. 14. He causeth the
grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food
out of the earth; 15. And wine that maketh
the heart of man glad, and oil that maketh
his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth
man's heart. 16. The trees of the Lord
are full of sap: the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted; 17. Where the birds
make their nests: as for the stork, the fir	rees
are her house. 18. The high hills are a
refuge for the wild goats, and the rocks for the
conies.

Having given glory to God, as the powerful Pro-
tector of this earth, in saving it from being deluged,
here he comes to acknowledge him as its bountiful
Benefactor, who provides conveniences for all the
creatures.

1. He provides fresh water for their drink; He
sends the springs into the valleys, v. 10. There is
water enough indeed in the sea, that is, enough
to drown us, but not one drop to refresh us, he we ever
so thirsty, it is all so salt; and therefore God has graciously provided water fit to
drink. Naturalists
dispute about the origin of fountains; but, whatever
are their second causes, here is their first Cause; it
is God that sends the springs into the brooks, which
walk by easy steps between the hills, and receive
in them the streams that descend from them.
These give drink, not only to man, and those
creatures that are immediately useful to him, but to
every beast of the field; (v. 11.) for where God has
given life, he provides a livelihood, and takes care
of all the creatures; even the wild asses, though un

tameable, and therefore of no use to man, are wel

to quench their thirsts; and we have no reason to

grudge it them, for we are better provided for,

though born like the wild ass's colt. We have rea

son to thank God for the plenty of fair water which

he has provided the habitable part of his earth, which

otherwise would not be habitable.

That ought to be reckoned a great mercy, the want

of which would be a great affliction: and the more

common it is, the greater mercy it is; Usis communis

aqueant—Water is for common use.

II. He provides food convenient for them, both

for man and beast, for he makes the earth to hear

the earth, but God hears them, Hos. ii. 21.

He waters the hills from his chambers, (v. 13.) from

those chambers spoken of, (v. 3.) the beams of

which he lays in the waters, those store-chambers, the

clouds that distil the fruitful showers. The hills that

are not watered by the rivers, as Egypt was by Nile, are watered by the rain from heaven, which is called the river of God, (Hos. 9.) as Canaan was, Dout. xi. 11, 12. Thus the earth is satisfied

with the fruit of his works; either with the rain it

drinks in, (the earth knows when it has enough,) it

is pity that any man should not, or with the pro

ducts it brings forth. It is a satisfaction to the

earth to bear the fruit of God's works for the bene

fit of man, for thus it answers the end of its creation.

The food which God brings forth out of the earth,

(v. 14.) is the fruit of his works, which the earth is

satisfied with. Observe how various and how valu

able its products are: for the cattle there is grass,

and the beasts of prey, that live not on grass, feed

on those that do. For man there is herb, a better

sort of grass, (and a dinner of herbs and roots is not
to be despised,) nay, he is furnished with wine, and

oil, and bread, v. 15.

We may observe here, concerning our food, that

which will help to make us both humble and thank

ful. 1. To make us humble, let us consider that we

have a necessary dependence upon God for all the

supports of this life; we live upon alms, we are

at his finding, for our own hands are not sufficient

for us: that our food comes all out of the earth, to

remind us whence we ourselves were taken, and

whether we must return; and that, therefore, we

must not think to live by bread alone, for that will

feed the body only, but must look into the word of

God for the meat that endures to eternal life; and,

finally, we have in this as in our fellow-commoners

with the beasts: the same earth, the same spot of

ground, that brings grass for the cattle, brings

corn for man. 2. To make us thankful, let us con

sider, (1.) That God not only provides for us, but

for our servants: the cattle that are of use to man

are particularly taken care of; grass is made to

grow in great abundance for them, when the young

lions, that are not for the service of man, often lack,

and suffer hunger. (2.) That our food is nigh us,

and not at a distance: our habitation on earth is

there we have our storehouse, and depend not on

the merchant-ships that bring food from afar, Prov.

xxxii. 14. (3.) That we have even from the pro

ducts of the earth, not only for necessity, but for or

nament and delight; so God has a Master do serve.

1. Does nature call for something to support it, and

repair its daily decays? Here is bread, which

strengthens man's heart, and is therefore called the

satiety of the flesh, when we have the bread we

want. [2.] Does nature go further, and covet

something pleasant? Here is wine, that makes glad

the heart, refreshes the spirits, and exhilarates them,

when it is soberly and moderately used; that we

may not only go through our business, but go through

it cheerfully. It is pity that should be abused to

overcharge the heart, and unfit men for their

duty, which was given to revive their heart, and

quicken them in their duty. [3.] Is nature yet

more humoursome, and does it crave something for

ornament too? Here is that also out of the earth;

oil to make the face to shine, that the countenance

may not only be cheerful but beautiful, and we may

be the more acceptable to those we worship.

Nay, the Divine Providence not only furnishes

animals with their proper food, but vegetables also

with theirs; (v. 16.) The trees of the Lord are full

of sap; not only men's trees, which they take care

of, and have an eye to, in their orchards, and parks,

and other enclosures, but God's trees, which grow

in the wildernesses, and are taken care of only by

his Providence, they are full of sap, and want no

nourishment. [4.] The fowl of the air, an open

forest, though they are high and bulky, and require

a great deal of sap to feed them, have enough from

the earth; they are trees which he has planted, and

which therefore he will protect and provide for.

We may apply this to the trees of righteousness,

which are the planting of the Lord, planted in his

vineyard; these are full of sap; for what God plants

he will water; and they that are planted in the

house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our

God, xci. 13.

III. He takes care that they shall have suitable

habitations to dwell in. To men God has given dis

cretion to build for themselves, and for the cattle

that are serviceable to them; but there are some

creatures which God more immediately provides a

settlement for.

The birds. Some birds, by instinct, make

their nests in the bushes near rivers, (v. 12.) By

the springs that run among the hills, some of the

fowls of heaven have their habitation, which sing

among the branches. They sing, according to their

capacity, to the honour of their Creator and Bene

factor; and their singing may shew our silence. Our

heavenly Father feeds them, (Matth. vi. 26.) and

therefore they are easy and cheerful, and take

no thought for the morrow. The birds being made
to fly above the earth, (as we find, Gen. i. 26.) they

make their nests on high, in the tops of trees, (v. 17.) it

should seem as if nature had arose to this in

planting the cedars of Lebanon, that they might be

receptacles for the birds. Those that fly heaven

ward shall not want resting-places. The stork is

particularly mentioned; the fir-trees, which are very

high, are her house, her castle.

2. The lesser sort of beasts; (v. 18.) The wild

gazelle, having neither strength nor swiftness to

secure themselves, are guided by instinct to the high

hills, which are a refuge to them; and the rabbins,

which are also helpless animals, find a shelter in the

rocks, where they can set the beasts of prey at de

fiance. Does God provide thus for the inferior

creatures, and will he not himself be a Refuge and

Dwelling-Place to his own people?

19. He appointeth the month for seasons:

the sun knoweth his going down. 20. Thou

maketh darkness, and it is night, wherein all

the beasts of the forest do creep forth. 21

The young lions roar after their prey, and seek

their meat from God. 22. The sun ariseth, they

gerather themselves together, and lay them down

in their dens. 23. Man goeth forth unto his work,

and to his labour, until the evening. 24. O Lord,
wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. 26. There go the ships; there is that Leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein. 27. These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. 28. That thou givest them, they gather: thou openest thy hand, they are filled with good. 29. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. 30. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.

We are here taught to praise and magnify God.

I. For the constant revolutions and succession of day and night, and the dominion of sun and moon over them. The heaven were so affected with the light and influence of the sun and moon, and their serviceableness to the earth, that they worshipped them as deities; and therefore the scripture takes all occasions to show that the gods they worshipped are the same as those of the true God: (Gen. 1. 14.) He appointed the moon for seasons, for the measuring of the months, the directing of the seasons for the business of the husbandman, and the governing of the tides. The full and change, the increase and decrease, of the moon, exactly observe the appointment of the Creator; so does the sun, for he keeps as punctually to the time and place of his going down as if he were an intellectual being, and knew what he did.

God herein fulfills the comfort of man.

1. The shadows of the evening befriend the repose of the night; (v. 20.) Thou madest darkness, and it is night, which, though black, contributes to the beauty of nature, and is as a foil to the light of the day; and under the protection of the night all the beasts of the forest creep forth to feed, which they are afraid to do in the day, God having put the fear and dread of man upon every beast of the earth. (Gen. ii. 20.) which contributes as much to man's safety as to his honor. See how nearly allied they are to the disposition of the wild beast, who wait for the twilight, (Job xxiv. 15.) and have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; and compare to this the danger of ignorance and melancholy, which are both darkness to the soul; when, either of these ways, it is night, then all the beasts of the forest creep forth, Satan's temptations then assauls, and have advantage against us. Then the young lions roar after their prey; and, as naturalists tell us, their roaring terrifies the timorous beasts, so that they have not strength or spirit to outrun them, which otherwise they might do, and so they become an easy prey to them. They are said to seek their meat from God, because it is not prepared for them by the care and forecast of man, but more immediately by the providence of God. (Ps. cxii. 1.) and of the young lions, like the crying of the young ravens, is interpreted, asking their meat of God. Does God put this construction upon the language of mere nature, even in venemous creatures, and shall he not much more interpret favourably the language of grace in his own people, though it be weak and broken groanings which cannot be uttered?

2. The light of the morning befriends the business of the day; (v. 22, 23.) The sun arises, (for, as he knows his rising, so doth he to God, knowing his rising again,) and then the wild beasts awake themselves to their rest, even they have some society among them, for they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens, which is a great mercy to the children of men, that while they are abroad, as become honest travellers, between sun and sun, care is taken that they shall not be set upon by wild beasts, for they are then drawn out of the field, and the sluggard shall have no opportunity to excuse himself from the business he durst not take for that. There is a lion in the way. Therefore, man goes forth to his work and to his labour; the beasts of prey creep forth with fear, man goes forth with boldness, as one that has dominion. The beasts creep forth to spoil and do mischief, man goes forth to work and do good. There is the work of every day, which is to be done in its day, which man must apply to every morning, for the lights are set up for us to work by, not to play by; and which we must stick to till evening: it will be time enough to rest when the night comes, in which no man can work.

II. For the replenishing of the ocean; (v. 25, 26.) As the earth is full of God's riches, well-stocked with animals, and those well provided for, so that it is seldom that any creature dies merely for want of food; so is this great and wide sea, which seems a useless part of the globe, at least, not to answer the room it takes up; yet God has appointed it its place, and it is well-stocked with navigation and navigation, (there go the ships, in which goods are conveyed to countries vastly distant, speedily, and much cheaper than by land-carriage,) and also to be the storehouse for fish; God made not the sea in vain, any more than the earth, he made it to be inhabited, for there are things swimming innumerable, both small and great animals, which serve for man's dainty food. The whale is particularly mentioned in the history of the creation, (Gen. i. 21.) and is here called the Leviathan, as Job xli. 1. He is made to play in the sea: he has nothing to do, as man has, who goes forth to his work; he has nothing to fear, as the beasts have, that lie down in their dens; and therefore he plays with the waters. It is pity that any of the children of men, who have nobler powers, and were made for nobler purposes, should live as if they were sent into the world, like Leviathan into the waters, to play therein; spending all their time in pastime. The Leviathan is said to play in the waters, because he is so well armed against all assaults, that he sets them at defiance, and laughs at the shaking of a spear, Job xli. 29.

III. For the seasonable and plentiful provision which is made for all the creatures, v. 27, 28. 1. God is a bountiful Benefactor to them; he gives them their meat; he opens his hand, and they are filled with good. He supplies them with the air of heaven and earth; even the meanest creatures are not below his cognizance. He is open-handed in the gifts of his bounty, and is a great and good Housekeeper that provides for so large a family. 2. They are patient expectants from him. They all wait upon him; they seek their food, according to the natural instinct God has put into them, and in the proper season for it; and affect not any other food, or at any other time, than when there is the obtaining of it; what God gives them they gather, and expect not that Providence should put it into their mouths; and what they gather they are satisfied with: they are filled with good; they desire no more than what God sees fit for them, which may shame our murmurings and discontent, and dissatisfaction with our lot.

IV. For the absolute power and sovereign dominion which he has over all creatures, which no species of each is still continued, though the individuals of each are daily dying and dropping off. See here, 1. All the creatures perishing; (v. 29.) Thou hidest thy face, withdrawest thy supporting power, thy supplying bounty, and they are troubled immediately. Every creature has as necessary a dependence upon God's favours as every saint is
sensible he has, and therefore says with David, (Ps. xxx. 7.) Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled. God's displeasure against this lower world for the sin of man is the cause of all the vanity and barrenness which the whole creation groans under. Thou takest away their breath, which is in thy hand, and then they die and return to their dust, to their first principles. The spirit of the beast, which goes downward, is at God's command, as well as the spirit of a man, which goes upward. The death of cattle was one of the plagues of Egypt, and is particularly taken notice of in the drowning of the world. 2. All preserved notwithstanding, in a succession; (v. 30.) Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created; the same spirit, the same divine will and power, by which they were all created at first, still preserves the several sorts of creatures in their being, and place, and usefulness; so that, though one generation of them passes away, another comes, and from time to time they are created; new ones rise up instead of the old ones, and this is a continual creation. Thus the face of the earth is renewed from day to day by the light of the sun, which beautifies it, and at every morning from year to year by the products of it, which enrich it anew every spring, and put quite another face upon it from what it had all winter. The world is as full of creatures as if none died, for the place of those that die is filled up. This (the Jews say) is to be applied to the resurrection, which every spring is an emblem of, when a new world rises out of the ashes of the old one.

In the midst of this discourse the psalmist breaks out into wonder at the works of God; (v. 24.) O Lord, how manifold are thy works! They are numerous, they are various, of many kinds, and many of every kind; and yet in wisdom hast thou made them all. When men undertake many works, and of different kinds, commonly some of them are neglected, and not done with due care; but God's works, though many, and of very different kinds, are all made in wisdom, and with the greatest exactness; there is not the least flaw or defect in them. The works of art, the more closely they are looked upon with the help of microscopes, the more rough they appear; the works of nature through these glasses appear more fine and exact. They are all made in wisdom, for they are all made to answer the end they were designed to serve, the good of the universe, in order to the glory of the universal Monarch.

31. The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever: the Lord shall rejoice in his works. 32. He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth; he toucheth the hills, and they smoke. 33. I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. 34. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord. 35. Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the Lord, O my soul. Praise ye the Lord.

The psalmist concludes this meditation with speaking.

1. Praise to God, which is chiefly intended in the psalm.

(1.) He is to be praised. [1.] As a great God, and as a God of matchless perfection; The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever, v. 31. It shall endure to the end of time, in his works of creation and providence; it shall endure to eternity, in the felicity and adorations of saints and angels. Man's glory is fading, God's glory is everlasting; creatures change, but with the Creator there is no variability. [2.] As a gracious God; The Lord shall rejoice in his works. He continues that complacency in the products of his own wisdom and goodness which he had when he saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good, and rested the seventh day from his work. God in his review, we cannot rejoice in, but are displeased at, and wish undone again, blaming our own management. But God always rejoices in his works, because they are all done in wisdom. We regret our bounty and beneficence, but God never does; he rejoices in the works of his grace, his gifts and callings are without repentance. [3.] As a God of almighty power; (v. 32.) He looketh on the earth, and it trembles, as unable to bear his broils. Even as Sodom, at the presence of the Lord. He toucheth the hills, and they smoke. The volcanoes, or burning mountains, such as ætna, are emblems of the power of God's wrath fastening upon proud unhumbled sinners. If an angry look and a touch have such effects, what will the weight of his heavy hand do, and the operations of his outstretched arm? Who knows the power of his anger? Who dare presume to dare it? It is intolerable, as man himself, as God's people, cannot endure it. He will rejoice in his works, because they are all so observer of him; and he will in like manner take pleasure in them that fear him, and that tremble at his word. (2.) The psalmist will himself be much in praising him; (v. 33.) I will sing unto the Lord, unto my God, will praise him as Jehovah, the Creator, and as my God, a God in covenant with me, and this not now only, but as long as I live, and while I have my being. Because we have our life and being from God, and depend upon him for the support and continuance of it, as long as we live and have our being, we must continue to praise God; and when we have no life, no being on earth, we hope to have a better life and better being in a better world, and there to do this work in a better manner, and in better company.

2. Joy to himself; (v. 34.) My meditation of him shall be sweet; it shall be fixed and close, it shall be finding and influencing thought; the reference shall be sweet. Thoughts of God will then be most pleasing when they are most powerful. Nete, Divine meditation is a very sweet duty to all that are sanctified. I will be glad in the Lord, it shall be a pleasure to me to praise him; I will be glad of all opportunities to set forth his glory; and I will rejoice in the Lord always, and in him only. All my joys shall centre in him, and in them they shall be full.

3. Terror to the wicked; (v. 35.) Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. (1.) They that oppose the God of power, and fight against him, will certainly be consumed: none can prosper that harden themselves against the Almighty. (2.) They that rebel against the light of such convincing evidence of God's being, and refuse to serve him, whom all the creatures serve, will perish. The earth shall be so lofty, that earth to grow under the burden of their impieties, which God thus fills with his riches, deserve to be consumed out of it, and that it should spue them out. (3.) They that heartily desire to praise God themselves, cannot but have a holy indignation at those that blaspheme and dishonour him, and a holy satisfaction in the prospect of their destruction, and the honour that God will give to himself by their punishment. It is very seasons, and the matter of their praise; While sinners are consumed out of the earth, let my soul bless the Lord that I am not cast away with the workers of iniquity, but distinguished from them by the special grace of God. When the wicked are no more, I hope to be praising
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God world without end: and therefore Praise ye the Lord; let all about me join with me in praising God. Hallelujah; sing praise to Jehovah." This is the first time that we meet with Hallelujah; and it comes in here upon occasion of the destruction of the wicked; and the last time we meet with it is upon the like occasion; when the New Testament Babylon is consumed, this is the burden of the song, Hallelujah, Rev. xix. 1, 3, 4, 6.

PSALM CV.

Some of the psalms of praise are very short, others very long, to teach us, that in our devotions, we should be more observant how our hearts work than how the psalms pass; and neither overstretch ourselves, by coveting to be long, nor overstretch ourselves, by coveting to be short, but either the one or the other, as we find in our hearts to pray. This is a long psalm; the general scope is the saying that we give him the glory of his God, but the subject matter is particular. Every time we come to the throne of grace, we may, if we please, furnish ourselves out of the Word of God (out of the history of the New Testament, as this out of the history of the Old) with new songs, with fresh thoughts—so copious, so various, so inexhaustible, is the subject. In the foregoing psalm, we are taught to praise God for his wondrous works of common providence, with reference to the world in general; in this, we are directed to praise him for his special favours to his church. We find the eleven first verses of this psalm in the beginning of that psalm which David delivered to Asaph to be used (as it should seem) for the daily service of the sanctuary, where the ark was fixed in the place he had prepared for it; by which it appears both who penned it, and when, and upon what occasion, it was penned, 1 Chron. xvii. 7, &c. David by it designed to instruct his people in the obligations they lay under to adhere faithfully to their holy religion. Here is the preface, (v. 1-7) and the history itself in several articles. 1. God's covenant with the patriarchs, v. 8-11. II. His care of them while they were in Egypt, v. 12-15. III. His raising up Hi-8. to be the shepherd and stone of Israel, v. 16-22. IV. The increase of Israel in Egypt, and their deliverance out of Egypt, v. 23-38. V. The care he took of them in the wilderness, and their settlement in Canaan, v. 39-45. In singing this, we must give to God the glory of his wisdom and power, his goodness and faithfulness; must look upon ourselves as concerned in the affairs of the Old Testament church, both because to it were committed the oracles of God, which are our treasure, and out of it Christ arose, and these things happened to it for examples.

1. Give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the people. 2. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works. 3. Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord. 4. Seek the Lord, and his strength; seek his face evermore. 5. Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth; 6. O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen. 7. He is the Lord our God; his judgments are in all the earth.

Our devotions are here warmly excited; and we are stirred up, that we may stir up ourselves to praise God. Observe, I. The duties we are here called to, and they are many; but the tendency of them all is to give unto God the glory due unto his name. (1.) We must give thanks to him, as one who has always been our bountiful Benefactor, and requires only the thanks, that he may give him thanks for his favours; poor returns for rich receivings. (2.) Call upon his name; as one whom you depend upon for further favours. Praying for further mercies is accepted as an acknowledgment of former mercies; because he has inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him. (3.) Make known his deeds, (v. 1.) that others may join with you in praising him. Talk ye of all his wondrous works, (v. 2.) as we talk of things that we are full of and much affected with, and desire to tell others with. God's wondrous works ought to be the subject of our familiar discourses with our families and friends, and we should talk of them, and sit in the house, and as we walk in the way; (Deut. vi. 7.) not merely for entertainment, but for the exciting of devotion, and the encouraging of our own and others' faith and hope in God. Even sacred things may be the matter of common talk, provided it be with due reverence. (4.) Sing psalms to God's honour, as those that rejoice in him, and desire to testify that joy for the encouragement of others, and to transmit it to posterity, as memorable things anciently were handed down by songs, when writing was scarce. (5.) Glory in his holy name; let those that are disposed to glory not boast of their own accomplishments and achievements, but of their acquaintance with God, and their relation to him, Jer. ix. 23, 24. Praise ye his holy name, so some; but it comes all to one, for in glorying in him we give glory to him. (6.) Seek him; place your happiness in him, and then pursue the way that leads to him, and with all the psalms, Seek the Lord and his strength, that is, the ark of his strength; seek him in the sanctuary, in the way wherein he has appointed us to seek him. Seek his strength, that is, his grace, the strength of his Spirit, to work in you that which is good, which we cannot do but by strength derived from him, for which he will be inquired of. Seek the Lord, and be strengthened; so divers ancient versions read it. They that would be strengthened must receive strength from God by faith and prayer. Seek his strength, and then seek his face; for by his strength we hope to prevail with him for his favour, as Jacob did, Hos. xii. 3. "Seek his face evermore; seek to have his favour to eternity, and therefore continue seeking it to the end of the time of your probation. Seek it while you live in this world, and you shall have it while you live in the other world, and even there shall be for ever seeking it, and as long as you live there progress in it, and be satisfied in it." (7.) Let the hearts of those rejoice that do seek him, (v. 3.) for they have chosen well, are well fixed, and well employed, and they may be sure that their labour will not be in vain; for he will not only be found, but he will be found the Rewarder of those that diligently seek him. If these have reason to rejoice that seek the Lord, much more those that have found him.

2. Some arguments to quicken us to these duties. (1.) Consider both what he has said, and what he has done, to engage us for ever to him; you will see yourselves under all possible obligations to give thanks to him, and call upon his name, if you remember the wonders which should make deep and durable impressions upon you; the wonders of his providence which he has wrought for you, and those who are gone before you, the marvellous works that he has done, which will be had in everlasting remembrance with the thoughtful and with the grateful; the wonders of his law, which he has written to you, and intrusted you with; the judgments of his mouth, as well as the judgments of his hand, v. 5. (2.) Consider the relation you stand in to him; (v. 6.) Ye are the seed of Abraham his servant; you are born in his house, and being thereby entitled to the privilege of his servants, are also bound to do the duty of servants, to attend your Master, consult his honour, obey his commands, and do what you can to advance his interests. You are the children of Jacob his chosen,
and are chosen and beloved for the fathers' sake, and therefore ought to tread in the steps of these whose honours you inherit. You are the children of godly parents, do not degenerate; you are God's church upon earth, and if you do not praise him, who should?

(3.) Consider your interest in him; He is the Lord our God, v. 7. We depend upon him, are devoted to him, and from him our expectation is. Should not a people seek unto their God, (Isa. viii. 19.) and praise their God? Dan. v. 4. He is Jehovah, our God; he that is our God is self-existent and self-sufficient, has an irresistible power and incontestable sovereignty. His judgments are in all the earth; he governs the whole world in wisdom, and gives law to all nations, even to those that know him not. The earth is full of the proofs of his power.

8. He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations: 9. Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; 10. And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant; 11. Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance: 12. When they were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it. 13. When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people, 14. He suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, he reproved kings for their sakes; 15. Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm. 16. Moreover, he called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread. 17. He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant; 18. Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron; 19. Until the time that his word came; the word of the Lord tried him. 20. The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. 21. He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance; 22. To bind his princes at his pleasure, and teach his senators wisdom. 23. Israel also came into Egypt, and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. 24. And he increased his people greatly, and made them stronger than their enemies.

We are here taught, in praising God, to look a great way back, and to give him the glory of what he did for his church in former ages, especially when it was in the founding and forming, which those in its latter ages enjoy the benefit of, and therefore should give thanks for. Doubtless we may fetch as proper matter for praise from the histories of the gospels, and the acts of the apostles, which relate the birth of the Christian church, as the gospels here does from the histories of Genesis and Exodus, which relate the birth of the Jewish church; and our histories greatly outshine theirs.

Two things are here made the subject of praise; 1. God's promise to the patriarchs, that great promise, that he would give to their seed the land of Canaan for an inheritance, which was a type of the promise of eternal life made in Christ to all believers.

In all the marvellous works which God did for Israel, he remembered his covenant, (v. 8.) and he will remember it for ever; it is the word which he commanded to a thousand generations. See here the power of the promise; it is the word, which he commanded, and which will take effect; see the perpetuity of the promise; it is commanded to a thousand generations, and the entail of it shall not be cut off. In the parallel place it is expressed as our duty: (1 Chron. xvi. 15.) Be ye mindful always of his covenant. God will not forget it, and therefore we must not. The promise is here called a covenant, because there was something required on man's part as the condition of its being fulfilled. Observe, 1. The persons with whom this covenant was made—with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, grandfather, father, and son, all eminent believers, Heb. xi. 8. 9. 2. The ratifications of the covenant; it was made sure by all that is sacred. Is that sure which is sworn to? It is his oath to Isaac and to Abraham. See to whom God swore by himself, Heb. vi. 13. 14. Is that sure which is passed into a law? He confirmed the same for a law, a law never to be repealed. Is that sure which is reduced to a mutual contract and stipulation? This is confirmed for an everlasting covenant, inviolable. 3. The covenant itself; Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, v. 11. The patriarchs had a right to it, not by providence, but by promise; and their seed should be put in possession of it, not by the common ways of settling nations, but by miracles; God will give it them himself, as it was with his own hand; it shall be given them as their lot, which God assigns them, and makes it sure to them; as the lot of their inheritance, a sure title, by virtue of their birth; it shall come to them by descent, not by purchase; by the favour of God, and not on merit of their own. Heaven is the inheritance we have obtained, Eph. i. 11. And this is the promise which God has promised us, (as Canaan was the promise he promised them,) even eternal life, 1 John ii. 25. Tit. i. 2.

11. His providences concerning the patriarchs, while they were waiting for the accomplishment of this promise; which represent to us the care God takes of his people in this world, while they are yet on this side the heavenly Canaan; for these things happened unto them for examples, and encouragements to all the heirs of promises that live by faith as they did.

They were wonderfully protected and sheltered, and (as the Jewish masters express it) gathered under the wings of the Divine Majesty. This is accounted for, v. 12-15. Where we may observe, (1.) How they were exposed to injuries from men. To the three renowned patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God's promises were very rich; again and again he told them he would be their God; but his performances in this world were so little proportionable, that, if he had not prepared for them a world in the other world, he would have been ashamed to have been called their God, (see Heb. xi. 16.) because he was always generous; and yet, even in this world, he was not wanting to them, but, that he might appear to do uncommon things for them, he exercised them with uncommon trials. [1.] They were few, very few; Abraham was called alone; (Isa. lii. 2.) he had but two sons, and one of them he cast out; Isaac had but two, and one of them he forced to the field; one of them Jacob had more, but some of them, instead of being a defence to him, exposed him, when (as he himself pleads, Gen. xxxiv. 30.) he was but few in number, and therefore might easily be destroyed by the natives, he and his house. God's chosen are but a little flock, few, very few; and yet upheld. [2.] They were strangers, and therefore were the more likely to be abused and to meet with strange usage, and
1. He was humbled, greatly humbled; (v. 17, 18.) God sent a man before them, even Joseph; many years before the famine began, he was sent before them, to nourish them in the famine; so vast are the foresights and forecasts of Providence, and so long its reaches. But in what character did he go to Egypt, who was to provide for the reception of the church there? He went not in quality of an ambassador, nor in form of a servant; but he was sold thither for a slave, a servant for life, without any prospect of being ever set at liberty. This was low enough, and, one would think, set him far enough from any probability of being great; and yet he was brought lower, he was made a prisoner, (v. 18.) His feet they with fetters, being unjustly charged with a crime no less heinous than a rape upon his mistress; the iron casted into his soul, was very painful to him, and was a false accusation, which was the cause of his imprisonment, did in a special manner grieve him, and went to his heart; yet all this was the way to his preferment.

2. He was exalted, highly exalted; he continued a prisoner, neither tried nor bailed, until the time appointed of God for his release, (v. 19.) when his word came, his interpretations of dreams came effectually to the point, and his advice in the affairs of Egypt, (which he gave when the chief butler was in prison, and when the chief baker was there?) was received by the chief of the household, and he was set free. Then he was discharged from prison, (v. 20.) he let him go free. God has often, by wonderful turn of providence, pleaded the cause of oppressed innocence. Secondly, He advanced him to the highest posts of the kingdom; for he was put into the chamberlain of his household; (he made him lord of his house;) nay, he put him into the office of lord treasurer, the ruler of all his substance. He made him prime minister of state, lord president of his council, to command his princes at his pleasure, and teach them wisdom; general of his forces; According to thy word shall all my people be ruled, Gen. xii. 40, 43, 44. He made him lord chief justice, to sit on his bench, and judge his peers; a situation that was very honourably and comfortably provided for many years. Thus the New Testament church has a place provided for her, even in the wilderness, where she is nourished for a time, times, and half a time; (Rev. xii. 14.) verily she shall be fed.

3. They were wonderfully multiplied, according to the promise; nay, so multiplied, that his seed should be as the sand of the sea for multitude, v. 24. In Egypt he increased his people greatly; they multiplied like fishes, so that in a little time they became stronger than their enemies, and formidable to them. Pharaoh took notice of it, (Exod. i. 9.)
The children of Israel are more and mightier than we; when God pleases, a little one shall become a thousand: and God's promises, though they work slowly, work surely.

25. He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtly with his servants. 26. He sent Moses his servant, and Aaron whom he had chosen. 27. They showed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. 28. He sent darkness, and made it dark; and they rebelled not against his word. 29. He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish. 30. The land brought forth frogs in abundance, in the chambers of their kings. 31. He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies, and lice in all their coasts. 32. He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land. 33. He smote their vines also, and their fig-trees; and brake the trees of their coasts. 34. He spake, and the locusts came, and eater-pillars, and that without number, 35. And did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground. 36. He smote also all the first-born in their land, the chief of all their strength. 37. He brought them forth also with silver and gold; and there was not one feeble person among their tribes. 38. Egypt was glad when they departed; for the fear of them fell upon them. 39. He spread a cloud for a covering, and fire to give light in the night. 40. The people asked, and he brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven. 41. He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places like a river. 42. For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant. 43. And he brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness; 44. And gave them the lands of the heathen: and they inherited the labour of the people; 45. That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws. Praise ye the Lord.

After the history of the patriarchs, follows here the history of the people of Israel, when they grew into a nation.

I. The affliction in Egypt; (v. 25.) He turned the heart of the Egyptians, who had protected them, to hate them, and deal subtly with them. God's goodness to his people exasperated the Egyptians against them; and though their old antipathy to the Hebrews (which we read of, Gen. xliii. 32.—xlvi. 34.) was laid asleep for a while, yet now it revived with more violence than ever: formerly they hated them, because they despised them, now because they feared them. They dealt subtly with them, set all their politics on work, to find out ways and means to weaken them, and waste them, and prevent their growth; they made their burdens heavy, and their lives bitter, and slew their male children as soon as they were born. Malice is crafty to destroy: Satan has the serpent's subtlety, with his venom. It was God that turned the hearts of the Egyptians against them; for every creature is that to us that he makes it to be, a friend or an enemy. Though God is not the Author of the sins of men, yet he serves his own purposes by them.

II. Their deliverance out of Egypt, that work of wonder, which, that it might never be forgotten, is set forth into the preface to the ten commandments. Observe,

1. The instruments employed in that deliverance; (v. 26.) He sent Moses his servant on this errand, and joined Aaron in commission with him. Moses was designed to be the lawgiver and chief magistrate, Aaron to be their chief priest; and therefore, that they might respect them the more, and submit to them the better, God made use of them as their deliverers.

2. The means of accomplishing that deliverance; these were the plagues of Egypt. Moses and Aaron observed their orders, in summoning them just as God appointed them, and they rebelled not against his word, (v. 28.) as Jenah did, who, when he was sent to denounce God's judgments against Nineveh, went to Tarshish. Moses and Aaron were not moved, either with a foolish fear of Pharaoh's wrath, or a foolish pity of Egypt's misery, to relax or retard any of the plagues which God ordered them to inflict on the Egyptians, but stretched forth their hand to inflict them as God appointed. They that are intrusted to execute judgment, will find their remissness construed into a rebellion against God's word. The plagues of Egypt are here called God's signs and his wonders; (v. 27.) they were not only proofs of his power, but tokens of his wrath, and to be looked upon with admiration and holy awe. They showed the words of his signs, so it is in the original; for every plague had an exposition going along with it; they were not, as the common works of creation and providence, silent signs, but speaking ones, and they spake aloud. They are all, or most, of them here specified, though not in the order in which they were inflicted.

(1.) The plagues of darkness, v. 28. This was one of the last, though here mentioned first. God sent darkness, and, coming with commission, it came with efficacy; his command made it dark. And then they, that is, the people of Israel, rebelled not against God's word, a command which some think was given them to circumcise all among them that had not been circumcised; in doing which, the three days' darkness would be a protection to them. The Old Translation follows the Septuagint, and reads it, They rebelled not against God's command; which may be applied to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, who, notwithstanding the terror of this plague, would not let the people go; but there is no ground for it in the Hebrew.

(2.) The turning of the river Nilus (which they idolized) into blood, and all their other waters, which slew their fish; (v. 29.) and so they were deprived, not only of their drink, but the daintiest of their meat.

(3.) The frogs, abodes of which their land brought forth, which poured in upon them, not only in such numbers, but with such fury, that they could not keep them out of the chambers of their kings and great men, whose hearts had been full of vermin, more nauseous, and more noxious—contempt of, and enmity to, both God and his Israel.

(4.) Flies of divers sorts swarmed in their air, and lice in their clothes. (v. 31.) Or, v. 17, 24. Now God can make use of the meanest, and weakest, and most desppicable, animals, for the punishing and humbling of proud oppressors, to whom the impotency of the instrument cannot but be a great mortification, as well as an undeniable conviction of the divine omnipotence.

(5.) Hail-stones shattered their trees, even the strongest timber trees in their coasts, and killed their
vines, and their other fruit trees, v. 32, 33. Instead of rain to cherish their trees, he gave them hail to crush them, and with it thunder and lightning, and to that degree, that the fire ran along upon the ground, as if it had been a stream of kindled brimstone, Exod. ix. 23.

(6.) Locusts and caterpillars destroyed all the herbs and grain, and to the service of man, and ate the bread out of their mouths, v. 34, 35. See what variety of judgments God has, whereby to provoke proud oppressors, that will not let his people go. God did not bring the same plague twice, but, when there was occasion for another, it was still a new one; for he has many arrows in his quiver. Locusts and caterpillars are God's armies; and, how weak soever they are singly, he can raise such numbers of them as to make them formidable, Joel 4. 6.

(7.) Having mentioned all the plagues, but those of the murrain and boils, he concludes with that which gave the conquering stroke, and that was the death of the first-born, v. 36. In the dead of the night, the joys and hopes of their families, the chief of their strength, and flower of their land, were all struck dead by the destroying angel. They would not release God's first-born, and therefore God saved all their first-born of their males, and then commanded them to dismiss his too, when it was too late to retrieve their own; for when God judges, he will overcome, and they will certainly sit down losers at last, that contend with him.

3. The mercies that accompanied this deliverance. In their bondage, (1.) They had been impoverished, and yet they came out rich and wealthy. God not only brought them forth, but he brought them forth with silver and gold, v. 37. The Israelites, which were a meandering, wandering people, were now put in possession of an established dominion. They were endowed with the land of Canaan, which was all new and unproductive, and there they were rich and wealthy; where otherwise they had been a wandering people, and perhaps had been driven out of the land by their enemies. (2.) The Israelites were free, and they were free as never before; and as free as they were rich and wealthy. When God brought them forth, there was not one feeble person, none sick, none so much as sickly, among their tribes. They went out that very night that the plague swept away all the first-born of Egypt, and yet they came out all in good health, and brought not with them any of the diseases of Egypt. Surely never was the like, that among so many thousands there was not one sick! So false was the representation which the enemies of the Jews, in after ages, gave of this matter, that they were all sick of a leprosy, or some leathern disease, and that therefore the Egyptians thrust them out of their land. (3.) They had been trampled upon, and insulted over; and yet they were brought out with honour; (v. 38.) Egypt was glad when they departed; for God had so wonderfully ordered all, and pleased their cause, that the fear of Israel fell upon them, and they owned themselves baffled and overthrown. God can and will make his church a bulwark strong to all that have at it, and seek to displace it, so that they shall think themselves happy, that get out of its way; (Zech. xii. 3.) when God judges, he will overcome. (4.) They had spent their days in sorrow and in sighing, by reason of their bondage; but now he brought them forth with joy and gladness, v. 43. When Egypt's cry for grief was loud, their first-born and oldest in their strain, Israel's call was of joy, and were as loud; both when they looked back upon the land of slavery out of which they were rescued, and when they looked forward to the pleasant land to which they were hastening. God now put a new song into their mouth.

4. The special care God took of them in the wilderness. (1.) For their shelter; beside the canopy of heaven, he provided them another heavenly canopy; he spread a cloud for a covering, (v. 39.) which was to them not only a screen and umbrella, but a cloth of state. A cloud was often God's pavilion, (xviii. 11.) and now it was Israel's; for they also were his people, and called his name; and are represented in the Old Testament, 11. 23. For the further security of them in the dark, he appointed a pillar of fire to give light in the night, that they might never be at a loss. Note, God graciously provides against all the grievances of his people, and furnishes them with convenient succours for every condition, for day and night, till they come there where it will be all day to eternity. (3.) He fed them both with necessary and dainties. Sometimes he furnished them with sweet manna, and sometimes with manna sweeter, of tables of wild fowl; (v. 40.) These people asked, and he brought quails; and when they were not thus fed, yet they were abundantly satisfied with the bread of heaven; those are curious and covetous indeed, who will not be so satisfied. Man did eat eagles' food, and that constantly, and on free cost. And as every bit they ate, had miracle in it, so had every drop they drank; (v. 41.) He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out, v. 41. Common provision fetches waters from heaven, and bread out of a rock; but God's grace is as plentiful as the streams of the rivers, and bread from the clouds, and water from the rocks: so far is the God of nature from being tied to the laws and courses of nature. The water did not only gush out at once, but it ran like a river, plentifully and constantly, and attended their camp in all their removes; hence they are said to have the rock follow them; (1 Cor. x. 4.) and, which increased the miracle, this river of God (so it might be truly called) was a constant supply of water and food, and so far God went in their supply as to make it abundantly so, and tasted and lost it, as one would expect it should have been, by the sands of the desert of Arabia. To this that promise alludes, I will give rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen, Isa. xlix. 19, 20.

5. Their entrance, at length, into Canaan; (v. 44.) He gave them the lands of the heathen; put them in possession of that which they had long been put in hopes of; and what the Canaanites had taken pains to get, and had and yet left behind them, God has inherited the labour of the people, and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just. The Egyptians had long inherited their labours, and now they inherited the labours of the Canaanites. Thus sometimes one enemy of the church is made to pay another's scores.

6. The reasons why God did all this for them. (1.) Because he would himself perform the promises of the word, v. 42. They were unworthy and unfaithful, yet he did those great things in their favour, because he remembered the word of his holiness his covenant, with Abraham his servant, and he would not suffer one iota or tittle of that to fall to the ground. See Deut. vii. 8. (2.) Because he would have them to perform the precepts of the word, to bind them to which was the greatest kindness he could put upon them. He put them in possession of Canaan, not that they might live in plenty and pleasure, in ease and honour, and might make a figure among the nations, but that they might observe his statutes and keep his laws; that, being formed into a people, they might be under God's immediate government, and revealed religion might be the basis of their national constitution; that, having a good land given them, they might out of the profits of it bring sacrifices to God's altar; and that, God, having thus done them good, they might be the people of God, the salt of the earth, the chosen church, that also designed for their good, and might be sensible of their obligations in gratitude to live in obedience to him. We are therefore made, maintained, and redeemed, that we may live in obedience to the will of God; and the hallelujah,
with which the psalm concludes, may be taken both as a thankfull acknowledgment of God's favours, and as a cheerful concurrence with this great intention of them. Has God done so much for us, and yet does he expect so little from us? Praise ye the Lord.

PSALM CVI.

We must give glory to God by making confession, not only of his goodness, but our own badness, which serve as foils to each other: our badness makes his goodness appear more in its true light, and our badness the more heinous and scandalous. The foregoing psalm was a history of God's goodness to Israel; this is a history of their rebellions and provocations, and yet it begins and ends with Hallelujah; for even sorrow for sin is not put us out of tune for praising God. Some think it was penned at the time of the captivity in Babylon, and the dispersion of the Jewish nation thereupon, because of that prayer in the close, v. 47. I rather think it was penned by David at the same time with the foregoing psalm, because we find the first verse and the two last in that psalm which David delivered to Asaph, at the bringing up of the ark to the place he had prepared for it; (1 Chron. xvi. 34-36.) Gather us from among the heathen; for we may suppose that in Saul's time there was a great dispersion of pious Israelites, when David was forced to wander. In this psalm, we have, I. The preface to the narrative, speaking honour to God, (v. 1.) comfort to the saints, (v. 5.) and the desire of the faithful toward God's favour, v. 4, 5. II. The narrative itself, of the sins of Israel, aggravated by the great things God did for them, an account of which is intermixed. Their great favours are compared to that sea, (v. 9, 10.) justly; in which the Jews were to drink, (v. 13-15.) mutinying; (v. 16, 18.) worshipping the golden calf; (v. 19, 23.) murmuring; (v. 24, 27.) joining themselves to Baal-peor; (v. 28, 31.) quarrelling with Moses; (v. 32, 33.) incorporating themselves with the nations of Canaan, v. 34, 35. To which is added an account how God had rebuked them for their sins, and yet saved them from ruin, v. 40. 46. III. The conclusion of the psalm with prayer and praise, v. 47, 48. It may be of use to us as well as the psalm, that, being stirred up by it, we may humble ourselves, and yet not despair of mercy, which even rebellious Israel often found with God.

1. PRAISE ye the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. 2. Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord; who can show forth all his praise? 3. Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doth righteousness at all times. 4. Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation. 5. That I may see the good of them that are chosen, and be as happy as thy saints are; and happier I do not desire to be. God's people are here called his chosen, his nation, his inheritance; for he has set them apart for himself, incorporated them under his own government, is served by them, and glorified in them. The chosen people of God have a good which is peculiar to them, which is the matter both of their gladness, and of their glorying, which is their pleasure, and their praise. God's people have reason to be a cheerful people, and to boast in their God all the day long; and they who have that gladness, that glory, need not envy any of the children of men their pleasure or pride. The gladness of God's nation, and the glory of his inheritance, are enough to satisfy any man; for they have everlasting joy and glory at the end of them.

6. We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly. 7. Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea. 8. Nevertheless, he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known. 9. He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up: so led he them through the depths, as through the wilderness. 10. And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. 11. And the waters covered their enemies; there was not one of them left. 12. Then believed they his words; they sang his praise.
church was in distress; for thus we must justify God in all that he brings upon us, acknowledging that therefore he has done right, because we have done wrong; and the remembrance of former sins, notwithstanding which God did not cast off his people, is an encouragement to us to hope that though we are justly corrected for our sins, yet we shall not be utterly abandoned.

1. God's afflicted people here own themselves guilty before God; (v. 6) "We have sinned with our fathers, like our fathers, after the similitude of their transgression." The inheritance of guilt, and filled up the measure of our fathers' iniquity, to augment yet the fierce anger of the Lord," Numb. xxxii. 14. Matth. xxii. 32. And see how they lay loads upon themselves, as becomes penitents; "We have committed iniquity, that which is in its own nature sinful; and we have done wickedly; we have sinned with a high hand, presumptuously." Or, this is a confession, not only of their imitation of, but their interest in, their fathers' sins. We have sinned with our fathers, for we were in their loins, and we bear their iniquity, Lam. v. 7.

II. They bewail the sins of their fathers, when they were first formed into a people; which, since children often smart for, they are concerned to sorrow for, even further than to the third and fourth generation. Even we now ought to take occasion, from the history of Israel's rebellions, to lament the pravity and perverseness of man's nature, and its unaptness to be amended by the most probable means. Observe here,

1. The strange stupidity of Israel in the midst of the favours God bestowed upon them; (v. 7.) They understood not thy wonders in Egypt. They saw them, but they did not rightly apprehend the meaning and design of them. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have understood. They thought the plagues of Egypt were intended for their deliverance, whereas they were intended also for their instruction and conviction, not only to force them out of their Egyptian slavery, but to cure them of their inclination to Egyptian idolatry, by evidencing the sovereign power and dominion of the God of Israel above all gods, and his particular concern for them. We lose the benefit of providences for want of understanding them. And as their understandings were dull, so their memories were treacherous; though they often received astonishing events, they should never have been forgotten, yet they remembered them not, at least, they remembered not the multitude of God's mercies in them. Therefore God is distrusted, because his favours are not remembered.

2. Their perverseness, arising from this stupidity; They provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea. The provocation was, despair of deliverance, (because so great, and wishing they had been left in Egypt still, Exod. xiv. 11, 12.) Quarrelling with God's providence, and questioning his power, goodness, and faithfulness, are as great provocations to him as any whatsoever. The place aggravated the crime; it was at the sea, at the Red sea, when they were newly come out of Egypt, and the wonders God had wrought for them were fresh in their minds; yet they reproach him, as if all that power, all that mercy in it, had been brought out of Egypt on purpose to kill them in the wilderness. They never lay at God's mercy so immediately as in their passage through the Red sea, yet there they affront it, and provoke his wrath.

3. The great salvation God wrought for them, notwithstanding their provocations, v. 8-11. (1.) He forced a passage for them through the sea; He trod the Red sea for standing in their way and regarding their march, and it was dried up immediately; as in the creation, at God's rebuke the waters fled, ciev. 7. Nay, he not only prepared them a way, but, by the pillar of cloud and fire, he led them into the sea; and, the conflict of Moses, led them through. God's mighty arms, so readily and mercifully encouraged them to take these steps, and subdued their fears, when those were their most dangerous and threatening enemies. See Isa. lxiii. 12-14. (2.) He interposed between them and their pursuers, and prevented them from cutting them off, as they designed. The Israelites were all on foot, and the Egyptians had all of them chariots and horses, with which they were likely to overtake them quickly, but God saved them from the hand of him that hated them, Pharaoh, who never loved them, but now hated them the more for the plagues he had suffered on their account; from the hand of his enemy, which was just ready to seize them, God redeemed them, (v. 10,) interposing himself, as it were, in the pillar of fire, between the persecuted and the persecutors. (3.) To complete the mercy, and turn the deliverance into a victory, the Red sea, which was a lane to them, was a grave to the Egyptians; (v. 11.) The waters covered their enemies, so as to slay them, but not so as to conceal their shame; for, the next tide, they were thrown up dead upon the shore, Exod. xiv. 30. There was not one of them left alive, to bring tidings of what was become of the rest. And why did God do this for them? Nay, why did he not cover them, as he did their enemies, for their unbelief and murmuring? He tells us, (v. 8,) it was for his name's sake; yet did they not deserve this favour, he designed it; and their undeservings should not alter his designs, nor break his measures, or make him withdraw his promise, or fail in the performance of it. He did this for his own glory, that he might make his mighty power to be known, not only in dividing the sea, but in doing it notwithstanding their provocations. Moses prays, (Numb. xiv. 17, 19.) "Let the power of my Lord be great, and harden the iniquity of this people. The power of the God of grace, in pardoning sin and sparing sinners, is as much to be admired as the power of the God of nature in dividing the waters.

4. The good impression this made upon them for the present; (v. 12.) Then believed they his words, and acknowledged that God was with them of a truth, and had, in mercy to them, brought them out of Egypt, and now with any design to slay them in the wilderness; then they feared the Lord, and his servant Moses, Exod. xiv. 31. Then they sang his praise, in that song of Moses penned on this great occasion, Exod. xv. 1. See in what a gracious and merciful way God sometimes silences the unbelief of his people, and turns their fears into praises; and so it is written, They that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine, Isa. xxix. 24.

13. They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel; 14. But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. 15. And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul. 16. They envied Moses also in the camp; and Aaron the scribe of the Lord. 17. The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram. 18. And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burnt up the wicked. 19. They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. 20. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an
ox that eateth grass. 21. They forgot God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt; 22. Wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red Sea. 23. Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them. 24. Yea, they despised the pleasant land; they believed not his word; 25. But murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord: 26. Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness: 27. To overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands. 28. They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead. 29. Thus they provoked him to anger with their inventions; and the plague brake in upon them. 30. Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed. 31. And that was counted unto him for righteousness, unto all generations for evermore. 32. They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: 33. Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

This is an abridgment of the history of Israel's provocations in the wilderness, and of the wrath of God against them for those provocations: and this abridgment is abridged by the apostle, with application to us Christians; (1 Cor. x. 5, &c.) for these things were written for our admonition, that we sin not like them, lest we suffer like them.

1. The cause of their sin, was, disregard to the works and word of God, v. 13. 1. They minded not the works of God; 2. They forgot his works, and lost the impression made upon them. They that do not improve God's mercies to them, nor endeavour in some measure to render according to the benefit done unto them, do indeed forget them. This people soon forgot them; God took notice of this; (Exod. xxxii. 8.) They have turned aside quickly. They made haste, they forgot his works, so it is in the margin; which some make to be two several instances of their sin. They made haste, their expectations anticipated God's promises; they expected to be in Canaan shortly, and, because they were not, they questioned whether they should ever be there, and quarrelled with all the difficulties they met with in their way: whereas he that believeth doth not make haste, Isa. xxviii. 16. And withal, they forgot his works, which were the undeniable evidences of his wisdom, power, and goodness, and denied the conclusion as confidently as if they had never seen the promises proved. This is mentioned again; (v. xxxii. 22.) They forgot God their saviour; they forgot that he had been their saviour: those that forget the works of God, forget God himself, who makes himself known by his works. They forgot what was done but a few days before, which we may suppose they could not but talk of, even then, when, because they did not make a good use of it, they are said to shut it up: it was what God did for them in Egypt, in the land of Ham, and by the Red Sea, things which we at this distance cannot, or should not, be unmindful of. They are called great things, (for though the great does nothing mean, yet he describes some things that are in a special manner great,) wondrous works and terrible things of the past, for two reasons: one, because they are evidences, therefore observable, therefore memorable, and terrible things, awful to them, and dreadful to their enemies, and yet soon forgotten; even miracles that were seen, passed away with them as tales that are told. 2. They minded not what God had said to them, nor would they depend upon it; They waited not for his counsel, did not attend his word, though they had Moses to be his mouth to them; they took up resolves about which they did not consult him, and made demands without calling upon him. They would be in Canaan directly, and had not patience to tarry God's time; the delay was intolerable, and therefore the difficulties were looked upon as insuperable. This is explained, (v. 24.) They believed not his word, his promise that he would make them masters of Canaan; and (v. 25.) They hearkened not to the voice of the Lord, who gave them counsel which they would not wait for, nor only by Moses and Aaron, but by Caleb and Joshua, Numb. xiv. 6, 7, &c. Those that will not wait for God's counsel, shall justly be given up to their own hearts' lusts, to walk in their own counsels.

II. Many of their sins are here mentioned, together with the tokens of God's displeasure which they fell under at those sins:

1. They did eat flesh, and yet would not believe that God could give it them; (v. 14.) They lusted a lust, (so the word is,) in the wilderness; they had bread enough and to spare, yet nothing would serve them but they must have flesh to eat. They were now supported entirely by miracles, so that this was a reflection upon the wisdom and goodness of their Creator: they were also, in all probability, within a step of Canaan, yet had no patience to stay for dainties till they came thither; they had flocks and herds of their own, but they will not kill them; God must give them flesh, as he gave them bread, or they will never give him credit, or their good word: they did not only wish for flesh, but they lusted exceedingly after it. A desire, even of lawful things, when it is inordinate and violent, becomes sinful; and therefore this is called lusting after evil things, (1 Cor. x. 6.) though the quails, as God's gift, were good things, and they did not count of, Ps. cv. 40. Yet this was not all; They tempted God in the desert, where they had such experience of his goodness and power, and questioned whether he could and would gratify them herein. See Lxxviii. 19, 20.

Now, how did God show his displeasure against them for this? We are told how; (v. 15.) He gave them their request, but gave it them in anger; and with a curse, for he sent leanness into their soul; he filled them with uncasefulness of mind, and terror of conscience, and a self-reproach, occasioned by their bodies being sick with the surfeit, such as sometimes drunkards experience after a great debauch. Or this is put for that great plague with which the Lord smote them, while the flesh was yet between their teeth, as we read, Numb. xi. 35. It was the consumption of the life. Note, (1.) What is asked for in passion, is given in plague. (2.) He gave them leanness, that fare deliciously every day, and whose bodies are healthful and fat, have at the same time leanness in their souls: no love to God, no thankfulness, no appetite to the bread of life, and then the soul must needs be lean. Those wretchedly forget themselves, that feast their bodies, and starve their souls. Then God gives the good things of this life in love, when with them he gives grace to glorify him in the use of them: for then the soul delights itself in fatness, Isa. lv. 2.
2. They quarrelled with the government which God had set over them, both in church and state; (v. 16.) They envied Moses his authority in the camp, as generalissimo of the armies of Israel, and chiefly as theulator of the divine law. It is not without reason that God's chosen are his agents, and that the government of his church is in the hands of men, who should study to build up, not to destroy; to make the word of God, as st Paul, 1 Cor. xii. 28, is called the image of the living God. They even looked partly to the order of the High-Priest, and partly to the example of Korah, who, being the eldest son of the tribe of Reuben, Jacob's eldest son, would claim to be chief magistrates, by the so-much admired right of primogeniture. Note, They are grossly changing their state and government, as if they would be one with God, to put them in possession of his government to rule as Lord. God was their Ruler, and they would become their rulers. And duly will contempt be poured upon them who put contempt upon any of the saints of the Lord.

How did God show his displeasure for this? We are told how, and it is enough to make us tremble; (v. 17, 18.) we have the story, Numb. xvi. 32, 35. (1.) They that flew in the face of the civil authority were punished by the earth, which opened and swallowed them up, as not fit to go upon God's ground, because they would not submit to God's government. (2.) They that would usurp the ecclesiastical authority, in things pertaining to God, suffered the vengeance of Heaven, for fire came out from the Lord, and consumed them; and the pretending sacrificers were themselves sacrificed to divine justice. The flame burnt up the wicked; for though they wielded with Aaron, the saint of the Lord, for holiness, (Numb. xvi. 3, 5.) yet God adjudged them wicked, and, as such, cut them off, as, in due time, he will destroy the man of sin, that wicked one, notwithstanding his proud pretensions to holiness.

3. They made, and worshipped, the golden calf, and this in Horeb, where there the law was given, and God had expressly said, Thou shalt neither make any graven image, nor bow down to it; they did both; They made a calf, and worshipped it, v. 19. Herein they did defiance to, and put an affront upon, the two great lights which God has made to rule the little world; (1.) That of human reason; for they changed their glory, their God, at least, the manifestation of him, which always had been in a cloud, (either a dark cloud or a bright one,) without any manner of visible similitude, into the similitude of Apis, one of the Egyptian idols, on ox that eateth grass, than which nothing could be more grossly and scandalously absurd, v. 20. Idolaters are perfectly besotted, and put the greatest dispensation in honor and preference upon the images of dead men, than which nothing could be more absurd than to worship by the image of a beast, and upon themselves, in worshipping it when they have done so. That which is here said to be the changing of their glory, is explained by St. Paul, (Rom. i. 23.) to be the changing of the glory of the incorruptible God. (2.) That of divine revelation, which was afforded to them, not only in the words God spake to them, but in the works he wrought for them, wondrous works, which spake that the Lord Jehovah is the only living God, and is alone to be worshipped, v. 21, 22.

For this, God showed his displeasure by declaring the decree, that he would cut them off from being a people, as they had, as far as lay in their power, in effect cut him off from being a God; he spake of destroying them, (v. 23.) and certainly he had done it, if Moses his chosen had not stood before him in the breach, (v. 24.) and yet the people's desire was surely for punishment; dealing with God as an advocate, about the breach or ruin God was about to devote them to, and wonderfully prevailed to turn away his wrath. See here the mercy of God, and how easily his anger is turned away, even from a provoking people. See the power of prayer, and the interest which God's chosen have in heaven. See a type of Christ, God's Chosen, his Elect, in whom his soul delights; who stood before him in the breach to turn away his wrath from a provoking world, and ever lives, for this end, making intercession.

Thus the ancient authorities, the report of the evil spies concerning the land of Canaan, in contradiction to the promise of God; (v. 24.) They despised the pleasant land; Canaan was a pleasant land, Deut. vii. 7. They undervalued it, when they thought it not worth venturing for, no, not under the guidance of God himself, and therefore were for making a captain, and returning to Egypt again. They believed not God's word concerning it, but murmured in their tents, basely charging God with a design upon them, as if he intended they might become a prey to the Canaanites, Numb. xiv. 2, 3. And when they were reminded of God's power and promise, they were so far from hearkening to that voice of the Lord, that they attempted to stone those who spake to them, Numb. xiv. 19. The heavenly Canaan is a pleasant land; a promise is left us of entering into it, but there are many that despise it, that neglect and refuse the offer of it, and prefer the wealth and pleasures of this world before it, and grudge the pains and hazards of this life to obtain that.

This also was so displeasing to God, that he lifted up his hand against them, in a way of threatening, to destroy them in the wilderness, nay, in a way of swearing, for he swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest; (xxc. 11. Numb. xiv. 28.) nay, and he threatened that their children also should pass through that overbreath and scattered, (v. 26,27.) and the whole nation dispersed and disinherited; but Moses prevailed for mercy for their seed, that they might enter Canaan. Note, Those who despise God's favours, and particularly the pleasant land, forfeit his favours, and will be shut out for ever from the pleasant land.

5. They were guilty of a great sin in the matter of Peor; and this was the sin of the new generation, when they were within a step of Canaan; (v. 28.) They joined themselves to Baal-peor, and so were entangled both in idolatry and in adultery, in corporeal and in spiritual whoredom, Numb. xxxv. 1-3. They that did often partake of, the altar of the living God, now ate the sacrifices of the dead, of the idols of Moab, that were dead images, or dead men enshrined or deified; or sacrifices to the infernal deities, on the behalf of their dead friends. Thus they provoked God to anger with their inventions, (v. 29.) and thereby exposed God to the contempt of his people, and his displeasure, and his anger. God's displeasure in his judgments. The iniquity of Peor was so great, that, long after it, it is said, They were not cleansed from it, Josh. xxii. 17. God testified his displeasure at this, (1.) By sending a plague among them, which in a little time swept away 24,000 of those impudent sinners. (2.) By stirring up Phinehas to use his power as a magistrate, for the suppressing of the sin, and checking the contempt of that which was his master's Amen, in his zeal for the Lord of hosts, and executed judgment upon Zimri and Cozbi, sinners of the first rank, gentle sinners; he put the law in execution upon them, and this was a service so pleasing to God, that upon it the plague was stayed, v. 30. By this, and some other like acts of public justice on that occasion, (Numb. xxxv. 4, 5.) the guilt ceased to be national, and the general controversy was let fall; when the people were so far from being in danger of God's displeasure, that they did not any longer keep the work in his own hands by the plague. Note, National justice prevents national judgments. But Phinehas herein signaling himself, a special mark of honour was put upon him, for what he did was counted to him for righteousness to all generations, (v. 31.) and, in recompence of it, the priesthood was entailed on his family.
shall make an atonement by offering up the sacrifices, who had so bravely made an atonement (so some read it, v. 30.) by offering up the sinners. Note, It is the honour of saints to be zealous against sin.

6. They continued their murmurings to the very last of their wanderings; for in the fortieh month they angered God at the waters of strife, (v. 32.) which refers to that story, Num. xx. 5-8. And that was six months after it; for, as we see, they went to offer a sacrifice with Moses for their sake, for he was the meekest of all the men in the earth, yet their clamours at that time were so peevish and provoking, that they put him into a passion, and, being now grown very old, and off his guard, he spake unadvisedly with his lips, (v. 33.) and not as became him on that occasion; for he said in a heat, Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch water out of this rock for you? This was Moses’s infirmity, and is written for our admonition, that we may learn, when we are in the midst of provocation, to keep our mouth as with a bridle, (xxxix. 1-3.) and to take heed to our spirits, that they admit not sentiments too much; for, when the spirit is provoked, it is much ado, even for those that have a great deal of wisdom and grace, not to speak unadvisedly. But it is charged upon the people as their sin; They provoked his spirit with that with which they angered God himself. Note. We must answer not only for our own passions, but for the provocation which, by them, we give to the passions of others, especially of those, who, if not greatly provoked, would be meek and quiet.

God shows his displeasure against this sin of theirs by shutting Moses and Aaron out of Canaan, for their misconduct upon this occasion; by which, (1.) God discovered his resentment of all such intemperate and unseasonable speeches and provocations. If he deals thus severely with Moses for one unadvised word, what does his sin deserve, who had spoken so many presumptuous wicked words? If this was done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? (2.) God deprived them of the blessing of Moses’s guidance and government, at a time when they most needed it, so that his death was more a punishment to them than to himself: It is just with God to remove those relations from us that are blessings to us, when we are peevish and provoking to them, and grieve their spirits.

34. They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the Lord commanded them: 35. But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. 36. And they served their idols; which were a snare unto them. 37. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, 38. And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons, and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood. 39. Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions. 40. Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against his people, in somuch that he abhorred his own inheritance. 41. And he gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them. 42. Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand. 43. Many times did he deliver them; but they provoked him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. 44. Nevertheless, he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry: 45. And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies. 46. He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives. 47. Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise. 48. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the Lord.

Here, I. The narrative concludes with an account of Israel’s conduct in Canaan, which was of a piece with that in the wilderness, and God’s dealings with them, wherein, as all along, both justice and mercy appeared.

I. They were very provoking to God. The miracles and mercies which settled them in Canaan, made no deep and durable impressions upon them than those which they felt in Egypt; for by the time they were just settled in Canaan, they corrupted themselves, and forsak’d God. Observe the steps of their apostasy.

(1.) They spared the nations which God had doomed to destruction; (v. 34.) when they had got the good land God had promised them, they had no zeal against the wicked inhabitants, whom the Lord commanded them to extirpate, pretending that it was too much ado; but so unprofitable is it to be in any case more compassionate than be.

(2.) When they spared them, they promised themselves, that, notwithstanding this, they would not join in any dangerous affinity with them; but the way of sin is down-hill; omissions make way for commissions; when they neglect to destroy the heathen, the next news we hear is, They were mingled among the heathen, made leagues with them, and contracted an inestimable deal with them, so that they learned their works, v. 35. That tree which is rotten will sooner corrupt that which is sound, than be cured or made sound by it.

(3.) When they mingled with them, and learned some of their works that seemed innocent diversions and entertainments, yet they thought they would never join with them in their worship; but, by degrees, they learned that too; (v. 36.) They served their idols, in the same manner, and with the same rites, that they served them; and they became a snare to them; that sin drew on many more, and brought the judgments of God upon them, which they themselves could not but be sensible of, and yet knew not how to recover themselves.

(4.) When they joined with them in some of their idolatrous services, which they thought had least harm in them, they little thought that ever they should be guilty of that barbarous and inhuman piece of idolatry, the sacrificing their living children to their dead gods; but they came to that at last; (v. 37, 38.) in which Satan triumphed over his worshippers, and reigned himself in blood and slaughter; They sacrificed their sons and daughters, pieces of themselves, to devils, and added murder, the most unnatural murder, to their idolatry; one cannot think of it without horror; They shed innocent blood, the most innocent, for it was infant blood, nay, it was the blood of their sons and their daughters. See the power of the spirit that works.
in the children of disobedience, and see his ma-
lice. The beginning of idolatry and superstition, like 
that of strife, is as the letting forth of water, and 
there is no villany which they that venture upon it 
can be sure they shall stop short of; for God justly 
gives them up to a reprobate mind, Rom. i. 28.

Their sin was, in part, their own punishment; 
for by it, [1.] They wronged their country; The 
land was polluted with blood, v. 38. That pleasant 
land, that holy land, was rendered uncomfortable to 
themselves, and unfit to receive those kind tokens 
of God's favour and presence in it, which were de-
signed to be its honour. [2.] They wronged their 
consciences; (v. 39.) They went a wandering with 
their own inventions, and some were arrived at 
windms, and were defiled with their own works, 
and rendered odious in the eyes of the holy God, and 
perhaps of their own consciences.

2. God brought his judgments upon them; 
and what else could be expected; For his name is Jea-
lous, and he is a jealous God.

(1.) He fell out with them for it, (v. 40.) he was 
angry with them; The wrath of God, that consum-
ing fire, was kindled against them for their idolatry, 
and they were defiled from the heathen that 
never knew him; pay, he was sick of them, he 
abhorred his own inheritance, which once he had 
taken pleasure in; yet the change was not in him, 
but in them. This is the worst thing in sin, that 

it makes us loathsome to God; and the nearer any 
are to God in profession, the more loathsome are 
they, if they rebel against him, like a dunghill at 
our door.

(2.) Their enemies then fell upon them, and, 
their Defence being departed, made an easy prey 
of them; (v. 41, 42.) He gave them into the hands 
of the heathen. Observe here how the punishment 
answered to the sin, They mingled themselves with 
the heathen, and learned their works; from them 
they willingly took the infection of sin, and there-
fore God justly made use of them as the instruments 
of their correction. Sinners often see themselves 
ravished by those by whom they have suffered them-
selves to be debauched. Satan, who is a tempter, 
will be a tormentor. The heathen hated them; 
apostates lose all the love on God's side, and get 
one on Satan's; and when they that hated them 
rulled over them, and they were brought in subjection 
under them, no marvel that they oppressed them, 
and ruled them with rigour; and thus God made 
them know the difference between his service and 
the service of the kings of the countries, 2 Chron. 
xxii. 8.

(3.) When God granted them some relief, yet 
they went on in their sins, and their troubles also 
were continued, v. 43. This refers to the days of 
the Judges, when God often raised up deliverers, 
and wrought deliverances for them, and yet they relapsed 
to idolatry, and provoked God with their counsels, 
their idolatrous inventions, to deliver them up to 
some other oppressor, so that all the while they were 
brought very low for their iniquity. Those that by 
disparage themselves, and will not by repentance 
humble themselves, are justly despised, and hum-
bled, and brought low, by the judgments of God.

(4.) At length they cried unto God, and God re-
turned in favour to them, v. 44-46. They were 
chastened for their sins, but not destroyed, cast down, 
but not cast off; God appeared for them, [1.] 
God felt for them, they brought clean sick, and were 
afflicted, (Exod. iii. 7.) and overlooked their provoca-
tions; for though he had said, and had reason to say 
it, that he would destroy them, yet he repented ac-
cording to the multitude of his mercies, and reversed 
the sentence; though he is not a man that he should 
repent, so as to change his mind, yet he is a gracious 
God, who pities us, and changes his way. [2.] As a 
truth, who remembered for them his covenant, 
and made good every word that he had spoken; 
and therefore as they were, he would deal with 
them, because he would not break his own promise. 
[3.] As the God of power, who has all hearts in his 
hand, and turns them which way soever he pleases. 
He made them to be pitted, even of those that carried 
them captives, and had hated them and ruled them 
with rigour. He not only restrained the remainder 
of their enemies' wrath, that it should not utterly 
consume them, but he infused compassion even into 
their hearts towards them, and showed them that 
there was more of any art of man could have done with 
the utmost force of rhetoric. Note, God can change 
libens into lambs, and, when a man's ways please the 
Lord, will make even his enemies to pity him, and 
be at peace with him. When God pities, men shall. 

1. With God.Indana Deus tranquillat omnia—A God at 
peace with us makes everything else at peace.

II. The psalm concludes with prayer and praise.

1. Prayer for the completing of his people's del-
iverance; even he who brought back the 
captivity of his people, still there was occasion 
to pray, Lord, turn again our captivity; (cxxvi. 1, 4.) 
so here, (v. 47.) Save us, O Lord our God, and 
gather us from among the heathen. We may sup-
pose, that many who were forced into foreign coun-
tries, in the times of the Judges, (as Naomi was, 
Ruth i. 1.) were not returned in the beginning of 
David's reign, Saul's time being discouraging, and 
therefore it was reasonable to pray, Lord, gather 
the dispersed Israelites from among the heathen, to 
give thanks to thy holy name; not only that they may 
have cause to give thanks, and hearts to give thanks, 
but that they may have opportunity to do it in the 
courts of the Lord's house, from which they were 
now banished, and so may triumph in thy praise, 
over those that had, in scorn, challenged them to 
sing the Lord's song in a strange land.

2. Praise for the beginning and progress of it; (v. 
48.) Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from ever-
lasting to everlasting. He is a blessed God from 
eternity, and will be so to eternity, and so let him be 
praised by all his worshippers. Let the priests say 
this, and then let all the people say, Amen, Hallelu-
jah, in token of their cheerful concurrence in all 
these prayers, praises, and confessions. According 
to this rubric or directory, we find, that, when this 
psalm (of the last 4 verses) was chanted, the whole 
people said, Amen, and praised the Lord by 
saying, Hallelujah. By these two comprehensive 
words, it is very proper, in religious assemblies, to 
testify their joining with their ministers in the pray-
ers and praises which, as their mouth, they offer up 
to God, according to his will, saying Amen to the 
prayers and Hallelujah to the praises.

PSALM CVII.

The psalmist, having in the two foregoing psalms cele-
brated the wisdom, power, and goodness, of God, in his 
dealings with his church in particular, here observes some of 
the instances of his providential care of the children of 
men in general, especially in their distresses; for he is not 
only King of saints, but King of nations, not only the 
God of Israel, but the God of the whole earth, and a com-
mon Father to all mankind. Though this may especially 
refer to Israelites in their personal capacity, yet there 
were then the same instances of God's providence over 
their spiritual interests, in the commonwealth of Israel, 
and yet were worshippers of the true God; and even 
those who worshipped images had some knowledge of a 
supreme Nomen, to whom, when they were in earnest, 
the least of all their fates did not belong to them; when 
these, when they prayed in their distresses, God took a 
particular care. I. He specifies some of the most com-
mon calamities of human life, and shows how God suc-
cours those that labour under them, in answer to their
prayers. 1. Banishment and dispersion, v. 2. 9. 2. Captivity and imprisonment, v. 10. 16. 3. Sickness and distress of body, v. 17. 22. 4. Danger and distress at sea, v. 23. 32. These are put for all similar perils, in which those that cry unto God have ever found him a very present Help. II. He specifies the varieties and vis-

tuities of events concerning nations and families; in all which, God's hand is to be eyed by his own people, with joyful acknowledgments of his goodness, v. 33. 43. When we are in any of these or the like distresses, it will be most agreeable to sing this psalm, when application is made, if we be not, others are, and have been, of whose deliv-
erance it becomes us to give God the glory, for we are members one of another.

1. GIVE thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. 2. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; 3. And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south. 4. They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. 5. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. 6. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses. 7. And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. 8. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! 9. For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

Here is,

I. A general call to all to give thanks to God, v. 1. Let all that sing this psalm, or pray it over, set themselves even to give thanks to the Lord; and those that have not any special matter for praise, may furnish themselves with matter enough from God's universal goodness; in the fountain he is good, in the streams his mercy endureth for ever, and never fails.

II. A particular demand hereof from the redeem-
ed of the Lord; which may well be applied spiritu-
to those that have an interest in the great Re-
demption and are ever trying him from sin and hell. They have, of all people, most reason to say that God is good, and his mercy everlasting; these are the children of God that were scattered abroad, whom Christ died to gather together in one, out of all lands, John xi. 52. Matth. xxxiv. 31. But it seems here to be meant of a temporal deliverance, wrought for them when in their distress they cried unto the Lord, v. 6. Is any afflicted? Let him pray. Does any pray? God will certainly hear and help. When troubles arrive and overtake us, that is man's time to cry; those who but whispered prayer before, then cry aloud; and then it is God's time to succour; in the mount he will be seen.

1. They were in an enemy's country, but God wrought out their rescue; He redeemed them from the hand of the enemy, (v. 2.) not by might or power, it may be, (Zech. iv. 6.) nor by force or reward, (Isa. xiv. 13.) but by the spirit of God working on the spirits of men.

2. They were dispersed as outcasts; but God gathered them out of all the countries whither they were scattered in the cloudy and dark day, that they might again be incorporated, v. 3. See Deut. xxxiv. 4. Ezek. xxxiv. 12. God knows those that are his, and where to find them.

3. They were bewildered, had no road to travel in, no dwelling-place to rest in, v. 4. When they were redeemed out of the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of the lands, they were in danger of perishing through the dry and barren des-


ters, They wandered in the wilderness, where there was no trodden path, no company, but a solitary way; no lodging, no conveniences, no accommoda-
tions, no inhabited city where they might have quar-
ters of refreshment. But God led them forth by the right way, (v. 7.) directed them to an inn, nay, di-
rected them to a home, that they might go to a city of habitation, which was inhabited; nay, which they themselves should inhabit. This may lay to the wilds of Arabia, where we may sup-
pose they were often at a loss; and yet many in that distress were wonderfully relieved, so that few perished. Note, We ought to take notice of the good hand of God's providence over us in our journeys, going out, and coming in, directing us in our way, and providing for us places, both to bait in, and rest in. Or (as some think) it has an eye to the wander-
ings of the children of Israel in the wilderness for 40 years; it is said, (Deut. xxxiii. 10.) God led them about, and yet here he led them by the right way. God's way, though to us it seems about, will appear, at last, to have been the right way. It is applica-
ble to our condition in this world; we are here as in a wilderness, have here no continuing city, but dwell in tents as strangers and pilgrims; but we are under the guidance of God, a wise and good providence, com-
mittling ourselves to which, we shall be led in the right way to the city that has foundations.

4. They were ready to perish for hunger; (v. 5.) Their soul even fainted in them, spent with the fa-
tigues of their journey, and ready to drop down for want of refreshment. They that have constant plenty, and are, every day, fed to the full, know not what a miserable case it is to be hungry and thirsty, and to have no supply. This was sometimes the case of Israel in the wilderness, and perhaps of other poor travellers; but God's providence finds out ways to satisfy the longing soul, and fill the hungry soul with goodness, v. 9. Israel's wants were seasonably sup-
plied, and many have been wonderfully relieved when they were ready to perish. The same God that has fed us, has fed us, all our life long, unto this day; has fed us with food convenient; has provided for the soul, and filled the hungry soul with goodness.

The Lord is the hungered his God, after righ-
teousness, after God, the living God, and companion with him, shall be abundantly replenished with the goodness of his house, both in grace and glory.

Now for all this, they who receive mercy are called upon to return thanks; (v. 8.) Oh that men (it is meant especially of these men whom God has graciously relieved) would praise the Lord for his goodness to them in particular, and for his wonderful works to others of the children of men. Note, (1.) God's works of mercy are wonderful; works of wonderful power, considering the weak-
ness, and of wonderful grace, considering the un-
worthiness, of those he shows mercy to. (2.) It is expected of those who receive mercy from God, that they return praise to him. (3.) We must ac-
knowledge God's goodness to the children of men, as well as to the children of God: to others as well as to ourselves.

10. Such as sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; 11. Because they rebelled against the words of God, and esteemed the counsel of the Most High; 12. Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help.
13. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses. 14. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. 15. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! 16. For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.

We are to take notice of the goodness of God toward prisoners and captives. Observe, 1. A description of this affliction. Prisoners are said to sit in darkness, (v. 10.) in dark dungeons, close prisoners. It intimates that they are desolate and disconsolate, they sit in the shadow of death; which intimates not only great distress and trouble, but great danger. Prisoners are many times pointed to die; they sit despairing to get out, but resolving to make the best of it. They are bound in affliction, and many times in iron, as Joseph. Thus sore a calamity is imprisonment, which should make us prize liberty, and be thankful for it.

2. The cause of this affliction; (v. 11.) It is, because they rebelled against the words of God. Willful sin is rebellion against the words of God; it is a corruption against God's truth, and his laws. They contemned the counsel of the Most High, and thought they neither needed it, nor could be the better for it; and they that will not counsel, cannot be helped. They that despise prophesying, that regard not the admonitions of their own consciences, nor the just reproofs of their friends, contemn the counsel of the Most High, and for this they are bound in affliction, both to punish them for, and to reclaim them from, their rebellions. 3. The design of this affliction, and that is, to bring down their heart, (v. 12.) to humble them for sin, to make them low in their own eyes, to cast down every high, proud, aspiring, thought. Afflicting providences must be improved as humbling providences; and we not only lose the benefit of them, but thwart God's designs, and walk contrary to him, in them, if our hearts be unhumbled and unbroken, as high and hard as ever under them. Is the earth's bottom down with the hammer sunk? Are those that exalted themselves fallen down, and is there none to help them? Let this bring down the spirit to confess sin, to accept the punishment of it, and humbly to sue for mercy and grace. 4. The duty of this afflicted state, and that is, to pray; (v. 13.) Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, though before perhaps they had neglected him. Prisoners have time to pray, who, when they were at liberty, could not find time; they see they have need of God's help, who formerly thought they could do well enough without him. Sense will make men cry when they are in trouble, but grace will direct them to cry unto the Lord, from whom the affliction comes, and who alone can remove it. 5. The deliverance out of the affliction; They cried to the Lord, and he saved them; v. 13. He brought them out of darkness into light, welcome light, and then doubly sweet and pleasant; brought them out of the shadow of death to the comforts of life; and their liberty was to them life from the dead, v. 14. Were they fettered? He brake their bands asunder. Were they imprisoned in strong castles? He brake the gates of brass, and the bars of iron, wherewith those gates were made fast, he did put back, but cut in sunder. Note, When God will work deliverance, the greatest difficulties that lie in the way shall be made nothing of. Gates of brass, and bars of iron, as they cannot keep him out from his people, (he was with Joseph in the prison,) so they cannot keep them in, when the time, the set time, for their enlargement is come. 6. The return that is required from those whose bands God has loosed; (v. 15.) Let them praise the Lord for his goodness, and take occasion from their own experience of it, and share in it, to bless him for that goodness which the earth is full of, the world and they that dwell therein.

17. Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted: 18. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. 19. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble; he saveth them out of their distresses. 20. He sent his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. 21. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! 22. And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.

Bodily sickness is another of the calamities of this life, which gives us an opportunity of experiencing the goodness of God in recovering us; and of that the psalmist speaks in these verses, where we may observe, 1. That we, by our sins, bring sickness upon ourselves, and then it is our duty to pray, v. 17. 19. (1.) It is the sin of the soul that is the cause of sickness; we bring it upon ourselves both meritoriously and efficiently: Fools, because of their transgression are thus afflicted: they are thus corrected for the sins they have committed, and thus cured of their evil inclinations to sin. If we knew no sin, we should know no sickness; but the transgression of our life, and the iniquity of our heart, make it necessary. Sinners are fools, they wrong themselves, and all against their own interests; not only their spiritual, but their secular, interest. They prejudice their bodily health by their intemperance, and endanger their lives by indulging their appetites. This their way is their folly, and they need the rod of correction to drive out their foolishness that is bound up in their heart. (2.) The weakness of the body is the effect of sickness; (v. 18.) when people are sick, their soul abhors all manner of meat; they not only have no desire to eat, nor power to digest it, but they nauseate it, and their stomach is turned against it; and here they may read their sin in their punishment; they that doted most on the meat that perished, when they come to be sick, are sick of it, and the dainties they loved are loathed; what they took too much of, now they can take nothing of, which commonly follows upon the overcharging of the heart with surfeiting and drunkenness. And when the stomach is gone the life is as good as gone; They draw near unto the gates of death; they are, in their condition, in perdition, and in the apprehension of all about them, at the brink of the grave, as ready to be turned to destruction. (3.) Then is a proper time for prayer; Then they cry unto the Lord, v. 19. Is any sick? Let him pray; let him be prayed for; prayer is a salve for every sore. 2. That it is by the power and mercy of God that we are recovered from sickness, and then it is our duty to be thankful. Compare with this Job xxxiii. 18, 28.
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PSALMS, CXLVIII.

(1.) When those that are sick call upon God, he returns them an answer of peace. They cry unto him, and he saves them out of their distresses; (v. 19.) he removes their griefs, and prevents their fears. [1.] He does it easily; He sent his word and healed them, v. 20. This may be applied to the miraculous cures which Christ wrought when he was upon earth, by a word's speaking; he said, Be clean, Be whole, and the work was done; it may also be applied to the spiritual cures which the spirit of grace works in regeneration; he sends his word, and heals souls; convinces, converts, sanctifies, them, and all by the word. In the common instances of recovery from sickness, God in his providence does but speak it, and it is done. [2.] He does it effectually; he delivereth them out of their destructions, that they shall neither be destroyed, nor distressed with the fear of being so. Nothing is too hard for that God to do, who kills and makes alive again, brings down to the grave, and raises up; who turneth man almost to destruction, and yet saith, Return.

(2.) When those that have been sick are recovered, they must return to God an answer of praise; (v. 21, 22,) Let all men praise the Lord for his goodness, and let them particularly, to whom God has thus granted a new life, spend it in his service; let them sacrifice with thanksgiving; not only bring a thank-offering to the altar, but a thankful heart to God. Thanksgivings are the best thank-offerings, and shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock. And let them declare his works with rejoicing, to his honour, and for the encouragement of others. The living, the living, they shall praise him.

23. They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; 24. These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. 25. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lietheth up the waves thereof. 26. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble. 27. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. 28. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. 29. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. 30. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. 31. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! 32. Let them extoll him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

The psalmist here calls upon them to give glory to God, who are delivered from dangers at sea. Though the Israelites dealt not much in merchandise, yet their neighbours the Tyrians and Zidennians did, and for them perhaps this part of the psalm was especially calculated.

1. Much of the power of God appears at all times in the sea, v. 23, 24. It appears to them that go down to the sea in ships, as mariners, merchants, fishermen, or passengers, that do business in great waters; and surely none will expose themselves there but those that have business; among all Solomon's pleasant things, we do not read of any pleasure-boat he had; but those that go on business, lawful business, men, in faith, put themselves under the divine protection. These are the works of the Lord, and his wonders, which are the more surprising, because most are born and bred upon land; and what passes at sea is new to them. The deep itself is a wonder, its vastness, its saltiness, its ebbing and flowing. The great variety of living creatures in the sea is wonderful. Let those that go to sea, by all the wonders they observe there, be led to consider the infinite perfections of that God whose the sea is, for he made it, and manages it.

2. It especially appears in storms at sea, which are much more terrible than at land. Observe here, (1.) How dangerous and dreadful a tempest at sea is. Then wonders begin to appear in the deep, when God commands and raises the strong wind, which fulfills his word, cxviii. 8. He raises the winds, as a prince by his commission raises forces. Solomon pretends to be the prince of the flower of the air; but he is a pretender; the powers of the air are at God's command, not at his. When the wind becomes stormy, it lifts up the waves of the sea, v. 25. Then the ships are kicked like tennis-balls on the tops of the waves; they seem to mount up to the heavens, and then couch again, as if they would go down to the depths, v. 26. A stranger, who had never seen it, would not think it possible for a ship to live at sea, as it will in a storm, and ride it out, because the wind would rise and rise on them, and it would never come up again: and yet God, who taught man discretion to make ships that should so strangely keep above water, does by his special providence preserve them, that they answer the end to admiration. When the ships are thus tossed, the soul of the seaman melts because of trouble; and when the storm is very high, even those that are used to the sea, can neither shake off nor discern the horrid waves, and the ship's crew are in confusion, and quite at their wit's end, (v. 27,) not knowing what to do more for their own preservation; all their wisdom is swallowed up, and they are ready to give up themselves for gone, Jonah i. 5., &c.

(2.) How seasonable it is at such a time to pray. They that go down to the sea must expect such perils as are here described, and the best preparation they can make for them, is, to make sure a liberty of access to God by prayer, for then they will cry unto the Lord, v. 28. We have a saying, "Let them that would learn to pray, go to sea;" I say, Let them that will go to sea, learn to pray, and accustom themselves to pray, that they may come with the more boldness to the throne of grace when they are in trouble. Even heathen mariners, in a storm, cried every man to his god; but they that have the Lord for their God, have a present and powerful Help in that and every other time of need, so that when they are at their wit's end, they are not at their faith's end.

(3.) How wonderfully God sometimes appears for those that are in distress at sea, in answer to their prayers; He brings them out of the danger; and, (4.) The sea is still; He makes the storm a calm; v. 29. The winds are not altogether the fault of the seamen; gentle murmurs serve to hull the waves asleep, so that the surface of the sea becomes smooth and smiling. By this Christ proved himself to be more than a man, that even the winds and the seas obeyed him. [2.] The seamen are made easy; They are glad, because they be quiet; quiet from the noise, quiet from the fear, of evil. Quietness after a storm is a very desirable thing, and sensibly pleasant. [3.] The voyage becomes prosperous and successful; so he brings them to their desired haven, v. 30. Thus he carries his people safe through all the storms.
and tempests that they meet with in their voyage heavenward; and lands them, at length, in the desired harbour.

(4.) How justly it is expected that all those who have had a safe passage over the sea, and especially who have been delivered from remarkable perils at sea, should acknowledge it with thankfulness, to the glory of God. Let them do it privately, in their closet, and let the Lord have the glory of his goodness to themselves and others, v. 31. Let them do it publicly, (v. 32.) in the congregation of the people, and in the assembly of the elders; there let them erect the memorials of their deliverance, to the honour of God, and for the encouragement of others to trust him.

33. He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the water-springs into dry ground; 34. A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. 35. He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water-springs. 36. And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation; 37. And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase. 38. He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly, and suffereth not their cattle to decrease. 39. Again, they are diminished, and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow. 40. He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way. 41. Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock. 42. The righteous shall see it, and rejoice; and all iniquity shall stop her mouth. 43. Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.

The psalmist, having given God the glory of the providential relief granted to persons in distress, here gives him the glory of the revolutions of providence, and the surprising changes it sometimes makes in the affairs of the children of men.

1. He gives some instances of these revolutions;

1. Fruitful countries are made barren, and barren countries are made fruitful. Much of the comfort of this life depends upon the soil in which our lot is cast. Now, (1.) The sin of man has often marred the fruitfulness of the soil, and made it un-serviceable, v. 33, 34. Land watered with rivers is sometimes turned into a wilderness, and that which had been full of water-springs, now has not so much as water-streams; it is turned into dry and sandy ground, that has not consistency and moisture enough to produce any thing valuable. Many fruitful land is turned into the salt sea, from natural causes as from the just judgment of God, who thus punisheth the wickedness of them that dwell therein: as the vale of Sodom became a salt sea. Note, If the land be bad, it is because the inhabitants are so. Justly is the ground made unfruitful to them that bring not forth fruit unto God, but serve Baal with their own and wine. (2.) The goodness of God has often made the barrenness of the soil, and turned a wilderness, a land of drought, into water-springs, v. 35. The land of Canaan, which was once the glory of all lands for fruitfulness, is said to be, at this day, a fruitless, useless, worthless, spot of ground, as was foretold, Deut. xxix. 23. This land of ours, which formerly was much of it an uncultivated desert, is now full of all good things, and more abundant honour is given to that part which lacked. Let the plantations in America, and the colonies settled there, compared with the desolations of many countries in Asia and Europe, that formerly were famous, expound this verse. 2. Necssitous families are raised and enriched, while more orthodox families are laid low. So, while those go to decay. If we look abroad in the world, (1.) We see many greatly increasing, whose beginning was small, and whose ancestors were mean, and made no figure, v. 36–38. Those that were hungry, are made to dwell in fruitful lands; there they take root, gain a settlement, and prepare a city for habitation for themselves and theirs after them. Providence puts good land under their hands, and they build upon it. Cities took rise from rising families. But as lands will not serve for men without lodgings, and therefore they must prepare a city of habitation, so lodgings, though ever so convenient, will not serve without lands, and therefore they must sow the fields, and plant vineyards; (v. 37.) for the king himself is served of the field. And yet the fields, though favoured with water-springs, will not yield fruits of increase, unless they be sown; nor will the vineyard yield wine, unless planted; God's industry must attend God's blessing, and God's blessing will crown man's industry. The fruitfulness of the soil should engage, for it does encourage, diligence; and, ordinarily, the hand of the diligent, by the blessing of God, makes rich, v. 38. He blesses them also, so that they are, in a little time, multiplied greatly, and he diminishes not their cattle. As in the beginning, so still it is, by the blessing of God, that the earth and all the creatures increase greatly, multiply, and abound; and we should depend upon God for the increase of the cattle as well as for the increase of the ground. Cattle would decrease many ways, if God should but permit it, and men would soon suffer by it. (2.) We see many that have thus suddenly risen, as suddenly sunk and brought to nothing; (v. 39.) Again they are minished and brought low by adverse providences, and end their days as low as they began them; or their families are made poor, their goods are lost as fast as they are got, and scatter what they heaped together. Note, Worldly wealth is an uncertain thing; and often those that are filled with it, ere they are aware, grow so secure and sensual with it, that, ere they are aware, they lose it again. Hence it is called deceitful riches, and the mammon of unrighteousness. God has many ways of making men poor; he can do it by oppression, affliction, and sorrow, as he tempted Job, and brought him low.

3. Those that are high and great in the world, are abased, and those that were mean and despis able, are advanced to honour, v. 40, 41. We have seen, (1.) Princes dethroned and reduced to straits. He pour'd contempt upon them, even among those that have idolized them. Them that exalt themselves God will abase; and, in order thereunto, will infatuate; he makes them to fall from the high seat of their prosperity. He baffles those counsels by which they thought to support themselves, and their own power and pomp, and drives them headlong, so that they know not what course to steer, or what measure to take. We met with this before, Job xii. 24, 25. (2.) Those of low degree advanced to the posts of honour; (v. 41.) Yet setteth he the poor on high, raiseth from the dust, to the throne of princes. Those that were afflicted, and trampled on, are not only delivered, but set on high out of the reach of their troubles, above their enemies, and have dominion over those to whom they had been in subjection.
PSALMS, CVIII.

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God, and the eyes, prudent kindness, Providence, God's attaining will not punishment Providence; sto/i that dispensations has a to part, sometimes us, and God has many ways of changing the condition of both.

II. He makes some improvement of these remarks; such surprising turns as these, are of use.

1. For the solacing of saints; they observe these dispensations with pleasure; (v. 42.) The righteous shall see it, and rejoice in the glorying of God's attributes, and the manifesting of his dominion over the children of men. It is a great comfort to a good man to see how God manages the children of men, as the potter does the clay; so as to serve his own purposes by them; to see despised virtue advanced, and impious pride brought low to the dust; to see it evinced beyond dispute, that verily there is a God that judges in the earth.

2. For the silencing of sinners; All iniquity shall stop her mouth; it shall be a full conviction of the folly of atheists, and of those that deny the Divine Providence; and, forasmuch as practical atheism is at the bottom of sin, it shall in effect stop the mouth of all iniquity. When sinners see how their punishment answers to their sin, and how justly God deals with them in taking away from them those gifts of his which they had abused, they shall not have one word to say for themselves; for God will be justified, he will be clear.

3. For the satisfying of all concerning the divine goodness, (v. 43.) Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, these various dispensations of Divine Providence, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord. Here is, (1.) A desirable end proposed; and that is, rightly to understand the loving-kindness of the Lord. It is of great use to us, in religion, to be fully assured of God's goodness; to be experimentally acquainted and duly affected with it; that his loving-kindness may be before our eyes, xxxvi. 3. (2.) A proper means prescribed for attaining this end; and that is, a due observing of God's ways, according to the disposition of his mind, and keeping them in mind, Luke ii. 19. (3.) A commendation of the use of this means, as an instance of true wisdom; Whoso is wise, let him by this both prove his wisdom, and improve it. A prudent observation of the providences of God will contribute very much to the accomplishing of a good Christian.

PSALM CVIII.

This psalm begins with praise, and concludes with prayer, and is consequently called God's praises. It is David's prayer to God for mercies to himself, v. 1. - 5. II. He prays to God for mercies for the land, pleading the promises of God, and putting them in suit, v. 6 - 13. The former part is taken out of Ps. Ixxi. 7, &c. the latter out of Ps. lx. 5, &c. and both with very little variation; to teach us, that we may in prayer use the same words that we have formerly used, provided it be with new affections. It intimates likewise that it is not only allowable, but sometimes necessary, to gather some verses out of one psalm, and some out of another, and to put them together, to be sung to the glory of God. In singing this psalm, we must give glory to God, and take comfort to ourselves.

A song or psalm of David.

1. O GOD, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory. awake early. 3. I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: and I will sing praises unto thee among the nations. 4. For thy mercy is great above the heavens, and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds. 5. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; and thy glory above all the earth:

We may here learn to praise God from the example of one who was master of the art.

1. We must praise God with fixedness of heart; our heart must be employed in the duty, (else we make nothing of it,) and engaged to the duty; (v. 1.) O God, my heart is fixed, and then I will sing and give praise. Wandering straggling thoughts must be gathered in, and kept close to the business; for they must be told that here is work enough for them all.

2. We must praise God with freedom of expression; I will praise him with my glory, with my tongue; our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when it is employed in praising God. When the heart is inditing this good matter, our tongue must be as the pen of a ready writer, xlv. 1. David's skill in music was his glory, it made him famous, and this should be consecrated to the praise of God; and therefore it follows, Awake, my soul, and my flesh, and all the gift we excel in, we must praise God with.

3. We must praise God with fervency of affection, and must stir up ourselves to do it, that it may be done in a lively manner, and not carelessly; (v. 2.) Awake, psaltery and harp; let it not be done with a dull and sleepy tune, but let the airs be all lively. I myself will awake early to do it, with all that is within me, and all little enough. Warm devotions honour God.

4. We must praise God publicly, as those that are not ashamed to own our obligations to him, and our thankful sense of his favours, but desire that others also may be in like manner affected with the divine goodness; (v. 3.) I will praise thee among the people of the Jews; nay, I will sing to thee among the nations of the earth. Whatever company we are in, we must take all occasions to speak well of God; and we must not be shy of singing psalms, though our neighbours hear us; for it looks like being ashamed of our Master.

5. We must, in our praises, magnify the mercy and truth of God in a special manner; (v. 4.) mercy in promising, truth in performing. The heavens are vast, but the mercy of God is more capacious; the skies are high and bright, but the truth of God is more eminent, more illustrious. We cannot see further than the heavens and clouds; whatever we see of God's mercy and truth, there is still more to be seen, more reserved to be seen in the other world.

6. Since we find ourselves so defective in glorifying God, we must beg of him to glorify himself, to do all, to dispose all, to his own glory, to get himself honour, and make himself a name; (v. 5.) Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, higher than the angels themselves can exalt thee with their praise; and let thy glory be spread over all the earth. Father, glorify thy own name; thou hast glorified it, glorify it again. It is to be our first petition, Hallowed be thy name.

6. That thy beloved may be delivered, save with thy right hand, and answer me.

7. God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice; I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. 8. Gilead is:
We may here learn how to pray as well as praise.

1. We must be public-spirited in prayer, and bear upon our hearts, at the throne of grace, the concerns of the church of God, v. 6. It is God's beloved, and therefore must be ours; and therefore we must pray for its deliverance, and reckon we are answered, if God grant what we ask for his church, though he do not give it in our way or time, as we ask for ourselves.

Save thy church, and thou answerest me; I have what I would have. Let the earth be filled with God's glory, and the prayers of David are ended; (Lxxix. 19, 20.) he desires no more.

2. We must, in prayer, act faith upon the power and promise of God; upon his power, Save with thy right hand, which is mighty to save; and upon his promise, God has spoken in his holiness, in his holy word, to which he has sworn by his holiness and therefore I will rejoice, v. 7. What he has promised he will perform, for it is the word both of his truth and of his power. An active faith can rejoice in what God has said, though it be not yet done; for with him saying and doing are not two things, whatever they are with us.

3. We must, in prayer, take the comfort of what God has secured to us and settled upon us, though we are not yet put in the possession of it. God had promised David to give him, (1.) The hearts of his subjects; and therefore he surveys the several parts of the country as his own already, Shechem and Succoth, Gilead and Manasseh, Ephraim and Judah, they are all my own, v. 8. With such assurance as this we may speak of the performance of what God has promised to the Son of David; he will, without fail, give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession; for so has he spoken in his holiness; nay, of all the particular persons that were given him, he will lose none; he also, as David, shall have the hearts of his subjects, John vi. 37. And, (2.) The necks of his enemies; these are promised, and therefore David looks upon Moab, and Edom, and Philistia, as his own already; (v. 9.) Over Philistia will I triumph, which explains ix. 8. Philistia, triumph thou because of me, which some think should be read, O my soul, triumph thou over Philistia. Thus the exalted Redeemer is set down at God's right hand, in a full assurance that all his enemies shall in due time be made his footstool, though all things are not yet put under him, Heb. ii. 8.

4. We must take encouragement from the beginning of mercy, to pray and hope for the perfecting of it (v. 11.) Wherefore, though the strong cities, they are yet unconquered? Who will make me master of the country of Edom, which is yet unsubdued? The question, probably, was to be debated in his privy council, or a council of war, What methods they should take to subdue the Edomites, and to reduce that country? but he brings it into his prayers, and leaves it in God's hands, Wilt thou, O God? Certainly thou wilt. It is probable that he spake with the more assurance concerning the conquest of Edom, because of the ancient oracle concerning Jacob and Esau, that the elder should serve the younger, and the blessing of Jacob, by which he was made Esau's lord, Gen. xxvii. 37. We must not be discouraged in prayer, nor beaten off from our hold of God, though Providence has, in some instances, frowned upon us; "Though thou hast cast us off, yet wilt thou now go forth with our hosts, v. 11. Thou wilt comfort us again, after the time that thou hast afflicted us." Adverse events are sometimes intended for the trial of the constancy of our faith and prayer, which we ought to persevere in, whatever difficulties we meet with, and not to faint.

5. We must seek help from God, renouncing all confidence in the creature; (v. 12.) Lord, give us help from trouble, prosper our designs, and defeat the designs of our enemies against us. It is not unseasonable to talk of trouble at the same time that we talk of triumphs, especially when it is to quicken prayer for help from Heaven; and it is a good plea, Vain is the help of man. "It is really so, and therefore we are undone if thou do not help us, we comprehend it to be so, and therefore depend upon thee for help, and have the more reason to expect it."

6. We must depend entirely upon the favour and grace of God, both for strength and success in our work and warfare, v. 13. (1.) We must do our part, but we can do nothing of ourselves, it is only through God that we shall do valiantly. Blessed Paul will own that even he can do nothing, nothing to publish, but through the grace of God strengthening him, Phil. iv. 13. (2.) When we have acquitted ourselves ever so well, yet we cannot speed by any merit or might of our own; it is God himself that trees down our enemies, else we, with all our valour, cannot do it. Whatever we do, whatever we gain, God must have all the glory.

PSALM CIX.

Whether David penned this psalm when he was persecuted by Saul, or when his son Absalom rebelled against him, or upon occasion of some other trouble that he was given, is uncertain; and whether the particular enemy he prays against, was Saul, or Doeg, or Ahithophel, or some other not mentioned in the story, we cannot determine; but it is certain that in penning it he had an eye to the Christ, his sufferers, and his persecutors, for that imprecation (v. 8.) is applied to Judas, Acts i. 20. The rest of the prayers here against his enemies were the expressions, not of passion, but of the Spirit of prophecy. 1. He lodges a complaint in the court of heaven for the malice and base ingratitude of his enemies, and with it an appeal to the righteous God, v. 1. 5. II. He prays against his enemies, and devotes them to destruction, v. 6. 20. The prayers for the success of his enemies, and the ways that God would help and succour him in his low condition, v. 21. 24. IV. He concludes with a joyful expectation that God would appear for him, v. 30, 31. In singing this psalm, we must comfort ourselves with the believing foresight of the certain destruction of all the enemies of Christ and his church, and the certain salvation of all those that trust in God, and keep close to him.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

1. HOLY not thy peace, O God of my praise; 2. For the mouth of the wicked, and the mouth of the deceitful, are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. 3. They compassed me about also with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause. 4. For my love they are my adversaries: but
I give myself unto prayer. 5. And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.

It is the unsparking comfort of all good people, that, wherever is against them, God is for them, and he who is to his own, they may apply themselves as to one that is pleased to concern himself for them. Thus David here.

1. He refers himself to God's judgment; (v. 1.) "Hold not thy peace, but let my sentence come forth from thy presence, xviii. 2. Delay not to give judgment upon the appeal made to thee." God saw what his enemies did against him, but seemed to connive at it; many of them thought he did not always do so." The title he gives to God, is observable, "O God of my praise; the God in whom I glory, and not in any wisdom or strength of my own; from whom I have every thing that is my praise; the God whom I have praised, and will praise, and hope to be for ever praising." He calls God the God of his mercy, (lix. 10.) here the God of his praise; forasmuch as God is the God of our mercies, we must make him the God of our praises; if all is of him and from him, all must be to him and for him.

2. He complains of his enemies, showing that they were such as it was fit for the righteous God to appear against. (1.) They were very spiteful and malicious; they were wicked, they delight in doing mischief, (v. 2.) their words are words of hatred, v. 3. They had an implacable enmity to a good man, because of his goodness. "They open their mouths against me to swallow me up, and fight against me to cut me off, if they could." (2.) They were notorious liars; now a liar is one of the seven things which the Lord hates. "They are deceitful in their protestations and professions of kindness, while at the same time they speak against me behind my back, with a lying tongue." They were equally false in their flatteries and in their calumnies. (3.) They were both politic and restless in their designs; "They compassed me about on all sides, so that which way sooner I looked, I could see nothing but what made against me." (4.) They were unjust; their accusations of him, and sentence against him, were all groundless; "They have fought against me without a cause, I never gave them any provocation," says, which was worst of all, (5.) They were very ungrateful, and rewarded him evil for good, v. 5. Many kindness, he had done them, and was upon all occasions ready to do them, and yet he could not work upon them to abate their malice against him; but, on the contrary, they were the more exasperated, because they could not provoke him to give them some occasion against him; (v. 4.) For my love they are my adversaries. The more he endeavoured to gratify them, the more they hated him. We may wonder that it is possible that such wicked, and yet, since there have been so many instances of it, we should not wonder if any be so wicked against us.

3. He resolves to keep close to his duty, and take the comfort of that; But I give myself unto prayer, (v. 4.) I pray, so it is in the original; "I am for prayer, I am a man of prayer, I love prayer, and prize prayer, and practise prayer, and make a business of prayer, and am in my element when I am at prayer." A good man is made up of prayer, gives himself up to it, and makes it so common in his time among Franciscan friars and other monks, that, if any one had malice against a neighbour, he might hire some of them to curse him every day, which he would do in the words of these verses; and particularly he tells of a lady in France, who, being at variance with her own and only son, hired a parcel of friars to curse him in these words. Greater impiety can scarcely be
Let the extortioner, the officer, seize all that he has, and let the stranger, who was nothing akin to his estate, spoil his labour, either for his crimes or for his debts, Job v. 4, 5. (5.) That his posterity should be miserable. Fatherless children, though they have nothing of their own, yet sometimes are well provided for by the kindness of those whom God inclines to pity them; but this wicked man having never shown mercy, God will deny him mercy, by favouring his fatherless children, when he is gone, v. 12. The children of wicked parents often fare the worse for their parents' wickedness, like the bowels of men's compassion are shut up from them, which yet ought not to be; for why should children suffer for that which was not their fault, but their infidelity? (6.) That his memory should be infamous, and buried in oblivion and disgrace; he was set to destruction, so Dr. Hammond; and in the next generation let their name be blotted out, or remembered with contempt and indignation, and (v. 15.) let an indelible mark of disgrace be left upon it.

See here what lurries some to shameful deaths, and brings the families and estates of others to ruin; makes them and theirs despicable and odious, and entails poverty, and shame, and misery, upon their posterity. It is sin, that mischievous destructive thing. The Lord rebuke thee, Satan; (Zech. iii. 1, 2.) when he shall be judged at men's bar, let not his usual arts to evade justice do him any service, but let his sin find him out, and let him be condemned; nor shall he escape before God's tribunal, but be condemned there when the day of inquisition and recompence shall come. Let his prayer become sin, as the clamours of a condemned malefactor not only find no acceptance, but are looked upon as an aggravation of the crime.

The prayers of the wicked are now become sin, because sauced with the leaven of hypocrisy and malice; and so they will in the great day, because then it will be too late to cry, Lord, Lord, open to us.

Let every thing be turned against him and improved to his disadvantage, even his prayers.

2. That, being condemned, he should be executed as a most notorious malefactor. (1.) That he should lose his life, and the number of months cut off the days of his life, by the sword of justice; Let his days be few, or shortened, as a condemned criminal has but a few days to live; (v. 8.) such bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days.

(2.) That, consequently, all his places should be disposed of to others, and they should enjoy his preferments and employments; Let another take his office. This St. Peter applies to the filling up of Judas's room in the truly sacred college of the apostles, by the choice of Matthias, Acts i. 20. Those that mismanage their trusts will justly have their office taken from them, and given to those that will approve themselves faithful. (3.) That his family should be beheaded and beggared; that his wife should be made a widow, and his children fatherless, by his untimely death, v. 9. Wicked men, by their wicked courses, bring ruin upon their wives and children, whom they ought to take care of and provide for, as David, when he was driven, if, when they lost their father, they had a competency to live upon, might still subsist in comfort; but they shall be vagabonds, and shall beg; they shall not have a house of their own to live in, nor any certain dwelling-place, nor know where to have a meal's meat, but shall creep out of their desolate places with fear and trembling, like beasts out of their dens, to seek their bread, (v. 10.) because they are conscious to themselves that all mankind have reason to hate them for their father's sake.

(4.) That his estate should be ruined, as the estates of malefactors are confiscated; (v. 11.)
let him have enough of it. Was he fond of cursing? let God's curse come into his bowels like water, and swell him as with a drop; and let it soak like oil into his bones. The word of the curse is quick and powerful, and divides between the joints and the marrow: it works powerfully and effectually; it fastens on the soul; it is a piercing thing, and there is no antidote against it. Let it compass him on every side as a garment, v. 19. Let God's cursing him be his shame, as his cursing his neighbour was his pride; let it cleave to him as a girdle, and let him be ever clasped close to it, as that which fastens him to him like the waters of jealousy, which caused the belly to swell and the thigh to rot. This points at the utter ruin of Judas, and the spiritual judgments which fell on the Jews for crucifying Christ. The psalmist concludes his imprecations with a terrible Amen, which signifies not only, "I wish it may be so," but "I know it shall be so;" Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the Lord, v. 20. And this will be the reward of all the adversaries of the Lord Jesus: his enemies, that will not have him to reign over them, shall be brought forth and slain before him. And he will one day recompense tribulation to them that trouble his people.

21. But do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy name's sake: because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me. 22. For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me. 23. I am gone like the shadow when it declineth: I am tossed up and down as the locust. 24. My knees are weak through fasting, and my flesh faileth of fatness. 25. I became also a reproach unto them: when they looked upon me they shaked their heads. 26. Help me, O Lord my God: O save me according to thy mercy; 27. That they may know that this is thy hand; that thou, Lord, hast done it. 28. Let them curse, but bless thou: when they arise, let them be ashamed; but let thy servant rejoice. 29. Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame; and let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a mantle. 30. I will greatly praise the Lord with my mouth; yea, I will praise him among the multitude. 31. For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul.

David, having denounced God's wrath against his enemies, here takes God's comforts to himself, but in a very humble manner, and without boasting.

1. He pours out his complaint before God concerning the low condition he was in, which probably gave advantage to his enemies to insult over him: "I am poor and needy, and therefore a proper object of pity, and one that needs and craves thy help." 2. He apprehended himself drawing near to his end; I am gone like the shadow when it declineth; as good as gone already. Man's life, at best, is like a shadow, sometimes it is like the evening shadow, the presage of night approaching, like the shadow when it declineth. (3.) He was unsettled; tossed up and down like the locust; his mind fluctuating and unstable, still putting him upon new counsels; his outward condition far from any fixed state. But still with him to the remove, hunted like a partridge on the mountains. (4.) His body was wasted, and almost worn away; (v. 24.) My knees are weak through fasting; either forced fasting, for want of food when he was persecuted, or for want of appetite when he was sick; or voluntary fasting, when he chastened his soul either for sin or affliction, his own or others. 13. My flesh fails of fatness; it has lost the fatness it had before he was a skeleton, nothing but skin and bones." But it is better to have this leanness in the body, while the soul prosperers and is in health, than, like Israel, to have leanness sent into the soul, while the body is feasted. (5.) He was ridiculed and reproached by his enemies; (v. 23.) his devotions and his afflictions they made the matter of their laughter; upon both these accounts, God's people have been exceedingly filled with the scorn of those that were at ease. In all this David was a type of Christ, who in his humiliation was thus wounded, thus weakened, thus reproached; he was also a type of the church, which is often afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted.

2. He prays for mercy for himself, in general, (v. 21.) Do thou for me, O God the Lord; appear for me, act for me." If God be for us, he will do for us, do more abundantly for us than we are able either to ask or think. 22. But not prescribe to God what he should do for him, but refer himself to his wisdom; "Lord, do for me what seems good in thine eyes. Do that which thou knowest will be for me, really for me, in the issue for me, though, for the present, it may seem to make against me." More particularly, he prays, (v. 26.) Help me, O Lord my God, O save me. Help me under my trouble, save me out of my trouble: save me from sin, help me to do my duty. He prays, (v. 28.) Though they curse, bless them. Here, (1.) He despises the causeless curses of his enemies; Let them curse. He said of Shimei, So let him curse. They can but show their malice; they can do him no more mischief than the bird by wandering, or the swallow by flying, Prov. xxvi. 2. (2.) He values the blessing of God as sufficient to balance their curses; Bless thou, and then it is no matter though they curse. If God bless us, we need not care for their curses: for how can they curse whom God has not cursed, nay, whom he has blessed? Numb. xxiii. 8. Men's curses are impotent. God's blessings are omnipotent; and those whom we unjustly curse, may in faith expect, and pray for. God's blessing, his special blessing. When the Pharisees cast out the poor man for confessing Christ, Christ found him, John ix. 35. When men, without cause, say all the ill they can of us, and wish all the evil that they can, we may with comfort lift up our heart to God in this petition, Let them curse, but bless thou. He prays, (v. 28.) Let thy servant rejoice. They that know how to value God's blessing, let them be but sure of it, and they will be glad of it.

3. He prays that his enemies might be ashamed, (v. 28.) dressed with shame; (v. 29.) that they might cover themselves with their own confusion; that they might be left to the isle to do that which would expose them, and manifest them to all before all men; or rather, that they might be disappointed in their designs and enterprises against David, and thereby might be filled with shame, as the adversaries of the Jews were, Neh. vi. 16. Nay, this he prays, that they might be brought to repentance, which is the chief thing we should beg of God for our enemies: sinners, indeed, bring shame upon themselves, but they are true penitents.
that take shame to themselves, and cover themselves with their own confusion.

4. He pleads God's glory, the honour of his name; Do for me, for thy name's sake (ver. 21). especially the såv, in his name, and still, by which he pro- claimed his name: "Deliver me, because thy mercy is good; it is what thou thyself dost delight in, and it is what I do depend upon. Save me, not according to my merit, for I have none to pretend to, but according to thy mercy; let that be the fountain, the reason, the measure, of my salvation."

Lastly, He concludes the psalm with joy, the joy of faith; joy, in assurance that his present conflicts will end, in this: (v. 30.) He promises God that he will praise him; (v. 30.) "I will greatly praise thee, the Lord, not only with my heart, but with my mouth; I will praise him, not in secret only, but among the multitude." (2.) He promises himself that he shall have cause to praise God; (v. 31.) He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, nigh to him, a present Help: he shall stand at his right hand, as his Patron and Advocate, to plead his cause against his accusers, and to bring him off; to save him, from that level to which his soul, and would execute it, if they could. God was David's Protector in his sufferings, and was present also with the Lord Jesus in his, stood at his right hand, so that he was not moved, (xvi. 8.) saved his soul from those that pretended to be the judges of it, and received it into his own hands. Let all those that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him.

PSALM CX.

This psalm is pure gospel; it is only, and wholly, concerning Christ, the Messiah, promised to the fathers, and expected by them. It is plain that the Jews of old, even the worst of them, so understood it. However the modern Jews have endeavour'd to pervert it, and to rob it of us; for when the Lord Jesus proposed a question to the Pharisees upon the first words of this psalm, where he takes it for granted that David, in spirit, calleth Christ his Lord, though he was his Son, they chose rather to say nothing, and to own themselves travelled, than to make it a question whether David does indeed speak of the Messiah or not, for they freely yield so plain a truth, though they foresee it will turn to their own disgrace, Mat. xxii. 41, &c. Of him therefore, no doubt, the prophet here speaks, of him, and of no other man. Christ, as our Redeemer, executes the office of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, in the fulness of his humiliation and exaltation; and of each of these we have here an account. 1. His prophetic office, v. 2. II. His priestly office, v. 3. III. His kingly office, v. 1, 3, 4, 6. IV. His act of humiliation and exaltation, v. 7. In singing this psalm, we must set faith upon Christ, submit ourselves entirely to him, to his grace and government, and triumph in him as our Prophet, Priest, and King, by whom we hope to be ruled, and taught, and saved, for ever; and as the Prophet, Priest, and King, of the whole church, who shall reign till he has put down all opposing rule, principality, and power, and delivered up the kingdom to God the Father.

A psalm of David.

1. THE LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. 2. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. 3. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. 4. The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Some have called this psalm David's creed, almost all the articles of the Christian faith being found in it: the title calls it David's psalm: for, in believing the foresight of the Messiah, he both praised God and solaced himself; much more may we, in singing it, to whom that is fulfilled, and therefore more clearly revealed, which is here foreshadowed. Glorious things are here spoken of Christ, and such as oblige us to consider how great he is.

I. He is David's Lord; we must take special notice of this, because he himself does; (Matt. xxii. 43.) David, in spirit, calleth him Lord. And as the apostle proves the dignity of Melchizedek, and in him of Christ, by this, that so great a man as Abraham has paid him tithes, (Heb. vii. 4.) we so we must by this prove the dignity of the Lord Jesus, that he is a great and happy man: I will call him Lord, by him that king acknowledges himself to reign, and to him to be acceptable as a servant to his Lord. Some think he calls him his Lord, because he was the Lord that was to descend from him; his Son, and yet his Lord. Thus his immediate mother calls him her Saviour; (Luke i. 47.) even his parents were his subjects, his saved ones.

II. He is constituted a sovereign Lord by the council and decree of God himself. The Lord Jehovah, said he, Sit thou at my right hand. He receives of the Father this honour and glory; (2 Pet. i. 17.) from him who is the Fountain of honour and power, and takes it not to himself. He is therefore rightfully Lord, and his title is incontestable; for what God has said cannot be gainsaid. He is therefore everlasting Lord; for what God has said shall not be unsaid. He will certainly take and keep possession of that kingdom which the Father has committed to him, and no man can hinder.

III. He was to be advanced to the highest honour, and intrusted with an absolute sovereign power, both in heaven and in earth; Sit thou at my right hand. Sitting is a resting posture: after his services and sufferings, he entered into rest from all his labours. It is a ruling posture; he sits to give law, to give judgment: it is a remaining posture; he sits like a king for ever; sitting at the right hand of God denotes both his dignity and his dominion, the honour put upon him, and the trusts reposed in him, by the Father. All the favours that come from God to man, and all the service that comes from man to God, pass through his hand.

IV. All his enemies were in due time to be made his footstool, and not till then; but then also he must reign in the glory of the Mediator, though the work of the Mediator will be, in a manner, at an end. Note, 1. Even Christ himself had enemies that fought against his kingdom and subjects, his honour and interest, in the world: there are those that will not have him to reign over them, and thereby they join themselves to Satan, who will not have him to reign at all. 2. These enemies will be made his footstool; he will subdue them, and triumph over them; he will do it easily, as easily as we put a footstool in its proper place, and so a property there will be no limit to the dominion and empire of the Son of God. 3. God the Father has undertaken to do it; I will make them thy footstool, who can do it. 4. It will not be done immediately. All his enemies are now in a chain, but not yet made his footstool: this the apostle observes, (Heb. ii. 8.) We see the chains of all things put under him. Christ himself must wait for the completing of his victories and triumphs. 5. He shall reign till it is done; and all their might and malice shall not give the least disturbance to his government. His sitting at God's right hand is a pledge to him of his set-
people in Corinth before they were converted, Acts xviii. 10.

2. That they should be a willing people, a people of willingness; alluding to servants that choose their service, and are not brought by captives to it; they love their masters, and would not go out free: or there may be an allusion to soldiers that are volunteers, and not pressed men; "Here am I, send me;" or to sacrifices that are free-will offerings, and not offered of necessity; we present ourselves to Christ's service to be a willing people. The conversion of a soul consists in its being willing to be Christ's, coming under his yoke, and into his interests, with an entire compliance and satisfaction.

3. That they should be so in the day of his power; In the day of thy muster, so some; When thou art enlistng soldiers, thou shalt find a multitude of volunteers forward to be listed; let but the standard be set up, and the Gentiles will seek to it, Isa. xlix. 14.-xxi. 3. Or, When thou art drawing them cut to battle, they shall be willing to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, Rev. xiv. 4. In the day of thine armies, so some; When the first preachers of the gospel were sent forth, as Christ's armies, to reduce apostate men, and to ruin the kingdom of apostate angels, then all that are thy people shall be willing; that will be thy time of setting up thy kingdom among the Gentiles, Rev. xv. 4. There is a general power which goes along with the gospel to all, proper to make them willing to be Christ's people, arising from the supreme authority of its great Author, and the intrinsic excellency of the things themselves contained in it, beside the undeniable miracles that were wrought for the confirmation of it. And there is also a particular power, the power of the Spirit, going along with the power of the word, to the people of Christ, which the former leaves sinners without matter of excuse, this leaves saints without matter of boasting. Whoever are willing to be Christ's people, it is the free and mighty grace of God that makes them so.

4. That they should be so in the beauty of holiness; that is, (1.) They shall be allured to him by the beauty of holiness; they shall be charmed into a subjection to Christ by the sight given them of his beauty, which we call the beauty of grace; he is the good Shepherd, whose feet, at last, on the necks of all his enemies. This is the beauty of holiness, which we call the beauty of grace. He sits in heaven in the midst of his friends; his throne of glory there is surrounded with none but faithful worshippers of him, Rev. v. 11. But he rules on earth in the midst of his enemies, and his throne of government here is surrounded with those that hate him, and fight against him. Christ's church is a city among thorns, and his disciples are sent forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; he knows where they dwell, even where Satan's seat is; (Rev. ii. 13.) and this redounds to his honour, that he not only keeps his ground, but gains his point, notwithstanding all the malignant policies and powers of hell and earth, which cannot shake the rock on which the church is built. Great is the truth, and will prevail.

5. That he should have a great number of subjects that should be to him for a name and a praise, v. 3.

1. That they should be his own people, and such as he should have an incontestable title to. They are given to him by the Father, who gave them their lives and beings, and to whom their lives and beings were forfeited; Thine they were, and thou gavest them me, John xvii. 6. They are redeemed by him; he has purchased them to be to himself a peculiar people, Tit. ii. 14. They are his by right, antecedent to their consent; he had much
ground, to make it fruitful. Note, The dew of our youth, even in the morning of our days, ought to be consecrated to our Lord Jesus.

6. That he should be not only a King, but a Priest, v. 4. The same Lord that said, Sit thou at my right hand, sware, and will not repent, Thou art a priest, that is, Be thou a priest; for by the word of his oath he was consecrated. Note, (1.) Our Lord Jesus Christ is a Priest; he was appointed to that office, and faithfully executes it; he is ordained for many things hereafter concerning Christ sacrifices for sin, (Heb. v. 1.) to make atonement for our sins, and to recommend our services to God's acceptance. He is God's Minister to us, and our Advocate with God, and so is a Mediator between us and God. (2.) He is a Priest for ever; he was designed for a Priest, in God's eternal counsels; he was a Priest to the Old Testament saints, and will be a Priest for all believers to the end of time, Heb. xii. 8. He is said to be a Priest for ever; not only because we are never to expect any other dispensation of grace than this by the priesthood of Christ, but because the blessed fruits and consequences of it will remain to eternity. (3.) He is made a Priest with an oath, which the apostle argues, to prove the pre-eminence of his priesthood above that of Aaron, Heb. vii. 20, 21. The Lord has sworn, to show that in the commission there was no implicit reserve of a power of revocation; for he will not repent, as he did concerning Eli's priesthood, 1 Sam. ii. 30. This was intended for the honour of Christ, and the comfort of Christians: the priesthood of Christ is confirmed by the highest ratifications possible, that it might be an unshaken foundation for our faith and hope to build upon. (4.) He is a Priest, not of the order of Aaron, but of that of Melchizedek, which, as it was prior, so it was, upon many accounts, superior, to that of Aaron, and a more lively representative of Christ. Melchizedek was a priest upon his throne, so is Christ, (Zech. vi. 13.) King of righteousness, and King of peace: Melchizedek had no successor, nor has Christ, his is an unchangeable priesthood. The apostle comments largely upon these words, (Heb. vii.) and builds on them his discourse of Christ's priestly office; which he shows was no new notion, but built upon this most sure word of prophecy. For, as the New Testament was not written in the Old, so the Old Testament confirms the New, and Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega of both.

5. The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries.

6. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries.

7. He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head. Here we have our great Redeemer, 1. Conquering his enemies, (v. 5, 6.) in order to the making of them his footstool, v. 1. Our Lord Jesus will certainly bring to nought all the opposition made to his kingdom, and bring to ruin all those who make that opposition, and persist in it. He will be too hard for those, whoever they may be, that fight against him, against his subjects, and the interest of his kingdom, among men, either by persecutions or by perverse disputations. Observe here, 1. The Conqueror; The Lord, Adonai; the Lord Jesus, he to whom all judgment is committed; he shall make his own part good against his enemies; The Lord at thy right hand, O church, so some; that is, the Lord that is nigh unto his people, and very present Help to them, that is at their right hand, to strengthen and succour them; shall appear for them against his and their enemies. See cix. 3. He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, xvi. 8. Some observe, that, when Christ is said to do his work at the right hand of his church, it intimates, that if we would have Christ to appear for us, we must besist ourselves, 2 Sam. v. 24. Or rather, A thy right hand, O God, referring to v. 1. in the dignity and dominion to which he is advanced. Note, Christ's sitting at the right hand of God speaks as much terror to his enemies, as happiness to his friends.

2. The time fixed for this victory; in the day of his wrath; that is, the time appointed for it; when the measure of their iniquities is full, and they are ripe for ruin. When the day of his patience is expired, then the day of his wrath comes. Note, (1.) Christ has wrath of his own, as well as grace. It concerns us to kiss the Son, for he can be angry, John xii. 24. And we read of the wrath of the Lamb, Rev. vi. 16. (2.) There is a day of wrath set, a year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion, the year of the redeemed. The time is set for the destruction of particular enemies, and when that time is come, it shall be done, how unlikely soever it may seem; but the great day of his wrath will be at the end of time, Rev. vi. 17.

3. The extent of this victory. (1.) It shall return very high; He shall strike through kings. The greatest that ever opposed themselves against Christ, shall be made to fall before him; though they be kings of the earth, and rulers, accustomed to carry their point, they cannot carry it against Christ, they do but make themselves ridiculous by the attempt, ii. 2-5. Be their power among men so despotick, Christ will call them to an account; be their strength ever so great, their policies ever so deep, Christ will be too hard for them; and above them, when he shall cast down his enemies, and will trample upon the creature of this world, Death the king of terrors, and we read of kings that make war with the Lamb; but they shall all be brought down and broken. (2.) It shall reach very far. The trophies of Christ's victories will be set up among the heathen, and in many countries, wherever any of his enemies are, not his eye only, but his hand, shall find them out, xxxiii. 8.) and his wrath shall follow them. He will be just in the height of his passions, Jer. xxxii. 2.

4. The equity of this victory; He shall judge among them. It is not a military execution, which is done in fury, but a judicial one; before he condemns and slays, he will judge; he will make it appear that they have brought this ruin upon themselves, and have themselves rolled the stone which returns upon them, that he may be justified when he speaks, and the heavens may declare his righteousness. See Rev. xix. 1, 2.

5. The effect of this victory; it shall be the complete and utter ruin of all his enemies. He shall strike them through, for he strikes home, and gives an incurable wound; he shall wound the heads, which seems to refer to the first promise of the Messiah, (Gen. iii. 15.) that he should bruise the serpent's head. He shall wound the head of his enemies; (Ps. lxxviii. 21.) some read it, He shall wound him that is the head over many countries; other Sinners; or the Antichrist, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of his mouth. He shall make such destruction of his enemies, that he shall fill the places with the dead bodies. The slain of the Lord shall be many. See Isa. xxxiv. 3, &c. Ezek. xxxix. 12, 14. Rev. xiv. 20. — xix. 17, 18. The filling of the valley (for so some read it) with dead bodies, perhaps, denotes the filling of the valley of Hinom (which is sometimes compared to the valley of Hinom, Isa. xxx. 33. Jer. vii. 32.) with damned souls for that will be the portion of those that persist in their enmity to Christ.
II. We have here the Redeemer saving his friends and comforting them, (v. 7.) for their benefit. 1. He shall be humbled; He shall drink of the brook in the way, that he may be made more humble, and put into his hand. He shall be so abased and impoverished, and withal so intent upon his work, that he shall drink puddle-water out of the lakes in the highway; so some. The wrath of God, running in the channel of the curse of the law, was the brook in the way, in the way of his undertaking, which he must go through; or which ran in the way of our salvation and obstructed it, which lay between us and God. 2. Christ drank of this brook, when he was made a Curse for us, and therefore, when he entered upon his suffering, he went over the brook Kidron; (John xviii. 1.) he drank deep of this black brook, (so Kidron signifies,) this bloody brook, so drank of the brook in the way, as to take it out of the way of our redemption and salvation.

2. He shall be exalted; Therefore shall he lift up the head. When he died, he bowed the head; (John xix. 30.) but he soon lifted up the head by his own power in his resurrection. He lifted up the head as a Conqueror, yea, more than a Conqueror. This denotes not only his exaltation, but his exultation; not only his elevation, but his triumph in it; (Col. ii. 15.) Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them. David spake as a type of him in this, (Ps. xxvii. 6.) Now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies. His exaltation was the work of the day, his humiliation himself, therefore God also has highly exalted him. Phil. ii. 9. Because he drank of the brook in the way, therefore he lifted up his own head, and so, lifted up the heads of all his faithful followers, who, if they suffer with him, shall also reign with him.

PSALM CXI.

This, and divers of the psalms that follow it, seem to have been penned by David for the service of the church in their solemn feasts, as a direction to any particular persons. This is a psalm of praise, the title of it is Hallelujah, Praise ye the Lord; intimating that we must address ourselves to the use of this psalm, with hearts disposed to praise God. It is composed alphabetically, each sentence beginning with a word of the Hebrew alphabet, in order exactly; two sentences to each verse, and three a piece to the two last. The psalmist, exhorting to praise God, 1. Sets himself for an inquirer, one that inquires after God, to know him, (v. 1.) from the works of God. 1. The greatness of his works, and the glory of them. 2. The righteousness of them. 3. The goodness of them. 4. The power of them. 5. The conformity of them to his word of promise. 6. The perpetuity of them. These observations are intermixed, v. 2. 9. 111. He recommends the holy fear of God, and a conscientious obedience to his commands, as the most acceptable way of praising God, v. 10.

1. PRAISE ye the Lord. I will praise the Lord with my whole heart in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation. 2. The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. 3. His works are honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever. 4. He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the Lord is gracious, and full of compassion. 5. He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will be ever mindful of his covenant.

The title of the psalm being Hallelujah, the psalmist (as every author ought to have) has an eye to his title, and keeps to his text.

1. He resolves to praise God himself, v. 1. What duty we call others to, we must oblige and excite ourselves to; nay, whatever others do, whether they will praise God or no, we and our houses must determine and order our hearts; for such is the psalmist’s resolution here, I will praise the Lord with my whole heart. My heart, my whole heart, being devoted to his honour, shall be employed in this work; and this in the assembly, or secret, of the upright, in the cabinet council, and in the congregation of Israelites. Note, We must praise God both in private and in public, in lesser and greater assemblies, in our own families and in the courts of the Lord’s house; but in both it is most comfortable to do it in concert with the upright, who will heartily join in it. Private meetings for devotion should be kept up as well as more public and promiscuous assemblies.

2. He recommends to us the works of the Lord, as the proper subject of our meditations when we are praising him—the dispensations of his providence toward the world, the church, and particular persons.

(1.) God’s works are very magnificent; great like himself, there is nothing in them that is mean or trifling: they are the products of infinite wisdom and power, and we must say this upon the first view of them, before we come to inquire more particularly into them, that the works of the Lord are great, v. 2. There is something in them surprising, and that strikes an awe upon us. All the works of the Lord are spoken of as one; (v. 3.) it is his work, such is the beauty and harmony of Providence, the so admirably do all its dispensations centre in one design; it was cried to the wheels, O wheel, Ezek. x. 13. Take all together, and it is honourable and glorious, and such as becomes him.

(2.) They are entertaining and exercising to the inquisitive; sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. Note, [1.] All that truly love God have pleasure in his works, and reckon all well that he does; nor do their thoughts dwell upon any subject with more delight than on the works of God, which the more they are looked into, the more they give us of a pleasing surprise. [2.] They that have pleasure in the works of God will not take up with a superficial transient view of them, but will diligently search into them and observe them. In studying both natural and political history, we should have this in our eye, to discover the greatness and glory of God’s works. [3.] These works of God, that are humbly and diligently sought into, shall be sought out; they that seek shall find; (so some read it;’ they are found of all them that have pleasure in them, or found in all their parts, designs, purposes, and several concerns; (so Dr. Hammond;) for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, xxv. 14.

3. They are all just and holy; His righteousness endures for ever. Whatever he does, he never did, nor ever will, do any wrong to any of his creatures; and therefore his works endure for ever, (Eccle. iii. 14.) because the righteousness of them does.

4. They are admirable and memorable, fit to be registered and kept on record. Much that we do is so trifling that it is not fit to be spoken of or told again; the greatest kindness is to forget it; but notice is to be taken of God’s works, and an account to be kept of them, (Ps. lxxvii. 18.) he has made his wonderful works to be remembered; accounts of them are given; but which is worthy to be remembered, which cannot but be remembered; and he has instituted ways and means for the keeping of some of them in remembrance, as the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt by the passover. He has made him a memorial by his wonderful works; so some read it; see Isa. lxix. 17. By that which God did with his glorious arm, he made himself an everlasting name.
5. They are kind; in them the Lord shows that he is gracious and full of compassion. As of the works of creation, so of the works of Providence, we must say, They are not only all very great, but all very good. Dr. Hammond takes this to be the name which God has made, to himself by his wonderful works, the same with that which he proclaimed to Moses, The Lord God is gracious and merciful, Exod. xxiv. 6. God’s pardoning sin is the most wonderful of all his works, and which ought to be remembered to his glory. It is a further instance of his grace and compassion, that he has given meat to them that fear him, v. 5. He gives them their daily bread, food convenient for them: so he does to others by common providence; but to them that fear him he gives it by covenant, and in pursuance of the promise; for it follows, He will be ever mindful of his covenant; so that they can taste covenant-love even in common mercies. Some refer this to the manna with which God fed his people Israel in the wilderness. Others to the spoil they got from the Egyptians when they came out with great substance, according to the promise, Gen. xv. 14. When God brake the kingdom of Egypt, he set a bound to his kingdom, Ps. lxv. 14. He has given prey to them that fear him; so the margin has it, not only fed them, but enriched them, and given their enemies to be a prey to them.

6. They are earnest of what he will do, according to his promise: He will ever be mindful of his covenant, for he has ever been so; and as he never did, so he never will, let one jot or title of it fall to the ground. Though God’s people have their infirmities, and are often unmindful of his commands, yet he will ever be mindful of his covenant.

6. He hath showed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen. 7. The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. 8. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness. 9. He sent redemption unto his people; he hath commanded his covenant for ever; holy and reverend is his name. 10. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.

We are taught to give glory to God,

1. For the great things he has done for his people, for his people of Israel, of old and of late; He has showed his people the power of his works, (v. 6.) in what he has wrought for them; many a time he has given proofs of his omnipotence, and showed them what he can do, and that there is nothing too hard for him to do. Two things are specified, to show the power of his works.

(1.) The possession God gave to Israel in the land of Canaan, that he might give them, or in giving them, the heritage of the heathen. This he did in Joshua’s time, when the seven nations were subdued; and in David’s time, when the neighbouring nations were many of them brought under his dominion, and subject to him, and became tributaries to David. Herein God showed his sovereignty, in disposing of kingdoms as he pleases, and his might, in making good his dispositions. If God will make the heritage of the heathen to be the heritage of Israel, who can either arraign his counsel, or stay his hand?

(2.) The many deliverances which he wrought for his people, when by their iniquities they had sold themselves into the hand of their enemies; (v. 9.) He sent redemption unto his people; not only out of Egypt at first, but often afterward; and these redemptions were typical of the great redemption, which in the fulness of time was to be wrought out of the hands of sin and death in Jerusalem which so many waited for.

2. For the stability both of his word and of his works, which assure us of the great things he will do for them.

(1.) What God has done shall never be undone. He will not undo it himself, and men and devils cannot; (v. 7.) The works of his hand are verity and judgment; (v. 8.) they are done in truth and uprightness; they are consistent with his covenant. He commands both rules and reasons of equity, all according to the counsel of his wisdom, and the purpose of his will; all well done; and therefore there is nothing to be altered or amended, but it is firm and unchangeable. Upon the beginning of his works we may depend for the perfecting of them; work that is true will last, will neither go to decay, nor sink under the stress that is laid upon it.

(2.) What God has said shall never be unsaid; All his commandments are sure; all straight, and therefore all steady. His purposes, the rule of his actions, shall all have their accomplishment; Has he spoken, and shall he not make it good? No doubt, he shall; whether he commands light or darkness, it is done as he commands. His precepts, the rule of our actions, are unquestionably just and good, and therefore unchangeable, and not to be repealed.

His promises and threatenings are all sure, and will be made good; nor shall the unbelief of man make either the one or the other of no effect. They are established, and therefore they stand fast for ever and ever, and the scripture cannot be broken. The wise God is never put upon new counsels, nor obliged to take new measures, either in his laws or in his providences. All is said, as all is done, in truth and uprightness, and therefore it is immutable. Men’s folly and falsehood make them unstable in all their ways, but infinite wisdom and truth for ever exclude retraction and revocation; He has commanded his covenant for ever. God’s covenant is commanded, for he has made it as one that has an incontestable authority to prescribe both what we must do, and what we must expect, and an unques tionable ability to perform both what he has promised in the blessings of the covenant, and what he has threatened upon the breaking of it, ch. 8. 13.

3. For the setting up and establishing of religion among men. Because holy and reverend is his name, and the fear of him is the beginning of wisdom, therefore his praise endureth for ever; he is to be everlastingly praised.

(1.) Because the discoveries of religion tend so much to his honour; Review what he has made known of himself in his word and in his works, and you will find, first, that he is most terrible, most holy, and greatly to be feared; for his name is holy, his infinite purity and rectitude appear in all that whereby he has made himself known, and because it is holy, therefore it is reverend, and to be thought of, and mentioned, with a holy awe. Note, What is holy, is reverend; the angels have an eye to God’s holiness when they cover their faces before him, and nothing is more man’s honour than his sanctification. It is in his present place that God appears most terrible, lxviii. 35. Lev. x. 3.

(2.) Because the dictates of religion tend so much to man’s happiness. We have reason to praise God, that the matter is so well contrived, that our reverence of him, and obedience to him, are as much our interest as they are our duty.

[1.] Our reverence of him is so; The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. It is not only
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reasonably that we should fear God, because his name is reverend, and his nature holy, but it is advantageous to us. It is wisdom, it will direct us to speak and act as becomes us, in a consistency with ourselves, and for our own benefit. It is the head of wisdom, that is, as we read it, it is the beginning of wisdom; men never begin to be wise, till they begin to fear God, and attend on his commandments; and, in true religion, and has its foundation in it; or, as some understand it, it is the chief wisdom, and the most excellent: the first in dignity. It is the principal wisdom, and the principle of wisdom, to worship God, and give honour to him, as our Father and Master. They manage well who always act under the government of his holy fear.

[2.] Our obedience to him is so: A good understanding doth the commandments. Where the fear of the Lord rules in the heart, there will be a constant conscientious care to keep his commandments; not to talk of them, but to do them; and such have a good understanding; First, They are well understood, their obedience is graciously accepted as a plain indication of their mind, that they do indeed fear God. Compare Prov. iii. 4. So shalt thou find favour and good understanding. God and man will look upon those as meaning well, among those of their duty, though they have their mistakes; what is honestly intended shall be well taken. Secondly, They understand well. 1. It is a sign that they do understand well. The most obedient are accepted as the most intelligent; those understand themselves and their interests best, that make God’s law their rule, and are in every thing ruled by it. A great understanding they have, that know God’s commandments, and can discern learnedly of them; but a good understanding have they that do them, and walk according to them. 2. It is the way to understand better; A good understanding are they to all that do them; the fear of the Lord, and the laws of that give men a good understanding, and are able to make them wise unto salvation. If any man will do his will, he shall know more and more clearly of the doctrine of Christ. John i. 18. Good men have all these that do them, so the margin; according to what was promised Joshua, if he would observe to do according to the law, (Josh. i. 8.) Then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and shalt have good success. We have reason to praise God, to praise him for ever, for putting man into such a fair way to happiness. Some apply the last words rather to the good man who fears the Lord, than to the good God; His praise endureth for ever: it is not of men, perhaps, but it is of God; (Rom. ii. 29.) and that praise, which is of God endures for ever, when the praise of men is withered and gone.

PSALM CXII.

This psalm is composed alphabetically, as the former it, and is (like the former) entitled, Hallelujah; treats of the happiness of the saints, because it redounds to the glory of God, and whatever we have the pleasure of, he must have the praise of. It is a comment upon the last verses of the forty-ninth psalm, showing how much it is our wisdom to fear God, and do his commandments. We have here, I. The character of the righteous, v. 1. II. The blessedness of the righteous. 1. There is a blessedness entailed upon their posterity, v. 1. II. They are a blessing conferred upon themselves. (1.) Prosperity outward and inward, v. 3. (2.) Comfort, v. 4. (3.) Wisdom, v. 5. (4.) Stability, v. 6. (5.) Honour, v. 6. 9. III. The misery of the wicked, v. 10. So that good and evil are set before us, the blessing and the curse. In singing this psalm, we must not only teach and admonish ourselves and one another to answer to the characters here given of the happy, but comfort and encourage ourselves and another with the privileges and comforts here secured to the holy.

1. PRAISE ye the Lord. Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. 2. His seed shall be mighty upon the earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed. 3. Wealth and riches shall be in his house; and his righteousness endureth for ever. 4. Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous. 5. A good man showeth favour, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion.

The psalmist begins with a call to us to praise God, but immediately applies himself to praise the people of God; for whatever glory is acknowledged to be on them, it comes from God, and must return to him, as his Praise; so they are his. We have reason to praise the Lord, that there are people in the world who fear him and serve him, and that they are a happy people; both which are owing entirely to the grace of God.

Now here we have,

1. A description of these who are here pronounced blessed, and to whom these promises are made. (1.) They are well-principled with pious and devout affections. Those have the privileges of God's subjects, not who cry, Lord, Lord, but who are indeed well-affecting to his government. [1.] They are such as stand in awe of God, and have a constant reverence for his majesty, and deference to his will. The happy man is he that fears the Lord, v. 1. [2.] They are such as take a pleasure in their duty. He that fears the Lord, as a Father, with the disposition of a child, not of a slave, delights greatly in his commandments, is well-pleased with them, and with the equity and goodness of them, they are written in his heart, it is his choice to be under them, and he calls them an easy, a pleasant, yoke; it is his delight to be searching into, and conversing with, God's commandments, by reading, hearing, and meditating, Ps. i. 2. He delights not only in God's promises, but in his precepts, and thinks himself happy, under God's government, as well as in his favour. It is a pleasure to him to be found in the centre of his duty, and he is in his element when he is in the service of God. Herein he delights greatly, more than in any of the employments and enjoyments of this world. And what he does in religion is done from principle, because he sees amiableness in religion, and advantage by it.

(2.) They are honest and sincere in their professions and intentions. They are called the upright, (v. 2, 4.) who are really as good as they seem to be, and deal faithfully both with God and man. There is no true religion without sincerity; that is gospel-perfection.

(3.) They are both just and kind in all their dealings; He is gracious, full of compassion, and righteous, (v. 4.) dares not do any wrong to any man, but does to every man all the good he can, and that from a principle of compassion and kindness. It is said of God in the former psalm, (v. 4.) He is gracious, and full of compassion; and here it is said of the good man, that he is so; for herein we must be followers of God, as dear children; be merciful as he is. He is full of compassion, and yet righteous; what he does good with, is what he came honestly by; God hates robbery for burnt-offerings, and so does he. One instance is given of his beneficence; (v. 5.) He shows favour, and lends. Sometimes there is as much charity in lending as in giving, as it obliges the borrower both to
They have dealt falsely, and with oppression; and have taken up money in their heart, and have rewarded diligently for the violence of their hands.

2. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, because ye have forgotten me and trusted in your own counsel, therefore, behold, I will smite you with the sword of man, with the sword of beasts, and with the sword of the famine, which shall devour the soul from without, and the heart within you.

3. And ye shall eat every man the flesh of his own house, and the flesh of your servants "shall be your meat, in the place which ye would not have set on foot, and "shall be as the desolation of your eyes, and all that ye have done, shall "be as the mourning of your heart. And ye shall eat in desolation, and shall perish, because of the sword of the Egyptians, and because of the sword of the Assyrians, and because of the sword of the sword of the whole earth, which I will plant against you.

4. And "you shall know that I am the Lord, when "I stretch out mine hand upon these that are fallen, and deliver them in my faithfulness, and "make the high crooked paths straight," and "the sharp points into paths of level ground, and "the glory of the house of Israel shall "be "given to the house of Israel, saith the Lord God; and "they shall "be "known by the name of the Lord."
liberality and bounty to the poor; He has dispersed, he has given to the poor; he has not suffered his charity to run all in one channel, or directed it to some few objects that he liked, but a kind of plan for, in all look behind him, given a portion to seven, and to eight, has sown beside all waters, and by thus scattering he has increased; and this is his righteousness, which endures for ever. Aims are called righteous, not because they will justify us by making atonement for our evil deeds, but because they are good deeds, which we are bound to perform; so that, if we are not charitable, we are not just; we withhold good from those that it is due to like the prodigal son; for, even, here are others for ever, for it shall be taken notice of in the great day: I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat. This is quoted as an inducement and encouragement to charity, 2 Cor. ix. 9.

(2.) A good man shall have a settled spirit, and that is a much more satisfaction than the former; for so shall a man have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. Surely he shall not be moved, whatever happens, not moved either from his duty, or from his comfort; he shall not be afraid, his heart is established, v. 7, 8. This is a part both of the character, and of the comfort, of good people. It is their endeavour to keep their minds stayed upon God, and so to keep them calm, and easy, and undisturbed; and God has promised them both cause to do so, and grace to do so. Observe, [1.] It is the duty and interest of the people of God, not to be afraid of evil tidings; not to be afraid of hearing bad news; and when they do hear them, to be put in a confusion by it, and into an amazing expectation of worse and worse; but, whatever happens, whatever threatens, to be able to say, with blessed Paul, None of these things move me, neither will I fear, though the earth be moved, xlvi. 2. [2.] The fixedness of the heart is a sovereign remedy against the disquieting fear of evil tidings. If we keep our thoughts composed, and ourselves masters of them, our wills resigned to the holy will of God, our temper sedate, and our spirits even, under all the unceasing of Providence, we are well-fortified against the agitations of the timorous. [3.] Trusting in the Lord is the best and surest way of fixing and establishing the heart. By faith we must cast anchor in the promise, in the word of God, and so return to him, and repose in him as our Rest. The heart of man cannot fix any where, to its satisfaction, but in the truth of God, and there it finds firm footing. [4.] They whose hearts are established by faith, shall not be caught till they have gained their point; He shall not be afraid, till he see his desire upon his enemies, till he come to heaven, where he shall see Satan, and all his spiritual enemies, trodden under his feet, and, as Israel saw the Egyptians, dead on the sea-shore; Till he look upon his oppressors, so Dr. Hammond; till he behold them securely, and look boldly in their faces, as being now no longer under their power. It will complete the satisfaction of the saints, when they shall have overcome the wicked, and all their purposes, and be able to say with St. Paul, when he had recounted the persecutions he endured, (2 Tim. iii. 11.) But out of them all the Lord delivered me. 2. The vexation of sinners, v. 10. Two things shall fret them. 1. The felicity of the righteous; The wicked shall see the righteous in prosperity and honour, and shall be grieved. It will vex them to see their innocence cleared, and their low estate regarded, and those whom they have despised, and on whom they have thought to oppress and wear down, and hoped to see their favourites of Heaven, and advanced to have dominion over them; (xlvi. 14.) this will make them gnash with their teeth, and pine away. This is often fulfilled in this world. The happiness of the saints is the envy of the wicked, and that envy is the rottenness of their bones. But it will most fully be accomplished in the other world, when it shall make damned sinners gnash with their teeth, to see Abraham afar off; and Lazarus in his bosom; to see all the oppressors in the kingdom of God, and themselves thrust out. (2.) Their own disappointment; The desire of the wicked shall perish; their desire was wholly to the world and the flesh, and they ruled over them; and therefore, when these perish, their joy is gone, and their expectations from them are cut off, to their everlasting confusion; their hope is as a spider's web.

PSALM CXIII.

This psalm begins and ends with Hallelujah; for, as many others, it is designed to promote the great and good work of praising God. 1. We are here called, and urged, to praise God, v. 1, 2. We are here furnished with many apt and choice words and verses to urge our praises, in singing which, we must, with holy fear and love, give to God the glory of, 1. The elevations of his glory and greatness, v. 4, 5. 2. The condescensions of his grace and goodness, (v. 6, 7.) which very much illustrate another one, that we may be duly affected with both.

PRAISE ye the Lord. Praise, O ye servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord. 2. Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and for evermore. 3. From the rising of the sun, unto the going down of the same, the Lord's name is to be praised. 4. The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. 5. Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, 6. Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth! 7. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; 8. That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people. 9. He maketh the barren woman to keep house, to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the Lord.

In this psalm,

1. We are exhorted to give glory to God, to give him the glory due to his name. The invitation is very pressing; Praise ye the Lord, and again, and again, Praise him, praise him; blessed be his name, for it is to be praised, v. 1...3. This intimates, 1. That it is a necessary and most excellent duty, greatly pleasing to God, and has a large room in religion. 2. That it is a duty we should much abound in, in which we should be frequently employed and enlarged. 3. That it is work which we are very backward to, and which we need to be engaged and excited to by precept upon precept, and line upon line. (Deut. iv. 2.) That it is work much in praising God themselves, will court others to it, both because they find the weight of the work, and that there is need of all the help they can fetch in, (there is employment for all hearts, all hands, and all little enough,) and because they find the pleasure of it, which they wish all their friends may share in.

Observe, (1.) From whom God has praise; from his own people; they are here called upon to praise God, as those that follow the call, Praise, O ye servants of the Lord. They have best reason to praise him; for they that attend him as his servants know him best, and receive most of his favours, and it is their business to praise him; that is the work required of them as his servants; it is easy pleasant work to speak well of their Master, and do them what honour they can; if they do not who should?
Some understand it of the Levites; but if so, all Christians are a royal priesthood, to show forth the praises of him that has called them, 1 Pet. ii. 9. The angels are the servants of the Lord; they need not be called upon by us to praise God, yet it is a comfort to us that they do it better than we can.

(2.) From whom has his right to do it? From whom has he received this grace? From whom are we to be raised to the standing of the sun, to the going down of the same, throughout the habitable world; let all that enjoy the benefit of the sun, (those that do so must count upon it that the sun will set,) give thanks for that light to the Father of lights. God's name is to be praised; it ought to be praised by all nations; for in every place, from East to West, there appear the manifest proofs and products of his wisdom, power, and goodness; and it is to be lamented that so great a part of mankind and his works, and good, and give them praise to others which is due to him alone. But perhaps there is more in it; as the former verse gave us a glimpse of the kingdom of glory, intimating that God's name shall be blessed for ever, (when time shall be no more, that praise shall be the work of heaven;) so this verse gives us a glimpse of the kingdom of grace in the gospel-dispensation of it, when the church shall no longer be confined to the Jewish nation, but shall spread itself all the world over; and everlasting spiritual income shall be offered to our God; (Mal. i. 11,) then, from the rising to the setting of the sun, the Lord's name shall be praised, by some in all countries.

11. We are here directed what to give him the glory of.

1. Let us look up with an eye of faith, and see how high his glory is in the upper world, and mention that, to his praise, v. 4. Then let us compare, in his praise, how high he is, his glory is high. (1.) High above all nations; their kings, though ever so pompous; their people, though ever so numerous. Whether it be true of an earthly king or no, that though he is major singularis—greater than individuals, he is minor universis—less than the whole, we will not dispute; but we are sure it is not true of the King of kings. Put all the nations together, and he is above them all; they are before him as the drop of the bucket, and the small dust of the balance, Isa. xl. 15, 17. Let all the nations think and speak highly of God, for he is high above them all.

(2.) High above the heavens; the throne of his glory is in the highest heavens; which should raise our hearts in praising him, Lam. iii. 41. His glory is above the heavens, above the angels; he is above what they are, their brightness is nothing to his; above what they do, for they are under his command, and do service for him; and above all heaven even they can speak him to be. He is exalted above all blessing and praise, not only all ours, but all theirs. We must therefore say, with holy adoration, Who is like unto the Lord our God? Who of all the princes and potentates of the earth? Who of all the bright and blessed spirits above? None can equal him, none dare compare with him. God is to be praised, as transcendently, incomparably, and incomprehensible; for he dwelleth exalted, and from on high sees all, and rules all; and justly attracts all praise to himself. 2. Let us look round with an eye of observation, and see how extensive his goodness is in the lower world, and mention that to his praise. He is a God who exalts himself to dwell, who humbles himself in heaven, and in earth. Some think there is a transposition, He exalts himself to dwell in heaven; he humbles himself to behold on earth; but the sense is plain enough, as we take it; for the thoughts of his self to transcend himself, and to humble himself, both are his own act and deed; as he is self-existent, so he is both the Fountain of his own honour, and the Spring of his own grace; God's condescending goodness appears,

(1.) In the cognizance he takes of the world below him; his glory is above the nations, and above the heavens, and yet neither is neglected by him; God is great, yet he does not despise any nation. Job xli. 13. He foundeth his throne above the stars of heaven, to behold the things in heaven, to support the beings, direct the motions, and accept the praises and services, of the angels themselves; for he needs them not, nor is benefited by them. [2.] Much more is it condescending in him to behold the things that are in the earth, to visit the sons of men, and regard them, to order and overrule their affairs, and to take notice of what they say and do, that he may fill the earth with his goodness, and so set us an example of stooping to do good, of taking notice of, and concerning ourselves about, our inferiors. If it be such condescension for God to behold things in heaven and earth, what an amazing condescension was it for the Son of God to come from heaven to earth, and take our nature upon him, that he might seek and save them that were lost! Here indeed he humbled himself.

(2.) In the particular favour he sometimes shows to the least and lowest of the inhabitants of this lower world. He not only beholds the great things in the earth, but the meanest, and those things which great men commonly overlook. Nor does he only behold them, but does wonders for them, and things that are very surprising, cut of the common road of Providence, and chain of causes; which shows that the world is governed, not by a course of nature, for that would always run in the same channel, but by a God of nature, who delights in doing things we looked not for.

[1.] Those that have been long despicable, are sometimes, on a sudden, made honourable; (v. 7, 8.) He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, that he may set him with princes. First, Thus God does sometimes magnify himself, and his own wisdom, power, and sovereignty; when he has some great work to do, he chooseth to employ those in it that were least likely, and least thought to be able by themselves, or by others, to the highest post of honour: Gideon is fetched from threshing, Saul from seeking the asses, and David from keeping the sheep; the apostles are sent from fishing to be fishers of men. The treasure of the gospel is put into earthen vessels, and the weak and foolish ones of the world pitched upon to be preachers of it, to confound the wise and mighty, (1 Cor. i. 27, 28,) that the excellency of the power may be of God, and all may be the wonder that is risen from him. Secondly, Thus does God sometimes reward the eminent piety and patience of his people who have long groaned under the burden of poverty and disgrace. When Joseph's virtue was tried and manifested, he was raised from the prison-dust, and set with princes. They that are wise will observe such returns of
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Providence, and will understand by them the loving-kindness of the Lord. Some have applied this to the work of redemption by Jesus Christ, and not unfi- tly; for through him poor fallen men are raised out of the dust, (one of the Jewish rabbins applies it, to the resurrection of the dead,) may, out of the dunghill of sin, and set among princes, among angels, those that spurned them. Hannah had sung to this purport, 1 Sam. i. 6-8.

[2.] Those that have been long barren, are sometimes, on a sudden, made fruitful, v. 9. This may look back to Sarah and Rebecca, Rachel, Hannah, and Samson’s mother, or forward to Elizabeth; and many such instances there have been, in which God has looked on the affliction of his handmaids, and taken away their approach. He makes to barren woman to keep house, not only builds up the family, but thereby finds the heads of the family something to do. Note, They that have the comfort of a family, must take the care of it; bearing children and guiding the house are put together, 1 Tim. v. 14. When God sets the barren in a family, he expects that she look well to the ways of her household, Prov. xxxi. 27. She is said to be a joy- ful mother, not only of her own children, but, even in common cases, the pain is forgotten, for joy that a man-child is born into the world, but there is particular joy when a child is born to those that have been long childless, (as Luke i. 14.) and therefore there ought to be particular thanking; Praise ye the Lord. Yet, in this case rejoice with trem- bings; for, though the sorrowful mother be made joyful, the joyful mother may be made sorrowful again, if the children be either removed from her, or imibted to her. This therefore it is to be applied to the gospel-church among the Gentiles, the building of which is illustrated by this similitude, (Isa. liv. 1.) Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; (G. I. iv. 27.) for which we (who, being sin- ners of the Gentiles, are children of the desolate) have reason to say, Praise ye the Lord.

PSALM CXIV.

The deliverance of Israel out of Egypt gave birth to their church and nation, which were then founded, then formed; that people who went forth from Egypt, and therefore are fitly called a people, and well known, have a peculiar memorableness. God gloried in it, in the presence of the ten commandments, and Hos. xi. 1. Out of Egypt have I called my son. In this psalm, it is celebrated in lively and musickly tuneful strains, not as a part of the great Hallelujah, or song of praise, which the Jews were wont to sing at the close of the passover-supper. It must never be forgotten, I. That they were brought out of slavery, v. 1. II. That God set up his tabernacle among them, v. 2. III. That the sea and Jordan were divided before them, v. 3, 5. IV. That the earth shook at the giving of the law, when God came down on mount Sinai, v. 4, 6, 7. V. That God gave them water out of the rock, v. 8. In singing this psalm, we must acknowledge God’s power and goodness in what he did for Israel, applying it to the much greater work of won- der, our redemption by Christ, and encouraging ourselves and others to trust in God in the greatest straits.

1. WHEN Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language, 2. Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion. 3. The sea saw it, and fled; Jordan was driven back. 4. The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. 5. What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? 6. Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills, like lambs? 7. Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob; 8. Which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.

The psalmist is here remembering the days of old, the years of the right hand of the Most High, and the wonders which their fathers told them of; (Judg. vi. 13.) for time, as it does not wear out the grime of sin, so it should not wear out the sense of mercy.

Let it never be forgotten, 1. That God brought Israel out of the house of bondage with a high hand and a stretched out arm. Israel went out of Egypt, v. 1. They did not steal out clandestinely, nor were they driven out, but fairly went out, marched out with all the marks of honour: they went out from a barbarous people, that had used them barbarously, from a people of a strange language, xxxi. 14. They had purposed, and it seemed, preserved their own language pure among them, and cared not for learning the language of their oppressors. By this distinction from them, they kept up an earnest of their deliverance.

2. That he himself framed their civil and sacred constitution; (v. 2.) Judah and Israel were his sanctuary, his dominion. When he delivered them out of the hand of their oppressors, it was that they might serve him, both in holiness, in -the purity of his presence, and the purity of his word, so that, like Judah here, are his sanctuaries, his living temples, en whom Holiness to the Lord is written! (2.) He set up his dominion among them, was himself their Lawgiver, and their Judge; and their govern- ment was a theocracy; The Lord was their King. All the world is God’s dominion, but Israel was so in a peculiar manner. What is God’s sanctuary must be his law, both of the laws of it, and of the laws of the land. There were many laws of the house that submit to the laws of God, and for this end Christ has redeemed us, that he might bring us into God’s service, and engage us ever for it.

3. That the Red sea was divided before them at their coming out of Egypt, both for their rescue, and the ruin of their enemies; and the river Jordan, when they entered into Canaan, for their honour, and to illustrate this, the psalmist asks, Is it only to amuse men? No, it is to illustrate this, by a poetical strain, (v. 5.) What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? and furnishes the sea with an answer; (v. 7.) it was at the presence of the Lord. This is designed to express, (1.) The reality of the miracle, that it was not by any power of nature, or from any natural cause, but it was at the presence of the Lord, who gave the word. (2.) The mercy of the miracle; What ailed thee? Was it in vain that God spoke the word? (3.) That it was in the presence of the God of Jacob; it was in kindness to the Israel of God, for the salvation of that chosen people, that God was thus displeased against the rivers, and his wrath was against the sea, as the prophet speaks, Hab. iii. 8-13. Isa. li. 10.—Isi.
Many ancient translations join this psalm to that which goes next before it, the Septuagint particularly, and the vulgar Latin; but it is, in the Hebrew, a distinct psalm. In it, we are taught to give glory, I. To God, and not to ourselves, v. 1. II. To God, and not to idols, v. 2. 8. We must give glory to God, 1. By trusting in him, and his promise and blessing, v. 9. 12. By avoiding the idolatrous v. 16. 18. Some think this psalm was penned upon occasion of some great distress and trouble that the church of God was in; when the enemies were insolent and threatening. In such case the church doth not so much pour out her complaint to God, as place her confidence in God, and triumph in doing so; and with such a holy triumph we ought to sing this psalm.

PSALM CXV.

Many ancient translations join this psalm to that which goes next before it, the Septuagint particularly, and the vulgar Latin; but it is, in the Hebrew, a distinct psalm. In it, we are taught to give glory, I. To God, and not to
providence, and always nigh to us by his promise and grace. (2.) Why does God permit them to say so? Nay, why should he not? Is it not possible that they have some colour for saying so? Lord, appear for our relief, that thou mayest vindicate thyself, and glorify thine own name."

2. He gives a direct answer to their question; (v. 3.) "Do they ask where is our God? We can tell where he is." (1.) In the upper world is the presence of his glory; Our God is in the heavens, where the gods of the heathen never were; in the heavens, and therefore out of sight; but, though his majesty be unapproachable, it does not therefore follow that his being is questionable. (2.) "In the lower world are the products of his power; He has done whatsoever he pleased, according to the counsel of his will; he has a sovereign dominion, and a universal uncontrollable influence. Do you ask where he is? He is at the beginning and end of every thing, and not far from any of us." He returns their question upon themselves. They asked, Where is the God of Israel? because he is not seen. He does in effect ask, What are the gods of the heathen? because they are seen.

(1.) He shows that their gods, though they are not shapeless things, are senseless things. Idolaters, at first, worshipped the sun and moon, (Job xxxi. 26.) which was bad enough, but not so bad as that which they were now come to, (for evil men grow worse, and worse,) which was bad enough. Now, the matter of the heavens, which was made of images, v. 4. The matter of them was silver and gold, dug out of the earth; (Man found them poor and dirty in a mine, Herbert) proper things to make money of, but not to make gods of. The make of them was from the artificer; they are creatures of men's vain imaginations, and the works of men's hands, and therefore can have no divinity in them. If man is the work of God's hands, (as certainly he is,) and it was his honour that he was made in the image of God,) it is absurd to think that that can be God which is the work of men's hands; or that it can be any other than a dishonour to God to make him in the image of man. The argument is irrefragable; The workman made it, and therefore it is not God, Hos. vii. 6. These idols are represented here as the most ridiculous things, a mere jest, that would seem to be something, but were really nothing. As a toy-shop than a temple; for children to play with than for men to pray to. The painter, the carver, the statuary, did their part well enough; they made them with mouths and eyes, ears and noses, hands and feet, but they could put no life into them, and therefore no sense. They had better have worshipped a dead carcasse (for that had life in it once) than a dead image, which neither has life, nor can have. They speak not, in answer to those that consult them; the crafty priest must do it for them. In Baal's image there was no voice, neither any that answered. They see not the prostrations of their worshippers before them, much less their burthenst and wants. They hear not their prayers, though ever so loud; they smell not their incense, though ever so strong, ever so sweet; they handle not the gifts presented to them, much less have they any gifts to bestow on them; they know not the tokens of God's favours, nor hands to the needy. They walk not, they cannot stir a step for the relief of those that apply to them. Nay, they do not so much as breathe through their throats; they have not the least sign or symptom of life, but are as dead, after the priest has pretended to consecrate them, and call a deity into them, as they were before.

(2.) He then infers the sottishness of their worshippers; (v. 8.) "They that make them images show their ingenuity, and doubtless are sensible men; but they that make them gods, show their stupidity and folly, and are like unto them, as senseless blockish things; they see not the invisible things of the world, which are eternal, and live to God in the works of creation; they hear not the voice of the day and the night, which in every speech and language declare his glory, xix. 2, 3. By worshipping these foolish puppets, they make themselves more and more foolish like them, and set themselves at a greater distance from every thing that is spiritual, sinking themselves deeper into the mire of sense; and within they provoke God to give them up to a refractory mind, a mind void of knowledge, and a mind void of judgement, Rom. i. 28. They the trust in them act very absurdly and very unreasonably; are senseless, helpless, useless, like them; and they will find it so themselves, to their own confusion. We shall know where our God is, and so shall they, to their cost, when their gods are gone, Jer. x. 3-11. Isa. xlv. 9, &c."

9. O Israel, trust thou in the Lord; he is their help and their shield. 10. O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord; he is their help and their shield. 11. Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord; he is their help and their shield. 12. The Lord hath been mindful of us; he will bless us: he will bless the house of Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron. 13. He will bless them, that fear the Lord, both small and great. 14. The Lord shall increase you more and more, you and your children. 15. You are blessed of the Lord, which made heaven and earth. 16. The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men. 17. The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence. 18. But we will bless the Lord from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the Lord.

In these verses,

I. We are earnestly exhorted, all of us, to repute our confidence in God, and not suffer our confidence in him to be shaken by the heathen's insulting of us, upon the account of our present distresses. It is folly to trust in dead images, but it is wisdom to trust in the living God, for he is a Help and a Shield to those that do trust in him; a Help to furnish them with, and forward them in, that which is good, and a Shield to fortify them against, and protect them from, every thing that is evil. Therefore, 1. Let Israel trust in the Lord; the body of the people, as to their public interests, and every particular Israelite, as to his own private concern, let them leave it to God to dispose of all for them, and believe he will dispose of all for the best, and will be their Help and Shield. 2. Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, and all the families of the house of Aaron, trust in the Lord; (v. 10.) they are most maligned and struck at by the enemies, and therefore of them God takes particular care. They ought to be examples to others of a cheerful confidence in God, and a faithful adherence to him, in the worst of times. 3. Let the proselytes, who are not of the seed of Israel, but fear the Lord, who worship him, and make conscience of their duty to him, let them trust in him, for he will not fail nor forsake them, v. 11. Note, Wherever there is an awful fear of God, there may be a cheerful faith in him: they that reverence his word, may rely upon it.

II. We are greatly encouraged to trust in God.
and a good reason is given us why we should stay ourselves upon him with an entire satisfaction. Consider then, (1.) What we have experienced; (v. 12.) The Lord has been mindful of us, and never unmindful; has been so constantly, has been so remarkably, upon special occasions. He has been mindful of our case, our wants and burthens; mindful of our prayers to him, his promises to us, and the covenant-relationship between him and us. All our comforts are derived from God’s thoughts to usward; he has been mindful of us, though we have forgotten him. Let us engage us to trust in him, that we may have found him faithful.

2. What we may expect. From what he has done for us, we may infer, He will bless us; he that has been our Help and our Shield, will be so; he that has remembered us in our low estate, will not forget us; but he is still the same, his power and goodness the same, and his promise inviolable; so that we have reason to hope that he who has delivered, and does, will yet deliver. Yet this is not all; he will bless us; he has promised that he will; he has pronounced a blessing upon all his people. God’s blessing us is not only speaking good to us, but doing well for us; those whom he blesses, are blessed indeed. It is particularly promised that he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the community, will bless his people in their civil interests; he will bless the house of Aaron, the church, the ministry; will bless his people in their religious concerns. The priests were to bless the people, it was their office; (Numb. vi. 23.) but God blesses them, and so blessed their blessings. Nay, (v. 13.) he will bless them that fear the Lord, though they be not of the house of Israel, or the house of Aaron; for it was a truth, before Peter perceived it, That, in every nation, he that fears God is accepted of him, and blessed, Acts x. 34, 35. He will bless them, both small and great, both young and old; God is blessings in store for them that are good betimes, and for them that are old disciples: both those that are poor in the world, and those that make a figure. The greatest need his blessing, and it shall not be denied to the meanest that fear him. Both the weak in grace and the strong shall be blessed of God, the lambs and the sheep of his flock.

It is promised, (v. 14.) The Lord shall increase you. What does God blesses he increases; that was one of the earliest and most merciful of God’s blessings, fruitful, and multiply. God’s blessing gives an increase; increase in number, building up the family; increase in wealth, adding to the estate and honour; especially an increase in spiritual blessings, with the increaseings of God. He will bless you with the increase of knowledge and wisdom, of grace, holiness, and joy; those are blessed indeed, whom God thus increases, who are made wiser and better. God has promised that this shall be, (1.) A constant continual increase; “He shall increase you more and more; so that, as long as you live, you shall be still increasing, till you come to perfection, as the shining light,” Prov. iv. 18. (2.) An hereditary increase; “You and your children; you in your children.” It is a comfort to parents to see their children increasing in wisdom and strength. There is a blessing in the increase of those that fear God, even in their infancy. For, (v. 15.) You are blessed of the Lord, you and your children are so; all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord has blessed, Isa. lxix. 9. They that are the blessed of the Lord have encouragement enough to trust in the Lord, as their Help and Shield, for it is he that made heaven and earth; therefore his blessings are free, for he needs not any thing himself; and therefore they are rich, for he has all things at command for us, if we fear him and trust in him. He that made heaven and earth, he does not make these happy that trust in him, and will do it.

III. We are stirred up to praise God by the psalmist’s example, who concludes this psalm with a resolution to persevere in his praises.

1. God is to be praised; (v. 16.) He is greatly to be praised; for, (1.) His glory is high. See how stately his palace is, and the throne he has prepared in the heavens; The heaven, even the heavens are the Lord’s, he is the rightful owner of all the treasures of light and life, in the upper and the better world, and is in the full possession of them, for he is himself infinitely bright and happy. (2.) His goodness is large, for the earth he has given to the children of men, having designed it, when he made it, for their use, to find them with meat, drink, and lodging. Not but that still he is Preceptor in chief; the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; but he has let cut that vineyard to these unhumble husbandmen, and from them he expects the rents and services: for though he has given them the earth, his eye is upon them, and he will call them to render an account how they use it. Calvin complains that profane wicked people, in his days, perverted this scripture, and made a jest of it, which some in our days do, arguing, in bauser, that God, having given the earth to the children of men, will no more look after it, nor after them upon it, but they may do what they will with it, and make the use of it as their portion; it is as it were thrown like a prey among them, Let him seize it that can. It is pity that such an instance as this gives of God’s bounty to man, and such a proof as arises from it of man’s obligation to God, should be thus abused. From the highest heavens, it is certain God holds all the children of men; to them he has given the earth; but to the children of God heaven is given.

2. The dead are not capable of praising him, (v. 17.) nor any that go into silence. The soul indeed lives in a state of separation from the body, and is capable of praising God; and the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burthens of the flesh, do praise God, are still praising him; for they go up to the land of perfect light and constant business; but the dead body cannot praise God; death puts an end to our glorifying God in this world. They leave the greatest services in the field; the grave is a land of darkness and silence, where there is no work or device. This they leave God, with deliverance out of the hand of their enemies, “Lord, if they prevail to cut us off, the idols will carry the day, and there will be none to praise thee, to bear thy name, and to bear a testimony against the worshippers of idols.” The dead praise not the Lord, so as we do in the business and fruits of this life. See Ps. xxx. 9.—lxxvi. 10.

3. Therefore it concerns us to praise him; (v. 18.) But we, that we are alive, will bless the Lord; we and those that shall come after us will do it, from this time forth and for evermore, to the end of time; we and those we shall remove to, from this time forth, and to eternity. The dead praise not the Lord, therefore we will do it the more diligently. (1.) Others are dead, and an end is thereby put to their service, and therefore we lay upon ourselves to do so much the more for God, that we may fill up the gap. Moses my servant is dead, now therefore, Joshua, arise. (2.) We ourselves must shortly go to the land of silence: but while we do live, we will bless the Lord, will improve our time, and work that work of him that sent us into the world to praise him, before the night comes.
and because the night comes wherein no man can work. The Lord will bless us; (v. 12.) he will do well for us, and therefore we will bless him, we will speak well of him. Poor returns for such receivings! Nay, we will not only do it ourselves, but will engage others to do it; Praise be the Lord; praise him, O my soul, and all the instruments of our praise, as we in ours; praise him when we are gone, that he may be praised for evermore. Hallelujah.

PSALMS CXVI.

This is a thanksgiving psalm; it is not certain whether David penned it upon any particular occasion, or upon a general and sweet reflection on God's gracious dealings with him, or the external and internal graces God had wrought for him, out of six troubles and seven, which deliverances draw from him many very lively expressions of devotion, love, and gratitude; with the pious affections our souls should be lifted up to God, in singing it. Observe, I. The great distress and danger that the psalmist was in, which almost drove him to despair, v. 3, 10, 11. II. The application he made to God, in that distress, v. 4. III. The experience he had of God's goodness to him, in answer to prayer; God heard him, (v. 1, 2.) pitied him, (v. 5, 6.) delivered him, v. 8. IV. His care respecting the acknowledgments he should make of the goodness of God to him, v. 12. 1. He will love God, v. 1. 2. He will thank God for his mercies, v. 2, 13, 17. 3. He will rest in him, v. 7. 4. He will walk before him, v. 9. 5. He will pay his vows of thanksgiving, in which he will own the tender regard God has had to him, and the gracious dealings with him, v. 17. Lastly, He will continue God's faithful servant to his life's end, v. 16. These are such breathings of a holy soul as bespeak it very happy.

1. I LOVE the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. 2. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. 3. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. 4. Then called I upon the name of the Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. 5. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. 6. The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me. 7. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. 8. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. 9. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.

In this part of the psalm, we have, 1. A general account of David's experience, and his pious resolutions, (v. 1, 2.) which are as the contents of the whole psalm, and give an idea of it. 1. He had expected from God a good and great answer to prayer; he has heard my voice and my supplications. David, in straits, had humbly and earnestly begged mercy of God, and God had heard him; had graciously accepted his prayer, taken cognizance of his cause, and granted him an answer of peace. He has inclined his ear to me; this intimates his readiness and willingness to hear prayer; he lays his ear, as it were, to the mouth of prayer, to hear it, though it be but whispered in grace, and that cannot be overheard. He has inclined his ear and hearts, Jer. vii. 6. Yet it implies, also, that it is wonderful condescension in God to hear prayer; it is bowing his ear. Lord, what is man, that God should thus stoop to him? 2. He resolved, in consideration thereof, to devote himself entirely to God, and to his honour. (1.) He will love God the better. He begins the

PSALM CXVII.

The experience we have had of God's goodness to us, in answer to prayer, are great encouragements to us to continue praying; we have sped well, notwithstanding our unworthiness and our praying infirmities, and therefore why may we not? God answers prayer, to make us love it, to make us expect more from us, in return for his favour. Why should we glean in any other field, when we have been so well treated in this? Nay, I will call upon him as long as I live; Hebrew, In my days; every day, to the last day. Note, As long as we continue living, we must continue praying: this breath we must breathe till we breathe our last, because then we shall take our leave of it, and till then we have continual occasion for it.

A more particular account of God's gracious dealings with him, and the good impressions thereby made upon him.

1. God, in his dealings with him, showed himself a good God, and therefore he bears this testimony to him, and leaves it upon record; (v. 5.) "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous. He is righteous, and did me no wrong in afflicting me; he is gracious, and was very kind in supporting and delivering me."

Let us all speak of God as we have found; and have we ever found him otherwise than just and good? No, our God is merciful, merciful to us; and it is of his mercies that we are not consumed. Review David's experiences.

(1.) He was in great distress and trouble; (v. 3.) the sorrows of death compassed me; that is, such sorrows as were likely to be his death, such as were thought to be the very pangs of death; perhaps the extremity of bodily pain, or trouble of mind, is called here: the pains of hell; terror of conscience arising from sense of guilt. Note, The sorrows of death are great sorrows, and the pains of hell great pains. Let us therefore give diligence to prepare for the former, that we may escape the latter. These compassed him on every side, they arrested him, got hold upon him, so that he could not escape; without were fightings, within were fears. I found trouble and sorrow; not only they found me, but I found them. Those that are melancholy have a great deal of sorrow of their own finding, trouble which they create to themselves, by indulging fancy and condition, this has sometimes been the infirmity of good men. When God's providence makes us, let us not by our own imprudence make it worse.

(2.) In his trouble he had recourse to God by faithful and fervent prayer, v. 4. He tells us that he prayed; Then called I upon the name of the Lord: then, when he was brought to the last extremity, then he made use of this, not as the last remedy, but as the old and only remedy, which he had found a salve for every sore. He tells us what his prayer was; it was short, but to the purpose; "O Lord, I beseech thee deliver my soul; save me from death, and save me from sin, for that is it that is killing to the soul." Both the fervency of his prayer are intimated in these words, O Lord, I beseech thee; when we come to the throne of grace, we must come as beggars for an alms, for necessary food. The following words, (v. 5.) Gracious is the Lord, may be taken as part of his prayer, as a plea to enforce his request and encourage his faith and hope; "Lord, deliver my soul, for thou art gracious
and merciful, and that only I depend upon for relief.

(3) God, in answer to this prayer, came in with seasonable and effectual relief. He found by experience that God is gracious and merciful, and in his compassion preserves the simple, v. 6. Because they are simple, sincere, and upright, and without guile, therefore God preserves them, as he preserved Paul, who had his conversation in the world, not with fleshly wisdom, but in simplicity and godly sincerity. Though they are simple, weak, and helpless, who cannot shift for themselves, men who depend upon God, yet God preserves them because they commit themselves to him, and have no confidence in their own sufficiency. Those who by faith put themselves under God’s protection shall be safe.

Let David speak his own experience.

[1.] God supported him under his troubles; “I was brought low, was plunged into the depth of misery, and then he helped me; helped me both to bear the worst, and to hope the best; helped me to pray, else desire had failed; helped me to wait, else faith had failed. I was one of the simple ones whom God preserved; the poor man who cried, and the Lord heard him,” xxxiv. 6. Note, God’s people are never brought so low, but that everlasting arms are under them, and they cannot sink who are sustained. Nay, it is in the time of need, at the dead lift, that God chooses to help, Deut. xxxiii. 36.

[2.] God saved him out of his troubles; (v. 8.) Those that had delivered; which means either the preservation of the distress he was ready to fall into, or the recovering of him from the distress he was already in. God graciously delivered, First, His soul from death. Note, It is God’s great mercy to us that we are alive; and the mercy is the more sensible, if we have been at death’s door, and yet have been spared and raised up, just turned to destruction and yet ordered to return; that a life so often forfeited, and so often exposed, should yet be lengthened out, is a miracle of mercy. The deliverance of the soul from spiritual and eternal death is especially to be acknowledged by all those who are now sanctified, and shall be shortly glorified. Secondly, His eyes from tears; that is, his heart from inordinate grief. It is a great mercy to be kept either from the occasions of sorrow, the evil that causes grief, or, however, from being swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. When God comforts those that are cast down, looses the mourner’s sackcloth, and giveth the elect a heart, he delivers their eyes from tears, which yet will not be perfectly done till we come to that world where God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. Thirdly, His feet from falling, from falling into sin, and so into misery. It is a great mercy, when our feet are almost gone, to have God hold us by the right hand, (Lxxi. 23.) so that, though we enter into temptation, we are not overcome and overthrown by the temptation. Oh, with gladness then he delivers their eyes from tears, which yet will not be perfectly done till we come to that world where God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.

2. David, in his returns of gratitude to God, showed himself a good man. God had done all this for him; and therefore,

(1.) He will live a life of delight in God; (v. 7.) Return unto thy rest, O my soul; [1.] "Repose thyself and be easy, and do not agitate thyself so with distrustful disquieting fears, as thou hast some reason to do in this world; for God has dealt kindly with thee, and therefore thou needest not fear that ever he will deal harshly with thee." [2.] "Repose thyself in God. Return to him as thy Rest, and seek not for that rest in the creature, which is to be had in him only." God is the soul’s Rest; in him only it can dwell at ease; to him therefore it must retire, and rejoice in him. He has dwelt bountifully with us; he has provided sufficiently for our comfort and refreshment, and encouraged us to come to him for the benefit of it, at all times, upon all occasions; let us therefore be satisfied with that. Return to that rest which Christ gives to the weary and heavy-laden, Matth. xxi. 28. Return to thy Noah; his name signifies rest, as the dove, when she found no rest, returned to the ark. I know no word more proper to close our eyes with at night, when going to sleep, nor to close them with at death, that long sleep, than this, Return to thy Rest, O my soul.

(2.) He will live a life of devotedness to God; (v. 9.) I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living, that is, in this world, as long as I continue to live in it. Note, [1.] It is our great duty to walk before the Lord, to do all we do as becomes us in his presence, and under his eye; to approve ourselves to him, as a holy God, by conformity to him as our sovereign Lord, by subjection to his will, and, as a God all-sufficient, by a cheerful confidence in him. [2.] I will walk before him, in the land of the living, Gen. xxi. 1. We must walk worthy of the Lord unto all well-pleasing. [2.] The consideration of this, that we are in the land of the living, should engage and quicken us to do so. We are spared and continued in the land of the living, by the power, and patience, and tender mercy, of our God, and therefore must make conscience of our duty to him. The land of the living is a land of mercy, which we ought to be thankful for; it is a land of opportunity, which we should improve. Canaan is called the land of the living, (Ezek. xxvi. 20.) and they whose lot is cast in such a valley of vision, are in a special manner concerned to set the Lord always before them. If God has delivered our soul from death, we must walk before him. A new life must be a new life indeed.

10. I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted. 11. I said in my haste, All men are liars. 12. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? 13. I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. 14. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people. 15. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. 16. O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds. 17. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. 18. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people. 19. In the courts of the Lord’s house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the Lord.

The Septuagint and some other ancient versions make these verses a distinct psalm separate from the former; and some have called it the Martyr’s psalm, I suppose for the pleasures. Therefore David makes confession of:

1. His faith; (v. 10.) I believed, therefore have I spoken. Which is quoted by the apostle, (2 Cor. iv. 13.) with application to himself and his fellow-ministers, who, though they suffered for Christ, were not ashamed to own him. David believed the being, providence, and promise, of God, particularly the assurance God had given him by Samuel, that he should exchange his crook for a sceptre: a great deal of hardship he went through, in the be
I. His fear; (v. 11.) I was greatly afflicted, and then I said in my haste, (somewhat rashly and inconsiderately, in my amazement, so some; when I was in consternation, in my flight, so others; when Saul was in pursuit of me.) All men are liable, all with whom he had to do, Saul and all his courtiers; his friends, who, he thought, would have stood by him, deserted him and disowned him, when he fell into disgrace at court. And some think it is especially a reflection on Samuel, who had promised him the kingdom, but deceived him; for, says he, I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul, 2 Sam. xxvii. 1. Observe, 1. The faith of the best of saints is not perfect. They do believe, and speak well, (v. 10.) but now, through unbelief, he speaks amiss. 2. When we are under great and sore afflictions, especially if they continue long, we are apt to grow weak, to despond, and almost to despair of a good issue. Let us not therefore be harsh in censoring others, but carefully watch over ourselves when we are in trouble, xxxix. 1.-3. 3. If good men speak amiss, it is in their haste, in their ignorance, in their weakness, not to excuse, but to deplore; to admit, rather with premeditation, as the wicked man, who sits in the seat of the scornful; (Ps. i. 1.) sits, and speaks against his brother, I. 19, 20, 4. What we speak amiss in haste, we must by repentance unsay again, (as David, xxxii. 22.) and then it shall not be laid to our charge. Some make this to be no rash word of David's. He was greatly afflicted, and forced to fly, but he did not trust in man, nor make flesh his arm. "No," he said, "all men are liars; and there is no one that is just among men, and no one that can save his soul;" (Ps. lxxiii. 1.) and therefore my confidence was in God only, and in him I cannot be disappointed." In this sense the apostle seems to make it; (Rom. iii. 4.) Let God be true, and every man a liar, in comparison with God. All men are fickle and inconstant, and subject to change; and therefore let us cease from men, and cleave to God.

II. His gratitude, v. 12, &c. God had been better to him than his fears, and had graciously delivered him out of his distresses; and, in consideration hereof, 1. He inquires what returns he shall make; (v. 12.) What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? Here he speaks, (1.) As one sensible of many mercies received from God; all his benefits. This psalm seems to have been penned upon occasion of some one particular benefit, (v. 6.) which God had vouchsafed to him; or, any thing, and that one brought many to mind; and therefore now he thinks of all God's benefits toward him. Note, When we speak of God's mercies, we should magnify them, and speak highly of them. (2.) As one solicitous and studious how to express his gratitude, What shall I render unto the Lord? Not as if he thought he could render any thing proportionable, or as a valuable consideration, for what he had received; we can no more pretend to give a recompence to God, than we can to merit any favour from him; but he desired to render something acceptable, something that God would be pleased with as the acknowledgment of a grateful mind. He asks God, What shall I render? Asks the priests, asks his friends, or rather, asks himself, and communes with his own heart about it. Note, Having received many benefits from God, we are concerned to inquire, What we shall render? 2. He resolves what returns he will make. (1.) He will in the most devout and solemn manner offer up his praises and prayers to God, v. 13, 17. [1.] I will offer the drink-offerings appointed by the law, in token of my thankfulness to God, and rejoice with my friends in God's goodness to me; this is called the cup of deliverance, because drunk in memory of the deliverance. The pious Jews had sometimes a cup of blessing, at their private meals, which the master of the family drank first of, with thanksgiving to God, and all at his table drank with him. But some understand it not of the cup, that has been present to God, but of the cup that God would put into his hand. I will receive, First, The cup of affliction. Many good interpreters understand it of that cup, that bitter cup, which is yet sanctified to the saints, so that to them it is a cup of salvation, Phil. i. 19. This shall turn to my salvation; it is a means of spiritual health. David's sufferings were typical of Christ's, and we, in ours, have communion with his, and partake of the cup of salvation. "God, having bestowed so many benefits upon me, whatever cup he shall put into my hands, I will readily take it, and not dispute it; welcome his holy will." Herein David speak the language of the Sion of David; (John xviii. 11.) The cup that my Father has given me, shall I not take it, and drink it? Secondly, The cup of consolation; (v. 3.) I will receive the benefits God bestows upon me as from his hand, and taste and see there in them, as that which is the portion not only of mine inheritance in the other world, but of my cup in this." [2.] I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving; the thank-offerings which God required, Lev. vii. 11, 12, &c. Note, These whose hearts are truly thankful, will express it in thank-offerings. We must first give our own selves to God, as living sacrifices, (Rom. xii. 1.) Cor. viii. 5.) and then lay out of what we have, for his honour, in works of thanksgiving and charity; for the sacrifices are sacrifices with which God is well-pleased, (Heb. xiii. 15, 16.) and this must accompany our giving thanks to his name. If God has been bountiful to us, the least we can do, in return, is, to be bountiful to the poor, Ps. xvi. 2, 3. Why should we offer that, to God which cost us nothing? [3.] I will call upon the name of the Lord. This he had promised, (v. 2.) and here he repeats it, (v. 13.) and again, v. 17. If we have received kindness from a man like ourselves, we tell him that we hope we shall never trouble him again; but God is pleased to reckon the prayers of his people an honour to him, and a delight, and no trouble; and therefore, in gratitude for former mercies, we must seek to him for further mercies, and continue to call upon him. (2.) He will always entertain good thoughts of God, as very tender of the lives and comforts of his people; (v. 15.) Precious is the sight of the Lord in the death of his saints; so precious, that he will not gratify Saul, or Absalom, or any of David's enemies, with his death, how earnestly soever they desire it. This truth David had comforted himself with, in the depth of his distress and danger; the event having confirmed it, he comforts others with it, who might be in like manner exposed. God has a people, even in this world, that are his saints, his merciful ones, or men of mercy; that have received mercy from him, and show mercy for his sake.
The saints of God are mortal and dying; nay, there are those that desire their death, and labour all they can to hasten it, and sometimes prevail to be the death of them; but it is precious in the sight of the Lord; their life is so, (2 Kings i. 13.) their blood is so, Ps. lxxii. 14. God often wonderfully prevents the death of his saints, where there is but a step between life and death. He will not only care for the preservation of their life, but order it for the best, in all the circumstances of it; and whoever kills them, how light soever they may make of it, they shall be made to pay dear for it, when inquisition is made for the blood of the saints, Matth. xxviii. 35. Though no man lays it to heart, when the righteous perish, God will make it to appear that he lays it to heart. This should make us willing to die, to die for Christ, if we are called to it, that our death shall be registered in heaven; and let that be precious to us which is so to God.

(3.) He will oblige himself to be God's servant all his days. Having asked, What shall I render? Here he surrenders himself, which was more than all burnt-offerings and sacrifice; (v. 16.) O Lord, truly I am thy servant. Here is, [1.] The relation in which David professes to stand to God; I am thy servant; I choose to be so, I will be so, I will do it, and I will tear my heart to say, I am thy servant. Sir: No Lord, I am truly thy servant, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I am so. And he repeats it, as that which he took pleasure in the thoughts of, and which he was resolved to abide by; I am thy servant, I am thy servant. Let others serve what master they will, truly I am thy servant. [2.] The ground of that relation: two ways men came to be servants of God, and as it is most usual to pray for the servants of God, so it is most common to pray that men may be made servants of God. Oh, Lord, I was born in thy house, I am the son of thy handmaid, and therefore thine. It is a great mercy to be the children of godly parents, as it obliges us to duty, and is pleasurable with God for mercy. Secondly, by redemption. He that procured the release of a captive took him for his servant. (Lord, thou hast loosed my bonds, these sorrows of death that compassed me, thou hast discharged me from them, and therefore I am thy servant, and entitled to thy protection, as well as obliged to thy work.) The very bonds which thou hast loosed shall tie me faster unto thee. Patrick.

(4.) He will make conscience of paying his vows, and making good what he had promised; not only that he would offer the sacrifices of praise, which he had vowed to bring, but perform all his other engagements to God, which he had laid himself under in the day of his affliction; (v. 14.) I will pay my vows; and again, (v. 18.) now in the presence of all his people. Note, Vows are debts that must be paid, for it is better not vow, than vow and not pay. He will pay his vows, [1.] Presently; he will not, like sorry debtors, delay the payment of them, or beg a day, but, I will pay them now, Ecc. v. 4. [2.] Publicly; he will not hide up his praises in a corner, but what service he has to do for God, he will do it in the presence of all his people, as a very great act of respect, and to show that he was not ashamed of the service of God, and that others might be invited to join with him. He will pay his vows, in the courts of the tabernacle, where there was a cloud of Israelites attending, in the midst of Jerusalem, that he might bring devotion into more reputation.

This psalm is short and sweet; I doubt the reason why we sing it so often as we do, is, for the shortness of it; but, if we neither understand and consider it, we shall much miss the sweetness of it, especially to us sinners of the Gentiles, on whom it casts a very favourable eye. Here is, 1. A solemn call to all nations to praise God, v. 1. For the beauty, and greatness, and splendor of his glory, and it is often for the sweetness of it, especially to us sinners. There is, 2. A repetition of that prayer suggested, that the prayers are so rare already; we have no need of repeating, and we have not. We know not what we say. In singing this psalm, we keep not up those pious and devout affections with which the spiritual sacrifice of praise ought to be kindled and kept burning.

1. O PRAISE the Lord, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. 2. For his merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever. Praise ye the Lord. There is a great deal of gospel in this psalm. The apostle has furnished us with a key to it, (Rom. xv. 11.) where he quotes it as a proof that the gospel was to be preached to, and would be entertained by, the Gentile nations, which were called so great a stumbling-block, and which would offend them, when it is said, and they themselves had often sung it, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles, and laud him, all ye people. Some of the Jewish writers confess that this psalm refers to the kingdom of the Messiah; nay, one of them has a fancy that it consists of two verses, to signify that in the days of the Messiah God should be glorified by two sorts of people; by the Jews, according to the law of Moses, and by the Gentiles, according to the seven precepts of the sons of Noah, which yet should make one church, as these two verses make one psalm. We have here, 1. The vast extent of the gospel-church, v. 1. For many ages, in Judah only was God known, and his name praised. The sons of Levi and the seed of Israel praised him, but the rest of the nations praised gods of wood and stone, (Dan. v. 4.) while there was no God in the land at all. Yet, at least, none openly that we know of, to the living and true God. But here all nations are called upon to praise the Lord, which could not be applied to the Old Testament times, both because this call was not then given to any of the Gentile nations, much less to all, in a language they understood; and because, unless the people of the land became Jews, and were circumcised, they were not admitted to praise God with them. But the gospel of Christ is ordered to be preached to all nations, and by him the partition-wall is taken down, and those that were afar off are made nigh. This was the mystery which was hid in prophecy for many ages, but was at length revealed in the accomplishment, That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, Eph. iii. 3, 6. Observe here, (1.) Who should be admitted into the church; all nations, and all people. The original words are the same that are used for the heathen' that rogue, and the people that imagine against Christ; (ii. 1.) they that had been enemies to his kingdom should become his willing subjects. The gospel of the kingdom was to be preached to all the world, for a witness to all nations, Matth. xxvii. 14. Mark xvi. 15. All nations shall be called, and to some of all nations the call shall be effectual, and they shall be disciplined. (2.) How their admission into the church is foretold; by a repeated call to faith; the gospel, being sent to all nations, should give them cause to praise God; the institution of gospel-ordinances would give them leave and opportunity to praise God; and the power of gospel-grace would give them hearts to praise him. These are highly
favored whom God invites by his word, and inclines by his Spirit, to praise him, and so makes to be to him for a name and a praise. See Jer. xii. 11.

2. The cross of gospel-lovers, which are to be the matter of our praise, v. 2. In the gospel, those celebrated attributes of God, his mercy and his truth, shine most bright in themselves, and most comfortably to us: and the apostle, where he quotes this psalm, takes notice of these as the two great things for which the Gentiles should glorify God, (Rom. xv. 8, 9.) for the truth of God, and for his mercy. We, that enjoy the gospel, have reason to magnify the Lord, v. 1. For the power of his mighty gospel, His mercifull kindness is great toward us: it is strong, so the word signifies; it is mighty for the pardon of mighty sins, (Amos v. 12.) and for the working out of a mighty salvation. (2.) For the perpetuity of his truth; The truth of the Lord endures for ever. It was mercy, mere mercy to the Gentiles, that the gospel was sent among them; it was mercifull kindness prevailing toward them above their deserts; and in it the truth of the Lord, of his promise made unto the fathers, endures for ever; for though the Jews were hardened and expelled, yet the promise took its effect in the believing Gentiles, the spiritual seed of Abraham. God's mercy is the fountain of all our comforts, and his truth the foundation of all our hopes, and therefore for both we must praise the Lord.

PSALM CXVIII.

It is probable that David penned this psalm when he had, after the victory over the Philistines, or his passage through the Philistines, and gained a full possession of the kingdom to which he had been anointed. He then invites and stirs up his friends to join with him, not only in a cheerful acknowledgment of God's goodness, and a cheerful dependence upon that goodness for the future, but in having expectation of the promised Messiah, of whose kingdom and his exaltation to his was typical: to him, it is certain, the prophet here bears witness, in the latter part of the psalm: Christ himself applies it to himself, (Matt. xxv. 8, 9.) and the former part of the psalm may, fairly, and without forcing, be accommodated to him and his undertaking. Some think it was first calculated for the solemnity of the bringing of the ark to the city of David, and was afterward sung at the Israel of Tabernacles. In it, v. 1. David calls upon all about him to give to God the glory of his goodness, v. 1.-4. II. He encourages himself and others to trust in God, from the experience he had had of God's power and pity in this great and kind things he had done for him, v. 5. 18. III. He gives thanks for his advancement to the throne, as it was a figure of the exaltation of Christ, v. 19.-23. IV. The people, the priests, and the psalmist himself, triumph in the prospect of the Redeemer's kingdom, v. 24.-29. In singing this psalm, we must glorify God for his goodness, his goodness to us, and especially his goodness to us in Jesus Christ.

1. O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good; because his mercy endureth for ever. 2. Let Israel now say, that his mercy endureth for ever. 3. Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy endureth for ever. 4. Let them now that fear the Lord say, that his mercy endureth for ever. 5. I called upon the Lord in distress; the Lord answered me, and set me in a large place. 6. The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? 7. The Lord taketh my part with them that help me; therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me. 8. It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man: 9. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.

10. All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them. 11. They compassed me about: yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them. 12. They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the Lord I will destroy them. 13. Thou hast thrust sore at me, that I might fall: but the Lord helped me. 14. The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation. 15. The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. 16. The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. 17. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. 18. The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me unto death.

It appears here, as often elsewhere, that David had his heart full of the goodness of God; he loved to think of it, loved to speak of it, and was very solicitous that God might have the praise of it, and others the comfort of it. The more our hearts are impressed with a sense of God's goodness, the more they will be enlarged in all manner of obedience. In these verses,

I. He celebrates God's mercy in general, and calls upon others to acknowledge it, from their own experience of it; (v. 1.) O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is not only good in himself, but good to you, and his mercy endureth for ever, not only in the everlasting Fountain, God himself, but in the never-failing streams of that mercy which shall run parallel with the longest line of eternity, and in the chosen vessels of mercy, who will be everlasting monuments of it. Israel, and the house of Aaron, and all that fear God, were called upon to trust in God; (cxv. 9.-11.) here they are called upon to confess that his mercy endureth for ever, and so to encourage themselves to trust in him: (v. 2.-4.) priests and people, Jews and proselytes, must all own God's goodness, and all join in the same thankful song; if they can say no more, let them say this for him, that his mercy endureth for ever, that they have had experience of it all their days, and consider in it for good things that shall last for ever. The praises and thanksgivings of all that truly fear the Lord, shall be as pleasing to him as those of the house of Israel, or the house of Aaron.

II. He preserves an account of God's gracious dealings with him in particular, which he communicates to others, that they might thence fetch both songs of praise, and supports of faith, and both that God would have glory. David had, in his time, waded through a great deal of difficulty, which gave him great experience of God's goodness.

Let us therefore observe here,

1. The great distress and danger that he had been in, which he reflects upon, for the magnifying of God's goodness to him in his present advancement. There are many who, when they are lifted up, care not for hearing or speaking of their former depressions. But David knew all the comforts of his own low estate. He was in distress, (v. 5.) greatly straitened and at a loss: there were many that hated him; (v. 7.) and that could not but be a grief to one of an ingenuous spirit, that strove to gain the good affections of all. All nations compassed me about, v. 10. All the nations adjacent to
Israel set themselves to give disturbance to David, when he was newly come to the throne of Philistines, Meabites, Syrians, Ammonites, &c. We read of his enemies round about; they were confederate against him, and thought to cut off all succours from him. This endeavour of his enemies to surround him is repeated; (v. 11.) They compassed me about, yea, they compassed me about, which intimates that they were virulent and violent, and, for a time, prevalent, in their attempts against him, and that, when put into disorder, they rallied again, and pursued each other in the face of David, as bees do that have lost their hive. Moreover, as there were many populous and great cities, so numerous were they, so noisy, so vexatious; they came flying upon him, came upon him in swarms, set upon him with their malignant stings; but it was to their own destruction, as the bee, they say, loses her life with her sting. Animagique in vulnere parent—She lays down her life in the wound. Lord, how are they increased that trouble me!

Two ways David was brought into trouble; (1.) By the injuries that men did him; (v. 13.) Thou (O enemy) hast thrust sore at me, with many a despicable push, that I might fall into sin and into ruin. Thrusting, thou hast thrust at me, (so the word is,) so that I was ready to fall. Satan is the great enemy that thrusts sore at us by his temptations, to cast us down from our excellency, that we may fall from our God, and from our comfort in him; and, if God had not upheld us by his grace, his thrusts had been fatal to us. The psalm of David was written when he had been put to these throes; (v. 18.) The Lord has chastened me sore. Men thrust at him for his destruction, God chastened him for his instruction; they thrust at him with the malice of enemies, God chastened him with the love and tenderness of a Father. Perhaps he refers to the same trouble which God, the Author of it, designed for his profit, that by it he might partake of hisholiness; (Heb. xii. 10, 11.) nevertheless, men, who were the instruments of it, meant not so, neither did their heart desire it, with a view to their own destruction, and not to his. God has thus chastened him; (v. 18.) The Lord has chastened me sore.

3. The improvement he made of this favour.

(1.) It encouraged him to trust in God: from his own experience he can say, It is better, more wise, more comfortable, and more safe; there is more reason for it, and it will speed better, to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man, yea, though it be the son of man. (Psa. 13, 6, 9.) He that devotes himself to God's guidance and government, with God's dependence upon God's wisdom, power, and goodness, has a better security to make him easy, than if all the kings and potentates of the earth should undertake to protect him.

(2.) It enabled him to triumph in that trust. (1.) He triumphs in God, and in his relation to him, and interest in him; (v. 6.) The Lord is on my side. He is a righteous God, and therefore excites my righteous courage, and will plead it. If we are on God's side, he is on ours; if we be for him and with him, he will be for us and with us; (v. 7.) The Lord takes my part, and stands up for me, with them that help me. He is to me among my helpers, and so one of them; he is all in all, both to them and me, and without him I could not help myself, nor could any friend have I in the world help me.

Thus, (v. 14.) The Lord is my Strength, he will make me strong against him without him I am weak and sad, but on him I stay myself as my Strength, both for doing and suffering; and in him I solace myself as my Song, by which I both express my joy, and ease my grief; and, making him so, I find him so: he strengthens my heart with his graces, and rejoices my heart with his comforts. If God be our Strength, he must be our Song; if he work all our works in us, he must have all praise and glory from us. God is sometimes the Strength of his people, when he is not their Song; they have spiritual supports, when they want spiritual delights; but if he be both to us, we have abundant reason to triumph in him; for if he be our Strength and our Song, he is become not only our Saviour, but our Salvation; for his being our Strength is our protection to the salvation, and his being our Song is an earnest and foretaste of the salvation.

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PSALMS, CXVIII.

First, he is sure they cannot hurt him; God is for me, and then I will not fear what man can do against me; v. 6. He can set them all at defiance, and is not disturbed at any of their attempts. They do nothing to me, but what God permits them to do; they can do me no real damage, for they cannot separate me from God, they cannot do any thing but what God can make to work for my good. The enemy is a man, a depend-
ing creature, whose power is limited, and subordinate to a higher power, and therefore I will not fear him." Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die? Isa. lii. 12. The apostle quotes this, with application to all mankind (Heb. xiii. 6). What a sadly false, as boldly as David himself, The Lord is my Helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me; let him do his worst. Secondly, He is sure that he shall be too hard for them at last; "I shall see my desire upon them that hate me;" (v. 7.) I shall see them defeated in their designs against me; now, In the name of the Lord I will destroy them; (v. 10-12.) I trust in the name of the Lord that I shall destroy them; and in my name. I will cause them to cease their strength, by warrant from him; and with an eye to his glory, not confiding in myself, or taking vengeance for myself. Thus he went forth against Goliath, in the name of the God of Israel, 1 Sam. xvii. 45. David says this as a type of Christ, who triumphed over the powers of darkness, destroyed them, and made a show of them openly. [5.] He triumphs in an assurance of the continuance of his funerary, and his life. First, Of his comfort; (v. 15.) The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous, and in mine particularly, in my family. The dwellings of the righteous in this world are but tabernacles, mean and moveable; here we have no city, no continuing city. But these tabernacles are more comfortable to them than the palaces of the wicked are to them; for in the house where religion rules, 1. There is salvation, safety from the perils of eternal salvation, which is come to this house, Luke xix. 9. 2. Where there is salvation, there is cause for rejoicing, for continual joy in God. Holy joy is called the joy of salvation, for in that there is abundant matter for joy. 3. Where there is rejoicing, there ought to be the voice of rejoicing, praise, and thanksgiving. Let God be served with joyfulness and gladness of heart, and let the voice of that rejoicing be heard daily in our families, to the glory of God, and the encouragement of others. Secondly, Of his victory; The right hand of the Lord doth valiantly, (v. 15.) and is exalted; for (as some read it) it has exalted me. The right hand of God's power is engaged for his people, and it acts vigorously for them, and therefore victorious. For what difficulty can stand before the divine valour? We are weak, and act cowardly for ourselves; but God is mighty, and acts valiantly for us, with jealously and resolution, Isa. lxi. 5, 6. There is spirit, as well as strength, in all God's operations for his people. And when God's right hand doth valiantly for our salvation, it ought to be exalted in our praises. Thirdly, Of his life; (v. 17.) I shall not die by the hands of my enemies that seek my life, but live, and declare the works of the Lord; I shall live a monument of God's mercy and power; his works shall be declared in me, and I will make the business of my life to praise and magnify God, looking upon that as the end of my preservation. Note, It is not worth while to live for any other purpose than to declare the works of God, for his honour, and the encouragement of others to serve him and trust in him. Such as these were the triumphs of the Son of David, in the assurance he had of the success of his undertaking, and that the good pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand. 19. Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go in to them, and I will praise the Lord; 20. This gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter. 21. I will praise thee; for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. 22. The stone when the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. 23. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. 24. This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. 25. Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. 26. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord: we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord. 27. God is the Lord, which hath showed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. 28. Thou art my God, and I will praise thee; thou art my God, I will exalt thee. 29. O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. We have here an illustrious prophecy of the humiliation and exaltation of our Lord Jesus, his sufferings, and the glory that should follow. Peter thus applies it directly to the chief priests and scribes; and none of the chief priests or elders heard this, as misapplying it, Acts iv. 11. Now observe here. 1. The preface with which this precious prophecy is introduced, v. 10.-21. 1. The psalmist desires admission into the sanctuary of God, there to celebrate the glory of him that cometh in the name of the Lord; Open to me the gates of righteousness. So the temple-gates are called, because they were shut against the uncircumcised, and forbade the stranger to enter; and hence, to come night or day, there was called sacrifices of righteousness. Those that would enter into communion with God in holy ordinances, must become humble suitors to God for admission. And when the gates of righteousness are opened to us, we must go into them, must enter into the holiest, as far as we have leave, and praise the Lord. Our business within God's gates, is, to praise God; therefore we should long till the gates of heaven be opened to us, that we may go in and dwell in God's house above, where we shall be at peace with him. 2. He sees admission granted him; (v. 20.) This is the gate of the Lord, the gate of his appointment, into which the righteous shall enter; as if he had said, "The gate you knocked at is opened, and you are welcome, Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Some by this gate understand Christ, by whom we are taken into fellowship with God, in whose name our praises are accepted; he is the Way; there is no coming to the Father but by him; (John xiv. 6.) he is the Door of the sheep; (John x. 9.) he is the Gate of the temple, by whom, and by whom only, the righteous, and they only, shall enter, and come into God's righteousness, as the expression is, lxxix. 27. The psalmist triumphs in the discovery, that the gate of righteousness, which had been so long shut, and so long knocked at, was now at length opened. 3. He prays to have thanks given to God for this favour; (v. 21.) I will praise thee. They that saw Christ's day at so great a distance, saw cause to praise God for the prospect; for in him they saw that God had heard them, had heard the prayers of the Old Testament saints, for the coming of the Messiah, and would be their Salvation. II. The prophecy itself, v. 22, 23. This may have some reference to David's preferment; he was the stone whom Saul and his courtiers rejected, but was by the wonderful providence of God advanced to be the head-stone of the building; but its principal reference is to Christ: and here we have. 1. His humiliation; he is the Stone which the builders refused; he is the Stone cut out of the moun.
taint without hands, Dan. ii. 34. He is a stone, not only for strength, and firmness, and duration, but for life, in the building of the spiritual temple; and yet a precious stone; (1 Pet. ii. 6.) for the foundation of the gospel-church must be saphires, Isa. lvi. 2. This Stone was rejected by the builders, by the rulers and people of the Jews; (Acts iv. 8, 10, 11.) they refused to own him as the Stone, the Messiah promised; they would not build their faith upon him, nor join themselves to him; they would make no use of him, but go on in their building without him; they denied him in the presence of Pilate, (Acts iii. 13.) when they said, We have found no basis to set down Christ. Thus the builders Stone, threw it among the rubbish out of the city; nay, they stumbled at it. This was a disgrace to Christ, but it proved the ruin of those that thus made light of him. Rejecters of Christ are rejected of God.

2. His exaltation; he is become the Head-stone of the corner; he is advanced to the highest degree both of honour and usefulness, to be above all, and all in him. He is the chief Corner-stone in the foundation, in the building and Gentile are united, that there may be built up one holy house. He is the chief Top-stone in the corner, in whom the building is completed, and who must in all things have the pre-eminence, as the Author and Finisher of our faith. Thus highly has God exalted him, because he humbled himself; and we, in compliance with God's design, must make him the Foundation of our hope, the Centre of our unity, and the End of our living.

The Hand of God in all this; This is the Lord's doing, it is from the Lord, it is with the Lord; it is the product of his counsel, it is his contrivance; both the humiliation and the exaltation of the Lord Jesus were his work, Acts ii. 23.—iv. 27. 28. He sent him, sealed him, his hand went with him through all his whole undertaking, and from first to last he did all his Father's will; and this ought to be marvelous in our eyes. Christ's name is Wonderful; and the redemption he wrought out is the most amazing of all God's works of wonder; it is what the angels desire to look into, and will be admiring to eternity; much more ought we to admire it, who owe all to it. Without controversy, great is this mystery of godliness.

III. The joy wherewith it is entertained, and the acclamations which attend this prediction: 1. Let the day be solemnized to the honour of God with great joy; (v. 24.) Make his joy our joy. The whole time of the gospel-dispensation, that accepted time, that day of salvation, is what the Lord has made so; it is a continual feast, which ought to be kept with joy. Or it may very fitly be understood of the Christian sabbath, which we sanctify in remembrance of Christ's resurrection, when the rejected Stone began to be exalted; and so, (1.) Here is the doctrine of the Christian sabbath; It is the day which the Lord has made; it is a day of rest, made remarkable, made holy, has distinguished it from other days; he has made it for man; it is therefore called the Lord's day, for it bears his image and superscription. (2.) The duty of the sabbath; the work of the day, that it is to be done in his day; We will rejoice and be glad in it; not only in the institution of the day, that there is such a day appointed, but in the occasion of it, Christ's becoming the Head of the corner. This was the only day he was anointed, that was anointed for his service, appointed to pronounce a blessing, in his name, upon all his loyal subjects that love him and his government in sincerity, Eph. vi. 24. We assure you that, in and through Jesus Christ, you are blessed; for he came to bless you; You are blessed out of the house of the Lord, with spiritual blessings in heavenly places, (Eph. i. 3.) and therefore have reason to bless him who hath thus blessed you.

Let the sacrifices of thanksgiving he offered to his honour, who offered for us the great atoning sacrifice, v. 27. Here is, (1.) The privilege we enjoy by Jesus Christ: God is the Lord which has shown us light; God is Jehovah, is known by that name, a God performing what he has promised, and perfecting what he has begun, Exod. vii. 6. He has shown us light, he has given us the knowledge of

(1.) Let him have the acclamations of the people, as is usual at the inauguration of a prince; let every one of his loyal subjects shout for joy; Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord. This Long live the King, and speaks a hearty joy for his accession to the crown, an entire satisfaction in his government, and a zealous affection to the interests and honour of it. Hosanna signifies, Save now, I beseech thee. [1.] "Lord, save me, I beseech thee, let this Saviour be my Saviour, and, in order to that, my Ruler; let me be taken under his protection, and owned as one of his willing subjects. His enemies and my enemies, and cast out all their reproaches upon me from them. Send me an interest in that prosperity which his kingdom brings with it to all those that entertain it. Let my soul prosper and be in health, in that peace and righteousness which his government brings, lxxii. 3. Let me have victory over those lusts that war against my soul, and let divine grace go on in my heart, conquering, and to conquer." [2.] "Lord, preserve him, I beseech thee, even the Saviour himself, and send him prosperity in all his undertakings; give success to his gospel, and let it be mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds, and reducing souls to their allegiance to him. Let his name be sanctified, his kingdom come, his will be done," thus let prayer be made for him continually, lxxii. 15. On the Lord's day, when we rejoice and are glad in his kingdom, we must pray for the advancement of it more and more, and its establishment upon the ruins of the Devil's kingdom. When Christ made his public entry into Jerusalem, he was thus met by his well-wishers, (Matth. xxi. 9.) Hosanna to the Son of David; long live King Jesus; let him reign for ever.

(2.) Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, do their part in this great solemnity, v. 26. [1.] Let them bless the prince with their praises; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Jesus Christ is he that cometh; i.e., he that was to come, and is, yet to come again, Rev. i. 8. He comes in the name of the Lord, with a commission from him, to act for him, to do his will, and to seek his glory; and therefore we must say, Blessed be he that cometh; we must rejoice that he is come, we must speak well of him, admire him, and esteem him highly, as one we are eternally obliged to; call him blessed Jesus, blessed for ever, xiv. 2. We must bid him welcom into our hearts, saying, Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; come in to thy grace, and take possession of me for thine own. We must bless his faithful ministers that come in his name, and receive them for his sake, Isa. lli. 7. John xiii. 20. We must pray for the enlargement and edification of his church; for the ripening of things for his second coming; and then, that he who has said, Surely I come quickly, would even so come. [2.] Let them bless the people with their prayers; We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord; the Lord's people are thus blessed; we are appointed, to pronounce a blessing, in his name, upon all his loyal subjects that love him and his government in sincerity, Eph. vi. 24. We assure you that, in and through Jesus Christ, you are blessed; for he came to bless you; You are blessed out of the house of the Lord with spiritual blessings in heavenly places, (Eph. i. 3.) and therefore have reason to bless him who hath thus blessed you.

Let the sacrifices of thanksgiving he offered to his honour, who offered for us the great atoning sacrifice, v. 27.
himself and his will; he has shined upon us, so some; has favoured us, and lifted up us upon the light of his countenance; he has given us occasion for joy and rejoicing, which is light to the soul, by giving us a prospect of everlasting light in heaven. The day which the Lord has made, is it not good? The duty which this privilege calls for: Bind the sacrifice with cords, that, being killed, the blood of it may be sprinkled upon the horns of the altar, according to the law; or perhaps it was the custom (though we read not of it elsewhere) to bind the sacrifice to the horns of the altar, while things were getting ready for the slaying of it. Or this may have a peculiar significance here; the sacrifice we are to make is a spiritual one, redeeming ourselves, not to be slain upon the altar, but living sacrifices. (Rom. xii. 1.) to be bound to the altar; spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, in which our hearts must be fixed and engaged, as the sacrifice was bound with cords to the horns of the altar, not to start back. Lastly, The psalmist concludes with his own thankful acknowledgments of divine grace, in which he calls upon others to join with him, v. 28, 29. (1.) He will call upon the name of God, and speak of the God of the covenant in his own heart, and in the hearts of others, and this because of his covenant-relationship to him, and interest in him; *'Thou art my God,* on whom I depend, and to whom I am devoted, who ownest me, and art owned by me; and therefore I will praise thee.* (2.) He will have all about him to give thanks to God for these glad tidings of great joy to all people, that there is a Redeemer, even Christ the Lord; in him it is that God is good to man, and that *his mercy endures for ever,* in him the covenant of grace is made, and in him it is made sure, made good, and made an everlasting covenant. He concludes this psalm as he began it; (v. 1.) for God's glory must be the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, of all our addresses to him. *Hallowed be thy name, and thine is the glory.* And this fitsly closes a prophecy of Christ. The angels give thanks for man's redemption. Glory to God in the highest. (Luke i. 14.) for there is on earth peace, to which we must echo with our hosannas, as they did. Luke xix. 38. *Peace in heaven to us through Christ, and therefore Glory in the highest.*

PSALM CXIX.

This is a psalm by itself, like none of the rest, it excels them all, and shines brightest in this constellation. It is much longer than any of them; more than twice as long as any of them. It is not making long prayers that Christ censures, but making them for a pretence; which intimates that they are in themselves good and commendable. It seems to me to be a collection of David's psalms divided in him, his first short in sudden breathings and elevations of his soul to God, which he wrote down as they occurred, and, toward the latter end of his time, gathered out of his day-book, where they lay scattered; added to them many like words, and dispersed in which he thought there was selectness in any coherence between the verses, but, like Solomon's proverbs, it is a chest of gold rings, not a chain of gold links. And we may not only learn, by the psalmist's example, how to divide the contents of a collection of verses into two parts, according to the manner in which it is selected, but also how to do it, that is to say, by the law of proportion, and the connexion of sentiment, which none have said of this psalm is true. *He that shall read it considerately, it will either warm him or shame him.*

1. The composition of it is singular, and very exact. It is divided into two parts, according to the number of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and each part consists of eight verses: all the verses of the first part beginning with Aleph, all the verses of the second with Beth, and so on, without any flaw, through all the whole psalm. Archbishop Tillotson says, it seems to have more of poetical skill and number in it, than we at this distance can easily understand. Some have called it the saints' alphabet; and it were to be wished we had it as ready in our memories, as the very letters of our alphabet, as reckoning by words. A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z, and a ready access to it, of use to himself to observe this method, as it obliged him to seek for thoughts, and search for them, that he might fill up the quota of every part; and the letter he was to begin with, he thought he must try and mind to upon occasion; by which the letter the first word would be got, and that would bring in the whole verse; thus young people would the more easily learn it by heart, and retain it the better even in old age. If any censure there be on this method (and there is none now quite out of fashion, let them know that the royal psalmist despises their censure; he is a teacher of babes, and if this method may be beneficial to them, he can easily stoop to it, if it can be to the advantage of others.

2. The general scope and design of it is to magnify the law, and make it honourable; to set forth the excellency and usefulness of divine revelation, and to recommend it to us, not only for the entertainment, but for the government, of our souls, by the psalmist's own example; who speaks by experience of the benefit of it, and of the good impressions made upon him by it; for he praises God, and earnestly prays, to the first, for the continuance of that grace which he had obtained; and to ordain him in the way of his duty. There are ten several words by which divine revelation is called in this psalm; and they are synonymous, each of them expressive of the whole case considered; God, the law, the covenant, the holy, the word, the promises (both that which God expects from us, and that which tells what we may expect from him,) and of the system of religion which is founded upon it, and guided by it. The things contained in the scripture, and drawn from it, are here called, 1. God's law, as the standard, the rule, the way, in which he has conducted himself; and, 2. His providence, because they are the rule both of his providence and of our obedience. 3. His testimonies, because they are solemnly declared to the world, and attended with the sanction of heaven, as a pledge of his truth, because given with authority, and (as the word signifies) lodged with us as a trust. 4. His precepts, because prescribed to us, and not left indifferently. 5. His word, or saying, because it is the device of his mind, and, 6. Christ, the essential Eternal Word, is all in all. 7. His judgments, because framed in infinite wisdom, and because by them we must both judge and be judged. 8. His righteousness, because it is all holy, just, and good, and the standard of all righteousness; 9. His statutes, because they are fixed and determined, and of perpetual obligation. 10. His truths, or truthfulness, because the principles upon which the divine law is built are eternal truths. And I think there are only these two words (it is v. 122.) in all this long psalm, in which there is not; one or other of these ten words; only in three or four they are used concerning God's providence, or David's practice, as v. 75, 84, 151; and, v. 132, they are used concerning God's name. The great affection and affection David had for the word of God, is the more admirable, considering how little he had of it, in comparison with what we have; no more perhaps, in writing, than the first books of Moses, which were but the duodenary of this day; and we may shame us who enjoy the full discoveries of divine revelation, and yet are so cold towards it. In singing this psalm, there is work for all the devout affections of a sanctified soul, and we may be sure that we shall, one another, and as we proceed in the Psalms, we shall find that here which is proper for them. And it is so far from being a tedious repetition of the same thing, as may seem to those who look over it cursorily, that, if we duly meditate on it, we shall see that it has a new thought, and something in it very lively. And this, as many other of David's psalms, teaches us to be sentiments in our devotions, both alone, and when others join in them. For, ordinarily, the effect of weaker Christians, is more likely to be raised, and kept by short expressions, the sense of which lies in a little room, than by long and laboured periods.
1. ALEPH.

BLESSED are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. 2. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. 3. They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.

The psalmist here shows that godly people are happy people: they are, and shall be, blessed indeed. Felicity is the thing we all pretend to aim at and pursue; he does not say whereon it consists; it is enough for us to know what we must do, and he that will train to it, and that we are here told. All men would be happy, but few take the right way; God has here laid before us the right way, which we may be sure will end in happiness, though it be strait and narrow. Blissednesses are to the righteous; in all manner of blessednesses.

Now observe the characters of the happy people. They are happy,

1. The make the will of God the rule of all their actions, and govern themselves, in their whole conversation, by that rule; they walk in the law of the Lord, v. 1. God's word is a law to them, not only in this or that particular instance, but in the whole course of their conversation; they walk within the hedges of that law, which they dare not break through, by doing any thing it forbids; and they walk in the paths of that law, which they will not trifle in, but press forward in them toward the mark, taking every step by rule, and never walking at all adventures. This is walking in God's ways, (v. 3,) the ways which he has marked out to us, and has appointed us to walk in. It will not serve us to make religion the subject of our discourse, but we must make it the rule of our walk; we must walk in his ways, not in the way of the world, or of our own hearts, Job xxviii. 10. 11. —xxxi. 7.

2. Who are upright and honest in their religion; Undeened in the way; not only who keep themselves pure from the pollutions of actual sin, unspotted from the world, but who are habitually sincere in their intentions; in whose spirit there is no guile; who are really as good as they seem to be, and row the same way as they look.

3. Who are true to the trust reposed in them, as God's professing people. It was the honour of the Jews, that to them were committed the oracles of God; and blessed are they who preserve pure and entire that sacred deposit; who keep his testimonies as a treasure of inestimable value, keep them as the apple of their eye, so keep them as to carry the comfort of them themselves to another world, and leave the knowledge and profession of them to those who shall come after them in this world. They who would walk in the law of the Lord must keep his testimonies, his truths; those will not long make conscience of good practices, who do not adhere to good principles. Or, his testimonies may denote his covenant; the ark of the covenant is called the ark of the testimony; those do not keep covenant with God who do not keep the commandments of God.

4. Who have a single eye to God as their chief good: and highest End in all they do in religion; (v. 2.) They seek him with their whole heart. They do not seek themselves and their own things, but God. They do not look for that to be their end, which God may be glorified in their obedience, and that they may be happy in God's acceptance. He is, and will be, the Rewarder, the Reward, of all those who thus seek him diligently, seek him with the heart; for that is it that God looks at and requires; and with the whole heart; if the heart be divided between him and the world, it is faulty.

5. Who carefully avoid all sin; (v. 3.) They do no iniquity; they do not allow themselves in any sin, they do not commit it as those do who are the servants of sin; they do not make a practice of it, do not make of ruin of it. They are cautious to themselves of much iniquity that clogs them in the ways of God, but not of that iniquity which draws them out of those ways. Blessed and holy are they who thus exercise themselves to have always conscientious void of offence.

4. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. 5. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! 6. Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

We are here taught, 1. To own ourselves under the highest obligations to walk in God's law. The tempter would possess men with an opinion that they are at their liberty whether they will make the word of God their rule or no, that though it may be good, yet it is not so necessary as if we were taught our first parents to question the command; Hath God said, ye shall not eat? And therefore we are concerned to be well established in this; (v. 4.) Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts, to make religion our rule; and to keep them diligently, to make religion our business, and to mind it carefully and constantly. We are bound, and must obey to our peril.

To look up to God for wisdom and grace to do so; (v. 5.) Oh that my ways were directed accordingly; not only that all events concerning us may be so ordered and disposed by the providence of God, as not in any thing to be a hinderance to us, but a furtherance rather, in the service of God, but that our hearts may be so guided and influenced by the Spirit of God, that we may not in any thing transgress God's commandments: not only that our eyes may be directed to behold God's statutes, but our hearts directed to keep them. See how the desire and prayer of a good man exactly agree with the will and command of a good God; "Then wouldst have me keep thy precepts, and, Lord, I fain would keep them." This is the will of God, even our sanctification; and it should be our will.

3. To encourage ourselves in the way of our duty, with a prospect of the comfort we shall find in it. v. 6. Note, (1.) It is the unchanging character of every good man, that he has a respect to all God's commandments. He has a respect to the command, eyes it as his copy, aims to conform to it, is sorry wherein he comes short; and what he does in religion, he does with a conscientious regard to the command, because it is his duty. He has respect to all the commandments, one as well as another, because they are all backed with the same authority, (Jam. ii. 10, 11.) and all levelled at the same end, the glorifying of God's name; and are true to the end, to have a sincere respect to any command will have a general respect to every command; to the commands of both testaments and both tables; to the prohibitions and the precepts; to those that concern both the inward and the outward man, both the head and the heart; to those that forbid the most pleasant and gainful sins, and to those that require the most difficult and hazardous duties. (2.) Those who have a sincere respect to all God's commandments will not be ashamed; not only they will thereby be kept from doing that which will turn to their shame, but they shall have confidence toward God, and boldness of access to the throne of his grace, 1 John iii. 21. They shall have credit before men, their honesty will be their honour; and they shall have clearness and courage in their own souls, they shall.
7. I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments. 8. I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.

Here is, 1. David's endeavour to perfect himself in his religion, and to make himself (as we say) master of his business. He hopes to learn God's righteous judgments; he knew much, but he was still pressing forward, and desired to know more, as knowing this, that he had not yet attained; but, as far as perfection is attainable in this life, he reached towards it, and will not take up short of it. As long as we live, we must be scholars in Christ's school, and sit at his feet; but we should aim to be head-scholars, and not pupils. God's judgments are all righteouness, and therefore it is desirable not only to learn them, but to be learned in them, mighty in the scriptures.

2. The use he would make of his divine learning. He coveted to be learned in the laws of God, not that he might make himself a name and interest among men, or fill his own head with entertaining speculations, but, (1.) That he might give God the glory of his learning; I will praise thee, when I have learned thy judgments; intimating, that he could not learn, unless God taught him; and that divine instructions are special blessings, which we have reason to be thankful for. Though Christ keeps a free school, and teaches without money and without price, yet he expects his scholars should give him thanks both for his word and for his Spirit; surely it is a mercy worth thanks, to be taught so gainfully a calling as religion is. Those have learned a good lesson who have learned to praise God, for that is the work of angels, the work of heaven. It is an easy thing to praise God in word and tongue; but those only are well learned in this mystery who have learned to praise him with uprightness of heart, are inward with him in praising him, and sincerely aim at his glory in the course of their conversation, as well as in the exercises of devotion. God accepts only the prayers of the upright: (2.) That he might himself come under the government of that learning; When I shall have learned thy righteous judgments, I will keep thy statutes. We cannot keep them, unless we learn them; but we learn them in vain, if we do not keep them. Those have well learned God's statutes who are come up to a full resolution, in the strength of his grace, to keep them.

3. His prayer to God, not to leave him; O forsake me not. He might himself say, I will praise thee when I have learned thy judgments; but he might also say, I will praise thee when I have learned thy judgments, I will keep thy statutes. We cannot keep them, unless we learned them; but we learn them in vain, if we do not keep them. Those have well learned God's statutes who are come up to a full resolution, in the strength of his grace, to keep them. When we are under the government of that learning, when we have been instructed by that learning, we cannot act contrary to it.

4. His prayer to God, that he might not depart from him, that he might not forsake him. I will praise thee when I have learned thy judgments; I will keep thy statutes. We cannot keep them, unless we learn them; but we learn them in vain, if we do not keep them. Those have well learned God's statutes who are come up to a full resolution, in the strength of his grace, to keep them. When we are under the government of that learning, when we have been instructed by that learning, we cannot act contrary to it.

5. His prayer to God, that he might not depart from him, that he might not forsake him. I will praise thee when I have learned thy judgments; I will keep thy statutes. We cannot keep them, unless we learn them; but we learn them in vain, if we do not keep them. Those have well learned God's statutes who are come up to a full resolution, in the strength of his grace, to keep them. When we are under the government of that learning, when we have been instructed by that learning, we cannot act contrary to it.

6. His prayer to God, that he might not depart from him, that he might not forsake him. I will praise thee when I have learned thy judgments; I will keep thy statutes. We cannot keep them, unless we learn them; but we learn them in vain, if we do not keep them. Those have well learned God's statutes who are come up to a full resolution, in the strength of his grace, to keep them. When we are under the government of that learning, when we have been instructed by that learning, we cannot act contrary to it.

7. His prayer to God, that he might not depart from him, that he might not forsake him. I will praise thee when I have learned thy judgments; I will keep thy statutes. We cannot keep them, unless we learn them; but we learn them in vain, if we do not keep them. Those have well learned God's statutes who are come up to a full resolution, in the strength of his grace, to keep them. When we are under the government of that learning, when we have been instructed by that learning, we cannot act contrary to it.

8. His prayer to God, that he might not depart from him, that he might not forsake him. I will praise thee when I have learned thy judgments; I will keep thy statutes. We cannot keep them, unless we learn them; but we learn them in vain, if we do not keep them. Those have well learned God's statutes who are come up to a full resolution, in the strength of his grace, to keep them. When we are under the government of that learning, when we have been instructed by that learning, we cannot act contrary to it.

9. His prayer to God, that he might not depart from him, that he might not forsake him. I will praise thee when I have learned thy judgments; I will keep thy statutes. We cannot keep them, unless we learn them; but we learn them in vain, if we do not keep them. Those have well learned God's statutes who are come up to a full resolution, in the strength of his grace, to keep them. When we are under the government of that learning, when we have been instructed by that learning, we cannot act contrary to it.

10. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.

Here is, 1. David's experience of a good work God had wrought in him, which he takes the comfort of, and pleads with God; I have sought thee, sought to thee, as to the Oracle, as to the right of my Happiness, sought thee as my God; for should not a people seek into their God? If I have not yet found thee, I have sought thee, and thou never saidst, Seek, in vain, nor wilt say so to me, for I have sought thee with my heart, with my whole heart; sought thee only, sought thee diligently. 2. His prayer for the preservation of that work; Thou hast not inclined me to seek thy precepts, never suffered me to wander from them. The best are sensible of their aptness to wander; and the more we have found of the pleasure there is in keeping God's commandments, the more afraid we shall be of wandering from them, and the more earnest we shall be in prayer to God for his grace to prevent our wanderings.

11. Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Here is, 1. The close application which David makes of the word of God to himself; he hid it in his heart, laid it up there, that it might be ready to him whenever he had occasion to use it: he laid it up as that which he valued highly, and had a warm regard for, and which he was afraid of losing and being robbed of. God's word is a treasure worth laying up, and there is no laying it up safe but in our hearts; if we have it only in our houses and
hands, enemies may take it from us; if only in our heads, our memories may fail; even if our hearts be delivered into the mould of it, and the impressions of it remain on our souls, it is safe.

2. The good uses he designed to make of it; that I might not sin against thee. Good men are afraid of sin, and are in care to prevent it; and the most effectual way to prevent it, is, to hide God’s word in our hearts, that we may answer every temptation, as our Master did, with, It is written; may oppose God’s precepts to the dominion of sin, his promises to its allurements, and his threatenings to its menace.

12. Blessed art thou, O Lord: teach me thy statutes. Here, 1. David gives glory to God; “Blessed art thou, O Lord. Thou art infinitely happy in the enjoyment of thyself, and hast no need of me or my services; yet thou art pleased to reckon thyself honoured by them; assist me, therefore, and then accept me.” In all our prayers we should intermix praise.

2. He asks grace from God; “Teach me thy statutes; give me to know and do my duty in every thing. Thou art the Fountain of all blessedness; let me have this drop from that Fountain, this blessing from that Blessedness; Teach me thy statutes, that I may know how to bless thee, who art a blessed God, and that I may be blessed in thee.”

13. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of my mouth. 14. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. 15. I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. 16. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

Here, 1. David looks back with comfort upon the respect he had paid to the word of God. He had the testimony of his conscience for him;

(1.) That he had edified others with what he had been taught out of the word of God; (v. 13.) With my lips have I declared all the judgments of my mouth. This he did, not only as a king in making orders, and giving judgment, according to the word of God, nor only as a prophet by his psalms, but his heart also from the bottom of his heart. Thus he showed how full he was of the word of God, and what a holy pride* he took in his acquaintance with it; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh. Thus did he good with his knowledge; he did not hide God’s word from others, but hid it for them; and, out of that good treasure in his heart, brought forth good things, as the householder out of his store, things new and old. They whose hearts are fed with the bread of life, should with their lips feed many. He had prayed, (v. 12.) that God would teach him; and here he pleads, “Lord, I have endeavoured to make a good use of the knowledge thou hast given me, therefore increase it;” for to him that hath shall be given.

(2.) That he had entertained himself with it; “Lord, teach me thy statutes; for I desire no greater pleasure than to know and do them.”

14. I have rejoiced in the way of thy commandments, in a constant even course of obedience to thee; not only in the speculations and histories of thy word, but in the precepts of it, and in that path of serious godliness which they chalck out to me. I have rejoice in this, as much as in all riches; as much as ever any worldling rejoiced in the increase of his wealth. In the way of God’s commandments I can truly say,

Soul, take thou ease.” In true religion there is all riches, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

2. He looks forward with a holy resolution never to cool in his affection to the word of God; what he does, that he will do, 2 Cor. xi. 12. They that have found pleasure in the ways of God, are likely to proceed and persevere in them.

(1.) He will dwell much upon his thoughts; (v. 13.) I will meditate in thy precepts. He not only discoursed of them to others, (many do that only to show their knowledge and authority,) but he communed with his own heart about them, and took pains to digest in his own thoughts what he had declared, or had to declare, to others. Note, God’s words ought to be very much the subject of our thoughts.

(2.) He will have them always in his eye; I will have respect unto thy ways, as the traveller has to his road, which he is in care not to miss, and always that only to show their knowledge and authority,) but he communed with his own heart about them, and took pains to digest in his own thoughts what he had declared, or had to declare, to others. Note, God’s words ought to be very much the subject of our thoughts.

(3.) He will take a constant pleasure in communion with God, and obedience to him. It is not for all a season that he rejoices in this light, but I will still, I will for ever, delight myself in thy statutes; not only think of them, but do them with delight, v. 16. David has no more delight in God’s statutes than is the pleasures of his court, or the honours of his camp; more than in his sword or in his harp: when the law is written in the heart, duty becomes a delight.

(4.) He will never forget what he has learned of the things of God; “I will not forget thy word; not only I will not quite forget it, but I will be mindful of it, when I have occasion to use it.” They that meditate in God’s word, and delight in it, are in no great danger of forgetting it.

3. GIMEL.

17. Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word. We are here taught,

1. That we owe our lives to God’s mercy. David prays, Deal bountifully with me, that I may live. It was God’s bounty that gave us life, that gave us this life; and the same bounty that gave it continues it, and gives all the supports and comforts of it; if withheld, we die; or, which is equivalent, our lives are embittered, and we become weary of them. If God deals in strict justice with us, we die, we perish, we all perish; if these forfetit lives be preserved and prolonged, it is because God is bountifully dealing according to his mercy, not according to our deserts.

The continuance of the most useful life is owing to God’s bounty, and on that we must have a continual dependence.

2. That therefore we ought to spend our lives in God’s service. Life is therefore a choice mercy, because it is an opportunity of obeying God in this world, where there are so few that do glorify him, and the David had in his eye, “Not that I may live and grow rich, live and be merry; but that I may live and keep thy word, may observe it myself, and transmit it to those that shall come after, which, the longer I live, the better I shall do.”

18. Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Observe here,

1. That there are wondrous things in God’s law, which we are all concerned, and should covet, to behold; not only strange things, which are very surprising and unexpected, but excellent things, which are to be highly esteemed and valued, and
things which were long hid from the wise and prudent, but are now revealed unto babes. If there were wonders in the law, much more in the gospel, where Christ is all in all, whose name is Wonderful.

Well may we, who are so nearly interested, desire to behold these wondrous things, when the angels themselves reach to look into them, 1 Pet. i. 12.

2. Those that would see the wondrous things of God's law and gospel, must beg of him to open their eyes, and to give them an understanding. We are by nature blind to the things of God, till his grace cause the scales to fall from our eyes; and even those in whose hearts God has said, Let there be light, have yet need to be further enlightened, and must still pray to God to open their eyes yet more and more, that they who at first saw men as trees walking, may come to see all things clearly: and the more God opens our eyes, the more wonders we see in the word of God which we saw not before.

19. I am a stranger in the earth; hide not thy commandments from me.

Here we have;

1. The acknowledgment which David makes of his own condition; I am a stranger in the earth. We all are so, and all good people confess themselves to be so; for heaven is their home, and the world is but their inn, the land of their pilgrimage. David was a man that knew as much of the world, and was as well known in it, as most men. God built him a house, established his throne; strangers submitted to him, and people that he had not known served him; he had a name like the names of the gods, and yet he calls himself a stranger. We are all strangers on earth, and must so account ourselves.

2. The request he makes to God thereupon; Hide not thy commandments from me; he means more; Lord, show thy commandments to me; let me never know the want of the word of God, but, as long as I live, give me to be growing in my acquaintance with it. I am a stranger, and therefore stand in need of a guide, a guard, a companion, a comforter; let me have the commandments of God always in view, for they will be all this to me, all that a poor stranger can desire. I am a stranger here, and must be gone shortly; by thy commandments let me be prepared for my removal hence.

20. My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times.

David had prayed that God would open his eyes, (v. 18.) and open the law; (v. 19.) now here he pleads the earnestness of his desire for knowledge and grace, for it is the fervent prayer that avails much.

1. His desire was importunate; My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments; or, as some read it, "It is taken up, and wholly employed, in longing for thy judgments; the whole stream of its desires runs in this channel. I shall think myself quite broken and undone, if I want the word of God, the direction, converse, and comfort, of it." 2. It was constant; at all times; it was not now and then, in a good humour, that he was so fond of the word of God: but, it is the habitual temper of every sanctified soul to hunger after the word of God, as its necessary food, which there is no living without.

21. Thou hast rebuked the ungodly which are cursed, which do err from thy commandments.

Here is, 1. The wretched character of wicked people. The temper of their minds is bad; they are proud, they magnify themselves above others; and yet that is not all; they magnify themselves against God, and set up their wills in competition with, and opposition to, the will of God, as if their hearts, and tongues, and all, were their own. There is something of pride at the bottom of every wilful sin, and the tenor of their laws is no better; They do err from thy commandments, as Israel, that did always err in their hearts they err in judgment, and embrace principles contrary to thy commandments, and then no wonder that they err in practice, and willfully turn aside out of the good way. This is the effect of their pride; for they say, What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? As Pharaoh, Who is the Lord?

2. The wretched case of such. They are certainly cursed, for God resists the proud; and they that throw off the commandments, the law lay themselves under its curse; (Gal. iii. 10.) and as that now beholds them afar off, will shortly say to them, Go, ye cursed. The proud sinners bless themselves, God curses them; and though the most direful effects of this curse are reserved for the other world, yet they are often severely rebuked in this world: Providence crosses them, vexes them, and, wherein they dealt proudly, God shows himself above them: and all these rebukes are earnestst of worse. David took notice of the rebukes people pass under, and it made him cleave the more closely to the word of God, and pray the more earnestly that he might not err from God's commandments. Thus saints get good by God's judgments on sinners.

22. Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.

Here, 1. David prays against the reproach and contempt of men; that they might be removed, or, as the word is, rolled, from off him. This intimates that they lay upon him, and that neither his greatest nor his goodness could secure him from being libelled and lampooned: some despised him, and endeavoured to make him mean, others reproached him, and endeavoured to make him odious. It has often been the lot of those that do well, to be ill-spoken of. It intimates that they lay heavy upon him. Hard and foul words do not indeed break bones, and yet they are very grievous to a tender and ingenuous spirit; therefore David prays, Lord, remove them from me, that I may not be thereby either driven from thee, or despised of men. God has all men's hearts and tongues in his hand, and can silence lying lips, and raise up a good name that is trodden in the dust; to him we may appeal as the Asserter of right and Avenger of wrong, and may depend on his promise, that he will clear up our righteousness as the light, xxxvii. 6. Reproach and contempt may humble us and do us good, and then it shall be removed.

2. He pleads his constant adherence to the word and way of God; For I have kept thy testimonies. He not only pleaseth his innocency, that he was unjustly censured, but, (1.) That he was jeered for well-doing; he was despised and abused for his strictness and zeal in religion; so that it was for God's name's sake that he suffered reproach, and therefore he could with the more assurance beg of God to appear for him. The reproach of God's people, if it be not removed now, will be turned into the greater honour shortly. (2.) That he was not jeered out of well-doing; Lord, remove it from me, for I have kept thy testimonies notwithstanding. If in a day of trial we still retain our integrity, we may be sure it will end well.

23. Princes also did sit and speak against me; but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.

See here, 1. How David was abused even by great men, who should have known better his cha
character and his case, and have been more generous; his petition; (a) and they are life to those that receive them,) and as an encouragement to hope that God would quicken him, having promised grace and comfort to all the saints, and to David in particular. God's word must be our guide and plea in every prayer.

26. I have declared my ways, and thou hearest me: teach me thy statutes. 27. Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.

We have here,

1. The great intimacy and freedom that had been between David and his God. David had opened his case, opened his very heart to God; "I have declared my ways, and acknowledged thee in them all, have taken thee along with me in all my designs and enterprises." Thus Jephthah uttered all his words, and Hezekiah spread his letters before the Lord. "I have declared my ways, my wants, and bourns, and troubles, that I meet with in my way; or my sins, my by-ways, I have made an ingenuous confession of them, and thou hearest me, nearest patiently all I had to say, and tookest cognizance of my case." It is an unspeakable comfort to a gracious soul to think with what tenderness all its complaints are received by a gracious God, 1 John v. 14, 15.

2. My earnest desire of the continuance of that intimacy; not by visions and voices from heaven, but by the word and Spirit in an ordinary way; Teach me thy statutes, that is, Make me to understand the way of thy precepts. When he knew God had heard his declaration of his ways, he does not say, "Now, Lord, tell me my lot, and let me know what the event will be;" but, "Now, Lord, tell me my duty, let me know what thou wilt have me to do, as the case stands." Note, Those who in all their ways think on the Lord, may pray in faith that he will direct their steps in the right way. And the surest way of keeping up our communion with God, is, by learning his statutes, and walking intelligently in the way of his precepts. See 1 John i. 6, 7.

3. The good use he would make of this, for the honour of God and the edification of others; "Let me have a good understanding of the way of thy precepts, give me a clear, distinct, and methodical, knowledge of divine things, so shall I talk, with the more assurance, and more to the purpose, of thy wondrous works." We can talk with a better grace of God's wondrous works, the wonders of providence, and especially the wonders of redeeming love, when we understand the way of God's precepts, and walk in that way.

23. My soul melteth for heaviness; strengthen thou me according unto thy word. 29. Remove from me the way of lying; and grant me thy law graciously.

Here is, 1. David's representation of his own griefs; My soul melteth for heaviness, which is to the same purport with v. 25. My soul cleaveth to the dust. Heaviness in the heart of man makes it to incline to lie to lie down, to drop away like a candle that wastes. The penitent soul melts in sorrow for sin, and even the patient soul may melt in the sense of affliction, and it is then its interest to pour out its soul before God.

2. His request for God's grace. (1.) That God would enable him to bear his affliction well, and graciously support him under it; "Strengthen thou me with strength in my soul, according to thy word, which, as the bread of life, strengthens man's heart to undergo whatever God is pleased to inflict. Strengthen me to do the duties, resist the temptations, and bear up under the
burthen, of an afflicted state, that the spirit may not fail. Strengthen me according to that word. (Deut. xxxiii. 25.) As thy day, so shall thy strength be."

(2.) That God would keep him from using any unlawful, indirect, means for the extricating of himself out of his troubles; (v. 29.) Remove from me the way of lying. David was conscious to himself of a proneness to this sin; he had, in a strait, cheated Ahimelech, (1 Sam. xxi. 2.) and Achish, v. 13. and ch. xxvii. 1. Great difficulties are great temptations to sin, and a lie with colour of a justifiable, and a necessary self-defence; therefore David prays, that God would prevent him from falling into this sin any more, lest he should settle in the way of it. A course of lying, of deceit, and dissimulation, is that which every good man dreads, and which we are all concerned to beg of God by his grace to keep us from.

(3.) That he might always be under the conduct and protection of God’s government; Grant me thy law graciously; grant me that to keep me from the way of lying. David had the law written with his own hand; for the king was obliged to transcribe a copy of it for his own use; (Deut. xvi. 18.) but he prays that he might have it written in his heart; for then, and then only, we have it indeed, and to good purpose. "Grant it me more and more." They that know and love the law of God, cannot but desire to know it more, and to use it more, and to apply it more. "Grant it me graciously; he begs it as a special token of God’s favour." Note, We ought to reckon God’s law a grant, a gift, an unspeakable gift, to value it, and pray for it, and to give thanks for it accordingly. The divine code of institutes and precepts is indeed a charter of privileges; and God is truly gracious to those whom he makes truly gracious by giving them his law.

30. I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me. 31. I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O Lord, put me not to shame. 32. I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.

1. That those who will make any thing to purpose of their religion must first make it their serious and deliberate choice; so David did; I have chosen the way of truth. Note, (1.) The way of serious godliness is the way of truth; the principles it is founded on are of eternal truth, and it is the only true way to happiness. (2.) We must therefore choose to walk in this way, not because we know no other way, but because we know no better; nay, we know no other safe and good way. Let us choose that way for our way, which we will walk in, though it be narrow.

2. That those who have chosen the way of truth must have a constant regard to the word of God as the rule of their walking; Thy judgments have I laid before me; as he who learns to write lays his copy before him, that he may write according to it, as the workman lays his model and platform before him. "Let me have the word in my heart, as a rule and pattern to apply it according to. As we have the word in our heart, by an habitual conformity to it, so we must have it in our eye, by an actual regard to it upon all occasions, that we may walk accurately and by rule.

3. That those who make religion their choice and rule are like to adhere to it faithfully; "I have stuck to thy testimonies with an unchanged affection, and an unshaken resolution; stuck to them at all times, through all trials. I have chosen them, and therefore I have stuck to them." Note, The choosing Christian is likely to be the steady Christian; those that are Christians by chance, lack about, if they find turn.

4. That those who stick to the word of God may in faith expect and pray for acceptance with God; for David means that, when he begs, "Lord, put me not to shame; never leave me to do that by which I shall shame myself, and do thou not reject my services, which will put me to the greatest confusion."

5. That the mere comfort God gives us, the more duty we expect from us. v. 32. Here we have, (1.) His resolution to go on vigorously; I will run the way of thy commandments. Those that are going to heaven should make haste thither, and be still pressing forward. It concerns us to redeem time and take pains, and to go on in our business with cheerfulness; we then run the way of our duty when we are ready to it, and pleasant in it, and lay aside every weight, Heb. xii. 1. (2.) His dependence upon God for grace to do so, I shall then abound in thy works, when thou shalt enlarge my heart. God, by his Spirit, enlarges the hearts of his people, when he gives them wisdom; for that is called largeness of heart, 1 Kings iv. 29. When he sheds abroad the love of God in the heart, and puts gladness there. The joy of our Lord should be wheels to our obedience.

5. HE.

33. Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end. 34. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.

Here, 1. David prays earnestly that God himself would be his Teacher; he had preachers, and wise men, and priests, about him, and was himself well-instructed in the law of God, yet he begs to be taught of God, as knowing that none teaches like him, Job xxxvi. 22. Observe here, (1.) What he desires to be taught; not the notions or language of God’s statutes, but the way of them; "The way of applying them to myself, and governing myself by them; teach me the way of my duty which thy statutes prescribes, and in every doubtful case let me know what thou wouldst have me to do, let me hear the word behind me, saying, This is the way, walk in it," Isa. xxx. 21. (2.) How he desires to be taught; in such a way as no man could teach him; Lord, give me understanding. As the God of nature, he has given us intellectual powers and faculties; but here we are taught to pray, that, as the God of grace, he would give us understanding to use those powers and faculties about the great things which belong to our peace, which, through the corruption of nature, we are averse to; Give me understanding, an enlightened understanding; for it is as good to have no understanding at all as not to have it sanctified. Nor will the spirit of revelation in the word answer the end, unless we have the spirit of wisdom in the heart. This is that which we are indebted to Christ for; for the Son of God is come, and has given us understanding, 1 John v. 20. "I am come thus" says faithfully that he would be a good scholar; if God would teach him, he was sure he should learn to good purpose; "I shall keep thy law, which I shall never do unless I be taught of God, and therefore I earnestly desire that I may be taught." If God, by his Spirit, gives us a right and good understanding, we shall be, (1.) Constant in our obedience; "I shall keep it to the end, to the end of my life, which will be the surest proof of sincerity." It will not avail the traveller to keep the way for a while, if he do not keep it to the end of his journey. (2.) Cordial in our obedience.
I shall observe it with my whole heart, with pleasure and delight, and with vigour and resolution. That way which the whole heart goes, the whole man goes; and that should be the way of God's commandments, for the keeping of them is the whole of man.

35. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.

36. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.

He had before prayed to God to enlighten his understanding, that he might know his duty, and not mistake concerning it; here he prays to God to bow his will, and quicken the active powers of his soul, that he might do his duty; for it is God that works in us both to will and to do, as well as to understand, what is good, Phil. ii. 13. Both the good head and the good heart are from the good grace of God, and both are necessary to every good work. Observe here,

1. The grace he prays for; (1) That God would make him able to do his duty; “Make me to go, strengthen me for every good work.” Since we are not sufficient of ourselves, our dependence must be upon the grace of God, for from him all our sufficiency is. God puts his Spirit within us, and so causes us to walk in his statutes; (Ezek. xxxvi. 27.) and this is that which David here begs. (2) That God would make him willing to do it, and would, by his grace, subdue the aversion he naturally had to it; “Incline my heart to thy testimonies, to those things which thy testimonies prescribe; not only make me willing to do my duty, as that which I must do, and therefore am concerned to make the best of, but make me desirous to do my duty, as that which is agreeable to the new nature, and really advantageous to me.” Duty is then done with delight, when the heart is inclined to it: it is God's grace that inclines us, and the more backward we find ourselves to it, the more earnest we must be for that grace.

2. The sin he prays against, and that is, covetousness; “Incline my heart to keep thy testimonies, and restrain and mortify the inclination there is in me to covetousness.” That is a sin which stands opposed to all God's testimonies; for the love of money is such a sin as is the root of much sin, of all sin: those therefore that would have the love of God rooted in them, must get the love of the world rooted out of them; for the friendship of the world is enmity with God. See in what way God deals with men; not by compulsion, but he draws with the cords of a man, working in them an inclination to that which is good, and an aversion to that which is evil.

3. His plea to enforce this prayer; “Lord, bring me to, and keep me in, the way of thy commandments, for therein do I delight; and therefore I pray thee, for grace to walk in that way. Thou hast wrought in me this delight in the way of thy commandments; wilt thou not work in me an ability to walk in them, and so crown thine own work?”

37. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.

Here, 1. David prays for restraining grace, that he might be prevented and kept back from that which would hinder him in the way of his duty; Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity. The honours, pleasures, and profits, of the world, are the vanity, the aspect and prospect of which draw multitudes away from the paths of religion and godliness; the eye, when fastened on these, infects the heart with the love of them, and so it is alienated from God and divine things; and therefore, as we ought to make a covenant with our eyes, and lay a charge upon them, that they shall not wander after, much less fix upon, that which is dangerous, (Job xxxi. 1.) so we ought to pray that God by his providence would keep vanity out of our sight, and that by his grace he would keep us from being enamoured with the sight of it.

2. He prays for constraining grace, that he might not only be kept from every thing that would obstruct his progress heaven-ward, but might have that grace which was necessary to forward him in that progress; “Quicken thou me in thy way; quicken me to redeem time, to improve opportunity, to press forward, and to do every duty with liveliness and fervency of spirit.” Beholding vanity deadens us, and slackens our pace; a traveller that stands gazing upon every object that presents itself to his view, will not rid ground; but if our eyes be kept from that which would divert us, our hearts will be kept to that which will excite us.

38. Establish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear.

Here is, 1. The character of a good man, which is the work of God's grace in him; he is God's servant. Here, 2. His employment in his work, that is, devoted to his fear, given up to his direction and disposal, and taken up with high thoughts of him, and all those acts of devotion which have a tendency to his glory. Those are truly God's servants, who, though they have their infirmities and defects, are sincerely devoted to the fear of God, and have all their affections and motions governed by that fear; they are engaged and addicted to religion.

2. The confidence that a good man has toward God, in dependence upon the word of his grace to him. They that are God's servants may, in faith and with humble boldness, pray that God would establish his word to them, that he would fulfil his promises to them in due time, and in the mean time give them an assurance that they shall be fulfilled. What God has promised we must pray for; we need not be so aspiring as to ask more; we need not be so modest as to ask less.

39. Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are good.

Here, 1. David prays against reproach, as before, v. 22. David was conscious to himself that he had done that which might give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, which would blemish his reputation, and turn it to the dishonour of his family; now he prays that God, who has all men's hearts and tongues in his hands, would be pleased to prevent this, to deliver him from all his transgressions, that he might not be the reproach of the foolish, which he feared; (xxxix. 8.) or he means that reproach which his enemies unjustly loaded him with. Let their lying lips be put to silence.

2. He pleads the goodness of God's judgments; “Lord, turn them away; let not religious be wounded through my side.”

40. Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness.

Here, 1. David professes the ardent affection he had to the word of God; “I have longed after thy precepts; not only loved them, and delighted in what I have already attained, but I have earnestly
desired to know them more, and do them better; and am still pressing forward toward perfection. Tastes of the sweetness of God's precepts will but set us a longing after a more intimate acquaintance with them. He appeals to God concerning this passionate desire after his precepts: "Behold, I have thus loved, thus longed; thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I am thus affected."

2. He prays for grace to enable him to answer this profession. "Thou hast wrought in me this languishing desire, put life into me, that I may prosecute it; cast me right on the right ways, according to thy righteous promise." Where God has wrought to will, he will work to do, and where he has wrought to desire, he will satisfy the desire.


41. Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even thy salvation, according to thy word. 42. So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word.

Here is, 1. David's prayer for the salvation of the Lord. "Lord, thou art my Saviour, I am miserable in myself, and thou only canst make me happy; let thy salvation come to me; hasten temporal salvation to me from my present distresses, and hasten me to the eternal salvation, by giving me the necessary qualifications for it, and the comfortable pledges and forecasts of it." 2. David's dependence upon the grace and promise of God for that salvation. These are the two pillars on which our hope is built, and they will not fail us. (1.) The grace of God; Let thy mercies come, even thy salvation: our salvation must be attributed purely to God's mercy, and not to any merit of our own. External life must be expected, as the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, Jude 21. "Lord, I have by faith thy mercies in view; let me by prayer prevail to have them come to me." (2.) The promise of God; Let it come according to thy word, thy word of promise: I trust in thy word, and therefore may expect the performance of the promise. We are not only allowed to trust in God's word, but our trusting in it is the condition of our benefit by it.

3. David's expectation of the good assurance which that grace and promise of God would give him; So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me for my confidence in God, as if it would deceive me." When God saves those out of their troubles who trusted in him, he effectually silences those who would have shamed that counsel of the floor, (xiv. 6.) and their reproaches will be for ever silenced, when the salvation of the saints is completed; then it will appear, beyond dispute, that it was not in vain to trust in God.

43. And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments. 44. So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.

Here is, 1. David's humble petition for the tongue of the learned, that he might know how to speak a word in season for the glory of God; Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth. He means, "Lord, let the word of truth be always in my mouth, let me have the wisdom and courage which are necessary to enable me both to use my knowledge for the instruction of others, and, like the good householder, to bring out of my treasury things new and old, and to make profession of my faith whenever I am called to it." We have need to pray to God, that we may never be afraid or ashamed to own his truths and ways, nor deny him before men. David found that he was sometimes at a loss, the enemy was too ready to him as it should have been, but he prays, "Lord, let it not be taken utterly from me; let me always have so much of it at hand as will be necessary to the due discharge of my duty."

2. His humble profession of the heart of the upright, without which, the tongue of the learned, however it may be serviceable to others, will stand us in no sight. (1.) David professes his confidence in God; "Love make me ready and might in the scriptures, for I have hoped in those judgments of thy mouth, and if they be not at hand, my support and defence are departed from me." (2.) He professes his resolution to adhere to his duty in the strength of God's grace; So shall I keep my law continually. If I have thy word not only in my heart, but in my mouth, I shall do all I should, stand complete in thy whole will." Thus shall the man of God be perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good word and work, 2 Tim. iii. 17. Col. iii. 16. Observe how he resolves to keep God's law, [1.] Continually, without trifling; God must be served in a constant course of obedience every day, and all the day long. [2.] For ever and ever, without backsliding; we must never be weary of well-doing. If we serve him to the end of our time on earth, we shall be serving him in heaven to the endless ages of eternity; so shall we keep his law for ever and ever. Or thus, "Lord, let me have the word of truth in my mouth, that I may commit that sacred deposit to the rising generation, (2 Tim. ii. 2.) and by them it may be transmitted to succeeding ages; so shall thy law be kept for ever and ever, from one generation to another," according to that promise, (Isa. lxi. 21.) My word in thy mouth shall not depart out of the mouth of thy seed, nor thy seed's seed.

45. And I will walk at liberty; for I seek thy precepts. 46. I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed. 47. And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. 48. My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes.

We may observe in these verses, 1. What David experienced of an affection to the law of God; I seek thy precepts, v. 45. I desire to know and do my duty, and consult thy word accordingly; I do all I can to understand what the will of the Lord is, and to discover the intimations of it in my own mind, and do thy precepts, for I have loved them, v. 47. I will only give them from the heart as good, but take complacency in them as good for me." All that love God, love his government, and therefore love all his commandments.

2. What he expected from this. Five things he promises himself here in the strength of God's grace.

O) That he should be free and easy in his duty; "I will walk at liberty, freed from that which is evil, not hampered with the fetters of my own corruptions, and free to that which is good, doing it not by constraint, but willingly." The service of sin is perfect slavery, the service of God is perfect liberty. Licentiousness is bondage to the greatest of tyrants, conscientiousness is freedom to the meanest of prisoners, John vii. 32, 36. Luke i. 74, 75.

(2.) That he should be bold and courageous in his duty; I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings. Before David came to the crown, kings
were sometimes his judges, as Saul, and Achish; but, if he were called before them to give a reason of the hope that was in him, he would speak of God's testimonies, and profess to build his hope upon them, and make them his counsel, his guards, his crown, his all. We must never be afraid to own our religion, though it should expose us to the wrath of kings; but speak of it as that which we will live and die by, like the three children before Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. iii. 16. Acts iv. 20. After David came to the crown, kings were sometimes his companions, they visited him, and he returned their visits; but he did not, in compliance to them, talk of every thing but religion, for fear of affronting them, and making his conversation uneasy to them: no, God's testimonies shall be the principal subject of his discourse with the kings, not only to show that he was not ashamed of his religion, but to instruct them in it, and bring them over to it. It is good for kings to hear of God's testimonies, and it will adorn the conversation of princes themselves to speak of them.

(3.) That he should be cheerful and pleasant in his duty; (v. 47.) "I will delight myself in thy commandments, in communicating with them, in conforming to them: I will never be so well pleased with myself, as when I do that which is pleasing to God." The more delight we take in the service of God, the nearer we come to the perfection we should aim at.

(4.) That he should be diligent and vigorous in his duty; (v. 48.) "I will lift up my hands to thy commandments; which denotes not only a vehement desire toward them, (exil. 6.) "I will lay hold of them as one afraid of missing them, or letting them go;" but a close application of mind to the observance of them; "I will lay my hands to the command, not only praise it, but practise it; nay, I will lift up my hands to it, I will put forth all the strength I have to do it." The hands that hang down, through sloth and discouragement, shall be lifted up, Heb. xii. 12.

(5.) That he should be thoughtful and considerate in his duty; (v. 48.) "I will meditate in thy statutes; not only entertain myself with thinking of them, as matters of speculation, but contrary how I may observe them in the best manner." By this it will appear that we truly love God's commandments, if we apply both our minds and our hands to them.

7. ZAIN.

49. Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.

Two things David here pleads with God, in prayer for that mercy and grace which he hoped for, according to the word, by which his requests were guided.

1. That God had given him the promise on which he hoped; "Lord, I desire no more than that thou wouldst remember thy word unto thy servant, and do as thou hast said;" (see 1 Chron. xvii. 23.) "Thou art wise, and therefore wilt perfectly what thou hast purposed, and not change thy counsel. Thou art faithful, and therefore wilt perform what thou hast promised, and not break thou word." Those that make God's promises their portion may with humble boldness make them their plea.

2. "Lord, is not that the word which thou hast spoken; and wilt not thou make it good?" Gen. xxxii. 9. Exod. xxxiii. 12.

9. That God, who had given him the promise in the word, had by his grace wrought in him a hope in that promise, and enabled him to depend upon it, and had raised his expectations of great things from it. Has God kindled in us desires towards spiritual blessings more than toward any temporal good things; and will he not be so kind as to satisfy those desires? Has he filled us with hopes of those blessings; and will he not be so just as to accomplish these hopes? He that did by his Spirit work faith in us, will, according to our faith, work for us, and will not disappoint us.

50. This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.

Here is David's experience of benefit by the word:

1. As a means of his sanctification; "Thy word hath quickened me." It made me alive when I was dead in sin; it has many a time made me lively when I was dead in duty; it has quickened me to that which is good, when I was backward and averse to it; and it has quickened me in that which is good, when I was cold and indifferent.

2. Therefore as a means of his consolation, then when he was in affliction, and needed something to support him; "Because thy word has quickened me at other times, it has comforted me then." The word of God has much in it that speaks comfort in affliction; but those only may apply it to themselves who have experienced in some measure the quickening power of the word. If through grace it makes us holy, there is enough in it to make us easy, in all conditions, under all events.

51. The proud have had me greatly in des- rision; yet have I not declined from thy law.

David here tells us, and it will be of use to us to know it, that he was a man of integrity.

1. That he had been jeered for his religion. Though he was a man of honour, a man of great prudence, and had done eminent services to his country, yet, because he was a devout conscientious man, the proud had him greatly in derision; they ridiculed him, bantered him, and did all they could to expose him to contempt; they laughed at him for his praying, and called it cant; for his seriousness, and called it megrousiness; for his strictness, and called it needless preciseness. They were the proud that had sat in the corner's seat, and valued themselves on it.

2. That yet he had not been jeered out of his religion; "They have done all they could to make me quit it for shame, but none of these things move me; I have not declined from thy law for this; but, if this be to be vile," (as he said when Michal had him greatly in derision,) "I will be yet more vile." He not only has not quite forsaken the law, but had not so much as declined from it. We must never shrink from any duty, nor let slip an oppor- tunity of doing good, for fear of the reproach of men, or their revilings. The traveller goes on his way, though the dogs bark at him. Those can bear but little for Christ, that cannot bear a hard word for him.

52. I remembered thy judgments of old, O Lord; and have comforted myself.

When David was derided for his godliness, he not only held fast his integrity, but,

1. He comforted himself: he not only bore reproach, but bore it cheerfully; it did not disturb his peace, nor break in upon the repose of his spirit in God. It was a comfort to him to think that it was for God's sake that he bore reproach, and that his worst enemies could find no occasion against him, save only in the matters of his God, Dan. vi. 5. They that are derided for their adherence to God's law, may comfort themselves with this, that the reproach of Christ will prove, in the end, greater riches to them than the treasures of Egypt.
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2. That which he comforted himself with, was, the remembrance of God's judgments of old, the providences of God concerning his people formerly, both in mercy to them, and in justice against their persecutors. God's judgments of old, in our own early days, and in the days of our fathers, are to be remembered by us for our comfort and encouragement in the way of God, for he is still the same.

53. Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law.

Here is, 1. The character of wicked people; he means those that are openly and grossly wicked; they forsake thy law. Every sin is a transgression of the law, but a course and way of wilful and avowed sin is downright forsaking it and throwing it off:

2. The impression which the wickedness of the wicked made upon David; it frightened him, it put him into an amazement: he trembled to think of the dishonour thereby done to God, the gratification thereby given to Satan, and the mischiefs thereby done to the souls of men. He dreaded the consequences of it, both to the sinners themselves, (and cried out, O gather not my soul with sinners, let mine enemies be as the wicked,) and to the interests of God's kingdom among men, which he was afraid would be thereby sunk and murdered. He does not say, "Horror has taken hold on me, because of their cruel designs against me," but "because of the contempt they put on God and his law." Sin is a monstrous horrible thing in the eyes of all that are sanctified, Jer. v. 30.—xxiii. 14. Hos. vi. 10. Jer. ii. 12.

54. Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.

Here is, 1. David's state and condition; he was in the house of his pilgrimage, which may be understood either as his peculiar trouble; he was often tossed and hurried, and forced to fly; or as his lot, in common with all; this world is the house of our pilgrimage, the house in which we are pilgrims; it is our tabernacle, it is our inn; we must confess ourselves strangers and pilgrims upon earth, who are not at home here, nor must be here long. Even David's palace is but the house of his pilgrimage.

2. His comfort in this state; "Thy statutes have been my songs;" most of the psalms were written by David himself; as travellers are wont to divert the thoughts of their weariness, and take off something of the tediousness of their journey, by singing a pleasant song now and then. David was the sweet singer of Israel, and here we are told whence he fetched his songs; they were all borrowed from the word of God; God's statutes were as familiar to him as the songs which a man is accustomed to sing; and he conversed with them in his pilgrimage solitudes. They were as pleasant to him as songs, and put gladness into his heart, more than they have that chant to the sound of the viols, Amos vi. 5. Is any afflicted then? Let him sing over God's statutes, and try if he cannot so sing away sorrow, Ps. cxxxviii. 5.

55. I have remembered thy name, O Lord, in the night, and have kept thy law. 56. This I had, because I kept thy precepts.

Here is, 1. The converse David had with the word of God; he kept it in mind, and upon every occasion he called it to mind. God's name is the discovery he has made of himself to us in and by his word. This is his memorial unto all generations, and therefore we should always keep it in memory; remember it in the night, upon a waking bed, when we are communing with our own hearts. When others were sleeping, David was remembering God's name, and, by repeating that lesson, increasing his acquaintance with it; in the night of affliction, this he called to mind.

2. The conscience he made of conforming to it. The due remembrance of God's name, which is prefixed to his law, will have a great influence upon our observance of the law; I remembered thy name in the night, and therefore was careful to keep thy law all days. How comfortable will it be in the reflection, if our own hearts can witness for us, that we have thus remembered God's name, and kept his law!

3. The advantage he get by it; (v. 56.) This I had, because I kept thy precepts. Some understand this indifferently; This I had; I had that which satisfied me, I had every thing that is comfortable, because I kept thy precepts. Note, All that have made a business of religion will own that it has turned to a good account, and that they have been unspeakable gainers by it. Others refer it to what goes immediately before; "I had the comfort of keeping thy law, because I kept it." Note, God's work is its own wages: a heart to obey the will of God is a most valuable reward of obedience; and the more we do, the more we may do, and shall do, in the service of God; the branch that bears fruit is made more fruitful, John xv. 2.

8. CHETH.

57. Thou art my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep thy words.

We may hence gather the character of a godly man.

1. He makes the favour of God his felicity; Thou art my Portion, O Lord. Others place their happiness in the wealth and honours of this world; their portion is in this life, they look no further, they desire no more, these are their good things; (Luke xvi. 25.) but all that are sanctified take the Lord for the Portion of their inheritance and their Cup, and nothing less will satisfy them. David can appeal to God in this matter; "Lord, thou knowest that I have chosen thee for my Portion, and depend upon thee to make me happy."

2. He makes the law of God his rule; "I have said, that I would keep thy words; and what I have said, by thy grace I will do, and will abide by it to the end." Note, Those that take God for their Portion, must take him for their Prince, and swear allegiance to him; and, having promised to keep his word, we must often put ourselves in mind of our promise, xxxix. 1.

58. I entreated thy favour with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word.

David, having in the foregoing verse reflected upon his covenants with God, here reflects upon his prayers to God, and reneweth his petition. Observe, 1. What he prayed for; having taken God for his Portion, he entreated his favour, as one that knew he had forfeited it, was unworthy of it, and yet undone without it, but for ever happy if he could obtain it. We cannot demand God's favour as a debt, but must be humble suppliants for it, that God will not only be reconciled to us, but accept us, and smile upon us. He prays, Be merciful to me, in the forgiveness of what I have done amiss, and in giving me grace to do better for the future.

2. How he prayed; with his whole heart; as one that knew how to value the blessing he prayed for; the gracious soul is entirely set upon the favour of God, and is therefore importunate for it; I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

3. What he pleaded; the promise of God; "Be
merciful to me, according to thy word. I desire thy mercy promised, and depend upon the promise for it." They that are governed by the precepts of the word, and are resolved to keep them, (v. 57.) may plead the promises of the word, and take the comfort of them.

59. I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. 60. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.

David had said he would keep God's word, (v. 57.) and it was well said; now here he tells us how and in what method he pursued that resolution.

1. He thought on his ways; he thought beforehand what he should do, pondering the path of his feet, (Prov. iv. 26.) that he might walk surely, and not at all adventures; he thought after what he had done, reflected upon his life past, and recollected the paths he had walked in, and the steps he had taken. The word signifies a fixed, abiding, thought. Some make it an allusion to those who work embroidery, who are very exact and careful to cover the least flaw; or, to those who cast up their accounts, who reckon with themselves, What do I owe? What am I worth? I thought not on my wealth, (as the covetous man, xlix. 11.) but on my ways; not what I have, but what I do: what we do will follow us into another world, when what we have must be left behind. Many are critical enough in their remarks upon other people's ways, who never think of their own; but let every man prove his own work.

2. He turned his feet to God's testimonies; he determined to make the word of God his rule, and to walk by that rule. He turned from the by-paths to which he had turned aside, and returned to God's testimonies; he turned not only his eye to them, but his feet; his affections to the love of God's word, and his conversation to the practice of it. The thoughts and inclinations of his soul were toward God's testimonies, and his conversation was governed by them. Penitent reflections must produce pious resolutions.

3. He did this immediately, and without demur; (v. 60.) I made haste, and delayed not. When we are under convictions of sin, we must strike while the iron is hot, and not think to defer the preservation of them, as if our day were distant, and our life long. When we are called to duty, we must lose no time, but set about it to-day, while it is called to-day.

Now, this account, which David here gives of himself, may refer to his constant practice every day; he reflected on his ways at night, directed his feet to God's testimonies in the morning, and what his hand found to do that was good, he did it without delay; or it may refer to his first acquaintance with God and religion, when he began to throw off the vanity of youth, and turn to serious reflection upon his Creator: that blessed change was, by the grace of God, thus wrought. Note, (1.) Conversion begins in serious consideration, Ezek. xviii. 28. Luke xv. 17. (2.) Consideration must end in a sound conversion. To what purpose have we thought on our ways, if we do not turn our feet with all speed to God's testimonies?

61. The bands of the wicked have robbed me: but I have not forgotten thy law.

Here is, 1. The malice of David's enemies against him; they were wicked men, who hated him for his godliness: there were bands or troops of them confederate against him; they did him all the mischief they could, they robbed him; having endeavoured to take away his good name, (v. 51.) they set upon his goods, and spoiled him of them, either by plunder in time of war, or by fines and confiscations under colour of law. Saul (it is likely) seized his effects; Absalom his palace; the Amalekites rifled Ziklag. Worldly wealth is what we may be robbed of; David, though a man of war, could not keep his own. "Thieves break through and steal."

2. The testimony of David's conscience for him, that he had held fast his religion when he was stripped of every thing else, as Job did, when the bands of the Chaldeans and Sabeans had robbed him; But I have not forgotten thy law. No care or grief should drive God's word out of our minds, or hinder our comfortable relish of it, and converse with it. Nor must we ever think the worse of the ways of God for the troubles we meet with in these ways, nor fear being losers by our religion at last, however we may be losers for it now.

62. At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee, because of thy righteous judgments.

Though David is, in this psalm, much in prayer, yet he did not neglect the duty of thanksgiving; for those that pray much will have much to give thanks for.

See, 1. How much God's hand was eyed in his thanksgivings; he does not say, "I will give thanks, because of thy favours to me, which I have the comfort of," but, "Because of thy righteous judgments: all the dispensations of thy providence in wisdom and equity, which thou hast the glory of." We must give thanks for the asserting of God's honour, and the accomplishing of his word in all he does in the government of the world.

2. How much David's heart was set upon his thanksgivings; he would rise at midnight, to give thanks to God. Great and good thoughts kept him awake, and refreshed him, instead of sleep; and so zealous was he for the honour of God, that when others were in their beds, he was upon his knees at his devotions. He did not affect to be seen of men in it, but gave thanks in secret, where our heavenly Father sees. He had praised God in the courts of the Lord's house, and yet he will do it in his bed-chamber. Public worship will not excuse us from secret worship. When David found his heart affected with God's judgments, he immediately offered up those break through and steal in actual adorations, not defecting, lest they should cool. Yet observe his reverence; he did not lie still and give thanks, but rose out of his bed, perhaps, in the cold and in the dark, to do it the more solemnly. And see what a good husband he was of time; when he could not lie and sleep, he would rise and pray.

63. I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.

David had often expressed the great love he had to God, here he expresses the great love he had to the people of God; and observe,

1. Why he loved them; not so much because they were his best friends, most firm to his interest, and most forward to serve him, but because they were such as feared God, and kept his precepts, and so did him honour, and helped him to support his kingdom among men. Our love to the saints is then sincere, when we love them for the sake of what we see of God in them, and the service they do to him.

2. How he showed his love to them; he was a companion of them. He had not only a spiritual communion with them in the same faith and hope, but he joined with them in holy ordinances in the courts of the Lord, where rich and poor, prince and peasant, meet together; he sympathized with them in their joys and sorrows, (Heb. x. 33.) he conversed familiarly with them, communicated his expe-
64. The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes.

Here, 1. David pleads that God is good to all the creatures, according to their necessities and capacities; as the heaven is full of God's glory, so the earth is full of his mercy, full of the instances of his pity and bounty. Nor only the land of Canaan, where God did keep Abraham, was well husbanded, but the whole earth, in many parts of which he has no homage paid him, is full of his mercy: not only the children of men upon the earth, but even the inferior creatures, taste of God's goodness; his tender mercies are over all his works.

2. He therefore prays that God would be good to him according to his necessity and capacity; "Teach me thy statutes." Thou feedest the young ravens that are ready to leave the nest; and therefore for thee, O God, not feed me with spiritual food, the bread of life, which my soul needs and craves, and cannot subsist without? The earth is full of thy mercy; and is not heaven too? Wilt thou not then give me spiritual blessings in heavenly places? A gracious heart will fetch an argument from any thing, to enforce a petition for divine teaching. Surely he that will not let his birds be unfed, will not let his children be untaught.

9. TETH.

65. Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word.

Here, 1. David makes a thankful acknowledgment of God's gracious dealings with him all along; Thou hast dealt well with thy servant. However God has dealt with us, we must own he has dealt well with us, better than we deserve; and all in love, and with design to work for our good. In many instances, God has done well for us, beyond our expectations; he has done well for all his servants; never any of them complained that he had used them hardly. Thou hast dealt well with me, not only according to thy mercy, but according to thy word. God's favours look best when they are compared with the promise, and are seen flowing from that fountain.

2. Upon these experiences he grounds a petition for divine instruction; "Teach me good judgment and knowledge, that, by thy grace, I may render again, in some measure, according to the benefit done unto me." Teach me a good taste, (so the word signifies,) a good relish, to discern things that differ, to distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil; for the ear tries words, as the mouth tastes meat. We should pray to God for a sound mind, that we may discern the current moral stories exercised, Heb. v. 14. Many have knowledge, who have little judgment; they who have both, are well fortified against the snares of Satan, and well furnished for the service of God, and their generation.

3. This petition is backed with a plea; "For I have believed thy commandments; received them, and consented to them that they are good, and submitted to their government; therefore, Lord, teach me." Where God has given a good heart, a good head too may in faith be prayed for.

67. Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.

David here tells us what he has experienced,

1. Of the temptations of a prosperous condition; "Before I was afflicted, while I lived in peace and plenty, and knew no sorrow, I went astray from God and my duty." Sin is going astray; and then we are most apt to wander from God, when we are easy and think ourselves at home in the world. Prosperity is the unhappy occasion of much iniquity; it makes men more easy; they please themselves, indulgent of the flesh, forgetful of God, in love with the world, and deaf to the reproofs of the word. See xxx. 6. It is good for us, when we are afflicted, to remember how, and wherein, we went astray, before we were afflicted, that we may answer the end of the affliction.

2. Of the benefit of an afflicted state; "Now have I kept thy word, and so have been recovered from my wanderings. God often makes use of afflictions as a means to reduce those to himself who have wandered from him. Sanctified afflictions humble us for sin, and show us the vanity of the world; they soften the heart, and open the eye to discipline. The prodigal's distress brought him to himself first, and then to his father."

68. Thou art good, and dost good: teach me thy statutes.

Here, 1. David praises God's goodness, and gives him the glory of it; Thou art good, and dost good. All who have eyes to see know how lovingly he deals with him, that he will own that he does good, and therefore will conclude that he is good. The streams of God's goodness are so numerous, and run so full, so strong, to all the creatures, that we must conclude the fountain that is in himself to be inexhaustible. We cannot conceive how much good our God does every day, much less can we conceive how good he is. Let us acknowledge it with admiration, and with holy love and thankfulness.

2. He prays for God's grace, and begs to be under the guidance and influence of it; Teach me thy statutes. "Lord, thou dost good to all, art the bountiful Benefactor of all the creatures; this is the good I beg thou wilt do to me,—Instruct me in my duty incline me to it, and enable me to do it. Thou art good, and dost good; Lord, teach me thy statutes. that I may be good, and do good, may have a good heart, and live a good life. It is an encouragement to poor sinners to hope that God will teach them his way, because he is good and upright, xxv. 8.

69. The proud have forged a lie against me: but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart. 70. Their heart is as fat as grease: but I delight in thy law.

David here tells us how he was affected as to the proud and wicked people that were about him.

1. He did not fear their malice, nor was he by it deterred from his duty; They have forged a lie against me; thus they aimed to take away his good name: nay, all we have in the world, even life itself, may be brought into danger by those who make no pause in their malice. They have envied David's reputation, because it eclipsed them; and therefore did all they could to blemish him: they took a pride in trampling upon him: they therefore persuaded themselves it was no sin to tell a deliberate lie, if it might but expose him to contempt. Their wicked wit forged lies, invented stories, which there was not the least colour for, to serve their wicked designs. And what did David do, when he was thus belied? He will bear it pateply; he will keep that precept which forbids
him to render railing for railing, and will with all his heart sit down silent. He will go on in his duty with constancy and resolution; "Let them say what they will, I will keep thy precepts, and not tread their reproach."

2. He did not envy their prosperity, nor was he by it allured from his duty; Their heart is as fat as grease. The proud are at ease; (cxiii. 4.) they are full of the world, and the wealth and pleasures of it; and this makes them, (1.) Senseless, secure; and stupid; they are past feeling; thus the phrase is used, (Isa. vi. 10.) Make the heart of these people fat. They are not sensible of the touch of the word of God, or his rod. (2.) Sensual and voluptuous; Their eyes stand out with fatness; (Ps. lxxiii. 7.) they roll themselves in the pleasures of sense, and take up with them as their chief good; and much good may it do them, I would not change conditions with them; I delight in thy law; I build my security upon the promises of God's word, and have pleasure enough in communion with God, infinitely preferable to all their delights. The children of God, who are acquainted with spiritual pleasures, need not envy the children of this world their carnal pleasures.

71. It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.

See here, 1. That it has been the lot of the best saints to be afflicted. The proud and the wicked live in pomp and pleasure, while David, though he did not close in with God and his duty, was still in affliction.

Water of a full cup are wrung out to God's people, lxxiii. 10.

2. That it has been the advantage of God's people to be afflicted. David could speak experimentally; It was good for me; many a good lesson he had learnt by his afflictions, and many a good duty he had been brought to, which otherwise had been unlearnt and undone. Therefore God visited him with affliction, that he might learn God's statutes; and the intention was answered, the afflictions had contributed to the improvement of his knowledge and grace. He that chastened him taught him. The rod and reproof give wisdom.

72. The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.

This is a reason why David reckoned, that, when by his afflictions he learned God's statutes, and the profit did so much balance the loss, he was really a gainer by them; for God's law, which he got acquaintance with by his affliction, was better to him than all the gold and silver which he lost by his affliction.

1. David had but a little of the word of God, in comparison with what we have, yet see how highly he valued it; how inexcusable then are we, who have both the Old and New Testament complete, and yet account them as a strange thing! Observe, Therefore he valued the law, because it is the law of God's mouth, the revelation of his will, and ratified by his authority.

2. He had a great deal of gold and silver, in comparison with what we have, yet see how little he valued it; his riches increased, and yet he did not set his heart upon them, but upon the word of God. That was better to him, yielded him better pleasures, and better maintenance, and a better inheritance, than all the treasures he was master of. Those that have read, and believe, David's Psalms and Solomon's Ecclesiastes, cannot but prefer the word of God far above the wealth of this world.

10. JOD.

73. Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me; give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.

Here, 1. David adores God as the God of nature, and the Author of his being; Thy hands have made me and fashioned me, Job x. 8. Every man is as truly the work of God's hands as the first man was, Ps. cxxxxix. 15, 16. "Thy hands have not only made me, and given me a being, otherwise I would have never been, but fashioned me, and given me this being, the noble and excellent being, endowed with these powers and faculties;" and we must own that we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

2. He addresses himself to God as the God of grace, and begs he will be the Author of his new and better being. God made us to serve him and enjoy him; but by sin we have made ourselves unable for his service, and indisposed for the enjoyment of him; and we must have a new and divine nature, otherwise we had the human nature in vain; therefore David prays, "Lord, since thou hast made me by thy power for thy glory, make me anew by thy grace, that I may answer the ends of my creation, and live to some purpose; give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments." The way in which God recovers and secures his interest in men, is, by giving them an understanding; for by that door he enters into the soul, and gains possession of it.

74. They that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy word.

Here is, 1. The confidence of this good man in the hope of God's salvation; I have hoped in thy word; and I have not found it in vain to do so; it has not failed me, nor have I been disappointed in my expectations from it. It is a hope that maketh not ashamed; but is present satisfaction, and fruition at last.

2. The concurrence of other good men with him in the joy of that salvation; They that fear thee, will be glad when they see me relieved by my hope in thy word, and delivered according to my hope.

The comforts which some of God's children have in God, and the favours they have received from him, should be matter of joy to others of them. St. Paul often expressed the hope that for God's grace to him thanks would be rendered by many, 2 Cor. i. 11.—iv. 15. Or it may be taken more generally; good people are glad to see one another; they are especially pleased with those (and, as I may say, proud of them) who are eminent for their hope in God's word.

75. I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

Still David is in affliction, and, being so, he owns, 1. That his sin was justly corrected; I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, are righteous ness itself. However God is pleased to afflict us, he does us no wrong, nor can we charge him with any iniquity, but must acknowledge that it is less than we have deserved. We know that God is holy in his nature, and wise and just in all the acts of his government, and therefore we cannot but know, in the general, that his judgments are right, though, in some particular instances, there may be difficulties which we cannot easily resolve.

2. That God's promise was graciously performed. The former may silence us under our afflictions, and forbid us to repine, but this may satisfy us, and enable us to rejoice; for afflictions are in the covenant, and therefore they are not only not meant for our hurt, but they are really intended for
our good; "In faithfulness thou hast afflicted me, pursuant to the great design of my salvation. It is easier to own, in general, that God's judgments are right, that to own it when they come to favor our own case. David subscribes to it with application, "Even my afflictions are just and kind."

76. Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant. 77. Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight.

Here is, 1. An earnest petition to God for his favour. They that own the justice of God in their afflictions, (as David had done, v. 75.) may, in faith, and with humble boldness, be earnest for the mercy of God, and the tokens and fruits of that mercy, in their affliction. He prays for God's merciful kindness, (v. 76.) his tender mercies, v. 77. He can claim nothing as his due, but all his supports under his affliction must come from mere mercy and compassion, to one in misery, one in want. "Let these come to me," that is, "the evidence of them; clear it up to me, that thou hast a kindness for me, and mercy in store; and let the effects of them come; let them work my relief and deliverance."

2. The benefit he promised himself from God's loving-kindness; "Let it come to me for my comfort;" (v. 76.) that will comfort me, when nothing else will; that will comfort me, whatever grieveth me." Gracious souls fetch all their comfort from a gracious God, as the Fountain of all happiness and joy; "Let it come to me, that I may live, that I may be revived, and my life may be made sweet to me, for I have no joy of it while I am under God's displeasure. In his favour is life, in his frowns are death." A good man cannot live, with any satisfaction, any longer than he has some tokens of God's favour to him.

3. His pleas for the benefits of God's favour. He pleads, (1.) God's promise; "Let me have thy kindness, according to thy word unto thy servant; the kindness which thou hast promised, and because thou hast promised it." Our Master has passed his word to all his servants, that he will be kind to them, and they may plead it with him. (2.) His own confidence and complacency in that promise; "Thy law is my delight; I hope in thy word, and rejoice in the same." Those that delight in the law of God, may depend upon the favour of God, for it shall certainly make them happy.

78. Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: but I will meditate in thy precepts. 79. Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.

Here David shows, 1. How little he valued the ill-will of sinners. There were those that dealt perversely with him, that were peevish and ill-conditioned toward him, that sought advantages against him, and misconstrued all he said and did. Even those that dealt most fairly may meet with those that deal perversely. But David mattered it not, for, (1.) He knew it was without cause, and that for his love they were his adversaries. The causeless reproach, like the curse, causes no evil, may be easily slighted; it does not hurt and therefore should not move us. (2.) He could pray, in faith, that they might be ashamed of it, God's dealing favourably with him might make them ashamed to think that they had dealt perversely with him. "Let them be ashamed; let them be brought either to repentance or to ruin." (3.) He could go on in the way of his duty, and find comfort in that. "However they deal with me, I will meditate in thy precepts, and entertain myself with them."

2. How much he valued the good-will of saints, and how desirous he was to stand right in their opinion, and keep up his interest in them, and communion with them: Let those that fear thee, turn to me. He does not mean so much that they might side with him, and take up arms in his cause, as that they might love him, and pray for him, and associate with him. Good men desire the friendship and society of those that are good. Some think it intimates, that, when David had been guilty of that foul sin in the murder of Uriah, though he was a king, they that feared God grew strange to him, and turned from him, for they were ashamed of him; this troubled him, and therefore he prays, Lord, let them turn to me again. He desires especially the company of those that were not only honest, but intelligent, that have known thy testimonies, have good heads as well as good hearts, and whose conversation will be edifying. It is desirable to have an intimacy with such.

80. Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed.

Here is, 1. David's prayer for sincerity, that his heart might be brought to God's statutes, and that it might be sound in them, not rotten and deceitful; that he might not rest in the form of godliness, but be acquainted with, and subject to, the power of it; that he might see the beauty and constant in religion, and that his soul might be in health.

2. His dread of the consequences of hypocrisy: that I be not ashamed. Shame is the portion of hypocrites, either here, if it be repented of, or hereafter, if it be not; "Let my heart be sound, that I fall not into scandalous sin, that I fall not quite off from the ways of God, and so shame myself. Let my heart be sound, that I may come boldly to the throne of grace, and may lift up my face without spot at the great day."

11. CAPH.

81. My soul fainteth for thy salvation; but I hope in thy word. 82. Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?

Here we have the Psalmsist, Longing for help from heaven; My soul faints, mine eyes fail. He longs for the salvation of the Lord, and for his word, that is, salvation according to the word. He is not thus eager for the creatures of fancy, but for the objects of faith; salvation from the present calamities under which he was groaning, and the doubts and fears which he was oppressed with. It may be understood of the coming of the Messiah, and so he speaks in the name of the Old Testament church; the souls of the faithful even then looked to the salvation which the prophets testified; (1 Pet. i. 10.) their eyes failed for it. Abraham saw it at a distance, and so did others, but at such a distance that it put their eyes to the stretch, and they could not steadfastly see it. David was now under prevailing dejections, and, having been long so, his eyes cried out, When wilt thou comfort me? Comfort me with thy salvation, comfort me with thy word. Observe, (1.) The suffering and complainings of God's people are secured to them by the word, which will certainly be fulfilled in its season. (2.) The promised salvation and comfort may be, and often are, long-deferred, so that they are ready to faint and fall in the expectation of them. (3.) Though we think the time long ere the promised salvation and comfort come, yet we must still keep our eye upon it, and resolve to
take up with nothing short of it. "Thy salvation, thy loved, thy comfort, are what my heart is still upon." 2. Waiting for that help; assured that it will come, and tarrying till it doth come; But I hope in thy word; and, but for hope, the heart would break. When the eyes fail, yet the faith must not; for the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and shall not lie.

33. For I am become like a bottle in the smoke, yet do I not forget thy statutes.

David begs God would make haste to comfort him. 1. Because his affliction was great, and therefore he was an object of God's pity; Lord, make haste to help me, for I am become like a bottle in the smoke, a leather bottle, what is in the throne, which, if it hang any while in the smoke, was not only blackened with soot, but dried, and parched, and shrivelled up. David was thus wasted by age, and sickness, and sorrow. See how affliction will mortar the strongest and stoutest of men! David had been of a ruddy countenance, as fresh as a rose; but now he is withered, his colour is gone, his cheeks are furrowed. Thus does man's beauty consume under God's rebuke, and how many: and he is in the throne, which, if the heart is in the throne, the heart suffers, and suffers greatly. 2. Because, though his affliction was great, yet it had not driven him from his duty, and therefore he was within the reach of God's promise; Yet do I not forget thy statutes. Whatever our outward condition is, we must not cool in our affection to the word of God, nor let that slip out of our minds; no care, no grief, must crowd that out. As some drink and forget the law, (Prov. xxxi. 5,) so others weep and forget the law; but we must, in every condition, both prosperous and adverse, have the things of God in remembrance; and, if we are mindful of God's statutes, we may pray and hope that he will be mindful of our sorrows, though for a time he seems to forget us.

34. How many are the days of thy servant? when wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?

Here, 1. David prays against the instruments of his troubles, that God would make haste to execute judgment on those that persecuted him. He prays not for power to avenge himself, (he bore no malice to any,) but that God would take to himself the vengeance that belonged to him, and would repay, (Rom. 12.19,) the wages of wickedness in the coin of the days. 2. He prays that the execution of judgment will be a day of great and terrible day it will be, when God will execute judgment on all the proud persecutors of his people; tribulation to them that troubled them; Enoch foretold it, (Jude 14.) whose prophecy perhaps David here had an eye to; and that day we are to look for, and pray for the hastening of; Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

The long continuance of his trouble; "How many are the days of thy servant? The days of my life are but few;" so some; "therefore let them not all be miserable; and therefore make haste to appear for me against my enemies, before I go hence, and shall be seen no more." Or rather, "The days of my affliction are many, thou seest, Lord, how many they be; when wilt thou return in mercy to me? Sometimes, for the elects' sake, the days of trouble are shortened. Oh let the days of my trouble be shortened; I am thy servant; and therefore, as the eyes of a servant are to the hand of his master, so are mine to thee, until that thou have mercy on me."

83. The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after thy law. 36. All thy commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help thou me. 87. They had almost consumed me upon earth: but I forsook not thy precepts.

David's state was herein a type and figure of the state both of Christ and Christians, that he was grievously persecuted: as there are many of his psalms, so there are many of the verses of this psalm, which complain of this, as those here. Where observe,

1. The account he gives of his persecutors, and their malice against him. (1.) They were proud, and in their pride they persecuted him, glorying in this, that they could trample upon one who was so much cried up, and hoping to raise themselves on his ruins. (2.) They were unjust; they persecuted him wrongfully; so far was he from giving them any provocation, that he had studied to oblige them; but for his love they were his adversaries. (3.) They were spiteful; they digged pits for him; which showed that they were deliberate in their designs against him, and that what they did was of malice prepense: it intimates likewise, that they were subtle and crafty, and had the serpent's head as well as the serpent's venom; that they were industrious, and would refuse no pains to do him a mischief; and treacherous, laying snares in secret for him, as hunters do to take wild beasts, xxxv. 7. Such has been the enmity of the serpent's seed to the seed of the woman. (4.) They herein showed their enmity to God himself; the pits they digged for him were not after God's law; he means, they were very much against his law, which forbids to devise evil to one's neighbors and has particularly said, Touch not mine anointed. The law appointed, that if a man digged a pit which occasioned any mischief, he should answer for the mischief, (Exod. xxii. 33, 34.) much more, when it was digged with a mischievous design. (5.) They carried on their designs against him so far, that they had almost consumed him upon earth; they went near to ruin him and all his interests. It is possible that he who shall shortly be consumed in heaven, may be, for the present, almost consumed on earth; and it is of the Lord's mercies, (and, considering the malice of their enemies, it is a miracle of mercy,) that they are not quite consumed. But the bush in which God is, though it burns, shall not be burnt up.

2. His application to God in his persecuted state. (1.) He acknowledges the truth and goodness of his religion, though he suffered; "However it be, all thy commandments are faithful, on them I may rely." (2.) He begs that God would also show that he was a faithful servant, and persecute me, help thou me; help me under my troubles, that I may bear them patiently, and as becomes me, and may still hold fast my integrity, and in due time help me out of my troubles. God help me, is an excellent comprehensive prayer; it is pity that it should ever be used lightly, and as a by-word.

3. His adherence to his duty, notwithstanding all the malice of his persecutors; (v. 87.) But I forsook not thy precepts. That which they aimed at, was,
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to frighten him from the ways of God, but they could not prevail; he would sooner forsake all that was dear to him in this world, than forsake the word of God; would sooner lose his life, than lose the comfort of doing his duty.

88. Quicken me after thy loving-kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.

Here is, 1. David in care to be found in the way of his duty; his constant desire and design are, to keep the testimonies of God's mouth, to keep to it as his rule, and to keep hold of it as his confidence and portion for ever. This we must keep, whatever we lose.

2. David at prayer for divine grace to assist him therein; "Quicken me after thy loving-kindness; make me alive, and make me lively, so shall I keep thy testimonies; implying, that otherwise he should not keep them. We cannot proceed, nor persevere, in the good way, unless God quicken us, and put life into us; we are therefore here taught to depend upon the grace of God for strength to do every good work, and to depend upon it as grace, as purely the fruit of God's favour. He had prayed before, Quicken me in thy righteousness; (v. 40.) but here, Quicken me after thy loving-kindness. The surest token of God's good-will toward us, is his good work in us.

12. LAMED.

89. For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. 90. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations; thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. 91. They continue this day according to thine ordinances; for all are thy servants.

Here, 1. The psalmist acknowledges the unchangeableness of the word of God, and of all his counsels. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled. Thou art for ever thyself, so some read it; thou art the same, and with thee there is no variableness, and this is a proof of it. Thy word, by which the heavens were established, is settled there in the abiding products of it;" or the settling of God's word in heaven, is opposed to the changes and revolutions that are here upon earth. All flesh is grass; but the word of the Lord endures for ever. It is settled in heaven, in the secret counsel of God, which is hid in himself, and is far above out of our sight, and is immoveable, as mountains of brass. And his revealed will is as firm as his secret will; as he will fulfill the thoughts of his heart, so no word of his shall fail to the end; for it follows here, Thy faithfulness is unto all generations; the promise is sure to every age of the church, and it cannot be antiquated by track of time. The promises that look ever so far forward shall be performed in their season.

2. He produces, for proof of it, the constancy of the course of nature; Thou hast established the earth, and it abides; it is what it was at first made, and where it was placed at first made. He hath given it weight, and, notwithstanding the convulsions in its own bowels, the agitations of the sea that is interwoven with it, and the violent concussions of the atmosphere that surrounds it, remains unmoveo. "They" (the heavens and the earth, and all the hosts of both) "continue to this day according to thine ordinances; they remain in the places wherein thou hast set them, they fill up the place assigned them, and answer the purposes for which they were intended. "The stability of the ordinances of day and night, of heaven and earth, is produced, to prove the perpetuity of God's covenant, Jer. xxxi. 35. 36. —xxxiv. 20. 21. It is by virtue of God's promise to Noah, (Gen. viii. 22.) that day and night, sum-

mer and winter, observe a steady course. "They have continued to this day, and shall still continue to the end of time, acting according to the ordinances which were at first given them; for all are thy servants, they entertain, and set forth thy glory, and in both are thy servants." All the creatures are, in their places, and according to their capacities, serviceable to their Creator, and answer the ends of their creation; and shall man be the only rebel, the only revoler from his allegiance, and the only unprofitable blemish of the earth?

92. Unless thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction.

Here is, 1. The great distress that David was in; he was in affliction, and ready to perish in his affliction; not likely to die, so much as likely to despair: he was ready to give up all for gone, and to lock upon himself as cut off from God's sight; he therefore, with admirable faith and hope, declares that he had not perished, that he kept the possession of his own soul, and was not driven out of his wits by his troubles, but especially that he was enabled to keep close to his God, and was not driven off from his religion by them. Though we are not kept from affliction, yet, if we are kept from perishing in our affliction, we have no reason to say, We have cleansed our hands in vain; or, What profit is it that we have worshipped God?

2. His support in this distress. God's law was his delight, (1.) It had been so formerly, and the remembrance of that was a comfort to him; as it afforded him a good evidence of his integrity. (2.) It was so now in his affliction; it afforded him abundant matter of comfort, and from these fountains of life he drew living waters, when the cisterns of the creature were broken or dried up. His converse with God's law, and his meditations on it, were his delightful entertainment in solitude and sorrow. A Bible is a pleasant companion at any time, if we please.

93. I will never forget thy precepts; for with them thou hast quickened me.

Here is, 1. A very good resolution; "I will never forget thy precepts, but will always return a remembrance of, and regard to, thy word as my rule." It is a resolution for perpetuity, never to be altered. Note, The best evidence of our love to the word of God, is, never to forget it. We must resolve that we will never, at any time, cast off our religion, and never, upon any occasion, lay aside our religion, but that we will be constant to it, and preserve it in it. 2. A very good reason for it; "For by them thou hast quickened me; not only they are quickening, but," (1.) "They have been so to me, I have found them so." Those speak best of the things of God who speak by experience, who can say, that by the word the spiritual life has been begun in them, maintained and strengthened in them, excited and comforted in them. (2.) "Thou hast made them so;" the word of itself, without the grace of God, would not quicken us; ministers can but prophesy upon the dry bones, they cannot put life into them; but, ordinarily, the grace of God works by the word, and makes use of it as a means of quickening; and this is a good reason why we should never forget it, but should highly value what God has put such honour upon, and dearly love what we have found such benefit by, and hope still to find. See here what is the best help for bad memories, namely, good affec-

tions; if we are quickened by the word, we should never forget it; nay, that word that does really quicken us to, and in, our duty, is not forgotten; though the expressions be lost, if the impressions remain, it is well.
94. I am thine; save me; for I have sought thy precepts.

Here, 1. David claims relation to God: "I am thine, devoted to thee, and owned by thee, thine in covenant." He does not say, Thou art mine, (as Dr. Manton observes,) though that follows of course, because that was a higher challenge; but, I am thine, expressing himself in a more humble and dutiful way of resignation; nor does he say, I am thus, but, I am thine, not pleading his own good pretensions to qualification, but God's proprietor in him; "I am thine, not my own, not the world's."

2. He proves his claim; "I have sought thy precepts, I have carefully inquired concerning my duty, and diligently endeavoured to do it." This will be the best evidence that we belong to God; all that are his, though they have not found perfection, are seeking it.

3. He improves his claim; "I am thine; save me, save me from sin, save me from ruin." Those that have, in sincerity, given up themselves to God, to be his, may be sure that he will protect them, and preserve them to his heavenly kingdom, Mal. iii. 18.

95. The wicked have waited for me, to destroy me: but I will consider thy testimonies.

Here, 1. David complains of the malice of his enemies; The wicked (and none but such would be so good a man) have waited for me, (not they,) to destroy me; they were very cruel, and aimed at no less than his destruction; they were very crafty, and sought all opportunities to do him a mischief; and they were confident, they expected, (so some read it,) that they should destroy him, they thought themselves sure of their prey.

2. He comforts himself in the word of God, as his protection; While they are prevailing my destruction, I consider thy testimonies, which secure to me my salvation." God's testimonies are then likely to be our support, when we consider them, and dwell in our thoughts upon them.

96. I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad.

Here we have David's testimony, from his own experience,

1. Of the vanity of the world, and its insufficiency to make us happy; I have seen an end of all perfection. Poor perfection which one sees an end of! Yet such are all those things in this world which pass for perfections. David, in his time, had seen Goliath, the strongest, overcome; Asahel, the swiftest, taken; Ahithophel, the wisest, befooled; Absalom, the fairest, deformed; and, in short, he had seen an end of perfection, of all perfection; he saw it by faith, he saw it by observation, he saw an end of the perfection of the creature, both in respect of sufficiency, it was scanty and defective, (there is that to be done for us which the creature cannot do,) and, in respect of continuance, it will not last our time, for it will not last to eternity, as we must. The glory of man is but as the flower of the grass.

2. Of the fulness of the word of God, and its sufficiency for our satisfaction; But thy commandment is broad, exceeding broad. The word of God reaches to all cases, to all times. The divine law lays a restraint upon the whole man, is designed to sanctify us wholly. There is a great deal required and forbidden in every commandment. The divine promise (for that also is commanded) extends itself to all our burthens, wants, and grievances, and has that in it which will make a portion and happiness for us when we have seen an end of all perfection.

13. MEM.

97. O how I love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.

Here is, 1. David's inexpressible love to the word of God; O how I love I thy law! He protests his affection to the word of God with a holy vehemency; not from love to it in his heart, which, no mattering the corruption of his nature, and the temptation of the world, he could not but wonder at, and at that grace which had wrought it in him. He not only loved the promises, but loved the law, and delighted in it after the inner man.

2. An unexceptionable evidence of this. What we love, we love to think of; by this appeared that David loved the word of God, it was his meditation. He not only read the book of the law, but read in his thoughts, and was delivered into it as into a mould: it was his meditation, not only in the night, when he was silent and solitary, and had nothing else to do, but in the day, when he was full of business and company; nay, and all the day some good thoughts were interwoven with his common thoughts; so full was he of the word of God.

98. Thou, through thy commandments, hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. 99. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.

We have here an account of David's learning, not that of the Egyptians, but of the Israelites indeed.

1. The good method by which he got it. In his youth, he minded business in the country, as a shepherd; from his youth, he minded business in the court and camp; which way, then, could he get any great store of learning? He tells us here how he came by it; he had it from God as the Author; Thou hast made me wise: all true wisdom is from God. He had it by the word of God, as the means; by his commandments, and his testimonies. These are able to make us wise to salvation, and to furnish the man of God for every good work.

(1.) These David took for his constant companions; "They are ever with me, ever in my mind, ever in my eye." A good man, wherever he goes, carries his Bible along with him, if not in his hands, yet in his head and in his heart. (2.) These he took for the delightful subject of his thoughts; they were his meditation, not only as matters of speculation for his entertainment, as scholars meditate on their notions, but as matters of concern, for his right management, as men of business think of their business, that they may do it in the best manner. (3.) These he took for the commanding rules of all his actions; I keep thy precepts; I make conscience of doing my duty in every thing. The best way to improve in knowledge is, to abide and abound in all the instances of serious godliness for, if any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine of Christ, shall know more and more of it, John vii. 17. The love of the truth prepares for the light of it; the pure in heart shall see God here.

2. The great eminency he attained to in it. By studying and practising God's commandments, and making them his rule, he learnt to behave himself wisely in all his ways, 1 Sam. xviii. 14. (1.) He outwitted his enemies; Goliath made him wise to battle and defeat their designs against him than they were to lay them. Heavenly wisdom will carry the point, at last, against carnal policy. By keeping the commandments, we secure
God on our side, and make him our Friend, and therein are certainly wiser than those that make him their head by keeping the common judgments; we preserve to ourselves that peace and quiet of mind which our enemies would rob us of, and so are wise for ourselves, wiser than they are for themselves, for this world as well as for the other. (2.) He outstrip his teachers, and had more understanding than all of them. He means either those who would have been his teachers, who blamed his conduct, and undertook to prescribe to him: by keeping God's commandments, he managed his matters so, that it appeared, in the event, he had taken the right measures, and they had taken the wrong. Or, he may mean those who should have been his teachers, the priests and Levites, who sat in Moses's chair, and whose lips ought to have kept knowledge, but who neglected the study of the law, and minded their honours and revenues, and the formalities only of their religion; and so David, who conversed much with the Scripture by that means, became more intelligent than they. Or, he may mean those who had been his teachers when he was young; he built so well upon the foundation which they had laid, that, with the help of his Bible, he became able to teach them, to teach them all. He was not now a babe that needed milk, but had spiritual senses exercised, Heb. v. 14. It is no reflection upon our teachers, but rather an honour to them, to prove them so really to exceed them, and not to need them. By meditation, we preach to ourselves, and so we come to understand more than our teachers, for we come to understand our own hearts, which they cannot. (3.) He outdid the ancients; either those of his day, he was young, like Elisha, and they were very old, (but his keeping of God's precepts taught him more wisdom than the multitude of their years, Job xxxiii. 7, 8.) or those of former days: he himself quotes the proverb of the ancients, Prov. v. 7, but he applied and gave him to understand things better than he could do by tradition, and all the learning that was handed down from preceding ages. In short, the written word is a sure guide to heaven to all the doctors and fathers, the teachers and ancients, of the church; and the sacred writings kept, and kept to, will teach us more wisdom than all their writings.

101. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep thy word.

Here is, 1. David's care to avoid the ways of sin; "I have refrained my feet from the evil ways they were ready to step aside into; I checked me, and drew back, as soon as I was aware that I was entering into temptation." Though it was a broad way, a green way, a pleasant way, and a way that many walked in, yet, being a sinful way, it was an evil way, and he refrained his feet from it, foreseeing the end of that way. And his care was universal; he shunned every evil way. By the words of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer, Prov. xiv. 24.

2. His care to be found in the way of duty; That I might keep thy word, and never transgress it. His abstaining from sin was, (1.) An evidence that he did conscientiously aim to keep God's word, and had made that his rule. (2.) It was a means of his keeping God's word in the exercises of religion; for we cannot, with any comfort or boldness, attend on God in holy duties, so as in them to keep his word, while we are under guilt, or in any by-way.

102. I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.

Here is, 1. David's constancy in his religion. He had not departed from God's judgments; he had not chosen any other rule than the word of God, nor had he wilfully deviated from that rule. A constant adherence to the ways of God, in trying times, will be a good evidence of our integrity.

2. The cause of his constancy; "For thou hast taught me, they were divine instructions that I learned; I was satisfied that the doctrine was of God, and therefore I stuck to it." Or rather, "It was divine grace in my heart that enabled me to receive those instructions." All the saints are taught of God, for "he it is that gives the understanding; and those, and those only, that are taught of God, will continue to the end in the things that they have learned.

103. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.

Here is, 1. The wonderful pleasure and delight which David took in the word of God; it was sweet to his taste, sweeter than honey. There is such a thing as a spiritual taste, an inward savour and relish of divine things; such an evidence of them to ourselves, by experience, as we cannot give to others. We have heard them ourselves, John iv. 42. To this scripture-taste the word of God is sweet, very sweet, sweeter than any of the gratifications of sense, even those that are most delicious. David speaks as if he wanted words to express the satisfactions he took in the discoveries of the divine will and grace no pleasure was comparable to it.

2. The unspackleable profit and advantage he gained by the word of God; (1.) It helped him to a good head; "Through thy precepts I get understanding, to discern between truth and falsehood, good and evil, so as not to mistake either in the conduct of my own life, or in advising others." (2.) It helped him to a good heart; "Therefore, because I have got understanding of the truth, I hate every false way, and am steadfastly resolved not to turn aside into it." Observe here, The way of sin is a false way, it deceives, and will ruin, all that walk in it; it is the wrong way, and yet it seems to a man right, Prov. xiv. 12. It is the character of every good man, that he hates the way of sin, and hates it because it is a false way: he not only refrains his feet from it, (v. 101.) but he hates it, has an antipathy to it, and a dread of it. Those who hate sin as sin, will hate all sin, hate every false way, because every false way leads to destruction. And the more understanding we get by the word of God, the more rooted will our hatred of sin be; for, to depart from evil, that is understanding; (Job xxviii. 26.) and the more ready we are in the scriptures, the better furnished we are with answers to temptation.

14. NUN.

105. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Observe here, 1. The nature of the word of God, and the great intention of giving it to the world; it is a lamp and a light, it discovers to us that, concerning God and ourselves, which otherwise we could not have known; it shows us what is amiss, and will be dangerous; it directs us in our work and way, and is a dark; a false way; he not only refrains his feet from it; it is a lamp which we may set up by us, and take into our hands for our own particular use, Prov. vi. 23. The commandment is a lamp kept burning with the oil of the Spirit; it is like the lamps in the sanctuary, and the pillar of fire, to Israel.

2. The use we should make of it. It must be not only a light to our eyes, to gratify them, and fill our heads with speculations, but a light to our feet and
to our path, to direct us in the right ordering of our conversation; both in the choice of our way in general, and in particular, we take it in that way; that we may not take a false way, nor a false step in the right way. We are then truly sensible of God's goodness to us in giving us such a lamp and light, when we make it a guide to our feet, our path.

106. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

Here is, I. The motion David had of religion; it is, keeping God's righteous judgments. God's commandments are his judgments, the decrees of infinite wisdom. There are righteous judgments, consonant to the eternal rules of equity, and it is our duty to keep them carefully.

2. The obligation he here laid upon himself to be religious, binding himself, by his own promise, to that which he was already bound to by the divine precept, and all little enough. "I have sworn, I have lifted up my hand to the Lord, and I cannot go back; and therefore must go forward, I will cleave to his ways." Note, (1.) It is good for us to bind ourselves with a solemn oath to be religious. We must swear to the Lord as subjects swear allegiance to their sovereign, promising fealty, appealing to God concerning our sincerity in this promise, and owning ourselves liable to the curse, if we do not perform it. (2.) We must often call to mind the vows of God that are upon us, and remember that we have sworn. (3.) We must make conscience of performing unto the Lord our oaths; (an honest man will, as his word;) nor have we sworn to our own hurt, but it will be unspeakably to our hurt, if we do not perform.

107. I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O Lord, according unto thy word.

Here is, 1. The presentation David makes of the sorrowful condition he was in; I am afflicted very much, afflicted in spirit; he seems to mean that especially; he laboured under many discouragements; without were fightings, within fears: this is occasioned to the best saints, therefore think it not strange if sometimes it be ours.

2. The recourse he has to God in this condition; he prays for his grace, "Quicken me, O Lord; make me lively, make me cheerful, quicken me, by afflictions, to greater diligence in my work: quicken me; deliver me out of my afflictions, which will be as life from the dead." He pleads the promise of God, guides his desires by it, and grounds his hopes upon it; Quicken me according to thy word. David resolved to perform his promises to God, (ver. 106.) and therefore could, with humble boldness, beg of God to make good his word to him.

108. Accept, I beseech thee, the free-will-offerings of my mouth, O Lord, and teach me thy judgments.

Tw. things we are here taught to pray for, in reference to our religious performances.

1. Acceptance of them; this we must aim at in all we do in religion, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of the Lord. That which David here earnestly prays for the acceptance of, is, the free-will-offerings, not of his purse, but of his heart, his praises and prayers; the crown of our lives, (Hos. xiv. 2.) the fruit of our lives, (Heb. i. 15.) these are the spiritual offerings which all Christians, as spiritual priests, must offer to God; and they must be free-will-offerings, for we must offer them abundantly and cheerfully; and it is this willing mind that is accepted. The more there is of freeness and willingness in the service of God, the more pleasing it is to him.

2. Assistance in them; Teach me thy judgments. We cannot offer any thing to God, which we have reason to think he will accept of, but you must be pleased to instruct us in the doing of; and we must be as earnest for the grace of God in us, as for the favour of God towards us.

109. My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law. 110. The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts.

Here is, 1. David in danger of losing his life. There is but a step between him and death, for the wicked have laid a snare for him; Saul did so many a time, because he hated him for his piety. Wherever he was, he found some design or other laid against him to take away his life, for that was it they aimed at; what they could not effect by open violence, he hoped to compass by treachery, which made him say, My soul is continually in my hand: it was not so with him, only as a man, (so it is true of us all;) wherever we are, we lie exposed to the strokes of death, what we carry in our hand, is easily snatched away from us by violence, or, if sandy, as our life is, it easily of itself slips through our fingers,) but as a man of war, a soldier, who often jeopardized his life in the high places of the field; and especially as a man after God's own heart, and, as such, hated and persecuted, and always delivered to death, (2 Cor. iv. 11.) killed all the day long.

2. David in no danger of losing his religion, notwithstanding this. Thus, in jeopardy every hour, and yet constant to God and his duty, none of these things move him: for, (1.) He does not forget the law, and therefore he is likely to persevere. In the multitude of his cares, for his own safety, he finds com in his head and heart for the word of God, and has that in his mind as fresh as ever; and, where that dwells richly, it will be a well of living water. (2.) He has not yet erred from God's precepts, and therefore it is to be hoped he will not. He had stood many a shock, and kept his ground, and surely that grace which had helped him hitherto would not fail him, but would still prevent his wanderings.

111. Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. 112. I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always, even unto the end.

The psalmist here, in a most affectionate manner, like an Israelite indeed, resolves to stick to the word of God, and to live and die by it.

1. He resolves to portion himself in it, and there to seek his happiness, nay, there to enjoy it; "Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart." The present delight he took in them was an evidence that the good things contained in them were, in his account, the best things, and the treasure which he set his heart upon. (1.) He expected an eternal happiness in God's testimonies; the covenant God had made with him was an everlasting covenant, and therefore he took it as a heritage for ever. He says, They shall be my heritage, yet he could say, "I have made choice of them for my heritage, and will never take up with a portion in this life," xvii. 14, 15. God's testimonies are a heritage to all that have received the Spirit of adoption; for, if children, then heirs; they are a heritage for ever, and that no earthly heritage is; (1 Pet. i. 4.) all the saints accept them as such, take up with them, live upon them, and can therefore be content with but little of this world.
2. He enjoyed a present satisfaction in them; They are the rejoicing of my heart, because they will be my heritage for ever. It requires the heart of a good man to see his portion in the promise of God, and not in the possession of this world. He resolves to show himself by it, and thence to take his measures; I have inclined my heart to do thy statutes. They that have the blessings of God's testimonies, must come under the bonds of his statutes. We must look for comfort only in the way of duty, and that duty must be done, (1.) With full consent and complacency; "I have, by the grace of God, inclined my heart to it, and conquered the aversion I had to it." A good man brings his heart to his work, and then it is done well. A gracious disposition to do the will of God is the acceptable principle of all obedience. (2.) With constancy and perseverance. He would perform God's statutes always, in all instances, in the duty of every day, in a constant course of holy walking, and this to the end, without weariness. This is following the Lord fully.

15. SAMECH.

113. I hate vain thoughts; but thy law do I love. 

Here is, 1. David's dread of the risings of sin, and the first beginnings of it; I hate vain thoughts. He does not mean that he hated them in others, for there he could not discern them, but he hated them in his own heart. Every good man makes conscience of his thoughts, for they are words to God: vain thoughts, how light soever most make of them, are sinful and hurtful, and therefore we should account them hateful and dreadful, for they not only divert the mind from that which is good, but open the door to all evil, Jer. iv. 14. Though David could not say that he was free from vain thoughts, yet he could say that he hated them; he did not countenance them, or give them any entertainment, but did what he could to keep them out, at least to keep them under. The evil I do, I allow not. 

2. David's delight in the rule of duty; but thy law do I love, which forbids those vain thoughts, and threatens them. The more we love the law of God, the more we shall get the mastery of our vain thoughts, the more hateful they will be to us, as being contrary to the whole law, and the more watchful shall we be against them, lest they draw us from that we love.

114 Thou art my hiding-place and my shield: I hope in thy word. 

Here is, 1. God's care of David to protect and defend him, which he comforts himself with, when his enemies were very malicious against him; Thou art my Hiding-place, and my Shield. David, when Saul pursued him, often betook himself to close places for shelter. In war, he betook himself with his shield, now God was both these to him; a Hiding-place to preserve him from danger, and a Shield to preserve him in danger, his life from death, and his soul from sin. Good people are safe under God's protection. He is their Strength and their Shield, their Help and their Shield; their Sun and their Shield; their Shield and their great Reward; and here, their Hiding-place and their Shield. They may live in a retir'd place to him, and repose in him as their Hiding-place, where they are kept in secret. They may by faith oppose his power to all the might and malice of their enemies, as their shield to quench every fiery dart. 

2. David's confidence in God; he is safe, and therefore he is easy, under the divine protection. "I hope in thy word, which has acquainted me with thee, and assured me of thy kindness to me?" They who depend on God's promise shall have the benefit of his power, and be taken under his special protection.

115. Depart from me, ye evil-doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God. 

Here is, 1. David's firm and fixed resolution to live a holy life; I will keep the commandments of my God. Bravely resolved! like a saint, like a soldier; for true courage consists in a steady resolution against all sin, and for all duty. These that would keep God's commandments, must be often renewing their resolutions to do so; "I will keep them: whatsoever others do, this I will do; though I be singular, though all about me be evil-doers, and desert me; whatever I have done hitherto, I will for the future walk closely with God. They are the commandments of God, of which I, and therefore I will keep them. He is God, and may command me; my God, and will command me nothing but what is for my good." 

2. His farewell to bad company, pursuant to this resolution; Depart from me, ye evil-doers. Though David, as a good magistrate, was a terror to evil-doers, yet there were many such, even about court, intruding near his person; these he here abdicates, and resolves to have no conversation with them. Note, They that resolve to keep the commandments of God, must have no society with evil-doers; for bad company is a great hindrance to a holy life. We must not choose wicked people for our companions, nor be intimate with them; we must not do as they do, nor do as they would have us do, Ps. i. 1. Eph. v. 11.

116. Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope. 

Here, 1. David prays for sustaining grace; for this grace sufficient he besought the Lord twice; Uphold me, and again, Hold thou me up. He sees himself, not only unable to go on in his duty by any strength of his own, but in danger of falling into sin, unless he was prevented by divine grace; and therefore he is thus earnest for that grace to uphold him in his integrity, (xli. 12.) to keep him from falling, and to keep him from tiring, that he might neither turn aside to evil-doing, nor be weary of well-doing. We stand no longer than God holds us, and go no further than he carries us. 

2. He pleads earnestly for this grace. 

(1.) He pleads the promise of God, his dependence upon the promise, and his expectation from it; "Uphold me, according to thy word, which word I hope in; and if it be not performed, I shall be made ashamed of my hope, and be called a fool for my credulity." But they that hope in God's word may be sure that the word will not fail them, and therefore their hope will not make them ashamed. 

(2.) He pleads the great need he had of God's grace, and the great advantage it would be of to him; Uphold me, that I may live; intimating, that he could not live without the grace of God; he should fall into sin, into death, into hell, if God did not hold him up; but, supported by his hand, he shall live; his spiritual life shall be grounded on the surest foundation, and the rest of eternal life. Hold me up, and I shall be safe; out of danger, and out of the fear of danger. Our holy security is grounded on divine supports. 

(x.) He pleads his resolution, in the strength of this grace, to proceed in his duty; "Hold me up, and then I will have respect unto thy statutes con- tinually, and never to turn my eyes or feet aside from them." I will employ myself, so some; I will de-
light myself, so others, in thy statutes. If God's right hand uphold us, we must, in his strength, go on in our duty; both with diligence and with pleasure. 118. Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes: for their deceit is falsehood. 119. Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love thy testimonies. 120. My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments.

Here is, 1. God's judgments on wicked people, on those that wander from his statutes, that take his measures from other rules, and will not have God reign over them. All depart from God, and hear of his judgments is certainly an error, and will prove a fatal one. These are the wicked of the earth; they mind earthly things, and lay up their treasures in the earth, and live in pleasure on the earth, and are strangers and enemies to heaven and heavenly things. Now, see how God deals with them, that you may neither fear them, nor envy them. (1.) He treads them all down; he brings them to ruin, to utter ruin, to shameful ruin; he makes them his footstool, tramples on them, brings them low; (Amos i. 9.) he has done it many a time, and he will do it, for he resists the proud, and will triumph over those that oppose his kingdom. Proud persecutors trample upon his people, but, sooner or later, he will trample upon them. (2.) He puts them all away like dross. Wicked people are as dross, which, though it be mingled with the good metal in the ore, and seems to be of the same substance with it, must be separated from it. And, in God's account, they are worthless things, the scum and refuse of the earth, and no more to be compared with the righteous, than dross with fine gold. There is a day coming which will put them away from among the righteous, (Matth. xxiii. 49.) so that they shall have no place in their congregations; (Ps. i. 5.) which will put them away into everlasting fire, the fittest place for the dross. Sometimes, in this world, the wicked, by the censures of the church, or the sword of the magistrate, or the judgments of God, put away as dross, Prov. xxv. 4, 5.

2. The reasons of these judgments. God casts them off, because they err from his statutes; they that will not submit to the commands of the word, shall feel the curses of it. And because their deceit is falsehood, because they deceive themselves by setting up false rules, in opposition to God's statutes, which they err from; and because they go about to deceive others with their hypocritical pretences of good, and their crafty projects of mischief. Their cunning is falsehood, so Dr. Hammond. The utmost of their policy is treachery and perfidiousness; this the God of truth hates, and will punish.

3. The improvement David made of these judgments; he took notice of them, and received instruction from them. The ruin of the wicked helped to fix it on his heart, and was the means of God's grace, to see what comes of sin; therefore I love thy testimonies, which warn me to take heed of these dangerous courses, and keep me from the paths of the destroyer. We see the word of God fulfilled in his judgments on sin and sinners, and therefore we should love it. (2.) His fear of the wrath of God: My flesh trembles for fear of thee. Instead of insulting these who fell under God's displeasure, he humbled himself to God, and hearkened the judgments of God upon wicked people, should make us, [1.] To reverence his terrible majesty, and to stand in awe of him; Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? 1 Sam. vi. 20. [2.] To fear lest we offend him, and become obnoxious to his wrath. Good men have need to be restrained from sin by the terrors of the Lord; especially when judgment begins at the house of God, and hypocrites are discovered, and put away as dross.

16. AIN.

121. I have done judgment and justice; leave me not to mine oppressors. 122. Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.

David here appeals to God,

1. As his Witness, that he had not done wrong; he could truly say, "I have done judgment and justice; I have made conscience of rendering to all their due, and have not, by force or fraud, hindered any of their right." Take him as a king, he executed judgment and justice to all his people; (2 Sam. viii. 15.) take him in a private capacity, he could say, "I have done judgment and justice, there was no evil or transgression in his hand," 1 Sam. xxiv. 11. Note, Honesty is the best policy, and will be our rejoicing in the day of evil.

2. As his Judge, that he might not be wronged; he, having done justice for others that were oppressed, begs that God would do him justice, and avenge him of his adversaries; "Be surety for thy servant for good; undertake for me against those that would run me down, and ruin me. He is sensible that he cannot make his part good himself, and therefore begs that God would appear for him. Christ is our Surety with God; and, if he be so, Providence shall be our Surety against all the world; who, or what, shall harm us, if God's power and goodness be engaged for our protection and rescue? He does not prescribe to God what he should do for him; only let it be for good, in such way and manner as infinite Wisdom sees best; only let me not be left to mine oppressors. Though David had done judgment and justice, yet he had many enemies; but, having God for his Friend, he hoped they should not have their will against him; and in that hope he prayed again, Let not the proud oppress me. David, one of the best of men, was oppressed by the proud, whom God beholds afar off: the condition, therefore, of the persecuted is better than that of the persecutors, and will appear so at last.

123. Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness.

David, being oppressed, is here waiting and wishing for the salvation of the Lord, which would make him easy.

1. He cannot but think that it comes slowly; Mine eyes fail for thy salvation. His eyes were towards it, and had been long so; he looked for help from heaven, and we deceive ourselves if we look for it any other way; but it did not come so soon as he expected. What we need is not to fail, and he was sometimes ready to despair, and to think that, because the salvation did not come when he looked for it, it would never come. It is after the infirmity even of good men, to be weary of waiting God's time, when their time is elapsed.

2. Yet he cannot but hope that it comes surely. For he expects the word of God's righteousness, and no other salvation than what is secured by that word, which cannot fail to the ground, because it is a word of righteousness. Though our eyes fail, yet God's word does not, and therefore those that build upon it, though now discouraged, shall in due time see his salvation.

124. Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes.

125. I am thy servant, give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.
Here is, 1. David's petition for divine instruction; "Teach me thy statutes; give me to know all thy duty; when I am in doubt, and know not for certain what is my duty, direct me, and make it plain to me; now that I am afflicted, oppressed, and mine eyes ready to fail for thy salvation, let me know what my duty is, in this condition." In difficult times, we should desire more to be told what we must do, than what we may expect; and should pray more to be led into the knowledge of scripture-precepts than of scripture-prophecies. If God, who gave us his statutes, do not teach us, we shall never learn them. How God teaches, is implied in the next petition, Give me understanding, a renewed understanding, apt to receive divine light, that I may know thy testimonies. It is God's prerogative to give an understanding, that understanding, without which we cannot know God's testimonies. Those who know most of God's testimonies desire to know more, and are still earnest with God to teach them, never thinking they know enough.

2. His pleas to enforce this petition.

(1.) He pleads God's goodness to him; Deal with me according to thy mercy. The best saints count this their best plea for any blessing, "Let me have it according to thy mercy." For we deserve no favour from God, nor can we claim any as a debt, but we are then most likely to be easy, when we cast ourselves upon God's mercy, and refer ourselves to it. Particularly, when we come to him for instruction, we must beg it as a mercy, and reckon that in being taught we are well dealt with.

(2.) He pleads his relation to God; "I am thy servant, and have work to do for thee, therefore teach me to do it, and to do it well." The servant has reason to expect, that, if he be at a loss about his work, his master should teach him, and if it were given him an understanding, he would do it well.

"Lord," says David, "I desire to serve thee, show me how." If any man resolve to do God's will as his servant, he shall be made to know his testimonies, John vii. 17. Ps. xxv. 14.

126. It is time for thee, LORD, to work; for they have made void thy law.

Here is, 1. A complaint of the daring impiety of the wicked; David, having in himself a holy indignation at it, humbly represents it to God. "Lord, there are those that have made void thy law, have set thee and thy government at defiance, and have done works that cancel and vacate the obligation of thy commandments. They that sin through infirmity transgress the law, but presumptuous sinners do, in effect, make void the law, saying, Who is the Lord? What is the Almighty, that we should fear him? It is possible a godly man may sin against the commandment, but a wicked man would sin away the commandment, would repeal God's laws, and enact his own lusts. This is the sinfulness of sin, and the malignity of the carnal mind.

2. A prayer that God would appear for the vindication of his own honour. "It is time for thee, LORD, to work, to do something for the effectual confutation of atheists and infidels, and the silencing of those that set their mouth against the heavens." God's time to work, is, when vice is become most aromatic, and the measure of iniquity is full. Now will I arise, saith the Lord. Some read it, and the original will bear it, it is time to work for thee, O Lord; it is time for every one in his place to appear on the Lord's side, against the threatening growth of profaneness and immorality. We must do what we can for the support of the sinking interests of religion, and after all, we must beg of God to take the work into his own hands.

127. Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold. 128. Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.

David aye, as often in this psalm, professes the great love he had to the word and law of God; and, to evidence the sincerity of it, observe,

1. The degree of his love. He loved his Bible better than he loved his money; above gold, yea, above fine gold. Gold, fine gold, is what most men set their hearts upon; nothing charms them and dazzles their eyes so as gold does; it is fine gold, a fine thing in their eyes; they will venture their souls, their God, their all, to get and keep it; but David saw that the word of God answers all purposes better than money does; for it enriches the soul toward God, and therefore he loved it better than gold; for it had done that for him which gold could not do, and would stand him in stead when the wealth of the world would fail him.

2. The ground of his love. Therefore he loved all God's commandments, because he esteemed them to be right, all reasonable and just, and suited to the end for which they were made. They are all as they should be, and no fault can be found with them; and therefore we must love them, because they bear God's image, and are the revelations of his will. If we thus consent to the law, that it is good, we shall delight in it after the inner man.

3. The fruit and evidence of this love; He hated every false way. The way of sin being directly contrary to God's precepts, which are right, is a false way, and therefore they that have a love and esteem for God's law, hate it, and will not be reconciled to it.

17. PE. 129. Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them.

See here, how David was affected toward the word of God.

1. He admired it, as most excellent in itself; Thy testimonies are wonderful. The word of God gives us admirable discoveries of God, and Christ, and another world, and the world of divine love and grace. The majesty of the style, the purity of the matter, the harmony of the parts, are all wonderful; its effects upon the consciences of men, both for conviction and comfort, are wonderful; and it is a sign that we are not acquainted with God's testimonies, or do not understand them, if we do not admire them.

2. He adhered to it, as of constant use to him; "Therefore doth my soul keep them, as a treasure of inestimable value, which I cannot be without." We do not keep them to any purpose, unless our souls keep them; there they must be deposited as the tables of the testimony in the ark, there they must have the innermost and uppermost place. They that see God's word to be admirable, will prize it highly, and preserve it carefully, as that which they promise themselves great things from.

130. The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

Here is, 1. The great use for which the word of God was intended; to give light, that is, to give understanding; to give us to understand that which will be of use to us in our travels through this world; and it is the outward and ordinary means by which the Spirit of God enlightens the understanding of all that are sanctified. God's testimonies are not only wonderful, for the greatness of them, but useful, as a light in a dark place.

2. Its efficacy for this purpose; it admirably an
131. I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.

Here is, 1. The desire David had toward the word of God; I longed for thy commandments. When he was under a forced absence from God's ordinances, he longed to be restored to them again; when he enjoyed ordinances, he greedy sucked in the word of God, as new-born babes desire the milk. When Christ is formed in the soul, there are gracious longings, unaccountable to one that is a stranger to the work.

2. The degree of that desire, appearing in the expression of it; I opened my mouth, and panted; as one, overcome with heat, or almost stifled, pants for a mouthful of fresh air. Thus strong, thus earnest, should our desires be toward God, and the remembrance of his name, xlii. 1, 2. Luke xii. 50.

132. Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.

Here is, 1. David's request for God's favour to himself; Look graciously upon me; let me have thy smiles, and the light of thy countenance; take cognizance of me and my affairs, and be merciful to me; let me taste the sweetness of thy mercy, and receive the gifts of thy mercy. See how humble his petition is; he asks not for the operations of God's hand, only for the smiles of his face; a good look is enough; and for that he does not plead merit, but implores mercy.

2. His acknowledgment of his favour to all his people; As thou usest to do unto those that love thy name, so also to me, and may either of the two be shown to me; let me be shown to you, (as I have been shown to them) that which thou usest to bestow on those that love thy name, which thou bearest to thy chosen, cxi. 4, 5. He desires no more, no better, than neighbour's fare, and he will take up with no less; common looks and common mercies will not serve, but such as are reserved for those that love him; which are such as eke has not seen, 1 Cor. ii. 9. Note, The dealings of God with them that love him, are such, that a man needs not desire to be any better dealt with, for he will make them truly and eternally happy. And as long as God deals with us no otherwise than as he uses to deal with those that love him, we have no reason to complain, 1 Cor. x. 13.

133. Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

Here David prays for two great spiritual blessings, and is, in this verse, as earnest for the good work of God in him, as, in the verse before, for the good-will of God toward him. He prays,

1. For direction in the paths of duty; Order my steps in thy word; having led me into the right way, let every step I take in that way be under the conduct of thy grace. We ought to walk by rule; all the motions of the soul must not only be kept within the bounds prescribed by the word, so as not to transgress them, but carried out in the paths prescribed by the word, so as not to trifle in them. And therefore we must beg of God, that, by his grace and power, he would order our steps accordingly.

2. For deliverance from the power of sin; Let not iniquity have dominion over me, so as to gain my consent to it, and that I should be led captive by it. The dominion of sin is to be dreaded and deprecated by every one of us; and if in sincerity we pray against it, we may receive that promise as an answer to the prayer, (Rom. vi. 14.) Sin shall not have dominion over you.

134. Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts.

Here, 1. David prays that he might live a quiet and peacable life, and might not be harassed and discomposed by those that studied to be vexatious; Deliver me from the oppression of man, whom God can control, and whose power is limited; let them know themselves to be but men, (ix. 20.) and let me be delivered out of the hands of unreasonable men.

2. He prays that then he would live in all godliness and honesty. Let me be delivered out of the hands of my enemies, that I may serve God without fear; so will I keep thy precepts. Not but that he would keep God's precepts, though he should be continued under oppression; but so shall I keep thy precepts more cheerfully, and with more enlargement of heart, my bonds being loosed. Then we may expect temporal blessings, when we desire them with this in our eye, that we may serve God the better.

135. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes.

David here, as often elsewhere, writes himself God's servant, a title he gloried in, though he was a king: now here, as became a good servant,

1. He is very ambitious of his Master's favour, accounting that his happiness and chiefest good. He asks not for corn and wine, for silver and gold, but, Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; let it be accepted of thee, and let me know that I am so. Comfort me with the light of thy countenance, in every cloudy and dark day; if the world frown upon me, yet do thou smile.

2. He is very solicitous about his master's work, accounting that his business and chief concern; this he would be instructed in, that he might do it, and do it well, so as to be accepted in the doing of it; Teach me thy statutes. Note. We must pray as earnestly for grace as for comfort. If God hides his face from us, it is because we have been careless in keeping his statutes; and therefore, that we may be qualified for the returns of his favour, we must pray for wisdom to do our duty.

136. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.
Here we have David in sorrow,
1. It is a great sorrow; to that degree, that he weeps rivers of tears; commonly, where there is a gracious heart, there is a weeping eye; in conformity to Christ, who was a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. David had prayed for comfort, and the Lord had promised it (Ps. lix. 16), and now pleads that he was qualified for that comfort, and had need of it, for he was one of them that mourned in Zion, and they that do so shall be comforted, Isa. lxi. 3.

2. It is godly sorrow. He wept not for his troubles, though they were many, but for the dishonour to God, Because they keep not thy law. Either, because mine eyes keep not thy law, so some. The eye is the inlet and outlet of a great deal of sin, and therefore it is required, that what we do not approve of in ourselves, they, those about me, v. 139. Nete, The sins of sinners are the sorrows of saints. We must mourn for that which we cannot mend.

18. TZADDI.

137. Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments. 138. Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful.

Here is, 1. The righteousness of God, the infinite rectitude and perfection of his nature; as he is what he is, so he is what he should be, and in every thing acts as becomes him; there is nothing wanting, nothing amiss, in God; his will is the eternal rule of equity, and he is righteous, for he doeth all according to it.

2. The righteousness of his government. He rules the world by his providence, according to the principles of justice, and never did, nor ever can, do any wrong to any of his creatures; Upright are thy judgments, the promises and threatenings are executions of both. Every word of God is pure, and he will be true to it; he perfectly knows the merits of every cause, and will judge accordingly.

3. The righteousness of his commands, which he has given to be the rule of our obedience; Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded, which are backed with thy sovereign authority, and to which thou dost require our obedience, are exceeding righteous and faithful: righteousness and faithfulness itself. As he acts like himself, so his law requires that we act like ourselves, and like him; that we be just to every man, and to God, alike. Those are the engagements we lay ourselves under both to God and man. That which we are commanded to practice is righteous; that which we are commanded to believe is faithful. It is necessary to our faith and obedience that we be convinced of this.

139. My zeal hath consumed me: because mine enemies have forgotten thy word. Here is, 1. The great contempt which wicked men put upon religion; Mine enemies have forgotten thy words. They have often heard them, but so little did they heed them, that they could forget them, they willingly forget them; not only, through carelessness, let them slip out of their minds, but contrived how to cast them behind their backs. This is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked, and particularly of their malignity and enmity to the people of God; they have forgotten the words of God, else those would give check to their sinful courses.

2. The great concern which godly men show for religion. David reckoned those his enemies who forgot the words of God, because they were enemies to religion, which he had entered into a league with, offensive and defensive. And therefore his zeal even consumed him, when he observed their impie-
ties. He conceived such an indignation at their wickedness as preyed upon his spirits, act them up, (as Christ's zeal, John ii. 17.) swallowed up all inferior considerations, and made him forget himself. My zeal has pressed or constrained me; so Dr. Hammond reads it, Acts xvii. 3. Zeal against sin should constrain us to do what we can against it in our places, at least, to do so much the more in religion ourselves. The worse others are, the better we should be.

140. Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.

Here is, 1. David's great affection for the word of God; Thy servant loveth it. Every good man, being a servant of God, loves the word of God, because it lets him know his Master's will, and directs him in his Master's work. Wherever there is grace, there is a warm attachment to the word of God.

2. The ground and reason of that affection; he saw it to be very pure, and therefore he loved it. Our love to the word of God is then an evidence of our love to God, when we love it for the sake of its purity; because it bears the image of God's holiness and is designed to make us partakers of his holiness. It commands purity; and as it is itself refined from all corrupt mixture, so, if we receive it in the light of love of God, it will remove from the dross of worldliness and fleshly-minDEDness.

141. I am small and despised; yet do not I forget thy precepts.

Here is, 1. David pious, and yet poor. He was a man after God's own heart, one whom the King of kings did delight to honour, and yet small and despised, in his own account, and in the account of many others. Men's real excellency cannot always secure them from contempt; nay, it often exposes them to the scorn of some, and always makes them lean on their own eyes. God has chosen the foolish things of the world, and it has been the common lot of his people to be a despised people.

2. David poor, and yet pious; small and despised for his strict and serious godliness; yet his conscience can witness for him, that he did not forget God's precepts. He will not throw off his religion, though it exposed him to contempt, for he knew that was designed to try his constancy. When we are small and despised, we have the more reason to remember God's precepts, that we may have them to support us under the pressures of a low condition.

142. Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.

Observe, 1. That God's word is righteousness, and it is an everlasting righteousness; it is the rule of God's judgment, and it is consonant to his counsels from eternity, and will direct his sentence for eternity. The word of God will judge us, it will judge us in righteousness, and by it our everlasting state will be determined. This should possess us with a strong reason for great reverence for the word of God, that it is righteousness itself, the standard of righteousness, and it is everlasting in its rewards and punishments.

2. That God's word is a law, and that law is truth. See the double obligation we are under to be governed by the word of God; we are reasonable creatures, and as such we must be ruled by truth, acknowledging the force and power of it. If the principles be true, the practices must be agreeable to them, else we do not act rationally. We are creatures, and therefore subjects, and must be ruled by our Creator; and whatever he commands we are bound to obey as a law. See how these obligations are here twisted, these cords of a man: here is truth brought to the understanding, there to sit chief, and
direct the motions of the whole man. But, lest the authority of that should become weak through the flesh, here is a law to bind the will, and bring that into subjection. God's truth is a law, (John xviii. 37.) and God's law is the truth; surely we cannot break such words as these asunder.

143. Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me; yet thy commandments are my delights. 144. The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.

These two verses are almost a repetition of the two foregoing verses, but with improvements.

1. He again professes his constant adherence to God and his duty, notwithstanding the many difficulties and discouragements he met with. He had said, (v. 141.) I am small and despised, and yet adhere to my duty; here he finds himself not only mean, but miserable, as far as this world could make him so. Trouble and anguish have laid hold on me; trouble without, anguish within; they surprised him, they seized him, they held him. Sorrows are often the lot of saints in this vale of tears; they are in heaviness through manifold temptations. There he had said, Yet do I not forget thy precepts; here he carries his constancy much higher; Yet thy commandments are my delights. All this trouble and anguish did not put his mouth out of taste for the comforts of the word of God, but he could still relish them, and find that peace and pleasure in them, which all the calamities of this present time could not deprive him of. There are delights, variety of delights, in the word of God, which the saints have often the sweetest enjoyment of, when they are in trouble and anguish, 2 Cor. i. 3.

2. He again acknowledges the everlasting righteousness of God's word as before; (v. 142.) The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting, and cannot be altered; and when it is admitted in its power into a soul, it is there an abiding principle, a well of living water, John iv. 14. We ought to meditate much and often upon the equity and the eternity of the word of God. Here he adds, by way of inference, (1.) His prayer for grace; Give me understanding. Those that know much of the word of God, should still covet to know more; for them there is more to be known. He does not say, “Give me a further revelation,” but, Give me a further understanding; what is revealed, we should desire to understand, and what we know, to know better; and we must go to God for a heart to know. (2.) His hope of eternity; “Give me this renewed understanding, as if I might (shall) live; shall live for ever, shall be eternally happy, and shall be comforted, for the present, in the prospect of it.” This is life eternal, to know God, John xvii. 3.

19. KOPH.

145. I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O Lord: I will keep thy statutes. 146. cried unto thee; save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.

Here is, 1. David's good prayers, by which he sought to God for mercy; these he mentions here, as a boasting of them, or trusting to any merit in them, but reflecting upon them with comfort, that he had taken the appointed way to comfort. Observe here, (1.) That he was inward with God in prayer, he prayed with his heart; and the prayer is acceptable no further than the heart goes along with it. Lip-labour, if that be all, is lost labour. (2.) He was importunate with God in prayer; he cried, as one in earnest, with fervour of affection, and a holy vehemence and vigour of desire. He cried with his whole heart; all the powers of his soul were not only engaged and employed, but exerted to the utmost, in his prayers. Then we are likely to speed, when we thus strive and wrestle in prayer. (3.) That he directed his prayer to God; I cried unto thee. Whether should the child go but to his father, when any thing is with him that he could not say before him? Or, that he could not say it before any one, but bring it to God in prayer?

3. That he was earnest for an answer; and not only looked up in his prayers, but looked after them, to see what became of them; (Ps. v. 3.) “Lord, hear me, and let me know that thou hearest me.”

2. David's good purposes, by which he bound himself to duty, when he was in the pursuit of mercy. “I will keep thy statutes; I am resolved that by thy grace I will;’ for, if we turn away our ear from hearing the law, we cannot expect an answer of peace to our prayers, Prov. xxviii. 9. This purpose is used as a humble plea; (v. 146.) “Lord, hear me;” I have put my sins asunder, and all my temptations, all the hindrances that lie in my way; that I may keep thy testimonies. We must cry for salvation, not that we may have the ease and comfort of it, but that we may have an opportunity of serving God the more cheerfully.

147. I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried; I hoped in thy word. 148. Mine eyes prevent the night-watches, that I might meditate in thy word.

David goes on here to relate how he had abounded in the duty of prayer, much to his comfort and advantage: he cried unto God, offered up to him his pious and devout attentions with all seriousness.

Observe, 1. The handmaid of his devoted. The two great exercises that attended his prayers, were help to his understanding, (1.) Hope in God's word, which encouraged him to continue instant in prayer, though the answer did not come immediately; “I cried, and hoped that at last I should speed, because the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and not lie. I hoped in thy word, which I knew would not fail me.” (2.) Meditation in God's word. The more intimately we converse with the word of God, and the more we dwell upon it in our thoughts, the better able we shall be to speak to God in his own language, and the better we shall know what to pray for as we ought. Reading the word will not serve, but we must meditate in it.

2. The hours of his devotion; he prevented the dawning of the morning; may, and the night-watches. See here, (1.) That David was an early riser, which perhaps contributed to his eminency. He was none of those that say, Yet a little sleep. (2.) That he began the day with God; the first thing he did in the morning, before he admitted any business, was, to pray; when his mind was most fresh, and in the best frame. If our first thoughts in the morning be of God, it will help to keep us in his fear all the day long. (3.) That his mind was so full of God, and the cares and delights of his religion, that a little sleep served his turn; even in the night-watches, when he waked from his first sleep, he would rather meditate and pray, than turn him and go to sleep again. He esteemed the words of God's mouth more than his necessary repose, which we can as ill spare as our food, Job xxiii. 12. (4.) That he would redeem time for religious exercises; he was full of
business all day, but that will excuse no man from secret devotion; it is better to take time from sleep, as David did, than not to find time for prayer. And this is true prayer; such as David made, that we can never come unassayably to the throne of grace; for we may have access to it at all hours. Baal may be asleep, but Israel's God never slumbers, nor are there any hours in which he may not be spoken with.

149. Hear my voice, according unto thy loving-kindness: O Lord, quicken me according to thy judgment. Here, 1. David applies himself to God for grace and comfort, with much solemnity. He begs of God to hear his voice: "Lord, I have something to say to thee; shall I obtain a gracious audience?" Well, what has he to say? What is his petition, and what is his request? It is not long, but it has much in a little; "Lord, quicken me; stir me up to that which is good, and make me vigorous and lively, and cheerful in it. Let habits of grace be drawn out into acts."

2. He encourages himself to hope that he shall obtain his request; for he depends, (1.) Upon God's loving-kindness; "He is good, therefore he will be good to me, who hope in his mercy. His loving-kindness manifested to me will help to quicken me, and put life into me." 2. Upon God's judgment, that is, his wisdom; "He knows what I need, and what is good for me, and therefore will quicken me." Or his promise, the word which he has spoken, mercy secured by the new covenant; Quicken me, according to the tenor of that covenant.

150. They draw nigh that follow after mischief: they are far from thy law. 151. Thou art near, O Lord; and all thy commandments are truth. Here is, 1. The apprehension David was in of danger from his enemies. (1.) They were very malicious, and industrious in prosecuting their malicious designs; they follow after mischief, any mischief they could do to David or his friends; they would let slip no opportunity, nor let fall any pursuit, that might be to his hurt. (2.) They were very impious, and had no fear of God before their eyes; They are far from thy law; setting themselves as far as they can out of the reach of its convictions and commands. The persecutors of God's people are such as make light of God himself; we may therefore be sure that God will take his people's part against them. (3.) They followed him close, and he was just ready to fall into their hands; They draw nigh, higher than they were; so that they got ground of him; they were at his heels, just upon his back. God sometimes suffers persecutors to prevail very far against his people, so that, as David said, (1 Sam. xx. 3.) There is but a step between them and death. Perhaps this comes in here as a reason why David was so earnest in prayer, v. 149. God brings us into imminent perils, as he did Jacob, that, like him, we may wrestle for a blessing.

2. The assurance David had of protection with God; "They draw nigh to destroy me, but thou art near; O Lord, to save me; not only mightier than they, and therefore able to help me against them, but nearer than they, and therefore ready to help." It is the happiness of the saints, that, when trouble is near, God is near, and no trouble can separate between them and him. He is never far to seek, but he is within our call, and means are within his call, Deut. iv. 7. All thy commandments are truth. The enemies thought to defeat the promises God had made to David, but he was sure it was out of their power, they were inviolably true, and would be infallibly performed.

152. Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.

This confirms what he had said in the close of the foregoing verses, All thy commandments are truth; he means the covenant, the word which God has commanded to a thousand generations. This is firm, as true as truth itself. For, 1. God has founded it so; he has framed it for a perpetuity; such is the constitution of it, and so well ordered is it in all things, that it cannot but be sure. The promises are founded for ever, so that, when heaven and earth pass away, every iota and tittle of the promise shall stand firm, 2 Cor. i. 20. 2. David had found it so; both by a work of God's grace upon his heart, (begetting in him a full persuasion of the truth of God's word, and enabling him to rely upon it with a full satisfaction,) and by the works of his providence on his behalf, fulfilling the promise beyond what he expected. Thus he knew of old, from the days of his youth, ever since he began to look toward God, that the word of God is what one can venture by, and that assurance was confirmed by the observations and experiences of his own life, all along, and of others that had gone before him in the ways of God. All that ever dealt with God, and trusted in him, will own that they have found him faithful.

20. RESH.

153. Consider mine affliction, and deliver me; for I do not thou thy law. 154. Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word. Here, 1. David prays for succour in distress. Is any afflicted? Let him pray; let him pray as David does here, (1.) He has an eye to God's pity, and prays, "Consider mine affliction; take it into thy thoughts, and all the circumstances of it, and sit by as one unconcerned." God is never unmindful of his people's afflictions, but he will have us to put him in remembrance, (Isa. xlix. 26.) to spread our case before him, and then leave it to his compassionate consideration to do in it as in his wisdom he shall think fit, in his own time and way. (2.) He has an eye to God's power, and prays, Deliver me; and again, Deliver me; consider my troubles, and bring me out of them. God has promised deliverance; (l. 15.) and we may pray for it, with submission to his will, and with regard to his glory, that we may serve him the better. (3.) He has an eye to God's righteousness, and prays, Plead my cause; be thou my Patron and Advocate, and take me for thy client. David had a just cause, but his adversaries were many and mighty, and he was in danger of being run down by them; yet he therefore begs of God to clear his integrity, and silence their false accusations. If God do not plead his people's cause, who will? He is righteous, and they commit themselves to him, and therefore he will do it, and do it effectually, Isa. li. 22. Jer. l. 34. (4.) He has an eye to God's grace, and prays, Quicken me; Lord, I am weak, and unable to bear my troubles; my spirit is apt to droop and sink. O that thou wouldest revive and comfort me, till the deliverance come!"

2. He pleads his dependence upon the word of God, and upon his guidance; Quicken, and deliver me, according to thy word of promise; for I do not forget thy precepts. The closer we cleave to the word of God, both as our rule, and as our stay, the more assurance we may have of deliverance in due time.
155. Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes.

Here is, 1. The description of wicked men; they do not only not do God's statutes, but they do not so much as seek them; they do not acquaint themselves with them, nor so much as desire to know their duty, or in the least endeavour to do it. These are wicked indeed, who do not think the law of God worth inquiring after, but are altogether regardless of it, being resolved to live at large; and to walk in the way of their heart.

2. Their doom; Salvation is far from them. They cannot upon any good grounds promise themselves temporal deliverance. Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. How can they expect to seek God's favour with success, when they are in adversity, who never sought his statutes, when they were in prosperity? But eternal salvation is certainly far from them. They flatter themselves with a conceit that it is near, and that they are going to heaven; but they are mistaken, it is far from them, they thrust it from them, by thrusting the Saviour from them; it is so far from them, that they cannot reach it, and the longer they persist in sin, the further it is; nay, while salvation is far from them, damnation is near; it slumbers not; Behold, the Judge stands before the door.

156. Great are thy tender mercies, O Lord; quicken me according to thy judgments.

Here, 1. David admires God's grace; Great are thy tender mercies, O Lord. The goodness of God's nature, as it is his glory, so it is the joy of all the saints; his mercies are tender, for he is full of compassion; they are many, they are great, a fountain that can never be exhausted; he is rich in mercy to all that call upon him. He had spoken of the misery of the wicked, (v. 155.) but God is good notwithstanding; there were tender mercies sufficient in God to have saved them, if they had not despised the riches of those mercies. They that are delivered from the sinner's doom, are bound for ever to own the greatness of God's mercies which delivered them.

2. He begs for God's grace, reviving, quickening, grace, according to his judgments, according to the tenor of the new covenant, that established rule by which he goes in dispensing that grace. Or, according to his munier, his custom or usage with those that love his name, v. 152.

157. Many are my persecutors and mine enemies; yet do I not decline from their testimonies.

Here is, 1. David surrounded with difficulties and dangers; Many are my persecutors and mine enemies. When Saul, the King, was his persecutor and enemy, no marvel that many more were; multitudes will follow the pernicious ways of abused authority. David, being a public person, had many enemies, but withal he had many friends, who loved him and wished him well, let him set the one over against the other. In this, David was a type both of Christ and his church. The enemies, the persecutors of both, are many.

2. David established in the way of his duty, notwithstanding; "Yet do I not decline from thy testimonies, as knowing that, while I adhere to them, God is for me; and then no matter who is against me." A man who is steady in the way of his duty, though he may have many enemies, needs fear none.

158. I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word.

Here is, 1. David's sorrow for the wickedness of the wicked. Though he conversed much at home, yet sometimes he looked abroad, and could not but see the wicked walking on every side. He beheld the transgressors, those whose sins were open before all men, and it grieved him to see them dishonour God, serve Satan, debauch the world, and ruin their own souls; to see the transgressors so numerous, so daring, so very impudent, and so dastardly to draw unstable souls into their snares. All this cannot but be a grief to those who have any regard to the glory of God, and the welfare of mankind.

2. The reason of that sorrow. He was grieved, not because they were vexatious to him, but because they were provoking to God; They kept not thy word. That they hate sin truly, hate it as sin, as a transgression of the law of God, and a violation of his word.

159. Consider how I love thy precepts; quicken me, O Lord, according to thy loving-kindness.

Here is, 1. David's appeal to God concerning his love to his precepts; "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love them; consider it then, and deal with me as thou usest to deal with those that love thy word, which thou hast magnified above all thy name." He does not say, "Consider how I fail thy precepts," he was conscious to himself, that in many things he came short; but, "Consider how I love thee." Our obedience is then only pleasing to God, and pleasant to ourselves, when it comes from a principle of love.

2. His petition thereupon; "Quicken me, to do my duty with vigour; revive me, keep me alive; not according to any merit of mine, though I love thy word, but according to thy loving-kindness;" to that we owe our lives, nay, that is better than life itself. We need not desire to be quickened any further than God's loving-kindness will quicken us.

160. Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.

David here comforts himself with the faithfulness of God's word, for the encouragement of himself and others to rely upon it.

1. It has always been found faithful hitherto, and never failed any that ventured upon it. It is true from the beginning. Ever since God began to reveal himself to the children of men, all he said was true, and to be trusted. The church, from its beginning, was built upon this rock. It has not gained its validity by track of time, as many governments, whose best plea is prescription and long usage. Quad initio non valet, tractu tempestis convaleat —That which, at first, wanted validity, in the progress of time, acquired it. But the beginning of God's word was true, so some read it; his government was laid on a sure foundation. And all, in every age, that have received God's word in faith and love, have found every saying in it faithful and well worthy of all acceptation.

2. It has been found faithful to the end, because righteous. Every one of the judgments endures for ever unalterable, and of perpetual obligation; adjusting men's everlasting doom.

21. SCHIN.

161. Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.

David here lets us know,
1. How he was discouraged in his duty by the
fear of man; Princes persecuted him. They looked upon him as a traitor and an enemy to the government, and under that notion sought his life, and bid him go serve other gods, 1 Sam. xxxvi. 19. It has been the common lot of the best men to be persecuted; and the case is the worse, if princes be the persecutors, for they have not only the sword in their hand, and therefore can do the more hurt, but they have the law on their side, and can do it with reputation and a colour of justice. It is sad that the power which magistrates have from God, and should use for him, should ever be employed against him. But, marvel not at the matter, Eccl. v. 8. It was not so, when princes persecuted him, he could truly say it was without cause, he never gave them any provocation.

2. How he was kept to his duty, notwithstanding, by the fear of God; "They would make me stand in awe of them and their word, and do as they bid me; but my heart stands in awe of thy word, and I was resolved to please God, and keep in with him, whoever is displeased, and falls out with me." Every gracious soul stands in awe of the word of God, of the authority of its precepts, and the terror of its threatenings; and to those that do so, nothing appears, in the power and wrath of man, at all formidable. We ought to obey God rather than men, and to make sure of God's favour, though we throw ourselves under the frowns of all the world, Luke xii. 4, 5. The heart that stands in awe of God's word, is armed against the temptations that arise from persecution.

II. I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.

Here is, 1. The pleasure David took in the word of God. He rejoiced at it, rejoiced that God had made such a discovery of his mind, that Israel was blessed with that light, when other nations sat in darkness; that he was himself let into the understanding of it, and had had experience of the power of it. He took a pleasure in reading it, hearing it, and meditating on it, and every thing he met with in it was agreeable to him. He had just now said, that his heart stood in awe of his word, and yet here, that he rejoiced in it; the more reverence we have for the word of God, the more joy we shall find in it.

2. The degree of that pleasure, as one that finds great spoil. This supposes a victory over the enemy. It is through much opposition that a soul comes to this, to rejoice in God's word. But, besides the pleasure and honour of a conquest, there is great advantage gained by the plunder of the field, which adds much to the joy. By the word of God we become more than conquerors, that is, unassailable gainers.

I hate and abhor lying; but thy law do I love.

Love and hatred are the leading affections of the soul; if those be fixed right, the rest move accordingly. Here we have them fixed right in David.

1. He had a rooted antipathy to sin, he could not endure to think of it; I hate and abhor lying; which may be taken for all sin, insomuch as by it we deal treacherously and perfidiously with God, and put a cheat upon him. Hypocrisy is lying; Vice is the false doctrine is lying; breach of faith is lying. Lying, in commerce or conversation, is a sin, which every good man hates and abhors, hates and dreads, because of the seven things which the Lord hates, one is a lying tongue, and another is a false witness that speaks lies, Prov. vi. 16. Every man hates to have a lie told him; but we should more hate telling a lie, because by the former we only receive an affront from men, by the latter we give an affront to God.

2. He had a rooted affection to the word of God; Thy law do I love. And therefore he abhorred lying, for lying is contrary to the whole law of God; and the reason why he loved the law of God, was, because of the truth of it. The more we see of the amiable beauty of truth, the more we shall see of the detestable deformity of a lie.

164. Seven times a day do I praise thee: because of thy righteous judgments.

David, in this psalm, is full of complaints, yet those did neither justly out his praises, nor put him out of tune for them; whatever condition a child of God is in, he does not want matter for praise, and therefore should not want a heart. See here,

1. How often David praised God; Seven times a day, very frequently; not only every day but often every day. Many think that once a week will serve, or once or twice a day, but David would praise God seven times a day at least. Praising God is a duty which we should very much abound in.

2. What he praised God for; because of thy righteous judgments. We must praise God for his precepts, which are all just and good, for his promises and threatenings, and the performance of both in his providence. We are to praise God even for our afflictions, if through grace we get good by them.

165. Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

Here is an account of the happiness of good men, who are governed by a principle of love to the word of God, that make it their rule, and are ruled by it.

1. They are easy, and have a holy serenity: none enjoy themselves more than they do; Great peace have they that love thy law, abundant satisfaction in doing their duty, and pleasure in reflecting upon it. The work of righteousness is peace, (Isa. xxxii. 17.) such peace as the world can neither give nor take away. They shall rejoice in great peace without, and yet enjoy great peace within; sat lucis intus—abundance of internal light. They that love the world have great vexation, for it does not answer their expectation; they that love God's word have great peace, for it outdoes their expectation, and in it they have sure footing.

2. They are safe, and have a holy security; Nothing shall offend them; nothing shall be scandal, snare, or stumbling-block, to them, to entangle them, either in guilt or grief. No event of providence shall be either an invincible temptation or an intolerable affliction to them, but their love to the word of God shall enable them both to hold fast their integrity and to preserve their tranquillity. They will make the best of that which is, and not quarrel with any thing that God does. Nothing shall offend or hurt them, for every thing shall work for good to them, and therefore shall please them and they reconcile themselves to it. They, in whom this holy love reigns, will not be apt to perplex themselves with needless scruples, or to take offence at their brethren, 1 Cor. xiii. 6, 7.

166. LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.

Here is the whole duty of man; for we are taught,

1. To keep our eye upon God's favour as our end; "Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation, not only temporal but eternal salvation. I have hoped for
that as my happiness, and laid up my treasure in it; I have hoped for it as thine, as a happiness of thy preparing, thy promising, and which consists in being with thee; that hope of this has raised me above the world, and borne me up under all my burdens in it.”

2. To keep our eye upon God’s word as our rule, I have done thy commandments; I have made conscience of conforming myself to thy will in every thing. Observe here how God has joined these two together, and let no man put them asunder. We cannot, upon good grounds, hope for God’s salvation, unless we set ourselves to do his commandments, keep his statutes, that he may open the way to do his commandments, ought to keep up a good hope of the salvation; and that hope will both engage and enlarge the heart in doing the commandments. The more lively the hope is, the more lively the obedience will be.

167. My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly. 168. I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for all my ways are before thee.

David’s conscience here witnesses for him. 1. That his practices were good. (1.) He loved God’s testimonies, he loved them exceedingly. Our love to the word of God must be a superlative love; we must love it better than the wealth and pleasure of this world: and it must be a victorious love, such as will subdue and mortify our lusts, and extirpate carnal affections. (2.) He kept them, his soul kept them, bodily exercised; profits little in religion, we must make heart-work of it, or we make nothing of it. The soul must be sanctified and renewed, and delivered into the mould of the word; the soul must be employed in glorifying God, for he will be worshipped in the spirit. We must keep both the precepts and the testimonies, the commands of God by our obedience to them, and his promises by our reliance on them.

2. That he was governed herein by a principle; “Therfore I have kept thy precepts, because by faith I have seen thine eye always upon me, all my ways are before thee; thou knowest every step I take, and strictly observest all I say and do. Thou dost see and accept all that I say and do well; thou dost see and disapprove all I say and do amiss.” Note, The consideration of this, that God’s eye is upon us at all times, should make us very careful in everything to keep his commandments, Gen. xviii. 1. 22. TAU.

169. Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD: give me understanding according to thy word. 170. Let my supplication come before thee: deliver me according to thy word.

Here is, 1. A general petition for audience repeated; Let my cry come near before thee; and again, Let my supplication come before thee. He calls his prayer his supplication, which denotes the humility of it; and his supplication, which denotes the humility of it; we must come to God as beggars come to our doors for an alms. He is concerned that his prayer might come before God, might come near before him, that he might have grace and strength by faith and fervency to lift up his prayers; that no guilt might interpose to shut out his prayers, and to separate him from God, and that God would graciously receive his prayers and take notice of them. His prayer, that his supplication might come before God, implies a deep sense of his unworthiness, and a holy fear that his prayers should come short or miscarry, as not fit to come before God; nor would any of our prayers have had access to God, if Jesus Christ had not approached to him as an Advocate for us.

2. Two particular requests, which he is thus earnestly to press. (1.) That God, by his grace, would give him wisdom to conduct himself well under his troubles; Give me understanding; he means that wisdom of the prudent, which is, to understand his way; “Give me to know thee and myself, and my duty to thee.” (2.) That God, by his providence, would rescue him out of his troubles. Deliver me; with the temptation make a way to escape, 1 Cor. x. 13.

3. The same general plea to enforce these requests, according to thy word. This directs and limits his desires; “Lord, give me such an understanding as thou hast promised, and such a deliverance as thou hast promised, I ask for no other.” It also encourages his faith and expectation; “Lord, that which I pray for is what thou hast promised, and wilt not thou be as good as thy word?”

171. My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes.

Here is, 1. A great favour which David expects from God, that he will teach him his statutes. This he had often prayed for in this psalm, and urges his petition for it with various arguments; and, now he is drawing toward the close of the psalm, he speaks of it as taken for granted. They that are humbly earnest with God for his grace, and resolve with Jacob that they will not let him go unless he bless them with spiritual blessings, may be humbly confident that they shall at length, obtain what they are so importunate for. The God of Israel will grant them those things which they request of him.

2. The grateful sense he promises to have of that favour; My lips shall utter praise when thou hast taught me. (1.) Then he shall have cause to praise God. Those that are taught of God have a great deal of reason to be thankful, for this is the foundation of all these spiritual blessings, which are the best blessings, and the earnest of eternal blessings. (2.) Then he shall know how to praise God, and have a heart to it. All that are taught of God are taught this lesson; when God opens the understanding, opens the heart, and so opens the lips, it is that the mouth may show forth his praise. We have learned nothing to purpose, if we have not learned to praise God. (3.) Therefore he is thus importunate for divine instructions, that he might praise God. They that pray for God’s grace, must aim at God’s glory, Eph. i. 12.

172. My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteous.
173. Let thy hand help me: for I have chosen thy precepts. 174. I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord; and thy law is my delight.

Here, 1. David prays that divine grace would work for him; Let thine hand help me. He finds his own hands are not sufficient for him, nor can any creature lend him a helping hand to any purpose; therefore he looks up to God in hopes that the hand that had made him would help him; & so if the Lord do not help us, whence can any creature help us? All our help must be expected from God's hand, from his power and his bounty.

2. I plead that divine grace had already wrought in him, as a pledge of further mercy, being a qualification for it. Three things he pleading: (1.) That he had made religion his serious and deliberate choice; "I have chosen thy precepts."

"Let me live, and serve my country, live and provide for my family;" but, "Let me live, that, in doing this, I may praise God here in this world of conflict and opposition." When we die, we hope to go to a better world to praise him; and that is more agreeable for us, but here there is more need of us. And therefore one would not desire to live any longer than we may do God some service here. Let my soul live; let me be sanctified and comforted; these are the life of the soul, and then it shall praise thee. Our souls must be employed in praising God, and therefore we must pray for grace and peace, that we may be fitted to praise God.

2. He prays that God would give him strength to praise him; "Let thy judgments help me; let all ordinances and all providences" (both are God's judgments) "further me in glorifying God; let them be the matter of my praise, and fit me for that work."

176. I have gone astray like a lost sheep: seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.

Here is, 1. A penitent confession; I have gone astray, or wander up and down like a lost sheep. As unconverted sinners are like lost sheep, (Luke xv. 4.) so weak unsteady saints are like lost sheep, Matth. xviii. 12, 13. "We are apt to wander like the sheep, and very unapt, when we have gone astray, to find the way again. By going astray we lose the comfort of the green pastures, and expose ourselves to a thousand miscarriages.

2. A believing petition; his thy servant, as the good shepherd seeks a wandering sheep to bring it back again, Ezek. xxxiv. 12. "Lord, seek me, as I used to seek my sheep when they went astray;" for David had been himself a tender shepherd.

"Lord, own me for one of thine; for though I am a stray sheep, I have thy mark; concern thyself for me; send after me by the word, and conscience, and providences; bring me back by thy grace." See not my sins, let me see mine, and then I shall say, Turn me, and I shall be turned.

3. An obedient plea; Though I have gone astray, yet I have not wickedly departed, I do not forget thy commandments. Thus he concludes the psalm with a penitent sense of his own sin, and a believing dependence on God's grace. With these a devout Christian will conclude his duties, will conclude his life; he will live and die, repenting and praying. Observe here, (1.) It is the character of good people that the Lord finds them out; it is his pleasure and delight to be well-pleased with their convictions, and well-settled in their resolutions. (2) Even those who, through grace, are mindful of their duty, cannot but own that they have in many instances wandered from it. (3) Those that have wandered from their duty, if they continue mindful of it, may with a humble confidence commit themselves to the care of God's grace.

PSALM CXX.

This psalm is the first of those fifteen which are here put together under the title of songs of degrees. It is well that it is not material what the meaning of that title should be, that is, that nothing is offered toward the explanation of it, no, not by the Jewish writers themselves, but what is conjectural. These psalms do not seem to be composed all by the same hand, much less all at the same time. Five of them thus addressed to David, and one said to be designed for Solomon, all penned perhaps by him; yet Psa. cxvi. and cxix. seem to be of a much later date; some of them are calculated for the close, (as cxx., cxxvi.) some for the family, (as cxxvii., cxxviii.) some for the public service, (as cxxix. and cxxxv.) and, as the psalm begins, (as cxv.) is of a general title, as cxvii., cxviii. So that, if it should seem, they had not this title from the author, but from the publisher. Some conjecture that they are so called from their singular excellence; as the song of sol's, so the song of degrees, is an most excellent song, in the highest degree. Others, from the tune they were set to, or the musical instruments they were sung to, or the raising of the voice in singing them. Some think they were sung on the fifteen steps or stairs, by which they went up from the outward court of the temple to the inner; others, at so many stages of the people's journey, when they returned out of captivity. I shall only observe, 1. That they are all short poems of a few lines, but one of them (Psa. cxv.) have but three verses a piece, and that they are placed next to Ps. cxix. which is by much the longest of all. Now as that was one psalm divided into many parts, so these were many psalms, which, being short, were sometimes sung all together, and many, as it were, one psalm observable only a pause between each; as many steps make one pair of stairs. 2. That, in the composition of them, we frequently meet with the figure they call climax or an ascending scale of sentiment, rising up, and rising to something further, as cxx. With him that hated peace, I peace. cxvi. From whence cometh my help, my help cometh. He that keepeth thee, shall slumber, he that keepeth Jerusalem, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem is builded. cxviii. Until he that have mercy upon us, Have mercy upon us. And the like in most of them, if not all. Perhaps for one of these reasons they are called songs of degrees.

This psalm is supposed to have been penned by David upon
occasional of Doeg’s accusing him and the priests to Saul, because it is like Ps. lii. which was penned on that occasion. The psalmist speaks of his being driven out of the congregation of the Lord, and his being forced among barbarous people. He prays to God to deliver him from the mischief designed him by false and malicious tongues, v. 1, 2. He threatens the judgments of God against such, v. 3, 4. III. He complains of his wicked neighbours that were quarrelsome and vexatious, v. 5., 6., 7. In singing this psalm, we may comfort ourselves in reference to the scourge of the tongue, when at last we fallately under the lash of it, that better than we have smarted for it.

A song of degrees.

1. In my distress I cried unto the Lord, and he heard me. 2. Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue. 3. What shall be given unto thee, or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? 4. Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper.

Here is,

1. Deliverance from a false tongue obtained by prayer; David records his own experience of this. (1.) He was brought into distress, into great distress, by lying lips, and a deceitful tongue. There were those that sought his ruin, and had affected it by lying lips, v. 1, 2. They flattered him with professions and protestations of friendship, and promises of kindness and service to him, that they might the more securely, and without suspicion, carry on their designs against him, and might have an opportunity, by betraying his counsels, to do him a mischief. They smiled in his face and kissed him, then when they were aiming to snite him under the fifth rib. The most deceitful designs against him, and those which it is most hard to guard against, are such as carry on their malicious designs under the colour of friendship. The Lord deliver every good man from such lying lips. (2.) By telling lies of him. They forged false accusations against him, and laid to his charge things that he knew not. This has often been the lot not only of the innocent, but of the excellents, of the ones, who have been great discomposed by lying lips, and have not only had their names marred, and made odious by calumnies in conversation, but their lives, and all that is dear to them in this world, endangered by false-witness bearing in judgment. David was here-in a type of Christ, who was distressed by lying lips and deceitful tongues.

2. In this distress he had recourse to God by faith and fervent prayer; I cried unto the Lord. Having no fence against false tongues, he appealed to him who has all men’s hearts in his hand, who has power over the consciences of bad men, and can, when he pleases, bridle their tongues. His prayer was, “Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, that my enemies may not by these cursed methods work my ruin.” He that had prayed so earnestly to be kept from lying, (cxxx. 29.) and hated it so heartily in himself, (v. 163.) might with the more confidence pray to be kept from being belied him, and carried away by the ill consequences of the deceitfulness of tongues.

3. He obtained a gracious answer to this prayer; God heard him; so that his enemies, though they carried their designs very far, were baffled at last, and could not prevail to do him the mischief they intended. The God of truth is, and will be, the Protector of his people from lying lips, xxxvii. 6.

4. The doom of a false tongue foretold by faith, v. 3, 4. As God will preserve his people from this mischievous generation, so he will reckong with their enemies, exi. 3, 7. The threatening is addressed to the sinner himself, for the awakening of his conscience, if he have any left; “Consider what shall be given unto thee, and what shall be done unto thee, by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, thou false tongue.” Surely sinners durst not do as they do, if they knew, and would be persuaded to think, what will be in the end thereof. Let liars and calumniators consider the doom of them; Sharp arrows of the Almighty, with coals of juniper, will fall and lie for ever under the wrath of God, and will be made memorable by the tokens of his displeasure, which will fly swiftly like arrows, and will strike the sinner ere he is aware, and when he sees not who hurts him. This is threatened against liars, (liv. 7.) God shall shoot at them with an arrow, suddenly shall they be wounded. They set at distance from them, but from afar his arrows can reach them. They are sharp arrows, and arrows of the mighty, the Almighty; for they shall pierce through the strongest armour, and strike deep into the hardest heart. The terrors of the Lord are his arrows, (Job vi. 4.) and his wrath is compared to burning coals of juniper, which do not flame or crackle, like thorns under a pot, but have a vehement heat, and keep fire very long; some say a year round, even when they seem to be gone out. This is the judgment of the Almighty; for all that love and make a lie shall have their portion in the lake that burns eternally, Rev. xxii. 15.

5. Wo is me that sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar! My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. 7. I am for peace; but, when I speak, they are for war.

The psalmist here complains of the bad neighbourhood into which he was driven; and some apply the two foregoing verses to this; What shall the deceitful tongue give, what shall it do to those that open their mouths to speak lies against him? They are malicious deceits, what such malicious deceitful men? Nothing but sharp arrows, and coals of juniper, all the mischiefs of a false and sputeful tongue, liv. 4. Wo is me, says David, that I am forced to dwell among such, that I sojourn in Mesech and Kedar! Not that David dwelt in the country of Mesech or Kedar; we never find him so far off from his own native country; but he dwelt among rude and barbarous people, like the inhabitants of Mesech, and Kedar; as when we would describe an ill neighbourhood, we say, We dwell among Turks and heathens: this made him cry out, Wo is me!

1. He was forced to live at a distance from the ordinances of God. While he was in banishment, he looked upon himself as a sojourner, never at home but when he was near God’s altars; and he cries out, “Wo is me, that my sojournings are prolonged, that I cannot get home to my resting-place, but am still kept at a distance!” So says it, and it. Note, A good man cannot think himself at home while he is banished from God’s ordinances, and has not them within reach. And it is a great grief to all that love God, to want the means of grace, and of communion with God: when they are under a force of that kind, they cannot but cry out, as David here, Wo is me!

2. He was forced to live among wicked people, who were, upon many accounts, troublesome to him. He dwelt in the tents of Kedar, where the shepherds were probably in an ill name for being litigious, like the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot. It is a very grievous burthen to a good man to be cast into, and kept in, the company of these whom he hopes to be for ever separated from; (like Lot in Sodom; 2 Pet. ii. 8.) to dwell long with such is grievous indeed, for they are thorns, vexing, and scratching, and tearing, and who will show the old enmity that
is  in the seed of the serpent, against the seed of the woman. Those that David dwelt with, were such as not only hated him, but hated peace, and proclaimed war with it; who might write on their weapons of war, not Sic sequimur pacem—Thus we aim at peace, but Sic sequimur pacem—Thus we persecute. Perhaps Saul’s court was the Mesech and Kedar in which David dwelt, and Saul was the man he means that hated peace, whom David studied to oblige and conciliate, that he might shew the unkindness to him, the more exasperated he was against him.

See here, (1.) The character of a very good man in David, who could truly say, though he was a man of war, I am for peace, for living peaceably with all men, and unpeaceably with none. I peace, so it is in the original; “I love peace, and pursue peace; my disposition is to peace, and my delight is in it. I pray for peace, and strive for peace, will do any thing, submit to any thing, part with any thing, in reason, for peace. I am for peace, and have made it to appear that I am so.” The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable.

(2.) The character of the worst of bad men in David’s enemies, who would pick quarrels with those that were most peaceably disposed; “When I speak, they are for war; and the more forward for war, the more they find me inclined to peace.” He spoke with all the respect and kindness that could be; proposed methods of conciliation, of peaceable, of spake reason, spake love; but they would not so much as hear him patiently, but cried out, “To arms, to arms;” so fierce and implacable were they, and so bent to mischief. Such were Christ’s enemies: for his love they were his adversaries, and for his good words and good works they stoned him. If we meet with such enemies, we must not think it strange, nor the peace less for our seeking it in vain. Be not overcome of evil, no not of such evil as this, but, even when this tried, still try to overcome evil with good.

PSALM CXXI.

Some call this the soldier’s psalm, and think it was penned in the camp, when David was jeopardizing his life in the high-places of the field, and thus trusted God to cover his head in the day of battle. Others call it the traveller’s psalm, (for there is nothing in it of military dangers,) and think David penned it when he was going abroad, and designed it, pro vehicle—for the carriage, for a good man to carry and companion in a journey or voyage. But we need no method so particular in this, for whether we are, at home or abroad, we are exposed to danger more than we are aware of; and this psalm directs and encourages us to repose ourselves and our confidence in God, and by faith to put ourselves under his protection, and commit ourselves to his care, which we must do, with an entire resignation and satisfaction, in singing this psalm. I. David here assures himself of help from God, v. 1, 2. II. He assures others of it, v. 3, 4.

A song of degrees.

I. I WILL lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. 2. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. 3. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. 4. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. 5. The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. 6. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. 7. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. 8. The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore.

This psalm teaches us,

I. To stay ourselves upon God as a God of power, and a God all-sufficient for us. David did so, and found the benefit of it. 1. We must not rely upon creatures, upon men and means, instruments and second causes, nor make flesh our arm: “Shall I lift up mine eyes to the hills? (so some read it.) “Does my help come from thence? Shall I depend upon the powers of the earth; upon the strength of the hills upon princes and great men, who, like hills, fill the earth and make them high? What, can I lift up mine eyes to heaven? No; in vain is salvation hoped for from hills and mountains, Jer. iii. 23. I never expect help to come from them, my confidence is in God only. “We must lift up our eyes above the hills, so some read it; we must look beyond instruments to God, who makes them that to us which they are. 2. We must see all our help laid up in God, his power and goodness, his providence and grace; and from him we must expect it to come; “My help comes from the Lord; the help I desire is what he sends, and from him I expect it in his own way and time. If he do not help, no creature can help; if he do, no creature can hinder, can hurt.” 3. We must fetch in help from God, by faith in his promises, and a due regard to all his institutions; “I will lift up mine eyes to the hills;” (probably he means the hills on which the temple was built, and the temple of Solomon, and the holy hill of Zion, where the ark of the covenant was, and the temple, and the altars,) “I will have an eye to the special presence of God in his church, and with his people, (his presence by promise,) not only to his common presence.” When he was at a distance, he would look toward the sanctuary; (xxviii. 12—xxix. 6.) from thence cometh our help, from the word and prayer, from the secret of his tabernacle. (My help cometh from the Lord,) so the word is, (v. 2.) from before the Lord, (from the light and from the presence of the Lord.) “Which (says Dr. Hammond) may refer to Christ incarnate, with whose humanity the Deity being inseparably united, God is always present with him, and through him with us, for whom, sitting at God’s right hand, he constantly maketh intercession. Christ is called the angel of his presence, that saved his people, Isa. lxiii. 9. 4. We must encourage our confidence in God with this, that he must not only be our God, but he must do all that can do any thing. He made the world out of nothing, himself alone, by a word’s speaking, in a little time, and all very good, very excellent and beautiful; and therefore, how great soever our straits and difficulties are, he has power sufficient for our succour and relief. He that made heaven and earth is sovereign Lord of all the hosts of both, and can make use of them as he pleases for the help of his people, and restrain them when he pleases from hurting his people.

II. To comfort ourselves in God, when our difficulties and dangers are greatest. It is hence promised, that if we put our trust in God, and keep in the way of our duty, we shall be safe under his protection, so that no real evil, no mere evil, shall happen to us, nor any affliction, but what God sees good for us, and will do good by. 1. God hath undertaken to be our Protector; The Lord is thy keeper, v. 5. Whatever charge he gives his angels to keep his people, he has not thereby discharged himself, so that whether every particular saint has an angel for his guardian or no, we are sure he has God himself for his Guardian. It is infinite wisdom that contrives, and infinite power that works, the safety of those that have put themselves under God’s protection. These must needs be well kept, that have the Lord for their Keeper. If, by affliction, they be made his prisoners, yet still he is their Keeper.
2. The same that is the Protector of the church in general, is engaged for the preservation of every particular believer; the same wisdom, the same power, the same promises. *He that keepeth Israel, (v. 4.) is thy Keeper, v. 5.* The Shepherd of the flock is the Shepherd of every sheep, and will take care, that not one, even of the little ones, shall be lost. *He that keepeth Israel, that keepeth thee, O Israelite, shall neither slumber nor sleep;* he never did, or ever will, for he is never weary; he not only does not sleep, but he does not so much as slumber; he has not the least inclination to sleep.”

4. He not only protects those whom he is the Keeper of, but he refreshes them; *He is their Shade.* The comparison has a great deal of gracious condescension in it; thou, and all Believers, who is his infinite Sub stance, is what he is, in order that he may speak sensible comfort to his people, promises to be their Umbre—their Shadow, to keep as close to them as the shadow does to the body, and to shelter them from the scorching heat, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, Isa. xxxii. 2. Under this shadow they may sit with delight and assurance, Cant. ii. 3.

5. He is always near to his people for their protection and refreshment, and never at a distance; *he is their Keeper and Shade on their right hand;* so that he is never far to seek. The right hand is the working hand; let them but turn themselves dexterously to their duty, and they shall find God ready to them, to assist them, and give them success, Ps. xvi. 8.

He is not only at their right hand, but he will also keep the feet of his saints, 1 Sam. ii. 9. He will have an eye upon them in their motions; he will not suffer thy foot to be moved. God will provide that his people shall not be tempted above what they are able, shall not fall into sin, though they may be very near it, (Is. ii. 23.) shall not fall into trouble, though there be many endeavouring to undermine them by fraud, or overthrow them by force. He will keep them from being frightened, as we are when we slip or stumble, and are ready to fall.

7. He will protect them from all the malignant influences of the heavenly bodies; *v. 6.* The sun shall not smite thee, with his heat by day, nor the moon, with her cold and moisture, by night. The sun and moon are great blessings to mankind, and yet (such a sad change has sin made in the creation) even the sun and moon, though worshipped by a great part of mankind, are often instruments of hurt and discomfort to human bodies: God by them often smites us; but his favour shall interpose so, that they shall not damage his people. He will keep them night and day, (Is. xlii. 3.) as he kept Israel in the wilderness by a pillar of cloud by day, which screened them from the heat of the sun, and of fire by night, which probably diffused a gentle warmth over the whole camp, that they might not be prejudiced by the cold and damp of the night; their father Jacob having complained, (Gen. xxxi. 40.) that by day the drought consumed him, and the frost by night. It may be understood figuratively; “Thou shalt not be hurt either by the open assaults of thine enemies, which are as visible as the scorching beams of the sun, or by their secret treacherous attempts, which are like the insensible insinuations of the cold by night.”

8. His protection will make them safe in every respect; *v. 8.* They shall preserve thee from all ev ill, *v. 9.* They shall prevent the evil thou fearest, and shall sanctify, remove, or lighten, the evil thou feelest. He will keep thee from doing evil, (2 Cor. xii. 7.) and so far from suffering evil, that whatever affliction happens to thee, there shall be no evil in thee. Even that which kills, shall not hurt.”

9. It is the spiritual life especially that God will take under his protection; *He shall preserve thy soul.* All souls are his; and the soul is the man, and therefore he will with a peculiar care preserve them, that they be not defiled by sin, and disturbed by affliction. He will keep them, by keeping us in the possession of them; and he will preserve them from perishing eternally.

10. He will keep us in all our ways; “He shall preserve thy going out and coming in. Thou shalt be under his protection in all thy journeys and voyages, outward-bound or homeward-bound, as he kept Israel in the wilderness, in their removes and rests. He will prosper thee in all thy affairs at home and abroad, in the beginning and in the conclusion of them. He will keep thee in life and death, thy going out and going on while thou livest, and thy coming in when thou diest; going out to thy labour in the morning of thy days, and coming home to thy rest when the evening of old age calls thee in,” (v. 23.)

11. He will continue his care over us from this time forth and even for evermore. It is a protection for life, never out of date. *He will be thy Guide even unto death,* and will hide thee in the grave, hide thee in heaven. He will preserve thee in his heavenly kingdom.” God will protect his church and his saints always, even to the end of the world. The Spirit, who is their Preserver and Comforter, shall abide with them for ever.

**PSALM CXXII.**

This psalm seems to have been penned by David for the use of the people of Israel, when they came up to Jerusalem, to worship at the three solemn feasts. It was in David’s time that Jerusalem was first chosen to be the city where God would record his name. It being a new thing, this, among other means, was used to bring the people to be in love with Jerusalem, as the Holy City, though it was but the other day in the hands of the Jebusites. Observe, I. The joy with which they were to go up to Jerusalem, v. 1, 2. II. The great esteem they were to have of Jerusalem, v. 3, 5. III. The great concern they were to have for Jerusalem, and the prayers they were to put up for its welfare, v. 6, 9. In singing this psalm, we must have an eye to the gospel-church, which is called the Jerusalem that is from above. *A song of *glores of David.*

1. I WAS glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.

2. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.

3. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together: 4. Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord. 5. For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

Here is, 1. The pleasure which David, and other pious Israelites, took in approaching to, and attending upon, the house of God. (1.) The invitation to them was very welcome. David was himself glad, and would have every Israelite to say that he was glad, when he was called upon to go up to the house of the Lord. Note, [1.] It is the will of God that we should worship him in concert; that many should join together to wait upon him in public ordinances. We ought to worship God in our own houses, but that is not enough, we must go up to the house of the Lord, and show our homage to him there, and not forsake the assemblying ourselves together. [2.] We should not only agree with one another, but excite and stir up one another, to go to worship God in public. *Lo*
6. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. 7. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. 8. For my brethren and companions’ sakes I will now say, Peace be within thee. 9. Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good.

Here,
1. David calls upon others to wish well to Jerusalem, v. 6, 7. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, for the welfare of it, for all good to it, particularly for the uniting of the inhabitants among themselves, and their preservation from the incursions of enemies. This we may truly desire, that in the peace thereof we may have peace; and this we must earnestly pray for, for it is the gift of God, and for it he will be inquired of. These can do nothing else for the peace of Jerusalem, can pray for it, which is something more than showing their goodwill, it is the appointed way of fetching in mercy. The peace and welfare of the gospel-church, particularly in our land, is to be earnestly desired and prayed for by every one of us.

Now, (1.) We are here encouraged in our prayers for Jerusalem’s peace: They shall prosper that love thee. We must pray for Jerusalem, not out of custom, or for fashion’s sake, but out of a principle of love to God’s government of man, and man’s worship of God: and in seeking the public welfare, we seek our own; for so well does God love the gates of Zion, that he will love all those that do love them; and therefore they cannot but prosper; at least their souls shall prosper by the ordinances they so dearly love.

(2.) We are here directed in our prayers for it, and words are put into our mouths, v. 7. Peace be within thy walls. He teaches us to pray, [1.] For all the inhabitants in general; all within the walls, from the least to the greatest. Peace be in thy fortifications, let them never be attacked; or, if they be, let them never be taken, but be an effectual security to the city. [2.] For the princes and rulers especially; Let prosperity be in the palaces of the great men that sit at the helm, and have the direction of public affairs; if they prosper, it will be well for the public. The poorer sort are apt to envy the prosperity of the palaces, but they are here taught to pray for it.

2. He resolves, that, whatever others do, he will approve himself a faithful friend to Jerusalem; (1.) In his prayers; “I will now say, now I see the tribes so cheerfully resorting hither to the testimony of Israel, and the matter settled, that Jerusalem must be the place where God will record his name, now I will say, Peace be within thee.” He did not say, “Let others pray for the public peace, the priests and the prophets, whose business it is, and the people, that have nothing else to do, and I will fight for it, and rule for it.” No; “I will pray for it too.” (2) In his endeavours, with which he will second his prayers; “I will, to the utmost of my power, seek thy good.” Whatever lies within the sphere of our activity to do for the public good, we must do it, else we are not sincere in praying for it.

Now it might be said, No thanks to David to be so solicitous for the welfare of Jerusalem, it was his own city, and the interests of his family were lodged in it. It is true; yet he professes that was not the reason why he was in such care for the welfare of Jerusalem; but it proceeded from the warm regard he had, [1.] To the communion of saints; It is for my brethren and companions’ sakes, that is, for the sake of all true-hearted Israelites, whom I look
upon as my brethren, (so he calls them, 1 Chron. xxviii. 2.) and who have often been my companions in the worship of God, which hath knit my heart to them. [2.] To the ordinances of God: He had set his affection to the house of his God; (1 Chron. xxix. 3.) he took a great pleasure in public worship, and for that reason would pray for the good of Jerusalem. Then our concern for the public welfare is right, when it is the effect of a sincere love to God's institutions and his faithful worshippers.

PSALM CXXIII.

This psalm was penned at a time when the church of God was brought low and trampled upon; some think it was when the Jews were captives in Babylon; though that was not the only time that they were insulted over by the proud. The psalmist begins as if he spoke for himself only, (v. 1.) but presently speaks in the name of the church. Here is, 1. Their expectation of mercy from God, v. 1, 2. 2. Their plea for mercy with God, v. 3, 4. In singing it, we must have our eye up to God's favours, with a holy concern, and then an eye down to men's reproach, with a holy contempt.

A song of degrees.

1. UNTO thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. 2. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us. 3. Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt. 4. Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud.

We have here, I. The solemn profession which God's people make of faith and hope in God, v. 1, 2. Observe, 1. The title here given to God; O thou that dwellest in the heavens. Our Lord Jesus has taught us, in prayer, to have an eye to God, as our Father in heaven; not that he is concealed there, but there especially he manifests his glory, as the King in his court. Heaven is a place of prospect, and a place of prospect a dwelling place. He beholds all the calamities of his people, and from thence can send to save them. Sometimes God seems to have forsaken the earth, and the enemies of God's people ask, Where is now your God? But then they can say with comfort, Our God is in the heavens. O thou that sittest in the heavens, so some; sittest as Judge there; for the Lord has prepared his throne in the heavens, and to that throne injured innocency may appeal. 2. The regard here had to God; the psalmist himself lifted up his eyes to him. The eyes of a good man are ever toward the Lord; (xxv. 15.) in every prayer we lift up our soul, the eye of our soul, to God; especially in trouble, which was the case here. The eyes of the people waited on the Lord, v. 2. We find mercy coming toward a people, when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, are toward the Lord. Zach. ix. 4. The eyes of the body are heaven-ward. Oe homini sublime dedit—To man he gave an erect mien, to teach us which way to direct the eyes of the mind. Our eyes wait on the Lord; the eye of desire and prayer; the begging eye, and the eye of dependence; hope and expectation; the longing eye. Our eyes must wait upon God as the Lord, and our God, until that he have mercy upon us. We desire mercy from him, we hope he will show us mercy, and we will continue our attendance on him till it come.

This is illustrated, (v. 2.) by a similitude: Our eyes are to God, as the eyes of a servant's handmaid, to the hand of their master and mistress. The eyes of a servant are, (1.) To his master's directing hand, expecting that he will appoint his work, and cut it out for him, and show him how he must do it; Lord, what will thou have me to do? (2.) To his supplying hand. Servants look to their master, or their mistress, for their portion of meat in due season, Prov. xxxi. 15. And to God must we look for our daily bread, for from him we must receive it thankfully. (3.) To his protecting hand. If the servant cannot do his work himself, where must he look for help but to his master. And in the strength of the Lord God we must go forth and go on. (4.) To his protecting hand. If the servant meet with opposition in his work, if he be questioned for what he does, if he be wronged and injured, who should bear him cut and right him, but his master are that set him on work? The people of God, when they are persecuted, may appeal to their Master. We are thine, save us. (5.) To his correcting hand. If the servant have provoked his master to beat him, he does not call for help against his master, but looks at the hand that strikes him, till it shall say, "It is enough, I will not contend for ever. The people of God were now under his rebukes; and whether they should turn to him that smote them? Isa. ix. 15. To whom should they now turn? And God's correction, if they will not do will as Hagar did, who ran away from her mistress, when she put some hardships upon her, (Gen. xvi. 6.) but they submit themselves to, and humble themselves under, God's mighty hand. (6.) To his rewarding hand. The servant expects his wages, his well-done, from his master. Hypocrites have their eye to the world's hand, thence they have their reward; (Matt. vi. 2.) but true Christians have their eye to God as their Rewarder.

II. The humble address which God's people present to him in their calamitous condition, (v. 3, 4.) wherein, 1. They sue for mercy; not prescribeing to God what he shall do for them, nor pleading any merit of their own, why he should do for them, but, Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us. We find little mercy with men, their tender mercies are cruel, but we have a God whose tender mercies are great. If our eyes are cursed mackings, but this is our comfort, that with the Lord there is mercy, and we need desire no more to relieve us, and make us easy, than the mercy of God. Whatever the troubles of the church are, God's mercy is a sovereign remedy.

2. They set forth their grievances; We are exceedingly filled with contempt. Reproach is the wound, the burthen, they complain of. Observe, (1.) Who were reproached; We, who have our eyes up to the heavens, (v. 2.) Those who are owned of God are often despised and trampled on by the world. Some translate the words which we render, those that are at ease, and the proud, so as to signify the persons that are scorned and contemned. "Our soul is troubled to see how these that are at peace, and the excellent ones, are scorned and despised." The saints are a peaceable people, and yet are abused; (xxxv. 20.) the excellent ones of the earth, and yet reproached. (2.) We are reproached; We are filled, or we are surfeited with it; Our soul is exceedingly filled with it. The enemies that we could not jeer them enough, nor say...
PSALMS, CXXIV.

David penned this psalm (we suppose) upon occasion of some great deliverance which God wrought for him and his people from some very threatening danger, which was likely to have involved them all in ruin; whether by foreign invasion, or intestine insurrection, is not certain; whatever it was, he seems to have been himself much affected, and very desirous to affect others, with the goodness of God, in making a way for them to escape: to him he is careful to give all the glory, and takes none to himself, as conquerors usually do. 1. He here magnifies the greatness of the danger they were in, and of the ruin they were at the brink of, v. 1. 5. 2. He gives God the glory of their escape, (v. 6, 7.) compared with v. 1-5. He takes encouragement and strength of trust in God, v. 8. In singing this psalm, beside the application of it to any particular deliverance wrought for us and our people, in our days and the days of our fathers, we may have in our thoughts the great work of our redemption by Jesus Christ, by which we were rescued from the powers of darkness.

A song of degrees of David.

1. If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say; 2. If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us; 3. Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us; 4. Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: 5. Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.

The people of God, being here called upon to praise God for their deliverance, are to take notice, 1. Of the malice of men, by which they were reduced to the very brink of ruin. Let Israel say, that there was but a step between them and death: the more desperate the disease appears to have been, the more does the skill of the Physician appear in the cure. Observe, (1.) Whence the threatening danger came; Men rose up against us; creatures of our own kind, and yet bent upon our ruin: Homo homini lupus—Man is a wolf to man. No marvel that the red dragon, the roaring lion, should seek to swallow us up; but that men should thirst after the blood of men, Absalom after his father's blood, the elder brother the blood of the younger brother; thus they could be drunk with the blood of the saints, is what, with St. John, we may wonder at with great admiration. From men we may expect humanity, yet there are those whose tender mercies are cruel. But what was the matter with these men? Why, their wrath was kindled against us; (v. 3.) something or other they were angry at, and then no less would serve than the destruction of those they had conceived a displeasure against. Wrath is cruel, and anger is fierce; it is a fire ready to consume us; they were proud; and the wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor. They were daring in their attempt, they rose up against us; rose in rebellion, with a resolution to swallow us up alive. (2.) How far it went, and how fatal it had been if it had gone a little farther; "We had been devoured as a lamb by a lion; not only slain, but swallowed up, so that there should have been no relics of us remaining; swallowed up with so much haste, ere we were aware, that we should have gone down alive to the pit. We had been overwhelmed as the lowly and humble, for a land-flood, or the sands by a high spring-tide." This similitude he dwells upon, with the ascents, which bespeaks this a song of degrees, or risings, like the rest. The waters had overwhelmed us. What of us? Why, the stream had gone over our souls, our lives, our comforts; all that is dear to us. What waters? Why, the proud waters. God suffers his enemies of his people sometimes to prevail very far against them, that his own power may appear more illustrious in their deliverance.

2. Of the goodness of God, by which they were rescued from the very brink of ruin; "The Lord was on our side; and if he had not been so, we had been undone." (1.) "God was on our side; he took our part, espoused our cause, and appeared for us: he was our Helper, and a very present Hulp, a Help on our side, nigh at hand. He was with us; not only for us, but against our enemies, and in chief of our forces." (2.) That God was Jehovah; there the emphasis lies. "If it had not been Jehovah himself, a God of infinite power and perfection, that had undertaken our deliverance, our enemies had overpowered us." Happy the people, therefore, whose God is Jehovah, a God all-sufficient. Let Israel say this, to his honour, and resolve never to forsake him.

6. Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. 7. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped. 8. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Here the psalmist further magnifies the great deliverance God had lately wrought for them.

1. That their hearts might be the more enlarged in thankfulness to him; (v. 6.) Blessed be the Lord. God is the Author and Overruler of our deliverance, and therefore he must have the glory of it. We exalt him of his due, if we do not return thanks to him. And we are the more obliged to praise him, because we had such a narrow escape. We were delivered, (1.) Like a lamb out of the very jaws of a beast of prey; God has not given us as a prey to their teeth; intimating, that they had no power against God's people, but what was given them from above. They could not be a prey to their teeth, unless God had given them up, and therefore they were rescued, because God would not suffer them to be ruined. (2.) Like a bird, a little bird, (the word signifies a sparrow,) out of the snare of the fowlers. The enemies are very subtle and sly; they lay snares for God's people, to bring them into sin and trouble, and to hold them there. Sometimes they seem to have prevailed so far as to gain their point; God's people are taken in by their artifice, and it seems helpless to help themselves out as any weak and silly bird is; and then is God's time to appear for their relief, when all other friends fail; then God breaks the snare, and turns the counsel of the enemies into foolishness; The snare is broken, and so we are delivered. Isaac is saved when he lay ready to be sacrificed. Jehovah-jireh; in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.

2. That their hearts, and the hearts of others, might be more enlarged in trust in God in the like dangers; (v. 8.) Our help is in the name of the Lord. David had directed us (cxxx, 2.) to depend upon God for help as to our personal concerns; My help is in the name of the Lord; here, as to the concerns of the public; Our help is in. It is a comfort to all that lay the interests of God's Israel near their hearts, that Israel's God is the same that made
the world, and therefore will have a church in the world, and can secure that church in the times of the greatest danger and distress. In him therefore let the church's friends put their confidence, and they shall not be put to confusion.

PSALM CXXV.

This short psalm may be summed up in those words of the prophet, (Isa. iii. 16, 11.) Say ye to the righteous, It shall be well with him. Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him. Thus are life and death, the blessing and the curse, set before us often in the psalms, as well as in the law and the prophets. 1. It is certainly well with the people of God; for, 1. They have the promises of a good God, (that shall be kept, (v. 1.) and safe, (v. 2.) and not always under the hatches, v. 3.) 2. They have the prayers of a good man, which shall be heard for them, v. 4. 22. It is certainly ill with the wicked, and particularly with the apostates, v. 3. Somewhere in the Jewish rav-
sus are of opinion that it has reference to the days of the Messiah; however, we that are members of the gospel-church may certainly, in singing this psalm, take the comfort of these promises, and the more so, if we stand in awe of the threatening.

A song of degrees.

1. THEY that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. 2. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth, even for ever. 3. For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.

Here are three very precious promises made to the people of God, which, though they are designed to secure the welfare of the church in general, may be applied by particular believers to themselves, as other promises of this nature may.

Here is, 1. The character of God's people to whom these promises belong. Many call themselves God's people who have no part nor lot in this matter. But those shall have the benefit of them, and may take the comfort of them, (1.) Who are righteous, (v. 3.) righteous before God, righteous to God, and righteous to all men; for his sake justified and sanctified. (2.) Who trust in the Lord, who depend upon his care, and devoutly themselves to his honour. All that deal with God must deal upon trust, and he will give comfort to those only that give credit to him, and not to put it to assay: they do so, but quitting other confidences, and venturing to the utmost for God. The closer our expectations are confined to God, the higher our expectations may be raised from him.

2. The promises themselves.

(1.) That their hearts shall be established by faith: those minds shall be truly stay'd that are stay'd on God; They shall be as mount Zion. The church is, in general, called mount Zion; (Heb. xii. 22.) and it shall in this respect be like mount Zion, it shall be built upon a rock, and its interests shall be so well secured, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The stability of the church is the satisfaction of all its well-wishers. Particular persons, who trust in God, shall be established; (Ps cxii. 7.) their faith shall be their fixation, Isa. vii. 9. They shall be as mount Zion, which is firm, and is not moved by the wind, and can never be more as a holy mountain supported by promise. [1.] They cannot be removed by the prince of the power of the air, nor by all his subdity and strength. They cannot be removed from their integrity, nor from their confidence in God. [2.] They abide for ever in that grace which is the earnest of their everlasting continuance in glory.

(2.) That, committing themselves to God, they shall be safe, under his protection, from all the insults of their enemies. As Jerusalem had a natural fastness and fortification in the mountains that were round about it, v. 2. (those mountains not only with the hatches, winds and tempests, and broke the force of them, but made it also very difficult of access for an enemy,) such a defence is God's providence to his people! Observe, [1.] The compass of it; The Lord is round about his people on every side; there is no gap in the hedge of protection which he makes round about his people, at which the enemy, who goes about them, seeking to do them a mischief, can find entrance, Job i. 10. [2.] The circumscription of it; from henceforth even for ever. Mountains may moulder and come to nothing, and rocks be removed out of their place, (Job xiv. 18,) but God's covenant with his people cannot be broken, (Isa. lix. 10.) nor his care of them cease. Their being said to stand fast for ever, (v. 1.) and here to have God round about them for ever, intimates, that the promises of the stability and security of God's people will have their full accomplishment in their everlasting state. In heaven they shall stand fast for ever, shall be firm of our God, and go no more out; (Rev. iii. 12.) and there God himself, with his glory and favour, will be round about them for ever.

(3.) That their troubles shall last no longer than their strength will serve to bear them up under them, v. 3. (1.) It is supposed that the rod of the wicked may come, may fall, upon the lot of the righteous. The rod of their power may oppress them, the rod of their anger may vex and torment them. It may fall upon their persons, their estates, their liberties, their families, their names, any thing that falls to their lot; only it cannot reach their souls. (2.) It is promised, that, though it may come upon their lot, it shall not rest there, it shall not continue so long as the enemies design, and as the people of God fear, but God will cut the work short in righteousness; so short, that even with the temptation he will make a way for them to escape. (3.) It is considered as a reason of this promise, that, if the trouble should continue ever-long, the righteous themselves would be in temptation to put forth their hands to iniquity, to join with wicked people in their wicked practices; to say as they say, and do as they do. There is danger lest, being long persecuted for their religion, at length they grow weary of it, and willing to give it up; being kept long in expectation of promised mercies, they begin to distrust the promise, and to think of casting off God, left upon suspicion of his having cast them off. See Lxxiii. 15, 14. Note, God considers the frame of his people, and will proportion their trials to their strength, by the care of his providence, as well as their strength to their trials, by the power of his grace. Oppression makes a wise man mad, especially if it continue long; therefore for the elects sake the days shall be shortened, that, whatever goes with their lot in this world, they may not lose their lot among the chosen.

4. Do good, O Lord, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts. 5. As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity; but peace shall be upon Israel.

Here is,

1. The prayer the psalmist puts up for the happiness of those that are sincere and constant; (v. 4.) Do good, O Lord, unto those that are good. This teaches us to pray for all good people, to make sup
It is sometimes but the Israel; was willfulness and God's promises should quicken our prayers. It is comfortable wishing well to those for whom God has engaged to do well.

The prospect was of the ruin of hypocrites and apostates; he does not pray for it, I have not desired the woeeful day, thou knowest, but he predicts it; As for those who, having known the way of righteousness, for fear of the rod of the wicked, basely turn aside out of it to their wicked ways, use indirect ways to prevent trouble, or extricate themselves out of it; or those who, instead of reforming, grow worse and worse, and are more obstinate and daring in their impieties, God shall send them away, cast them out, and lead them forth, with the workers of iniquity, he shall appoint them their portion with the worst of sinners. Note, (1.) Sinful ways are crooked ways; sin is the perverting of that which is right. (2.) The doom of those who turn aside to those crooked ways, out of the right way, will be the same with theirs who have all along walked in them; nay, and more grievous, for if any place in hell be hotter than another, that shall be the portion of hypocrites and apostates. God shall lead them forth, as prisoners are led forth to execution, Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire; and these shall go away, all their former righteousness shall not be mentioned unto them. The last words, Peace upon Israel, may be taken as a prayer; God preserve his Israel in peace, when his judgments are abroad reeking with evil-doers. We read them as a promise, Peace shall be upon Israel; that is, [1.] When those who, by treacherously deserted the ways of God meet with their own destruction, those who faithfully adhere to them, though they may have trouble in their way, their end shall be peace. [2.] The destruction of those who walk in crooked ways will contribute to the peace and safety of the church; when Herod was cut off, the word of God grew, Acts xii. 23. 24. [5.] The peace and happiness of God's Israel will be the occasion, and add much to the terror, of those who, in their wickedness, Luke xiii. 28. Isa. lxv. 13. My servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed.

PSALM CXXVI.

It was with reference to some great and surprising deliverance of the people of God out of bondage and distress, that this psalm was penned; and that likely their return out of Babylon, which Dr. Hammond thinks Babylon he here mentioned, as it is, (Ps. cxxxvii.) their captivity there was the most remarkable captivity, both in itself, and as their return out of it was typical of our redemption. Those Psalms were penned by Ezra, and some of the prophets that came up with the first. We read of singers of the children of Asaph, that famous psalmist who returned them, Ezra ii. 41. It being a song of degrees, which was sung and repeated with advancement, (v. 2, 3. and v. 4, 5.) it is something among the rest of the psalms that bear that title. I. Those that were returned out of captivity are here called upon to be thankful, v. 1. - 3. II. Those that were yet remaining behind, who were prayed for, (v. 1. 4. 5. 6.) were encouraged, v. 5. 6. It will be easy, in singing this psalm, to apply it either to any particular deliverance wrought for the church, or our own land, or to the great work of our salvation by Christ.

A song of degrees.

1. WHEN the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. 2. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them. 3. The Lord hath done great things for us, yereof we are glad.

While the people of Israel were captives in Babylon, their harps were hung upon the willows; for then God called to weeping and mourning, then he measured unto them, and they lamented; but, now that their captivity is turned, they resume their harps; Providence pipes to them, and they dance. Thus must we accommodate ourselves to all the dispensations of Providence, and be suitably affected with them. And the harps are never more melodiously tunable than after such a melancholy season. The long wait of mercies greatly sweetens their return.

Here is, 1. The deliverance God had wrought for them; He turned again the captivity of Zion. It is possible that Zion may be in captivity for the punishment of her degeneracy; but her captivity shall be turned again, when the end is answered, and the work designed by it is effected. Cyrus, for reasons of state, proclaimed liberty to God's captives, and yet it was the Lord's doing, according to his word. But God is free to be for ever merciful. God that in captivity, not as brass is put into the fire to be consumed, but as gold to be refined. Observe, The release of Israel is called the turning again of the captivity of Zion, the holy hill, where God's in Abode and dwelling-place were; for the restoring of their sacred interests, and the reviving of the public exercise of their religion, were the most valuable advantage of their return out of captivity.

2. The pleasing surprise that this was to them. They were amazed at it; it came so suddenly, that at first they were in confusion, not knowing what to make of it, nor what it was tending to; “We thought ourselves like men that dream, we thought it too good news to be true, and began to question whether we were well awake or no, and whether it was not still,” (as sometimes it had been to the prophets,) only a representation of it in vision;” as St. Peter for a while after, in regard to his deliverance was, Acts xii. 9. Sometimes the people of God are thus surprised with the blessings of his goodness before they are aware. We were like them that are recovered to health, so Dr. Hammond reads it; such a comfortable happy change it was to us, as life from the dead, or sudden ease from exquisite pain; we thought ourselves in a new world. And the surprise of it put them into an ecstasy and transport of joy, that they could scarcely contain themselves within the bounds of decency in the expression of it; Our mouth was filled with laughter, and our song with singing. Thus they gave vent to their joy, gave glory to their God, and gave notice to all about them what wonders God had wrought for them. They that were laughed at now laugh, and a new song is put into their mouths. It was a laughter of joy in God, not scorn of their enemies.

The notice which their neighbours took of it; They said among the heathen, Jehovah, the God of Israel, has done great things in the sight of their eyes, as our gods cannot do for us. The heathen had observed their calamity, and had triumphed in it, Jer. xxix. 8, 9. Ps. cxxxvii. 7. Now they could not but observe their deliverance, and admire that. It put a reputation upon those that had been scorned and despised, and made them look considerable; besides, it turned greatly to the honour of God, and extorted from those that set up other gods in competing with him, an acknowledgment of his wisdom, power and providence.
4. The acknowledgments which they themselves made of it, v. 3. The heathen were but spectators, and spake of it only as matter of news; they had no part or lot in the matter; but the people of God spake of it as sharers in it. (1.) With application; "He has done great things for us, things that we are interested in, and have advantage by." Thus it is comfortable speaking of the redemption Christ has wrought out, has wrought out for us, who loved us and foresaw for us. (2.) With affection; whereof we are glad. The heathen were amazed at it, and some of them angry, but we are glad. While Israel went a whoring from their God, joy was forbidden them; (Hos. ix. 1) but now that the iniquity of Jacob was purged by the captivity, and their sin taken away, now God makes them to rejoice. It is the repenting reformatory people that are, and shall be, the rejoicing people. Observe here, [1.] God's appearances for his people are to be looked upon as great things. [2.] God is to be eyed as the Author of all the great things done for the church. [3.] It is good to observe how the church's deliverances are for us, that we may rejoice in them.

4. Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south. 5. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. 6. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall, doubtless, come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

These verses look forward to the mercies that were yet wanted; they that were come out of captivity were still in distress, even in their own land, (Neh. i. 5) and many yet remained in Babylon. And their progress with trembling, and bare upon their hearts the grievances that were yet to be redressed. We have here, 1. A prayer for the perfecting of their deliverance; (v. 4.) "Turn again our captivity. Let those that are returned to their own land be eased of the burthens which they are yet groaning under. Let those that remain in Babylon have their hearts stirred up, as ours were, to take the benefit of the liberty granted. The beginning of every encouragement to us is to pray for the completing of it. And while we are here in this world, there will still be matter for prayer, even then when we are most furnished with matter for praise. And when we are free, and in prosperity ourselves, we must not be unmindful of our brethren that are in trouble and under restraint. The bringing of those that were yet in captivity, to join with their brethren that were returned, would be as welcome to both sides as streams of water in those countries, which, lying far south, were parched and dry. As cold water to a thirsty soul, so would this good news be from that far country, Prov. xxv. 25.

2. A promise for their encouragement to wait for it, assuring them that though they had now a sorrowful time, yet it would end well. But the promise is expressed generally, that all the saints may comfort themselves with this confidence, that their seed and their hairs of trespass will certainly end in a harvest of joy at last, v. 5, 6.

(1.) Suffering saints have a seedness of tears. They are in tears often, they share in the calamities of human life, and commonly have a greater share in them than others. But they sow in tears; they do the duty of an afflicted state, and so answer the intentions of the providences they are under. Weeping must not hinder sowing; when we suffer ill we must be doing well. Nay, the ground is by the rain prepared for the seed, and the husbandman sometimes chooses to sow in the wet, so we must improve times of affliction, as disposing us to repentance, and prayer, and humiliation. Nay, there are tears which are themselves the seed that we must sow; tears of sorrow for sin, our own and others; tears of sympathy with the afflicted church; and tears of tenderness in prayer and under the word. These are precious seed, such as the husbandman sows when corn is dear, and he has but little for his family, and therefore weeps to part with it, yet buries it under ground, in expectation of receiving it again with advantage. Thus does a good man sow in tears.

(2.) They shall have a harvest of joy. The troubles of the saints will not last always, but, when they have done their work, shall have a happy period. The captives in Babylon were long soving in tears, but at length they were brought forth with joy, and then they reap the benefit of their patience, suffering, and brought their sheaves with them to their own land, in their experiment of the goodness of God to them. Job, and Joseph, and David, and many others, had harvests of joy after a sorrowful seedness. They that sow in the tears of godly sorrow, shall reap in the joy of a sealed pardon and a settled peace. Those that sow to the spirit, in this vale of tears, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting, and that will be a joyful harvest indeed. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be for ever comforted.

PSALM CXXVII.

This is a family-psalm, as divers before were state-poems, and church-poems. It is entitled (as we read it) for Solomon, dedicated to him by his father. He having a house to build, a city to keep, and seed to raise up to his father, David directs him to look up to God, and to depend upon his providence, without which all his wisdom, care, and industry, would not serve. Some take it to have been penned by Solomon himself, and it may as well be read, a song of Solomon, who wrote a great many others. They compare it with his Ecclesiastes, the scope of both being the same, to show the vanity of worldly care, and how necessary it is that we keep in with God. On him we must depend. 1. For wealth, v. 1. 2. For heirs to leave it to, v. 5. 5. In singing this psalm, we must have our eye up unto God for success in all our undertakings, and a blessing upon all our comforts and enjoyments, because every creature is that to us which he makes it to be, and no more.

A song of degrees for Solomon.

1. EXCEPT the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. 2. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep. 3. Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. 4. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man: so are children of the youth. 5. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

We are here taught to have a continual regard to the Divine Providence in all the concerns of this life. Solomon was cried up for a wise man, and would be apt to learn to his own understanding and forecast, and therefore his father teaches him to look higher, and to take God along with him in his undertakings. He was to be a man of business, and therefore David instructed him how to manage his business under the direction of his religion; pa
We must have an eye to God,

I. In all the affairs and business of the family, even of the royal family, for king’s houses are no longer safe than while God protects them. We must depend upon God’s blessing, and not our own contrivance.

1. For the raising of a family: Except the Lord build the house, by his providence and blessing, its labour in vain, though ever so ingenious, that build it. We may understand it of the material house, except the Lord bless the building; it is to no purpose for men to build, any more than for the builders of Babel, who attempted it in defiance of heaven, or Hiol, who built Jericho under a curse. If the model and design be laid in pride and vanity, or if the foundations be laid in oppression and injustice, (Hab. ii. 11, 12.) God certainly does not build there; nay, if God be not acknowledged, we have the reason to expect his blessing, and without his blessing all is nothing. Or rather, it is to be understood of the making of a family considerable, that was mean; men labour to do this by advantageous matches, offices, employments, purchases; but all in vain, unless God build up the family, and raise the poor out of the dust.

The best laid project fails, unless God connecteth with it. (Mal. i. 3.)

2. For the security of a family or a city; for these are specified; if the guards of the city cannot secure it without God, much less can the good man of the house save his house from being broken up. Except the Lord keep the city from fire, from enemies, the watchmen, who go about the city, or patrol upon the walls of it, though they neither slumber nor sleep, wake but in vain, for a raging fire may break out, and the mischief of which the cleverest discoveries may not be able to prevent. That is a shame, or the city betrayed and lost by a thousand accidents, which the most watchful sentinel, or most cautious governor, could not obviate.

3. For the enriching of a family; that is a work of time and thought, but cannot be effected without the favour of Providence, any more than that which is the product of one happy turn; “It is in vain for the man that hateth light, and to deny yourselves your bodily refreshment to the pursuit of the wealth of the world.” Usually, those that rise early do not care for sitting up late, nor can those that sit up late easily persuade themselves to rise early; but there are some so hot upon the world, that they will do both, will rob their sleep to pay their cares; and they have as little comfort in their meals as in their rest, they eat the bread of sorrows. It is part of our sentence, that we eat our bread in the sweat of our face; but those go further, all their days they eat in darkness, Eccl. v. 17. They are continually full of care, which imbibes their comforts, and makes their lives a burthen to them. All this is to get money, and all in vain, except God prosper them, for riches are not always to men of understanding, Eccl. ix. 11. They that love God, and are beloved of him, have their minds easy, and live very comfortably, without this ado. Solomon was called Jedidiah, Beloved of the Lord; (2 Sam. xii. 25.) to him the kingdom was promised, and then it was in vain for Absalom to rise up early, to wheel the people, and for Adonijah to make such a stir, and to say, I will be king; Solomon sits still, and, being beloved of the Lord, to him he gives sleep and the kingdom too. Note, (1.) Inordinate excessive care about the things of this world, is a work of vain expense, which, if we have it, and often weary ourselves in vain for it, Hag. i. 6, 9. (2.) Bodily sleep is God’s gift to his beloved. We owe it to his goodness that our sleep is safe, (Ps. iv. 8.) that it is sweet, Jer. xxxi. 25, 26.

Then God gives as sleep, as he gives it to his beloved, when with it he gives us grace to lie down in his fear, and our souls returning to him, and reposing in him (as on Rest,) and will give us grace to be still with him, and to use the refreshment we have by sleep in his service. He gives his beloved sleep, quietness, and contentment of mind, a commodious enjoyment of what is present, and a commodious expectation of what is to come. Our care must be to keep ourselves in the love of God, and then we may be easy, whether we have little or much of this world.

II. In the increase of the family; he shows,

1. That children are God’s gift, v. 3. If children are withheld, it is God that withholds them (Gen. xxx. 2.) if they are given, it is God that gives them; (Gen. xxxiii. 5.) and they are to us what he makes them, comforts or crosses. Solomon multiplied wives, contrary to the law, but we never read of more than one wife that he had; for those that desarie children, as an heritage from the Lord, must receive them in the way that he is pleased to give them, by lawful marriage to one wife; (Mal. ii. 15.) therefore one, that he might seek a seed of God. But they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase. Children are a heritage, and a reward; and are so to be accounted blessings, and not burshtens; for he that sends mouths will send meat, if we trust in him. Obad. edom. might be bright sons, for the Lord blessed him because he had entertained them. Jer. I Chron. xxxvi. 5. Children are a heritage for the Lord, as well as from him; they are my children, (says God,) which thou hast borne unto me; (Ezkj. xvi. 20.) and then they are most our honour and comfort, when they are accounted to him for a generation.

2. That they are a good gift, and a great support and defence to a family; As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, who knows how to use them for his own safety and advantage; so are children of the youth, children born to their parents when they are young, which are the strongest and most healthful children, and are grown up to serve them by the time they need their service. Or rather, children who are themselves young; they are instruments of much good to their parents and families, which may fortify themselves with them against their enemies. The family which has a large stock of children, is like a quiver full of arrows, of different sizes we may suppose, but all of use one time or other; children of different capacities and inclinations may be several ways serviceable to the family. He that has a numerous issue may boldly speak with his enemy in the gate in judgment; in battle he needs not fear, leaving so many good seconds, so zealous, so faithful, and in the vigour of youth, 1 Sum. ii. 4, 5. Observe here, Children of the youth are arrows in the hand, which, with prudence, may be directed aright to the mark, God’s glory, and the service of their generation; but afterward, when they are gone abroad into the world, they are arrows out of the hand, it is too late to bend them then.

These arrows in the hand too often prove arrows in the heart, a constant grief to their godly parents, whose gray hairs they bring with sorrow to the grave.

PSALMS CXXVIII.

This, as the former, is a psalm for families. In that, we were taught that the prosperity of our families depends upon the blessing of God; in this, we are taught that the only way to do it is by blessing the families of the Lord. Let us make our families comfortable, is, to live in the fear of God, and in obedience to him. They that do so, in general, shall be blessed, v. 1, 2, 4. In particular, I. They shall be prosperous in their several enterprises, v. 2, 11. Their relations shall be agreeable, v. 3. III. They shall live to see their families brought up, v. 4, 6. They shall have the satisfaction of seeing the church of God flourish in a flourishing condition, v. 5, 6. We must sing this psalm in the firm belief of this truth. That religion and
psalms, and people, thy it. Happy shall thou be, and it shall be well with thee. 3. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thy house: thy children like olive-plants round about thy table. 4. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord. 5. The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. 6. Yea, thou shalt see thy children’s children, and peace upon Israel.

It is here showed that godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

1. It is here again and again laid down as an undoubted truth, that they who are truly holy are truly happy. They whose blessed state we are here assured of, are such as fear the Lord, and walk in his ways; such as observe the commandments of God in their spirits, and evidence it by a regular and constant conformity to his will.

Where the fear of God is a commanding principle in the heart, the tenor of the conversation will be accordingly; and in vain do we pretend to be of those that fear God, if we do not make conscience both of keeping to his ways, and not trifling in them or drawing back. Such are blessed, (v. 1.) and shall be blessed, v. 4. God blessed them, and his pronouncing them blessed makes them so. They are blessed now, they shall be blessed still, and for ever.

This blessedness arising from this blessing, is here secured, 1. To all the saints universally; Blessed is every one that fears the Lord, whoever he be; in every nation, he that fears God, and works righteousness, is accepted of him, and therefore is blessed. Whether he be high or low, rich or poor, in the world, if religion rule him, it will keep him in this world, and crown him in the next. To such a saint in particular; thus shall the man be blessed; not only the nation, the church in its public capacity, but the particular person in his private interests.

We are here encouraged to apply it to ourselves; (v. 2.) “Happy shall thou be; thou mayest take the comfort of the promise, and expect the benefit of it, as if it were directed to thee by name, if thou fear God, and walk in his ways. Happy shall thou be; that is, It shall be well with thee; whatever befalls thee, thou shalt be brought out of it: it shall be well with thee while thou livest, better when thou diest, and best of all to eternity.”

It is asserted, (v. 4.) with a note commanding attention, Behold, thus shall the man be blessed; behold it by faith in the promise; behold it by observation in the performance of the promise; behold it with assurance that it shall be so, for God is faithful; and with admiration that it should be so, for we merit no favour, no blessing, from him.

II. Particular promises are here made to godly people, which they may depend upon, as far as is for God’s glory and their good; and that is enough.

1. That, by the blessing of God, they shall get an honest livelihood, and live comfortably upon it. It is not promised that they shall live at ease, without care or pains, but, Thou shalt eal the labour of thy hands. Here is a double promise, (1.) That they shall have something to do, (for an idle life is a miserable uncomfortable life,) and shall have health and strength, and capacity of mind, to do it, and shall not be forced to be beholden to others for necessary food, and to live, as the disabled poor do, upon the labours of other people. It is as much a mercy, as it is a duty, with quietness to work and eat our own bread, 2 Thess. iii. 12. (2.) That they shall succeed in their employments, and they and theirs shall enjoy what they get; others shall not come and eat the bread out of their mouths, not shall it be taken from them either by oppressive rulers or by men that can do it, and they shall have the fruits of what they do. Hence, Happy shall thou be, and it shall be well with thee. And happy shall thy children be, and the Lord shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.

2. That they shall have abundance of comfort in their family-relations. As a wife and children are very much a man’s care, so, if by the grace of God they are such as they should be, they are very much the man’s delight, as much as any creature-comfort. (1.) The wife shall be as a vine by the sides of the house, not only as a spreading vine, which serves for an ornament, but as a fruitful vine, which is for profit, and with the fruit whereof both God and man are honoured, Judg. ix. 13. The vine is a weak and tender plant, and needs, to be supported and cherished, but it is a very valuable plant, and some think (because all the products of it were prohibited to the Jews, Deut. xviii. 4.) therefore, the wife’s fruitfulness is a figure of the church, to be cherished, and nourished. The wife’s place is the husband’s house; there her business lies, and that is her castle; Where is Sarah thy wife? Behold, in the tent; where should she be else? Her place is by the sides of the house, not under foot to be trampled on, nor yet upon the house-top to dominie: if she be so, she is but as the grass upon the house-top, in the next psalm; but on the side of the house, being a rib out of the side of the man; she shall be a loving wife, as the vine, which cleaves to the house-side, and one of its tender shoots, the vine, which is pliable, and grows as it is directed. She shall be fruitful as the vine, not only in children, but in the fruits of wisdom, and righteousness, and good management, the branches of which run over the wall, (Gen. xlix. 22. Ps. lxxx. 11.) like a fruitful vine, not cumbering the ground, or bringing forth sour grapes, or grapes of Sodom, but good fruit. (2.) The children shall be as olive-plants, likely in their early springs to thrive, and to grow and flourish in the olive-plant’s nature, yet grafted into the good olive, and partaking of its root and fatness, Rm. xi. 17. It is pleasant to parents, who have a table spread, though but with ordinary fare, to see their children round about it; to have many children, enough to surround it, and those with them, and not scattered, or the parents forced from them; Job makes it one of the first instances of his former prosperity, that his children were about him, Job xxxix. 5. Parents love to have their children at table, to keep up the pleasantness of the table-talk; to have them in health, craving food, and not phisy; to have them like olive-plants, straight and green, sucking in the sap of their good education, and likely in due time to be serviceable.

3. That they shall have those good things which God has promised, and which they pray for; The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion, where the ark of the covenant was, and where the plous Israelites attended with their devotions. Blessings out of Zion are the best blessings, which flow, not from common providence, but from special grace, Ps. xx. 2.

4. That they shall live long, to enjoy the comforts of the rising generations; “Thou shalt see thy children’s children, as Joseph, Gen. i. 23. Thy family shall be built up and continued, and thou shalt have the pleasure of seeing it.” Hence, Should beget, should get, as the crown of old men, (Prov. xvii, 6.) who are apt to be fond of their grand-children.

5. That they shall see the welfare of God’s church, and the land of their nativity, which ever-
man who fears God is no less concerned for than for the prosperity of his own family, "Thou shalt be blessed in Zion's blessing, and wilt think thyself so. Thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem as long as thou livest, though thou livest long; and shalt not have thy private comforts allayed and im- bittered by public troubles." A good man can have little comfort in seeing his children's children punish- withal he see peace. God has Israel, and Israel has hopes of transubstantiation of religion pure and entire to those that shall come after him, for that is the best inheritance.

PSALM CXXIX.

This psalm relates to the public concerns of God's Israel. It is not certain who was the person to whom it was penned, probably when they were in captivity in Babylon, or about the time of their return. 1. They look back with thankfulness for the former deliverances God had wrought for them and their fathers, out of the many distresses and persecutions in former times. II. They look forward with a believing prayer, for, and prospect of, the destruction of all the enemies of Zion, v. 5-8. In singing this psalm, we may apply it both ways to the Gospel Israel, which, like the Old Testament Israel, has weathered many a storm, and is still threatened by many enemies.

A song of degrees.

1. MANY a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say: 2. Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth; yet they have not prevailed against me. 3. The ploughers ploughed upon my back; they made long their fur- rows. 4. The Lord is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.

The church of God, in its several ages, is here spoken of, or rather, here speaks, as one single person, now old and gray-headed, but calling to remembrance the former days, and reflecting upon the times of old. And, upon the review, it is found,

1. That the church has been often greatly dis- tressed by its enemies on earth; Israel may now say, "I am the people that have been oppressed more than any people, that has been as a steeple bird, pecked at by all the birds round about," Jer. xii. 9. It is true, they brought their troubles upon them- selves by their sins, it was for them that God punished them; but it was for the peculiarity of their covenant, and the singularities of their religion, that their neighbours hated and persecuted them. For these, many a time have they afflicted me from my youth. Note, God's people have al- ways had many enemies; and the state of the church, from its infancy, has frequently been an afflicted state. Israel's youth was in Egypt, or in the times of the Judges, then they were afflicted, and from thenceforward more or less. The gospel- church, ever since it had a being, has been at times afflic- ted; and it bare this yoke most of all in its youth, witness the ten persecutions which the primitive church grieved under, v. 3. The ploughers ploughed upon my back. We read (cxv. 3.) of the rod of the wicked upon the lot of the righte- ous, where we rather expected the plough, to mark it out for themselves; here we read of the plough of the wicked upon the back of the righteous, where we rather expected to find the rod. But the metaphors in these places may be said to be crossed; the sense, however, of both is the same, and is too plain, that we need not dwell all along upon them very barborously. They tare them as the husbandman tares the ground with his ploughshare, to pull them to pieces, and get all they could out of them, and so to swear out the saints of the Most High, as the ground is worn out that had been long tilled, tilled (as we say) quite out of heart. When God permitted them to plough thus, he intended it for his people's good, that, their fallow ground being thus broken up, he might sow the seeds of his grace upon them, and reap a harvest of good fruit from them; howbeit, the enemies meant not so, neither did their lawlessness, Isa. x. 7.) they made long their furrows, never knew when to have done, aiming at nothing less than the destruction of the church. Many, by the furrows they made on the backs of God's people, understand the stripes they gave them. The cutters cut upon my back, so they read it. The saints have often had trials of cruel scourgings, (probably the captives had,) and cruel mockings, (for we read of the scourgers of Jesus, Acts xxi. 32.) and they were fulfilled in Christ, when he gave his back to the smiters, Isa. i. 6. Or it may refer to the desolations they made of the cities of Israel; Zion shall, for your sake, be ploughed as a field, Mic. iii. 12. 2. That the church has been always graciously delivered by her Friend in heaven.

1. The enemies' projects have been defeated; they have afflicted the church, in hopes to ruin it, but they have not gained their point; many a storm, it has weathered, many a shock, and many a brunt, it has borne, and yet is in being; They have not prevailed against me. One would wonder how this ship has lived at sea, when it has been tossed with tempests, and all the waves and billows have gone over it. Christ has built his church upon a rock, and the gates of hell have not prevailed against it, nor ever shall. 2. The enemies' power has been broken; God has cut asunder the cords of the wicked; has cut their gears, their traces, and so spoiled their plough- ing; has cut their scourges, and so spoiled their lashing; has cut the bands of union, by which they were combined together; has cut the bands of cap- tivity, in which they held God's people. God has many ways of disabling wicked men to do the mis- chief they design against his church, and shaving their counsels.

These words, The Lord is righteous, may refer either to the distresses or to the deliverances of the church. [1.] The Lord is righteous, in suffering Israel to be afflicted. This the people of God were always ready to own, that, how unjust soever their enemies were, God was just in all that was brought upon them, Neh. ix. 35. [2.] The Lord is righte- ous, in not suffering Israel to be ruined; for he has promised to preserve it a people to himself, and he is as good as his word. He is righteous in reckoning with their persecutors, and rendering to them a recompense, 2 Thess. i. 6.

5. Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion: 6. Let them be as the grass upon the house-tops, which with- ereth afore it growtheth up; 7. Wherewith the mower filleth not his hand, nor he that bindeth sheaves, his bosom. 8. Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the Lord be upon you: we bless you in the name of the Lord.

The psalmist, having triumphed in the defeat of the many designs that had been laid as deep as hell to ruin the church, here concludes his psalm as De- beoth did; let God have all along used them very barbarously. They tare them as the husbandman tares the ground with his ploughshare, to pull them to pieces, and get all they could out of them, and so to swear out the saints of the Most High, as the ground is worn out that had been long tilled, tilled (as we say) quite out of heart. When God permitted them to plough thus, he intended it for his people's good, that, their fallow ground being thus broken up, he might sow the seeds of his grace upon them, and reap a harvest of good fruit from them; howbeit, the enemies meant not so, neither did their lawlessness, Isa. x. 7.) they made long their furrows, never knew when to have done, aiming at nothing less than the destruction of the church. Many, by the furrows they made on the backs of God's people, understand the stripes they gave them. The cutters cut upon my back, so they read it. The saints have often had trials of cruel scourgings, (probably the captives had,) and cruel mockings, (for we read of the scourgers of Jesus, Acts xxi. 32.) and they were fulfilled in Christ, when he gave his back to the smiters, Isa. i. 6. Or it may refer to the desolations they made of the cities of Israel; Zion shall, for your sake, be ploughed as a field, Mic. iii. 12. 2. That the church has been always graciously delivered by her Friend in heaven.

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5. Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion: 6. Let them be as the grass upon the house-tops, which with- ereth afore it growtheth up; 7. Wherewith
that seek the ruin of both, and do what they can, that God may not have a church in the world.

2. We ought to pray that all their attempts against the church may be frustrated, that in them they may be confounded, and turned back with shame, as those that have not been able to bring to pass their enterprises and expectancies; Let them all be confounded as much as, They shall be all confounded. The confusion imprecated, and predicted, is illustrated by a similitude; while God's people shall flourish, as the loaded palm-tree, or the green and fruitful olive, their enemies shall wither as the grass upon the house-top. As men, they are not to be feared, for they shall be made as grass, Isa. lii. 12. But, as they are enemies to Zion, they are so certainly marked for ruin, that they shall be located as the grass upon the house-top, which is little, and short, and sour, and good for nothing.

(1.) It perishes quickly, it withers before it grows up to any maturity, having no root; and the higher its place is, which perhaps is its pride, the more it is exposed to the scorching heat of the sun, and consequently the sooner does it wither. It withers before it is plucked up, so some read it. The enemies of the church of God are not to be feared, for they will not be rooted out by the judgments of God.

(2.) It is of no use to any body; nor are they any thing but the unprofitable burthens of the earth; nor will their attempts against Zion ever ripen or come to any head; nor, whatever they promise themselves, will they get any more by them than the husbandman does by the grass on his house-top. Their harvest will be a heap in the day of grief, Isa. xlii. 11.

3. As one man will pray God to bless the mowers or reapers, v. 8. Observe, (1.) It has been an ancient and laudable custom not only to salute, and wish a good day to, strangers and travellers, but particularly to pray for the prosperity of harvest-labourers. Thus Boaz prayed for his reapers, (Ruth ii. 4.) The Lord be with you. We must thus acknowledge God's providence, testify our good-will to our neighbours, and commend their industry, and it will be accepted of God and as a pious ejaculation, if it comes from a devout and upright heart. (2.) Religious expressions, being sacred things, must never be made use of in light and licentious actions. Mowing the grass on the house-top would be a jest, and therefore those that have a reverence for the name of God will not prostitute to it the usual forms of salutation, which savoured of devotion; for holy things must not be jested with. (3.) It is a dangerous thing to let the church's enemies have our good wishes in their designs against the church. If we wish them God speed, we are partakers of their evil deeds, 2 John xi. When it is said, None will bless them, and show them respect, more is implied, namely, that all wise and good people will cry out shame on them, and beg of God to defeat them; and woe to those that have the prayers of the saints against them. I turned his habitation, Job v. 8.

PSALM CXXXX.

This psalm relates not to any temporal concern, either personal or public, but it is wholly taken up in the affairs of the soul. It is reckoned one of the seven penitential psalms, which have been made use of by penitents, upon their admission into the church; in singing it, we are all concerned to apply it to ourselves. The psalmist here expresses, 1. His desire toward God, v. 1, 2. His dependence upon God, v. 3, 4. III. His attendance upon God, v. 5, 6. IV. His expectations from God, v. 7, 8. And as in water face answers to face, so does the heart of one humble penitent to another.

A song of degrees.

1. OUt of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. 2. Lord, hear my voice; let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. 3. If then, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? 4. But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.

In these verses, we are taught,

1. Whatever condition we are in, though ever so deplorable, to continue calling upon God, v. 1. The best men may sometimes be in the depths, in great trouble and affliction, and utterly at a loss what to do; in the depths of distress, and almost in the depths of despair; the spirit low and dark, singing and drooping, cast down and disquieted. But, in the greatest depths, it is our privilege that we may cry unto God, and he will hear. A prayer may reach the heights of heaven, though not out of the depths of hell, yet out of the depths of the greatest trouble we can be in, in this world; Jeremiah's, out of the dungeon, Daniel's, out of the den, and Jonah's, out of the fish's belly. It is our duty and interest to cry unto God, for that is the likeliest way both to prevent our sinking lower, and to recover us out of the horrible pit, and miry clay, xl. 1, 2.

While we continue calling upon God, to assure ourselves of an answer or deliverance from him; for this is that which David in faith prays for, (v. 2.) Lord, hear my voice, my complaint and prayer, and let thine ears be attentive to the voice both of my afflictions and of my supplications.

3. We are taught to humble ourselves before the justice of God, as guilty in his sight, and unable to answer him for one of a thousand of our offences; (v. 3.) If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? His calling God Lord twice, in so few words, Jah and Adonai, is very emphatical, and intimates a very awful sense of God's glorious majesty, and a dread of his wrath. Let us learn here, (1.) To acknowledge our iniquities, that we cannot justify ourselves before God, or plead not guilty. There is that which is remarkable in our iniquities, and is liable to be animadverted upon. (2.) To own the power and justice of God, which is said that, if he should mark what we do amiss, there were no hopes of coming off. His eye can discover enough in the best man to ground a condemnation upon; and if he proceed against us, we have no way to help ourselves, we cannot stand, but shall certainly be cast. If God deal with us in strict justice, we are undone; if he makes remarks upon our iniquities, he will find them to be many and great; greatly aggravated, and very provoking; and then, if he should proceed accordingly, he would shut us out from all hope of his favour, and shut us up under his wrath; and what could we do to help ourselves? We could not make our escape, nor resist, or bear up under, his avenging hand. (3.) Let us admire God's patience and forbearance; we were undone if he should mark iniquities, and he knows it, and therefore bears with us. It is of his mercy that we are not consumed by his wrath.

4. We are taught to cast ourselves upon the pardoning mercy of God, and to comfort ourselves with that, when we see ourselves obnoxious to his justice, v. 4. Here is, (1.) God's grace discovered, and pleaded with him, by a penitent sinner; But there is forgiveness with thee. It is our unspeakable comfort, in all our approaches to God, that there is forgiveness with him, for that is what we need. He has put himself into a capacity to pardon sin, he has declared his mind and will, that he is ready to forgive, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. He has promised to forgive the sins of those that do repent. Never any that dealt with him found him impalpable, but easy to be entreated, and swift to show
mercy. With us there is iniquity, and therefore it is well for us that with him there is forgiveness. There is a propitiation with thee, so some read it. Jesus Christ is the great Propitiation, the Ransom which God has found; he is ever with him, as Advocate for us, and through him we hope to obtain forgiveness. (2.) Our duty designed in that discovery, and inferred from it; There is forgiveness with thee, not that thou mayest be made bold with, and presumed upon, but that thou mayest be feared; in which case, what thou dost may be observed by the children of men, who, being sinners, could have no dealings with God, if he were not a Master that could pass by a great many faults. But this encourages us to come into his service, that we shall not be turned off for every misdemeanor; no, not for any, if we truly repent. This does in a special manner invite those who have sinned to repent, and return to the fear of God, that he may be gracious and merciful, and will receive them upon their repentance; (Joel ii. 13. Matth. iii. 2.) and we, therefore, are to have a holy awe and reverence of God's pardoning mercy; (Hos. iii. 5.) They shall fear the Lord, and his goodness; and then we may expect the benefit of the forgiveness that is with God, when we make it the object of our holy fear.

5. I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning; I say, more than they that watch for the morning. 7. Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. 8. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

Here, 1. The psalmist engages himself to trust in God, and to wait for him, v. 5. 6. Observe, (1.) His dependence upon God, expressed in a climax, it being a song of degrees, or ascents: I wait for the Lord; from him I expect relief and comfort, believing it will come, long till it does come, but patiently bearing the delay of it, and resolving to look for it from no other hand. My soul doth wait; I wait for him in sincerity, and not in profession only. I am an expectant, and it is for the Lord that my soul waits, for the gifts of his grace, and the operations of his power.” (2.) The ground of that dependence; In his word do I hope. We must hope for that only, which he has promised in his word, and not for the creatures of our own fancy and imagination; and we must hope for it, because he has promised it, and not from any opinion of our own merit. (3.) The degree of that dependence; more than they that watch for the morning; who are, [1.] Well assured that the morning will come; and so am I, that God will return in mercy to me, according to his promise; for God's covenant is more firm than the ordinances of day and night, for they shall come to an end, but that is everlasting. [2.] Very desirous that it would come. Sentinels keep watch, and desire the day, both for the sick people, and travellers that are abroad upon their journey, long before day, wish to see the dawning of the day; but more earnestly does this good man long for the tokens of God's favour, and the visits of his grace; and more readily will he be aware of his first appearances than they are of day. Dr. Hammond reads it thus: My soul hastens to the Lord, from the guards the morning, the guards in the morning,” and gives this sense of it. To thee I daily betake myself, early in the morning, addressing my prayers, and my soul very, before thee, at the time that the priests offer their morning sacrifice.” 2. He encourages all the people of God, in like manner, to depend upon him, and trust in him; Let Israel hope in the Lord, and wait for him; not only the body of the people, but every good man, who is named by the name of Israel, Isa. xlv. 5. Let all that devote themselves to God cheerfully wait themselves upon him, (v. 7, 8.) for two reasons: (1.) Because the light of nature discovers to us that there is mercy with him, that the God of Israel is a merciful God, and the Father of mercies. Mercy is with him; not only inherent in his nature, but it is his delight, it is his darling attribute; it is with him in all his works, in all his counsels. (2.) Because the light of the gospel discovers to us that there is redemption with him, contrived by him, and to be wrought out in the fulness of time; it was in the beginning hid in God. See here, [1.] The nature of this redemption; it is redemption from sin, from all sin; and therefore capable of no other than a plenteous redemption which Jesus Christ became the Author of; for it is he that saves his people from their sins, (Matt. i. 21.) that redeems them from all iniquity, (Tit. ii. 14.) and turns away ungodliness from Jacob, Rom. xi. 26. It is he that redeems us both from the condemning, and from the commanding, power of sin. [2.] The riches of this redemption; it is a plenteous redemption; there is an all-sufficient fulness of merit and grace, which the Redeemer is able to supply for all, enough for each; enough for all who believes the believer. Redemption from sin includes redemption from all other evils, and there is a plenteous redemption. [3.] The persons to whom the benefits of this redemption belong; He shall redeem Israel; Israel according to the spirit; all those who are in covenant with God, as Israel was, and who are Israelites indeed, in whom is no guide.

PSALM CXXXI.

This psalm is David's profession of humility; humbly made, with thankfulness to God for his grace, and not in vain-glory. It is probable enough that (as most interpreters suggest) David made this protestation in answer to the complaints of Saul and his courtiers, who represented David as an ambitious aspiring man, who, under pretence of a divine appointment, sought the kingdom, in the pride of his heart. But he appeals to God, that he, on the contrary, was humble; He aimed at nothing high or great, v. 1. II. He was very careful of which God allotted him; (v. 2.) and therefore, III. He encourages all good people to trust in God as he did, v. 3. Some have made it an objection against singing David's psalms, that there are many who cannot say, My heart is not haughty, &c. It is true there are; but we may sing it for the same purpose that we read it, to teach and admonish ourselves, and one another, what we ought to be; with reverence that they have come short of being so, and humble prayer to God for his grace to make us so.

A song of degrees of David.

1. L ORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. 2. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother; my soul is even as a weaned child. 3. Let Israel hope in the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.

Here are two things which will be comforts to us: 1. Consciousness of our integrity. This was David's rejoicing, that his heart could witness for him, that he had walked humbly with his God, with- standing the censures he was under, and the temptations he was in. 1. He aimed not at a high condition, nor was he
desirous of making a figure in the world, but, if God had so ordered, could have been well content to spend all his days, as he did the beginning of them, in the sheep-folds. His own brother, in a passion, charged him with pride, (1 Sam. xvii. 28.) but the charge was groundless and unjust; God, who searches the heart, knew,

(1.) That he had no conceited opinion of himself, or of what he was, for, on the contrary, my heart is not haughty. Humble saints cannot think so well of themselves as others think of them; are not in love with their own shadow, nor do they magnify their own attainments or acquisitions. The love of God, reigning in the heart, will subdue all inordinate self-love.

(2.) That he had neither a scornful nor an aspiring look; "My eyes are not lofty, either to look with envy upon those that are above me, or to look with disdain upon those that are below me. This is a proud heart, there is commonly a proud look;" (Prov. vi. 17.) but the humble publican will not so much as lift up his eyes.

(3.) That he did not employ himself in things above his station; in things too great or too high for him. He did not employ himself in studies too high; he made God's word his meditation, and did not amuse himself with matters of nice speculation or doubtful dissertation, or care to be wise above what is written; To know God and our duty, is learning sufficiently high for us. He did not employ himself in affairs too great; he followed his ewes, and never set up for a politician; no, nor for a soldier; for, when his brethren went to the wars, he stayed at home to keep the sheep. It is our wisdom, and will be our praise, to keep within our sphere, and not to intrude into things which we have not seen, or meddle with that which does not belong to us. Princes and scholars are not the only wise men in the world; there is greatness in the way, too high, for men: and those in a low station, and of ordinary capacities, must not pretend to that which is out of their reach, and which they were not cut out for. Those will fall under due shame, that affect undue honours.

2. He was well-reconciled to every condition that God placed him in; (v. 2.) I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother. As he was weaned, and we have reason to suppose since God had appointed him to it, he had not behaved insolently towards any, nor been restless in his attempts to get the crown before the time set; but, (1.) He had been as humble as a little child about the age of a weaning, as manageable and governable, and as far from aiming at high things; as entirely at God's disposal, as the child at the disposal of the mother or nurse; as far from taking state upon him, though anointed to be king, or vying himself upon the prospect of his future advancement, as a child in the arms. Our Saviour has taught us humility by this comparison; (Matt. xviii. 3.) we must become as little children. (2.) He had been as indifferent to the wealth and honour of this world as a child is to the breast, when it is thoroughly weaned from it. I have levelled and quieted myself, (so Dr. Hammond reads it,) as a child that is weaned. This intimates that our hearts are naturally as loathsome of worldly things as the breast is of the breast, and in like manner relish them, cry for them, are fond of them, play with them, and cannot live without them. But, by the grace of God, a soul that is sanctified is weaned from those things. Providence puts wormwood upon the breast, and that helps to wean us. The child is perhaps cross and fretful while it is in the weaning, and thinks itself undone when it has lost the breast; but in a day or two it is forgotten, the fret is over, and it accommodates itself well enough to a new way of feeding; cares no longer for milk, but can bear strong meat. Thus does a gracious soul quiet itself under the loss of that which it loved, and disappointment in that which it hoped for, and is easy whatever happens; lives, and lives comfortably, upon God and the covenant-grace, when creatures prove dry breasts. When our condition is not to our mind, we must bring our mind to our condition; and then we are easy to ourselves, and all about us; then our souls are as a weaned child.

3. Confidence in God; and that David recommends to all the Israel of God, no doubt from his own experience of the benefit of it; (v. 3.) Let Israel hope in the Lord, and let them continue to do so, from henceforth and for ever. Though David could himself wait patiently and quietly for the crown designed him, yet perhaps Israel, the people whose duration he was, would be ready to attempt something in favour of him before the time; he therefore endeavours to quiet them too, and bids them hope in the Lord, that they should see a happy change of the face of affairs in due time. Thus it is good to hope, and quietly to wait, for the salvation of the Lord.

PSALM CXXXII.

It is probable that this psalm was penned by Solomon, to be sung at the dedication of the temple which he built according to the charge his father gave him, 1 Chron. xxviii. 2, &c. Having fulfilled his trust, he begs of God to own what he had done. 1. He had built this house for the honour and service of God; and when he brings the Ark into it, the men of God's presence, he desires God himself would come and take possession of it, v. 8. 10. With these words Solomon concluded his prayer, 2 Chron. vi. 41, 42. 2. He had built it in pursuance of the orders he had received from his father, and therefore his pleas to enforce these petitions refer to David. 1. He pleads David's piety towards God, v. 1. 7. 2. He pleads God's promise to David, v. 11. 18. The former introduces his petition, the latter follows it as an answer to it. In this passage, we must have a concern for the church, as the temple of God, and a dependence upon Christ, as David our King, in whom the mercies of God are sure mercies.

A song of degrees.

1. LORD, remember David, and all his afflictions. 2. How he swarne unto the LORD, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob; 3. Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; 4. I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, 5. Until I find out a place for the LORD, a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob. 6. Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah; we found it in the fields of the wood. 7. We will go into his tabernacles; we will worship at his footstool. 8. Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; thou and the ark of thy strength. 9. Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy. 10. For thy servant David's sake turn not away the face of thine anointed.

In these verses, we have Solomon's address to God for his favour to him and to his government, and his acceptance of his building a house to God's name. Observe,

1. What he pleads: two things.

1. That what he had done was in pursuance of the promise which his father had made to build a house for God. Solomon was a wise man, yet pleads not any merit of his own; *I am not worthy, for whom thou shouldest do this; but, Lord, remember David, with whom thou madest the co-
venant;" (as Moses prayed, Exod. xxxiii. 13. Remember Abraham, the first trustee of the covenant;) "remember all his afflictions, all the troubles of his life, which his being anointed was the occasion of;" or, his care and concern about the ark, and what an unceasing it was to him that the ark was in curtains, 2 Sam. vii. 2. Remember all his humility and meekness; all his prayers and intercession, with which he had made the following vow. Note, It is not amiss for us to put God in mind of our predecessors in profession, of their afflictions, their services, and their sufferings; of God's covenant with them, the experiences they have had of his goodness, the care they took of, and the many prayers they put up for, those that should come after them. God had made it to David, the Son of Dav- id, and to all his afflictions; "Lord, remember my- nant made with him, and the satisfaction made by him; Remember all his operations, (Ps. xx. 5.) all his sufferings."

He especially pleads the solemn vow that David had made as soon as ever he was settled in his government, and before he was well settled in a house of his own, that he would build a house for God. Gen. xxii. 17.

(1.) Whom he bound himself to; to the Lord, to the mighty God of Jacob. Vows are to be made to God, who is a Party as well as a Witness. The Lord is the mighty One of Jacob; Jacob's God, and a mighty One, whose power is engaged for Jacob's defence and deliverance. Jacob is weak, but the God of Jacob is a mighty One.

(2.) What he bound himself to do; to find out a place for the Lord, for the ark, the token of his presence. He had observed in the law frequent mention of the place that God would choose to put his name there, to which all the tribes should resort. When he came to the crown, there was no such place, Shiloh was deserted, and no other place was pitched upon, for want of which the feasts of the Lord were not kept with due solemnity. "Well," says David, "I will find out such a place for the general rendezvous of all the tribes, a place of habi- tation for the mighty One of Jacob, a place for the ark, where there shall be room both for the priests and people to attend upon it."

(3.) How intent he was upon it; he would not settle in his house; nay, he would not sleep in his bed, till he had brought this matter to some head, v. 3, 4. The thing had been long talked of, and nothing done, till at last David, when he went out one morning about public business, made a vow, that before night he would come to a resolution in this matter, and would determine the place either where the tent should be pitched for the reception of the ark, at the beginning of his reign, or rather, where Solomon should build the temple, which was not fixed till the latter end of his reign, just after the pestilence with which he was punished for num- bering the people; (1 Chron. xxii. 1.) Then David said, This is the house of the Lord. And perhaps it was upon occasion of that judgment that he made this vow, being apprehensive that one of God's con- troversies with him was for his dilatoriness in this matter. Note, When needful work is to be done for God, it is good for us to task ourselves, and tie ourselves to a time, because we are apt to put off. It is good in the morning to cut out work for the day, binding ourselves that we will do it before we sleep, only with submission to Providence; for we know not what may befall us to-morrow. Lastly, the great work of conversion to God; we must be thus solicitous, thus zealous; we have good reason to re- solve that we will not enjoy the comforts of this life, till we have laid a foundation for hopes of a better.

That it was in pursuance of the expectations of the people of Israel, v. 6, 7. (1.) They were in- quisitive after the ark; for they lamented its obse- rity, 1 Sam. vii. 2. They heard of it at Ephraim, at Shiloh, in the tribe of Ephraim, there they were told it had been, but it was gone; they found it at last in the fields of the wood, in Kirjath-jearim, which signifies the city of woods. Thence all Israel fetched it, with great solemnity, in the beginning of David's reign, (1 Chron. xii. 8) so that in building this house for the ark, Solomon had gratified all Is- rael; they needed not to go about to seek the ark any more, they now knew where to find it. (2.) They were resolved to attend to it; "Let us but have a conven- ient place, and we will go into his tabernacle, to pay our homage there; we will worship at his foot- stool, as subjects and suppliants; which we neglected to do, for want of such a place, in the days of Saul." 1 Chron. xiii. 5.

11. What he prays for, v. 8-10.

1. That God would vouchsafe, not only to take possession of, but to take up his residence in, this temple which he had built. Arise, O Lord, into thy rest, and let this be it, thou, even the ark of thy strength, the pledge of thy presence, thy mighty presence.

That God would give grace to the ministers of the sanctuary to do their duty: Let thy priests be clothed with white robes; let thy ministers, who appear righteous both in their administrations and in their conversations, and let both be according to the rule. Note, Righteousness is the best ornament of a minister. Holiness towards God, and goodness towards all men, are habits for ministers, of the necessity of which there is no dispute. "They are thy priests, and will therefore discriminate their relation to thee, if they be not clothed with righteousness."

That the people of God might have the comfort of the due administration of holy ordinances among them; Let thy saints shout for joy; they did so when the ark was brought into the city of David; (2 Sam. vi. 15.) they will do so when the priests are clothed with righteousness. A faithful ministry is the joy of the saints; it is the matter of it; it is a friend and a furtherance to it; we are helpers of your joy, 2 Cor. i. 24.

3. The Solomon's own prayer, upon occasion of the dedicating of the temple, might be accepted of God; "Turn not away the face of thine anointed; deny me not the things I have asked of thee; send me not away ashamed. He pleads, (1.) That he was the anointed of the Lord, and this he pleads as a type of Christ, the great Anointed, who, in his intercession, urges his designation to his office. He is God's Anointed, and therefore the Father hears him always. (2.) That he was the son of David; "For his sake do not deny me," and this is the Christ's plea; "For the sake of Christ," (our David,) "in whom thou art well pleased, accept me." He is David, whose name signifies beloved; and we are made accepted in the Beloved. He is God's Serv- ant, whom he upholds, Isa. xlii. 1. We have no merit of our own to plead, but, for his sake, in whom there is a fulness of merit, let us find favour. When we pray for the prosperity of the church, we may with great boldness, for Christ's sake, who pur- chased the church with his own blood; let both ministers and people do their duty.
14. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. 15. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. 16. I will also clothe her priests with salvation; and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. 17. There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. 18. His enemies will I clothe with shame; but upon himself shall his crown flourish.

These are precious promises, confirmed by an oath, that the heirs of them might have strong consolation, Heb. vi. 17, 18. It is all one whether we take them as pleas urged to the prayer, or as answers returned to the prayer; believers know how to make use of the promises both ways; with them to speak to God, and in them to hear what God the Lord will speak to us. These promises relate to the establishment both in church and state, both to the throne of the house of David, and to the testimony of Israel fixed on mount Zion. The promises concerning Zion's hill are as applicable to the gospel-church, as these concerning David's seed are to Christ; both were made pleasurable by us, and very comfortable to us. Here is:

1. The choice blessings God has in store for David's house, and Zion hill. Both were of divine appointment.

1. God chose David's family for the royal family, and confirmed his choice by an oath, v. 11, 12. David, being a type of Christ, was made king with an oath, The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, will not turn from it. Did David swear to the Lord, that he would build him a house? (v. 2.) The Lord swore to David that he would build him a house; for God will be with him, and none of his people in afflictions or assurances. The promise made to David refers, (1.) To a long succession of kings that should descend from his loins; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne, which was fulfilled in Solomon: David himself lived to see it with great satisfaction, 1 Kings i. 48. The crown was also vacated continually upon his heirs by prefixed conditions: If thy children, in following ages, will keep my covenant, and my testimony that I shall teach them; God himself engages to teach them, and he did his part; they had Moses and the prophets, and all he expects, is, that they should keep what he taught them, and keep to it, and then, their children shall sit upon thy throne for evermore. Kings are before God upon their good behaviour, and their commission from him runs quandam ex benevolentis et during good behaviour. The issue of this was, that they did not keep God's covenant, and so the entail was at length cut off, and the sceptre departed from Judah by degrees. (2.) To an everlasting Successor, a King that should descend from his loins, of the increase of whose government and praise there shall be no end. St. Peter applies this to Christ, nay, he tells us, that David himself so understood it; (Acts ii. 30.) He knew that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ c. sit on his throne; and in the fulness of time he did so, and gave him the throne of his father David, Luke i. 32. He did fulfill the condition of the promise, he kept God's covenant and his testimony, did his Father's will, and in all things pleased him, and therefore to him, and his spiritual seed, the promise of the horn of David was confirmed; he has given him, all believers, shall sit upon the throne for evermore, Rev. iii. 21.

2. God chose Zion hill for the holy hill, and confirmed his choice by the delight he took in it, v. 15, 14. He chose the mount Zion which he loved; (lxxxvii. 68.) he chose it for the habitation of his ark, and said of it, This is my rest for ever, and not my residence for a time, as Shiloh was. Zion was the city of David, he chose it for the royal city, because God chose it for the holy city. God said, Here will I dwell, and therefore David said, Here will I dwell, for he adhered to his promise, It is good for me to be near to God. Zion must be here looked upon as a type of the gospel-church, which is called mount Zion, (Heb. xii. 22.) and in it what is here said of Zion has its full accomplishment. Zion was long since ploughed as a field, but the church of Christ is the house of the living God, (1 Tim. iii. 15.) and it is his rest for ever, and shall be blessed with his presence always, even to the end of the world. The delight God takes in his church, and the continuance of his presence with his church, are the comfort and joy of all its members.

11. The choice blessings God has in store for David's house, and Zion hill. Whom God chooses he will bless.

1. God, having chosen Zion hill, promises to bless that. (1.) With the blessings of the life that now is; for godliness has the promise of them, v. 15. The hill, which shall be the inheritance of his people, shall appear up, there shall be provision, and in blessing God will bless it; (bxvi. 6.) he will surely and abundantly bless it. And a little provision, with an abundant blessing upon it, will be more serviceable, as well as more comfortable, than a great deal without that blessing. God's people have a special blessing upon common enjoyments, and that blessing puts a peculiar sweetness into them. Nay, the promise goes further; I will satisfy her poor with bread. Zion has her own poor to keep; and it is promised that God will take care even of them. [1.] By his providence they shall be kept from wanting, they shall have provision enough. If there be scarcity, the poor are the first that feel it, so that it is a sure sign of plenty if they have sufficient. Zion's poor shall not want, for God has obliged all the sons of Zion to be charitable to the poor, according to their ability, and the church must take care that they are not neglected, Acts vi. 1. [2.] By his grace, they shall be kept from complaining; though they have but dry bread, yet they shall be satisfied. Zion's poor have, of all others, reason to be content with a little of this world, because they have better things prepared for them. And this may be understood spiritually of the provision that is made for the soul, in the word and ordinances; God will abundantly bless that for the nourishment of the new man, and will supply the poor in spirit with the bread of life. What God sanctifies to us, we shall and may be satisfied with.

(2.) With the blessings of the life that is to come, things pertaining to godliness; (v. 16.) which is an answer to the prayer, v. 9. [1.] It was desired that the priests might be clothed with righteousness, it is here promised that God will clothe them with the raiment of salvation; not only save them to everlasting salvation, but make them instrumental for the salvation of his people; they shall both save themselves and them that hear them, and add those to the church that shall be saved. Note, Whom God clothes with righteousness he will clothe with salvation; we must pray for righteousness, and then with it God will give salvation. [2.] It was desired that the saints might shout for joy; it is promised that they shall shout aloud for joy. God gives us a foretaste of the joy, when he gives salvation he will give an abundant joy.

2. God, having chosen David's family, here promises to bless that also with suitable blessings.

(1.) Growing power; There, in Zion, will I make the horn of David to bud, v. 17. The royal dig
nity shall increase more and more, and constant additions be made to the lustre of it. Christ is the 
Horn of salvation, denoting a plentiful and power-
sful salvation, which God has raised up, and made 
to bud, in the house of his servant David. David 
had promised to use his power for God's glory, to 
cut down the horns of the wicked, and to exalt the horns of the righteous: (lxv. 10.) in recompense 
for it, God here promises to make his horn to bud, 
for them that have power, and use it well, more 
shall be given.

(3.) Lasting honour; I have ordained a lamp for 
mine anointed. Thou wilt light my candle: (xviii. 
28.) that lamp is likely to burn bright which God 
ordains. A lasting successor; for, when a lamp is 
put out, another may be lighted by it: it is a 
succession; for by this means David shall not want 
a man to stand before God. Christ is the Lamp 
and the Light of the world.

(3.) Complete victory; His enemies, who have 
formed designs against him, will I clothe with shame, 
when they shall see their designs baffled. Let this 
enemies of all good govern our expectation to be clothed 
with shame, and especially the enemies of the Lord 
Jesus Christ, and his government, who shall rise, in 
the great day, to everlasting shame and contempt.

(4.) Universal prosperity; Upon himself shall his 
crown flourish; his government shall be more and 
more his honour. This was to have its full accom-
plishment in Jesus Christ, whose crown of honour 
and power shall never fade, nor the flowers of it 
wither. The crowns of earthly princes endure not 
to all generations: (Ixxv. 22.) but Christ's crown 
shall endure to all eternity, and the crowns reserved 
for his faithful subjects are such as fade not away.

PSALM CXXXIII.

This psalm is a brief encomium on unity and brotherly 
love, which, if we did not see the miseries of discord 
among men, we should think needless: but we cannot 
say too much, it was well if we could say enough, to 
persuade people to live together in peace. Some conje-
ture that David penned it upon occasion of the 
peace that was made, when the tribes, after the 
slaughter of the sons of Ishbosheth, were united, 
and the house of David was crowned with glory for a 
very long time. The doctrine laid down is, that peace 
and unity is a blessing to all nations; and that doctrine, in the 
two ancient languages, v. 1., 2. 3. III. The proof of it, in a good 
reason given for it, (v. 3.) and then we are left to make the 
application, which we ought to do in singing it, provok-
ing ourselves and one another to holy love. The 
contents of this psalm, in our Bibles, are short, but very 
proper; it is the benefit of the communion of saints.

A song of degrees of David.

1. Behold, how good and how pleasant 
it is for brethren to dwell to-
gether in unity! 2. It is like 
the precious ointment upon the head, that runn 
upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that 
grew down to the skirts of his garments; 3. As the 
dew of Hermon, and as the dew 
that descended upon the mountains of Zion: 
for there the Lord commanded the bless-
ing, even life for evermore.

Here see, 1. What it is that is commended: bre-
thren's dwelling together in unity; not only not 
quarrelling, and devouing one another, but delight-
ing in each other with mutual endearments, and 
promoting each other's welfare with mutual 
services. Sometimes it is chosen, as the best expedi-
cent for preserving peace, that brethren should live 
asunder and at a distance from each other; this 
indeed may prevent enmity and strife, (Gen. xi. 
9.) but the goodness and pleasantness are, for bre-
thren to dwell together, and so to dwell in unity; to 
dwell even as one, so some read it; as having one 
heart, one soul, one interest. David had many 
sons by many wives; probably, he penned this 
psalm for their instruction, to engage them to love 
one another; which, if they had done, much of the 
mischief that arose in his family had been happily 
prevented. The tribes of Israel had long had sepa-
rate interests, during the government of the judges, 
and it was not until bad times; now that they were united under one common head, 
he would have them sensible how much it was likely 
to be for their advantage; especially since now the 
ark was fixed, and with it the place of their ren-
dezvous for public worship, and the centre of their 
unity. Now let them live in love.

2. How commendable it is; Behold, how good 
and how pleasant it is! It is good in itself, agree-
able to the will of God, the conformity of earth to 
heaven. It is good for us, for our honour and com-
fort; it is pleasant and pleasing to God and all good 
men; it brings constant delight to those who do thus 
live in unity. Behold, how good! We cannot con-
ceive or express the goodness and pleasantness of 
it. Behold, it is a rare thing, and therefore admir-
able. Behold, and wonder that there should be 
so much goodness and pleasantness among men, so 
much of heaven on earth. How happy are those who 
are thus united under the same head. Behold, it is 
an encomium, the praise of such a thing, which will attract our hearts. Be-
hold, it as an exemplary thing, which, where it is, is, 
to be imitated by us with a holy emulation.

3. How the pleasantness of it is illustrated. 
(1.) It is fragrant as the holy anointing oil, which 
was strongly perfumed, and diffused its sweet 
smell, to the great delight of all the by-standers, when it 
was poured upon the head of Aaron, or his successor, 
the high priest, so pleasant was it when you 
delved the hand, even to the hair or garment of the 
dew. 2. [1.] This was holy ointment; such must our 
brotherly love be, with a pure heart, devoted to 
God. We must love them that are begotten, for 
sake that begat, 1 John v. 1. [2.] This oint-
mant was a composition made up by a divine dis-
pensary; God appointed the ingredients and the 
quantities. Thus believers are taught of God to 
love one another; it is a grace of his working in us. 
[3.] It is fragrant, and the like to it was not 
to be made for any common use. Thus holy 
love is, in the sight of God, of great price; and 
that is precious indeed, which is so in God's sight.
[4.] It was grateful, both to Aaron himself and to 
all about him; so is holy love; it is like oint-
ment and perfume which rejoiceth the heart. 
Christ's love to mankind was a part of that oil of gladness 
with which he was anointed above his fellows. 
[5.] It was substantial, and the like to it was not 
to be made for any common use. Thus holy 
love is, in the sight of God, of great price; and 
that is precious indeed, which is so in God's sight.

II. It is fragrant as the holy anointing oil, which 
was strongly perfumed, and diffused its sweet 
smell, to the great delight of all the by-standers, when it 
was poured upon the head of Aaron, or his successor, 
the high priest, so pleasant was it when you 
delved the hand, even to the hair or garment of the 
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to be made for any common use. Thus holy 
love is, in the sight of God, of great price; and 
that is precious indeed, which is so in God's sight.

9. But the goodness and pleasantness are, for bre-
thren to dwell together, and so to dwell in unity; to 
dwell even as one, so some read it; as having one 
heart, one soul, one interest. David had many 
sons by many wives; probably, he penned this 
psalm for their instruction, to engage them to love 
one another; which, if they had done, much of the 
mischief that arose in his family had been happily 
prevented. The tribes of Israel had long had sepa-
rate interests, during the government of the judges, 
and it was not until bad times; now that they were united under one common head, 
he would have them sensible how much it was likely 
to be for their advantage; especially since now the 
ark was fixed, and with it the place of their ren-
dezvous for public worship, and the centre of their 
unity. Now let them live in love.
that it tarryth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men, Mic. v. 7. Nor shall our love to our brethren stay for theirs to us, that is publican's love; but should go before it, that is divine love.

4. The proof of the excellency of brotherly love. Loving people are blessed people. For, (1.) They are blessed of God, and therefore blessed indeed. Those were brethren dwell together in unity, the Lord commands the blessing, a complicated blessing, including all blessings. It is God's prerogative to command the blessings, man can but beg a blessing. Blessings, according to the promise, are commanded blessings, for he has commanded his covenant for ever. Blessings that take effect, are commanded blessings, for he speaks and it is done.

(2.) They are everlastingly blessed. The blessing which God commands on them that dwell in love, is, life for evermore; that is the blessing of blessings. They that dwell in love, not only dwell in God, but do already dwell in heaven. As the perfection of love is the blessedness of heaven, so the sincerity of love is the earnest of that blessedness. They that live in love and peace, shall have the God of love and peace with them now, and they shall be with him shortly, with him for ever in the world of endless love and peace. How good then is it, and how pleasant!

**PSALM CXXXIV.**

This is the last of the fifteen songs of degrees; and if they were at any time sung all together in the temple-service, it is fitting that the conclusion of them for the design of it is, to stir up the ministers to go on with their work in the night, when the solemnities of the day were over. Some make this psalm to be a dialogue. 1. In the two first verses, the priests or Levites, who sat up all night to keep the watch of the Lord, are called upon to spend their time while they were upon the guard, not in idle talk, but in the acts of devotion. 2. In the last verse, they were thus called upon to praise God, pray for him that gave them the exhortation, either the high priest, or the captain of the guard. Or thus; they who did that service, did mutually exhort one another, and pray for one another. In singing this psalm, we must both stir up ourselves to give glory to God, and encourage ourselves to hope for mercy and grace from him.

**A song of degrees.**

**BEHOLD,** bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which by night stand in the house of the Lord. 2. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord. 3. The Lord, that made heaven and earth, bless thee out of Zion.

This psalm instructs us concerning a two-fold blessing: 1. Our blessing God; that is, speaking well of him, which here we are taught to do, v. 1, 2. (1) It is a call to the Levites to do it; they were the servants of the Lord by office, appointed to minister in holy things; they attended the sanctuary, and kept the charge of the house of the Lord, Numb. iii. 6, &c. Some of them did by night stand in the house of the Lord, to guard the holy things of the temple, that they might not be profaned, and the rich things of the temple, that they might not be plundered. While the ark was in curtains, there was the more need of guards upon it. They attended likewise to see that neither the fire on the altar, nor the lamps in the candlestick, went out. Probably, it was lawful for a young Levite to sit up with them; we read of one that departed not from the temple night or day, Luke ii. 37. Now these are here called upon to bless the Lord. Thus they must keep themselves awake by keeping themselves employed; thus they must re-

decem time for holy exercises and how can we spend our time better than in praising God? It would be an excellent piece of good husbandry, to fill up the vacancies of time with pious meditations and ejaculations; and surely it is a very modest and reasonable duty that God calls us to, when we have nothing else to do. They who stood in the house of the Lord, must remember where they were, and that holiness and holy work became that house. Let them therefore bless the Lord; let them all do it in concert, or each by himself; let them lift up their hands in the doing of it, in token of their lifting up of their hearts. Let them lift up their hands in holiness, so Dr. Hammond reads it; or in sanctification; as it is fit when they lift them up in the sanctuary. When they that were appointed to wash before they went in to minister, they were thereby taught to lift up holy hands in prayer and praise.

(2.) It is a call to us to do it, who, as Christians, are made priests to our God, and Levites, Isa. lxvi. 21. We are the servants of the Lord, we have a place and a name in his house, in his sanctuary, we stand before him to minister to him, even by night. We are called and consecrated, and have access to him. Let us therefore bless the Lord, and his name; think and speak of his glory and goodness; let us lift up our hands in prayer, in praise, in vows; let us do our work with diligence and cheerfulness, and an elevation of mind. This exhortation is ushered in with Behold! a note commanding attention. Look about you, Sirs, when you are in God's presence, and conduct yourselves accordingly.

2. God's blessing us, and that is doing well for us, which we are here taught to desire, v. 3. Whether it is the watchmen's blessing their captain, or the Levites' blessing the high priest, or whoever was their chief, as many take it, because it is in the singular number, The Lord bless thee; or whether the blessing is pronounced by one upon many, The Lord bless thee, each of you in particular, thee and thee: you that are blessing God, the Lord bless you; is not material. We may learn, (1.) That we need desire no more to make us happy, than to be blessed of the Lord, for these whom he blesses are blessed indeed. (2.) That blessings out of Zion, spiritual blessings, the blessings of the covenant, and of communion with God, are the best blessings, which we should be most earnest for. (3.) It is a great encouragement to us, when we come to God for a blessing, that it is he who made heaven and earth, and therefore has all the blessings both at his disposal, the upper and nether springs. (4.) We ought to take these blessings with cheerfulness, and love to render to others also; not only, The Lord bless me, but, The Lord bless thee; thus testifying our belief of the fulness of divine blessings, that there is enough for others as well as for us, and our good will also to others. We must pray for them that exhort us. Though the less is blessed of the greater, (Heb. vii. 7) yet the greater must be praised for by the less.

**PSALM CXXXV.**

This is one of the Hallelujah psalms; this is the title of it, and that is the Amen of it, both its alpha and its omega. 1. It begins with a call to praise God, particularly a call to the servants of the Lord to praise him, as in the foregoing psalms. In the end, v. 4. He is called the God of Jacob, vv. 4, 5. As the God of the whole world, v. 6, 7. As a terrible God to the enemies of Israel, v. 8. As a God of great and powerful matter for praise. God is to be praised, 1. As the God of Jacob, v. 4. 2. As the God of gods, v. 5. 3. As the God of the whole world, v. 6, 7. 4. As a terrible God to the enemies of Israel, v. 8. 5. As a God of great and powerful matter, that he had done for them, and what he would do, v. 12, 14. 6. As the only living God, all other gods being vanity and a lie, v. 13, 18, 11. It concludes with another exhortation to all persons concern'd to praise God, v. 19, 21. In singing this psalm, our hearts must be filled, as well as our mouths, with the high praises of God.
PRAISE ye the Lord. Praise ye his name, O ye servants of the Lord. 2. Ye that stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God, 3. Praise the Lord; for the Lord is good: sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant. 4. For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure.

Here is,
1. The duty we are called to; to praise the Lord, to praise his name, to praise him, and again praise him. We must not only thank him for what he has done for us, but praise him for what he is in himself, and has done for others; take all occasions to speak well of God, and to give his truths and ways a good word.
2. The persons that are called upon to do this; the servants of the Lord, the priests and Levites that stand in his house, and all the devout and pious Israelites that stand in the courts of his house to worship there, v. 2. They have most reason to praise God, who are admitted to the privileges of his house; and they see most reason, who there behold him, that themselves believe them, as from them it is expected, for to that end they enjoy their places. Who should praise him, if they do not?
3. The reasons why we should praise God.
(1.) Because he whom we are to praise is good; and goodness is that which every body will speak well of. He is good to all, and we must give him the praise of that; his goodness is his glory, and we must make mention of it to his glory,
(2.) Because the work is its own wages; Sing praises to his name, for it is pleasant. It is best done with a cheerful spirit, and we shall have the pleasure of having done our duty. It is a heaven upon earth to be praising God; and the pleasure of that should quite put our mouths out of taste for the pleasures of sin.
(3.) Because of the peculiar privileges of God's people; (v. 4.) The Lord hath chosen Jacob to himself; and therefore Jacob is bound to praise him; for therefore God chose a people to himself, that they might be unto him for a name and a praise; Jer. xiii. 11. and therefore Jacob has abundant matter for praise, being thus dignified and distinguished. Israel is God's peculiar treasure above all people; (Exod. xix. 5.) they are his Segullah, a people appropriated to him, and that he has a delight in, precious in his sight, and honourable. For this distinguishing, surprising, favour, if the seed of Jacob do not praise him, they are the most unworthy, ungrateful, people under the sun.
5. For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. 6. whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places. 7. He caused the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth: he maketh lightnings for the rain: he bringeth the wind out of his treasuries. 8. Who smote the first-born of Egypt, both of man and beast. 9. Who sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants. 10. Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings: 11. Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan: 12. And gave their land for a heritage, a heritage unto Israel his people. 13. Thy name, O Lord, endureth for ever; and thy memorial, O Lord, throughout all generations. 14. For the Lord will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants.

The psalmist had suggested to us the goodness of God, as the proper matter of our cheerful praises; here he suggests to us the greatness of God, as the proper matter of our awful praises; and on this he is most large, because this we are less forward to consider.
1. He asserts the doctrine of God's greatness; (v. 5.) The Lord is great: great indeed, who knows no limits of time or place. He asserts it with assurance, I know that he is so, and it is easy to observe the proofs of it, but by belief of the revelation of it. I know it; I am sure of it, I know it by my own experience of the divine greatness working on my soul. He asserts it with a holy defiance of all pretenders, though they should join in confederacy against him; he is not only above any god, but above all gods, infinitely above them, twixt him and them there is no comparison.
2. He has made him to be a great God, by the greatness of his power, v. 6. 1. He has an absolute power, and may do what he will; Whatever the Lord pleased, that did he, and none could control him, or say unto him, What does thou? He does what he pleases, because he pleases, and gives not account of any of his matters. 2. He has an almighty power, and can do what he will; if he will work, none shall hinder. 3. This absolute almighty power is of universal extent; he doeth what he will in heaven, in earth, in the seas and all deep places that are in the bottom of the sea or the bowels of the earth. The gods of the heathen can do nothing; but our God can do any thing, and does do every thing.

III. He gives instances of his great power.
1. In the kingdom of nature, v. 7. All the powers of nature prove the greatness of the God of nature, and therefore those who are derived, and on whom they depend. The elements of nature are framed by him at first, but is still preserved by him.
(1.) It is by his power that exhalations are drawn up from the terreneous globe; the heat of the sun raises them, but it has that power from God, and therefore it is given as an instance of the glory of God, that nothing is hid from the heat of the sun, xix. 6. He causes the vapours to ascend (not only unhelped, but unseen, by us) from the earth, from the ends of the earth, that is, from the seas, by which the earth is surrounded. (2.) It is he who, out of those vapours so raised, forms the rain, so that the earth is no loser by the vapours it sends up, for they are returned with advantage in fruitful showers. (3.) Out of the same vapours (such is his wonderful power) he makes lightnings for the rain, by them he opens the bottles of heaven, and shakes the clouds, that they may water the earth. Here are fire and water thoroughly reconciled by Divine Omnipotence. They come together, and with the water does not quench the fire, nor the fire lick up the water, as fire from heaven did when God pleased, 1 Kings xviii. 38. (4.) The same exhalations, to serve another purpose, are converted into winds, which blow where they list, from what point of the compass they will, and we are so far from directing them, that we cannot tell whence they come or whither they go, but God brings them out of his treasuries with as much exactness and design as a prudent prince orders money to issue out of his exchequer.
2. In the kingdoms of men; and here he mentions the great things God had formerly done for his people Israel, which were proofs of God's greatness as well as of his goodness, and confirmations of the truth of the scriptures of the Old Testament, which began to be written by Moses, the person employed in working those miracles. Observe God's sovereign dominion, and irresistible power, (1.) In bringing Israel out of Egypt, and delivering them by his power from the plagues, and so directing him to let them go. These plagues are called tokens and wonders, because they came not in the common course of providence, but there was something miraculous in each of them. They were sent upon Pharaoh and all his servants, his subjects; but the Israelites, whom God claimed for his servants, his sons, his first-born, his free-born, were exempted from them, and no plague came nigh their dwelling. The death of the first-born both of men and cattle, was the heaviest of all the plagues, and that which gained the point. (2.) In destroying the kingdoms of Canaan before them, v. 10. They that were in possession of the land designed for Israel, had all possible advantages for keeping possession; the people were numerous, and warlike, and confederate against Israel; they were great nations. Yet if a great nation has a meek and mean-spirited prince, it lies exposed; but these great nations had mighty kings, and yet they were all smitten and slain; Sihon and Og, and all the kingdoms of Canaan, v. 10, 11. No power of hell or earth can prevent the accomplishment of the promise of God, when the time, the set time, for it, is come. (3.) In settling them in the land of promise. He that gives kingdoms to whomsoever he pleases, gave Canaan to be a heritage to Israel his people. It came to them by inheritance, for their ancestors had the promise of it, though not the possession. and it is described as an inheritance to their seed. This was done long before, yet God is now praised for it; and with good reason, for the children were now enjoying the benefit of it.

IV. He triumphs in the perpetuity of God's glory and grace. 1. Of his glory; (v. 13.) Thy name, O God, endures for ever. God's manifestations of himself to his people have everlasting fruits and consequences. What God doeth, it shall be for ever, Exod. xix. 5. He that has made the heavens and earth, in the constant and everlasting praises of his people, his memorial endures, has endured hitherto, and shall still endure throughout all generations of the church. This seems to refer to Exod. iii. 15. where, when God had called himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he adds, This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations. God is, and will be, always the same to his church, a gracious, faithful, wonder-working God; and his church is and will be, the same to him, a thankful, praising, people; and thus his name endures for ever. 2. Of his grace; he will be kind to his people. (1.) He will plead their cause against others that contend with them; he will judge his people, he will judge for them, and will not suffer them to be run down. (2.) He will not himself contend for ever with them, but will repent himself concerning his servants, and not proceed in his controversy with them, but will be merciful to them, and will be for-}told concerning them; he will return in waves of mercy to them, and will delight to do them good. This verse is taken from the song of Moses, Dcut. xxxiii. 36.

15. The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. 16. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; 17. They have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths. 18

They that make them are like unto them, so is every one that trusteth in them. 19.

Bless the Lord, O house of Israel: bless the Lord, O house of Aaron: 20. Bless the Lord, O house of Levi: ye that fear the Lord, bless the Lord. 21. Blessed be the Lord out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem. Praise ye the Lord. 

The design of these verses is, 1. To arm the people of God against idarity and all false worship, by showing what sort of gods they were that the heathen worshipped, as we had it before, exv. 4, &c. (1.) They were gods of their own making; being so, they could have no power but what their makers gave them; and then, what power could their makers receive from them? The images were the work of men's hands, and the deities that were supposed to inform them, were as much the creatures of men's fancy and imagination. (2.) They had the shape of animals, but could not perform the least act, no not of the animal life. They could neither see, nor hear, nor speak, nor so much as breathe; and therefore to make them with eyes, and ears, and mouths, and nostrils, was such a jest, that one could wonder how reasonable creatures could ever have been so foolish as to expect any good from such mock-deities. (3.) Their worshippers were therefore as stupid and senseless as they were: both those that made them to be worshipped, and those that trusted in them when they were made, v. 18. The worshipping of such gods as were the objects of sense, and senseless, made the worshippers sensual and senseless. Let our worshipping of a God that is a Spirit, make us spiritual and wise. 2. To stir up the people of God to true devotion in the worship of the true God, v. 19. The more deplorable the condition of the Gentile nations that worship idols is, the more are we bound to thank God that we know better. Therefore, (1.) Let us set ourselves about the acts of devotion, and employ ourselves in them; Bless the Lord, and again, and again, bless the Lord. In the parallel places, (exx. 19, 21.) by this means, we may, from the impotency of idols, the duty thus pressed upon us, is, to trust in the Lord; here, to bless him; by putting our trust in God, we give glory to him, and they that depend upon God shall not want matter of thanksgiving to him. All persons that knew God are here called to praise him: the house of Israel, the nation in general; the house of Aaron, and the house of Levi, the Lord's ministers that attended in his sanctuary; and all others that feared the Lord, though they were not of the house of Israel. (2.) Let God have the glory of all; Blessed be the Lord. The tribute of praise arises out of Zion; all God's works do praise him, but his saints bless him; and they need not go far to pay their tribute, for he dwells in Jerusalem, in his church, which they are members of, so that he is always nigh unto them to receive their homage. The condescensions of his grace, in dwelling with men upon the earth, call for our grateful and thankful returns, and our repeated Hallelujahs.

PSALM CXXXVI.

The scope of this psalm is the same with that of the foregoing psalm, but there is something very singular in the composition of it; for the latter half of each verse is the same, repeated throughout the psalm, for his mercy endures for ever, and yet no vain repetition. It is allowed that such burthen, or keepings, as we call them, add very much to the beauty of a song, and help to make i
Give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.  
1. O give thanks unto the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever.  
2. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever.  
3. O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever.  
4. To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy endureth for ever.  
5. To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy endureth for ever.  
6. To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy endureth for ever.  
7. To him that made great lights: for his mercy endureth for ever:  
8. The sun to rule by day: for his mercy endureth for ever:  
9. The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good:  
1. We must give thanks to God for his goodness and mercy; (v. 1.) Give thanks to the Lord, not only because he is good, but because he is good; all the streams must be run over, and waters must not only because he is merciful to us, but because his mercy endures for ever, and will be drawn out to those that shall come after us. We must give thanks to God, not only for that mercy which is now handed out to us here on earth, but for that which shall endure for ever in the glories and joys of heaven.

More particularly, [1.] He made the heavens, and stretched them out, and in them we not only see his wisdom and power, but we taste his mercy in their beneficent influences; as long as the heavens endure, the mercy of God endures in them, v. 5.  
[2.] He raised the earth out of the waters, when he caused the dry land to appear, that it might be fit to be a habitation for man, and therein also his mercy to man still endures; (v. 6.) for the earth will he give to the children of men, and all its products.  
[3.] Having made both heaven and earth, he settled a correspondence between them, notwithstanding their distance, by making the sun, moon, and stars, which he placed in the firmament of heaven, to shed their light and influences upon this earth, v. 7.-9. These are called the great lights, because they appear so to us, for, otherwise, astronomers tell us, that the moon is less than many of the stars, but, being nearer to the earth, it seems much greater. They are said to rule, not only because they govern the seasons of the year, but because they are useful to the world, and benefactors are the best rulers, Luke xxii. 25. But the empire is divided; one rule by day, the other by night, (at least, the stars,) and yet all are subject to God's direction and disposal. Those rulers, therefore, which the Gentiles idolized, are the world's servants, and God's subjects; Sun, stand thou still, and thou, moon.

10. To him that smote Egypt in their first-born: for his mercy endureth for ever:  
11. And brought out Israel from among them: for his mercy endureth for ever:  
12. With a strong hand, and with a stretched-out arm: for his mercy endureth for ever.  
13. To him which divided the Red Sea into parts: for his mercy endureth for ever:  
14. And made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy endureth for ever:  
15. But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea: for his mercy endureth for ever.  
16. To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy endureth for ever.  
17. To him which smote great kings: for his mercy endureth for ever:  
18. And slew famous kings: for his mercy endureth for ever:  
19. Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy endureth for ever:  
20. And Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy endureth for ever:  
21. And gave their land for a
For his mercy endureth for ever:

22. Even a heritage unto Israel his servant:
for his mercy endureth for ever.

The great things God did for Israel, when he first formed them into a people, and set up his kingdom among them, are here mentioned, as often elsewhere in the Psalms, as instances both of the power of God, and of the particular kindness he had for Israel. See cxvii. 8, &c.

1. He brought them out of Egypt, v. 10-12.
That was a mercy which endured long to them, and our redemption by Christ, which was typified by that, is for ever, and an eternal redemption. Of all the plagues of Egypt, none is mentioned but the death of the first-born, because that was the conquering plague; by that, God, who, in all the plagues, distinguished the Israelites from the Egyptians, brought them last from among them; not by a wise, but with a strong hand, and an arm stretched out to reach for, and do great things. These miracles of mercy, as they proved Moses's commission to give law to Israel, so they laid Israel under lasting obligations to obey that law, Exod. xx. 2.

2. He forced them a way through the Red sea, which obstructed them at their first setting out. By the power he has to control the common course of nature, he divided the sea into two parts, between which he opened a path, and made Israel to pass between the parts, now that they were to enter into covenant with him; see Jer. xxxiv. 18. He not only divided the sea, but gave his people courage to go through it when it was divided; which was an instance of God's power over men's hearts, as the former of his power over the waters. And, to make it a miracle of justice as well as mercy, the same Red sea that was a lane to the Israelites, was a grave to their pursuers. There he shook off Pharaoh and his host.

3. He conducted them through a vast howling wilderness; (v. 16) there he fed them and fed them; their camp was victuall'd and fortified by a constant series of miracles for forty years; though they loitered and wandered there, they were not lost. And in this, the mercy of God, and the constancy of that mercy, were the more observable, because they often provoked him in the wilderness, and grieved him in the desert.

4. He destroyed kings before them, to make room for them; (v. 17, 18.) not deposed and banished them, but smote and slew them; in which appeared his wrath against them, but his mercy, his never-failing mercy, to Israel. And that which magnified it, was, that they were great kings and famous kings, yet God subdued them as easily as if they had been the least, and weakest, and meanest, of the children of men. They were wicked kings, a id then their grandeur and lustre would not secure them from God. The more great and famous they were, the more did God's mercy to Israel appear in giving such kings for them. Sihon and Og are particularly mentioned, because they were the two first that were conquered on the other side Jordan, v. 19, 20. It is good to enter into the detail of God's favours, and not to view them in the gross; and in each instance to observe, and own, the God's mercy endureth for ever.

5. He put them in possession of good land, v. 21, 22. He, whose the earth is, and the fulness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein, took land from one people and gave it to another, as pleased him. The ingenuity of the Amorites was now full, and therefore it was taken from them; Israel was his servant, and though they had been provoking in the wilderness, yet he intended to have some service out of them, for to them pertained the service of God. As he said to the Egyptians, let my people go, so to the Canaanites, let my people in, that they may serve me. In this, God's mercy to them endureth for ever, because it was a figure of the heavenly Canaan, the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.


God's everlasting mercy is here celebrated.

1. In the redemption of his church; (v. 25, 24.) in the many redemptions wrought for the Jewish church, out of the hands of their oppressors; when, in the years of their servitude, their estate was very low, God remembered them, and raised them up savours, the judges, and David, at length, by whom God gave them rest from all their enemies; but especially in the great redemption of the universal church, of which these were types, we have a great deal of reason to say; "He remembered us, the children of Abraham; forsaking us in our low estate, for his mercy endureth for ever: he sent his Son to redeem us from sin, and death, and hell, and all our spiritual enemies; for his mercy endureth for ever; he was sent to redeem us, and not the angels that sinned; for his mercy endureth for ever."

2. In the provision he makes for all the creatures; (v. 25.) He giveth food to all flesh. It is an instance of the mercy of God's providence, that, wherever he has given life, he gives food agreeable and sufficient; and he is a good Housekeeper, that provides for so large a family.

3. In all his glories, and all his gifts; (v. 26.) Give thanks to the God of heaven; this denotes him to be a glorious God, and the glory of his mercy is to be taken notice of in our praises; the riches of his glory are displayed in the vessels of his mercy, Rom. ix. 23. It also denotes him to be the great benefactor, for every good and perfect gift is from above, from the Father of lights. He is the Father of light, and we should trace every stream to the fountain; this and that particular mercy may perhaps endure but a while, but the mercy that is in God endureth for ever; it is an inexhaustible fountain.

PSALM CXXXVII.

There are divers psalms which are thought to have been penned in the latter days of the Jewish church, when prophecy was near expiring, and the canon of the Old Testament ready to be closed up; but none of them appears so plainly to be of a late date as this, which was penned when the people of God were captives in Babylon, and there insulted over by their proud oppressors; probably it was toward the latter end of their captivity, for now they saw the destruction of Babylon hastening on apace, (v. 8.) which would be their discharge. It is a mournful psalm, a lamentation; and the Septuagint makes it one of the lamentations of Jeremiah, naming him for the author of it. Here, I. The melancholy captives cannot enjoy themselves, v. 1, 2. II. They cannot humour their proud oppressors, v. 3, 4. III. They cannot forget Jerusalem, v. 5, 6. IV. They cannot forgive Edom and Babylon, v. 7-9. In singing this psalm, we must be much affected with the concernsments of the church, especially that part of it that is in affliction, laying the sorrows of God's people near our hearts, comforting ourselves in the prospect of the deliverance of the church, and the ruin of its enemies, in due time, but carefully avoiding all personal animosities, and not mixing the leaven of malice with our sacrifices.
By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. 2. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. 3. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. 4. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? 5. If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. 6. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

We have here the daughter of Zion covered with a cloud, and dwelling with the daughter of Babylon; the people of God in tears, but sowing in tears. 1. The mournful posture they were in, as to their affairs, and as to their spirits.
1. They were posted by the rivers of Babylon, in a strange land, and a great way from their own country, whence they were brought as prisoners of war; the land of Babylon was now a house of bondage to that people, as Egypt had been in their beginning. Their conquerors quartered them by the rivers, with design to employ them there, and keep them to work in their gallicies; or perhaps they chose it as the most melancholy place, and therefore most suitable to their sorrowful spirits. If they must build houses there, (Jer. xxxix. 5.) it shall not be in the cities, the places of converse, but by the rivers, the places of solitude, where they might mingle their tears with the streams. We find some of them by the river Chebar. (Ezek. i. 3.) others by the river Ulai, 2. They sat down to indulge their grief, by poring on their miseries. Jeremiah had taught them under this yoke to sit alone, and keep silence, and put their mouths in the dust, Lam. iii. 28, 29. We sat down, as those that expected to stay, and were content, since it is the will of God that it must be so.
3. Thoughts of Zion drew tears from their eyes: and it was not a sudden passion of weeping, such as we are wont to beguile away by a glass; it not surprizes us, but they were deliberate tears; we sat down and wept, tears with consideration. We wept when we remembered Zion, the holy hill on which the temple was built. Their affection to God's house swallowed up their concern for their own houses. They remembered Zion's former glory, and the satisfaction they had in Zion's courts, Lam. vii. Jerusalem remembered, in the days of her misery, all her pleasant things which she had in the days of old, Ps. xlii. 4. They remembered Zion's present desolations, and favoured the dust thereof, which was a good sign that the time for God to favour it was not far off, ci. 13, 14.
4. They lay by their instruments of music; (v. 2.) We hanged our harps upon the willows. (1.) The harps they used for their own diversion and entertainment; these they had laid aside both because it was the manner of those that ought not to use them, that God called to weeping and mourning, (Isa. xxi. 12.) and their spirits were so sad, that they had no hearts to use them; they brought their harps with them, designing perhaps to use them for the alleviating of their grief, but it proved so great, that it would not admit the experiment; music makes some people melancholy; As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart. (2.) The harps they used in God's worship, the Levites; these they did not throw away, hoping they might yet again have occasion to use them, though they had no present use for them; God had cut them out a passage through them, by both hands, to sweet songs and lamentations, and their songs into lamentations, Amos viii. 10. Every thing is beautiful in its season. They did not hide their harps in the bushes, or the hollows of the rocks; but hung them up in view, that the sight of them might affect them with this deplorable change. Yet perhaps they were faulty in doing this; for praising God is never out of season, it is his will that we should in everything give thanks, (1. Thess. v. 16.) II. The abuses which their enemies put upon them when they were in this melancholy condition, v. 5. They had carried them away captive from their own land, and then wasted them in the land of their captivity, took what little they had from them; but this was not enough; to complete their woes, they insulted over them, they required of us mirth and a song. Now, 1. This was very barbarous and inhuman; even an enemy, in misery, is to be pitied, and not trampled upon. It argues a base and scroful spirit to upbraid those that are in distress either with their former joys or with their present grievances, or to challenge those to be merry, who, we know, are out of tune for it; this is adding affliction to the afflicted. 2. It was very profane and impious; no songs would serve them but the songs of Zion, with which God had been hallowed; so that in this demand they reflected upon God himself, as Belsazar when he drank wine in temple-bowls. Their enemies mocked at their sabbaths, Lam. i. 7.
III. The patience wherewith they bore their abuses, v. 4. They had laid by their harps, and would not resume them, no act to ingratiate themselves with those at whose mercy they lay; they would not answer those fools according to their folly. Profane scoffers are not to be humour'd, nor pears cast before swine. David prudently kept silence even from good, when the wicked were before him, who, he knew, would ridicule what he said, and make a jest of it, Ps. xxxix. 1, 2. The reason they gave is very mild and pious; How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? They do not say, "How shall we sing, when we are so much in sorrow?" If that had been all, they might perhaps have put a force upon themselves, so far as to take some measure to revenge their losses, by a song; but this is a sacred thing, it is peculiar to the temple-service, and therefore we dare not sing it in the land of a stranger, among idolaters. We must not serve common mirth, much less profane mirth, with any thing that is appropriated to God, who is sometimes to be honoured by a religious silence as well as by religious speaking.
IV. The constant affection they retained for Jerusalem, though they were in Babylon. Though their enemies banter them for talking so much of Jerusalem, and even doting upon it, their love to it is not in the least abated; it is what they may be jeered for, but will never be jeered out of, v. 5, 6. Observe, 1. How these pious captives stared affected to Jerusalem; (1.) Their heads were full of it; it was always in their minds, they remembered it, they did not forget it, though the rest of their poor condition was so great; they had never seen it, nor knew any thing of it but by report, and by what they had read in the scripture, yet it was graven upon the palms of their hands, and even its ruins were continually before them, which was an evidence of their faith in the promise of its restoration in due time. In their daily prayers, they opened their windows toward Jerusalem; and how then could they forget it? (2.) Their hearts were full of it; they preferred it above their chief joy, and therefore they remembered it.
and could not forget it. What we love, we love to think of. They that rejoice in God, do, for his sake, make Jerusalem their joy, and prefer it before that, whatever it is, which is the head of their joy, which is dearest to them in this world. A godly man will prefer a public good before any private satisfaction or gratification whatsoever.

2. How steadfastly they resolved to keep up this affection, we see by a solemn imprecation, a mischief to themselves if they should let it fall; "Let me be forever disabled, either to sing or play on the harp, if I so far forget the religion of my country as to make use of my songs and harps for the pleasing of Babylon’s sons, or the praising of Babylon’s gods. Let my right hand forget her art,“ (which the hand of an expert musician never can, unless it were withered,) “may, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, we have not a good word to say for Jerusalem, wherever I am.” Though they dare not sing Zion’s songs among the Babylonians, yet they cannot forget them, but as soon as ever the present restraint is taken off, they will sing them as readily as ever, notwithstanding the long disuse.

7. Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof. 8. O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. 9. Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

The pious Jews in Babylon, having afflicted themselves with the thoughts of the ruins of Jerusalem, have particularly connected the present prosperity of her impotent, implacable enemies; but this, not from a spirit of revenge, but from a holy zeal for the glory of God and the honour of his kingdom. 1. The Edomites will certainly be reckoned with, and all others that were accessories to the destruction of Jerusalem, that were aiding and abetting, that helped forward the affliction, (Zech. i. 13.) and triumphed in it; that said, in the presence of the nations, this is our portion. "Rase it, rase it to the foundations; down with it, down with it, do not leave one stone upon another." Thus they made the Chaldean army more furious, who were already so enraged that they needed no spur. Thus they made them put shame upon Israel, who would be looked upon as a people worthy to be cut off, when their next neighbours had such an ill-will to them. And all this was a fruit of the old enmity of Esau against Jacob, because he get the birth-right and the blessing, and a branch of that more ancient enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent: Lord, remember them, says the psalmist; which is an appeal to his justice against them. For be it from us to avenge ourselves, if ever it should be in our power, but we will leave it to him who has said, Vengeance is mine. Note, They that are glad at calamities, especially the calamities of Jerusalem, shall not go unpunished. They that are content to have the persecutors of good people, and stir them up, and set them on, and are pleased with what they do, shall certainly be called to an account for it another day, and God will remember it against them.

2. Babylon is the principal, and it will come to her turn too to drink of the cup of trembling, the very dregs of it; (v. 8, 9.) O daughter of Babylon, who art proud and secure, and art in the midst of all, by the word of truth, thou art to be destroyed; or, as Dr. Hammond reads it, who art the destroyer. The destroyers shall be destroyed; (Rev. xiii. 10.) and perhaps it is with reference to this, that the man of sin, the head of the New Testament Babylon, is called a son of perdition, 2 Thess. ii. 3. The destruction of Babylon being foreseen as a sure destruction, thou art to be destroyed. It is spoken of, (1.) As a just destruction; she shall be paid in her own coin; “Thou shalt be served as thou hast served us; as barbarously used by the executors of us as we have been by thee.” See Rev. xvi. 8. Let not those expect to find mercy, who, when they had power, did not show mercy. (2.) As an utter destruction; the very little ones of Babylon, when it is taken by storm, and all in it put to the sword, shall be dashed to pieces, by the enraged and merciless conqueror. None escape, if these little ones perish. Those are the seed of another generation; so that, if they be cut off, the ruin will be not only total, as Jerusalem’s was, but final. It is sunk like a millstone into the sea, never to rise. (3.) As a destruction which should reflect honour upon the instruments of it. Happy shall they be that do it; for they are fulfilling God’s counsels; and therefore he calls Cyrus, who did it, his servant, his shepherd, his anointed, (Isa. xlv. 28.—xlv. 1.) and the soldiers, that were employed in it, his sanctified ones, Isa. xiii. 3. They are making way for the enlargement of God’s Israel, and happy they who are any way serviceable to that. The fall of the New Testament Babylon will be the triumph of all the saints, Rev. xix. 1.

PSALM CXXXVIII.

It does not appear, nor is it material to inquire, upon what occasion David penned this psalm; but in it, 1. He looks back with thankfulness upon the experiences he had had of God’s goodness to him, v. 1.—9. 2. He looks forward with comfort, in hopes, I. That others would go on to praise God like him, v. 4, 5. 2. That God would go on to do good to him, v. 6, 8. In singing this psalm, we must in like manner learn to praise God, to sing his praise, and repose ourselves in his power and goodness.

A psalm of David.

1. I WILL praise thee with my whole heart; before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. 2. I will worship towards thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving-kindness, and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. 3. In the day which I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenest me with strength in my soul. 4. All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O Lord, when they hear the words of thy mouth. 5. Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the glory of the Lord:

1. How he would praise God; compare cxli. 1. 1. He will praise him with sincerity and zeal; with my heart, with my whole heart; with that which is within me, and with all that is within me; with uprightness of intention, and fervent affection; inward impressions agreeing with outward expressions.

2. With freedom and boldness; Before the gods will I sing praise unto thee; before the princes, and judges, and great men; either these of other nations, that visited him, or those of his own nation, that attended on him. Even in their presence, he will not only praise God with his heart, which we may do by pleas calculated in any company, but will sing praise, if there be occasion. Note, Praising God is work which the greatest of men need not be ashamed of; it is the work of angels, the work of heaven. Before the angels, so some understand it, in religious assemblies, where there
as a special presence of angels, 1 Cor. xii. 10. 3. In the way that God had appointed; I will worship toward thy holy temple. The priests only went into the temple, the people, at the nearest, did but worship towards it, and that they might do at a distance. Christ is our Temple, and toward him we must look with an eye of faith, as Mediator between us and God, in all our praises of him. Heaven is God's holy temple, and thitherward we must lift up all our addresses to God; Our Father in heaven.

II. What he would praise God for.

1. For the fountain of his comforts; for thy loving-kindness, and for thy truth; for thy goodness, and for thy promise; mercy hid in thee, and mercy revealed by thee that God is a gracious God in himself, and has engaged to be so to all those that trust in him. For thou hast magnified thy word, thy promise, which is truth, above all thy name. God has made himself known to us many ways, in creation and providence, but most clearly by his word. The judgments of his mouth are magnified even above those of his hand, and greater things are done by them. The wonders of grace exceed the wonders of nature; and what is discovered of God by revelation, is much greater than what is discovered by reason. In what the Lord has done, both his faithfulness to his word appeared more illustrious, and redounded more to his glory, than any other of his attributes. Some good interpreters understand it of Christ, the essential Word, and of his gospel, which are magnified above all the discoveries God had before made of himself to the fathers. He that magnified the law and made that honourable, magnifies the gospel much more.

For the strength of grace from that fountain, in which he himself had tasted that the Lord is gracious, v. 3. He had been in affliction, and he remembers, with thankfulness, (1.) The sweet communion he then had with God. He cried, he prayed, and prayed earnestly, and God answered him, gave him to understand that his prayer was accepted, and should have a gracious return in due time. The intercourse between God and his saints is carried on by his prayers and their prayers. (2.) The sweet communications Jesus has with his people; Thou strengthenedst me with strength in my soul. This was the answer to his prayer, for God gives more than good words, xx. 6. Observe, [1.] It was a speedy answer; in the day when I cried. Note, Those that trade with heaven by prayer, grow rich by quick returns; while we are yet speaking, God hears, Isa. lxxv. 19. [2.] It was a spiritual answer; God gave him strength in his soul, and power and grace and valour in his soul, for to fight against his enemies. This was a real and valuable answer to the prayer of faith in the day of affliction. If God gives us strength in our souls, to bear the burthens, resist the temptations, and do the duties, of an afflicted state; if he strengthen us to keep hold of himself by faith, to maintain the peace of our own minds, and to wait with patience for the issue, we must own that he has answered us, and we are bound to be thankful.

III. What influence he hoped that his praising God would have upon others, v. 4. 5. David was himself a king, and therefore he hoped that kings would be wrought upon by his experiences, and his examples, to embrace religion; and if kings became religious, their kingdoms would be every way better. Now, 1. This may have reference to the kings that were neighbours to David, as Hiram and others; They shall all praise thee; when they visited David. For the same reason, when they sought the presence of Solomon, (as all the kings of the earth are expressly said to have done, 2 Chron. ix. 23.) they readily joined in the worship of the God of Israel. 2. It may look further to the calling of the Gentiles, and the disciplining of all nations, by the gospel of Christ, of whom it is said, that all kings shall fall down before him, Ps. lxxxi. 11. Now it is here foretold, (1.) That the kings of the earth shall hear the words of God. All that came near David should hear them from him, cix. 46. In the latter days, the preachers of the gospel should be sent into all the world. (2.) That then they shall praise God, as all those have reason to do that hear his word, and receive it, and the light and love of it, Acts xiii. 48. (3.) That they shall sing in the ways of the Lord, in the ways of his providence and grace toward them; they shall rejoice in God, and give glory to him, however he is pleased to deal with them in the ways of their duty and obedience to him. Note, They that walk in the ways of the Lord have reason to sing in those ways, to go on in them with a great deal of cheerfulness, for they are ways of pleasantness, and it becomes us to be pleasant in them; if we can and do, great is the glory of the Lord. It is very much for the honour of God that kings should walk in his ways, and that all those who walk in them should sing in them, and so proclaim to all the world that he is a good Master, and his work its own wages.

6. Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect to the lowly; out of the pumpkin he knoweth afar off. 7. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me; thou shalt stretch forth thy hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me. 8. The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.

David here comforts himself with three things.

1. The favour God bears to his humble people; (v. 6.) Though the Lord be high, and neither needs any of his creatures, nor can be benefited by them, yet hath he respect unto the lowly; smiles upon them as well pleased with them, overlooks heaven and earth to cast a gracious look upon them, (Isa. lvii. 1. Rev. iv. 10.)—As if he had said, He is so near upon them, while he knows the proud afar off, he knows them, but disowns them and rejects them, how proudly soever they pretend to his favour. Dr. Hammond makes this to be the sum of that gospel which the kings of the earth shall hear and welcome—that penitent sinners shall be accepted of God, but the impenitent cast out; witness the instance of the Pharisee and the Publican, Luke xviii.

2. The care God takes of his afflicted, oppressed, people, v. 7. David, though a great and good man, expects to walk in the midst of trouble, but encourages himself with hope, (1.) That God would comfort him; "When my spirit is ready to sink and fall, thou shalt revive me, and make me easy and cheerful under my troubles." Divine consolations have enough in them to revive us even when we walk in the midst of troubles, and are ready to die away for fear. (2.) That he would protect him, and plead his cause; Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand, though not against mine enemies, to destroy them, yet against the wrath of mine enemies, to restrain that, and set bounds to it. (3.) That he would in due time work deliverance for him; Thy right hand shall save me. As he has one hand to stretch out against his enemies, so he has another to save his own people. Christ is the Right Hand of the Lord, that shall save all those who serve him.

3. The assurance we have, that, whatever good work God has begun in and for his people, he will perform it; (v. 8.) The Lord will perfect that
which concerns me, (1.) That which is most needful for me; and he knows what is so. We are careful and cumbered about many things that do not concern us, but he knows what are the things that really are of consequence to us, (Matt. vi. 32.) and will order them for the best. (2.) That which we are most concerned about. Every good man is most concerned about his duty to God, and his happiness in God; that the former may be faithfully done, and the latter effectually secured; and if indeed these are the things that our hearts are most upon, and concerning which we are most solicitous, there is a good work begun in us, and he that has begun it will perfect it, we may be confident he will, Phil. i. 6. Observe, [1.] What ground the psalmist builds this confidence upon. Thy love, O Lord, endures for ever. This he had made very much the matter of his praise, (xiii. 6.) and therefore he could here with the more assurance make it the matter of his hope. For, if we give God the glory of his mercy, we may take to ourselves the comfort of it. Our hopes that we shall persevere, must be founded, not upon our own strength, for that will fail us, but upon the mercy of God, for that will not fail. It is well pleaded, Lord, thy mercy endures for ever; let me be for ever a monument of it. [2.] What use he makes of this confidence; it does not supersede, but quicken, prayer; he turns his expectation into a petition; Forsake not, do not let go, the work of thine own hands. Lord, I am the work of thine own hands, my soul is so, do not forsake me; my concerns are so, do not lay thy care of them. Whatever good there is in us, it is the work of God's own hands; he works in us both to will and to do; it will fail if he forsake it; but if he worketh in us, as hebrew, a perfecting God, is so much concerned in the progress of it to the end, that we may in faith pray, Lord, do not forsake it. Whom he loves he loves to the end; and as for God, his work is perfect.

PSALM CXXXIX.

Some of the Jewish doctors are of opinion that this is the most excellent of all the psalms of David; and a very pi-

dous devout meditation it is, upon the doctrine of God's own love toward us, which should therefore be the subject of our hearts fixed upon, and filled with, in singing this psalm. 1. This doctrine is here asserted, and fully laid down, v. 1-6. II. It is confirmed by two arguments. 1. God is everywhere present, therefore he knows all, v. 7-12. He makes us, therefore he knows us, v. 13-18. Three inferences are drawn, from this doctrine. 1. It may fill us with pleasing admiration of God, v. 17, 18, 2. With a holy dread and detestation of sin and sinners, v. 19-22. 3. With a holy satisfaction in our own integrity, concerning which we may appeal to God, v. 23, 24. This great and self-evident truth, That God knows our hearts, and the hearts of all the children of men, if we did but mix faith with it, and seriously consider it, and apply it, would have a great influence upon our holiness, and upon our comfort.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

1 LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. 2. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine up-rising; thou under-

standest my thought afar off. 3. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways:

4. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. 5. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thy hand upon me. 6. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

David here lays down this great doctrine, That the God with whom we have to do has a perfect knowledge of us, and that all the motions and actions, both of our inward and of our outward man, are naked and open before him. 1. He laid down this doctrine in the way of an address to God, 2. prais- ing him, acknowledging it to him, and giving him the glory of it. Divine truths look full as well when they are prayed over, as when they are preached over; and much better than when they are disputed over. When we speak of God to him himself, we shall find ourselves concerned to speak with the utmost degree both of sincerity and reverence, which will be likely to make the impressions the deeper.

3. He leaves it here in a manner of application to himself; not, "Thou hast known me," but, "Thou hast known me; that is it which I am most concerned to believe, and which it will be most profitable for me to consider." Then we know these things for our good, when we knew them for ourselves, Job v. 27. When we acknowledge, Lord, all souls are thine," we must add, "My soul is thine; thou hast the whole, all sin hast thou sin on me; thou art good to all, good to Israel, art good to me; The heart knoweth his own lust; and known me; known me, thoroughly as we know that which we have most diligently and exactly searched into." David was a king, and the hearts of kings are unsearchable to their subjects, (Prov. xxv. 3.) but they are not so to their Sovereign.

3. He descends to particulars; Thou knowest me wherever I am, and whatever I am doing; me, and all that belongs to me." (1.) Thou knowest me and all my motions, my down-sitting to rest, my up-rising to work; with what temper of mind I compose myself when I sit down, and stir up myself when I rise up; what my soul reposes itself in, as its stay and support, what it aims at, and reaches toward, as its felicity and end. Thou knowest me when I come home, how I walk before my house, and when I go abroad, on what errands I go." (2.) Thou knowest all my imaginations; nothing is more close and quick than thought, it is always unknown to others, it is often unobserved by ourselves, and yet thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Though my thoughts be ever so foreign and distant from one another, thou understandest the chain of them, and canst make out their connexion, when so many of them slip my notice, that I myself cannot." Or, "Thou understandest them afar off, even before I think them, and long after I have thought them, and have myself forgotten them." Or, "Thou understandest them from afar, from the height of heaven thou seest into the depths of the heart," xxxiii. 14. (3.) "Thou knowest me and all my designs and undertakings; thou composest every particular path; thou estified or winnowest my path," (so some) "so as thoroughly to distinguish between the good and evil of what I do," as by sifting we separate between the corn and the chaff. All our actions are observed by the judgment of God, xxxix. 3. God takes notice of every step we take, every right step, and every back-step. He is acquainted with all our ways, intimately acquainted with them, he knows what rule we walk by, what end we walk toward, what company we walk with. (4.) "Thou knowest me in all my retirements; thou knowest my lying down; when I am withdrawn from all company, and am reflecting upon what has passed all day, and composing my self to rest, my best self to be in my best heart, and with what thoughts I go to bed." (5.) "Thou knowest me, and all I say; (v. 4.) There is not a word in my tongue, not a vain word, not a good word, but thou knowest it altogether; knowest what it meant, from what thought it came, and with what design it was
uttered. There is not a word at my tongue's end, ready to be spoken, yet checked and kept in, but thou knowest it." When there is not a word in my tongue, O Lord, thou knowest all; so some read it; for thoughts are words to God. (6.) "Thou knowest me in every part of me; Thou hast bested me behind and before, that so, which way I will, I am under thine eye, and cannot escape it. Thou hast laid thine hand upon me, and I cannot run away from thee." Wherever we are, we are under the eye and hand of God. Perhaps, it is an allusion to the physician's laying his hand upon his patient, to feel how his pulse beats, or what temper he is in. God knows us, as we know not only what we see, but what we feel, and have our hands upon. All his saints are in his hand.

4. He speaks of it with admiration; (v. 6.) It is too wonderful for me; it is high; (1.) "Thou hast such a knowledge of me, as I have not of myself, nor can have. I cannot take notice of all my own thoughts, nor make such a judgment of myself as thou makest of me." (2.) "It is such a knowledge as I cannot comprehend, much less describe. That thou knowest all things I am sure, but how I cannot tell." We cannot by searching find out how God searches and finds out us; nor do we know how we are known.

7. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? 8. If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. 9. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; 10. Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. 11. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. 12. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. 13. For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. 14. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. 15. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 16. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there reis none of them.

It is of great use to us to know the certainty of the things wherein we have been instructed, that we may not only believe them, but be able to tell why we believe them, and to give a reason of the hope that is in us. David is therefore sure that God perfectly knows him and all his ways.

1. Because he is always under his eye. If God is omnipresent, he must needs be omniscient; but he is omnipresent; this supposes the infinity and immensity of his being, from which follows the ubiquity of his presence; heaven and earth include the whole creation, and the Creator fills both; (Jer. xxvi. 24.) he not only knows both, and governs both, but he fills both. Every part of the creation is under God's intuition and influence. David here acknowledg-
II. Because he is the work of his hands: he that framed the engine knows all the motions of it; God made us, and therefore, no doubt, he knows us: he saw us when we were in the forming, and can we be hid from him now that we are made? This is the argument he insists upon; (v. 13-16.) "Thou hast possessed my reins; thou art Master of my most secret thoughts and intentions, and the innermost recesses of my soul; thou not only knowest, but governest, them, as we do that which we have possession of; and the possession thou hast of my reins is a rightful possession, for thou coverestst me in my mother's womb, thou madest me; (Job x. 11.) thou madest me a secret; the soul is concealed from all about us, thou knowest the things of a man, says the spirit of a man?" 1 Cor. ii. 11. Hence we read of the hidden man of the heart. But it was God himself that thus covered us, and therefore he can, when he pleases, discover us; when he hid us from all the world, he did not intend to hide us from himself.

Concerning the formation of man, of each of us;
1. The glory of it is here given to God, entirely to him; for it is he that has made us, and not we ourself. Our place was only to be void, when he spake, my parents were only the instruments of it. It was done, (1.) Under the divine inspection; My substance, when hid in the womb, nay, when it was yet but in fieri—in the forming, an unshapen embryo, was not hid from thee, thine eyes did see my substance. (2.) By the divine operation. As the eye of God saw us then, so his hand wrought us; we were his work. (3.) According to the divine model; In thy book all my members were written. Eternal wisdom formed the plan, and by that almighty power raised the noble structure.

2. Glorious things are here said concerning it. The generation of man is to be considered with the same pious veneration as his creation at first. Consider it, (1.) As a great marvel, a great miracle we might call it, but that it is done in the ordinary course of nature. We are fearfully and wonderfully made; we may justly be astonished at the admirable contrivance of these living temples, the composition of every part, and the harmony of all together. (2.) As a great mystery; a mystery of nature; My soul knows right well that it is marvellous, but how to describe it for any one else I know not; for I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the womb, as in the lowest parts of the earth; so privately, and so far out of sight. (3.) As a great mercy; that all our members in continuance were fashioned, according as they were written in the book of God's wise counsel, when as we were there none of them; or, as some read it, and none of them was left out. If any of our members had been wanting in God's book, they had been wanting in our bodies, but, through his goodness, we have all our limbs and senses, the want of any of which might have made us burthens to ourselves. See what reason we have then to praise God for our creation, and to conclude that he who saw our substance when it was unfinished, sees it now that it is fashioned.

17. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! 18. If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee. 19. Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me, therefore, ye bloody men. 20. For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. 21. Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that ris up against thee? 22. I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them mine enemies. 23. Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; 24. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Here the psalmist makes application of the doctrine of God's omniscience, divers ways.
1. He acknowledges, with wonder and thankfulness, the care God had taken of all his days, (v. 17, 18.) God, who knew him, thought of him, and his thoughts toward him were thoughts of love: thoughts of good, and not of evil, Jer. xxiv. 11. God's omniscience, which might justly have watched over us to our hurt, has been employed for us, and has watched over us to do us good, Jer. xvii. 10.

28. God's counsels concerning us and our welfare have been, (1.) Precious, to admiration; How precious are they! They are deep in themselves, such as cannot be fathomed and comprehended. Providence has had a vast reach in its dispensations concerning us, and has brought things about for our good, quite beyond our contrivance and foresight. They are dear to us; we must think of them with a great deal of reverence, and show ourselves with precision and thankfulness. Our thoughts concerning God must be delightful to us above any other thoughts. (2.) Numerous, to admiration; How great is the sum of them! We cannot conceive how many God's kind counsels have been concerning us; how many good turns he has done us; and what variety of mercies we have received from him. If we would count them, the heads of them, much more the particulars of them, they are more in number than the sand, and yet only one in all the world; xli. 5. We cannot conceive the multitude of God's compassions, which are all new every morning. (3.) Constant at all times; "When I awake every morning, I am still with thee, under thine eye and care, safe and easy under thy protection." This bespeaks also the continual devout sense David had of the eye of God upon him; When I awake, I am with thee, in my thoughts; and it would help to keep us in the fear of God, to remember, when we awake in the morning, our first thoughts were of him, and we did then set him before us.

2. He concludes from this doctrine, that ruin will certainly be the end of sinners. God knows all the wickedness of the wicked, and therefore he will reckon for it; "Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God; for all their wickedness is open before thee, however it may be artfully disguised and coloured over, to hide it from the eye of the world. However thou suffer them to prosper for a while, surely thou wilt slay them at last." Now observe, (1.) The reason why God will punish them; because they daringly affront him, and set him at defiance; (v. 20.) They speak against thee wickedly; they set their mouth against the heavens, (lxviii. 9.) and shall be called to account for the hard speeches they have spoken against him, Jude 15. They are his enemies, and declare their enmity by taking his name in vain; as we show ourselves enemies of a man, if we make a by-word of his name, and never mention him but in a way of jest and banter. These that profane the sacred forms of swearing or praying, by using them in an impertinent, irreverent, manner, take God's name in vain, and thereby show themselves enemies to him. Some make it to be a description of hypocrites; "They speak of thee for mischief; they talk of God, pretending to piety, but it is some ill design, for a cloak of maliciousness; and, being enemies to God, while they pretend friendship, they take his name in vain, they
swear falsely.” (2.) The use David makes of this project which has of the ruin of the wicked. [1.] He detests them; “Depart from me, ye bloody men; ye shall not debar me, for I will not admit your friendship, nor have fellowship with you; and you cannot destroy me, for, being under God's protection, he shall force you to depart from me.” [2.] He detests them; (v. 21, 22.) “Lord, thou knowest the heart, and canst witness for me; do not I hate them that hate thee, and for that reason, because they hate thee. Therefore I hate them, for I love thee, and hate to see such affronts and indignities put upon thy blessed name. Am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee, grieved to see their rebellion, and to foresee their ruin which it will certainly end in?” Note, Sin is hated, and sinners lamented, by all that fear God. “I hate them, I hate the work of them that turn aside,” (as he explains himself, c. 3.) “with a sincere and perfect hatred; I count them that are enemies to God as enemies to me, and will not have any intimacy with them,” 11. 8. 3. He appeals to God concerning his sincerity, v. 23, 24. (1.) He desires that as far as he was in the wrong, God would discover it to him. They that are upright, can take comfort in God's omniscience as a witness of their uprightness, and can with a humble confidence beg of him to search and try them, to discover to them the things they have done, (for he knows the heart knows how to do effectually;) Lead me in the way everlasting. Note, [1.] The way of godliness is an everlasting way, it is eternally true and good; pleasing to God, and profitable to us; and will end in everlasting life. It is the way of antiquity, so some; the good old way. [2.] All the saints desire to be kept and led in this way, that they may not miss it, turn out of it, or tire in it.

**PSALM CXL.**

This and the four following psalms are much of a piece, and the scope of them the same with many that we met with in the beginning and middle of the book of Psalms, though with but few of late. They were penned by David (as it should seem) when he was persecuted by Saul; one of them is said to be his prayer when he was in the cave, and it is probable that all the rest were penned about the same time. In this psalm, I. David complains of the malice of his enemies, and prays to God to preserve him from them, v. 1., 5. II. He encourages himself in God, as his God, v. 6. 7. III. He prays for, and prophesies, the destruction of his persecutors, v. 8., 9. IV. He returns a certain sign of poison in their mouths to his heart. V. 10. They are confederate; they are many of them; but they are all gathered together against me for war, v. 2. They who can agree in nothing else, can agree to persecute a good man. Herod and Pilate will unite in this, and in this they resemble Satan, who is not divided against himself, all the devils agreeing in Beelzebub. (4.) They are proud, (v. 5.) conceited of themselves, and confident of the destruction of their enemies; and they resemble Satan, whose reigning, ruining, sin, was pride. The pride of persecutors, though at present it be the terror, yet may be the encouragement, of the persecuted, for the more haughtily they are, the faster are they ripening for ruin. Pride goes before destruction. 2. He prays to God to keep him from them, and from being swallowed up by them; “Lord, deliver
me, preserve me, keep me; (v. 1, 4.) let them not prevail to take away my life, my reputation, my interest, my comfort, and to prevent my coming to the throne. Keep me from doing as they do, or as they would have me do, or as they promise themselves I shall do.” Note, The more malice appears in our enemies against us, the more earnest we should be in prayer to God to take us under his protection. In him believers may count upon a security, and may enjoy it and themselves with a holy serene, and expect God to preserve. If he be for us, who can be against us?

3. He triumphs in God, and thereby, in effect, he triumphs over his persecutors, v. 6, 7. When his enemies sharpened their tongues against him, did he sharpen his against them? No; adders’ poison was under their lips, but grace was poured into his lips, witness what he here said unto the Lord, for to him he looked, to him he directed himself, when he saw himself in so much danger through the malice of his enemies: and it is well for us that we have a God to go to. He comforted himself, (1.) In his interest in God; “I said, Thou art my God, and if my God, then my Shield and mighty Protector.” In treble dangerous times, it is good to claim relation to God, and by faith to keep hold of him. (2.) In his access to God. This comforted him, that he was not only taken into covenant with God, but into communion with him, that he had access to him, and might lay open his case, and make an offer of peace from him, and could say, with a humble confidence, Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord. (3.) In the assurance he had of help from God, and happiness in him; “O God the Lord, Jehovah, Adonai; as Jehovah, thus art thou self-existent and self-sufficient, an infinitely perfect Being; as Adonai, thou art my Stay and Support, my Ruler and Governor; and therefore the Strength of my salvation, my strong Saviour; as, not only my Saviour, but my Salvation itself, from whom, in whom, my salvation is; not only a strong Saviour, but the very Strength of my salvation, on whom the stress of my hope is laid; all in all to make me happy, and to preserve me to my happiness.” (4.) In the experience he had had formerly of God’s care of him; Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle. As he pleaded with Saul, that, for the service of his country, he many a time jeopardized his life in the high place of his head, so his life was saved, and his head kept, in those services. He had wonderfully protected him, and provided him a better helmet for the securing of his head, than Goliath’s was; “Lord, thou hast kept me in the day of battle with the Philistines, suffer me not to fall by the treacherous intrigues of false-hearted Israelites.” God is as able to preserve his people from secret fraud as from open force; and the experience we have had of his power and care, in dangers of one kind, may encourage us anew in him, and may expect of him, in dangers of another nature; for nothing can shorten the Lord’s right hand.

8. Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked; further not his wicked devise, lest they exalt themselves. Selah. 9. As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them. 10. Let burning coals fall upon them: let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again. 11. Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth: evil shall hunt the violent man to overtake him. 12. I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor. 13. Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name; the upright shall dwell in thy presence.

Here is the believing foresight David had, 1. Of the shame and confusion of persecutors. Their disappointment; this he prays for, (v. 8.) that their lusts might not be gratified, their lust of ambition, envy, and revenge; “Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked, but frustrate them; let them not establish themselves in the mind’s image, or in the midst of his ways, that they so earnestly wish to see; but hear the voice of my supplications.” He prays that their projects might not take effect, but be blasted; “O further not his wicked device; let not Providence favour any of his designs, but cross them; suffer not his wicked device to proceed, but chain his wheels, and stop him in the career of his pursuits.” Thus we are to pray against the enemies of God’s people, that they may not succeed in any of their enterprises. The Lord David’s prayer against Abiathel, that God would turn his counsels into foolishness. The plea is, lest they exalt themselves; value themselves upon their success, as if it were an evidence that God favoured them. Plead men, when they prosper, are made prudent, grow more impudent against God, and insolent against his people, and therefore, Lord, do not prosper them.

2. Their destruction. This he prays for, (as we read it,) that they might be brought to choose to read it rather as a prophecy; and the original will bear it. If we take it as a prayer that proceeds from a spirit of prophecy, which comes all to one, he foretells the ruin,

(1.) Of his own enemies; “As for those that compass me about, and seek my ruin,” [1.] “The mischief of their own lips shall cover their heads; (v. 9.) the evil they have wished to me shall come upon themselves; their curses shall be blown back into their own faces; and the very designs which they would lay against me shall turn to their own灭亡.” vii. 15, 16. Let those that make mischief, by slandering, tale-bearing, misrepresenting their neighbours, and spreading ill-natured characters and stories, dread the consequence of it, and think how sad their condition will be, when all the mischief they have been accessory to shall be made to return upon themselves. [2.] The judgments of God shall fall upon them, compared here to burning coals, in Job xx. 19, to burning heat, in Job xix. 25; as in the deluge, the waters from above, and those from beneath, met for the drowning of the world, both the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up; so here, to complete the ruin of the enemies of Christ and his kingdom, they shall not only have burning coals cast upon them from above, (Job xx. 23.—xxvii. 22.) but they themselves shall be cast into the fire beneath; both heaven and hell, the wrath of God, the Judge, and the rage of Satan the tormentor, shall concur to make them miserable. And the fire they shall be cast into is not a furnace of fire, out of which perhaps they might escape, but a deep pit, out of which they cannot rise. Tophet is said to be deep and large, Isa. xxx. 33.

(2.) Of all others that are like them, v. 11. [1.] Evil speakers must expect to be shaken, for they shall not be established, those who make ruinous designs by fraud and falsehood, by calumny and unjust accusation, will not prosper, will not last. Wealth gotten by vanity will be diminished. Let not such men as Doeg think to reign long, for his doom will be theirs, ii. 5. A lying tongue is but for a moment, but the lips of truth shall be established for ever. [2.] Evil Doeg must expect to be destroyed. Evil shall hunt the violent man, as the blood-hound hunts the murderer; he discovers him, as the huntsman hunts his prey to tear it to pieces; miscible men
will be brought to light, and brought to ruin, the
situation appointed shall run them down and over-
throw them. **Evil pursues sinners.**

II. Here is his foresight of the deliverance and
comfort of the persecuted, v. 12, 13. 1. God will
do them justice, in delivering them, who, being
wronged, commit themselves to him: *I know that*
the **Lord will maintain the just and injured cause**
of afflicted people, so they shall not always be pre-
vented, and danger threatened, though it be but
*the right of the poor, who have but little that they*
can pretend a right to." **God is, and will be,** the
patron of oppressed innocence, much more of per-
cuted piety; they that know him cannot but know
this. 2. They will do him justice, (if I may so
speak,) in ascribing the glory of their deliverance
to him; *Surely the righteous (who make conscience
of rendering to God his due, as well as to men,
their) shall give thanks unto thy name, when they
find their cause pleaded with jealousy, and prosec-
cuted with effect." The closing words, *The upright
shall dwell in thy presence,* denote God's favour to
them; *Thou shalt admit them to dwell in thy
presence, in grace here, in glory hereafter, and it
shall be their safety and happiness,* their duty to
God; They shall attend upon thee as servants that
keep in mind of the practice of their masters. It is
true thanksgiving, even thanksgiving; and this use
we should make of all our deliveries, we should
serve God the more closely and cheerfully.

**PSALM CXLI.**

David was in distress when he penned this psalm; pursued,
it is most likely, by Saul, that violent man. *Is any
distressed? Let him pray; David did so,* and had the com-
fort of it. I. He prays for God's favourable acceptance,
v. 1, 2. II. For his powerful assistance, v. 3, 4, 5. III.
That others might be instrumental of good to his soul,
as he hoped to be to the souls of others, v. 5, 6, 7. IV.
That he and his friends being now brought to the last ex-
act, God would graciously appear for their relief and
rescue, v. 7, 8. The mercy and grace of God are as
necessary to us as they were to him, and therefore we
should be humbly earnest for them in singing this psalm.

*A psalm of David.*

**LORD, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me;** give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee. 2. Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrific-
e. 3. Set a watch, O **Lord,** before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. 4. In-
cline not my heart to any evil thing, to prac-
tice wicked works with men that work ini-
quity: and let me not eat of their dainties.

Mercy to accept what we do well, and grace to
keep us from doing ill, are the two things which we
are here taught by David's example to pray to
God for:

1. David loved prayer, and he begs of God that
his prayers might be heard and answered, v. 1, 2. **David cried unto God;** his crying denotes fervency in
prayer, he prayed as one in earnest; his crying to God
denotes faith and fixness in prayer. And
what did he desire as the success of his prayer? (1.)
That God would take cognizance of it; *Give ear
to my voice,* let me have a gracious audience. (2.) That
cry in prayer may be heard to be heard in prayer, not for their loudness, but their liveliness. (3.) That
he would visit him up and not; Make haste unto me. Those that know how to value God's gracious presence
will be impatient for it, and humbly impatient of delays. **He that believes** does not make haste, but he that
prays may be ears to God to make haste. (3.) That he would be well-pleased with him in it; well-pleased with his
praying and the lifting up of his hands in prayer; which
denotes both the elevation and enlargement of his
desire, and the out-goings of his hope and ex-
pectation; the lifting up of the hand signifying the
lifting up of the heart, and being used instead of
lifting up the hands in adoration and invocations, as
was done and waved before the Lord. Prayer is a spiritual
sacrifice, it is the offering up of the soul and its best
affections to God; now he prays that this may be set
forth and directed before God, as the incense which
was daily burnt upon the golden altar, and as the
evening sacrifice, which he mentions, rather than
the morning sacrifice, perhaps because this was an
evening prayer, or with an eye to Christ, who, in
the evening of the world, and in the evening of the
day, was to offer himself a Sacrifice of atone-
ment, and establish the spiritual sacrifices of ac-
knowledgment, having abolished all the carnal or-
dinances of the law. *They that pray in faith may
expect it will please God better than an ox or bul-
lock.*

2. David was in fear of sin; and he begs of God
that he might be kept from sin, knowing that his
prayers would not be accepted, unless he took care
to watch against sin; we must be as earnest for God's
grace in us, as for his favour towards us.

(1.) He prays that he might not be surprised into
any sinful words; (v. 3.) *Set a watch, O **Lord,**
before my mouth,* and nature having made my lips
to be a door to my words, let grace keep that door,
that no word may be suffered to go out, which may
any way tend to the dishonour of God, or the hurt
of others." Good men know the evil of tongue-sins,
and how prone they are to them; when enemies are
provoking, we are in danger of carrying our resent-
ments too far, and speaking injuriously of those near
us, as David did, though the meekest of men; and therefore
they are earnest with God to prevent their speaking
amiss, as knowing that no watchfulness or resolu-
tion of their own is sufficient for the governing of
their tongues, much less of their hearts, without
the special grace of God. We must keep our mouth
as with a bridle; but that will not serve, we must
pray to God to keep them. Nehemiah prayed to the
**Lord** then when he set a watch, and so much
for without him the watchman waketh but in vain,
(2.) That he might not be inclined to any sinful prac-
tices; (v. 4.) *Incline not mine heart to any evil
ing thing;* whatever inclination there is in me to sin,
let it be not only restrained, but mortified, by divine
grace. The example of those about us, and the
provocations of these against us, are apt to stir up,
and draw out, corrupt inclinations; we are ready to
do as others do, and to think that if we received
injuries, we may return them; and therefore we have
need to pray that we may never be left to ourselves
to practise any wicked work, either in confidence
with, or in opposition to, the men that work ini-
quity. While we live in such an evil world, and
carry about with us such evil hearts, we have need
to pray that we may never be drawn in by any all-
urement, nor driven on by any provocation, to do
any sinful thing.

(3.) That he might not be insnared by any sinful
pleasures; *Let me not eat of their dainties. Let
me not join with them in their feasts and sports, lest
thereby I be inveigled into their sins." Better is a
dinner of herbs out of the way of temptation, than a
staid and in it. Sinners pretend to find dainties in sin; stolen waters are sweet, forbidden fruit is pleasant to the eye: but they that consider how soon the dainties of sin will turn into wormwood and gall, how certainly it will, at last, bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder, will dread those dainties, and pray to God by his providence to take them out of their sight, and by his grace to turn them against them. Good men will pray against even the sweets of sin.

5. Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head, if it may but help to break my heart." (4.) We must require the kindness of those that deal thus faithfully, thus friendly, with us, at least by our prayers for them in their calamities, and hereby we must show that we take it kindly. Dr. Hammond gives quite another reading of this verse; "Refraorch will bruise me that I am righteous, and will break me; but he shall not break my head, shall not destroy me, shall not do me the mischief intended, for yet my prayer shall be in their mischief, that God would preserve me from them, and my prayer shall not be in vain." 2. David hopes his persecutors will, some time or other, bear to be told of their faults, as he was willing to be told of his; (v. 6.) "When their judges" (Saul, and his officers, who judged and condemned David, and which the reprovers) "are overthrown in stony places, among the rocks in the wilderness, then they shall hear my words, for they are sweet." Some think this refers to the rebellions that were in Saul's breast, when he said with tears, "Is this thy voice, my son David? 1 Sam. xxiv. 16.—xxvi. 21. Or, we may take it more generally; even judges, great as they are, may come to be overthrown; those that make the greatest show of justice in their world, may walk over the level smooth ways through it. And those that slighted the word of God before, will relish it, and be glad of it, when they are in affliction, for that opens the ear to instruction. When the world is bitter, the word is sweet. Oppressed innocency cannot gain a hearing with those that live in pomp and pleasure, but when they come to be overthrown themselves, they will have more compassionate thoughts for them.

3. David complains of the great extremity to which he and his friends were reduced; (v. 7.) "Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, cut ct which they are thrown up, so long have we been dead, or into which they are ready to be thrown, so near are we to the pit; and they are as little regarded as chips among the hewers of wood, which are thrown in neglected heaps. As one that cuts and clears the earth; so some read it, alluding to the ploughman who tears the earth with his ploughshare, cxix. 3. Can these dry bones live? 4. David casts himself upon God, and depends upon him for deliverance; "But mine eyes are unto thee; (v. 8.) for, when the case is ever so deplorable, thou canst redress all the grievances, from thee I expect relief, bad as things are, and in thee is my trust. Those that have their eye toward God, may have their hopes in him.

5. He prays that God would succour and relieve him as his necessity required. (1.) That he would comfort him; "Leave not my soul desolate and destitute; still let me see where my help is." (2.) That he would prevent the designs of his enemies against him; (v. 9.) "Keep me from being taken in the snare they have laid for me; give me to discover it, and to evade it." Be the gin placed with ever so much art under God, and God will secure him from being taken in it. (3.) That God would, in justice, turn the designs of his enemies upon themselves, and, in mercy, deliver him from being ruined by them; (v. 10.) "Let the wicked fall into their own net, the net which, intentionally, they procured for me; but which, meritoriously, they prepared for themselves. Nie lex est justior ut laeum nee patriae suae—No law can be more just than that, to the extent of destruction should happen by their own contrivance. All that are bound over to God's justice are held on the cords of their own iniquity. But let me at the same time obtain a discharge. The entangling and ensnaring of the wick ed sometimes prove the escape and enlargement of the righteous.
PSALMS, CXLII.

PSALM CXLII.

This psalm is a prayer, the substance of which David offered up to God, when he was forced by Saul to take shelter in a cave, and which he afterward committed in this form, v. 1. The complaints he makes to God, (v. 1, 2.) of the subtlety, strength, and malice of his enemies, (v. 3, 6.) and the coldness and indifference of his friends, v. 4. II. The comfort he takes in God, that he knew his case, (v. 3.) and was his Refuge, v. 5. III. His expectation from God, that he would hear and deliver him, v. 6, 7. IV. His expectation from the righteous, that they would join with him in prayers, v. 7. Then, if any one, whether body, or estate, may, in singing this psalm, (if they sing it in some measure with David's spirit,) both warrant his complaints, and fetch in his comforts.

Maschil of David. A prayer when he was in the cave.

1. I CRIED unto the Lord with my voice: with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication. 2. I poured out my complaint before him: I showed before him my trouble. 3. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knowest my path: in the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.

Whether it was in the cave of Adullam, or that of En-gedi, or in a desert cave, to be put to such shifts for his own safety; and a great terror to be so lightly pursued, and every moment in expectation of death; yet then he had such a presence of mind, as to pray this prayer, and, wherever he was, still he had his religion about him. Prayers and tears were his weapons, and when he durst not stretch forth his hands against his prince, he lifted them up to his God. There is no cave so deep, so dark, but we may out of it send up our prayers, and our souls in prayer, to God. He calls this prayer Maschil, a psalm of instruction, because of the good lessons he had himself learnt in the cave, learnt on his knees, which he desired to teach others.

In these verses, observe, 1. How David complained to God, v. 1, 2. When the danger was over, he was not ashamed to own (as great shifts sometimes are) the fright he had been in, and the application he had made to God. Let not men of the first rank think it any diminution or disparagement to them, when they are in affliction, to cry to God, and to cry like children to their parents, when any thing frightens them. David poured out his complaint, which denotes a free and full complaint; he was large and particular in it. His heart was as full of his grievances as it could hold, but he made himself as free by pouring them out before the Lord; and this he did with great fervency. He cried unto the Lord with his voice, with the voice of his mind, (so some think,) for, being hid in the cave, he durst not speak with an audible voice, lest that should have discovered him: but mental prayer is vocal to God, and he hears the groanings which cannot, or dare not, be uttered, Rom. viii. 26. Two things David laid open to God. I. His complaint; (L.) His distress; he exhibited a remonstrance or memorial of his case: I showed before him my trouble, and all the circumstances of it. He did not prescribe to God, nor show him his trouble, as if God did not know it without his showing, but, as one that put a confidence in God, desired to keep up communion with him, and was willing to refer himself entirely to him, he unbosommed himself to him, humbly laid the matter before him, and then cheerfully left it with him. We are apt to show our trouble too much to ourselves, aggravating it, and perverting it, which does us no service; whereas, by showing it to God, we might cast the care upon him who careth for us, and thereby effect ourselves. Nor should we allow of any complaint to ourselves, or others, which we cannot with the due decency and sincerity of devotion make to God, and stand to before him.

(2.) His desire. When he made his complaint, he made his supplication; (v. 1.) not claiming relief as a debt, but humbly begging it as a favour. Complaints must be supplications, for God will be sought unto.

2. What he complained of; ("In the way wherein I walked, suspecting no danger, have they privily laid a snare for me, to entrap me." Saul gave Michal his daughter to David, on purpose that she might be a snare to him, 1 Sam. xviii. 21. This he complains of to God, that every thing was done with a design against him. If he had gone out of his way, and met with snares, he might have thanked himself; but, when he met with them in the way of his duty, he might with humble boldness tell God of them.

3. What comforts him in the midst of these complaints; (v. 3.) "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, and ready to sink under the burthen of grief and fear, when I was quite at a loss, and ready to despair, thou knowest my path, then it was a pleasure to me to think that thou knowest it. Thou knowest my sincerity, the right path which I have walked in, and that I am not such a one as my persecutors represent me; thou knowest also my condition in all the particulars of it; when my spirit was so overwhelmed that I could not distinctly show it, this comforted me, that thou knowest it, Job xxxii. 10. Thou knowest it, thou didst protect, preserve, and secure it," Ps. xxxi. 7. Deut. ii. 7.

4. I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. 5. I cried unto thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living. 6. Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors: for they are stronger than I. 7. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.

The psalmist here tells us, for our instruction, 1. How he was disowned and deserted by his friends, v. 4. When he was in favour at court, he seemed to have a great interest, but when the way of his duty, he was made an outcast, and it was dangerous for any body to harbour him, (witness Ahimelech's fate,) then no man would know him, but every body was shy of him. He looked on his right hand for an advocate, (cix. 51.) some friend or other to speak a good word for him. But, since Jonathan's appearing for him had like to have cost him his life, nobody was willing to venture in defence of his innocency, but all were ready to side with the persecutors of the man. He looked round to see if any would open their doors to him, but, refuge failed him, none of all his old friends would give him a night's lodging, or direct him to any place of secrecy and safety. How many good men have been deceived by such swallow-friends, who are gone when winter comes! David's life was exceeding precious, and yet, when he was unjustly proscribed, no man cared for it, nor would move a hand for the protection of it. Herein he was a type
PSALMS, CXLIII.

This psalm, as those before, is a prayer, and full of complaints of the great distress and danger he was in, probably when Saul persecuted him. He did not only pray in that affliction, but he prayed very much, and very often, not the same over again, but new thoughts. In this psalm, 1. He complains of his troubles, through the oppression of his enemies, (v. 3.) and the weakness of his spirit under it, which was ready to sink, notwithstanding the likely course he took to support himself, v. 4, 5, 6. He prays, and prays earnestly, v. 6. He would hear him, v. 7, 8. That he would not deal with him according to his sins, v. 2. That he would not hide his face from him, (v. 7.) but manifest his favour to him, v. 10. He might be granted a guide and direct him in the way of his duty, (v. 8, 10.) and quicken him in it, v. 11. That he would deliver him out of his troubles, v. 9, 11. 6. That he would in due time reckon with his persecutors, v. 12. We may more easily accommodate this psalm to ourselves, in the singing of it, because most of the petitions in it are for spiritual blessings, (which we all need at all times,) mercy and grace.

A psalm of David.

1. **Heard my prayer, O Lord;** give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness.

2. And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified. 3. For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground: he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead. 4. Therefore is my spirit overweened within me: my heart within me is desolate. 5. I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works: I muse on the work of thy hands. 6. I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.

Here, 1. David humbly begs to be heard; (v. 1.) not as if he questioned it, but he earnestly desired it, and was in care about it, for, having directed his prayer, he looked up to see how it sped, Hab. ii. 1. He is a supplicant to his God, and he begs that his prayers and supplications may be heard; **Hear my prayer, give ear to my supplications:** he is an appellant against his persecutors, and he begs that his case might be brought to hearing, and that God would give judgment upon it, in his faithfulness and righteousness, as the Judge of right and wrong. Or, **Answer my petitions in thy faithfulness,** according to the promises thou hast made, which thou wilt be just to. We have no righteousness of our own to plead, and therefore must plead God's righteousness, the word of promise, which he has freely given us, and caused us to hope in.

2. He humbly begs not to be proceeded against in strict justice, v. 2. He seems here, if not to correct, yet to explain, his plea, (v. 1.) **Deliver me in thy righteousness:** "I mean," says he, "the righteous promises of the gospel, not the righteous threatenings of the law; if I be accused, Lord, and dealing with me after the manner of the world, let me be delivered by thee, and not as the world, which shall broken covenant of innocence, I am quite undeserving," and therefore, (1.) His petition is, **"Enter not into judgment with thy servant;"** do not deal with me in strict justice, as I deserve to be dealt with. "In this prayer, we must own ourselves...
to be God's servants, bound to obey him, accountable to him, and responsible to obtain his favour, and we must approve ourselves to him; we must acknowledge that in many instances we have offended him, and have come short of our duty to him; that he might justly inquire into our offenses, and proceed against us for them according to law; and that, if he should do so, judgment would certainly go against us, we have nothing in store or mitigation of it, but execution would be taken out and awarded, and it would be with great displeasure, he would not encourage ourselves with a hope that there is mercy and forgiveness with God, and be carnest with him for the benefit of that mercy. Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for thou hast already entered into judgment with thy Son, and laid upon him the iniquity of us all. Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for thy servant enters into judgment with himself; and if we will judge ourselves, we shall not be judged. (2.) His plea is, In that sight shall no man living be justified upon those terms, for no man can plead innocence nor any righteousness of his own, either that he has not sinned, or that he does not deserve to die for his sins, or that he has any satisfaction of his own to offer; nay, if God contend with us, we are not able to answer him for one of a thousand, Job ix. 3.—xx. 20. David, before he prays for the removal of his trouble, prays for the pardon of his sin, and depends upon more mercy. 

3. He complains of the prevalency of his enemies against him; (v. 3.) "Sui, that great enemy, has persecuted my soul, sought my life, with a restless malice, and has carried the persecution so far, that he has already smitten it down to the ground; though I am not yet under ground, I am struck to the ground, and that is next door to it; he has forced me to dwell in darkness, not only in dark caves, but in dark thoughts and apprehensions, and has plunged me into melancholy, as helpless and hopeless as those that have been long dead. Lord, let me find mercy with thee, for I find no mercy with men. They condemn me; but, Lord, do not thou condemn me. Am not I an object of thy compassion, fit to be appeased for; and is not mine enemy an object of thy displeasure, fit to be appeased against?"

4. He bemoans the oppression of his mind, occasioned by the perseverance of his enemies. Therefore is my spirit overpowered and overwhelmed within me, and I am almost plunged in despair; when without are fightings, within are fears, and those fears greater tyrants and oppressors than Saul himself, and not so easily outright. It is sometimes the lot of the best men to have their spirits for a time almost overwhelmed, and their hearts desolate, and doubtless it is their infirmity. David was not only a great saint, but a great soldier, and yet even he was sometimes ready to faint in a day of adversity. Howl, fir-trees, if the cedars be shaken.

5. He applies himself to the use of proper means for the relief of his troubled spirit. He had no force to muster up against the oppression of the enemy, but if he can keep possession of nothing else, he will do what he can to keep possession of his own soul, and to preserve his inward peace. In order to that, he makes up his mind to die daily. Fleeing to God of old. (v. 5.) God's former appearances for his afflicted people, and for him in particular. This has been often a relief to the people of God in their straits, to think of the wonders which their fathers told them of, Ixxxvii. 5, 11. (2.) He looks round, and takes notice of the works of God in the visible creation, and the providential government of the world; I meditate on all thy works. Many see them, but do not see the footsteps of God's wisdom, power, and goodness, in them, and therefore do not receive the benefit they might by them, because they do not meditate upon them; they do not dwell on that copious, curious, subject, but soon quit it, as if they had exhausted it, when they have scarcely touched upon it. I muse on, or, as some read it, I discourse of, the operation of thy hands; how great, how good, it is! The more we consider the power of God, the less we shall fear the face or force of man, Isa. li. 12, 13. (3.) He looks up with earnest desires toward God and his favour; (v. 6.) I stretch forth my hands unto thee, as one begging alms, and I expect no thing great, standing ready to lay hold on it, and bid it welcome; "My soul thirsteth after thee, it is to thee, (so the word is,) entire for thee, intent on thee, it is as a thirsty land, which, being parched with excessive heat, gaps for rain; so do I need, so do I crave, the support and refreshment of divine consolations under mine afflictions, and nothing else will relieve me." This is the best course we can take when our spirits are overwhelmed; and justly do they sink under their load, who will not take such a ready way as this to ease themselves.

7. Hear me speedily, O Lord; my spirit faileth; hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit. 8. Cause me to hear thy loving-kindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust; cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee. 9. Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies: I fly unto thee to hide me. 10. Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.

11. Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake: for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble. 12. And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am thy servant.

David here tells us what he said when he stretched forth his hands unto God; he begins not only as one in earnest, but as one in haste; in fine, as one that is over-persuaded with no less in earnest, or in no less spirit faileth. I am just ready to faint; reach the cordial, quickly, quickly, or I am gone. It was not a haste of unbelief, but of vehement desire and holy love; Make haste, O God, to help me.

Three things David here prays for; 1. The manifestations of God's favour toward him; that God would be well pleased with him, and let him know that he was so; this he prefers before any good. 6. 1. He dreads God's frowns; "Lord, hide not thy face from me; Lord, be not angry with me; do not turn from me, as we do from one we are dissatisfied with; Lord, let me not be left under the apprehensions of thine anger, or in doubt concerning thy favour; if I have thy favour, let it not be hid from me." Those that have the truth of grace, cannot but desire the evidence of it. He pleads the wretchedness of his case, if God withdrew from him; "Lord, let me not lie under thy wrath; for then I am like them that go down to the pit, down to the grave; I am a dead man, weak, and pale, and ghastly; thy frowns are worse than death; or down to hell, the bottomless pit. Even those who through grace are delivered from going down to the pit, may sometimes, when the terrors of the Almighty set themselves in array against them, look like those who are going to the pit. Disconsolate some have sometimes cried out of the wrath of God, as if they had been damned sinners, Job vi. 4. Ps. lxxxvii. 6. 2. He entreats God's favour;
cause me to hear thy loving-kindness in the morning. He cannot but think that God has a kindness for him, that he has some kind things to say to him, some good words and comfortable words; but the present hurry of his affairs, and tumult of his spirits, drowned those pleasing whispers; and therefore he begs, "Lord, do not only speak kindly to me, but cause me to hear it, to hear joy and gladness of heart in the morning; and by this and by thy providence, and in both we should desire and shun to hear his loving-kindness," (c. iv.) that we may set that always before us; "Cause me to hear it in the morning, every morning; let my waking thoughts be of God's loving-kindness, that the sweet relish of that may abide upon my spirits all the day long." His plea is, "For thee do I trust, and in thee only; I look not for comfort in any other." It is a usual thing for God's goodness to be wrought for those who trust in him, (xxxii. 8.) who by faith draw it out.

II. The operations of God's grace in him. Those he is as earnest for, as for the tokens of God's favour to him, and so should we be. He prays; 1. That he might be enlightened with the knowledge of God's will; and this is the first work of the Spirit, in order to his other works; for God deals with men as men, as rulers over the nations are the rulers of their posterity, and this is the effect. (1.) Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk. Sometimes, those that are much in care to walk right are in doubt and in the dark which is the right way. Let them come boldly to the throne of grace, and beg of God, by his word, and Spirit, and providence, to show them the way, and prevent their missing it. A good man does not ask what is the way in which he must walk, or in which is the most pleasant walking, but what is the right way, the way in which he should walk. He pleads, "I lift up my soul unto thee, to be moulded and fashioned according to thy will." He did not only importunately, but impartially, desire to know his duty; and those that do so shall be taught. (2.) "Teach me to do thy will; not only show me what thy will is, but teach me how to do it, how to turn my hand dexterously to my duty." It is the desire and endearment of all God's faithful servants, and it is their duty, to do his will that he may be pleased with and approved of. His plea is, "Thou art my God, and therefore my Oracle, by whom I may expect to be advised; my God, and therefore my Ruler, whose will I desire to do." If we do in sincerity take God for our God, we may depend upon him to teach us to do his will, as a master does his servant. (3.) Lead me into the land of uprightness, into the communion of saints, that pleasant land of the upright; or, into a settled course of holy living, which will lead to heaven, that land of uprightness, where holiness will be in perfection, and he that is holy shall be holy still. We should desire to be led, and kept safe, to heaven, not only because it is a land of blessedness, but because it is a land of uprightness; it is the perfection of grace. We cannot find the way that will bring us to that land, unless God show us; nor go in that way, unless he take us by the hand and lead us, as we lead those that are weak, or lame, or preconcerted, or dim-sighted; so necessary is the grace of God, not only to put us into the good way, but to keep us up, and carry us on, in it. The plea is, "Thy Spirit is good, and able to make me good," good and willing to help those that are at a loss. Let thy good Spirit lead me, so some read it. They that have the Lord for their God have his Spirit for their Guide; and it is both their character and their privilege that they are led by the Spirit of God.

2. He prays that he might be enabled to do his will; (v. 11.) "Quicken me, O Lord; quicken my graces, that they may be active, quicken my devotions, that they may be lively, quicken me to my duty, and quicken me in it, and this for thy name's sake." The best saints often find themselves dull, and dead, and slow, and therefore pray to God to quicken them.

III. The appearance of God's providence for him; that God would, in his own way and time, 1. Give him rest from his troubles; (v. 5.) "Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies, that they may not have their will against me; for I fly unto thee to hide me; I trust to thee to defend me in my trouble, and therefore to rescue me out of it." Preservations are pledges of salvation, and those shall find God their Hiding-Place, who by faith make him such. He explains himself, (v. 11.) "For thy righteousness-sake, bring my soul out of trouble; for thy promise, sake, nay, for thy mercy-sake," (for some by righteousness understand kindness and goodness.) "Do not only deliver me from my outward, but from the trouble of my soul, the trouble that threatens to overwhelm my spirit. Whatever trouble I am in, Lord, let not my heart be troubled," John iv. 1. 2. That he would reckon with those that were the instruments of his trouble; (v. 12.) "Of thy mercy to me, cut off mine enemies, that I may be no longer in fear of them; and destroy all them, whoever they be, how numerous, how powerful, how determined, how active in their wickedness, and with execution to that; for I am thy servant, and am resolved to continue such, and therefore may expect to be owned and protected in thy service." This prayer is a prophecy of the utter destruction of all the impenitent enemies of Jesus Christ and his kingdom, who will not have him to reign over them, who grieve his Spirit and afflict his soul, by afflicting his people, in whose afflictions he is afflicted.

**PSALM CXLIV.**

The four preceding psalms seem to have been penned by David before his accession of kingdom, when he was persecuted by Saul; this seems to have been penned after, when he was still in trouble, (for there is no condition in this world privileged with an exemption from trouble,) the neighbouring nations molesting him and giving him disturbance, especially the Philistines, 2 Sam. v. 17. In this psalm, 1. He acknowledges, with triumph and thankfulness, the great goodness of God to him in advancing him to the government, v. 1-4. He prays for the prosperity of his own kingdom, and pleasure himself with the hopes of it, v. 5-12. In singing this psalm, we may give God the glory of our spiritual privileges and advancements, and fetch in help from him against our spiritual enemies; we may pray for the prosperity of our souls, of our families, and of our land; and, in the opinion of some of the Jewish writers, we may refer the psalm to the Messiah and his kingdom.

A psalm of David.

1. BLESSED be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight: 2. My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust, who subdueth my people under me. 3. LORD, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him? or the son of man, that thou makest account of him? 4. Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away. 5. Bow thy heavens, O Lord, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke. 6. Cast forth lightning and scatter them: shoot out thine arrows and destroy them. 7. Send thy hand from
above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children; 8. Whose mouth speaketh vanity; and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

Here, 1. David acknowledges his dependence upon God, and his obligations to him, v. 1, 2. A prayer for further mercy is fitly begun with a thanksgiving for former mercy; and when we are waiting upon God to bless us, we should stir ourselves to bless him. He gives to God the glory of two things: 2. What he was to him, so may he be the Lord my Rock, (v. 1.) my Goodness, my Fortress, v. 2. He has in the covenant engaged himself to be so, and encouraged us, accordingly, to depend upon him; all the saints, who by faith have made him theirs, have found him not only to answer, but to outdo, their expectations. David speaks it here as the matter of his trust, and that which made him easy; as the matter of his triumph, and that which made him glad, and in which he gloried. See how he multiplies words to express the satisfaction he had in God, and his interest in him. (1.) "He is my Strength, on whom I stay, and from whom I have power both for my work and for my warfare; my Rock to build on, to take shelter in." Even when we are weak, we may be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. (2.) "My Goodness; not only good to me, but my chief Good, in whose favour I place my felicity, and who is the Author of all the goodness that is in me, and from whom comes every good and perfect gift." (3.) "My Fortress, and my high Tower, in whom I think myself as safe as ever any prince thought himself in a castle or strong-hold." David had formerly sheltered himself in strong-holds at En-gedi, (1 Sam. xxvii. 29.) which perhaps were natural fastnesses. He had lately made himself master of the strong-hold, the fortification, which was fortified by art, and he esteemed it the more when he could say, "So dwelt I in the fort;" (2 Sam. v. 7, 9.) but he depends not on these. 2. "Lord," says he, "thou art my Fortress, and my high Tower." The divine attributes and promises are fortifications to a believer, far exceeding those either of nature or art. (4.) My Deliverer, and, as it is in the original, very emphatically, my Deliverer to me; "not only a Deliverer I have interest in, but who is always nigh unto me, and ever liveth, and is a Prince of life." (5.) My Shield, to guard me against all the malignant darts that mine enemies let fly at me; not only my Fortress at home, but my Shield abroad in the field of battle. Wherever a believer goes, he carries his protection along with him. Fear not, Abram, I am thy Shield. 2. What he had done for him. He was bred a shepherd, and seemeth to have been designed by his parents for that calling, but. (1.) God had made him a soldier; his hands had been used to the crook, and his fingers to the harp, but God taught his hands to war, and his fingers to fight, because he designed him for Israel's champion; and what God calls men to, he either finds them, or makes them, fit for. Let the men of war give God the glory of all their military skill; the same that teaches the art of war has taught the greatest general his. It is pity that any, whose fingers God has taught to fight, should fight against him or his kingdom among men. Those have special reason to acknowledge God with thankfulness, who prove to be qualified for services which they themselves never thought of. (2.) God had made him a sovereign prince, had taught him to wield the sceptre as well as the sword, to rule as well as fight, the harder and nobler art of the two; He subdued my people under me. The providence of God is to be acknowledged in making people subject to their prince, and so preserving the order and benefit of societies. There was a special hand of God inchaing the people of Israel to be subject to David, putting a public yoke of bondage upon them, and it was typical of that great state of captivity, the bringing of souls into subjection to the Lord Jesus, and making them willing in the day of his power.

II. He admires God's condescension to man, and to himself in particular; (v. 3, 4.) "Lord, what is man, what a poor little thing is he, that thou tookst knowledge of him! that thou makest account of him! that he falls so much under thy cognizance, and care, and that thou hast such a tender regard to any of that mean and worthless race, as thou hast had to me!" Considering the many disgrace which the human nature lies under, we have reason to admire the honours God has put upon mankind in general, (the saints especially, some in a particular manner, as David,) and upon the Messiah, (to whom those words are applied, Heb. ii. 6.) who was therefore highly exalted, because he humbled himself to be found in fashion as a man, and therefore has authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man. A question to this purport David asked, (Ps. viii. 4.) and there he illustrated the wonder by the consideration of the great dignity God has placed man in; (v. 5.) Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour. Here he illustrates it by the consideration of the meaness and mortality of man, notwithstanding the dignity put upon him; (v. 4.) Man is like to vanity, so frail is he, so weak, so helpless, compassed about with so many infirmities, and his continuance here so very short and uncertain, that he is as like as may be to vanity itself. Nay, he is vanity, he is so at his best estate. His days have little substance in them, considering how many of the thoughts and cares of an immortal soul are employed about a poor dying body: they are as a shadow, that passeth away, and the shadow of that which passeth away, and when that sets, resolving itself into all shadow. They are as a shadow that passeth away, and there is no loss of it. David puts himself into the number of those that are thus mean and despicable. 3. He begs of God to strengthen him, and give him success against the enemies that invaded him, v. 5.-8. He does not specify who they were that he had to contend with, any more than the form of the besieging army, (v. 1.) but it is evident that David knew whom he meant, though he did not name them. But afterward he describes them; (v. 7, 8.) "They are strange children, Philistines, aliens, bad neighbours to Israel, heathens whom we are bound to be strange to, and not to make any leagues with; and who therefore carry it strangely towards us." Notwithstanding the advantages with which God had blessed David's arms against them, there were vexations, inconveniences, that he could put no confidence in; one cannot take their word, for their mouth speaketh vanity; may, if they give their hand upon it, or offer their hand to help you, there is no trusting them; for their right hand is a right hand of falsehood; against such as these we cannot defend ourselves, but may depend on the God of truth and justice, who hates falsehood, to defend us from them.

1. David prays that God would appear, that he would do something extraordinary, for the conviction of those who preferred their dunghill-deities before the God of Israel; (v. 5.) "Bow thy heavens, O Lord, and make it evident that they are indeed thine, and that thou art the Lord of them, Isa. lxiv. 1. Let thy providence threaten mine enemies, and look black upon them, as the clouds do on the earth, when they are thick, and shine very low, big with a storm. Fight against them that fight against us, so
that it may visibly appear thou art for us. Touch the mountains, our strong and stately enemies, and let them smoke. Show thyself by the ministry of thy angels, as thou didst upon mount Sinai. 2. Thou wast wroth against his enemies; that he would fight from heaven against them, as sometimes he had done, by lightnings, which are his arrows, his fiery darts, against which the hardest steel is no armour of proof; so penetrating is the force of lightning: that he himself would shoot these arrows, who, we are sure, never misses his mark, but hits where he aims.

3. That he would appear for him, v. 7. He begs for their destruction, in order to his deliverance and theirs. Ps. cxxv. 7. 'Send thy hand, thy power, from above, for that way we look for help; rid me, and deliver me out of these: great waters that are ready to overwhelm me.' God's time to help his people is when they are sinking, and all other helps fail.

9. I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery, and an instrument of ten strings, will I sing praises unto thee. 10. It is he that giveth salvation unto kings; who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword. 11. Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood: 12. That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace:

13. That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store; that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets: 14. That our oxen may be strong to labour; that there be no breaking in, nor going out; that there be no complaining in our streets. 15. Happy is that people that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.

The method is the same in this latter part of the psalm, as in the former; he first gives glory to God, and then begs mercy from him.

1. He praiseth God for the experiences he had had of his goodness to him, and the encouragements he had to expect further mercy from him, v. 9, 10. In the midst of his complaints concerning the power and treachery of his enemies, here is a holy exaltation in his God: I will sing a new song to thee, O God; a song of praise for new mercies, for those compassions that are new every morning. Fresh favours call for fresh returns of thanks; nay, we must praise God for the mercies we hope for by his promise, as well as those we have received by his providence, 2 Chron. xx. 20, 21. He will join music with his songs of praise, to express and excite his holy joy in God; he will praise God upon a psaltery of ten strings, in the best manner, thinking all little enough, to set forth the praises of God. He tells us what this new song shall be; (v. 10.) It is he that giveth salvation unto kings. This intimates, 1. That great kings cannot save themselves without him. Kings have their life-guards, and have armies at command, and all the means of safety that can be devised; but, after all, it is God that gives them their salvation, and secures them by those means, which he could do, if there were occasion, without them. xxxiii. 16. Kings are the protectors of their people, but it is God that is their Protector. How much service do they owe him, then, with their power, who gives them all their salvation! 2. That good kings, who are his ministers for the good of their subjects, shall be protected and saved by him. He has engaged to give the salvation of his people to the king; and so the king is his peculiar and rule for him; witness the great things he had done for David his servant, whom he had many a time delivered from the hurtful sword, to which Saul's malice, and his own zeal for the service of his country, had often exposed him. This may refer to Christ the Son of David, and then it is a new song indeed, a New Testament song; God delivered him from the hurtful sword, upheld him as his servant, and brought him off a Conqueror over all the powers of darkness. Ps. cxlv. 8. To him he gave salvation, not for himself only, but for us, raising him up to be a Horn of salvation.

II. He prays for the continuance of God's favour.

1. That he might be delivered from the public enemies, v. 11. Here he repeats his prayer and plea, v. 7, 8. His persecutors were still of the same character, false and perfidious, and who would certainly over-reach an honest man, and be too hard for him; 'Therefore, Lord, do thou deliver me from them, for I am a stranger among them.' 2. That he might see the public peace and prosperity: 'Lord, let us have victory, that we may have quietness; which we shall never have while our enemies have it in their power to do us mischief.'

David, as a king, here speaks the earnest desire he had of the welfare of his people; wherein he was a type of Christ, who provides effectually for the good of his chosen. We have here,

(1.) The particular instances of that public prosperity which David desired for his people.

[1.] A hopeful prophecy; (v. 12.) 'That our sons and our daughters may be in all respects such as we could wish.' He means not those only of his own family, but those of his subjects, that are the seed of the next generation. It adds much to the comfort and happiness of parents in this world, to see their children promising, and likely to do well. First, It is pleasant to see our sons as plants grown up in their youth, as olive plants, (cxxviii. 5.) the father's knife that, as he looks on them, doth rejoice in them as plants, not as weeds, not as thorns; to see them as plants growing great, not withered and blasted; to see them of a healthful constitution, a quick capacity, a strongly disposition, and especially of a pious inclination, likely to bring forth fruit unto God in their day; to see them in their youth, their growing time, increasing in every thing that is good, growing wiser and better, till they grow strong in spirit. Secondly, It is no less desirable to see our daughters as corner-stones, or corner-pillars, polished after the similitude of a palace or temple. By daughters families are united and connected, to their mutual strength, as the parts of a building are by the corner-stones; and when they are graceful and beautiful both in body and mind, they are then polished after the similitude of a noble and curious structure. When we see our daughters well established and stayed with wisdom and discretion, as corner-stones are fastened in the building, when we see them by faith united to Christ, as the chief Corner-stone, adorned with the graces of God's Spirit, which are the polishing of that which is naturally rough, and become women professing godliness, when we see them purified and consecrated to God as living temples, we think ourselves happy in them

[2.] Great plenty. Numerous families increase the care, perhaps more than the comfort, where there is not sufficient for their maintenance; and therefore he prays for a growing estate with a growing family. First, That their store-houses might be replenished with the fruits and products of the earth; That our garners may be full, like those of the good householder, who brings out of them
things new and old; those things that are best new, he has in that state; those that are best when they are kept, he has in that state; that we may have in them all manner of stores, for ourselves and our friends; that, living plentifully, we may live not luxuriously, for then we abuse our plenty, but cheerfully and usefully; that, having abundance, we may be thankful to God, generous to our friends, and charitable to the poor; otherwise, what profit is it to have our garners full? Sam. v. 3. Secondly, That their flocks might greatly increase. That the sheep might bring forth their lambs, and ten thousands, in our folds. Much of the wealth of their country consisted in their flocks; (Prov. xxvii. 26.) and of ours too, else wool would not be, as it is, a staple commodity. The increase of our cattle is a blessing in which God is to be acknowledged. Thirdly, That their beasts designed for service might be fit for it; That our oxen may be strong to labour in the plough; that they may be fatted, and furnished in good working case. We were none of us made to idle, and therefore we should pray for bodily health, not that we may be easy and take our pleasures, but that we may be strong to labour, that we may do the work of our place and day, else we are worse than the beasts; for when they are strong, it is for labour.

[3.] An uninterrupted peace. First, That there be no war; no breaking in of invaders, no going out of deserters. In another sense, the peace in us, let us not have occasion to march out against them. War brings with it abundance of mischiefs, whether it be offensive or defensive. Secondly, That there be no oppression or faction, no complaining in our streets; that the people may have no cause to complain, either of their government or of one another; nor may be so peevish as to complain without cause. It is desirable thus to dwell in quiet habitations.

(2.) His reflection upon this description of the prosperity of the nation which he so much desired; (v. 15.) Happy are the people that are in such a case; but it is seldom so, and never long; yea, happy are the people whose God is the Lord. The relation of a people to God as theirs, is here spoken of, either, (1.) As that which is the fountain whence all those blessings flow. Happy are the Israelites, if they faithfully adhere to the Lord as their God, for it is implied that they expect to be in such a case. No piety commonly brings national prosperity; for nations, as such, in their national capacity, are capable of rewards and punishments only in this life. Or, (2.) As that which is abundantly preferable to all these enjoyments. The psalmist began to say, as most do, Happy are the people that are in such a case; they are blessed that prosper in the world; but he immediately corrects himself, Yea, rather, happy are the people whose God is the Lord, who have his favour and love and grace, according to the tenor of the covenant, though they have not abundance of this world's goods. As all this, and much more, cannot make us happy unless the Lord be our God, so, if he be, the want of this, the less of this, nay, the reverse of this, cannot make us miserable.

PSALM CXLV.
The five foregoing psalms were all of a piece, all full of prayers; this, and the five that follow to the end of the book, are all of a piece too, all full of praises; and though this is another psalm, as it is not so much for prayer, as there is not so much room to think but that they were all his, as well as all the foregoing prayers. And it is observable, 1. That after five psalms of prayer, follow six psalms of praise; for those that are not to be desired of for prayer, and those that have sped in prayer, must abound in praise. Our thanksgiving for mercy, when we have received it, should even exceed our supplications for it, when we were in pursuit of it. David in the last of his begging psalms, had promised to praise God, (cxlvi. 9.) and here he performs his promise. 2. That the book of Psalms concludes with psalms of praise, all praise, for praise is the conclusion of the whole matter, it is that in which all the psalms centre. And it intimates, that God's people, toward the close of this life, should abound much in praise, and the rather, because, at the end of all things, they hope to remove to the world of everlasting praise; and the nearer they come to heaven, the more they should accentuate themselves to the work of heaven. This is one of the things which comprehends all the rest, (as Ps. xxv. and xxxiv, &c.) that it might be the more easily committed to memory, and kept in mind. The Jewish writers justly extol this psalm as a star of the first magnitude; and this may be a reason why some of them have an extravagant saying concerning it, not much unlike some of the popish superstitions, That whoever will sing this psalm constantly three times a day, shall certainly be happy in the world to come. In this psalm, 1. David engages himself and others to praise God, v. 1, 2, 4, 7, 10, 12. 11. He fastens upon those things that are proper matter for praise; God's greatness, (v. 3.) his goodness, (v. 8.) the proofs of both in the administration of his kingdom, (v. 13.) the kingdom of providence, (v. 14., 16.) the kingdom of grace; (v. 17., 20.) and then he concludes with a resolution to continue praising God, (v. 21.) with which resolution our hearts must be filled, and in which they must be fixed, in singing this psalm.

David's psalm of praise.

1. I will extol thee, my God, O King; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. 2. Every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name for ever and ever. 3. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable. 4. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. 5. I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works. 6. And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness. 7. They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness. 8. The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. 9. The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works.

The entitling of this, David's psalm of praise, may intimate not only that he was the psalmist of it, but that he took a particular pleasure in it, and sung it often; it was his companion wherever he went. In the former part of the psalm, God's glorious attributes are praised, as in the latter part of the psalm, his kingdom and the administration of it. Observe, I. Who shall be employed in giving glory to God. 1. Whatever others do, the psalmist will himself be much in praising God. To this good work he here excites himself, engages himself, and has his heart much enlarged in it. What he does, that he will do, having more and more satisfaction in it; it was his delight. Observe, 2. How he expresses the work itself; I will extol thee, and bless thy name; (v. 1.) "I will speak well of thee, as thou hast made thyself known, and will therein express my own high thoughts of thee, and endeavour to raise the like in others." When we speak honourably of God, this is graciously interpreted and accepted as an extolling of him. Again, (v. 2.) "I will bless thee, I will praise thy name." The poet intimates the frequency of his affection in this work, the fixedness of his purpose to adorn it in, and the frequency of his performances therein.
Again, (v. 5.) I will speak of thine honour; and, (v. 6.) I will declare thy greatness. He would give glory to God, not only in his solemn devotions, but in his common conversation. If the heart be full of God, out of the abundance of that which mouth we speak, with reverence, to his praise, upon all occasions. What subject of discourse can we find more noble, more copious, more pleasant, useful, and unexceptionable, than the glory of God? (2.) How he expresses his resolution to persevere in it. [1.] He will be constant to this work; Every day will I bless thee. Praising God must be our daily work. No day must pass through ever so long a day, though ever so sorrowful a day, without praising God; we ought to reckon it the most needful of our daily employments, and the most delightful of our daily concerns. God is every day blessing us, doing well for us; there is therefore reason that we should be every day blessing him, speaking well of him. [2.] He will continue in it; I will bless thee for ever and ever, (v. 1.) and again, v. 2. This intimates, First, That he resolved to continue in this to the end of his life, throughout his ever in this world. Secondly, That the psalms he penned should be made use of in praising God by the church to the end of time, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 30. Thirdly, That he hoped to be praising God to all eternity in the other world. They that make it their constant work on earth, shall have it their everlasting bliss in heaven.

2. He doubts not but others also would be forward to this work. (1.) "They shall concur in it now; they shall join with me in it; when I declare thy greatness, men shall speak of it, (v. 6.) they shall abundantly utter it," (v. 7.) or pour it out, as the word is; they shall praise God with a gracious fluency, better than the most curious oratory. David's zeal would provoke many, and it has done so. (2.) "They shall keep it up, when I am gone, in an uninterrupted succession; (v. 4.) One generation shall praise thy works to another." The generation that is gone off shall tell them to that which is rising up, shall tell what they have seen in their days, and what they have heard from their fathers; they shall fully and particularly declare thy mighty acts; (lxxxviii. 3.) and the generation that is rising up shall follow the example of that which is going off; so that the death of God's worshippers shall be no diminution of his worship; for a new generation shall rise up in their stead to carry on that good work, more or less, to the end of time, when it shall be left to that world to do it in, in which there is no succession of generations.

II. What we must give to God the glory of.

1. Of his greatness, and his great works. We must declare, Great is the Lord, his presence infinite, his power irresistible, his brightness insupportable, his majesty awful, his dominion boundless, and his sovereignty contestable; and therefore there is no dispute, but Great is the Lord, and if great, then greatly to be praised, with all that is within us, to the utmost of our power, and with all the circumstances of solemnity imaginably. His greatness indeed cannot be comprehended, for it is unspeakable; who can conceive, or express, how great God is! But then it is so much the more to be praised, when we cannot, by searching, find the bottom, when we know not the brink, and adore the depth, Rom. xi. 33. God is great; (1.) His majesty is glorious in the upper world, above the heavens, where he has set his glory; and when we are declaring his greatness, we must not fail to speak of the glorious honour of his majesty, the splendour of the glory of his majesty, v. 5. How bright he shines in the upper world, so as to dazzle the eyes of the angels themselves, and oblige them to cover their faces, as unable to bear the lustre of it. (2.) His works are wondrous in this lower world; the preservation, maintenance, and government, of all the creatures, speak the Creator very great. When therefore we declare his greatness, we must observe the unquestionable proofs of it, and must declare his works. (4.) Speak of his wondrous works, (v. 5.) the might of his terrible grace; we must see God acting and working in all the affairs of this lower world; various instruments are used, but in all events God is the supreme Director; it is he that performs all things. Much of his power is seen in the operations of his providence; they are mighty acts, such as cannot be paralleled by the strength of any creature; and much of his justice, they are terrible acts, awful to saints, dreadful to sinners. Then we would have all occasions to speak of, observing the finger of God, his hand, his arm, in all, that we may marvel.

2. Of his goodness; this is his glory, Exod. xxxiii. 19. It is what he glories in, (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.) and it is what we must give him the glory of; They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, v. 7. God's goodness is great goodness, the treasures of it can never be exhausted, nay, they can never be lessened, for he will ever be as rich in mercy as he ever was. In that goodness, it is what we ought always to lay before us, always to have in mind, and preserve the memorials of; for it is worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance: and the memory we have of God's goodness we should utter, we should abundantly utter, as those who are full of it, very full of it, and desire that others may be acquainted and affected with it. But, whenever we utter God's great goodness, we must not forget, at the same time, to sing of his righteousness; for as he is gracious in regarding those that serve him faithfully, so he is righteous in punishing those that rebel against him. Impartial and inflexible justice is as surely in God as inexhaustible goodness; and we must sing of both together, Rom. xi. 22.

(1.) There is a fountain of goodness in God's nature; (v. 8.) The Lord is gracious to those that serve him, he is full of compassion to those that need him, slow to anger to those that have offended him, and of great mercy to all that seek him, and sue to him. He is ready to give, and ready to forgive, more ready than we are to ask, than we are to repent.

(2.) There are streams of goodness in all the dispensations of his providence, v. 9. As he is good, so he does good; he is good to all, to all his creatures, from the highest angels to the meanest worm; to all but devils and damned sinners, that have shut themselves out from his goodness. His tender mercies are over all his works. (1.) All his works, all his creatures, receive the fruits of his merciful care and bounty; it is extended to them all, he hastes nothing that he has made. (2.) The works of his mercy outshine all his other works, and declare him more than any of them. In nothing will the memory of God be for ever so illustrious, as in the vessels of mercy ordained to glory. To the divine goodness will the everlasting hallelujahs of all the saints be sung.

10. All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee. 1. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; 12. To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom. 13. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations. 14. The Lord upholdeth all that fall.
and raiseth up all those that be bowed down. 15. The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest their meat in due season. 16. Thou openest thy hand, and satisfishest the desire of every living thing. 17. The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. 18. The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. 19. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them. 20. The Lord preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy. 21. My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord: and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.

The greatness and goodness of God is *optimus et maximus—the best and greatest of beings*, were celebrated in the former part of the psalm; here, in these verses, we are taught to give him the glory of his kingdom, in the administration of which his greatness and goodness shine so clear, so very bright. Observe, as before.

1. From whom the tribute of praise is expected? (v. 13.) All God's works shall praise him; they all minister to us to matter for praise, and so praise him according to their capacity; even those that refuse to give him honour, he will get him honour upon; but his saints do bless him, not only as they have peculiar blessings from him, which other creatures have not, but as they praise him actively, while his other works praise him only objectively. They bless him, for they collect the rent and tribute of praise from the inferior creatures, and pay it into the treasury above. All God's works do praise him, as the beautiful building praises the builder, or the well-drawn picture praises the painter; but his saints bless him, as the children of prudent tender parents rise up and call them blessed. Of all God's works, the saints, the workmanship of his grace, the first-fruits of his creatures, have most reason to bless him.

2. For what this praise is to be given; They shall speak of thy kingdom. The kingdom of God among men is a thing to be often thought of, and often spoken of. As, before, he had magnified God's greatness and goodness in general, so, here, he magnifies them with application to his kingdom. Consider then,

1. The greatness of his kingdom; it is great indeed, for all the kings and kingdoms of the earth are under his control. To show the greatness of God's kingdom, he observes, (1.) The pomp of it. Would we by faith look within the veil, we should see, and believing, we should speak of, the glory of his kingdom, (v. 11.) the glorious majesty of it, (v. 12.) for he has prepared his throne in the heavens, and it is high and lifted up, and surrounded with an innumerable company of angels. The courts of Solomon and Absaureus were magnificent; but, compared with the glorious majesty of God's kingdom, they were but as glow-worms to the sun. The consideration of this should strike an awe upon us in all our approaches to God. (2.) The power of it; When they speak of the glory of God's kingdom, they must talk of his power; the extent of it, the efficacy of it, the ability and power to do a thing, and do every thing he pleases; (v. 11.) and, as a proof of it, let them make known his mighty acts, (v. 12.) that the sons of men may be invited to yield themselves his willing subjects, and so put themselves under the protection of such a mighty Poten-
1. **PRAISE ye the Lord.** Praise the **Lord, O my soul.** 2. While I live will I praise the **Lord:** I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being. 3. Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. 4. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish.

David is supposed to have penned this psalm; and he was himself a prince, a mighty prince; as such, it might be thought,

1. That he should be exempted from the service of praising God, that it was enough for him to see that his priests and people did it, but that he needed no other service to that end. If it be of nature, (ver. 2.) I thought it a disparagement to him to dance before the ark; but he was so far from being of this mind, that he will himself be first and foremost in the work, v. 1. 2. He thinks his dignity is so far from excusing him from it, that it rather obliged him to lead in it; and that it was so far from lessening him, that it really magnified him; therefore he stirs up himself to it, and makes a business of it. Where the argument is in God's part, he wants nothing to abide by it; “I will praise him with my heart, I will sing praises to him with my mouth. Herein I will have an eye to him as the **Lord,** infinitely blessed and glorious in himself, and as my God, in covenant with me.” Then praise is most pleasant, when, in praising God, we have an eye to him as ours, whom we have an interest in, and stand in relation to. “This I will do constantly while I live every day of my life, and to my life’s end also. I will do it while I have any being; for when I have no being on earth, I hope to have a being in heaven, a better being, to be doing it better.” That which is the great end of our being, ought to be our great employment and delight while we have any being; “In thee must our time and powers be spent.”

2. It might be thought that he himself, having been so great a blessing to his country, should be allowed, according to the usage of the heathen nations, who deified their heroes; that they should all come and trust in his shadow, and make him their stay and strong hold. “No,” says David, “Put not your trust in princes, (v. 3.) net in me, nor in any other; do not repose your confidence in them, do not raise your expectations from them. Be not too sure of their sincerity, some have thought they knew better how to reign by knowing how to dissemble; be not too sure of their constancy and fidelity, it is possible they may both change their minds and break their words.” But though we suppose them wise and good as David himself, yet we must not be too sure of their ability and continuance, for they are sons of Adam, weak and mortal. There is indeed a Son of man in whom there is help, in whom there is salvation, and who will not fail those that trust in him. But all other sons of men are like the man they are sprung of, who, being in honour, did not abide.

1. Without our being able to be sure of our ability; even the power of kings may be so straitened, cramped, and weakened, that they may not be in a capacity to do that for which we expect. David himself owned, (2 Sam. iii. 39.) *I am this day weak, though anointed king.* So that in the son of man there is often no help, no salvation; he is at a loss, at his wit’s end, as a man anonised and, then, though a mighty man, he cannot save his life. 9. (2.) We cannot be sure of their continuance. Suppose he has it in his power to help us while he lives, yet he may be suddenly taken off when we
expect most from him; (v. 4.) His breath goeth forth, so it does every moment, and comes back again, but that is an intimation that it will shortly go for good and all, and then he returns to his earth. He is his earth, in respect of his original as a man, the earth out of which he was taken, and to which therefore he must return, according to the sentence, Gen. iii. 19. It is he, if he be a worldly man, in respect of choice, his earth which he has chosen for his portion, and on the things of which he has set his affections. He shall go to his own place. Or rather, it is his earth, because of the property he has in it; and, though he has had large possessions on earth, a grave is all that will remain to him. The earth God has given to the children of men, and great strength thereof, is a part of the Lord of their authority, men call their lands by their own names. But, after a while, no part of the earth will be their own, but that in which the dead body shall make its bed, and that shall be theirs while the earth remains. But when he returns to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish; all the projects and designs he had of kindness to us, vanish and are gone; and he cannot take one step further in them; all his purposes are cut short, and therefore we are to know, that none of those things can come to pass, which of ourselves we imagine on earth, or which comes of our expectations from him? Princes are mortal, as well as other men, and therefore we cannot have that assurance of help from them, which we may have from that Potentate who hath immortality. Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, and will not be there long.

5. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God; 6. Which made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is; which keepeth truth for ever; 7. Which executeth judgment for the oppressed; which giveth food to the hungry. The Lord looseth the prisoners. 8. The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind: the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down: the Lord loveth the righteous. 9. The Lord preserveth the strangers, he revealeth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down. 10. The Lord shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the Lord.

The psalmist, having cautioned us not to trust in princes, (because, if we do, we shall be miserably disappointed,) here encourages us to put our confidence in God, because, if we do so, we shall be happily secured. Happy is he that has the God of Jacob for his Help, that has an interest in his attributes and promises, and has them engaged for him; and whose hope is in the Lord his God. Those shall have God for their Help, 1. Who take him for their God, and serve and worship him accordingly. 2. Who have their hope in him, and live a life of dependence upon him; who have good thoughts of him, and encourage themselves in him, when all other supports fail. Every believer may look upon him as the God of Jacob, of the church in general, and therefore may expect relief from him, in reference thereunto, and as he is God in particular, and therefore may depend upon him in all personal wants and straits. We must hope, (1.) In the providence of God, for all the good things we need, which relate to the life that now is. (2.) In the grace of Christ, for all the good things which relate to the life that is to come. To this especially the learned Dr. Hammond refers this and the following verses, looking upon the latter part of this psalm to have a most visible remarkable aspect toward the eternal Son of God in his incarnation. He quotes one of the rabbins, who says of v. 10. that it belongs to the days of the Messiah. And that it does so, he thinks will appear by comparing v. 7, 8. with the characters of Christ, and of the Messiah; (Matth. x. 5, 6.) The blind receive their sight, the lame walk; and the closing words there, Blessed is he whose word shall be offended in me, he thinks may very well be supposed to refer to v. 5. Happy is the man that hopes in the Lord his God, and who is not offended in him.

Let us take a view of the mighty encouragements here given us to hope in the Lord our God.

1. He is the Maker of the world, and therefore has all power in himself, and the command of the powers of all the creatures, which, being derived from him, depend upon him; (v. 6.) He made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and therefore his arm is not shortened, that it cannot save. It is very applicable to Christ, by whom God made the world, and without whom was not any thing made that was made. It is a great support to faith, that the Redeemer of the world is the same that was the Creator of it, and therefore has a good-will to it, a perfect knowledge of its case, and power to help it.

2. He is a God of inviolable fidelity. We may venture to take God's word, for he keepeth truth for ever, and therefore no word of his shall fall to the ground; it is true from the beginning, and therefore true to the end. Our Lord Jesus is the Amen, the faithful Witness, as well as the Beginning, the Author and Finisher, of the creation of God. Rev. iii. 14. The keeping of God's truth for ever is committed to him, for all the promises are in him yea and amen.

3. He is the Patron of injured innocency; He pleads the cause of the oppressed, and (as we read it) he executes judgment for them. He often does it in his providence, righting those that suffer wrong, and clearing up their integrity; he will do it in the judgment of the great day. The Messiah came to rescue the children of men out of the hands of Satan the great oppressor, and, all judgment being committed to him, the executing of judgment upon persecutors is so among the rest, Jude 15.

4. He is a bountiful Benefactor to the necessituous; He gives food to the hungry; so God does in an ordinary way for the answering of the cravings of nature; so he has done sometimes in an extraordinary way, as when ravens fed Elijah; so Christ did more than once, when he fed thousands miraculously with that which was intended but for one meal or two for his own family; this encourages to hope in him as the Nourisher of our souls with the bread of life.

5. He is the Author of liberty to those that were bound; The Lord looseth the prisoners. He brought Israel out of the house of bondage in Egypt, and afterward in Babylon. The miracles Christ wrought, in making such an extraordinary proclamation with that one word, Ephphatha, Be opened, his cleansing of lepers, and so discharging them from their confinement, and his raising the dead out of their graves, may all be included in this one of loosing the prisoners; and we may take encouragement from those, to hope in him for that spiritual liberty which he came to proclaim, Isa. lxv. 1, 2.

He gives sight to those that have been long deprived of it; The Lord guideth the blind, and has often given to his afflicted people to see that comfort which before they were not aware of; witness Gen. xxii. 19. and the prophet's servant, 2 Kings vi. 17. But this has special reference to Christ; for since the world began, was it not heard
that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind, till Christ did it, (John ix. 32.) and thereby encouraged us to hope in him for spiritual illumination.

He sets that straight that was crooked, and makes those that were pained and ready to sink; he raises them that are bowed down, by comforting and supporting them under their burdens, and, in due time, removing their burdens. This was literally performed by Christ, when he made a poor woman straight, that had been bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself; (Luke xiii. 12.) and he still does it by his grace, giving rest to them that are weary, and heavy-laden, and raising up with his comforts those that were humbled and cast down by convictions.

8. He has a constant kindness for all good people; The Lord loveth the righteous, and they may, with the more confidence, depend upon his power when they are sure of his good-will. Our Lord Jesus showed his love to the righteous, by fulfilling all righteousness.

9. He has a tender concern for those that stand in special need of his care; The Lord preserveth the strangers. It ought not to pass without remark, that the name Jehovah is repeated here five times in five lines, to intimate that it is an almighty power (that of Jehovah) that is engaged and exerted for the relief of the oppressed; and that it is as much the glory of God to succour them that are in misery, as it is to ride on the heavens by his name Jah, lxviii. 4. (1.) Strangers are exposed, and are commonly destitute of friends, but the Lord preserveth them, that they be not run down and ruined. Many a poor stranger has found the benefit of the divine protection, and been kept alive by it. (2.) Widows and fatherless children, that have lost the head of the family, who took care of the affairs of it, often fall into the hands of those that make a prey of them, that will not do them right, say, that will do them wrong; but the Lord relieth them, and raiseth up friends for them. See Exod. xxii. 22, 23. Our Lord Jesus came into the world to help the helpless, to receive Gentiles, strangers, into his kingdom, and with him poor sinners, that are as fatherless, may find mercy, Hos. xiv. 3.

10. He will appear for the destruction of all those that oppose his kingdom, and oppress the faithful subjects of it; the way of the wicked he turneth upside down, and therefore let us hope in him, and not be afraid of the fury of the oppressor, as though he were ready to destroy. It is the glory of the Messiah, that he will subvert all the counsels of hell and earth, that militate against his church, so that, having for us, we need not fear any thing that can be done against us.

11. His kingdom shall continue through all the revolutions of time, to the utmost ages of eternity, v. 10. Let this encourage us to trust in God at all times, that the Lord shall reign forevermore; in the exaltation of his kingdom, and in the possession of darkness, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Christ is set King on the holy hill of Zion, and his kingdom shall continue in an endless glory. It cannot be destroyed by an invader, it shall not be left to a successor, either to a succeeding monarch, or a succeeding monarchy, but it shall stand for ever. It is matter of unspeakable comfort, that the Lord reigns as Zion's God, as Zion's King, that the Messiah is Head evermore to the church, and will be so while the world stands.

PSALM CXLVII.

This is another psalm of praise; some think it was penned after the return of the Jews from their captivity; but it is so much of a piece with Ps. cxlv. that I rather think it was penned by David, and what is said, v. 2, 13. may well enough be applied to the first building and fortifying of Jerusalem in his time, and the gathering in of those that escaped outcasts in Saul's time. The Septuagint divides it into two; and we may divide it into the first and second part, but both of the same import. 1. We are called upon to praise God, v. 1., 12. II. We are furnished with matter for praise, for God is to be glorified, v. 1. As the God of nature, and so he is very great, v. 4, 5, 6, 9, 15., 18. 2. As the God of grace, comforting his people, v. 3., 6., 11. 3. As the God of Israel, Jerusalem, and Zion, settling their civil state, v. 2, 13, 14. and especially settling religion among them, v. 19, 20. It is easy, in singing this psalm, to apply it to ourselves, both as to personal and national mercies, were it but as easy to do it with suitable affections.

1. Praise ye the Lord: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely. 2. The Lord doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel. 3. He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. 4. He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.

5. Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite. 6. The Lord lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground. 7. Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God; 8. Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. 9. He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry. 10. He delighteth not in the strength of the horse; he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. 11. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

Here,

I. The duty of praise is recommended to us. It is not without reason, that we are thus called to it again and again; Praise ye the Lord, (v. 1.) and again, (v. 7.) Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving, sing praise upon the harp to our God, let all our praises be directed to him, and centre in him; for it is said of God, it is our duty, and therefore good in itself; it is our interest, and therefore good for us: it is acceptable to our Creator, and it answers the end of our creation. The law for it is holy, just, and good, the practice of it will turn to a good account. It is good; for, 1. It is pleasant; holy joy and delight are required as the principle of it, and that is pleasant to us as men; giving glory to God is the design and business of it, and that is pleasant to us as saints that are in a spiritual estate. Giving glory to God is what he is, and therefore is his own; he is his own works, it is heaven upon earth, it is what we should be in, as in our element. 2. It is comely, it is that which becomes us as reasonable creatures, much more as people in covenant with God. In giving honour to God, we really do ourselves a great deal of honour.

II. God is recommended to us as the proper Object of our most exalted and enlarged praises, upon several accounts. 1. The care he takes of his chosen people, v. 2. Is Jerusalem to be raised out of small beginnings? Is it to be recovered out of its ruins? In both cases, The Lord buildeth up Jerusalem. The gospel-church, the Jerusalem that is from above, is of his building; he framed the model of it in his own counsels, he founded it by the preaching of his gospel, he adds to it daily such as shall be saved, and so increases it.
He will build it up unto perfection, build it up as high as heaven. Are any of his people outcasts? Have they made themselves so by their own folly? He gathers them by giving them repentance, and brings them again into the heart of their souls. Have they been forced out by war, famine, or persecution? He opens a door for their return; many that were missing, and thought to be lost, are brought back, and they that were scattered in the cloudy and dark day are gathered together again.

2. The comforts he has laid up for true penitents, v. 3. They are broken in heart, and wounded, humbled, and troubled, for sin, inwardly pained at the remembrance of it, as a man is, that is sorely wounded. Their very hearts are not only pricked, but rent, under the sense of the dishonour they have done to God, and the injury they have done to themselves, by sin. To those whom God heals with the consolations of his Spirit, he speaks peace; assures them that their sins are pardoned, and that he is reconciled to them, and so makes them easy, pours the balm of Gilead into their bleeding wounds, and then binds them up, and makes them to rejoice. They who have had experience of this need not be called upon to praise the Lord, for, when he brought them out of the horrible pit, and set their feet upon a rock, he put a new song in their mouths, xl. 2, 3. And, for this, let others praise him also.

3. The sovereign dominion he has over the lights of heaven, v. 4, 5. The stars are innumerable, many of them being scarcely discernible with the naked eye, and yet he counts them, and knows the exact number of them, for they are all the work of his hands, and the instruments of his providence; their bulk and power are very great, but he calleth them all by their names, which bespeaks his dominion over them, and the command he has them at, to make what use of them he pleases. They are his servants, his soldiers, he musters them, he marshals them, they come and go at his bidding, and all their moves and direction. He mentions this as one instance of many, to show that great is our Lord, and of great power; he can do what he pleases, and of his understanding there is no computation, so that he can contrive everything for the best. Man's knowledge is soon drained, and you have his utmost length; hitherto his wisdom can reach, and no farther; but God's knowledge is a depth that no man can fathom, and no soul can comprehend.

4. The pleasure he takes in humbling the proud and exalting them of low degree; (v. 6.) The Lord lifteth up the meek, who abuse themselves before him, and whom men trample on; but the wicked, who carry it insolently toward God and scornfully toward all mankind, who lift up themselves in pride and folly, he casteth down to the ground, sometimes by very humbling providences in this world, at furthest in the day of his anger, the very word of his wrath, is everlasting shame. God proves himself to be God, by looking on the proud and abusing them, Job xl. 12.

5. The provision he makes for the inferior creatures. Though he is so great as to command the stars, he is so good as not to forget even the fowls, v. 8, 9. Observe in what method he feeds man and beast. (1.) He covereth the heaven with clouds; which God interposed, and covered the sun, and yet in them he prepareth that rain for the earth which is necessary to its fruitfulness. Clouds look melancholy, and yet without them we could have no rain, and consequently no fruit. Thus afflictions, for the present, look black, and dark, and unpleasant, and we are in heaviness because of them, as sometimes, when the sky is overcast, it makes us dull; but they are necessary, for from these clouds of affliction come those showers that make the harvest to yield the exceeding fruits of righteousness, (Heb. xii. 11.) which should help to reconcile us to them. Observe the necessary dependence which the earth has upon the heavens, which directed the heavens to depend on God in heaven. All the rain, with which the earth is watered, is o. God's preparing. (2.) By the rain which distils on the earth, he makes grass to grow upon the mountains, even the high mountains, which man neither takes care of, nor reaps the benefit of. The mountains, which are not watered with the springs and rivers, as the valleys are, are yet watered so that they are not barren. (3.) This grass he gives to the beast for his food, the beasts of the mountains, which run wild, which man makes no provision for. And even the young ravens, which, being forsaken by their old ones, cry, are heard by him, and ways are found to feed them, so that they are kept from perishing in the nest.

6. The complacency he takes in his people, v. 10, 11. In times when great things are doing, and there are great expectations of the success of them, it concerns us to know (since the issue proceeds from the Lord) whom, and what, God will delight to honour and crown with victory. It is not the strength of armies, but the strength of grace, that is pleased to own. (1.) Not the strength of armies; not in the cavalry, for he delighteth not in the strength of the horse, the war-horse, noted for his courage; (Job xxxix. 19, &c.) nor in the infantry, for he taketh no pleasure in the legs of a man; he does not mean the swiftness of them for flight, to quit the field, but the steadiness of them for charging, to stand the ground. If one king, making war with another king, goes to God to pray for success, it will not avail him to plead, "Lord, I have a gallant army, the horse and foot in good order, it is pity that they should suffer any disgrace;" for that is no argument with God, Ps. xx. 7. Jehoshaphat's was much better, Lord, we have no might, 2 Chron. xx. 12. But, (2.) God is pleased to own the strength of grace; a serious and suitable regard to God, is that which is, in the sight of God, of great price in such a case. The Lord accepts of, and takes pleasure in, those that fear him, and that hope in his mercy. Observe, [1.] A holy fear of God and hope in God, not only may consist, but must occur. In the same heart, at the same time, there must be both a reverence of his majesty, and a complacency in his goodness; both a believing dread of his wrath, and a believing expectation of his favour. Nor must we hang in suspense between hope and fear, but we must act under the gracious influences of hope and fear. Our fear must save our hope from swelling into presumption, and our hope must save our fear from sinking into despair; thus must we take our work before us. [2.] We must hope in God's mercy, his general mercy, even then when we cannot find a particular prospect of our own issue. A humble confidence in the goodness of God's nature is very pleasing to him, as that which turns to the glory of that attribute which he most glorifies in. Every man of honour loves to be trusted.

12. Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion. 13. For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children within thee. 14. He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat. 15. He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth, his word runneth very swiftly. 16. He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes. 17. He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold
18. He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow. 19. He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. 20. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord.

Jerusalem, and Zion, the holy city, the holy hill, are here called upon to praise God, v. 12. For where should praise be offered up to God, but where his altar is? Where may we expect that glory should be given to him, but in the beauty of holiness? Let the inhabitants of Jerusalem praise the Lord in their own houses; let the priests and Levites, who attend in Zion, the city of their solemnities, in a special manner, praise the Lord, because they have more cause to do it than others, and they lie under greater obligations to do it than others; for it is their business, it is their profession. "Praise thy God, O Zion: he is thine, and therefore thou art bound to praise him; his being thine includes all happiness, so that thou canst never want matter for praise."

Jerusalem and Zion must praise God,

I. For the prosperity and flourishing estate of their civil interests, v. 13, 14. 1. For the common safety; they had gates, and kept their gates barred in times of danger; but that would not have been an effectual security to them, if God had not strengthened the bars of their gates, and fortified their fortifications. The most probable means we can devise for our own preservation will not answer the end, unless God give his blessing with them; we must, therefore, in the careful and diligent use of these means, look to God for that blessing, and attribute the undisturbed repose of our land, more to the wall of fire, than to the wall of water, round about us, Zech. ii. 5. 2. For the increase of their people; this strengthens the bars of the gates as much as any thing; He hath blessed thy children within thee, with that first and great blessing, Bountiful, and multiply, and replenish the land. It is a comfort to know, that God doth give increase of the Lord, (Gen. xxii. 9.) and a comfort to the generation that is going off, to see the rising generation numerous and hopeful; for which blessing God must be blessed. 3. For the public tranquility, that they were delivered from the terrors and desolations of war; He maketh peace in thy borders, by putting an end to the wars that were, and preventing the wars that were threatened and feared. He makes peace within thy borders, in all parts of the country, by composing differences among neighbours, that there may be no intestine broils and animosities; and upon thy borders, that they may not be attacked by invasions from abroad. If there be trouble any where, it is in the borders, the marches of a country, the frontier-towns lie most exposed, so that if there be peace in the borders, there is a universal peace, a mercy we can never be enough thankful for. 4. For great plenty, the common effect of peace; He filleth thee with the finest of the wheat; wheat, the most valuable grain, the fat, the finest of that, and a fulness thereof. What would they more? Canaan abounded with the best wheat, (Deut. xxxii. 14.) and exported it to the countries abroad, as appears, Ezek. xxxvii. 17. The land of Israel was not enriched with precious stones or spices, but with the finest of the wheat, with bread, which strengthens man's heart; that made it the glee of all lands, and for that God was praised in Zion.

II. For the wonderful instances of his power in the wear; particularly the winter-weather; he that protects Zion and Jerusalem is God of power from whom all the powers of nature are derived, and on whom they depend, and who produces all the changes of the seasons, which, if they were not common, would astonish us.

1. In general, whatever alterations there are in this lower world, (and it is that world that is subject to continual changes,) they are produced by the will, and power, and providence, of God, (v. 13.) He sendeth rain upon the earth, and he clotheth all flesh: he that has an incontestable authority to give orders, and innumerable attendants ready to carry his orders, and put them in execution. As the world was at first made, so it is still upheld and governed, by a word of almighty power; God speaks, and it is done, for all are his servants. That word takes effect, not only surely, but speedy; his word runneth very swifly, for nothing can oppose or retard it. As the lightning, which passes through the air in an instant, we must take word of God's providence, and such the word of his grace, when it is sent forth with commission, Luke xvii. 24. Angels, who carry his word, and fulfil it, fly swiftly, Dan. ix. 21.

2. In particular, frosts and thaws are both of them wonderful changes, and in both we must acknowledge the word of his power.

(1.) Frosts are from God; with him are the treasures of the snow and the hail, (Job xxxviii. 22, 23.) and his treasures of snow and hail. [1.] He giveth snow like wool; it is compared to wool for its whiteness, (Isa. i. 18.) and its softness; it falls silently, and makes no more noise than the fall of a lock of wool, it covers the earth, and keeps it warm like a fleece of wool, and so promotes its fruitfulness. See how God can work by contraries, and bring meat out of the eater, can warm the earth with cold snow. [2.] He scattereth the hoar-frost, which is so renowned for its coldness, and its freezing power; and rain conceal'd; this looks like ashes scattered upon the grass, and is sometimes prejudicial to the products of the earth, and blasts them as if it were hot ashes, Ps. lxxviii. 47. [3.] He casteth forth his ice like morsels, which may be understood either of large hail-stones, which are as ice in the air, or of the ice which covers the face of the waters, and when it is broken, though naturally it was as drps or morsels, it must be upon them blessed of meat, or crusts of bread. [4.] When we see the frost, and snow, and ice, we feel it in the air; Who can stand before his cold? The beasts cannot, they retire into dens, (Job xxxviii. 8.) they are easily conquered then, 2 Sam. xxiii. 20. Men cannot, but are forced to take the benefit of fires, or furs, or both, and all little enough where and when the cold is in extremity. We see not the causes when we feel the effects; and therefore we must call it his cold, it is of his sending, and therefore we must bear it patiently, and be thankful for warm houses, and clothes, and beds, to relieve us against the rigour of the season, and must give him the glory of his wisdom and sovereignty, his power and faithfulness, which appear in the winter-weather, which shall not cease more than summer, Gen. vii. 22. And let us also infer from it, If we cannot stand before the cold of his frosts, how can we stand before the heat of his wrath, as he pleases. 

(2.) Thaws are from God; when he pleases, (v. 18.) he sendeth out his word, and melteth them; the frost, the snow, the ice, are all dissolved quickly, in order to which he causeth the wind, the south wind, to blow, and the waters, which were frozen, flew again as they did before. We are soon sensible of the change, but we see not the causes of it, but must resolve it into the will of God. If we must be content with it, it must be according to the power of God, that he can so suddenly, so insensibly, make such a great and universal alteration in the temper of the air, and the face of the earth; (what cannot he do, that doeth this every winter, perhaps often every
winter?) but also of the goodness of God; hard weather does not always continue, it would be sad if it should; he does not contend for ever, but newens the face of the earth. As he remembered Noah, and released him, (Gen. viii. 1.) so he remembers the earth, and his covenant with the earth, Cant. ii. 11, 12. This thawing word may represent the gospel of Christ, and this thawing wind the Spirit of Christ, (for the Spirit is compared to the wind, John iii. 8.) both are sent for the melting of frozen souls; contrasting grace, like the thaw, softens the heart that was hard, moistens it, and melts it into tears of repentance; it warms good affections, and makes them to flow, which, before, were chilled and stopped up. The change which the thaw makes is universal, and yet gradual; it is very evident, and yet how it is done is unaccountable: such is the change wrought in the conversion of a soul, when God's word and Spirit are sent to melt it, and restore it to itself.

III. For his distinguishing favour to Israel, in giving them his word and ordinances, a much more valuable blessing than their peace and plenty, (v. 14.) as much as the soul is more excellent than the body. Jacob and Israel had God's statutes and judgments among them; they were under his peculiar government, the municipal laws of their nation were of his framing; and although, as is observable in theocracy, they had the benefit of divine revelation, the great things of God's law were written to them; they had a priesthood of divine institution for all things pertaining to God, and prophets for all extraordinary occasions. No people besides went upon sure grounds in their religion. Now this was, 1. A preventing mercy; they did not find out God's statutes and judgments of themselves, but God showed his word unto Jacob, and his word he made known to them his statutes and judgments. It is a great mercy to any people to have the word of God among them; faith comes by hearing and reading that word, that faith without which it is impossible to please God. 2. A distinguishing mercy, and upon that account the more obliging; He hath not dealt so with every nation, not with any nation; and as for his judgments, they have not known them, nor sought after them. All the universe cannot take down the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile, that the gospel may be preached to every creature. Other nations had plenty of outward good things; some nations were very rich, others had pompous powerful princes, and polite literature, but none were blessed with God's statutes and judgments as Israel were; let Israel therefore praise the Lord in the observation of these statutes; Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not to the world? Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thine eyes.

PSALMS, CXLVIII.

This psalm is a most solemn and earnest call to all the creatures according to the order of being, to glorify the Creator, and to show forth his eternal power and Godhead, the invisible things of which are manifested in the things that are seen. Thereby the psalmist designs to express his great affection to the duty of praise: he is highly satisfied that God is praised, is very desirous that he may be more praised, and therefore does all he can to engage all about him in this pleasant work, yea, and all who shall come after him, whose hearts must be very dead and cold, if they are not raised, in praise and thanksgiving, by the lofty flights of divine poetry which we find in this psalm.

1. He calls upon the higher house, the creatures that are placed in the upper world, to praise the Lord, both these that have wings, and are swift to be moved, (v. 7, 10.) and those that are not, and are therefore capable of doing it only objectively, v. 3.-6. II. He calls upon the lower house, the creatures of this lower world, both those that can only minister matters of praise, (v. 7.-10.) and those that, being endued with reason, are capable of offering up this sacrifice, (v. 11.-13.) especially his own people, who have more cause to do it, and are more concerned to do it, than any other. v. 14.

1. PRAISE ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens: praise him in the heights. 2. Praise ye him, all his angels; praise ye him, all his hosts. 3. Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. 4. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. 5. Let them praise the name of the Lord: for he commanded, and they were created. 6. He hath also established them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.

We, in this dark and depressed world, know but little of the world of light and exaltation, and, conversing within narrow confines, can scarcely admit any tolerable conceptions of the vast regions above. But this we know, I. That there is above us a world of blessed angels, by whom God is praised, an innumerable company of them; Thousand thousands minister unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him; v. 1. II. That God may be praised from the heavens, that thence a praising frame may be transmitted to this world in which we live, that from the inhabitants of that world we may learn this blessed work. It is his delight to think that God is praised in the heights; that, while we are so cold, and low, and flat, in praising God, there are those above who are doing it in a better manner, and that, while we are so often interrupted in this work, they rest not day nor night from it. In particular, he had an eye to God's angels, to his hosts, and calls upon them to praise God. That God's angels are his hosts, is plain enough; as soon as they were made, they were listed, armed, and disciplined; he employs them in fighting his battles, and they keep ranks, and know their place, and observe the word of command as his hosts. But what is meant by the psalmist's calling upon them, and exalting them to praise God, is not so easy to account for. I will not say, They do not need it; because we find that to the prinicipalities and powers is known by the church the manifold wisdom of God; (Eph. iii. 10.) but I will say, They do not need it, for they are continually praising God, and there is no deficiency at all in their performances; and therefore, when, in singing this psalm, we call upon the angels to praise God, (as we did, cit. 26.) we mean, that we desire God may be praised by the ablest hands and in the best manner; that we are sure it is fit he should be so; that we are pleased to think he is so; and that we have a spiritual communion with those that dwell in his house above, and are still praising him; and that we are come by faith, and hope, and holy love, to the innumerable company of angels, Heb. xii. 22.
1. What these creatures are are thus shewn us the way in praising God, and, whenever we look up and consider the heavens, furnish us with matter for his praises. (1.) There are the sun, moon, and stars, which continually, either day or night, present themselves to our view, as looking-glasses, in which we do see a faint shadow (for I must call it, not a resemblance) of the glory of him that is the Father of lights, v. 3. The greater lights, the sun and moon, are not too great, too bright, to praise him; and the praises of the lesser lights, the stars, shall not be slighted. Idolaters made the sun, moon, and stars, their gods, and praised them, worshipping and serving the creature, because it is seen, more than the Creator, because he is not seen; but we, who worship the true God, make them only our fellow-worshippers, and call upon them to praise him with us, nay, as Levites to attend us, who, as priests, offer the spiritual sacrifice. (2.) There are the heavens of heavens above the sun and stars, the seat of the blessed; from the vastness and brightness of these unknown orbs abundance of glory redounds to God, for the heavens of heavens are the Lord's, (cxxv. 16.) and yet they cannot contain him, 1 Kings viii. 27. Dr. Hammond and other writers (not without reason), by the heavens of heavens, the upper regions of the air, or all the regions of it, as Ps. lxxviii. 33. We read of the heaven of heavens, whence God sends forth his voice, and that a mighty voice, meaning the thunder. (3.) There are the waters that be above the heavens, the clouds that hang above in the air, where they are reserved against the day of battle and war, Job xxxviii. 23. We have reason to praise God, not only that these waters do not drown the earth, but that they water it and make it fruitful. The Chaldee paraphrase reads it, Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that depend on the word of him which is above the heavens; for the key of the clouds is one of the keys which God has in his hand, wherewith he opens, and none can shut, he shuts, and none can open.

2. Upon what account we are to give God the glory of them; Let them praise the name of the Lord; let us praise the name of the Lord; and observe what constant and fresh matter for praise may be fetched from them. (1.) Because he made them, gave them their powers, and assigned them their places; He commanded them (great as they are) out of nothing, and they were created at a word's speaking. God created, and therefore may command; for he commanded, and so created; his authority must always be acknowledged and acquiesced in, because he once spake with such authority. (2.) Because he still upholds and preserves them in their being and posts, their powers and motions; (v. 6.) He hath established them for ever and ever, to the end of time; a short ever, but it is their ever; they shall last as long as there is occasion for them. He hath made a decree, the law of creation, which shall not pass; it was enacted by the wisdom of God, and therefore needs not be altered; by his sovereignty and inviolable fidelity, and therefore cannot be altered. All the creatures that praised God at first for their creation, must praise him still for their continuance. And we have reason to praise him, that they are kept within the bounds of a decree; for to that it is owing that the waters above the heavens have not a second time drowned the earth.

7. Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps. 8. Fire and hail; snow and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling his word: 9. Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars: 10. Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl: 11. Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: 12. Both young men and maidens; old men and children: 13. Let them praise the name of the Lord: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven. 14. He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the Lord.

Considering that this earth, and the atmosphere that surrounds it, are the very sediment of the universe, it concerns us to inquire after those considerations that are to be of importance for our conduct in this place and in this life; and I know none more likely than this, (next to the visit which the Son of God once made to it,) that even in this world, dark and as bad as it is, God is praised; Praise ye the Lord from the earth, v. 7. As the rays of the sun, which are darted directly from heaven, reflect back (though more weakly) from the earth, so should the praises of God, with which this cold and infected world should be surrounded and perfumed.

1. Even those creatures which are not dignified with the powers of reason are summoned into this concert, because God may be glorified in them, v. 7-10. Let the dragons or whales, that sport themselves in the mighty waters, (civ. 26.) dance before the Lord, to his glory, who largely proves his own omnipotence, by his dominion over the leviathan or whale, Job xli. 1, &c. All deeps, and their inhabitants, praise God; the sea, and the animals there; the bowels of the earth, and the animals thereof; the depth of the deeps may be praised as well as prayed unto. If we look up into the atmosphere, we meet with a great variety of meteors, which, being a kind of new productions, (and some of them unaccountable,) do, in a special manner, magnify the power of the great Creator. There are fiery meteors, lightning is fire, and there are other blazes sometimes kindled, which may be so called; there are watery meteors, snow, hail, and frost; which are clouds that they are gendered; there are airy meteors, stormy winds; we know not whence they come, nor whither they go; whence their mighty force comes, nor how it is spent; but this we know, that, be they ever so strong, so stormy, they fulfil God's word, and do that, and no more than he appoints them; and by this Christ showed himself to have a divine power, that he commanded even the winds and the sea, and they obeyed him. Those that will not fulfill God's word, but rise up in rebellion against it, show themselves to be more violent and headstrong than even the stormy winds, for they fulfil it. Take a view of the surface of the earth, (v. 9.) and there are presented to our view the exalted grounds, mountains, and all hills; from the barren tops of some of which, and the fruitful tops of others, we may fetch matter for praise; there are the exalted plants, some that are exalted by their own freshness and fragrance, as cedars, for the fruits of which God is said to be praised; others by their staleness, as all cedars, those trees of the Lord, civ. 16. Cedars, the high trees, are not the fruitful trees, yet they had their use even in God's temple. Pass we next to the animal kingdom, and there we find God glorified, even by the beasts that run wild, and all cattle that are tame and in the service of man, v. 10. Nay, even the creeping things are not sunk so low, as to the flying fowl so high, as not to be called upon to praise the Lord. Much of the
wisdom, power, and goodness, of the Creator, appears in the several capacities and instincts of the created; and in their heart, and the use made of them. When we see all so very strange, and all so very good, surely we cannot but acknowledge God with wonder and thankfulness.

2. Much more, those creatures that are dignified with the powers of reason, ought to employ them in praising God. 

**Kings of the earth and all people.** v. 11, 12. (1.) God is to be glorified in and for these, as in and for the inferior created; for their hearts are in the hand of the Lord, and he makes what use he pleases of them. God is to be praised in the order and constitution of kingdoms, the **pars imprimi- rans—the part that commands, and the pars subdi- tita—the part that is subject; kings of the earth, and all people.** It is by him that kings reign, and people are subject to them; the princes and judges of the earth have their wisdom and their commission from him, and we, to whom they assent, ought to bless God for them. God is to be praised also in the constitution of families, for he is the Founder of them; and for all the comfort of relations, the comfort that parents and children, brothers and sisters, have in each other, God is to be praised. (2.) God is to be glorified by these. Let all manner of persons praise God. [1.] Those of each rank, high and low; the praises of kings, and princes, and judges, are demanded; those from God have put them in honor and power. So conjecture, they are intrusted with, and the figure they make in the world, put them in a capacity of bringing more glory to God, and doing him more service, than others. Yet the praises of the people are expected also, and God will graciously accept of them; Christ despised not the hosannas of the multitude. [2.] Those of each sex, young men and maidens, who make merry together, let them turn it into this channel, let the mirth be sacred, that it may be pure. [3.] Those of each age; old men must still bring forth this fruit in old age, and not think that either the gravity or the infirmity of their age will excuse them from it; and children too must begin betimes to praise God; even out of the mouths of *babes and sucklings* this good work is perfected. A good reason is given (v. 13.) why all these should praise the name of the Lord, because his name alone is excellent, he is to be praised; his name is a name above every name; no name, no nature, but his, has in it all excellency. His glory is above both the earth and the heaven, and let all the inhabitants both of earth and heaven praise him, and yet acknowledge his name to be exalted far above all blessing and praise.

3. Most of all, his own people, that are dignified with peculiar privileges, must in a peculiar manner give glory to him, v. 14. Observe, (1.) The dignity God has put upon his people, even the children of Israel, typical of the honor reserved for all true believers, who are God's spiritual Israel. He ex- alts their horn, their brightness, their plenty, their power. The people of Israel were, in many respects, honored above any other nation, for to them pertained the adoption, the glory, and the covenants, Rom. ix. 4. It was their horn, honour, that they were chosen by God, with peculiar honor, to be a peculiar treasure; they were admitted into his courts, when a stranger that came nigh must be put to death. They had him nigh to them in all that which they called upon him for. This blessing is now come upon the Gentiles, through Christ, for they that were afar off, by his blood are made nigh, Eph. ii. 13. It is the greatest honour that can be put upon a man, to be brought near to God, the nearer the better; and it will be best of all, when nearest of all in the kingdom of glory. (2.) The duty God expects from them in consideration of this; Let those whom God honours, honour him; Praise ye the Lord. Let him be the Praise of all his saints, the Object of their praise; for he is a Praise to them. He is thy praise, and he is thy God, Deut. x. 21. Some by the horn of his people und-stand David, as a type of Christ, whom God has exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, who is indeed the Praise of all his saints, and will be for ever; for it is through him that they are a people near to God.

**PSALM CXLIX.**

The foregoing psalm was a hymn of praise to the Creator this to the Redeemer. It is a psalm of triumph in the God of Israel, and over the enemies of Israel. Probably, it was penned upon occasion of some victory which Israel was blessed and honoured with. Some conjecture that it was penned when David had taken the stronghold of Zion, and settled his government there. But it looks further, to the kingdom of the Messiah, who, in the chariot of the everlasting gospel, goes forth conquering and to conquer. To him, and his glories and graces, we must have an eye, in singing this psalm, which speaks, I. Abundance of joy to all the people of God, v. 11–5. Abundance of terror to the proudest of their en-emies, v. 6–9.

1. **PRAISE ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praises in the congregation of saints.** 2. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. 3. Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp. 4. For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation. 5. Let the saints be joyful in glory, let them sing aloud upon their beds.

We have here,

1. The calls given God's Israel to praise. All his works were in the foregoing psalm, excited to praise him; but here his saints in a particular manner are required to bless him. Observe then,

1. Who are called upon to praise God. All Israel in general, the whole body of the church, (v. 2.) the children of Zion particularly, the inhabitants of that holy hill, who are nearer to God than other Israelites; these that have the word and ordinances of God near them, that are not put to travel far to them, are justly expected to do more in praising God than others. All true Christians may call themselves the children of Zion, for in faith and hope we are come unto mount Zion, Heb. xii. 22. The saints must praise God, saints in profession, saints in power, for this is the intention of their sanctification; they are therefore devoted to the glory of God, and renewed by the grace of God, that they may be unto him for a name and a praise.

2. What must be the principle of this praise; and that, is holy joy in God; Let Israel rejoice, and the children of Zion be joyful, and the saints be joyful in glory. Our praises of God should flow from a heart that is filled with delight and triumph in God's attributes, and our relation to him. Much of the power of godliness in the heart consists in making God our chief Joy, and solacing ourselves in him; and our faith in Christ is described by our rejoicing in him. We then give honour to God, when we take pleasure in him. We must be joyful in glory, in him as our Glory, and in the interest we have in him; and let us look upon it as our glory to be of those that rejoice in God.

3. What must be the expressions of the praise. We must, by all proper ways, show forth the praises
of God; Sing to the Lord. We must entertain ourselves, and proclaim his name, by singing praises unto him, (v. 3.) singing aloud, (v. 5.) for we should sing psalms with all our heart, as these that are not only not ashamed of it, but are enlarged in it. We must sing a new song, new melodies, at every special occasion; sing with new affections, which make the song new, though the words have been used before, and keep them from growing threadbare. Let God be praised in the dance with timbrel and harp; according to the usage of the Old Testament church very early, (Exod. xv. 20.) where we find God praised with timbrels and dancing. They who from hence urge the use of music in the church, often protest that they shall never introduce dancing, for they went together, as in David’s dancing before the ark, and Judg. xxi. 21. But whereas many scriptures in the New Testament keep up singing as a gospel-ordinance, none provide for the keeping up of music and dancing; the gospel-canon for psalmody, is, to sing with the spirit and with the understanding.

4. What opportunities must be taken for praising God; none must be let slip; but particularly, (1.) We must praise God in public, in the solemn assembly, (v. 1.) in the congregation of saints; the more the better, it is the more like heaven. Thus God’s name must be owned before the world; thus the service must have a solemnity put upon it, and we must mutually excite one another to it. The principle, end, and design, of our coming together in religious assemblies, is, that we may join together in praising God. Other parts of the service must be in order to this. (2.) We must praise him in private. Let the saints be so transported with their joy in God, as to sing aloud upon their beds, when they awake in the night, full of the praises of God, as David, cxix. 62. When God’s Israel are brought to a quiet settlement, let them enjoy that with thankfulness to God; much more may true believers, that are entered into God’s rest, and find repose in Jesus Christ, sing aloud, for joy of that. Upon their sick-beds, their death-beds, let them sing the praises of their God.

II. The cause given God’s Israel for praise. Consider,

1. God’s doings for them. They have reason to rejoice in God, to devote themselves to his honour, and employ themselves in his service; for it is he that made them. He gave us our being as men, and we have reason to praise him for that, for it is noble and excellent being. He gave Israel their being as a people, as a church; made them what they were, so much different from other nations; let that people therefore praise him, for he formed them for himself, on purpose that they might show forth his praise, Isa. lxxiii. 21. Let Israel rejoice in his Makers, so it is in the original; for God said, Let us make man; and in this, some think, is the mystery of the Trinity. God’s dealings with them. This follows upon the former: if he made them, he is their King; he that gave being, no doubt, may give law; and this ought to be the matter of our joy and praise, that we are under the conduct and protection of such a wise and powerful King. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, for behold, thy King cometh, the King Messiah, whom God has set upon his holy hill of Zion; let all the children of Zion be joyful in him, and be glad; to the utmost to meet him with their hosannas, Zech. ix. 9.

3. God’s delight in them. He is a King that rules by love, and therefore to be praised; for the Lord takes pleasure in his people, in their services, in their prosperity, in communion with them, and in the communications of his favour to them. He that is infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself, and to whose fidelity no accession can be made, yet graciously condescends to take pleasure in his people, cxlvii. 11.

4. God’s designs concerning them. Beside the present complacency he has in them, he has prepared for their future glory; He will beautify the neck, the humble, and lovely, and contrite in heart, that tremble at his word, and submit to it, that are patient under their afflictions, and show all meekness towards all men. These, men vili and asper, but God will justify them, and wipe off their reproach, may, he will beautify them, they shall appear not only clear, but comely, before all the world, with the comeliness that he puts upon them. He will be beautiful to them, and make them beautiful, with all those external ornamentations, when God works remarkable deliverances for his people, they that had been among the pots, become as the wings of a dove covered with silver, (lxxviii. 13.) but especially with eternal salvation. The righteous shall be beautified in that day, when they shine forth as the sun. In the hopes of this, let them now, in the darkest day, sing a new song.

6. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; 7. To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; 8. To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; 9. To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the Lord.

The Israel of God are here represented triumphing over their enemies, which is both the matter of their praise, (let them give to God the glory of those triumphs,) and the recompense of their praise; they that are truly thankful to God for their tranquility, shall be blessed with victory. Or it may be taken as a further expression of their praise; (v. 6.) Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and then, in a holy zeal for his honour, let them take a two-edged sword in their hand, to fight his battles against the enemies of his kingdom.

Now this may be applied. 1. To the many victories which God blessed his people Israel with over the nations of Canaan, and other nations that were devoted to destruction. These began in Moses and Joshua, who, when they taught Israel the high praises of the Lord, did withal put a two-edged sword in their hand; David did so too, for as he was the sweet singer of Israel, so he was the captain of their hosts, and taught the children of Judah the use of the bow, (2 Sam. i. 18.) taught their hands to war, as God had taught his. Thus he and they went on victoriously, fighting the Lord’s battles, and avenging Israel’s quarrels on those that had oppressed them; then they executed vengeance upon the heathen, (as the Gentiles, Chaldees, Ammonites, and others, 2 Sam. viii. 1, &c.) and punishments upon the people, for all the wrong they had done to God’s people, v. 7. Their kings and nobles were taken prisoners, (v. 8.) and on some of them the judgment written was executed, as by Joshua on the kings of Canaan, by Gideon on the princes of Midian, by Samuel on Agag. The honour of this redounded to all the Israel of God, and led to him who put it upon them; they return to it entirely in their hallelujahs. Jehovah’s army had at the same time the high praises of God in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, for they went forth to war, singing the praises of God, and then their sword did execution, 2 Chron. xx. 23. Some apply it to the time of the Maccabees.
when the Jews sometimes gained great advantages against their oppressors. And if it seem strange that the meek should, in righteousness, be exalted above the sons of men, we must remember that the sons of men may be exalted upon kings and nobles too, here is one word that justifies them in it, it is the judgment written.

They do not do it from any personal malice and revenge, or any bloody politics that they govern themselves by, but by commission from God, according to his direction, and in obedience to his command; and Saul lost his kingdom for disobeying a command of this nature. Thus the kings of the earth, that shall be employed in the destruction of the New-Testament Babylon, will but execute the judgment written, Rev. xvii. 16, 17. But, since now no such special commissions can be produced, this will by no means justify the violence either of subjects against their princes, or of princes against their subjects, or both against their neighbours, under pretence of religion; for Christ never intended that his gospel should be propagated by fire and sword, or his righteousness wrought by the wrath of man.

When the high praises of God are in our mouth, with them we should have an olive-branch of peace in our hands.

To Christ's victories, by the power of his gospel and grace over spiritual enemies, in which all believers are more than conquerors. The word of God is the two-edged sword, (Heb. iv. 12.) the sword of the Spirit, (Eph. vi. 17.) and therefore it is not contrary, we must have it in our hand also, as our Master had, when he said, It is written. Now, (1.) With this two-edged sword the first preachers of the gospel obtained a glorious victory over the power of darkness; vengeance was executed upon the gods of the heathen, by the conviction and conversion of those that had been long their worshippers, and by the constitution and confusion of those that would not return. (Rev. vi. 15.) The strong-holds of Satan were cast down; (2 Cor. x. 4, 5.) great men were made to tremble at the word, as Felix; Satan, the god of this world, was cast out, according to the judgment given against him. This is the honour of all Christians, that their holy religion has been so victorious. (2.) With this two-edged sword believers fight against their own corruptions and, through the grace of God, subdue and mortify them; the sin that had dominion over them is crucified; (Rom. vi.) that once sitting, is bound with chains, and brought into subjection to the yoke of Christ; the tempter is foiled and bruised under their feet; This honour have all the saints. (3.) The complete accomplishment of this will be in the judgment of the great day, when the Lord shall come with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, Jude, v. 14, 15. Vengeance shall then be executed upon the heathen. (Ps. cxlviii. 8, 9.) Vengeance is on those upon whom they shall cast their eyes; (Isa. xlix. 23.) upon the people, kings and nobles, that cast away the bands and cords of Christ's government, (Ji. 3.) shall not be able to cast away the chains and fetters of his wrath and justice. Then shall be executed the judgment written, for the secrets of men shall be judged according to the gospel. This honour shall all the saints have, that, as assessors with Christ, they shall judge the world; (1 Cor. vi. 2.) in the day when they let them praise the Lord and continue Christ's faith and servants and soldiers to the end of their lives.

PSALM CL.

The first and last of the psalms have both the same number of verses, are both short, and very memorable; but the scope of them is very different; the first psalm is an elaborate instruction in our duty, to prepare us for the comforts of our devotion; this is all rapture and transport, and, perhaps, was penned on purpose to be the conclusion of those sacred songs, to show what is the design of them all, and that is, to assist us in praising God. The psalmist had been himself full of the praises of God, and here he would fain fill all the world with them: again and again he calls, Praise the Lord, praise him, praise him, no less than thirteen times in these six verses, verses. He shows, 1. For what and upon what account, God is to be praised, v. 1. 2. How, and with what expressions of joy, God is to be praised, v. 3. 5. III. Who must praise the Lord; it is every one's business, v. 6. In sing these psalms, when we think, our hearts much affected with the perfections of God, and the praises with which he is, and shall be, for ever attended, throughout all ages, world without end.

1. Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. 2. Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness. 3. Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. 4. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. 5. Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals. 6. Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.

We are here with the greatest earnestness imaginable, excited to praise God; if, as some suppose, it was primarily intended for the Levites, to stir them up to do their office in the house of the Lord, as singers and players on instruments, yet we must take it as speaking to us, who are made to our God spiritual priests. And the repeated incalculating of the call thus, intimates that it is a great and necessary duty, a duty which we should be much employed, and many enlarged, in; but which we are naturally backward to, and cold in, and therefore need to be brought to, and held to, by precept upon precept, and line upon line. Observe here,

1. Whence this tribute of praise arises, and out of what part of his dominion it especially issues. It comes, (1.) From his sanctuary; praise him there: let his priests, let his people that attend there, attend with their eyes and ears. Wherever he is praised, there he is honored, and where he is not praised, there he is dishonored, in a special manner, both manifest his glory, and communicate his grace. Praise God upon the account of his sanctuary, and the privileges we enjoy by having that among us, Ezek. xxxvii. 26. Praise God in his holy ones, so some read it: we must take notice of the image of God, as it appears on those that are sanctified, and love them for the sake of that image; and, when we praise them, we must praise God in them. (2.) From the firmament of his power; Praise him, because of his power and glory which appear in the firmament; its vastness, its brightness, and its splendid furniture; and because of the powerful influences it has upon this earth. Let them have that dwelling in the firmament of his power, even the holy angels, lead in this good work. Some, by the sanctuary, as well as by the firmament of his power, understand the highest heavens, the residence of his glory; that is indeed his sanctuary, his holy temple, and there he is praised continually, in a far better manner than we can praise him. And it is a comfort to us, when we find we do it so poorly, that it is so well done there.

2. Upon what account this tribute of praise is due: upon many accounts; particularly, (1.) The works of his power; (v. 2.) Praise him for his mighty acts; for his mightiness, so the word is; for all the instances of his might, the power of his providence, the power of his grace; what he has done in the
creation, government, and redemption, of the world; for the children of men in general, for his own church and children in particular. (2.) The glory and majesty of his being; *Praise him according to his excellent greatness, according to the multitude of his magnificenes*; (so Dr. Hammond reads it;) not that our praises can bear any proportion to God's greatness, for it is infinite; but, because he is greater than we can express or conceive, we must raise our conceptions and expressions to the highest degree we can attain to. Be not afraid of saying too much in the praises of God, as we often do in praising even great and good men; *Deus non patitur hyperbolum—We cannot speak hyperbolically of God;* all the danger is of saying too little; and therefore, when we have done our utmost, we must own, that though we have praised him in consideration of, yet not in proportion to, *his excellent greatness.*

3. In what manner this tribute must be paid; with all the kinds of musical instruments that were then used in the temple-service, v. 3-5. It is well that we are not concerned to inquire what sort of instruments each of these was; it is enough that they were well known then: our concern is, to know, (1.) That hereby is intimated how full the psalmist's heart was of the praises of God, and how desirous he was that this good work might go on. (2.) That in serving God we should spare no cost or pains. (3.) That the best music in God's ears is devout and pious affections; *non musica chordula, sed cor—not a melodiou string, but a melodious heart.* Praise God with a strong faith; praise him with holy love and delight; praise him with an entire confidence in Christ; praise him with a believing triumph over the powers of darkness; praise him with an earnest desire toward him, and a full satisfaction in him; praise him by universal respect to all his commands; praise him by a cheerful submission to all his dispositions; praise him by rejoicing in his love, and solacing yourselves in his great goodness; praise him by promoting the interests of the kingdom of his grace; praise him by a lively hope and expectation of the kingdom of his glory. (4.) That various instruments being used in praising God, it should yet be done with an exact and perfect harmony; they must not hinder, but help, one another. The New-Testament concert, instead of this, is, *with one mind, and one mouth, to glorify,* Rom. xv. 6.

4. Who must pay this tribute; (v. 6.) *Let every thing that has breath praise the Lord.* He began with a call to those that had a place in his sanctuary, and were employed in the temple-service; but he concludes with a call to all the children of men, in prospect of the time when the Gentiles should be taken into the church, and *in every place,* as acceptably as at Jerusalem, *this incense should be offered,* Mal. i. 11. Some think that in *every thing that has breath,* here we must include the inferior creatures, (as Gen. vii. 22,) *all in whose nostrils was the breath of life.* They praise God according to their capacity: the singing of birds is a sort of praising God. The brutes do in effect say to man, "We would praise God if we could, do you do it for us." John in vision heard a song of praise from *every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth,* Rev. v. 13. Others think that the children of men only are meant; for into them God has in a more peculiar manner breathed the *breath of life,* and they are become *living souls* Gen. ii. 7. Now that the gospel is ordered to be preached to *every creature,* to every human *creature,* it is required that every human creature praise the Lord. What have we our breath, our spirit, for, but to spend it in praising God; and how can we spend it better? Prayers are called *our breathings,* Lam. iii. 56. Let every one that breathes toward God in prayer, finding the benefit of that, breathe forth his praises too. Having breath, let the *praises of God perfume our breath;* let us be in this work as in our element; let it be to us as the *air we breathe in,* which we could not live without. Having our *breath in our nostrils,* let us consider that it is still going *forth,* and will shortly go, and not return. Since therefore we must shortly breathe our last, while we have breath let us praise the Lord; and then we shall breathe our last with comfort, and, when death runs us out of breath, we shall remove to a better state, to breathe God's praises in a freer better air.

The three first of the five books of psalms (according to the Hebrew division) concluded with *Amen and Amen,* the fourth with *Amen, Hallelujah,* but the last, and in it the whole book, concludes only with *Hallelujah,* because the six last psalms are wholly taken up in praising God, and there is not a word of complaint or petition in them. The nearer good Christians come to their end, the fuller they should be of the praises of God. Some think that this last psalm is designed to represent to us the work of glorified saints in heaven, who are there continually praising God. And musical instruments, here said to be used, are no more to be understood literally than the gold, and pearls, and precious stones, which are said to adorn the New Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 18, 19. But as those intimate that the glories of heaven are the most excellent glories, so these intimate that the praises the saints offer there are the most excellent praises. Prayers will there be swallowed up in everlasting praises; there will be no intermission in praising God, and yet no weariness. Hallelujahs for ever repeated, and yet still new songs. Let us often take a pleasure in thinking what glorified saints are doing in heaven, what those are doing whom we have been acquainted with on earth, but are gone before us thither; and let it not only make us long to be among them, but quicken us to do this part of the will of God on earth, as they do it that are in heaven.

And therefore let us spend as much of our time as may be in this good work, because in it we hope to spend a joyful eternity. *Hallelujah* is the word there; (Rev. xix. 1, 3,) let us echo to it now, as those that hope to join in it shortly. *Hallelujah, praise ye the Lord.*
AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE

PROVERBS.

We have now before us,

I. A new Author, or Penman rather, or Pen, (if you will,) made use of by the Holy Ghost, for making known the mind of God to us, writing as moved by the Finger of God, so the Spirit of God is called; and that is Solomon, through his hand came this book of Scripture, and the two that follow it, Ecclesiastes and Canticles, a Sermon and a Song. Some think he wrote Canticles when he was very young, Proverbs in the midst of his days, and Ecclesiastes when he was old. In the title of his song, he only writes himself Solomon, perhaps, because he wrote it before his accession to the throne, being filled with the Holy Ghost when he was young. In the title of his Proverbs he writes himself the son of David, king of Israel, for then he ruled over Israel. In the title of his Ecclesiastes he writes himself the son of David, king of Jerusalem, because then, perhaps, his influence was grown less upon the distant tribes, and he confined himself very much in Jerusalem. Concerning this author we may observe: 1. That he was a king, and a king’s son. The penman of scripture, hitherto, were most of them men of the first rank in the world, as Moses and Joshua, Samuel and David, and now Solomon; but, after him, the inspired writers were generally poor prophets, men of no figure in the world, because that dispensation was approaching in which God would choose the weak and foolish things of the world to confound the wise and mighty, and the poor should be employed to evangelize. Solomon was a very rich king, and his dominions very large, a king of the first magnitude, and yet he addicted himself to the study of divine things, and was a prophet, and a prophet’s son. It is no disparagement to the greatest princes and potentates in the world to instruct these about them in religion and the laws of it. 2. That he was one whom God endued with extraordinary measures of wisdom and knowledge, in answer to his prayers at his accession to the throne; his prayer was exemplary, Give me a wise and an understanding heart; the answer to it was encouraging, he had that, and all other things were added to him. Now here we find what good use he made of the wisdom God gave him; he not only governed himself and his kingdom with it, but he gave rules of wisdom to others also, and transmitted them to posterity. Thus we must trade with the talents with which we are trusted, accordingly as they are. 3. That he was one who had his faults, and in his latter end turned aside from those good ways of God which in this book he had directed others in. We have the story of it, 1 Kings xi. and a sad story it is, that the penman of such a book as this should apostatize as he did; tell it not in Gath; but let these who are most eminently useful take warning, by this, not to be proud or secure; and let us all learn not to think the worse of good instructions, though we have them from those who do not themselves altogether live up to them.

II. We have here a new way of writing, in which divine wisdom is taught us by Proverbs, or short sentences, which contain their whole design within themselves, and are not connected with one another. We have had divine laws, histories, and songs, and now divine proverbs; such various methods has Divine Wisdom used for our instruction, that, no stone being left unturned to do us good, we may be inexcusable if we perish in our folly. Teaching by proverbs was, 1. An ancient way of teaching, it was the most ancient way among the Greeks; the seven wise men of Greece had each of them some one saying that they valued themselves upon, and that made them famous; these sentences were inscribed on pillars, and had in great veneration, as that which was said to come down from heaven; *A callo descendit, γιρισε συγγια—Know thyself, in a precept which came down from heaven. 2. It was a plain and easy way of teaching, which cost neither the teachers nor the learners much pains, nor put their understandings or their memories to the stretch. Long periods, and arguments far-fetched, must be laboured both by him that frames them and by him that takes them; while a proverb, which carries both its sense and its evidence in a little compass, is quickly apprehended and subscribed to, and is easily retained. Both David’s devotions and Solomon’s instructions are sententious, which may recommend that way of expression to those who minister about holy things, both in praying and preaching. 3. It is a very probable way of teaching, and served admirably well to answer the end. The word *Mashal, here used for a proverb, comes from a word that signifies to rule; or have dominion, because of the commanding power and influence which wise and weighty sayings have upon the children of men; he that teaches by them, *dominatur in concionibus—rules his auditory. It is easy to observe how the world is governed by proverbs; *Asaith the proverb of the ancients, (1 Sam. xxiv. 15.) or, as
the vulgar express it, as the old saying is, goes very far with most men in forming their notions and fixing their resolves. Much of the wisdom of the ancients had been handed down to posterity by proverbs; and some think we may judge of the temper and character of a nation by the complexion of its vulgar proverbs. Proverbs in conversation are like axioms in philosophy, maxims in law, and postulates in the mathematics, which nobody disputes, but every one endeavours to expound, so as to have them on his side. Yet there are many corrupt proverbs, which tend to debauch men's minds and harden them in sin. The Devil has his proverbs, and the world and the flesh have their proverbs, which reflect on God and religion, (as Ezek. xii. 22—xxvii. 2.) to guard us against the corrupt influences of which, God has his proverbs, which are all wise and good, and tend to make us so. These proverbs of Solomon were not merely a collection of the wise sayings that had been formerly delivered, as some have imagined, but were the dictates of the Spirit of God in Solomon. The very first of them, (ch. 1. 7.) agrees with what God said to man in the beginning, (Gen. xxviii. 28.) Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; so that, though Solomon was great, and his name may serve as much as any man's to recommend his writings, yet behold, a greater than Solomon is here. It is God, by Solomon, that here speaks to us; I say, to us; for these proverbs were written for our learning, and when Solomon speaks to his son, the exhortation is said to speak to us as children, Heb. xii. 5. And as we have no book so useful to us in our devotions as David's psalms, so have we none so serviceable to us, far the right ordering of our conversations, as Solomon's proverbs, which, as David signs of the commandments, are exceeding broad, containing, in a little compass, a complete body of divine truths, and economics, exposing every vice, recommending every virtue, and suggesting rules for the government of ourselves in every relation and condition, and every turn of conversation. The learned Bishop Hild has drawn up a system of moral philosophy out of Solomon's Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. The nine first chapters of this book are reckoned as a preface by way of exposition to the study and practice of wisdom's rules, and caution against those things that would hinder therein. We have then the first volume of Solomon's proverbs; (ch. x.—xxiv.) after that, a second volume; (ch. xxv.—xxxix.) and Amos Agur's prophecy, (ch. xxx.) and Lemuel's, ch. xxxi. The scope of all is one and the same, to direct us so to order our conversations aright, as that in the end we may see the salvation of the Lord. The best comment on those rules is to be ruled by them.

PROVERBS, I.

CHAP. I.

Those who read David's psalms, especially those toward the latter end, would be tempted to think that religion is all rapture, and consists in nothing but the ecstasies and transports of devotion; and doubtless there is a time for them, and, if there be a heaven upon earth, it is in them: but, while we are on earth, we cannot be wholly taken up with them, we have a life to live in the flesh, must have a conversation in the world, and into that we must now be taught to carry our religion, which is a rational thing, and very serviceable to the conduct of human life, and tends as much to make us discreet as to make us devout, to make the face shine before men in a prudent, honest, useful conversation, as to make the heart burn toward God in holy and pious affections. In this chapter, then, I teach the bounds of the boundless and the vast scope and design of it, v. 1—6. II. The first principle of it recommended to our serious consideration, v. 7—9. III. A necessary caution against bad company, v. 10—19. IV. A faithful and lively representation of wisdom's reasonings with the proverbs, when, and the certain ruin of those who turn a deaf ear to those reasonings, v. 20—33.

1. THE proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel; 2. To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; 3. To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment; and equity; 4. To give subtlety to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. 5. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels; 6. To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.

We have here an introduction to this book, which some think was prefixed by the collector and publisher, as Ezra; but it is rather supposed to have been penned by Solomon himself, who, in the beginning of his book, proposes his end in writing it, that he might keep to his business, and closely pursue that end. We are here told,

I. Who wrote these wise sayings; (v. 1.) they are the proverbs of Solomon. I. His name signifies peaceable, and the character both of his spirit and of his reign answered to it; both were peaceable. David, whose life was full of troubles, wrote a book of devotion; for, Is any afflicted? Let him pray. Solomon, who lived quietly, wrote a book of instruction, for when the churches had rest, they were edified. In times of peace, we should learn ourselves, and teach others, that which, in troublous times, both they and we must practise. 2. He was the son of David; it was his honour to stand related to that good man, and he reckoned it so with good reason, for he fared the better for it, 1 Kings xi. 12. He had been blessed with a good education, and many a good prayer had been put up for him, (Ps. lxxxii. 1.) the effect of both which appeared in his wisdom and usefulness. The generation of the upright is sometimes thus blessed, that they are made blessings, eminent blessings, in their day. Christ is often called the Son of David, and Solomon was of the same type of him in this, as in other things, that he opened his mouth in parables or proverbs. 3. He was king of Israel; a king, and yet it was no disapprobation to him to be an instructor of the ignorant, and a teacher of babes; king of Israel, that people among whom God was known, and his name was great; among them he learned wisdom; and to them he communicated it. All the earth sought to hear his wisdom, which excelled all men's; (1 Kings iv. 30—xxiv.) it was an honour to Israel, that their king was such a dictator, such an oracle, Solomon was famous for apothegms; every word he said had weight in it, and something that was surprising and edifying; his servants, who attended him, and heard his wisdom, had, among them, collected 3000 proverbs of his, which they wrote in their day-books, but these were of his own writing, and do not amount to near a thousand; in these, he was divinely inspired. Some think, that out of those other proverbs of his, which were not so inspired, the apocryphal books of Ecclesiasticus, and the Wisdom of Solomon were compiled, in which are many excellent sayings, and of great use; but, take all together, they are far short of this book.
The Roman emperors had each of them their symbol or motto, as many now have with their coat of arms. But Solomon had many weighty sayings, not, as theirs, borrowed from others, but all the product of that extraordinary wisdom which God had endowed him with.

II. For what end they were written; (v. 2-4.) not to gain a reputation to the author, or strengthen his interest among his subjects, but for the use and benefit of all that in every age and place will govern themselves by these dictates, and study them close.

This book will help us,

1. To form right notions of things, and to possess our minds with clear and distinct ideas of them, that we may know wisdom and instruction; that wisdom which is got by instruction, by divine revelation; may know both how to speak and act wisely ourselves, and to give instruction to others.

2. To distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil; to perceive the words of understanding; to apprehend them, to judge of them, to guard against mistakes, and to accommodate what we are taught to ourselves, and our own use, that we may discern things that differ, and not be imposed upon, and may approve things that are excellent, and not lose the benefit of them, as the apostle prays, Phil. i. 10.

3. To order our conversation aright in every thing, v. 3. This book will give, that we may receive, the instruction of wisdom, that knowledge which will guide our practice in justice, judgment, and equity, (v. 3.) which will dispose us to render to all their due, to God the things that are God’s, in all the exercises of religion, and to all men what is due to them, according to the obligations which, by relation, office, contract, or upon any other account, we lie under to them. Note, Those are truly wise, and none but those, who are universally conscientious; and the design of the scripture is, to teach us that wisdom is not only sensible of their own ignorance, and their need to be taught, and are therefore desirous to receive instruction; and those who receive those instructions, in their light and power, though they be simple, will hereby be made subtle, graciously craftry to know the sin they should avoid, and the duty they should do, and to escape the tempter’s wiles. He that is harmless as the dove, by observing Solomon’s rules, may become wise as the serpent, and may avoid the snares of wickedness, he begins to govern himself by the word of God, becomes graciously wise. 2. For young people, to give them knowledge and discretion. Youth is the learning age, catch es at instructions, receives impressions, and retains what is then received; it is therefore of great consequence that the mind be then seasoned well, nor can it receive a better tincture than from the proverbs. Young people is prone to be rash, heady, and inconsiderate: man is born like the wild ass’s colt; and therefore needs to be broken by the restraints, and managed by the rules, we find here. And if young people will but take heed to their ways, according to Solomon’s proverbs, they will soon gain the knowledge and discretion of the ancients. Solomon had an eye to posterity in writing this book, hoping by it to season the minds of the rising generation with the generous principles of wisdom and virtue.

IV. What good use may be made of them, v. 5, 6. Those who are young and simple may be them be made wise, and are not excluded from Solomon’s school, as they were from Plato’s. But is it only for such? No, here is not only milk for babes, but strong meat for hungry men. But make the foolish and bad wise and good, but the wise and good wiser and better; and though the simple and the young man may perhaps slight these instructions, and not be the better for them, yet the wise man will hear; wisdom will be justified by her own children, though not by the children sitting in the market-place. Note, While wise men must hear, and not think themselves too wise to learn. A wise man is sensible of his own defects, (Prover. i. 7.) sed ignorantiam meam non ignorabo—I am ignorant of many things, but not of my own ignorance, and therefore is still pressing forward, that he may increase in learning, may know more, and know it better, more clearly and distinctly, and may know better how to make use of it. As long as we live, we should strive to increase in all useful learning. It was a saying of one of the greatest of the rabbins, Qui non aget scieniaciae, (Pirke Avevros.)—He that has not an increasing stock of knowledge be not increasing, it is wasting; and they that would increase in learning must study the scriptures; those perfect the man of God. A wise man, by increasing in learning, is not only profitable to himself, but to others also.

1. As a counsellor. A man of understanding in these precepts of wisdom, by comparing them with one another, and with his own observations, shall by degrees attain unto wise counsel, he shall, by his preferment, and will be consulted as an oracle, and intrusted with the conduct of public affairs; he shall come to sit at the helm, so the word signifies. Note, Industry is the way to honour; and those whom God has blessed with wisdom must study to do good with it, according as their sphere is. It is more dignity, indeed, to be counsellor to the prince, but it is more charity to be counsellor to the poor, as Job was with his wisdom, (Job xxix. 15.) I was eyes to the blind. 2. As an interpreter; (v. 6.) to understand a proverb. Solomon was himself famous for expounding riddles, and resolving hard questions, which was, of old, the celebrated entertainment of the eastern princes; witness the solutions he gave to the knots with which the queen of Sheba thought to puzzle him. Now, here he undertakes to furnish his reader with a full and satisfactory interpretation to the best purposes. They shall understand a proverb, even the interpretation, without which the proverb is a nut uncracked; when they hear a wise saying, though it be figurative, they shall take the sense of it, and know how to make use of it. The words of the wise are sometimes dark sayings. In St. Paul’s epistles there was that which was hard to be understood; but to those who, being well versed in the scriptures, and are in a spirit and furnished with spiritual, they will be easy and safe. So that, if you ask them, Have ye understood all these things? they may answer, Yes, Lord. Note, It is a credit to religion, when men of honesty are men of sense; all good people, therefore, should aim to be intelligent, and run to and fro, take pains in the use of means, that their knowledge may be increased.

7. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. 8. My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: 9. For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.

Solomon, having undertaken to teach a young man knowledge and discretion, here lays down two genera.
ruler of the land to be great, and sharpen their tongues with bitterness;
and the king’s anger is but the" "fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; it is the primitive part of knowledge, so the margin; it is the head of knowledge; that is, knowledge, that those know nothing who do not know this. 2. In order to the attaining of all useful knowledge, this is most necessary, that we fear God; we are not qualified to profit by the instructions that are given us, unless our minds be possessed with a holy reverence of God, and every thought within us be brought into obedience to him. If any man do his will, he shall know of his doctrine, John vii. 17. 3. Knowledge is the first step from the fear of God, so it must tend to it as its progression and centre. Those know enough who know how to fear God, who are careful in every thing to please him, and fearful of offending him in any thing; this is the alpha and omega of knowledge.

To confirm this truth, that an eye to God must both direct and quicken all our pursuits of knowledge, he observes, Fools (atheists who have no regard to God) despise wisdom and instruction; having no dread at all of God’s wrath, nor any desire of his favour, they will not give you thanks for telling them what they may do to escape his wrath, and obtain his favour. They who say to the Almighty, Depart from us, who are so far from fearing him, that they set him at defiance, can excite no surprise if they desire not the knowledge of his ways, but despise that instruction. Note, Those are fools who do not fear God, and value the scriptures; and, though they may pretend to be admirers of wit, they are really strangers and enemies to wisdom.

II. Let them have regard to their parents, as their superiors; (v. 8, 9.) My son, hear the instruction of thy father. He means, not only that he would have his own children to be observant of him, and of what he said to them, nor only that he would have his pupils, and those who came to him to be taught to look upon him as their father, and attend to his precepts with the respect due to the parent of children; but that he would have all children to be dutiful and respectful to their parents, and to conform to the virtuous and religious education which they give them, according to the law of the fifth commandment.

1. He takes it for granted, that parents will, with all the wisdom they have, instruct their children, and, with all the authority they have, give law to them for their good; and therefore he tells them, Thou art the children of children; but that he would have all children to be dutiful and respectful to their parents, and to conform to the virtuous and religious education which they give them, according to the law of the fifth commandment.

2. He charges children both to remember, and to retain, the good lessons and laws their parents give them.

(1.) To receive them with readiness; “Hear the instruction of thy father; hear, and heed it; hear it, and bid it welcome, and be thankful for it, and subscribe to it.”

(2.) To retain them with resolution; “Forsake not their law; think not that, when thou art grown up, and no longer under tutors and governors, thou mayest live at large; no, the law of thy mother was according to the law of thy God, and therefore it must never be forsaken.” That is, I commend the instruction of parents, carefully gathered up, and lived up to, shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, (v. 9.) such an ornament as is, in the sight of God, of great price, and shall make thee look as great as those that wear gold chains about their necks.” Let divine truths and commands be to us as a coronet, or a collar of SS, which are badges of first-rate honours; let us value them, and be ambitious of them, and then they shall be so to us. Those are truly valuable, and shall be valued, who value themselves more by their virtue and piety than by their worldly wealth and dignity.

10. My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. 11. If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: 12. Let us swallow them up alive, as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit: 13. We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: 14. Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse. 15. My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: 16. For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood: 17. (Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird:) 18. And they lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives. 19. So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners thereof.

Here Solomon gives another general rule to young people, in order to their finding out, and keeping in, the paths of wisdom, and that is, to take heed of the snare of bad company. David’s psalms begin with this caution, and so do Solomon’s proverbs; for nothing is more destructive both to a lively devotion and to a regular conversation; (v. 10.) My son, whom I love, and have a tender concern for, if sinners entice thee, cast out those not. This is good advice for parents not to give their children, when they send them abroad into the world; it is the same that St. Peter gave to his new converts, (Acts ii. 40.) Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Observe, 1. How industrious wicked people are to seduce others into the paths of the destroyer; they will entice; sinners love company in sin; the angels that fell were tempters almost as soon as they were sinners. They do not therefore stand, but condescend and talk with flattering and fair speech; with a bait they draw the unwary young man to the hook. But they mistake, if they think, that, by bringing others to partake with them in their guilt, and to be bound, as it were, in the bond with them, they shall have the less to pay themselves; for they will have so much the more to answer for. 2. How cautious
young people should be that they be not seduced by them; "Consent thou not; and then, though they entice thee, they cannot force thee. Do not say as they say, nor do as they do, or would have thee to do; have no fellowship with them."

To enforce this caution,

1. He represents the fallacious reasonings which sinners use in their induciments, and the arts of wheedling which they have, for the beguiling of unstable souls. He specifies highwaymen, who do what they can to draw others into their gang, v. 11-14. See here what they would have the young man to do; "Come with us, (v. 11.) let us have thy company;" at first, they pretend to ask no more; but the courtship rises higher, v. 14. Cast in thy lot among us; come in partner with us, join our force to yours, and let us resolve to live and die together; thou shalt fare as we fare; and let us all have one purse, that which we get together we may spend merrily together;" for that is it they aim at.

Two unreasonable unsatiable lusts they propose to themselves the gratification of, and therewith entice their prey into the snare.

1. Their cruelty. They thirst after blood, and have no compassion in them, and never gave them any provocation, because, by their honesty and industry, they shame and condemn them; "Let us therefore lay wait for their blood, and lurk privily for them; they are conscious to themselves of no crime, and consequently apprehensive of no danger, but travel unarmed; therefore we shall make the more easy prey of them. And, Oh how sweet it will be to swallow them up alive!" v. 12. These bloody men would do this as greedily as the hungry lion devours the lamb. If it be objected, "The remains of the murdered will betray the murderers;" they answer, "No danger of that, we will swallow them whole as those that are buried." Who could imagine that human nature should degenerate so far, that it ever should be a pleasure to one man to destroy another?

2. Their covetousness. They hope to get a good booty by it; (v. 13.) "We shall find all precious substance by following this trade; what though we venture our necks by it, we shall fill our houses with spoil." See here, (1.) The idea they had of worldly wealth. They call it precious substance; whereas it is neither substance, nor precious; it is a shadow, it is vanity, especially that which is got by robbery, Ps. lxxi. 10. It is as that which is not, which will give a man no solid satisfaction. It is cheap, it can be got at the end of his fingers, and therefore they will hazard their lives, and perhaps their souls, in pursuit of it. It is the ruining mistake of thousands, that they over-value the wealth of this world, and look on it as precious substance. (2.) The abundance of it, which they promised themselves; We shall fill our houses with it. Those who trade with sin promise themselves mighty bargains, and yet they say to a vain and foolish grace, All this will I give thee, (says the tempter;) but they only dream that they eat; the housefuls dwindle into scarcely a handful, like the grass on the house-tops.

II. He shows the perniciousness of these ways, as a reason why we should dread them; (v. 15.) "My son, walk thou not in the way with them; do not associate with them; get, and keep, as far off from them as thou canst, refrain thy foot from their path, do not let them, nor be found in it. Such is the corruption of our nature, that our foot is very prone to step into the path of sin, so that we must use necessary violence upon ourselves to refrain our foot from it, and check ourselves, if at any time we take the least step towards it. Consider, 1. How pernicious their way is in its own nature; (v. 16.) Their feet run to evil, to that which is displeasing to God and hurtful to mankind, for they make haste to shed blood. Note, The way of sin is down-hill; men not only cannot stop themselves, but, the longer they continue in it, the faster they run, and make haste in it, as if they were afraid they should not do mischief enough, and were resolved to lose no time. They said they would proceed leisurely, (Let us lay wait for blood, v. 11.) but they will find all in haste, so much has Satan filled their hearts."

2. How pernicious the consequences of it will be. They are plainly told that this wicked way will certainly end in their own destruction, and yet they persist in it. Herein, (1.) They are like the silly bird, that sees the net spread to take her, and yet it is in vain; she is decoyed into it by the bait, and yet is not taken, because the fowler who gave her, v. 17. But we think ourselves of far more value than many sparrows, and therefore should have more wit, and act with more caution. God has made us wiser than the fowls of heaven; (Job xxxv. 11.) and shall we, then, be as stupid as they? (2.) They are worse than the birds, and have not the sense which we sometimes perceive them to have: for the fowler knows it is in vain to lay his snare in the sight of the bird; he therefore he has an art to conceal it. But the sinner sees ruin at the end of his way; the murderer, the thief, see the jail and the gallows before them, nay, they might see hell before them, their watchmen tell them they shall surely die, but it is to no purpose; they rush into sin, and rush on in it, like the horse into the battle. For really the stone they roll will turn upon themselves, v. 18, 19. They lay wait, and lurk privily, for the blood and lives of others, but it will prove contrary to their intention, to be for their own blood, their own lives; they will come at length, to a shamefu]l end; and, if they escape the sword of the magistrate, yet there is a divine Nemesis that pursues them. Vengeance suffers them not to live. Their greediness of gain hurries them upon those practices which will not suffer them to live out half their days, but will cut off the number of their months in the midst. They have little reason to be proud of their property in that which takes away the life of the owners, and then passes to other masters; and what is a man profited, though he gain the world, if he lose his life? for then he can enjoy the world no longer; much less if he lose his soul, and that be drowned in destruction and perdition, as multitudes are by the love of money.

Now, though Solomon prescribes only the temptation to rob on the highway, yet he intends hereby to warn us against all other evils which sinners entice men to; such are the ways of the drunkards and unclean, they are indulging themselves in those pleasures which tend to their ruin, both here and for ever; and, therefore, consent not to them.

20. Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets; 21. She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying, 22. How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and the scorner delight in his scorning, and fools hate knowledge? 23. Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. 24. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; 25. But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; 26. I also will laugh at
your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. 27. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you; 28. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:

For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: 30. They would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof: 31. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. 32. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. 33. But whose heartened unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

Solomon, having showed how dangerous it is to hearken to the temptations of Satan, here showeth how dangerous it is not to hearken to the calls of God, which we shall for ever rue the neglect of.  

I. By whom God calls to us; by wisdom. It is wisdom that crieth without. The word is plural, wisdoms, for, as there is infinite wisdom in God, so there is the manifold wisdom of God, Eph. iii. 10. God speaks to the children of men by all the kinds of wisdom, and as in every will, so in every word, of God there is a counsel. 1. Human understanding is wisdom, the light and law of nature, the powers and faculties of reason, and the office of conscience, Job xxxviii. 36. By these God speaks to the children of men, and reasons with them; The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord; and, wherever men go, they may hear a voice behind them, saying, This is the way; and the voice of conscience is the voice of God, and not always a still small voice, but sometimes it crieth. 2. Civil government is wisdom; it is God’s ordinance, magistrates are his vicegerents. God, by David, had said to the fools, Deal not foolishly, Ps. lxxv. 4. In the opening of the gates, and in the places of concourse, where courts were kept, the judges, the wisdom of the nation, call to the wicked people, in God’s name, to repent and reform. 3. Divine revelation is wisdom; all its dictates, all its laws, are wise as wisdom itself. God does, by the written word, by the law of Moses, which sets before us the blessing and the curse, by the priests’ prayers which keep knowledge, by his servants the prophets, and all the ministers of this word, declare his mind to sinners, and give them warning as plainly as that which is proclaimed in the streets or courts of judicature by the criers. God, in his word, not only opens the case, but argues it with the children of men. Come now, and let us reason together, Is. i. 18. 4. Christ himself is Wisdom, is Wisdoms, for in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and he is the centre of all divine revelation, not only the essential Wisdom, but the eternal Word, by whom God speaks to us, and to whom he has committed all judgement; he it is, therefore, who here both pleads with sinners, and passes sentence on them; he calls himself Wisdom, Luke v. 21.

II. How he calls to us, and in what manner. I. Very publicly, that whosoever hath ears to hear may hear, since all are welcome to take the benefit of what is said, and all are concerned to hear it. The rules of wisdom are published without in the streets, not in the schools only, or in the palaces of princes, but in the chief places of concourse, among the common people, that pass and repass in the opening of the gates, and in the city. It is comfortable casting the net of the gospel there where there is a multitude of fish, in hopes that some will then be enclosed. This was the case at Jerusalem, Lord Jesus, 4. John xxi. 18. He taught openly in the temple, and in the crowds of people, and in secret said nothing, (John xviii. 20.) and charged his ministers to proclaim his gospel on the house-tops, Matt. x. 27. God says, (Isa. xlv. 19.) I have not spoken in secret. There is no speech or language where wisdom’s voice is not heard. Truth seeks not corners, nor is virtue ashamed of itself. 2. Very pathetically; she cries, and again she cries, one ear in earnest; Jesus stood from the pulpit, and the shouters were among the people, to spread his words with all possible clearness and affection. God is desirous to be heard and heeded. 3. III. What the call of God and Christ is. 1. He reproves sinners for their folly, and their obstinate persisting in it, v. 22. Observe, (1.) Who they are that Wisdom here reproves and expostulates with. In general, they are such as are simple, and therefore might justly be despised; such as are so senseless and shallow that they are despised; but we must us the means even with those that we have little hopes of, because we know not what divine grace may do. Three sorts of persons are here called to; [1.] Simple ones that love simplicity. Sin is simplicity, and sinners are simple ones; they do foolishly, very foolishly; and the condition of those is very bad, who love simplicity, are fond of their simple notions of good and evil, their simple prejudices against the ways of God, and those who are so senseless and shallow that they are doing a simple thing, sporting themselves in their own deceptions, and flattering themselves in their wickedness. [2.] Scorners that delight in scorning. Proud people that take a pleasure in hectoring all about them; jovial people that banter all mankind, and make a jest of every thing that comes in their way. But scoffers at religion are especially meant, the worst of sinners, that scorn to submit to the truths and counsels of God, and to the reproofs and admonitions of his word, and take a pride in running down everything that is sacred and serious. [3.] Fools that hate knowledge. None but fools hate knowledge; those only are enemies to religion that do not understand it aright. And they are the worst of fools that hate to be instructed and reformed, and have a rooted antipathy to serious godliness. (2.) How the reproof is expressed. "And how long will ye utter your words with all possible clearness and affection. God is desirous to be heard and heeded.

The promises are very encouraging. They that love simplicity find themselves under a moral impotency to change their own mind and way, they cannot turn by any power of their own; to this God answers, Behold, I will pour my Spirit unto you; and I will set my Spirit within you, and I will put my Spirit within you, and I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. (Ezr. x. 46.) And work in you both to will and to do that good which, without that grace, you could not do." Help thyself, and God will help thee; stretch forth thy withered hand, and Christ will strengthen and heal it. [1.] The Author of this grace is the Spirit, and
that a promised; I will pour out my Spirit unto you, as oil, as water; you shall have the Spirit in abundance, rivers of living water. John vii. 38. Our heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. [2.] The means of this grace is the word, which, if we take it aright, will turn us; it is therefore promised, "I will make known my words unto you, not only speak them to you, but make them known, give you to understand them. Note, Special grace is necessary to a sin- cestrian, to those who were improved and counselled to any that honestly seek it, and submit to it. 3. He reads the doom of those that continue ob- stinate against all these means and methods of grace. It is large and very terrible, v. 24-32. Wisdom, having called sinners to return, pauses a while, to see what effect the call has, hearten and hears; but they speak not aright, (Jer. viii. 6.) and therefore she goes on to tell them what will be in the end thereof. (1.) The crime is recited, and it is highly pro- voking. See what it is for which judgment will be given against impenitent sinners in the great day, and you will say they deserve it, and the Lord is righteous in it. It is, in short, rejecting Christ, and the offers of his grace, and refusing to submit to the terms of his gospel, which would have saved them both from the wrath of the law of God, and from the dominion of the law of sin. [1.] Christ called to them, to warn them of their danger; he stretch out his hand to offer them mercy, nay, to have helped them out of their misera- ble condition, stretch out his hand for them to take hold of, but they refused, and no man regard- ed; some were careless, and never heeded it, nor took notice of what was said to them; others were worldly, and though they could not avoid hear- ing the voice of Christ, yet they gave him a flat de- nial, they refused, v. 24. They were in love with their folly, and would not be made wise. They were obstinate to all the methods that were taken to reclaim them. God stretch out his hand in mercies bestowed upon them, and, when those would not work upon them, in corrections, but all were in vain, they regarded the operations of his hand no more than the declarations of his mouth. Christ, having said to them that they were rejected, and that every one that rejected him, not only reprieved them for what they did amiss, but counselled them to do better, (these are reproofs of instruction, and evidences of love and good-will,) but they set at nought all his counsel, as not worth heeding, and would none of his reproof; as if they were below them to be reproved by him, and as if they had never done any thing that deserved re- proof, v. 25. This is repeated; (v. 30.) They would none of my counsel, but rejected it with dis- dain; they called reproofs reproaches, and took them amiss; (Jer. vi. 10.) nay, they despised all my reproof, as if it were all a jest, and not worth taking notice of. Note, Those are marked for ruin that are deaf to reproof and good counsel. [3.] They were exhorted to submit to the gov- ernment of right reason and religion, but they re- belled against both. First, Reason should not rule their conscience contrary to the light of divine truth, because it discovered to them the evil of their deeds, John iii. 20. They hated to be told that which they could not bear to know. Secondly, Religion should not rule them, for they did not choose the fear of the Lord, but chose to walk in the way of their hearts, and in the sight of their eyes. They were pressed to set God always before them, but they chose rather to cast him and his fear behind their backs. Note, Those who do not choose the fear of the Lord, show that they have no knowledge. (2.) The sentence is pronounced, and it is cer- tainly ruining; they that will not submit to God’s government will certainly perish in wrath and curse, and the gospel itself will not relieve them. They would not take the benefit of God’s mercy when it was offered them, and therefore justly fall as victims to his justice, ch. xxix. 1. The threat- enings here will have their full accomplishment in the judgment of the great day, and the eternal misery of the impenitent, of which yet there are some earnest in present judgments. [1.] No sinners are in security, and secure; they live at ease, and set sorrow at defiance. But, First, Their calamity will come, (v. 26.) sickness will come, and those diseases which they shall ap- prehend to be the very arrests and harbingers of death. Other troubles will come, in mind, in estate, which will convince them of their folly in setting God at a distance. Secondly, Their calamity will come, and put them into a great fright. Fear seizes them, and they apprehend that bad will be worse. When public judgments are abroad, the sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness surprises the hypocrites; death is the king of terrors to them; (Job xx. 21, &c.—xviii. 11, &c.) this fear will be their continual torment. Thirdly, According to their fright it will be to them. Their fear shall come; the thing they were afraid of shall befall them, it shall come as de- solation, as a mighty deluge, bearing down all be- fore it; it shall be their destruction, their total and final destruction, and it shall come as a whirlwind, which suddenly and forcibly drives away all the chaff. Note, Those that will not admit the fear of God, lay themselves open to all other fears, and their fears will not prove causeless. Fourthly, Their fright will then be turned into despair; Dis- tress and anguish shall come upon them, for, being fallen into the pit they were afraid of, they shall see no way to escape, v. 25. Saul cries out, (2 Sam. i. 9.) Anguish is come upon me; and in hell there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth for anguish; tribulation and anguish to the soul of the sinner, the fruit of the indignation and wrath of the righteous God, Rom. ii. 8, 9. [2.] Now God pities their folly, but he will then laugh at their calamity; (v. 26.) "I also will laugh at your distress, even as you laughed at my counsel." God will make use of the sin of one who rejects his religion, will thereby make themselves ridiculous before the world, and shall show the righteousness will laugh at them, (Ps. lii. 6.) for God himself will. It intimates that they shall be for ever shut out of God’s compassions; they have so long sinned against mercy, that they have now quite sinned it away; his eye shall not spare, neither will he have pity. Nay, his justice being glorified in their ruin, he will be pleased with it, though now he would rather they should turn and live. Ah, I will ease me of my adversaries. [3.] Now God is ready to hear their prayers, and to meet them with mercy, if they would but seek to him for it; but then the door will be shut, and they shall cry in vain; (v. 28.) "Then shall they call upon me, when it is too late, Lord, God, open to me. They would then gladly be beholden to that mercy which now they reject and make light of; but I will not answer, because, when I called, they did not answer me." This is the language of God, Deport from me, I know you not. This has been the case of some even in this life, as of Saul, when God answered not by Urim or propheths; but, ordi- narily, while there is life, there is room for prayer, and hope of speed; and therefore this must refer to the inexorable justice of the last judgment. Then those that slighted God will seek him early, earnest ly, but in vain; they shall not find him, because they sought him not when he might be found, Isa. lv. 6. The rich man in hell begged, but was denied.
[4.] Now they are eager upon their own way, and fond of their own devices; but then they will have enough of them, (v. 31.) according to the proverb, Let men drink as they brew; they shall eat the fruit of their own ways, their wages shall be according to their work, and, as was their choice, so shall their doom be, Gal. vi. 7, 8. Note, First, There is a natural tendency in sin to destruction, Jam. i. 15. Sinners are certainly miserable, if they do but eat the fruit of their own ways. Secondly, They that perish must thank themselves, and can lay no blame upon any other. It is their own device, let them make their boast of it. God chooses their detusions, Isa. lxi. 4.

[5.] Now they value themselves upon their worldly prosperity; but then that shall help to aggravate their ruin, v. 32. First, They are now proud that they can turn away from God, and get clear of the restraints of religion; but, that very thing will, when they see, the remembrance of it shall cut them to the heart. Secondly, They are now proud of their own security and sensuality; but the case of the simple (so the margin reads it) shall stay them; the more secure they are, the more certain and the more dreadful will their destruction be, and the prosperity of fools shall help to destroy them, by puffing them up with pride, guiling their hearts to the world, furnishing them with fuel for their lusts, and heightening their hopes of prosperity; and this is the case of all who are not inclining to God, and are not afraid of offending him. They must, therefore, be afraid of God; or, as Solomon says, Be afraid of God, and he shall keep thee from the evil. He justly compares the fear of God with the fear of a parent; the young man may be under the protection of his kindred, but there is no certain safety except under the protection of God. For those who are under his protection, he shall keep them, but for those that are under the protection of the world, he shall destroy them. And he says concerning such, 1. They shall dwell under the special protection of Heaven, so that nothing shall do him any real hurt, v. 33. 2. They shall be safe, and have no disquieting apprehensions of danger; he shall not only be safe from evil, but quiet from the fear of it. Though the earth be moved, and may shake their fear; Would we be safe from evil, and quiet from the fear of it? Let religion always rule us, and the word of God be our counselor. That is the way to dwell safely in this world, and to be quiet from the fear of evil in the other world.

CHAP. II.

Solomon, having foretold the destruction of those who are obstinate in iniquity, in this chapter applies himself to those who are willing to be taught, and I. He shows them, that, if they would diligently use the means of knowledge and grace, they should obtain of God the knowledge and grace which they seek, v. 1.-9. He shows them of what unpeachable advantage it would be to them. 1. It would preserve them from the snares of evil men, (v. 10.-15.) and of evil women, v. 16.-19. II. It would direct them into, and keep them in, the way of good men, v. 20.-22. So that, in this chapter, we are taught both how to get wisdom, and how to use it when we have it, that we may neither seek it, nor receive it in vain.

1. My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; 2. So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thy heart to understanding; 3. Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; 5. Then shall thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God: 6. For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding; 7. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous; he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. 8. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. 9. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.

Job had asked, long before this, Where shall wisdom be found? Where cometh wisdom? Job xxvii. 19. He had given this general answer, (v. 23.) God knoweth the place of it; but Solomon here goes further, and tells us both where we may find it, and how we may get it. Where are we told, I. What means we must use, that we may obtain wisdom.

1. We must closely attend to the word of God, for that is the word of wisdom, which is able to make us wise unto salvation, 2 Cor. iv. 6. We must, therefore, receive the word of God with all readiness of mind, and bid it welcome, even the commandments as well as the promises, without murmuring or disputing. Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. 3. We must hide them with us, as we do our treasures, which we are afraid of being robbed of. We must not only receive, but retain, the word of God, and lodge it in our hearts, that it may be always ready to us. 4. We must incline our ear to them; we must lay hold on all opportunities of hearing the word of God, and listen to it with attention and seriousness, as those that are afraid of letting it slip. 5. We must apply our hearts to them, else inclining the ear to them will stand us in no stead.

2. We must be much in prayer, v. 3. We must cry after knowledge, as one that is ready to perish, for hunger begs hard for bread; faint desires will not prevail, we must be importunate, as those that knew the worth of knowledge, and our own want of it. We must, therefore, as new-born babes, after the sincere milk of the word, 1 Pet. ii. 2. We must lift up our voice for understanding, lift it up to heaven; from thence these good and perfect gifts must be expected, Jam. i. 17. Job xxxviii, 34. We must give our voice to understanding, so the word is; speak for it, vote for it; submit the tongue to the command of wisdom; we must consecrate our voice to it; having applied our heart to it, we must employ our voice in seeking for it. Solomon could write probatom est, upon this method; he prayed for wisdom, and so obtained it.

3. We must be willing to take pains; (v. 4.) we must seek it as silver, preferring it far before all the wealth of this world, and labouring in search of it as those who dig in the mines, who undergo great toil, and run great hazards, with indefatigable industry, and invincible constancy and resolution, in pursuit of the cress; or as those who hunt up caribou, up early, up late, and turn every stone to get money, and fill their treasures. Thus diligent must we be in the use of the means of knowledge, following on to know the Lord.

II. What success we may hope for in the use of these means; our labour shall not be in vain; for, 1. We shall know how to maintain our acquaintance and communion with God; Thou shalt understand the fear of the Lord; (v. 5, 6.) thou shalt know how to worship him aright, shalt be led into the meaning and mystery of every ordinance, and be enabled to
answer the end of its institution." Therefore shall find the knowledge of God, which is necessary to our fearing him aright. It concerns us to understand how much it is our interest to know God, and to evidence it by acceptable affections toward him, and adorations of him. 2. We shall know how to carry it into practice in mankind (v. 9.) "Thou shalt understand, by the word of God, righteousness, and judgment, and equity; shall learn those principles of justice and charity, and fair dealing, which shall guide and govern thee in the whole course of thy conversation, shall make thee fit for every relation, every business, and faithful to every trust. It shall give thee not only a right notion of justice, but a disposition to practise it, and to render to every man his due; for this will not only do thee right, but shall perfectly understand it." This will lead them into every good path, for the scripture will make the man of God perfect. Note, Those have the best knowledge who know their duty, Ps. cxli. 10.

III. What ground we have to hope for this success in our pursuits of wisdom; we must take our encouragement herein from God only, v. 6., 8.

1. God has wisdom to bestow, v. 6. The Lord not only is wise himself, but he gives his wisdom to such as seek it, and that is more than thousand men in the world can do, for it is God's prerogative to open the understanding. All the wisdom that is in any creature is his gift, his free gift, and he gives it liberally, (Jam. 1. 5.) has given it to many, and is still giving it; to him, therefore, let us apply ourselves for it.

2. He has blessed the world with a revelation of his will. Out of his mouth, by the law and the prophets, by the written word, and by his ministers, both of whom are sent to the children of men, come knowledge and understanding; such a discovery of truth and good, as, if we admit and receive the impressions of it, will make us truly knowing and intelligent. It is both an engagement, and an encouragement, to search after wisdom, that we have the scriptures to search in, in which we may find it if we seek it diligently.

3. He has particularly provided that good men, who sincerely desire to do his will, shall have that knowledge and understanding which are necessary for them, John vii. 17. Let them seek, and they shall find it, let them ask, and it shall be given them, v. 7, 8. Observe here, (1.) Who they are that are thus favoured. They are the righteous, on whom the image of God is renewed, which consists in righteousness; and those who walk uprightly, who are honest in their dealings both with God and man, and make conscience of doing their duty as far as they know it. They are his saints, devoted to his honour, and set apart for his service. (2.) What it is that is provided for them. [1.] Instruction. The means of wisdom are given to all, but wisdom itself, sound wisdom, is laid up for the righteous, laid up in Christ their Head, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and who is made of God to us Wisdom. The same that is the Spirit of revelation in the word, is a Spirit of wisdom and understanding, that he who is justified shall receive, and who is justified, shall understand his way; and it is sound wisdom, its foundations firm, its principles solid, and its products of lasting advantage. [2.] Satisfaction. Some read it, He lays up substance for the righteous, not only substantial knowledge, but substantial happiness and comfort. Prov. viii. 21. Riches are things that are not, and they that have them only fancy themselves happy; and wisdom is laid up in Christ, in such great store and in heaven, for the righteous, will make them truly, thoroughly, and eternally, happy. [3.] Protection. Even they who walk uprightly may be brought into danger, for the trial of their faith, but God is, and will be, a Buckler to them, so that no thing that happens to them, shall do them any real hurt, or possess them with any terrific apprehensions; they are safe, and they shall think themselves so. "Fear not, Abrahams, I am thy Shield. It is their way, the paths of judgment, in which they walk, that the Lord knoweth and owns, and takes care of. [4.] Grace to persevere to the end. If we depend upon God, and seek to him for wisdom, he will uphold us in our integrity, will enable us to keep the paths of judgment, however we may be tempted to turn aside out of them; for he preserveth the way of his saints, that it be not perverted, and so preserves them in it safe and blameless to his heavenly kingdom. The assurance God has given us his grace, if duly improved, will excite and quicken our endeavours in doing our duty. Work out your salvation, for God works in you.

10. When wisdom entereth into thy heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul, 11. Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee; 12. To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things; 13. Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness; 14. Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked; 15. Whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths: 16. To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words; 17. Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God. 18. For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead; 19. None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life: 20. That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous. 21. For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. 22. But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.

The scope of these verses is to show, 1. What great advantage true wisdom will be to us; it will keep us from the paths of sin, which lead to ruin, and will therein do us a greater kindness than if it enriched us with all the wealth of the world. 2. What good use we should make of the wisdom God gives us; we must use it for our own guidance in the paths of virtue, and for the arming of us against temptations of every kind. 3. By what rules we may try ourselves, whether we have this wisdom or no; this tree will be known by its fruits; if we be wise, it will be evident by our care to avoid all evil company and evil practices.

This wisdom will be of use to us, 1. For our preservation from evil, from the evil of sin, and consequently from the evil of trouble that attends it. In general, (v. 10., 11.) "When wisdom has entire possession of thee it will keep thee." And when has it an entire possession of us.

1. When it has dominion over us; when it not only fills the head with notions, but enters into the heart. It is our business to lay up for the righteous, and has a command and power to become so; when it is upon the throne there, and gives law to the affections and passions; when it enters into the heart, as the leaven into the dough, to diffuse its relish there, and to change it into its own image; then it is likely to do us good. 2. When
we have knowledge in it: when knowledge becomes pleasant to the soul; "When thou beginnest to relish it as the most agreeable entertainment, and art subject to its rules, of choice, and with satisfaction; when thou callest the practice of virtue, not a slavery and a task, but liberty and pleasure, and a life of serious goodness, the most comfortable life a man can live in this world, then thou wilt find the reward of it." This must be kept in mind, that these responsibilities should be in some respects unpleasant to the soul, yet even those must be pleasant to the soul. When it is come to this, with us, discretion shall preserve us, and keep us. God keeps the way of his saints, (v. 8.) by giving them discretion to keep out of harm's way, to keep themselves, that the wicked one touch them not. Note, A principle of grace reigning in the heart, will be a powerful preservative both against corruptions of sin and temptations without. Ecc. ix. 18, 19. More particularly, wisdom will preserve us,

(1.) From men of corrupt principles; atheistical, profane men, who make it their business to debase young men's judgments, and instil into their minds prejudices against religion, and arguments for vice. "It will deliver thee from the way of the evil man;" (v. 12.) and a blessed deliverance it will be, as from the very jaws of death, from the way in which the wicked man walketh, in which he would persuade thee to walk." The enemy is spoken of as a crafty adversary, (v. 12.) an evil man, but afterward as many; (v. 13.) there is a club, a gang, of them, that are in confederacy against religion, and join hand in hand for the support of the devil's kingdom and the interests of it.

[1.] They have a spirit of contradiction to that which is good; they speak froward things; they say as they can against religion, both to show their own enmity against, and to delude others from it. They are advocates for Satan, they plead for Balaam, and pervert the right ways of the Lord. How peevishly will profane wits argue for sin; and with what frowardness will they carp at the word of God! Wisdom will keep us either from conversing with such men, or at least from being ensnared by them.

[2.] They are themselves apostates from that which is good, and such are commonly the most malicious and dangerous enemies religion has. Notwithstanding, says Julian, (v. 13.) They leave the paths of uprightness, which they were trained up in, and had set out in; shake off the influences of their education, and break off the thread of their hopeful beginnings, to walk in the ways of darkness, in those wicked ways, which hate the light, in which men are led blindfold by ignorance and error, and which lead men into utter darkness. The ways of sin are ways of darkness, uncomfortable and unsafe; what fools are they that leave the plain, pleasant, light, paths of uprightness, to walk in those ways? Ps. lix. 22. John i. 11. 5. 6.

[3.] They take a pleasure in sin; both in committing it themselves, and in seeing others commit it; (v. 14.) They rejoice in an opportunity to do evil, and in the accomplishment and success of any wicked project. It is sport to a fool to do mischief; now, they are sight more grateful to them, than to see the frowardness of the wicked, and to see those that are hopeful drawn into the ways of sin, and then to see them hardened and confirmed in those ways. They are pleased if they can discern that the devil's kingdom gets ground; (see Rom. i. 28.) such a height of impiety are they arrived at.

[4.] They are resolute in sin; (v. 15.) Their ways are crooked, a great many windings and turnings to escape the perils of their convictions, and break the force of them; some sly excuse, some subtle evasion, or their deceitful hearts furnish them with, for the strengthening of their hands in their wickedness; and, in the crookedness of that labyrinth, they secure themselves from the arrests of God's word and their own consciences; for they are froward in their paths, they are resolved to go on in them, whatever is said against it. Every wise man will shun the company of such as these.

(2.) From women of corrupt practices. The former lead to spiritual wickedness, the lusts of the flesh, the unspiritual and unrefined mind; these lead to frowardly lusts, which defile the body, and live in the senses, and against the soul. The adulteress is here called the strange woman, because no man that has any wisdom or goodness in him, will have any acquaintance with her; she is to be shunned by every Israelite, as if she were a heathen, and a stranger to that sacred commonwealth. A strange woman indeed! utterly estranged from all principles of reason, virtue, and honour.

It is a great mercy to be delivered from the allurements of the adulteress, considering,

[1.] How false she is. Who will have any dealings with those that are made up of treachery? She is a strange woman; for, First, She is false to him whom she entices; she speaks fair, tells him how much she admires him above any man, and what a kindness she has for him; but she flatters with her words, she has no true affection for him; nor any desire of his welfare, any more than Dili to the kind of a by-street bawd; all her arguments are to pocket, and gratify a base lust of her own. Secondly, She is false to her husband, and violates the sacred obligation she lies under to him; she was the guide of her youth, by marrying him she chose him to be so, and submitted herself to his conduct, with a promise to attend him only, and forsake all others; but she has forsaken him, and therefore it cannot be thought that she should be faithful to any one else; and whoever entertains her is a weaker with her in her falsehood. Thirdly, She is false to God himself; she forgets the covenant of her God, the marriage covenant, (v. 17.) to which God is not only a witness, but a party, for he having instituted the ordinance, both sides vow to be true to each other. It is not her husband only that she sins against, but her God, who therefore will judge wholemongers and adulterers, because they despise the oath, and break the covenant, Ezekiel x. 18. 19.

[2.] How fatal it will prove to those that fall in league with her, v. 18. 19. Let the sufferings of others be our warnings; take heed of the sin of whoredom; for, First, The ruin of those who are guilty of it is certain and unavoidable, if they do not repent. It is a sin that has a direct tendency to the killing of the soul, the extinguishing of all good affections and dispositions in it, and exposing of it to the wrath and curse of God, and the sword of his justice. Those that live in forbidden pleasures are dead while they live. Let discretion preserve every man, not only from the evil woman, but from the evil house, for the house incites to death, it is in the road that leads directly to eternal death; and her paths unto Rephaim, to the giants, so some read it, the sinners of the old world, who, living in luxury and excess of riot, were cut down out of time, and their foundation overthrown with a flood; and the word there is, a flood of sin, and such is the certainty of its overthrow, with the consideration of everlasting torments which follow them, where the worm dies not, nor is the fire quenched. See Math. v. 28. 29. Secondly, Their repentance and recovery are extremely hazardous; none, or next to none that go unto her, return again. It is very rare that any who are caught in this snare of the devil recover themselves, so much is the heart hardened, and the mind blinded, by the deceitfulness of this sin. Having once lost their hold of the
paths of life, they know not how to take hold of them again, but are perfectly besotted and bewitched with those base lusts. Many learned interpreters think that this caution against the strange woman, beside the literal sense, is to be understood figuratively, as a caution, 1. Against idolatry, which is spiritual whoredom. Wisdom will keep thee from all familiarity with the worshippers of images, and all inclination to join with them, which had for many ages been of such pernicious consequence to Israel, and proved so to Solomon himself. 2. Against the debauching of the intellectual powers and faculties of the soul, by the lusts and appetites of the body. Wisdom will keep thee from being captivated by the carnal mind, and from subjecting the spirit to the dominion of the flesh, that notorious adultery which forsakes its guide, violates the covenant of our God, which inclines to death, and which when it has got an undisputed dominion, makes the case of the soul desperate.

II. This wisdom will be of use to guide and direct us in that which is good; (v. 20.) That thou mayest walk in the way of good men. We must therefore avoid the way of the evil man, and the strange woman, that we may walk in good ways; we must therefore cease to do evil, that we may learn to do well. Note. 1. There is a way which is peculiarly the way of good men, the way in which good men, as such, and as far as they have really been such, have always walked. 2. It will be our wisdom to walk in that way, to ask for the good old way, and walk therein, Jer. vi. 16. Heb. vi. 12.—xii. 1. And we must not only walk in that way awhile, but we must keep it, keep in it, and never turn aside out of it: The paths of the righteous are the paths of life, and we, all alike, having taken hold of that, will keep their hold of; "That thou mayest imitate those excellent persons, the patriarchs and prophets, (so Bishop Patrick paraphrases it,) and be preserved in the paths of those righteous men who followed after them."

We must not only choose our way in general, by the good examples of the saints, but must also take directions from them in the choice of our particular paths, and never be behind the track, and go forth by the footsteps of the flock.

Two reasons are here given why we should thus choose.

(1.) Because men's integrity will be their establishment, v. 21. It will be the establishment, [1.] Of their persons; The upright shall dwell in the land, peaceably and quietly, as long as they live: and their uprightness will contribute to it, as it settles their minds, guides their counsels, gains them the good-will of their neighbours, and entitles them to God's special favour. [2.] Of their families; The perfect, in their posterity, shall remain in it. They shall dwell and remain for ever in the heavenly Canaan, of which the earthly one was but a type.

(2.) Because men's iniquity will be their destruction, v. 22. See what comes of the wicked, who choose the way of the evil man; they shall be cut off; not only from heaven hereafter, and all hopes of that, but from the earth now, on which they set their affections, and in which they lay up their treasure. They think to take root in it, but they and their families shall be rooted out of it, in judgment to them, but in mercy to the earth. There is a day coming, which shall leave them neither root nor branch, Mal. iv. 1. Let that wisdom then enter into our hearts, and be pleasant to our souls, which will keep us out of a way that will end thus.

CHAP. III.

This chapter is one of the most excellent in all this book; both for argument to persuade us to be religious, and for direction therein. I. We must be constant to our duty, because that is the way to be happy, v. 1-4. II. We must live a life of dependence upon God, because that is the way to be safe, v. 5. III. We must keep up the fear of God, because that is the way to be healthful, v. 7, 8. IV. We must lay up wealth with God, because that is the way to be rich, v. 9, 10. V. We must bear afflictions well, because that is the way to get good by them, v. 11, 12. VI. We must take pains to obtain wisdom, because that is the way to be lovely, and to gain by her, v. 13-20. VII. We must always govern ourselves by the rules of wisdom, of right reason and religion, because that is the way to be always easy, v. 21, 28. VIII. We must do all we can and be kind to our neighbours, because, according a man and a woman is just, charitable or uncharitable, humble or haughty, accordingly they shall receive of God, v. 27…35. From all which it appears what a tendency religion has to make men both blessed and blessings.

1. My son, forget not my law; but let thy heart keep my commandments:
2. For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.
3. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee; bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thy heart.
4. So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.
5. Trust in the Lord with all thy heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
6. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

We are here taught to live a life of communion with God; and without controversy great is this mystery of godliness, and of great consequence to us, and as here showed, will be of unspeakable advantage.

I. We must have a continual regard to God's precepts, v. 1, 2.

We must, 1. Fix God's law, and his commandments, as our rule, by which we will in every thing be ruled, and to which we will yield obedience. 2. We must acquaint ourselves with them; for we cannot be said to forget that which we never knew.

3. We must remember them so that they may be ready to use when we have occasion to use them.

4. Our wills and affections must be subject to them, and must in every thing conform to them. Not only our heads, but our hearts, must keep God's commandments; in them, as in the ark of the testimony, both the tables of the law must be deposited.

To encourage us to submit ourselves to all the restraints and injunctions of the divine law, we are assured, v. 2. that it is the certain way to long life and prosperity. (1.) It is the way to be long-lived.

God's commandments shall add to us length of days; to a good useful life on earth, they shall add an eternal life in heaven, length of days for ever and ever, Ps. xxi. 4. God shall be our Life, and the Length of our days, and that will be indeed long life, with an addition. But, because length of days may possibly become a burthen and a trouble, it is promised, (2.) That it shall prove the way to be easy too, so that even the days of old age shall not be evil days, but days in which thou shalt have reason to be sure; Peace shall they be continually adding to thee. As grace increases, peace shall; and of the increase of Christ's government and peace, in the heart as well as in the world, there shall be no end. Great and growing peace have they that love the law.

II. We must have a continual regard to God's promises, which go along with his precepts, and are to be received, and retained with them; (v. 3.) "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee; God's mercy in promising, and his truth in performing; do not forfeit those, but live up to them, and preserve
thine interest in them; do not forget these, but live upon them, and take the comfort of them; bind them about thy neck, as the most graceful ornament."

It is the greatest honour we are capable of in this world, to have an interest in the mercy and truth of God. "Write them upon the table of thine heart, as dear to thee, thy portion, and most delightful entertainment; take a pleasure in applying them, and thinking them over." Or it may be meant of the mercy and truth which are our duty; piety and sincerity; charity toward men, fidelity toward God. Let these be fixed and commanding principles in thee.

To encourage us to do this, we are assured, (v. 4.) that God has prepared both himself and ourselves both to our Creator and fellow-creatures; So shalt thou find favour, and good understanding. 1. A good man seeks the favour of God, in the first place, is ambitious of the honour of being accepted of the Lord, and he shall find that favour, and with it a good understanding; God will make the best of him, and put a favourable construction upon what he says and does. He shall be owned as one of Wisdom's children, and shall have praise with God, as one having that good understanding which is ascribed to all them that do his commandments. 2. He wishes to have favour with men also, (as Christ had, Luke ii. 52.) to be accepted of the multitude of his brethren; (Esth. x. 3.) and that he shall have, they shall understand him aright, and in his dealings with them he shall appear to be prudent, shall act intelligently and with discretion. He shall have good success, so some translate it; the common effect of good understanding.

III. We must have a continual regard to God's providence, must own and depend upon it in all our affairs, both by faith and prayer.

1. By faith. We must repose an entire confidence in the wisdom, power, and goodness, of God, assuring ourselves of the extent of his providence to all the creatures and all their actions. We must therefore trust in the Lord with all our hearts; (v. 5.) we must believe that he is able to do what he will, wise to do what is best, and good, according to his promise, to do what is best for us, if we love him and serve him. We must, with an entire submission and satisfaction, depend upon him to perform all things for us, and not lean to our own understanding; as if we could, by any forecast of our own, without God, help ourselves, and bring our affairs to a good issue. Those who know themselves to be the creatures of God's providence, have no need to be a broken reed, which, if they lean to, it will certainly fail them. In all our conduct, we must be diffident of our own judgment, and confident of God's wisdom, power, and goodness, and therefore must follow Providence, and not force it. That often proves best which was least our own doing.

2. By prayer; (v. 6.) In all thy ways acknowledge God. We must not only in our judgment believe that God is the Lord of our being, serving and disposing of us and all our affairs, but we must solemnly own it, and address ourselves to him accordingly. We must ask his leave, and not design any thing but what we are sure is lawful. We must ask his advice, and beg direction from him, not only when the case is difficult, (when we know not what to do, no thanks to us that we have our eyes up to him,) but in every case, be it ever so plain; many cases as those who know the race is not to the swift; we must refer ourselves to him, as one from whom our judgment proceeds, and patiently, and with a holy indifference, wait his award. In all our ways that prove direct, and fair, and pleasant, in which we gain our point to our satisfaction, we must acknowledge God with thankfulness. In all our ways that prove cross and uncomfortable, and that are hedged up with thorns, we must acknowledge God with submission. Our eye must be ever towards God, to him we must, in every thing, make our requests known, as Jeph-thah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh, Judg. xxi. 11.

For our encouragement to do this, it is promised, "He shall direct thy paths; so that thy way shall be safe and good, and the issue happy at last." Note, They that put themselves under a divine guidance, shall always have the benefit of it. God will give them that wisdom which is profitable to direct, so that they shall not turn aside into the by-paths of sin, and then will himself so wisely order the event, that they shall be to their mind, or (which is equiva-lent) for their good. They that faithfully follow the pillar of cloud and fire, shall find, that, though it may lead them about, it leads them the right way, and will bring them to Canaan at last.

7. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil. 8. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones. 9. Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase; 10. So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. 11. My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction: 12. For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

We have before us three exhortations, each of them enforced with a good reason.

1. We must live in a humble and dutiful subjection to God and his government; (v. 7.) "Fear the Lord, as your sovereign Lord and Master; be ruled in every thing by your religion, and subject to the divine will. This must be, 1. A humble subject; Be not wise in thine own eyes. Note, There is not a greater enemy to the power of religion, and the fear of God in the heart, than conceitedness of our own wisdom. They that have an opinion of their own sufficiency, think it below them, and a disparagement to them, to take their measures from, much more to hamper themselves with, religion's rules. 2. A dutiful subjection; I Fear the Lord, and depart from evil. Thus he that anything to offend him, and to forfeit his care. To fear the Lord, so as to depart from evil, is true wisdom and understanding; (Job xxviii. 28.) those that have it are truly wise, but self-denyingly so, and not wise in their own eyes.

For our encouragement thus to live in the fear of God, it is here promised (v. 8.) that it shall be as serviceable even to the outward man as our necessary food; it will be nourishing; it shall be health to thy navel; it will be strengthening, it shall be mar-row to thy bones. The prudence, temperance, and sobriety, the calmness and composure of mind, and the good government of the appetites and passions, which religion teaches, tend very much not only to the health of the soul, but to a good habit of body, which is very desirable, and without which our other enjoyments in this world are insipid. Envy is the sin of the martians, because it is the sorrow of the world dries them, but hope and joy in God are marrow to them.

II. We must make a good use of our estates, and that is the way to increase them, v. 9. 10. Here is, 1. A precept which makes it our duty to serve God with our estates; Honour the Lord with thy substance. It is the end of our creation and redemption to honour God, to be to him for a name and a praise; we are no other way capable of serving him
than in his honour. His honour we must show forth, and the honour we have for him. We must honour him, not only with our bodies and spirits, which are his, but with our estates too, for they also are his; and we all our appurtenances must be devoted to his use. Worldly wealth hath its point, and will yet, such as it is, we must honour God with it, and then, if ever, it becomes substantial. We must ho-

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cour God, (1.) With our increase. Where riches increase, we are tempted to honour ourselves, (Deut. viii. 17.) and to set our hearts upon the world; (Ps. lxxi. 10.) but the more God gives us, the more we should study to honour him. It is meant of the increase of the earth, for we live upon annual produce: and perhaps it also intends our children: and, by this, the doctrine is, (2.) With all our increase; as God has prospered us in every thing, we must honour him. Our law will allow a prescription for a modus decimandia—a modus of tithing, but none de non decimando—for being excluded from paying tithes. (3.) With the first-fruits of all, as Abel, Gen. iv. 4. This was the law, (Exod. xxviii. 19.) and the prophets, Mal. iii. 10. God, who is the first and best, must have the first and best of every thing; his right is prior to all others, he must have it first. Note, It is our duty to make our worldly estates serviceable to our religion; to use them, and the interest we have by them, for the promoting of religion; to do good to the poor with what we have, and abound in all works of piety and charity, devising liberal things.

2. A promise, which makes it our interest to serve God with our estates; it is the way to make a little more, and much more; it is the surest and safest method of thriving; So shall thy barns be filled with plenty. He does not say, thy bags, but, thy barns; not, thy wardrobe replenished, but, thy presses; God shall bless thee with an increase of that which is for use, not for show or ornament; for spending and laying out, not for hoarding and laying up. They that do good with what they have, shall have more to do more good with. Note, If we make our worldly estates serviceable to our religion, we shall find religion very serviceable to the prosperity of our worldly affairs. Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and most of the comfort of it. We mistake, if we think that giving will undo us, and make us poor; no, giving for God's honour will make us rich, Hag. ii. 19. What we gave we have.

III. We must conduct ourselves aright under our afflictions, v. 11, 12. This the apostle quotes, (Heb. xii. 5.) and calls it an exhortation, which speaks unto us as unto children, with the authority and affection of a father. We are here in a world of troubles. Now observe,

1. What must be our care when we are in affliction; we must neither despise it, nor be weary of it. His exhortation before, was to those that are rich and in prosperity, here, to those that are poor and in adversity. (1.) We must not despise an affliction, be it ever so light and short, as if it were not worth our notice; or as if it were not sent on an errand, and therefore required no answer. We must not be stocks and stones, and Stoics, under our afflictions; insensible of them, hardening ourselves under them, and concluding we can easily get through them without God. (2.) We must not be weary of an affliction, be it ever so heavy and long, nor faint under it, so the apostle renders it; not be dispirited, dispossessed of our own souls, or driven to despair; but use any means to take comfort or relief, and the redress of our grievances. We must not think that the affliction either presses harder, or continues longer, than is meet; nor conclude that deliverance will never come, because it does not come so soon as we expect it.

2. What will be our comfort when we are in afflic-

tion. (1.) That it is a divine correction; it is the chastening of the Lord; which, as it is a reason why we should submit to it, (for it is folly to con-
tend with a God of incontestable sovereignty, and irresistible power;) so it is a reason why we should be satisfied in it; for we may be sure that a God of unspotted purity does us no wrong, and that a God of infinite goodness means us no hurt. It is from God, and therefore must not be despised; for a slight put upon the messenger, is an affront to him that sends him. It is from God, and therefore we must not be weary of it, for he knows our frame, both what we need, and what we can bear. (2.) That it is a fatherly correction; it comes not from his vindictive justice as a Judge, but out of that affection as a Father. The father corrects the son when he loves, nay, and because he loves him, and desires he may be wise and good. He delights in that in his son, which is amiable and agreeable, and therefore corrects him for the prevention and cure of that which would be a deformity to him, and an ally to his delight in him. Thus God hath said, do many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, Rev. iii. 19. This is a far more comfortable reflection under their afflictions. [1.] That they not only consist with, but flow from, covenant-love. [2.] That they are so far from doing them any real hurt, that, by the grace of God working with them, they do a great deal of good, and are happy means of their sanctification.

13. Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding: 14. For the merchandize of it is bet-
ter than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. 15. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared to her. 16. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. 17. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. 18. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her. 19. The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. 20. By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew.

Solomon had pressed us earnestly to seek diligently for wisdom, (ch. ii. 1, &c.) and had assured us that we should succeed in our sincere and constant pursuits. But the question is, What shall we get by it when we have found it? Prospect of advantage is the spring and spur of industry; he therefore shows us how much it will be to our profit, laying this down for an unquestionable truth, Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man which consists in the knowledge and love of God, and an entire conformity to all the intentions of his truths, providences, and laws. Now observe,

I. What it is to find wisdom, so as to make happy by it.

1. We must get it; he is the happy man, who, having found it, makes it his own, gets both an inter-
est in it, and the possession of it; who draws out understanding; so the word is; (1.) Who derives it from God; having it not in himself, he draws it with the bucket of prayer from the Fountain of all wisdom, who gives liberally. (2.) Who takes pains for it, as he does who draws ore out of the mine; if it does not come easily, we must put
the more strength to draw it. (3.) Who improves in it; who having some understanding, draws it out by growing and wise age, and multiplying it, leas only.

(4.) Who does good with it; who draws out from the stock he has, as wine from the vessel, and communicates to others, for their instruction, things new and old. That is well got, and to good purpose, that is thus used to good purpose.

2. We must trade it. We read here of the merchandise of wisdom; which intimates, (1.) That we must make it our business, and not a by-business; as the merchant must be the gain of his trade, and time upon his merchandise. (2.) That we must venture all in it, as a stock in trade, and be willing to part with all for it. This is that pearl of great price, which, when we have found it, we must willingly sell all for the purchase of. Matth. xiii. 45, 46. Buy the truth; (Prov. xxi. 23.) he does not say at what rate, because we must buy it at any rate, rather than miss it.

3. We must lay hold on it, as we lay hold on a good bargain when it is offered us, which we do the more carefully, if there be danger of having it taken out of our hands. We must apprehend with all our might, and put forth our utmost vigour in the pursuit of it; lay hold on all occasions to improve in it, and catch at the least of its dictates.

4. We must retain it; it is not enough to lay hold on wisdom, but we must keep our hold, hold it fast, with a resolution never to let it go, but to persevere in the ways of wisdom to the end. We must susta in it, so we read it; must embrace it with all our might, as we do that which we would sustain. We must do all we can to support the declining interests of religion in the places where we live.

II. What the happiness of those is who do find it.

1. It is a transcendent happiness, more than can be found in the wealth of this world, if we had ever so much of it, v. 14, 15. It is not only a surer, but a more gainful, merchandise to trade for wisdom, for Christ, and grace, and spiritual blessings, than for silver and gold, and rubies; suppose a man to have got these in abundance, may, to have all the things he can desire of this world; and who is it that ever had that? (1.) All this would not purchase heavenly wisdom; no, it would utterly be contemned; it cannot be gotten for gold, Job xxviii. 15, &c. (2.) All this would not counterweigh the want of heavenly wisdom, nor be the ransom of a soul lost by its own folly. (3.) All this would not make a man half so happy, no, not half as much as he would without it; when he who have true wisdom, though they have none of all these things. (4.) Heavenly wisdom will procure that for us, and secure that to us, which silver, and gold, and rubies, will not be the purchase of.

2. It is the true happiness; for it is inclusive of, and equivalent to, all those things which are supposed to make men happy, v. 16, 17. Wisdom is here represented as a bright and refreshing crown, resplendent over her faithful and loving subjects, and offering them to all that will submit to her government.

(1.) Is length of days a blessing? Yes, the most valuable; life includes all good, and therefore she offers that in her right hand. Religion puts us into the best methods of prolonging life, entitles us to the promises of it, and though our days on earth should be no more than our neighbour's, yet it will secure to us a better life in the other world.

(2.) Are riches and honour accounted blessings? They are so, and them she reaches out with her left hand. For as she is ready to embrace those that submit to her with both arms, so she is ready to give out to them with both hands. They shall have the wealth of this world, as far as Infinite Wisdom sees good for them; the true riches, however, by which men are rich toward God, are secured to them; nor is there any honour, by birth or purchase, comparable to that which attends religion; it makes the righteousness of the true faithful an advantage to their neighbour, recommends men to God, commands respect and veneration with all the sober part of mankind, and will in the other world make those that are now buried in obscurity to shine forth as the sun.

(3.) Is pleasure courted as much as any thing? It is so, and it is certain that true piety has in it the greatest true pleasure. Her ways are ways of pleasure, in which she has directed us to walk, are such as we shall find abundance of delight and satisfaction in. All the enjoyments and entertainments of sense are not comparable to the pleasure which gracious souls have in communion with God and doing good. That which is the only right way to bring us to our journey's end, we must walk in, fair or foul, pleasant or unpleasant; but the way of religion, as it is the right way, so it is a pleasant way, it is smooth and clean, and strewed with roses. All her ways are fair paths. There is not only peace in the end, but peace in the way; not only in the way of religion in general, but in the particular paths of that way, in all her paths, all the several acts, instances, and duties, of it. One does not im better what the other sweetness, as it is with the allays of this world; but they are all peace, not only sweet, but safe; the saints enter into peace on this side heaven, and enjoy a present sabbatism.

3. It is the happiness of paradise; (v. 16.) She is a tree of life. True grace is that to the soul which the tree of life would have been, from which our first parents were shut out for eating of the forbidden tree; it is a seed of immortality, a well of living water springing up to life eternal. It is an earnest of the New Jerusalem, in the midst of which is the tree of life, Rev. xxii. 1—4. They that feed and feast on this heavenly wisdom, shall not only be cured by it of every fatal malady, but shall find an antidote against age and death; they shall eat and live for ever.

4. It is a participation of the happiness of God himself, for wisdom is his everlasting glory and blessedness, v. 19, 20. This should make us in love with the wisdom and understanding which God gives, that the Lord by wisdom founded the earth, so that it cannot be removed, nor can ever fail of answering all the ends of its creation, to which it is admirably and exceptionally fitted; by understanding he has likewise established the heavens, and directed all the motions of them in the best manner. The heavenly bodies are vast, yet there is no flaw in them; numerous, yet no disorder in them; the motion rapid, yet no wear or tear; the depths of the sea are broken up, and thence come the waters beneath the firmament, and the clouds drop down the dew, the waters from above the firmament; and all this by the divine wisdom and understanding, without which there would be no wisdom; for he will thereby be thoroughly furnished for every good word and work. Christ is that Wisdom by whom the worlds were made, and still consists, happy therefore are they to whom he is made of God Wisdom, for he has wherewithal to make good all the foregoing promises of long life, riches, and honour; for all the wealth of heaven, earth, and seas, are his.

21. My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion. 22. So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. 23. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. 24. When thou lies
down, thou shalt not be afraid; yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet. 25. Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. 26. For the Lord shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.

Solomon having pronounced them happy, who not only lay hold on wisdom, but retain her, here exhorts us therefore to retain her, assuring us that we ourselves shall have the comfort of doing so.

I. The exhortation is, to have religion's rules always in view, and always at heart, v. 21. 1. To have them always in view; "My son, let them not depart from thine eyes; let not thine eyes ever depart from them to wander after vanity. Have them always in mind, and do not forget them; be ever and anon thinking of them, and conversing with them, and never imagine that thou hast looked upon them long enough, and that it is time now to lay them by; but, as long as thou livest, keep up, and cultivate, thine acquaintance with them. He who learns to write, must always have his eye upon his copy, and not let that be out of his sight; and to the words of wisdom must they, in like manner, have a constant respect, who will walk circumspectly. 2. To have them always at heart; for it is in that treasury, the hidden man of the heart, that we must keep sound wisdom and discretion, keep to the principles of it, and keep in the ways of it. It is wealth that is worth keeping.

II. The argument to enforce this exhortation, is taken from the unspeakable advantage which wisdom, thus kept, will be of to us. 1. In respect of strength and satisfaction; "It will be life to thy soul; (v. 22.) it will quicken thee to thy duty, when thou beginnest to be slack and remiss, it will revive thee under thy troubles, when thou beginnest to droop and despond. It will be thy spiritual life, an earnest of life eternal." Life to the soul is life indeed. 2. In respect of honour and reputation; It shall be grace to thy neck, as a chain of gold, or a jewel. Grace to thy jaws, so the word is; gracious to thy taste and relish, so some; it shall influence grace unto all thou sayest, so others; shall establish thee with acceptable words, which shall gain thee credit. 3. In respect of safety and security; this he insists upon in four verses, the scope of which is to show that the effect of righteousness, (which is the same with wisdom here) is quietness and assurance for ever, Isa. xxxii. 17. Good people are taken under God's special protection, and therein they may have an entire satisfaction. They are safe, and the danger is past.

1. In their motions by day, v. 23. "If our religion be our companion, it will be our convoy; Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely; the natural life, and all that belongs to it, shall be under the protection of God's providence; the spiritual life, and all its interests, under the protection of his grace, so that thou shalt be kept from falling into sin or trouble. Wisdom will direct us into, and keep us in, the safe way; the fear of the Lord will enable us to walk in it with a holy security; the way of duty is the way of safety. "We are in danger of falling, but wisdom will keep thee, that thy foot shall not stumble at those things which are an offence and overthrow to many, but which thou shalt know how to get over."

2. In their rest by night, v. 24. In our retirements, we lie exposed, and are most subject to frights; "But keep up communion with God, and keep a good conscience, and then, when thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid of fire, or thieves, or spectres, or any of the terrors of darkness, knowing that where God is, and all our friends are asleep, yet He that keeps Israel and every man born for like, neither slumbers nor sleeps; and to him thou hast committed thyself, and taken shelter under the shadow of his wings. Thou shalt lie down, and not need to sit up to keep guard; having lain down, thou shalt sleep, and not have thine eyes held waking by care and fear; and thy sleep shall be sweet and refreshing to thee, being not disturbed by any alarms from without or from within." Ps. iv. 8.—xxvi. 7. The way to have a good night, is, to keep a good conscience; and the sleep, as of the labouring man, so of the wise and godly man, is sweet.

(3.) In their greatest straits and dangers. Integrity and uprightness will preserve us, so that we need not be afraid of sudden fear, v. 25. The harms that surprise us unthought of, giving us no time to arm ourselves by consideration, are most likely to put us into confusion. But let not the wise and good man forget himself, and then he will not give way to any fear that has torment, be the alarm ever so sudden. Let him not fear the desolation of the wicked, when it comes; [1.] The desolation which the wicked ones make of religion and the religious; though it comes, and seems to be just at the door, yet be not afraid of it; for though God may make use of the wicked as instruments of his people's correction, yet he will never suffer them to be the authors of their desolation. Or rather, [2.] The desolation which wicked men will be brought into in a moment. It will come, and timorous saints may be apprehensive that they shall be involved in it; but let this be their comfort, that though judgments last generally, at least promiscuously, yet God knows who is his, and how to separate between the precious and the vile. Therefore be not afraid of that which appears most formidable, for (v. 26.) "The Lord shall be not only the Shelterer to keep thee safe, but thy Confidence to keep thee secure, so that thy foot shall not be taken by thine enemies, nor insnared by thine own fears." God has engaged to keep the feet of his saints.

27. Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. 28. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and tomorrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee. 29. Deceive not against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee. 30. Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm. 31. Envy not thou the oppressor, and choose none of his ways. 32. For the froward is abomination to the Lord: but his secret is with the righteous. 33. The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just. 34. Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly. 35. The wise shall inherit glory; but shame shall be the promotion of fools.

True wisdom consists in the due discharge of our duty toward man, as well as toward God, in honesty as well as piety, and therefore we have here divers excellent precepts of wisdom, which relate to our neighbour.

1. We must render to all their due, both in justice and charity, and not delay to do it; (v. 27, 28.)
"Withhold not good from them to whom it is due; (either for want of love to them, or through too much love to thy money,) when it is in the power of thine hand to do it, for if it be not, it cannot be expected; but it was thy own admission, if thou dost by all thy presumptiveness, desirest thyself to do justly and show mercy, and it ought to be the greatest of thy griefs, if God had disabled thee; not so much that thou art straitened in thy own comforts and conveniences, as that thou hast not wherewithal to give to those to whom it is due." Withhold it not; this implies that it is called for and expected, but that the hand is drawn in, and the bowls of compassion are shut up. We must not hinder others from doing good to them, or not for the best reasons. Withhold it not by thee to-day, hast it in the power of thine hand, say not to thy neighbour, Go thy way for this time, and come at a more convenient season, and I will then see what will be done; to-morrow I will give; whereas thou art not sure that thou shalt live till to-morrow, or that to-morrow thou shalt have it by thee; be not thus loath to part with thy money upon a good account; make not excuses to shift off a duty that must be done; nor deliver not thyself bound in and in suspense, or to show the authority which the giver has over the beggar; but readily and cheerfully, and from a principle of conscience toward God, give good to those to whom it is due; to the lords and owners of it, so the word is, to those who, upon any account, are entitled to it. This requires us, 1. To pay our just debts, without fraud, covet, or delay. 2. To give wages to those that have earned it. 3. To provide for our relations, and those that have dependence on us, for to them it is due. 4. To render dues both to church and state, magistrates and ministers. 5. To be ready to all acts of friendship and humanity, and in every thing to be neighbourly; for these are things that are due by the law of doing as we would be done by. 6. To be charitable to the poor and necessitous; if others want the necessary supports of life, and we have wherewithal to supply them, we must look upon it as due to them, and not withhold it; alms are called righteousness, because they are a debt to the poor; and a debt which we must not defer to pay; Bis dat, qui cito dat—He gives twice, who gives speedily.

II. We must never design any hurt or harm to any body; (v. 29.) "Deceit not evil against thy neighbour; do not contrive how to do him an ill turn undiscovered, to prejudice him in his body, goods, or good name; and the rather, because he dwelleth securely by thee, and, having given thee no provocation, entertains no jealousy or suspicion of thee, and therefore is off his guard." It is against the laws both of honour and friendship to do a man an ill turn, and give him no warning; Cursed be he that smites his neighbour secretly. It is a most base, ungrateful thing, if our neighbours have a good opinion of us, that we will do them no harm, and we hence take advantage to cheat and injure them. We must not deuise evil to the harmless; (v. 30.) "Do not strive with a man without cause; contend not for that which thou hast no title to; resist not that as a provocation, which peradventure was but an oversight. Never trouble thy neighbour with frivolous complaints and accusations, or vexatious law-suits, when either there is no harm done thee, or none worth speaking of, or thou mightest right thyself in a friendly way;" law must be the last refuge; for it is not only our duty, but our interest, and it is one way, to live pleasantly with all men. When accounts are balanced, it will be found there is little left by striving.

IV. We must not envy the prosperity of evil doers, v. 31. This caution is the same with that which is so much insisted on, Ps. lxxxvii. "Envy not the offspring; though he be rich and great, though he live in ease and pleasure, and make all about him to stand in awe of him, yet do not think him a happy man, nor wish thyself in his condition. Choose none of his ways, do not imitate him, nor take the pleasures that he sinneth as a reward;" for we think of doing as he does, though thou wert sure to get by it all that he has, for it would be dearly bought.

Now, to show what little reason saith to envy sinners, Solomon here, in the four last verses of the chapter, compares the condition of sinners and saints together, (as his father David had done, Ps. xxxvii.) sets the one over against the other, that we may see how happy the saints are, though they may fall short of the perfect and the wretched are, though they be offspring. Men are to be judged of as they stand with God, and as he judges of them, not as they stand in the world's books; those are in the right who are of God's mind; and, if we be of his mind, we shall see, whatever pretence one sinner may have to envie another, saints are so happy themselves, that they have no reason at all to envy any sinner, though his condition be ever so prosperous. But, 1. Sinners are hated of God, but saints are loved, v. 32. The froward sinners, who are continually going from-ward him, whose lives are a perverse contradiction to his will, they are abomination to the Lord; He, that hates nothing that he has made, abhors those who have thus marred themselves; they are not only abominable in his sight, but an abomination; the righteous therefore have no reason to envy them, for they have his secret with them; they are his favourites, he has that communion with them which is a secret to the world, and in which they have a joy that a stranger does not intermeddle with; he communicates to them the secret tokens of his love; his covenant is with them; they know his mind, and the meanings and intensions of his providence, better than others can. Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do? 2. Sinners are under the curse of God, they and their houses; saints are under his blessing, they and their habitation, v. 33. The wicked has a house, a strong and stately dwelling perhaps, but the curse of the Lord is upon it, it is in it, and though the affairs of the family may prosper, yet the very blessings are cursed, Mal. ii. 2. There is leanness in the soul, when the body is fed to the full, Ps. civ. 15. The curse may work silently and slowly; but it is as a fretting leprosy, it will consume the timber thereof, and the stones thereof; Zech. v. 4. Hab. ii. 11. The just have a habitation, a poor cottage, (the word used for sheep-cotes,) a very mean dwelling; but God blesses it, he is continually blessing it, from the beginning of the year to the end of it. The curse or blessing of God is upon the house, according as the inhabitants are wicked or godly; and it is certain that a blessed family, though poor, has no reason to envy a cursed family, though rich. 3. God puts contempt upon sinners, but shows respect upon sinners. Two kinds of contempt are mentioned, (1.) Those who humble themselves shall certainly be abused; surely he scorns the scorners. Those who scorn to submit to the discipline of religion, scorn to take God's yoke upon them, scorn to be beholden to his grace, who scoff at godliness and godly people, and take a pleasure in bantering and exposing them, God will scorn them, and lay them open to scorn before all the world: he despises their impotent malice, sits in heaven and laughs at them. Ps. lxi. 4. He calumniates them to his face. (2.) Those who humble themselves shall be exalted, for he gives grace to the lowly; he works that in them which puts honour upon them, and for which they are accepted of God, and approved of men. Those who patiently bear contempt from scornful
men shall have respect from God and all good men, and then they have no reason to envy the scorers, or to choose their ways.

4. The end of sinners will be everlasting shame, the end of saints endless honour, v. 35. (1.) Sifts are wise men, and act wisely for themselves; for though their religion now wraps them up in obscurity, and lays them open to reproach, yet they are sure to inherit glory at last, the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; they shall have it, and have it by inheritance, the sweetest and surest tenure; God gives them grace, (v. 34.) and therefore they shall inherit glory, for grace is glory, 2 Cor. iii. 18. (2.) Sifts are fools, for they are not only preparing disgrace for themselves, but at the same time flattering themselves with a prospect of honour, as if they took only the way to be great. Their end will manifest their folly; shame shall be their promotion. And it will be so much the more their punishment, as it will come instead of their promotion; it will be all the promotion they must ever expect, that God will be glorified in their everlasting confusion.

CHAP. IV.

When the things of God are to be taught, precept must be upon precept, and line upon line; not only because the things themselves are of great worth and weight, but because men's minds, at the best, are apt to admit them, and commonly prejudiced against them; and therefore Solomon, in this chapter, with a great variety of expression, and a pleasant powerful flood of divine eloquence, inculcates the same things that he had pressed upon us in the foregoing chapters. Here is, 1. An earnest exhortation to the study of wisdom, that is, of true religion and godliness, borrowed from the good instructions which his father gave him, and enforced with many considerable arguments, v. 1. 13. II. A necessary caution against bad company, and all fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, v. 14. 19. III. Particular directions for the attaining and preserving of wisdom, and bringing forth the fruits of it, v. 20. 27. So plainly, so pressingly, is the case laid before us, that we shall be far from inexusable if we perish in our folly.

1. **Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.** 2. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law. 3. For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. 4. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live. 5. Get wisdom, get understanding; forget it not: neither decline from the words of my mouth. 6. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. 7. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. 8. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. 9. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee. 10. Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many. 11. I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in the right paths. 12. When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened: and when thou munnest, thou shalt not stumble.

Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life.

Here we have,

1. The invitation which Solomon gives to his children to come and receive instruction from him; (v. 1.) I. "Let my own children, in the first place, receive and give good heed to those instructions which I set down for the use of others also." Note, Magistrates and ministers, who are intrusted with the conduct of larger societies, are concerned to take a more than ordinary care for the good instruction of their own families; from this duty their public workmen are not free. This charity must begin at home, though it must not end there; for he that has not his children in subjection with all gravity, and does not take pains in their good education, how shall he do his duty as he ought to the church of God? 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5. The children of those that are eminent for wisdom and public usefulness, ought to improve in knowledge and grace, in proportion to the advantages they derive from their relation to such parents. Yet it may be observed, to save both the credit and the comfort of those parents whose children do not answer the hopes that arose from their education, that Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, was far from being either one of the wisest, or one of the best; we have reason to think that thousands have got more good by Solomon's proverbs than his own son did, to whom they seem to have been dedicated. 2. Let all young persons, in the days of their childhood and youth, take pains to get knowledge and grace, for that is their learning age, and then their minds are formed and seasoned. He does not say, My children, but, Ye children; we read of but one son that Solomon had of his own. He is willing to set up for a school-master, and to teach other people's children; for, at that age, there is most hope of success; the branch is easily bended when it is young and tender. 3. Let all that would receive instruction come with the disposition of children, though they be grown persons; let all prejudices be laid aside, and the mind be as white paper; let them be dutiful, tractable, and self-diffident, and take the words as the word of a father, which comes both with authority and affection. We must see it coming from God as our Father in heaven, to whom we pray, from whom we expect blessings, the Father of our spirits, to whom we ought to be in subjection, that we may live. We must look up upon our teachers as our fathers, who love us, and seek our welfare; and therefore, though the instruction carry it in reproof and correction, for so the word signifies, yet we must bid it welcome.

Now, (1.) To recommend it to us, we are told, not only that it is the instruction of a father, but that it is understanding, and therefore should be welcome to intelligent creatures. Religion has reason on its side, and we are taught to take it by fair means. It is a law indeed, (v. 2.) but that law is founded upon doctrine, upon unquestionable principles of truth, upon good doctrine, which is not only faithful, but worthy of all acceptance. If we admit the doctrine, we cannot but submit to the law.

(2.) To rivet it in us, we are directed to receive it as a gift, to attend to it with all diligence, to attend so as to know it, for otherwise we cannot do it, we cannot do it, by disowning the doctrine, or disobeying the law.

II. The instructions he gives them. Observe, 1. How he came by these instructions; he had them from his parents, and teaches his children the same that they taught him, v. 3. 4. Observe, (1.) His parents loved him, and therefore taught him; I was my father's son. David had many sons, but
Solomon was his son, indeed, as Isaac is called, (Gen. xvii. 19.) and for the same reason, because on him the covenant was entailed. He was his father's darling above any of his children. God had a special kindness for Solomon, (the prophet called him Jedidiah, because the Lord loved him, 2 Sam. xii. 25.) and, for that reason, David had a special kindness for him, for he was a man after God's own heart. If parents may ever love one child better than others, they may not be tickled in the least by any signs that God does so. He was tender, and only beloved, in the sight of his mother: surely there was a manifest reason for making such a distinction, when both the parents made it. Now we see how they showed their love; they cated him, kept him to his book, and held him to a strict discipline. Though he was a prince, and heir-apparent to the crown, yet they did not let him live at large; nay, therefore they tutored him. The strictest discipline was them at David's instance, though he was so attached to his Education, because he had seen the ill effects of an undue indulgence in Adonijah, whom he had not crossed in any thing, (1 Kings i. 6.) as also in Absalom. (2.) What his parents taught him he teaches others. Observe, [1.] When Solomon was grown up, he not only remembered, but took a pleasure in repeating, the good lessons his parents taught him when he was a child. He did not forget them, so deep were the impressions made by them on him. He had no occasion to be ashamed of them, such a high value had he for them, nor did he look upon them as the childish things, the mean things, which, when he became a man, a king, he should put away, as a disparagement to him; much less did he repeat them, as some wicked children have done, to ridicule them, and make his companions merry with them, priding himself that he was got clear from grave lessons and restraints. [2.] Though Solomon was a prince, and highly honored, yet, when he was to teach wisdom, he did not think it below him to quote his father, and to make use of his words. They that would learn well, and teach well, in religion, must not affect new-found notions and new-coined phrases, so as to look with contempt upon the knowledge and language of their predecessors; if we must keep to the good old way, why should we scorn the good old words? Jer. vi. 16. [3.] Solomon, having been well instructed in his parents' words, thought it his duty to oblige his children a good education, the same that his parents had given him; and this is one way in which we must require our parents for the pains they took with us, even by showing pity at home, 1 Tim. v. 4. They taught us, not only that we may learn ourselves, but that we might teach our children, the good knowledge of God, Ps. lxxviii. 6. And we are false to a trust if we do not, for the sacred deposit of religious doctrine and law was lodged in our hands, with a charge to transmit it pure and entire to those that shall come after us, 2 Tim. ii. 2. [4.] Solomon enforces his exhortations with the authority of his father David a man famous in his generation upon all accounts. Be it taken notice of, to the honour of religion, that the wisest and best men in every age have been most zealous, not only for the practice of it themselves, but for the propagating of it to others. They could converse in the things which we have learned, knowing of whom we have learned them, 2 Tim. iii. 14.

2. What those instructions were, v. 4-13. [1.] By way of precept and exhortation. David, in teaching his son, though he was a child of great capacity and quick apprehension, to show that he was in good earnest, and to affect his child the more with what he said, expressed himself with warmth and importunity, and inculcated the same thing again and again. So children must be taught; (Deut. vi. 7.) Thou shalt teach them diligently upon thy children. David, though he was a man of public business, and had tutors for his son, took all this pains with himself.

First, He recommends to him his Bible and his catechism, as the means, his father's word, (v. 4.) the words of his mouth, (v. 5.) his sayings, (v. 10.) all the good lessons he had taught him; and, perhaps, he means particularly the book of Psalms, many of which were instrucive, and two of them are expressly said to be for Solomon. These, and all his other words, Solomon must have an eye to. 1. He must hear and receive them, (v. 10.) diligently attend to them, and imbibe them, as the earth drinks in the rain that comes often upon it, Heb. vi. 7. God thus bespeaks our attention to his word, Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings. 2. He must hold fast the form of sound words which he had heard from his father, (v. 9.) that he may retain my words; and except the word be hid in the heart, lodged in the will and affections, it will not be retained. 3. He must govern himself by them; Keep my commandments, obey them, and that is the way to increase in the knowledge of them, John vii. 17. 4. He must stick to them, and abide by them; *Decline not from the words of my mouth, (v. 3.) as fearing they will be too great a check upon thee, but take fast hold of instruction, (v. 13.) as being desirable, all that is done and said, and let not his hand relax, and let not his heart be prevailed upon to depart from them. Those that have a good education, though they strive to shake it off, will find it hang about them a great while, and if it do not, its case is very sad.

Secondly, He recommends to him wisdom and understanding as the end to be aimed at in the use of these means; that wisdom which is the principal wisdom, get that: Quod cupiat est sapientiae eam accep- tumque, non solum sibi, sed omnibus, and be sure to mind that branch of wisdom which is the top branch of it, and that is the fear of God, ch. i. 7. Junius and Tremellius. A principal of religion in the heart, this is the one thing needful: therefor,

1. Get this wisdom, get this understanding, v. 5. And again, "Get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding, v. 7. Pray for it, take pains for it, give diligence in the use of all appointed means for it, 2 Tim. iv. 17. of all this gate, Prov. viii. 34. Get dominion over thy corruption, over thy f l i e s; get possession of wise principles, and the habits of wisdom: get it by experience, get it above all thy getting, be more in care, and take more pains, to get this, than to get the wealth of this world: whatever thou forgettest, get this; reckoning it a great achievement, and pursue it accordingly. True wisdom is God's gift, and yet we are here commanded to get it, because God gives it to those that labour for it; yet, after all, we must not say, Our might, and the power of our hand, have gotten us this wealth.

2. Forget her not, (v. 5.) forsake her not, (v. 6.) let her not go, (v. 13.) but keep her. Those that have got this wisdom must take heed of losing it again by returning to folly; it is indeed a good part that shall not be taken from us; but then we must take heed lest we throw it from us, as these do that forget it first, and then pursue it; it is nothing to us, and we shall forsake it, and turn out of its good ways. That good thing which is committed to us we must keep, and not let it drop, through carelessness, nor suffer it to be forced from us, nor suffer ourselves to be wheedled out of it; never let go such a jewel.

3. Love her, (v. 6.) and embrace her, (v. 8.) as worldly men love their wealth, and set their hearts upon it. Religion should be very dear to us, dearer than any thing in this world; and if we cannot reach to be great masters of wisdom, yet let us be true lovers of it; and what grace we have, let us
embrace it with a sincere affection, as those that adore its beauty.

4. "Exalt her; (v. 8.) always keep up high thoughts of religion, speak of it with value and fervency, and do all thou canst to bring it into reputation, and maintain the credit of it among men; concur with God in his purpose, which is, to magnify the law and make it honorable, and do what thou canst to hinder the discouragement of children not only justify her, but magnify her, and prefer her before that which is dearest to them in this world. In honouring those that fear the Lord, though they are low in the world, and in regarding a poor wise man, we exalt wisdom.

[2.] By way of motive and inducement, thus to labour for wisdom, and submit to the conduct of it, consider,

First, It is the main matter, and that which ought to be the chief and continual care of every man in this life; (v. 7.) Wisdom is the principal thing; other things which we are solicitous to get, and keep, are nothing to it; it is the whole of man, Eccl. xii. 13. It is that which recommends us to God, which beautifies the soul, which enables us to answer the end of our creation, to live to some good purpose in the world, and to get to heaven at last; and the principal thing it is the principal thing.

Secondly, It has reward and equity on its side; (v. 11.) "I have taught thee in the way of wisdom, true wisdom, and it will be found to be at last; I have led thee, not in the crooked way of carnal policy, which does wrong, under colour of wisdom, but in right paths, agreeable to the eternal rules and reasons of good and evil." The rectitude of the divine nature appears in the rectitude of all the divine laws. Observe, David not only taught his son by good instructions, but led him both by a good example, and by applying general instructions to particular cases; so that nothing was wanting on his part to make him wise.

Thirdly, It would be much for his own advantage; "If thou be wise and good, thou shalt be so for thyself.

1. "It will be thy life, thy comfort, thy happiness; what thou canst not live without," Keep my commandments, and live, v. 4. That of our Saviour agrees with this, If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments, Matt. xix. 17. It is upon pain of death, eternal death, and in prospect of life, eternal life, that we are required to be religious; "Receive wisdom's sayings, and the years of thy life shall be many, (v. 10.) as many in this world as Infinite Wisdom sees fit, and in the other world thou shalt live that life, the years of which shall never be numbered. Keep her therefore, whatever it cost thee, for she is thy life, v. 13. All thy satisfaction will be found in this;" and a soul without true wisdom and grace is really a dead soul.

2. "It will be thy guard and guide, thy convey and conduct, through all the dangers and difficulties of thy journey through this wilderness. Love wisdom, and cleave to her, and she shall preserve thee, she shall keep thee (v. 6.) from sin, the worst of evils, the worst of enemies; she shall keep thee from hurting thyself, and then none else can hurt thee." As we say, "Keep thy shop, and thy shop will keep thee;" so "Keep thy wisdom, and thy wisdom will keep thee." It will keep us from straits and stumbling-blocks in the management of ourselves and our affairs, v. 12. (1.) That our steps be not straitened when we go, that we bring not ourselves into such straits as David was in, 2 Sam. xx. 14. They that make God's word their rule shall walk at liberty, and be at ease in themselves. (2.) That our feet do not stumble when we run. If wise and good men be put upon sudden resolves, the certain rule of God's word, which they go by, will keep them even then from stumbling upon any thing that may be pernicious. Integrity and uprightness will preserve us.

3. "It will be thy honour and reputation; (v. 8.) Exalt wisdom, do thou but shew thy good-will to her advancement, and, though she needs not thy service, she will abundantly recompense it, she shall promote thee, she shall bring thee to honour." Solomon was to be a king, but his wisdom and virtue would be more his honour than his crown or people; that was it for which all his neighbours had him so much in veneration; and, no doubt, in his reign, and David's, wise and good men stood fairest for preferment. However, religion will, first or last, bring all those to honour that sincerely embrace her; they shall be accepted of God, respected by all wise men, owned in the great day, and shall inherit everlasting glory. This he insists on, (v. 9.) "She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace, in this world, shall recommend thee both to God and man, and in the other world a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee; a crown that shall never totter, a crown of glory that shall never wither." That is the true honour which attends religion; Nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus—Virtue is the only nobility! David having thus recommended wisdom to his son, no marvel that, when God bid him ask what he would, he prayed, Lord, give me a wise and an understanding heart. We should make it appear by our prayers how well we were taught.

14. Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. 15. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. 16. For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall. 17. For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence. 18. But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. 19. The way of the wicked is as darkness; they know not what they stumble.

Some make David's instructions to Solomon, which began v. 4. to continue to the end of the chapter; nay, some continue them to the end of the ninth chapter; but it is more probable that Solomon begins here again, if not sooner. In these verses, having expressed us to walk in the paths of wisdom, he cautions us against the paths of the wicked. 1. We must take heed of the ways of sin, and avoid them; every thing that looks like sin, and leads to it. 2. In order to this, we must keep out of the ways of sinners, and have no fellowship with them. For fear of falling into wicked courses, we must shun wicked company. Here is,

1. The caution itself, v. 14, 15:

1. We must take heed of falling in with sin and sinners; Enter not into the paths of the wicked. Our teacher, having, like a faithful guide, showed us the right paths, (v. 11.) here warns us of the by-paths into which we are in danger of being drawn aside. Those that have been well educated, and trained up in the way they should go, let them never turn aside into the way they should not go; let them not so much as enter into it, no, not to make trial of it, lest it prove a dangerous experiment, and difficult to retreat with safety. "Venture not into the company of these that are infected with the plague, no, not though thou think thyself guarded with an antidote."
2. If at any time we are inveigled into an evil way, we must hasten out of it. "If, ere thou wast aware, thou didst enter in at the gate, because it was wide, yet go not on in the way of evil men. As soon as thou art made sensible of thy mistake, retire immediately, take not a step more, stay not a minute longer, in the way that certainly leads to destruction.

3. We must dread and denounce the ways of sin and sinners. "The way of evil men is as a pleasant way and sociable, and the nearest way to the compassing of some secular end we may have in view; but it is an evil way, and will end ill, and therefore, if thou love thy God and thy soul, avoid it, pass not by it, that thou mayest not be tempted to enter into it; and, if thou find thyself near it, turn from it, and pass away, and get as far off as thou canst." The manner of expression intimates the imminent danger we are in, the need we have of this caution, and the great importance of it; and that our watchmen are, or should be, in good earnest in giving us warning. It intimates likewise at what a distance we should keep from sin and sinners; he does not say, Keep at a due distance, but at a great distance, the further the better; never think you can get far enough from it; escape for thy life, look not behind thee.

II. The reasons to enforce this caution.

1. "Consider the character of the men whose way thou art warned to shun:" they are mischievous men, (v. 16, 17.) they not only care not what hurt they do to those that stand in their way, but it is their business to do mischief, and their delight, purely for mischief’s sake. They are continually designing and endeavouring to cause some to fall, to ruin them body and soul. Wildness and malice are in their nature, and violence in all their actions. They are spiteful in the highest degree for, (1.) Mischief is rest and sleep to them. As my soul was affection as a covetous man has when he has got money, an ambitious man when he has got preferment, and a good man when he has done good, so much have they when they have said or done that which is injurious and ill-natured; and extremely uneasy if they cannot get their envy and revenge gratified; as Haman, to whom every thing was unpleasant, as long as Mordecai was unaimed. It intimates, therefore, whatever the heart may be, either in their mischievous pursuits; they will rather want sleep than want the pleasure of being vexatious. (2.) Mischief is meat and drink to them, they feed and feast upon it; they eat the bread of wickedness, (they eat up my yeeple as they eat bread, Ps. xiv. 4.) and drink the wine of violence, drink iniquity like water, Job xvi. 16. All they eat and drink is get by rapine and oppression. Do wicked men think the time lost in which they are not doing hurt? Let good men make it as much their business and delight to do good; Amici, diem feridi—Friends, I have lost a day. And let all that are wise, and wish well to themselves, avoid the society of the wicked; for, [1.] It is very scandalous; for there is no disposition of mind that is a greater reproach to the human nature, a greater enemy to human society, a bolder defiance to God and conscience, that has more of the Devil in it, or is more serviceable to him, than to do mischief, and to do vex, and hurt, and ruin everybody. [2.] It is very dangerous. "Shun those that delight to do mischief, as thou tenderest thine own safety; for, whatever friendship they may pretend, one time or other they will do thee mischief; thou wilt ruin thyself if thou dost concur with them, (ch. i. 18.) and they will ruin thee if thou dost not." 

2. "Consider the character of the way itself which thou art warned to shun, compared with the right way which thou art invited to walk in." (1.) The way of righteousness is light; (v. 18.) The path of the just, which they have chosen, and in which they walk, is as light; the light shines on their ways, (Job xxxi. 28.) and makes them both safe and pleasant. Christ is their Way, and he is the Light. They are guided by the word of God, and that is a light to their feet; they themselves are light in the Lord, and they walk in the light as he is in the light, (12.) and this light shines on their ways. They shine on themselves, in the joy and comfort of it; it shines before others in the lustre and honour of it; it shines before men, who see their good works, Matth. v. 16. They go on in their way with a holy security and serenity of mind, as those that walk in the light. It is as the morning-light, which shines out of obscurity, (Isa. lviii. 8, 10.) and puts an end to the works of darkness. [2.] It is a growing light; it shines more and more; not like the light of a menial candle, which soon disappears, or that of a candle, which burns dim, and burns down; but like that of the rising sun, which goes forward shining, mounts upward shining. Grace, the guide of this way, is growing; he that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger; that joy which is the pleasure of this way, that honour which is the brightness of it, and all that happiness which is indeed its light, shall be still increasing. [3.] It will arrive, in the end, at the perfect day. The light of the day-spring will at length be noon-day light, and that is it which the enlightened soul is pressing toward. The saints will not be perfect till they come to heaven, but there they shall themselves shine as the sun when he goes forth in his strength, Matth. xiii. 43. Then their graces and joys shall be all consummate. Therefore it is our wisdom to keep close to the path of the just. (2.) The way of sin is as darkness, v. 19. The works he had cautioned ns not to have fellowship with, are, works of darkness. What true pleasure and satisfaction can they have who know no pleasure and satisfaction but what they have in doing mischief? What sure guide have they that cast God’s word behind them? The way of the wicked is dark, and therefore dangerous; for they stumble, and yet know not at what they stumble; they fall into sin, but are not aware which way the temptation came, by which they were overthrown, and therefore they fall; but in this light they are avoided, or they are led into trouble, but never inquire wherefore God contends with them; they consider not that they do evil, nor what will be in the end of it, Ps. lxixii. 5. Job xviii. 5, 6. This is the way we are bid to shun.

20. My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings: 21. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thy heart: 22. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh. 23. Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. 24. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. 25. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. 26. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. 27. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

Solomon, having warned us not to do evil, here teaches us how to do well. It is not enough for us to shun the occasion of sin, but we must study the methods of duty
1. We must have a continual regard to the word of God, and endeavour that it may be always ready to us. The sayings of wisdom must be our principles by which we govern our ways, and our reason to warn us of duty and danger; and therefore, (1.) We must receive them readily; "Incline thine ear to them, (v. 20.) humbly bow to them, diligently listen to them." The attentive hearing of the word of God is a good sign of a work of grace begun in the heart, and a good means of carrying it on. It is to be hoped that those are resolved to do their duty who are inclined to know it. (2.) We must retain them faithfully; (v. 21.) we must lay them before us as a rule; "Let them not depart from thine eyes; view them, review them, and in every thing aim to conform to them." We must lodge them within us, as a commanding principle, the influences of which are diffused throughout the whole man; "Keep them in the midst of thine heart, as things dear to thee, and which thou art afraid of losing." Let the word of God be written in the heart, and that which is written there will remain.

The reason why we must thus make much of the words of wisdom, is, because they will be both food and physic to us, like the tree of life, Rev. xxvii. 2. Ezek. xlviii. 12. They that seek and find them, find and keep them, shall find in them, [1.] Food; For they are life unto those that find them, v. 22. As the spiritual life was begun by the word as the instrument of it, so by the same word it is still nourished and maintained. We could not live without it, we may by faith live upon it. [2.] Physic. They are health to all their flesh, to the whole man, both body and soul; they help to keep both in good plight. They are health to all flesh, so the Seventy. There is enough to cure all the diseases of this distempered world. They are a medicine to all their flesh, so the word is; to all their corruptions; for they are called flesh; to all their grievances, which are as thorns in the flesh. There is in the word of God a proper remedy for all our spiritual maladies.

2. We must keep a watchful eye, and a strict hand, upon all the motions of our inward man, v. 23. Here is, (1.) A great duty required by the laws of wisdom, and in order to our getting and preserving wisdom; Keep thy heart with all diligence. God, who gave us these souls, gave us a strict charge with them; Man, woman, keep thy heart; take heed to thy spirit, Deut. iv. 9. We must maintain them, jealous of ourselves, and set a strict guard, accordingly, upon all the avenues of the soul; keep our hearts from doing hurt, and getting hurt, from being defiled by sin, and disturbed by trouble; keep them as our jewel, as our vineyard; keep a conscience void of offence; keep out bad thoughts; keep up good thoughts; keep the affections upon right objects, and in due bounds. Keep with all keepings, so the word is; there are many ways of keeping one another, and God will help at any hand, and we must use them all in keeping our hearts; and all little enough, so deceitful are they, Jer. xvii. 9. Or, above all keepings; we must keep our hearts with more care and diligence than we keep any thing else. We must keep our eyes, (Job xxxi. 1.) keep our tongues, (Ps. xxxiv. 13.) keep our feet, (Eccl. v. 1.) but, above all, keep our hearts. (2.) A good reason given for this care; because any thing out of its place, and that which well kept will flow living issues, good products, to the glory of God, and the edification of others. Or, in general, all the actions of the life flow from the heart, and, therefore, keeping, that is making the tree good and healing the springs. Our lives will be regular or irregular, comfortable or uncomfortable, according as our hearts are kept or neglected.

3. We must set a watch before the door of our lips, that we offend not with our tongue; (v. 24.) Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips. Our hearts being naturally corrupt, out of them a great deal of corrupt communication is apt to come, and therefore we must conceive a great dread and detestation thereon, in other words, cursing, swearing, lying, sulking, brawling, filthiness, and foolish talking, all which come from a froward mouth, and perverse lips, that will not be governed either by reason or religion, but contradict both; and which are as unsightly and ill-favoured before God, as a crooked distorted mouth drawn awry is before men. All manner of tongue-sins we must, by constant watchfulness and steadfast resolution, shut from us, put far from us; abstaining from all words that have an appearance of evil, and fearing to learn any such words.

4. We must make a covenant with our eyes; "Let them look right on, and straight before thee, v. 25. Let the eye be fixed and not wandering, let it notrove after every thing that presents itself, for then it will be diverted from good, and insurmount in evil. Turn it from beholding vanity; let thine eye be single, and not divided; let thine intentions be sincere and uniform, and look not to the end." We must keep our eye upon our Master, and be careful to approve ourselves to him; keep our eye upon our rule, and conform to that; keep our eye upon our mark, the prize of the high calling, and direct all toward it. Oculum in metam—The eye upon the goal.

5. We must act considerately in all we do; (v. 26.) Ponder the path of thy feet; weigh it, so the word is. "Put the word of God in one scale, and what thou hast done, or art about to do, in the other, and see how they agree; be nice and critical in examining whether thy way be good before the Lord, and whether it will end well." We must consider our past ways, and examine what we have done, and our present ways, What are we doing? Whither are we going? See that ye walk circumspectly. It concerns us to consider, what are the duties, and what the difficulties, what are the advantages, and what the dangers, of our way, that we may act accordingly. "Do nothing rashly."

6. We must act with steadiness, caution, and consistency; "Let all thy ways be established, (v. 26.) and be not unstable in them, as the double-minded man is; halt not between two, but go on in an even uniform course of obedience; turn not to the right hand, nor to the left, for there are errors on both sides, and Satan gains his point, if he prevail to draw us aside either way. Be very careful to remove thy foot from evil; take heed of extremities, for in them there is evil, and let thine eyes look right on, that then mayest keep the golden mean." Those that would approve themselves wisewill always be watchful.

CHAP. V.

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of ch. 3. To the wise man more is given, not to be grievous, for it is safe, Phil. iii. 1. Here is, 1. An exhortation to get acquaintance with, and submit to, the laws of wisdom in general, v. 1, 2. 1. A particular caution against the sin of whoredom, v. 3, 14. 11. Remedies prescribed against that sin, v. 15., v. 20. 2. A regard to God's omniscience, v. 21. 3. A dread of the miserable end of wicked people, v. 22, 23. And all little enough to arm young people against those fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

1. My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding;

2. That thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge. 3. For the lips of a strange woman drop as a honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil.
4. But her ene is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. 5. Her feet go down to death, her steps take hold on hell. 6. Lest thou shouldst ponder the path of life, her ways are movable, that thou canst not know them. 7. Hear me now, therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth. 8. Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house; 9. Lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel: 10. Lest strangers be filled with thy wealth, and thy labours be in the house of a stranger; 11. And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed. 12. And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; 13. And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me! 14. I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly.

Here we have,
1. A solemn preface to introduce the caution that follows, v. 1. 2. Solomon here addresses himself to his son, that is, to all young men, as unto his children, whom he has an affection for; and some influence upon. In God's name he demands attention; for he proceeds by divine inspiration, and is a prophet, though he begins not with, Thus saith the Lord. "Attend, and how thin ear; not only hear what is said, and read what is written, but apply thy mind to it, and consider it diligently." To gain attention, he urges, 1. The excellency of his discourse; "It is my wisdom, it is my understanding; if I undertake to teach thee wisdom, I cannot prescribe any thing to be more properly called so; moral philosophy is my philosophy, and that which is to be learned in my school." 2. The usefulness of it; "Attend to what I say," (1) "That thou mayest act wisely; that thou mayest regard discretion." Solomon's lectures are not designed to fill our heads with notions, with matters of nice speculation, or doubtful disputation, but to guide us in the government of ourselves, that we may act prudently, so as becomes us, and so as will be for our true interest. (2) "That thou mayest speak wisely; that thy lips may keep knowledge; and thou mayest have it upon thy tongue's end," (as we say,) "for the benefit of those with whom thou dost converse." The priest's lips are said to keep knowledge; (Mal. ii. 7.) but they that are ready and mighty in the scriptures, may, not only in their devotions, but in their discourses, be spiritual priests.

II. The caution itself, and that is, to abstain from fleshly lusts, from adultery, fornication, and all uncleanness. Some apply this figuratively, and by the adulteress woman here understand idolatry, false doctrine, which tend to debauch men's minds and manners; or, the sensual appetite, to which it may as fitly as any thing be applied; but the primary scope of it is plainly to warn us against seven-commandments-sins, which youth is so prone to, the temptations to which are so violent, the examples of which are so many, and which, where admitted, and allowed themselves to be indulged in, go to the soul, that it is not strange that Solomon's cautions against it are so very pressing, and so often repeated. Solomon here, as a faithful watchman, gives fair warning to all, as they tender their lives and comforts, to dread this sin, for it will certainly be their ruin. Two things we are here warned to take heed of;
1. That we do not listen to the charms of this sin. It is true, the lips of a strange woman drop as a honeycomb; (v. 3.) the pleasures of fleshly lust are tempting, (like the wine that gives its colour to the cup) and moves itself right; its mouth, the kisses of its mouth, the mouth, the words of its mouth, smoother than oil, that the poisonous pill may go down glily, and there may be no suspicion of harm in it.

But consider, (1.) How fatal the consequences will be; how bitter the fruit which the sinner will have of his honey and oil, when the end will be, [1.] The terrors of conscience; it is bitter as wormwood; (v. 1.) which was in the mouth, rises in the stomach, and turns sour there; it curdles the reflection, like a two-edged sword; take it which way you will, it wounds. Solomon could speak by experience, Eccl. vii. 26. [2.] The torments of hell. If some, that have been guilty of this sin, have repented and been saved, yet the direct tendency of the sin is to destruction of body and soul: the feet of it go down to death, may, they take hold on hell, to pull it to the sinner, as if the damnation slumbered, or were not, v. 5. Those that are entangled in this sin should be reminded, that there is but a step between them and hell, and that they are ready to drop into it.

(2.) Consider how false the charms are. The adulteress flatters and speaks fair, her words are honey and oil, but she will deceive these that hear ken to her; her ways are moveable, that thou canst not know them; she often changes her disguise, and puts on a great variety of false colours, because, if she be rightly known, she is certainly hated. Pretens like, she puts on many shapes, that she may keep in with those whom she has a design upon. And what does she aim at with all this art and management? Nothing but to keep them from pondering the path of life, for she knows, that, if they once come to do that, she will certainly lose them. Those are ignorant of Satan's devices who do not understand that the great thing he drives at, in all his temptations, is, [1.] To keep them from considering the path of life, to prevent them from being religious, and from going to heaven, that, being himself shut out from happiness, he may keep them out from it. [2.] In order hereunto, to keep them from pondering the path of life, from considering how reasonable it is that they should walk in that path, and how much it will be for their advantage. Be it observed, to the honour of religion, that it certainly gains its point with all those that will allow themselves the liberty of a serious thought, and will weigh things impartially in an even balance; and that the devil has no way of securing men in his interests, but by diverting them, with continual amusements of one kind or other, from the calm and sober consideration of the things that belong to their peace. And uncleanness is a sin that does, as much as any thing, blind the understanding, scar the conscience, and keep people from pondering the path of life. Whorem takes away the heart, Hos. iv. 11.

2. That we do not approach the borders of this sin, v. 7, 8. This caution is introduced with a solemn preface; "Hear me now therefore, O ye children, whoever you are that read or hear these lines, take notice of what I say, and mix faith with it, treasure it up, and depart not from the words of wisdom; for the words of the strange woman do not only cause the lips of the mouth to be like the words of the strange woman. Do not only receive what I say, for the present merely, but cleave to it, and let it be ready to thee, and of force with thee, when thou art most violently assaulted by the temptation." The caution itself is very pressing; "Re
They that are merry now, shooting thyselv in thine own deceivings, yet thou wilt certainly mourn at the last, v. 11. Thou art all this while making work for repentance, and laying up matter for vexation and torment in the reflection, when the sin is set before thee in its own colours." Sooner or later it will bring sorrow; either when the soul is humbled, and brought to repentance, or when the flesh and body are consumed; either by sickness, when conscience flies in the sinner's face, or by the grave; when the body is rotten there, the soul is racking in the torments of hell, where the worm dies not, and, Son, remember, is the constant peel.

Solomon here brings in the convinced sinner, reproaching himself, and aggravating his own folly. He will then most bitterly lament it.

First, That, because he hated to be reformed, he therefore hated to be informed, and could not endure either to be taught his duty, (How have I hated not only the discipline of being instructed, but the instruction itself, though all true and good!) or to be told of his faults, My heart despised reprovery, v. 12. He cannot but own that those who had the charge of him, parents, ministers, had done their part, they had been his teachers, they had instruct- ed him, had given him good counsel and fair warning; (v. 13.) but to his own shame and confusion does he speak it, and therein justifies God in all the miseries that were brought upon him, he had not taken their counsel, had not obeyed their voice, for indeed he never inclined his ear to those that instructed him; never minded what they said, nor admitted the impressions of it. Note, Those who have had a good education, and do not live up to it, will have a great deal to answer for another day. And those who will not now remember what they were taught, to conform themselves to it, will be made to remember it as an aggravation of their sin, and, consequently, of their ruin.

Secondly, That, by the frequent acts of sin, the habits of it were so rooted and confirmed, that his heart was fully set in him to commit it; (v. 14.) I was almost in all evil, in the midst of the congregation and assembly. When he came into the synagogue, or into the courts of the temple, to worship God with the Israelites, his uncleanness was full of wanton thoughts and desires, and his eyes of adultery. Reverence of the place and company, and of the work that was doing, could not restrain him, but he was almost as wicked and vile there as any where. No sin will appear more frightful to an awakened conscience, than the profanation of holy things; nor will any aggravation of sin render it more exceeding sinful than the place we are honoured with in the congregation and assembly, and the advantages we enjoy thereby. Zimri and Cozbi avowed their villany in the sight of Moses, and all the congregation; (Numb. xxv. 6.) and heart-adultery is as open to God, and must needs be most offensive to him, when we draw nigh to him in religious exercises. I was in all evil, in defiance of the magistrates and judges, and their assemblies; so some understand it. Others refer it to the evil of punishment, not to the evil of sin; I was made a spectacle in the congregation of Israel; I was under almost all God's sore judgments in the midst of the congregation of Israel, set up for a mark. I stood up, and cried in the congregation," Job xxx. 28. Let that be avoided which will be thus rued at last.

15. Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. 16. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets

Proverbs, V. 657

1. "It blasts the reputation; thou wilt give thine honour unto others; (v. 9.) thou wilt lose it thyself, thou wilt put into the hand of each of thy neighbours a stone to throw at thee, for they will all, with good reason, cry shame on thee, will despise thee, and trample on thee, as a foolish man." Whoredom is a sin that makes men contemptible and base, and no man of sense or virtue will care to keep company with one that keeps company with has.

2. "It wastes the times, gives the years, the years of youth, the flower of men's time, unto the cruel, that base lust of thine, which, with the utmost cruelty, wars against the soul; that base harlot which pretends an affection for thee, but really hunts for the precious life." Those years that should be given to the honour of a gracious God are spent in the service of a cruel sin.

3. "It ruins the estate; (v. 10.) strangers will be filled with thy wealth, which thou art but institted with as a steward for thy family; and the fruit of thy labours, which should be provision for thine own house, will be in the house of a stranger, that neither has right to it, nor will ever thank thee for it.

4. "It is destructive to the health, and shortens men's days; thy flesh and thy body will be consumed. (v. 11.) I was in all uncleanliness not only war against the soul, which thou, Sir, will not be in no care about, but they war against the body too, which he is so indulgent of, and is in such care to please and pamper; such deceitful, such foolish, such hurtful, lusts are those. Those that give themselves to work uncleanliness with greediness, waste their strength, throw themselves into weakness, and often have their bodies filled with loathsome distempers, by which the number of their months is cut off in the midst, and they fall unpitied sacrifices to a cruel lust.

5. "It will fill the mind with horror, if ever conscience be awakened. Though thou art merry now, shooting thyselv in thine own deceivings, yet thou wilt certainly mourn at the last, v. 11. Thou art all this while making work for repentance, and laying up matter for vexation and torment in the reflection, when the sin is set before thee in its own colours." Sooner or later it will bring sorrow; either when the soul is humbled, and brought to repentance, or when the flesh and body are consumed; either by sickness, when conscience flies in the sinner's face, or by the grave; when the body is rotten there, the soul is racking in the torments of hell, where the worm dies not, and, Son, remember, is the constant peel.

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17. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers with thee. 18. Let thy fountain be blessed; and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. 19. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times, and be thou ravished always with her love. 20. And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? 21. For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings.

22. His own iniquities shall take the wick-ed ed, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. 23. He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

Solomon, having showed the great evil that there is in adultery and fornication, and all such lewd and filthy courses, here prescribes remedies against them.

I. Enjoy with satisfaction the comforts of lawful marriage, which was ordained for the prevention of uncleanness, and therefore ought to be made use of in time, lest it should not prove effectual for the cure of that which it might have prevented. Let none complain that God has dealt unkindly with them, in forbidding them those pleasures which they have a natural desire of, for he has graciously provided for the regular gratification of them. Thou mayest not indeed eat of every tree of the garden, but choose thee out one, which thou pleasest, and of that thou mayest freely eat; nature will be content with that, but lust with nothing. God, in thus confining men to one, has been so far from putting any hardship upon them, that he has really consulted their true interest; for, as Mr. Herbert observes, if God had laid all common, certainly

Man would have been the enсуessor.—Church-porch.

Solomon here enlarges much upon this; not only prescribing it as an antidote, but urging it as argument, against fornication, that the allowed pleasures of marriage (however wicked wits may ridicule them, who are factors for the unclean spirit) far transcend all the false forbidden pleasures of whoredom.

1. Let young men marry, marry and not burn. Have a wife, a well of thine own. (v. 15.) even the wife of thy youth; (v. 16.) Wholly abstain, or sed—Herb. "The world is wide, and there are varieties of accomplishments, among which thou mayest please thyself."

2. Let him that is married take delight in his wife, and let him be very fond of her, not only because she is the wife that he himself has chosen, and he ought to be pleased with his own choice, but because she is the wife that God in his providence has appointed for him, and he ought much more to be pleased with the divine appointment; pleased with her because she is his own; Let thy fountain be blessed; (v. 18.) think thyself very happy in her, look upon her as a blessed wife, let her have thy blessing, pray daily for her, and then rejoice with her. Those comforts we are likely to have joy of, that are sanctified to us by prayer and the blessing of God. It is not only allowed us, but commanded us, to be pleasant to our relations; and it particularly becomes yoke-fellows to rejoice together and in each other. Mutual delight is the bond of mutual fidelity. It is not only taken for granted, that the bridegroom rejoices over his bride, (Isa. xxvi. 5.) but given for law. (Ecc. ix. 9.) Live joyfully with thy wife whom thou lovest, all the days of thy life.

Those take not their comforts there where God has appointed, who are jovial and merry with their companions abroad, but sour and morose with their fellow-sinners.

3. Let him be fond of his wife, and love her dearly; (v. 19.) Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe, such as great men sometimes kept tame in their houses, and played with. Desire no better diversion from severe study and business, than the innocent and pleasant conversation of thine own wife; let her lie in thy bosom, as the poor man's ewe-lamb did in his, (2 Sam. xii. 3.) and do thou thy head in her's, and let that satisfy thee at all times. They seek not from others what they have not from thee. Err thou always in her love. If thou wilt suffer thy love to run into an excess, and wilt be doting-fond of any body, let it be only of thine own wife, where there is least danger of exceeding. This is drinking waters, to quench the thirst of thine appetite, out of thine own cistern, and running waters, which are clear, and sweet, and wholesome, out of thine own well; (v. 15.) 1 Cor. vii. 2, 3. 4. Let each delight in children, and look upon them with pleasure; (v. 16, 17.) "Look upon them as streams from thine own pure fountain." (the Jews are said to come forth out of the waters of Judah, Is. xlvi. 1.) "so that they are pieces of thyself, as the streams are of the fountain. Keep to thine own wife, and thou shalt have," (1.) "A numerous offspring, like rivers of water, which run in abundance, and they shall be dispersed abroad, matched into other families, whereas they that commit fornication, shall not increase," Hos. iv. 19. (2.) "A peculiar offspring, which shall be only thine own, whereas the children of whoredom, that are fathered upon thee, are, probably, not so, but, for aught thou knowest, are the offspring of strangers, and yet thou must keep them." (3.) "A creditable offspring, which are an honour to thee, and which thou mayest send abroad, and appear with in the streets, whereas a spurious brood is thy disgrace, and that which thou art ashamed to own."

In this matter, virtue has all the pleasure and honour in it; justly therefore is it called wisdom.

5. Let him then scorn the offer of forbidden pleasures, when he is always ravished with the love of a faithful virtuous wife, let him consider what an absurdity it will be for him to be ravished with a strange woman, (v. 20.) to be in love with a filthy harlot, and embrace the bosom of a stranger; which, if he had any sense of honour or virtue, he would loathe the thoughts of. Why wilt thou, being a Brit, such an enemy to thyself, as to prefer puddle-water, and that poisoned too and stolen, before pure living waters out of thine own well?" Note, If the dictates of reason may be heard, the laws of virtue will be obeyed. II. "See the eye of God always upon thee, and let his fear rule in thine heart, v. 21. They that live in this sin, promise themselves secrecy; the eye of God is upon the same; Hos. iv. 22. But to what purpose, when it cannot be hid from God? For. 1. He sees it; the ways of man, all his motions, all his actions, are before the eyes of the Lord, all the workings of the heart, and all the outgoings of the life, that is done ever so secretly, and disguised ever so artfully. God sees it in a true light, and knows it with all its causes, circumstances, and consequences. He does not cast an eye upon these, as a stranger, or with a caviling Inquisition. It is not that he searches, but actually in his view, and under his inspection and darkest thou sin against God in his sight, and do that wickedness under his eye, which thou durst not do in the presence of a man like thyself?"

2. He will call the sinner to an account for it; for he not only sees, butonders, all his goings, judges concerning them, as one that will shortly judge the sinner for
PROVERBS, VI.

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In this chapter, we have, 1. A caution against rash sureties, v. 1–5. 2. A rebuke to slothfulness, v. 6–11. 3. The character and fate of a malicious mischievous man, v. 12–15. 4. An account of seven things which God hates, v. 16–19. 5. An exhortation to make the word of God familiar to us, v. 20–22. 6. A repeated warning of the pernicious consequences of the sin of whoredom, v. 24–35. We are here dissuaded from sin very much by arguments borrowed from our secular interests, for it is not only represented as damping in the other world, but as impoverishing in this.

1. My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger, 2. Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth. 3. Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, when thou art come into the hand of thy friend; go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend. 4. Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids. 5. Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.

It is the excellency of the word of God, that it teaches us not only divine wisdom for another world, but human prudence for this world, that we may order our affairs with discretion; and this is one good rule, To avoid suretyship, because by it poverty and ruin are often brought into families, which take away that comfort in relations which he had recommended in the foregoing chapter.

1. We must look upon suretyship as a snare, and decline it accordingly, v. 1. 2. It is dangerous enough for a man and be bound to his friends in it; it is one whose circumstances he is well acquainted with, and well assured of his sufficiency; but much more to strike the hands with a stranger, to become surety for one whom thou dost not know to be either able or honest. Or the stranger here, with whom the hand is stricken, is the creditor, “the usurer to whom thou art become bound, and yet as to thee he is a stranger, thou owest him nothing, nor hast had any dealings with him. If thou hast rashly entered into such a bargain, and hast given to him, or in hopes to have the same kindness done thee another time; know that thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, it was easily done, with a word’s speaking, it was but setting thy hand to a paper; a bond is soon sealed and delivered, and a recognition entered into; but it will not be so easily got clear of, thou art in a snare, more than thou art aware of.” See how little reason we have to make light of tongue-sins; if by a word of our mouth we may become indebted to men, and lie open to their actions, by the words of our mouth we may become obnoxious to God’s justice, and even so may be snared. It is false that words are but wind, they are often snares. 2. If we have been drawn into this snare, it will be our wisdom, by all means, with all speed, to get out of it, v. 3.5. “It sleeps for the present, we hear nothing of it, the debt is not demanded, say the creditors. Never fear, we will take care of it.” But still the true interest is running on, the creditor may come upon thee when he will, and perhaps may be hasty and severe, the principal may prove either knavish or insolvent, and then thou must rob thy wife and children, and ruin thy family, to pay that which thou didst neither eat nor drink for. And therefore deliver thyself, rest not till either the creditor give up the bond, or the principal give thee counter-security, when thou art come into the hand of thy friend, and he has advantage against thee, it is no time to threaten or give ill language, (that will provoke, and make ill worse,) but humble thyself, beg and pray to be discharged, go down on thy knees to them, and give them all the fair words thou canst, engage thy friends to speak for thee, leave no stone unturned till thou hast agreed with thee adversary, and committed the matter, so that thy bond may not come to the hands of a creditor, which a single sin which may well break thy sleep, and let it do so till thou hast got through it. Give not sleep to thine eyes, till thou hast delivered thyself. Strive and struggle to the utmost, and hasten with all speed, as a roe or a bird delivers herself out of the snare of the fowler or hunter. Delays are dangerous, and feeble efforts will not serve. See what care God, in his word, has taken to make men good husbands to their estates, and to preserve the management of them. Godliness has precepts, as well as promises, relating to the life that now is.

But how are we to understand this? We are not to think it is unlawful in any case to become surety, or bail, for another; it may be a piece of justice or charity; he that has friends may see cause in this
instance to show himself friendly, and it may be no piece of imprudence. Paul became bound for Onesimus, Philemon 19. We may help a young man into business, that we know to be honest and diligent, and gain him credit by passing our words for him, and to do him great kindness without any detriment to ourselves. But, (1.) It is every man's wisdom to keep out of debt as much as may be, for it is an incumbrance upon him, entangles him in the world, puts him in danger of doing wrong, or suffering wrong; the borrower is servant to the lender, and makes himself very much a slave to the world. Christians therefore, who are bought with a price, should not thus, without need, make themselves the servile debtors to one another. Besides, it is greatly to entangle ourselves with necessitous people, and to become bound for their debts, that are ever and anon taking up money, and lading, as we say, out of one hole into another, for it is ten to one but some time or other, it will come upon us. A man ought never to be bound as surety for more than he is both able and willing to pay, and can afford to pay without wronging his family, in case the principal fail, for he ought to look at it as his own debt. (Ecclesiasticus viii. 13.) Be not surety above thy power, for thou be surety, thou must take care to pay it. (3.) It is a necessary piece of after-wit, if we have foolishly entangled ourselves, to get out of the snare as fast as we can, to lose no time, spare no pains, and stick at no submission, to make ourselves safe and easy, and get our affairs into a good posture. It is better to humble ourselves for an accommodation, than to ruin ourselves by our stiffness and haughtiness. Make sure thy friend, by getting clear from thine engagements from him; for rash suretyship is as much the bane of friendship, as that which is prudent is sometimes the bond of it. (4.) Let us take heed lest we any way make ourselves guilty of other men's sins against God, (1 Tim. v. 22.) for that is worse, and much more dangerous, than being bound for other men's debts; and if we must be in all this care to get our debts to men forgiven, much more to get our peace made with God; 7. Humble thyself to him, make sure of Christ thy friend, to intercede for thee; pray earnestly that thy sins may be pardoned, and thou mayest be delivered from going down to the pit; and it shall not be in vain. Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eye-lids, till this be done. 9.

6. Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: 7. Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, 8. Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. 9. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? 10. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: 11. So shall poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.

Solomon, in these verses, applies himself to the sluggard, who loves his ease, lives in idleness, minds no business, sticks to nothing, brings nothing to pass, and in a particular manner is careless in the business of religion. Slothfulness is as sure a way to poverty, though not so short a way, as sure suretyship.

7. A sluggard will not_________:
    1. By way of instruction, v. 6. 8. He sends him to school, for sluggards must be schooled. He is to take him to school himself, for if the scholar will take no pains, the master must take the more; the sluggard is not willing to come to school to him, dreaming scholars will never love wakeful teach-
    ers; and therefore he has found him out another school, as low as he can desire. Observe,
    1. The master he is sent to school to; Go to the ant, to the bee, so the Seventy. Man is taught more than the beasts of the earth, and made wiser than the fowls of heaven, and yet is so degenerated, that he may learn wisdom from the meanest insects, and be shamed by them. When we observe the wonderful sagacities of the inferior creatures, we must not only give glory to the God of nature, who has made them thus strangely, but receive instruction to ourselves; by spiritualizing common things, we may make the things of God both easy and ready to us, and converse with them daily.

    2. This application of the master, which is taught of them, is that required in order to the learning of this master; Consider her ways. The sluggard is so, because he does not consider; nor shall we ever learn to any purpose, either by the word or the works of God, unless we set ourselves to consider. Particularly, if we would imitate others in that which is good, we must consider their ways, diligently observe what they do, that we may do likewise, Phil. iii. 17.

    3. The application of the sluggard, is, Particulars, that is required in order to the learning of this master; Consider her ways. The sluggard is so, because he does not consider; nor shall we ever learn to any purpose, either by the word or the works of God, unless we set ourselves to consider. Particularly, if we would imitate others in that which is good, we must consider their ways, diligently observe what they do, that we may do likewise, Phil. iii. 17.

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gards? How long wouldst thou sleep, if one would let thee alone? When wilt thou think it time to arise?" Sluggards should be reasured with a How long? This is applicable, (1.) To those that are slothful in the works of Belial, whom of their particular calling as men, or their general calling as Christians. "How long wilt thou waste thy time, and when wilt thou be a better husband of it? How long wilt thou love thine ease, and when wilt thou learn to deny thyself, and to take pains? How long wilt thou bury thy talents, and when wilt thou begin to trade with them? How long wilt thou delay, and put off, and trifle away, the advantages of the present, as one regardless of hereafter; and when wilt thou stir up thyself to do what thou hast to do, which, if it be not done, thou art for ever undone?" (2.) To those that are secure in the way of sin and danger; "Hast thou not slept enough? Is it not far in the day? Does not thy Master call? Are not the Philistines upon thee? When, then, wilt thou arise?"

2. He exposes the frivolous excuses he makes for himself, and shows how ridiculous he makes himself; when he is roused, he stretches himself, and begs, as for alms, for more sleep, more slumber; he is well in his warm bed, and cannot endure to think of rising, especially of rising to work: but observe, he promises himself and his master that he will desire but a little more sleep, a little more slumber, and then he will get up and go to his business. But herein he deceives himself; the more a slothful temper is indulged, the more it prevails; let him sleep awhile, and slumber awhile, and still he is in the same tune; for a little more sleep, yet a little more; he never thinks he has enough, and yet, when he is called, pretends he will come presently. Thus men's great work is left undone by being put off yet a little longer, de die in diem—from day to day; and they are cheated of all their time by being cheated of the present moments; a little more sleep proves an everlasting sleep. Sleep on now, and take your rest.

3. He gives him fair warning of the fatal consequences of his slothfulness, v. 11. (1.) Poverty and want will certainly come upon those that are slothful in their business; if men neglect their affairs, they not only will not go forward, but they will go backward; he that leaves his concerns at sixes and sevens, will soon see them go to wreck and ruin, and bring his noble to niphencence. Spiritual poverty comes upon those that are slothful in the service of God; those will want oil, when they should use it, that provide it not in their vessels. (2.) "It will come silently and insensibly, will grow upon thee, and come step by step, as one that travels; but will without fail come at last." It will leave thee as naked as if thou wast stript by a highwayman; so Bishop Patrick. (3.) "It will come irresistibly, like an armed man, whom thou canst not oppose, or make thy part good against.

12. A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth. 13. He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers; 14. Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord. 15. Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy. 16. These six things doth the Lord hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto him: 17. A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood. 18. An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, that be swift in running to mischief. 19. A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

Solomon here gives us,

1. The characters of one that is mischievous to man, and dangerous to be dealt with. If the slothful are to be condemned, that do nothing, much more these that do ill, and contrive to do all the ill they can. It is a naughty person that is here spoken of, Heb. A man of Belial; I think it should have been so translated, because it is a term often used in scripture, and this is the explication of it. Observe

1. How a man of Belial is here described; he is a wicked man, that makes a trade of doing evil, especially with his tongue, for he walks, and works his designs, with a froward mouth, (v. 12.) by lying and perverseness, and a direct opposition to God and man. He says and does every thing. (1.) Very artfully, and with design; he has the subtlety of the serpent, and carries on his projects with a great deal of craft and management, (v. 13.) with his eyes, with his feet, with his fingers: he expresses his malice, when he daren't speak out, so some; or rather, thus he carries on his ploy; these about him, whom he makes use of as the tools of his wickedness, understand the ill meaning of a wink of his eye, a stamp of his feet, the least motion of his fingers. He gives orders for evil-doing, and yet would not be thought to do so, but has ways of concealing what he does, so that he may not be suspected. He is a close man, and upon the reserve; those only shall be let into the secret that will do any thing he would have them to do; he is a cunning man, and upon the trick, he has a language by himself, which an honest man is not acquainted with, nor desires to be. (2.) Very spitefully, and with ill design; it is not so much ambition and covetousness that are in his heart, as downright frowardness, malice, and ill-nature. He aims not so much to enrich and advance himself, as to do an ill turn to those about him. He is continually devising and mischievous, or other, purely for mischief's sake; a man of Belial indeed, of the devil, resembling him not only in subtilty, but in malice.

2. What his doom is; (v. 15.) His calamity shall come, and he shall be broken; he that devised mischief shall fall into mischief. His ruin shall come, (1.) Without warning; it shall come suddenly, suddenly shall he be broken, to punish him for all the wicked arts he had to surprise people into his snares. (2.) Without relief; he shall be irreparably broken, and never able to piece again; he shall be broken without remedy. What relief can he expect that has disabled all mankind? He shall come to his end, and none shall help him, Dan. xi. 43.

11. A catalogue of those things which are in a special manner odious to God, all which are generally to be avoided, because they were by the Lord described in the foregoing verses; and the last of them (which, being the seventh, seems especially to be intended, because he says they are six, yea seven) is part of his character, that he sows discord. God hates sin, he hates every sin, he can never be reconciled to it, he hates nothing but sin. But there are some sins which he does in a special manner hate; and all these here mentioned are such as are injurious to God's glory, and the happiness of his church. If the evidence of the good-will God bears to mankind, that there is no God in a special manner provoking to him which are prejudicial to the comfort of human life and society. Therefore the men of Belial must expect their ruin to come suddenly, and without remedy, because their practices are such as the Lord hates, and are an abomination to him, v. 16. These things which
God hates, it is no thanks to us to hate in others, but we must hate them in ourselves.

1. Haughtiness, conceit of ourselves, and contempt of others; a proud look. There are seven things that God hates, and pride is the first, because it is at the bottom of much sin, and gives rise to it. God sees the pride in the heart, and hates it there; but we mustGuard against that degree, that the show of men's countenance witnesses against them, that they overvalue themselves, and undervalue all about them, this is in a special manner hateful to him; for then pride is proud of itself, and sets shame at defiance.

2. Falsehood, and fraud, and dissimulation. Next to a proud look, nothing is more an abomination to God than a lying tongue; nothing more sacred than truth, nor more necessary to conversation than speaking truth; God and all good men hate and abhor lying.

3. Cruelty and blood-thirstiness. The Devil was, from the beginning, a liar and a murderer, (John viii. 44.) and therefore as a lying tongue, so hands that shed innocent blood, are hateful to God; because they have in them the Devil's image, and do him service.

4. Subtility in the contrivance of sin, wisdom to do evil, a heart that designs, and a head that devises, wicked imaginations, that is acquainted with the depths of Satan, and knows how to carry on acovetous, envious, revengeful, plot, most effectually. The more there is of craft and management in sin, the more it is an abomination to God.

5. Vigour and diligence in the prosecution of sin; feet that are swift in running to mischief, as if they were afraid of losing time, or were impatient of delay, in things that are so dear to. The policy and vigilance, the eagerness and industry, of sinners, in their sinful pursuits, may shame us who go about that which is good so awkwardly and so coldly.

6. False-witness bearing, which is one of the greatest mischiefs that the wicked imagination can devise, and against which there is least fence. There cannot be a greater affront to God, (to whom in an oath appeal is made,) nor a greater injury to our fellow men, than the calumnies that are uttered in this world, even the dearest, lie open to an attack of this kind,) than knowingly to give in a false testimony. There are seven things which God hates, and lying involves two of them; he hates it, and doubly hates it.

7. Making mischief between relations and neighbours, and using all wicked means possible, not only to alienate their affections one from another, but to irritate their passions one against another. The God of love and peace hates him that sows discord among brethren, for he delights in concord. Those that, by tale-bearing and slandering, by carrying ill-natured stories, aggravating every thing that is said and done, and suggesting jealousies and evil surmises, blow the coals of contention, are but preparing for themselves a fire of the same nature.

20. My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: 21. Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. 22. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest it shall keep thee; and when thou awaketh, it shall talk with thee. 23. For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life: 24. To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. 25. Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids: 26. For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread; and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life. 27. Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt? 28. Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt? 29. So be he goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent. 30. Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry: 31. But if he be found, he shall restore seven-fold; he shall give all the substance of his house. 32. But whose committed adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. 33. A wound and dishonour shall he get, and his reproach shall not be wiped away. 34. For jealousy is the rage of a man; therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. 35. He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts. Here is,

I. A general exhortation faithfully to adhere to the word of God, and to take it for our guide in all our actions.

1. We must look upon the word of God, both as a light, (v. 23.) and as a law, (v. 20. 23.) (1.) By its arguments it is a light, which our understandings must subscribe to; it is a lamp to our darkness, and so to our feet for direction. The word of God reveals to us truths of eternal certainty, and is built upon the highest reason. Scripture-light is the sure light. (2.) By its authority it is a law, which our wills must submit to. As never such a light shone out of the schools of the philosophers, so never such a law issued from the throne of any prince; so well framed, and so binding. It is such a law as is a lamp and a light, for it carries with it the evidence of its own goodness.

2. We must receive it as our father's commandment, and the law of our mother, v. 20. It is God's commandment, and his law. But, (1.) Our parents directed us to it, put it into our hands, trained us up in the knowledge and observance of it, its original and obligation being most sacred. We believe, indeed, not for their saying, for we have tried it ourselves, and find it to be of God; but we were beholden to them for recommending it to us, and see all the reason in the world to continue in the things we have learned, knowing of whom we have learned them. (2.) The cautions, counsels, and commands, which our parents gave us, agree with the word of God, and therefore we must hold them fast. Children, when they are grown up, must remember the law of a good mother, as well as the commandment of a good father, Ecclesiastes xi. 2. The Lord has given the father honour over the children, and has confirmed the authority of the mother over the sons.

3. We must retain the word of God, and the good instructions which our parents gave us out of it. (1.) We must never cast them off, never think it a mighty achievement (as some do) to get clear of the restraints of a good education; "Keep thy father's commandment, keep it still, and never forsake it." (2.) We must never lay them by, no not for a time; (v. 21.) Bind them continually, not only
Upon thine hand, (as Moses had directed, Deut. vi. 8.) but upon thine heart. Phylacteries upon the horse were of no value at all, any further than they occasioned pious thoughts and affections in the heart. There the word must be written, there it must be hid, and laid close to the conscience. "Tie them about thy neck, as an ornament; so shall God command and so shall this word be; it shall not be taken from thy mouth; thou shalt meditate upon it day and night, that thou mayest bless thy soul."

The tongue of a strange woman, who pretends to love thee, but intends to ruin thee. Those that will be wrangled upon by flattery, make themselves a very easy prey to the tempter; and those who will deal that snare, must take well-instructed reproofs as great kindnesses, and be thankful to those that will deal them. Deut. xvii. 9. (t.)

2. The greatest danger that self, indeed, is, to keep at a distance from this sin, and to lose upon it with the utmost dread and detestation; (v. 25.) "Just as not after her beauty, no not in thy heart, for if thou dost, thou hast there already committed adultery with her."

Talk not of the charms in her face, neither be thou smitten with her amorous glances; they are all snares and nets; let her not take thee with her eyes. Her looks are arrows and fiery darts; they wound, they kill, in another sense than what lovers mean; they call it a pleasing captivity, but it is a destroying one, it is worse than Egyptian slavery."

Divers arguments Solomon here urges to enforce this caution against the sin of whoredom.

(1.) It is a sin that impoverishes men, wastes their estates, and reduces them to beggary; (v. 26.) By means of a whorish woman a man is brought into a house of bondage, and is made to bear the fear of it. He shall be led by that, let it be thy rule, and then shalt be led by the Spirit; he will be thy Monitor and Support. (2.) It will be our guard, and we must put ourselves under the protection of it; "When thou sleepest, and liest exposed to the malignant powers of darkness, it shall keep thee; thou shalt be safe, and shalt think thyself so." If we govern ourselves by the precepts of the word all day, and make conscience of the duty of God, and are ready to be bound to us, we may shelter ourselves under the promises of the word at night, and take the comfort of the deliverances God does, and will, command for us. (3.) It will be our companion, and we must converse with it; "When thou awaketh in the night, and knowest not how to pass away thy wakening minutes, if thou pleasest, it shall talk with thee, and entertain thee with pleasant meditations in the night; and this shall be the comfort of the day," And art contriving the work of the day, it shall talk with thee about it, and help thee to contrive for the best," Ps. i. 2. The word of God has something to say to us upon all occasions, if we would but enter into discourse with it, would ask it what it has to say, and give it the hearing. And it would contribute to our close and comfortable walking with God all day, if we would begin with him in the morning, and let his word be the subject of our first thoughts. When I awake, I am still with thee; we are so, if the word be still with us. (4.) It will be our life; for, as the law is a lamp, and a light, for the present, so the reproofs of instruction are the way of life. Those reproofs of the word, which not only show us our faults, but instruct us how to do better, are the way that leads to life, eternal life. Let not faithful reproofs, therefore, which have such a direct tendency to make us happy, ever make us unprofitable.

11. Here is a particular caution against the sin of uncleanliness. When we consider how much this iniquity abounds, how heinous it is in its own nature, of what pernicious consequence it is, and how certainly destructive to all the seeds of the spiritual life in the soul, we shall not wonder that the cautions against it are so often repeated, and so largely insisted on.

One great kindness God designed men, in giving them his law, was, to preserve them from this sin; (v. 24.) "The reproofs of instruction are therefore the way of life to thee, because they are designed to keep thee from the evil woman, who will be certain death to thee, from being enticed by the flattery of
the Fountain of honour, his word must be the standard of it. [1.] As for the sin of stealing, if a man were brought to it by extreme necessity, if he stole meat for the satisfying of his soul when he was hungry, though that will not excuse him from guilt, yet it is such an extenuation of his crime, that men do not despise him, do not expose him to ignominy, death, or stone walls, and blame will be laid upon those that brought him to poverty, or that did not relieve him; nay, though he have not that to say in his excuse, if he be found stealing, and the evidence be ever so plain upon him, yet he shall only make restitution seven-fold; the law of Moses appointed that he who stole a sheep should restore four-fold, and an ox five-fold; (Exod. xxii. 1.) accordingly David adjudged, of his own act, that which was contrary to the commandment, he will not regard any ransoming; though thou offer to bribe him, and give him many gifts to pacify him, he will not rest content with anything less than the execution of the law, thou must be stoned to death; if a man would give all the substance of his house, it would be a death, (v. 31.) but not for adultery, in that case it would utterly be condemned. Stand in awe therefore, and sin not, expose not thyself to all this misery for a moment’s sordid pleasure, which will be bitterness in the end.”

**chap. vii.**

The scope of this chapter is, as of several before, to warn young men against the lusts of the flesh. Solomon remembered of what ill consequence it was to his father, perhaps found himself, and perceived his son, addicted to it, or at least had observed how many hopeful young men among his subjects had been ruined by those lusts, and therefore he thought he did now see enough to dissuade men from them, that every one may possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, and not in the lusts of unchoosiness. In this chapter, we have, 1. A general exhortation to keep our minds and bodies in the word of God, as a sovereign antidote against this sin, v. 1—3. If. A particular representation of the great danger which unwary young men are in of being involved in it, v. 4—24. 1. M a y son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. 2. Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye. 3. Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart. 4. Say unto Wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call Understanding thy kinswoman: 5. That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words. These verses are an introduction to his warning against fleshly lusts, much the same with that, b. vi. 20, &c. and ends, (v. 5.) as that did, (v. 24.) To keep thee from the strange woman, that is it he aims at; only there he had said, Keep thy father’s commandment, here, (which comes all to one.) Keep my commandments, for he speaks to us as unto sons. He speaks in God’s name; for they are God’s commandments that we are to keep, his words, his law. The word of God must be to us,

1. As that which we are most careful of; we must keep it as our treasure, we must lay it up; God’s commandments with us, lay them up safe, that we may not be robbed of them by the wicked one; (v. 1.) We must keep it as our life; I eep my commandments, and live; (v. 2.) “Not only keep them, and you shall live; but, keep them as you would your life, as those that cannot live without them.” It would be death to a good man to be deprived of the word of God, for it he lives, and not by being reviled, blackened, and despised. 2. As that which we are most tender of; Keep my law as the apple of thine eye; a little thing offends the eye, and therefore nature has so well guarded it: we pray, with David, that God would manslaughter, of his brother’s blood. If thou art not afraid of the wrath of God, yet be afraid of the rage of a man; such jealousy is, it is strong as death, and cruel as the grave. In the day of vengeance, when the adulterer comes to be tried for his life, the prosecutor will not spare any pains or cost in the prosecution, will not relent toward the one he knew as his brother, and that one that had robbed him; he will not accept of any composition, he will not regard any ransom; though thou offer to bribe him, and give him many gifts to pacify him, he will not rest content with anything less than the execution of the law, thou must be stoned to death; if a man would give all the substance of his house, it would be a death, (v. 31.) but not for adultery, in that case it would utterly be condemned. Stand in awe therefore, and sin not, expose not thyself to all this misery for a moment’s sordid pleasure, which will be bitterness in the end.”

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1. As that which we are most careful of; we must keep it as our treasure, we must lay it up; God’s commandments with us, lay them up safe, that we may not be robbed of them by the wicked one; (v. 1.) We must keep it as our life; I eep my commandments, and live; (v. 2.) “Not only keep them, and you shall live; but, keep them as you would your life, as those that cannot live without them.” It would be death to a good man to be deprived of the word of God, for it he lives, and not by being reviled, blackened, and despised. 2. As that which we are most tender of; Keep my law as the apple of thine eye; a little thing offends the eye, and therefore nature has so well guarded it: we pray, with David, that God would
Those that keep the law, are light, the law in the heart is the eye of the soul.

3. As that which we are fond of, and would be ever mindful of; (v. 3.) Bind them upon thy fingers, let them be precious to thee, look upon them as an ornament, as a diamond ring, as the signet upon thy right hand, wear them continually as the wedding-ring, the alliance of thy love to God; look upon the word of God as putting an honour upon thee, as an ensign of thy dignity. Bind them upon thy fingers, that they may be constant memorandums to thee of thy duty, that thou mayest have them always in view, as if which is granted upon the palms thine hands.

4. As that which we are fond of, and are ever thinking of; Write them upon the tables of thine heart, the names of thy friends, those dear love, which are written in our hearts. Let the word of God dwell richly in us, and be written there where it will be always at hand to be read. Where sin was written, Jer. xvii. 1. let the word of God be written. It is the matter of a promise; (Heb. viii. 10.) I will write my law in their hearts, which makes the precept practicable and easy.

5. As that which we are intimately acquainted and conversant with; (v. 4.) Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister, whom I dearly love and take delight in; and calling understand thy kinswoman, to whom I am nearly allied, and for whom I have a pure affection; call her thy friend whom thou countest. We must make the word of God familiar to us, consult it, and consult its honour, and take a pleasure in conversing with it.

6. As that which we make use of for our defence and armour, to keep us from the strange woman, from sin, that flattering, but destroying, thing, that adulteres; particularly from the sin of uncleanness.

7. And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding.

8. Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house.

9. In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night. And behold, there met him a woman, with the attire of an harlot, and subtle of heart. (11. She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house: 12. Now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner.)

13. So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, I have peace-offerings with me; this day have I paid my vows: 15. Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face; and have found thee. 16. I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt. 17. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. 18. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning; let us solace ourselves with loves: 19. For the good man is not at home, he is gone a long journey: 20. He hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come at the day appointed. 21. With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. 22. He goeth after her straightforward, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; 23. Till a dart strike through his liver, as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.

Solomon here, to enforce the caution he had given against the sin of whoredom, tells a story of a young man that was ruined, to all intents and purposes, by the enticements of an adulterous woman. Such a story as this would serve the lewd profane poets of our age to make a play of, and the harlot, with them, would be a heroine; nothing would be so entertaining to the audience, nor give them so much diversion, as her arts of beguiling the young gentleman, and drawing in the country-squire; her conquests would be celebrated by all the world, the state and love, and the comedy would conclude very pleasantly; and every young man that saw it acted, would covet to be so picked up. Thus fools make a mock at sin. But Solomon here relates it, and all wise and good men read it, as a very melancholy story; the impudence of the adulterous woman is very justly looked upon, by all that have any sparks of virtue in them, with the highest indignation, and the easiness of the young man, with the tenderest compassion; and the story concludes with sad reflections, enough to make all that read and hear it afraid of the snare of earthly lusts, and careful to keep at the utmost distance from them. It is supposed to be a parable, or imagined case, but I doubt it was too true, and, which is worse, that, notwithstanding the warning it gives of the fatal consequences of such wicked courses, it is still too often true, and the agents for hell are still playing the same game, and with like success.

Solomon was a magistrate, and, as such, inspected the manners of his subjects, looked often through his casement, that he might see with his own eyes, and made remarks upon those who little thought his eye was upon them, that he might know the better how to make the sword he bore a terror to evil-doers. But here he writes as a minister, a prophet, who is by office a watchman, to give warning of the approach of the enemies, and especially where they lie in ambush, that we may not be ignorant of Satan's devices, but may know where to double our guard. This Solomon does here, where we may observe the account he gives,

1. Of the person tempted, and how he laid himself open to the temptation, and therefore must thank himself if it end in his destruction. 1. He was a young man, v. 7. 2. Fleshly lusts are called wanton lusts, (2 Tim. ii. 22.) and called indulged lusts, as tricks of youth, and therefore excusable, but rather to aggravate them, as robbing God of the first and best of our time, and, by debauching the mind when it is tender, laying a foundation for a bad life ever after; and to intimate that young people ought, in a special manner, to fortify their resolutions against this sin. 2. He was a young man, vain of understanding, that went abroad into the world, not principled, as he ought to have been, with wisdom and the fear of God, and so ventured to sea.
without ballast, without pilot, cord, or compass; he knew not how to depart from evil, which is the best understanding, Job xxviii. 28. Those become an easy prey to Satan, who, when they are arrived to the stature of men, have scarcely the understanding of children. 3. He kept bad company; he was a youth, and terrified the young in sin; yielded, as the simple ones; if, being conscious of his own weakness, he had associated with those that were elder and wiser than himself, there had been hopes of him; Christ, at twelve years old, conversed with the doctors, to set young people an example of his; but if those that are simple choose such for their companions as are like themselves, simple they will be, and hardened in their simplicity. 4. He kept bad food; he fared sumptuously, and passed through the street, as one that knew not how to dispose of himself. One of the sins of filthy Solom., was, abundance of idleness, Ezek. xvi. 49. He went in a starched stately manner, so (they say) the word signifies; he appeared to be a nice formal fop, the top of whose accomplishments was to dress well, and walk with a good air; fit game for that bird of prey to fly at. 5. He was a night-walker, that hated the brightness that is to be drawn from day-light, from which he found men in to their repose; and, having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, he begins to move in the twilight in the evening, v. 9. And he chooses the black and dark night as fittest for his purpose, not the moon-light nights, when he might be discovered. 6. He steered his course toward the house of one that he thought would entertain him, and that he might be merry with; he went near her corner, the way to her house, (v. 8.) contrary to Solomon's advice, (ch. v. 8.) Come not nigh the door of her house. Perhaps he did not know it was the way to an infamous house, but, however, it was a way that he had no business in; and, when we have nothing to do, the Devil will quickly find us something to do. We must take heed, not only of idle days, but of idle evenings, lest they prove inlets into temptation.

II. Of the person tempting; not a common prostitute, for she was a married wife, (v. 19.) and, for aught appears, lived in reputation among her neighbours, not suspected of any such wickedness, and yet, in the twilight of the evening, when her husband was abroad, abominably impudent. She is here described, 1. By her dress; she had the attire of a harlot, (v. 10.) gaudy and flaunting, to set off as a beauty, perhaps she was painted as Jezebel, and went with her neck and breasts bare, loose, and en deshabille. The purity of the heart will show itself in the modesty of the dress, which becomes women professing godliness. 2. By her craft and management; she is subtile of heart, mistress of all the arts of wheedling, and knowing how by all her caresses to serve her own base purposes. 3. By her temper and carriage; she is loud and stubborn, talkative and self-willed, noisy and troublesome, wild and head-strong, all tongue, and that will have her way; she has a sort of check and control, and cannot bear to be counselled, much less reproved, by husband or parents, ministers or friends; she is a daughter of Belial, that will endure no yoke. 4. By her place; not her own house, she hates the confinement and employment of that, her feet abide not there any longer than needs must. She is all for gadding abroad, changing place and company, and she is without in the country, under pretence of taking the air, now in the streets of the city, under pretence of seeing how the market goes; she is here, and there, and everywhere where but where she should be; she lies in wait at every corner, to pick up such as can make a prey of. Virtue is a penance to those to whom home is a prison.

III. Of the temptation itself, and the management of it. She met the young spark, perhaps she knew him, however, she knew by his fashions that he was such a one as she wished for; so she caught him about the neck and kissed him, contrary to all the rules of modesty, (v. 13.) and waited not for his compliments. She comes, with a beguiling face, invited him not only to her house, but to her bed. 1. She courted him to sipp with her; (v. 14, 15.) I have peace-offerings with me. Hereby she gives him to understand, (1.) Her prosperity, that she was compassed about with so many blessings, that she had occasion to offer peace-offerings, in token of joy and thankfulness; she was before-hand in the world, so that he needed not fear having his pocket pinched. (2.) He makes profession of piety, so, he is a night-walker, he has found in to their repose, and was still respected there as any that worshipped in the courts of the Lord; she had paid her vows, and as she thought, made all even with God Almighty, and therefore might venture upon a new score of sins. Note, The external performances of religion, if they do not harden men against sin, harden them in it, and embolden carnal hearts to venture upon it, in hopes that, when they come to count and discount with God, he will have this to say, he has not offered them their peace-offerings and their vows, as they to him for their sins. But it is sad that a show of piety should become the shelter of iniquity, (which really doubles the shame of it, and makes it more exceeding sinful,) and that men should baffle their consciences with those very things that should startle them. The Pharisees made long prayers, that they might the more plausibly carry on their covetous and mischievous designs. The greatest part of the flesh of the peace-offerings, was, by the law, returned back to the offerers, to feast upon with their friends, which (if they were peace-offerings of thanksgiving) was to be all eaten the same day, and none of it left until the morning, Lev. vii. 15. This law of charity and generosity is abused to be a colour for glutony and excess; "Come," says she, "come home with me, for I have good cheer enough, and only want a good company to help me off with it." It was pity that the peace-offerings should thus become, in a bad sense, sin-offerings, and that what was designed for the honour of God should become the food and fuel of a base lust.

But this is not all; to strengthen the temptation, [1.] She pretends to have a very great affection for him above any man; *Therefore, because I have a good supper upon the table, I came forth to meet thee, for a friend in the world shall be so welcome to it as thou shalt, v. 15. Thou art he whom I came on purpose to seek, to seek diligently; came myself, and would not send a servant." Surely he cannot deny her his company, when she put such a value upon it, and would take all these pains to obtain the favour of it. Sinners take pains to do mischief, and are as the roaring lion himself, they go about seeking to devour, and yet pretend they do good. [2.] She breathes it out, that Providence itself countenanced her choice of him for her companion; for how quickly had she found him whom she sought! 2. She courted him to lie with her; they will sit down to eat and drink, and then rise up to play, to play the wanton, and there is a bed ready for them, where he shall find that which will be, in all respects, agreeable to him; to one whose study is to be a Slender in all the sciences of nature, and carved works, exquisitely fine, he never saw the like; to please his touch, the sheets are not of home-spun cloth, they are far-fetched and dear-bought, they are of fine linen of Egypt; (v. 16.) to gratify his smell, it is perfumed with the sweetest scents, v. 17. Come,
Thousands (1.) Is 
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on husband, 
would Potiphar's 
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and 
foolish 
life, 
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shall 
advantage 
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Sudden; 
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and 
end in his endless damnation. (2.) That 
which makes his case the more piteous, is, that he 
himself aware of his misery and danger; he 
goes blindfold, 
for, of all sinners, drunkards are the greatest fools, 
they wilfully turn themselves into fools is led to the 
correction of the stocks, and is not sensible of 
the shame of it, but goes to it as if he were going to 
a play. The bird that hastes to the snare, looks only 
at the bait, and promises herself a good bit from 
that, and considers not that it is for her life. Thus 
this unthinking unwary young man dreams of 
nothing but the pleasures he shall have in the 
embraces of the harlot, while really he is running 
headlong upon his ruin. Though Solomon does not here 
tell us that he put the law in execution against this 
base harlot, yet we have no reason to think but 
that he did, he was himself so affected with the 
mischief she did, and had such an indignation at it.

24. Hearken unto me now, therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth: 25. Let not thy heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths: 26. For she hath cast down many wounded; yea, many strong 
men have been slain by her. 27. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.

We have here the application of the foregoing 
story: "Hearken to me therefore, and not to such 
seducers; (v. 24.) give ear to a father, and not to 
an enemy."

1. "Take good counsel when it is given you. Let not thine heart decline to her ways; (v. 25.) never 
leave the paths of virtue, though strait and narrow, 
and up-hill, for the way of the adulteress, 
though green and broad, and crowded with company. 
Do not only keep thy feet from those ways, but let 
not so much as thy heart incline to them; never 
harbour a disposition this way, nor think otherwise 
than with abhorrence of such wicked practices as 
these. Let reason, and conscience, and the fear of 
God, ruling in the heart, check the inclinations of 
the sensual appetite. If thou goest in her paths, in 
any of the paths that lead to this sin, thou goest 
stray, thou art out of the right way, the safe way; 
therefore take heed, go not astray, lest thou wander 
endlessly."

2. "Take fair warning when it is given you." (1.) "Look back and see what mischief this sin 
hath done; the adulteress has been the ruin not of 
here and there one, but she has cast down many 
morally wounded." Thousands have been undone, now and 
and for ever, by this sin; and those not only the weak 
and simple youths, such as he was of whom we had 
now spoken, but many strong 
men have been 
slain by her, v. 26. Men, who were the样的 illustrious, 
especially to Samson, who was slain by this sin, and 
perhaps to David too, who, by his sin, entailed a 
word upon his house, though so far the Lord took 
it away, that he himself should not die. These were 
men not only of great bodily strength, but of eminent 
wisdom and courage, and yet their fleshly lusts 
prevailed over them. Howl, fir-trees, if the cedars be 
shaken. Let him that thinks he stands, take heed 
lest he fall."

(2.) "Look forward with an eye of faith, and see 
what will be in the end of it," v. 27. Her house, 
though richly decked and furnished, and called a 
house of pleasure, is the way to hell; and her 
chambers are the stair-case that goes down to the 
chambers of death, and everlasting darkness. The 
cup of fornication must shortly be exchanged for the
cup of trembling; and the flames of lust, if not quenched by repentance and mortification, will burn to the lowest hell. Therefore stand in awe, and sin not.

CHAP. VIII.

The word of God is two-fold, and, in each sense, is wisdom; for a word without wisdom, is of little value, or wisdom without a word, is of little use. Now, I. Divine revelation is the word and wisdom of God, and so is that pure religion and undefiled, which is built upon it; and of that Solomon here speaks, recommending it to us as faithful, and well worthy of all acceptance, v. 1. ... 21. God, by it, instructs, and governs, and blesses, the children of men. II. The Redeemer is the eternal Word and Wisdom, the Logos; he is the Wisdom that speaks to the children of men, in the former part of the chapter; all divine revelation passes through his hand, and centres in him; but of him as the personal Wisdom, the second Person in the Godhead, in the judgment of many of the ancients, Solomon here speaks, v. 22. ... 31. He concludes with a repeated charge to the children of men, diligently to attend to the voice of God in his word, v. 32 ... 36.

1. BOTH not Wisdom cry? and Understanding stand forth her voice? 2. She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. 3. She crieth at the gates, at the entrance of the city, at the coming in at the doors; 4. Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of wisdom. 5. O ye simple, understand wisdom; and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart. 6. Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things. 7. For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips. 8. All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing false or perverse in them. 9. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge. 10. Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. 11. For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.

The will of God, revealed to us for our salvation, is here largely represented to us, as easy to be known and understood, that none may have an excuse for their ignorance or error; and as worthy to be embraced, that none may have an excuse for their carelessness and unbelief.

1. The things revealed are easy to be known, for they belong to us and to our children; (Deut. xxix. 29.) and we need not soar up to heaven, or dive into the depths, to get the knowledge of them, (Deut. xxxi. 11.) for they are published and proclaimed, in some measure by the works of creation, (Ps. xix. 1.) more fully by the consciences of men, and the eternal reasons and rules of good and evil, but most clearly by Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

The prospects of wisdom may easily be known; for—

1. They are proclaimed aloud; (v. 1.) Does not Wisdom cry? Yes, she cries aloud, and does not spare; (Isa. livii. 1) she puts forth her voice, as one in earnest, and desirous to be heard. Jesus stood and cried, John vii. 37. The curses and blessings were read with a loud voice by the Levites, Deut. xxxvii. 14. And men’s own hearts sometimes speak aloud to them; there are clamours of conscience, as well as whispers.

2. They are proclaimed from on high; (v. 2.) She stands in the top of high places; it was from the top of mount Sinai that the law was given, and Christ explained it in a new light. Nay, if we slight divine revelation, we turn away from him that speaks from heaven, a high place indeed, Heb. xii. 25. The adulterous woman spake in secret, the oracles of the heathen muttered, but wisdom speaks openly; truth seeks no corners, but gladly appeals to the light.

3. They are proclaimed in the places of concourse, where multitudes are gathered together, and wisdom begins in the synagogues and in the temple, whither the Jews always resorted, John xviii. 30. Every man that passes by on the road, of what rank or condition soever, may know what is good, and what the Lord requires of him, if it be not his own fault. There is no speech nor language where Wisdom’s voice is not heard; her discoveries and directions are given to all promiscuously. He that has ears to hear, let him hear.

4. They are proclaimed there where they are most needed. They are intended for the guidance of the childless, that are without the way, and therefore are published in the places of the path, where many ways meet, that travelers may be showed, if they will but ask, which is the right way, just then when they are at a loss; thou shalt then hear the word behind thee, saying, This is the way, Isa. xxx. 21. The foolish man knows not how to go to the city, (Eccl. x. 13.) and therefore wisdom stands ready to direct him; stands at the gates, at the entrance of the city, ready to tell him where the seer’s house is, 1 Sam. ix. 18. Nay, she follows men to their own houses, and cries to them at the coming in at the doors, saying, Peace be to this house; and, if the son of peace be there, it shall certainly abide upon it. God’s ministers are appointed to testify to people, both publicly, and from house to house. Their own consciences follow them with admonitions, wherever they go, which they cannot be out of hearing of, while they carry their own heads and hearts about with them, which are a law unto themselves.

5. They are directed to the children of men. We attend to that discourse in which we hear ourselves named, though otherwise we should have neglected it; therefore wisdom speaks to us; *Unto you, O men, I call, (v. 4.) not to angels, they need not these instructions; not to devils, they are past them; nor to the brute-creatures, they are masters of them; but to you, O men, who are taught more than the beasts of the earth, and made wiser than the fowls of heaven. To you is this law given, to you is the word of this invitation, this exhortation, sent. My voice is to the sons of men, who are concerned to receive instruction, and to whom, one would think, it should be very welcome. It is not to you, O Jews, only, that wisdom cries, or to you, O gentlemen, or to you, O scholars; but to you, O men, O men, that are taught more than the beasts of the earth.

6. They are designed to make them wise; (v. 5.) they are calculated not only for men that are capable of wisdom, but for sinful men, fallen men, foolish men, that need it, and are unwise within it; *0 ye simple ones, understand wisdom. Though you are ever so simple, Wisdom will take you for her scholars, and not only so, but, if you will be ruled by her, will undertake to give you an understanding heart. When we better the Jews and become truly religious, then the simple understand wisdom.

II. The things revealed are worthy to be known, well worthy of all acceptance. We are concerned to hear; for—

1. They are of inestimable value; they are cxcellent things, (v. 6.) principally things, so the word is
Though they are level to the capacity of the meanest, yet there is that in them which will be entertaining for the greatest. They are divine and holy; they are the descendants, the offspring, the children, with whom, all other learning is but children's play. Things which relate to an eternal God, an immortal soul, and an everlasting state, must needs be excellent things.

2. They are of incontestable equity, and carry along with them the evidence of their own goodness; they are right things, (v. 6.) all in righteousness, (v. 5.) and nothing formal or hasty in them. All the dictates and directions of revealed religion are consonant to, and perfective of, the light and law of nature, and there is nothing in it that puts any hardship upon us, that lays us under any undue restraints, unbecoming the dignity and liberty of the human nature; nothing that we have reason to complain of: all God's precepts concerning all things are right.

3. They are of unutterable truth; Wisdom's doctrines, upon which her laws are founded, are such as we may venture our immortal souls upon; My mouth shall speak truth, (v. 7.) the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, for it is a testimony to the world. Every word of God is true, there are not so much as pious frauds in it; nor are we imposed upon in that which is told us for our good. Christ is a faithful Witness, is the Truth itself; wickedness, lying, is an abomination to his life. Note, Lying is wickedness, and we should not only refrain from it, but it should be an abomination to us, and as far from what we say, as from what God says to us. His word to us is yea, and amen, never then let our's be yea and nay.

4. They are wonderfully acceptable and agreeable to those who take them aright, who understand themselves aright, have not their judgments blinded and biased by the world and the flesh, are not under the power of prejudice, are taught of God, and whose understanding he has opened; who partially seek knowledge, take pains for it, and have found in it the inquiries they have hitherto prided to: them. (1.) They are all plain, and not hard to be understood. If the book issealed, it is to those who are willingly ignorant. If our gospel is hid, it is hid to them who are lost; but to those who depart from evil, which is understanding, who have that good understanding, which they have when they are enlightened from sin, and from the will and commands of evil, they are all plain, and there is nothing difficult in them. The way of religion is a high-way, and the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein, Isa. xxxv.

5. They therefore do a great wrong to the common people, who deny them the use of the scripture, under pretence that they cannot understand it, whereas it is plain for plain people. (2.) They are all right, and not hard to be submitted to. They are principles, things in the truth, good and evil, readily subscribe to the rectitude of all wisdom's dictates, and, therefore, without murmuring or disputing, govern themselves by them.

III. From all this he infers, that the right knowledge of those things, such as transforms us into the image of them, is to be preferred before all the wealth of this world; (v. 10, 11.) Receive my instruction, and not silver. Instruction must not only be received, but received in the right manner, receive the impressions of it, and submit to the command of it; and this, rather than choice gold; that is, 1. We must prefer religion before riches, and look upon it, that, if we have the knowledge and fear of God in our hearts, we are really more happy, and better provided for every condition of life, than if we had ever so much silver and gold. Wisdom is, in itself, and therefore must be, in our account, better than rubies. It will bring us in a better price, be to us a better portion; show it forth, and it will be a better ornament than jewels and precious stones of the greatest value. Whatever we can sit down and wish for of the wealth of this world, if we had it, it were not worthy to be compared with the advantages that attend serious godliness. 2. We must be dead to the wealth of this world, that we may the more closely and earnestly apply ourselves to the business of religion. We must receive instruction as the main matter, and then be indifferent whether we receive silver or no; nay, we must not receive it as our portion and reward, as the rich man in his life-time received his good things.

12. I Wisdom dwell with Prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions. 13. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the forward mouth, do I hate. 14. Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength. 15. By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. 16. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth. 17. I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me. 18. Riches and honour are, with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness.

19. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver. 20. I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: 21. That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will find their treasures.

Wisdom here is Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; it is Christ in the word, and Christ in the heart: not only Christ revealed to us, but Christ revealed in us. It is the word of God, the whole compass of divine revelation; it is God the Word, in whom all divine revelation centres; it is the soul formed by the word, it is Christ formed in the soul; it is religion in the person and property of it. Glorious things are here spoken of this excellent Person, this excellent thing.

1. Divine wisdom gives men good heads; (v. 12.) I wisdom dwell with prudence, not with carnal policy, (the wisdom that is from above is contrary to that, 2 Cor. i. 12.) but with true discretion, which serves for the right ordering of the conversation; that wisdom of the prudent, which is to understand his way, and is in all cases profitable to direct; the wisdom of the serpent, not only to guard from harm, but to use it in doing good. Wisdom dwells with prudence; for prudence is the prince of religion, and an ornament to religion; and there are more witty inventions found out with the help of the scripture, both for the right understanding of God's providences, and for the effectual countering of Satan's devices, and the doing of good in our generation, than were ever discovered by the learning of the philosophers or the politeness of statesmen. We may apply to our Christian life he dwells with prudence, for his whole undertaking is the wisdom of God in a mystery, and in it God abounds towards us in all wisdom and prudence. Christ found out the knowledge of that great invention, and a costly one it was to him, man's salvation, by his satisfaction an admirable expedition: we had found out many inventions for our ruin, he found out one for our recovery. The covenant of grace is so well ordered.
in all things, that we must conclude that he, who ordered it, dwelt with prudence.

II. It gives men good hearts, v. 13. True religion consisting in the fear of the Lord, which is the wisdom before recommended, teaches men, 1. To hate all sin, as displeased they see it done, and determined to destroy it. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil, the evil way; to hate sin as sin, and therefore to hate every false way. Wherever there is an awe of God, there is a dread of sin, as an evil, an only evil. 2. Particularly to hate pride and passion, those two common and dangerous sins. Conceitedness of ourselves, pride and arrogancy, are sins which Christ hates, and so do all those who have the Spirit of Christ; every one hates them in others, but we must hate them in ourselves. The froward mouth, peevishness towards others, God hates, because it is such an enemy to the peace of mankind, and therefore we should hate it. Be it spoken to the honour of religion, that, however it is unjustly accused, it is so far from making men conceited and sour, that there is nothing more directly contrary to it than pride and passion, nor which it teaches us more to detest.

This has great influence upon public affairs, and the well governing of all societies, v. 14. Christ, as God, has strength and wisdom; wisdom and might are his; as Redeemer, he is the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God. To all that are his, he is made of God both Strength and Wisdom; in him they are laid up for us, that we may both know and do our duty. He is the Wonderful Counsellor, and gives that grace which alone is sound wisdom. He is Understanding itself, and has strength for all those that strengthen themselves in him. True religion gives men the best counsel in all difficult cases, and helps to make their way plain; wherever it is, it is understanding, it has strength, it will be all that to us that we need, both for services and sufferings. Where the word of God dwells richly, it makes a man perfect and furnishes him thoroughly for every good word and work.

Kings, princes, and judges, have, of all men, most need of wisdom and strength, of counsel and courage, for the faithful discharge of the trusts reposed in them, and that they may be blessings to the people over whom they are set. And therefore Wisdom says, By me kings reign; (v. 15, 16.) that is, 1. Civil government is a divine institution, and those that are intrusted with the administration of it have their commission from Christ; it is either of his kingly office, that by him kings reign; from him, to whom all judgment is committed, their power is derived. They reign by him, and therefore ought to reign for him. 2. Whatever qualifications for government any kings or princes have, they are indebted to the grace of Christ for them; he gives them the spirit of government, and they have nothing, no skill, no principles of justice, but what he endues them with. A divine grace which he has bestowed in the highest degree on them, and that is not to their subjects what he makes them.

3. Religion is very much the strength and support of the civil government; it teaches subjects their duty, and so by it kings reign over them the more easily; it teaches kings their duty, and so by it kings reign as they ought; they decree justice, while they rule in the fear of God. Those rule well whom religion rules.

We must all make all those happy, truly happy, that receive and embrace it.

1. They shall be happy in the love of Christ; for he it is that says, I love them that love me, v. 17. They that Love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity shall be loved of him with a peculiar distinguishing love; he will love them, and manifest himself to them. 2. They shall be happy in the success of their inquiries after them; They that seek me early, seek an acquaintance with me, and an interest in me, seek it early, seek it earnestly, seek it first before any thing else, that begin betimes in the days of their youth to seek me, they shall find what they seek, and the Lord shall be their guide, and they shall be his; he never said, Seek, in vain.

3. They shall be happy in the wealth of the world, or in that which is infinitely better. (1.) They shall have as much riches and honour as Infinite Wisdom seems good for them; (v. 18.) they are with Christ, he has them to give, and whether he will see fit to give them to us must be referred to him. Religion sometimes helps to make people rich and great in this world, because it makes a man wise, and so increases his estates; and the riches which Wisdom gives to her favourites have these two advantages; [1.] That they are riches and righteousness, riches honestly got, not by fraud and oppression, but in regular ways; and riches charitably used, for aims are called righteousness. Those that have their wealth from God's blessing on their industry, and that have a heart to do good with it, have riches and righteousness. [2.] That therefore they are durable riches; wealth gotten by fraud and sin so soon begins to consume, which is well-got will wear well, and will be left to the children's children; and that which is well-spent, in works of piety and charity, is set out to the best interest, and so will be durable; for the friends made by the mammon of unrighteousness, when we fail, will receive us into everlasting habitations, Luke xvi. 9. It will be found after many days, for the days of eternity. (2.) They shall have that which is infinitely better, if they have not riches and honour in this world; (v. 19.) My fruit is better than gold, and will turn to a better account, will be of more value in less compass, and my revenue better than the choicest silver, will serve a better trade. We may assure ourselves, that not only Wisdom's products at last, but her incomes in the mean time, not only her fruit, but her revenue, are more valuable than the best, either of the possessions or of the reversions of this world.

4. They shall be happy in the grace of God now; that shall be their guide in the good way, v. 20. This is that fruit of wisdom which is better than gold, than fine gold; it leads us in the way of righteousness, shows us that way, and goes before us in it; the way that God would have us walk in, and which will certainly bring us to our desired end. It leads in the midst of the paths of judgment, and saves us from the harm of the ways of the ungodly. Virtue lies in the midst. Christ by his Spirit guides believers into all truth, and so leads them in the way of righteousness, and they walk after the Spirit.

5. They shall be happy in the glory of God hereafter, v. 21. Therefore Wisdom leads in the paths of righteousness, not only that she may keep her friends in the way of duty and obedience, but that she may cause them to inherit substance, and may fill their hands with the produce of the earth, and of all that is in it; and give them a share of the happiness of this world, nor with any thing less than God and heaven. The happiness of those that love God, and devote themselves to his service, is substantial and satisfactory. (1.) It is substantial, it is substance itself; it is a happiness which will subsist of itself, and stand alone, without the accidental supports of outward conveniences, spiritual and external things are the only real and substantial things. Joy in God is substantial; it is real and well-grounded; the promises are their bonds, Christ is their Surety, and both substantial. They inherit substance; their inheritance hereafter is substantial, it is a weight of glory, it is substance; (Heb. x. 34.) all their happiness they have as heirs, it is grounded upon their sonship. (2.) It is satisfying; it will fill not only their hands, but their treasures; not only maintain
them, but make them rich. The things of this world may fill men's bellies, (Ps. xvi. 14.) but not their treasures; for they cannot in them secure to themselves goods for many years, perhaps they may be deprived of them this night; but, let the treasures of the soul be ever so capacious, there is enough in God, and Christ, and heaven, to fill them. In Wisdom's promises believers have goods laid up, not for days and years, but for eternity; her fruit therefore is better than gold.

22. The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. 23. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. 24. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. 25. Before the mountains were settled; before the hills was I brought forth:

26. While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. 27. When he prepared the heavens, I was there; when he set a compass upon the face of the depth; 28. When he established the clouds above; when he strengthened the fountains of the deep; 29. When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment; when he appointed the foundations of the earth:

30. Then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him: 31. Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.

That it is an intelligent and divine Person that here speaks, seems very plain, and that it is not meant of a mere property of the divine nature; for wisdom here has personal properties and actions; and that intelligent, divine Person, can be no other than the Son equal himself, to whom the principal things here spoke of are attributed in other scriptures, and we must explain scripture by itself. If Solomon himself designed only the praise of wisdom, as it is an attribute of God, by which he made the world and governs it, so to recommend to men the study of that wisdom which belongs to them, yet the Spirit of God, who ended what he wrote, carried him, as David often, to such expressions as could agree to no other than the Son of God, and would lead us into the knowledge of great things concerning him. All divine revelation is the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, and here we are told who and what he is, as God, designed in the eternal councils to be the Mediator between God and man. The best exposition of these verses we have in the four first verses of St. John's gospel; In the beginning was the Word, &c.

Concerning the Son of God, observe here,

1. His personality, and distinct subsistence; one with the Father, and of the same essence, and yet a person of himself, whom the Lord possessed, (v. 22.) was set up, (v. 23.) was brought forth, (v. 24, 25.) was by him, (v. 30.) for he was the express Image of his person, Heb. i. 3.

2. His eternity; he was begotten of the Father, for the Lord possessed him, as his own Son, laid him in his bosom; he was brought forth as the only-begotten of the Father, and this, before all worlds; which is most largely insisted upon here. The Word was eternal, and had a being before the world, before the beginning of time; and therefore it must follow, that it was from eternity. The Lord possessed him in the beginning of his way, of his eternal councils, for those were before his works; this way, indeed, had no beginning, for God's purposes in himself are eternal like himself, but God speaks to us in our own language. Wisdom explains her self; (v. 23.) I was set up from everlasting. The Son of God was, in the eternal councils of God, designated and appointed to be the Wisdom and Power of the Father, Light and Life, in the creation and in the redemption of the world.

That he was brought forth as to his being, and set up as to the divine councils concerning his office, before the world was made, is here set forth in a great variety of expressions, much the same with those by which the eternity of God himself is expressed, Ps. xc. 2. Before the mountains were brought forth, (1.) Before the earth was, and that was made in the beginning, before man was made; therefore the second Adam had a being before the first, for the first Adam was made of the earth, the second had a being before the earth, and therefore is not of the earth, John iii. 31. (2.) Before the sea was; (v. 24.) when there were no depths in which the waters were gathered together, no fountains from which those waters might arise, none of that deep on which the Spirit of God moved for the production of the earth; everlasti g

fore the mountains were, the everlasting mountains, v. 25. Eliphaz, to convince Job of his inability to judge of the divine counsels, asks him, (Job xv. 7.) Was thou made before the hills? No, thou wast not; but before the hills was the eternal Word brought forth. (4.) Before the habitable parts of the world, which men cultivate, and reap the profits of, (v. 26.) the fields in the valleys and plains, to which the mountains are opposed, and which constitute the chief part of the dust of the world; the first part of the dust, so some; the atoms which compose the several parts of the world; the chief or principal part of the dust, so it may be read, and understood of man, who was made of the dust of the ground, and is dust, but is the principal part of the dust, dust enlivened, dust refined. The eternal Word had a being before man was made, for in him was the life of men.

His agency in making the world, He not only had a being before the world, he was present, not as a spectator, but as the Architect, when the world was made. God puzzled and humbled Job, by asking him, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Who hath laid the measures thereof? (Job xxxviii. 4, 8.) Wast thou that eternal Word and Wisdom, which was the prime Manager of that great affair? No; thou art of yesterday." But here the Son of God, referring, as it should seem, to the discourse God had with Job, declares himself to have been engaged in that which Job could not pretend to be a witness of, and a worker in, the creation of the world. By him God made the worlds, Eph. iii. 9. Heb. i. 2. Col. i. 16. (1.) When, on the first day of the creation, in the very beginning of time, God bespoke the light, and with a word produced it, this eternal Wisdom was that almighty Word; Then I was there, when he prepared the heavens, the foundations of the earth, whatever it is here, is there substantial. (2.) He was no less active, when, on the second day, he stretched out the firmament, the vast expanse, and set that as a compass upon the face of the depth, (v. 27.) surrounded it on all sides with that canopy, that curtain. Or, it may refer to the exact order and method with which God framed all the parts of the universe, as the workman marks out his work with his line and compasses. The work in nothing varied from the plan of it formed in the eternal mind. (3.) He was also employed in the third day's work, when
the waters above the heavens were gathered together by establishing the clouds above, and those under the heavens by strengthening the fountains of the deep, which send forth those waters, (v. 26.) and by preserving the bounds of the sea, which is the receptacle of those waters, (v. 29.) This speaks much the high praise due to Wisdom for this. But first and next God proves himself a God greatly to be feared, (Jer. v. 22.) that he has placed the sand for the bound of the sea, that the dry land might continue to appear above water, fit to be a habitation for man; and thus he has appointed the foundation of the earth. How able, how fit, is the Son of God to be the Saviour of the world, who was the Creator of it!

4. The infinite complacency which the Father had in the Father the Son, is declared by the following words: (v. 30.) I was by him, as one brought up with him. As by an eternal generation he was brought forth of the Father, so by an eternal council he was brought up with him; which intimates, not only the infinite love of the Father to the Son, who is therefore called the Son of his love, (Col. i. 13.) but the mutual conscious- ness and good understanding that were between them, concerning the work of man's redemption, which the Son was to undertake and accomplish when the council of peace was between them both, Zech. vi. 13. He was alumnus Patris—the Father's pupil, as I may say, trained up from eternity for that service which, in time, in the fulness of time, he was to go forth with, and is now taken under the special tuition and protection of the Father; he is my Servant whom I uphold, Isa. xlii. 1. He did what he saw the Father do, (John v. 19.) pleased his Father, sought his glory, did according to the common method of all great persons, and all this as one brought up with him. He was daily his Father's Delight, (mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth,) says God; Isa. xlii. 1, and he also rejoiced always before him. This may be understood, either, (1.) Of the infinite delight which the persons of the blessed Trinity have in each other, wherein consists much of the happiness of the divine nature. Or, (2.) Of the pleasure which the Father took in the operations of the Son, when he made the world; God saw every thing that the Son made, and, behold, it was very good, it pleased him, and therefore his Son was daily, day by day, during the six days of the creation, upon that account, his Delight; Exod. xxxix. 43. And the Son also did himself rejoice before him in the beauty and harmony of the whole creation, Ps. civ. 31. Or, (3.) Of the satisfaction they had in each other, with reference to the great work of man's redemption. The Father delighted in the Son, as Mediator between him and man, was well pleased with what he proposed, (Matth. iii. 17.) and therefore loved him, because he undertook to lay down his life for the sheep; he put a confidence in him, that he would go through his work, and not fail or fly off. The Son also rejoiced always before him, delighted to do his will, (Ps. xi. 8.) stuck close to his undertaking, as one that was well satisfied in it, and, when it came to the setting to, expressed as much satisfaction in it as ever, saying, Lo, I come, to do as in the volume of the book it is written of me.

5. The gracious concern he had for mankind, v. 31. Wisdom rejoiced, not so much in the rich products of the earth, or the treasures hid in the bowels of it, as in the habitable parts of it, for her delights were with the sons of men; not only in the creation of man is it spoken with a peculiar air of pleasure, (Gen i. 26.) But let us make man, but in the redemption and salvation of man. The Son of God was ordained, before the world, to that great work, 1 Pet. i. 20. A remnant of the sons of men were given him to be brought, through his grace, to his glory, and those were they in whom his delights were: his church was the habitable part of his earth, made habitable for him, that the Lord God might dwell even among them that had been rebellious; and this he rejoiced in, in the prospect of seeing his seed. Though he foresaw all the difficulties he was to meet with in his work, the services and sufferings he was to go through, yet, because it would be sue in the glory of his Father, and the salvation of these sons of men that were given him, he locked forward upon it with the greatest satisfaction imaginable, in which we have all the encouragement we can desire to come to him, and rely upon him for all the benefits designed us by his glorious undertaking.

32. Now, therefore, hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways. 33. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. 34. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. 35. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. 36. But he that sittETH against me worketh against his own soul: all they that hate me love death.

We have here the application of Wisdom's discourse; the design and tendency of it, is, to bring us all into an entire subjection to the laws of religion, to make us wise and good; not to fill our heads with speculations, or our tongue with disputes, but to rectify what is amiss in our hearts and lives. In order to this, here is,

1. An exhortation to hear and obey the voice of Wisdom, to attend and comply with the good instructions that the word of God gives us, and in them to discern the voice of Christ, as the sheep know the shepherd's voice.

1. We must be diligent hearers of the word; for how can we believe in him of whom we have not heard? "Hearken unto me, O ye children," (v. 32.) "read the word written, sit under the word preached, bless God therefore, and your hearts be speaking to you." Let children in age hearken, for it is their learning age; and what they hearken to then, it is likely, they will be so seasoned by, as to be governed by all their days. Let children in relation hearken to God as their Father, to Wisdom as their mother, to whom they ought to be in subjection and live; let Wisdom's children justify Wisdom by hearkening to her, and show themselves to be indeed her children.

We must hear Wisdom's words, (1.) Submissively, and with a willing heart; (v. 33.) "Hear instruction, and refuse it not, either as that which you need not, or as that which you like not; it is offered you as a kindness, and it is at your peril if you refuse it." They that reject the counsel of God, reject it against themselves, Luke vii. 30. "Refuse it not now, lest you have not another offer." (2.) Constantly, and with an attentive ear: We must hear Wisdom so as to watch daily at her gates, as beggars to receive an alms, as clients and patients to receive advice, and to wait as servants, with humility, and patience, and ready observance, at the posts of her doors. See here what a good house Wisdom keeps, for every day is dole-day; what a good school, for every day is lecture-day. While we have God's works before our eyes, and his word in our hand, we may be every day hearing instruction from him, and learning instruction from her. See here what a dutiful and diligent attendance is required of all Christ's disciples; they must watch at his gates. [1.] We must lay hold upon all opportunities of getting knowledge and grace, and must get into, and keep
CHAP. IX.

Christ and sin are rivals for the soul of man, and here we are told how they both make their court to it, to have the innermost and permest place in it. The design of this representation is to prevent before it is too late, the just judgment of God, to prevent misconduct, to guard against sin and evil; and there needs no more than a fair stating of the case, to determine us which of those to choose, and surrender our hearts to. They are both brought in, making entertainment for the soul, and inviting it to accept of the entertainment; concerning both we are told what the issue will be; and the matter being thus laid before us, let us consider, take advice, and speak our minds. And we are therefore to be on our guard against sin, against our own souls, because we see there is such striving for them.

1. Christ, under the name of Wisdom, invites us to accept of his entertainment, and so to enter into acquaintance and communion with him, v. 1., 2. And having foretold the different success of his invitation, v. 7., 9., he shows, in short, what he requires from us, v. 10., and what he designs for us, v. 11. and then leaves it to our choice what we will do, v. 12. II. Sin, under the character of a foolish woman, courts us to accept of her entertainment, and v. 13., 16. pretends it is very charming, v. 17. But Solomon tells what the reckoning will be, v. 18. And now choose you, this day, whom you will choose with.

1. WISDOM hath built her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: 2. She hath killed her beasts: she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table: 3. She hath sent forth her maidsens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city. 4. Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, 5. Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. 6. Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding. 7. He that reprouveth a scorner geteth to himself shame; and he that rebuketh a wicked man geteth himself a blot. 8. Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. 9. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning. 10. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding. 11. For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased. 12. If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.

Wisdom is here introduced as a magnificent Queen, very great and very generous; that Word of God is this Wisdom, in which God makes known his good-will toward men; God the Word is this Wisdom, to whom the Father has committed all judgment. He who, for the chapter before, bestowed his splendour and glory, as the Creator of the world, here shows his grace and goodness, as the Redeemer of it. The word is plural, to Wisdom; for in Christ are hid treasures of wisdom, and in his undertaking appears the manifold Wisdom of God in a mystery. Now, observe here,

1. The rich provision which Wisdom has made for the reception of all those that will be his disciples. This is represented under the similitude of a sumptuous feast, whence, it is probable, our Saviour borrowed those parables, in which he compares, the kingdom of heaven to a great supper, Matth. xxii.
2. Luke xiv. 16. And so it was prophesied of, Isa. xxv. 6. It is such a feast as Ahasuerus made to show the riches of his glorious kingdom. The grace of God is a feast; and he who is set before the throne of the Lord’s supper. To bid her guests welcome.

1. Here is a stately palace provided, v. 1. Wisdom, not finding a house capacious enough for all her guests, has built one on purpose, and, both to strengthen it, and to beautify it, she has hevn out her seven pillars, which make it to be very firm, and look very great. Heaven is the house which Wisdom has built to entertain all her guests that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. That is her Father’s house, where there are many mansions, and whither she is gone to prepare places for us. She has hanged the earth upon nothing, therefore in it we have no continuing city; but heaven is a city that has foundations, his pillars. The church is Wisdom’s house, to which she invites her guests, supported by the power and promise of God, as by seven pillars. Probably, Solomon refers to the temple which he himself had lately built for the service of religion, and to which he would persuade people to resort, both to worship God, and to receive the instructions of Wisdom. Some reckon the schools of the prophets to be here intended.

2. Here is a splendid feast got ready; (v. 2.) She has killed her beasts, she has mingled her wine; plenty of meat and drink is provided, and all of the best. She has killed her sacrifice, so the word is; it is a sumptuous, but a sacred, feast, a feast upon a sacrifice. Wisdom has fitted up herself a Sacrifice for us, and it is his flesh that is meat indeed, and his blood that is drink indeed. The Lord’s supper is a feast of reconciliation and joy upon the sacrifice of atonement. The wine is mingled with something richer than itself, to give it more than ordinary spirit and flavour. She has completely furnished her table with all the satisfactions that a soul can desire; righteousness and grace, peace and joy, the assurance of God’s love, the consolations of the Spirit, and all the pledges and covenants of eternal life. Observe, It is all Wisdom’s own doings; she has killed the beasts, she has mingled the wine; which denotes both the love of Christ, who makes the provision, (he does not leave it to others, but takes the doing of it into his own hands,) and the excellency of the preparation. That must needs be exactly fitted to answer the end, which Wisdom herself has the fitting up of.

II. The gracious invitation she has given, not to some particular friends, but to all in general, to come and take part of these provisions. 1. She employs her servants to invite round about in the country; she has sent forth her maidens, v. 3. The ministers of the gospel are commissioned and commanded to give notice of the preparations which God has made, in the everlasting covenant, for all those that are willing to come up to the terms of it; and they, with maiden purity, not corrupting themselves, nor the sons of the congregation of the Lord, in the exercises of orders, are to call upon all they meet with even in the high-ways and hedges, to come and feast with Wisdom, for all things are now ready, Luke xiv. 23. 2. She herself cries upon the highest places of the city, as one earnestly desirous of the welfare of the children of men, and grieved to see them rejecting their own mercies for lying vanities. Our Lord Jesus was himself the Publisher of his last will, when he had sent forth his disciples, he followed them, and finalled to them, and said, “The day began to bespoken by the Lord, Heb. ii. 3. He stood, and cried, Come unto me.” We see who invites; now let us observe, (1.) To whom the invitation is given; Whoso is simple, and wants understanding, v. 4. If we were to make an entertainment, of all people we should not care for much less court, the company of such, but rather of philosophers and learned men, that we might hear their wisdom, and whose table-talk would be improving. Have I need of maid-men? But the Wise Woman AND WISDOM is such, that all who are willing to give is what they most need, and it is their welfare that she consults, and aims at, in the preparation and invitation. He that is simple is invited, that he may be made wise; and he that wants a heart, so the word is, let him come hither, and he shall have one. Her preparations are rather physic than food, designed for the most valuable and desirable cure, that of the mind. Whosoever he be, the invitation is general, and excludes none that do not exclude themselves, if they have the heart. Yet [1.] They shall be welcome. [2.] They may be helped, they shall neither be despised nor despairs of. Our Saviour came, not to call the righteous, but sinners; not the wise in their own eyes, who say they see, (John ix. 41.) but the simple, those who are sensible of their simplicity, and ashamed of it, and him that is willing to become a fool, that he may be wise. 1. Cor. iii. 18.

(2.) What the invitation is. [1.] We are invited to Wisdom’s house; Turn in hither. I say we are, for which of us is there that must not own the character of the invited, that are simple, and want understanding? Wisdom’s doors stand open to such, and she is desirous to have some conversation with them, one word for their own good, nor has she any other design upon them. [2.] We are invited to her table; (v. 5.) Come, eat of my bread, taste of the true portions that are, to be found in the knowledge and fear of God. By faith act on the promises of the gospel, applying them to ourselves, and taking the comfort of them, we feed, we feast, upon the provisions Christ has made for poor souls. What we eat and drink we make our own, and are nourished and refreshed by it, and so are our souls by the word of God; it has that in it that is meat and drink to those that understand themselves.

(3.) What is required of those that may have the benefit of this invitation, v. 6. [1.] They must break off from all bad company; “Forsake the foolish, converse not with them, conform not to their ways, have no fellowship with the works of darkness, or with those that deal in such works.” The first step toward virtue, is, to shun vice, and therefore to shun the vicious; Depart from me, ye evil doers. [2.] They must awake and arise from the dead; they must live, not in pleasure, (for those that so live, do live,) but in the service of God; for these only that do so live indeed, live to some purpose. “Live not a mere animal-life, as brutes, but now, at length, live the life of men. Live, and you shall live; live spiritually, and you shall live eternally,” Eph. v. 14. [3.] They must choose the paths of Wisdom, and keep to them; “Go in the way of understanding; govern thyself hence-forward by the rules of religion and right reason.” It is not enough to extend these blessings, but we must go to ourselves with those that walk in wisdom, and walk in the same spirit and steps.

III. The instructions which Wisdom gives to the maidens she sends to invite, to the ministers and others, who in their places are endeavouring to serve her interests and designs. She tells them, 1. What their work must be; not only to tell in general what preparation is made for souls, and to give a general offer of it, but they must apply the particular portions of the King’s parables, and of their faults, to revolve, rebuke, v. 7. 8. They must instruct them how to amend, teach, v. 9. The word of God is intended, and therefore so is the ministry of that word, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. 2. What different sorts of persons they would meet with, and what course they must take with them, and what success they might expect.
(1.) They would meet with some scorers and wicked men, who would mock the messengers of the Lord, and misuse them, would laugh them to scorn, that invite them; and this fears them, as they did, 2 Chron. xxx. 10. would treat them spitefully, Matth. xxii. 6. And though they are not forbidden to invite those simple ones to Wisdom's house, yet they are advised not to pursue the invitation, by reproving and rebuking them; Reprove not a scorner, cast not these pearls before swine, Matth. vii. 6. Thus Christ said of the Pharisees, Let them alone, Matth. xv. 14. Do not reproach those, 1. [3.] "In justice to them, for they have forfeited the favour of further means, who scorn the means they have had." They that are thus filthy, let them be filthy still; that are joined to idols, let them alone; to, we turn to the Gentiles. 2. [2.] "In prudence to yourselves; because, if you reprove them," First, "You lose your labour, and so get to yourselves shame for the disappointment." Second, "You exasperate them; do it ever so wisely and tenderly, if you do it faithfully, they will hate you, they will load you with reproaches, and say all the ill they can of you, and so you will get a blot; therefore you had better not meddle with them, for your reproves will be likely to do more hurt than good." (2.) They would meet with others who are wise, and good, and just; thanks be to God, all are not scorers. We meet with some who are so wise for themselves, so just to themselves, as to be willing and glad to be taught; and, with whom we meet with such, 1. [1.] If there be occasion, we must reprove them; for wise men are not so perfectly wise, but there is in that which needs a reproof; and we must not connive at any man's faults, because we have a veneration for his wisdom; nor must a wise man think that his wisdom exculpates him from reproof, when he says or does any thing foolishly; but, the more wisdom a man has, the more desirous he should be to have his weaknesses showed him, because a little folly is a great blemish to him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour. [2.] With our reproves we must give them instruction, and must teach them, v. 9. [3.] We may expect that it will be taken as a kindness, Ps. cxli. 5. A wise man will reckon those his friends who deal faithfully with him; "Rebuke such a one, and he will love thee for thy plain dealing, will thank thee, and desire thee to do him the same good turn another time, if God be pleased to give him an opportunity; for great an instance of wisdom to take a reproof well, as to give it well. [4.] Being taken well, it will do good, and answer the intention. A wise man will be made wiser by the reproves and instructions that are given him; he will increase in learning, will grow in knowledge, and so grow in grace. None must think themselves too wise to learn, or so good that they need not be better, and therefore need not be taught. We must study to grow in wisdom, and this will come to the perfect man. Give to a wise man, so it is in the original, give him advice, give him reproof, give him comfort, and he will be yet wiser; give him occasion, so the Seventy, occasion to show his wisdom, and he will show it, and the acts of wisdom will strengthen the habits. IV. The instructions she gives to those that are invited, which her maidens must inculcate upon them. 1. Let them know wherein true wisdom consists, and what will be their entertainment at Wisdom's table, v. 10. (1.) The heart must be principled with the fear of God, that is the beginning of wisdom. A reverence of God's majesty, and a dread of his wrath, is that fear of him which is the beginning, the first step toward true religion, whence all other instances of it take rise. This fear may, at first, have torment, but love will, by degrees, cast out the the torment of it. (2.) The head must be filled with the knowledge of the things of God. The knowledge of holy things (the word is plural) is understanding; the things pertaining to the service of God, (these are many;) and it is certain to our own sanctification; reproof is called that which is holy, Matth. vii. 6. Or the knowledge which holy men have, which was taught by the holy prophets, of those things which holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; this is understanding, it is the best and most useful understanding, will stand us in most stead, and turn to the best account have we become by it.

2. Let them know what will be the advantages of this wisdom; (v. 11.) "By me thy days shall be multiplied." It will contribute to the health of thy body, and so the years of thy life on earth shall be increased, while men's folly and intemperance shorten their days. It will bring thee to heaven, and there thy days shall be multiplied in infinitum—to infinity, and the years of thy life shall be increased without end." There is no true wisdom but in the way of religion, and no true life but in the end of that way.

3. Let them know what will be the consequence of their choosing, or refusing, this fair offer, v. 12. Here is, (1.) The happiness of those that embrace it; "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself, thou wilt be the gainer by it, not Wisdom." A man cannot be profitable to God; it is to our own good that we are thus courted: "Thou wilt not leave the gain to others," (as we do our worldly wealth when we die, which is therefore called another man's, Luke xvi. 12. "but thou shalt carry it with thee into another world." Those that are wise for their souls, are wise for themselves, for the soul is the man; nor do any consult their own true interest, but those that are truly religious. This recommends us to God, and recovers us from that which is our folly and degeneracy; it employs us in that which is most beneficinal in this world, and entitles us to that which is much more so in the world to come. (2.) The shame and ruin of those that slight it; "If thou scorner Wisdom's preacher, thou alone shall bear it." [1.] "Thou shalt bear the blame of it;" those that are good must thank God, but those that are wicked may thank themselves. It is not owing to God, he is not the Author of sin; Satan can only tempt, he cannot force; and wicked companions are but his instruments; so that all the fault must lie on the sinner himself. [2.] "If thou shalt prophesy, and lose of that which thou receivest;" think not to take thine own destruction, thy blood will be upon thine own head, and the consideration of this will aggravate thy condemnation. Son, remember that thou hast this fair offer made thee, and thou wouldst not accept of it; thou stoodest fair for life, but didst choose death rather.

13. A foolish woman is clamorous; she is simple, and knoweth nothing. 14. For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city. 15. To call passengers who go right on their ways; 16. Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: and as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, 17. Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. 18. But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell.

We have heard what Christ has to say, to engage our affections to God and godliness, and one would think the whole world should go after him; but here we are told how industrious the tempter is to seduce unwary souls into the paths of sin, and with the
next he gains his point, and Wisdom's courtship is not effectual. Now observe,

1. Who is the tempter, a foolish woman? Folly herself, in opposition to Wisdom. Carnal, sensual pleasure, I take to be especially meant by this foolish woman; (v. 13.) for that is the great enemy to virtue, and inlet to vice; that defiles and debauches the mind, stoppeth conscience, and puts out the sparks of triumph that shall overwhelm her. Curiusher is here described to be, (1.) Very ignorant; she is simple, and knows nothing, she has no sufficient, solid, reason to offer; where she gets dominion in a soul, she works out all the knowledge of holy things, they are lost and forgotten. Whoredom, and wine, and new wine, take away the heart, they besot men, and make fools of them. (2.) Very importunate. The less she has to offer, that is rational, the more violent and pressing she is in this. This woman is; (1.) clamorous and noisy, (v. 13.) continually haunting young people with her enticements. She sits at the door of her house, (v. 14.) watching for a prey; not as Abraham at his tent-door, seeking an opportunity to do good. She sits on a seat, (on a throne, so the word signifies) in the high places of the city, as if she had authority to give law; and we were all debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh; and as if she had respect of the places of the high places of the city; and, perhaps, she gains upon many, more by pretending to be fashionable, than by pretending to be agreeable. Do not all persons of rank and figure in the world, (says she) give themselves a greater liberty than the strict laws of virtue allow; and why shouldst thou humble thyself so far as to be cramped by them? Thus the tempter affects to seem both kind and great.

2. Who are the more young people that have been well educated; these she will triumph most in being the ruin of. Observe, (1.) What their real character is; they are passengers that go right on their ways, (v. 15.) that have been trained up in the paths of religion and virtue, and set out very hopefully and well; that seem determined and designed for good, and are not (as that young man, ch. vii. 8.) going the way to her house. Such as these has a design upon, and lays snares for, and uses them to perversion, and will not look to the end of the highway to hell, and at the brink of it, but they are already in the depths of hell, under the power of sin, led captive by Satan at his will; sometimes lashed by the terrors of their own consciences, which are a hell upon earth. The depths of Satan are the depths of hell; remorseless sin is remedyless ruin, it is the bottomless pit always. Thus does Solomon show the hook; those that believe him will not meddle with the bait.

CHAP. X.

Hitherto we have been in the porch or preface to the Proverbs, here they begin; they are short, but weighty, sentences; most of them are distichs, two sentences in one verse, illustrating each other; but it is seldom that there is any coherence between the verses, much less any thread of discourse; and therefore in these chapters we need not attempt to reduce the contents to their proper heads, the several sentences will appear best in their own places. The scope of them all, is, to set before us good and evil, the blessing and the curse. Many of the proverbs in this chapter relate to the good government of the tongue, without which men's religion is vain.

1. The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father; but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

Solomon, speaking to us as unto children, observes here how much the comfort of parents, natural, political, and ecclesiastical, depends upon the good behaviour of those under their charge, as a reason. 1. Why parents should be careful to give their children a good education, and to train them up in the ways of religion, which, if it obtain the desired effect, they themselves will have the comfort of it, or, if not, they will have for their support under their heaviness, that they have done their endeavours. 2. Why children should conduct themselves wisely and well, and live up to their good education, that they may rejoice the hearts of their parents, and not sadden them. Observe, (1.) It adds to the comfort of young people that are pious and discreet, that thereby they do something toward recompensing their parents for all the care and pains they have taken with them, and occasion pleasure to them in the evil days of old age, which they most need it. It is the duty of parents to rejoice in their children's wisdom and well-doing, yes, though it arrive at such an eminency as to eclipse
2. Treasures of wickedness profit nothing; but righteousness delivereth from death. 

3. The Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked.

These two verses speak to the same point, and the latter may be the reason of the former.
1. That wealth which a man unjustly will do them no good, because God will blast it; Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, (v. 2.) the treasures of wicked people; much less the treasure which they have made themselves masters of by any wicked arts, by oppression or fraud; though it be ever so much, as a treasure, and laid up ever so safe, though it be hid treasure, yet it profits nothing; when profit and loss come to be balanced, the profit gained by the treasures will by no means countervail the less sustained by the wickedness. Matth. xvi. 26.  {

2. That which is honestly got will turn to a good account, for God will bless it. Righteousness delivers from death, that is, wealth gained, and kept, and used in a right manner; (righteousness signifies both honesty and charity;) it answers the end of wealth, which is to keep a family, and be a defence to us; and delivers from those judgments which men bring upon themselves by their wickedness; it will profit to that degree, as to deliver, though not from the stroke of death, yet from the sting of it, and consequently from the terror of it. For the Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish. (v. 3.) and so their righteousness delivers from death, purely by the favour of God to them, which is their life and livelihood, and which will keep them alive in famine. The soul of the righteous shall be kept alive by the word of God, and faith in his promise, when young lions shall lack, and suffer hunger.

\checkmark 4. He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.

We are here told, 1. Who they are, who, though rich, are in a fair way to become poor; those who deal with a slack hand, who are careless and remiss in their business, and never mind which end goes foremost, nor ever set their hands vigorously to their work, or stick to it; who deal with a deceitful hand, so it may be read; those who think to enrich themselves by fraud and tricking, will, in the end, impoverish themselves, not only by the ends of God they have, but by forfeiting their reputation with men; none will care to deal with those who deal with slight of hand, and are honest only with looking to. 2. Who they are, who, though poor, are in a fair way to become rich; those who are diligent, and honest, who are careful about their affairs, and what their hands find to do, do it with all their might, in a fair and honourable way, these are likely to increase what they have. The hand of the acute, so some; of those who are sharp, but not sharpeners; the hand of the active, so others; the stirring hand gets a penny. This is true in the affairs of our souls, as well as in our worldly affairs; slothfulness and hypocrisy lead to spiritual poverty, but those who are fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, are likely to be rich in faith, and rich in good works.

5. He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame.

Here is, 1. The just praise of those who improve the opportunities, who take pains to gather and increase what they have, both for soul and body, who provide for hereafter, while provision is to be made, who gather in summer, which is gathering time; he who does so is a wise son, and it is his honour; he acts wisely for his parents, whom, if there be occasion, he ought to maintain, and he gives reputation to himself, his family, and his education.

2. The just reproach and blame of those who trifle away these opportunities; He who sleepeth, loves sloth, and is not diligent, trivelle away his time, and neglects his work, especially who sleepeth in harvest, when he should be laying in for the winter, who lets slip the season of furnishing himself with that which he will have occasion for, he is a son that causes shame; for he is a foolish son, he prepares shame for himself when winter comes, and reflects shame upon all his friends. He who gets knowledge and wisdom in the days of his youth, gathers in summer, and he will have the comfort and credit of it; but he who idles away the days of his youth, will bear the name of it when he is old.

6. Blessings are upon the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

Here is, 1. The head of the just crowned with blessings; with the blessings both of God and man; variety of blessings, abundance of blessings, shall descend from above, and visibly abide on the head of good men; real blessings; they shall not only be spoken well of, but done well to. Blessings shall be on their head as a coronet to adorn and dignify them, as a watchman's helmet to protect and secure.

2. The mouth of the wicked covered with violence; their mouths shall be stopt with shame for the violence which they have done; they shall not have a word to say in excuse for themselves; (Job v. 16.) their breath shall be stopt with the violence that shall be done to them, when their violent dealings shall return on their heads, shall be returned to their teeth.

7. The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot.

Both the just and the wicked, when their days are fulfilled, must die; between their bodies, in the grave, there is no visible difference; between the souls of the one and the other, in the world of spirits, there is a vast difference; and so there is, or ought to be, between their memories that survive them.

1. Good men are, and ought to be, well spoken of when they are gone; it is one of the blessings that comes upon the head of the just, even when their head is laid. Blessed men leave behind them blessed memories. (1.) It is part of the dignity of the saints, especially those who excel in virtue, and are eminently useful, that they are remembered with respect when they are dead; their good name, their name with good men, for good things, is then
1. That men's dishonesty will be their shame; He that perverts his way, that turns aside into crooked paths, that dissuades with God and man, turns one way and rows another, though he may for a time disguise himself, and pass current, he shall be known to be what he is; it is a thousand to one but some time or other he betrays himself; however, God will discover him in the great day. He that perverts his ways, document evil—shall be made an example of, for warning to others; so some.

10. He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow; but a prating fool shall fall.

Mischief is here said to attend,

1. Politic, designing, self-disguising, sinners; He that winketh with the eye, as if he took no notice of you, when, at the same time, he is watching an opportunity to do you an ill turn; that makes signs to his accomplices when to come in to assist him in executing his wicked projects, which are all carried on by trick and artifice; he causes sorrow, both to others and to himself. Ingenuity will be no excuse for iniquity, but the sinner must either repent, or do worse; for, as Solomon saith, the prating fool, or as he is called, the babbling fool, is the dog that bites not always the dog that barks.

11. The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

See here, 1. How industrious a good man is, by communicating his goodness, to do good with it; His mouth, the outlet of his mind, is a well of life, it is a constant spring, whence issues good discourse for the edification of others, like streams that water the ground and make it fruitful, and for their consolation, like streams that quench the thirst of the weary traveller. It is like a well of life that is pure and clean, not only not poisoned, but not muddied, with any corrupt communication.

2. He that is a prating fool, that is, by concealing his badness, to do hurt with it; The mouth of the wicked covers violence; disguises the designed mischief with professions of friendship, that it may be carried on the more securely and effectually; as Joab kissed and killed, Judas kissed and betrayed; this is his sin to which the punishment answers; (v. 6.) Violence covers the mouth of the wicked; what he got by violence, shall by violence be taken from him, Job v. 4, 5.

12. Hatred stirreth up strife; but love covereth all sins.

Here is, 1. The great mischief-maker, and that is malice; Even where there is no manifest occasion of strife, yet hatred seeks occasion, and so stirreth it up, and does the devil's work. Those are the most spiteful, ill-natured people that can be, who take a pleasure in setting their neighbours together by the ears, by tale-bearing, evil surmisings, and misrepresentations; blowing up the sparks of contention, which has lain buried, into a flame, at which, with an unaccountable pleasure, they warm their hands.

2. The great peace-maker, and that is love, which covers all sins, the offences among relations, which occasion discord; Love, instead of proclaiming and aggravating the offence, conceals and extenuates it as far as it is capable of being concealed and extenuated. Love will excuse the offence which we give through mistake, and unadvisedly, when we are able to say that there was no ill intended, but it...
13. In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found: but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding.

Observe, 1. Wisdom and grace are the honour of good men; He that has understanding, that good understanding which they have that do the commandments, wisdom is found in his life, it is discovered to be there, and, consequently, that he has within a good treasure of it, and it is derived thence for the benefit of others. It is a man’s honour to have wisdom, but much more to be instrumental to make others wise. 2. Folly and sin are the shame of bad men; A rod is for the back of him that wants a heart; he exposes himself to the lashes of his own conscience, to the scourges of the tongue, to the censures of the magistrate, and to the righteous judgments of God. They that foolishly and wilfully go on in their wicked ways are preparing vials for themselves, the marks of which will be their perpetual disgrace.

14. Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction.

Observe, 1. It is the wisdom of the wise that they treasure up a stock of useful knowledge, which will be their preservation; Wisdom is therefore found in their lives. (v. 13.) because it is laid up in their hearts; out of which store, like the good householder, they bring things new and old. Whatever knowledge may be at any time useful to us, we must lay it up, because we know not but some time or other we may have occasion for it. We must continue laying up as long as we live; and be sure to lay it up safe, that it may not be to seek when we want it.

2. It is the folly of fools that they lay up mischief in their hearts, which is ready to them in all they say, and works terror and destruction both to others and to themselves. They love devouring words, (Ps. lxi. 4.) and these come uppermost; their mouth is near destruction, having the sharp arrows of bitter words always at hand, to throw about.

15. The rich man’s wealth is his strong city; the destruction of the poor is their poverty.

This may be taken two ways: 1. As a reason why we should be diligent in our business, that we may avoid that sinking, dispiriting uneasiness which attends poverty, and may enjoy the benefit and comfort which they have that are beforehand in the world. Taking pains is really the way to make ourselves and our families easy. Or, rather, 2. As a representation of the common mistakes both of rich and poor, concerning their outward condition.

(1.) Rich people think themselves happy because they are rich; but it is their mistake; The rich man’s wealth is, in his own conceit, his strong city, whereas the worst of evils it is too weak and utterly insufficient to protect them from. It will prove that they are not so safe as they imagine; nay, their wealth may perhaps expose them.

(2.) Poor people think themselves undone because they are poor; but it is their mistake; The destruction of the poor is their poverty; it sinks their spirits, and ruins all their comforts; whereas a man may live very comfortably, though he has but a little to live on, if he be but content, and keep a good conscience, and live by faith.

16. The labour of the righteous tending to life: the fruit of the wicked to sin.

Solomon here confirms what his father had said, (Ps. xxxvii. 16.) A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked.

1. Perhaps a righteous man has no more than what he works hard for, he eats only the labour of his hands, but that labor is due to him; he aims at nothing but to get an honest livelihood, covets not to be rich and great, but is willing to live and maintain his family. Nor does it tend only to his own life, but he would enable himself to do good to others; he therefore labours, that he may have to give; (Eph. iv. 28.) all his business turns to some good account or other. Or, it may be meant of his labour in religion; he takes most pains in that which has a tendency to eternal life; he seems to the Spirit, that he may reap life everlasting.

2. Perhaps a wicked man’s wealth is fruit which he did not labour for, but came easily by, but it tends to sin; it makes him the food and fuel of his lusts, his pride, and luxury; he does hurt with it, and not good; he gets hurt by it, and is hardened by it in his wicked ways. The things of this world are good or evil, life or death, as they are used, and as they are that have them.

17. He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof is errth.

See here, 1. That those are in the right that do not only receive instruction, but retain it; that do not let it slip through carelessness, as most do, nor let it go to those that would rob them of it; that keep instruction safe, keep it pure and entire, keep it for their own use, that they may govern themselves by it, keep it for the benefit of others, that they may instruct them; they that do so are in the way of life; the way that has true comfort in it, and eternal life at the end of it.

2. That those are in the wrong, that do not only not receive instruction, but wilfully and obstinately refuse it when it is offered them; they will not be taught their duty, because it discovers their faults to them; that instruction which carries reproof in it, they have a particular aversion to, and certainly they cry; it is a sign that they err in judgment, and have false notions of good and evil; it is a cause of their erring in conversation. The traveller that has missed his way, and cannot bear to be told of it, and showed the right way, must needs err still, err endlessly: he certainly misses the way of life.

18. He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and that uttereth a slander, is a fool.

Observe here, malice is folly and wickedness. 1. It is so when it is concealed by flattery and dissimulation; He is a fool, though he may think himself a politician, that hides hatred with lying lips, lest, if it break out, he should be ashamed before men, and he should lose the opportunity of gratifying his malice. Lying lips are bad enough, of themselves, but have a peculiar malignity in them, when they are hid under a cloak of malicefulness. But he is a fool who thinks to hide any thing from God.

2. It is no better when it is vented in spiteful and mischievous language; He that uttereth slander is a fool too, for God will, sooner or later, bring forth that righteousness as the light, which he endeavours
22. The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.

Worldly wealth is that which most men have their hearts very much upon, but they generally mistake both in the nature of the thing they desire, and in the way by which they hope to compass it; we are therefore told here,

1. What that wealth is which is indeed desirable; not having abundance only, but having it, and no sorrow with it; no disquieting care to get and keep it; no vexation of spirit in the enjoyment of it; no tormenting grief for the loss of it; no guilt contracted by the abuse of it. To have it, and to have a heart to take the comfort of it; to do good with it, and to serve God with joyfulness and gladness of heart in the use of it.

2. Whence this desirable wealth is to be expected; not by making ourselves drudges to the world, (Ps. cxxxvi. 2.) but by the blessing of God, that is it that makes rich, and adds no sorrow; what comes from the love of God has the grace of God for its companion, to preserve the soul from these turbulent lusts and passions of which, otherwise, the increase of riches is commonly the incentive. He had said, (v. 4.) The hand of the diligent maketh rich, as a heavy man; and he assigns it to the blessing of the Lord; but that blessing is upon the hand of the diligent. It is thus in spiritual riches. Diligence in getting them is our duty, but God's blessing and grace must have all the glory of that which is acquired, Deut. vii. 17, 18.

23. It is a sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom.

Here is, 1. Sin exceeding sinful; It is as a lover to a fool to do mischief; it is as natural to him, and as pleasant, as it is to a man to laugh. Wickedness is his Isaac, that is the word here; it is his delight, his happiness, and that in which he pleases himself. He makes a laughing matter of sin. When he is warned not to sin, from the consideration of the law of God, and the revelation of his wrath against sin, he makes a jest of the admonition, and laughs at the shaking of the spear; when he has sinned, instead of sorrowing for it, he boasts of it, ridicules reproofs, and laughs away the convictions of his own conscience, ch. xiv. 2.

2. Wisdom exceeding wise; for it carries along with it the evidence of its own excellency; it may be predicated of itself, and it is encomium enough; you need say no more in praise of a man of understanding than this, He is an understanding man, he has wisdom; he is so wise as not to do mischief, or if he has, through oversight, offended, he is so wise as not to make a jest of it. Or, to bespeak wisdom wise indeed, read it thus; As it is a sport to a fool to do mischief, so it is to a man of understanding to have wisdom, and to show it. Beside the future recompense, a good man has as much present pleasure in the restrictions and exercises of religion, as sinners can pretend to in the liberties and enjoyments of sin; and much more and much better.

24. The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted. 25. As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more: but the righteous is an everlasting foundation.

It is here said, and said again, to the righteous, that it shall be well with them, and to the wicked, Woe to them; and these are set the one over against the other, for their mutual illustration.

1. It shall be as ill with the wicked as they can
be; and as well with the righteous as they can des.

(1) The wicked, it is true, busy themselves up some times in their wickedness with vain hopes which will deceive them, but at other times they cannot but be haunted with just fears, and these fears shall come upon them; the God they provoke will be every whit as terrible as they, when they are in their greatest delights, apprehend him to be. As is thy fear, so is thy wrath; Ps. xx. 11. Wicked men fear the punishment out of sin, but they have not wisdom to improve their fears by making their escape, and so the thing they feared comes upon them, and their present terrors are earnest of their future torments. (2) The righteous, it is true, sometimes have their fears, but their desire is toward the favour of God and a happiness in him, and that desire shall be granted. According to their faith, not according to their fear, it shall be unto them, Ps. xxxiii. 4.

2. The prosperity of the wicked shall quickly end, but the happiness of the righteous shall never end, v. 25. The wicked make a great noise, hurry themselves and others, like a whirlwind which threatens to bear down all before it; but, like a whirlwind, they are presently gone, and they pass irrecoverably, they are no more; all about them are quiet and glad when the storm is over, Ps. xxxvii. 10, 15. Job, xcv. 5. The righteous, on the contrary, make a show; they lie hid, like a foundation which is low and out of sight, but they are fixed in their resolution to cleave to God, established in virtue, and they shall be an everlasting foundation, immoveably good; he that is holy shall be holy still, and immovably happy; his hope is built on a rock, and therefore not shocked by the storm, Matth. vii.

24. The righteous is the pillar of the world, so some read it; the world stands for their sakes; the holy seed is the substance thereof.

26. As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him. Observe, 1. Those that are of a slothful disposition, that love their ease, and cannot apply their minds to any business, are not fit to be employed, no not so much as to be sent on an errand, for they will neither deliver a message with any care, nor make any haste back. Such therefore are very unmeet to be ministers, Christ's messengers; he will not send forth of sluggards into his harvest. 2. They that are guilty of so great an oversight as to intrust such with any affair, and put confidence in them, will certainly have vexation with them. A slothful servant is to his master as uneasy and troublesome as vinegar to the teeth, and smoke to the eyes; he provokes his passion, as vinegar sets the teeth on edge, and occasions him grief to see his business neglected and undone, as smoke sets the eyes a weeping.

27. The fear of the Lord prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened. 28. The hope of the righteous shall be gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish.

Observe, 1. Religion lengthens men's lives, and crowns them with life. What makes he that loves life? Let him love fear God, and that will secure him from many things that would prejudice his life, and secure to him life enough in this world, and eternal life in the other; the fear of the Lord will add days more than was expected, will add them endlessly, will prolong them to the days of eternity. What man is he that would see good days? Let him be religious, and then his days shall not only be many, but happy, very happy as well as very many, for the hope of the righteous shall be gladness, they shall have what they hope for, to their unspeakable satisfaction. It is a sweeting future and unseen that they place their happiness in; (Rom. viii. 24, 25.) not what they have in hand, but what they have in hope, and their hope will shortly be swallowed up in fruition, and it will be their everlasting gladness. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

2. Wickedness shortens men's lives, and frustrates their hopes; The years of the wicked, that are spent in the pleasures of sin and the drudgery of the world, shall be shortened; Cut down the trees that cumber the ground. And whatever comfort or happiness a wicked man promises himself in this world or the other, he will be frustrated; for the expectation of the wicked shall perish; his hope shall be turned into endless despair.

29. The way of the Lord is strength to the upright; but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity. 30. The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.

These two verses are to the same purport with those next before, intimating the happiness of the godly and the misery of the wicked; it is necessary that this be inculcated upon us, so loath are we to believe and consider it.

2. Strength and stability are entailed upon integrity; The way of the Lord, the providence of God, the way in which he walks towards us, is strength to the upright, confirms him in his uprightness. All God's dealings with him, merciful and affectionate, serve to quicken him to his duty, and animate him against his discouragements. Or, The way of the Lord, the way of godliness, in which he appoints us to walk, is strength to the upright; the easier we keep to that way, and the more our hearts are encouraged to proceed in it, the better fitted we are both for services and sufferings. A good conscience, kept pure from sin, gives a man boldness in a dangerous time; and constant diligence in duty makes a man's work easy in a busy time; the more we do for God, the more we may do, Job xviii. 9. That joy of the Lord, which is to be found only in the way of the Lord, will be our strength, (Neh. viii. 10.) and therefore the righteousness shall never be removed. Those that have an established virtue, have an established peace and happiness which nothing can rob them of, they have an everlasting foundation, v. 25.

2. Ruin and destruction are the certain consequences of wickedness. The wicked shall not only not inherit the earth, though they lay up their treasure in it, but they shall not so much as inhabit the earth; God's judgments will yet them out; Destruction, swift and sure destruction, shall be to the workers of iniquity; destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. Nay, that way of the Lord, which is the strength of the upright, is consumption and terror to the workers of iniquity; the same gospel which to the one is a sa-vour of life unto life, to the other is a savour of death unto death; the same providence, like the same sun, softens the one and hardens the other, Hos. xiv. 9.

31. The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out. 32. The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable; but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness.

Here, as before, men are judged of, and, accordingly, are justified, or condemned, by their words, Matth. xii. 37.
1. It is both the proof and the praise of a man's wisdom and goodness, that he speaks wisely and well. And in his discourse, brings forth wisdom for the benefit of others. God gives him wisdom as a reward of his righteousness; (Eccl. ii. 25.) and he, in gratitude for that gift, and justice to the Giver, does good with it, and with his wise and pious discourses edifies many. He knows what is acceptable, what discourse will be pleasing to God, (for that is it that he studies more than to oblige the company,) and what will be agreeable both to the speaker and to the hearers, what will become him, and benefit them, and that he will speak.

2. It is the sin, and will be the ruin, of a wicked man, that he speaks wickedly like himself. The mouth of the wicked speaks frowardness, that which is displeasing to God, and provoking to those he converses with; and what becomes of it? Why, the froward tongue shall be cut off, as surely as the flattering one, Ps. xii. 3.

CHAP. XI.

1. A FALSE balance is abomination to the Lord: but a just weight is his delight.

As religion toward God is a branch of universal righteousness, (he is not an honest man that is not devout,) so righteousness toward men is a branch of true religion, he is not a godly man that is not honest, nor can he expect that his devotion should be accepted; for,

1. Nothing is more offensive to God than deceit in commerce, A false balance is here put for all manner of unjust and fraudulent practices in dealing with any person, which are all an abomination to the Lord, and render the discourse of those that allow themselves in the use of such cursed arts of thriving. It is an affront to justice, which God is the Patron of, as well as a wrong to our neighbour, whom God is the Protector of. Men make light of such frauds, and think there is no sin in that which there is money to be got by, and, while it passes undiscovered, they cannot blame themselves for it; a blot is no blot till it is hit, Hos. xii. 7, 8. But they are not the less an abomination to God, who will be the Avenger of those that defraud their brethren.

2. Nothing is more pleasing to God than fair and honest dealing, nor more necessary to make us and our devotions acceptable to him; A just weight is his delight. He himself goes by a just weight, and holds the scale of judgment with an even hand, and therefore is pleased with those that are herein followers of him. A balance cheats, under pretence of doing right most exactly, and therefore is the greater abomination to God.

2. When pride cometh, then cometh shame, but with the lowly is wisdom.

Observe, 1. How he that exalts himself is here abased, and contempt put upon him; When pride cometh, then cometh shame. Pride is a sin which men have reason to be themselves ashamed of; it is a shame to a man who springs out of the earth, who lives upon alms, depends upon God, and has forfeited all he has, to be proud. It is a sin which others cry out shame on, and look upon with disdain; be that is haughty makes himself contemptible; it is a sin for which God often brings men down, as he did Nebuchadnezzar and Herod, whose ignominy immediately attended their vainglory; for God resists the proud, contradicts them, and counterworks them, in the thing they are proud of, Isa. ii. 11, &c.

2. How he that humblest himself is here exalted, and a high character is given him; as with the proud there is folly, and will be shame, so with the lowly there is wisdom, and will be honour, for a man's wisdom gains him respect, and makes his face to shine, before men; or if any be so base as to trample upon the humble, God will give them grace, which will be their glory. Considering how safe, and quiet, and easy, they are, that are of a humble spirit, what communion they have with God, and comfort in themselves, we will say, With the lowly is wisdom.

3. The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.

It is not only promised that God will guide the upright, and threatened that he will destroy the transgressors, but, that we may be the more fully aware of both, it is here represented as if the nature of the thing were such on both sides, that it would do it itself.

1. The integrity of an honest man will itself be his guide, in the way of duty and the way of safety. His principles are fixed, his rule is certain, and therefore his way is plain; his sincerity keeps him steady, and he needs not talk about every time the wind turns, having no other end to drive at than to keep a good conscience. Integrity and uprightness will find him, Ps. xxx. 21.

2. The iniquity of a bad man will itself be his ruin. As the plainness of a good man will be his protection, though he is ever so much exposed, so the perverseness of sinners will be their destruction, though they think themselves ever so well fortified. They shall fall into pits of their own digging, ch. v. 22.

4. Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.

Note, 1. The day of death will be a day of wrath; it is a messenger of God's wrath; therefore, when Moses had meditated on man's mortality, he takes occasion thence to admire the power of God's anger, Ps. x. 11. It is a debt owing, not to nature, but to God's justice. After death, the judgment, and that is a day of wrath, Rev. vi. 17.

2. Riches will stand men in no stead in that day; they will neither put by the stroke, nor case the man, much less take out the sting; what profit will this world's birth-rights be of them? In the day of public judgments, riches often expose men rather than protect them, Ezek. vii. 19.

3. It is righteousness only that will deliver from the evil of death; a good conscience will make death easy, and take off the terror of it; it is the privilege of the righteous only not to be hurt of the second death, and so not much hurt by the first.

5. The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness. 6. The righteous ness of the upright shall deliver them: but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness.

These two verses are, in effect, the same, and both to the same purport, with v. 3. For the truths are here of such certainty and weight, that they cannot be too often inculcated. Let us govern ourselves by these principles.

1. That the ways of religion are plain and safe, and in them we may enjoy a holy security. A living principle of honesty and grace, will be, (1.) Our best direction in the right way, in every doubtful case, to say to us, This is the way, walk in it. He that acts without a guide looks right on, and sees his way before him. (2.) Our best deliverance
from every false way; The righteousness of the upright shall be armour of proof to them, to deliver them from the allurements of the devil and the world, and from their menaces.

2. The ways of wickedness are dangerous and destructive; The wicked shall fall into misery and ruin, by their own wickedness, and be taken in their own naughtiness as in a snare; O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself. Their sin will be their punishment, that very thing by which they contrived to shelter themselves will make against them.

7. When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth.

Note. 1. Even wicked men, while they live, may keep up a confident expectation of a happiness when they die, or at least a happiness in this world. The hypocrite has his hope, in which he wraps himself as the spider in her web; the worldling expects great matters from his wealth, he calls it goods laid up for many years, and hopes to take his case in it, and to be merry; but in death their expectation will be frustrated, the worldling must leave this world, and his tillage to continue in, and the hypocrite will come short of that world which he expected to remove to, Job xxxvii. 8. 2. It will be the great aggravation of the misery of wicked people, that their hopes will sink into despair then when they expect them to be crowned with fruition. When a godly man dies, his expectations are outdone, and all his fears vanish; but when a wicked man dies, his expectations are dashed, dashed to pieces, in that very day, his thoughts perish, with which he had pleased himself, his hopes vanish.

8. The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead. As always in death, so sometimes in life, the righteous are remarkably favoured, and the wicked crossed.

1. Good people are helped out of the distresses which they thought themselves lost in, and their feet are set in a large room, Ps. lxvi. 12.—xxxiv. 19. God has found out a way to deliver his people, when they have despaired, and their enemies have triumphed, as if the wilderness had shut them in.

2. The wicked have fallen into the distresses which they thought themselves far from, nay, which they have been instrumental to bring the righteous into, so that they seem to come in their stead, as a ransom for the just. Mordercas is from the gallows, Daniel from the lion's den, and Peter from the prison; and their persecutors come in their stead. The Israelites are delivered out of the Red Sea, and the Egyptians drowned in it. So precious are the saints in God's eye, that he gives men for them, Isa. xliii. 3, 4.

9. An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered from those that lie in wait to deceive, and so to destroy, Rom. xvi. 18, 19.

10. When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth: and when the wicked perish, there is shouting. 11. By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted; but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.

It is here observed,

1. That good men are generally well-beloved by their neighbours, but no body cares for wicked people. (1.) It is true, there are some few that are enemies to the righteous, that are prejudiced against God and godliness, and are therefore vexed to see good men in power and prosperity; but all indifferent persons, even those that have no great stock of religion themselves, have a good word for a good man; and therefore when it goes well with the righteous, when they are advanced, and put into a capacity of doing good according to their desire, it is so much the better for all about them, and the city rejoices. For the honour and encouragement of virtue, and as it is the accomplishment of the promise of God, we should be glad to see virtuous men prosper in the world, and brought into reputation. (2.) Wicked people may, perhaps, have here and there a well-wisher among those who are altogether such in themselves, but among the generality of their neighbours they get ill-will, they may be feared, but they are not loved, and therefore when they perish, there is shouting; every body takes a pleasure in seeing them disgraced, and disarmed, removed out of places of trust and power, chased out of the world, and wishes no greater loss may come to the town, the rather because they hope the righteous may come in their stead, as they into trouble instead of the righteous, v. 8. Let a sense of honour therefore keep us in the paths of virtue, that we may live desired and die lamented, and not be hissed off the stage, Job xxxvii. 23. Ps. ii. 6.

2. That there is good reason for this, because those that are bad do good, but (as saith the pro-verb of the ancients) wickedness proceedeth from the wicked. (1.) Good men are public blessings—Fir bonus est commune bonum. By the blessing of the upright, the blessings with which they are blessed, which only other Israelites shall have, those blessings with which they bless their neighbours, their advice, their example, their prayers, and all the instances of their serviceableness to the public interest; by the blessings with which God blesses others for their sake; by these the city is exalted, and made more comfortable to the inhabitants, and more considerable among its neighbours. (2.) Wicked men are public nuisances; not only the burthens, but the plagues, of their generation; the city is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked, whose evil communications corrupt good manners, are enough to debauch a town, to ruin virtue in it, and bring down the judgment of God upon it.

12. He that is void of wisdom desipeth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace. 13. A tale-bearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.

Silence is here recommended as an instance of true friendship, and a preservative of it, and therefore an evidence, 1. Of wisdom, A man of understanding, that has rule over his own spirit, if he be provoked, holdth his peace, that he neither give vent to his passion, nor kindle the passion of others, by any opprobrious language or peevish reflections. 2. Of sincerity; He that is of a faithful spirit, that is
true, not only to his own promise, but to the interest of his friend, he conceals every matter, which, if divulged, may turn to the prejudice of his neighbour. This prudent friendly concealment is here opposed to two very bad vices of the tongue: (1.) Speaking scornfully of a man to his face; He that is void of wisdom discovers his folly by this; he designates his neighbour, calls him Rascal, and Thou fool, upon the least provocation, and tramples upon him as not worthy to be set with the dogs of his flock. He undervalues himself, who thus undervalues one that is made of the same mould. (2.) Speaking spitefully of a man behind his back; A tale-bearer, that carries all the stories he can pick up, true or false, from house to house, to make mischief and sow discord, he reveals secrets which he has been intrusted with, and so breaks the laws, and worketh against all the privileges, of friendship and conversation.

14. Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.

Here is, 1. The bad omen of a kingdom's ruin; Where no counsel is, no consultation at all, but every thing done rashly, or no prudent consultation for the common good, but only caballing for parties, and divided interests, the people fall, crumble into factions, fall to pieces, fall together by the ears, and fall an easy prey to the common enemies. Councils of war are necessary to the operations of war; two eyes see more than one; and mutual advice is in order to mutual assistance. 2. The good presage of a kingdom's prosperity; In the multitude of counsellors that see their need one of another, and act in concert, and with concern for the public welfare, there is safety; for what prudent methods one discerns not, another may. In our private affairs we shall often find it to our advantage to advise with many; if they agree in their advice, our way will be the more clear; if they differ, we shall hear what is to be said on all sides, and be the better able to determine.

15. He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hateth suretiship is sure.

Here we are taught, 1. In general, that we may not use our estates as we will; he that gave them to us has reserved himself a power to direct us how we shall use them; for they are not our own, we are but stewards; and further, that God in his law consults our interests, and teaches us that charity which begins at home, as well as that which must not end there. There is a good man, He is kind to the poor, and good, and is good divinity, and a discretion in ordering our affairs, which is part of the character of a good man, Ps. cxiii. 5. Every man must be just to his family, else he is not true to his stewardship.

2. In particular, that we must not enter rashly into suretiship; (1.) Because there is danger of bringing ourselves into trouble by it, and our families too, when we are gone; He that is surety for a stranger, for which he is bound, may be sure he must be bound for him another time, for one whose person perhaps he knows, and thinks he knows his circumstances, but is mistaken, he shall smart for it, Contrivium contrectur.—He shall be certainly and sadly crushed and broken by it, and perhaps become a bankrupt. Our Lord Jesus was Surety for us when we were strangers, nay, enemies, and he suffered for it; it pleased the Lord to bruise him. (2) Because he that resolves against all such suretiship keeps upon sure grounds, which a man may do, if he take care not to launch out any further into business than his own credit will carry him, so that he needs not ask others to be bound for him.


Here, 1. It is allowed that strong men retain riches; that those who bustle in the world, who are men of spirit and interest, and are able to make their part good against all who stand in their way, are likely to keep what they have, and to get more; while those who are weak are preyed upon by all about them. 2. It is taken for granted, that a gracious woman is as solicitous to preserve her reputation, for wisdom and modesty, humility and courtesy, and all those other graces that are the true ornaments of her sex, as strong men are to secure their estates; and those women who are truly gracious, will, in like manner, effectually secure their honour by their prudence and good conduct. A gracious woman is as honourable as a valiant man, and her honour is as sure.

17. The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh.

It is a common principle, Every one for himself, Proximity egonet mihi—None so near to me as myself. Now, if this be rightly understood, it will be a reason for the cherishing of gracious dispositions in ourselves, and the crucifying of corrupt ones. We are friends or enemies to ourselves, even in respect of these members, according as we are, or are not, governed by religious principles. 1. A merciful, tender, good-humoured man, doeth good to his own soul, makes and keeps himself easy; he has the pleasure of doing his duty, and contributing to the comfort of those that are to him as his own soul; for we are members one of another. He that waters others with his temporal good things, God will water him with his spiritual blessings, which he will find to do the best good to his own soul. See Isa. lviii. &c. If thou hide not thine eyes from thine own flesh, but do good to others as to thyself; if thou do good with thine own soul, and draw that out to the hungry, thou doest good to thy own soul; for the Lord shall satisfy thy soul, and make fat thy bones. Some make it part of the character of a merciful man, that he will make much of himself; that disposition which inclines him to be charitable to others, will oblige him to allow of himself a heart to ask it, either for the good of others, or for his own. He is vexatious to his nearest relations, that are, and should be, to him as his own flesh, Eph. v. 29. Envy, and malice, and greediness of the world, are the tenetness of the bones, and the consumption of the flesh.

18. The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward.

Note. 1. Sinners put a most fatal cheat upon themselves; The wicked works a deceitful work, builds himself a house upon the sand, which will deceive him when the storm comes; promises himself that by his sin which he will never gain; nay,
it is cutting his throat when it smiles upon him. Sin deceived me, and by it slew me.

2. Saints lay up the best securities for themselves; He that sows righteousness, that is good, and makes it his business to do good, with an eye to a future compensation, he shall have a sure reward; it is made sure to him as eternal truth can make it. If the seediness fail not, the harvest shall not, Gal. vi. 8.

19. As righteousness tendeth to life; so he that pursueth evil, pursueth it to his own death.

It is here showed that righteousness, not only by the divine judgment, will end in life, and wickedness in death, but that righteousness, in its own nature, has a direct tendency to life, and wickedness to death.

1. True holiness is true happiness; it is a preparative for it, a pledge and earnest of it. Righteousness inclines, disposes, and leads, the soul to life.

2. In like manner, they that indulge themselves in sin are fitting themselves for destruction. The more violent a man is in sinful pursuits, the more eagerly he is upon his own destruction; he awakens it when it seemed to slumber, and hastens it when it seemed to linger.

20. They that are of a frivolous heart are abomination to the Lord: but such as are upright in their way are his delight.

It concerns us to know what God hates, and what he loves, that we may govern ourselves accordingly; may avoid his displeasure, and recommend ourselves to his favour. Now here we are told,

1. That nothing is more offensive to God than hypocrisy and double-dealing; for that is signified by the word which we translate frowardness, pretending justice, but intending wrong; walking in crooked ways, to avoid discovery. Those are of a froward heart who act in contradiction to that which is good, under a profession of that which is good; and such are, more than any sinners, an abomination to the Lord, Isa. lxxv. 5.

2. That nothing is more pleasing to God than sincerity and plain dealing; Such are upright in their way, such as aim and act with integrity, such as have their conversation in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshy wisdom, these God delights in, these he has been boast of, (Hast thou considered my servant Job?) and will have us to admire; Behold an Israelite indeed!

21. Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.

1. That confederacies in sin shall certainly be broken, and shall not avail to protect the sinners; Though hand join in hand, though there are many that concur by their practice to keep wickedness in countenance, and engage to stand by one another in defending it against all the attacks of virtue and justice, though they are in league for the support and propagation of it, though wicked children tread in the steps of their wicked parents, and resolve to keep up the trade, in defiance of religion, yet all this will not protect them from the justice of God, they shall not be held guiltless; it will not excuse them to say that they did as the most did, and as their company did, they shall not be unpunished; witness the flood that was brought upon a whole world of ungodly men. Their number, and strength, and unanimity in sin, will stand them in no stead when the day of vengeance comes.

2. That entails of religion shall certainly be blessed; The seed of the righteous, that follow the steps of their righteousness, though they may fall into trouble, shall, in due time, be delivered. Though justice may come slowly to punish the wicked, and mercy may come slowly to save the righteous, yet both will come surely. Sometimes the seed of the righteous, though they are not themselves righteous, are delivered for the sake of their godly ancestors, as Israel often, and the seed of David.

22. As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion.

By discretion here we must understand religion and grace, a true taste and relish (so the word signifies) of the honours and pleasures that attend an unspotted virtue; so that a woman without discretion is a woman of a loose and dissolute conversation; and then observe,

It is to be observed here, that beauty and comeliness of body are as a jewel of gold, a thing very valuable, and, where there is wisdom and grace to guard against the temptations of it, it is a great ornament. Gratior est pulchro venienti de cor-fore virtus—Virtue appears peculiarly graceful when associated with beauty. A foolish wanton woman, of a light carriage, is fitly compared to a swine, though she be ever so handsome, wallowing in the mere of filthy lusts, with which the mind and conscience are defiled, and, though washed, returning to them.

2. It is lamented that beauty should be so abused as it is by those that have not modesty with it; it seems ill-bestowed upon them; it is quite misplaced, as a jewel in a swine's snout, with which he rots in the dunghill; if beauty be not guarded by virtue, the virtue is exposed by the beauty. It may be applied to all other bodily endowments and accomplishments that those should have them who have not discretion to use them well.

23. The desire of the righteous is only good: but the expectation of the wicked is wrath.

This tells us what the desire and expectation of the righteous, and of the wicked, are, and how they will prove; what they would have, and what they shall have.

1. The righteous would have good, only good; all they desire, is, that it may go well with all about them; they wish no hurt to any, but happiness to all; as to themselves, their desire is not to gratify any evil lust, but to obtain the favour of a good God, and to preserve the peace of a good conscience; and good they shall have, that good which they desire, Ps. xxxvii. 4.

2. The wicked would have wrath, they desire the woful day, that God's judgments may gratify their passion and revenge, may remove those that stand in their way, and that they may make an advantage to themselves by fishing in troubled waters; and growth they shall have, to satisfy their desire; they expect and desire mischief to others, but it shall return upon themselves; as they loved cursing they shall have enough of it.

24. There is that scattereth, and yet in creaseth: and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.

Note. 1. A man may grow rich by prudently spending what he has; may scatter in works of piety, charity, and generositas; and yet may live in crease; nay, by that means may increase, as the corn is increased, by being sown. By cheerfully spending what we have, our spirits are exhilarated, and so fitted for the business we have to do; by minding which closely, what we have is increased;
it gains a reputation which contributes to the increase. But it is especially to be ascribed to God; he blesses the giving hand, and so makes it a getting hand, 2 Cor. ix. 10. "Give, and it shall be given you."

2. A man may grow poor by meanly sparing what he has, withholding more than is meet, not paying just debts, not relieving the poor, not providing what is convenient for the family, not allowing necessary expenses for the preservation of the goods; this tends to poverty; it cramps men's ingenuity and industry, weakens their interest, destroys their credit, and forfeits the blessing of God; and let men be ever so saving of what they have, if God blast it, and blow upon it, it comes to nothing; a fire not blown shall consume it, Hag. i. 6, 9.

25. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

So backward we are to works of charity, and so ready to think that giving undoeth us, that we need to have it very much pressed upon us, how much it is for our own advantage to do good to others, as before. v. 17.

1. We shall have the comfort of it in our own bosoms; The liberal soul, the soul of blessing, that prays for the afflicted, and provides for them, that scatters blessings with gracious lips and generous hands, that soul shall be made fat with true pleasure, and enriched with more grace.

2. We shall have the recompense of it both from God and men; He that waters others with the streams of his bounty, shall be also watered himself; God will certainly return it in the dews, in the plentiful showers of his blessing, which he will pour out, till there be not room enough to receive it, Mal. iii. 10. Men that have any sense of gratitude will return it if there be occasion; the merciful shall find mercy, and the kind be kindly dealt with.

3. We shall be enabled still to do yet more good; He that waters, even he shall be as rain, so some read it; he shall be recruited as the clouds are, which return after the rain, and shall be further useful and acceptable, as the rain to the new-mown grass. He that teaches shall learn, so the Chaldee reads it; he that uses his knowledge in teaching others, shall himself be taught of God; to him that has, and uses what he has, more shall be given.

26. He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.

See here, 1. What use we are to make of the gifts of God's bounty; we must not hoard them up merely for our own advantage, that we may be enriched by them, but we must bring them forth for the benefit of others, that they may be supported and maintained by them. It is a sin, when corn is dear and scarce, to withhold it, in hopes that it will still grow dearer, so to keep up and advance the market, when it is already so high, that the poor suffer by it; and at such a time it is the duty of those that have stocks of corn by them to consider the poor, and to be willing to sell at the market-price, to be content with moderate profit, and not aim to make gain of God's judgments. It is a noble and extensive piece of charity, for those that have stores wherewithal to do it, to help to keep the markets low when the price of our commodities grows excessive.

2. What regard we are to have to the voice of the people; we are not to think it an indifferent thing, and not worth heeding, whether we have the ill will and word, or the good will and word, of our neighbours, their prayers or their curses; for here we are taught to dread their curses, and forego our own profit rather than incur them; and to curt their blessings, and be at some expense to purchase them. Sometimes, Vox populi vox Dei—The voice of the people is the voice of God.

27. He that diligently seeketh good prosperity favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.

Observe, 1. These that are industrious to do good in the world get themselves beloved both with God and man; He that rises early to that which is good, so the word is; that seeks opportunities of serving his friends, and relieving the poor, and lays cut himself therein, he procures favour; all about him love him, and speak well of him, and will be ready to do him a kindness; and, which is better than that, better than life, he has God's loving-kindness.

2. These that are industrious to do mischief are preparing ruin for themselves; it shall come unto them; some time or other they will be paid in their own coin. And, observe, seeking mischief, is here set in opposition to seeking good; for those that are not doing good, are doing hurt.

28. He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.

Observe, 1. Our riches will fail us when we are in the greatest need; He that trusts in them, as if they would secure him the favour of God, and be his protection and portion, he shall fall, as a man who lays his weight on a broken reed, which will not only disappoint him, but run into his hand, and pierce him.

2. Our righteousness will stand us in no stead when our riches fail us; The righteous shall then flourish as a branch, the branch of righteousness; like a tree whose leaf shall not wither, Ps. i. 3. Even in death, when riches fail men, the bones of the righteous shall flourish as an herb, Isa. lxvi. 14. When those that take root in the world wither, those that are grafted into Christ, and partake of his root and fatness, shall be fruitful and flourishing.

29. He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind: and the fool shall be servant to the wise of heart.

Two extremes, in the management of family affairs, are here condemned, and the ill consequences of them foretold.

1. Carefulness and carnal policy, on the one hand. There are these that by their extreme earnestness in pursuit of the world, their anxiety about their business, and fretfulness about their losses, their strictness with their servants, and their niggardliness toward their families, trouble their own houses, and give continual vexation to all about them; while others think, by supporting factions and feuds in their families, which are really a trouble to their houses, to serve some turn for themselves, and either to get, or to save, by it; but they will both be disappointed; they will inherit the wind. All they will get by these arts will not only be empty and worthless as the wind, but noisy and troublesome, vanity and vexation.

2. Carelessness and want of common prudence, on the other hand. He that is a fool in his business, that either minds it not, or goes awkwardly about it, that has no contrivance and consideration, he not only loses his reputation and interest, but becomes a servant to the wise in heart; he is impoverished, and forced to work for his living; while these that manage wisely raise themselves, and come to have dominion over him, and others like him. It is rational, and very fit, that the fool should be servant to
30. The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that witteth souls is wise.

This shows what great blessings good men are, especially those that are eminently wise, to the places where they live, and therefore how much to be valued.

1. The righteous are as trees of life; the fruits of their piety and charity, their instructions, reproofs, examples, and prayers, their interest in heaven, and their influence upon earth, are like the fruits of that tree, precious and useful, contributing to the support and nourishment of the spiritual life in many; they are the ornaments of paradise, God's church on earth, for whose sake it stands.

2. In the things of this world, which more, they are as trees of knowledge, not forbidden, but commanded, knowledge. He that is wise, by communicating his wisdom, wins souls; wins them upon to bring them to love with God and holiness, and so wins them over into the interests of God's kingdom among men. The wise are said to turn many to righteousness, and that is the same with winning souls here, Dan. xii. 3. Abraham's proselytes are called the souls that he had gotten, Gen. xii. 3. They that would win souls let them know how to deal with them; and they that do win souls show that they are wise.

31. Behold, the righteous shall be compensated in the earth: much more the wicked ed and the sinner.

This, I think, is the only one of Solomon's proverbs that has that note of attention prefixed to it, Behold! which intimates, that it contains not only an evident truth, which may be beheld, but an eminent truth, which must be considered.

1. Some understand both parts of a recompense in displeasure; The righteous, if they do amiss, shall be punished for their offences in this world; much more shall the wicked people be punished for theirs, which are committed, not through infirmity, but with a high hand. If judgment begin at the house of God, what will become of the ungodly? 1 Pet. iv. 17, 18. Luke xxiii. 31.

2. I rather understand it of a recompense of reward to the righteous, and punishment to sinners. Let us behold providential retributions. There are some recompenses in the earth, in this world, and in the last judgment, which, though they do not prove that verily there is a God that judges in the earth, (Ps. lvi. 11.) but they are not universal; many sins go unpunished in the earth, and services unrewarded, which indicates that there is a judgment to come, and that there will be more exact and full retributions in the future state. Many times the righteous are recompensed for their righteousness here in the earth, though that is not the principal, much less the only, reward either intended for them or intended by them; but whatever the word of God has promised them, or the wisdom of God seems good for them, they shall have in the earth. The wicked also, and the sinner, are sometimes remarkably punished in this life; nations, families, particular persons. And if the righteous, who do not deserve the least reward, yet have part of their recompense here on earth, much more shall the wicked, who deserve the greatest punishment, have part of their punishment on earth, as an earnest of worse to come. Therefore stand in awe, and sin not. If those have two heavens that merit none, much more shall they have two hells that merit both.
Note. 1. He that is blessed with a good wife is as happy as if he were upon the throne, for she is no less than a crown to him. A virtuous woman, that is pious and prudent, ingenious and industrious, that is active for the good of her family, and looks well to the ways of her household, that makes conscience of her duty in every relation, a woman of spirit, that can bear crosses without disturbance, such a one shall be a crown to her husband, and therefore she is a crown to him; not only a credit and honour to him, as a crown is an ornament, but supports and keeps up his authority in his family, as a crown is an ensign of power. She is submissive and faithful to him, and therefore teaches his children and servants to be so too.

2. He that is plagued with a bad wife is as miserable as if he were upon the dunghill; for she is no better than retinues in his bones, an incurable disease; moreover, she makes him ashamed. She that is silly and slothful, wasteful and wanton, passionate and ill-tongued, ruins both the credit and comfort of her husband; if he go abroad, his head is hung down, for his wife's faults turn to his reproach; if he retire into himself, his heart is sunk; he is continually uneasy; it is an affliction that preys much upon the spirits.

5. The thoughts of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit.

Note. 1. The word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and judges them. We mistake if we imagine that thoughts are free; no, they are under the divine cognizance, and therefore undo the divine command. 2. We ought to be observers of the thoughts and intents of our own hearts, and to judge of ourselves by them; for they are the first-born of the soul that have most of its image undisguised. Right thoughts are a righteous man's best evidences, as nothing more certainly proves a man wicked than wicked contrivances and designs. A good man may have in his mind bad suggestions, but he does not indulge them and harbour them till they are ripened into bad projects and bad actions; it is an honour to mean honestly, and to have his thoughts right, though a word or action may be misplaced, or mistimed, or, at least, misinterpreted. But it is a man's shame to lie always at catch, to act with deceit, with trick and design; not only with a long reach, but with an overreach.

6. The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.

In the foregoing verse, the thoughts of the wicked and righteous were compared, here their words, and these are as the abundance of the heart is.

2. Good men speak help to their neighbours; and wicked indeed are those whose words are to lie in wait for blood, their tongues are swords to those that stand in their way, to good men whom they hate and persecute. See an instance, Luke xx. 20, 21.

2. Good men speak help to their neighbours; The mouth of the upright is ready to be opened in the cause of those that are oppressed, (ch. xxxi. 8.) to plead for them, to witness for them, and to deliver them, particularly them whom the wicked lie in wait for. A man may sometimes do a very good work with one good word.

7. The wicked are overthrown, and are not: but the house of the righteous shall stand.

We are here taught, as before, (v. 3. and i. 25, 30.)

1. That the triumphing of the wicked is short; they may be exalted for awhile, but in a little time they are overthrown, and are not; their trouble proves their overthrow, and they who made a great show disappear, and their place knows them no more. Turn the wicked, and they are not; they stand in such a slippery place, that the least touch of trouble brings them down; like the apples of Sodom, which lack fire, but touch them, and they go to dust.

2. That the prosperity of the righteous has a good bottom, and will endure. Death will remove them, but their house shall stand, their families shall be kept up, and the generation of the upright shall be blessed.

8. A man shall be commended according to his wisdom: but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised.

We are here told whence to expect a good name. Reputation is what most men have a fervent regard to, and stand much upon. Now it is certain,

1. The best reputation is that which attends virtue and serious piety, and the prudent conduct of life; A man shall be commended by all that are wise and good, in conformity to the judgment of God himself, which, we are sure, is according to truth, not according to his riches or preferments, his craft and subtlety, but according to his wisdom, the honesty of his designs, and the prudent choice of means to compass them.

2. The worst reproach is that which follows wickedness, and an opposition to that which is good; He that is of a perverse heart, that turns aside crooked ways, and goes on fraudulently in them, shall be despised. Providence will bring him to poverty and contempt, and all that have a true sense of honour will despise him, as unworthy to be dealt with, and unfit to be trusted, as a blinsh and scandalous to mankind.

9. He that is despised, and hath a servant, is better than he that honoureth himself and lacketh bread.

Note. 1. It is the folly of some, that they covet to make a great figure abroad, take place, and take state, as persons of quality, and yet want necessaries at home, and, if their debts were paid, would not be worth a morsel of bread, nay, perhaps, pinch their bellies to put it on their backs, that they may appear very gay, because fine feathers make fine birds.

2. The condition and character of those is every way better, who content themselves in a lower sphere, where they are despised for the plainness of their dress, and the meanness of their post, that they may be able to afford themselves, not only necessaries, but conveniencies, in their own houses, not only bread, but a servant to attend them, and take some of their work off their hands. They that can trive to live plentifully and comfortably at home, are to be preferred before those that affect nothing so much as to appear splendid abroad, though they have not wherewithal to maintain it, whose hearts are unhumbled when their condition is low.

10. A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

See here, 1. To how great a degree a good man will be merciful; he has not only a compassion for the human nature under its greatest abasements, but he regards even the life of his beast, not only because
it is his servant, but because it is God's creature, and in conformity to Providence, which preserves man and beast. The beasts that are under our care must be provided for, must have convenient food and rest, must in no case be abused or tyrannized over. Balaam was checked for beating his ass. He must take care for oxen. Those therefore are unrighteous men that are not just to the brute-creatures; those that are furious and barbarous to them, evidence, and confirm in themselves, a habit of barbarity, and help to make the creation groan, Rom. viii. 22.

2. To how great a degree a wicked man will be unmerciful; even his tender mercies are cruel, that natural compassion which is in him, as a man, is lost, and by the power of corruption is turned into hard-heartedness; even that which they will have to pass for compassion, is really cruel, as Pilate's resolution concerning Christ the Innocent, I will chastise him, and let him go. Their pretended kindness are only a cover for purposed cruelties.

11. He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding.

Note, 1. It is men's wisdom to mind their business, and follow an honest calling, for that is the way, by the blessing of God, to get a livelihood: He that tilleth his land, of which he is either the owner or the occupant, that keeps to his work, and is willing to take pains, if he do not raise an estate by it, (what need is there of that?) yet he shall be satisfied with bread, shall have food convenient for himself and his family, enough to bear his charges comfortably through the world. Even the sentence of wrath has this mercy in it, Thou shalt eat bread, though it be in the sweat of thy face. Cain was denied this, Gen. iv. 12. Be busy, and that is the true way to keep thy shop, and thy shop will keep thee. Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands.

2. It is men's folly to neglect their business; they are void of understanding that do so, for then they fall in with idle companions, and follow them in their evil courses, and so come to want bread, at least bread of their own, and make themselves burthen-some to others, eating the bread out of other people's mouths.

12. The wicked desireth the net of evil men: but the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit.

See here, 1. What is the care and aim of a wicked man; he would do mischief; He desires the net of evil men; "Oh that I were but as cunning as such a man, to make a hand of those I deal with; that I had but his art of overreaching, that I could but take my revenge on one I have quite to, as effectually as he can!" He desires the strong-hold, or fortress, of evil men, so some read it, to act securely in doing mischief, that it may not turn upon him.

2. What is the care and aim of a good man; his root yields fruit, and is his strength and stability, and that is it that he desires, to do good, and to be fixed and confirmed in doing good. The wicked desires only a net wherewith to fish for himself, the righteous desires to yield fruit for the benefit of others, and God's glory, Rom. xiv. 6.

13. The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips: but the just shall come out of trouble.

See here, 1. The wicked entangling themselves in trouble by their folly, when God in justice leaves them to themselves; They are often snared by the corruption of their lips, and their throats are cut with their own tongues: by speaking evil of dignities they expose themselves to public justice, by giving ill language they become obnoxious to private resentments, are sued for defamation, and actions on the case for words are brought against them. Many a man has paid dearly in this world for the transgression of his lips, and has felt the lash on his back for want of a bridle upon his tongue, Ps. liv. 8.

2. The righteous extricate themselves out of trouble by their own wisdom, when God in mercy comes in for their succour. The just shall come out of such troubles as the wicked throw themselves headlong into, Ps. xcvii. 20. It is not for all, that, perhaps, come into trouble; but though they fall, they shall not be utterly cast down, Ps. xxxiv. 19.

14. A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth: and the recompense of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him.

We are here assured, for our quickening to every good word and work, 1. That even good words will turn to a good account; (v. 14.) A man shall be satisfied with good, he shall gain present comfort, that inward pleasure which is truly satisfied, by the fruit of his mouth, by the good he does with his pious discourse and prudent advice. While we are teaching others, we may ourselves learn and feed on the bread of life we break to others.

2. That good works, much more, will be abundantly rewarded. The recompense of a man's hands for all his work and labour of love, all he has done for the glory of God, and the good of his generation, shall be rendered unto him, and he shall reap as he has sown. Or it may be understood of the general rule of justice, God will render to every man according to his work, Rom. ii. 6.

15. The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.

See here, 1. What it is that keeps a fool from being wise; His way is right in his own eyes, he thinks he is in the right, in every thing he has an opinion about, before he asks no advice, because he does not apprehend he needs it; he is confident he knows the way, and cannot miss it, and therefore never inquires the way; The rule he goes by, is, to do that which is right in his own eyes, to walk in the way of his heart. Quicquid libet, licet—He makes his will his law. He is a fool that is governed by his eye, and not by his conscience.

2. What it is that keeps a wise man from being a fool: he is willing to be advised, he desires to have counsel given him, and hearkens to counsel, being diffluent of his own judgment, and having a value for the directions of those that are wise and good. He is wise; it is a sign he is so, and he is likely to continue so whose ear is always open to good advice.

16. A fool's wrath is presently known: but a prudent man covereth shame.

Note, 1. Passion is folly; A fool is known by his anger, so some read it; not but that a wise man may be angry when there is just cause for it, but then he hides his anger under check and direction, is lord of his anger, whereas a fool's anger lords it over him. He that, when he is provoked, breaks out into indecent expressions, in words or behaviour, whose passion alters his countenance, makes him outrageous, and forget himself, Nabat certainly is his name, and folly is with him. A fool's indignation
17. He that speaketh truth showeth forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit.

Here is, 1. A faithful witness commended for an honest man. He that makes conscience of speaking truth, and representing every thing truly, to the best of his knowledge, whether in judgment or in common conversation, whether he be upon his oath or no, he shows forth righteousness, he makes it to appear that he is governed and actuated by the principles and laws of righteousness, and he promotes justice by doing honour to it, and serving the administration of it. (2.) A false witness condemned for a cheat; he shows forth deceit, not only how little conscience he makes of deceiving these he deals with, but how much pleasure he takes in it, and that he is possessed by a lying spirit; Jer. ix. 38. We are compelled to possess ourselves with a dread and dexterity of the sin of lying, (Ps. cxxix. 163.) and with a reigning principle of honesty.

18. There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword; but the tongue of the wise is health.

The tongue is death or life, poison or medicine, as it is used.

1. There are words that are cutting and killing, that are like the piercings of a sword. Opprobrious words grieve the spirits of those to whom they are spoken, and cut them to the heart; sharper than a two-edged sword, wound the reputation of those of whom they are uttered, and perhaps incurable; whisperings and evil surmises, like a sword, divide and cut under the bonds of love and friendship, and separate those that have been dearest to each other.

2. There are words that are curing and healing; The tongue of the wise is health, closing up those wounds which the backbiting tongue had given, making all whole again, restoring peace, and accommodating murrain, peace, and perturbation to reconciliation. Wisdom will find out proper remedies against the mischiefs that are made by destruction and evil-speaking.

19. The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment.

Be it observed, to the honour of truth, that sacred thing.

1. That, if truth be spoken, it will hold good, and, whoever may be disliked by it, and angry at it, yet it will keep its ground; great is the truth, and will prevail; what is true will be always true, we may abide by it, and need not fear being disproved and put to shame.

2. That, if truth be denied, yet in time it will transpire; a lying tongue, that puts false colours upon things, is but for a moment, the lie will be disproved; the liar, when he comes to be examined, will be found in several stories, and not consistent with himself, as he that speaks truth; and when he is found in a lie, he cannot gain his point, nor will he afterward be credited. Truth may be eclipsed, but it will come to light. Those, therefore, that make a lie their refuge, will find it a refuge of lies.

20. Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil: but to the councillors of peace is joy.

Note, 1. Those that devise mischief, contrive for the accomplishing of it, how to impose upon others; but it will prove, in the end, that they deceive themselves. They that imagine evil, under colour of friendship, have their hearts full of this and the other advantages and satisfactions in which they shall gain by it, but it is all a cheat. Let them imagine it ever so artfully, deceivers will be deceived.

2. Those that consult the good of their neighbours, that study the things which make for peace, and give peaceable advice, promote healing attempts, and contrive healing methods, and, according as their sphere is, further the public welfare, will have not only the credit, but the comfort of it, joy and success, perhaps beyond their expectation. Blessed are the peace-makers.

21. There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief.

Note, 1. Piety is a sure protection. If men be sincerely righteous, the righteous God has engaged that no evil shall happen to them; he will, by the power of his grace in them, that principle of justice, keep them from the evil of sin; so that though they be tempted, yet they shall not be overcome by the temptation. And though they may come into trouble, into that kind of trouble to which these troubles shall have no evil in them, whatever they have to others, (Ps. xci. 10.) for they shall be overruled to work for their good.

2. Wickedness is as sure a destruction. They that live in contempt of God and man, and are set on mischief, with mischief they shall be filled. They shall be more and more miserable, shall be filled with all unrighteousness, Rom. i. 29. Or, they shall be made miserable with the mischiefs that shall come upon them. They that delight in mischief shall have enough of it. Some read the whole verse thus, There shall no evil happen to the just, though the wicked be filled with mischief and spite against them. They shall be safe under the protection of Heaven, though hell itself break loose upon them.

22. Lying lips are abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight.

We are here taught, 1. To hate lying, and to keep at the utmost distance from it, because it is an abomination to the Lord, and renders those abominable, in his sight, that allow themselves in it; not only because it is a breach of his law, but because it is destructive to human society.

2. To make conscience of truth, not only in our words, but in all our actions; because those that deal truly and sincerely, in all their dealings, are his delight, and he is well pleased with them. We delight to converse with, and make use of those that are honest, and that we may put a confidence
in; such therefore let us be, that we may recommend ourselves to the favour both of God and man.

23. A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaims foolishness.

Note. 1. He that is wise does not affect to proclaim his wisdom, and it is his honour that he does not; he communicates his knowledge when it may turn to the edification of others, but he conceals it when the showing of it would only tend to his own commendation. Knowing men, if they be prudent men, will carefully avoid every thing that savours of ostentation, and not take all precautions to have their learning only serve to hide it, so that little discretion have they in the management of themselves, Eccl. x. 3.

24. The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute.

Note. 1. Industry is the way to preferment. Solomon advanced Jeroboam, because he saw that he was an industrious young man, and minded his business, 1 Kings xi. 28. Men that take pains in study and serviceableness, will thereby gain such an interest and reputation as will give them a dominion over all about them by what means soever they know not how to hide it, so that little discretion have they in the management of themselves.

25. Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.

Here is, 1. The cause and consequence of melancholy. It is heaviness in the heart, it is a load of care, and fear, and sorrow, upon the spirits, depressing them, and disabling to exert themselves with any vigour in what is to be done, or courage in what is to be borne; it makes them stoop, prostrates and sinks them. Those that are thus oppressed can neither do the duty, nor take the comfort, of any relation, conversation, or society. Those therefore that are inclined to it should watch and pray against it.

2. The cure of it; A good word from God, applied by faith, makes it glad; such a word as that, (says one of the rabbins,) Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee; the good word of God, particularly the gospel, is designed to make the hearts glad that are weary and heavy-laden, Matt. xi. 28. Ministers are to be helpers of this joy.

26. The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour: but the way of the wicked seduce them.

See here, 1. That good men do well for them selves; for they have in themselves an excellent character, and they secure to themselves an excellent portion, and it has the force of an inherent good. The righteous is more abundant than his neighbour, so the margin; he is richer, though not in this world's goods, yet in the graces and comforts of the Spirit, which are the true riches. There is a true excellency in religion, it ennobles men, inspires them with generous principles, makes them substantial; it is an excellency which is, in the sight of God, of great price, who is the true Judge of excellency. He that doeth good may make a greater figure in the world, may be more applauded, but the righteous man has the intrinsic worth.

2. That wicked men do ill for themselves; they walk in a way which seduces them. It seems to them to be not only a pleasant way, but the right way; it is so agreeable to flesh and blood, that they therefore flatter themselves with an opinion that it cannot be amiss, but they will not gain the point they aim at, nor enjoy the good they hope for. It is all a cheat to them; the righteous is wiser and happier than his neighbours, that yet despise him, and trample upon him.

27. The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious.

Here is, 1. That which may make us hate slothfulness and deceit, for the word here, as before, signifies both; The slothful deceitful man has roasted meat, but that which he roasts is not what he himself took in hunting, no, it is what others took pains for, and he lives upon the fruit of their labours, like the drones in the hive. Or, if slothful men have taken any thing by hunting, (as sportsmen are seldom men of business,) yet they do not roast it, when they have taken it; they have no comfort in the enjoyment of it; perhaps God, in his providence, cuts them short of it.

2. That which may make us love in industry and honesty; that the substance of a diligent man, though it be not great, perhaps is yet precious. It comes from the blessing of God; he has comfort in it; it does him good, and his family. It is his own daily bread, not bred out of other people's mouths, and therefore he sees God gives it him in answer to his prayer.

28. In the way of righteousness is life: and in the path-way thereof there is no death.

The way of religion is here recommended to us,

1. As a straight, plain, easy, way; it is the way of righteousness; God's commands (the rule we are to walk by) are all holy, just, and good; religion has right reason and equity on its side; it is a path-way, a way where God has cast a powerful thyrex, as in Mic. viii. 1. It is a highway, the king's highway, the King of kings' highway; a way which is tracked before us by all the saints; the good old way, full of the footsteps of the flock.

2. As a safe, pleasant, comfortable way. (1.) There is not only life at the end, but there is life in the way; all true comfort and satisfaction. The favour of God, which is better than life; the Spirit, who is life. (2.) There is not only life in it, but so many, that in it, there is no death; none of that sorrow of the world which works death, and is an alay to our present joy and life. There is no end of that life that is in the way of righteousness. Here there is life, but there is death too. In the way of right-
PROVERBS, XIII.

1. A WISE son heareth his father’s instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke.

Among the children of the same parents, it is not new thing for some to be hopeful, and others the contrary; now here we are taught to distinguish, 1. There is great hope of those that have a reverence for their parents, and are willing to be advised and admonished by them. He is a wise son, and is in a fair way to be wiser, that hears his father’s instruction, desires to hear it, regards it, and complies with it, and does not only give it the hearing. 2. There is little hope of those that will not so much as hear rebuke with any patience, but scorn to submit to government, and scoff at these that deal faithfully with them. How can those mend a fault who will not be told of it, but count those their enemies who do them that kindness. 2. A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth: but the soul of the transgressors shall eat violence.

Note. 1. If that which comes from within, out of the heart, be good, and from a good treasure, it will return with advantage. Inward comfort and satisfaction will be daily bread; nay, it will be a continual feast to those who delight in that communication which is to the use of edifying.

2. Violence done will recoil in the face of him that does it; The soul of the transgressors, that hastens hours and plots mischief, and vents it by word and deed, shall eat violence; they shall have their belly full of it. Reward her as she has rewarded thee, Rev. xviii. 6. Every man shall drink as he brews, cat as he speaks; for by our words we must be justified or condemned; (Matth. xii. 37.) as our fruit is, so will our food be, Rom. vi. 21, 22.

3. He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.

Note. 1. A guard upon the lips is a guard to the soul; he that is cautious, that thinks twice before he speaks once, that, if he have thought evil, lays his hand upon his mouth to suppress it, that keeps a strong bridle on his tongue, and a strict hand on that bridle, he keeps his soul from a great deal both of guilt and grief, and saves himself the trouble of many bitter reflections on himself, and others upon him. 2. There is many a one ruined by an ungoverned tongue; He that openeth wide his lips, to let out good in buccan verberi—whatever comes unsulliest, that loves to bow, and bluster, and make a noise, and affected with a liberty of speech as bids defiance both to God and man, he shall have destruction. It will be the destruction of his reputation, his interest, his comfort, and his soul for ever, 1 Sam. iii. 6.

4. The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

Here is, 1. The misery and shame of the slothful; see how foolish and absurd they are; they desire the gains which the diligent get, but they hate the pains which the diligent take; they covet every thing that is to be coveted, but will do nothing that is to be done; and therefore it follows, they have nothing; for he that will not labour, let him hunger, and let him not eat, 2 Thess. iii. 10. The desire of the slothful, which should be his excitement, is his torment, which should make him busy, makes him always uneasy, and is really a greater toil to him than labour would be. 2. The happiness and honour of the diligent; Their soul shall be made fat; they shall have abundant dance, and shall have the comfortable enjoyment of it; and the more, for its being the fruit of their diligence. This is especially true in spiritual affairs. They that rest in idle wishes, know not what the advantages of religion are; whereas they that take pains in the service of God find both the pleasure and profit of it.

5. A righteous man hateth lying; but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame.

Note. 1. Where grace reigns, sin is loathsome. It is the ungodly character of every righteous man, that he hates lying, all sin, for every sin is a lie, and particularly all fraud and falsehood in commerce and conversation; not only that he will not tell a lie, but he abhors it, from a rooted reigning principle of love to truth and justice, and conformity to God.

2. Where sin reigns, the man is loathsome. If his eyes were opened, and his conscience awakened, he would be so to himself, he would abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes; however, he is so to God and all good men; particularly, he makes himself so by lying, than which nothing is more detestable. And though he may think to face it out a while, yet he will come to shame and contempt at last, and will blush to show his face, Dan. xii. 2.

6. Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way: but wickedness overthroweth the sinner.

See here, 1. Saints secured from ruin. Those that are upright in their way, that mean honestly in all their actions, adhere conscientiously to the sacred and eternal rules of equity, and deal sincerely both with God and man, their integrity will keep them safe from all the temptations of Satan, which shall not prevail over them, the reproaches and injuries of evil men, which shall not fasten upon them, to do them any real mischief, Ps. xxv. 21.

He manus aequus est, nil conscience sibi—
Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence,
Still to preserve thy conscious innocence.

2. Sinners secured for ruin. Those that are wicked, even their wickedness will be their overthrow at last, and they are held in the cords of it in the mean time. Are they corrected, destroyed? It is their own wickedness that corrects them, that destroys them; they alone shall bear it.

7. There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing; there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.

* This observation is applicable.

1. To men’s worldly estate. The world is a great cheat; not only the things of the world, but the men of the world; all men are liars. Here is an instance in two sore evils under the sun: (1.) Some that are really poor would be thought to be rich, and are thought to be so; they trade and spend as if they were rich, make a great bustle and a great show as if they had hid treasures, when perhaps, if all their debts were paid, they are not worth a great. This is sin, and will be shame; many a one hereby ruins his family, and brings reproach upon his profession.

They that thus live above what they have, choose to be subject to their own pride rather than to God’s providence, and it will end accord
ngly. (2.) Some that are really rich would be thought to be poor, and are thought to be so, because they sordidly and meanly live below what God has given them, and choose rather to bury it than to use it, Eccl. vi. 1, 2. In this there is ingratitude to God, injustice to the family and neighbourhood, and uncharitableness to the poor.

2. To their spiritual state. Grace is the riches of the soul, it is true riches; but men commonly misrepresent it, either designedly, or through mistake, and ignorance of themselves. (1.) There are many presuming hypocrites that are really poor, and empty of grace; and yet either think themselves rich, and will not be convinced of their poverty, or pretend themselves rich, and will not own their poverty. (2.) There are many timorous, trembling, Christians, that are spiritually rich, and full of grace, and yet think themselves poor, and will not be persuaded that they are rich, or at least, will not own it; by their doubts and fears, their complaints and griefs, they make themselves poor. The former mistake is destroying at last, this is disquieting in the mean time.

3. The ransom of a man’s life are his riches: but the poor heareth not rebuke.

We are apt to judge of men’s blessedness, at least, in this world, by their wealth, and that they are more or less happy according as they have more or less of this world’s goods; but Solomon here shows what a gross mistake it is; that we may be reconciled to a poor condition, and may neither covet riches ourselves, nor envy those that have abundance.

1. Those that are rich, if by some they are respected for their riches, yet, to balance that, by others they are envied and struck at, and brought in danger of their lives, which therefore they are forced to ransom with their riches. Stay us not, for we have treasures in the field, Jer. xii. 8. Under some tyrants, it has been crime enough to be rich; and how little is a man beholden to his wealth, when it only serves to redeem that life which otherwise had not been exposed!

2. Those that are poor, if by some, that should be their friends, they are despised and overlooked, yet, to balance that, they are also despised and overlooked by others, that would be their enemics if they had anything to lose; The poor hear not rebuke; are not censured, reproached, accused, nor brought into trouble, as the rich are; for nobody thinks it worth while to take notice of them. When the rich Jews were carried captives to Babylon, the poor of the land were left, 2 Kings xxv. 12. Welcome nothing, once in seven years. Cantab. vacus coram latrone viator—When a traveller is met by a robber, he will rejoice in not having much property about him.

9. The light of the righteous rejoiceth: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.

Here is, 1. The comfort of good men flourishing and lasting; The light of the righteous rejoiceth, it increases, and makes them glad. Even their outward prosperity is their joy, and much more those gifts, and grace, and comforts, with which their souls are illuminated; these shine more and more, ch. iv. 18. The Spirit is their Light, and he gives them that brightness, and rejoiceth to do them good.

2. The comfort of bad men withering and dying; The lamp of the wicked burns dim and faint, it looks melancholy, like a taper in an urn, and it shortly be put out in utter darkness, Isa. l. 11. The light of the righteous is as that of the sun, which may be eclipsed and clouded, but will continue; that of the wicked is as a lamp of their own kindling, which presently goes out, and is easily put out.

10. Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well-advised is wisdom.

Note, 1. Foolish pride is the great make bate. Would you know whence comes wars and fightings? They come from this root of bitterness. Whatever hand other lusts may have in contention, (passion, envy, covetousness,) pride has the great hand, it is its pride that it will itself sow discord, and needs no help. Pride makes men impatient of contradiction in either their opinions or their desires, impatient of competition and rivalry, impatient of condescension and receding, from a conceit of certain right and truth on their side; and hence arise quarrels among relations and neighbours, quarrels in states and kingdoms, in churches and Christian societies. Pride will be revenged, will not forgive, because they are proud.

2. Those that are humble and peaceful are wise and well-advised. Those that will ask and take advice, that will consult their own consciences, their Bibles, their ministers, their friends, and will do nothing rashly, they are wise, as in other things, so in this, that they will humble themselves, will stoop and yield, to preserve quietness, and prevent quarrels.

11. Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.

This shows that riches wear as they are won and wrought.

1. That which is won ill will never wear well, for a curse attends it, which will waste it; and the same corrupt dispositions which incline men to the sinful ways of getting, will incline them to the like sinful ways of spending; Wealth gotten by vanity will be bestowed upon vanity, and then it will be diminished. That which is got by such employments as are not lawful, or not becoming Christians, such as only serve to feed pride and luxury; that which is got by gaming, or by the stage, may as truly be said to be gotten by vanity, as that which is got by fraud and lying, and will be diminished. De male questitis vix gaudeat tertius harum—Ill-gotten wealth will scarcely be enjoyed by the third generation.

2. That which is got by industry and honesty will grow more, instead of growing less; it will be a maintenance, it will be an inheritance, it will be an abundance. He that labours, working with his hands, shall so increase, as that he shall have to give to him that needs; (Eph. iv. 28,) and, when it comes to that, it will increase yet more and more.

12. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.

Note, 1. Nothing is more grievous than the disappointment of a raised expectation, though not in the thing itself, by a denial, yet in the time of it by a delay; Hope deferred makes the heart sick and withers, fretful and peevish; but hope quite dashed kills the heart, and the higher the expectation was raised, the more cutting is the frustration of it. It is therefore our wisdom not to promise ourselves any great matters from the creature, nor to feed ourselves with any vain hopes from this world, lest we lay up matter for our own vexation; and what we do hope for let us prepare to be disappointed in, that, if it should prove so, it may prove the easier let us not be heavy.

2. Nothing is more grateful than to enjoy that, at last, which we have long wished and waited for;
When the desire does come, it puts men into a sort of paradise, a garden of pleasure, for it is a tree of life. It will aggravate the eternal misery of the wicked, that their hopes will be frustrated; and it will make the happiness of heaven the more welcome to the saints, that it is what they have earnestly longed for as the crown of their hopes.

13. Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.

Here is, 1. The character of one that is marked for ruin; He that despiseth the word of God, and has no regard to it, no veneration for it, nor will be ruled by it, certainly he shall be destroyed; for he slights that which is the only means of curing a destructive disease, and makes himself obnoxious to that divine wrath which will certainly be his destruction. Those that prefer the rules of carnal policy before divine precepts, and the allurements of the world and the flesh before God’s promises and comforts, despise his word, giving the preference to those things that stand in competition with it; and it is to their own just destruction; they would not take warning.

2. The character of one that is sure to be happy; He that fears the commandment, that stands in awe of God, pays a deference to his authority, has a reverence for his word, is afraid of displeasing God, and incurring the penalties annexed to the commandment, he shall not only escape destruction, but shall be rewarded for his godly fear. In keeping the commandment there is great reward.

14. The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

By the law of the wise and righteous, here, we may understand, either the principles and rules by which they govern themselves, or (which comes all to one) the instructions which they give to others, which is to be as a law to all about them; and if they be so,

1. They will be constant springs of comfort and satisfaction as a fountain of life, sending forth streams of living water; the closer we keep to those rules, the more effectually we secure our own peace.

2. They will be constant preservatives from the temptations of Satan. They that follow the dictates of this law will keep at a distance from the snares of sin, and so escape the snares of death, which they run themselves into that forsake the law of the wise.

15. Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard.

If we compare not only the end, but the way, we shall find that religion has the advantages for,

1. The way of saints is pleasant and agreeable; Good understanding gains favour with God and man; our Saviour grew in that favour, when he increased in wisdom. Those that conduct themselves prudently, and order their conversation aright in every thing, that serve Christ in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, are accepted of God and approved of men, Rom. xiv. 17, 18. And hence comfortably will that man pass through the world, who is well-understood, and is therefore well-accepted!

2. The way of sinners is rough and uneasy, and, for that reason, unpleasant to themselves, because unacceptable to others. It is hard, hard upon others; who complain of it, hard to the sinner himself, who can have little enjoyment of himself, while he is doing that which is disgusting to all mankind. The service of sin is perfect slavery, and the road to hell is strewed with thorns and thistles that are the products of the curse. Sinners labour in the very fire.

16. Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge: but a fool layeth open his folly.

Note, 1. It is wisdom to be cautious; Every prudent discreet man does all with knowledge, (considering with himself, and consulting with others,) acts with deliberation, and is upon the reserve; is careful not to meddle with that which he has not some knowledge of, nor to launch out into business which he has not acquainted himself with; will not deal with those that he has not some knowledge of, whether they may be confided in. He is still dealing in knowledge, that he may increase the stock he has.

2. It is folly to be rash, as the fool is, who is forward to talk of things he knows nothing of, and undertakes that which he is no way fit for, and so lays open his folly, and makes himself ridiculous. He began to build, and was not able to finish.

17. A wicked messenger falleth into mischief: but a faithful ambassador is health.

Here is, 1. The ill consequences of betraying a trust; A wicked messenger, who, being sent to negotiate any business, is false to him that employed him, divulges his counsels, and so defeats his designs, he cannot expect to prosper, but will certainly fall into some mischief or other, will be discovered and punished; since nothing is more hateful to God and man than the treachery of those that have a confidence reposed in them.

2. The happy effects of fidelity; An ambassador, who faithfully discharges his trust, and serves the interests of those who employ him, he is health, he is health to those by whom, and for whom, he is employed, heals differences that are between them, and preserves a good understanding; he is health to himself, for he secures his own interest. This is applicable to ministers, Christ’s messengers and ambassadors; those that are wicked and false to Christ, and the souls of men, do mischief, and fall into mischief; but those that are faithful will find sound words to be healing words to others and themselves.

18. Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction: but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured.

Note, 1. He that is so proud that he scorns to be taught, will certainly be abused; He that refuseth the good instruction offered him, as if it were a reflection upon his honour, and an abridgment of his liberty, poverty and shame shall be to him; he will become a beggar, and live and die in disgrace; every one will despise him as foolish, and stubborn, and ungodly.

2. He that is so humble that he takes it well to be told of his faults, shall certainly be exalted; He that regards a reproof, whoever gives it him, and will mend what is amiss when it is showed him, he gains respect as wise and candid; he avoids that which would be a disgrace to him, and is in a fair way to make himself considerable.

19. The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul: but it is abomination to fools to depart from evil.

This shows the folly of those that refuse instruction, for they might be happy, and will not.

1. They might be happy. There are in man strong desires of happiness; God has provided for the accomplishment of those desires, and that would be sweet to the soul, whereas the pleasures of sense are grateful only to the carnal appetite. The desire of good men toward the favour of God and spiritual blessings, brings that which is sweet to their souls:
we know those that can say so by experience. Ps. iv. 6, 7.

2. Yet they will not be happy; for it is an abomin-
ation to them to depart from evil, which is neces-
sary to their being happy. Never let those expect any thing truly sweet to their souls that will not be persuaded to leave their sins, but that roll them under their tongues as a sweet morsel.

20. He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

Note, 1. Those that would be good must keep good company, which is an evidence for them that they would be good, (men's character is known by the company they choose,) and will be a means of making them good, of showing them the way, and of quickening and encouraging them in it. He that would be himself wise, must walk with those that are so, must choose such for his intimate acquaint-
ance, and converse with them accordingly; must ask and receive instruction from them, and be pleased and profitable with them; (Ex. viii. 9.) Miss not the discourse of the elders, for they also learned of their fathers. And (ch. vi. 35.) Be willing to hear every godly discourse, and let not the parables of understanding escape thee.

2. Multiudes are brought to ruin by bad company: A companion of fools shall be broken, so some; shall be known, so the Seventy; known to be a fool, wisecurit ex socio—he is known by his company. He shall be like them, so some; will be made wicked, so others; it comes all to one; for all those, and those only, that make themselves wicked, will be destroy-
ed; and those that associate with evil-doers are de-
bauched, and so undone, and at last, ascribe their death to it.

21. Evil pursueth sinners: but to the righteous good shall be repaid.

Here see, 1. How unavoidable the destruction of sinners is; the wrath of God pursues them, and all the terrors of that wrath. Evil pursueth them close wherever they go, as the averger of blood pursued the manslayer, and they have no city of refuge to flee to; they attempt an escape, but in vain. Whom God pursues he is sure to overtake. They may prosper for awhile, and grow very secure, but their damnation slumbers not, though they do.

2. How indefeasible the happiness of the saints is; the God that cannot lie has engaged that to the righ-
teous good shall be repaid; they shall be abundantly recompensed for all the good they have done, and all the ill they have suffered, in this world; so that, though many have been losers for their righteous-
ness, they shall not be losers by it. Though the recompense do not come quickly, it will come in the day of payment, in the world of retribution; and it will be an abundant recompense.

22. A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.

See here, 1. How a good man's estate lasts; he leaves an inheritance to his children's children. It is part of his praise that he is thoughtful for poste-
riety; that he does not lay all out upon himself, but is in care to do well for those that come after him; not by withholding more than is meet, but by a prudent and decent frugality. He trains up his children to this, that they may leave it to their children; and especially he is careful, both by jus-
tice and charity, to obtain the blessing of God upon what he has, and to entail that upon his children, without which the greatest industry and frugality will be in vain; A good man, by being good, and doing good, by honouring the Lord with his sub-
stance, and spending it in his service, secures it to his posterity; or, if he should not leave them much of this world's goods, his prayers, his instructions, his good example, will be the best entail; and the promises of the covenant will be an inheritance to his children's children, Ps. ciii. 17.

2. How it increases by the accession of the wealth of the sinner: for that is laid up for the just. If it be asked, How should good men grow so rich, who are not so eager upon the world as others are, and who commonly suffer for their well-doing? it is here answered, God, in his providence, often brings into their hands that which wicked people had laid up for themselves. The innocent shall divide the silver, Job xxxvii. 16, 17. The Israelites shall spoil the Egyptians, (Exod. xii. 36.) and eat the riches of the Gentiles, Isa. lx. 6.

23. Much food is in the tillage of the poor: but there is that is destroyed for want of judgment.

See here, 1. How a small estate may be improved by industry, so that a man, by making the best of every thing, may live comfortably upon it; Much food is in the tillage of the poor, the poor farmers, that have but a little, but take pains with that little, and husband it well. Many make it an excuse for their idleness, that they have but a little to work on, a very little to be doing with; but the less compass the field is of, the more let the skill and labour of the owner be employed about it, and it will turn to a very good account. Let him dig, and he needs not beg.

2. How a great estate may be ruined by indiscre-
tion; There is that has a great deal, but it is destroyed and brought to nothing, for want of judgment, pru-
dence in the management of it. Men over-build themselves, or over-buy themselves; keep greater company, or a better table, or more servants, than they can afford; suffer what they have to go to de-
cay, and do not make the most of it; by taking up money themselves, or being bound for others, their estates are sunk, their families reduced, and all for want of judgment.

24. He that spareth his rod hatcheth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

Note, 1. To the education of children in that which is good, there is necessary a due correction of them for what is amiss; every child of ours is a child of Adam, and therefore has that foolishness bound up in its heart which calls for rebuke, more or less; the rod and reproof which give wisdom. Observe, It is his rod that must be used, the rod of a parent, directed by wisdom and love, and designed for good; not the rod of a servant.

2. It is good to begin betimes with the necessary restraints of children from that which is evil, before vicious habits are confirmed. The branch is easily bent when it is tender.

3. Those really hate their children, though they pretend to love them; if they do not keep them under a strict discipline, and by all proper methods, severe ones when gentle ones will not serve, make them sensible of their faults, and afraid of offending. They abandon them to their worst enemy, to the most dangerous disease, and therefore hate them. Let this reconcile children to the correction their good parents give them; it is from love, and for their good, Heb. xii. 7—9.

25. The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul: but the belly of the wicked shall want.
Note, 1. It is the happiness of the righteous that they shall have enough, and that they know when they have enough. They desire not to be surfeited, but, being moderate in their desires, they are soon satisfied. Nature is content with a little, and grace with less; enough is as good as a feast. They that feed on the bread of life, that feast on the promises, meet with abundant satisfaction of soul there, eat, and are filled.

2. It is the misery of the wicked, that, through the insatiableness of their own desires, they are always needy; not only their souls shall not be satisfied with the world and the flesh, but even their belly shall want, their sensual appetite is always craving. In hell they shall be denied a drop of water.

CHAP. XIV.

1. EVERY wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.

Note. 1. A good wife is a great blessing to a family; by a fruitful wife a family is multiplied and replenished with children, and so built up; but by a prudent wife, one that is pious, industrious, and considerate, the affairs of the family are made to prosper, debts are paid, portions raised, provision made, the children well educated and maintained, and the family has comfort within doors and credit without; thus is the house built. She looks upon it as her own to take care of, though she knows it is her husband's to bear rule in, Esth. i. 22.

2. Many a family is brought to ruin by ill housewifery, as well as by ill husbandry: A foolish woman, that has no fear of God, nor regard to her business, that is, wilful, and wasteful, and humour-some; that indulges her ease and appetite, and is all for juasting and feasting, cards and the play-house, though she came to a plentiful estate, and to a family beforehand, she will impoverish and waste it, and all as comes to the ruin of her house as if she flucked it down with her hands; and the husband himself, with all his care, can scarcely prevent it.

2. He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord: but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.

Here are, 1. Grace and sin in their true colours. Grace reigning is a reverence of God, and gives honour to him who is infinitely great and high, and to whom all honour is due, than which what is more becoming, or should be more pleasing, to the rational creature? Sin reigning is no less than a contempt of God; in this, more than in any thing, sin appears exceeding sinful, that it desipes God, whom angels adore. They that despise God's precepts, and will not be ruled by them, his promises, and will not accept of them, despise God himself, and all his attributes.

2. Grace and sin in their true light. By this we may know a man that has grace, and the fear of God, reigning in him; he walketh in his uprightness, he makes conscience of his actions, is faithful both to God and man, and every stop he makes, as well as every step he takes, is by rule; here is one that honours God. But, on the contrary, he that is perverse in his ways, that wilfully follows his own appetites and passions, that is unjust and dishonest, and contradicts his profession in his conversation; however he may pretend to devotion, he is a wicked man, and will be reckoned with as a desipser of God himself.

3. In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve him.

See here, 1. A proud fool exposing himself. Where there is pride in the heart, and no wisdom in the head to suppress it, it commonly shows itself in the words; In the mouth there is pride, proud boasting, proud cursing, proud scolding, proud commanding, and giving law; this is the rod, or breach of pride; the word is used only here and Is. xi. 1. It grows from that root of bitterness which is in the heart; it is a rod from that stem. The root must be plucked up, or we cannot conquer this branch; or it is meant of a smiting, beating rod; a rod of pride, which strikes others. The proud man with his tongue lays about him, and deals blows at pleasure, but it will one day be a rod to himself; the proud man shall one day come under an ignominious correction by the words of his own mouth; not cut as a soldier, but caned as a servant; and herein he will be beaten with his own rod, Ps. lxxv. 8.

2. A humble wise man saving himself, and consulting his own good; The lips of the wise shall preserve them from doing that mischief to others which proud men do with their tongues, and from bringing that mischief on themselves which haughty scorners are often involved in.

4. Where no oxen are, the crib is clean: but much increase is by the strength of the ox.

Note. 1. The neglect of husbandry is the way to poverty; Where no oxen are, to till the ground and tread out the corn, the crib is empty, is clean, there is no straw for the cattle, and consequently no bread for the service of man. Scarcity is represented by clearness of teeth, Amos iv. 6. Where no oxen are, there is nothing to be done at the ground, and therefore nothing to be had out of it; the crib indeed is clean from dung, which pleases the neat and nice, that cannot endure husbandry, because there is so much dirty work in it, and therefore will sell their oxen to keep the crib clean; but then not only the labour, but even the dung, of the ox is wanted. This shows the folly of these who addict themselves to the pleasures of the country, but do not mind the business of it; who (as we say) keep more horses than kine, more dogs than swine; their families must needs suffer by it.

2. Those who take pains about their ground are likely to reap the profit of it; those who keep that about them which is for use and service, not for state and show, more husbands than footmen, they are likely to thrive. Much increase is by the strength of the ox, that is made for our service, and is profitable alive and dead.

5. A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies.

In the administration of justice, much depends upon the witnesses, and therefore it is necessary to the common good that witnesses be principled as they ought to be; for,

1. A witness that is conscientious, will not dare to give in a testimony that is in the least untrue; nor, for good-will or ill-will, represent a thing otherwise than according to the best of his knowledge, whoever is pleased or displeased; and then judgment runs down like a river.

2. But a witness that will be bribed, and bisected, and brow-beat, will utter lies, (and not stick or startle at it,) with as much readiness and assurance as if it were all true.

6. A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth.

Note. 1. The reason why some people seek wisdom, and do not find it, is, because they do not seek it from a right principle, and in a right manner.
They are scorner, and it is in scorn that they ask instruction, that they may ridicule what is told them, and may cavil at it. Many put questions to Christ, tempting him, and that they might have whereof to accuse him, but they were never the wiser. No marvel, if they who seek wisdom, as Simon Magus sought the gifts of the Holy Ghost, to serve their pride and covetousness, do not find it, for they seek anis. Herod desired to see a miracle, but he was a sorer, and therefore it was denied him, Luke xix. 8. Scorner speed not in prayer.

2. To those who understand themselves aright, who depart from evil, for that is understanding, the knowledge of God and of his will is easy. The parables which harden scorner in their scorning, and make divine things more difficult to them, enlighten those who are willing to learn, and make the same things more plain and intelligible and familiar to them, Matt. xiii. 11, 15, 16. The same word which to the scornful is a savour of death unto death, to the humble and serious is a savour of life unto life. He that understands, so as to depart from evil, (for that is understanding,) to quit his prejudices, to lay aside all corrupt dispositions and affections, will easily apprehend instruction, and receive the impressions of it.

7. Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.

See here, 1. How we may discern a fool, and discover him; a wicked man, for he is a foolish man, if we desire not in him the lips of knowledge, if we find there is no relish or savour of piety in his discourse, that his communication is all corrupt and corrupting, and nothing in it good and to the use of edifying, we may conclude the treasure is bad.

2. How we must decline such a one, and depart from him; Go from his presence, for thou perceivest there is no good to be gotten by his company, but danger of getting hurt by it. Sometimes the only way we have of proving wicked discourse and witnessing against it, is, by leaving the company and going out of hearing of it.

3. The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit.

See here, 1. The good conduct of a wise and good man; he manages himself well. It is not the wisdom of the learned, which consists only in speculation, that is here commended, but the wisdom of the prudent, which is practical, and is of use to direct our counsels and actions. Christian prudence consists in right understanding of our way; for we are travellers, whose concern it is, not to spy wonders, but to get forward towards their journey's end. It is to understand our own way, not to be critics and busy-bodies in other men's matters, but to look well to ourselves, and ponder the path of our feet; to understand the directions of our way, that we may observe them; the dangers of our way, that we may avoid them; the difficulties of our way, that we may break through them; and the advantages of our way, that we may improve them: to understand the rules we are to walk by, and the ends we are to walk toward, and walk accordingly.

2. The bad conduct of a bad man; he puts a cheat upon himself, he does not rightly understand his way, he thinks he does, and so misses his way, and goes on in his mistake; The folly of fools is deceit, it cheats them into their own ruin. The folly of him that built on the sand was deceit.

9. Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour.

See here, 1. How wicked people are hardened in their wickedness; they make a laughing matter of the sins of others, making themselves and their companions merry with that for which they should mourn; and they make a light matter of their own sins, both when they are tempted to sin, and when they have committed it; they call evil good, and good evil, (Isa. v. 20.) turn it off with a jest, rush into sin, (Jer. viii. 6.) and say they shall be at peace, though they go on: they care not what mischief they do by their sins, and laugh at those that tell them of it. They are advocates for sin, and are ingenious at framing excuses for it.

Fools make a mock at the sin-offering, so some; that they make light of sin make light of Christ. They are fools that make light of sin, for they make light of that which God complains of, (Amos ii. 13.) which lay heavy upon Christ, and which they themselves will have other thoughts of shortly.

2. How good people are encouraged in their goodness; Among the righteous there is favour; if they in any thing offend, they presently repent, and obtain the favour of God. They have a good-will one to another; and among them, in their societies, there is mutual charity and compassion in cases of offences, and no mocking.

10. The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.

This agrees with 1 Cor. ii. 11. What man know\ the things of a man, and the changes of his temper, save the spirit of a man?

1. Every man feels most from his own burthen, especially that which is a burthen upon the spirits, for that is commonly concealed, and the sufferer keeps it to himself. We must not censure the griefs of others, for we know not what they feel, their sorrow perhaps is heavier than their groaning.

2. Many enjoy a secret pleasure, especially in some conditions, which others are not aware of, much less are sharers in. As the sorrows of a penitent, so the joys of a believer, are such as a stranger does not intermeddle with, and therefore is no competent judge of.

11. The house of the wicked shall be overthrown: but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish.

Note, 1. Sin is the ruin of great families; The house of the wicked, though built ever so strong and high, shall be overthrown, shall be brought to poverty and disgrace, and at length be extinct. His hope for heaven, the house on which he leans, shall not stand, but fail in the storm; the deluge that comes will sweep it away.

2. Righteousness is the rise and stability even of mean families; Even the tabernacle of the upright, though moveable and despicable as a tent, shall flourish in outward prosperity, if Infinite Wisdom see good; at all events, in graces and comfort, which are true riches and honours.

12. There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death.

We have here an account of the way and end of a great many self-deluded souls.

1. Their way is seemingly fair; it seems right to themselves; they please themselves with a fancy that they are as they should be, that their opinions and practices are good, and such as will bear them out. The way of ignorance and carelessness, the way of worldliness and earthly-mindedness, the way of sensuality and flesh-pleasing, seem right to those that walk in them; much more, they imagine,
one that will promise payment; those are simple who thus believe every word, forgetting that all men, in some sense, are liars, in comparison with God, all whose words we are to believe with an implicit faith, for he cannot lie.

2. It is wisdom to be cautious; The prudent man will try before he trusts, will weigh both the credibility of the witness, and the probability of the testimony, and then give judgment as the thing appears, or suspend his judgment till it appears.

Prove all things, and believe not every spirit.

16. A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confiderent.

Note. 1. Holy fear is an excellent guard upon every holy thing, and against every thing that is unholy. It is wisdom to depart from evil, from the evil of sin, and thereby from all other evil; and therefore it is wisdom to fear, to be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy, to keep up a dread of God's wrath, to be afraid of coming near the borders of sin, or dallying with the beginnings of it.

A wise man, for fear of harm, keeps out of harm's way, and starts back in a fright when he finds himself entering into temptation.

He that is soon angry dealteth foolishly; and a man of wicked devices is hated.

Note. 1. Passionate men are justly laughed at; Men who are peevish and touchy, and are soon angry upon every least provocation, deal foolishly, they say and do that which is ridiculous, and so expose themselves to contempt; they themselves cannot but be ashamed of it when the heat is over. The censure of this way, should engage our first, especially who are in reputation for wisdom and honour, with the utmost care to bridle their passion.

2. Malicious men are justly dreaded and detested, for they are much more dangerous and mischiefful to all societies; A man of wicked devices, who stifles his resentments till he has an opportunity of being avenged, and is secretly plotting how to wrong his neighbour, and to do him an ill turn, as Cain to kill Abel, such a man as this is hated by mankind. The character of an angry man is pitiable; through the surprise of a temptation he disturbs and disgraces himself, but it is soon over, and he is sorry for it; but that of a spiteful revengeful man is odious, there is no fence against him, no care for him.

18. The simple inherit folly: but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.

Note. 1. Sin is the shame of sinners; The simple, who love simplicity, get nothing by it, they inherit folly, they have it by inheritance, so some. The commonwealth of nature is derived from our first parents, and all the calamities that attend it we have by kind; it was the inheritance they transmitted to their degenerate race, an hereditary disease. They are as fond of it as a man of his inheritance, held it as fast, and are as loath to part with it. What they value themselves upon is really foolish; and what will be the issue of their simplicity but folly? They will for ever rue their own foolish choices.
2. Wisdom is the honour of the wise; The prudent crown themselves with knowledge, they look upon it as their brightest ornament, and there is nothing they are so ambitious of; they bind it to their heads as a crown, which they will bear, to mean part with; they press upon the top and perfection of knowledge, which will crown their beginnings and progress. They shall have the praise of it; wise heads shall be respected as if they were crowned heads. They crown knowledge, (so some read it,) they are a credit to their profession; wisdom is not only justified, but glorified, of all her children.

19. The evil bow before the good; and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.

That is, 1. The wicked are oftentimes impoverished and brought low, so that they are forced to beg, their wickedness having reduced them to straits, while good men, by the blessing of God, are enriched, and enabled to give, and do give, even to the evil, for where God grants life, we must not deny a livelihood.

2. Sometimes God extorts, even from bad men, an acknowledgment of the excellency of God’s people. The evil ought always to bow before the good, and so some are made to do, that God has loved them, Rev. iii. 9. They desire their favour, (Esth. vii. 7.) their prayers, 2 Kings, ii. 12.

3. There is a day coming when the upright shall have the dominion; (Ps. xliv. 14.) when the foolish virgins shall come begging to the wise for oil, and shall knock in vain at that gate of the Lord at which the righteous entered.

20. The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends.

This shows not what should be, but what is, the common way of the world—to be shy of the poor, and fond of the rich.

1. Few will give countenance to those whom the world frowns upon, though otherwise worthy of respect; The poor, who should be pitied, and encouraged, and relieved, is hated, looked strange upon, and kept at a distance, even by his own neighbour, with mean grace, not only to himself, but with him, and pretended to have a kindness for him. Most are swallow-friends that are gone in winter. It is good having God our Friend, for he will not desert us when we are poor.

2. Every one will make court to those whom the world smiles upon, though otherwise unworthy; The rich have many friends, friends to their riches, in hope to get something out of them. There is little friendship in the world but what is governed by self interest, which is no true friendship at all, nor what a wise man will either value himself on, or put any confidence in. Those that make the world their god, idolize them that have most of its good things, and seek their favour, as if indeed they were Heaven’s favourites.

21. He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.

See here how men’s character and condition are measured and judged of, by their conduct toward their poor neighbours.

1. Those that look upon them with contempt, have here assigned them a bad character, and their condition will be accordingly. He that despises his neighbour because he is low in the world, because he is of a mean extraction, rustie education, and makes but a mean figure, that thinks it below him to take notice of him, converse with him, or concern himself about him, and sets him with the dogs of his flock, he is a sinner, is guilty of a sin, is in the way to worse, shall be dealt with as a sinner, unhappy is he.

2. Those that look upon them with compassion are here said to be in a good condition, according to their character. He that has mercy on the poor, is ready to do all the good offices he can to him, and thereby puts an honour upon him, happy is he; he does that which is pleasing to God, which he himself will afterward reflect upon with great satisfaction, for which the losses of the poor will bless him, and which will be abundantly recompensed in the resurrection of the just.

22. Do they not err that devise evil? but mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good.

See here, 1. How miserably mistaken they are, they not only do evil, but devise it: Do they not err? Yes, certainly they do, every one knows it. They think that by sinning with craft and contrivance, and carrying on their intrigues with more plot and artifice than others, they shall make a better hand of their sins than others do, and come off better; but they are mistaken. God’s justice cannot be out witted. They that devise evil against their neighbours greatly err, for it will certainly turn upon themselves, and end in their own ruin; a fatal error!

2. How willingly they consult their own interest, that not only do good, but devise it; Mercy and truth shall be to them; not a reward of debt, (they will own that they merit nothing,) but a reward of mercy, mere mercy, according to the promise, mercy and truth, to which God is pleased to make himself a Debtor. Those that are so liberal as to devise liberal things, that seek opportunities of doing good, and contrive how to make their charity most extensive, and most acceptable to those that need it, by liberal things they shall stand, Isa. xxxii. 8.

23. In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips lendeth only to penury.

Note, 1. Working without talking, will make men rich; In all labour of the head, or of the hand, there is profit, it will turn to some good account or other. Industrious people are generally thriving people, and where there is something done, there is something to be had. The stirring hand gets wealth. It is good therefore to keep in business, and to keep in action, and what our hand finds to do, to do it with all our might.

2. Talking, without working, will make men poor. Those that love to boast of their business, and make a noise about it, and that waste their time in tittle-tattle, in telling and hearing new things, like the Athenians, and, under the pretence of improving themselves by conversation, neglect the work of their place and day, they waste what they have, and the course they take, tends to penury, and will end in it. It is true in the affairs of our souls; those that take pains in the service of God, that strive earnestly in prayer, will find profit in it. But if men’s religion runs all out in talk and noise, and their praying is only the labour of the lips, they will be spiritually poor, and come to nothing.

24. The crown of the wise is their riches: but the foolishness of fools is folly.

Observe, 1. If men be wise and good, riches make them so much the more honourable and useful, The crown of the wise is their riches; their riches make them to be so much the more respected, and give them the more authority and influence upon others. They that have wealth, and wisdom to use it, will have a great opportunity of honouring God
and doing good in the world. *Wisdom is good without an inheritance, but better with it.*

2. If men be wicked and corrupt, their wealth will but the more expose them; *The foolishness of fools, put them in what condition you will, is folly,* and will show itself, and shame them; if they have riches, they do mischief with them, and are the more hardened in their foolish practices.

25. A true witness delivereth souls: but a deceitful witness speaketh lies.

See here, 1. How much praise is due to a faithful witness; *He delivers the souls of the innocent who are falsely accused,* and their good names, which are as dear to them as their lives. A man of integrity will venture the displeasure of the greatest, to bring truth to light, and rescue those who are injured by falsehood. A faithful minister, who truly witnesses for God against sin, is thereby instrumental to deliver souls from eternal death.

2. How little regard is to be had to a false witness; he forges lies, and yet pours them out with the greatest assurance imaginable for the destruction of the innocent. It is therefore the interest of a nation, by all means possible, to detect and punish false witness-bearing; yea, and lying in common conversation; for truth is the cement of society.

26. In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence; and his children shall have a place of refuge. 27. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

In these two verses, we are invited and encouraged to live in the fear of God, by the advantages which attend a religious life; *the fear of the Lord is here put for all gracious principles, producing gracious practices.*

1. Where this reigns it produces a holy security and serenity of mind; there is in it a strong confidence, it enables a man still to hold fast both his purity and his peace, whatever happens, and gives him boldness before God and the world. *I know that I shall be justified; None of these things move me;* such is the language of this confidence.

2. It entails a blessing upon posterity. The children of them that by faith make God their Confidence, shall be encouraged, by the promise that God will be a God to believers, and to their seed, to fly to him as their Refuge, and they shall find shelter in him. The children of religious parents often do the better for their parents’ instructions and example, and fare the better for their faith and prayers. *Our fathers trusted in thee, therefore we will.*

3. It is an overflowing, overflowing, spring of comfort and joy; it is a fountain of life, yielding constant streams of blessing to the soul; joy, peace, and grace are pure and fresh are life to the soul, and quench that thirst, and can never be drawn dry; it is a well of living water that is springing up to, and is the earnest of, eternal life.

4. It is a sovereign antidote against sin and temptation. Those that have a true relish of the pleasures of serious godliness, will not be allure by the baits of sin to swallow its hook; they have better things than any it can pretend to offer; and therefore it is easy to them to depart from the snares of death, and to keep their feet from being taken in them.

28. In the multitude of people is the king’s honour: but in the want of people is the destruction of the prince.

Here are two maxims in politics, which carry their own evidence with them.

1. That it is much for the honour of a king to have a populous kingdom; it is a sign that he rules well, since strangers are hereby invited to come and settle under his protection, and his own subjects live comfortably; it is a sign that he and his kingdom are under the blessing of God, the effect of which is, being fruitful and multiplying. It is his strength, and makes him considered and formidable; happily the king, the father of his country, who has his quiver full of arrows, he shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with his enemy in the gate, Ps. cxvii. 4. 5. It is therefore the wisdom of princes, by a mild and gentle government, by encouraging trade and husbandry, and by making all easy under them, to promote the increase of their people. And let all that wish well to the kingdom of Christ, and to his honour, do what they can in their places, that many be added to his church.

2. That when the people are lessened, the prince is weakened; *In the want of people is the leanness of the prince;* so some read it; trade lies dead, the ground lies unsettled, the army wants to be recruited, the navy to be manned, and all because there are not hands sufficient. See how much the honour and safety of kings depend upon their people, which is a reason why they should rule by love, and not with fear.

Princes are corrected by those judgments which abate the number of the people, as we find, 2 Sam. xxiv. 13.

29. *He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.*

Note. 1. Meekness is wisdom. *He rightly understands himself, and his duty and interest, the infinitudes of human nature, and the constitution of human society,* who is slow to anger, and knows how to excuse the faults of others as well as his own, how to adjourn his resentments, and moderate them, so as by no provocation to be out of the possession of his own soul. A mild patient man is really to be accounted an intelligent man, one that learns of Christ, who is Wisdom itself.

2. Unbridled passion is folly proclaimed; *He that is hasty of spirit, whose heart is tender to every spark of provocation, that is all fire and tow, as we say, he thinks hereby to magnify himself, and make himself welcome and in love of him, whereas really he exalts his own folly, he makes it known, as that which is lifted up is visible to all, and he submits himself to it, as to the government of one that is exalted.*

30. A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.

The foregoing verses showed how much our reputation, this, how much our health, depends on the good government of our passions, and the preserving of the temper of the mind.

1. A *healing spirit,* made up of love and meekness, a hearty, friendly, cheerful disposition, *is the life of the flesh;* it contributes to a good constitution of health, and is the safeguard of the soul.

2. A *fruitsful, envious, discontented spirit,* is its own punishment; it consumes the flesh, preys upon the animal spirits, makes the countenance pale, and is the rottenness of the bones; they that see the prosperity of others and are grieved, let them gnash with their teeth, and melt away, Ps. cxvi. 10.

31. *He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth the Lord;* whoever bursts for envy, let him burst.
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1st his Maker: but he that honourth him hath mercy on the poor.

God is here pleased to interest himself more than one would imagine in the treatment of the poor.

1. He reckons himself affronted in the injuries that are done them. Whosoever he be that wrongs a poor man, taking advantage against him, because he is poor and cannot help himself, let him know that he puts an affront upon his Maker. God made him, and gave him his being, the same that is the Author of our being; we have all one Father, one Maker; see how Job considered this, Job xxxi. 15. God made him poor, and appointed him his lot, so that if we deal hardly with any because they are poor, we reflect upon God as dealing hardly with them, in laying them low, that they might be trampled upon.

2. He reckons himself honoured in the kindnesses that are done them; he takes them as done to himself, and will show himself accordingly pleased with them; I was hungry, and ye gave me meat. Those therefore that have any true honour for God, will show it by compassion to the poor, whom he has undertaken in a special manner to protect and preserve.

32. The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.

Here is, 1. The desperate condition of a wicked man when he goes out of the world; he is driven away in his wickedness; he cleaves so close to the world, that he cannot find in his heart to leave it, but is driven away out of it; his soul is required, is forced from him, and sin cleaveth so close to him, that it is inseparable, it goes with him into another world; he is driven away in his wickedness, dies in his sins, under the guilt and power of them, unjustified, unsanctified; his wickedness is the storm in which he is hurried away, as chaff before the wind, closed out of the world.

2. The comfortable condition of a godly man when he finishes his course; He has hope in his death, of a happiness on the other side death, of better things in another world than ever he had in this. They have the grace of hope in them, though they have pain, and some dread of death; they have before them the good hoped for, even the blessed hope, which God, who cannot lie, has promised.

33. Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding: but that which is in the midst of fools is made known.

Observe, 1. Modesty is the badge of wisdom. He that is truly wise hides his treasure, so as not to boast of it, (Matth. xiii. 44.) though he does not hide his talent, so as not to trade with it. His wisdom rests in his heart, he digests what he knows, and has it ready to him, but does not unseasonably talk of it, and make a noise with it. The heart is the seat of the affection, and there wisdom must rest in the practical love of it, and not swim in the head.

2. Openness and ostentation are a mark of folly. If fools have a little smattering of knowledge, they take all occasions, though very foreign, to produce it, and bring it in by head and shoulders. Or, the folly that is in the midst of fools is made known by their forwardness to talk. Many a foolish man takes more pains to show his folly than a wise man thinks it worth his while to take to show his wisdom.

34. Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.

Note, 1. Justice, reigning in a nation, puts an honour upon it; A righteous administration of the gov-

ernment, impartial equity between man and man, public countenance given to religion, the general practice and profession of virtue, the protecting and preserving of virtuous men, charity and compassion to strangers, (alms are sometimes called righteousness,) these exalt a nation, they uphold the throne, elevate the people's minds, and qualify a nation for the favour of God, which will make them high, as a holy nation, Deut. xxvi. 19.

2. Vice, reigning in a nation, puts disgrace upon it. Sin is a reproach to any city or kingdom, and renders them despicable among their neighbours. The people of Israel were often instances of both parts of this observation; they were great when they were good, but when they forsook God, all about them insulted them, and trampled on them. It is therefore the interest and duty of princes to use their power for the suppression of vice and support of virtue.

35. The king's favour is toward a wise servant: but his wrath is against him that causeth shame.

This shows, that in a well-ordered court and government, smiles and favours are dispens'd among those that are employed in public trusts, according to their merits; Solomon lets them know he will go by that rule; 1. That those who behave themselves wisely shall be respected and preferred, whatever enemies they may have, that seek to undermine them. No man's services shall be neglected to please a party or favourer. 2. That those who are selfish and false, who betray their country, oppress the poor, and sow discord, and thus cause shame, they shall be displaced, and banished the court, whatever friends they may make to speak for them.

Chap. xv.

1. A SOFT answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

Solomon, as conservator of the public peace, here tells us, 1. How the peace may be kept, that we may know how in our places to keep it; it is by soft words. If wrath be risen like a threatening cloud, pregnant with storms and thunder, a soft answer will dispense it and turn it away. When men are provoked, speak gently to them, and give them good words, and they will be pacified; as the Ephraimites were by Gideon's mildness, (Judg. viii. 1. 3.) whereas, upon a like occasion, by Jephthah's roughness, they were exasperated, and the consequences were bad, Judg. xii. 1. 3. Reason will be better spoken, and a righteous cause better pleaded, with meekness than with passion; hard arguments do best with soft words.

2. How the peace will be broken, that we, for our parts, may do nothing toward the breaking of it. Nothing stirs up anger and sows discord, like grievous words, calling foul names, as Raca, and Thou fool, upbraiding men with their infirmities and infelicities, their extraction or education, or any thing that lessens them, and makes them mean; scornful, spiteful, reflections, by which men affect to show their wit and malice, and stir up the anger of others, which does but increase and inflame their own anger. Rather than lose a jest, some will lose a friend and make an enemy.

2. The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.

Note, 1. A good heart, by the tongue, becomes very useful. He that has knowledge is not only to
enjoy it for his own entertainment, but to use it, to use it aright, for the edification of others; and it is the tongue that must make use of it in pious, profitable discourse, in giving suitable and seasonable instructions, counsels, and comforts, with all possible expressions of humility and love, and then knowledge is used aright; and to him that has, and thus uses what he has, more shall be given.

2. A wicked heart, by the tongue, becomes very hurtful; for the mouth of fools pours out foolishness, which is very offensive; and the corrupt communication which proceeds from an evil treasure within, (the filthiness, and foolish talking, and jesting,) corrupts the good manners of some, and debauches them, and grieves the good hearts of others, and disturbs them.

3. The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

The great truths of divinity are of great use to enforce the precepts of morality, and none more than this—That the eye of God is always upon the children of men.

1. An eye to discern all; not only from which nothing can be concealed, but by which every thing is actually inspected, and nothing overlooked, or looked slightly upon; The eyes of the Lord are in every place; for he not only sees all from on high, (Ps. xxxii. 9,) but he is everywhere present. Any where are full of eyes, (Rev. iv. 8.) but God is all eye. It denotes not only his omniscience, that he sees all, but his universal providence, that he upholds and governs all. Secret sins, services, and sorrows, are under his eye.

2. An eye to distinguish both persons and actions; he beholds the evil and the good: is displeased with the evil, and approves of the good, and will judge men according to the sight of his eyes, Ps. i. 6.—xi. 4. The wicked shall not go unpunished, nor the righteous unrewarded, for God has his eye upon both, and knows their true character; this speaks as much comfort to saints as terror to sinners.

4. A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breath in the spirit.

Note, 1. A good tongue is healing; healing to wounded consciences, by comforting them; to sick souls, by convincing them; to peace and love when it is broken, by accommodating differences, compromising matters in variance, and reconciling parties at variance; this is the healing of the tongue, which is the tree of life, with which he has endowed his creatures, a sanctifying virtue, Rev. xxii. 2. He that knows how to discourse, will make the place he lives in a paradise.

2. An evil tongue is wounding; (perverseness, passion, falsehood, and filthiness there, are a breach in the spirit;) it wounds the conscience of the evil speaker, and occasions either guilt or grief to the hearers, and both are to be reckoned breaches in the spirit. Hard words indeed break no bones, but many a heart is wounded by them.

5. A fool despiseth his father’s instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.

Hence, 1. Let superiors be admonished to give instruction and reproof to those that are under their charge, as they will answer it in the day of account. They must not only instruct with the light of knowledge, but reprove with the heat of zeal; and both these must be done with the authority and affection of a father, and must be continued, though the descendent of grace be in immediately perceived. If the instruction be despised, give reproof, and rebuke sharply. It is indeed against the grain with good-humoured men to find fault, and make those about them uneasy; but better so, than to suffer them to go on undisputed in the way to ruin.

2. Let inferiors be admonished, not only to submit to instruction and reproof, (even hardships must be submitted to,) but to value them as favours, and not despise them; to make use of them for their comfort, and always to have a regard to them; this will be an evidence that they are wise, and a means of making them so; whereas he that slight his good education is a fool, and is likely to live and die one.

6. In the house of the rightous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.

Note, 1. Where righteousness is, riches are, and the comforts of them; In the house of the righteous is much treasure. Religion teaches men to be diligent, temperate, and just, and by these means, ordinarily, the estate is increased; but that is not all, God blesses the habituation of the just, and that blessing makes rich without trouble. Or, if there be not much of this world’s goods, yet, where there is grace, there is true treasure; and those who have but little, if they have a heart to be therewith content, and to enjoy the comfort of that little, it is enough; it is all riches. The righteous, perhaps, are not themselves enriched, but there is treasure in their house, a blessing in store, which their children after them may reap the benefit of. A wicked worldly man is only for having his belly filled with these treasures, his own sensual appetite gratified; (Ps. xvii. 14.) but a righteous man’s first care is for his soul, and then for his seed; to have treasure in his heart, and then in his house, which his relations and those about him may have the benefit of.

2. Where wickedness is, though there may be riches, yet there is vexation of spirit with them; In the revenues of the wicked, the great incomes they have, there is trouble; for there is guilt and a curse; there is pride and passion, and envy and contention, and those are troublesome lusts, which rob them of the joy of their revenues, and make them troublesome to their neighbours.

7. The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish doeth not so.

This is to the same purport with v. 2, and shows what a blessing a wise man is, and what a burthen a fool is, to those about him. Only here observe further,

1. That we then use knowledge aright when we disperse it; not confine it to a few of our intimates, and grudge it to others who would make as good use of it, but give a portion of this spiritual alms to seven, and also to eight; not only be communicative, but communicate of this good, with humility and prudence. We must take pains to spread and propagate useful knowledge; must teach some, that they may teach others; and so it is dispersed.

2. That it is not only a fault to pour out foolishness, but it is a shame not to disperse knowledge; not to drop some wise word or other; The heart of the foolish doeth not so; it has nothing to disperse that is good; or, if it had, has neither skill nor will to do good with it, and therefore is little worth.

8. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

Note, 1. God so hates wicked people, whose hearts are malicious, and their lives mischievous, that even their sacrifices are an abomination to him. God has sacrificed him even by wicked men, to stop
the mouth of conscience, and to keep up their reputation in the world; as malefactors come to a sanctuary, not because it is a holy place, but because it shelters them from justice: but their sacrifices, though ever so costly, are not accepted of God, because they are offered in sincerity, nor from a good principle; they resemble with God, and in their conversations give the lie to their devotions, and, for that reason, they are an abomination to him, because they are made a cloak for sin, ch. vii. 14. See Isa. i. 11.

2. God has such a love for upright good people, that, though they are not at the expense of a sacrifice, (he himself has provided that,) their prayer is a delight to him. Praying garments are his own gift, and the work of his own Spirit in them, with which he is well pleased. He not only answers their prayers, but delights in their addresses to him, and in doing them good.

9. The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord; but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.

This is a reason of what was said in the foregoing verse. 1. The sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to God; not for want of some nice points of ceremony, but because their way, the whole course and tenour of their conversations, is wicked, and consequently an abomination to him. Sacrifices for sin were not accepted of those that resolved to go on in sin; and were to the highest degree abominable, if intended to obtain a connivance at sin, and a permission to go on in it.

2. Therefore the prayer of the upright is his delight, because he is a friend of God, and he loves him who, though he have not yet attained, is following after, righteousness, aiming at it, and pressing towards it, as St. Paul, Phil. iii. 13.

10. Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproach shall die.

This shows, that those who cannot bear to be corrected, must expect to be destroyed.

1. It is common for those who have known the way of righteousness, but have forsaken it, to reckon a great affront to be reproved and admonished; they are very uneasy at it, they cannot, they will not, bear it; nay, because they hate to be reformed, they hate to be reproved, and hate those who deal faithfully and kindly with them. Of all sinners, reproofs are worst resented by apostates.

2. It is certain that those who will not be reproved will be ruined; He that hateth reproach, and hardens his heart against it, is joined to his idols, let him alone; he shall die, and perish for ever, in his sins, since he would not be parted from his sins; (2 Chron. xxvi. 16.) I know that God has determined to destroy thee, because thou couldst not bear to be reproved; see also ch. xxix. 1.

11. Hell and destruction are before the Lord; how much more then the hearts of the children of men?

This confirms what was said (v. 3.) concerning God's omniscience, in order to his judging of evil and good.

1. God knows all things, even those things that are hid from the eyes of all living; Hell and destruction are before the Lord; not only the centre of the earth, and its subterraneous caverns, but the grave, and all the dead bodies which are there buried out of our sight, they are all before the Lord, all under his eye, so that none of them can be lost, or be to seek when they are to be raised again. He knows where every man lies buried, even Moses, even those that are buried in the greatest obscurity, nor needs he any monument with a His base—Here he lies, to direct him. The place of the dammed in particular, and all their tombs, which are inexhaustible, the state of separate souls in general, and all their circumstances, are under God's eye. The word here used for destruction is Abaddon, which is one of the devil's names, Rev. ix. 11. That destroyer, though he deceive us, cannot evade or elude the divine cognizance. God examines him whence he comes, (Job i. 7.) and sees through all his disguises, though he is sly, and subtle, and swift, Job xxxvi. 6.

2. He knows particularly the hearts of the children of men. If he sees through the depths and wiles of Satan himself, much more can he search men's hearts, though they be deceitful, since they learned all their fraudulent arts of Satan. God is greater than our hearts, and knows them better than we know ourselves, and therefore is an infallible Judge of every man's character, Heb. iv. 13.

12. A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him; neither will he go unto the wise.

A scorner is one that not only makes a jest of God and religion, but bids defiance to the methods of his conviction and reformation; and, as an evidence of that,

1. He cannot endure the checks of his own conscience, nor will he suffer it to deal plainly with him; He loves not to reprovet; some read it. He cannot endure to retire into his own heart, and commune seriously with the soul; he will not admit of any frank thought or fair reasoning with himself, nor let his own heart smite him, if he can help it. That man's case is sad who is afraid of being acquainted, and of arguing, with himself.

2. He cannot endure the advice and admonitions of his friends; He will not go unto the wise, lest they should give him wise counsel. We ought not only to bid the wise welcome when they come to us, but to go to them, as beggars to the rich man's door for an alms; but this the scorner will not do, for fear of being told of his faults, and prevailed with to reform.

13. A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of heart the spirit is broken.

Here, 1. Harmless mirth is recommended to us, as that which contributes to the health of the body, making men lively, and fit for business, and to the acceptableness of the conversation, making the face to shine, and rendering us pleasant to one another. A cheerful spirit, under the government of wisdom and grace, is a great ornament to religion, puts a further lustre upon the beauty of holiness, and makes men the more capable of doing good.

2. Hurtful melancholy is what we are cautioned against, as a great enemy to us, both in our devotion and in our conversation; By sorrow of the heart, when it has got dominion, and plays the tyrant, as it will be apt to do, if it be indulged awhile, the spirit is broken, it grows heavy and sunk, and becomes unfit for the service of God. The sorrow of the world works death. Let us therefore weep as though we wept not, in justice to ourselves, as well as in conformity to God and his providence.

14. The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness.

Here are two things to be wondered at,

1. A wise man not satisfied with his wisdom, but still seeking the increase of it; the more he has, the
more he would have; The heart of him that has understand- ing rejoices so in the knowledge it has attained to, that it is still coveting more; and in the use of the means of knowledge is still labouring for more; growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ. Si dixisti, Sufficiat, peristit—If you say, I have enough, you are undone.

2. A God well satisfied with his folly, and not seeking further more of it. While a good man hungers after the solid satisfactions of grace, a carnal mind feasts on the gratifications of appetite and fancy. Vain mirth and sensual pleasures are its delight, and with these it can rest contented, flattering itself in these foolish ways.

15. All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast.

See here what a great difference there is between the condition and temper of some and others of the children of men.

1. Some are much in affliction, and of a sorrowful spirit, and all their days are evil days, like those of old age, and days of which they say they have no pleasure in them. They eat in darkness, (Eccl. v. 17.) and never eat with pleasure, Job xxi. 25. How many are the afflictions of the afflicted in this world! Such are not to be censured or despised, but pitied and prayed for, succoured and comforted. It might have been our own lot, or may be yet, merry as we are at present.

2. Others enjoy great prosperity, and are of a cheerful spirit; and they have not only good days, but have a continual feast; and if in the abundance of all things, they serve God with gladness of heart, and it is off to the wheels of their obedience, (all this, and heaven too,) then they serve a good Master. But let not such feast without fear, a sudden change may come; therefore rejoice with trembling.

16. Better is little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and trouble therewith.

Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

Solomon had said in the foregoing verse, that he who has not a large estate, nor a great income, but a cheerful spirit, has a continual feast; Christian contentment, and joy in God, make the life easy and pleasant; now here he tells us what that is which is necessary to that cheerfulness of spirit, which will furnish a man with a continual feast, though he has but little in the world; holiness and love.

1. Holiness: A little, if we manage it, and enjoy it, in the fear of the Lord, if we keep a good conscience, and go on in the way of duty, and serve God faithfully with the little we have, will be more comfortable, and turn to a better account, than great treasure, and trouble therewith. Observe here, (1.) It is often the lot of those that fear God to have but a little of this world; the poor receive the gospel, and poor they still are, Jer. ii. 5. (2.) Those that have great treasure have often trouble therewith: it is so far from making them easy, that it increases their care and hurry. The abundance of the rich will not suffer them to sleep. (3.) If great treasure bring trouble with it, it is for want of the fear of God. If those that have great estates would do their duty with them, and then trust God with them, their treasure would not have so much trouble attending it. (4.) It is therefore far better, and more desirable, to have but little of the world, and to have it with a good conscience; to keep up communion with God, and enjoy him in it, and live by faith, than to have the greatest plenty, and live without God in the world.

2. Love; next to the fear of God, peace with all men is necessary to the comfort of this life. (1.) If brethren dwell together in unity, if they are friendly, and hearty, and pleasant, both in their daily meals and in more solemn entertainments, that will make a dinner of herbs a feast sufficient; though the fare be coarse, and the estate so small, that they may not afford, no better, yet love will sweeten it, and they may be as merry over it as if they had all dignities. (2.) If there be mutual charity and strife, though there be a whole ox for dinner, a fat ox, there can be no comfort in it; the leaven of malice, of hating and being hated, is enough to sour it all. Some refer it to him that makes the entertainment; better have a slender dinner, and be heartily welcome, than a table richly spread with a grudging evil eye.

The most sumptuous entertainment, presented with a sullen brow, would offend me; while the plainest repast, presented kindly, would delight me.

18. A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife

Here is, 1. Passion the great makebate; thence come wars and fightings; anger strikes the fire which sets cities and churches into a flame; A wrathful man, with his peevish passion-tee reflections, stirs up strife, and sets people together by the ears; he gives occasion to others to quarrel, and takes the occasion that others give, though ever so trifling. When men carry their resentment too far, one evil still produces another.

2. Meekness the great peace-maker; He that is slow to anger, not only prevents strife, that it be not kindled, but appeaseth it, if it be already kindled, brings water to the flame, unites these again that were fallen out, and by gentle methods brings them to mutual concessions, for peace sake.

19. The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righte-ous is made plain.

See here, 1. Whence those difficulties arise, which men proceed to meet with in the way of their duty, and to be insuperable; they arise, not from any thing in the nature of the duty, but from the slothfulness of those that have really no mind to it. Those that have no heart to their work, pretend that their way is hedged up with thorns, and they cannot do their work at all; as if God were a hard Master, reaping where he had not sown; at least, that their way is strewed with thorns, that they cannot do their work without a great deal of hardship and danger; and therefore they go about it with as much reluctance as if they were to go barefoot through a thorny hedge.

2. How these imaginary difficulties may be conquered; an honest desire and endeavour to do our duty, will, by the grace of God, make it easy, and we shall find it strewed with roses; The way of the righteous is made plain; it is easy to tread, and not rough; easy to be hit, and not intricate.

20. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother.

Observe here, 1. To the praise of good children, that they are the joy of their parents, who ought to have joy of them, having taken so much care and pains about them. And it adds much to the satisfaction of those that are good, if they have reason to think that they have been a comfort to their parents in their declining years, when evil days come.

2. To the shame of wicked children, that, by their wickedness, they put contempt upon their parents, slight their authority, and make an ill re
quittal for their kindness; A foolish son despoils his mother, that had most sorrow with him, and perhaps had too much indulged him, which makes his sin, in despising her, the more sinful, and her sorrow the more sorrowful.

21. Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly.

Note. 1. It is the character of a wicked man, that he takes pleasure in sin; he has an appetite to the bait, and swallows it greedily, and has no dread of the hook, nor feels from it when he has swallowed it; Folly is joy to him, the folly of others is so, and his own folly, he sins, not only without regret, but with delight; not only repents not of it, but makes his boast of it: this is a certain sign of one that is graceless.

2. It is the character of a wise and good man, that he makes conscience of his duty. A fool lives at large, walks at all adventures, by no rule, acts with no sincerity or steadiness; but a man of understanding, the eyes of whose understanding are enlightened by the gospel, that have not a good understanding, have no understanding,) he walks uprightly, lives a sober, orderly, regular life, and studies in every thing to conform himself to the will of God; and this is a constant pleasure and joy to him. But what foolishness remains in him, or proceeds from him, at any time, it is a grief to him, and he is ashamed of it. By these characters we may try ourselves.

22. Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established. See here, 1. Of what ill consequence it is to be precipitate and rash, and to act without advice; Men's purposes are disappointed, their measures broken, and they come short of their point, gain not their end, because they would not ask counsel about the way. If men will not take time and pains to deliberate with themselves, or are so confident of their own judgment, that they scorn to consult with others, they are not likely to bring any thing considerable to pass; circumstances defeat them, which, with a little consultation, might have been foreseen and obviated. It is a good rule, both in public and domestic affairs, to do nothing rashly, and of one's own head. Plus vident occi quam occidet—Many eyes see more than one. That often proves best which was least our own doing.

2. How much it will be for our advantage to ask the advice of our friends; In the multitude of counsellors, (provided they be discreet and honest, and will not give counsel with a spirit of contradiction,) purposes are established. Solomon's son made no use of this proverb, when he acquiesced not in the counsel of the old men, but, because he would have a multitude of counsellors, regarding number more than weight, advised with the young men.

23. A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!

Note. 1. Then we speak wisely, when we speak seasonably; The answer of the mouth will then be our credit and joy, when it is pertinent, and to the purpose, and is spoken in due season, when it is needed, and will be regarded, and, as we say, hits the joint. Many a good word comes short of doing the good it is designed to do, because, for want of being well-timed. Nor is any thing more the beauty of discourse than to have a proper answer ready off-hand, just when there is occasion for it, and it comes on well.

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2. If we speak wisely and well, it will redound to our own comfort, and to the advantage of others; A man has joy by the answer of his mouth; he may take a pleasure, but may by no means take a pride, in having spoken so acceptably and well, that the hearers admire him, and say, "How good is it, and how much good does it do?"

24. The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.

The way of wisdom and holiness is here recommended to us, 1. As very safe and comfortable; It is the way of life, the way that leads up to heaven, in which we shall find the joy and satisfaction which will be the life of the soul, and at the end of which we shall find the perfection of blessedness; be wise and live. It is the way to escape that misery which we cannot but see ourselves exposed to, and in danger of. It is to depart from hell beneath, from the snares of hell, the temptations of Satan, and all his wiles; from the pains of hell, that everlasting destruction which our sins have deserved.

2. As very sublime and honorable; it is above. A good man sets his affections on things above, and deals in those things; his conversation is in heaven, his way leads directly thither; there his treasure is, above, out of the reach of enemies, above the changes of this lower world. A good man is truly noble and great, his desires and designs are high, and he lives above the common rate of other men. It is above the capacity, and out of the sight, of foolish men.

25. The Lord will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow.

Note. 1. Those that are elevated, God delights to abase, and commonly does it in the course of his providence; The proud, that magnify themselves, bid defiance to the God above them, and trample on all about them, they are such as God resists, and will destroy; not them only, but their houses, which they are proud of, and are confident of the continuance and perpetuity of. Pride is the ruin of multitudes.

2. Those that are dejected, God delights to support, and often does it remarkably; He will establish the border of the poor widows, which proud injurious men break in upon, and which the poor widow is not herself able to defend and make good. It is the honour of God to protect the weak, and appear for those that are oppressed.

26. The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord: but the words of the pure are pleasant words.

The former part of this verse speaks of thoughts, the latter of words, but they come all to one; for thoughts are words to God, and words are judged of by the thoughts from which they proceed; so that, 1. The thoughts and words of the wicked, which are, like themselves, wicked, which aim at mischief, and have some ill tendency or other, they are an abomination to the Lord, he is displeased at them, and will reckon for them. The thoughts of wicked men, for the most part, are such as God hates, and are an offence to him, who not only knows the heart, and all that passes and repasses there, but requires the innermost and uppermost place in it.

2. The thoughts and words of the pure, being pure like themselves, clean, honest, and sincere, are pleasant words, and pleasant thoughts, well-pleasing to the holy God, who delights in purity.
It may be understood, both of their devotions to God, (the words of their mouth, the meditations of their heart, in prayer and praise, are acceptable to God, Ps. xix. 14.—lix. 13.) and of their discourses with men, tending to edification. Both are pleasant, when they come from a pure, a purified heart.

27. He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live.

Note, 1. Those that are covetous entail trouble upon their families; He that is greedy of gain, and therefore makes himself a slave to the world, rises up early, sits up late, and eats the bread of carefulness, in pursuit of it; he that hurries, and puts himself and all about him upon the stretch, in business, frets and vexes at every loss and disappointment, and quarrels with every body that stands in the way of his profit, he troubleth his own house, is a burthen and vexation to his children and servants. He that, in his greediness of gain, takes bribes, and uses unlawful ways of getting money, leaves a curse, with what he gets, to those that come after him, which, sooner or later, will bring trouble into the house, Hab. ii. 9, 10.

2. Those that are generous as well as righteous entail a blessing upon their families; He that hates gifts, that shakes his hands from holding the bribes that are thrust into his hand to pervert justice, and abhors all sinful indirect ways of getting money, that hates to be paltry and mercenary, and is willing, if there be occasion, to do good gratis, he shall live, he shall have the comfort of it, shall live in prosperity and reputation, his name and family shall live and continue.

28. The heart of the righteous studieth to answer; but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.

Here is, 1. A good man proved to be a wise man, by this, that he governs his tongue well; he that does so, the same is a perfect man, Jam. iii. 2. It is part of the character of a righteous man, that, being convinced of the account he must give of his words, and of the good and bad influence of them upon others, he makes conscience of speaking truly, (it is his heart that answers, he speaks as he thinks, and dares not do otherwise, he speaks the truth in his heart, Ps. xxv. 2.) and of speaking pertinently and profitably, and therefore he studieth to answer, that his speech may be with grace, Neh. ii. 4.—v. 7.

2. A wicked man is proved to be a fool, by this, that he never heeds what he says, but his mouth poureth out evil things, to the dishonour of God and religion, his own reproach, and the hurt of others. Doubtless that is an evil heart which thus overflows with evil.

29. The Lord is far from the wicked; but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.

Note, 1. God sets himself at a distance from those that set him at defiance; The wicked say to the Almighty, Depart from us, and he is, accordingly, far from them; he does not manifest himself to them, has no communion with them, will not hear them, will not help them, no not in time of their need. They shall be for ever banished from his presence, and he will behold them afar off. Depart from me, ye cursed.

2. He will draw nigh to those in a way of mercy who draw nigh to him in a way of duty; He hears the prayer of the righteous, accepts it, is well-pleased with it, and will grant an answer of peace to it. It is the prayer of a righteous man that availeth much,
33. The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility.

See here, how much it is our interest, as well as duty, to...

1. To submit to our God, and keep up a reverence for him; **The fear of the Lord, as it is the beginning of wisdom, so is the instruction and correction of wisdom;** the principles of religion, closely adhered to, will improve our knowledge, rectify our mistakes, and be the best and surest guide of our way. An awe of God upon our spirits will put us upon the wisest counsels, and chastise us when we say or do unwise things.

2. To stoop to our brethren, and keep up a respect for them. Where there is humility, there is a happy presage of honour, and preparative for it. Those that humble themselves shall be exalted here and hereafter.

CHAP. XVI.

1. **THE preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord.**

As we read this, it teaches us a great truth, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think or speak anything, of ourselves, that is wise and good, but that all our sufficiency is of God, who is with the heart and with the mouth, and works in us both to will and to do, Phil. ii. 13. Ps. x. 17. But most read it otherwise; **The preparation of the heart is in man,** he may contrive and design this and the other; but **the answer of the tongue,** not only the delivering of what he designed to speak, but the issue and success of what he designed to do, **is of the Lord.** That is, in short,

1. **Man purposes;** he has a freedom of thought, and a freedom of will, permitted him; let him form his projects, and lay his schemes, as he thinks best: but, after all,

2. **God disposes;** man cannot go on with his business without the assistance and blessing of God, who *made man's mouth,* and teaches us what we shall say. Nay, God easily can, and often does, cross men's purposes, and break their measures. It was a curse that was prepared in Balak's heart, but the answer of the tongue was a blessing.

2. All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits.

Note. 1. We are all apt to be partial in judging of ourselves; **All the ways of a man, all his designs, all his doings, are clean in his own eyes,** and he sees nothing amiss in them, nothing for which to condemn himself, or which should make his projects prove otherwise than well; and therefore he is confident of success, and that the answer of the tongue shall be according to the expectations of the heart; but there is a great deal of pollution cleaving to our ways, which we are not aware of, or do not think so ill of as we ought.

2. The judgment of God concerning us, we are sure, is according to truth; **He weigheth the spirits** in a just and unerring balance, knows what is in us, and passes a judgment upon us accordingly, writing *Tekel* upon that which passed our scale with approbation, *weighed in the balance,* and found wanting; and by his judgment we must stand or fall. He not only sees men's ways, but tries their spirits, and we are as our spirits are.

3. **Commit thy works unto the Lord,** and thy thoughts shall be established.

Note. 1. It is a very desirable thing to have our thoughts established, and not tossed, and put into a hurry, by disquieting cares and fears; to go on in an even steady course of honesty and piety, not disturbed, or put out of frame, by any event or change; to be satisfied that all shall work for good, and issue well at last, and therefore to be always easy and sedate.

2. The only way to have our thoughts established, is, to **commit our works to the Lord.** The great concerns of our souls must be committed to the grace of God, with a dependence upon, and submission to, the conduct of that grace; (2 Tim. i. 12.) all our outward concerns must be committed to the providence of God, and to the sovereign, wise, and gracious purposes, designed by God, *thy works upon the Lord,* so the word is, *roll the burden of thy care from thyself upon God,* lay the matter before him by prayer, *make known thy works unto the Lord,* so some read it; not only the works of thy hand, but the workings of thy heart; and then leave it with him, by faith and dependence upon him, submission and resignation to him; *the will of the Lord be done.* We may then be easy, when we resolve, that whatever pleases God shall please us.

4. **The Lord hath made all things for himself;** yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

Note. 1. That God is the first Cause, he is the Former of all things and all persons, the Fountain of being; he gave every creature the being it has, and appointed it its place. Even the wicked are his creatures, though they are rebels; he gave them those powers with which they fight against him, which aggravates their wickedness, that they will not let him that made them rule them, and therefore, though he made them, he will not save them.

2. That God is the last End. All is of him and from him, and therefore all is to him and for him. He made all according to his will, and for his praise; he designed to serve his own purposes by all his creatures, and he will not fail of his design: all are his servants. The wicked he is not glorified by, but he will be glorified upon. He makes no man wicked, but he made those who he foresaw would be wicked, yet he made them, (Gen. vi. 6.) because he knew how to get him honour upon them. See Rom. ix. 22. Or, as some understand it, he made the wicked to be employed by him as the instruments of his wrath in the day of evil, when he brings judgments on the world. He makes some use even of wicked men, as of other things, to be his sword, his hand, (Ps. xvi. 13, 14.) *flagellum Dei—the scourge of God.* The King of Babylon is called his servant.

5. **Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord:** though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.

Note. 1. The pride of sinners sets God against them. He that, being high in estate, is proud in heart, whose spirit is elevated with his condition, so that he becomes insolent in his conduct toward God and man, let him know, that though he adores himself, and others cares him, yet he is an abomination to the Lord; the great God despises him, the holy God detests him.

2. The power of sinners cannot secure them against God, though they strengthen themselves with both hands; though they may strengthen one another with their confederacies and combinations, joining forces against God, they shall not escape his righteous judgment; *wo unto him that strives with his Maker,* ch. xi. 21. Isa. xlv. 9.

6. **By mercy and truth iniquity is purged:** and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.
PROVERBS, XVI.

1. How the guilt of sin is taken away from us; by the mercy and truth of God, mercy in promising, truth in performing; the mercy and truth which kiss each other in Jesus Christ the Mediator; by the covenant of grace, in which mercy and truth shine so bright; by our mercy and truth, as the condition of the pardon, and a necessary qualification for it; by these, and not by the legal sacrifices, Mic. vi. 7, 8.

2. How the power of sin is broken in us; by the principles of mercy and truth commanding in us, the corrupt inclinations are purged out; so we may take the former part: however, by the fear of the Lord, and the influence of that fear, men depart from evil; they will not dare to sin against God, who keep up in their minds a holy dread and reverence of him.

7. When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Note, 1. God can turn foes into friends, when he pleases; he that has all hearts in his hand has access to men's spirits, and power over them, working insensibly, but irresistibly, upon them, can make a man's enemies to be at peace with him, change their minds, or force them into a feigned submission. He can slay all enmities, and bring those together that were at the greatest distance from each other.

2. He will do it for us, when we please him; if we make all our cares to be reconciled to God, and to keep ourselves in his love, he will incline those that had been envious towards us, and vexatious to us, to entertain a good opinion of us, and to become our friends. God made Esau to be at peace with Jacob, Abimelech with Isaac, and David's enemies to court his favour, and desire a league with Israel. The image of God appearing upon the righteous, and his particular loving kindness to them, are enough to recommend them to the respects of all, even of those that had been most prejudiced against them.

8. Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right.

Here, 1. It is supposed that an honest good man may have but a little of the wealth of this world, all the righteous are not rich; that a man may have but little, and yet may be honest; though poverty is a temptation to dishonesty, (ch. xxx. 9.) yet not an invincible one. A man may grow rich, for a while, by fraud and oppression, may have great revenues, and those got, and kept, without right, may have no good title to them, nor make any good use of them.

2. It is maintained that a small estate, honestly come by, which a man is content with, enjoys comfortably, serves God with cheerfully, and puts to a right use, is much better, and more valuable, than a great estate ill got, and then ill kept, or ill spent. It carries with it more inward satisfaction, a better reputation with all that are wise and good, it will last longer; and will turn to a better account in the great day, when men will be judged, not according to what they had, but what they did.

9. A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps.

Man is here represented to us,

1. As a reasonable creature, that has the faculty of contriving for himself; His heart devises his way, designs an end, and projects ways and means leading to that end, which the inferior creatures, who are governed by sense and natural instinct, cannot do. The more shame for him, if he do not devise the way how to please God, and provide for his everlasting state.

2. As a depending creature, that is subject to the direction and dominion of his Maker; if men devise their way, so as to make God's glory their end, and his will their rule, they may expect that he will direct their steps by his Spirit and grace, so that they shall not miss their way, nor come short of their end. But, let men devise their worldly affairs after so politicly, and with ever so great a probability of success, yet God has the ordering of the event, and sometimes directs their steps to that which they least intended. The design of this is to teach us to say, If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that, (Jam. iv. 14, 15.) and to have our eye to God, not only in the great turns of our lives, but in every step we take; Lord, direct my way, 1 Thess. iii. 11.

10. A divine sentence is in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment.

We wish this were always true as a proposition, and we ought to make it our prayer for kings, and all in authority, that a divine sentence may be in their lips, both in giving orders, that they may do that in wisdom, and in giving sentence, that they may do that in equity, both which are included in judgment, and that in neither their mouth may transgress, 1 Tim. ii. 1. But it is often otherwise; and therefore,

1. It may be read as a precept to the kings and judges of the earth, to be wise and instructed; let them be just, and rule in the fear of God; let them act with such wisdom and conscience, that there may appear a holy divination in all they say or do, and that they are guided by principles supernatural; let not their mouths transgress in judgment, for the judgment is God's.

2. It may be taken as a promise to all good kings, that, if they sincerely aim at God's glory, and seek direction from him, he will qualify them with wisdom and grace above others, in proportion to the eminency of their station, and the trusts lodged in their hands. When Saul himself was made king, God gave him another spirit.

3. It was true concerning Solomon, who wrote this, he had extraordinary wisdom, pursuant to the promise God made him. See 1 Kings iii. 28.

11. A just weight and balance are the Lord's; all the weights of the bag are his work.

Note, 1. The administration of public justice by the magistrate is an ordinance of God; in it the scales are held, and ought to be held, by a steady and impartial hand; and we ought to submit to it, for the Lord's sake, and to see his authority in that of the magistrate, Rom. xiii. 1. 1 Pet. ii. 13.

2. The observation of justice in commerce between man and man is likewise a divine appointment. He taught men discretion to make scales and weights for the adjusting of right exactly between buyer and seller, that neither may be wronged; and all other useful inventions for the preserving of right are from him; He has also appointed by his law that they be just; it is therefore a great affront to him, and to his government, to falsify, and so to do wrong, under colour and pretence of doing right, which is wickedness in the place of judgment.

12. It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness; for the throne is established by righteousness.

Here is, 1. The character of a good king, which Solomon intended not for his own praise, but for instruction to his successors, his neighbours, and the vice-roys under him. A good king not only does
justice, but it is an abomination to him to do otherwise; he hates the thought of doing wrong, and preserving justice; he not only abhors the wickedness done by others, but abhors to do any himself, though, having power, he might easily and safely do it.

2. The comfort of a good king; his throne is established by righteousness. He that makes conscience of using his power aright, shall find that to be the best security of his government; both as it will oblige people, make them easy, and keep them in the interests of others, and as it will obtain the blessing of God, which will be a firm basis to the throne, and a strong guard about it.

13. Righteous lips are the delight of kings; and they love him that speaketh right.

Here is a further character of good kings, that they love and delight in those that speak right.

1. They hate parasites and those that flatter them, and are very willing that all about them should deal faithfully with them, and tell them that which is true, whether it be pleasing or displeasing, both concerning persons and things; that every thing should be set in a true light, and nothing disguised, ch. xxix. 12.

2. They not only do righteousness themselves, but take care to employ those under them that do righteousness too; which is of great consequence to the people, who must be subject not only to the king as supreme, but to the governors sent by him, 1 Pet. ii. 14. A good king will therefore put those in power who are conscientious, and will say that which is righteous and discreet, and know how to speak right, and to the purpose.

14. The wrath of a king is as messengers of death; but a wise man will pacify it. 15. In the light of the king’s countenance is life; and his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain.

These two verses show the power of kings, which is everywhere great, but was especially so in those eastern countries, where they were absolute and arbitrary; whom they would they slay, and whom they would they keep alive; their will was a law. We have reason to bless God for the happy constitution of the government we live under, which maintains the prerogative of the prince without any injury to the liberty of the subject. But here it is intimated,

1. How formidable the wrath of a king is; it is as messengers of death; the wrath of Ahasuerus was so to Haman. An angry word from an incensed prince has been to many a messenger of death, and has struck as great a terror upon some, as if a sentence of death had been pronounced upon them. He must be a very wise man, that knows how to pacify the wrath of a king with a word fitly spoken; as Jonathan once pacified his father’s rage against David, 1 Sam. xix. 6. A prudent subject may sometimes suggest that to an angry prince, which will cool his resentments.

2. How valuable and desirable the king’s favour is to those that have incurred his displeasure; it is life from the dead, if the king be reconciled to them. To be in favour with a court is a rare, very refreshing to the ground. Solomon put his subjects in mind of this, that they might not do any thing to incur his wrath, but be careful to recommend themselves to his favour. We ought by it to be put in mind how much we are concerned to escape the wrath, and obtain the favour, of the King of kings. His frowns are worse than death, and his favour better than light; and therefore they are fools, who, to escape the wrath, and obtain the favour, of an earthly prince, will throw themselves out of God’s favour, and make themselves obnoxious to his wrath.

16. How much better is it to get wisdom than gold, and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver?

Solomon here not only asserts that it is better to get wisdom than gold, (ch. iii. 14.—iii. 19.) but he speaks it, with assurance, that it is much better, beyond expression; with admiration, How much better! amazed at the disproportion; with an appeal to men’s consciences, “Judge in yourselves how much better it is;” and with an addition to the same purport, that understanding is rather to be chosen than silver, and all the treasures of kings and their favourites.

Note. 1. Heavenly wisdom is better than worldly wealth, and to be preferred before it. Grace is more valuable than gold. Grace is the gift of God’s peculiar favour; gold only of common providence. Grace is for ourselves; gold for others. Grace is for the soul and eternity; gold only for the body and time. Grace will stand us in stead in a dying hour, when gold will do us no good.

2. The getting of this heavenly wisdom is better than the getting of worldly wealth. Many take care and pains to get wealth, and yet come short of it; but grace was never denied to any that sincerely sought it. There is vanity and vexation of spirit in getting wealth, but joy and satisfaction of spirit in getting wisdom; great peace have they that love it.

17. The highway of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.

Note. 1. It is the way of the upright to avoid sin, and everything that looks like it, and leads towards it; and this is a highway marked out by authority, tracked by many that have gone before us, and in which we meet with many that keep company with us; it is easy to hit, and safe to be travelled in, like a highway, Isa. xxxv. 8. To depart from evil is understanding.

2. It is the care of the upright to preserve their own souls, that they be not polluted with sin, and that by the troubles of the world they may not be purged out of the possession of them; especially that they may not perish for ever, Matth. xvi. 26. And it is therefore their care to keep their way, and not to turn aside out of it, on either hand, but to press toward perfection. They that adhere to their duty, secure their felicity. Keep thy way, and God will keep thee.

18. Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Note. 1. Pride will have a fall. Those that are of a haughty spirit, that think of themselves above what is meet, and look with contempt upon others, that with their pride affront God and disquiet others, they will be brought down, either by repentance or by ruin. It is the honour of God to humble the proud, Job xi. 11, 12. It is the act of justice, that those who have lifted up themselves should be laid low. Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, were instances of this. Men cannot punish pride, but power adverseth the possession of them, and therefore God will take the punishing of it in his own hands. Let him alone to deal with proud men.

2. Proud men are often most proud, and insolent, and haughty, just before their destruction, so that it is a certain presage: that they are upon the brink of it. When proud men set God’s judgments at defiance, and think themselves at the greatest distance from them, it is a sign that they are at the door, witness the case of Benhadad and Herod. While the
word was in the king's mouth, Dan. iv. 31. Therefore let us not fear the pride of others, but greatly fear it in ourselves.

19. Better it is to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

This is a paradox which the children of this world cannot understand, and will not subscribe to; that it is better to be poor and humble, than to be rich and proud.

1. They that divide the spoil are commonly proud; they value themselves and despise others, and their mind rises with their condition; those, therefore, that are rich in this world, have need to be charged that they be not high-minded, 1 Tim. vi. 17. Those that are proud, and will put forth themselves, that thrust, and show in his own name, for upreignment, are the men that commonly divide the spoil, and share it among them; they have the world at will, and the ball at their foot.

2. It is upon all accounts better to take our lot with those whose condition is low, and their minds brought to it, than to covet and aim to make a figure and a bustle in the world. Humility, though it should expose us to contempt in the world, yet, while it recommends us to the favour of God, qualifies us for his gracious visits, prepares us for his glory, secures us from many temptations, and preserves the quiet and repose of our own souls, is much better than that high-spiritedness, which, though it carry away the honour and wealth of the world, makes God a man’s enemy, and the devil his master.

20. He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good; and whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he.

Note, 1. Prudence gains men respect and success; He that handles a matter wisely, that is master of his trade, and makes it to appear he understands what he undertakes, that is considerable in his affairs, and, when he speaks or writes of any subject, does it pertinently, he shall find good, shall come into good repute, and perhaps may make a good hand of it.

2. But it is piety only that will secure men’s true happiness; They that handle a matter wisely, if they are proud, and lean to their own understanding, though they may find some good, yet they will have no great satisfaction in it; but he that trusts in the Lord, and not in his own wisdom, happy is he, and shall speed better at last. Some read the former part of the verse, so as to expound it of piety, which is indeed true wisdom; he that attends to the word, the word of God, (ch. xiii. 13.) he shall find good in it, and good by it. And whoso trusts in the Lord, in his word which he attends to, is happy.

21. The wise in heart shall be called prudent; and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning.

Note, 1. Those that have solid wisdom will have the credit of it; it will gain them reputation, and they shall be called prudent, grave, men, and a difference will be paid to their judgement. Do that which is wise and good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.

2. Those that with their wisdom have a good eloquence, that deliver themselves easily and with a good grace, are communicative of their wisdom, and have words at will, and good language as well as good sense, they increase learning, they diffuse and propagate knowledge to others, and do good with it, and by that means increase their own stock. They add doctrine, improve sciences, and do service to the commonwealth of learning. To him that has, and uses what he has, more shall be given.

22. Understanding is a well-spring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools is folly.

Note, 1. There is always some good to be gotten by a wise and good man; his understanding is a well-spring of life to him, which always flows, and can never be drawn dry; he has something to say upon all occasions, that is instructive, and of use to those that will make use of it, things new and old, to bring out of his treasure; at least, it is a spring of life, to himself, yielding him abundant satisfaction; within his own thoughts he entertains and edifies himself, if not others.

2. There is nothing that is good to be gotten by a fool; even his instruction, his set and solemn discourses, are but folly, like himself, and tending to make others like him. When he does his best, it is but folly, in comparison even with the common talk of a wise man, who speaks better at table than a fool in Moses’s seat.

23. The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.

Solomon had commended eloquence, and the sweetness of the lips, (v. 21.) and seemed to prefer it before wisdom; but here he corrects himself, as it were, and shows that unless there be a good treasure within to support the eloquence, it is worth but little. Wisdom in the heart is the main matter.

1. That is it that directs us in speaking; that teaches the mouth what to speak, and when, and how, so that what is spoken may be proper, and pertinent, and seasonable; otherwise, though the language be ever so fine, it had better be unsaid.

2. That is it that gives weight to what we speak, and adds learning to it; strength of reason and force of argument; without which, let a thing be ever so well worded, it will be rejected, when it comes to be considered, as trifling; quaint expressions please the ear, and honour the fancy, but it is learning in the lips that must convince the judgment, and sway that; to which wisdom in the heart is necessary.

24. Pleasant words are as a honey-comb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

The pleasant words here commended must be those which the heart of the wise teaches, and adds learning to; (v. 23.) words of seasonable advice, instruction, and comfort; words taken from God’s word, for that is it which Solomon had learned from his father to account sweeter than honey and the honey-comb, Ps. xix. 10. These words, to those that know how to relish them, 1. Are pleasant; they are like the honey-comb, sweet to the soul, which tastes in them that the Lord is gracious; nothing more grateful and agreeable to the new man than the word of God, and those words which are borrowed from it, Ps. cxix. 103.

2. They are wholesome; many things are pleasant that are not profitable; but these pleasant words and health to the bones, to the inward man, as well as sweet to the soul; they make the bones, which sin has broken and put out of joint, to rejoice. The bones are the strength of the body; and the good word of God is a means of spiritual strength, curing the diseases that weaken us.

25. There is a way that seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death.
This we had before, (ch. xiv. 12.) but here it is repeated, as that which is very necessary to be thought of:
1. By way of caution to us all to take heed of deceiving ourselves in the great concerns of our souls, by resting in that which seems right, and is not really so; and, for the preventing of a self-delusion, to be impartial in our examination, and keep up a jealousy over ourselves.
2. By way of terror to those whose way is not right, is not as it should be, however it may seem to themselves or others, the end of it will certainly be death; to that it has a direct and certain tendency.

26. He that laboureth, laboureth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him.

This is designed to engage us to diligence, and quicken us; what our hand finds to do, to do it with all our might, both in our worldly business, and in the work of religion; for in the original it is, The soul that labours, labours for itself. It is heart-work which is here intended, the labour of the soul, which is here recommended to us,
1. As that which will be absolutely needful; our mouth is continually craving it of us; the necessities both of soul and body are pressing, and require constant relief, so that we must either work or starve. Both call for daily bread, and therefore there must be daily labour; for in the sweat of our face we must eat, 2 Thess. iii. 10.
2. As that which will be unexpectedly gainful; we know on whose errand we go; He that labours shall reap the fruit of his labour, it shall be for himself, he shall rejoice in his own work, and eat the labour of his hands. If we make religion our business, God will make it our blessedness.

27. An ungodly man diggeth up evil; and in his lips there is as a burning fire. 28. A forward man soweth strife; and a whisperer separateth chief friends.

There are those that are not only vicious themselves, but spiteful and mischievous to others, and they are the worst of men; two sorts of such are here described.
1. Such as envy a man the honour of his good name, and do all they can to blast that by calumnies and misrepresentations; They dig up evil, they take a great deal of pains to find out something or other on which to ground a slander, or which may give some colour to it. If none appear above ground, rather than want it, they will dig for it, by diving into what is secret, or looking a great way back, or by evil suspicions and surmises, and forced inferences. In the lips of a slanderer and backbiter there is as a fire, not only to brand his neighbour's reputation, to smoke and sulky it, but as a burning fire to consume it. And how great a matter does a little of this fire kindle, and how hardly is it extinguished: Jer. iii. 5, 6.
2. Such as envy a man the comfort of his friendship, and do all they can to break that, by suggesting that, on both sides, which will set those at variance that are most nearly related, and have been long intimate, or, at least, cool and alienate their affections one from another; A forward man, that cannot find in his heart to love any body but himself, is vexed to see others live in love, and therefore makes it his business to sow strife, by giving men base characters one of another, telling lies, and carrying ill-natured stories between chief friends, so as to separate them one from another, and make them angry at, or at least suspicious of, one another. Those are bad men, and bad women too, that do such ill offices; they are doing the devil's work, and his will their wages be.

29. A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into the way that is not good. 30. He shuddeth his eyes to devise forward things; moving his lips, he bringeth evil to pass.

Here is another sort of evil men described to us, that we may neither do like them, nor have any thing to do with them.
1. Such as (like Satan) do all the mischief they can by force and violence, as roaring lions, and not only by fraud and insinuation, as subtle serpents; They are violent men, that do all by rapine and oppression, that shut their eyes, meditating with the closest intention and application of mind to devise forward things, to centwre how they may do the greatest mischief to their neighbour, to do it effectually, and yet securely to themselves; and then, moving their lips, giving the word of command to their agents, they bring the evil to pass, and accomplish the wicked device; biting his lips, so some read it, for vexation. When the wicked plot against the just, he gnasheth upon him with his teeth.
2. Such as (like Satan still) do all they can to entice and draw in others to join with them in doing mischief, leading them in a way that is not good, neither honest, nor honourable, nor safe, but offensive to God, and which will be the end pernicious to the sinner. Thus he aims to ruin some in this world by bringing them into trouble, and others in the other world by bringing them into sin.

31. The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.

Note. 1. It ought to be the great care of old people to be found in the way of righteousness, the easily put a falter and serious goodness. Both God and man will look for them in that way; it will be expected that those that are old should be good, that the multitude of their years should teach them the best wisdom; let them therefore be found in that way. Death will come, the Judge is coming, the Lord is at hand; that they may be found of him in peace, let them be found in the way of righteousness, (2 Pet. iii. 14.) found so doing, Matth. xxiv. 36.

Let all people be old disciples, let them persevere to the end in the way of righteousness, which they long since set out in, that they may then be found in it.

2. If old people be found in the way of righteousness, their age will be their honour. Old age, as such, is honourable, and commands respect; Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, (Lev. xix. 32.) but if he be found in the way of wickedness, its honour is forfeited, its crown profaned, and laid in the dust, Isa. lxv. 20. Old people, therefore, if they would preserve their honour, must still hold fast their integrity, and then their gray hairs are indeed a crown to them; they are worthy of double honour. Grace is the glory of old age.

32. He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

This recommends the grace of meekness to us, which will well become us all, particularly the hoary head, v. 31. Observe,
1. The nature of it; it is to be slow to anger, not easily put into a passion, nor apt to resent provocation; taking time to consider, before we suffer our passion to break out, that it may not transgress due bounds; so slow in our motions towards anger, that we may be quickly stopped and pacified. It is to
have the rule of our own spirits, our appetites and affections, and all our inclinations, but particularly our passions, our anger, keeping that under direction and check, and the strict government of religion and right reason. We must be lords of our anger, as God is, Nah. i. 3. Asolus sins, affectuum tuorum Rule your passions, as Asolus rules the winds.

2. The honour of it: He that gets, and keeps, the mastery of his passions, he is better than the mighty, better than he that by a long siege takes a city, or by a long war subdues a country. Behold, a greater than Alexander or Caesar is here! The conquest of ourselves, and our own unruly passions, requires more true conduct, and a more steady, constant, and regular, management, than the obtaining of a victory over the forces of an enemy. A rational conquest is more honourable to a rational creature, than a brutal one.

It is a victory that does no body any harm; no lives or treasures are sacrificed to it, but only some base lusts. It is harder, and therefore more glorious, to quash an insurrection at home, than to resist an invasion from abroad; nay, such are the gains of meekness, that by it we are more than conquerors.

33. The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.

Note, 1. The Divine Providence orders and directs those things which to us are perfectly casual and fortuitous. Nothing comes to pass by chance, nor is any event determined by a blind fortune, but everything by the will and counsel of God. What man has neither eye nor hand in, God is intimately concerned in.

2. When solemn appeals are made to Providence by the casting of lots, for the deciding of that matter of moment, which could not otherwise be at all, or not so well, decided, God must be eyed in it, by prayer, that it may be disposed aright, (Give a perfect lot, 1 Sam. xiv. 41. Acts i. 24.) and by acquiescing in it when it is disposed; being satisfied that the hand of God is in it, and that hand directed by infinite wisdom. All the disposals of Providence concern the great ends of our life, we must look up to be the directing of our lot, the determining of what we referred to God, and must be reconciled to them accordingly.

CHAP. XVII.

1. BETTER is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife.

These words recommend family-love and peace, as conducing very much to the comfort of human life.

1. Those that live in unity and quietness, not only free from jealousies and animosities, but vying in mutual endearments, and that study to make themselves easy and obliging to one another, live very comfortably though they are low in the world, work hard, and fare hard; though they have but a meal a day, yet it is a dry morsel, and that a dry morsel. There may be peace and quietness where there are not three meals a day, provided there be a joint satisfaction in God's providence, and a mutual satisfaction in each other's prudence. Holy love may be found in a cottage.

2. Those that live in contention, that are always jarring and brawling, and reflecting upon one another, though they have plenty of dainties, a house full of sacrifices, live uncomfortably; they cannot expect the blessing of God upon them and what they have, nor can they have any true relish of their enjoyments, much less have any peace in their own consciences. Love will sweeten a dry morsel, but strife will sour and imbid a house full of sacrifices.

A little of the leaven of malice will leaven all the enjoyments.

2. A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.

Note, 1. True merit does not go by dignity. All agree, that the son in the family is more worthy of the servant; (John viii. 35.) and yet sometimes it so happens that the servant is wise, and a blessing and credit to the family, when the son is a fool, and a burthen and a shame to the family. Eliezer of Damascus, though Abram could not bear to think that he should be his heir, was a stay to the family, when he was sent to get a wife for Isaac; whereas Ishmael, a son, was a shame to it, when he mocked Isaac.

2. True dignity will go by merit. If a servant be wise, and manage things well, he shall be further trusted, and not only have rule with, but rule over, a son that causes shame; for God and nature have designed that the fool shall be servant to the wise in heart. Nay, a prudent servant may perhaps come to have such an interest in his master, as to be taken in for a child's share of the estate, and to have part of the inheritance among the brethren.

3. The fining-pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold; but the Lord trieth the hearts.

Note, 1. The hearts of the children of men are subject, not only to God's view, but to his judgment; As the fining-pot is for silver, both to prove it, and to improve it, so the Lord tries the hearts; he searches whether they are standard or no, and those that are he refines and makes purer, Jer. xvii. 10. God tries the heart by affliction, (Ps. lxvi. 10, 11.) and often chooses his people in that furnace, (Isa. xlvii. 16.) and makes them choice.

2. It is God only that tries the hearts; men may try their silver and gold with the fining-pot and the furnace, but they have no such way of trying one another's hearts; God only does that, who is both the Searcher and the Sovereign, of the heart.

4. A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.

Note, 1. Those that design to do ill, support themselves by falsehood and lying; A wicked doer giveth ear, with a great deal of pleasure; to false lips, that will justify him in the ill he does, to those that aim to make public disturbances, catch greedily at libels, and false stories, that defame the government and the administration.

2. Those that take the liberty to tell lies, take a pleasure in hearing them told; A liar gives heed to a malicious, backbiting, tongue, that he may have something to graft his lies upon, and with which to give them some colour of truth, and so to support them. Sinners will strengthen one another's hands; and those show they are bad themselves who court the acquaintance, and need the assistance, of those that are bad.

5. Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker; and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.

See here, 1. What a great sin they are guilty of who trample upon the poor, who ridicule their wants, and the meanness of their appearance, upbraid them with it, and take advantage from their weakness to be abusive and injurious to them; they reproach their Maker, put a great contempt and affront upon him, who allotted the poor to the con
dation they are in, owns them, and takes care of them, and can, when he pleases, reduce us to that condition. Let those, that thus reproach their Maker, know they shall be called to an account for it, Matth. xxxv. 40, 41. Prov. xiv. 31.

2. What great danger they are in of falling into incapable themselves, who are pleased to see and hear of the troubles of others; He that is glad at calamities, that he may be built upon the ruins of others, and regales himself with the judgments of God when they are abroad, let him know that he shall not go unpunished; the cup shall be put into his hand, Ezek. xxv. 6, 7.

6. Children’s children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.

They are so, that is, they should be so; if they conduct themselves worthily, they are so.

1. It is an honour to parents, when they are old, to leave children, and children’s children, growing up, that tread in the steps of their virtues, and are likely to maintain and advance the reputation of their families. It is an honour to a man to live so long as to see his children’s children; (Ps. cxviii. 6. Gen. l. 23.) to see his house built up in them, and to see them likely to serve their generation according to the will of God; this crowns and completes their concern in this world. It is an honour to children to have wise and godly parents, and to have them continued to them, even after they are themselves grown up and settled in the world. Those are unnatural children who reckon their aged parents a burthen to them, and think they live too long; whereas, if the children be wise and good, it is as much their honour as can be, that thereby they are comforts to their parents in the unpleasant days of their old age.

7. Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince.

Two things are here represented as very absurd; 1. That men of no repute should be dictators. What can be more unbecoming than for fools, who are known to have little sense and discretion, to pretend to that which is above them, and which they never were cut out for? A fool, in Solomon’s proverbs, signifies a wicked man, whom excellent speech does not become, because his conversation gives the lie to his excellent speech. What have they to do to declare God’s statutes, who hate instruction? Ps. I. 16. Christ would not suffer the unclean spirits to say that they knew him to be the Son of God. See Acts xvi. 17, 18.

2. That men of great repute should be deceivers.

If it is unbecoming a despicable man to presume to speak as a philosopher or politician, and nobody needs him, being prejudiced against his character, much more unbecoming it is for a prince, for a man of honour, to take advantage, from his character and the confidence that is put in him, to lie, and dissemble, and make no conscience of breaking his word. Lying ill becomes any man, but worst a prince; so corrupt is the modern policy, which insinuates that princes ought not to make themselves slaves to their words further than is for their interest, and Qui nescit dissimulare, nescit regnare. He who does not know how to dissemble, knows not how to reign.

8. A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it; whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.

The design of this observation is to show,

1. Those who have money in their hand think they can do any thing with it. Rich men value a little money as if it were a precious stone, and value themselves on it, as if it gave them not only ornament, but power, and every one were bound to be at their beck, even justice itself. Whithersoever they turn this sparkling diamond, they expect it should dazzle the eyes of all, and make them do just what they would have them do, in hopes of it. The deepest bag will carry the cause; fee high, and you may have what you will.

2. That those who have money in their eye, and set their hearts upon it, will do any thing for it; A bribe is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that takes it; it has a great influence upon him, and he will be sure to go the way that it leads him, either and which, though contrary to justice, and not consistent with himself.

9. He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.

Note. 1. The way to preserve peace among relations and neighbours, is, to make the best of every thing; not to tell others what has been said or done against them, when it is not at all necessary to their safety; nor to take notice of what has been said or done against ourselves, but to excuse both, and put the best constructions upon them. It was an oversight, therefore, to overlook it; it was done through forgetfulness, therefore forget it; it perhaps made nothing of you, therefore do you make nothing of it.

2. The ripping up of faults is the ripping out of love, and nothing tends more to the separating of friends, and setting them at variance, than the repeating of matters that have been in variance; for they commonly lose nothing in the repetition, but the things themselves are aggravated, and the passions about them revived and exasperated. The best method of peace is by an amnesty or act of oblivion.

10. A reproach entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.

Note. 1. A word is enough to the wise. A gentle reproof will enter not only into the head, but into the heart, of a wise man, so as to have a strong influence upon him; for if but a hint be given to conscience, let it alone to carry it on and prosecute it.

2. Strangers will not endure it for a fool, to make him sensible of his errors, that he may repent of them, and be more cautious for the future. He that is sottish and wilful is very rarely benefited by severity. David is softened with, Thou art the man; but Pharaoh remains hard under all the plagues of Egypt.

11. An evil man seeketh only rebellion: therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.

Here is the sin and punishment of an evil man.

1. His sin; he is an evil man indeed that seeks all occasions to rebel against God, and the government God has set over him, and to contradict and quarrel with those about him. Quart jurtgia—He picks quarrels; so some. There are some that are actuated by a spirit of opposition, that will contradict for contradiction’s sake, that will go on frowardly in their wicked ways, in spite of all restraint and check. A rebellious man seeks mischief; so some read it, watches all opportunities to disturb the public peace.

2. His punishment; Because he will not be reclaimed by mild and gentle methods, a cruel messenger shall be sent against him; some dreadful judgment or other, as a messenger from God; Angels, God’s messengers, shall be employed as ministers of his justice against him, Ps. lxviii. 49. Satan,
the angel of death, shall be let loose upon him, and the messengers of Satan. His prince shall send a sergeant to arrest him, an executioner to cut him off. He that kicks against the pricks, is waited for of the sword.

12. Let a bear robbed of her whelps, meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly.

Note. 1. A passionate man is a brutish man. However at other times he may have some wisdom, take him in his passion unguarded, and he is a fool in his folly. They are fools in whose bosom anger rests, and in whose countenance anger rages. He has put off man, and is become like a bear, a raging bear, a bear robbed of her whelps; he is as fond of the gratifications of his lusts and passions as a bear of her whelps. (which, though ugly, are her own, as eager in the pursuit of them, as she is in quest of her whelps when they are missing, and as full of indignation if crossed in the pursuit.

2. He is a dangerous man, falls foul on every one that stands in his way, though innocent, though his friend, as a bear robbed of her whelps sets upon the first man she meets as a robber. *Ira furor brevis est—Anger is madness while it lasts. One may more easily stop, escape, or guard against, an enraged bull than a raging bear.* Let us therefore watch over our own passions, (lest they head and do mischief,) and so consult our own honour; and let us avoid the company of furious men, and get out of their way when they are in their fury, and so consult our own safety. Currenti eoque furori—Give place unto wrath.

13. Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house.

A malignant, mischievous man, is here represented.

1. As ungrateful to his friends; he oftentimes is so absurd and insensible of kindness done him, that he renders evil for good. David met with those that were his adversaries for his love, Ps. cix.

4. To render evil for evil is brutish, but to render evil for good is devilish. He is an ill-natured man, who, because he is resolved not to return a kindness, will revenge it.

2. As therein unkind to his family, for he entails a curse upon it; this is a crime so heinous, that it shall be punished, not only in his person, but in his posterity, for whom he thus treasures up wrath. *The sword shall not depart from David's house,* because he rewarded Uriah with evil for his good services. The Jews stoned Christ for his good works, therefore is his blood upon them and upon their children.

14. The beginning of strife is as when one leteth out water; therefore leave off contention before it be meddled with.

Here is, 1. The danger that there is in the beginning of strife; one hot word, one peevish reflection, one angry word, and, one petty contradiction, begets another; and that a third, and so on, till it proves like the cutting of a dam; when the water has got a little passage, it does itself widen the breach, bears down all before it, and there is then no stopping it, no reducing it.

2. A good caution inferred thence, to take heed of the first spark of contention, and to put it out as soon as ever it appears. Dread the breaking of the ice; for, if once broken, it will break further; therefore leave it off, not only when you see the worst of it, for then it may be too late, but when you see the first of it; *Obsta proniculis—Resist at the earliest display; leave it off even before it be meddled with; leave it off, if it were possible, before you begin.

15. He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord.

This shows what an offence it is to God,

1. When those that are intrusted with the administration of public justice, judges, juries, witnesses, prosecutors, counsel, do either acquit the guilty, or condemn those that are not guilty, or in the least contribute to either; this defeats the end of government, which is to protect the good and punish the bad, Rom. xiii. 3. 4. It is equally provoking to God to justify the wicked, though it be in pity, and in favorem vitae—to save life, as to condemine the just.

2. When any private persons plead for sin and sinners, palliate and excuse wickedness, or argue against virtue and piety, and so pervert the right ways of the Lord, and confound the eternal distinctions between good and evil.

16. Wherefore there is a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it!

Two things are here spoken of with admiration:

1. God's great goodness to foolish man, in putting a price into his hand to get wisdom, to get knowledge and grace to fit him for both works. We have rational souls, the means of grace, the strivings of the Spirit, access to God by prayer, we have time and opportunity; he that has a good estate, (so some understand it,) has advantages thereby of getting wisdom by purchasing instruction. Good parents, relations, ministers, friends, are helps to get wisdom. It is a price therefore of value, a talent it is a price in the hand, in possession, the word is nigh thee; it is a price for getting; it is for our own advantage, it is for getting wisdom, the very thing which, being fools, we have most need of. We have reason to wonder that God should so consider our necessity, and should intrust us with such advantages, though he foresaw we should not make a right improvement of them.

2. Man's great wickedness, his neglect of God's favour, and his own interest, which is very absurd and unaccountable; *he has no heart to it, not to the wisdom that is to be got, nor to the price in the use of which it may be got. He has no heart, no skill, nor will, nor courage, to improve his advantages. He has set his heart upon other things, so that he has no heart to his duty, or the great concerns of his soul. Wherefore should a price be thrown away and lost upon one so undeserving of it?

17. A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

This bespeaks the strength of these bonds by which we are bound to each other, and which we ought to be sensible of.

1. Friends must be constant to each other at all times; that is not true friendship which is not constant, it will be so, if it be sincere, and actuated by a good principle. They that are fainciful or selfish in their friendship, will love no longer than their humour is pleased, and their interest served, and therefore their affections turn with the wind, and change with the weather; swallow-friends, that fly to you in summer, but are gone in winter; such friends are more to be pitied than despised, for if a friendship be brudent, generous, and cordial, if I love my friend because he is wise, and virtuous, and good, as long as he continues so, though he fall into poverty and disgrace, still I shall love him. Christ is a Friend that loves at all times; (John xiii. 1.) and we must so love him, Rom. viii. 35.

2. Relations must in a special manner be careful and tender of one another in affliction; *A brother is born to succour a brother or sister in distress, to
whom he is joined so closely by nature, that he may the more sensibly feel from their burtneous, and be the more strongly inclined and engaged, as it were by instinct, to help them. We must often consider what we were born for, not only as men, but as in such a station and relation. Who knows but we came into such a family, for such a time as this? We do not play a part in the management of our own lives, if we do not the duty of the some. Some take it thus; A friend that loves at all times, is born, becomes a brother in adversity, and is so to be valued.

18. A man void of understanding striketh hands, and becometh surety in the presence of his friend.

Though he had commended friendship in adversity, (v. 17.) yet let not any, under pretence of being generous to their friends, be unjust to their families, and wrong them; one part of our duty must be made to consist with another.

Note, 1. It is a piece of wisdom to keep out of debt as much as may be, especially to dread sure- tiship. There may be a just occasion for a man to pass his word for his friend in his absence, till he come to engage himself; but to be surety in the presence of his friend, when he is upon the spot, supposes that his own word will not be taken, he being deemed insolvent, or dishonest; and then who can with safety pass his word for him?

2. Those that are void of understanding are com- monly taken in this snare, to the prejudice of their families, and therefore ought not to be trusted too far with their affairs, but to be under direction.

19. He loveth transgression that loveth strife: and he that exalgeth his gate seeketh destruction.

Note, 1. Those that are quarrelsome, involve themselves in a great deal of guilt; He that loves strife, that in his wordly business loves to go to law, in religion loves controversies, and in common conversation loves to thwart and fall out, that is never well but when he is in the five, he loves transgres- sions; for a great deal of sin attends that sin, and the way of it is down hill. He pretends to stand up for truth, and for his honour and right, but really he loves sin, which God hates.

2. Those that are ambitious and aspiring, expose themselves to a great deal of trouble, such as often ends in their ruin. He that exalgeth his gate, builds a stately house, at least a fine frontispiece, that he may overtop and outshine his neighbours, seeks his own destruction, and takes a deal of pains to ruin himself; he makes his gate so large, that his house and estate go out at it.

20. He that hath a froward heart findeth no good; and he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief.

Note, 1. Framing ill designs will be of no advantage to us, there is nothing got by them; He that has a froward heart, that sows discord, and is full of resentment, cannot promise himself to get by it, sufficient to balance the loss of his repose and reputation, nor can he take any rational satisfaction in it; he is not good for.

2. Giving ill language will be a great disadvantage to us; He that has a perverse tongue, spiteful and abusive, scurrilous or backbiting, falls into one mischief or other, loses his friends, provokes his enemies, and pulls trouble upon his own head; many a one has paid dear for an unbridled tongue.

21. He that begetteth a fool doeth it to his sorrow; and the father of a fool hath no joy.

This speaks that very emphatically, which many wise and good men feel very sensibly, what a griev- ous vexations thing it is to have a foolish wicked child. See here,

1. How uncertain all our creature-comforts are, so that we are often not only disappointed in them, but that you prove greatest crosses in which we promised ourselves most satisfaction. The father joy when a man-child was born into the world, and yet, if he prove vicious, his own father wishes he had never been born. The name of Absalom signifies his father's peace, but he was his greatest trouble. It should moderate the desire of having children, and the delight of their parents in them, that they may prove a grief to them; yet it should silence the murmuring of the afflicted father in that case, that, if his son be a fool, he is a foil of his own will, and therefore he must make the best of him, and take it up as his cross, the rather, because Adam begetts a son in his own likeness.

2. How unwise we are in suffering one affliction (and that of an untoward child as likely as any other) to drown the sense of a thousand mercies; The father of a fool lays that so much to heart, that he has no joy of any thing else; for this he may think himself; there are joys sufficient to balance even that sorrow.

22. A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.

Note, 1. It is healthful to be cheerful. The Lord is for the body, and has provided for it, not only meat, but medicine, and has here told us that the best medicine is a merry heart; not a heart addicted to pain, carnal, sensual, mirth; Solomon himself said of that mirth, It is not medicine, but madness. It is not food, but poison; What doth it? But he means a heart rejoicing in God, and serving him with gladness, and then taking the comfort of outward enjoyments, and particularly that of pleasant conversation. It is a great mercy, that God gives us leave to be cheerful, and cause to be cheerful; especially if by his grace he gives us hearts to be cheerful. This does good to a medicine, (so some read it,) it makes physic agreeable to the body, or makes it so that it is not good, but wine; What doth it? But he means a heart rejoicing in God, and serving him with gladness, and then taking the comfort of outward enjoyments, and particularly that of pleasant conversation. It is a great mercy, that God gives us leave to be cheerful, and cause to be cheerful; especially if by his grace he gives us hearts to be cheerful. This does good to a medicine, (so some read it,) it makes physic agreeable to the body, or makes it so that it is not good, but wine; What doth it?

2. The sorrows of the mind often contribute very much to the sickness of the body; A broken spirit, sunk by the burthen of afflictions, and especially a conscience wounded with the sense of guilt and fear of wrath, dries the bones, wastes the radical moisture, exhausts the very marrow, and makes the body a mere skeleton. We should therefore watch and pray against all melancholy indispositions, for they lead us into trouble as well as into temptation.

23. A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.

See here, 1. What an evil thing bribery is: He is a wicked man that will take a gift to engage him to give a false testimony, verdict, or judgment; when he does not, he is a wicked man. He is a wicked man, who against all the secrecy imaginable, out of the bosom where he knows it is laid ready for him; it is industriously concealed, and so slyly, that if he could, he would hide it from his own conscience. A gift is taken out of the bosom of a wicked man, so some read it; for he is a bad man that gives bribes, as well as he that takes them.

2. What a powerful thing it is. It is of such force, that it perverts the ways of judgment. The course of justice is not only obstructed, but turned into it.
justice; and the greatest wrongs are done, under colour of doing right.

24. Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.

Note. 1. He is to be reckoned an intelligent man, that not only has wisdom, but has it ready when he has occasion for it. He lays his wisdom before him, as his card and compass which he steers by, has his eye always upon it, as he that writes has on his copy; and then he has it before him, it is not to seek, but still at hand.

2. He that has a giddy head, a roving, rambling fancy, will never be fit for any solid business. He is a fool, and good for nothing; whose eyes are in the ends of the earth, here, and there, and every where; any where but where they should be; who cannot fix his thoughts on one subject, nor pursue any one purpose with any thing of steadiness. When his mind should be applied to his study and business, it is filled with a thousand things, foreign and impertinent.

25. A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.

Observe, 1. Wicked children are an affliction to both their parents. They are an occasion of anger to the father, (so the word signifies,) because they contemn his authority; but of sorrow and bitterness to the mother, because they abuse her tenderness. The parents, being joint-sufferers, should therefore bring mutual comfort to bear them up under it, and strive to make it as easy as they can, the mother to mollify the father’s anger, the father to alleviate the mother’s grief.

That Solomon often repeats this remark, probably, because it was his own case; however, it is a common case.

26. Also to punish the just is not good, nor to strike princes for equity.

In differences that happen between magistrates and subjects, (and such differences often arise,) 1. Let magistrates see to it that they never punish the just, that they be in no case a terror to good works, for that is to abuse their power; and betray that great trust which is reposed in them. It is not good, it is a very evil thing, and will end ill, whatever end they may aim at in it. When princes become tyrants and persecutors, their thrones will be neither easy nor firm.

2. Let subjects see to it that they do not find fault with the government for doing its duty, for it is wrong to strike princes for equity; by defining their administration, or secretly attempting to strike at them; as the ten tribes that revolted reflected upon Solomon for imposing necessary taxes. Some read it, nor to strike the ingenious for equity; magistrates must take heed that noone suffer under them for well-doing; nor must parents provoke their children to wrath by unjust rebukes.

27. He that hath knowledge spareth his words; and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit. 28. Even a fool when he holdeth his peace is counted wise; and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.

Two ways a man may show himself to be a wise man.

1. By the good temper, the sweetness, and the sedateness, of his mind; A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit, a precious spirit, so the word is; he is one that looks well to his spirit, that it be as it should be, and so keeps it in an even frame, easy to himself, and pleasant to others. A gracious spirit is a precious spirit, and renders a man amiable, and more excellent than his neighbour. He is of a cool spirit, so some read it, not heated with passion, nor put into any tumult or disorder by the impetus of any corrupt affectation, but even and stayed. A cool head with a warm heart is an admirable composition.

2. By the good government of his tongue.

(1.) A wise man will be of few words, as being afraid of speaking amiss; He that has knowledge, and aims to do good with it, is careful, when he does speak, to speak to the purpose, and therefore says little, that he may take time to deliberate upon it. He spares his words, because they are better spared than ill-spent.

(2.) This is generally taken for such a sure indication of wisdom, that a fool may gain the reputation of being a wise man, if he have but wit enough to hold his tongue, to hear, and see, and say little. If a fool hold his peace, men of candour will think him wise, because nothing appears to the contrary, it will be said. But because it will be thought that he is making observations on what others say, that others may gain experience, and is consulting with himself what he shall say, that he may speak pertinently. See how easy it is to gain men’s good opinion, and to impose upon them. But when a fool holds his peace, God knows his heart, and the folly that is bound there; thoughts are words to him, and therefore he cannot be deceived in his judgment of men.

CHAP. XVIII.

1. THROUGH desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddles with all wisdom.

The original here is difficult, and differently understood.

1. Some take it as a rebuke to an affected singularity; when men take a pride in separating themselves from the sentiments and society of others, in contradicting all that has been said before them, and advancing new notions of their own, which, though ever so absurd, are wedded to it, to gratify a desire or lust of vainglory, and they are seekers and meddlers with that which does not belong to them; he seeks according to his desire, and intermeddles with every business, pretends to pass a judgment upon every man’s matter; he is morose and supercilious; those generally are so that are opinionative and conceited, and they thus make themselves ridiculous, and are vexatious to others.

2. Our translation seems to take it as an excitements to diligence in the pursuit of wisdom. If we would get knowledge and grace, we must desire it, as that which we need, and which will be of great advantage to us, 1 Cor. xii. 31. We must separate ourselves from all those things which would divert us from, or retard us in, the pursuit, retire out of the noise of the world’s vanities, and then seek and intermeddle with all the means and instructions of wisdom; be willing to take pains, and try all the methods of improving ourselves; be acquainted with a variety of opinions, that we may prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.

2. A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself. A fool may pretend to understanding, and to seek an intermeddlery with the means of it; but,

1. He has a true delight in it; it is only to please his friends, or save his credit, he does not love his book, or his business, or his Bible, or his prayers, he would rather be playing the fool with his sports; those that take no pleasure in learning or religion
will make nothing to purpose of either. No progress is made in them, if they are a task and a drudgery.

2. He hath no good design in it, only that his heart may discover itself, that he may have something to make a show with, something wherewith to varnish his folly, that he may pass off the better, because he loves to hear himself talk.

3. When the wicked cometh, then cometh also contempt, and with ignominy reproach. This may include a double sense;

1. That wicked people are scornful people, and put contempt upon others; When the wicked comes into any company, comes into the schools of wisdom, or into the assemblies for religious worship, then cometh contempt of God, of his people and ministers, and of there things which is said and done. You can expect no other from those that are profane than that they will be scoffers; they will be an ignominy and reproach; they will float and jeer every thing that is serious and grave; but let not wise and good men regard it, for the proverb of the ancients says, Such wickedness proceed from the wicked.

2. That wicked people are shameful people, and bring contempt upon themselves, for God has said, There shall be no shame in despising him, shall be lightly esteemed. As soon as ever sin entered, shame followed it, and sinners make themselves desppicable. Nor do they only draw contempt upon themselves, but they bring ignominy and reproach upon their families, their friends, their ministers, and all that are any way related to them. Those therefore who secure their honour must retaill their virtue.

4. The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters, and the well-spring of wisdom as a flowing brook. The similitudes here seem to be elegantly transposed.

1. The well-spring of wisdom is as deep waters; an intelligent knowing man has in him a good treasure of useful things, which furnishes him with something to say upon all occasions, that is pertinent and profitable. This is as deep waters which make no noise, but never run dry.

2. The words of such a man's mouth are as a flowing brook; what he says can speak; flows naturally from him, and with a great deal of ease, and freedom, and natural fluency; it is clean and fresh, it is cleansing and refreshing; from his deep wells flows what there is occasion for, to water those about him, as the brooks do the low grounds.

5. It is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment. This justly condemns those who, being employed in the administration of justice, pervert judgment.

1. By conniving at men's crimes, and protecting and countenancing them in oppression and violence, because of their dignity and wealth, or some personal kindness they have for them; Whatever excuses men may make for it, certainly it is not good that to accept the person of the wicked, it is an offence to God, an affront to justice, a wrong to mankind, and a real service done to the kingdom of sin and Satan. The merits of the cause must be regarded, not the person.

2. By giving a cause against justice and equity, because the person is poor, and low in the world, or not of the same party or persuasion, or a stranger of another country; this is overthrowing the righteous in judgment, who ought to be supported, and whom God will make to stand.

6. A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes. 7. A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.

Solomon has often showed what mischief bad men do to others with their ungoverned tongues; here he shows what mischief they do to themselves.

The first part, their lips, is a quarrel, A fool's lips, without any cause or call, enter into contention, by advancing foolish notions, which others find themselves obliged to oppose, and so a quarrel is begun; or by giving provoking language, which will be resented, and satisfaction demanded; or by setting men at defiance, and bidding them do if they dare. Proud and passionate men, and drunkards, are fools, whose lips enter into contention. A wise man may, against his will, be drawn into a quarrel, but he is a fool that of choice enters into it when he might avoid it, and he will repent it when it is too late.

2. They expose themselves to correction; The fool's mouth does, in effect, call for strokes; he has said that which deserves to be punished with strokes, and is still saying that which needs to be checked, and restrained with strokes, as Ananias unjustly commanded that Paul should be smitten on the mouth.

3. They involve themselves in ruin; A fool's mouth, which has been, or would have been, the destruction of others, proves at length his own destruction, perhaps from men; Shimei's mouth was his own destruction, and Adonijah's, who spake against his own head; and when a fool, by his foolish speaking, has run himself into a premunire, and thinks to bring himself off by justifying or excusing what he has said, he only aggravates his defence, for his defence is his sin, and his lips are still the snare of his soul, entangling him yet more and more. However, when men by their evil words shall be condemned at God's bar, their mouths will be their destruction, and it will be such an aggravation of their ruin, as will not admit one drop of water, one drop of comfort, to cool their tongue, which is their snare, and will be their tormentor.

3. The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

Tale-bearers are those who secretly carry stories from house to house, which perhaps have some truth in them, but are secrets not fit to be told, or are basely misrepresented, and false colours put upon them, and are all told with design to blast men's reputation, to break their friendship, to make mischief between relations and neighbours, and set them at variance: now the words of such are here said to be,

1. Like as when men are wounded, so the margin reads it; they take on them to be very much affected with the miscarriages of such and such, and to be in pain for them, and pretend that it is with the greatest grief and reluctance imaginable that they speak of them, they look as if they themselves were wounded by it; whereas really they rejoice in iniquity, are fond of the story, and tell it with pride and pleasure. Thus their words seem; but they go down as poison into the innermost parts of the belly, the pill being thus gilded, thus sugared.

2. As wounds, so the text reads it; as deep wounds, deadly wounds, wounds in the innermost parts of the belly; the venter medius vel infimus—The middle or lower belly, the thorax, or the abdomen, in either of which wounds are mortal. The words of the tale-bearer and him of whom they are spoken, his credit and interest, and him to whom they are spoken, his love and charity; they occasion so
him, which is a wound to the conscience; perhaps he seems to slight them, but they wound insensibly, by alienating his affections from one he ought to love.

9. He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.

Note. 1. Prodigality is very bad husbandry. Those are not only justly branded as fools among men, but will give an uncomfortable account to God of the talents they are intrusted with, who are wasters of their estates, who live above what they have, spend and give more than they can afford, and so, in effect, throw away what they have, and suffer it to run to waste.

2. Idleness is no better. He that is remiss in his work, whose hands hang down, (so the word signifies,) that stands, as we say, with his thumbs in his mouth, that neglects his business, does it not at all, or as if he did it not, he is own brother to him that is a prodigal; he is as much a fool, and in as sure and ready a way to poverty; one scatters what he has, the other lets it run through his fingers. The observation is too true, in the affairs of religion; he that is trifling and careless in praying and hearing, is brother to him that does not pray or hear at all; and omissions of duty and in duty, are as fatal to the soul as commissions of sin.

10. The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

Here is, 1. God's sufficiency for the saints; His name is a strong tower for them, in which they may take rest where they are weary, and take sanctuary when they are pursued, where they may be lifted up above their enemies, and fortified against them. There is enough in God, and in the discoveries which he has made of himself to us, to make us easy at all times; the wealth laid up in this tower is enough to enrich them, to be a continual feast, and a continuing treasure, to them; the strength of this tower is enough to protect them; the name of the Lord is all that whereby he has made himself known as God, and our God, not only his titles and attributes, but his covenant and all the promises of it; these make up a tower, a strong tower, impenetrable, impregnable, for all God's people.

2. The saints' security in God. It is a strong tower; how he knows how to make use of it as such; the righteous, by faith and prayer, devotion toward God, and dependence on him, run into it as their city of refuge; having made sure their interest in God's name, they take the comfort and benefit of it; they go out of themselves, retire from the world, live above, dwell in God, and God in them, and so they are safe, they think themselves so, and they shall find themselves so.

11. The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as a high wall in his own conceit.

Having described the firm and faithful defence of the righteous man, (v. 10,) he here shows what is the false and deceitful defence of the rich man, that has his portion and treasure in the things of this world, and sets his heart upon them; his wealth is as much his confidence, and he expects as much from it as from his God, and from his own power.

See, 1. How he supports himself; he makes his wealth his city, where he dwells, where he rules, with a great deal of self-complacency, as if he had a whole city under his command. It is his strong city, in which he intrenches himself, and then sets danger at defiance, as if nothing could hurt him. His scales are his pride; his wealth is his wall in which he incloses himself, and he thinks it a high wall which cannot be scaled or get over, Job xxxi. 14. Rev. xviii. 7.

2. How herein he cheats himself; it is a strong city, and a high wall, but it is so only in his own conceit, it will not prove to be really so, but, like the house built on the sand, it will fall the builder when he most needs it.

12. Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility.

Note. 1. Pride is the presage of ruin, and ruin will, at last be the punishment of pride; for before destruction men are commonly so infatuated by the just judgment of God, that they are more haughty than ever; that their ruin may be the sorer, and the more surprising. Or, if that do not always hold, yet, after the heart has been lifted up with pride, a fall comes, ch. xvi. 18.

2. Humility is the presage of honour, and prepares men for it, and honour shall at length be the reward of humility, as he had said before, ch. xv. 33. That has need to be often said which men are so loath to believe.

See here how men often expose themselves by that very thing by which they hope to gain applause.

1. Some take a pride in being quick; they answer a matter before they hear it, hear it cut, nay, as soon as they but hear of it. They think it is their honour to take up a cause suddenly; and when they have heard one side, they think the matter so plain, that they need not trouble themselves to hear the other, they are already apprized of it, and masters and all the merits of the cause. Whereas, though a ready wit is an agreeable thing to play with, it is solid judgment and sound wisdom that do business.

2. Those that take a pride in being quick, commonly fall under the just reproach of being impertinent. It is folly for a man to go about to speak to a thing which he does not understand, or to pass sentence upon a matter which he is not truly and fully informed of, and has not patience to make a strict inquiry into; and if it be folly, it is, and will be, shame.

14. The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?

Note. 1. Outward grievances are tolerable as long as the mind enjoys itself, and is at ease. Many infirmities, many calamities, we are liable to in this world, in body, name, and estate, which a man may bear, and bear up under, if he have but good conduct and courage, and be able to act with reason and resolution, especially if he have a good conscience, and the testimony of that be for him; and if the spirit of a man will sustain the infirmity, much more will the spirit of a Christian, or rather the Spirit of God, witnessing and working with our spirits in a day of trouble.

2. The grievances of the spirit are of all others most heavy and hardly to be borne; these make sore the shoulders which should sustain the other infirmities. If the spirit be wounded by the disturbance of the reason, defection under the trouble, whatever it is, and despair of relief; if the spirit be wounded by the amazing apprehensions of God's wrath for sin, and the fearful expectations of judgment and fiery indignation, who can bear this? Wounded spirits cannot help themselves, nor do others know how to help them. It is therefore wisdom to keep conscience void of offence.

15. The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.
Not, 1. Those that are prudent will seek knowledge, and apply their ear and heart to the pursuit of it; their ear to attend to the means of knowledge, and their heart to mix faith with what they hear, and make a good improvement of it. Those that are prudent do not think they have prudence enough, but still see they have need of more; and the more prudent a man is, the more inquisitive will he be after knowledge, the knowledge of God and his duty, and the way to heaven, for that is the best knowledge.

2. Those that prudently seek knowledge, shall certainly get knowledge, for God never said to such, Seek, in vain. Seek, and ye shall find. If the ear seeketh, and the heart meteth it, and keeps it, and is enriched by it. We must get knowledge, not only into our heads, but into our hearts, get the savour and relish of it, apply what we know to ourselves, and experience the power and influence of it.


Of what great force gifts, bribes, are, he had intimated before, ch. xvii. 8, 25. Here he shows the power of gifts, presents, made even by inferiors to those that are above them, and have much more than they have. A good present will go far,

1. Towards a man's liberty; a man's gift, if he be in prison, may procure his enlargement; there are courtiers, who, if they use their interest even for oppressed innocency, expect to be gratified for it. Or, if a mean man know not how to get access to a great man, he may do it by a fee to his servants, or a present to himself; those will make room for his gift.

2. Toward his preferment. It will bring him to sit among great men in honour and power. See how corrupt this world is, when men's gifts will do that for them which their merits will not do, though ever so great; nay, will gain that for them which they are unworthy of, and unfit for; and no wonder that those take bribes in their offices, who gave bribes for them. Vendi puro potens, emarat ille fru.—He that bought law, can sell it.

17. He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.

This shows that one tale is good till another is told.

1. He that speaks first will be sure to tell a straight story, and relate that only which makes for him, and put the best colour he can upon it, so that his cause shall appear good, whether it really be so or no.

2. The plaintiff having done his evidence, it is fit that the defendant should be heard, should have leave to confront the witnesses, and cross-examine them, and show the falsehood and fallacy of what has been alleged, which, perhaps, may make the matter appear quite otherwise than it did. We must therefore remember that we have ears to hear each side before we give judgment.

18. The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty.

Note, 1. Contentions commonly happen among the mighty, that are jealous for their honour and right, and stand upon the punctilios of both, and are confident of their being able to make their part good. Their hearts are hardly condescend to the necessary terms of an accommodation; whereas those that are poor are forced to be peaceable, and sit down losers.

2. Even the contentions of the mighty may be ended by lot, if they cannot otherwise be compromised, and sometimes better so than by arguments which are endless, or concessions which they are loath to stoop to, whereas it is no dispensation to a man to acquiesce in the determination of the lot, when once it is referred to that. To prevent quarrels, Canaan was divided by lot; and, if usury laws had not the usual way of appeal to Providence, perhaps it might be very well used now for the deciding of many controversies, both to the honour of God, and the satisfaction of the parties, provided it be done with prayer and due solemnity, this, and some other scriptures, seeming to direct to it, especially Acts i. 26. If the law is a lottery (as some have called it,) it were as well that a lottery were the law.

19. A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city; and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.

Note, 1. Great care must be taken to prevent quarrels among relations, and those that are under special obligation to each other, not only because they are most unnatural and unbecoming, but because such things are commonly taken most unkindly, and resentments are apt to be carried too far. Wisdom and grace would indeed make it most easy to us to forgive our relations and friends. If they offend us, and the corruption makes it most difficult to forgive them; let us therefore take heed of disobliging a brother, or one that has been as a brother; ingratitude is very provoking.

2. Great pains must be taken to compromise matters in variance between relations, with all speed, because it is a work of so much difficulty, and, consequently, the more honourable if it be done. Esau was a brother offended, and seemed harder to be won than a strong city, yet, by a work of God upon his heart, in answer to Jacob's prayer, he was won.

20. A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled.

Note, 1. Our comfort depends very much upon the testimony of our own consciences, for us, or against us. The belly is here put for the conscience, as ch. xx. 27. Now it is of great consequence to us whether that be satisfied, and what that is filled with, for, accordingly, will our satisfaction be, and our inward peace.

2. The testimony of our consciences will be for us, or against us, according as we have, or have not, governed our tongues well. According as the fruit of the mouth is, good or bad, unto piety or unto righteousness, accordingly the character of the man is, and, consequently, the testimony of his conscience concerning him. "We ought to take as great care about the words we speak, as we do about the fruit of our trees, or the increase of the earth, which we are to eat; for, according as they are wholesome or unwholesome, so will the pleasure or the pain be, wherewith we shall be filled." See Bishop Patrick.

21. Death and life are in the power of the tongue; and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

Note, 1. A man may do a great deal of good, or a great deal of hurt, both to others and to himself, according to the use he makes of his tongue. Many a one has been his own death by a foul tongue, or the death of others by a false tongue; and, on the contrary, many a one has saved his own life, or procured the comfort of it, by a prudent gentle tongue, and saved the lives of others by a seasonable intercession or intercession for them. And if by our words we must be justified or condemned, death and life
are, no doubt, in the power of the tongue. Tongues were Esop's best meat, and his worst.

2. Men's words will be judged of by the affections with which they speak; he that not only speaks angry, (which a bad man may do to save his credit, or please his company,) but loves to speak so, speaks well of choice, and with delight, to him it will be life; and he that not only speaks amiss, (which a good man may do through inadvertency,) but loves to speak so, (Ps. lii. 4.) to him it will be death. As men love it, they shall eat the fruit of it.

22. Whoso findeth a wife, findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord.

Note. 1. A good wife is a great blessing to a man. He that finds a wife, that is, a wife indeed, (a bad wife does not deserve to be called by a name fit so much honour,) that finds a help meet for him, that is a wife in the original acceptance of the word, that sought such a one with care and prayer, and has found what he sought, he has found a good thing, a jewel of great value, a rare jewel, he has found that which will not only contribute more than anything to his comfort in this life, but will forward him in the way to heaven.

2. God is to be admired lodged in it with thankfully, a token of his favour, and a happy pledge of further favours; it is a sign that God delights in a man to do him good, and has mercy in store for him; for this, therefore, God must be sought unto.

23. The poor useth entreaties; but the rich answereth roughly.

Note. 1. Poverty, though many inconveniences to the body attend it, has often a good effect upon the spirit, for it makes men humble and submissive, and makes their pride; it teaches them to use entreaties; it teaches them to watch for favours; it tells them they must not prescribe or demand, but take what is given them, and be thankful. At the throne of God's grace we are all poor, and must use entreaties, not answer, but make application, must sue sub forma piauferis—as a piaufer.

2. A prosperous condition, though it has many advantages, has often this mischief attending it, that it makes men proud, haughty, and imperious; The rich amuse the poor of the poor roughly, as Nabul answered David's messengers with railing. It is a very foolish humour of some rich men, especially those who have risen from little, that they think their riches will warrant them to give hard words, and, even where they do not design any rough dealing, that it becomes them to answer roughly, whereas gentlemen ought to be gentle, Jam. iii. 17.

24. A man that hath friends must show himself friendly; and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

Solomon here recommends friendship to us, and shows,

1. What we must do, that we may contract and cultivate friendship; we must show ourselves friendly. Would we have friends and keep them, we must not only befriend them, or quarrel with them, but we must love them, and make it appear that we do so, by all expressions that are endearing; by being free with them, pleasing to them, visiting them, and bidding them welcome, and especially by doing all the good offices we can, and serving them in every thing that lies in our power; that is showing ourselves friendly.

Si vis amari, amas—
If you wish to gain affection, bestow it. Sen.

Ut ameris, amabilis esto—
The way to be beloved, is to be lovely. Ovid

2. That it is worth while to do so, for we may promise ourselves a great deal of comfort in a true friend; A brother indeed is born for adversity, as he had said, ch. xvii. 17. In our troubles, we expect comfort and relief from our relations, but sometimes these things are friens, and that is nothing akin to us, the bonds of whose name he and love prove stronger than those of nature, and therefore he sticks closer than a brother, and, when it comes to the trial, will do more for us than a brother will. Christ is a Friend to all believers, that sticks closer than a brother; to him therefore let them show themselves friendly.

CHAP. XIX.

1. BETTER is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.

Here see, 1. What will be the credit and comfort of a poor man, and make him more excellent than his neighbour, though his poverty may expose him to contempt, and may dispirit him. Let him be honest, and walk in integrity, let him keep a good conscience, and make it appear that he does so, let him always speak and act with sincerity, when he is under the greatest temptations to dissemble, and break his word, and then let him value himself upon that, for all wise and good men will value him. He is better, has a better character, is in a better condition, is better beloved, and lives to better purpose, than many a one that mocks great, and makes a figure.

2. What will be the shame of a rich man, notwithstanding all his pomp. If he have a shal low head, and an evil tongue, if he is perverse in his lips, and is a fool, if he is a wicked man, and gets what he has by fraud and oppression, he is a fool, and an honest poor man is to be preferred far before him.

2. Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good; and he that hasteth with his feet sinneth.

Two things are here showed to be of bad consequence; 1. Ignorance; To be without the knowledge of the soul is not good, so some read it. Know not our own selves, our own hearts? A soul without knowledge is not good; it is a great privilege that we have souls, but if these souls have not knowledge, what the better are we? If man have not understanding, he is as the beast, Ps. xlix. 20. An ignorant soul cannot be a good soul. That the soul be without knowledge, is not safe, nor pleasant; what good can they do, or what is it good for, if it be without knowledge?

2. Rashness; He that hasteth with his feet, that does things incomodiously, and with precipitation, and will not take time to ponder the path of his feet, sins; he cannot but miss it often, and take many a false step, which these prevent that consider their ways. As well not know, as not consider.

3. The foolishness of man perverteth his way; and his heart fretteth against the Lord.

We have here two instances of men's folly. 1. That they bring themselves into straits and troubles, and run themselves aground, and embarras themselves; The foolishness of man perverteth his way. Men meet with crosses and disappointments in their affairs, and things do not succeed as they expected and wished, and it is their own fault, and their own folly; it is their own iniquity that corrects them.
2. That, when they have done so, they lay the blame upon God, and their hearts fret against him, as if he had done them wrong, when this they would condemn. In fretting, we are enemies to our own peace, and become self-tormentors; in fretting against the Lord, we affront him, his justice, goodness, and sovereignty; but it is very absurd to take occasion, from the trouble which we pull upon our own heads by our wilfulness, or neglect, to quarrel with him, when we ought to blame ourselves, for it is our own doing. See Isa. 1. 1.

4. Wealth maketh many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbour.

Here, 1. We may see how strong is men’s love of money, that they will love any man, how undeserving soever he be otherwise, if he has but a deal of money, and is free with it, so that they may hope to be the better for it. Wealth enables a man to send many presents, make many entertainments, and do many good offices, and so gains him many friends, who pretend to love him, for they flatter him, and make their court to him, but really love what he has; or rather love themselves, hoping to get by him.

2. We may see how weak is men’s love of one another; He who, while he prospered, was loved and respected, if he fall into poverty, is separated from his neighbour, is not owned or looked upon, not visited or regarded, is bid to keep his distance, and told he is troublesome; even one that has been his neighbour and acquaintance, shall turn his face from him; and pass by on the other side; because men’s consciences tell them they ought to relieve and succour such, they are willing to have this excuse, that they did not see them.

5. A false witness shall not be unpunished; and he that speaketh lies shall not escape.

Here we have, 1. The sins threatened; bearing false witness in judgment, and speaking lies in common conversation. Men could not arrive at such a pitch of impetu as to bear false witness, (where to the very person of a lie, and to the injury,) if they had not advanced to it by allowing themselves to speak untruths in jest and banter, or under pretence of doing good. Thus men teach their tongues to speak lies, Jer. ix. 5. Those that will take a liberty to tell lies in discourse are in a fair way to be guilty of the greater wickedness of false-witnes-bearing; whenever they are tempted to it, though they had seemed to deter it. They that can swallow a false word debauch their consciences, so that a false oath will not choketh them.

2. The threatening itself; they shall not go unpunished, they shall not escape. This intimates, that that which imboldens them in the sin, is, hope of impunity, and that is a sin which commonly escapes punishment from men, though the law was strict, Deut. xix. 18, 19. But it shall not escape the righteous judgment of God, who is jealous, and will not suffer his name to be profaned; we know where all liars will have their everlasting portion.

6. Many will entreat the favour of the prince; and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts. 7. All the brethren of the poor do hate him; how much more do his friends go far from him? he pursueth them with words, yet they are wanting to him.

These two verses are a comment upon v. 4, and show,

1. How those that are rich and great are courted and caressed, and have suitors, and servants, in abundance. The prince that has power in his hand, and precepts at his disposal, has his gate and his anti-chamber thronged with petitioners, that are willing to wait upon him, that they may get what they will entertain his favour, and think themselves happy in it. Even great men are humble suppliants to the prince. How earnest then should we be for the favour of God, which is far beyond that of any earthly prince! But, it should seem, liberality will go further than majesty itself to gain respect, for they are many that court the prince, but every man is a friend to him that gives gifts; not only that he is received, or do respect, gifts from him, will, as friends, be ready to serve him, but others also will, as friends, give him their good word. Prodigals, who are foolishly free of what they have, will have many hangers-on, who will cry them up as long as it lasts, but will leave them when it is done. Those that are prudently generous make an interest by it, which may stand them in good stead; they are accounted benefactors, erect another which may give them an opportunity of doing good, Luke xxii. 23.

2. How those that are poor and low are slighted and despised. It should not be so, we must honour all men, even under their greatest abasement; men may, if they please, court the prince, and the princely, but they may not trample upon the poor, and look at them with disdain; yet so it often is, All the brethren of the poor do hate him, even his own relations are shy of him, because he is needy and craving, and expects something from them, and because they look upon him as a blemish to their family; and then, no marvel if others of his friends, that were nothing akin to him, go far from him, to get out of his way; he pursueth them with words, hoping to prevail with them, by his importunity, to be kind to him, but all in vain, they have nothing for him. They pursue him with words, so some understand it, to excuse themselves from giving him anything; they tell him that he is idle and impertinent, that he has brought himself into poverty, and therefore ought not to be relieved; as Nabal said to David’s messengers, “There are many servants now-a-days, that run away from their masters; and how do I know but that David may be one of them?” Let poor people therefore make God their Friend, pursue him with their prayers, and he will not be wanting to them.

8. He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul; he that keepeth understanding shall find good.

They are here encouraged,

1. That take pains to get wisdom, to get knowledge and peace, and acquaintance with God; they that do so, show that they love their own souls, and will be found to have done themselves the greatest kindness imaginable. No man ever hated his own flesh, but loves that; yet many are wanting in love to their own souls, for those only love their souls, and, consequently, love themselves aright, that get wisdom, true wisdom.

2. That take care to keep it when they have got it; it is health, and wealth, and honour, and all to the soul, and therefore he that keeps understanding, as he shows that he loves his own soul, so he shall certainly find good, all good. He that retains the good lessons he has learnt, and orders his conversation according to them, shall find the benefit and comfort of it in his own soul, and shall be happy here and for ever.

9. A false witness shall not be unpunished; and he that speaketh lies shall perish.

Here is, 1. A repetition of what was said before,
(v. 5.) for we have need to be again and again warned of the danger of the sin of lying and false-wit ness bearing, since nothing is of more fatal consequence.

2. An addition to it in one word; there it was said, He that speaks lies shall not escape, and implied that he shall be punished. Here it is said, His punishment shall be as will be his destruction, he shall perish; the lie he forged against others will be his own ruin. It is a damming, destroying, sin.

10. Delight is not seemly for a fool; much less for a servant to have rule over princes.

Note. 1. Pleasure and liberty ill become a fool; Delight is not seemly for such a one. A man that has not wisdom and grace has no right or title to true joy, and therefore it is given to none. It ill be comes those, that do not delight in God, to delight in any thing else. They know not how to use any thing, nor how to manage themselves, and therefore they do but expose themselves. It becomes ungracious fools to be afflicted, and mourne, and weep, not to laugh and be merry; rebukes are more proper for them than delights. Delight is seemly for a man of business, to refresh him when he is fatigued, but not for a fool that lives an idle life, and abuses his reasonings. The proximity of fools discourses their folly, and destroys them.

2. Power and honour ill become a man of a servile spirit; nothing is more unseemly than for a servant to have rule over princes; it is absurd in itself, and very preposterous; for none are so insolent and intolerable as a beggar on horseback, a servant when he reigns, ch. xxx. 22. It is very unseemly for one, that is a servant to sin and his lusts, to rule over and oppress those that are God's freemen, and made kings and priests to him.

11. The discretion of a man deterreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.

A wise man will observe these two rules about his anger;

1. Not to be over-hasty in his resentments; Discretion teaches us to defer our anger; to defer the admission of it, till we have thoroughly considered all the merits of the provocation, seen them in a true light, and weighed them in a just balance; and then to defer the prosecution of it, till there be no danger of running into any indecencies. Plato said to his servant, "I would beat thee, but that I am angry." Give it time, and it will cool.

2. Not to be over-critical in his resentments. Whereas it is commonly looked upon as a piece of ingenuity to apprehend an affront quickly, it is here made a man's glory to pass over a transgression, to appear as if he did not see it; (Ps. xxxviii. 13.) or, if he sees fit to take notice of it, yet to forgive it, and mediate no revenge.

12. The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favour is as dew upon the grass.

This is to the same purport with what we had, ch. xvi. 14, 15. and the design of it is,

1. To make kings wise and considerate in dispensing their favours and smiles; they are not like those of common persons, their favours are very terrible, and their smiles very comfortable, and therefore it concerns them to be very careful that they never frighten a good man from doing well, with their favours, nor ever give contentance to a wicked man in doing ill, with their smiles, for then they abuse their influence, Rom. xii. 3.

2. To make subjects faithful and dutiful to their princes. Let them be restrained from all disloyalty, by the consideration of the dreadful consequence of having the government against them; and let them be encouraged in all good services to the public, by the hopes of the favour of the prince. Cost a King, whose wrath against his enemies will be as the roaring of a lion, (Rev. x. 3.) and his favour to his own people as the refreshing dew, Ps. lxx. 3.

13. A foolish son is the calamity of his father; and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping.

It is an instance of the vanity of the world, that we are liable to the greatest griefs in those things wherein we promise ourselves the greatest comfort. It is as it proves. What greater temporal comfort can a man have than a good wife, and good children? Yet,

1. A foolish son is a great affliction, and may make a man wish a thousand times he had been written childless. A son that will apply himself to no study or business, that will take no advice, that lives a lewd, loose, rakish, life, and spends what he has extravagantly, games it away, and wastes it in the excess of riot, or that is proud, foppish, and conceited, such a one is the grief of his father, because he is the disgrace, and is likely to be the ruin, of his family. He hates all his labour, when he sees to whom he must leave the fruit of it.

2. A provoking wife is as great an affliction; Her contentions are continual; every day and every hour in the day, she finds some occasion to make herself, and those about her, uneasy. Those that are accustomed to chide, never want something or other to chide at; but it is a continual dropping, that is, a continual vexation, as it is to have a house so much out of repair that it rains in, and a man cannot lie dry in it. That man has an uncomfortable life, and has need of a great deal of wisdom and grace to enable him to bear his affliction, and do his duty, that has a set to his son, and a scold to his wife.

14. House and riches are the inheritance of fathers; and a prudent wife is from the Lord.

Note. 1. A discreet and virtuous wife is a choice gift of God's providence to a man; a wife that is prudent, in opposition to one that is contentions, v. 15. For though a wife, that is continually finding fault, may think it is her wit and wisdom to be so, it is really her folly; a prudent wife is meek and quiet, and makes the best of every thing. If a man has such a wife, let him not ascribe it to the wisdom of his own choice, or his own management, (for the wisest have been deceived both in and by a woman,) but let him ascribe it to the goodness of God, who made him a help meet for him, and, perhaps, by some hits and turns of providence, that seemed casual, brought her to him. Every creature is what he makes it. Happy marriages, we are sure, are made in heaven; Abraham's servant prayed in the belief of this, Gen. xxiv. 12.

2. It is a more valuable gift than house and riches, contributes more to the comfort and credit of a man's life, and the welfare of his family, is a greater token of God's favour, and about which the Divine Providence is in a more especial manner conversant. A good estate may be the inheritance of fathers, which, by the common direction of Providence, comes in course to a man; but no man has a good wife by descent or entail. Parents that are worldly, in disposing of their children, look no further than to match them to house and riches, but it was to a prudent wife, let God have the glory.
15. Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.

See here the evil of a sluggish, slothful, disposition: 1. It stupefies men, and makes them senseless, and mindless of their own affairs, as if they were cast into a deep sleep, dreaming much, but doing nothing. 2. It doth not only slumber, but also destroy their talents, live a useless life, and are the unpohftitable burdens of the earth; for any service they do when they are awake they had as good be always asleep. Even their souls are idle, and lulled asleep, their rational powers chilled and frozen.

2. It impoverishes men, and brings them to want; they that will not labour, cannot expect to eat, but must suffer hunger; An idle soul, one that is idle in the affairs of his soul, that takes no care or pains to work out his salvation, shall perish for want of that which is necessary to the life and happiness of the soul.

16. He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul; but he that despiseth his ways shall die.

Here is, 1. The happiness of those that walk circumspectly; They that make conscience of keeping the commandment in every thing, that live by rule, as becomes servants and patients, they keep their own souls, they secure their present peace, and future bliss, and provide every way well for themselves. If we keep God's word, God's word will keep us from every thing really hurtful.

2. The misery of those that live at large, and neglect the worship of God: They that despise their ways shall die, shall perish eternally, they are in the high road to ruin. With respect to those that are careless about the end of their ways, and never consider whether they are going, and about the rule of their ways, that will walk in the way of their hearts, and after the course of the world, (Eccl. xi. 9.) that never consider what they have done, or what they are concerned to do, but walk at all adventures, (Lec. xxxvi. 21.) right or wrong, it is all one to them; what can come of this but the greatest mischief?

17. He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.

Here is, 1. The duty of charity described. It includes two things: (1.) Compassion, which is the inward principle of charity in the heart; it is to have pity on the poor; those that have not a penny for the poor, yet may have pity on them, a charitable concern and sympathy; and if a man give all his goods to feed the poor, and have not this charity in his heart, it is nothing, 1 Cor. xiii. 3. We must draw out our souls to the hungry, Isa. lviii. 10. (2.) Bounty and liberality. We must not only pity the poor, but give, according to their necessity and our ability, Jam. iii. 15, 16. That which he has given. Margin, His deed. It is charity to do for the poor, as well as to give; and thus, if they have their limbs and senses, they may be charitable to one another.

2. The encouragement of charity. (1.) A very kind construction shall be put upon it; What is given to the poor, or done for them, God will place it to account as lent to him, lent inpon interest, so the word signifies; he takes it kindly, as if it were done to himself, and he would have us to take the comfort of it, and to be as well pleased as ever any insurer was when he had let out a sum of money into good hands. (2.) A very rich recompence shall be made for it; he will pay him again. In temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings. Almsgiving is the surest and safest way of thriving.

18. Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.

Parents are here cautioned against a foolish indulgence of their children, that are untoward and viciously inclined, and that discover such an ill temper of mind as is not likely to be cured but by severity.

1. Do not say, that it is all in good time to correct them; no, as soon as ever there appears a corrupt disposition in them, check it immediately, before it gets head, and takes root, and is hardened into a habit; Chasten thy son while there is hope, for, perhaps, if he be let alone awhile, he will be past hope, and a much greater chastening will not do that which now a less would effect. It is easiest plucking up weeds as soon as they spring up, and the bullock that is designed for the yoke should be betimes accustomed to it.

2. Do not say, that it is a pity to correct them, and that because they cry, and beg to be forgiven, you cannot find in your heart to do it; if the point will be gained without correction, well and good; but if you find, as it often proves, that your forgiving them once, upon a dissembled repentance, and promise of amendment, does but embolden them and harden again, especially, if it be a thing that is itself sinful, as lying, swearing, ribaldry, stealing, or the like; in such a case, put on resolution, and let not thy soul spare for his crying. It is better that he should cry under the rod, than under the sword of the magistrate, or, which is more fearful, that of divine vengeance.

19. A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment; for if thou deliver him, yet thou must do it again.

1. As we read this, it intimates, in short, that angry men never want we; those that are of strong, or rather of headstrong, passions, commonly bring themselves, and their families, into trouble and vexations suits and quarrels, and the provocations they give; they are still smarting, in one instance or other, for their ungodly heats; and if their friends deliver them out of one trouble, they will quickly involve themselves in another, and they must do it again; all which trouble to themselves and others would be prevented if they would mortify their passions, and get the rule of their own spirits.

2. It may as well be read, He that is of great wrath, meaning the child that is to be corrected, and is impatient of rebuke, cries, and makes a noise, even that wrath of his against the rod of correction deserves to be punished, for if thou deliver him for the sake of that, thou wilt be forced to punish him so much the more the next time. A stomachful, high-spirited, child, must be subdued betimes, or it will be the worse for it.

20. Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.

Note. 1. It is well with those that are wise in their latter end, wise for their latter end, for their future state, for another world, that are found wise when their latter end comes; wise virgins, wise builders, wise stewards; that are wise at length, and understand the things that belong to their peace, before they be hid from their eyes. A carnal worldly, at his end, shall be a fool, (Jer. xviii. 11.) but godliness will prove wisdom at last. 2. Those that would be wise in their latter end, must hear counsel, and receive instruction, in their
21. There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.  

Here is, 1. Men projecting. They keep their designs to themselves, but they cannot hide them from God, he knows the many devices that are in men's hearts, devices against his counsel, as those, Ps. ii. 1•3. Micah iv. 11. devices without his counsel, no regard had to his providence, as those, James iv. 13. This and the other they will do, and not take God along with them; devices unlike God's counsels; men are wavering in their devices, and often absurd and unjust, but God's counsels are wise and holy, steady and uniform.  

2. God overruling. Various men have various designs, according as their inclination and interest leads them, but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand, whatever comes of the devices of men. His counsel often breaks men's measures, and baffles their devices; but their devices cannot in the least alter his counsel, or disturb the proceedings of it, or put him upon new counsels, Isa. xiv. 24.—xlvi. 11. What a check does this give to politic, designing, men, who think they can manage all mankind, that there is a God in heaven, that laughs at them! Ps. ii. 4. What comfort does this speak to all God's people, that all God's purposes, which, we are sure, are right and good, shall be accomplished in due time!  

22. The desire of a man is his kindness; and a poor man is better than a liar.  

Note, 1. The honour of doing good is what we may reasonably be ambitious of. It cannot but be the desire of a man, if he have any spark of virtue in him, to be kind; one would not covet an estate for anything so much as thereby to be put into a capacity of relieving the poor, and obliging our friends.  

2. It is far better to have a heart to do good, and want ability for it, than have ability for it, and want a heart to it; The desire of a man to be kind, and charitable, and generous, is his kindness, and shall be so construed; both God and man will accept his good will, according to what he has, and will not expect more. A poor man, who wishes you well, but can promise you nothing, because he has nothing to be kind with, is better than a liar, than a rich man, who makes you believe he will do mighty things, but, when it comes to the setting to, will do nothing. The character of the men of low degree, that they are vanity, from whom nothing is expected, is better than that of men of high degree; that they are a lie, they deceive those whose expectations they raised.  

23. The fear of the Lord tendeth to life; and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil.  

See what they get by it, that live in the fear of God, and always make conscience of their duty to him.  

1. Safety: They shall not be visited with evil; they may be visited with sickness, or other afflictions, but there shall be no evil in them, nothing to hurt them, because nothing to separate them from the love of God, or to hurt the soul.  

Satisfaction: They shall abide satisfied; they shall have those comforts which are satisfying, and shall have a constant contentment and complacency in them. It is a satisfaction which will abide, whereas all the satisfactions of sense are transient, and soon gone. Satur penurocabit, non cubabit incan- tatione—He shall not go supperless to bed; he shall have that which will make him easy, and be an entertainment to him in his silent and solitary hours, Ps. cxv. 7.  

3. True and complete happiness; serious godli- ness has a direct tendency to life, to all good, to eternal life; it is the sure and ready way to it; there is something in the nature of it, fitting men for heaven, and so leading them to it.  

24. A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.  

A sluggard is here exposed as a fool, for, 1. All his care is to save himself from labour and cold. See his posture; He hides his hand in his bosom, pretends he is lame, and cannot work; his hands are cold, and he must warm them in his bosom; and, when they are warm there, he must keep them so. He hides himself in his own case, and is resolved against labour and hardship. Let those work that love it; for his part, he thinks there is no such fine life as sitting still and doing nothing.  

2. He will not be at the pains to feed himself; an elegant hyperbole; as we say, A man is so lazy, that he would not shake fire off him; so here, He cannot find in his heart to take his hand out of his bosom, not to put meat into his own mouth. If the law be so, that those who will not labour must not eat, he will rather starve than stir: thus his sin is his punishment, and therefore is egregious folly.  

25. Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware; and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge.  

Note, 1. The punishment of scorners will be a means of good to others. When men are so hardened in wickedness, that they will not themselves be wrought upon by the severe methods that are used to reclaim and reform them, yet such methods must be used for the sake of others, that they may hear and fear, Deut. xiv. 20. If the scorner will not be recovered from his sin, the disease being invertebrate, yet the simple will beware of venturing upon the rozam, which exposes men thus. If it cure not the infected, it may prevent the spreading of the infection.  

2. The reproof of wise men will be a means of good to themselves; they need not be smitten; a word to the wise is enough. Do but reprove one that has understanding, and he will so far understand himself and his own interest, that he will understand knowledge by it, and not miss it again, through ignorance and inadvertence, when once he has been told of it; so kindly does he take reproof, and so wisely improve it.  

26. He that wasteth his father, and chasteth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach.  

Here is, 1. The sin of a prodigal son. Beside the wrong he does to himself, he is injurious to his good parents, and basely ungrateful to them that were the instruments of his being, and have taken so much care and pains about him, which is a great aggravation of his sin, and renders it exceeding sinful in the eyes of God and man. He wastes his father, wastes his estate which he should have supported him in; he degenerates, wastes his spirits, and breaks his heart, and brings his gray head with sorrow to the grave. He chases away his mother, alienates her affections from him, which cannot be done without a great deal of regret and uneness
to her; he makes her weary of the house, with his unedness and insolence, and glad to retire for a little quietness; and, when he has all spent, he turns her out of doors.

2. The shame of a prodigal son. It is a shame to himself that he should be so brutish and unnatural; he makes himself odious to all mankind. It is a shame to his parents and family, who are reflected upon, though perhaps without just cause, for teaching him no better, or being some way wanting to him.

27. Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.

This is a good caution to those who have had a good education, to take heed of hearkening to those who, under pretense of religion and godliness, give them off from those good principles under the influence of which they were trained up. Observe,

1. There is that which seems designed for the instruction, but really tends to the destruction, of young men. The factors for vice will undertake to teach them free thoughts and a fashionable conversation; how to palliate the sins they have a mind to, and stop the mouth of their own consciences; how to get clear of the restraints of their education, and set up for wits and beaus. This is the instruction which causeth to err from the forms of sound words, which should be held fast in faith and love.

2. It is the wisdom of young men to turn a deaf ear to such instructions, as the adder does to the charms that are designed to insnare her. "Dread hearing such talk as tends to instil loose principles into the mind; and if thou art linked in with such, break off from them; thou hast heard enough, or too much, and therefore hear no more, of the evil communication which corrupts good manners."

28. An ungodly witness scorneth judgment; and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity.

Here is a description of the worst of sinners, whose hearts are fully set in them to do evil.

1. They set that at defiance which would deter and detain them from sin; An ungodly witness is one that bears false witness against his neighbour, and will forswear himself to do another a mischief, in which there is not only great injustice, but great impiety; this is one of the worst of men. Or, An ungodly witness is one that profanely and atheistically witnesses against his neighbor, whose instructions reduceth from the words of knowledge; (v. 27.) such a one scorns judgment, laughs at the terrors of the Lord, mocks at that fear, Job xv. 26. Tell him of law and equity, that the scriptures and an oath are sacred things, and not to be jested with, that there will come a reckoning day; he laughs at it all, and scorns to heed it.

2. They are greedily and glad of that which gives them an opportunity to sin; The mouth of the wicked eavens devoureth iniquity, drinks it in like water, Job xv. 16.

29. Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools.

Note, 1. Scorners are fools; those that ridicule things sacred and serious, do but make themselves ridiculous; their folly shall be manifest unto all men.

2. Those that scorn judgments cannot escape them, v. 28. The unbelief of man shall not make God's threatenings of no effect; they that devour iniquity swallow the hook with the bait. The civil magistrate has judgments prepared for scorners; for, otherwise, he would bear the sword in vain; but if he be remiss, and connine at sin, yet God's judgments slumber not, they are prepared, Matth. xxv. 41.

CHAP. XX.

1. WINE, is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

Here is, 1. The mischief of drunkenness; Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; it is so to the sinner himself, it mocks him, makes a fool of him, promises him that satisfaction which it can never give him; it smiles upon him at first, but at the last it bites; in reflection upon it, it rages in his conscience; it is raging in the body, puts the humour into a ferment. When the wine is in, the wit is out, and then the man, according as his natural temper in either case may be disposed. If he be a debauchee, he drinks himself into man. Drunkenness, which pretends to be a sociable thing, renders men unfit for society, for it makes them abusive with their tongues, and outrageous in their passions, ch. xxii. 29.

2. The folly of drunkards is easily inferred thence. He that is deceived thereby, that suffers himself to be drawn into this sin, when he is so plainly warned of the consequences of it, is not wise, he shows that he has no right sense or consideration of things; and he is truly so, but he renders himself incapable of getting wisdom; for it is a sin that infatuates and betrays men, and takes away their heart. A drunkard is a fool, and a fool he is likely to be.

2. The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whose provoketh him to anger sinner against his own soul.

See here, 1. How formidable kings are, and what a terror they strike upon those they are angry with; Their fear, with which (especially when they are absolute, and their will is a law) they keep their subjects in awe, is as the roaring of a lion, which is very dreadful to the creatures he preys upon, and makes them tremble, so that they cannot escape from him. Those princes that rule by wisdom and love, rule like God himself, and bear his image; but those that rule merely by terror, and with a high hand, do but rule like a lion in the forest, with a brutal power. Oderint, dum metuant—Let them hate, provided they fear.

2. How unwise therefore they are that quarrel with them, that are angry at them, and so provoke them to anger; they sin against their own lives; much more do they sin with those that we have, who want to provoke the King of kings to anger. Nemo me impune lacesset—No one shall provoke me with impunity.

3. It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling.

This is designed to rectify men's mistakes concerning strife.

1. Men think it is their wisdom to engage in quarrels; whereas it is the greatest folly that can be. He thinks himself a wise man that is quick in resenting affronts, that stands upon every nicety of honour and right; he will not stand an ace of either; that prescribes and imposes, and gives, law, to every body; but he that thus meddles is a fool, and creates a great deal of needless vexation to himself.

2. Men think, when they are engaged in quarrels, that it would be a shame to them to go back, and let fall the weapon; whereas really it is an honour for a man to cease from strife, an honour to withdraw an action, to drop a controversy, to forgive an injury, and even to be disputants with those that we have fallen out with. It is the honour of a man, a wise man, a man of spirit, to show the command he has
of himself, by ceasing from strife, yielding, and stooping, and receding from his just demands, for peace sake, as Abraham, the better man, Gen. xiii. 8.

4. The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.

See here the evil of slothfulness, and the love of ease:

1. It keeps men from the most necessary business, from ploughing and sowing when the season is; The sluggard has ground to occupy, and has ability for it, he can plough, but he will not, some excuse or other he has to shift it off, but the true reason is, it is cold weather; though ploughing time is not in the depth of winter, it is in the borders of winter, when he thinks it too cold for him to be abroad. Those are scandalously sluggishe, who, in the way of their business, cannot find in their hearts to undergo so little toil as that of ploughing, and so little hardship as that of a cold blast. Thus careless are many in the affairs of their souls; a trifling difficulty will frighten them from the most important duty; but good soldiers must endure hardness.

2. Thereby it deprives them of the most necessary supports; That will not plough in seed-time, cannot expect to reap in harvest; and therefore they must beg their bread with astonishment when the diligent are bringing home their sheaves with joy. He that will not submit to the labour of ploughing, must submit to the shame of begging; they shall beg in harvest, and yet have nothing; no, not then when there is most plenty. Though it may be charity to relieve sluggards, yet a man may, in justice, not relieve them; they deserve to be left to starve. They that would not provide oil in their vessels, begged when the bridegroom came, and were denied.

5. Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out.

A man’s wisdom is here said to be of use to him, for the pumping of other people, and diving into their minds.

1. To get the knowledge of them. Though men’s counsels and designs are ever so carefully concealed by them, so that they are as deep water which one cannot fathom; yet there are those who, by sly insinuations, and questions that seem foreign, will get out of them both what they have done, and what they intend to do. Those therefore who would keep counsel, must not only put on resolution, but stand upon their guard.

2. To get knowledge by them. Some are very able and fit to give counsel, have an excellent faculty of clearing a hair, hitting the joint of a difficulty, and advising pertinently; but they are modest, and reserved, and not communicative; they have a great deal in them, but it is loath to come out; in such a case, a man of understanding will draw it out, as wine out of a vessel. We lose the benefit we might have by the conversation of wise men, for want of the art of being inquisitive.

6. Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?

Note. 1. It is easy to find those that will pretend to be kind and liberal. Many a man will call himself a man of mercy, will boast what good he has done, and what good he designs to do, or, at least, what an affection he has to well-doing. Most men will talk a great deal of their charity, generosity, hospitality, and piety, will sound a trumpet to themselves, as the Pharisees, and, what little goodness they have, will proclaim it, and make a mighty matter of it.

2. But it is hard to find those that really are kind and liberal; that have done, and will do, more than either they speak of, or care to near spoken of; that will be a true friend in a strait; such a one as one may trust to is like a black swan.

7. The just man walketh in his integrity; his children are blessed after him.

It is here observed, to the honour of a good man, 1. That he does well for himself; he has a certain rule, which, with an even steady hand, he governs himself by; He walks in his integrity, he keeps a good conscience, and he has the comfort of it, for it is his. He is not liable to those uneasinesses, either in contriving what he shall do, or reflecting on what he has done, which they are liable to that walk in deceit.

2. That he does well for his family; His children are blessed after him, and fare the better for his sake; God has mercy in store for the seed of the faithful.

8. A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes.

Here is 1. The character of a good governor; He is a king that deserves to be called so, who sits in the throne, not as a throne of honour, to take his ease, and take state upon him, and oblige men to keep their distance, but as a throne of judgment, that he may do justice, right the injured, and punish the injurious; that makes his business his delight, and loves to assure confidence, and that does not devolve the whole care and trouble upon others, but takes cognizance of affairs himself, and sees with his own eyes as much as may be, 1 Kings x. 9.

2. The happy effect of a good government. The presence of the prince goes far toward the putting of wickedness out of countenance; if he inspect his affairs himself, those that are employed under him will be kept in awe, and restrained from doing wrong. If great men be good men, and will use their power as they may and ought, what good may they do, and what evil may they prevent?

9. Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?

This question is not only a challenge to any man in the world to prove himself sinless, whatever he pretends, but a lamentation of the corruption of mankind, even that which remains in the best. Alas! Who can say, “I am sinless?” Observe,

1. Who the persons are that are excluded from these pretensions; all, one as well as another. Here, in this imperfect state, no person whatsoever can pretend to be without sin. Adam could say so in innocency, and saints can say so in heaven, but none in this life. Those that think themselves as good as they should be, cannot; and, these that are really good, will not, dare not, say this.

2. What the pretension is that is excluded. We cannot say, We have made our hearts clean; though we can say, through grace, “We are cleaner than we have been,” yet we cannot say, “We are clean and pure from all remainders of sin;” or, though we are clean from the gross acts of sin, yet we cannot say, “Our hearts are cleanly;” or, though we are in a pleasure, yet we cannot say, “We ourselves made our own hearts clean,” it was the work of the Spirit; or, though we are pure from the sins of many others, yet we cannot say, “We are pure
from our sin, the sin that easily besets us, the body of death which Paul complained of, Rom. vii. 24.

10. Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the Lord.

See here, 1. The various arts of deceiving that men have; all which evils the love of money is the root of. In paying and receiving money, which was then commonly done by the scale, they had divers weights, an under-weight for what they paid, and an over-weight for what they received; in delivering out, and taking in, goods, they had divers measures, a scanty measure to sell by, and a large measure to buy by. This was doing wrong with plot and contrivance, and under cover of doing right. Under these is included all manner of fraud and deceit in commerce and trade.

2. The displeasure of God against them; whether they be about the money or the goods in the buyer, or in the seller, they are all alike an abomination to the Lord; he will not prosper the trade that is thus driven, nor bless what is thus got; he hates those that thus break the common faith by which justice is maintained, and will be the Avenger of all such.

11. Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.

The tree is known by its fruits, a man by his doings; even a young tree by its first fruits, a child by his childish things, whether his work be clean only, appearing good, (the word is used ch. xvi. 2.) or whether it be right, really good. This intimates,

1. That children will discover themselves; one may soon see what their temper is, and which way their inclination leads them, according as their constitution is. Children have not learned the art of dissembling and concealing their bent, as grown people have.

2. That parents should observe their children, that they may discover their disposition and genius, and both change them, and direct them, accordingly. Drive the mill that will go, and draw out what goes amiss. Wisdom is herein profitable to direct.

12. The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them.

Note, 1. God is the God of nature, and all the powers and faculties of nature are derived from him, and depend upon him, and therefore are to be employed for him. It was he that formed the eye, and planted the ear, (Ps. xcv. 9.) and the structure of both is admirable; and it is he that preserves to us the use of both; to his providence we owe it that our eyes are seeing eyes, and our ears hearing ears. Hearing and seeing are the learning senses, and we must particularly own God's goodness in them.

2. God is the God of grace; it is he that gives the ear that hears God's voice, the eye that sees his beauty, for it is he that opens the understanding.

13. Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread.

Note, 1. Those that indulge themselves in their case may expect to want necessaries, which should have been gotten by honest labour; "Therefore, though thou must sleep, (nature requires it,) yet love not sleep, as those do that hate business. Love not sleep for its own sake, but only as it fits for further work. Love not much sleep, but rather grudge the time that is spent in it, and wish thou wealthiest live without it, that thou mightest always be employed in some good exercise." We must allow it to our bodies as men allow it to their servants, because they cannot help it, and otherwise they shall have no good of them. They that love sleep are likely to come to poverty, not only because they lose the time they spend in excess of sleep, but because they contract a listless, careless, disposition, and are still half asleep, never well awake.

2. Those that stir up themselves to their business may expect to have conveniences; "Open thine eyes, and awake, and shake off slumber, see how far in the day it is, how thy work wants thee, and how busy others are about thee! And when thou art awake, look up, look to thine advantages, and do not let slip thine opportunities; apply thy mind closely to thy business, and be in care about it. It is the easy condition of a great advantage; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread; if thou dost not grow rich, yet thou shalt have enough; and that is as good as a feast."

14. It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.

See here, 1. What arts men use to get a good bargain, and to buy cheap. They not only cheapen carelessly, as if they had no need, no mind, for the commodity, when, perhaps, they cannot go without it, (there may be prudence in that,) but they villify and run down that which yet they know to be of value; they cry, "It is naught, it is naught; it has this and the other fault, or perhaps may have; it is not good of the sort; and it is too dear; we can have better and cheaper elsewhere; or have bought better and cheaper." This is the common way of dealing; and after all, it may be, they knew the contrary of what they affirm; but the buyer may think he has no other way of being even with the seller, who deems as extravagantly commend his goods, and justify the price he sets on them; and so there is a fault on both sides; whereas the bargain would be made every jot as well, if both buyer and seller would be modest, and speak as they think.

2. What pride and pleasure often take in a good bargain, and how good bargains, through wherein they contradict themselves, and own they dissembled when they were driving the bargain; when he has beaten down the seller, who was content to lower his price rather than lose a customer, (as many poor tradesmen are forced to do, small profit is better than none,) then he goes his way, and boasts what excellent goods he has got at his own price, and takes it as an affront and a reflection upon his judgment if any body disparages his bargain. Perhaps he knew the worth of the goods better than the seller himself did, and knows how to get a great deal by them. See how apt men are to be pleased with their gettings, and proud of their tricks; whereas a fraud and a lie are what a man ought to be ashamed of, though he have gained ever so much by them.

15. There is gold, and a multitude of rubies: but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.

The lips of knowledge (a good understanding to guide the lips, and a good eloquence to diffuse the knowledge) are to be preferred far before gold, and pearl, and rubies; for,

1. They are more rare in themselves, more scarce, and hard to be got. There is gold in many a man's pocket, that has no grace in his heart. In Solomon's time there was plenty of gold, (1 Kings x. 21.) and abundance of rubies, every body wore them, they were to be bought in every town; but wisdom is a rare thing, a precious jewel, few have it so as to de
good with it, nor is it to be purchased of the merchants.
2. They are more enriching to us, and more adorning: They make us rich toward God, rich in good works. 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10. Most men are beggars of gold, and a ruby or two will not serve, they must have a multitude of them, a cabinet of jewels, but he that has the lips of knowledge despises these, because he knows and possesses better things.

16. Take his garment that is surety for a stranger; and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

Two sorts of persons are here spoken of, that are ruining their own estates, and will be beggars shortly, and therefore are not to be trusted without good security.
1. Those that will be bound for any body that will ask them, that entangle themselves in rash sureties, to oblige their idle companions; they will break at last, nay, they cannot hold out long; these waste by wholesale.
2. Those that are in league with abandoned women, that treat them, and court them, and keep company with them; they will be beggars in a little time, never give them credit without a good pawn. Strange women have strange ways of impoverishing men, to enrich themselves.

17. Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.

Note, 1. Sin may be pleasant in the commission; Bread of deceit, wealth gotten by fraud, by lying and oppression, may be sweet to a man, and the more sweet for its being ill-gotten; such pleasure does the carnal mind take in the success of its wicked projects. All the pleasures and profits of sin are bread of deceit, they are stolen, for they are forbidden fruit, and they will deceive men, for they are not what they promise. For a time, however, they are rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, and the sinner blesses himself in them.
But, 2. It will be bitter in the reflection. Afterward, the sinner’s mouth shall be filled with gravel; when his conscience is awakened, when he sees himself deserted, and becomes apprehensive of the wrath of God against him for this sin, how painful and uneasy then is the thought of it! The pleasures of sin are but for a season, and are succeeded with sorrows. Some nations have punished malefactors by mingling gravel with their bread.

18. Every purpose is established by counsel; and with good advice make war.

Note, 1. It is good in every thing to act with deliberation, and to consult with ourselves at least, and, in matters of moment, with our friends too, before we determine, but especially to ask counsel of God, and beg direction from him, and observe the guidance of his eye. This is the way to have both our minds and our purposes established, and to succeed well in our affairs; whereas what is done hastily and with precipitation, is repented of at leisure. Take time, and you will have done the sooner. De liberandum est du, quod statuendo est semen—A final decision should be preceded by mature deliberation.
2. It is especially our wisdom to be cautious in making war; consider, and take advice, whether the war should be begun or no, whether it be just, whether it be prudent, whether we be a match for the enemy, and able to carry it on when it is too late to retreat; (Luke xiv. 31.) and, when it is begun, bow, and by what arts, it may be prosecuted, for skill is as necessary as courage. Going to law is a kind of going to war, and, therefore, must be done with good advice, Prov. xxxv. 8. The rule among the Romans was, nec sequi bellum, nec fugere—neither to urge war, nor yet to shun it.

19. He that goeth about as a tale-bearer revealeth secrets; therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.

Two sorts of people are dangerous to be conversed with.
1. Tale-bearers; though they are commonly flatterers, and by speaking fair insinuate themselves into men’s acquaintance. Those are unprincipled people, that go about carrying stories, that make mischief among neighbours and relations, that sow in the minds of people jealousies of their governors, of their ministers, and of one another, that reveal secrets which they are intrusted with, or which, by unfair means, they come to the knowledge of; or, under pretence of guessing at men’s thoughts and intentions, tell that of them which is really false. “Be not familiar with such, do not give them the hearing when they tell their tales and reveal secrets, for you may be sure that they will betray your secrets too, and tell tales of you.”
2. Flatterers; for they are commonly tale-bearers. If a man fawn upon you, cajole and commend you, suspect him, for he has some design upon you, and stands upon your guard; he would pick that out of you, which will serve him to make a story of to somebody else, to your prejudice; therefore meddle not with him that flatters with his lips. Those too dearly love, and too dearly buy, their own praise, that will put confidence in a man, and trust him with a secret or business, because he speaks fairly to them.

20. Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.

Here is, 1. An undutiful child become very wicked by degrees; he began with despising his father and mother, slighting their instructions, disobeying their commands, and running at their reproofs, but at length he arrives at such a pitch of impudence and impiety as to curse them, to give them scurrilous and opprobrious language, and to wish mischief to them who were the instruments of his being, and have taken so much care and pains about him; and this, in defiance of God and his law, which has made this a capital crime, (Exod. xxii. 17. Matth. xv. 4.) and in violation of all the bonds of duty, their affection, and gratitude.
2. An undutiful child become very miserable at last; His lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness; all his honour shall be laid in the dust, and he shall for ever lose his reputation; let him never expect any peace or comfort in his own mind, no, nor prosperity in this world. His days shall be shortened, and the lamp of his life extinguished, according to the reverse of the promise in the fifth commandment. His family shall be cut off, and his posterity be a curse to him; and it will be his eternal ruin, and the lamp of his happiness shall be put out in the blackness of darkness, so the word is, even that which is for ever, Jude 13. Matth. xxii. 13.

21. An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed.

Note, 1. It is possible that an estate may be suddenly raised. There are those who will be rich, by right or wrong, who make no conscience of what they say or do, if they can but get money by it, who,
when it is in their power, will cheat their own father, and who sordidly spare and heard up what they get, grudging themselves and their families food convinces, and thinking all lest but what they buy lend with, or put out to interest. By such ways as these a man may grow rich, may grow very rich, in a little time, at his first setting out.

2. An estate that is suddenly raised is often as suddenly ruined; it was raised hastily, but, not being raised honestly, it proves soon ripe and soon rotten, the end thereof shall not be blessed of God, and, if he do not bless it, it can neither be comfortable, nor of any continuance; so that he who got it, at the end, will be a fool. He had better have taken time, and built firmly.

22. Say not thou, I will recompense evil: but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee.

They that live in this world must expect to have injuries done them, affronts given them, and trouble wrongfully created them, for we dwell among briers. Now here we are told what to do when we have wrong done us.

We must not avenge ourselves, no, nor so much as think of it, or design it; "Say not thou, no not in thy heart, I will recompense evil for evil; do not please thyself with the thought that some time or other thou shalt have an opportunity of being quits with him. Do not wish revenge, or hope for it, much less resolve upon it, no, not when the injury is fresh, and the resentments of it most deep. Never say that thou wilt do a thing which thou canst not in faith pray to God to assist thee in; and that thou canst not do in meditating revenge."

2. We must refer ourselves to God, and leave it to him to plead our cause, to maintain our right, and reckon with those that do us wrong, in such a way and manner as he thinks fit, and in his own due time; "Wait on the Lord, attend his pleasure, acquiesce in his will, and he does not say that he shall punish him that has injured thee; instead of desiring that, thou must forgive him and pray for him, but he shall save thee, and that is enough. He will protect thee, and preserve thee; when passing by one injury shall not (as is commonly feared) expose thee to another; nay, he will recompense good to thee, to balance thy trouble, and encourage thy patience," as David hoped, when Shimei cursed him, 2 Sam. xvi. 12.

23. Divers weights are an abomination unto the Lord; and a false balance is not good.

This is to the same purport with what was said v. 10.

1. It is here repeated, because it is a sin that God doubly hates; as lying (which is of the same nature with this sin) is mentioned twice among the seven things that God hates, ch. vi. 17, 19. and because, probably, it was a sin very much practised at that time in Israel, and therefore made light of, as if there were no harm in it, under pretence that, being commonly used, there was no trading without it.

2. It is here added, A false balance is not good; to intimate that it is not only abominable to God, but unprofitable to the sinner himself; there is really no good to be got by it, no, not a good bargain, for a bargain made by fraud will prove a losing bargain in the end.

24. Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?

We are here taught, that, in all our affairs,

1. We have a necessary and constant dependence upon God; all our natural actions depend upon his providence, all our spiritual actions upon his grace. The best man is no better than God makes him; and every creature is that to us which it is the will of God that it should be. Our enterprises succeed, not as we desire and design, but as God directs and dispenses. The goings even of a strong man, so the word signifies, are of the Lord, for his strength is weakness without God, nor is the battle always to the strong.

2. We have no foresight of future events, and therefore know not how to forecast for them; How can a man understand his own way? How can he tell what will befall him, since God's counsels concerning him are secret? and therefore how can he of himself contrive what to do, without divine direction? We so little understand our own way, that we know not what is good for ourselves, and therefore we must make a virtue of necessity, and commit our way unto the Lord, in whose hand it is, follow the guidance, and submit to the disposal of Providence.

25. It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy, and after vows to make inquiry.

Two things, by which God is greatly afforded, men are here said to be insinuate by, and entangled not only in guilt, but in trouble and ruin at length.

1. Sacrilege; men's alienating holy things, and converting them to their own uses, which is here called devouring them. What is devoted in such a way to the service and honour of God, for the support of religion and divine worship, or the relief of the poor, ought to be conscientiously preserved to the purposes designed; and those that directly or indirectly embezzle them, or defeat the purpose for which they were given, will have a great deal to answer for; Will a man rob God in tithes and offerings? Mal. iii. 8. Those that hurry over religious offices, (their praying and preaching,) and huddle them up in haste; as being impatient to get done, may be said to devour that which is holy.

2. Covenant-breaking: It is a snare to a man, after he has sworn to God, to inquire how he may evade them, or get them dispensed with, and to contrive excuses for the violating of them. If the matter of them was doubtful, and the expressions ambiguous, that was his fault, he should have made them with more caution and consideration, for it will involve his conscience (if he be tender) in great perplexities, if he be to inquire concerning them afterward; (Eccl. v. 6.) for when we have opened our mouth to the Lord, it is too late to think of going back, Acts v. 4.

26. A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them.

See here, 1. What is the business of magistrates; they are to be a terror to evil-doers. They must scatter the wicked, who are linked in confederacies to assist and imboden another in doing mischief; and there is no doing this but by bringing the wheel over them, putting the laws in execution against them, crushing their power, and quashing their projects. Severity must sometimes be used, to rid the country of those that are openly vicious and mischievous, debouched and debauching.

2. What is the qualification of magistrates, which is necessary in order to this; they have need to be both pious and prudent, for it is the wise king, that is both religious and discreet, that is likely to effect the suppression of vice and reformation of manners.

27. The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly.
We have here the dignity of the soul, the great soul of man, that light which enlighteth every man. 

1. It is a divine light; it is the candle of the Lord, a candle of his lighting, for it is the inspiration of the Almighty, that gives us understanding. He forms the spirit of man within him. It is after the image of God that man is created in knowledge. 

Conscience, that noble faculty, is God's deputy in the soul; it is a candle not only lighted by him, but lighted for him. The Father of spirits is therefore called the Father of lights. 

2. It is a discovering light. By the help of reason, we come to know men, to judge of their characters, and dine into their designs; by the help of conscience we come to know ourselves. The spirit of a man has a self-consciousness; (1 Cor. ii. 11.) it searches into the dispositions and affections of the soul, praises what is good, condemns what is otherwise, and judges of the thoughts and intents of the heart. This is the office, this the power of conscience, which we are therefore concerned to get rightly informed, and keep void of offence. 

23. Mercy and truth preserve the king; and his throne is upheld by mercy. 

Here is, 1. The virtues of a good king; those are mercy and truth, especially mercy, for that is mentioned twice here. He must be strictly faithful to his word, must be sincere, and abhor all dissimulation, must religiously discharge all the trusts reposed in him, must support and countenance truth. He must likewise rule with clemency, and by all acts of compassion gain the affections of his people. 

Mercy and truth are the glories of God's throne, and kings are called gods. 

2. The advantages he gains thereby. These virtues will preserve his person, and support his government, will make him easy and safe, beloved by his own people, and feared by his enemies, if it be possible that he should have any. 

29. The glory of young men is their strength; and the beauty of old men is the gray head. 

This shows that both young and old have their advantages, and therefore must each of them be, according to their capacities, serviceable to the public, and neither of them despise or envy the other. 

1. Let not old people despise the young, for they are strong and fit for action, able to go through business, and break through difficulties, which the aged and weak cannot grapple with. The glory of young men is their strength, provided they use it well, (in the service of God and their country, not of their lusts,) and that they be not proud of it, nor trust to it. 

2. Let not young people despise the old, for they are wise and fit for counsel, and though they have not the strength that young men have, yet they have more wisdom and experience. 

20. The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly; 

Note. 1. Many need severe rebukes. Some children are so obstinate, that their parents can do no good with them without sharp correction; some criminals must feel the rigor of the law and public justice, gentle methods will not work upon them; they must be beaten black and blue. And the wise God sees that his own children sometimes need very sharp afflictions. 

2. Severe rebukes sometimes do a great deal of good, as corrosives contribute to the cure of a wound, eating out the proud flesh. The red drives out even that foolishness which was bound up in the heart, and cleanses away the evil there. 

3. Frequently those that most need severe rebukes can worst bear them. Such is the corruption of nature, that men are so loath to be rebuked sharply for their sins as to be beaten till their bones ache. Correction is grievous to him that forsakes the way, and yet it is good for him, Heb. xii. 11. 

CHAP. XXI. 

1. THE king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever he will. 

Note. 1. Even the hearts of men are in God's hand, and not only their goings, as he had said, ch. xx. 24. God can change men's minds, can, by a wise government, by the operation upon their spirits, turn them from that which they seemed most intent upon, and incline them to that which they seemed most averse to, as the husbandman, by canals and gutters, turns the water through his grounds as he pleases, which does not alter the nature of the water, or put any force upon it, any more than God's providence does upon the native freedom of man's will, but directs the course of it to serve his own purposes. 

2. Even kings' hearts are so, notwithstanding their powers and prerogatives, as much as the hearts of common persons. The hearts of kings are unsearchable to us, much more unmanageable by us; as they have their Arcana imperii—State secrets, so they have the prerogatives of their crown, but the great God has them not only under his eye, but in his hand. Kings are what he makes them. Those that are most absolute are under God's government: he puts things into their hearts, Rev. xvii. 17. Ezra vii. 27. 

2. Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the Lord pondereth the hearts. 

Note. 1. We are all apt to be partial in judging of ourselves and our own actions, and to think too favourably of our own character, as if there were nothing amiss in it; Every way of a man, even his by-way, is right in his own eyes; the prudent heart is very ingenious in putting a fair face upon a foul matter, and in making that appear right to itself, which is far from being so, to stop the mouth of conscience. 

2. We are sure that the judgment of God concerning us is according to truth. Whatever our judgment is concerning ourselves, the Lord pondereth the heart. God looks at the heart, and judges of men according to that, of their actions according to their principles and intentions; and his judgment of that is as exact as ours is of that which we ponder most, and more so; he weighs it in an unerring balance, ch. xvi. 2. 

3. To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice. 

Here. 1. It is implied that many deceive themselves with a conceit, that if they offer sacrifice, that will excuse them from doing justice, and procure them a dispensation for their unrighteousness; and this makes their way seem right, v. 2. We have fasted, Isa. lviii. 3. I have peace-offerings with me, Prov. vii. 14. 

2. It is plainly declared, that living a good life,
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3. But moral duties were preferred before them, (1 Sam. xv. 22.) which intimated that their excellency was not innate, nor the obligation to them perpetual, Micah vi. 6-8. Much of religion lies in doing judgment and justice, from a principle of duty to God, contempt of the world, and love to our neighbours and this is more pleasing to God than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices, Mark xii. 33.

4. An high look, and a proud heart, and the ploughing of the wicked, is sin.

This may be taken as showing us,
1. The marks of a wicked man. He that has a high look and a proud heart, that carries himself insolently and scornfully toward both God and man; and that is always ploughing and plotting, designing and devising some mischief or other, he is indeed a wicked man. The light of the wicked is sin. Sin is the pride, the ambition, the glory and joy, and the business of wicked men.

2. The miseries of a wicked man. His raised expectations, his high designs, and most elaborate contrivances and projects, are sin to him; he contracts guilt in them, and so prepares trouble for himself. The very speculations and plottings of all wicked men, as well as their pleasure, is nothing but sin. So Bishop Patrick. They do all to serve their lusts, and have no regard to the glory of God in it, and therefore their ploughing is sin, and, no marvel, when their sacrificing is so, ch. xv. 8.

5. The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty, only to want.

Here is, 1. The way to be rich. If we would live plenteously and comfortably in the world, we must be diligent in our business, and not shrink from the toil and trouble of it, but prosecute it closely, improving all advantages and opportunities for it, and doing what we do with all our might; yet we must not be hasty in it, nor hurry ourselves and others with it, but keep doing fair and softly, which, we say, goes far in a day. With diligence there must be contrivance; the thoughts of the diligent are as necessary as the hand of the diligent. Forecast is as good as work. Scest thou a man thus prudent and diligent? He will have enough to live on.

2. The way to be poor. Those that are hasty, that are rash and inconsiderate in their affairs, and will not take time to think, that are greedy of gain, by right or wrong, and make haste to be rich by unjust practices, or unwise projects, they are in the ready road to poverty. Their thoughts and contrivances, by which they hope to raise themselves, will ruin them.

6. The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.

This shows the folly of those that hope to enrich themselves by dishonest practices, by oppressing and overreaching those with whom they deal, by false-witness-bearing, or by fraudulent contracts; if those that make no conscience of their assertions when there is any thing to be got by a falsehood. They may perhaps heap up treasures by these means, that which they make their treasure; but, 1. They will not meet with the satisfaction they expect; it is a vanity tossed to and fro; it will be disappointment and vexation of spirit to them; they will not have the comfort of it, nor can they put any confidence in it, but will be perpetually uneasy. It will be taken and lost by their own consciences, and by the censures of men; let them expect to be in a constant hurry.

2. They will meet with the destruction they do not expect. While they are seeking wealth by such unlawful practices, they are really seeking death, they lay themselves open to the envy and ill will of men by the treasures they get, and to the wrath and curse of God by the lying tongue wherewith they get them, which he will make to fall upon themselves, and sink them to hell.

7. The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; because they refuse to do judgment.

See here, 1. The nature of injustice. Getting money by lying, (v. 6.) is no better than downright robbery. Cheating is stealing; you had as good pick a man's pocket, as impose upon him by a lie, in making a bargain which he had no fence against but by not believing you; and it will be no excuse from the guilt of robbery to say that he might choose whether he would believe you, for that is a debt we should owe to no one man.

2. The cause of injustice. Men refuse to do judgment, they will not render to all their due, but withhold it, and omissions make way for commissions; they come at length to robbery itself. They that refuse to do justice will choose to do wrong.

3. The effect of injustice; it will return upon the sinner's own head. The robbery of the wicked will terrify them, so some; their consciences will be filled with horror and amazement, will cut them, will saw them asunder, so others; it will destroy them, here and for ever, therefore he had said, (v. 6.) They seek death.

8. The way of man is froward and strange; but as for the pure, his work is right.

This shows, that as men are, so is their way.
1. Evil men have evil ways. If the man be froward, his way also is strange; and this is the way of most men, such is the general corruption of mankind. They are all gone aside; (Ps. xiv. 2, 3.) all flesh have perverted their way. But the froward man is the man of deceit, that acts by craft and trick in all he does, his way is strange, contrary to all the rules of honour and honesty, it is strange, for you know not where to find him, or when you have him; it is strange, for it is alienated from all good, and estranges men from God and his favour. It is what he beholds afar off, and so do all honest men.

2. Men that are pure are proved to be such by their work, for it is right, it is just and regular; and they are accepted of God, and approved of men. The way of mankind in their apostacy is froward and strange, but as for the pure, those that by the grace of God are recovered out of that state, of which there is here and there one, their work is right, as Noah's was in the old world, Gen. vii. 1.

9. It is better to dwell in a corner of the house-top, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.

See here, 1. What a great affliction it is to a man to have a brawling, scolding woman to his wife, who, upon every occasion, and often upon no occasion, breaks out into passion, and chides either him or those about her, is fretful to herself, and furious to her children and servants, and, in both, vexatious to her husband. If a man has a wide house, spacious and pompous, this will imbitter the comfort
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10. The soul of the wicked desireth evil; his neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes.

See here the character of a very wicked man.
1. The strong inclination he has to do mischief; His very soul desires evil, desires that evil may be done, and that he may have the pleasure, not only of seeing it, but of having a hand in it; the root of wickedness lies in the soul; the desire that men have to do evil is that which conceives and brings forth sin.
2. The strong aversion he has to do good; His neighbour, his friend, his nearest relation, finds no favour in his eyes, cannot gain from him the least kindness, though he be in the greatest need of it. And, when he is in the pursuit of the evil his heart is so much upon, he will spare no man that stands in his way; his next neighbour shall be used no better than a stranger, than an enemy.

11. When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise; and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.

This we had before, (ch. xix. 25.) and it shows, that there are two ways by which the simple may be made wise.
1. By the punishments that are inflicted on those that are incorrigibly wicked. Let the law be executed upon a scorner, and even he that is simple will be awakened and alarmed by it, and will discern, more than he did, the evil of sin, and will take warning by it, and take heed.
2. By the instructions that are given to those that are wise and willing to be taught; When the wise is instructed by the preaching of the word, he, not only the wise himself, but the simple, that stands by, receives knowledge. It is no injustice at all to take a good lesson to ourselves which was designed for another.

12. The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked: but God overthrowneth the wicked for their wickedness.

1. As we read this verse, it shows the reason why good men, when they come to understand things right, will not envy the prosperity of evil-doers. When they see the house of the wicked, how full it is, perhaps, of all the good things of this life, they are tempted to envy; but when they wisely consider it, when they look upon it with an eye of faith, when they see God overthrew the wicked for their wickedness, that there is a curse upon their habitation, which will certainly be the ruin of it ere long, they see more reason to despise them, or pity them, than to fear or envie them.

2. Some give another sense of it; The righteous man, the judge or magistrate, that is intrusted with the execution of justice, and the preservation of the public peace, examines the house of the wicked, searches it for arms, or for stolen goods, makes a diligent inquiry concerning his family, and the characters of those about him, that he may by his power overthrow the wicked for their wickedness, and prevent their doing any further mischief, that he may fire the nests where the birds of prey are harboured, or the unclean birds.

13. Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.

Here is the description and doom of an uncharitable man.
1. His description; He stops his ears at the cry of the poor, at the cry of their wants and miseries, he resolves to take no cognizance of them; at the cry of their requests and supplications, he resolves he will not so much as give them the hearing, turns them away from his door, and forbids them to come near him; or if he cannot avoid hearing them, he will not heed them, nor be moved by their complaints, nor be prevailed with by their importunities; he shuts up the bowels of his compassion, and that is equivalent to the stopping of this ears, Acts vii. 57.
2. His doom; He shall himself be reduced to such a state that he may do as he please, but he shall not be heard. Men will not hear him, but reward him as he has rewarded others. God will not hear him; for he that showed no mercy shall have judgment without mercy; (Jas. ii. 13.) and he that on earth denied a crumb of bread, in hell was denied a drop of water. God will be deaf to their prayers who are deaf to the cries of the poor, which, if they be not heard by us, will be heard against us, Exod. xxii. 23.

14. A gift in secret pacifieth anger; and a reward in the bosom strong wrath.

Here is, 1. The power that is commonly found to be in gifts. Nothing is more violent than anger; Oh the force of strong wrath! And yet a handsome present, prudently managed, will turn away some men's wrath, when it seemed impecuniable, and discharge the keenest and most passionate resentments. Concerning God's giving money to a master-sin, and has the command of other lusts. Pecunia omnia spatia. Money commands all things. Thus Jacob pacified Esau, and Abigail David.
2. The policy that is commonly used in giving and receiving bribes; it must be a gift in secret, and a reward in the bosom; for that he takes it would not be thought to covet it, nor known to receive it, nor would he willingly be beholden to him whom he has been offended with; but if it be done privately all is well. No man shall be too open in giving any gift, nor boast of the presents he sends; but if it be a brile to pervert justice, that is so scandalous, that those who are fond of it are ashamed of it.

15. It is joy to the just to do judgment; but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.

Note, 1. It is a pleasure and satisfaction to good men, both to see justice administered by the government they live under, right taking place, and iniquity suppressed, and also to practise it themselves, according as their sphere is. They not only do justice, but do it with pleasure; not only for fear of shame, but for love of virtue.
2. It is a terror to wicked men to see the laws put in execution against vice and profaneness; it is destruction to them; as it is also a vexation to them to be forced, either for the support of their credit, or
for fear of punishment, to do judgment themselves. Or, if we take it as we read it, the meaning is: There is true pleasure in the practice of religion, but certain destruction at the end of all vicious courses.

16. The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead.

Here is, 1. The sinner upon his ramble; He wanders out of the way of understanding, and when once he has left that good way, he wanders endlessly.

The way of religion is the way of understanding; those that are not truly pious are not truly intelligent; those that wander out of this way break the hedge which God has set, and follow the conduct of the world and the flesh; and they go astray like lost sheep.

2. The sinner at his rest, or rather his ruin: He shall remain (quietly—he shall rest, but not in peace—in peace) in the congregation of the giants, the sinners of the old world that were swept away by the deluge; to that destruction the damnation of sinners is compared, as sometimes to the destruction of Sodom, when they are said to have their portion in fire and brimstone. Or in the congregation of the damned that are under the power of the second death.

There is a vast congregation of damned sinners, bound in bundles for the fire, and in that they shall remain for ever, who are shut out from the congregation of the righteous. He that forsakes the way to heaven, if he return not to it, will certainly sink into the depths of hell.

17. He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man; he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.

Here is an argument against a voluptuous, luxurious, life, taken from the ruin it brings upon men's temporal interests. Here is,

1. The description of an epicure: He loves pleasure. God allows us to use the delights of sense soberly and temperately, wine to make glad the heart, and put vigour into the spirits, and oil to make the face to shine, and beautify the countenance; but he that loves these, that sets his heart upon them, covets them earnestly, is solicitous to have all the delights of sense wound up to the height of pleasureableness, is impatient of every thing that crosses him in his pleasures, relishes these as the best pleasures, and has his mouth by them put out of taste for spiritual things, he is an epicure. 2 Tim. iii. 4.

2. The punishment of an epicure in this world; He shall be a poor man; for the lusts of sensuality are not maintained but at a great expense; and there are instances of those who want necessities, and live upon them, who once could not live without dainties and varieties. Many a bean becomes a beggar.

18. The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright.

This intimates,

1. What should be done by the justice of men; The wicked, that are the trouble of a land, ought to be punished, for the preventing and turning away of those national judgments which otherwise will be inflicted, and in which even the righteous are many times involved. Thus, when Achan was stoned, he was a ransom for the camp of righteous Israel; and the seven sons of Saul, when they were hanged, were a ransom for the kingdom of righteous David.

2. What is often done by the providence of God; The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked comes in his stead, and so seems as if he were a ransom for him, ch xi. 8. God will rather leave many wicked people to be cut off than abandon his own people. I will give men for thee, Isa xlix. 3, 4.

19. It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry man.

Note. 1. Unbridled passions imitate and spoil the comfort of all relations. A peevish angry wife makes her husband's life uneasy, to whom she should be a comfort and a meet help. Those cannot dwell in peace and happiness that cannot dwell in peace and love. Even those that are one flesh, if they be not withal one spirit, have no joy of their union.

2. It is better to have no company than bad company. The wife of thy covenant is thy companion, and yet if she be peevish and provoking, it is better to dwell in a solitary wilderness, exposed to wind and weather, than in company with her. A man may better enjoy God and himself in a wilderness than among quarrelsome relations and neighbours.

See v. 9.

20. There is treasure to be desired, and oil in the dwelling of the wise: but a foolish man spendeth it up.

Note. 1. Those that are wise will increase what they have, and live plentifully; their wisdom will teach them to proportion their expenses to their income, and to lay up for hereafter; so that there is a treasure of things to be desired, and as much as needs be desired, a good stock of all things convenient, laid up in season, and particularly of oil, one of the staple commodities of Canaan, Deut. viii. 8. This is in the habitation, or cottage, of the wise; and it is better to have an old-fashioned house, and have it well furnished, than a fine modern one, ill kept. God blesses the endeavours of the wise, and then their houses are replenished.

2. Those that are foolish will mispend what they have, upon their lusts, and so bring the stock they had, to nothing. Those manage themselves ill, that are in haste to spend what they have, but not in care which way to get more. Foolish children spend what their wise parents had laid up; one sinner destroys much good, as the prodigal son.

21. He that followeth after righteousness and mercy, findeth life, righteousness, and honour.

See here, 1. What it is to make religion our business; it is to follow after righteousness and mercy; not to content ourselves with easy performances, but to do our duty with the utmost care and pains, as those that are pressing forward, and in fear of coming short; we must both do justly, and love mercy, and proceed and persevere therein; and though we cannot attain to perfection, yet it will be a comfort to us if we aim at it, and follow after it.

What will be the advantage of doing so? Those that do follow after righteousness, shall find righteousness; God will give them grace to do good, and they shall have the pleasure and comfort of it, they that make conscience of being just to others, shall be justly dealt with by others, and others shall be kind to them. The Jews followed after righteousness, and did not find it, because they sought amiss. Rom. ix. 31. Otherwise, Seek and you shall find, and with it shall find both life and honour, everlasting life and honour, the crown of righteousness.

22. A wise man casteth the city of the mighty, and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof.

Note. 1. Those that have power are apt to promise themselves great things from their power. The
city of the mighty thinks itself impregnable, and therefore it builds with the confidence thereof, what it boasts of, and trusts in, bidding defiance and pleasure.

2. Those that have wisdom, though they are so modest as not to promise much, often perform great things, even against those that are so confident of their strength, by their wisdom. Good conduct will go far even against force; and a strategist, well managed, may effectually scale the city of the mighty, and cast down the strength it had such a confidence in. A wise man will gain upon the affections of people, and conquer them by strength of reason, which is a more noble conquest than that by strength of arms. They that understand their interest will willingly submit themselves to a wise and good man, and the strongest walls shall not hold out against him.

23. Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles.

Note, 1. It is our great concern to keep our soul from straits, from being entangled in snares and perplexities, and disquieted with troubles, that we may preserve the possession and enjoyment of ourselves, and our souls may be in frame for the service of God.

2. Those that would keep their souls, must keep a watch before the door of their lips, must keep the mouth by temperance, that no forbidden fruit go into it, no stolen waters, that nothing be eaten or drunk to excess; they must keep the tongue also, that no forbidden word go out of the door of the lips, no corrupt communication. By a constant watchfulness over our words, we shall prevent abundance of mischiefs which an ungoverned tongue runs into. Keep thy heart, and that will keep thy tongue from sin: keep thy tongue, and that will keep thy heart from trouble.

24. Proud and haughty scorners is his name, who dealeth in proud wrath.

See here the mischief of pride and haughtiness.

1. It exposes men to sin, it makes them passionate, and kindles in them the fire of proud wrath; they are continually dealing in it, as if it were their trade to be angry, and they had nothing so much to do as to better passions, and exchange bitter words. Most of the wrath that inflames the spirits and societies of men, is proud wrath. Men cannot bear the least slight, nor in any thing to be crossed or contradicted; but they are out of humour, and in a heat, immediately. It likewise makes them scornful when they are angry, very abusive with their tongues, insolent toward those above them, and importunate toward all about them; only by fire doth comes all this.

2. It exposes men to shame; they get a bad name by it, and every one calls them proud and haughty scorners, and therefore nobody cares for having any thing to do with them. If men would but consult their reputation a little, and the credit of their profession, which suffers with it, they would not indulge their pride and passion as they do.

25. The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour. 26. He coveteth greedily all the day long; but the righteous giveth and spareth not.

Here is, 1. The miseries of the slothful, when he is not content to do his duty, or an honest calling, by which they might get an honest livelihood: they are as fit for labour as other men, and business offers itself, to which they might lay their hands, and apply their minds, but they will not; herein they fondly think they do well for themselves; (see ch. xxvi. 16.) Soul, take thine ease; but really they are enemies to themselves; for, beside that their slothfulness starves them, depriving them of their necessary supports, their desires at the same time stab them; though their hands refuse to labour, their hearts cease not to covet, lusts, and honours, which yet cannot be obtained without labour; their desires are impetuous and insatiable, they covet greedily all the day long, and cry, Give, give; they expect every body should do for them, though they will do nothing for themselves, much less for any be all: now these desires kill them, they are a perpetual vexation to them, fret them to death, and perhaps, put them upon such dangerous courses, for the satisfactions of their craving lusts, as hasten them to an untimely end. Many times the slothful, in their desire, which is to make provision for the flesh, and would not be at the pains to get it honestly, have turned highwaymen, and that has killed them. Those that are slothful in the affairs of their souls, and yet have desires toward that which would be the happiness of their souls, these desires kill them, will aggravate their condemnation, and be witness against them, that they were convinced of the worth of spiritual blessings, but refused to be at the pains that are necessary to the obtaining of them.

2. The honours of the honest and diligent. The righteous and industrious have their desires satisfied, and enjoy not only that satisfaction, but the further satisfaction of doing good to others. The slothful are always craving, and gaping to receive, but the righteous are always full, and contriving to give; and it is more blessed to give than to receive. They give, and share not; give liberally, and upon need: they give a portion to seven, and also to eight, and do not spare for fear of wanting.

27. The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind!

Sacrifices were of divine institution, and, when they were offered in faith, and with repentance and reformation, God was greatly honoured by them, and well pleased in them; but they were often not only unacceptable, but an abomination, to God, and he declared so; which was an indication, both that they were not required for their own sakes, and that there were better things, and more effectual, in every heart, when the sacrifice and offering should be done away. They were an abomination.

1. When they were brought by wicked men, who did not, according to the true intent and meaning of sacrificing, repent of their sins, mortify their lusts, and amend their lives. Cain brought his offering. Even wicked men may be found in the external performances of religious worship; they can freely give God their beasts, their lips, their knees, who would not give him their hearts: the Pharisees gave alms. But when the person is an abomination, as every wicked man is to God, the performance cannot but be so; even when he brings it diligently; so some read the latter part of the verse. Though their offerings are continually before God, (Ps. I. 8.) they are an abomination to him.

2. Much more when they were brought with wicked minds, when their sacrifices were made, not only consistent with, but serviceable to, their wickedness: as Absalom's vow, Jezebel's fast, and the Pharisees' long prayers. When men make a show of devotion, that they may the more easily and effectually compass some covetous or malicious design; when holiness is pretended, but some wickedness intended; then, especially, the performance is an abomination, Isa. lxvi. 5.

28. A false witness shall perish: but the man that heareth speaketh constantly.

Here is, 1. The doom of a false witness: He who, for favour to the side, or malice to the other, giv's
in a false evidence, or makes an affidavit of that which he knows to be false, or, at least, does not know to be true, if he be discovered, his reputation will be ruined; a man may tell a lie perhaps in his haste, but he that gives a false testimony does it with deliberation and solemnity, and it cannot be a presumptuous sin, and a forfeiture of man's credit; but, though it should not be discovered, he himself shall be ruined; the vengeance he imprecated upon himself, when he took the false oath, will come upon him.

2. The praise of him that is conscientious; He who hears, obeys the command of God, indeed, are to every man truth with his neighbour; he who testifies nothing but what he has heard and knows to be true, speaks constantly, consistently with himself; he is always in the same story; he speaks in finem—to the end; people will give credit to him, and hear him out; he speaks unto victory, he carries the cause, which the false witness shall lose; he shall speak to eternity; what is true, is true eternally. The life of truth is established for ever.

29. A wicked man hardeneth his face: but as for the upright, he directeth his way.

Here is, 1. The presumption and impudence of a wicked man; He hardens his face, brazenizes it, that he may not blush, steels it, that he may not tremble, when he commits the greatest crimes; he bids defiance to the terrors of the law, and the checks of his own conscience, the reproofs of the word and the rebukes of Providence; he will have his way; and nothing shall hinder him. Isa. diei. 7.

2. The caution and circumspection of a good man; as for the upright, he do not say, What would I do? What have I a mind to? That I will have; but, What should I do? What does God require of me? What is duty? What is prudence? What is for edification? And so he does not force his way, but directs his way by a safe and certain rule.

30. There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel, against the Lord. 31. The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the Lord.

The designing, busy, part of mankind are here directed, in all their counsels and undertakings, to have their eye to God, and to believe: 1. That there can be no success against God, and therefore they must never act in opposition to him, in contempt of his commands, or in contradiction to his counsels. Though they think they have wisdom, and understanding, and counsel, the best politics and politicians, on their side, yet, if it be against the Lord, it cannot prosper long, it shall not prevail at last. He that sits in heaven laughs at men's projects against him and his Anointed, and will carry his point in despite of them. Ps. ii. 1-6. They that fight against the Lord are prepared shine and run for themselves; whoever make war with the Lamb, he will certainly overcome them, Rev. xvii. 14.

2. That there can be no success without God, and therefore they must never act but in dependence on him. Be the cause ever so good, and the patrons of it ever so strong, and wise, and faithful, and the means of carrying it on, and gaining the point, ever so probable, still they must acknowledge God, and take the thoughts and purposes of God's grace; the poor are as corrected and comforted, for instance, as the rich. There is the same Christ, the same scripture, the same Spirit, the same covenant of promises, for them both. There is the same heaven for poor saints that there is for rich; Lazarus is in the bosom of Abraham: and there is the same hell for rich sinners that there is for poor. All stand upon the same level before God, as they do also in the grave. The small and great are there as great and small in their place.
3. A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.

See here, 1. The benefit of wisdom and consideration: A prudent man, by the help of his prudence, will foresee an evil before it comes, and hide himself; he will be aware when he is entering into a temptation, and will put on his armour, and stand on his guard; when the clouds are gathering for a storm, he takes the warning, and flies to the name of the Lord as his strong tower. Noah foresaw the deluge, Joseph the years of famine, and provided accordingly.

2. The mischief of rashness and inconsideration; the simple, who believe every word that flatters them, will believe none that warns them, and so they pass on, and are punished; they venture upon sin, though they are told what will be in the end thereof; they throw themselves into trouble, notwithstanding the fair warning given them, and they repent their presumption when it is too late. See an instance of both these, Exod. ix. 20, 21. Nothing is so perilous to precious souls as this, they will not take warning.

4. By humility and the fear of the Lord, are riches, honour, and life.

See here, 1. Wherein religion does very much consist; in humility, and the fear of the Lord; that is, walking humbly with God; we must so reverence God's majesty and authority, as to submit with all humility to the commands of his word, and the dispositions of his providence. We must have such low thoughts of ourselves, as to believe humbly toward God and man. Where the fear of God is, there will be humility.

2. What is to be gotten by it; riches, and honour, and comfort, and long life, in this world, as far as God sees good; at least, spiritual riches and honour in the favour of God, and the promises and privileges of the covenant of grace, and eternal life at last.

5. Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward: he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them.

Note, 1. The way of sin is vexatious and dangerous; In the way of the froward, that crooked way, which is contrary to the will and word of God, thorns and snares are found; thorns of grief for past sins, and snares entangling them in further sin. He that makes no conscience of what he says, and does, will find himself hampered by that imaginary liberty, and tormented by his pleasures. Froward people, who are soon angry, expose themselves to trouble at every step. Every thing will fret and vex him that will fret and vex at every thing.

2. The way of duty is safe and easy; He that keeps his soul, that watches carefully over his own heart and ways, is far from those thorns and snares, for his way is both plain and pleasant.

6. Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Here is, 1. A great duty enjoined, particularly to those that are the parents and instructors of children, in order to the propagating of wisdom, that it may remain with them; Train up children in that age of vanity, to keep them from the snares and thorns of it; in that learning age, to prepare them for what they are designed for. Catechise them, initiate them, keep them under discipline; train them as soldiers, who are taught to handle their arms, keep rank, and observe the word of command. Train them up, not in the way they would go, (the bias of their corrupt hearts would draw them aside,) but in the way they should go, the way in which, if you love them, you would have them go. Train up a child according as he is capable, so some take it; with a gentle hand, as nurses feed children, little and often, Deut. vi. 7.

2. A good reason for it, taken from the great advantage of this care and pains with children; when they grow up, when they grow old, it is to be hoped, they will not depart from it. Good impressions made upon them then, will abide upon them all their days. Ordinarily, the vessel retains the savour with which it was first seasoned. Many, indeed, have departed from the good way in which they were trained up; Solomon himself did; but it may be a means of their recovering themselves, as it is supposed Solomon did. At least, the parents will have the comfort of having done their duty, and used the means.

7. The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.

He had said, (v. 2.) Rich and poor meet together; but here he finds, here he shows, that, as to the things of this life, there is a great difference; for, 1. Those that have little will be in subjection to those that have much, because they have dependence upon them, they have received, and expect to receive, support from them; The rich rule over the poor, and too often more than becomes them, with pride and rigour; unlike to God, who, though he be great, yet despises not any. It is part of the affliction of the poor, that they must expect to be trampled upon; and part of their duty, to be scrupulously careful, that they be not guilty of those things that are kind to them, and study to be grateful.

2. Those that are going behind-hand, find themselves to lie much as the mercy of those that are before-hand; The borrower is servant to the lender, is obliged to him, and must sometimes beg, Have patience with me. Therefore it is part of Israel's promised happiness, that they should lend and not borrow, Deut. xxvii. 12. And it should be our endowment, and the rich should give their poor, that they may have the means of paying their debts.

8. He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity: and the rod of his anger shall fail.

Note, 1. Ill-gotten gains will not prosper; He that sows iniquity, that does an unjust thing, in hopes to get by it, shall reap vanity; what he gets will never do him any good, nor give him any satisfaction. He will meet with nothing but disappointment. They that create trouble to others, do but prepare trouble for themselves. Man shall reap as he sows.

2. Abused power will not last. If the word of authority turn into a rod of anger, if men rule by passion instead of prudence, and, instead of the public welfare, aim at nothing so much as the gratifying of their own resentments, it shall fall, and be broken, and their power shall not bear them out in their exorbitances, Isa. x. 24, 25.

9. He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.

Here is, 1. The description of a charitable man; he has a bountiful eye, opposed to the evil eye, (ch. xxiii. 6,) and the same with the single eye, (Matth. vi. 22.) an eye that seeks out objects of charity, an eye that offers itself, an eye that sees upon the sight of one in want and misery, afflicts the heart with compassion; an eye, that, with the alms, gives a pleasant look, which makes the alms doubly acceptable. He has also a liberal hand, he give
of his bread to those that need; his bread, the bread appointed for his own eating. He will rather abridge himself than see the poor perish for want; yet he does not give all his bread, but of his bread; the poor shall have their share with his own family.

2. The blessedness of such a man, the lions of the judgment seat to bless him, all about him will speak well of him, and God himself shall bless him, in answer to many a good prayer put up for him, and he shall be blessed.

10. Cast out the scorners, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease.

See here, 1. What the scorners does; it is implied that he sows discord, and makes mischief, wherever he comes; much of the strife and contention which disturb the peace of all societies is owing to the evil interpreter, as some read it, that construes every thing into the worst; to those that despise and de-ride every one that comes in their way, and take a pride in bantering and abusing all mankind.

2. What is to be done with the scorners, that will not be reclaimed; Cast him out of your society, as Ishmael, when he mocked Isaac, was thrust out of Abraham's family. They that would secure the peace must exclude the scorners.

11. He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend.

Here is, 1. The qualifications of an accomplished, a complete, gentleman, that is fit to be employed in public business; he must be an honest man, a man that loves pureness of heart, and hates all impurity; not only pure from all fleshly lusts, but from all deceit and dissimulation, from all selfishness and sinister designs; that takes care to approve himself a man of sincerity, is just and fair from principle, and delights in nothing more than in keeping his own conscience clear, and void of offence. He must also be a man of speech, with a good grace; not to daub and flatter, but to deliver himself decently and ingeniously, in language as clean and smooth as his spirit.

2. The preference such a man stands fair for; The king, if he be wise and good, and understand his own and his people's interest, shall be his friend, shall make him of his cabinet-council, as there was one in David's court, and another in Solomon's, that was called the king's friend; or, in any business that he has, the king will befriend him. Some understand it of the King of kings; a man in whose spirit there is no guile, and whose speech is always with grace, God will be his Friend, Messiah, the Prince, will be his Friend; this honour have all the saints.

12. The eyes of the Lord preserve knowledge; and he overthrew the words of the transgressor.

Here is, 1. The special care God takes to preserve knowledge, to keep up religion in the word, by keeping up among men the knowledge of himself and of good and evil, notwithstanding the corruption of mankind, and the artifices of Satan to blind men's minds and keep them in ignorance; it is a wonderful instance of the power and goodness of the eyes of the Lord, his watchful providence. He preserves men of knowledge, wise and good, (2 Chron. xvi. 9.) particularly faithful witnesses, who speak what they know; God protects such, and prospers their counsels. He does, by his grace, preserve knowledge in such, secures his own work and interest in them; see Prov. ii. 7, 8.

2. The just vengeance God takes on those that speak and act against knowledge, against their own knowledge, and against the interests of knowledge and religion in the world; He overthrows the words of the transgressor, and preserve knowledge in spite of them. He defeats all the counsels and designs of false and treacherous men, and turns them to their own confusion.

13. The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets.

Note, 1. Those that have no love for their business will never want excuses to shift it off. Multitudes are ruined, both for soul and body, by their slothfulness, and yet still they have something or other to say for themselves; so ingenious are men in putting a cheat upon their own souls! And who, I pray, will be the gainer at last, when the pretences will be all rejected as vain and frivolous?

2. Many go in for real duties by imaginary difficulties; The slothful man has work to do without in the fields, but he fancies there is a lion there; nay, he pretends he dares not go along the streets, for fear somebody or other should meet him and kill him. He does not himself think so, he only says so to those that call him up; he talks of a lion without, but considers not his real danger from the devil, that roaring lion, which is in bed with him, and from his own slothfulness, which kills him.

14. The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein.

This is designed to warn all young men against the lusts of uncleanness; as they tender the welfare of their souls, let them take heed of strange women, lascivious women, whom they ought to be strange to; of the mouth of strange women, of the kisses of their lips, (ch. vii. 13.) of the words of their lips, their charms and enticements; dread them, have nothing to do with them; for,

1. Those who abandon themselves to that sin prove that they are abandoned of God; it is a deep pit, which those fall into that are abhorred of the Lord, who leaves them to themselves to enter into that temptation, and takes off the bridle of his restraining grace, to punish them for other sins. Value not thyself upon being in favour with such women, when it bespeaks thee under the wrath of God.

2. It is seldom that they recover themselves, for it is a deep pit, it will be hard getting out of it, it so besots the mind, and debauches the conscience, by pleasing the flesh.

15. Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

We have here two very sad considerations:

1. That corruption is woven into our nature; Sin is foolishness, it is contrary both to our right reason and to our true interest; it is in the heart, there is an inward inclination to sin, to speak and act foolishly; it is in the heart of children, they bring it into the world with them, it is what they were shapen and conceived in; it is not only found there, but it is bound there, it is annexed to the heart; so some vicious dispositions cleave close to the soul. Are bound to it, as the scion to the stock into which it is grafted, which quite alters the property; there is a knot tied between the soul and sin, a true-lover's knot; they two become one flesh. It is true of ourselves, it is true of our children, whom we have begotten in our own likeness. O God, thou knowest this foolishness.

2. That correction is necessary to the cure of it,
It will not be got out by fair means and gentle methods; there must be strictness and severity, and that which will cause grief. Children need to be corrected, and kept under discipline, by their parents; and we all need to be corrected by our heavenly Father; (Heb. xii. 6, 7,) and under the correction we must stroke down folly, and kiss the rod.

16. He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.

This shows what evil courses rich men sometimes take; by which, in the end, they will impoverish themselves, and provoke God, notwithstanding their abundance, to bring them to want; they oppress the poor, and give to the rich; that is,

1. They will not in charity relieve the poor, but withhold from them, that, by saving that which is really the best, but which they think the most needless part, of their expenses, they may increase their riches; but they will make presents to the rich, and give them great entertainments, either in pride and vainglory, that they may look great, or by any policy, that they may receive it again with advantage; such shall surely come to want. Many have been beggarly by a foolish generosity, but never any by a prudent charity. Christ bids us invite the poor, Luke xiv. 12, 13.

2. They not only will not relieve the poor, but they oppress them, rob the spital,* extort from their poor tenants and neighbours, invade their rights, who have not wherewithal to defend themselves, and then give bribes to the rich, to protect and countenance them in it; but it is all in vain, they shall come to want. They that rob God, and so make him their Enemy, cannot secure themselves by giving to the rich, to make them their friends.

17. Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge. 18. For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips. 19. That thy trust may be in the Lord, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee. 20. Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge; 21. That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth, that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?

Solomon here changes his style and manner of speaking; hitherto, for the most part, since the beginning of ch. x. he had laid down doctrinal truths, but now and then dropped a word of exhortation, leaving us to make the application as we went along; but here, to the end of ch. xxiv. he directs his speech to his son, his pupil, to his reader, his hearer, speaking as to a particular person: hitherto, for the most part, his sense was comprised in one verse, but here usually it is drawn out further. See how Wisdom tries variety of methods with us, lest we should be chary of being addressed, in order that our attention may be awakened, and our application assisted. Ministers must not think it enough to preach before their hearers, but must preach to them; nor enough to preach to them all in general, but should apply themselves to particular persons, as here; Do thou do so and so. Here is,

1. An earnest exhortation to get wisdom and *A corruption of the word hospital, denoting here any charitable grace, by attending to the words of the wise men, both written and preached; the words of the prophets and priests; and particularly to that knowledge which Solomon, in this book, gives men of good and evil, sin and duty, rewards and punishments. To these words, to this knowledge, the car shall be humbled down, in humility and sorrow, in correction; and the heart applied by faith, and love, and close consideration. The car will not serve without the heart.

II. Arguments to enforce this exhortation. Consider,

1. The worth and weight of the things themselves, which Solomon in this book gives us the knowledge of; they are not trivial things, for amusement and diversion, not jocular proverbs, to be repeated in report, and in order to pass away time; no, but excellent things, which concern the glory of God, the holiness and happiness of our souls, the welfare of mankind, and all communities; they are principally things, so the word is, fit for kings to speak, and senators to hear; they are things that concern counsels and knowledge, wise counsels, relating to the most important concerns; things which will not only make us knowing ourselves, but enable us to advise others.

2. The clearness of the discovery of these things, and the directing of them to us in particular. They are made known, publicly known, that all may read; plainly known, that he that runs may read; made known this day, more fully than ever before, in this day of light and knowledge; made known in this day; but it is only a little while that this light is with thee; perhaps the things that are this day made known to thee, if thou improve not the day of thy visitation, may, before to-morrow, be hid from thine eyes. They are written, for no freest certainty, and that they may be received, and transmuted, pure and entire, to posterity; but that which the emphasis is here most laid upon, is, that they are made known to thee, even to thee, and written to thee, as if it were a letter directed to thee by name; it is suited to thee and to thy case, thou mayest in this glass see thine own face; it is intended for thee, to be a rule to thee, and by it thou must be judged. They cannot say of these things, They are good things, but they are nothing to me; no, they are of the greatest concern imaginable to us.

3. The agreeableness of these things to us, in respect both of comfort and credit. (1.) If we hide them in our hearts, they will be very pleasing, and yield us an abundant satisfaction; (v. 18.) *It is a pleasant thing, and will be thy constant entertainment, if thou keep them within thee; if thou digest them, and be actuated and governed by them, and delivered into them as into a mouth." The form of godliness, when that is restored in, is but a force put upon a man, and he does but do penance in that white clothing; those only that submit to the power of godliness, and make heart-work of it, find the pleasure of it, ch. ii. 10. (2.) If we make use of them in our discourse, they will be very becoming, and gain us a good reputation; they shall be fitted in thy lips. *Speak of these things, and thou speakest like thyself, and as is fit for thee to speak, considering thine character; thou wilt also have pleasure in speaking of these things, as well as in thinking of them.

4. The advantage designed us by them. The excellent things which God hath written to us are not like the commands which the master gives his servant, which are all intended for the benefit of the master, but like those which the master gives his scholar; which are all intended for the benefit of the scholar. These things must be kept by us, for they are written to us.

(1.) That we may have a confidence in God, and so may have comfort in him, and communion with
him; that thy trust may be in the Lord, v. 19. We cannot trust in God, except in the way of duty; we are, therefore, taught our duty, that we may have reason to trust in God. Nay, this is itself one great duty we are to learn, and a duty that is the foundation of all practical religion, to live a life of delight in God, and dependence on him.

(2.) That we may have a satisfaction in our own judgment; 'That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth.' That, the more I know what is truth, the more plainly do I distinguish between it and falsehood, and mayest know upon what grounds thou receivest and believest the truths of God.' Note. [1.] It is a desirable thing to know, not only the words of truth, but the certainty of them; that our faith may be intelligent and rational, and may grow up to a full assurance. [2.] The way to know the certainty of the words of truth, is, to make conscience of our duty; for if any man do his will, he shall know for certain that the doctrine is of God, John vii. 17.

(3.) That we may be useful and serviceable to others for their instruction; "That thou mayest give a good account of the words of truth to them to send to thee to consult thee as an oracle;' or, as the margin reads it, 'to those that send thee, that employ thee as an agent or ambassador in any business.' Knowledge is given to us to do good with, that others may be comforted, and we may, in our place serve our generation according to the will of God. And those who make conscience of keeping God's commandments will be best able to give a reason for the hope that is in them.

22. Rob not the poor, because he is poor; neither oppress the afflicted in the gate; 23. For the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.

After this solemn preface, one would have expected something new and surprising; no: here is a plain and common, but very needful, caution against the barbarous and inhuman practice of oppressing poor people. Observe, 1. The sin itself, and that is, robbing the poor, and oppressing them, contrary taking from them, that have but little to lose, and so leaving them nothing. It is bad to rob any man, but most absurd to rob the poor, whom we should relieve; to squeeze those with our power, whom we should water with our bounty; to oppress the afflicted, and so to add affliction to them, to give judgment against them, and so to patronise those that do rob them; which is as bad as if we robbed them ourselves. Rich men will not suffer themselves to be wronged, poor men cannot help it, and therefore we ought to be the more careful not to wrong them.

2. The aggravations of the sin. (1.) If their inability, by reason of their poverty, to right themselves, imbolden us to rob them, it is so much the more; that is robbing the poor because he is poor; this is not only a base and cowardly thing, to take advantage against a man because he is helpless, but it is unnatural, and bespeaks men worse than beasts. (2.) Or if it be done under colour of law and justice, that is oppressing the afflicted in the gate, where they ought to be protected from wrong, and to have justice done them against those that oppress them; which is as bad as if we robbed them ourselves.

3. The danger that attends this sin. He that robs and oppresses the poor, it is at his peril; for, (1.) The oppressed will find God their powerful Patron; he will plead their cause, and not suffer them to be run down and trampled upon. If men will not appear for them, God will. (2.) The oppressors will find him a just Avenger; he will make reprimands upon them, will spoil the souls of those that spoil them; he will repay them in spiritual judgments, in curses to their souls. He that robs the poor will be found in the end a murderer of himself.

24. Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go; 25. Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.

Here is, 1. A good caution against being intimate with a passionate man. It is the law of friendship that we accommodate ourselves to our friends, and be ready to serve them, and therefore we ought to be wise and wary in the choice of a friend, that we come not under that sacred tie to any one whom it would be dangerous for us to accommodate ourselves to; though we must be civil to all, yet we must be careful whom we lay in our bosoms, and contract a familiarity with. And, among others, a man who is expressly provoked, touchy, and apt to resent affronts, who, when he is in a passion, cares not what he says or does, but grows outrageous, such a one is not fit to be made a friend or companion, for he will be ever and anon angry with us, and that will be our trouble, and we will expect that we should, like him, be angry with others, and that may".

2. Good cause given for this caution; lest thou learn his way. Those we go with we are apt to grow like. Our corrupt hearts have so much tincter in them, that it is dangerous conversing with those that throw about the sparks of their passion; we shall thereby get a snare to our souls, for a disposition to anger is a great snare to any man, and an occasion of much sin. He does not say, 'Lest thou have ill language given thee, or get a broken head'; but, which is much worse, 'Lest thou imitate him, to humour him, and so contract an ill habit.'

26. Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts.

27. If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee? We have here, as often before, a caution against suretyship, as a thing both imprudent and unjust.

1. We must not associate ourselves, nor contract an intimacy, with men of broken fortunes and reputations, who need, and will urge their friends to be bound for them, but that the persons our friends, hours, to feed their lusts, and, by keeping up a little longer, may do the more damage at last to those that give them credit. Have nothing to do with such; be not thou among them.

2. We must not cheat people of their money, by striking hands ourselves, or becoming surety for others, when we have not to pay. If a man by the Divine Providence is disabled to pay his debts, he ought to be pitied and helped, but he that takes up money or goods himself, or is bound for another, when he knows that he has not wherewithal to pay, or that which he has is so settled, that the creditors cannot come at it, he does in effect pick his neighbour's pocket; and though, in all cases, compassion is to be used, yet he may thank himself if the law have its course, and his bed be taken from under him, which might not be taken for a pawn to secure a debt, Exod. xxvii. 26. 27. For if a man appeared so powerful, he was not to do nothing else to his security, he ought to be relieved, and it was honestly done to own it; but for the recovery of a debt, it seems it might be taken by the summum jus—i.e. strict operation of law.

3. We must not ruin our own estates and families; every man ought to be just to himself, and to his wife and children; those are not so who live above what they have, who, by the mismanagement of their own affairs, or by incumbering themselves with the debts of others, waste what they have, and bring themselves to poverty. We may take joyfully
CHAPTER XXIII.

WHEN thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee; 2. And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. 3. Be not desirous of his dainties; for they are deceitful meat.

The sin we are here warned against, is, luxury and sensuality, and the indulgence of the appetite in eating and drinking, a sin that most easily besets us.

1. We are here told when we enter into temptation, and are in most danger of falling into this sin; "When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, thou hast great plenty before thee, varieties and dainties, such a table as thou hast seldom seen; thou art ready to think, as Haman did, of nothing but the honour hereby done thee; (Esth. v. 12,) and the opportunity thou hast of pleasing thy palate, and forgettest that there is a snare laid for thee." Perhaps the temptation may be stronger and more dangerous to one that is not used to such entertainments, than to one that always sits down to a good table.

2. We are here bid double our guard at such a time. We must, (1.) Apprehend ourselves to be in danger; "Consider diligently what is before thee, what meat and drink are before thee, that thou mayest choose that which is safest for thee, and which thou art least likely to eat and drink of to excess. Consider also, that companion, that ruler himself, who, if he be wise and good, will take it as an affront for any of his guests to disorder themselves at his table." And if when we sit to eat with a ruler, much more when we sit to eat with the Ruler of rulers at the Lord's table, we must consider diligently what is before us, that we may not in any respect eat and drink unworthily, unbecomingly, lest that table become a snare. (2.) We must alarm ourselves into temperance and moderation, "Put a knife to thy throat, restrain thyself, as if it were with a sword hanging over thy head, from all excess. Let these words, Take heed lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and so that day come upon you unwares; or these, For all these things God shall bring thee into judgment; or these, Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God; be a knife to the throat." The Latins call luxury, gula—the throat; "Take up arms against that sin. Rather be so abominable, that thy throat should be cut, than indulge thyself in voluptuousness." We must never feed ourselves without fear, (Jude 12,) but we must in a special manner fear when temptation is before us. (3.) We must reason ourselves into a holy contempt of the gratifications of sense; "If thou be a man given to appetite, thou must, by a present resolution, and an application of the terrors of the Lord, restrain thyself. When thou art in danger of falling into any excess, put a knife to thy throat; that may serve for ever. But that is not enough, lay the axe to the root, mortify that appetite which has such a power over thee, not desirous of dainties." Now, We ought to observe what is our own iniquity, and, if we find ourselves addicted to flesh-pleasing, we must not only stand upon our guard against temptation from without, but subdue the corruption within. Nature is desirous of food, and we are taught to pray for it, but it is less in desire of dainties, and we cannot in faith pray for them, for frequently they are not food convenient either for mind, body, or estate. They are deceitful meat, and therefore David, instead of praying for them, prays against them, Ps. cxii. 4. "They are pleasant to the palate, but perhaps rise in the stomach, turn sour there, upbraid a man, and make him sick. They do not yield men the satisfaction they promised themselves from them; for those that are given to appetite, when they have that which every dainty, not pleased, they are soon weary of it, they must have something else more dainty; the more a luxurious appetite is humour'd and indulged, the more humorous and troublesome it grows, and the more hard to please; dainties will surfeit, but never satisfy. But especially are they, upon this account, deceitful meat, that, while they please the body, they prejudice the soul, they over-charg the heart, and unfit it for the service of God, nay, they take away the heart, and diminutive the soul, from the things of God, and spoil its relish. Why then should we covet that which will certainly cheat us?"

4. Labour not to be rich; cease from thine own wisdom. 5. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away, as an eagle toward heaven.
As some are given to appetite, (v. 2) so others to covetousness, and those Solomon here takes to task. Men cheat themselves as much by setting their hearts on money (though it seems most substantial) as by setting them on dainties. Observe,

I. How he dissuades the covetous man from toiling and tormenting himself; (v. 4) "Do not aim to be rich; to raise an estate, and make what thou hast in abundance, more than is needful." We endure life tremendously, and provide for our children and families, according as our rank and condition are, but we must not seek great things. Be not of those that will be rich, that desire it as their chief good, and design it as their highest end, 1 Tim. vi. 9. Covetous men think it is their wisdom, imagining that if they be rich to such a degree, they shall be completely happy; cease from that wisdom, for it is a mistake, a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses, Luke xii. 15. Those that aim at great things,

1. "They fill their hands with business more than they can grasp, so that their life is both a perfect drudgery and a perpetual hurry; but be not thou such a fool, labour not to be rich. What thou hast and doest, be master of it, and not a slave to it, as those that rise up early, sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, and all the while and every moment they may have to give, is our wisdom and duty, Eph. iv. 28. Immoderate labour, that we may have to hoard, is our sin and folly.

2. "They fill their heads with projects more than they understand, so that their life is a constant toil of care and fear; but do not thou vex thyself, cease from thine own wisdom, go on quietly in the way of thy business, not contriving new ways, and setting thy wits on work to find out new inventions. Acquaintance in God's wisdom, and cease from thine own, ch. iii. 5, 6.

II. How he dissuades the covetous man from cheating and deceiving himself by an inordinate love and pursuit of that which is vanity and vexation of spirit; for,

1. It is not substantial and satisfying; "Wilt thou be such a fool as to set thine eyes, to cause thine eyes to fly with eagerness and violence, upon that rich man's hoard? Those are things that are not. They have a real existence in nature, and are the real gifts of Providence, but in the kingdom of grace they are things that are not; they are not a happiness and portion for a soul; are not what they promise to be, nor what we expect them to be; they are a show, a shadow, a sham upon the soul that trusts to them; they are not, for in a little while they will not be, they will not be ours, they perish in the using; the fashion of them passes away. (2.) It is therefore folly for us to set our eyes upon them; to admire them as the best things, and appropriate them to ourselves as our good things; and to aim at them as our mark at which all our actions are levelled; to fly upon them as the eagle upon her prey. "Wilt thou do a thing scabrous in itself? What, thou a reasonable creature, wilt thou dote upon shadows? The eyes are put for national and intellectual powers; wilt thou throw those away upon such undeserving objects? To set the hands and feet upon the world is well enough, but not the eyes, the eyes of the mind, those were made to contemplate better things. Wilt thou, my son, that professed religion, put such an affront upon God, (toward whom thine eyes should ever be) and such an abuse upon thy own soul?

2. It is not durable and abiding; Riches are very uncertain; they are not to be trusted; for so, they make themselves wings, and flee away. The more frequently our eyes are set upon them, the more likely they are to fly away from us. (1.) Riches will leave us; those that hold them ever so fast, cannot hold them always, cannot hold them long; either they must be taken from us, or we must be taken from them. The goods are said to flow away as a stream, (Job xx. 28.) here to flee away as a bird. (2.) Perhaps they may leave us suddenly; when we have taken a great deal of pains for them, and begin to take a great deal of pride and pleasure in them. The covetous man sits hatching upon his wealth, and brooding over it till it is fledged, as the young ones under the hen, and then it is gone. Or, as if a man should be fond of a flight of wild-fowl that light in his field, and call them his own, because they are upon his ground, whereas if he offer to come near them, they take wing immediately, and are gone to another man's field. (3.) The wings they flee away upon are of their own making; they have in themselves the principle of their own corruption, the devouring moth and rust. They are vesting in their own nature, and like a handful of dust, which if it be grasped, slips through the fingers. Snow will last awhile, and look pretty, if it be left to lie on the ground where it fell, but if gathered up and laid in the bosom, it is dissolved and gone immediately. (4.) They go irresistibly and irrecoverably, as an eagle toward heaven, that flies strongly, there is no stopping her, and flies out of sight of the strong air, and when she has thus done riches leave men, and leave them in grief and vexation, if they set their hearts upon them.

6. Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats: 7. For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee. 8. The morrow which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words.

Those that are voluptuous, and given to appetite, (v. 2) are glad to be where there is good cheer stirring, and those that are covetous and saving, that they may spare at home, will be glad to get a dinner at another man's table; and therefore both are here advised not to be forward to accept of every man's invitation, but especially not to thrust themselves in, unbidden. Observe,

1. There are those that pretend to bid their friends welcome, that are not hearty and sincere in it. They have a fair tongue, and know what they should say; Eat and drink, saith he, because it is expected that the master of the feast should so compliment his guests; but they have an evil eye, and grudge their guests every bit they eat, especially if they eat freely. They would seem to be liberal in making the entertainment, and would have the credit of it, but they have so great a love to their money, and so little to their friends, that they cannot have the comfort of it, nor any enjoyment of them selves or their friends. The miser's feast is his pleasure. If a man be so very selfish, and sordid, that he cannot find in his heart to bid his friends welcome to what he has, lie ought not to add to that the guilt of dissimulation by inviting them, but let him own himself to be what he is, that the vile person may not be called liberal, or the churl bountiful, Isai. xxxii. 5.

2. One can have no comfort in accepting the entertainments that are given grudgingly; "Eat not thou the bread of such a man, let him keep it to himself. Do not spuge upon those that are bountiful, nor make thyself burthensome to any; but especially scorn to be beholden to those that are palpably, and not sincerely. Better have a dimmer of love, but true and true welcome, than dainty meats without it. Therefore," (1.) "Judge of the man as his mind is; thou thinkest to pay thy respect to him as a friend,
9. Speak not in the ears of a fool; for he will despise the wisdom of thy words.

We are here directed not to cast pearls before swine, (Matth. vii. 6.) and not to expose things sacred to the contempt and ridicule of profane scoffers. It is our duty to take all fit occasions to speak of the most sacred things.

1. There are some that will make a jest of every thing, though it be ever so prudent and pertinently spoken; that will not only despise a wise man’s words, but despise even the wisdom of them, that in them which is most improvable for their own edification; they will particularly reproach that, as if it had an ill design upon them, which they must guard against.

2. Those that do so forfeit the benefit of good advice and instruction, and a wise man is not only allowed, but advised, not to speak in the ears of such fools; let them be foolish still, and let not precious breath be thrown away upon them. If what a wise man says in his wisdom will not be heard, let him hold his peace, and try whether the wisdom of that will be regarded.

10. Remove not the old land-mark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless: 11. For their Redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee.

Note, 1. The fatherless are taken under God’s special protection; with him they not only find mercy showed to them, (Hos. xiv. 5.) but justice done for them. He is their Redeemer, their Goel, their near Kinsman, that will take their part, and stand up for them with jealousy, as taking himself affronted in the injuries done to them. As their Redeemer, he will plead their cause against those that do them any injury, and, one way or other, will not only defend their right, and correct it if the wrong be done to them. And he is mighty, almighty; his omnipotence is engaged and employed for their protection, which their proudest and most powerful oppressors will find themselves an unequal match for; and that it is at their peril to contend with it.

2. Every man therefore must be careful not to injure them in any thing, or to invade their rights; either by a clandestine removal of the old landmarks, or by a forcible entry into their field. Being fatherless, they have none to right them, and, being in their childhood, they do not so much as apprehend the wrong that is done them. Sense of honour, and much more the fear of God, should restrain men from offering any injury to children, especially fatherless children.

12. Apply thy heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge. 13. Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. 14. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell. 15. My son, if thy heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine; 16. Yea, my reins shall rejoice when thy lips speak right things.

Here is, 1. A parent instructing his child. He is here brought in, persuading him to give his mind to his book, and especially to the scriptures and his catechism; to attend to the words of knowledge, by which he might come to know his duty, and danger, and interest, and not to think it enough to give them the hearing, but to apply his heart to them, to delight in them, and bow his will to the authority of them.

The heart is then applied to the instruction, when the instruction is applied to the heart.

2. A parent correcting his child. A tender parent can scarcely find in his heart to do it, it goes much against the grain, but he finds it necessary, it is his duty, and therefore he dares not withhold correction when there is occasion for it; (shar’ the rod, and shoul’st the child;) he beats him with the rod, gives him a gentle correction, the stripes of the sons of men, not so much as we give to beasts. Beat him with the rod, and he shall not die; the rod will not kill him; nay, it will prevent his killing himself by those vicious courses which the rod will be necessary to restrain him from. For the present, it is not joyous but grievous, both to the parent and to the child; but, when it is given with wisdom, designed for good, accompanied with prayer, and blessed of God, it may prove a happy means of preventing his utter destruction, and delivering his soul from hell. Our great care must be about our children’s soul, we must not see them in danger of hell, without using all possible means, with the utmost care and concern, to snatch them as brands out of everlasting burnings. Let the body smart, so that the spirit be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

3. A parent encouraging his child, telling him, (1.) What was all he expected; nothing but what would be for his own good, that his heart be wise, that he speak right things; that he be under the government of good principles, and that by those principles he particularly maintain a good government of his tongue. It is to be hoped, that those will do right things, when they grow up, who learn to speak right things when they are young, and dare not speak any bad words. (2.) What a comfort it would be to him, if herein he answered his expectation; “If thy heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, shall rejoice in thee; even mine, who have taken so much care and pains about thee, my heart that has many a time ached for thee, for whom thou shouldst study thus to make a gracious requital.”

Note, The wisdom of children will be the joy of their parents and teachers, who have no greater joy than to see them walk in the truth, 3 John 4. “Children, if you be wise and good, devout and conscientious, God will be pleased with you, and that will be our joy; we shall think our labour, in instructing and correcting you, well bestowed. It is an answerable for the many prayers we have put up for you; we shall be eased of a great deal of care, shall not need to be so strict and severe in watching over you, and shall, consequently, be the easier, both to you and to ourselves. We shall rejoice in hope that you will be a credit and comfort to us, if we should live to be old, that you will bear up the name of Christ in your generation, that you will live comfortably in this world, and happily in another.”
Let not thy heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long. 18. For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off.

Here is, 1. A necessary caution against entertaining any favourable thoughts of prospering profaneness; "Let not thine heart envy sinners; do not grudge them either the liberty they take to sin, or the success they have in sin, it will cost them dear, and they are to be pitied rather than envied. Their prosperity is their portion, (Ps. xvi. 11.) not, it is their poison." Prov. i. 22. We must not nourish in our hearts any secret discontent at the providence of God, though it seem to smile upon them, nor wish ourselves in their condition. "Let not thine heart imitate sinners," (so some read it,) do not as they do, walk not in the way with them, use not the methods they take to enrich themselves, though they thrive by them.

2. An excellent direction to maintain high thoughts of God in our minds at all times, Be thou in the fear of the Lord, every day, and all the day long. We must be in the fear of the Lord, as in our employment, exercising ourselves in holy adorations of God in subjection to his precepts, submission to his providences, and a constant care to please him; we must be in it as in our element, taking a pleasure in contemplating God's glory, and complying with his will. It is to be devoted to his fear; (Ps. cxix. 38.) and governed by it as our commanding principle in all we say and do. All the days of our life we must constantly keep up an awe of God upon our spirits, must pay a deference to his authority, and have a dread of his wrath. We must be always so in his fear as never to be out of it.

3. A good reason for both of these; (v. 18.) Surely there is an end, an end and expectation, as Jer. xxix. 11. There will be an end of the prosperity of the wicked, therefore do not envy them, (v. 17.) there will be an end of thy afflictions, therefore be not weary of them; an end of thy services, thy work and warfare will be accomplished, perfect love will cast out fear, and thine expectation of the reward not only will be not cut off, or disappointed, but it will be infinitely outdone. The consideration of the end will help to reconcile us to all the difficulties and discouragements of the way.

19. Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thy heart in the way. 20. Be not among wine-bibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: 21. For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty; and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags. 22. Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old. 23. Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding. 24. The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice; and he that beggeth a wise child shall have joy of him. 25. Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice. 26. My son, give me thy heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways. 27. For an whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit. 28. She also lieth in wait as for a prey, and increaseth the transgressors among men.

Here is good advice for parents to give to their children; words are put into their mouths, that they may train them up in the way they should go. Here we have,

1. An earnest call to young people to attend to the advice of their godly parents, not only to this that is here given, but to all other profitable instructions; "Hear, my son, and be wise, v. 19. This will be an evidence that thou art wise, and a means to make thee wiser." Wisdom, as Faith, comes by hearing. As said, (v. 22.) "Hearken unto thy father who begat thee, and who therefore has an authority over thee, and an affection for thee, and, thou mayest be sure, has no other design than thine own good." We ought to give reverence to the fathers of our flesh, who begat us, and were the instruments of our being; much more ought we to obey, and be in subjection to, the Father of our spirits, who made us, and is the Author of our being. We are since as Finisher also, from a sense of duty to God, and in love to her child, gives him good instructions, let him not despise her, or her advice, when she is old. When the mother is grown old, we may suppose the children to be grown up; but let them not think themselves past being taught, even by her, but rather respect her the more for the multitude of her years, and the wisdom which they teach. Scornful and insolent young men will make a jest, it may be, of the good advice of an aged mother, and deride her; but who do not seem to heed what an old woman says; but such will have a great deal to answer for another day, not only as having set at nought good counsel, but as having slighted and grieved a good mother, ch. xxx. 17.

II. An argument to enforce this call, taken from the great comfort which this will be to their parents, v. 24. Note. 1. It is the duty of children to study how they may rejoice the hearts of their godly parents, and do it yet more and more, so that they may greatly rejoice in them when the evil days come, and the years of which they say they have no pleasure in them, but this, to see their children do well; as Barzillai to see Chimham preferred. 2. Children will be a joy to their parents, if they be righteous and wise. Righteousness is true wisdom; they who do good, do well for themselves. Those are completely such as they should be who are simply wise, knowing and learned, but righteous, honest and godly men, being righteous, conscientious and well-meaning, but wise, prudent and discreet in the management of themselves. If such the children be, especially all the children, the father and mother will be glad, and think nothing too much that they have done, or do, for them; they will please themselves in them, and give God thanks for them; particularly she that bare them with pain, and nursed them with pains, will rejoice in them, and reckon herself well-requited, and the sorrow more than forgotten, because a wise and good man is the product of it, who is a blessing to the world he was born into.

III. Some general precepts of wisdom and virtue.

1. Guide thine heart in the way, v. 19. It is the heart that must be taken care of, and directed aright; the motions and affections of the soul must be toward right objects, and under a steady guidance. If the heart be guided in the way, the steps will be guided, and the conduct well-ordered.

2. Buy the truth, and sell it not, v. 23. Truth is that by which the heart must be guided and governed, for without truth there is no goodness; no regular practices without right principles. It is by the power of truth, known and believed, that we must be kept back from sin, and constrained to duty; the understanding must be well-informed with what is true, and instruction. And therefore, (1.) We must buy it, be willing to part with any thing for it. He does not say at what rate we must buy it, because we
cannot buy it too dear, but must have it at any rate; whatever it costs us, we shall not repent the bargain. When we are at expense for the means of knowledge, man, resolved to gain knowledge, by that reason, then we buy the truth. Riches should be employed for the getting of knowledge, rather than knowledge for the getting of riches. When we are at pains in searching after truth, that we may come to the knowledge of it, and may distinguish between it and error, then we buy it. Dil laboribus omnia vendunt—Heaven concedes every thing to the laborious. When we choose rather to suffer less in our temporal interest, than to deny or neglect the truth, that we may have it; and it is a pearl of such great price, that we must be willing to part with all to purchase it, must make shipwreck of estate, trade, preferment, rather than of faith and a good conscience.

(2.) We must not sell it; do not part with it for pleasures, honours, riches, any thing in this world; do not neglect the study of it, nor throw off the profession of it, nor revolt from under the dominion of it, for the getting or saving of any secular interest whatsoever. Hold fast the form of sound words, and never let it go upon any terms.

3. Give me thine heart, v. 26. God, in this exhortation, speaks to us as unto children; Son, Daughter, Give me thy heart. The heart is that which the great God requires and calls for from every one of us; whatever we give, if we do not give him our hearts, it will not be accepted. We must set our love upon him. Our thoughts must converse much with him, and on him, and not high. Bid; the tenderness of our hearts must be fastened. We must make it our own act and deed to devote ourselves to the Lord, and we must be free and cheerful in it. We must not think to divide the heart between God and the world; he will have all or none; Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. To this call we must readily answer, “My Father, take my heart, such as it is, and make it such as it should be; take possession of it, and set up thy throne in it.”

4. Let thine eyes observe my ways; have an eye to the rule of God’s word, the conduct of his providence, and the good examples of his people. Our eyes must observe these, as he that writes observes his copy, that we may keep in the right paths, and may proceed and persevere in them.

IV. Some particular cautions against these sins which are, of all others, the most destructive to the seeds of wisdom and grace in the soul, which impair the sweet image of God in it.

1. Gluttony and drunkenness, v. 20, 21. The world is full of examples of this sin, and temptations to it, which all young people are concerned to stand upon their guard against, and keep at a distance from. Be not a wine-bibber; we are allowed to drink a little wine, (1 Tim. v. 23;) but not much; not to make a trade of it, never to drink to excess. Be not a riotous eater of flesh, as the Israelites were, when they came out of Egypt. Who will give us flesh to eat? Whereas Paul, though he is free to eat flesh, yet resolves that he will eat no flesh while the world stands, rather than make his brother to offend; so indifferent is it to he, 1 Cor. viii. 13. Be not an excessive eater of flesh; intemperance must be avoided in meat as well as drink. Be not a luxurious eater of flesh; not pleased with any thing but what is very nice and delicate, savoury and dainty. So take not only a pleasure, but a pride, in being curious about their diet, and, as they call it, eating well; as if that were the ornament of a gentleman which is really the shame of a Christian; making a god of the belly. Be not a wine-bibber, and be not a riotous eater; and therefore, be not among wine-bibbers, nor among riotous eaters; do not give them countenance, lest thou learn their ways, and insensibly fall into those sins, or at least lose the dread and detestation of them. They covet to have thee among them; for we are not desirous; but thou thyself are very desirous to debauch others; therefore do not gratify them, lest thou endanger thyself. He fetches an argument against this sin from the expressiveness of it, and its tendency to impoverish men; and if men will not be deterred from it by the ruin it brings on their secular interests, which nearest their hearts, no marvel that they are not frightened from it by what they are told out of the world of the greatest mischief it beareth them in their spiritual and eternal concerns. The drunken and the glutton hate to be reformed, though they are told they shall come to poverty; nay, though they are told they shall come to hell. Drunkenness is the cause of drownings; it stupefies men, and makes them inattentive to seriousness, and then all goes to wreck and ruin; for men that have lived creditably come to be clothed with rags.

2. Whoredom: that is another sin which takes away the heart that should be given to God, Hos. iv. 11. He shows the danger which attends that sin, v. 27, 28.

(1.) It is a sin from which few recover themselves, when once they are entangled in it. It is like a deep ditch, and a narrow fit, which it is almost impossible to get out of; and therefore it is wisdom to keep far enough from the brink of it. Take heed of making any approaches toward this sin, because it is so hard to make a retreat from it; conscience, which should head the retreat, being debauched by it, and divine grace forfeited.

(2.) It is a sin which bewitches men to their ruin; The adulteress lies in wait as a robber, pretending friendship, but designing the greatest mischief, to rob them of all they have that is valuable, to strip them both of their armour and of their ornaments. Even those who, being virtuously educated, endeavour to shun the adulteress, she will lie in wait for; that she may head the retreat, being debauched by it, and then raise the guard, and she has them at an advantage. Let none, therefore, be at any time secure.

(3.) It is a sin that contributes more than any other to the spreading of vice and immorality in a kingdom; It increases the transgressors among men. One adulteress may be the ruin of many a precious soul, and may help to debauch a whole town. It increases the treacherous or perfidious ones; it not only occasions husbands to be false to their wives, but men who serve their masters, but means they have, professed religion, to throw off their profession, and break their covenants with God. Houses of uncleanliness are therefore such pest-houses as ought to be suppressed by those whose office it is to take care of the public welfare.

29. Who hath wo? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? how hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? 30. They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixed wine. 31. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright; 32. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. 33. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things: 34. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. 35. They have stricken me, shall thou say,
and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.

Solomon here gives fair warning against the sin of drunkenness, to confirm what he had said, v. 20. I. He cautions all people to keep out of the way of temptations to this sin; (v. 31.) Look not thou at their cup, nor let their drunkenness make thee drunk. Can any looked upon as the best wine, it is therefore called the blood of the grape. Critics judge of wine, among other indications, by the colour of it; some wine, they say, looks charmingly, looks so well, that it even says, "Come and drink me; it moves itself aight, goes down very smoothly, or perhaps the roughness of it is grateful. It is said of generous, strong-bodied, wine, that it even causes the wine to take the forbidden fruit." Note, Those that would be kept from any sin, must keep themselves from all the occasions and beginnings of it, and be afraid of coming within the reach of its allurements, lest they be overcome by them. II. He shows the many pernicious consequences of the sin of drunkenness, for the enforcement of this caution. Take heed of the bait, for fear of the hook. But the last end of drunkards is bitterness in the end, and this sin particularly. It bites like a serpent; when the drunkard is made sick by his surfeit, thrown by it into a dropsy, or some fatal disease, beggar'd and ruined in his estate, especially when his conscience is awakened, and he cannot reflect upon it without horror and indignation at himself; but, worst of all, at last, when the cup of drunkenness shall be turned into a cup of trembling, the cup of the Lord's wrath, the dishes of which he must be for ever drinking, and shall not have a drop of water to cool his inflamed tongue. To take off the force of the temptation that there is in the pleasure of the sin, foresees the punishment of it, and what it will at last end in, if repentance prevent not. In its latter end it bites, so the word is; think, therefore, what will be in the end thereof. But he chooses to specify those pernicious consequences of this sin, which are present and sensible. 1. It embolds men in quarrels, makes them quarrel with others, and say and do that which gives others occasion to quarrel with them, v. 29. He asks, Who hath wo? who hath sorrow? Who has not, in this world? Many have wo and sorrow, and cannot help it; but drunkards wilfully create wo and sorrow to themselves. They that have contentions have wo and sorrow; and drunkards are the fools whose life enter into contention. When the wine is in, the wit is out, and the passions up; and thence come drunken scuffles, and drunken frays, and drunken disputes over the cups; many a vexatious, ravishing law-suit has begun thus. There is babbling, quarrels in word, and the exchange of scurrilous language; yet it rests not there; you will have wounds without cause, for causes are things which drunkards are in no capacity to judge of, and therefore they deal blows about without the least consideration who or where to speak; Cant. vii. 9. without cause, received in service of their lusts, are marks of their infancy. Nay, drunkards wound themselves in a tender part, for they have redness of eyes, symptoms of an inward inflammation; their sight is weakened by it, and their looks deformed. This comes, (1.) Of drinking long, tarrying long at the wine, and spending that time in drunken company which should be spent in useful business, or in sleep, which is fit for business, v. 30. Oh the precious hours which both the thankful may save thus; every one of which will be brought into the account at the great day! (2.) Of drinking that which is strong and intoxicating. They go up and down to seek wine that will please them; their great inquiry, "Where is the best liquor?" They seek mixed wine, which is most palatable, but most heady; so willingly do they sacrifice their reason to please their palate! 2. It makes men impure and insolent, v. 33. (1.) The eyes grow unruly, and behold strange women to lust after them, and so let in adultery into the heart. Eat Venus in vino—Wine is oil to the fire of lust. Thine eyes shall behold strange things; so some read it. When men are drunk, the house turns round with them, and every thing looks strangely to them, so that then they cannot trust their own eyes. (2.) The tongue also grows unruly, and talks of things sacrilegiously; by it the heart utters perverse things, things contrary to good order and common civility; which they would be ashamed to speak if they were sober. What ridiculous incoherent nonsense will men talk when they are drunk, who at another time will speak admirably well, and to the purpose! 3. It stupifies and besots men, v. 34. When men are drunk, they know not where they are, nor what they say and do. (1.) Their heads are giddy, and, when they are at sea, they are tossed by the rolling waves of the sea, or upon the top of a mast; hence they complain that their heads swim; their sleeps are commonly unquiet and not refreshing, and their dreams tumultuous. (2.) Their judgments are clouded, and they have no more steadiness and consistency than he that sleeps upon the top of a mast; they drink, and forget the law, (ch. xxxi. 5.) they err through wine, (Isa. xxxvii. 27.) which think as extravagant as they talk. (3.) They are heedless and fearless of danger, and senseless of the rebukes they are under, either from God or man. They are in imminent danger of death, of damnation, lie as much exposed as if they slept upon the top of a mast, and yet are secure, and sleep on. They fear no peril when the terrors of the Lord are laid before them; nay, they feel no pain when the judgments of God are actually upon them; they cry not when he binds them. Set a drunkard in the stocks, and he is not sensible of the punishment: "They have stricken me, and I was not sick; I felt it not, it made no impression at all upon me." Drunkenness turns men into stocks and stones, they are scarcely to be reckoned animals, they are dead while they live. 4. Worst of all, the heart is hardened in the sin, and the sinner, notwithstanding all these present mischiefs that attend it, obstinately persists in it, and basely betrays the inmost secrets of his mind. Wilt thou, ado he has to shake off the chains of his drunken sleep, he can hardly get clear of the fumes of the wine, though he strives with them, that (being thirsty in the morning) he may return to it again. So perfectly lost is he to all sense of virtue and honour, and so wretchedly is his conscience seared, that he is not ashamed to say, I will seek it yet again. There is no hope; no, they have loved drunkards, and after them they will go, Jer. ii. 32. This is adding drunkenness to thirst, and following strong drink; these that do so may read their doom.
PROVERBS, XXIV.

CHAP. XXIV.

1. Be not thou envious against evil men, and neither desire to be with them: 2. For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief.

Here, 1. The caution given is much the same with that which we had before; (ch. xxiii. 17.) not to envy sinners, not to think them happy, nor to wish ourselves in their condition, though they prosper ever so much in this world, and are ever so merry, and ever so secure; "Let not such a thought ever come into thy mind; Oh that I could shake off the restraints of religion and conscience, and take as great a liberty to indulge the sensual appetite, as I see such and such do! No; desire not to be with them, to do as they do, and fare as they fare, and to cast in thy lot among them.

2. Here is another reason given for this caution; Be not envious against them; not only because their end will be bad, but because their way is so, v. 2. Do not think with them, for their heart studies destruction to others, but it will prove destruction to themselves. Do not speak like them, for their lips talk of their mischief. All they say has an ill tendency; to dishonour God, reproach religion, or wrong their neighbour; but it will be mischief to themselves at last. It is therefore thy wisdom to have nothing to do with them; nor hast thou any reason to look upon them with envy, but with pity rather, and a just indignation at their wicked practices.

3. Through wisdom is an house built, and by understanding it is established; 4. And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

5. A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength. 6. For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war; and in multitude of counsellors there is safety.

We are tempted to envy those that grow rich, and raise their estates and families by such unjust courses as our consciences will by no means suffer us to use. But, to set aside that temptation, Solomon here shows that a man, with prudent management, may raise his estate and family by lawful and honest means, with a good conscience, and a good name, and the blessing of God upon it; and if the other be raised up little sooner, yet these will last a great deal longer.

1. That which is here recommended to us, as having the best influence upon our outward prosperity, is, wisdom, and understanding, and knowledge; that is, both piety toward God, (for that is true wisdom,) and prudence in the management of our outward affairs. We must govern ourselves in everything by the rules of religion first, and then of prudence. So that, truly piues, do not thrive in the world, for want of prudence; and some, that are prudent enough, yet do not prosper, because they lean to their own understanding, and do not acknowledge God in their ways; therefore both must go together to complete a wise man.

2. That which is here set before us as the advantage of true wisdom, is, that it will make men's outward affairs prosperous and successful.

(1.) It will build a house, and establish it, v. 3. Men may, by unrighteous practices, build their houses, but they cannot establish them, for the foundation is rotten; (Heb. ii. 9, 10.) whereas, what is honestly got will wear like steel, and be an inheritance to children's children.

(2.) It will enrich a house, and furnish it, v. 4. Those that manage their affairs with wisdom and equity, that are diligent in the use of lawful means for increasing what they have, that spare from luxury, and spend in charity, those that are in a fair way to have the increase of their warehouses, their chambers, filled with all precious and pleasant riches; precious, because got by honest labour, and the substance of a diligent man is precious, pleasant, because enjoyed with holy cheerfulness; some think this is to be understood chiefly of spiritual riches; By knowledge the chambers of the soul are filled with graces and comfort of the Spirit, those precious and pleasant riches; for the Spirit, by enlightening understanding, performs all his other operations on the soul.

3. It will fortify a house, and turn it into a castle; Wisdom is better than weapons of war, offensive or defensive. A wise man is in strength, is in a strong hold, yea, a man of knowledge strengthens might, increases it, v. 5. As we grow in knowledge, we grow in all grace, 2. Pet. iii. 18. Those that increase in wisdom are strengthened with all might, Col. i. 9, 11. A wise man will compass that by wisdom, which a strong man cannot effect by force of arms. The spirit is strengthened both for the spiritual work, and the spiritual warfare, by true wisdom.

(4.) It will govern a house and a kingdom too, and the affairs of both, v. 6. Wisdom will erect a college, or council of state. Wisdom will be of use, [1.] For the managing of the public quarrels, so as not to engage in them but for an honest cause, and not so as to make them the means of a disadvantage, or an honourable retreat; By wise counsel thou shalt make war; which is a thing that may prove of ill consequence if not done by wise counsel. [2.] For the securing of the public peace; In the multitude of counsellors there is safety, for one may foresee the danger, and discern the advantages, which another cannot. In our spiritual conflicts, we need wisdom, for our enemy is subtle.

7. Wisdom is too high for a fool; he openeth not his mouth in the gate. 8. He that deviseth to do evil shall be called a mischievous person. 9. The thought of foolishness is sin; and the corner is an abomination to men.

Here is the description.

1. Of a weak man; Wisdom is too high for him; he thinks it so, and therefore, despairing to attain it, he will take no pains in the pursuit of it, but sit down content without it. And really it is so; he has not capacity for it, and therefore the advantages he has for getting it are all in vain to him. It is no easy thing to get wisdom; those that have natural parts good enough, yet if they be foolish, if they be slothful, and will not take pains, if they be playful and trifling, and given to their pleasures, if they be viciously inclined, and keep bad company, it is too high for them, they are not likely to reach it. And, for want of it, they are unfit for the service of their country, they open not their mouth in the gate, they are not admitted into the council or magistracy, or, if they are, they are dumb statues, and stand, whether they say nothing, because they have nothing to say, and they know, that if they should or for any thing, it would not be heeded, nay, it would
be hissed at. Let young men take pains to get wisdom, that they may be qualified for public business, and do it with reputation.

2. Of a wicked man, who is not only despised as a fool is, but detested. Two sorts of wicked men are so.

(1.) Such are secretly malicious. Though they speak fair, and carry it plausibly, they devise to do evil, are contriving to do an ill turn to those they bear a grudge to, or have an envious eye at; He that doth so, shall be called a mischievous person, or a monster of mischief; which, perhaps, was then a common name of reproach; he shall be branded as an inventor of evil things (Rom. i. 30.) or if any mischief be done, he shall be suspected as the author of it, or at least necessary to it. This devising evil, is the thought of foolishness, v. 9. It is made light of, and turned off with a jest, as only a foolish thing, but really it is sin, it is exceeding sinful; you cannot call it by a worse name than to call it sin. It is bad to do evil, but it is worse to devise it, for that has in it the subtlety and poison of the old serpent. But it may be taken more generally; We contract guilt, not only by the act of foolishness, but by the thought of it, though it go no further; the first risings of sin in the heart are sin, offensive to God, and must be repented of, or we are undone. Not only malicious, unclean, proud thoughts, but even foolish thoughts are sinful thoughts. If vain thoughts lodge in the heart, it defile it, which is a reason why we should keep our hearts with all diligence, and harbor no thoughts there which cannot give a good account of themselves, Gen. vi. 5.

(2.) Such as are openly abusive; The scorner, who gives ill language to every body, takes a pleasure in affronting people, and reflecting upon them, he is an abomination to men; none that have any sense of honor and virtue will care to keep company with him. The seat of the scorner is the pestilential chair, (as the Seventy call it, Ps. i. 1.) which no wise man will come near, for fear of taking the infection. Those that strive to make others odious, do but make themselves so.

10. If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.

Note. 1. In the day of adversity, we are apt to faint, to droop and be discouraged, to desist from our work, and to despair of relief. Our spirits sink, and then our hands hang down, and our knees grow feeble, and we become unfit for any thing. And often those that are most cheerful, when they are well, drop most, and are most dejected, when they are worst.

(2.) This is an evidence that our strength is small, and is a means of weakening it more; "It is a sign that thou art not a man of any resolution, any firmness of thought, any consideration, any faith, (for that is the strength of a soul,) if thou canst not bear up under an afflictive change of thy condition. Some are so feeble, that they can bear nothing; if a trouble does but touch them, (Job, iv. 5.) nay, if it does but threaten them, they faint immediately, and are ready to give up all for gone; and by this means they render themselves unfit to grapple with their trouble, and unable to help themselves. Be of good courage, therefore, and God shall strengthen thy heart.

11. If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; 12. If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that ponders the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul doth he not know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?

Here is, 1. A great duty required of us, and that is, to appear for the relief of oppressed innocency; if we see the lives or liberties of any, who by being taken away unjustly, we ought to bestir ourselves all we can to save them, by disproving the false accusations on which they are condemned, and seeking out proofs of their innocence. Though the persons be not such as we are under any particular obligation to, we must help them, out of a general zeal for justice. If any be set upon by force and violence, and it be in our power to rescue them, we ought to do it. Nay, if we see any through ignorance exposing themselves to danger, or fallen in distress, as travellers upon the road, ships at sea, or any the like, it is our duty, though it be with peril to ourselves, to hasten with help to them, and not forbear to deliver them, not be slack, or remiss, or indifferent, in such a case.

2. An answer to the excuse that is commonly made for the omission of this duty. Thou wilt say, "Behold we knew it not;" we were not aware of the imminency of the danger the person was in; we could not be sure that he was innocent, nor did we know how to prove it, nor which way to do any thing in favour of him, else we would have helped him." Now, (1.) It is easy to make such an excuse as this, sufficient to avoid the censures of men, for perhaps they cannot disprove us, when we say, We knew it not; or, We forgot. The temptation to tell a lie, for the excusing of a fault, is very strong, when we know it is impossible to be disproved, the truth lying wholly in our breasts; as when we say, We thought so and so, and really designed it; which no one is conscious of but ourselves.

(2.) It is not so easy with such excuses to evade the judgment of God; and to the discovery of that we lie open, and by the determination of that we must abide. Now, (1.) God fonders the heart, and keeps the soul; he keeps an eye upon it, observes all the doings of it, its most secret thoughts and intents are all naked and open before him. It is his prerogative, and that in which he glories; (Jer. xvii. 10.) I the Lord search the heart. He keeps the soul; holds it in life. This is a good reason why we should be tender of the lives of others, and do all we can to preserve them, because our lives have been precious in the sight of God, and he has graciously kept them. (2.) He knows and considers whether the excuse we make be true or no; whether it was because we did not know it, or whether the true reason was not because we did not love our neighbour as we ought, but were selfish, and regardless both of God and man. Let this serve to silence all our frivolous pleas, by which we think to stop the mouth of conscience when it charges us with the omission of plain duty. Does not he that fonders the heart consider it? (3.) He will judge us accordingly. As his knowledge cannot be imposed upon, so his justice cannot be biassed, but he will render to every man according to his works, not only the commission of evil works, but the omission of good works.

13. My son, eat thou honey, because it is good: and the honey-comb, which is sweet to thy taste: 14. So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.

We are here quickened to the study of wisdom by
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1. It will be very pleasant; we eat honey because it is sweet to the taste, and, upon that account we call it good, especially that which runs first from the honey-comb. Canaan was said to flow with milk and honey, and it was the common food of the country, (Luke xxiv. 41, 42.) even for children, Lxx. viii. 13. Those should weed them out of wisdom, and relish the good instructions of it. They that have tasted honey, need no further proof that it is sweet, nor can they by any argument be convinced of the contrary; so those that have experienced the power of truth and godliness are abundantly satisfied with the pleasure of both; they have tasted the sweetness of them, and all the atheists in the world with their sophistry, and the proflane with their banter, cannot alter their sentiments.

6. It will be very profitable. Honey may be sweet to the taste, and yet not wholesome; but wisdom has a future recompense attending it, as well as a present sweetness in it; "Thou art permitted to eat honey, and the agreeableness of it to thy taste invites thee to it; but thou hast much more reason to relish and digest the precepts of wisdom; for, when thou hast found that there shall be a reward, thou shalt be paid for thy pleasure, while the servants of sin pay dear for their pains. Wisdom does indeed work thy soul, but it will be a reward; it does indeed raise great expectations in thee, but as thy labour, so thy hope, shall not be in vain, thine expectation shall not be cut off, (ch. xxiii. 18.) nay, it shall be infinitely outdone."

15. Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous; spoil not his resting-place; 16. For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.

This is spoken, not so much by way of counsel to wicked men, they will not receive instruction, (ch. xxviii. 9.) but rather in defiance of them, for the encouragement of good people that are threatened by them. See here,

1. The designs of the wicked against the righteous, and the success they promise themselves in those designs. The plot is laid deep; they lay wait against the dwelling of the righteous, thinking to charge with the crimes which, upon his suspicion against him, they lie in wait at the door, to catch him when he stirs out, as David's persecutors, Ps. lix. title. The hope is raised high; they doubt not but to spoil his dwelling-place, because he is weak, and cannot support it, because his condition is low and distressed, and he is almost down already. All this is a fruit of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman. The blood-thirsty hate the upright.

2. The folly and frustration of those designs.

(1.) The righteous man, whose ruin was expected, recovers himself; he falls seven times into trouble, but, by the blessing of God upon his wisdom and integrity, he rises up again, sees through his troubles, and sees better times after them. The just man falls, sometimes falls seven times, perhaps into sin, sins of infirmity, through the surprise of temptation; but he rises up again, by repentance finds mercy with God, and regains his peace. (2.) The wicked man, who expects to see his ruin, and to help it forward, is undone; he falls into mischief, his sins and his troubles are his utter destruction.

17. Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth; and let not thy heart be glad when he stumbleth; 18. Lest the Lord see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.

Here, 1. The pleasure we are apt to take in the troubles of an enemy is forbidden us; as when any have done us an ill turn, or we bear them ill will only because they stand in our light, or in our way; when we do, we come to that they fall or any danger, suppose they stumble; and our corrupt hearts conceive a secret delight and satisfaction it; Aha, so would we have it; they are entangled, the wilderness has shut them in. Or, as Tyrus said concerning Jerusalem, (Ezek. xxvi. 2.) I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste. Men hope in the ruin of their enemies or rivals to wreak their revenge, or to find their account; but be not thou so ingrateful; rejoice not when the worst falls upon him that hast, falls. There may be a holy joy in the destruction of God's enemies, as it tends to the glory of God, and the welfare of the church; (Ps. liii. 10.) but in the ruin of our enemies, as such, we must by no means rejoice; on the contrary, we must weep, even with them when they weep, (as David, Ps. xxxv. 13, 14.) and that in sincerity; not so much as letting our hearts be secretly glad at their calamities.

2. The provocation which that pleasure gives to God is assigned as the reason of that prohibition; The Lord will see it, though it be hid in the heart only, and it will displease him; as it will displease a prudent father to see one child triumph in the correction of another, which he ought to tremble at and take warning by, not knowing how soon it may be his own case, he having so often deserved it. He adds an argument ad hominem—addressed to the individual, "Thou canst not do a greater kindness than to the enemy, when he is fallen, than to rejoice in it; for then, to cross thee and vex thee, God will turn his wrath from him; for, as the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God, so the righteousness of God was never intended to gratify the wrath of man, and humour his foolish passions; rather than seem to do that, he will adjourn the execution of his wrath; nay, it is implied, that when he turns his wrath from him, he will turn it against thee and the cup of trembling shall be put into thy hand."

19. Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be thou envious at the wicked: 20. For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out.

Here, 1. He repeats the caution he had before given against envying the pleasures and successes of wicked men in their wicked ways. This he quotes from his father David, Ps. xxxvii. 1. We must not in any case fret ourselves, or make ourselves uneasy, whatever God does in his providence; how disagreeable soever it is to our sentiments, interests, and expectations, we must acquiesce in it. We must not be of such a mind that we may be said to fret ourselves, nor must our eye be evil against any, because God is good. Are we more wise or just than he? If wicked people prosper, we must not therefore incline to do as they do. 2. He gives a reason for this caution, taken from the end of that way which wicked men walk in; envy not their prosperity; for (1.) There is no true happiness in it; There shall be no reward to the evil man; he has as much only for his existence; these are all the good things he must ever expect; there is none intended him in the world of retribution; he has his reward, Matth. vi. 2. He shall have none. Those are not to be envied that have their portion in this life, and must outlive it, Ps. xvii. 12. (2) There is no continuance in it; their candle shines bright, but it shall presently be
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...and a final period put to all their comfort, Job xxi. 17. Ps. xxxvii. 1, 2.

21. My son, fear thou the Lord and the king; and meddle not with them that are given to change: 22. For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both? Note, 1. Religion and loyalty must go together. As men, it is our duty to honour our Creator, to worship and reverence him, and to be always in his fear; as members of a community, incorporated for mutual benefit, it is our duty to be faithful and dutiful to the government God has set over us, Rom. xiii. 1, 2. Those that are truly religious will be loyal in conscience towards God; the godly in the land will be the quiet in the land; and those are not truly loyal, or will be so no longer than is for their interest, that are not religious. How should he be true to his prince, that is false to his God? And if they come in competition, it is an adjudged case; we must obey God rather than men. 2. Innovations in both are to be dreaded. Have nothing to do, he does not say, with them that change, for there may be cause to change for the better, but that are given to change, that affect it for change-sake, out of a peevish discontent with that which is, and a fondness for novelty, or a desire to fish in troubled waters; Meddle not with them that are given to change, either in religion, as in the civil government, come not into their secret, join not with them in their cabals, nor enter into the mystery of their iniquity. 3. Those that are of restless, factional, turbulent, spirits, commonly pull mischief upon their own heads, ere they are aware; Their calamity shall rise suddenly. Though they carry on their designs with the utmost secrecy, they will be discovered, and brought to condign punishment, when they little think of it. Who knows the time and manner on the rain which both God and the king will bring on their contemners, both on them and them that meddle with them?

23. These things also belong to the wise. It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment. 24. He that saith unto the wicked, Thou art righteous; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him: 25. But to them that rebuke him shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them. 26. Every man shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer. Here are lessons for wise men, judges, and princes. As subjects must do their duty, and be obedient to magistrates, so magistrates must do their duty in administering justice to their subjects, both in plas of the crown, and causes between party and party. These are lessons for them. 1. They must always weigh the merits of a cause, and not be swayed by any regard, one way or other, to parties concerned; It is not good in itself, nor can it ever do well, to have respect of persons in judgment; the consequences of it cannot but be the perverting of justice, and doing wrong, under colour of law and equity. A good judge will know the truth, not know faces, so as to countenance a friend, and help him out in a bad cause, or so much as omit any thing that can be said or done in favour of a righteous cause, when it is the cause of an enemy. 2. They must never connive at, or encourage, wicked people in their wicked practices. Magistrates in their places, and ministers in theirs, are to deal faithfully with the wicked man, though he be a great man, or a particular friend; to convict him of his wickedness, to show him what will be in the end thereof, to discover him to others, that they may avoid him. But if those whose office it is thus to show people their transgressions, palliate them, and connive at them; if they excuse the wicked man, much more if they prefer him and associate with him, which is, in effect, to say, Thou art righteous, they shall justly be looked upon as enemies to the public peace and welfare, which they ought to advance, and the people shall curse them, and cry out shame on them; and even those of other nations shall abhor them, as base betrayers of their trust. 3. They must discountenance, and give check to, all fraud, violence, injustice, and immorality; and though thereby they may disoblige a particular person, yet they will recommend themselves to the fame of God and man. Let magistrates and ministers, and private persons too, that are capable of doing it, rebuke the wicked, that they may bring them to repentance, or put them to shame, and they shall have the comfort of it in their own bosoms: to them shall be delight; when their consciences witness for them that they have been witnesses for God; and a good blessing shall come upon them, the blessing of God and good men; they shall be deemed righteous patriots, and their country's patriots. See ch. xxxviii. 23. 4. They must always give judgment according to equity; (v. 26.) they must give a right answer, give their opinion, and pass sentence, according to law and the true merits of the cause; and every one shall kiss his lips that doeth so, shall love and honour him, and be subject to his orders, for there is a kiss of allegiance as well as of affection. He that in common conversation likewise speaks pertinent and with sincerity, recommends him to his company, and is beloved and respected by all.

27. Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thy house. This is a rule of prudence in the management of household affairs; for all good men should be good husbands, and manage with discretion, which would prevent a great deal of sin, and trouble, and disgrace to their profession. 1. We must prefer necessaries before conveniencies, and not lay that out for show, which should be expended for the support of the family. We must be content with a mean cottage for a habitation, rather than want, or go in debt for, food convenient. 2. We must not think of building till we can afford it; "First apply thyself to thy work without in the field, let thy ground be put into good order, look after thy husbandry, for that is it by which thou must get; and when thou hast got well by that, then, and not till then, thou mayest think of re-building and beautifying thy house, for that is it upon which, and in which, thou wilt have occasion to spend." Many have ruined their estates and families by laying out money on that which brings nothing in, beginning to build, when they were not able to finish. Some understand it as advice to young men not to marry (for by that the house is built) till they have set up in the world, and get wherewith to maintain a wife and children comfortably. 3. When we have any great design on foot, it is wisdom to take it before us, and make the necessary preparations, before we fall to work, that, when it is begun, it may not stand still for want of materials. Solomon observed this rule himself in building the house of God; all was made ready before it was brought to the ground, 1 Kings vi. 7.

28. Be not a witness against thy neigh-
bour without cause; and deceive not with thy lips. 29. Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me; I will render to the man according to his work.

We are here forbidden to be in any thing injurious to our neighbour, particularly in and by the forms of law; either, 1. As a witness; “Never bear a testimony against any man without cause, unless what thou sayest thou knowest to be punctually true, and thou hast a clear call to testify it. Never bear a testimony against any one;” for it follows, “Deceive not with thy lips; deceive not thy judge and jury, deceive not those whom thou conversest with into an ill opinion of thy neighbour. When thou speakest of thy neighbour, do not only speak that which is true, but take heed, lest in the manner of thy speaking thou insinuate any thing that is otherwise, and so should deceive by ineffable or hyperbole.

Or, 2. As a plaintiff or prosecutor. If there be occasion to bring an action or information against thy neighbour, let it not be from a spirit of revenge; Say not, I am resolved I will meet with him, I will do so to him as he has done to me; even a righteous cause becomes unrighteous, when it is thus prosecuted with malice. Say not, I will render to the man according to his work; and make him pay dear for it; for it is God’s prerogative to do so, and we must leave it to him, and not step into his token or take his work out of his hands. If it will needs be our own carvers, and judges in our own cause, we forfeit the benefit of an appeal to God’s tribunal; therefore we must not avenge ourselves, because he has said, "Vengeance is mine.

30. I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; 31. And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. 32. Then I saw, and considered it well; I looked upon it, and received instruction. 33. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: 34. So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.

Here is, 1. The view which Solomon took of the field and vineyard of the slothful man. He did not go on purpose to see it, but, as he passed by, observed the fruitfulness of the ground, as it is very proper for travelling to do, and his subjects’ management of their land, as it is very proper for magistrates to do, he cast his eye upon a field, and a vineyard, unlike all the rest; for though the soil was good, yet there was nothing growing in them but thorns and nettles; not here and there one, but they were all overrun with weeds; and if there had been any fruit, it would have been eaten up by the beasts, for there was no fence, the stone wall was broken down. See the effects of that curse upon the ground, (Gen. iii. 18.) “Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee, and nothing else, unless thou take pains with it.” See what a blessing to the world the husbandman’s calling is, and what a wilderness this earth, even Canaan itself, would be without it. The king himself is served of the field, but he would be ill served, if God did not teach the husbandman discretion and diligence to rid the ground, plant it, sow it, and fence it. See what a great difference there is between some and others in the management even of their worldly affairs, and how little some consult their reputation, not caring though they proclaim their slothfulness, in the manifold effects of it, to all that pass by, shamed by their neighbour’s diligence.

The questions which he made upon it. He paused little, and considered it, looked again upon it, and received instruction. He did not break out into any passionate censures of the owner, did not call him any ill names, but he endeavoured himself to get good by the observation, and to be quickened by it to diligence. Note, These that are to give instruction to others, must receive instruction themselves; and instruction must be received, not only from what we read and hear, but from what we see. Not only what we see of the works of God, but from what we see of the manners of men; not only from men’s good manners, but from their evil manners. Plutarch relates a saying of Cato Major, That wise men profit more by fools than fools by wise men; for wise men will avoid the faults of fools, but fools will not imitate the virtues of wise men. Solomon reckoned that he received instruction by this sight, though it did not suggest to him any new notion or lesson, but only put him in mind of the service that himself had rendered, of the ridiculous folly of the sluggard, who, when he has needful work to do, lies dozing in bed, and cries, Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, and still it will be a little more, till he has slept his eyes out, and, instead of being fitted by sleep for business, as wise men are, he is dullest, and stupidest, and made good for nothing. Hence, certain misery attends him; his poverty comes as one that travelleth, it is constantly coming nearer and nearer to him, and will be upon him speedily, and want seizeth him as irresistibly as an armed man, a highwayman that will strip him of all he has.

Now this is applicable, not only to our worldly business, to show what a scandalous thing slothful ness in that is, and how injurious to the family, but to the affairs of our souls. Note, (1.) Our souls are our fields and vineyards, which we are every one of us to take care of, to dress, and to keep. They are capable of being improved with good husbandry; that may be got out of them which will be fruit abounding to our account. We are charged with them, to occupy them till our Lord come; and a great deal of care and pains it is requisite that we should take about them. (2.) These fields and vineyards are often in a very bad state; not only fruit brought, but all overgrown with thorns and nettles, scratching, stinging, inordinate lusts and passions, pride, covetousness, sensuality, uncleanness, these are the thorns and nettles, the wild grapes, which the unsanctified heart produces; no guard kept against the enemy, but the stone wall broken down; all lies in common, all exposed. (3.) Where it is thus, it is owing to the sinner’s own slothfulness and folly; he is a sluggard, loves sleep, hates labour, and he is void of understanding, understands neither his business nor his interest; he is perfectly besotted. (4.) The issue of it will certainly be the ruin of the soul, and all its welfare. It is everlasting want that thus comes upon it as an armed man. We know the place assigned to the wicked and slothful servant.

CHAP. XXV.

1. THESE are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, copied out.

This verse is the title of this latter collection of Solomon’s proverbs, for he sought out, and set in order, many proverbs, that by them he might be still teaching the people knowledge, Ecc. xii. 9. Observe,
1. The proverbs were Solomon's, who was divinely inspired to deliver, for the use of the church, these wise and weighty sentences. We have had many, but still there are more; yet, herein also, Christ is greater than Solomon, for, if we had all upon record that Christ said and did, that was instructive, the world could not contain the books that should be written. (Luke xix. 41.)

2. The publishers were Hezekiah's servants, who, it is likely, here acted as his servants, being appointed by him to do this good service to the church, among other good offices that he did in the law and in the commandments, 2 Chron. xxxv. 21. Whether he employed the prophets in this work, as Isaiah, Hosea, or Micah, who lived in his time, or some that were trained up in the schools of the prophets, or some of the priests and Levites, to whom we find him giving a charge concerning divine things, (2 Chron. xxix. 4.) or as the Jews think) his princes and ministers of state, who were more properly called his servants, is not certain; if it was done by Eliakim, and Joach, and Shebna, it was no diminution to their character. They copied out these proverbs from the records of Solomon's reign, and published them as an appendix to the former edition of his book, as a public and religious service to the church, to publish other men's works have lain hid in obscurity, perhaps a great while. Some think they culled these out of the 3000 proverbs which Solomon spake, (1 Kings iv. 32.) leaving out those that were physical, and that pertain to natural philosophy, and preserving such only as were divine and moral; and in this collection some observe that special regard was had to theervations which concern kings and their administration.

2. It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honour of kings is to search out a matter. 3. The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable.

Here is 1. An instance given of the honour of God; It is his glory to conceal a matter. He needs not search into any thing, for he perfectly knows every thing by a clear and certain view, and nothing can be hid from him; and yet his own way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters. There is an unfathomable depth in his counsels, Rom. xi. 33. It is but a little portion that is heard of him. Clouds and darkness are round about him. We see what he does, but we know not the reasons. Some refer it to the sins of men; it is his glory to be hidden, which is covering it, not remembering it, not mentioning it; his forbearance, which he exercises toward sinners, is likewise his honour, in which he seems to keep silence, and take no notice of the matter.

2. A double instance of the honour of kings. (1.) It is God's glory that he needs not search into a matter. because he knows it without search; but it is the honour of kings, with a close application of mind, and by all the methods of inquiry, to search out the matters that are brought before them, to take pains in examining offenders, that they may discover their designs, and bring to light the hidden works of darkness; not to give judgment till they have weighed things; nor to leave it wholly to others to examine things, but to see with their own eyes. (2.) It is God's glory that he cannot himself be found out by searching, and some of that honour is devolved upon kings, wise kings, that search out matters; their hearts are unsearchable, like the height of heaven, or the depth of the earth, which we may guess at, but cannot measure. Princes have their arcana imperii—state secrets, designs which are kept private, and reasons of state, which private persons are not competent judges of, and therefore ought not to pry into. Wise princes, when they search into a matter, have reaches which one would not think of, as Solomon, when he called for a sword to divide the living child with, designing thereby to discover the true mother.

4. Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer. 5. Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness.

This shows that the vigorous endeavours of a prince to suppress vice, and reform the manners of his people, is the most effectual way to support his government. Observe, 1. What the duty of magistrates is: To take away the wicked, to use their power for the terror of evil works and evil workers, not only to banish those that are vicious and profane from their presence, and forbid them the court, but so to frighten them and restrain them, that they may not spread the infection of their wickedness among their subjects. This is called taking away the dross from the silver, which is done by the force of fire. Wicked people are the dross of a nation, the scum of the country, and, as such, to be taken away. If men will not do it, God will, Ps. cix. 119. If the wicked be taken away from before the king, if he abandon them, and show his detestation of their wicked courses, it will go far toward the disabling of them to do mischief. The reformation of the court will promote the reformation of the kingdom, Ps. cl. 6. It is the advantage will be of their doing this duty. (1.) It will be the bettering of the subjects; they shall be made like silver refined, fit to be made vessels of honour. (2.) It will be the settling of the prince; his throne shall be established in this righteousness; for God will bless his government, the people will be pliable to it, and so it will become durable.

6. Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men: 7. For better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither, than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.

Here we see, 1. That religion is so far from destroying good manners, that it teaches us to behave ourselves lowly and reverently towards our superiors, to keep our distance, and give place to those to whom it belongs; "Put not forth thyself rudely and carelessly in the king's presence, or in the presence of great men; do not compare with them; (so some understand it;) "do not vie with them in apparel, furniture, gardens, house-keeping, or residence, for that is an affront to them, and will waste thine own estate." 2. That religion teaches us humility and self-denial, which is a better lesson than that of good manners; "Deny thyself the place thou art entitled to, covet not to make a fair show, nor aim at preference, nor thrust thyself into the company of those that are above thee; be content in a low sphere, if that is it which God has allotted to thee." The reason he gives, is, because this is really the way to advancement, as our Saviour shows in a parable that seems to be borrowed from this, Luke xiv. 9. Not that we must therefore pretend modesty and humility, and make a stratagem of it, for the court
8. **Go not hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame.**

9. **Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another;**

10. **Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away.**

Here is good counsel given about going to law:

1. "Be not hasty in bringing an action, before thou hast thyself considered it, and consulted with thy friends about it; Go not hastily to strive, do not send for a writ in a passion, or upon the first appearance of right on thy side, but weigh the matter deliberately, because we are apt to be partial in our own cause; consider the certainty of the expenses, and the uncertainty of the success, how much care and vexation it will be the occasion of, and, after all, the cause may go against thee; surely then thou shouldst not go hastily to strive."

2. "Bring not an action before thou hast tried to end the matter amicably; (v. 9.) Debate thy cause with thy neighbour privately, and perhaps you will understand one another better, and see that there is no occasion to go to law." In public quarrels, the war that must at length end, might better have been prevented by a treaty of peace, and a great deal of blood and treasure spared. It is so in private quarrels; "Sue not thy neighbour as a heathen man and a judean, until thou hast told him his fault between thee and him alone, and he has refused to refer the matter, or to come to an accommodation. Perhaps the matter in variance is a secret, not fit to be divulged to any, much less be to be brought upon the stage before the country; and therefore end it privately, that it may not be discovered." Reveal not the secret of another, so some read it. "Do not in revenge, to disgrace thine adversary, disclose that which should be kept private, and which does not at all belong to the cause."

Two reasons he gives why we should be thus cautious in going to law; (1.) "Because otherwise the cause will be in danger to go against thee, and thou wilt not know what to do, when the defendant has justified himself in what thou didst charge upon him, and made it out that thy complaint was frivolous and vexatious, and that thou hadst no just cause of action, and so put thee to shame, nonsuit thee, and force thee to pay costs; all which might have been prevented by a little consideration." (2.) "Because it will turn very much to thy reproach, if thou findest the character of thy cause, not only the defendant himself, (v. 8.) but he that hears the cause tried, will put thee to shame, will expose thee as a man of no principle, and thine infamy will not turn away, thou wilt never retrieve thy reputation."

11. A word fully spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. 12. As an ear
ing of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear.

Solomon here shows how much it becomes a man,

1. To speak pertinently; A word upon the wheels, that runs well, is well circumstanced in proper time and place, instruction, advice, or comfort, given seasonably, and in apt expressions, adapted to the case of the person spoken to, and agreeing with the character of the person speaking, is like golden balls resembling apples, or true apples of a golden colour, (golden repects,) or perhaps gilded, as sometimes we have gilded laurels, and those besossed in pictures of silver, or rather, brought to a table in a silver network basket, or in a silver box of that which we call, fit gree-work, through which the golden apples might be seen. Doubtless it was some ornament of the table then well known. As that was very pleasing to the eye, so is a word fitting spoken to the ear.

Especially give a reprover with discretion, and so as to make it acceptable. If it be well given by a wise reprover, and well taken by an obedient ear, it is an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, very graceful, and well-becoming both the reprover and the reproved; both will have their praise, the reprover for giving it so prudently, and the reproved for taking it so patiently, and making a good use of it. Others will commend them both, and they will have satisfaction in each other; he who gave the reprove is pleased that it had the desired effect, and he to whom it was given has reason to be thankful for it as a kindness. That is well given, we say, that is well taken; yet it does not always prove that that is well taken which is well given. It were to be wished that a wise reprover should always meet with an obedient ear, but often it is not so.

13. **As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him; for he refresheth the soul of his masters.**

See here, 1. What ought to be the care of a servant, the meanest that is sent on an errand, and intrusted with any business, much more the greatest, the agent and ambassador of a prince; he ought to be faithful to him that sends him, and to see to it that he do not, by mistake or with design, falsify his trust, and that he be in nothing, that lies in his power, wanting to his master's interest. Those that are as far as possible removed from their commission, ought to act as carefully as for themselves.

2. How much this will be the satisfaction of the master; it will refresh his soul, as much as ever the cold of snow (which in hot countries they preserve by art all the year round) refreshed the labourers in the harvest, that bore the burthen and heat of the day. The more important the affair was, and the more fear of its miscarrying, the more acceptable is the messenger, if he have managed it successfully and well. A faithful minister, Christ's messenger, should be thus acceptable to us; (Job xxxiii. 23.) however, he will be a sweet savour to God, 2 Cor. ii. 16.

14. Whoso bounteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain.

He may be said to boast of a false gift,

1. Who pretends to have received or given that which he never had, which he never gave; makes a noise of his great accomplishments, and his good services, but it is all false; he is not what he pretends to be. Or,

2. Who promises what he will give, and what he will do, but performs nothing; who raises people's expectations of the mighty things he will do for his country, for his friends, what noble legacies he will leave, but either he has not wherewithal, or he never designs it. Such a one is like the morning
cloud, that passes away, and disappoints those who looked for rain from it to water the parched ground; (Jude 12.) Clouds without water.

15 By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone. Two things are here recommended to us, in dealing with others, as likely means to gain our point:
1. Patience, to bear a present heat without being put into a heat by it, and to wait for a fit opportunity to offer our reasons, and to give persons time to consider them. By this means even a prince may be persuaded to do a thing which he seemed very averse to, much more a common person. That which is justice and reason now will be so another time, and therefore we need not urge them with violence now, but wait for a more convenient season. This is, as our Saviour speaks, “wait upon the Lord,” Ps. 27. 14.

2. A soft tongue breaketh the bone; it mollifies the roughest spirits, and overcomes those that are most morose; like lightning, which, they say, sometimes has broken the bone, and yet not pierced the flesh. Gideon with a soft tongue pacified the Ephraimites, and Abigail turned away David’s wrath. Hard words, we say, break no bones, and therefore we should bear them patiently; but, it seems, soft words do, and therefore we should, on all occasions, give them prudently.

16. Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it. Here, 1. We are allowed a sober and moderate use of the delights of sense; “Hast thou found honey? It is not forbidden fruit to thee, as it was to Jonathan; thou mayest eat of it with thanksgiving to God, who, having created things grateful to our senses, has given us leave to make use of them. Eat as much as is sufficient, and no more; enough is as good as a feast.”

2. We are cautioned to take heed of excess. We must use all pleasure as we do honey, with a check upon our appetite, lest we take more than does us good, and make ourselves sick with it. We are most in danger of surfeiting upon that which is most sweet, and therefore those that fare sumptuously every day have need to watch over themselves, lest their hearts be at any time overcharged. The pleasures of sense lose their sweetness by the excessiveness of them; as honey, which turns sour in the stomach; it is therefore our interest, as well as our duty, to use them with sobriety.

17. Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour’s house; lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee.

Here he mentions another pleasure which we must not take too much of, that of visiting our friends; the former, for fear of surfeiting ourselves, this, for fear of surfeiting our neighbour.

1. It is a piece of civility to visit our neighbours sometimes, to show our respect to them and concern for them, and to cultivate and improve mutual acquaintance and love, and that we may have both the satisfaction and advantage of their conversation.

2. It is wisdom, as well as good manners, not to be troublesome to our friends in our visiting of them; not to visit too often, nor stay too long, nor contrive to come at meal-time, nor make ourselves busy in the affairs of their families; hereby we make ourselves neither welcome, nor welcome, but and become nauseous, to the neighbour, who, if thus plagued and haunted with thy visits, will be weary of thee, and hate thee, and that will be the destruction of friendship, which should have been the improvement of it. Post triste suae

dies, finitas vises et hostes.—After the third day, fish and company became distasteful. Familiarity breeds contempt. Nulli te facias nimis solitatem.—Be not too intimate with any. He that spungen upons his friends lessen him. How much better a Friend then is God than any other friend; for we need not withdraw our foot from his house, the throne of his grace; (ch. viii. 34.) the oftener we come to him the better, and the more welcome.

18. A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a mail, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.

Here, 1. The sin condemned, is, bearing false witness against our neighbour, either in judgment, or in common conversation, contrary to the law of the tenth commandment.

2. That which it is he condemned for, is, the mischieflessness of it; it is in its power to ruin not only men’s reputation, but their lives, estates, families, all that is dear to them; a false testimony is everything that is dangerous, it is a mal ad club to knock a man’s brains out, a faif, which there is no fence against; it is a sword to wound near at hand, and a sharp arrow to wound at a distance; we have therefore need to pray, “Lord deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, Ps. cxvi. 2.

19. Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint. 1. The confidence of an unfaithful man (so some read it) will be like a broken tooth; his policy, his power, his interest, all that which he trusted in to support him in his wickedness, will fail him in time of trouble, Ps. lii. 7.

2. Confidence in an unfaithful man, so we read it; in a man whom we thought trusty, and therefore depended on, but who proves otherwise; it proves not only unserviceable, but painful and vexatious, like a broken tooth, or a foot out of joint, which, when we put any stress upon it, not only fails us, but makes us feel from it; especially in time of trouble, when we most expect help from it; it is like a broken reed, Isa. xxxvi. 6. Confidence in a faithful God, in time of trouble, will not prove thus; on him we may rest, and in him dwell at ease.

20. As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre; so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart.

1. The absurdity here censured, is singing songs to a heavy heart. Those that are in great sorrow are to be comforted by sympathising with them, condoling with them, and concurring in their lamentation: if we take that method, the moving of our lips may assuage their grief; (Job xvi. 5.) but we take a wrong course with them, if we think to relieve them by being merry with them, and endeavouring to make them merry; for it adds to their grief, to see their friends so little concerned for them; it puts them upon rising up the causes of their grief, and aggravating them, and makes them harden themselves in sorrow against the assaults of mirth.

2. The absurdities this is compared to, are, taking away a garment from a man in cold weather, which makes him colder, or pouring vinegar upon nitre, which, like water upon lime, puts it into a ferment; so improper, so incongruous, is it to sing pleasant songs to one that is of a sorrowful spirit. Some wait it in a contrary sense; As he that puts on a garment in cold weather warms the body, or as vinegar upon nitre dissolves it, so he that sings songs of comfort to a person in sorrow refreshes him, and dispels his grief.
21. If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: 22. For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee.

By this it appears, that, however the scribes and Pharisees had corrupted the law, not only the commandment of loving our brethren, but even that of loving our enemies, was not only a new, but an old, commandment; an Old Testament law, which our Saviour has given us with the new enforcement of his own great example in loving us when we were enemies. Observe, 1. How we must express our love to our enemies; by the real offices of kindness, even those that are expensive to ourselves, and most acceptable to them; "If they be hungry and thirsty, instead of pleasing thyself with their distress, and contriving how to cut off supplies from them, relieve them, as Elias did the Syrians that came to apprehend him," 2 Kings vii. 23. 2. What encouragement we have to do so. (1.) It will be a likely means to win upon them, and bring them over to be reconciled to us; we shall mollify them as the refiner melts the metal in the crucible, not only by putting it over the fire, but by heaping coals of fire upon it. The way to turn an enemy into a friend, is, to act toward him in a friendly manner. If it do not gain him, it will aggravate his sin and punishment, and heap the burning coals of God's wrath upon his head, as rejoicing in his calamity may be an occasion of God's turning his wrath from him, ch. xxxiv. 17. (2.) However, we shall be no losers by our self-denial; "Whether he relent toward thee or no, the Lord shall reward thee; he shall forgive thee, who thus shewest thyself to be of a forgiving spirit; he shall provide for thee when thou art in distress, (though thou hast been evil and ungrateful,) as thou dost for thine enemy." However, it shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, when kindness done to our enemies shall be remembered, as well as those shown to God's friends.

23. The north wind driveth away rain; so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.

Here see, 1. How we must discourage sin, and witness against it, and particularly the sin of slandering and backbiting, we must frown upon it, and, by giving it an angry countenance, endeavour to put it out of countenance. Slanders would not be so readily spoken as they are, if they were not readily heard; but good manners would silence the slanderer, if he knew that his tales displeased the company. We should show ourselves uneasy, if we heard a dear friend, whom we value, evil-spoken of; the same dislike we should shew of evil speaking in general. If we cannot otherwise reprove, we may do it by our looks. 2. The good effect which this might, probably, have; who knows but it may silence and drive away a backbiting tongue? Sin, if it be countenanced, becomes daring, but if it receive an check, it is so conscious of this shame, that it becomes cowardly, and this particularly; for many abuse those they speak of, only in hopes to curry favour with those they speak to.

24. It is better to dwell in a corner of the house-top, than with a brawling woman, and in a wide house.

This is the same with what he had said, ch. xxi. 9. Observe, 1. How these are to be pitied that are unequally yoked, especially with such as are brawling and contentious, whether husband or wife; for it is equally true of both. It is better to be alone than to be joined to one, who, instead of being a meet help, is a great bindrance to the comfort of life. 2. How those may sometimes be envied that live in solitude; as they want the comfort of society, so they are free from the vexation of it. And as there are cases which give occasion to say, "Blessed is the womb that has not borne," so there are which give occasion to say, "Blessed is the man who was never married, but who lives like a servant in a corner of the house-top." 25. As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.

See here, 1. How natural it is to us to desire to hear good news from our friends, and concerning our affairs at a distance. It is sometimes with impatience that we expect to hear from abroad, our souls thirst after it: but we should check the inordinateness of that desire; if it be bad news, it will come too soon, if good, it will be welcome at any time. 2. How acceptable such good news will be when it does come, as refreshing as cold water to one that is thirsty. Solomon himself had much trading abroad, as well as correspondence by his ambassadors with foreign courts; and how pleasant it was to hear of the good success of his negotiations abroad, he well knew by experience. Heaven is a country afar off; how refreshing is it to hear good news from thence, both in the everlasting gospel, which signifies glad tidings, and in the witness of the Spirit with our spirits that we are God's children.

26. A righteous man falling down before the wicked, is as a troubled fountain and a corrupt spring.

It is here represented as a very lamentable thing, and a public grievance, and of ill consequence to many, like the troubling of a fountain, and the corrupting of a spring, for the righteous to fall down before the wicked; that is, 1. For the righteous to fall into sin, in the sight of the wicked, for to do any thing unbecoming their profession, which is told in Gash, and published in the streets of Askelon, and in which the letters of the Philistines rejoice; for them that have been in reputation for wisdom and honour, to fall from their excellency, this troubles the fountain by grieving some, and corrupts the springs by infecting others, and emboldening them to do likewise. 2. For the righteous to be oppressed, and run down, and trampled upon, by the violence or subtly of evil men, to be displeased, and thrust into obscurity, this is the troubling of the fountains of justice, and corrupting the very springs of government, ch. xxviii. 12, 28.—xxix. 2. 3. For the righteous to be cowardly, to truckle to the wicked, to be afraid of opposing his wickedness, and basely to yield to him, this is a reflection upon religion, a discouragement to good men, and strengthens the hands of sinners in their sins, and so is like a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring.

27. It is not good to eat much honey; sc for men to search their own glory is not glory.

Two things we must be graciously dead to: 1. To the pleasures of sense, for it is not good to eat much honey, though it pleases the taste, and, if eaten with moderation, is very wholesome, yet, if eaten to excess, it becomes nauseous, creates bile, and is the occasion of many diseases; it is true of all the delights of the children of men, that they will surfeit, but never satisfy, and they danger-
ous to those that allow themselves the liberal use
of them. 2. To the praise of men. We must not be greedy of
that, any more than of pleasure, because, for
men to search their own glory, to court applause,
and covet to make themselves popular, is not their
glory, but their shame, every one will seek for
them, but the glory which is so courted, when
it is got, is not glory, it is really no true honour
to a man.

Some give another sense of this verse; To eat
much honey is not good, but to search into glorious
and excellent things is a great commendation, it is
true glory; we cannot therein offend by excess. Others
thus; As honey, though pleasant to the
taste, if used immediately, oppresseth the stomach,
so also every man search into things sublime and
glorious, though pleasant to us, if we pry too far,
will overwhelm our capacities with a greater glory
and lustre than they can bear. Or thus; “You
may be surfeited with eating too much honey, but
the last of glory, of their glory, the glory of the
blessed, is glory, it will be ever fresh, and never
pall the appetite.”

28. He that hath no rule over his own
spirit is like a city that is broken down, and
without walls.

Here is, 1. The good character of a wise and virtuous
man implied; he is one that has rule over his
own spirit; he governs the government of his-
self, and of his own appetites and passions, and does
not suffer them to rebel against reason and
conscience. He has the rule of his own thoughts, his
desires, his inclinations, his resentments, and keeps
them all in good order.

2. The bad case of a vicious man, who has not
this rule over his own spirit, who, when temptations
to excess in eating or drinking are before him, has
no government of himself, when he is provoked,
brakes out into exorbitant passions, such a one is
like a city that is broken down, and without walls;
all that is good goes out, and forsakes him, all that
is evil breaks in upon him; he lies exposed to all
the temptations of Satan, and becomes an easy prey
to that enemy; he is also liable to many troubles
and vexations; it is likewise as much a reproach to
him as it is to a city to have its walls ruined, Neh. i. 3.

CHAP. XXVI.

1. As snow in summer, and as rain in
harvest; so honour is not seemly
for a fool.

Note, 1. It is too common a thing for honour
to be given to fools, who are utterly unworthy of it,
and unfit for it; bad men, who have neither wit nor
grace, are sometimes preferred by princes, and ap-
plauded and cried up by the people. Folly is set
for a richly dressed, a seat of very high
honour, xli. 2.

2. It is very absurd and unbecoming when it is so.
It is as incongruous as snow in summer, and as great
a disorder in the commonwealth as that is in the
course of nature and in the seasons of the year; nay,
it is as injurious as rain in harvest, which hinders
the labourers, and spoils the fruits of the earth when
they are ready to be gathered. When bad men
are in power, they commonly abuse their power; in
discouraging virtue, and giving countenance to wick-
edness, for want of wisdom to discern it, and grace
to detest it.

2. As the bird by wandering, as the swal-
low by flying; so the curse causeless shall
not come.

Here is, 1. The folly of passion; it makes men
scatter causeless curses; wishing ill to others, upon
presumption that they are bad, and have done ill,
when either they mistake the person, or misunder-
stand the fact, or call evil good, and good evil. Give
honour to a fool, and he thunders out his anathemas
against all that he is disgusted with, right or wrong.
Great men, when wicked, think they have a privi-
lege to keep those about them in awe, by cursing
them, and swearing at them; which yet is an ex-
pression of the most impotent malice, and shows
their weakness as much as their wickedness.

2. The safety of innocency. He that is cursed
without cause, whether by furious imprecatings or
solemn anathemas, the curse shall do him no more
harm than the bird that flies over his head, than
Saul’s curse on David, i. 19. It will fly away like the
sparrow or the wild dove, which go nobody knows whither, till they return
unto their proper place, as the curse will at length return
on the head of him that uttered it.

3. A whip for the horse, a bridle for the
ass, and a rod for the fool’s back.

Here, 1. Wicked men are compared to the horse
and the ass; so brutish are they, so unreasonably,
and not to be governed but by force or fear;
so low has sin sunk men, so much below themselves!
Men indeed are born like the child’s ass; but as
some, by the grace of God, are changed, and be-
come rational, so others, by custom in sin are har-
dened, and become more and more sottish, as the
horse and the mule, Ps. xxxii. 9.

2. Direction is given to use them accordingly;
Princes, instead of giving honour to a fool, (v. 1.)
must put disgrace upon him; instead of putting pow-
er into his hand, must exercise power over him. A
horse unbrowed needs a whip, for correction, and an
ass a bridle for direction, and to check him, when
he would turn out of the way; so a vicious man,
who will not be under the guidance and restraint of
religion and reason, ought to be whipt and bridled,
and be rebuked severely, and made to smart for
what he has done amiss, and to be restrained from
offending any more.

4. Answer not a fool according to his
folly, lest thou also be like unto him. 5.
Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he
be wise in his own conceit.

See here the noble security of the scripture-style,
which seems to contradict itself, but really does not.
Wise men have need to be directed how to deal
with fools; and they have never more need of wis-
don than in dealing with such, to know when to
keep silence, and when to speak, for there may be
a time for both.

1. In some cases, a wise man will not set his wit
that to a fool, so far as to answer him according
to his folly. “If he boast of himself, do not answer
him by boasting of thyself. If he rail and talk
passionately, do not thou rail and talk passionately
too. If he tell one great lie, do not thou tell another
to match it. If he calumny thy friends, do not thou
calumny his. If he banter, do not answer him
in his own language, lest thou be like him; even thou,
who knowest better things, who hast more sense,
and hast been better taught.”

2. Yet, in other cases, a wise man will use his
wisdom for the conviction of a fool; when, by taking
notice of what he says, there may be hopes of doing
good, or, at least, preventing further mischief, either
to himself or others.

If thou have reason to think that thy silence will be deemed an evidence of the
weakness of thy cause, or of thine own weakness, in
such a case, answer him, and let it be an answe.

*ad hominem*—to the man, beat him at his own we-
6. He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool, cuttest off the feet, and drinketh damage. 7. The legs of the lame are not equal; so is a parable in the mouth of fools. 8. As he that bindeth a stone in a sling; so is he that giveth honour to a fool.

9. As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard; so is a parable in the mouth of fools.

To recommend wisdom to us, and to quicken us to the diligent use of all the means for the getting of wisdom, Solomon here shows that fools are fit for nothing; they are either sottish men, who will never think and design at all, or vicious men, who will never think and design well.

1. They are not fit to be intrusted with any business, not fit to go on an errand; (v. 6.) He that doth send but a message by the hand of a fool, of a careless, heedless, slumbering, one who delighteth in his jests, and giveth to his pleasures, that he cannot apply his mind to anything that is serious, he will find his message misunderstood, the one half of it forgotten, the rest awkwardly delivered, and so many blunders made about it, that he had as well have cut off his legs, that is, never have sent him; nay, he will drink damage, it will be very much to his prejudice to have employed such a one, who, instead of bringing him a good account of his affairs, will abuse him, and put a trick upon him; for, in Solomon's language, a knife and a fool are of the same signification. It will turn much to a man's disgrace to make use of the service of a fool, for people will be apt to judge of the master by his messenger.

2. They are not fit to have any honour put upon them; he had said, (v. 1.) Honour is not seemly for a fool; here he shows that it is lost and thrown away upon him; as if a man should throw a precious stone, or a stone fit to be used in weighing, into a heap of common stones, where it would be buried, and of no use; it is as absurd as if a man should dress up a stone in jewels, so others; nay, it is dangerous, it is like a stone bound in a sling, with which a man will be likely to do hurt; to give honour to a fool, is to put a sword in a madman's hand, with which we know not what mischief he may do, even to those that put it into his hand.

3. They are not fit to deliver wise sayings, nor should be intrusted to manage matters of weight, though they should be instructed concerning it, and be able to say something to it. Wise sayings, as a foolish man delivers them, and applies them, (in such a manner, that one may know he does not rightly understand them,) lose their excellency and usefulness; A parable in the mouth of fools ceases to be a parable, and becomes a jest. If a man who lives a wicked life, yet speaks religiously, and takes God's covenant into his mouth, (1.) He does but shame himself and his profession; As the legs of the lame are not equal, by reason of which their going is unseemly, so unseemly is it for a fool to pretend to speak apothegms, and give advice, and for a man to talk devoutly, whose conversation is a constant contradiction to his talk, and gives him the lie. His good words raise him up, but then his bad life takes him down, and so his words are not equal. "A wise saying (says Bishop Patrick) doth as ill become a fool as dancing doth a cripple; for as his lameness never so much appears as when he would seem nimble, so the foolishness of the wise is never so ridiculous as when he would seem wise."

As therefore it is best for a lame man to keep his seat, so it is best for a silly man, and a bad man, to hold his tongue.

(2.) He does but do mischief with it to himself and others, as a drunkard does with a worm, or any other sharp thing which he takes in his hand, with which he tears himself and those about him, because he knows not how to manage it. Those that talk well, and do not live well, their good words will aggravate their own condemnation, and others will be hardened by their inconsistency with themselves. Some give this sense of it; The sharpest saying, by which a sinner, one would think, should be pricked to the heart, makes no more impression upon a fool, no, though it come out of his own mouth, than the scratch of a thorn does upon the hand of a man when he is drunk, who then feels it not, nor complains of it, ch. xxiii. 35.

10. The great God, that formed all things, both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors.

Our translation gives this verse a different reading in the text, and in the margin; and accordingly it bespeaks, either,

1. The equity of a good God; The Master, or Lord, (so Rab signifies,) or, as we read it, The great God that formed all things at first, and still governs them in infinite wisdom, renders to every man according to his work. He rewards the fool, who sinneth through ignorance, who knew not his Lord's will, and few things; and the transgressor, who sins presumptuously, and with a high hand, who knew his Lord's will, and would not do it, with many stripes. Some understand it of the goodness of God's common providence, even to fools and transgressors, on whom he causes his sun to shine, and his rain to fall. Or it bespeaks,

2. The iniquity of a bad prince; so the margin reads it. A great man grieves all; and he hires the fool, he hires the transgressor, and the transgressor, who hires a wicked man gets power in his hand, by himself, and by the fools and knaves whom he employs under him, whom he hires and chooses to make use of, he grieves all who are under him, and is vexatious to them. We should therefore pray for kings, and all in authority, that, under them, our lives may be quiet and peaceable.

11. As a dog returneth to his vomit; so a fool returneth to his folly.

See here, 1. What an abominable thing sin is, and how hateful sometimes it is to appear, even to the sinner himself. When his conscience is convinced, or he feels smart from his sin, he is sick of it, and vomits it up; he seems then to detest it, and to be willing to part with it. It is in itself, and, first or last, will be to the sinner, more loathsome than the vomit of a dog, Ps. xxxvi. 2. 2. How apt sinners are to relapse into it notwithstanding; as the dog, after he has gained ease by vomiting that which burdened his stomach, yet goes and gorges himself again, so sinners, who have been convinced only, and not converted, return to sin again, forgetting how sick it made them. The Apostle applies this proverb to those that have known the way of righteousness, but are turned from it, (2 Pet. ii. 22.) but God will swear them out of his mouth, Rev. iii. 16.

12. Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.
Here is, 1. A spiritual disease supposed, and that is self-conceit. Sceat thou a man? Yes, we see many a one, wise in his own conceit; who has some little sense, but is proud of it, thinks it much more than it is, more than any of his neighbours have, and enough, so that he needs no more; has such a conceit of his own abilities as makes him opinionative, dogmatical, and censorious; and all the use he makes of it is, to puff himself up. Or, if by a wise man we understand a religious man, it describes the character of those who, making some show of religion, conclude their spiritual state to be good, when really it is very bad, like Laodicea, Rev. iii. 17.

2. The danger of this disease; it is in a manner desperate, there is more hope of a fool, that knows, and owns, himself to be such, than of such a one. Solomon was not only a wise man himself, but a teacher of wisdom; and this observation he made upon his pupils, that he found his work most difficult, and least successful, with those that had a good opinion of themselves, and were not sensible that they needed instruction. Therefore he that seems to himself to be wise, must become a fool, that he may be wise, 1 Cor. iii. 18. There is more hope of a publican than of a proud Pharisee, Matth. xxi. 28. Many are hindered from being truly wise, and religious, by false and groundless conceit that they are so, John ix. 40, 41.

13. The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way, a lion is in the streets.

When a man talks foolishly, we say, He talks idly; for none betray their folly more than those who are idle, and about to excuse themselves in their idleness. As men’s folly makes them slothful, so their slothfulness makes them foolish. Observe,

1. What the slothful man really dredts; he dreads the way, the streets, the place, where work is to be done, and a journey to be gone; he hates business, hates everything that requires care and labour.

2. What he dreams of, and pretends to dread; a lion in the way. When he is pressed to be diligent, either in his worldly affairs, or in the business of religion, this is his excuse, (and a sorry excuse it is, as bad as none,) There is a lion in the way, some insuperable difficulty or danger which he cannot pretend to grapple with. Lions frequent woods and deserts; and, in the day-time, when man has business to do, they are in their dens, Ps. civ. 22, 23. But the sluggard fancies, or rather pretends to fancy, a lion in the streets, whereas the lion is only in his own fancy, nor is he so fierce as he is painted. Note, It is a foolish thing to frighten ourselves from real duties by fancied difficulties, Eccl. xi. 4.

14. As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed.

Having seen the slothful man in fear of his work, here we find him in love with his ease; he lies in his bed on one side till he is weary of that, and then turns to the other, but still in his bed, when it is far in the day, and work is to be done; as the door is moved, but not removed; and so his business is neglected, and his opportunities let slip. See the sluggard’s character.

1. He is one that does not care to get out of his bed, but seems to be hung upon it, as the door upon the hinges. Bodily ease, too much consulted, is the sad occasion of many a spiritual disease. They that love sleep will prove in the end to have loved death.

2. He that does not care to get forward with his business, in that he stirs to and fro a little, but to no purpose, he is where he was. Slothful professors turn, in profession, like the door upon the hinges. The world and the flesh are the two hinges on which they are hung, and, though they move in a course of external services, are got into a road of duties, and tread around in them like the horse in the mill, yet they get no good, they get no ground, they are never the nearer heaven; sinners unchangeable, saints unimproved.

15. The slothful hides his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth.

The sluggard is now, with much ado, got out of his bed, but he might as good have lain there still, for anything he is likely to bring to pass in his work, so awkwardly does he go about it, nor is he such an one to be moved, as he was moved, for his slothfulness.

He hides his hand in his bosom, for fear of cold; next to his warm bed is his warm bosom; or, pretending that he is lame, as some do, that make a trade of begging; something ails his hand, he would have it thought that it is blistered with yesterday’s hard work; or, it speaks, in general, his aversion to business; he has tried, and his hands are not used to labour, and therefore he hugs himself in his own ease, to keep himself warm. This, it is common for those that will not do their duty, to pretend they cannot; I cannot dig, Luke xvi. 3.

2. The prejudice he sustains by his slothfulness; He himself is the loser by it, for he starves himself; it grieves him to bring his hand to his mouth, he cannot find in his heart to feed himself, but dreads, as if it were a mighty toil, to lift his hand to his head. It is an elegant hyperbole, aggravating his sin, that he cannot endure the labour of a little profit, and showing how his sin is his punishment. These that are slothful in the business of religion will not be at the pains to feed their own souls with the word of God, the bread of life, nor to fetch in promised blessings by prayer, though they might have them for the fetching.

16. The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.

Observe, 1. The high opinion which the sluggard has of himself, notwithstanding the gross absurdity and folly of his slothfulness; He thinks himself wiser than seven men, than seven wise men, for they are such as can render a reason. It is the wisdom of a man to be able to render a reason; of a good man, to be able to give a reason of the hope that is in him, 1 Pet. iii. 15. What we do we should be able to render a reason for, though, perhaps, we may not have wit enough to show the fallacy of every objection against it. He that takes pains in religion can render a good reason for it; he knows that he is working for a good Master, and that his labour shall not be in vain. But the sluggard thinks himself wiser than seven such; for, let seven such persuade him to be diligent, with all the reasons they can render for it, it is to no purpose, his own determination, he thinks, answers enough to them and to his reasons.

2. The reference that this has to his slothfulness: It is the sluggard, above all men, that is thus self-conceited; for, (1.) His good opinion of himself is the cause of his slothfulness; therefore he will not take pains to get wisdom, because he thinks he is wise enough already. A conceit of the sufficiency of our attainments is a great enemy to our improvement. (2.) His slothfulness is the cause of his good opinion of himself. If he would but take pains to examine himself, and compare himself with the laws of wisdom, he would have other thoughts of himself. Indulged slothfulness is at the bottom of
17. He that passeth by, and meddles with strife belonging to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears.

1. That which is here condemned, is, meddling with strife that belongs to us. If we must not be hasty to strive in our own cause, (ch. xxv. 8.) much less in other people's, especially theirs that we are no way related to, or concerned in, but light on accidentally as we pass by. If we can be instrumental to make peace between those that are at variance, we must do it, though we should thereby receive the ill-will of both sides, at least, while they are in their heat; but to make ourselves busy in other men's matters, and parties in other men's quarrels, is not only to court our own trouble, but to thrust ourselves into temptation. Who made me a judge? Let them end it, as they began it, between themselves.

2. Therefore we are cautioned against it, because of the danger it exposes us to; it is like taking a snarling cur by the ears, that will snap at you, and bite you; you had better have let him alone, for you cannot get clear of him when you would, and must thank yourselves if you come off with a wound and dishonour. He that has got a dog by the ears, if he let him go, he flies at him, if he keeps his hold, he has his hands full, and can do nothing else. Let every one with quietness work, and mind his own business, and not with unquietness quarrel, and meddle with other people's business.

18. Asamad man who casteth fire-brands, arrows, and death. 19. So is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?

See here, 1. How mischievous those are that make no scruple of deceiving their neighbours, they are great mischievous men who cast fire-brands, arrows, and death; so much hurt may they do to their deceiving. They value themselves upon it, as politic, cunning, men, but really they are as mad men. There is not a greater madness in the world than a wilful sin. It is not only the passionate, furious, man, but the malicious, deceitful, man, that is a mad man; he does in effect cast fire-brands, arrows, and death; he does more mischief than he can imagine. Fraud and falsehood burn like fire-brands, kill, even at a distance, like arrows.

2. See how frivolous the excuse is which men commonly make for the mischief they do, that they did it in jest; with this they think to turn it off when they are reproved for it, Am not I in sport? But it will prove dangerous playing with fire, and jesting with edge-tools. Not that these are to be commended who are captious, and can take no jest, they that themselves are wise, must suffer fools, (2 Cor. vi. 19, 20.) but those are certainly to be condemned who are so impassive to their neighbours, impose upon their credulity, cheat them in their bargains with them, tell lies to them, or tell lies of them, give them ill language, or sully their reputation, and then think to excuse it by saying that they did but jest; Am not I in sport? He that sins in jest, must repent in earnest, or his sin will be his ruin. Truth is too valuable a thing to be sold for a jest, and so is the reputation of our neighbour.

19. Where no wood is, there is the fire goeth out; so where there is no tale-bearer, the strife ceaseth. 21. As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife. 22. The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

Contention is as a fire, it heats the spirit, burns up all that is good, and puts families and societies into a flame. Now here we are told how that fire is commonly kindled and kept burning, that we may avoid the occasions of strife, and so prevent the mischievous consequences of it. If then we would keep the peace,

1. We must not give ear to tale-bearers, for they feed the fire of contention with fuel; nay, they spread it with combustible matter; the tales they carry are fire-balls; they who, by insinuating base characters, revealing secrets, and misrepresented words and actions, do what they can to make relations, friends, and neighbours, jealous one of another, to alienate them one from another, and sow discord among them, are to be banished out of families, and all societies, and then strife will as surely cease, as the fire will go out when it has no fuel; the contentious wildest heart will understand one another, and come to a better temper; old stories will soon be forgotten, when there are no new ones told to keep up the remembrance of them, and both sides will see how they have been imposed upon by a common enemy. Whisperers and backbiters are incendiaries not to be suffered.

To illustrate this, he repeats (v. 22.) what he has said before, (ch. xviii. 8.) that the words of a tale-bearer are as wounds, wounds in the vitals; they wound the reputation of him who is belied, and, perhaps, the wound proves incurable, and even the plaster of a recantation (which yet can seldom be obtained) may not prove wide enough for it; they wound the love and charity which he, to whom they are spoken, ought to have for his neighbour, and give a fatal stab to friendship and Christian fellowship. We must therefore not only not be tale-bearers ourselves at any time we ever do any ill offices, but we should not give the least countenance to those that are.

2. We must not associate with peevish, passionate, people, that are exceptions, and apt to put the worst constructions upon every thing, that pick quarrels upon every occasion, and are quick, and high, and hot, in resenting affronts; these are contentious men, that kindle strife, v. 21. The less we have to do with such, the better, for it will be very hard not to quarrel with those that are quarrellers.

23. Burning lips and a wicked heart are like a potsherd covered with silver dross. This may be meant, either,

1. Of a wicked heart showing itself in burning lips, furious, passionate, outrageous, words, burning in malice, and persecuting those to whom, or of whom, they are spoken; ill words and ill will agree as well together as a potsherd and the dress of sil-
ver, which, now that the pot is broken and the dress separated from the silver, are fit to be thrown together to the dunghill.

2. Or of a wicked heart disguising itself with burning lips, burning with the professions of love and friendship, and even persecuting a man with flatteries; this is like a fished cover'd with the scum of oil, with which one that is weak may be imposed upon, as if it were of some value, but a wise man is soon aware of the cheat. This sense agrees with the following verses.

24. He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him; 25. When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart. 26. Whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be showed before the whole congregation.

There is cause to complain, not only of the want of sincerity in men's profession of friendship, and that they do not love so well as they pretend, nor will serve their friends so much as they promise, but, which is much worse, of wicked designs in the profession of friendship, and the making of it subservient to the most malicious intentions. This is here spoken of as a common thing; (v. 24.) He that hates his neighbour, and is contriving to do him a mischief, yet dissembleth with his lips, professes to have a respect for him, and to be ready to serve him, talks kindly with him, as Cain with Abel, asks, Art thou in health, my brother? as Job to Amasa, that his malice may not be suspected, and guarded against, and so he may have the fairer opportunity to execute the purposes of it, this man fakes with deceit within him, he keeps in his mind the mischief he intends to do his neighbour, till he catches him at an advantage. This is malice which has no less of the subtility, than it has of the venom, of the old serpent in it.

Now, as to this matter, we are here cautioned,

1. Not to be so foolish as to suffer ourselves to be imposed upon by the pretensions of friendship. Remember to distrust when a man speaks fair, be not too forward to believe him, unless you know him well, for it is possible there may be seven abominations in his heart, a great many projects of mischief against you, which he is labouring so industriously to conceal with his fair speech. Satan is an enemy that hates us, and yet, in his temptations, speaks fair; as he did to Eve, but it is madness to give credit to him, for there are seven abominations in his heart, seven other spirits does our unclean spirit bring more wicked than himself.

2. Not to be so wicked as to impose upon any with a profession of friendship; for, though the fraud may be carried on plausible awhile, it will be brought to light, v. 26. He whose hatred is covered by deceit, one time or other will be discovered, and his wickedness showed, to his shame and confusion, before the whole congregation; and nothing will do more to make a man odious to all companies. Love (says one) is the best armour, but the worst cloak, and will serve dissemblers as the disguise which Ahab put on and perished in.

27. Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him.

Here see, 1. What pains men take to do mischief to others: As they put a force upon themselves by concealing it with a profession of friendship, so they put themselves to a great deal of labour to bring it about; it is digging a pit, it is rolling a stone, hard work; and yet men will not stick at it, to gratify their passion and revenge.

2. What preparation they hereby make of mischief to themselves; their violent dealing will return upon their own heads; they shall themselves fall into the pit they digged, and the stone they rolled will return upon them. Ps. vii. 15, 16.—ix. 15, 16.

The righteous God will take the wise, not only in their own craftiness, but in their own cruelty. It is the plotter's doom. Haman is hanged on a gallows of his own preparing:

Nec lex est iustior uilla
Quam necis artifices arte perier una
Nor is there any law more just than that the contrivers of destruction should perish by their own arts.

28. A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh evil.

There are two sorts of lies equally detestable.

1. A slandering lie, which avowedly hates those it is spoken of; A lying tongue hates those that are afflicted by it; it afflicts them by calumnies and reproaches, because it hates them, and can thus smite them secretly where they are without defence; and it hates them, because it has afflicted them, and made them its enemies. The mischief of this is open and obvious; it afflicts, it hates, and owns it, and every body sees it.

2. A flattering lie, which secretly works the ruin of those it is spoken to. In the former, the mischief is plain, and men guard against it as well as they can, but in this it is little suspected, and men betray themselves by being credulous of their own praises, and the compliments that are passed upon them. A wise man therefore will be more afraid of a flatterer that kisses and kills, than of a slanderer that proclaims war.

CHAP. XXVII.

1. BOAST not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

Here is, 1. A good caution against presuming upon time to come; Boast not thyself, no, not of to-morrow, much less of many days or years to come. This does not forbid preparing for to-morrow, but presuming upon what to-morrow, We must not pro-

perse the continuance of our lives and comforts till to-morrow, but speak of it with submission to the will of God, and as those who, with good reason, are kept at uncertainty about it. We must not take thought for the morrow, (Matt. vi. 34.) but we must cast our care concerning it upon God. See James iv. 13—15. We must not put off the great work of conversion, that one thing needful, till to-morrow, and we were sure of it, but to-day while it is called to-day, hear God's voice.

1. A good consideration, upon which this caution is grounded; We know not what a day may bring forth; what event may be in the teeming womb of time; it is a secret till it is born, Ecc. xi. 5. A little time may produce considerable changes, and such as we little think of; we know not what the present day may bring forth, the evening must commend it. Nescia quid veniat viscerum verba Thou knowest not what the close of evening may bring with it. God has wisely kept us in the dark concerning future events, and reserved to himself the knowledge of them, as a flower of the crown, that he may train us up in a dependence upon himself, and a continued readiness for every event, Acts i. 7.

2. Let another man praise thee, and not
thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.

Note. 1. We must do that which is commendable, for even strangers may praise us. Our light must shine before men, and we must do good works that may be seen, though we must not do them on purpose that they may be seen. Let our own works be such as will praise us, even in the gates. Phil. iv. 8.

2. When we have done it, we must not commend ourselves, for that is an evidence of pride, folly, and self-love, and a great lessening to a man's reputation. Every one will be forward to run him down that cries himself up. There may be a just occasion for us to vindicate ourselves, but it does not become us to applaud ourselves. Proprio laus sorbet in ore—Self-praise defiles the mouth.

3. A stone is heavy, and the sand weighty; but a fool's wrath is heavier than them both. 4. Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?

These two verses show the intolerable mischief,

1. Of ungoverned passion; The wrath of a fool, who, when he is provoked, cares not what he says and does, is more grievous than a great stone, or a load of sand. It lies heavy upon himself. Those who have no regard of their passions do themselves even sink under the load of them. The wrath of a fool lies heavy upon those he is enraged at, to whom, in his fury, he will be in danger of doing some mischief. It is therefore our wisdom not to give provocation to a fool, but, if he be in a passion, to get out of his way.

2. Of rooted malice; which is as much worse than the former, as coals of juniper are than a fire of thorns; Wrath (it is true) is cruel, and does many a grievous thing, and anger is outrageous; but a secret enmity at the person of another, an envy at his prosperity, and a desire of revenge for some injury or affront, are much more mischievous: one may avoid a sudden heat, as David escaped Saul's javelin, but when it grows, as Saul's did, to a settled envy, there is no standing before it; it will pursue, it will overtake. He that grieves at the good of another, will be still contriving to do him hurt, and will keep his anger for ever.

5. Open rebuke is better than secret love. 6. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

Note. 1. It is good for us to be reproved, and told of our faults, by our friends. If true love in the heart has but zeal and courage enough to show itself in dealing plainly with our friends, and reproving them, when they will, we may say and do amiss, this is really better, not only than secret love, but than secret love, that love to our neighbours which does not show itself in this good fruit, which compliments them in their sins, to the prejudice of their souls; Faithful are the rebukes of a friend, though, for the present, they are painful as wounds. It is a sign that our friends are faithful indeed, if, in love to our souls, they will not suffer sin upon us, nor let us alone in it. The physician's care is to care the patient's disease, not to please his palate.

2. It is dangerous to be caressed and flattered by an enemy, whose kisses are deceitful; we can take no pleasure in them, because we can put no confidence in them. Job's kiss and Judas's were deceitful, and therefore we have need to stand upon our guard, that we be not deluded by them: they are to be deprecated. Some read it, The Lord delivers us from an enemy's kisses; from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue.

7. The full soul loatheth an honey-comb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.

Solomon here, as often in this book, shows that the poor have in some respects the advantage of the rich; for,

1. They have a better relish of their enjoyments than the rich have; hunger is the best sauce. Coarse fare, with a good appetite to it, has a sensible pleasantness in it, which they are strangers to whose hearts are overcharged with surfeiting. They that surfeit sumptuously every day, nauseate even delicate food, as the Israelites did the quails; whereas they that have no more than their necessary food, though it be such as the full soul would call bitter, to them it is sweet; they eat it with pleasure, digest it, and are refreshed by it.

2. They are more thankful for their enjoyments; The hungry will bless God for bread and water, while those that are full think the greatest dainties and varieties scarcely worth giving thanks for. The virgin Mary seems to refer to this, when she says (Luke i. 53.) The hungry, who know how to value God's blessings, are filled with good things, but, the rich, who despise them, are justly sent empty away.

8. As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place.

Note. 1. There are many that do not know when they are well off, but are uneasy with their present condition, and given to change. God, in his providence, has appointed them a place fit for them, and has made it comfortable to them; but they affect uneasiness, they love to wander, they are glad of a pretence to go abroad, and do not care for staying long at a place; they needlessly absent themselves from their own work and care, and meddle with that which belongs not to them.

2. Those that thus desert the post assigned to them, are like a bird that wanders from her nest. It is an instance of their folly, they are like a silly bird, they are always wavering, like the wandering bird that had not a nest, he rov'd from how to how, and rests now here, it is unsafe; the bird that had a nest was exposed; a man's place is his castle, he that quits it makes himself an easy prey to the fowler; when the bird wanders from her nest, the eggs and young ones there are neglected. They that love to be abroad leave their work at home undone. Let every man therefore, in the calling wherein he is called, therein abide, therein abide with God.

9. Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart; so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel. 10. Time own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not; neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity: for better is a neighbour that is near, than a brother far off.

Here is, 1. A charge given to be faithful and constant to our friends, our old friends, to keep up an intimacy with them, and to be ready to do them all the good offices that lie in our power. It is good to have a friend, a bosom-friend, whom we can be free with, and with whom we may communicate counsels; it is not necessary that this friend should be a relation, or any way akin to us, though it is happiest, when, among those who are so, we find
one fit to make a friend of. Peter and Andrew were brethren, so were James and John; yet Solomon frequently distinguishes between a friend and a brother. But it is advisable to choose a friend among our neighbours who live near us, that acquaintance may be kept up, and kindesses the more frequently interchanged. It is good also to have a special respect to those who have been friends to our family; *Thine own friend, especially if he have been thy father's friend, forsake not; fail not both to serve him, and to use him, as there is occasion. He is a tried friend, he knows thine affairs, he has a particular concern for thee, therefore be advised by him. It is a duty we owe to our parents, when they are gone, to lose their friends, and consult with them. Solomon's son undid himself by forsaking the counsel of his father's friends.

2. A good reason given why we should thus value true friendship, and be choice of it.

(1) Because of the pleasure of it. There is a great deal of sweetness in conversing and consulting with a cordial friend; it is like ointment and perfume, which are very grateful to the smell, and exhilarate the spirits, it rejoices the heart, the breath of life is more refreshing by breathing ourselves to our friend, and it is a great satisfaction to us to have his sentiments concerning our affairs. The sweetness of friendship lies not in hearty mirth, and hearty laughter, but in hearty counsel, faithful advice, sincerely given and without flattery; by counsel of the soul, so the word is; counsel which reaches the case, and comes to the heart; counsel about soul-concerns, Ps. lxvi. 16. We should reckon that the most pleasant company in the world is about spiritual things, and promotes the prosperity of the soul.

(2) Because of the profit and advantage of it, especially in a day of calamity; when we are here advised not to go into a brother's house, not to expect relief from a kinsman, merely for kindred-sake, for the obligation of that commonly goes little further than calling cousin, and fains when it comes to the trial of a real kindness; but, rather, to apply ourselves to our neighbours, who are at hand, and will be ready to help us at an exigence. It is wisdom to oblige them by being neighbourly, and we shall have the benefit of it in distress, by finding them so to us, ch. xviii. 24.

11. My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him that reproacheth me.

Children are here exhorted to be wise and good,

1. That they may be a comfort to their parents, and may make their hearts glad, even when the evil days come, and so recompense them for their care, ch. xxii. 15.

2. That they may be a credit to them; "That I may answer him that reproacheth me with having been over-strict and severe in bringing up my children, and having taken a wrong method with them, in restraining them from the liberties which other young people take. My son, be wise, and then it will appear, in the effect, that I went the wisest way to work with my children. Those that have been blest with religious education, should carry it in their hands every thing as a credit to their education, and to silence those that say, A young saint, an old devil; and to prove the contrary, A young saint, an old angel.

12. A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.

This we had before, ch. xxi. 3.

Note 1. Evil may be foreseen. Where there is temptation it is easy to foresee, that, if we thrust ourselves into it, there will be sin, and as easy to foresee, that, if we venture upon the evil of sin, there will follow the evil of punishment; and, commonly, God warns before he wounds, having set watchmen over us, Jer. vi. 17.

2. It will be well or ill with us, according as we do, or do not, improve the foresight we have of evil before us; The prudent man, foreseeing the evil, forecasts accordingly, and hides himself, but the simple is either so dull that he does not foresee it, or so wilful and stupid that he will take no care to avoid it, and so he passeth on securely, and is punished. We do well for ourselves when we provide for hereafter.

13. Take his garment that is surety for a stranger, and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

This also we had before, ch. xx. 16.

1. It shows who they are that are hastening to poverty; those that have so little consideration as to be bound for every body that will ask them, and those that are given to women. Such as these will take up money as far as ever their credit will go, but they will certainly cheat their creditors at last, nay, they are cheating them all along. An honest man may be made a beggar, but he is not hastening his own destruction.

2. It advises us to be so discreet, in ordering our affairs, as not to lend money to those who are manifestly wasting their estates, unless they give very good security for it. Foolish lending is injustice to our families. He does not say, "Get another to be bound with him," for he that makes himself a common voucher will have those to be his security who are as insensit as himself; therefore Take his garment.

14. He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him.

Note. 1. It is a great folly to be extravagant in praising even the best of our friends and benefactors; it is our duty to give every one his due praise, to applaud those that excel in knowledge, virtue, and usefulness, and to acknowledge the kindesses we have received with thankfulness; but to do this with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, to always harping on this string, in all companies, even to the most frivolous, or to the friends he may be desteemed to hear it, to do it studiously, as we do that which we rise early to, to magnify the merits of our friends above measure, and with hyperbole, is fulsome, and nauseous, and savours of hypocrisy and design; praising men for what they have done, is only to get more out of them; and every body concludes the parasite will be well paid for his panegyric or epistle dedicatory. We must not give that praise to our friend, that is due to God only, as some think is implied in rising early to do it; for in the morning God is to be praised. We must not make too much haste to praise men, so some understand it; not cry up men too soon for their abilities and performances, but let them first be proved; lest they be lifted up with pride, and hid to sleep in idleness.

2. It is a greater folly to be fond of being ourselves extravagantly praised; a wise man rather courts it a curse, and a reflection in his bosom, not only a signal to his prejudice. Modest praises (as a great man observes) invite such as are present to add to the commendation, but immodest, immoderate praises tempt them to detract rather, and to censure one that they hear over-commended. And besides, over-praising a man makes him the object of envy; every man puts in for a share of reputation, and therefore reckons himself
injured, if another monopolise it, or have more given him than his share. And the greatest danger of all, is, that it is a temptation to pride; men are apt to think of themselves above what is meet, when others speak of them above what is meet. See how careful blessed Paul was not to be over-valued, 2 Cor. xii. 6.

15. A continual dropping in a very rainy day, and a contentious woman, are alike.

16. Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand which bewrayeth itself.

Here, as before, Solomon laments the case of him that has a peevish, passionate, wife, that is continually chiding, and making herself, and all about her, uneasy.

1. It is a grievance that there is no avoiding, for it is like a continual dropping in a very rainy day. The contents of a neighbour may be, like a sharp shower, troublesome for the time, yet, while it lasts, one may take shelter; but the contents of a wife are like a constant soaking rain, for which there is no remedy but patience. See. ch. xix. 13.

2. It is a grievance that there is no concealing. A wise man would hide it if he could, for the sake both of his own and his wife's reputation, but he cannot, any more than he can conceal the noise of the wind when it blows, or the smell of a strong perfume. Those that are froward and brawling will proclaim their own shame, even when their friends, in kindness to them, would cover it.

17. Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

This bespeaks both the pleasure and the advantage of conversation. One man is nobody; nor will poring upon a book in a corner accomplish a man so as reading and studying of men will. Wise and profitable discourse sharpen men's wits; and those that have so much knowledge, may, by conference, have something added to them. It sharpeneth men's looks, and, by cheering the spirits, puts a briskness and liveliness into the countenance, and gives a man such an air as shows he is pleased himself, and makes him pleasing to those about him. Good men's graces are sharpened by converse with those that are good, and bad men's lusts and passions are sharpened by converse with those that are bad, as iron is sharpened by its like, especially by the file. Men are filed, made smooth, and bright, and fit for business, (who were rough, and dull, and inactive,) by conversation. This is designed,

1. To recommend to us this expedient for sharpening ourselves, but with a caution to take heed whom we choose to converse with, because the influence upon us is so great, either for the better or for the worse.

2. To direct us what we must have in our eye in conversation, to improve both others and ourselves, not to pass away time or banter one another, but to provoke one another to love and to good works, and so to make one another wiser and better.

18. Whoso keepeth the fig-tree shall eat the fruit thereof; so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.

This is designed to encourage diligence, faithfulness, and constancy, even in mean employments. Though the calling be laborious and despisiable, yet those who keep to it will find there is something to be got by it.

1. Let not a poor gardener, who keeps the fig-tree, be discouraged; though it require constant care and attendance to nurse up fig-trees, and, when they are grown to maturity, to keep them in good order, and gather the figs in their season, he shall be paid for his pains, he shall eat the fruit of it, 1 Cor. ix. 7.

2. Nay, let not a poor servant think himself incapable of thriving and being preferred; for, if he be diligent in waiting on his master, observant of him, and obedient to him; he keep his master, so the word is; if he do all he can for the securing of his master's person and reputation, and take care that his estate be not wasted or damaged, such a one shall be honoured; shall not only get a good word, but be preferred and rewarded. God is a master who has engaged to put an honour on those that serve him faithfully, John xii. 26.

19. As in water, face answereth to face; so the heart of man to man.

This shows us that there is a way,

1. Of knowing ourselves; as the water is a looking-glass, in which we may see our faces by reflection, so there are mirrors by which the heart of man is discovered to a man, to himself. Let a man examine his own conscience, his purposes, and intentions. Let him behold his natural face in the glass of the divine law, (Jam. i. 23.) and he may discern what kind of man he is, and what is his true character, which it will be of great use to every man rightly to know.

2. Of knowing one another by ourselves; for, as there is a similitude between the face of a man and the reflection of it in the water, so there is between one man's heart and another's; for God has fashioned men's hearts alike; and, in many cases, we may judge of others by ourselves, which is one of the foundations on which that rule is built, of doing to others as we would be done by, Exod. xxiii. 9. Nil hil est unum uni tam simile, tam fur, quam omnes inter nossem ipsos sumus. Nai nemo ipse tam similis quam omnes sunt omnium—No one thing is like another as man is to man. No person himself is so like as each person is to all besides. Cic. de Legib. lib. 1.

One cannot discern better than another one's sanctified heart, for the former bears the same image of the earthly, the latter the same image of the heavenly.

20. Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.

Two things are here said to be insatiable, and they are two things near of kin, death and sin.

1. Death is insatiable; the first death, the second death, both are so. The grave is not clogged with the multitude of dead bodies that are daily thrown into it, but is still an open sepulchre, and cries, Give, give; hell also has enlarged itself, and still has room for the dammed spirits that are committed to that prison. Tophet is deep and large, Isa. xxx. 33.

2. Sin is insatiable; The eyes of man are never satisfied, nor the appetites of the carnal mind toward profit or pleasure; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is he that loves silver satisfied with silver. Men labour for that which surfeits, but satisfies not; nay, it is most satisfying; for a person sometimes have men justly been doomed to, ever since our first parents were not satisfied with all the trees of Eden, but they must meddle with the forbidden tree. Those whose eyes are ever toward the Lord, in him are satisfied, and shall for ever be so.

21. As the fining-pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise.

This gives us a touchstone by which we may try ourselves: silver and gold are tried by putting them into the furnace and fining-pot; so is a man tried by prising him. Let him be extolled and prferred, and then he will show him what he is.
1. If a man be made, by the applause that is given him, proud, conceited, and scornful; if he take the glory to himself, which he should transmit to God, as Herod did; if, the more he is praised, the more careless he is of what he says and does, if he lie in bed till noon, because his name is up; whereby it will appear that he is a vain foolish man, and a man who, though he be praised, has nothing in him truly praiseworthy.

2. If, on the contrary, a man is made, by his praise, more thankful to God, more respectful to his friends, more watchful against every thing that may blemish his reputation, more diligent to improve himself, and do good to others, that he may answer the expectations of his friends from him, by this it will appear that he is a wise and good man. He has a good temper of mind who knows how to pass by evil report and good report, and is still the same; 2 Cor. vi. 8.

22. Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among wheats with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.

Solomon had said, (ch. xxi. 15.) The foolishness which is bound in the heart of a child may be driven out by the rod of correction, for then the mind is to be moulded, the vicious habits not having taken root; but here he shows, that, if it be not done then, it will be next to impossible to do it afterward; if the disease be inveterate, there is a danger of its being incurable. Can the Ethiopian change his skin? Obs. 1. Some are so bad, that rough and severe methods must be used with them, after gentle means have been tried in vain; they must be brayed in a mortar. God will take this way with them by his judgments; the magistrates must take this way with them by the rigour of the law. Force must be used with those that will not be ruled by reason, and love, and their own interest.

2. Some are so incorrigibly bad, that even these rough and severe methods do not answer the end, their foolishness will not depart from them; so fully are their hearts set in them to do evil; they are often under the rod, and yet not humbled; in the furnace, and yet not refined; but, like Azah, trespass yet more; (2 Chron. xxviii. 22.) and what remains, then, but they should be rejected as reprobate silver?

23. Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds; 24. For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation? 25. The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered: 26. The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of thy field; 27. And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance of thy maidens.

Here is, 1. A command given us to be diligent in our callings; it is directed to husbandmen and shepherds, and those that deal in cattle, but it is to be extended to all other lawful callings; whatever our business is, within doors or without, we must apply our minds to it. This command intimates, (1.) That we ought to have some business to do in this world, and not to live in idleness. (2.) We ought rightly and fully to understand our business, and know what we have to do, and meddle with that which we do not understand. (3.) We ought to have an eye to it ourselves, and not turn over all the care of it to others; we should, with our own eyes, inspect the state of our flocks; it is the master's eye that makes them fat. (4.) We must be discreet and considerate in the management of our business; know the state of things, and look well to them, that nothing may be lost, no opportunity let slip, but every thing done in proper time and order, and so as to turn to the best advantage. (5.) We must be diligent, and take pains; not only sit down and centrive, but be up and doing; "Set thy heart to thy herds, as one in care; lay thy hands, lay thy bones, to thy business." 28. The reasons to enforce this command. Consider,

(1.) The uncertainty of worldly wealth; (v. 24.) Riches are not for ever. [1.] Other riches are so durable as these are; "Look well to thy flocks and herds, thine estate in the country, and the stock upon that, for these are staple commodities, which, in a succession, will be for ever, whereas riches in trade and merchandise will not be so; the crown itself may, perhaps, not be so sure to Thy family as thy flocks and herds. [2.] Even these riches will go to decay, if they be not well looked after. If a man had an abbey, (as we say,) and should be sullen and wasteful, he may make an end of it; even the crown, and the revenues of it, if care be not taken, will suffer damage, nor will it continue to every generation, without very good management. Though David had the crown entailed on his family, yet he looked well to his flocks, 1 Chron. xxvi. 29, 31.

(2.) The vanity and liberality of nature, or, rather, of the God of nature, and his providence; (v. 25.) The hay appeareth. In taking care of the flocks and herds, [1.] There needs no great labour, no ploughing or sowing, the food for them is the spontaneous product of the ground, thou hast nothing to do but to turn them into it in the summer, when the grass shows itself, and to gather the herbs of the mountains for them against winter. God has done his part, thou art ungrateful to him, and unjustly refusest to serve his providence, if thou dost not do thine. [2.] There is an opportunity to be observed and improved; a time when the hay appeareth; but, if thou let slip that time, thy flocks and herds will fare the worse for it. As for ourselves, so for our cattle, we ought, with the ant, to provide meat in summer.

(3.) The profit of good husbandry in a family; "Keep thy sheep, and thy sheep will help to keep thy house, and thou shalt have begotten of children and servants; goats' milk enough; (v. 27.) and enough of the hay good as a feast. Thou shalt have raiment likewise, the lambs' wool shall be for thy clothing. Thou shalt have money to pay thy rent; the goats thou shalt have to sell shall be the price of thy fields; nay, as some understand it, "Thou shalt become a purchaser, and buy land to leave to thy children," v. 26. Note, [1.] If we have herd and raiment, and wherewithal to give every body his own, we have enough, and ought to be content, but thankful. [2.] Masters of families must provide not only for themselves, but for their families, and see that their servants have a fitting maintenance.

[3.] Plain food and plain clothing, if they be but competent, are all we should aim at. "Reckon thyself well done to, if thou be clothed with homespun cloth, with the fleece of thy own lambs, and fed with goats' milk; let that serve for thy food which sees for the food of thy household, and the mainte-

nance of thy maidens; be not desirous of dainties, for-fetched and dear bought." [4.] This should encourage us to be careful and industrious about our business, that that will bring in a sufficient maintenance for our families; we shall eat the labours of our hands.

CHAP. XXVIII.

1. THE wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.
If they flee when none pursues, what will they do when they shall see God himself pursuing them with his armies? Job xx. 24.—xxv. 24. Sec Deut. xxviii. 25. Lev. xxvi. 36.

2. What a holy security and serenity of mind they enjoy who keep conscience void of offence, and so keep themselves in the love of God. The righteous are bold as a lion, as a young lion; in the greatest dangers they have a God of almighty power to trust to; Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed: whatever difficulties they meet with in the way of their duty, they are not daunted by them; None of those things move me.

The morus antennus esto, nil conscribere siti—
Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence,
Still to preserve thy conscious innocence. Hor.

2. For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof: but by a man of understanding and knowledge the state thereof shall be prolonged.

Note. 1. National sins bring national disorders, and the disturbances of the public repos: For the transgression of a land, and a general defection from his God to idol religion, to idol understandings, and to immorality, many are the princes thereof, many at the same time pretending to the sovereignty, and contending for it, by which the people are crumbled into parties and factions, biting and devouring one another. Or many, successively, in a little time, one cutting off another, as 1 Kings xvi. 8, &c. or soon cut off by the hand of God, or of a foreign enemy, as 2 Kings xxiv. 5, &c. As the people suffer for the sins of the prince, Delirant regis, plebanator Achaui—
Kings play the madman, and their people suffer for it.
so the government sometimes suffers for the sins of the people.

2. Wisdom will prevent or redress these grievances; By a man, by a people, of understanding, that come again to themselves and their right mind, things are kept in a good order, or, if disturbed, brought back to the old channel again. Or, By a prince of understanding and knowledge, a privy-counsellor, or minister of state, that will restrain or suppress the transgression of the land, and take the right methods of healing the state thereof, the good estate of it will be prolonged. We cannot imagine what a great deal of service one wise man may do to a nation in a critical juncture.

3. A poor man that oppresseth the poor is like a sweeping rain, which leaveth no food.

See here, 1. How hard hearted poor people frequently are to one another; not only not doing such good offices as they might do one to another, but imposing upon, and overreaching, one another. Those who know by experience the miseries of poverty, should be compassionate to those who suffer the like, but they are inexcesously barbarous if they be injurious to them.

2. How imperious and gripping those commonly are, who be indulgent and necessitous, get into power. If a prince prefer a poor man, he forgets that ever he was poor, and none shall be so oppressive to the poor as he, or squeeze them so cruelly. The hungry leech and the dry sponge suck much. Set a beggar on horseback, and he will ride without mercy; he is like a sweeping rain, which washes away the corn in the ground, and lays and beats out that which is grown, so that it leaveth no food.

Princes, therefore, ought not to put those into places of trust, who are poor; and in debt, and behind-hand in the world, nor any who make it their main business to enrich themselves.

4. They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them.

Note. 1. Those that praise the wicked make it to appear that they do themselves forsake the law, and go contrary to it, for that curses and condemns the wicked. Wicked people will speak well of one another, and so strengthen one another's hands in their wicked ways, hoping thereby to silence the clamours of their own consciences, and to serve the interests of the devil's kingdom, which is not done by any thing so effectually as by keeping vice in reputation.

2. Those that do indeed make conscience of the law of God themselves, will, in their places, vigorously oppose sin, and bear their testimony against it, and do what they can to shame and suppress it; they will reprove the works of darkness, and silence the excurses which are made for those works, and do what they can to bring gross offenders to punishment, that others may hear and fear.

5. Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the Lord understand all things.

Note. 1. As the prevalency of men's lusts is owing to the darkness of their understandings, so the darkness of their understandings is very much owing to the dominion of their lusts; Men understand not judgment, discern not between truth and falsehood, right and wrong; they understand not the law of God as the rule either of their duty or of their doings; and, (1.) Therefore it is that they are evil men; their wickedness is the effect of their ignorance and error, Eph. iv. 18. (2.) Therefore they understand not judgment, because they are evil men, their corruptions blind their eyes, and fill them with prejudices, and, because they do evil, they hate the light. It is just with God also to give them up to strong delusions.

2. As men's seeking the Lord is a good sign that they do understand much, so it is a good means of their understanding more, even of their understanding all things needful for them. They that set God's glory before them as their end, his favour as their felicity, his word as their rule, and apply themselves to him upon all occasions by prayer, they seek the Lord, and he will give them the spirit of wisdom. If a man do his will, he shall know his doctrine, John vii. 17. A good understanding they have, and a better they shall have, that do his commandments, Ps. cxii. 10. 1 Cor. ii. 12, 13.

6. Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich.
Here, 1. It is supposed that a man may walk in his uprightness, and yet be poor in this world; may be poor in the world, which is a temptation to dishonesty, and yet may resist the temptation, and continue to walk in his uprightness: also that a man may be perverse in his ways, injurious to God and man, and yet be rich, and prosper in the world, for a while: he may be rich, and so he under greater obligations, and have great opportunities to do good, and yet be perverse in his ways, and do a great deal of hurt.

2. It is maintained as a paradox to a blind world, that an honest, godly, poor man, is better than a wicked, ungodly, rich man; has a better character, is in a better condition, has more comfort in himself, and is a greater blessing to the world, and is worthy of much more honour and respect. It is not only certain that his case will be better at death, but is better in life. When Aristides was by a rich man upbraided with his poverty, he answered, Thy riches do thee more hurt than my poverty does me.

7. Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous men, shameth his father.

Note, 1. Religion is true wisdom, and it makes men wise in every relation; He that conscientiously keeps the law is wise, and he will be particularly a wise son, will act discreetly toward his parents, for the law of God teaches him to do so.

2. Bad company is a great hindrance to religion: Those that are companions of riotous men, that choose such for their companions, and delight in their conversation, will certainly be drawn from keeping the law of God, and drawn to transgress it, Ps. cxix. 113.

3. Wickedness is not only a reproach to the sinner himself, but to all that are akin to him; He that keeps rakish company, and spends his time and money with them, not only grieves his parents, but shames them, it turns to their discredit, as if they had not done their duty to him. They are ashamed that a child of theirs should be scandalous and abusive to their neighbours.

3. He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor.

Note, 1. That which is ill got, though it may increase much, will not last long. A man may perhaps raise a great estate, in a little time, by usury and extortion, and an oppression of the poor, but it will not continue: he gathers it for himself, but it shall prove to have been gathered for somebody else that he has no kindness for. His estate shall go to decay, and another man's shall be raised out of the ruins of it.

2. Sometimes God, in his providence, so orders it, that that one who gets unjustly, another uses charitably; it is strange, but it is true, that the hand of one that will fill the poor, and do good with it, and so cut off the entail of the curse which he brought upon it, got it by deceit and violence. Thus, the same Providence that punishes the cruel, and disables them to do any more hurt, rewards the merciful, and enables them to do so much the more good. To him that has the ten pounds give the four which the wicked servant hid in the napkin; for to him that has, and uses it well, more shall be given. Mat. xix. 24. Thus the poor are repaid, the charitable are encouraged, and God is glorified.

9. He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.

Note, 1. It is by the word and prayer that our communion with God is kept up. God speaks to us by his law, and expects we should hear him, and heed him; we speak to him by prayer, to which we wait for an answer of peace. How reverent and serious should we be, whenever we are hearing from, and speaking to, the Lord of glory.

2. If God's word be not regarded by us, our prayers shall not only be not accepted of God, but they shall be an abomination to him; not only our sacrifices, which were ceremonial appointments, but even our prayers, which are moral duties, and which, when they are put up by the upright, are so much his delight: see Isa. i. 11, 13. The sinner, whose prayers God is thus angry at, is one who wilfully and obstinately refuses to obey God's commandments, who will not so much as give them the hearing that he causes his ear to decline the law, and refuses, when God calls; God will, therefore, justly refuse him when he calls: see Prov. i. 24, 28.

10. Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit: but the upright shall have good things in possession.

Note, 1. These that are rich are apt to think themselves wise, because, whatever else they are ignorant of, they know how to get and save; and still that which is most precious to them, that which they put most to the heart, is a deception to them; they should be regarded as an oracle and a law, and that none should dare to contradict them, but every sheep bow to theirs; this humour is fed by flatterers, who, because, like Jezebel's prophets, they are fed at their table, cry up their wisdom.

2. Those that are poor often prove themselves wiser than they; A poor man, who has taken pains to get wisdom, having no other way (as the rich man has) to preserve a reputation, he searches him out, and makes it appear that he is not such a scholar, nor such a politician, as he is taken to be. See how variously God dispenses his gifts; to some he gives wealth, to others wisdom, and it is easy to say which of these is the best gift, which we should covet most earnestly.

12. When righteous men do rejoice, there is great glory: but when the wicked rise, a man is hidden.

Note, 1. The comfort of the people of God is the honour of the nation in which they live; There is a great glory dwelling in the land when the righteous do rejoice, when they have their liberty, the free exercise of their religion, and are not persecuted; when the government countenances them, and
speaks comfortably to them, when they prosper and grow rich, and much more when they are preferred and employed, and have power put into their hands.

The advancement of the wicked is the eclipsing of the beauty of a nation; When the wicked rise, and get head, they make head against all that is sacred, and then a man is hidden, a good man is thrust into obscurity, is necessitated to abscond for his own safety; corruptions prevail so generally, that, as in Elijah's time, there seems to be no good men left, the wicked walk so thick on every side.

13. He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

Here is, 1. The folly of indulging sin, of palliating and excusing it, denying or extenuating it, diminishing it, dissembling it, or throwing the blame of it upon others; He that thus covers his sins shall not prosper; let him never expect it; he shall not succeed in his endeavour to cover his sin, for it will be discovered, sooner or later; there is nothing hid which shall not be revealed, a bird of the air shall carry the voice, murder will out, and so will other sins. He shall not prosper, he shall not obtain the pardon of his sin, nor can he have any true peace of conscience. David owns himself to have been in a constant agitation while he covered his sins, Ps. xxvii, 3, 4. When the patient conceals his distemper he cannot expect a cure.

2. The benefit of parting with it, both by a penitent confession, and a universal reformation; He that confesses his guilt to God, and is careful not to return to sin again, shall find mercy with God, and shall have the comfort of it in his own bosom. His conscience shall be eased, and his ruin prevented: see 1 John i. 9. Jer. iii. 12, 13. When we set sin before our face, (as David, My sin is ever before me,) God casts it behind his back.

14. Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.

Here is, 1. The benefit of a holy caution. It sounds strange, but it is very true; Happiness is the man that feareth alway. Most people think that they are happy who never fear; but there is a fear which is so far from having torment in it, that it has in it the greatest satisfaction. Happy is the man who always keeps in his mind a holy awe and reverence of God, his glory, goodness, and government, who is always afraid of offending God, and incurring his displeasure, who keeps conscience tender, and has a dread of the appearance of evil, who is always jealous of himself, distrustful of his own sufficiency, and lives in expectation of troubles and changes, so that, whenever they come, they are no surprise to him. He who keeps up such a fear as this, will live a life of faith and watchfulness, and therefore happiness is he, blessed and holy.

2. The danger of a sinful presumption; He that hardeneth his heart, thatmocks at fear, and sets God and his judgments at defiance, and receives not the impressions of his word or rod, he shall fall into mischief; this presumption will be his ruin, and, whatever sin (which is the greatest mischief) he falls into, it is owing to the hardness of his heart.

15. As a roaring lion, and a raging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people.

It is written indeed, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people; but, if he be a wicked ruler, that oppresses the people, especially the poor people, robbing them of the little they have, and making a prey of them, whatever we may call him, this scripture calls him a roaring lion, and a raging bear.

1. In respect of his character; he is brutish, barbarous, and blood-thirsty, he is rather to be put among the beasts of prey, the wildest and most savage, than to be reckoned of that noble rank of beings whose glory is reason and humanity.

2. In respect of the mischief they do to their sub jects; they are dreadful as the roaring lion, who makes the forest tremble; they are devouring as a hungry bear, and the more necessitous they are, the more mischief they do, and the more greedy of gain they are.

16. The prince that wanteth understanding is also a great oppressor: but he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days.

Two things are here intimated to be the causes of the mal-administration of princes;

1. The love of money, that root of all evil; for hating covetousness here stands opposed to oppression, according to Moses's character of good magistrates, men fearing God and hating covetousness, (Exod. xviii. 21.) not only not being covetous, but hating it, and shaking the hands from holding of bribes. A ruler that is covetous will neither do justly nor love mercy, but the people under him shall be bought and sold.

2. Want of consideration; He that hateth covetousness shall prolong his government and peace, shall be happy in the affections of his people, and the blessings of his God. It is as much the interest as the duty of princes to reign in righteousness; oppressors therefore and tyrants are the greatest fools in the world, they want understanding, they do not consult their own honour, ease, and safety, but sacrifice all to their ambition of an absolute and arbitrary power. They might be much happier in the hearts of their subjects, than in their necks or estates.

17. A man that doeth violence to the blood of any person shall fly to the pit; let no man stay him.

This agrees with that ancient law, Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, (Gen. ix. 6.) and speaks,

1. The doom of the shedder of blood; He that has committed murder, though he flies for his life, shall be continually haunted with terrors, shall himself flee to the pit, betray himself, and torment himself, like Cain, who, when he had killed his brother, became a fugitive and a vagabond, and trembled continually.

2. The duty of the avenger of blood; Whether the magistrate, or the next of kin, or whoever are concerned in making inquisition for blood, let them be close and vigorous in the prosecution, and let it not be bought off. They that acquit the murderer, or do anything to help him off, come in sharers in the guilt of blood; nor can the land be purged from the blood of God by the blood of him that shed it, Numb. xxxv. 33.

18. Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved: but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once.

Note, 1. Those that are honest are always safe. He that acts with sincerity, that speaks as he thinks, has a single eye, in everything, to the glory of God and the good of his brethren, that would not, for a world, do an unjust thing, if he knew it, that in all manner of conversation walks uprightly, he shall be saved hereafter. We find a glorious company of these in whose mouth was found no guile, Rev. xiv. 3. They shall be safe now. Integrity and up-
righteousness will preserve men, will give them a holy
security in the worst of times; for it will preserve
their comfort, their reputation, and all their inter-
ests; they may be injured, they cannot be hurt.

2. Those that are false and dishonest are never safe;
He that is perverse in his ways, that thinks to
secure himself by fraudulent practices, by dissimula-
tion and treachery, or by an estate ill-get, he shall
fall; nay, he shall fall at once, not gradually, and
with warning given, but suddenly, without previ-
ous notice, for he is least safe when he is most se-
cure. He falls at once, and so has neither time to
guard against his ruin, nor to provide for it; and,
being a surprise upon him, it will be so much the
greater terror to him.

19. He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after
vain persons shall have poverty enough.

Note, 1. Those that are diligent in their callings
take the way to live comfortably: He that tills his
land, and tends his shop, and minds his business,
whatever it is, he shall have plenty of bread, of that
which is necessary for himself and his family, and
with which he may be charitable to the poor; he
shall eat of the labour of his hands.

2. Those that are idle, and careless, and com-
pany with rogues, though they indulge themselves in liv-
ing (as they think) easily and pleasantly, they take
the way to live miserably. He that has land, and
values himself upon that, but does not till it, ne-
glects his business, will not take pains, but follows
after vain persons, drinks with them, joins with
them in their frolics and vain sports, and idles away
his time with them, he shall have poverty enough,
shall be smitten or replenished with poverty, so the
word is; he takes those courses which lead so di-
rectly to hell, that he seems to court it, and he shall
have his fill of it.

20. A faithful man shall abound with
blessings: but he that maketh haste to be
rich shall not be innocent.

Here, 1. We are directed in the true way to be
happy, and that is to be holy and honest; He that is
faithful to God and man shall be blessed of the Lord,
and he shall abound with blessings of the upper and
nether springs. Men shall praise him, and pray for
him, and be ready to do him any kindness. He
shall abound in doing good, and shall himself be a
blessing to the place where he lives. Usefulness
shall be the reward of faithfulness, and it is a good
reward.

2. We are cautioned against a false and deceitful
way to happiness, and that is, right or wrong, rais-
ing an estate suddenly. Say not, This is the way to
abound with blessings; for he that makes haste to be
rich, more haste than good speed, he shall not be
innocent; and if he be not, he shall not be blessed of
God, but, rather, bring a curse upon what he has;
or, if he be not innocent, can he long be easy to
himself; he shall not be accounted innocent by his
neighbours, but shall have their ill-will and ill-word.
He does not say that he cannot be innocent, but
there is all the probability in the world that he will
not prove so; He that hasteth with his feet, sinneth,
stumbleth, falleth. Sed quae reverentia legum, quis metus, aut judex, est unquam prohiberatis avari?—What reverence for law, what fear, what
shame, was ever indicated by an avaricious man
having to be rich?

21. To have respect of persons is not
good; for, for a piece of bread that man will
transgress.
24. Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression: the same is the companion of a destroyer.

As Christ shows the absurdity and wickedness of those children who think it is no duty, in some cases, to maintain their parents, (Matth. xx. 5.) so Solomon here shows the absurdity and wickedness of those who think it is no sin to rob their parents, either by force or secretly, by wheeling them or threatening them, or by wasting what they have, and (which is no better than robbing them,) running into debt, and leaving them to pay it. Now,

1. This is commonly made light of by untoward children; they say, “It is no transgression, for it will be our own shortly, our parents can well enough spare it, we have occasion for it, we cannot live as gentlemen upon the allowance our parents give us; it is too strait for us.” With such excuses as these they endeavour to shift off the conviction. But,

2. How dignified an unconquered youth makes of it, it is a very great sin; he that does it is the companion of a destroyer; no better than a robber on the highway. What wickedness will he scruple to commit, who will rob his own parents?

25. He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the Lord shall be made fat.

Note. 1. Those make themselves lean, and continually unquiet, that are haughty and quarrelsome, for they are opposed to those that shall be made fat; He that is of a proud heart, that is conceited of himself, and looks with contempt upon all about him, that cannot bear either competition or contradiction, he stirs up strife, makes mischief, and creates disturbance to himself and every body else.

2. Those make themselves fat, and always easy, that live in a continual dependence upon God and his grace; He who putteth his trust in the Lord, who, instead of struggling for himself, commits his cause to God, he shall be made fat; he saves the money which others spend upon their pride and contentiousness, he enjoys himself, and has abundant satisfaction in his God; and thus his soul dwells at ease, and he is most likely to have plenty of outward good things. None live so easily, so pleasantly, as those who live by faith.

26. He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.

Here is, 1. The character of a fool; he trusteth to his own heart, to his own wisdom and counsels, his own strength and sufficiency, his own merit and righteousness, and the good opinion he has of himself; he that does so is a fool, for he trusts to that, not only which is deceitful above all things, (Jer. xviii. 9.) but which has often deceived him. This implies, that it is the character of a wise man (as before, v. 25.) to put his trust in the Lord, and in his power and promise, and to follow his guidance, Prov. iii. 5-9.

2. The comfort of a wise man; He that walks wisely, that trusts not to his own heart, but is humble and self-diffident, and goes on in the strength of the Lord God, he shall be delivered; when the fool, that trusts in his own heart, shall be destroyed.

27. He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.

Here is, 1. A promise to the charitable; He that gives to the poor shall himself be never the poorer for so doing, he shall not lack; if he have but little, and so be in danger of lacking, let him give out of his little, and that will prevent it from coming to nothing; as the bounty of the widow of Sarepta to Elijah, for whom she made a little cake first, when what she had was reduced to a handful of meal. If he have much, let him give much out of it, and that will prevent its growing less; he and his shall not want what is given in pious charity. What we gave we lose.

2. A threatening to the uncharitable; He that hides his eyes, that he may not see the miseries of the poor, nor read their petitions, lest his eye should affect his heart, and exert some relief from him, he shall have many a curse, both from God and man, and neither causeless, and therefore they shall come. Woful is the condition of that man who has the word of God, and the prayers of the poor, against him.

28. When the wicked rise, men hide themselves: but when they perish, the righteous increase.

This is to the same purport with what we had, v. 12.

2. When bad men are preferred, that which is good is clouded and run down; When power is put into the hands of the wicked, men hide themselves, wise men retire into privacy, and decline public business, not caring to be employed under them; rich men get out of the way, for fear of being squeezed for what they have; and, which is worst of all, good men abscond, despairing to do good, and fearing to be persecuted and ill-treated.

2. When bad men are displaced, degraded, and their power taken from them, then that which is good rises again, then the righteous increase; for, when they perish, good men will be put in their room, who will, by their example and interest, counteract religion and righteousness. It is well with a land when the number of good people increases in it; and it is therefore the policy of all princes, states, and potentates, to encourage them, and to take special care of the good education of youth.

CHAP. XXIX.

1. He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

Here, 1. The obstinacy of many wicked people in a wicked way is to be greatly lamented. They are often reproved by parents and friends, by magistrates and ministers, by the providence of God, and by their own consciences, have hid their sins set in order before them, and fair warnings given them of the consequences of them, but all in vain, they harden their necks, perhaps they fling away, and will not so much as give the reproof a patient hearing; or, if they do, yet they go on in the sins for which they are reproved, they will not bow their necks to the yoke, but are children of Belial, they refuse reproof, (ch. x. 17.) despise it, (ch. v. 12.) hate it, (ch. xii. 1.)

2. The issue of this obstinacy is to be greatly dreaded; They that go on in sin, in despite of admonition, shall be destroyed; those that will not be reformed must expect to be ruined; if the rods answer not the end, expect the axes; they shall be suddenly destroyed, in the midst of their security, and without remedy; they have sinned against the preventing remedy, and therefore let them not expect any recovering remedy. Hell is remediless destruction; they shall be destroyed, and no healing, so the word is. If God wounds, who can heal?

2. When the righteous are in authority,
the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.

This is what was said before, ch. xxviii. 12, 28.

1. The people will have cause to rejoice, or mourn, according as their rulers are righteous, or wicked; for if the righteous be in authority, sin will be punished and restrained, religion and virtue will be supported and kept in reputation; but if the wicked get power in their hands, wickedness will abound, religion and religious people will be persecuted, and so the ends of government will be perverted.

2. The people will actually rejoice, or mourn, according as their rulers are righteous, or wicked. Such a conviction are even the common people under the Excellency of virtue and religion, that they will rejoice when they see it preferred and countenanced; and, on the contrary, let men have ever so much honour and power, if they be wicked and vicious, and use it ill, they make themselves contemptible and base before all the people, (as those priests, Mal. ii. 9,) and subjects will think themselves miserable under such a government.

3. Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth his substance.

Both the parts of this verse repeat what has been often said, but, on comparing them together, the sense of them will be enlarged from each other.

1. Be it observed, to the honour of a virtuous young man, that he loves wisdom, he is a philosopher, (for that signifies a lover of wisdom,) for religion is the best philosophy; he avoids bad company, and especially the company of low people; whereby he rejoices his parents, and has the satisfaction of being a comfort to them, and increases his estate, and is likely to be comfortably.

2. Be it observed, to the reproach of a vicious young man, that he hates wisdom, he keeps company with scandalous women, who will be his ruin, both in soul and body; he grieves his parents, and, like the prodigal son, devours their living with harlots. Nothing will beggar men sooner than the lusts of uncleanness; and the best preservative from those ruinous lusts is wisdom.

4. The king by judgment establisheth the land: but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it.

Here is, 1. The happiness of a people under a good government. The care and business of a prince should be to establish the land, to maintain its fundamental laws, to settle the minds of his subjects, and make them easy, to secure their liberties and properties from hostilities, and for posterity, and to set in order the things that are wanting; this he must do by judgment, by wise counsels, and by the steady administration of justice, without respect of persons, which will have these good effects.

2. The misery of a people under a bad government: A man of obligations, (so it is in the margin,) overthrows the land; a man that is either sacrilegious or superstitious, or that invades the priest’s office, as Saul and Uzziah; or a man that aims at nothing but getting money, and will, for a good bribe, comine at the most guilty, and, in hope of one, persecute the innocent; such governors as these will ruin a country.

5. A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.

Those may be said to flatter their neighbours, who commend and applaud that good in them, (the good they do, or the good they have,) which really either is not, or is not such as they represent it, and who profess that esteem and that affection for them, which really they have not; these spread a net for their feet.

1. For their neighbour’s feet, whom they flatter; they have an ill design in it, they would not speak thus fair, but that they hope to make an advantage of them; and it is therefore wisdom to suspect those who flatter us, that they are secretly laying a snare for us, and to stand on our guard accordingly. Or it has an ill effect on those who are flattered; it puffs them up with pride, and makes them conceited and confident of themselves, and so proves a net that entangles them in sin.

2. For their own feet; so some understand it. He that flatters others, in expectation that they will return his compliments, and flatter him, does but make himself ridiculous and odious even to those he flatters.

6. In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare: but the righteous doth sing and rejoice.

Here is, 1. The peril of a sinful way; there is not only a punishment at the end of it, but a snare in it; one sin is a temptation to another, and there are troubles which, as a snare, come suddenly upon evil men in the midst of their transgressions; may, their transgression itself often involves them in vexations, their sin is their punishment, and they are held in the cords of their own iniquity, ch. v. 22.

2. The pleasantness of the way of holiness. The snare that is in the transgression of evil men spells all their mirth, but righteous men are kept from those snares, or delivered out of them; they walk at liberty, walk in safety, and therefore they sing and rejoice; they that make God their chief Joy, have him for their exceeding Joy, and it is their own fault if they do not rejoice evermore. If there be any true joy on this side heaven, doubtless they have it whose conversation is in heaven.

7. The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: but the wicked regardeth not to know it.

It is pitiful that every one who sues sub forma pauperis—as a pauper, should have an honest cause, (they are of all others inexcusable, if they have not,) because the scripture has so well provided that it should have a fair hearing, and that the judge himself should be of counsel, as for the prisoner, so for the pauper.

1. It is here made the character of a righteous judge, that he considers the cause of the poor; it is every man’s duty to consider the poor, (Ps. xli. 1,) but the judgment of the poor is to be considered by those that sit in judgment; they must take as much pains to find out the right in a poor man’s cause, as in a rich man’s. Sense of justice must make both judge and advocate as solicitous and industrious in the poor man’s cause, as if they hoped for the greatest advantage.

2. It is made the character of a wicked man, that because it is a poor man’s cause, which there is nothing to be got by, he regards not to know it, in the true state of it, for he cares not which way it goes, right or wrong. See Job xxix. 16.

3. Scornful men bring a city into a snare: but wise men turn away wrath.

See here, 1. Who are the men that are dangerous to the public; scornful men; when such are employed in the business of the state, they do things with precipitation, because they scorn to deliberate, and
will not take time for consideration and consultation; they do things illegal and unjustifiable, because they scorn to be hampered by laws and constitutions; break their faith, because they scorn to be bound by their word; provoke the people, because they scorn to please them; thus they bring a city into a snare by their ill conduct, or, as the margin reads it, they set a city on fire, they saw discord among the citizens, and ran them into confusion. Those are severe men who use the oblations of conscience, the likes of another world, and every thing that is sacred and serious; such men are the plagues of their generation, they bring God's judgments upon a land, set men together by the ears, and so bring all to confusion.

2. Who are the men that are the blessings of a land; the wise men, who, by promoting religion, which is true wisdom, turn away the wrath of God, and who, by prudent counsels, reconcile contending parties, and prevent the mischievous consequences of divisions. Proud and foolish men kindle the fires which wise and good men must extinguish.

9. If a wise man contendeth with a foolish man, whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest.

A wise man is here advised not to set his wit to a fool's, not to dispute with him, or, by contending with him, to think either of fastening reason upon him, or gaining right from him; If a wise man contend with a wise man, he may hope to be understood, and, as far as he has reason and equity on his side, to carry his point, at least, to bring the controversy to a head, and make it; but if he contend with a foolish man, there is no rest; he will see no end of it, nor will he have any satisfaction in it, but must expect to be always uneasy.

1. Whether the foolish man he contends with, rage or laugh, whether he take angrily or scornfully, what is said to him, whether he rail at it or mock at it, one of the two he will do, and so there will be no rest. However it is given, it will be ill taken, and the wisest man must expect to be either scolded or ridiculed, if he contend with a fool. He that fights with a dunghill, whether he be conqueror or conquered, is sure to be defiled.

2. Whether the wise man himself rage or laugh, whether he take the serious or the jocular way of dealing with the fool, whether he be severe or pleasant with him, whether he come with a rod or with the spirit of meekness, (1 Cor. iv. 21.) it is all alike, no good is done. We have fished unto you, and ye have not danced, mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.

10. The blood-thirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul.

Note. 1. Bad men hate their best friends; The blood-thirsty, all the seed of the old serpent, who was a murderer from the beginning, and inherit his enmity against the seed of the woman, they hate the upright, they seek the ruin of good men, because they condemn the wicked world, and witness against it. Christ told his disciples that they should be hated of all men. Bloody men do especially hate upright magistrates, who would restrain and reform them, and put the laws in execution against them, and so really do them a kindness.

2. Good men love their worst enemies: The just, whom the bloody men hate, seek their soul, pray for their conversion, and would gladly do any thing for their salvation. This Christ taught us, Par. 5. But he that seeketh his soul, the soul of the upright, whom the bloody hate, so it is commonly understood; seek to protect it from violence, and save it from, or avenge it at, the hands of the blood-thirsty.

11. A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it till afterwards.

Note. 1. It is a piece of weakness to be very open; He is a fool who utters all his mind, who tells every thing he knows, and has in his mouth instantly whatever he has in his thoughts, and can keep no counsel; who, whatever is started in discourse, shoots his bolt; who, when he is provoked, will say any thing, and do any thing; who, when he is not himself in a continued speech, or stanch discourse, but with pauses, that he may hear what is to be objected, and answer it. Von minus interdum oratorum est tacere quam dicere—True oratory requires an occasional pause. Phil. Ep. 7. 6.

12. If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked.

Note. 1. It is a great sin in any, especially in rulers, to hearken to lies; for thereby they not only give a wrong judgment themselves of persons and things, according to the lies they give credit to, but they encourage others to give them wrong informations. Lies will be told to those that will hearken to them; but the receiver, in this case, is as bad as the thief.

2. Those that do so will have all their servants wicked; all their servants will appear wicked, for they will have lies told of them; and they will be wicked, and what they will tell lies to them. All that have their ear will fill their ear with slanderers, and false characters and representations; and so, if princes, as well as people, will be deceived, they shall be deceived, and, instead of devolving the guilt of their own false judgments upon their servants that misinformed them, they must share in their servants' guilt, and on them will much of the blame lie for encouraging such misinformations, and giving countenance and ear to them.

13. The poor and the deceitful man meet together: the Lord lighteneth both their eyes.

This shows how wisely the great God serves the designs of his providence, by persons of very different temperaments, capacities, and conditions in the world; even,

1. By those that are contrary the one to the other. Some are poor, and forced to borrow, others are rich, have a great deal of the mammon of unrighteousness, (deceitful riches they are called,) and they are creditors, or usurers, as it is in the margin. Some are poor and honest, and laborious, others rich, slothful, and deceitful; they meet together in the business of this world, and have dealings with one another, and the Lord enlightens their eyes, he causes his sun to shine upon both, and gives them both the comforts of this life; to some of both sorts he gives his grace; he enlightens the eyes of the poor, by giving them patience, and of the deceitful, by giving them repentance, as Zacheus.

But the comfort of that sort of thing that can profit, things that can profit, would be best spared. The poor and the deceitful we are ready to lock upon as blasphemers of Providence, but God makes even them to display the beauty of Providence; he has wise ends not only in leaving the poor always with us, but in permitting the deceived and the deceiving to live and work together, and in giving the sunshine of grace and blessing upon both. All the deceitful are not wicked, and all the poor are not destitute and in want of assistance. Some of the poor have money, and are able to relieve the needful, and to give charity to the poor, who have nothing, to make them happy, and to comfort them, and to give them that grace which is better than wealth.
ceiver, for both are his, (Job xii. 16.) and turn to his praise.

14. The king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established for ever.

Here is, 1. The duty of magistrates, and that is, to judge faithfully between man and man, and to determine all causes brought before them, according to truth and equity; particularly to take care of the poor; not to countenance them in an unjust cause, for the sake of their poverty, (Exod. xxii. 3.) but to see that their poverty do not turn to their prejudice, if they have a just cause. The rich will seek them themselves, but the poor, and needy the prince must defend, (Ps. lxxxii. 7.) and plead for, Prov. xxxi. 9.

2. The happiness of those magistrates that do their duty; their throne of honour, their tribunal of judgment, shall be established for ever. This will secure to them the favour of God, and strengthen their interest in the affections of their people, both which will be the establishment of their power, and help to transmit it to posterity, and perpetuate it in the family.

15. The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.

Parents, in educating their children, must consider,

1. The benefit of due correction. They must not only tell their children what is good and evil, but they must chide them, and correct them too, if need be, when they either neglect that which is good, or do that which is evil. If a reproof will serve without the rod, it is well, but the rod must never be used without a rational and grave reproof; and then, though it may be a present uneasiness both to the father and to the child, yet with much wisdom, Vexatio dat intellectum—Vexatio sharpeneth the intellect. The child will take warning, and so will get wisdom.

2. The mischief of undue indulgence; A child that is not restrained or reproofed, but is left to himself, as Adonijah was, to follow his own inclinations, he may do well if he will, but if he take to ill courses, nobody will hinder him, it is a thousand to one to the child bringing a disgrace to his family, and brings his mother, who fondled him, and humored him in his licentiousness, to shame, to poverty, to reproach, and perhaps will himself be abusive to her, and give her ill language.

16. When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth: but the righteous shall see their fall.

Note, 1. The more sinners there are, the more sin there is; When the wicked, being countenanced by authority, grow numerous, and walk on every side, no marvel if transgression increases, as a plague in the country is said to increase, when still more and more are infected with it. Transgression grows more impudent and bold, more imperious and threatening, when there are many to keep it in countenance. In the old world, when men began to multiply, they began to degenerate, and to corrupt themselves and one another.

2. The more sin there is, the nearer is the ruin threatened. Let not the righteous have their faith and hope shocked by the increase of sin and sinners; let them not say that they have cleaned their hands in vain, or that God has forsaken the earth, but wait with patience; the transgressors shall fall, the measure of their iniquity will be full, and then they shall fall from their dignity and power; and fall into dis-grace and destruction; and the righteous shall have the satisfaction of seeing their fall, (Ps. xxxix. 24.) perhaps in this world, at furthest, in the judgment of the great day, when the fall of God's implacable enemies will be the joy and triumph of glorified saints. See Isa. lxvi. 24. Gen. xix. 28.

17. Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest: yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.

Note, 1. It is a very happy thing when children prove the comfort of their parents; good children are so; they give them rest, make them easy, and free from the many cares they have had concerning them; yea, they give delight unto their souls. It is a pleasure to parents, which none know but those that are blessed with it, to see the happy fruit of their good education thrice, but should then the children cease, and to have a prospect of their well-doing for both worlds; it gives delight proportionable to the many thoughts of heart that have been concerning them.

2. In order to this, children must be trained up under a strict discipline, and not suffered to do what they will, and to go without rebuke when they do amiss. The foolishness bound up in their hearts must by correction be driven out, when they are young, or it will break out, to their own and their parents' shame, when they are grown up.

18. Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

See here, 1. The misery of the people that want a settled ministry; Where there is no vision, no prophet to expound the law, no priest or Levite to teach the good knowledge of the Lord, no means of grace, the word of the Lord is scarce, there is no open vision; (1 Sam. iii. 1.) where it is so, the people perish; the word has many significations, any of which will apply here; (1.) The people are made naked, stripped of their ornaments, and so exposed to shame; stripped of their armour, and so exposed to danger. How bare does a place look, without Bibles and ministers, and what an easy prey is it to the enemy of souls! (2.) The people rebel, not only against God, but against their prince; good preaching would make people good subjects, but, for want of it, they are turbulent and factious, and despire dominions, because they know no better. (3.) The people are idle, or they play, as the scholars are apt to do when the master is absent; they do nothing to any good purpose, but stand all the day idle, and sporting in the market-place, for want of instruction what to do, and how to do it. (4.) They are scattered as sheep having no shepherd, for want of the masters of assemblies to call them and keep them together, Mark vi. 34. They are scattered from God and their duty by apostacies, from one another by divisions; God is provoked to scatter them by his judgments, 2 Chron. xxv. 3. (5.) They perish; they are destroyed for lack of knowledge, Hos. iv. 6. See what reason we have to be thankful to God for the plenty of open vision which we enjoy!

2. The felicity of a people that have not only a settled, but a successful, ministry among them; the people that hear and keep the law, among whom religion is uppermost; happy is such a people, and every particular person among them. It is not having the law, but obeying it, and living up to it, that will entitle us to blessedness.

19. A servant will not be corrected by words; for though he understand, he will not answer.
Here is the description of an unprofitable, slothful, wicked, servant; a slave that serves not from conscience, or love, but purely from fear. Let those that have such servants put on patience to bear the vexation, and not disturb themselves at it. See their character.

1. No rational words will work upon them; they will not be corrected and reformed, not brought to their business, nor cured of their idleness and laziness, by fair means, no, nor by foul words; even the most gentle master will be forced to use severity with them; no reason will serve their turn, for they are unreasonable.

2. No rational words will be got from them; they are dogged and sullen; and though they understand the questions you ask them, they will not give you an answer; though you make it ever so plain to them, what you expect from them, they will not promise to mend what is amiss, or to mind their business. See the folly of those servants whose mouth by their silence calls for strokes; they might be corrected by words, and save blows, but they will not.

20. Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

Solomon here shows that there is little hope of bringing a man to wisdom that is hasty, either,

1. Through rashness and inconsideration; Seek thou a man that is hasty in his matters, that is of a light, desultory, wit, that seems to take a thing quick, but takes it by the halves, gallops over a book or science, but takes no time to digest it, no time to pause or muse upon a business. There is more hope of making a scholar, and a wise man, of one that is dull and heavy, and slow in his studies, than of one that has such a mercurial genius, and cannot fix.

2. Through pride and conceit; Seek thou a man that is forward to speak to every matter that is started, and affects to speak first to it, to open it, and speak last to it, to give judgment upon it, as if he were an oracle? There is more hope of a modest fool, who is sensible of his folly, than of such a self-conceited one.

21. He that delicately bringeth up a servant from a child, shall have him become his son at the length.

Note, 1. It is an im prudent thing in a master to be too fond of a servant, to advance him too fast, and admit him to be too familiar with him; to suffer him to be over-nice and curious in his diet, and clothing, and lodging, and so to bring him up delicately, because he is a favourite, and an agreeable servant; it should be remembered that he is a servant, and, by being thus indulged, will be spoiled for any other place. Servants must endure hardness.

2. It is an ungrateful thing in a servant, but what is very common, to behave himself insolently, because he has been used tenderly. The humble prophet thinks himself unworthy to be called a son, and is content to be a servant; the pampered slave thinks himself too good to be called a servant, and will be a son at the length, will take his ease and liberty, will be on a par with his master, and perhaps pretend to the inheritance. Let masters give their servants that which is equal and fit for them, and neither more nor less. This is very applicable to the body, which is a servant to the soul; those that delicately bring up the body, that humour it, and are over-tender of it, will find that at length it will forget its place, and become a son, a master, a perfect tyrant.

22. An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.

See here the mischief that flows from an angry, passionate, furious disposition.

1. It makes men provoking to one another; An angry man stirreth up strife, is troublesome and quarrelsome in the family and in the neighbourhood, blows the coals, and even forces those to fall out with him that would live peaceably and quietly by him.

2. It makes men provoking to God; A furious man, which is wedded to his humors and passions, which but brings him in transgressions; that is a sin which is the case of many; not only hinges men from calling upon God's name, but it occasions their swearing and cursing, and profaning God's name.

23. A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

This agrees with what Christ said more than once. That those who exalt themselves shall be abased. They that think to gain respect by lifting up themselves above their rank, by looking high, talking big, appearing fine, and upholding themselves, will, on the contrary, expose themselves to contempt, lose their reputation, and provoke God by humbling providences to bring them down and lay them low.

2. That those who humble themselves shall be exalted, and shall be established in their dignity; Honour shall uphold the humble in spirit; their humility is their honour, and that shall make them truly and safely great, and recommend them to the esteem of all that are wise and good.

24. Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul: he heareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not.

See here what sin and ruin they involve themselves in, who are drawn away by the enticements of sinners.

1. They incur a great deal of guilt; He docth so, that goes partner with such as rob and defraud, and casts in his lot among them, ch. 1. 11, &c. The receiver is as bad as the thief; and, being drawn in to join with him in the pursuit of the sin, he cannot escape joining with him in the concealment of it, though it be with the most horrid perjuries and execrations. They hear cursing, when they are sworn to tell the whole truth, but they will not confess.

2. They hasten to utter ruin; they even hate their own souls, for they wilfully do that which will be the inevitable destruction of them. See the absurdities sinners are guilty of; they love death, than which nothing is more dreadful, and hate their own souls, than which nothing is more dear.

25. The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.

Here, 1. We are cautioned not to dread the power of man; neither the power of a prince, nor the power of the multitude; both are formidable enough, but the slavish fear of either brings a snare, exposes men to many insults; (some take a pride in terrifying the timorous;) or, rather, exposes men to many temptations. Abraham, for fear of man, denied his wife, and Peter his Master, and, in one case God was appearing in the clouds, and in the other God was appearing in the flesh; Dan. iii. 16. Ps. cxviii. 6. He must himself die, (Isa. li. 12) and can but kill our body, Luke xii. 5.
2. We are encouraged to depend upon the power of God, which would keep us from all that fear of man, which has either torment or temptation in it. Whoso puts his trust in the Lord, for protection and supply in the way of duty, he shall be set on high, above the counsel of man, and above the fear of that power. A holy confidence in God makes a man both great and easy, and enables him to look with a gracious contempt upon the most formidable designs of hell and earth against him. If God be my Salvation, I will trust, and not be afraid.

26. Many seek the ruler’s favour; but every man’s judgment cometh from the Lord.

See here, 1. What is the common course men take to advance and enrich themselves, and make themselves great; they seek the ruler’s favour, and, as if all their judgment proceeded from him, to him they make all their court. Solomon was himself a ruler, and knew what seductivity men made their application to him, some on one count, others on another, but all for his favour. It is the way of the world to make interest with great men, and expect much from the smiles of second causes, which yet are uncertain, and frequently disappoint them. Many take a great deal of pains in seeking the ruler’s favour, and yet cannot have it; many have it for a little while, but they cannot keep themselves in it, by some little turn or other they are brought under his displeasure; many have it, and keep it, and yet it does not answer their expectation, they cannot make that hand of it, that they promised themselves they should. Haman had the ruler’s favour, and yet it availed him nothing.

2. What is the wisest course men can take to be happy; let them look up to God, and seek the favour of the Ruler of rulers; for every man’s judgment proceedeth from the Lord. It is not with us as with the ruler pleases; his favour cannot make us happy; his frowns cannot make us miserable; but it is as God pleases; every creature is that to us that God makes it to be, no more and no other; he is the first Cause on which all second causes depend; if he help not, they cannot, 2 Kings vi. 27. Job xxxiv. 29.

27. An unjust man is an abomination to the just; and he that is upright in the way, is abomination to the wicked.

This bespeaks not only the innate contrariety that there is between virtue and vice, as between light and darkness, fire and water, but the old enmity that has always been between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, Gen. iii. 15.

1. All that are sanctified have a rooted antipathy to wickedness and wicked people. They have a good will to the souls of all; (God has so, and would have none perish;) but they hate the ways and practices of those that are impious toward God, and injurious toward him, they cannot help of them, or speak of them, without a holy indignation, because they do naught the society of the ungodly and unjust, and dread the thought of giving them any countenance, but do all they can to bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end. Thus an unjust man makes himself odious to the just, and it is one part of his present shame and punishment, that good men cannot endure him.

2. All that are unsanctified have a like rooted antipathy to godliness and godly people; He that is upright in the way, that makes conscience of what he says and does, is an abomination to the wicked, whose wickedness is restrained perhaps, and suppressed, or, however, shamed and condemned, by the uprightness of the upright. Thus Cain did, who was of his father the devil. And this is not only the wickedness of the wicked, that they hate those whom God loves, but their misery too, that they hate those whom they shall shortly see in everlasting bliss and honour, and who shall have dominion over them in the morning, Ps. xlix. 14.

CHAP. XXX.

This and the following chapter are an appendix to Solomon’s proverbs; but they are both expressly called prophesies, in the first verses of both; by which it appears that the penmen of them, whoever they were, were divinely inspired. This chapter is penned by one that bears the name of Agur Ben Jakeh. What tribe he was of, or when he lived, we are not told; what he wrote, being ended by the Holy Ghost, is here kept upon record. We have here, I. His confession of faith, v. 1–2. II. His injuries, v. 3–5. III. His judgments, v. 6–9. IV. His advice, v. 10–19. V. Words of wisdom, v. 10–31. Sermons to the rich, v. 10–14. IV. Wicked generations, v. 11–14. V. Four things insatiable, (v. 15, 16,) to which is added, fair warning to undutiful children, v. 17. VI. Four things unsearchable, v. 18–20. VII. Four things intolerable, v. 21–23. VIII. Four things little and wise, v. 24–25. IX. Four things stately, v. 29 to the end.

1. THE words of Agur the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy: The man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal.

2. Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. 3. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy. 4. Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son’s name, if thou canst tell? 5. Every word of God is pure; he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. 6. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

Some make Agur to be not the name of this author, but his character; he was a collector, so it signifies; a gatherer; one that did not compose things himself, but collected the wise sayings and observations of others; made abstracts of the writings of others; which some think is the reason why he says, I have not learned wisdom myself, but have been a scribe, or amanuensis, to other wise and learned men.” Note, We must not bury our talent, though it be but one, but, as we have received the gift, so minister the same, if it be but to collect what others have written. But we rather suppose it to be his name, which, no doubt, was well known then, though not mentioned elsewhere in scripture.

Ithiel and Ucal are mentioned, either,

As the names of his pupils, whom he instructed, or who consulted him as an oracle, having a great opinion of his wisdom and goodness. Probably, they wrote from him what he dictated, as Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah, and by their means it was preserved, and they were ready to attest it to be his, for it was spoken to them; they were two witnesses of it. Or,

2. As the subject of his discourse. Ithiel signifies God with me, the application of Immortal, God with us. The word calls him God with us, faith appropriates this, and calls him “God with me, who loved me, and gave himself for me, and into union and communion with whom I am admitted.” Ucal signifies The Mighty One, for it is upon one that is mighty, that help is laid for. Many good
interpreters therefore apply this to the Messiah, for to him all the prophecies bear witness, and why not this then? It is what Agur spake concerning Ishiel, even concerning Ishiel (that is the name on which the stress is laid) and Ucal. The mighty God, (Isa. ix. 6.) with us, Isa. vii. 14.

Three things the prophet here aims at,
1. To absolve himself. Before he makes confession of his faith, he makes confession of his folly, and the weakness and deficiency of reason, which make it so necessary that we be guided and governed by faith. Others, when concerning the Saviour, he speaks of himself as needing a Saviour, and as nothing without him; we must go out of ourselves before we go into Jesus Christ.

2. He speaks of himself as wanting a righteousness, and having done foolishly, very foolishly. When he reflects upon himself, he owns, Surely I am more brutish than any man. Every man is become brutish, Jer. x. 14. But he that knows his own heart, knows as much more evil of himself than he does of any other, that he cries out, "Surely I cannot but think that I am more brutish than any man, surely no man has such a corrupt deceitful heart as I have. I have acted as one that has not the understanding of Adam, as one that is wretchedly degenerated from the knowledge and righteousness in which man was at first created; may, I have not the common sense and reason of a man, else I had not done as I have done." Agur, when he was apparelled in glory, as wiser than most, acknowledges himself more foolish than any. Whatever high opinions others may have of us, it becomes us to have low thoughts of ourselves.

3. He speaks of himself as wanting a revelation to guide him in the ways of truth and wisdom. He owns, (v. 3.) "I neither learned wisdom by any power of my own, the depths of it cannot be fathomcd by my line and plummet, nor know I the knowledge of the holy ones, the angels, our first parents in innocency, nor of the holy things of God, I cannot get no insight into them, nor make any judgment of them, further than God is pleased to make them known to me." The natural man, the natural powers, perceive not, nor they receive not, the things of the Spirit of God. Some suppose Agur to be asked, as Apollo's oracle was of old, Who was the wisest man? The answer is, He that is sensible of his own ignorance, especially in divine things. Hoc tantum sed, me nihil scire—All that I know is, that I know nothing.

II. To advance Jesus Christ, and the Father in him; (v. 4.) Who hath ascended up into heaven, &c.

1. Some understand this of God, and of his works, which are both incomparable and unsearchable. He challenges all mankind to give an account of the heavens above, of the winds, the waters, the earth; "Who can pretend to have ascended up to heaven, to take a view of the orbs above, and then to have descended, to give an account of them? Who can pretend to have had the command of the winds, to have grasped them in his hand, and managed them, as God does, or to have bound the waves of the sea with a swelling band, as God has done? Who has established the ends of the earth, or can describe the strength of its foundations, or the extent of its limits? Tell me what is the man's name who can undertake to vie with God, or to be of his cabinet counsellor, if he be not the end to whom God has added this great secret.

2. Others refer it to Christ, to Ishiel and Ucal, the Son of God, for it is the Son's name, as well as the Father's, that is here inquired after, and a challenge given to any to compare with him. We must now exalt Christ as one revealed, they then magnified him as one concealed; as one they had heard something of, but had very dark and defective ideas of. We have heard the fame of him with our ears, but cannot describe him; (Job xxxviii. 22.) certainly it is God that has gathered the wind in his fists, and bound the waters as in a garment; but what is his name? It is, I am that I am, (Exod. iii. 14.) a name to be adored, not to be understood. What is his Son's name, by whom he doth all these things? The Old-Testament saints expected the Messiah to be the Son of the Blessed, and he is here spoken of as a Person distinct from the Father, but his name as yet secret. Note, The great Redeemer, in the glories of his own person, can neither be paralleled, nor found out to perfection. (1.) The glories of the kingdom of his grace are unsearchable and unparalleled; for who besides has ascended into heaven, or descended? Who besides is perfectly acquainted with both worlds, and has himself a free correspondence with both, and is therefore fit to settle a correspondence between them, as Mediator, as Jacob's ladder? He was in heaven in the Father's bosom, (John i. 1, 18.) thence he descended to take our nature upon him; and never was there such condescension! In that nature he again ascended, (Eph. iv. 9.) to receive the promised glories of his exalted state; and who besides has done this? Rom. x. 6. (2.) The glories of the kingdom of his providence are likewise unsearchable and unparalleled. The same that reconciles heaven and earth was the Creator of both, and governs and dispenses all. He specifies in his government the three lesser elements of creation, air, earth, and water, (Gen. i. 7.) and the motions of the air are of his directing. Satan pretends to be the prince of the power of the air, but even there Christ has all power, he rebuked the winds, and they obeyed him. (2.) The bounds of the water are of his appointing; He binds them as in a garment; hitherto shall they come, and no further, Job xxxviii. 9. [3.] The foundations of the earth are of his establishing; he founded it at first, he upholds it still; if Christ had not interposed, the earth would have sunk under the load of the curse upon the ground, for man's sin. Who, and what, is the mighty He that doeth all this? We cannot find out God, nor the Son of God, unto perfection. Oh the depth of that knowledge!

III. To assure us of the truth of the word of God, and to recommend it to us, v. 5, 6. Agur's pupils expect to be instructed by him in the things of God; Alas," says he, "I cannot undertake to instruct you; go to the word of God, see what he has there revealed to himself, and to the world for you, and you shall need know no more than what that will teach you, and that you may rely upon, as sure and sufficient. Every word of God is pure; there is not the least mixture of falsehood and corruption in it." The words of men are to be heard and read with jealousy, and with allowance, but there is not the least ground to suspect any deficiency in the Word of God; it is as silver purified seven times, (Ps. xii. 6.) without any mixture of alloy; Thy word is very pure, Ps. cxix. 140.

1. It is sure, and therefore we must trust to it, and venture our souls upon it. God in his word, God in his promise, is a Shield, a sure Protection, to all them that put themselves under his protection, and put their trust in him. The word of God, applied by faith, will make us easy in the midst of the greatest dangers, Ps. lxi. 1, 2.

2. It is true, and therefore we must not add to it; (v. 6.) Add thou not unto his words, because they are pure and perfect. This forbids the advancing of any thing, not only in contradiction to the word of God, but in competition with it; though it be under the plausible pretence of explaining it, yet if it pretend to be of equal authority with it, it is adding to his words, which is not only a reproach to them as insufficient, but opens a door to all man-
ner of errors and corruptions; for, that one absurdi-

7. Two things have I required of thee;

deny me them not before I die: 3. Remove
far from me vanity and lies; give me nei-
ther poverty nor riches; feed me with food
convenient for me; 9. Lest I be full, and
deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or
lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name
of my God in vain.

After Agur's confession and creed, here follows
his litany; where we may observe,
I. The preface to his prayer; Two things have I
required, that is, requested, of thee, O God.
Before we pray to pray, it is good to consider what we
need, and what the things are which we have to ask
of God. What does our case require? What do our
hearts desire? What would we that God should do
for us? That we may not be seek for our petition
and request, when we should be presenting it.
He begs, Deny me not before I die. In praying, we
should think of dying, and pray accordingly. "Lord,
give me pardon, and peace, and grace, before I die,
before I go hence, and be no more; for if I be not
renewed in grace before I die, it will not be
done after; if I do not prevail in prayer before I die,
prayers after will not prevail, no, not Lord, Lord.
There is none of this wisdom or working in the
grace. Deny me not thy grace, for thou do, I
die; I perish, if thou be silent to me, I am like them
that go down to the pit, Ps. xxviii. 1. Deny me not
before I die; as long as I continue in the land of the
living, let me continue under the conduct of thy
grace and good providence."

II. The prayer itself; the two things he requires,
grace sufficient, and food convenient.
1. Grace sufficient for his soul; "Remove from
me vanity and lies; deliver me from sin, from all
corrupt principles, practices, and affections, from
crime and mistake, which are at the bottom of all
sin; from the love of the world and the things of it,
which are all vanity and a lie." Some understand it as a prayer for the pardon of sin; an when God
forgets sin, he removes it, he takes it away. Or
rather, it is a prayer of the same import with that,
Lead us not into temptation. Nothing is more mis-
chievous to us than sin, and therefore there is no-
thing which we should more earnestly pray against
than that we may do no evil.

2. Food convenient for his body. Having prayed
for the operations of divine grace, he here begs the
provisions of the body, that we may live as
extend to the good, and not to the prejudice of the
soul.

(1.) He prays, that, of God's free gift, he might
receive a competent portion of the good things of
this life; "Feed me with the bread of my allowance;
such bread as thou finitest fit to allow me." As to
all the gifts of the Divine Providence, we must refer
ourselves to the Divine Wisdom. Or, "the bread
that is fit for me, as a man, a master of a family;
that which is agreeable to my rank and condition
in the world." For as is the man, so is his competency.
Oft he seems to refer to this, when he teaches
us to pray, and grants us the spirit that is, as this
seems to refer to Jacob's vow, in which he
wished for no more than bread to eat, and rainment
to put on. Food convenient for us is what we ought
to content with, though we have not dainties, va-
ricies, and superfluities; what is for necessity,
though we have not for delight and ornament; and
it is what we may in faith pray for, and depend upon
God for.

(2.) He prays that he may be kept from every
condition of life that would be a temptation to him.
[1.] He prays against the extremes of abundance
and want; Give me neither poverty nor riches. He
does not hereby prescribe to God, nor pretend to
教 him what condition he shall allot to him, nor
does he pray against poverty or riches absolutely,
as in themselves evil, for either of them, by the
grace of God, may be sanctified, and be a means of
good to us. Lest I be full, God hereby intends to
express the value which wise and good men have for a
middle state of life, and, with submission to the will
of God, desires that that might be his state; neither
great honour, nor great contempt. We must learn
how to manage both. (as St. Paul. Phil. iv. 12.)
but rather wish to be always between both. Optimus
peccuniae modus qui nec in pamperturit eedit, nec
procurat a pauperture discidit.—The best condition
is that which neither is too favours, nor there is a
recrudescence. Secondly, He here intimates a holy
jealousy he had of himself, that he could not keep his
ground against the temptations either of an afflicted,
or a prosperous, condition. Others may preserve their
i nTEGRITY in either, but as he is afraid of both, and
dependence grace teaches him to pray against riches,
as much as nature against poverty; but the will
of the Lord be done.

[2.] He gives a pious reason for his prayer; (v. 9.)
He does not pray for such a supply as will
be in a manner burdensome, and envied by his
neighbours, and eaten up with a multitude of
servants; as, "Lest I be poor, and trampled on,
and forced to work hard, and fare hard;" but, "Lest I
be rich, and sin, and poor, and sin." Sin is that
which a good man is afraid of in every condition, and
under every event; witness Nehemiah, (ch. vi. 13.)
that he should be afraid, and do so, and sin.

First. He dreads the temptations of a prosperous
condition, and therefore even deprecates that; Lest
I be full, and deny thee, (as Jeshurun, who wazed
fat, and kicked, and forsook God who made him,
Deut. xxxii. 15.) and say, as Pharaoh in his pride,
Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? Pros-
perity makes people proud, and forgetful of God,
as if they had no need of him, and were there-
fore under no obligation to him. What can the Al-
mighty do with him to whom he aught? and what
will they do for him? Even good men are
afraid of the worst sins, so deceitful do they think
their own hearts to be; and they know that the
greatest gains of the world will not balance the
least guilt.

Secondly, He dreads the temptations of a poor
condition, and for that reason, and no other, depre-
cates that, Lest I be poor, and steal. Poverty is a
strong temptation to sin. Lest I steal. Riches are
overcome by, who are also ready to think it
will be their excuse; but it will not bear them out
at God's bar, any more than at men's, to say, "I
stole because I was poor;" yet if a man steal for
the satisficing of his soul when he is hungry, it is a case
of compassion, (ch. vi. 30.) and what even those that have some principles of honesty in them may be drawn to. But observe why Aguare dreads this; not because he should endanger himself by it, "Lest I steal, and be hanged for it, while, put into the stocks, or sold for a bondman; and as among the Jews poor thieves were, who had not wither-

where to make restitution; but lest he should dis- 

honour God by it; "Lest I should steal, and take the name of my God in vain, discredit my professor- 

ship of religion by practices disagreeable to it." Or, "Lest I steal, and, when I am charged with it, for- 

wear myself." He therefore dreads one sin, be- 

cause it would draw on another, for the way of sin is downward. Oh, sirs! He calls God his God, and 

therefore he is afraid of doing any thing to offend 

him, because of the relation he stands in to him.

10. Accuse not a servant unto his mas- 

ter, lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty. 11. There is a generation that cur- 

eath their father, and doth not bless their mo- 

ther. 12. There is a generation that are 

pure in their own eyes, and yet is not wash- 

ed from their filthines. 13. There is a ge- 

neration, O how lofty are their eyes! and 

their eye-lids are lifted up. 14. There is a 

generation whose teeth are as swords, and 

their jaw-teeth as knives, to devour the 

poor from off the earth, and the needy from 

among men.

Here is, 1. A caution not to abuse other people's servants any more than our own, nor to make mis-

chief between them and their masters, for it is an 

ill office, invidious, and what will make a man odious, v. 10. Consider, (1.) It is an injury to the servant, whose poor condition makes him an object of pity, and therefore it is barbarous to add affilia-

tion to him that is afflicted; "Hurt not a servant with thy tongue, so the margin reads it; for it argues a 
sordid disposition to snite any body secretly with the 

scourge of the tongue, especially a servant, who is not a match for us, and whom we should rather protect, if his master be severe with him, than ex-

asperate him more. (2.) "It will perhaps be an 

injury to thyself; if a servant be thus provoked, perhaps he will curse thee, and bring thee into trouble; or give thee an ill word, and 
blemish thy reputation; or appeal to God against thee, and imprecate his wrath upon thee, who is the Patron and Protector of oppressed inno-

cence."

2. An account, upon occasion of this caution, of 
some wicked generations of men, that are justly abominable to all that are virtuous and good.

(1.) Such as are abusive to their parents, give 

them bad language, and wish them ill; call them 

beggars, and actually injure them; as is the ge-

neration of such; young men of that black charac-

ter commonly herd together, and irritate one an-

other against their parents; a generation of vipers 

they are, who curse either their natural parents, or 

their magistrates, or their ministers, because they 
cannot endure the yoke; and they are near of kin to 

them, who, though they are not yet arrived at such 
a pitch of wickedness as to curse their pa-

rents, yet do not love them, cannot give them a good word, and will not pray for them.

(2.) Such as are conceited of themselves, and, 

under a show and pretence of sanctity, hide from 

others, and perhaps from themselves too, abun-
dance of reigning wickedness in secret; (v. 12.) 

they are pure in their own eyes, as if they were in 

all respects such as they should be: they have a 

very good opinion of themselves and their own char-

acter, that they are not only righteous, but rich 

and increased with goods, (Rev. iii. 17.) and yet 

are not cleansed from their filthiness, the filthiness 
of their hearts, which they pretend to be the best 

part of them; they are, it may be, swept and gar-
nished, but they are not washed, not sanctified; as 

the Pharisees that within were full of all unclean-

ness, Matth. xxiii. 25, 26.

(3.) Such as are haughty and scornful to those about them, v. 13. He speaks of them with amazement 
at their intolerable pride and insolence; O how 

lofty are their eyes! With what disdain do they 

look upon their neighbours, as not worthy to be set 

with the dogs of their flock! What a distance do 

they expect every body should keep; and when 

they look upon themselves, how do they strut and 
vault, like the peacock, thinking they make them-

selves illustrious, when really they make them-

selves ridiculous! There is a generation of such, 

on whom he that resists the proud will pour con-

tempt.

(4.) Such as are cruel to the poor, and barbarous 
to all that lie at their mercy; (v. 14.) their teeth 

are iron and steel, swords and knives, instruments of 
cruelty, with which they devour the poor with 

the greatest pleasure imaginable, and as greedily 

as hungry men cut their meat, and eat it. God has 

so ordered it, that the poor we shall have always 

with us, that they shall never cease out of the land; 

but there are those who, because they hate to 

receive the poor should, if they could, abolish them 

from the earth, from among men; especially God's poor. 

Some understand it of those who wound and ruin 

others by slanders and false accusations, and severe 
censures of their everlasting state; their tongues, 

and their teeth too, (which are likewise organs of 
speech,) are as swords and knives, Ps. lvi. 4.

15. The horse-leech hath two daughters, 
crying, Give, give. There are three things 

that are never satisfied, no, four things say 

not. It is enough: 16. The grave; and the 

barren womb; the earth that is not filled 

with water; and the fire, that saith not, It is 

enough. 17. The eye that mocketh at his 

father; and despiseth to obey his mother, the 

ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and 

the young eagles shall eat it.

He had spoken before of these that devoured the 

poor, (v. 14.) and had spoken of them last, as the 

worst of all the four generations there mentioned; 

now here he speaks of their insatiableness in doing 

this. The temper that puts them upon it is made 

up of cruelty and covetousness; these are two daugh-

ters of the horse-leech. his genuine offspring, that 

still cry, "Give, give, give more blood, give more mo-

ney;" for the bloody are still blood-thirsty; yet, 

drunk with blood, they add thirst to their drunken-

ness, and will seek it yet again. They also that 

love silver shall never be satisfied with silver. 

Thus, while from these two principles they are 

devouring the poor, they are continually uneasy to 

themselves, as David's enemies, Ps. lxx. 14, 15.

Now, 1. For the further illustration of this, he 
specifies four other things which are insatiable, to 

which these devourers are compared, which say 

not, It is enough; or, It is wealth. These are never 

rich that are always coveting. Now these four 

things that are always craving, are, (1.) The grave 
in which multitudes fall, and yet still more will fall, 

and it swallows them all up, and returns none. Hell 

and destruction are never full, ch. xxvi. 20. When
it comes to our turn, we shall find the grave ready for us, Job xvi. 1. (2.) The barren womb, which is impatience of its affliction in being barren, and cries, as Rachel did, Give me children. (3.) The parched ground in time of drought, (especially in those hot countries,) which still soaks in the rain that comes in abundance upon it, and in a little time it wants for any more rain. For the rain has consumed abundance of fuel, yet still devours all the combustible matter that is thrown into it. So insatiable are the corrupt desires of sinners, and so little satisfaction have they even in the gratification of them.

2. He adds a terrible threatening to disobedient children, (v. 17) for warning to the first of those four wicked generations that curse their parents, (v. 11) and shows here, (1.) Who they are that belong to that generation, not only they that curse their parents in heat and passion, but, [1.] They that mock at them, though it be but with a scornful eye, looking with disdain upon them, because of their bodily infirmities, or looking sour or dogged at them when they instruct or command, impatient at their checks, and angry at them. God takes notice with what eye children look upon their parents, and will reckon for the heering look and the cast of an evil eye, as well as for bad language given them. [2.] They that despise to obey them, that think it a thing below them to be dutiful to their parents, especially to the mother, they scorn to be controlled by her; and thus she that bare them in sorrow, in greater sorrow bears their manners. (2.) What their doom will be. They that dishonour their parents shall be set up as monuments of God’s vengeance; they shall be hanged in chains, as it were, for the birds of prey to pick out their eyes, those eyes with which they looked so scornfully on their good parents. The dead bodies of malefactors were not to hang all night, but before night the ravens would have picked out their eyes. If men do not punish undutiful children, God will, and will load those with the greatest infamy that conduct themselves haughtily toward their parents. Many who have come to an ignominious end, have owned that the wicked courses that brought them to it began in contumacy of their parents’ authority.

18. There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not: 19. The way of an eagle in the air, the way of a serpent upon a rock, the way of a ship in the midst of the sea, and the way of a man with a maid. 20. Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness. 21. For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear: 22. For a servant when he reigneth, and a fool when he is filled with meat; 23. For an odious woman when she is married, and a handmaid that is heir to her mistress.

Here is,
1. An account of four things that are unsavourable, too wonderful to be fully known. And here,
2. The three first are natural things, and are only designed as comparisons for the illustration of the last, which is not without meaning. (1.) An eagle in the air; which way shall she fly? (2.) A serpent upon a rock. The way of a serpent in the sand we may find by the track, but not of a serpent upon the hard rock; nor can we describe how a serpent will, without a little time creep to the top of a rock. (3.) A ship in the midst of the sea. The leviathan, indeed, makes a path to shine after him, one would think the deep to be hoary, (Job xii. 22.) but this ship is moved by the winds; it is so tossed upon the waves, that one would wonder how it lives at sea, and gains its point. The kingdom of nature is full of wonders; marvellous things which the God of nature does, past finding out.

2. The fourth is a mystery of iniquity, more unaccountable than any of these; it belongs to the depths of Satan, that deceitfulness and that desparate wickedness, which none can know, Jer. xvii. 9. It is twofold:

(1.) The cursed arts which a vile adulterer has to debauch a maid, and to persuade her to yield to his wicked and abominable lust; this is what a wanton poet wrote a whole book of, long since, De arte amandi—On the art of love. By what pretensions and protestations of love, and all its powerful charms, promises of marriage, assurances of secrecy and reward, is many an unwary virgin beguiled to her destruction, thereby spoiling her mind and soul, and all to a base traitor; for so all sinful lust is in the kingdom of love. The more artfully the temptation is managed, the more watchful and resolute ought every pure heart to be against it.

(2.) The cursed arts which a vile adulteress has to conceal her wickedness, especially from her husband, from whom she treacherously departs; so close are her intrigues with her lewd companions, and so cleverly she so manages that although you should discover her as to track an eagle in the air. She eats the forbidden fruit, after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, and then wipes her mouth, that it may not betray itself, and, with a bold and impudent face, says, I have done no wickedness. [1.] To the world she denies the fact, and is ready to swear it, that she is as chaste and modest as any woman, and never did the wickedness she is suspected of. They are works of darkness, which are disobedient to the light of nature. To her own conscience (if she have any left) she denies the fault, and will not own that that great wickedness is any wickedness at all, but an innocent entertainment. See Hos. xii. 7, 8. Thus multitudes ruin their souls by calling evil good, and out-facing their convictions with a self-justification.

II. An account of four things that are intolerable, that is, four sorts of persons that are very troublesome to the places where they live, and the relations and companies they are in; the earth is disquieted for them, and groans under them as a burden it cannot bear, and they are all much alike.

1. A servant when he is advanced, and intrusted with power, who is, of all others, most insolent and impetuous; witness Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, Neh. ii. 10. 2. A fool, a silly, rude, boisterous, vicious, man, when he is grown rich, and is partaking of the pleasures of the table, will disturb all the company with his eating, and the affairs he will put upon those about him. 3. An ill-natured, cross-grained, woman, when she gets a husband; who, having made herself Odysseus by her pride and sourness, so that one would not have thought any body should have loved her, yet, if at last she be married, that honourable estate makes her more intolerably scornful and spiteful than ever. It is a pity that which should sweeten the disposition, should have a contrary effect. A good-natured woman, when she is married, will be yet more obliging. 4. An old maid- servant that has prevailed with her mistress, by humouring her, and, as we
4. The spider; an insect, but as great an instance of industry in our houses as the ants are in the field. Spiders are very ingenious in weaving their webs, with a fineness and exactness, such as no art can pretend to come near; They take hold with their hands, and spin a fine thread out of their own bowels, with a great deal of art; and they are not only in poor men's cottages, but in kings' palaces, notwithstanding all the care that is there taken to destroy them. Providence wonderfully keeps up those kinds of creatures, not only which men provide not for, but which every man's hand is against, and seeks the destruction of. These that will mind their business, and take hold of it with their hands, shall be in king's palaces; sooner or later, they will get preferment, and may go on with it, notwithstanding the difficulties and discouragements they must meet with. If one well-spun web be swept away, it is but making another.

29. There be three things which go well, yea, four are come in going: 30. A lion, which is strongest among beasts, and turneth not away for any; 81. A greyhound; a he-goat also; and a king, against whom there is no rising up. 32. If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thy hand upon thy mouth. 33. Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood; so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife.

Here is, 1. An enumeration of four things which are majestic and stately in their going, which look great.

1. A lion, the king of beasts, because strongest among beasts; among beasts it is strength that gives the pre-eminence, but it is pity that it should do so among men, whose wisdom is their honour, not their strength and force. The lion turns not away, nor alters his pace, for fear of any pursuers, since he knows he is too hard for them. Herein the righteous are bold as a lion, that they turn not away from their duty for fear of any difficulty they meet with in it.

2. A greyhound that is girt in the loins, and fit for running; or, as the margin reads it, a horse, which ought not to be omitted among the creatures that are comely in going, for so he is, especially when he is dressed up in his harness, or trappings.

3. A he-goat, the comeliness of whose going is when he goes first, and leads the flock; it is the comeliness of a Christian's going, to go first in a good work, and to lead others in the right way.

4. A king, who, when he appears in his majesty, is looked upon with reverence, awe, and admiration; and all nations that there is no rising up against him, none can compare with him, none can contend with him, whoever does it, it is at his peril. And if there is no rising up against an earthly prince, so to him then that strives with his Maker. It is intended that we should learn courage and fortitude in all virtues actions from the lion, and not to turn away from any difficulty we meet with; from the greyhound we may learn quickness and dispatch; from the he-goat, the care of our family, and those under our charge; and from a king, to have our children in subjection with all gravity; and from them all, to go well, and to order the steps of our conversation, so as that we may not only be safe, but comely, in going.

2. A caution to us to keep our temper at all times and under all provocations, and to take heed of car
ry our resentments too far upon any occasion, especially when there is a king in the case, against whom there is no rising up; when it is a ruler, or one much our superior, that is offended; nay, the rule is always the same.

(1.) We must bridle and suppress our own passion, and take shame to ourselves, whenever we are justly charg'd and not with our own innociency; if we have lifted up ourselves, either in a proud conceit of ourselves, or a peevish opposition to those that are over us, if we have transgressed the laws of our place and station, we have therein done foolishly. Those that magnify themselves over others, or against others, that are haughty and insolent, they do shame themselves, and betray their own weakness; nay, if we have but thought evil, if we are conscious to ourselves, that we have harboured an ill design in our minds, or it has been suggested to us, we must lay our hand upon our mouth, [1.] We must humble ourselves for what we have done amiss, and even lie in the dust before God, in sorrow for it, as Job did, when he repented of what he had said foolishly; (ch. xli. 4.) I will lay my hand upon my mouth; and as the convicted leper, who put a covering upon his unclean self, if we have done foolishly, we must not stand to it before men, but by silence own our guilt, which will be the best way of appeasing those we have offended. [2.] We must keep the evil thought we have conceived in our minds from breaking out in any evil speeches; Do not give the evil thought an imprimitur—a license; allow it not to be published, but lay thy hand upon thy mouth; use a holy silence with thyself, if need be, and enjoin thyself silence; as Christ suffered not the evil spirit to speak. It is bad to think ill, but it is much worse to speak it; for that implies a consent to the evil thought, and a willingness to infect others with it.

(2.) We must not irritate the passions of others. Some are so very provoking in their words and conduct, that they even force wrath, they make those about them angry, whether they will or no, and put them into a passion, who are not only not inclined to it, but resolved against it. Now, this forcing of wrath by them, and our being forced into a passion, brings with it confusion and every evil work. As the violent agitation of the cream fetches all the good out of the milk, and the hard wringing of the rose will extort blood from it, so this forcing of wrath wastes both the body and spirits of a man, and robs him of all the good that is in him. Or, as it is in the churning of milk, and the wringing of the rose, that is done by force, which otherwise would not be done; so the spirit, that is the effusion of the wine, the angry word begets another, and that a third, one passionate debate makes work for another, and so it goes on, till it ends at length in irreconcilable feuds; let nothing, therefore, be said or done with violence, but every thing with softness and calmness.

CHAP. XXXI.

This chapter is added to Solomon's proverbs, some think, because it is of the same author, supposing king Lemuel to be king Solomon; others, only because it is of the same nature, though left, in writing by another author, called Lemuel; however it be, it is a prophecy, and therefore given by inspiration and direction of God, which Lemuel was under in the writing of it, and putting it into this form, as an admonition to him in particular. Here is 1. An exhortation to Lemuel, a young prince, to take heed of the sins he would be tempted to, and to do the duties of the place he was called to, v. 1. 2. The description of Lemuel's character, in the relation of a wife, and the mistress of a family, which Lemuel's mother drew up, not as an encomium of herself, though, no doubt, it was her own true picture, but is narrated by degrees when stronger as the foregoing verses were to her son, or as a direction to her son in the choice of a wife; she must be chaste and modest, diligent and frugal, dutiful to her husband, careful of her family, discreet in her discourse, and in the education of her children, and, above all, conscientious in her duty to God; such a one as this, if he can find her, will make him happy; v. 10.-31.

1. THE words of king Lemuel, the pro- phecy that his mother taught him. 2. What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows? 3. Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings. 4. It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes strong drink; 5. Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted. 6. Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. 7. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.

3. Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruc- tion. 3. Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.

Most interpreters are of opinion that Lemuel is Solomon; the name signifies one that is for God, or devoted to God; and so it agrees well enough with that honourable name which, by divine appointment, was given to Solomon, (2 Sam. xii. 23.) Je- dediah, beloved of the Lord. Lemuel is supposed to be a pictur'd, under this character, those women to whom his mother used to call him; and so much did he value himself upon the interest he had in his mother's affections, that he was not ashamed to call himself by it. One would the rather incline to think it is Solomon that here tells us what his mother taught him, because he tells us, (ch. iv. 4.) what his father taught him. But some think, (and the conjecture is not improbable,) that Lemuel was a prince of some importance in the land of Israel, perhaps a son of David, and taught him these good lessons. Note, 1. It is the duty of mothers, as well as fathers, to teach their children what is good, that they may do it, and what is evil, that they may avoid it; when they are young and tender, they are most under the mother's eye, and she has then an opportunity of molding and fashioning their minds well, which she ought not to let slip. 2. Even kings must be catechised; the greatest of men is less than the least of the ordinances of God. 3. Those that are grown up to maturity should often call to mind, and make mention of, the good instructions they received when they were children, for their own admonition, the edification of others, and the honour of those who were the guides of their youth.

Now, in this mother's (this queen mother's) catechism, observe, 1. Her expectation with the young prince, by which she lays hold of him, claims an interest in him, and awakens his attention to what she was about to say; (v. 2.) "What, my son? What shall I say to thee?" She speaks as one considering what advice to give him, and choosing out words to reason with him; so full of concern is she for his welfare! Or, What is this that thou dost? It seems to be a chiding question. She observed, when he was young, that he was too much inclined to women and wine, and therefore she found it necessary to take him to task, and deal roundly with him. "What, my son? Is this the course of life thou intendest to
lead? Have I taught thee no better than this? I must reprove thee, and reprove thee sharply, and thou must take it well, for,

1. "Thou art descended from me, thou art the son of my womb, and therefore, what I say comes from the authority and affection of a parent, and cannot be suspected to come from any ill-will; thou art a piece of myself, I bare thee with sorrow, and I expect no other return for all the pains I have taken with thee, and undergone for thee, than this, be wise and good, and then I am well paid.

2. "Thou art devoted to my God; thou art the son of my vows, the son I prayed to God to give me, and promised to give back to God, and did so;" (thus Samuel was the son of Hannah's vows); "thou art the son I have often prayed to God to give his grace to;" (Ps. lxxii. 1.) and shall a child of so many prayers miscarry? And shall all my hopes concerning thee be disappointed?" Our children that by baptism are dedicated to God, for them, and whose name, we covenanted with God, may well be called the children of our vows; and as this may be made a good plea with God in our prayers for them, so it may be made a good plea with them in the instructions we give them; we may tell them, they are baptized, are the children of our vows, and it is at their peril if they break those bonds in sundri, which, in their infancy, they were solemnly brought under.

1. Against uncleanliness; (v. 3.) Give not thy strength unto women, unto strange women. He must not be soft and effeminate, nor spend that time in a vain conversation with the ladies, which should be spent in getting knowledge and despatching business; nor employ that wit which is the strength of the man in courting and complimenting them, which he should employ about the affairs of his government.

"Especially shun all adultery, fornication, and lasciviousness, which waste the strength of the body, and bring into it dangerous diseases. Give not thy ways, thy affections, thy conversation, to that which destroys kings, which has destroyed many, which gave such a shock to the kingdom, even of David himself, in the matter of Uriah. Let the sufferings of others be thy warnings. It lessens the value of all of them when we shun them mean. Are those fit to govern others, that are themselves slaves to their own lusts? It makes them unfit for business, and fills their court with the basest and worst of animals. Kings lie exposed to temptations of this kind, having wherewith both to please the humours, and to bear the charges of the sin, and therefore they ought to double their guard; and if they would preserve their people from the unclean spirit, they must themselves be patterns of purity. Men of people many times do the same to themselves. Let none give their strength to that which destroys souls.

2. Against drunkenness, v. 4, 5. He must not drink wine, or strong drink, to excess; he must never sit to drink as they used to do in the day of their kings, when the princes made him sick with bottles of wine, Hos. vii. 5. Whatever temptation he might be in from the excellency of the wine, or the charms of the company, he must deny himself, and be sober-minded.

(1.) The indecency of drunkenness in a king; However some may call it a fashionable accomplishment and entertainment, it is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings, to allow themselves that liberty; it is a disparagement to their dignity, and profanes their crown, by confusing the head that wears it; that which for the time unmans them, does for the time unking them. Shall we say, They are gods? No, they are worse than the beasts that perish. All Christians are made to our God kings and priests, and must apply this to themselves. It is not for Christians, to drink to excess, they degrade themselves if they do; it ill becomes the heirs of the kingdom, and the spiritual priests, Lev. x. 9.

(2.) The ill consequences of it; (v. 5.) Lastesth drink and make their understandings and memories, drink, and forget the law by which they are to govern; and so, instead of doing good with their power, do hurt with it, and pervert, or alter the judgment of all the sons of affliction, and, when they should right them, wrong them, and add to their affliction. It is a sad complaint which is made of the priests and prophets, (Isa. xxviii. 7.) that they have erred through wine, and through strong drink they are out of the way; and the effect is as bad in kings, who, when they are drunk, or affected with the love of wine, cannot but stumble in judgment. Judges must have clear heads, which those cannot have, who so often make themselves giddy, and incapacitate themselves to judge of the most common things.

III. The counsel she gives him to do good.

1. He must do good with his wealth. Great men must not think that they have their abundance, only that out of it they may make provision for the future, to fulfill the duties of the present, and make them the more likely to have it; but that with it they may relieve such as are in distress, v. 6, 7. "Thou hast wine and strong drink at command; instead of doing thyself hurt with it, do others good with it, let them have it that need it." Those that have wherewithal must not only give bread to the hungry, and water to the thirsty, but they must give strong drink to him that is ready to perish through sickness or pain, and wine to those that are melancholy and of heavy heart; for it was appointed to cheer and revive the spirits, and make glad the heart, (as it does where there is need of it,) not to burden and oppress the spirits, as it does where there is no need of it. We must deny our selves in the gratifications of sense, that we may have to spare for the relief of the miseries of others, and be glad to see our superfluities and dainties better bestowed upon those whom they will be a real kindness to, than upon ourselves whom they will be a real injury to. Let those that are ready to perish drink and sing, and it will be a mercy to revive their drooping spirits, that they will forget their poverty for the time, and remember their misery no more, and so they will be the better able to bear it. The Jews say, that upon this was grounded the practice of giving a stupifying drink to condemned prisoners when they were going to execution, as they did to our Saviour. But the scope of the place is to show that wine is a cordial, and therefore, when a man is used for comfort and sustenance, by those only that need cordials, as Timothy, who is advised to drink a little wine, only for his stomach's sake, and his often infirmities, 1 Tim. v. 23.

2. He must do good with his power, his knowledge, and interest; must administer justice with care, courage, and compassion, v. 8, 9. (1.) He must himself take cognizance of the causes of his subjects, and have a particular care of the poor and destitute, so that he may not only support those that do their duty, and lay those aside that neglect it, or are partial. (2.) He must, in all matters that come before him, judge righteously, and, without fear of the face of man, boldly pass sentence according to equity; Open thy mouth; which denotes the liberty of speech that princes and judges ought to use in passing sentence. Some observe, that wise men only often their mouths, for
 fools have their mouths always open, are full of words. (5.) He must especially look upon himself as obliged to be the patron of oppressed innocency; the inferior magistrates perhaps had not zeal and tenderness enough to plead the cause of the poor and needy, and therefore the king himself must interpose and appear as an advocate, [1.] For those that were unjustly charged with capital crimes, as Naboth was; that were appointed to destruction, to gratify the malice either of a particular person, or of a party. It is a case which it well befits a king to appear in, for the preserving of innocent blood. [2.] For those that had actions unjustly brought against them, to defend them of their right, because they were poor and needy, and unable to defend it, not having wherewithal to fee counsel; in such a case also kings must be advocates for the poor. Especially, [3.] For those that were dumb, and knew not how to speak for themselves, either through weakness or being over-talked by the prosecutor, or overawed by the court. It is generous to speak for those that cannot speak for themselves, that are absent, or have not words at command, or are timorous. Our law appoints the judge to be of counsel for the prisoner.

10. Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. 11. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that she shall have no need of spoil. 12. She will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life. 13. She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. 14. She is like the merchants’ ships, she bringeth her food from afar. 15. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. 16. She considereth a field, and buyeth it; with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. 17. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. 18. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. 19. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. 20. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. 21. She is not afraid of the snow for her household; for all her household are clothed with scarlet. 22. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. 23. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. 24. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. 25. Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. 26. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. 27. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. 28. Her children rise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praizeth her. 29. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.

but a woman that searcheth the Lord, she shall be praised. 31. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.

This description of the virtuous woman is designed to show what wise the women should make, and what wives the men should choose; it consists of twenty-two verses, each beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in order, as some of the Psalms; which makes some think it was no part of the lesson which Lemuel’s mother taught him, that he himself, written by some other hand, and perhaps had been commonly repeated among the pious Jews, for the case of which it was made alphabetical. We have the abridgment of it in the New Testament, (1 Tim. ii. 9, 10. 1 Pet. iii. 1.) where the duty prescribed to wives agrees with this description of a good wife; and with good reason is so much stress laid upon it, since it contributes as much as any one thing to the keeping up of religion in families, and the entail of it upon posterity, that the mothers be wise and good; and of what consequence it is to the wealth and outward prosperity of a house, every one is sensible. He that will thrive must ask his wife leave.

Here is,

1. A general inquiry after such a one; (v. 10.) where observe, 1. The person inquired after, and that is, a virtuous woman; a woman of strength, so the word is; though the weaker vessel, yet she strong by wise words, and grace, and the fear of God; it is the same word that is used in the character of good judges, (Exod. xviii. 21.) that they are able men, men qualified for the business to which they are called, men of truth, fearing God. So it follows, A virtuous woman is a woman of spirit, who has the command of her own spirit, and knows how to manage other people’s; one that is pious and industrious, and a help meet for a man. In opposition to this strength, we read of the weakness of the heart of an imperious, scolding, woman, Ezek. xvi. 30. A virtuous woman is a woman of resolution, who, having espoused good principles, is firm and steady to them, and will not be frightened with winds and clouds from any part of her duty. 2. The difficulty of meeting with such a one; Who can find her? Which intimates that good women are very scarce; many that seem to be so, do not prove so; he that thought he had found a virtuous woman was deceived; Behold it was Leah, and not the Rachel he expected. But he that designs to marry ought to seek diligently for such a one, to have this principally in his eye, in all his inquiries, and to take heed that he be not biased by beauty or gaiety, wealth or parentage, dressing well or dancing well, for all these may be, and yet the woman not be virtuous; and there is many a woman truly virtuous, who yet is not recommended by these advantages. 3. The enviable attributes of such a one, and the value which he that has such a wife ought to put upon her, showing it by his thankfulness to God, and his kindness and respect to her, whom he must never think he can do too much for; her price is far above rubies, and all the rich ornaments with which vain women adorn themselves. The more rare such good wives are, the more they are to be valued.

II. A particular description of her, and of her excellent qualities:

1. She is very industrious to recommend herself to her husband’s esteem and affection. Those that are good really, will be so relatively. A good woman, if she be brought into the married state, will be a good wife, and make it her business to please her husband, 1 Cor. vii. 34. Though she is a woman of spirit herself, yet her desire is to her
husband, to know his mind, that she may accommodate herself to it, and she is willing that he rule over her.

(1.) She conducts herself so that he may repose an entire confidence in her; in her chastity, which she never gave him the least occasion to suspect, or to entertain any jealousy of; she is not mercenary, but modest and grave, and has all the marks of virtue in her countenance and behaviour; her husband knows it, and therefore his heart doth safely trust in her; he is easy, and makes her so. He trusts in her conduct, that she will speak in all companies, and act in all affairs, with prudence and discretion, so as not to occasion him either damage or reproach. He trusts in her fidelity to his interests, and that she will never betray his counsels, or have any interest separate from that of his family. When he goes abroad to attend the concerns of the public, he can confide in her to order all his affairs at home, as well as if he himself were there. She is a good wife, that is fit to be trusted, and he a good husband, that will leave it to such a wife to manage for him.

(2.) She contributes so much to his content and satisfaction that he shall have no need of spoil; he needs not be griping and scraping abroad, as those must be whose wives are proud and wanton at home. She manages his affairs so that he is always before; modesty and plenty of his own, that he is in no temptation to prey upon his neighbours. He thinks himself so happy in her, that he envies not those who have most of the wealth of this world; he needs not it, he has enough, having such a wife. Happy the couple that have such a satisfaction as this in each other!

(3.) She makes it her constant business to do him good, and is afraid of doing any thing, even through inadvertency, that may turn to his prejudice. She shows her love to him not by a foolish fondness, but by prudent endearments, accommodating herself to his temper, and not crossing him, giving him good words, and not bad ones, no, not when he is out of humour; studying to make him easy, to provide what is fit for him both in health and sickness, and attending him with diligence and tenderness when any thing ails him; nor would she, no, not for the world, wilfully do any thing that might be a damage to his person, estate, or good name, and to take care all the days of her life; not at first only, or now and then, when she is in a good humour, but perpetually; and she is not weary of the good offices she does him; She does him good, not only all the days of his life, but of her own too; if she survive him, still she is doing him good in her care of his children, his estate, and good name, and all the concerns he left behind him. We read of kindness showed, not only to the living, but to the dead, Ruth ii. 20.

(4.) She adds to his reputation in the world; (v. 23.) Her husband is known in the gates, known to have a good wife. By his wise counsels, and prudent management of affairs, it appears that he has a discreet companion in his bosom, by conversation with whom he improves himself. By his cheerful countenance and pleasant humour, it appears that he has an agreeable wife at home; for many that have not, their tempers strangely scared by it. Nay, his excellent wife manages his business, and on all things, every thing about him decent and handsome, yet not gaudy, one may know he has a good wife at home that takes care of his clothes.

2. She is one that takes pains in the duty of her place, and takes pleasure in it. This part of her character is much enlarged upon here.

(1.) She hates to sit still and do nothing; She eateth not the bread of idleness, v. 27. Though she needs not work for her bread, (she has an estate to live upon,) yet she will not eat it in idleness, because she knows that we were none of us sent into this world to be idle, and that when we have nothing to do, the devil will soon find us something to do, and that it is not fit that those who will not labour should eat. Some eat and drink because they can and find their pleasure in idleness, and the less visits must be received with fashionable entertainments; these are eating the bread of idleness, which she has no relish for, for she neither gives, nor receives, idle visits or idle talk.

(2.) She is careful to fill up time that none of that be lost. When day-light is done, she does not then think it time to lay by her work, as those are forced to do whose business lies abroad in the fields, (Ps. civ. 23.) but, her business lying within doors, and her work worth candle-light, with that she lengthens out the day; and her candle goes on by night, v. 18. It is a mercy to have candle-light to supply the want of daylight, and a duty, having that advantage, to improve it. We say of an elaborate piece, It smells of the lamp.

(3.) She rises early, while it is yet night, (v. 15.) to give her servants their breakfast, that t., may be ready to go cheerfully about their work as soon as the day breaks. She is none of those who sit up playing cards, till midnight, till morning, and then lie in bed till noon; nor the frivolous woman loves her business better than her ease or her pleasure, is in care to be found in the way of her duty every hour of the day, and has more true satisfaction in having given meat to her household betimes in the morning, than those can have in the money they have won, much more, in what they have lost, who sat up all night at play. Those that have a family to take care of, should not love their beds well in a morning.

(4.) She is one that attends to the business that is proper for her. It is not in scholar's business, or statesman's business, or husbandman's business, that she employs herself, but in women's business; She seeks wood and flax, where she may have the best of each at the best hand, and cheapest; she has a stock of both by her, and every thing that is necessary to the carrying on both of the woollen and the linen manufacture; (v. 13.) and with this, she does not only set the proper work, which is a very good business, but exercises herself, and work willingly, with her hands; she works with the counsel or delight of her hands, so the word is; she goes about it cheerfully and dexterously; lays not only her hand, but her mind, to it, and goes on in it without weariness in well-doing. She lays her own hands to the spindle, or spinning-wheel, and her hands hold the distaff; (v. 19.) and she does not reckon it either an abridgment of her liberty, or a disparagement to her dignity, or at all inconsistent with her repose. The spindle and the distaff are here mentioned as her honour, while the ornaments of the daughters of Zion are reckoned up to their reproach, Isai. iii. 18, &c.

(5.) She does what she does with all her might, and does not trifle in it; (v. 17.) She girds her loins with strength, and strengthens her arms; she does not employ herself in sitting work only, or in that which is only the nice performance of the fingers; there is a work every day to be done. Nay, she is one that must work; every thing about him decent and handsome, yet not gaudy, one may know she has a good wife at home that takes care of his clothes.

3. She is one that makes what she does turn to a good account by her prudent management of it; she does not toil all night and catch nothing; no, she herself perceives that her mercantile is good; (v. 18.) she is sensible that in all her labour there is profit, and that encourages her to go on with it.
perceives that she can make things herself better and cheaper than she can buy them; she finds by observation what branch of her employment brings in the best returns, and to that she applies herself most ardently.

(1.) She brings in provisions of all things necessary and convenient for her family, v. 14. No merchants' ships, no, not Solomon's navy, ever made a more advantageous return than her employments do. Do they bring in foreign commodities with the effects they export? So does she with the fruit of her labours. What her ground does not produce, she can furnish herself with, if she have occasion for it, by exchanging her own goods for it; and so she brings her food from afar. Not that she values the more for their being far-fetched, but, if they be ever so far off, if she must have them, she knows how to come by them.

(2.) She purchases lands, and enlarges the demesne of the family; v. 16. She considers a field, and buys it. She considers what an advantage it will be to the family, and what a good account it will turn to, and therefore she buys it; or rather, though she have ever so much mind to it, she will not buy it, till she has first considered it, whether it be worth her money, whether she can afford to take so much money out of her stock, as must go to purchase it, whether the title be good, whether the ground will answer the character given of it, and whether she has money at command to pay for it. Many have undone themselves by buying without considering; but those who would make advantageous purchases must consider, and then buy. She also plants a vineyard, but it is with the fruit of her hands; she does not take up money, or run into debt, to do it, but she does it with what she can spare out of the gains of her own housewifery. Men should not lay out any thing upon superfluities, till, by the blessing of God upon their industry, they are got before-hand, and can afford it; and then the fruit of the vineyard is likely to be doubly sweet, when it is the fruit of honest industry.

(3.) She furnishes her house well, and has good clothing for herself and her family; v. 22. She makes herself coverings of tapestry to hang her rooms, and she may be allowed to use them when they are of her own making; her own clothing is rich and fine, it is silk and purple, according to her place and rank. Though she is not so vain as to sport herself, but she would be well covered and warm, she yet provides for herself, and puts on of apparel her adorning, nor values herself upon it, yet she has rich clothes, and puts them on well. The senator's robes which her husband wears are of her own spinning, and they look better, and wear better, than any that are bought. She also gets good warm clothing for her children, and her servants' liversies; she needs not fear the cold of the most pinching winter, for she and her family are well provided with clothes, neither makes her put out cold, which is the end chiefly to be aimed at in clothing; All her household are clothed in scarlet, strong cloth, and fit for winter, and yet rich, and making a good appearance. They are all double clothed, so some read it; have change of raiment, a winter suit and a summer suit.

(4.) She trades abroad; she makes more than she and her household have occasion for; and therefore, though she has knocked up all the little she sells, fine linen and girdles to the merchants, v. 24., who carry them to Tyre, the mart of the nations, or some other trading city. Those families are likely to thrive that sell more than they buy; as it is well with the kingdom when abundance of its home-manufactures are exported. It is no disgrace to those of the best quality to sell what they can spare, nor to deal in trade, and send ventures by sea.

(5.) She lays up for hereafter, She shall rejoice in time to come, having laid in a good stock for her family, and having good portions for her children. Those that take pains when they are in their prime will have the pleasure and joy of it when they are old, both in reflecting upon it, and in reaping the benefit of it.

4. She takes care of her family, and all the affairs of it, gives meat to her household, (v. 15.) to every one his portion of meat in due season, so that none of her servants have reason to complain of being kept short, or faring hard. She gives also a portion, an allotment of work, as well as meat, to her maidens; they shall each of them know their business, and have their portion, to the ways of her household, (v. 27.) She inspects the works of all her servants, that she may check what is amiss among them, and oblige them all to behave properly, and do their duty to God and one another, as well as to her, as Job, who put away iniquity far from his tabernacle; and David, who would suffer no wicked thing in his house. She does not interfere in the concerns of other people's houses, she thinks it enough for her to lock well to her own. She is as intent upon giving as she is upon getting, she often serves the poor with her own hand, and she does it freely, cheerfully, and very liberally, with an out-stretched hand. Nor does she relieve her poor neighbours only, and those that are nigh at hand, but she reaches forth her hands to the needy that are at a distance, seeking opportunities to do good and to communicate; which is as good housewifery as any thing she does.

6. She is discreet and obliging in all her discourse; not talkative, censorious, or peevish, as some are, that know how to take pains; no, she opens her mouth with wisdom; when she does speak, it is with a great deal of prudence, and very much to the purpose; you may perceive by every word she says, how much she governs herself by the rules of wisdom. She not only takes prudent measures herself, but gives prudent advice to others; and this, not as assuming the authority of a dictator, but with the affection of a friend, and an obliging air; In her tongue is the law of kindness; all she says is under the government of that law. The law of love and kindness is written in the heart, but it shows itself in the tongue; if we are kindly affectioned one to another, it will appear by affectionate expressions. She has a law of kindness, because it gives law to others, to all sorts of persons, whether of the world, and wisdom and kindness together put a commanding power into all she says; they command respect, they command compliance. How forcible are right words! In her tongue is the law of grace, or mercy; so some read it, understanding it of the word and law of God, which she delights to talk of among her children and servants. She is full of pious religious discourse, and manages it prudently; which shows how full her heart is of God, and even when her hands are most busy about this world.

7. That which completes and crowns her character, is, that she fears the Lord, v. 30. With all those good qualities she lacks not that one thing needful she is truly pious, and, in all she does, is guided and governed by principles of conscience, and to a God; this is that which is here preferred far before beauty, that is vain and deceitful; all that are wise regard it as of great account so, and value neither themselves nor other's goods, nor the commendations men are given to God, nor is it any certain indication of wisdom and goodness, but it has deceived many a man who has made his choice of a wife by it. There may be an impure deformed soul lodged in a comely and beautiful body; nay, many have been exposed by their beauty to such temptations as have been the ruin of their virtue, their honour, and their precious
souls. It is a fading thing at the best, and therefore vain and deceitful; a fit of sickness will stain and sully it in a little time; a thousand accidents may blast this flower in its prime; old age will certainly wither it, and death and the grave consume it; but the fear of God reigning in the heart, is the beauty of the soul; it recommends those that have it, to the favour of God, and is, in his sight, of great price; it will last for ever, and bid defiance to death itself, which consumes the beauty of the body, but consummates the beauty of the soul.

III. The happiness of this virtuous woman.

1. She has the comfort and satisfaction of her virtue in her own mind; (v. 25.) Strength and honour are her clothing; which suits herself, that is, enjoys herself, and in which she appears to the world, and so recommends herself. She enjoys a firmness and constancy of mind, has spirit to bear up under the many crosses and disappointments which even the wise and virtuous must expect to meet with in this world; and this is her clothing, for defence as well as decency. She deals honourably with all, and she has the pleasure of doing so, and shall rejoice in time to come; she shall reflect upon it with the satisfaction of a good life, whether she was not idle or useless when she was young. In the day of death it will be a pleasure to her to think that she has lived to some good purpose. Nay, she shall rejoice in an eternity to come, she shall be recompensed for her goodness with fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

2. She is a great blessing to her relations, v. 28. (1.) Her children grow up in her place, and they call her blessed; they give her their good word, they are themselves a commendation to her, and they are ready to give great commendations of her; they pray for her, and bless God that they had such a good mother. It is a debt which they owe her, a part of that honour which the fifth commandment requires to be paid to father and mother; and it is a double honour that is due to a good father and a good mother.

(2.) Her husband thinks himself so happy in her, that he takes all occasions to speak well of her, as one of the best women. It is no indignity at all, but a laudable instance of conjugal love, for husbands and wives to give one another their due praises.

3. She gets the good word of all her neighbours, as Ruth did, whom all the city of her people knew to be a virtuous woman, Ruth iii. 11. Virtue will have its praise, Phil. iv. 8. A woman that fears the Lord shall have praise of God, (Rom. ii. 29.) and of men too. It is here showed,

(1.) That she shall be highly praised; (v. 29.) Many have done virtuously; virtuous women, it seems, are precious jewels, but not such rare jewels as was represented, v. 10. there have been many, but such a one as this cannot be paralleled; Who can find her equal? She excels them all. Note. Those that are good should aim and covet to excel in virtue. Many daughters, in their father's house, and in the single state, have done virtuously, but a good wife, if she be virtuous, excels them all, and does more good in her place than they can do in their'. Or, as some explain it, A man cannot have his house so well kept by good daughters as by a godly wife; her good name is more lasting than that of daughters.

(2.) That she shall be incontestably praised, without contradiction, v. 31. Some are praised above what is their due, but those that praise her do but give her of the fruit of her hands; they give her that which she has dearly earned, and which is justly owing to her; she is wronged if she have it not. Note, Those ought to be praised, the fruit of whose hands is praiseworthy. The tree is known by its fruits, and therefore, if the fruit be good, the tree must have our good word. If her children be dutiful, and her husband is satisfied with her, and as they ought, they then give her of the fruit of her hands; she reaps the benefit of all the care she has taken of them, and thinks herself well paid. Children must thus study to requite their parents, and this is showing piety at home, 1 Tim. v. 4. But if men be unjust, the thing will speak itself, her own works will praise her in the gates, openly before all the people. 1.] She leaves it to her own works to praise her, and does not court the applause of men. Those are none of the truly virtuous women that love to hear themselves commended. [2.] Her own works will praise her; if her relations and neighbours altogether hold their peace, her good works will proclaim her praise. The widows gave the best encomium of Dorcas, when they showed the coats and garments she had made for the poor, Acts ix. 39. [3.] The least that can be expected from her neighbours, is, that they should let her own works praise her, and do nothing to hinder them. They that do that which is good, let them have praise of the same, (Rom. xiii. 3.) and let not us enviously say, or do, any thing to the diminishing of it, but be provoked by it to a holy emulation. Let none have an ill report from us, that have a good report even of the truth itself. Thus is shut up this looking-glass for ladies, which they are desired to open, and dress themselves by; and if they do so, their adorning will be found to praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Twenty Chapters of the Book of Proverbs, (beginning with ch. 10. and ending with ch. 29.) consisting mostly of entire sentences in each verse, could not well be reduced to proper heads, and the contents of them gathered; I have therefore here put the contents of all these chapters together, which, perhaps, may be of some use to those who desire to see at once all that is said of any one head in these chapters.

I take the heads in no method but as they occurred in reading the chapters; some of the verses, perhaps, I have not put under the same heads that another would have put them under, but the most of them fall (I hope) naturally enough to the places I have assigned them.

(1.) Of the comfort, or grief, parents have in their children, according as they are wise or foolish, godly or ungodly, ch. x. 1.—xx. 20.—xxvii. 21, 25.—xix. 13, 26.—xxiii. 15, 16, 24, 25.—xxvii. 11.—xxviii. 3.

(2.) Of the world's insufficiency, and religion's sufficiency, to make us happy, ch. x. 2.—xx. 1, 3.—iv. 4. and the preference to be therefore given to the fruits of virtue, above those of this world, ch. xx. 16, 17.—xviii. 16.—xvii. 1.—xx. 3.—xxviii. 6, 11.

(3.) Of slothfulness and diligence, ch. x. 4, 26.—xii. 11, 24, 27.—xiii. 4, 23.—xxv. 19.—xvi. 26.—xxviii. 9.—xix. 15, 24.—xx. 4, 13.—xxii. 5, 25.—xxvi. 13, 29.—xxv. 30.—xxv. 13.—xxvii. 18, 23.—xxviii. 19.—xxv. 31.—xxviii. 18, 23, 25.—xxv. 14, 21, 29.—xxvii. 6, 9, 14, 15, 21, 29, 25.—xvii. 14, 19, 32.—xxviii. 6, 8, 9, 24, 26, 29.—xx. 7.—xxv. 12, 16, 18, 21.—xxvi. 12.—xxviii. 10, 18.—xxiv. 6.

(4.) Of the happiness of the righteous, and the misery of the wicked, ch. x. 6, 9, 16, 24, 25, 27.—xxv. 30.—xx. 3, 5.—xxv. 18.—xxvi. 13, 14, 21, xxvii. 5, 6, 9, 14, 15, 21, 29, 25.—xvii. 11, 14, 19, 32.—xxv. 8, 9, 24, 26, 29.—xx. 7.—xxv. 12, 16, 18, 21.—xxvi. 12.—xxviii. 10, 18.—xxiv. 6.

(5.) Of honour and dishonesty, ch. x. 7.—xiii. 8, 9, 10.
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(6.) The wisdom of obedience, and folly of disobe
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(7.) Of mischiefousness and usefulness, ch. x. 10,
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—xii. 2.—xxiv. 29, 30.—xxvii. 11.
—xxi. 10.—xxiv. 8.—xxvii. 23, 27.

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Vol. III.—5 G
AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE BOOK OF

ECCLESIASTES.

We are still among Solomon's happy men, his happy servants, that stood continually before him to hear his wisdom; and they are the choicest of all the dictators of his wisdom, such as were more immediately given by divine inspiration, that are here transmitted to us, not to be heard, as by them; but once, and then liable to be mistaken or forgotten, and by repetition to lose their beauty, but to be read, reviewed, revolved, and had in everlasting remembrance. The account we have of Solomon's apostacy from God, in the latter end of his reign, (1 Kings xi. 1.) is the tragical part of his story; we may suppose that he spake his Proverbs in the prime of his time, while he kept his integrity, but delivered his Ecclesiastes when he was grown old, (for of the burdens and decays of age he speaks feelingly, ch. xii.) and was, by the grace of God, recovered from his backslidings: there he dictated his observations, here he wrote his own experiences; this is what days speak, and wisdom which the multitude of years teaches. The title of the book and the penman we shall meet with in the first verse, and therefore shall here only observe,

I. That it is a sermon, a sermon in print; the text is, (ch. i. 2.) Vanity of vanities, all is vanity; that is the doctrine too; it is proved at large, by many arguments, and an induction of particulars; and divers objections are answered; and, in the close, we have the use and application of all, by way of exhortation, to remember our Creator, to fear him, and to keep his commandments. There are indeed many things in this book which are dark, and hard to be understood, and some things which men of corrupt minds wear to their own destruction, for want of distinguishing between Solomon's arguments and the objections of atheists and epicures; but there is enough easy and plain to convince us (if we will admit the conviction) of the vanity of the world, and its utter insufficiency to make us happy, the vileness of sin, and its certain tendency to make us miserable, and of the wisdom of being religious, and the solid comfort and satisfaction that are to be had in doing our duty both to God and man; this should be intended in every sermon, and that is a good sermon by which these points are in any measure gained.

II. That it is a penitential sermon, as some of David's psalms are penitential psalms; it is a recantation sermon, in which the preacher sadly laments his own folly and mistake, in premising himself satisfaction in the things of this world, and even in the forbidden pleasures of sense, which now he finds more bitter than death. His fall is a proof of the weakness of man's nature; Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor say, "I shall never be such a fool as to do so and so," when Solomon himself, the wisest of men, played the fool so egregiously; nor let the rich man glory in his riches, since Solomon's wealth was so great a snare to him, and did him a great deal more hurt than Job's poverty did him. His recovery is a proof of the power of God's grace, in bringing one back to God that had gone so far from him; it is a proof too of the riches of God's mercy in accepting him, notwithstanding the many aggravations of his sin, pursuant to the promise made to David, that if his children should commit iniquity, they should be corrected, but not abandoned and disinhirited, 2 Sam. vii. 14, 15. Let him therefore that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall; and let him that is fallen, make haste to get up again, and not despair either of assistance or acceptance therein.

III. That it is a practical, profitable sermon. Solomon, being brought to repentance, resolves, like his father, to teach transgressors God's way, (Ps. li. 13.) and to give warning to all to take heed of splitting upon those rocks which had been fatal to him; and these were fruits meet for repentance. The fundamental error of the children of men, and that which is at the bottom of all their departures from God, is the same with that of our first parents, hoping to be as gods, by entertaining themselves with that which seems good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise. Now the scope of this book is to show that this is a great mistake, that our happiness consists not in being as gods to ourselves, to have what we will, and do what we will, but in having Him that made us to be a God to us. The moral philosophers disputed much about man's felicity, or chief good, various opinions they had about it, but Solomon, in this book, determines the question, and assures us, that to fear God and keep his commandments, is the whole duty of man. He tried what satisfaction might be found in the wealth of the world, and the pleasures of sense, and at last pronounced all vanity and vexation; yet multitudes will not take his word, but will make the same dangerous experiment, and it proves fatal to them. He, i. Shows the vanity of those things in which men commonly look for happiness, as hu
man learning and policy, sensual delights, honour and power, riches and great possessions. And then, 2. He prescribes remedies against the vexation of spirit that attends them. Though we cannot cure them of their vanity, we may prevent the trouble they give us, by sitting loose to them, enjoying them comfortably, but laying our expectations low from them, and acquiescing in the will of God concerning us in every event, especially by remembering God in the days of our youth, and continuing in his fear and service all our days, with an eye to the judgment to come.

ECCLESIASTES, I.

CHAP. I.

In this chapter, we have, 1. The inscription, or title, of the book, v. 1. II. The general doctrine of the vanity of the creature laid down, (v. 2.) and explained, v. 3. III. The proof of this doctrine, taken, 1. From the shortness of human life, and the multitude of births and burials in this life, v. 4. 2. From the inconstant nature, and constant revolutions, of all the creatures, and the perpetual flux and reflux they are in; the sun, wind, and water, v. 5. 3. From the abundant toil man has about them, and the little satisfaction he has in them, v. 8. 4. From the return of the same things again, which shows the end of all perfection, and that the stock is exalted and abased. From the stillness, in which things are conditioned, v. 11. IV. The first instance of the vanity of men's knowledge, and all the parts of learning, especially natural philosophy and politics. Observe, 1. The trial Solomon made of these, v. 12, 13, 16, 17. 2. His judgment of them; that all is vanity, v. 14. For, (1.) There is labour in getting knowledge, v. 13. (2.) There is little good to be done with it, v. 15. (3.) There is no satisfaction in it, v. 18. And if this is vanity and vexation, all other things in this world, being much inferior to it in dignity and worth, must needs be so too. A great scholar cannot be happy, unless he be a true saint.

1. THE words of the Preacher, the son of David, king of Jerusalem. 2. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity, 3. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?

Here is,

1. An account of the penman of this book; it was Solomon, for no other son of David was king of Jerusalem: but he conceals his name Solomon, peaceable, because by his sin he had brought trouble upon himself and his kingdom, had broken his peace with God, and lost the peace of his conscience, and therefore was no more worthy of that name. Call me not Solomon, call me, Marah, for behold, for peace I had great bitterness. But he calls himself, the preacher, which bespeaks his present character. He is Koheleth, which comes from a word which signifies to gather; but is a feminine termination, by which, perhaps, Solomon intends to upbraided himself with his inefficacy, which contributed more than anything to his apostacy; for it was to please his wife that he set up idols, Neh. xiii. 26. Or the word Soul must be understood, and so Koheleth is,

(1.) A penitent soul, or one gathered; that had rambled and gone astray like a lost sheep, but was now reduced, gathered in from his wanderings, gathered home to his duty, and come to length to himself; the spirit, that was dispossessed after a thousand vanities, is now collected, and made to centre in God. Divine grace can make great sinners great converts, and renew even these to repentance, who, after they had known the way of righteousness, turned aside from it, and heal their backslidings, though it is a difficult case. It is only the penitent soul that God will accept, the heart that is broken, not the head, that is bowed down like a bulrush only for a day, David's repentance, not Ahab's. And it is only the gathered soul that is the penitent soul, that comes back from its by-paths, that no longer scatters its way to the strangers, (Jer. iii. 13.) but is united to fear God's name. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, and therefore we have here the words of the penitent, and those published. If eminent professors of religion fall into gross sin, they are concerned, for the honour of God, and the repairing of the damage they have done to his kingdom, openly to testify their repentance, that the antidote may be administered as extensively as the poison.

(2.) A preaching soul, or one gathering. Being himself gathered to the congregation of saints, out of which he had by his sin thrown himself, and being reconciled to the church, he endeavours to gather others to it, that had gone astray like him, and perhaps were led astray by his example. He that has done any thing to seduce his brother, ought to do all he can to restore him. Perhaps Solomon called together a congregation of his people, as he had done at the dedication of the temple, (1 Kings viii. 2.) so now at the re-dedicating of himself. In that assembly he presided as the people's mouth to God, and in prayer, (v. 12.) in this as God's mouth to them in preaching. God by his Spirit made him a preacher, in token of his being reconciled to him; a commission is an implicit pardon. Christ sufficiently signified his forgiving Peter, by committing his lambs and sheep to his trust. Observe, Penitents should be preachers; they that have taken warning themselves to turn and live, should give warning to others not to go on and die. When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. Preachers must be preaching souls, for that only is likely to reach to the heart that comes from the heart. Paul served God with his spirit in the gospel of his Son, Rom. i. 9.

2. The son of David. His taking this title intimates, (1.) That he looked upon it as a great honour to be the son of so good a man, and valued himself very much upon it. (2.) That he also looked upon it as a great aggravation of his sin, that he had such a father, who had given him a good education, and put up many a good prayer for him; it cuts him to the heart to think that he should be a blemish and disgrace to the name and family of such a one as David. It aggravated the sin of Jehoiakim, that he was the son of Josiah, Jer. xxxii. 15. 17. (3.) That his being the son of David encouraged him to repent, and hope for mercy, for David had fallen into sin, by which he should have been warned not to sin, but was not; but David repented, and there in he took example from him, and found mercy as he did. Yet this was not all, he was that son of David concerning whom God had said, that though he would chasten his transgression with the rod, yet he would not break his covenant with him, Ps. lxxxix. 34. Christ, the great Preacher, was the Son of David.

3. King of Jerusalem. This he mentions, (1.) As that which was a very great aggravation of his sin; he was raising. God had done much for him in raising him to the throne, and yet he had so ill required him; his dignity made the bad example
ECCLESIASTES, I.

and influence of his sin the more dangerous, and many would follow his pernicious ways; especially as he was king of Jerusalem, the holy city, where God's temple was, and of his own building too, where the priests, the Lord's ministers, were, and his prophets who had taught him better things. (2.) As this might give some advantage to what he wrote, for *where the word of a king doth go, there it is established*. He thought it no disparagement to him, as a king, to be a preacher; but the people would regard him the more as a preacher, because he was a king. If men of honour would lay out themselves to do good, what a great deal of good might they do! Solomon looked as great in the pulpit, preaching the vanities of the world, as in his throne of ivory, judging.

The Chaldee paraphrase (which, in this book, may be very large additions to the text, or comments upon it, all along) gives this account of Solomon's writing this book: That by the spirit of prophecy he foresaw the revolt of the ten tribes from his son; and, in process of time, the destruction of Jerusalem and the house of the sanctuary, and the captivity of the people; in the foresight of which, he said, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity*; and to that he applies many passages in his book.

II. The general scope and design of the book. We have a general intimation of it, from the title, which he gives it, and the sense of the whole, which he aims at, is, for the making us truly religious, to take down our esteem of, and expectation from, the things of this world. In order to this, he shows,

1. That they are *all vanity*, v. 2. This is the proposition he lays down, and undertakes to prove; *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity*. It was no new text, his father David had more than once spoken to the same purport. The truth itself here asserted, is, that all is vanity; and that the God, and the whole of the vanity, is an abstract from him; the *all* of this world; all worldly employments and enjoyments; the *all that is in the world*; (1 John ii. 16.) all that which is agreeable to our senses and to our fancies in this present state, which gains pleasure to ourselves, or reputation with others. It is *all vanity*, not only in the abuse of it, when it is perverted by the sin of man, but even in the use of it. Man, considered with reference to these things, is vanity, (Ps. xxxiii. 5, 6.) and if there were another world, man would be vanity, (Ps. lxxxix. 47.) and these things, considered in reference to man, (whatever they are in themselves,) are vanity. They are impertinent to the soul, foreign, and add nothing to it; they do not answer the end, nor yield any true satisfaction; they are uncertain in their continuance, are fading, and perishing, and passing away, and will certainly deceive and disappoint those that put a confidence in them. Let us not therefore *love vanity*, (Ps. iv. 2.) nor lift up our souls to it, (Ps. xxiv. 4.) for we shall but weary ourselves for it, Heb. ii. 13.

It is expressed here very emphatically; not only *all is vain*, but in the abstract, *All is vanity*; as if vanity were *the proprium quarto modo—propriety in the fourth mode*, of the things of this world, that which enters into the nature of them. They are not only vanity, but vanity of vanities, the vainest vanity, vanity in the highest degree, nothing but vanity. Nothing is more a cause of a great deal of vanity. And this is redoubled, because the thing is certain and past dispute, it is *vanity of vanities*. This intimates that the wise man had his own heart fully convinced of, and much affected with, this truth, and that he was very desirous that others should be convinced of it, and affected with it, as he was, but that he found the generality of men very loath to believe it, and consider it; (Job xxxiii. 14.) it intimates likewise, that we cannot comprehend and express the vanity of this world. But

it one that will stand to what he says? Yes, he puts his name to it, *saith the preacher*. Is it one that was a competent judge? Yes, as much as ever any man was. Many speak contemptuously of the world, because they are hermits, and know it not, or beggars, and have it not; but Solomon knew it, he had divined into nature's depths, (2 Kings iv. 33.) and he had it, more of it perhaps, than every one else; he lived filled with its notions, and his belly with its hid treasures, (Ps. xxvii. 14.) and he passes this judgment on it. But did he speak as one having authority? Yes, not only that of a king, but that of a prophet, a preacher; he spake in God's name, and was divinely inspired to say it. But did he not say it in his haste, or in a passion, upon occasion of some particular disappointment? No, he said it deliberately, said it, and proved it, laid it down as a fundamental principle, on which he grounded the necessity of being religious. And, as some think, one main thing he designed, was, to show that the everlasting throne and kingdom which God had by Nathan promised to David and his seed, must be of another world; for all things in this world are subject to vanity, and therefore have not in them sufficient to answer the extent of that promise. If Solomon found all to be vanity, then the kingdom of the Messiah must come, in which we shall inherit substance.

2. That this makes us happy and for this he appeals to men's consciences; *What profit has a man of all the pains he takes?* v. 3. Observe here,

(1.) The business of this world described; *It is labour*, the word signifies both care and toil; it is work that wearies men; there is a constant fatigue in worldly business; it is *labour under the sun*, that is a phrase peculiar to this book, where we meet with it twenty-eight times. There is in the world, a world which needs not to be seen, for the glory of God is its light, where there is work without labour, and with great profit, the work of angels; but he speaks of the work *under the sun*, the pains of which are great, and the gains little. It is *under the sun*, under the influence of the sun, by its light and in its heat; as we have the benefit of the light of the day, so we sometimes the burden and heat of the day; (Matt. xx. 12.) and therefore in the sun, in the sun's heat; in the dark and cold grave the weary are at rest.

(2.) The benefit of that business inquired into; *What profit has a man of all his labour?* Solomon says, (Prov. xiv. 23.) *In all labour there is profit*; and yet here he denieth that there is any profit. As to our present condition in the world, it is true that by labour we get that which we call profit; we eat the labour of our hands; but as the wealth of the world is commonly called substance, and yet it is that which is not, (Prov. xxvii. 18.) so it is called profit, but the question is, Whether it be really so or no? And here he determines that it is not; that it is not a real benefit, that it is not a remaining benefit. In short, the wealth and pleasure of this world, if we had ever so much of them, are not sufficient to make us happy, nor will they be a portion for us.

[1.] As to the body, and the life that now is, *What profit has a man of all his labour? A man's life consists not in an abundance*, Luke xxiv. 49. The pleasures are increased, and they are increased, and they are increased that eat of them, and a little thing will afflict all the comfort of them, and then, *what profit has a man of all his labour? Early up, and never the nearer*. [2.] As to the soul, and the life that is to come, we may much more truly say, *What profit has a man of all his labour? All he gets by it will not supply the wants of the soul, nor satisfy its desires, will not atone for the sin of the soul, nor cure its diseases, nor counterbalance the loss of it; what profit will they be to the soul in
death, in judgment, or in the everlasting state? The fruit of our labour in heavenly things is meat that endures to eternal life, but the fruit of our labour for the world is only meat that perishes.

4. One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever. 5. The sun also riseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place, where he arose. 6. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. 7. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full: unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. 8. All things are full of labour, man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

To prove the vanities of all things under the sun, and their insufficiency to make us happy, Solomon here shows,

1. That the time of our enjoyment of these things is very short, and only while we accomplish as a hireling his day. We continue in the world for but one generation, which is continually passing away, to make room for another, and we are passing with it. Our worldly possessions we very lately had from others, and must very shortly leave to others, and therefore to us they are vanity; they can be no more substantial than that life which is the substratum of them, and that is but a vapour, which appeareth for a little while, and then vanishes away. While the stream of mankind is continually flowing, how little enjoyment has one drop of the stream if the pleasant banks between which it glides! We may give God the glory of that constant succession of generations, in which the world has hitherto had its existence, and will have to the end of time; admiring his patience in continuing that sinful species, and his power in continuing that dying species. We may be also quickened to do the work of our generation diligently, and serve it faithfully, because it will be over shortly; and, in concern for mankind in general, we should consult the welfare of succeeding generations, but as to our own happiness, let us not expect it within such narrow limits, but in eternal rest and consistency.

2. That when we leave this world, we leave the earth behind us; that abideth for ever where it is, and therefore the things of the earth can stand us in no stead in the future state. It is well for mankind in general, that the earth endures to the end of time, when it and all the works in it shall be burnt up; but what is that to particular persons, when they remove to the world of spirits?

3. That the condition of man is, in this respect, worse than that even of the inferior creatures; The earth abideth for ever, but man abideth upon the earth but a little while. The sun sets indeed every night, yet it rises again in the morning, as bright and fresh as ever; the winds, though they shift their point, yet, in some point or other still they are; the waters that go to the sea above ground, come from it again underground; but man lies down and rises not, Job xiv. 7, 12.

4. That all things in this world are moveable and mutable, and subject to a continual toil and toss, constant in nothing but inconstancy, still going, never resting; it was but once that the sun stood still; when it is risen, it is hastening to set, and when it is set, hastening to rise again; (v. 5.) the winds are ever and anon shifting, (v. 6.) and the waters in a continual circulation, (v. 7.) it would be of as bad consequence for them to stagnate, as for the blood in the body to do so. And can we expect rest in a world where all things are thus full of labour, (v. 8.) on a sea that is always ebbing and flowing, and her waves continually working and rolling? The wind is still in motion, yet they are still where they were; The sun parts, as it is in the margin, but it is to the same place; the wind turns till it comes to the same place, and so the waters return to the same place whence they came. Thus man, after all the pains he takes to find satisfaction and happiness in the creature, is but where he was, still as far to seek as ever. Man's mind is as restless in its pursuits as the sun, and wind, and rivers, for he never satisfied, neither contented, the more it has of the world, the more it would have; and it would be no sooner filled with the streams of outward prosperity, the brooks of honey and butter, (Job xx. 17.) than the sea is with all the rivers that run into it; it is still as it was, a troubled sea that cannot rest.

6. That all things continue as they were, from the beginning of the creation; (2 Pet. iii. 4.) the earth is where it stood, he and all mankind being kept in the same station, and to the same course that ever they did, and therefore if they have never yet been sufficient to make a happiness for man, they are never likely to be so, for they can but yield the same comfort that they have yielded: we must therefore look above the sun for satisfaction, and for a new world.

7. That this world is, at the best, a weary land; All is vanity, for all is full of labour; the whole creation is made subject to this vanity, ever since man was sentenced to eat bread in the sweat of his brow. If we survey the whole creation, we shall see all busy; all have enough to do, to mind their own business, none will be a portion or happiness for man; all labour to serve him, but none prove a help meet for him. Man cannot express how full of labour all things are, can neither number the laboursious, nor measure the labours.

8. That our senses are unsatisfied, and the objects of them unsatisfying. He specifies those senses that perform their office with least toil, and are most capable of being pleased; The eye is not satisfied with seeing, but is weary of seeing always the same sight, and covets novelty and variety. The ear is fond, at first, of a pleasant song or tune, but soon nauseates it, and must have another; both are surfeited, but neither satiated, and what was most grateful becomes ungrateful. Curiosity is still insatiable, because still unsatisfied, and the more it is humoured, the more nice and peevish it grows, crying, Give, give.

9. The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. 10. Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. 11. There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.

Two things we are apt to take a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction in, and value ourselves upon, with reference to our business and enjoyments in the world, as if they helped to save them from vanity. Solomon here shows us our mistake in such:—

1. The novelty of the invention, that it is such was new before known. How grateful is it to think
that none ever made such advances in knowledge, and such discoveries by it, as we! that none ever made such improvements of an estate or trade, and had the art of enjoying the gains of it, as we have!

Their contrivances and compositions are all despised and run down, and we boast of new fashions, new hypotheses, new methods, new expressions, which justly out that we have put them down; but this is all another verse: The thing that is passed away is the same with that which has been; and that which shall be done, will be but the same with that which is done, for there is no new thing under the sun, v. 9.

It is repeated, (v. 10.) by way of question, Is there any thing of which it may be said, with wonder, See this is new; there never was the like? It is an appeal to observing men, and a challenge to those that cry up modern learning above that of the ancients. Let them name any thing which they take to be new, and though perhaps we cannot make it to appear, for want of the records of former times, yet we have reason to conclude that it has been already of old time, which was before us. What is there in the kingdom of nature, of which we may say, This is new? The works were finished from the foundation of the world; (Heb. iv. 5.) things which appear new to us, as they do to children, are not so in themselves. The heavens were of old; the earth abides forever; the powers of nature and the links of natural causes are still the same that ever they were.

In the kingdom of Providence, though the course and method of it have not such known and certain rules as that of nature, nor does it go always in the same track, yet, in the general, it is still the same thing over and over again; men's hearts, and the corruptions of them, are still the same: their desires, and pursuits, and complaints, still the same; and what God does in his dealings with men, is accomplished in a manner answering to the former, so that it is all repetition. What is surprising to us needs not be so, for there has been the like; the like strange advancements and disappointments; the like strange revolts and sudden turns, sudden turns of affairs; the miseries of human life have always been much the same, and mankind tread a perpetual round, and, as the sun and wind, are but where they were.

Now the design of this is,

(1.) To shew the folly of the children of men, in affecting things that are new, in imagining that they have discovered such things, and in pleasing and priding themselves in them. We are apt to nauseate old things, and to grow weary of what we have been long used to, as Israel of the manna, and covet, with the Athenians, still to tell and hear of some new thing, and admire this and the other as new, where it is all what has been. Tatianus the Assyrian, showing the Greeks how all the arts, which they valued themselves upon, owed their original to those nations which they counted barbarous, thus reasons with them; "For shame, do not call these things Epirosis—Inventions, which are but Musiosis—Inimitations."

(2.) To take us off from expecting happiness and satisfaction in the creature. Why should we look for it there, when never any yet have found it? What would we have to think that the world should yield any kinder? It has been to those that have gone before us; since there is nothing in it that is new, and our predecessors have made as much of it as could be made? Your fathers did eat manna, and yet they are dead. See John viii. 8, 9.—vi. 49.

(3.) To quicken us to secure spiritual and eternal blessings. If we would be entertained with new things, we must acquaint ourselves with the things of God, get a new nature; then old things pass away, and all things become new, 2 Cor. v. 17. The gospel puts a new song into our mouths. In Tha- ven all is new, (Rev. xxi. 5.) all new at first, wholly unlike the present state of things, a new world indeed, (Luke xx. 35.) and all new to eternity, always fresh, always flourishing. This consideration should make us willing to die, That in this world there is nothing but the same over and over again, and we can expect nothing from it more or better than we have had.

2. The memorableness of the achievement, that it is such as will be known and talked of hereafter. Many think they have found satisfaction enough in this, that their names shall be perpetuated, that posterity will celebrate the actions they have performed, the honours they have won, and the estates they have raised; that their houses shall continue for ever; (Ps. xlii. 11.) but herein they deceive themselves. How many former things and persons were there, which in their day looked very great, and made a mighty figure, and yet there is no remembrance of them, they are buried in oblivion! Here and there one person or action that was remarkable, met with a kind historian, and had the good hap to be recorded, when, at the same time, there were others, no less remarkable, that were dropt; and therefore we may conclude, that neither shall there be any remembrance of things to come, but that that which we hope to be remembered by will be either lost or slighted.

12. I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem: 13. And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail I hath God given to the sons of man, to be exercised therewith. 14. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. 15. That which is crooked cannot be made straight; and that which is wanting cannot be numbered. 16. I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem; yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.

17. And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. 18. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.

Solomon, having asserted, in general, that all is vanity, and having given some general proofs of it, now takes the most effectual method to evince the truth of it, 1. By his own experience; he tried them all, and found them vanity. 2. By an induction of particulars; and here he begins with that which bids fairest of all other to be the happiness of a reasonable creature, and that is knowledge and learning; if this be vanity, every thing else must needs be so.

Now as to this,

Solomon tells us here what trial he had made of it, and that with such advantages, that if true satisfaction could have been found in it, he had found it.

1. His high station gave him an opportunity of improving himself in all parts of learning, and particularly in politics and the conduct of human affairs, v. 12. He that is the preacher of this doctrine was king over Israel, whom all their neighbours admired as a wise and understanding people, Deut. iv. 6. He had his royal seat in Jerusalem, which then deserved, better than Athens ever did, to be
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75: called the eye of the world. The heart of a king is unsearchable, he has reaches of his own, and a divine sentence is often in his lips. It is his honour, it is his business, to search out every matter. Solomon's great wealth and honour put him into a capacity of making his court the centre of learning; and he surrounded himself with the best of books, and both conversing or corresponding with all the wise and knowing part of mankind then in being, who made application to him to learn of him, by which he could not but improve himself; for it is in knowledge as it is in trade, all the profit is by barter and exchange; if we have that to say which will instruct others, they will have that which will instruct us. We observe accordingly Solomon speaks of his dignity and honour. He does not say, I the preacher am king, but I was king, no matter what I am. He speaks of it as a thing past, because worldly honours are transitory.

2. He applied himself to the improvement of these advantages, and the opportunities he had of getting wisdom, which, though ever so great, will not make a man wise, unless he give his mind to it. Solomon got to know and to enjoy things to be known by wisdom, v. 13. He made it his business to acquaint himself with all the things that are done under the sun, that are done by the providence of God, or by the art and prudence of man. He set himself to get all the insight he could, into philosophy and mathematics, into husbandry and trade, merchandise and mechanics, into the history of former ages, and the present state of other kingdoms, their laws, customs, and policies, into men's different temperaments, capacities, and projects, and the methods of managing them; he set himself not only to seek, but to search, to pry into, that which is most intricate, and which requires the closest application of mind, and the most vigorous and constant prosecution. Though he was a prince, he made himself a drudge to learning, was not discouraged by its knots, nor took up short of its depths. And this he did, not merely to gratify his own genius, but to qualify himself for the service of God and his generation, and to make an experiment how far the enlargement of the knowledge would go toward the settlement and repose of the mind.

3. He made very great progress in his studies, wonderfully improved all the parts of learning, and carried his discoveries much further than any that had been before him. He did not condemn learning, as many do, because they cannot conquer it, and will not be at the pains to make themselves masters of it; no, what he aimed at he compassed; he saw all the works that were done under the sun, (v. 14.) works of nature in the upper and lower world, all within this vortex, (to use the modern gibberish,) which has the sun for its centre; works of art, the product of man's wit, in a personal or social capacity. He had as much satisfaction in the success of his searches as ever any man had; he conversed with the best temperaments, capacities, and projects in knowledge, with as much pleasure as ever any rich merchant had in taking account of his stock. He could say, "Lo, I have magnified and increased wisdom, have not only gotten more of it myself, but have done more to propagate it and bring it into reputation, than any, than all that have been before me in Jerusalem." Note, It becomes great men to be studious, and delight themselves most in the improvement of their powers. There are great advantages of getting knowledge, he expects improvements accordingly. It is happy with a people, when their princes and noblemen study to excel others as much in wisdom and useful knowledge, as they do in honour and estate; and they may do that service to the commonwealth of learning, by applying themselves to the studies that are proper for them, which meaker persons cannot do. Solomon must be acknowledged a competent judge of this matter, for he had not only got his head full of the knowledge of the great experience of wisdom and knowledge, of the use of it, and been a beholder of it, as well as the amusement and entertainment of it; what he knew he had digested, and knew how to make use of. Wisdom entered into his heart, and so became pleasant to his soul, Prov. ii. 10, 11.—xxii. 18.

4. He applied his studies especially to that part of learning, which is most serviceable to the conduct of mankind. He, consequently, is the most valuable; (v. 12.) "I gave my heart to know and to search out and to set displeasure, and dictated of wisdom, and how I might obtain it; and to know madness and folly, how I might prevent and cure it; to know the snares and insinuations of it, that I might avoid them, and guard against them, and discover its fallacies." Thus industrious was Solomon to improve himself in knowledge, that he gained instruction both by the wisdom of prudent men, and by the madness of foolish men; by the field of the slothful, as well as of the diligent.

II. He tells us what was the result of this trial, to confirm what he had said, that all is vanity.

1. He found that his searches after knowledge were very toilsome, and a weariness not only to the flesh, but to the mind; (v. 13.) This sore travel, this difficulty that there is in searching after truth, and finding it, God has given to the sons of men, to be afflicted therewith, as a punishment for our first7 parents coveting forbidden knowledge. As bread for the body, so that for the soul, must be got and eaten in the sweat of our face, whereas both had been had without labour, if Adam had not sinned.

2. He found that the more he saw of the works done under the sun, the more he saw of their vanity; nay, and the sight often occasioned him vexation of spirit; (v. 14.) "I have seen all the works of a world full of business, have observed what the children of men are doing; and, behold, whatever men think of their own works, I see, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." He had before pronounced all vanity, (v. 2.) needless and unprofitable, and that which does us no good; here he adds, It is all vexation of spirit, troublesome and prejudicial, and that which does us hurt. It is feeding upon wind; so some read it, Hos. xii. 1. (1.) The works themselves which we see done, are vanity and vexation to those that are employed in them. There is so much care in the contrivance of our worldly business, so much toil in the prosecution of it, and so much trouble in the disappointments we meet with in it, that we may well say, It is vexation of spirit. (2.) The sight of them is vanity and vexation of spirit to the wise observer of them. The more we see of the world, the more we see to make us uneasy, and, with Heraclitus, to look upon all with weeping eyes. Solomon, as the wisest king of all the men of Israel, could not but perceive the vanity and vexation of wisdom and folly was vexation of spirit, v. 17. It vexed him to see so many that had wisdom not use it, and many that had folly not strive against it. When he knew wisdom, it vexed him to see how far off it stood from the children of men; and when he saw folly, how fast he saw it bound in their hearts.

3. He found that when he had got some knowledge, he could get no gain; he could neither gain that satisfaction to himself, nor do that good to others, with it, which he expected, v. 15. It would not avail,

(1.) To redress the many grievances of human life; "After all, I find that which is crooked will be crooked still, and cannot be made straight,"
Our knowledge is itself intricate and perplexed, we must go far and fetch a great compass, to come at it. Solomon thought to have found out a nearer way to it, but he could not; the paths of learning are as much a labyrinth as ever they were. The minds and methods of men have been crooked and perverse. Solomon thought, with his wisdom and power together, to have thoroughly reformed his kingdom, and made that straight which he found crooked; but he was disappointed. All the philosophy and politics in the world will not restore the corrupt nature of man to its primitive rectitude; we find the insufficiency of them, both in others and in ourselves. Learning will not alter men's natural tempers, nor cure them of their sinful dimesters; nor will it change the constitution of things in this world; a vale of tears it is, and so it will be, when all is done.

(2.) To make up the many deficiencies in the comfort of human life; that which is wanting there cannot be numbered, or counted out to us, from the treasures of human learning, but what is wanting will still be so; all our enjoyments here, when we have done our utmost to bring them to perfection, are still lame and marred, and it cannot be helped; as they are, so they are like to be. That which is wanting in our knowledge, is so much, that it cannot be numbered. The more we know, the more we see of our own ignorance. Who can understand his errors, his defects?

4. Upon the whole, therefore, he concludes that great scholars do but make themselves great mourners; for in much wisdom is much grief. 

Solomon here, in pursuit of the summum bonum—the felicity of man, adjoins out of his study, his library, his laboretory, his council-chamber, where he had in vain sought for it, into the park and the play-house, his garden and his summer-house; exchanges the company of the philosophers and grave senators, for that of the wits and gallants, and the beaux-esprits, of his court, to try if he could find true satisfaction and happiness among them. Here he takes a great step downward, from the noble pleasures of the intellect to the brutal ones of sense; yet, if he resolve to make a thorough trial, he must knock at this door, because here a great part of mankind imagine they have found that which he was in quest of.

He resolved to try what mirth would do, and the pleasures of wit, whether he should be happy if he constantly entertained himself and others with merry stories and jests, banter and drollery; if he should furnish himself with all the pretty ingenious turns and repartees he could invent or pick up, fit to be laughed over, and all the bulls, and blunders, and foolish things, he could hear of, fit to be ridiculed and laughed at, so that he might be always in merry humor.

1. I said in my heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. 2. I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? 3. I sought in my heart to give myself unto wine, (yet acquainting my heart with wisdom,) and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. 4. I made me great works; I built me houses; I planted me vineyards; 5. I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits. 6. I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees; 7. I got me servants and maidsens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me; 8. I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasures of kings and of the provinces; I gat me men-singers and women-singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. 9. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom remained with me. 10. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I witheld not my heart from any joy: for my heart rejoiced in all my labour; and this was my portion of all my labour. 11. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

CHAP. II.

Solomon having pronounced all vanity, and particularly knowledge and learning, which he so far from giving himself joy of, that he found the issue of it did but increase his sorrow, in this chapter, he goes on to show what reason he had to be tired of this world, and with what little reason most men are fond of it. I. He shows that there is no true happiness and satisfaction to be had in it, neither in the garden of God, nor in the splendour of this world, v. 1—16. II. He re-considers the pretensions of wisdom, and allows it to be excellent and useful, and yet sees it eloped with so many diminutions of its worth, that it proves insufficient to make a man happy, v. 17—24. III. He inquires how far the business and wealth of this world will go toward making men happy, and concludes, from his own experience, that, to those who set their hearts upon it, it is really a vexation of spirit, v. 17—26. And that is, there be any good in it, it is only to those that sit loose to it, v. 24—26.
H - With mirth, I will try if that will give thee satisfaction. Neither the temper of his mind, nor his outward condition, had anything in them to keep him from being merry, but both agreed, as did all other advantages, to further it, therefore he resolved to take a lease this way, and said, "Enjoy pleasure, and take thy fill of it; cast away care, and resolve to be merry." So a man may be, and yet have none of these fine things which he here got to entertain himself with; many that are poor are very much relieved in this manner. Mirth is the entertainment of the fancy, and though it comes short of the solid delights of the rational powers, yet it is to be preferred before those that are merely carnal and sensual. Some distinguish man from the brutes, not only as animal rationale - a rational animal, but as animal visible - a visible animal; therefore he that said to his soul, Take thine ease, eat and drink, added, And be merry, for it was in order to that he would eat and drink. "Try therefore," says Solomon, "to laugh and be happy." 2. The judgment he passed upon this experiment; Behold, this also is vanity, like all the rest, it yields no true satisfaction, v. 2. I said of laughter, It is mad, or, Thou art mad, and therefore I will have nothing to do with thee; and of mirth, (of all sports and recreations, and whatever pretends to divert, and amuse, or divert thy thoughts,) Nothing is so ungrateful as excessive mirth, and carnal excesses in a wondrous manner are so abominable. It serves us but for a short season. It yields but a short comfort, and a short rest. It fills us with small satisfaction, but at the expense of our reason, and even our reason is too much mortified, and disordered, by it. It fills us with a little joy, but it soon passes away. Inconcernable mirth, soberly, seasonably, and moderately, used, is a good thing, fits for business, and helps to soften the toils and chagrin of human life; but, when it is excessive and immoderate, it is foolish and fruitless. (1.) It does no good; What doeth it? Cui bono - Of what use is it? It will not avail to quiet a guilty conscience; no, nor to ease a sorrowful spirit; nothing is more ungrateful than singing songs to a heavy heart. It will not satisfy the soul, nor give it true content. It is but a palliative cure to the grievances of this present time. Great laughter commonly ends in a sigh. (2.) It does a great deal of hurt; it is mad, it makes men mad, it transports men into many indecencies, which are a reproach to their reason and religion. They are mad that indulge themselves in it, for it estranges the heart from God and divine things, and insensibly eats out the power of religion. Those that love to be merry and make a sport of their souls, they are the timbrel and harp, they say to the Almighty, Depart from us, Job xxii. 12, 14. We may, as Solomon, prove ourselves with mirth, and judge of the state of our souls by this; How do we stand affected to it? Can we be merry and wise? Can we use it as sauce, and not as food? But we need not try, as Solomon did, whether it will make a happiness for us, for, we may take his word for it, It is mad, and What doeth it? Laughter and pleasure (says Sir William Temple) come from very different affections of the mind; for as men have no disposition to laugh at things they are most pleased with, so they are very little pleased with many things they laugh at. 11. Finding himself not happy in that which pleased his fancy, he resolved next to try that which would please the palate, v. 3. Since the knowledge of the creature would not satisfy, he would see what the knowledge of the food might yield. He resolved to give myself unto wine, to good meat and good drink; many give themselves to these without consulting their hearts at all, not looking any further than merely the gratification of the sensual appetite; but Solomon applied himself to it rationally, and as a man; critically, and only to make an experiment. Observe, 1. He did not allow himself any liberty in the use of the delights of sense till he had tried himself with his severe studies; till his increase of wisdom proved an increase of sorrow, he never thought of giving himself to wine. When we have spent ourselves in doing good, we may then most comfortably refresh ourselves with the gifts of God's bounty. Then the delights of sense are rightly used, when they are used as we use cordials, only when we need them; as Timothy drank wine for his health's sake, 1 Tim. v. 23. I thought to draw my flesh with wine; so the margin reads it, or to wine. Those that have addicted themselves to drinking did at first put a form upon themselves, and in time became so addicted to it, as Solomon says, He shall fall to the pit, and we read with it, and with it; but they should remember to what miseries they hereby draw themselves. 2. He then looked upon it as folly, and it was with reluctance that he gave himself to it; as St. Paul, when he commenced himself, called it a weakness, and desired to be borne with in his foolishness, 2 Cor. xi. 1. I sought to lay hold on folly, to see the utmost that that folly would do toward making men happy; but he has that regard for the rest (as we say) too far. He resolved that the folly should not take hold of him, not get the mastery of him, but he would lay hold on it, and keep it at a distance; yet he found it too hard for him. 3. He took care at the same time to acquaint himself with wisdom, to manage himself wisely in the use of his pleasures, so that they should not do him any prejudice, nor disfigure him to be a competent judge of them. When he drew his flesh with wine, he let his heart be filled with wisdom, so the word is; kept up his pursuits after knowledge, did not make a set of himself, nor become a slave to his pleasures, but his studies and his feasts were folly to each other, and he tried whether both mixed together would give him that satisfaction which he could not find in either separately. This Solomon proposed to himself, but he found it vanity; for they that think to give themselves to wine, and yet to acquaint their hearts with wisdom, they never will agree; and we are as much as they do that think to serve both God and mammon. Wine is a mocker, it is a great cheat, and it will be impossible for any man to say that thus far he will give himself to it, and no further. 4. That which he aimed at, was, not to gratify his appetite, but to find out man's happiness, and this, because it pretended to be so, must be tried among the rest. Observe the description he gives of the foolish sons of man, which they should do under the heaven all their days. (1.) That which we are to inquire after is not so much the good we must have, we may leave that to God, but the good we must do, that ought to be our care. Good Master, what good thing shall I do? Our happiness consists not in being idle, but in doing right, in being well employed. If we do that which is good, no doubt we shall have comfort and praise of the same. (2.) It is good to be done under the heaven, while we are here in this world, while it is day, while our doing time lasts; this is our state of work and service, it is in the other world that we must expect the retribution, thither our works will follow us. (3.) It is to be done all the days of our life; the good we are to do we must persevere in the doing of it to the end, while our doing time lasts; the number of the days of our life, so it is in the general; and in the particular, he that tried the most, that was the fittest to be trusted with the wealth and the power and the office of a prince. It is the prince in whose hand our times are, and they are all to be spent as he directs. But that any man should give himself to wine, in hopes to find cut in that the best way of living in this world, was an absurdity which Solomon here, in the reflection, condemns himself for. Is it possible that this should be the good that men should do? No; it is plainly very bad. III. Perceiving quickly that it was folly to give himself to wine, he next tried the most easily the entertainments and amusements of princes and great men. He had a vast income, the revenue of his...
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crown was very great, and he laid it out so as might most please his own humour, and make him look great.

1. He gave himself much to building, both in the city and in the country; and, having been at such vast expense, in the beginning of his reign, to build a house for God, he was the more excusable if afterward he pleased his own fancy in building for himself; he began to do the latter, as also the former, Matth. 33. not as the people (Hag. i. 4.) that setled their own houses while God's lay waste, and it prospered accordingly. In building, he had the pleasure of employing the poor, and doing good to posterity. We read of Solomon's buildings, (1 Kings ix. 15-19.) and they were all great works, such as became his purse, and spirit, and great dignity. See his mistake; he inquired after the great works he should do, (v. 5.) and, in pursuit of the inquiry, applied himself to great works. Good works indeed are truly great, but many are reputed great works, which are far from being good; wondrous works, which are not gracious, Matth. vii. 22.

2. He took to love a garden, which is to some as bewitching as building; he planted him vineyards, which the soil and climate of the land of Canaan favoured; he made him fine gardens and orchards, (v. 5.) and perhaps the art of gardening was no way inferior then to what it became, and is only found, of old time, but trees of all kind of fruit, which he himself had planted; and, if any worldly business would yield a man happiness, surely it must be that which Adam was employed in while he was in innocency.

3. He laid out a great deal of money in waterworks, ponds, and canals; not for sport and diversion, but for use, to water the wood that brings forth trees; (v. 6.) he not only planted, but watered, and then left it to God to give the increase. Springs of water are great blessings; (Josh. xv. 19.) but where nature has provided them, art must direct them, to make them serviceable, Prov. xxxi. 1.

4. He increased his family. When he proposed to himself to do great works, he must employ many hands, and therefore procured servants and maidsens, which were bought with his money, and of those he had servants born in his house, v. 7. Thus his retinue was enlarged, and his court appeared more magnificent, than Ezra i. 58.

5. He did not neglect country-business, but both entertained and enriched himself with that, and was not diverted from it either by his studies, or by his pleasures. He had large possessions of great and small cattle, herds and flocks, as his father had before him; (1 Chron. xxvii. 29, 31.) not forgetting that his father, in the beginning, was a keeper of sheep. Let those that deal in cattle neither despise their employment, nor be weary of it, remembering that Solomon puts his having possessions of cattle among his great works and his pleasures.

6. He grew very rich, and was not at all impoverished by his building and gardening, as many are, who, for that reason only, repent it, and call it vanity and vexation. Solomon scattered, yet increased. He filled his exchequer with silver and gold, which yet did not stagger him, but were made to circulate through his kingdom. It was not that he made a show of them, to multiply himself, but in order to the improvement of the other parts of his kingdom; to enrich his subjects. He had the Segullah, the peculiar treasure of kings, and of the provinces, which was, for richness and rarity, more accounted of than silver and gold. The neighbouring kings, and the distant provinces of his own empire, sent him the richest presents they had, to obtain his favour, and the instructions of his wisdom.

7. He had every thing that was charming and diverting, all sorts of melody and music, vocal and instrumental, men-singers and women-singers, the best voices he could pick up, and all the wind and hand-instruments that were then in use. His father had a genius for music, but it should seem he employed it more to serve his devotion than the sons, who made it more his diversion. These are called the delights of the sons of men; for the gratifications of sense are the things that the generality of people set their affections upon, and take the greatest care to accommodate their wants. Solomon, then, says, though the children of God are of quite another nature, pure, spiritual, and heavenly, and the delights of angels.

8. He enjoyed, more than ever any man did, a composition of rational and sensitive pleasures at the same time. He was, in this respect, great, and increased more than all that were before him, that he was wise amidst a thousand earthly enjoyments. It was strange, and the like was never met with.

(1.) That his pleasures did not debauch his judgment and conscience. In the midst of all these entertainments, his wisdom remained with him, v. 9. In the midst of all these childish delights, he preserved his spirit manly, kept the possession of his own soul, and maintained the dominion of reason over the appetites of sense; such a vast stock of wisdom had he, that it was not wasted and impaired, as any other man's would have been, by this course of life! But let none be imbodced hereby to lay the reins on the neck of the children of this world; neither must we forget that one may do that, and yet retain their wisdom, for they have not such a strength of wisdom as Solomon had; nay, and Solomon was deceived; for how did his wisdom remain with him, when he lost his religion so far as to build altars to strange gods, for the humouring of his strange wives? But thus far his wisdom remained with him, that he was master of his pleasures, and not a slave to them, and kept himself capable of making a judgment of those things which were of greater moment than the satisfaction of his desires.

(2.) Yet his judgment and conscience gave no check to his pleasures, nor hindered him from extracting the very quintessence of the delights of sense, v. 10. It might be objected against his judgment in this matter, that, if his wisdom remained with him, he could not take the liberty that was his portion, even when he was surrounded with all the pleasures of the world. He went over to the enemies' country, not as a deserter, but as a spy, to discover the nakedness of their land.

"Yea," said he, "I took as great a liberty as any man could take, for whatsoever mine eyes desired, I kept not from them, if it could be compassed by lawful means, though ever so difficult or costly; and as I withheld not any joy from my heart, that I had a mind to, so I withheld not my heart from any joy, but, with a non-obstante—with the full exercise of my wisdom, I had a high gust of my pleasures, relished and enjoyed them as much as ever Epicure did;" nor was there anything either, in the circumstances of his condition, or in the temper of his spirit, to sour or irritate him, or give them any allay. In short, [1.] He had as much pleasure in his business as ever any man had; My heart rejoiced in all my labour; so that the toil and fatigue of that were no damp to his pleasures. [2.] He had no less profit by his business, he met with no disappointment in it to give him any disturbance. This was my portion of the labour of my hands. And then he added to all the rest of his pleasures, that in them he did not only see, but eat, the labour of his hands; and this was all he had, for indeed it was all he could expect, from his labour. It sweetened his business, that he enjoyed the success of it, and it sweetened his enjoyments, that they were the product of his business; so that, upon the whole, he was certainly as happy as the world could make him happy.
and behold, all was very good, every thing pleased him; but when Solomon reviewed all the works that his hands had wrought, with the utmost cost and care, and the labour that he had laboured to do, in order to make himself easy and happy, nothing answered his expectation; behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, he had no satisfaction in it, no advantage by it; there was no profit under the sun, neither by the employments, nor by the enjoyments, of this world.

12. And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done. 13. Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness. 14. The wise man’s eyes are in his head, but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all. 15. Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me: and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity. 16. For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever: seeing that which now is, in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? As the fool.

Solomon having tried what satisfaction was to be had in learning first, and then in the pleasures of sense, and having also put both together, he here compares them with one another, and passes a judgment upon them.

1. He sets himself to consider both wisdom and folly. He had considered these before; (ch. 1. 17.) but, lest it should be thought he was then too quick in passing a judgment upon them, he here turns himself again to behold them, to see if, upon a second examination, and application of his mind, he could gain more satisfaction in the search than he had done upon the first. He was sick of his pleasures, and, as nauseating them, he turned from them, that he might again apply himself to speculation; and if, upon this rehearing of the cause, the verdict be still the same, the judgment will surely be decisive; for what can the man do that cometh after the king; especially such a king, who had so much of this world to make the experiment upon, and so much wisdom to make it with? The baffled trial needs not be repeated; no man can expect to find more satisfaction in the world than Solomon did, nor to gain a greater insight into the principles of morality; when a man has done what he can, still it is that which has been already done. Let us learn, (1.) Not to indulge ourselves in a fond conceit that we can mend that which has been well done before us; let us esteem others better than ourselves, and think how unfit we are to attempt the improvement of the performances of better heads and hands than ours, and rather own how much we are beholden to them, John iv. 37, 38. (2.) To acquiesce in Solomon’s judgment of the things of this world, and not to think of repeating the trial; for we can never think of having such advantages as he had to make the experiment, nor of being able to make it with equal application of mind, and so little danger to ourselves.

2. He gives the preference to wisdom far before folly; let none mistake him, as if, when he speaks of the vanity of human literature, he designed only to amuse men with a paradox, or were about to write (as a great wit once did) Encomium moriæ—A panegyric in praise of folly; no, he is maintaining sacred truths, and therefore he is careful to guard against being misunderstood. I soon saw (says he) that there is an excellency in wisdom more than in folly, as much as there is in light above darkness. The pleasures of wisdom, though they suffice not to make men happy, yet they vastly transcend the pleasures of wine. Wisdom enlighteneth the soul with surprising discoveries, and usurps directions for the right government of itself; but sensuality (for that seems to be especially the folly here meant) clouds and eclipses the mind, and is as darkness to it, it puts out men’s eyes, makes them to stumble in the way, and wander out of it. Or, though wisdom and knowledge will not make a man happy, (St. Paul shows a more excellent way than gifts, and that is grace,) yet it is much better to have these than to be at a loss, or at a plunge, either bewildered, that he knows not which way to go, or embarrassed, that he cannot go forward. A man that is discreet and considers has the command of his business, and acts decently and safely, as those that walk in the day; but he that is rash, and ignorant, and sottish, is continually making blunders, running upon one precipice or other, his projects, his bargains, are all foolish, and ruin his affairs. Therefore get wisdom, get understanding.

3. Yet he is not satisfied with the vanities of lasting happiness and satisfaction, the wisdom of this world gives a man very little advantage: for,

(1.) Wise men and fools fare alike. “It is true, the wise man has very much the advantage of the fool, in respect of foresight and insight, and yet the greatest probabilities do so often come short of success, that I myself perceived, by my own experience, that one event happeneth to them all;” (v. 14.) or, it is true, that they are so sick as those who are most careless of it, and the most suspicious are imposed upon.” David had observed that wise men die, and are involved in the same common calamity with the fool and the brutish person, Ps. xlix. 12. See ch. ix. 11. Nay, it has of old been observed, that Fortune favours fools, and that half-witted men often thrive most, while the greatest projectors forecast worst for themselves. The same kindness, the same sword, devours wise men and fools.

Solomon applies this mortifying observation to himself, (v. 15.) that, though he was a wise man, he might not glory in his wisdom; I said to my heart, when it began to be proud or secure, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth to me, even to me; for thus emphatically it is expressed in the original; So, as for me, it happeneth to me. Am I rich? So is many a Nabab that fares as sumptuously as I do. Is a fool so sick as he does get a fall? So do I. I am even I; and neither my wealth nor my wisdom will be my security. And why was I then more wise? Why should I take so much pains to get wisdom, when, as to this life, it will stand me in so little stead? Then said I in my heart, that this also is vanity. Some make this a correction of what was said before, like that, (Ps. lxvii. 10.) “I said, This is my infirmity; it is my folly to think that wise men to fools, and a man upon a level;” but really they seem to be the same, in respect of the event, and therefore it is rather a confirmation of what he had before said.
That a man may be a profound philosopher and politician, and yet not be a happy man.

(2.) Wise men and fools are forgotten alike; (v. 16.) There is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool. It is promised to the righteous, that they shall be hid in everlasting remembrance, and their memory shall be blessed; and they shall shortly shine as the stars; but there is no such promise made concerning the wisdom of this world, that that shall perpetuate men's names, for those names only are perpetuated that are written in heaven, and otherwise the names of this world's wise men are written with those of its fools in the dust. That which now is, in the days to come, shall all be forgotten. What was much talked of in one generation, is, in the next, as if it had never been. New persons and new things justou out the very remembrance of the old, which in a little time are looked upon with contempt, and at length quite buried in oblivion. Where is the wise? Where is the disputer of this world? 1 Cor. i. 20. And it is upon this account that he asks, How dies the wise man? As the fool. Between the death of a godly and wicked man there is a great difference, but not between the death of a wise man and a fool; the fool is buried and forgotten; (ch. viii. 10.) and no one remembered the poor man that by his wisdom delivered the city; (ch. ix. 15.) so that to both the grave is a land of forgetfulness; and wise and learned men, when they have been awhile there out of sight, grow out of mind, a new generation arises, that knew them not.

17. Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit. 18. Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun; because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. 19. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have showed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity. 20. Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun. 21. For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity, and a great evil. 22. For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? 23. For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief: yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This also is vanity. 24. There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God. 25. For who can eat, or who else can bestow hereunto, more than I? 26. For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather, and to hear up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Business is a thing that wise men have pleasure in; they are in their element when they are in their business, and complain if they be out of business; they may sometimes be tired with their business, but they are not weary of it, nor willing to leave it off; here is a piece of one would expect to have heard the good that men should do, but Solomon tried this too; after a contemplative life, and a voluptuous life, he betook himself to an active life, and found no more satisfaction in it than in the other, still it is all vanity and vexation of spirit; of which he gives an account in these verses. Where observe,

1. What the business was which he made trial of; it was business under the sun, (v. 17-20.) about the things of this world, the riches, the honours, and pleasures, of this present time; it was the business of a king. There is business above the sun, perpetual business, which is perpetual blessedness: what we do, in conformity to that business (doing God's will as it is done in heaven, and in pursuance of that blessedness,) will turn to a good account, we shall have no reason to hate that labour, nor to despair of it; but it is labour under the sun, labour for the meat that perisheth, (John vi. 27. Isa. lv. 2.) that Solomon betook himself to in the end; this was the better sort of business, not that of the bidders and drawers of water, (it is not so strange if men hate all that labour,) but it was in wisdom, and knowledge, and equity, v. 21. It was rational business, which related to the government of his kingdom, and the advancement of its interests. It was labour managed by the dictates of wisdom, of natural and acquired knowledge, and the directions of justice; it was labour at the council-board and in the courts of justice; it was labour wherein he showed himself wise, (v. 19.) which as much excels the labour wherein men only show themselves strong, as the endowments of the mind, by which we are all led to angels, do those of the body, which we have in common with the brutes. That which many people have in their eye more than any thing else, in the prosecution of their worldly business, is, to show themselves wise, to get the reputation of ingenious men, and men of sense and application.

II. His falling out with this business; he soon grew weary of it. 1. He hated all his labour, because he did not meet with that satisfaction in it which he expected: after he had had his fine houses, and gardens, and water-works, awhile, he began to nauseate them, and look upon them with contempt, as children, who are eager for a toy, and fond of it at first, but, when they have played with it awhile, are weary of it, and throw it away, and must have another. This speaks not a gracerus hatred of these things, which is our duty, to love them less than God and religion, (Luke xiv. 26.) nor a sinful hatred of them, which is our folly, to be weary of the place God has assigned us and the work of it, but a natural hatred of them, arising from a surfeit upon them, and a sense of disappointment in them. 2. He caused his heart to despair of all his labour; (v. 20.) he took pains to possess himself with a deep sense of the vanity of worldly business, that it would not bring in the advantage and satisfaction he had formerly flattered himself with the hopes of. Our hearts are very loath to quit their expectations of great things from the creature, we must go about, must fetch a compass, in arguing with them, to convince them that there is not that in the business of this world which we are apt to make all the world, we are apt to mislead ourselves from them. Have we so often bored and sunk into this earth for some rich mine of satisfaction, and found not the least sign or token of it
but been always frustrated in the search, and shall
we not at length set our hearts at rest, and despair
of ever finding it? 3. He came to that, at length,
that he hated life itself, (v. 17.) because it is sub-
ject to such pure necessities, such unceasing dis-
appointments. God had given Solomon such
lurging of heart, and such vast capacities of
mind, that he experienced more than other men of
the unsatisfying nature of all the things of this life,
and their insufficiency to make them happy. Life it-
sel, that is so precious to a man, and such a bless-
ing to a good man, may become a burthen to a man
of business.
But the reasons of this quarrel with his life and
labours. Two things made him weary of them.
1. That his business was so great a toil to himself;
the work that he had wrought under the sun was
grievous unto him, v. 17. His thoughts and cares
about it, and that close and constant application of
mind, which was requisite to it, were a burthen and
fatigue to him, especially when he grew old. It is
the effect of a curse on that we are to work upon.
Our business is said to be the work and toil of our
hands, because of the ground which the Lord had
cursed, (Gen. v. 29.) and of the weakening of the
faculties we are to work with, and of the sentence
pronounced on us, that in the sweat of our face we
must eat bread. Our labour is called the vexation
of our heart; (v. 22.) it is to most a force upon
themselves, so natural is it to us to love our ease. A
man of business is described to be uneasy both in his
going out and his coming in, v. 23. (1.) He is de-
prived of his pleasure by day, for his hours are
short, not only sorrowful, but sorrowful only, nay,
many sorrows and various; his travail, or labour, all
day, is grief. Men of business ever and anon meet
with that which vexes them, and is an occasion of
anger or sorrow to them. They are apt to fret;
the more dealings they have in the world, the of-
tener they are made to fret. The world is a vale
of tears, even to those that have much of it. They
that labour are said to be heavy-laden, and are
therefore called to come to Christ for rest, Matt.
xi. 28. (2.) He is disturbed in his repose by night.
When he is overcome with the hurries of the day,
and hopes to find relief when he lays his head on
his pillow, he is disappointed there; cares hold his eyes
waking, or, if he sleep, yet his heart wakes, and
that takes no rest in the night. See what fools they are,
that make themselves drudges to the world, and
do not make God their Rest; night and day
they cannot but be uneasy, and when the Lord tells
that, upon the whole matter, it is all vanity, v. 17.
This is vanity in particular, (v. 19, 23.) nay, it is vanity and a great
evil, v. 21. It is a great affront to God, and a great
injury to themselves, therefore a great evil; it is a
vain thing to rise up early and sit up late, in pursuit
of this world's goods, which were never designed to
be our chief good.
2. That the gains of his business must be all left
to others. Prospect of advantage is the spring of
all our labour, because they hope to get by it; if the
hope fail, the labour flags; and therefore Solomon quar-
reled with all the works, the great works, he had
made, because they would not be of any lasting ad-
vantage to himself.
(1.) He must leave them. He could not, at death,
take them away with them, nor any share of them,
nor should he return any more to them, (Job vii. 10.)
neither therefore is it vanity to return them to any
good, Luke xvi. 25. But I must leave all to the
man that shall be after me, to the generation that
comes up in the room of that which is passing away.
As there were many before us, who built the houses
that we live in, and into whose purchases and la-
bour we have entered, so there shall be many after
us, who shall live in the houses that we build, and
enjoy the fruit of our purchases and labours. Never
was land lost for want of an heir. To a gracious
soul this is no meanness at all; why should we
waste other men's time and affairs in this world,
and not rather be pleased, that, when we are
gone, those that come after us shall fare the better
for our wisdom and industry? But to a worldly mind,
that seeks for its own happiness in the creature, it
is a great vexation to think of leaving the beloved
self behind, at this uncertainty.
(2.) He must leave them to those that would never
have taken so much pains for them, and will there-
fore by excuse himself from taking any more. He
that raised the estate did it by labouring in wisdom,
and knowledge, and equity; but he that enjoys it,
and spends it, (it may be,) has not laboured therein,
(v. 21.) and, more than that, never will; the bee
toils to maintain the drone. Nay, it proves a snare
to him, it is left him for his portion, which he rests
in, and takes up with; and miserable he is in being
put off with it for a portion. Whereas if an estate
had not come to him thus easily, who knows but he
might have been both industrious and religious? Yet
we ought not to perplex ourselves about this, since
it may prove otherwise, that what is well-get may
come to one that will use it well, and do good with it.
(3.) He knows not whom he must leave it to, (for
God makes heirs,) or, at least, what he will prove
to whom he leaves it, whether a wise man or a fool,
a wise man that will make it more, or a fool that
will bring it to nothing; yet he shall have a rule
called all my labour, and feelishly undeath at which
his father wisely did. It is probable that Solomon
wrote this very feelingly, being afraid what Riche-
boan would prove. St. Jerem, in his commentary
on this passage, applies this to the good books which
Solomon wrote, in which he had shown himself
wise, but he knew not into whose hands they would
fall, perhaps into the hands of a fool, who, according
to the perverseness of his heart, makes a bad
use of what was well written. So that, upon the
whole matter, he asks, (v. 22.) What has man of
all his labour? What has he to himself, and to his
own use? What has he that will go with him into
another world?
IV. The best use which is therefore to be made
of the wealth of this world; and that is, to use it
cheerfully, to take the comfort of it, and do good
with it. With this he concludes the chapter, v.
24-26. There is no true happiness to be found in
these things; they are vain, and if happiness be
expected from them, the disappointment will be
vexation of spirit; but he will put us in a way to
make the best of them, and to avoid the inconve-
niences he had observed. 1. We must not over-til
ourselves, so as, in pursuit of more, to rob ourselves
of the comfort of what we have. 2. We must not
over-heard for hereafter, nor lose our own enjoy-
ment of what we have, to lay it up for these that
shall come after us, but serve ourselves cut of it
first. Observe,
(1.) What that good is which is here recommend-
ed to us; and which is the utmost pleasure and pro-
fit we can expect or extract from the business and
profit of this world, and the furthest we can go to
rescue it from its vanity, and the vexation that is
in it.
[1] We must do our duty with them, and be
more in care how to use an estate well, for the
ends for which we were intrusted with it, than to
have it or increase an estate. This is estimated,
v. 26, where those only are said to have the con-
fort of this life, who are good in God's sight; and
again, good before God, truly good, as Noah, whom
God saw righteous before him. We must set God
always before us, and give diligence in every thing to
approve ourselves to him. The Chaldee, paraphrase says, A man should make his soul to enjoy good by keeping the commandments of God, and walking in the ways that are right before him; and (v. 25.) by studying the words of the law and discerning about the day of the great judgment that is to come.

[2.] We must take the comfort of them. Those things will not make a happiness for the soul; all the good we can have out of them is for the body, and if we make use of them for the comfortable support of that, so that it may be fit to serve the soul, and able to keep pace with it in the service of God, then they turn to a good account. There is therefore nothing better for us to do than to make ourselves a sober cheerful use of them, according as his rank and condition are, to love meat and drink of them for himself, his family, his friends, and so delight his senses, and make his soul enjoy good, all the good that is to be had out of them; do not lose that, in pursuit of that good, which is not to be had out of them. But observe, He would not have us to give up business, and take our ease, that we may eat and drink; no, we must enjoy good in our labour; we must use these things, not to excuse us from, but to make us diligent and cheerful in, our worldly business.

[3.] We must herein acknowledge God, we must see that it is from the hand of God; First, The good things themselves that we enjoy, are so, not only the products of his creating power, but the gifts of his providential bounty to us. And then they are truly pleasant to us, when we take them from the hand of God as a Father, when we eye his wisdom giving us that which is fittest for us, and acquisite in it, and taste his love and goodness, relish them, and are thankful for them. Secondly, A heart to enjoy them is so; this is the gift of God's grace. Unless he gives us wisdom to make a right use of what he has, in his providence, bestowed upon us, and, withal, peace of conscience, that we may discern God's favour in the world's smiles, we cannot make our souls enjoy any good in them.

[2.] Why should we have this in our eye, in the management of ourselves as to this world, and look up to God for it.

[1.] Because Solomon himself, with all his possessions, could aim at no more, and desire no better; (v. 23.) "Who can hasten this more than I? This is that which I was ambitious of, I wished for no more, and those that have but little, in comparison with what I have, may attain to this, to be content with what they have, and enjoy the good of it." Yet Solomon could not obtain it by his own wisdom, we know that the special grace of God, and God's power, corrects us to expect it from the hand of God, and pray to him for it.

[2.] Because riches are a blessing, or a curse, to a man, according as he has, or has not, a heart to make good use of them. First, God makes them a reward to a good man, if with them he give him wisdom, and knowledge, and joy, to enjoy them cheerfully himself, and to communicate them charitably to others. To those who are good in God's sight, who are of a good spirit, honest and sincere, pay a deference to their God, and have a tender concern for all mankind, God will give wisdom and knowledge in this world, and joy with the righteous in the world to come; so the Chaldee. Or, he will give that wisdom and knowledge in things natural, moral, political, and divine, which will be a constant joy and pleasure to them.

Secondly, He makes them a punishment to a bad man, if he denies him the heart to take the comfort of them, for they do but tantalize him, and tyrannize over him; To the sinner God gives travail, by leaving him to himself and his own foolish counsels, to gather and to heap up that which, as to himself, will not only burn him like thick clay, (Hab. ii. 6.) but be a witness against him, and eat his flesh as it were fire; (Jam. v. 5.) while God designs, by an overruling providence, to give it to him that he himself, before him; for the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just, and gathered for him that will perish the floor. Note, 1. Godliness, with contentment, is great gain; and those only have true joy that are good in God's sight, and that have it from him, and in him. 2. Ungodliness is commonly punished with discontent and an insatiable covetousness, which are sins that are their own punishment. 3. When God gives abundance to wicked men, it is with design to force them to a resignation in favour of his own children, when they are of age, and ready for it; as the Cannanities kept possession of the good land till the time appointed for Israel's entering upon it.

Lastly, The burden of the song is still the same; This is also vanity and vexation of spirit. It is vanity, at the best, even to the good man; when he has all that the sinner has scraped together, it will not make him happy without something else; but it is vexation of spirit to the sinner to see what he had, but do not. In sum, Solomon, in the end, is led by himself, and therefore evil in his. So that, take it which way you will, the conclusion is firm, All is vanity, and vexation of spirit.

CHAP. III.

Solomon having showed the vanity of studies, pleasures, and business, and made it to appear that happiness is not to be found in the search of the gardens of Epicurus, or upon the exchange, he proceeds, in this chapter, further to prove his doctrine, and the inference he had drawn from it; That therefore we should cheerfully content ourselves with, and make use of what God has given us by himself, for the multiplicity of all human affairs, v. 1. 10. II. The immutability of the divine counsels concerning them, and the unsearchableness of those counsels, v. 11. 15. III. The vanity of worldly pleasures and power, which are used for the support of oppression and persecution, if men be not governed by the fear of God in the use of it, v. 16. For a check to proud oppressors, and to show them their vanity, he reminds them, 1. That they will be called to account for it; v. 17. 2. That their condition, in reference to this world, (for of that he speaks,) is no better than that of the brutes, v. 18. 21. And therefore he concludes, that it is our wisdom to make use of all we have, for our comfort, and not oppress others with it.

1. To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: 2. A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; 3. A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; 4. A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; 5. A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracmg; 6. A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; 7. A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; 8. A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace. 9. What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth? 10. I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.
1. That we live in a world of changes. That the several events of time, and conditions of human life, are interwoven together in a manner that we cannot escape from, and yet continually pass and repass between them; as in the revolutions of every day and every year. In the wheel of nature, (Jam. iii. 6.) sometimes one spoke is uppermost, and by and by the contrary; there is a constant ebbing and flowing, waxing and waning; from one extreme to the other does the fashion of this world change, ever did, and ever will.

2. That every change concerning us, and the time and season of it, is unalterably fixed and determined by a Supreme Power; and we must take things as they come, for it is not in our power to change what is appointed for us. And this comes in here as a reason why, when we are in prosperity, we should be easy, and yet not secure; not secure, because we live in a world of changes, and therefore have no reason to say, To-morrow shall be as this day; the lowest valleys join to the highest mountains; and yet to be easy, and, as he had advised, (ch. ii. 24.) to enjoy the good of our labour, in a humble dependence upon God and his providence, neither lifted up with hopes, nor cast down with fears, but with evenness of mind expecting every event. Here we have, 1. A general proposition laid down, To every thing there is a season, v. 1. Those things which seem most contrary the one to the other, will, in the revolution of affairs, each take their turn, and come into play. The day will give place to the night, and the night again to the day. Is it summer? Will it be winter? Is it winter? Stay awhile, and it will be summer. Every purpose has its time. The clearest sky will be clouded, Post gaudia tactus—Joy succeeds sorrow; and the most cloudy sky will clear up; Post nobile Phoebus—The sun will burst from behind the cloud. 2. Those things which to us seem most casual and contingent, are, in the counsel and foreknowledge of God, unconditionally determined, and the very hour of them fixed, which can neither be anticipated nor adjourned a moment.

II. The proof and illustration of it by the induction of particulars, twenty-eight in number, according to the days of the moon's revolution, which is always increasing or decreasing between its full and change; some of these changes are purely the act of God, others depend more upon the will of man, but all are determined by the divine counsel. Every thing changeable is thus changeable, but in heaven there is an unchangeable state, and an unchangeable counsel, concerning these things.

1. There is a time to be born, and a time to die; these are determined by the divine counsel, and, as we were born, so we must die, at the time appointed, Acts xvii. 26. Some observe that there is a time to be born, and a time to die, but no time to live; that is so short, that it is not worth mentioning; as soon as a child is born, it is to die. There is a time to be born, and a time to die, so there will be a time to rise again, a set time when they that lie in the grave shall be remembered, Job xiv. 13.

2. A time for God to plant a nation, as that of Israel in Canaan, and, in order to that, to pluck up the seven nations that were planted there, to make room for them; and at length there was a time when God spake concerning Israel too, to pluck up and to dash down, and to give them for meat to all their enemies, Is. lxv. 7. There is a time for to plant, a time of the year, a time of their lives, but when that which was planted is grown fruitless and useless, it is time to pluck it up.

3. A time to kill, when the judgments of God are abroad in a land, and lay all waste; but when he returns in ways of mercy, then is a time to heal what he has torn, (Hos. vi. 1, 2.) to comfort a people after the time that he has afflicted them, Ps. xl. 15. There is a time when it is the wisdom of rulers to use severe methods, but there is a time when it is as much their wisdom to take a more gentle course, and to apply themselves to remedies, not corrosives.

4. A time to break down a family, an estate, a kingdom, when it has ripened itself for destruction; but God will find a time, if they return and repent, to rebuild what he has broken down; there is a time, a set time, for the Lord to build up Zion, Ps. cvi. 15, 16. There is a time for men to break up house, to break off trade, and so to break down, which they that are busy building up both must expect and prepare for.

5. A time when God's providence calls to weep and mourn, and when man's wisdom and grace will comply with the call, and will weep and mourn, as in times of common calamity and danger, and then it is very absurd to laugh, and dance, and make merry; (Isa. xxii. 12, 13. Ezek. xxi. 16.) but then, on the other hand, there is a time when God calls to cheerfulness, a time to laugh and dance, and then he expects we should serve him with joyfulness and gladness of heart. Observe, The time of mourning and weeping is put first, before that of laughter and dancing, for we must first sow in tears, and then reap in joy.

6. A time to cast away stones, by breaking down and demolishing fortifications, when God gives peace in the borders, and there is no more occasion for them; but there is a time to gather stones together, for the making of strongholds. 5. A time for old towers to fall, as that in Sileam, (Lake xiii. 4.) and for the temple itself to be so minished, as that not one stone should be left upon another; but also a time for towers and triumphs too to be erected, when national affairs prosper.

7. A time to embrace a friend, when we find him faithful, but a time to refrain from embracing, when we find he is faithless, or unfaithful, and that we have cause to suspect him; it is then our providence to be shy, and keep at a distance. It is commonly applied to conjugal embraces, and explained by 1 Cor. vii. 3-5. Joel ii. 16.

8. A time to get, get money, get preferment, get good bargains and a good interest, when opportunity smiles; a time when a wise man will seek, (so the word is,) when he is setting out in the world, and has a growing family, when he is in his prime, when he has prospects, and has a run of business, then it is time for him to be busy, and make hay when the sun shines. There is a time to get wisdom, and knowledge, and grace, when a man has a price put into his hand; but then let him expect there will come a time to spend, when all he has will be little enough to serve his turn. Nay, there will come a time to lose, when what has been got fast will be scattered as fast, and cannot be held fast.

We are not to think that we use for what we have got, and can keep it without running the hazard of a good conscience; but there may come a time to cast away, when love to God may oblige us to cast away what we have, because we must deny Christ, and wrong our consciences, if we keep it, (Matth. x. 37, 38.) and rather to make shipwreck of all than of the faith; nay, when love to ourselves may oblige us to cast it away, when it is for the saving of our lives, as it is said, when Jonah's mariners heaved their cargo into the sea.

10. A time to rend the garments, as upon occasion of some great grief, and a time to sew them again, in token that the grief is over. A time to undo what we have done, and a time to do again what we have undone. Jerom applies it to the rending of the Jewish church, and the sewing and making up of the gospel church thereupon.
11. *A time* when it becomes us, and is our wisdom and duty, *to keep silence*, when it is an evil *time*, (Amos v. 13.) when our speaking would be the causing of heart before Mine, or when we are in danger of speaking amiss; (Ps. xxxix. 2.) but there is also a *time to speak* for the glory of God and the edification of others, when silence would be the betraying of a righteous cause, and when the mouth confession is to be made to salvation; and it is a great part of Christian prudence to know when to speak and when to hold our peace.

A *time to show ourselves friendly*, to be free and cheerful, and it is a pleasant time; but there may come a *time to hate*, when we shall see cause to break off all familiarity with some that we have been fond of, and to be upon the reserve, as having found reason for a suspicion, which love is loath to admit.

Lastly, *A time of war*, when God draws the sword for judgment, and gives it commission to devour; when men draw the sword for justice and the maintaining of their rights; when there is in the nations a disposition to war; but we may hope for *a time of peace*, when the sword of the Lord shall be sheathed, and he shall make wars to cease, (Ps. xlv. 9.) when the end of the war is obtained, and when there is on all sides a disposition to peace. War shall not last always, nor is there any peace to be called lasting, on this side the everlasting peace. Thus in all these changes God has set the one over against the other; there may rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and weep as though we wept not.

III. The inferences drawn from this observation. If our present state be subject to such vicissitude,

1. Then we must not expect our portion in it, for the good things of it are of no certainty, no continuance; (v. 9.) *What profit has he that works?* What can a man promise himself from planting and building, when that which he thinks is brought to perfection may so soon, and will so surely, be plucked up and broken down? All our pains and care will not alter either the mutable nature of the things themselves, or the immutable counsel of God concerning them.

2. Then we must look upon ourselves as upon our probation in it. There is indeed no profit in that wherein we labour; the thing itself, when we have it, will do us little good; but if we make a right use of the disposals of Providence about it, there will be profit in that; (v. 10.) *I have seen the travail which God has given to the sons of men*, not to make up a happiness by it, but to be exercised in it, to have various graces exercised by the variety of events, to have their dependence upon God tried by every change, and to be trained up to it, and taught both how to want and how to abound, Phil. iv. 12. Note, (1.) There is a great deal of toil and trouble to be seen among the children of men; labour and sorrow fill the world. (2.) This toil and this trouble are what God has allotted us; he never intended this world for our rest, and therefore never appointed us to take our ease in it. (3.) To many it proves a gift; God gives it men, as the physician gives a medicine to his patient, to do him good. This travail is given us, to make us weary of the world, and desirous of the remaining rest. (4.) It is given us, that we may be kept in action, and may always have something to do; for we were none of us sent into the world but to do good. Every change cuts us out some new work, which we should be more solicitous about than about the event.

11. He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end. 12. I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life. 13. And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of his labour; it is the gift of God. 14. I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him. 15. That which hath been is now: and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.

We have seen what changes there are in the world, and must not expect to find the world more sure to us than it has been to others. Now here he shows the hand of God in all these changes; it is he that has made every creature to be that to us that it is, and therefore we must have our eye always up unto him.

1. We must make the best of that which is, and must believe it best for the present, and accommodate ourselves to it; *He has made every thing very beautiful in his time*, (v. 11.) and, therefore, while its time lasts, we must be reconciled to it; nay, we must please ourselves with the beauty of it. Note, (1.) Every thing is as God has made it; it is really as he appointed it to be, not as it appears to us. (2.) All that which to us seems most unpleasant, in a little while time, is altogether becoming.

Cold is as becoming in winter as heat in summer; and the night, in its turn, is a black beauty, as the day, in its turn, is a bright one. (3.) There is a wonderful harmony in the divine providence, and all its dispositions; so that the events of it, when they come to be considered in their relations and tendencies, together with the seasons of them, will appear very beautiful to the glory of God, and the comfort of those that trust in him. Though we see not the complete beauty of providence, yet we shall see it, and a glorious sight it will be, when the mystery of God shall be finished; then every thing shall appear to have been done in the most proper time, and it will be the wonder of eternity, Deut. xxxxi. 4.

2. We must wait with patience for the full discovery of that which to us seems intricate and perplexed, acknowledging that we cannot find out the end of God's doings from the beginning to the end, and therefore must judge nothing before the time. We are to believe that God has made all beautiful, every thing is done well as in creation, so in providence, and we shall see it when the end comes, but till then we are incompetent judges of it. While the picture is in drawing, and the house in building, we see not the beauty of either: but when the artist has put his last hand to them, and given them their finishing strokes, then all appears very good. Also the work of God is not from the beginning of them, then we should see how admirably the plan was laid in the divine counsels, nor to the end of them, which crowns the action, then we should see the product to be glorious; but we must wait till the vail be rent, and not arraign God's proceedings, nor pretend to pass a judgment on them. *Secret things belong not to us."

Those words, *He has set the world in their hearts*, are differently understood. (1.) Some make them to be a reason why we may know more of God's work than we do; so Mr. Pemble, "God has not left himself without witness of his righteous, equal, and beautiful ordering of things, but has set it forth to be observed in the book of the world, and this he has set in men's hearts, given man a large desire, and a power, in good measure, to comprehend and
understand the history of nature, with the course of
human affairs, so that if men did but give themselves to
the exact observation of things, they might, in
most of them, perceive an admirable order and con-
sequence. (2) Others make the will to be a reason why we, do not know so much of God's works as we
might; so Bishop Reynolds: "We have the world
so much in our hearts, are so taken up with thoughts
and cares of worldly things, and are so exercised in
our travail concerning them, that we have neither
time nor spirit to eye God's hand in them."
The world has not only gained possession of the heart,
but has formed prejudices there against the beauty
of God's works. He must be pleased with our lot in this world,
and cheerfully acquiesce in the will of God concern-
ing us, and accommodate ourselves to it. There is
no certain, lasting, good in these things; what good
there is in them, we are here told, v. 12, 13. We
must make a good use of them,
(1.) For the benefit of others. All the good there is in them, is to do good with them, to our families,
to our neighbours, to the poor, to the public, to its
civil and religious interests. What have we our buildings, capacities, and estates, for, but to be
made a great way serviceable to our generation? We mistake, if we think we were born for ourselves; no, it is
our business to do good, it is in that that there is the
truest pleasure, and what is so laid out, is best laid
up, and will turn to the best account. Observe, It is
to do good in this life, which is short and uncer-
tain; we have but a little time to be doing good in,
and therefore had need to redeem time. It is in
this life, where we are in a state of trial and proba-
tion for another life. Every man's life is his oppor-
tunity of doing that which will make for him in
eternity.
(2.) For our own comfort. Let us make ourselves easy, rejoice, and enjoy the good of our labour, as it
is the gift of God, and so enjoy God in it, and taste
his love, return him thanks, and make him the Cen-
tre of our joy; eat and drink to his glory, and serve him
with joyful heart in the abundance of all things.
If all things in this world be so uncertain, it is a foolish thing for men sordidly to spare for the present, that they may hoard up all for hereafter; it is better to live cheerfully and usefully
upon what we have, and let to-morrow take thought for
the things of itself. Grace and wisdom to do this is the gift of God, and it is a good gift, which
crowns the gifts of his providential bounty.
4. We must be entirely satisfied with all the dispo-
sals of the Divine Providence, both as to personal
and public concerns, and bring our minds to them,
because God, in all, performs the thing that is ap-
pointed for us, acts according to the counsel of his
will; and we are here told,
(1.) That that counsel cannot be altered, and there
fore it is our wisdom to make a virtue of necessity,
by submitting to it. It must be as God wills; I
know it, and I know it, and I know it, and I know it, in
what any thing of God that whatsoever God doeth, it shall
be done, and no man doeth anything there. Ever, v. 14. He is in one mind, and who can turn him?
His measures are never broken, nor is he ever put
upon new counsels, but what he has purposed shall
be effected, and all the world cannot defeat or dis-
annul it. It behoves us therefore to say, "Let it
be as God wills," for how cross soever it may be to
our designs and interests, God's will is his wisdom.
(2.) That that counsel needs not to be altered, for there is nothing that can be inserted between it and
its accomplishment. If we could see it altogether at one
view, we should see it so perfect, that nothing can
be put to it, for there is no deficiency in it, nor any
thing taken from it, for there is nothing in it unne-
cessary, or that can be spared. Like the word of
God, the works of God are each perfect in their
kind, and it is presumption for us either to add to
them, or to diminish from them, Deut. iv. 2. It is
therefore as much our interest as our duty, to bring
our wills to the will of God.
5. We must study to answer God's end in all his
providings, not which is, in general, to make us reli-
gious. God doth all, that men should fear before
him, to convince them that there is a God above
them, that has a sovereign dominion over them, at
whose disposal they are, and all their ways, and in
whose hands their times are, and all events concern-
ing them; and that therefore they ought to have their
eyes ever toward him, to worship and adore him, to acknowledge him in all their ways, to be careful of
nothing in offending him in any thing. God thus changes
his dispositions, and yet is unchangeable in his coun-
sels, not to perplex us, much less to drive us to de-
spair, but to teach us our duty to him, and engage
us to do it. That which God designs in the govern-
ment of the world, is, the support and advance-
ment of religion among men.
6. Whatever changes we see or feel in this world, we must acknowledge the invisible tenderness of God's
government. The sun rises and sets, the moon increases and decreases, and yet both are where they were, and their revolutions are in the same method from the beginning, according to the ordinances of heaven; so it is with the events of Providence; (v. 15.) That which has been, is now.
God has not of late begun to use this method; no,
things were always as mutable and uncertain as
they are now, and so they will be; that which is
to be has already been; and therefore we speak in
considerately, when we say, "Surely the world was
never so bad as it is now," or, "None ever met
with such disappointments as we meet with," or,
"The times will never mend;" they may mend
with us, and, after a time to mourn, there may
come a time to rejoice, but that will still be liable to
the common character; to the common fate. The
world, as it has been, is, and will be, constant in in-
constancy; for God requires that which is past, re-
peats what he has formerly done, and deals with us
no otherwise than as he has used to do with good
men; shall the earth be forsaken for us, or the rock
removed out of his place? There has no change
befallen us, nor any temptation by it taken us, but
such as is common to men. Let us not be proud
and secure in prosperity, for God may recall a past
trouble, and order that to seize us, and spoil our
mirth; (Ps. xxx. 7.) nor let us despond in adversity, for
God may call back the comforts that are gone
away, as he did to Job. We may apply this to our past
actions, and our behaviour under the changes that
have affected us, God will call us to account for
that which is past; and therefore when we enter into
a new condition we should judge ourselves for
our sins in our former condition, prosperous or af-
flicted.
16. And, moreover, I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was
there; and the place of righteousness, that
iniquity was there. 17. I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wick-
ed: for there is a time there for every pur-
pose, and for every work. 18. I said in my heart concerning the estate of the sons of
men, that God might manifest them, and
that they might see that they themselves are
beasts. 19. For that which belheth the
sons of men belheth beasts; even one thing
belheth them: as the one dieth, so
oneth the other; yea, they have all one breath: so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity. 20. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. 21. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth? 22. Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works: for that is his portion; for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?

Solomon is still showing that every thing in this world, without piety and the fear of God, is vanity. Take away religion, and there is nothing valuable among men, nothing for the sake of which a wise man would think it worth while to live in this world. In these verses, he shows that power, than which there is nothing men are more ambitious of, and life itself, than which there is nothing men are more fond, more jealous of, are nothing without the fear of God.

I. Here is the vanity of man as mighty; man in his best estate, man upon the throne, where his authority is submitted to, man upon the judgment-seat, where his wisdom and justice are appealed to, and where, if he be governed by the laws of religion, he is God's vicegerent; nay, he is of those to whom it is said, Ye are gods; but without the fear of God it is vanity, for, set that aside, and—

1. The judge will not judge right, he will not use his authority, but will abuse it; instead of doing good with it, will do harm with it, and then it is not only vanity, but a lie, a cheat to himself, and to all about him, v. 16. Solomon perceived; by what he had read of former times, what he heard of other countries, and what he had seen in some corrupt judges, even in the land of Israel, notwithstanding all his care to prefer good men, that there was wickedness in the place of judgment. It is not so above the sun; far from it from God that he should do injustice or pervert justice; but under the sun it is often found that that which should be the refuge proves the prison of oppressed innocency. Man, being in honour, and not understanding what he ought to do, becomes like the beasts that perish, like the beasts of prey, even the most ravenous, Ps. xlix. 20. Not only from the persons that sat in judgment, but even in the places where judgment was, in pretence, administered, and righteousness was expected, there was iniquity; men met with the greatest wrongs in those courts to which they fled for right: this is vanity and vexation: for, (1.) It had been better for the people to have had no judges than to have had such. (2.) It had been better for the judges to have had no power than to have had it and used it to such ill purposes; and so they will say another day.

2. The judge will himself be judged for not judging right. When Solomon saw how judgment was perverted among men, he looked up to God, the Judge, and looked forward to the day of his judgment; (v. 17.) I said in my heart, that this unrighteous judgment is not so conclusive as both sides take it to be, for there will be a review of the judgment; God shall judge between the righteous and the wicked, shall judge for the righteous, and plead their cause, though now it is run down, and judge against the wicked, and reckon with them for all their unrighteous decrees, and the grievousness which they have perpetrated, Isa. x. 1. With an eye of faith we may see, not only the period, but the punishment, of the pride and cruelty of oppressors, (Ps. xcii. 7.) and it is an unspackable comfort to the oppressed, that their cause will be heard over again. Let them therefore wait with patience, for there is another Judge that standeth before the door. And though the day of affliction may last long, yet God is a great King, for the examination of every purpose and every work done under the sun. Men have their day now, but God's day is coming, Ps. xxxvii. 13. With God there is a time for the re- 

II. Here is the vanity of man as mortal. He now comes to speak more generally concerning the estate of the sons of men in this world, their life being on earth, and shows that their reason, without religion and the fear of God, advanced them but little above the beasts. Now observe,

1. What he aims at in this account of man's estate.

(1.) That God may be honoured, may be justified, may be glorified; that they might clear God, so the margin reads it; that, if men have an uneasy life in this world, full of vanity and vexation, they may think themselves, and lay no blame of it; let them not blame God for it, and not say, that he made this world to be man's prison, and life to be his penance; no, God made man, in respect both of honour and comfort, little lower than the angels; if he be mean and miserable, it is his own fault. Or, that God, the word of God, might manifest them, and discover them to themselves, and so appear to be quick and powerful, and a Judge of men's characters; and we may be made sensible how open we are to God's knowledge and judgment.

(2.) That men may be humbled, may be vilified, may be mortified; that they might see that they themselves are beasts. It is much to convince proud men that they are but men, (Ps. ix. 20.) much more to convince men that they are beasts, that, being destitute of religion, they are as the beasts that perish, as the horse and the mule that have no understanding. Proud oppressors are as beasts, as roaring lions, and ranging bears. Nay, every man that thinks himself only, and not his soul, makes himself no better than a brute, and must wish, at least, to die like one.

2. The manner in which he verifies this account, which he undertakes to prove, is, that a worldly, carnal, earthly-minded, man, has no pre-eminence above the beast, for all that which he sets his heart upon, places his confidence, and expects a happiness, in, is vanity, v. 19. Some make this to be the language of an atheist, who justifies himself in his Iniquity, (v. 16.) and evades the argument taken from the judgment to come, (v. 17.) by pleading that there is not another life after this, but that when man dies, there is an end of him, and therefore, while he lives, he may live as he lists; but others rather think Solomon here speaks as he himself thinks, and that it is to be understood in the same sense with that of his father, (Ps. xlix. 14.) like sheep they are laid in the grave, and that he intends to show the vanity of this world's wealth and honours, "by the equal condition in more outward respects" (as Bishop Reynolds expounds it) "between men and beasts."
t's the same air, and it is the general description of both
that in their nostrils is the breath of life, (Gen. vii. 22.) and, therefore, as the one dies, so dies the other;
in their expiring there is no visible difference, but
death makes the same change with a beast
that it does with a man.
[1.] As to their bodies, the change is altogether
the same, excepting the different respects that are
paid to them by the survivors. Let a man be bu-
ried with the burial of an ass, (Jer. xxii. 19.) and
that pre-eminence then has he above a beast? The
Touch of the dead body of a man, by the law of
Moses, contrasted a greater ceremonial pollution
than the touch of the carcase even of an unclean
beast or fowl. And Solomon here observes, that
all go unto one place, that dead bodies of men and
beasts putrefy alike, and that in their cor-

erre, or all turn to dust again, in their cor-

ruption. What little reason then have we to be
proud of our bodies, or any bodily accomplishments,
when they must not only be reduced to the earth
very shortly, but must be so in common with the
beasts, and we must mingle our dust with theirs!
[2.] As to their spirits, there is indeed a vast dif-
ference, but not a visible one, v. 21. It is certain
that the spirit of the sons of men at death is ascend-
ing, and passing into the world of spirits, to be
made to, to the world of spirits, to which it is al-
lie; it dies not with the body, but is redeemed
from the power of the grave, Ps. xlii. 15. It goes
upward, to be judged, and determined to an un-
changeable state. It is as certain that the spirit of
the beast goes downward to the earth, it dies with
the body, it perishes, and is gone at death. The soul
of a beast is, at death, like a candle blown out,
the candle that was blown out, the beast who was
the soul of a man is then like a candle taken out of a
dark lantern, which leaves the lantern useless indeed, but
does itself shine brighter. This great difference there
is between the spirits of men and beasts; and a

good reason it is why men should set their affec-
tions on things above, and lift up their souls to
those things, not suffering them, as if they were the
souls of brutes, to cleave to this earth. But who
knows this difference? We cannot see the ascent
of the soul, and the descent of the other, with our
bodily eyes; and therefore those that live by sense,
as all carnal sensualists do, that walk in the sight
of their eyes, and will not admit any other discove-
ries, by their own rule of judgment, have no pre-
eminence above the beasts. Who knows? Who con-
siders this? Isa. lili. 1. Very few; were it better
considered, the world would be every way better;
but most men live as if they were to be a cattle,
or as if, when they die, there were an end of them;
and it is not strange that those live like beasts, who
think they shall die like beasts; but on such the

treble faculties of reason are perfectly lost and
thrown away.
3. An inference drawn from it; (v. 22.) There is
nothing better, as to this world, nothing better to be
had out of our wealth and honour, than that a man
should rejoice in his own works. (1.) Keep a good
conscience, and never admit iniquity into the place
of righteousness. Let every man prove his own
work, and approve himself to God in it, so shall he
have rejoicing in himself alone, Gal. vi. 4. Let him
not get or keep any thing but what he can rejoice in.
See 2 Cor. i. 12. (2.) Live a cheerful life. If God
have prospered the work of our hands unto us, let
us rejoice in it, and take the comfort of it, and
not make it a burden to ourselves, and leave others
the joy of it; for this is not only against our souls,
miserae are they that have their portion
in this life, (Ps. xvii. 14.) and fools are they
that choose it and take up with it, (Luke xii. 19.)
but it is the portion of the body, that only which we
enjoy is ours out of this world; it is taking what
is to be had, and making the best of it; and the rea
son is, because none can give us a sight of what
shall be after us; either who shall have our estates,
or what use they will make ofthem. When we are
gone, it is likely we shall not see what is after us;
there is no correspondence that we know of be-
tween the other world and this, Job xiv. 21. They
in the other world will have the inconvenience of
that world, so that they will not care for seeing
what is done in this; and while we are here, we
cannot foresee what shall be after us, either as to
our families or the public; it is not for us to know
the times and seasons that shall be after us; which,
as it should be a restraint to our cares about this
world, so it should be a reason for our concern
about another. Since death is a final farewell to
this life, let us look before us to another life.

CHAP. IV.

Solomon, having shown the vanity of this world, in the
temptation which those in power feel to oppress
and trample upon their subjects, here further shows, I. The
temptation which the oppressed feel to discontent and
impatience, v. 1. 3. II. The temptation which
those that love their ease feel to take their ease and neglect
business, for fear of being envied, v. 4. 6. III. The folly of
boasting of the abundance of worldly wealth, v. 7, 8. IV. A remedy against that folly, in being made
sensible of the benefit of society and mutual assistance,
v. 9. 12. V. The mutability even of royal dignity, not
only among the living, but even of the mighty, (v. 14.)
but through the weakness of the people, let the prince
be ever so discreet, v. 15. 16. It is not the prerogative
even of kings themselves to be exempted from the vanity
and vexation that attend these things; let none else then
expect it.

1. S0 I returned, and considered all the op-
pressions that are done under the sun:
and, behold, the tears of such as were oppress-
red, and they had no comforter; and on the
side of their oppressors there was power,
but they had no comforter. 2. Wherefore I
praised the dead which are already dead,
more than the living which are yet alive.
3. Yea, better is he than both they which hath
not yet been, who hath not seen the evil
work that is done under the sun.

Solomon had a large soul, (1 Kings iv. 29.) and it
appeared by this, among other things, that he had
a very tender concern for the miserable part of
man, and in the cognizance of the afflictions of the
afflicted. He had taken the oppressors to task, (ch.
iii. 16, 17.) and put them in mind of the judgment
to come, to be a curb to their insolence; now here
he observes the oppressed; this he did, no doubt, as
a prince, to do them justice, and avenge them
of their adversories, for he both feared God and re-
garded men; but here he does it as a preacher, and
shows, The troubles of their condition; (v. 1.) of these
he speaks very solemnly, and with compassion. It
graved him,

(1.) To see might prevailing against right, to see
so much oppression done under the sun; to see ser-

vants, and labourers, and poor workmen, oppressed
by their masters, who take advantage of their ne-
cessity to impose what terms they please upon them:
debtors oppressed by cruel creditors, and creditors
too by fraudulent debtors; tenants oppressed by hard
landlords, and landlords oppressed by insolent
peasants; and, worst of all, subjects oppressed by arbitrary
princes and unjust judges. Such oppressions are
done under the sun, above the sun righteousness
reigns for ever. Wise men will consider these op-


Ecclesiastes, considered

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork.

To all for whom the tears of affliction were shed;

(2.) To see how those that were wronged laid to heart the wrongs that were done them. He beheld the tears of such as were oppressed, and perhaps could not forbear weeping with them. The world is full of oppressors; look what way we will, we have a melancholy scene presented to us, the tears of those that are oppressed with one trouble or other. They find it is to no purpose to complain, and therefore mourn in secret, (as Job ch. xvi. 20, 21.) but Blessed are they that mourn.

(3.) To see how unable they were to help themselves; On the side of their oppressors there was froward, when they had done wrong, to stand to it, and make good what they had done, so that the poor were borne down with a strong hand, and had no way to do themselves right. It is sad to see power misplaced, and that which was given men to enable them to do good, perverted to support them in doing wrong.

(4.) To see how they and their calamities were slighted by all about them. They wept, and needed comfort, but there was none to do that friendly office, they had no comforter, their oppressors were powerful and threatening, and therefore they had no comfort; nor could comfort them themselves, not, for fear of displeasing the oppressors, and being made their companions for offering to be their comforters. It is sad to see so little humanity among men.

2. The temptations of their condition. Being thus hardly used, they are tempted to hate and despise life, and to envy those that are dead and in their graves, and to wish they had never been born; (v. 2, 3.) and Solomon is ready to agree with them, for as life is vanity and vexation of spirit, since life itself is often so; and if we disregard it, in comparison with the favour and fruition of God, (as St. Paul, Acts xx. 24. Phil. i. 23.) it is our praise; but if (as here) only for the sake of the miseries that attend it, that is our infirmity, and we judge therein after the flesh, as Job and Eliah did.

(1.) He here thinks them happy who have ended this miserable life, have done their part, and quitted the stage; I thus far pleased the executors of my just debts, or that had a speedy passage through the world, made a short cut over the ocean of life, dead already, before they had well begun to live; I was pleased with their lot, and had it been in their own choice, should have praised their wisdom, for but looking into the world, and then retiring, as not liking it. I concluded that it is better with them than with the living that are yet alive, and that is all, dragging the long and heavy chain of life, and wearing out its tedious minutes. This may be compared, not with Job iii. 20, 21, but with Rev. xiv. 13, where, in times of persecution, (and such Solomon is here describing,) it is not the passion of man, but the Spirit of God, that says, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth.

Note, The condition of the saints that are dead, and gone to rest with God, is, upon many accounts, better and more desirable than the condition of living saints that are yet continued in their work and present danger.

(2.) He thinks them happy, who never began this miserable life; nay, they are happiest of all; He that has not been is happier than both they. Better never to have been born than to be born to see the evil work that is done under the sun; to see so much wickedness committed, so much wrong done, and not only to be in no capacity to mend the matter, but to suffer ill for doing well. 'A good man, how calamitous a condition soever he is in, in this world, cannot have cause to wish he had never been born, since he is glorifying the Lord even in the fires, and will be happy at last, for ever happy; nor ought any to wish so while they are alive, for while there is life, there is hope; a man is never undone till he is in hell.

4. Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit.

5. The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh. Better is a handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit.

Here Solomon returns to the observation and consideration of the vanity and vexation of spirit that attend the business of this world, which he had spoken of before, ch. ii. 11.

1. If a man be acute, and dexterous, and successful in his business, he gets the ill-will of his neighbours, v. 4. Though he takes a great deal of pains, and goes through all travail, does not get his estate easily, but it costs him a great deal of hard labour, nor does he get it dishonestly, he wrongs no man, defrauds no man, but by every right work, by applying himself to the business of it, as in its every part, bringing it by all the rules of equity and fair-dealing, yet for this he is envied of his neighbour, and the more for the reputation he has got by his honesty. This shows, (1.) What little conscience most men have, that they will bear a grudge to a neighbour, give him an ill word, and do him an ill turn, only because he is more ingenious and industrious than themselves, and has more of the blessing of heaven. Cain envied Abel, Esau Jacob, and Saul David, and all for their right works. This is downward, but nationalism. (2.) What little comfort wise and useful men must expect to have in this world. Let them be, let them have themselves ever so cautiously, they cannot escape being envied; and who can stand before envy? Prov. xxvii. 4. They that excel in virtue will always be an eye-sore to those that exceed in vice; which should not discourage us from any right work, but drive us to expect the praise of it, not from men, but from God, and not to count upon satisfaction in life. Happiness is the crown of right works; to prove vanity and vexation of spirit, no works under the sun can prove otherwise. But for every right work a man shall be accepted of his God, and then he needs not mind though he be envied of his neighbour, only it may make him love the world the less.

2. If a man be stupid and dull, and blundering in his business, he decoys ill for himself; (v. 5.) The fool that goes about his work as if his hands were muffled and folded together, that does everything awkwardly; the sluggard, (for he is a fool,) that loves his ease, and folds his hands together to keep them warm, because they refuse to labour, he eats his own flesh, is a cannibal to himself, brings himself into such a poor condition that he has nothing to eat but his own flesh, into such a desperate condition, that he is ready to eat his own flesh for vexation; he has a dog’s life, hunger and ease. Because God gives active men, that though in the world, envied he runs into the other extreme; and lest he should be envied for his right works, he does everything wrong, and does not deserve to be pitied. Note, Idleness is a sin that is its own punishment.

The following words, (v. 6.) Better is a handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit, may be taken either; (1.) As the sluggard’s argument for the excuse of himself in his idleness; he folds his hands together, and abuses and misapplies a good truth for his pus
tification; as it, because a little with quietness is bet-

 threatens: of necessary, a little with idleness is better than abundance with strife, therefore a little

 with idleness is better than abundance with honest

 labour: thus wise in own counsel is he, Prov. xxvi. 16. But, (2 ) I rather take it as Solomon's

 advice to keep the mean between that travail which will make a man envied, and that slothfulness

 which will make a man eat his own flesh. Let us by honest industry lay hold on the handfull, that we

 may have many necessaries, but not grasp at both the

 hands full, which will but create us vexation of

 spirit. Moderate pains and moderate gains will do

 best. A man may have but a handfull of the world,

 and yet may enjoy it and himself with a great deal of

 quietness, with content of mind, peace of con-

 science, and the love and good will of his neigh-

 bour, much that have both their hands full, have

 more than heart could wish, have a great deal of

 travail and vexation with it. Those that cannot

 live on a little, it is to be feared, would not live as

 they should, if they had ever so much.

 7. Then I returned, and I saw vanity

 under the sun. 8. There is one alone and

 there is not a second; yea, he hath neither

 child nor brother: yet is there no end of all

 his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with

 riches; neither saith he, For whom do I lab-

 our, and bereave my soul of good? This is

 also vanity, yea, it is a sore travail. 9. Two

 are better than one; because they have a

 good reward for their labour. 10. For if

 they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but

 wo to him that is alone when he falleth; for

 he hath not another to help him up. 11.

 Again, if two lie together, then they have

 heat: but how can one be warm alone? 12.

 And if one prevail against him, two shall

 withstand him; and a threefold cord is not

 quickly broken.

 Here Solomon fastens upon another instance of

 the vanity of this world, that frequently the more

 men have of it, the more they would have; and on

 this they are so intent, that they have no enjoyment of

 what they have. Now Solomon here shows,

 1. That selfishness is the cause of this evil; (v. 7, 8.) There is one alone that minds none but

 himself, cares for nobody, but would, if he could, be

 placed alone in the midst of the earth; there is not a

 second, nor does he desire there should be, one

 mouth he thinks enough in a house, and grudges

 every thing that goes beside him. See how this

 covetous muckworm is here described.

 (1.) He makes himself a mere slave to his busi-

 ness. Though he has no charge, neither child nor

 brother, none to take care of but himself, none to

 hang upon him, or draw from him, no poor rela-

 tions, nor dures he marry, for fear of the expense

 of a family, yet is there no end of his labour, he is

 at it night and day, early and late, and will scarce-

 ly allow necessary rest to himself and those he

 employs. He does not confine himself within

 the bounds of his own calling, but is for having a

 hand in any thing that he can get by. See

 Ps. cxlvii. 2.

 (2.) He never thinks he has enough; His eye is

 not satisfied with riches. Covetousness is called the

 lust of the eye, (1 John ii. 16.) because the behald-

 ing of it with his eyes is all that the worldling seems
to covet, Eccl. v. 11. He has enough for his back,

 (as Bishop Reynolds observes,) for his belly, for his

 calling, for his family, for his living decently in the

 world, but he has not enough for his eyes; though

 he can but see it, can but count his money, and

 not find in his heart to use it, yet he is not easy be-

 cause he has not more to regale his eyes with.

 (3.) He denies himself the comfort of what he

 has. He bereaves his soul of good. If our souls be

 bereaved of good, it is we ourselves that do bereave

 them; others may bereave us of outward good, but

 cannot rob us of our graces and comforts, our spri-

 tual good things; it is our own fault if we do not

 enjoy ourselves; yet many are so set upon the world

 that, in pursuit of it, they bereave their souls of

 good here and for ever, make shipwreck of faith

 and of a good conscience, bereave themselves not

 only of the favour of God and eternal life, but of the

 pleasures of this world too, and this present life.

 Worldly people, pretending to be wise for them-

 selves, are really enemies to themselves.

 (4.) He has no excuse for doing this; He has nei-

 ther child nor brother; none that is bound to, on

 whom he may lay out what he has to his satisfaction

 while he lives; none that he has a kindness for, for

 whom he may lay it up to his satisfaction, and to

 whom he may leave it when he dies; none that are

 poor or dear to him.

 (5.) He has no consideration enough to show

 himself that this is; he never puts this question

 to himself, "For whom do I labour thus? Do I la-

 bour, as I should, for the glory of God, and that I

 may have to give to those that need? Do I con-

 sider that it is but for the body that I am labouring,

 a dying body; it is for others, and I know not for

 whom; perhaps for a fool that will scatter it as fast

 as I have gathered it; perhaps for a foe, that will

 be ungrateful to my memory?" Note, It is wisdom for

 those that take pains, about what they have done

 this pains for; and whether it be really worth while to

 bereave themselves of good, that they may bestow it

 on a stranger. If men do not consider this, it is vanity, and a sore

 travail; they shame and vex themselves to no

 purpose.

 2. That sociableness is the cure of this evil. Men

 are thus solitud, because they are all for themselves.

 Now Solomon shows here, by this instance, that

 it is not good for man to be alone; (Gen. ii. 18.) he

 designs hereby to recommend to us both marriage

 and friendship, two things which covetous misers

 decline, because of the charge of them; but such

 are the comfort and advantage of them both, if

 prudently contracted, that they will very well quit

 cost. Man, in paradise itself, could not be happy

 without a mate, and therefore is no sooner made

 than matched.

 (1.) Solomon lays this down for a truth. That

 two are better than one, and more happy jointly,

 than either of them could be separately; more

 pleased in one another than they could be in them-

 selves only; mutually serviceable to each other's

 welfare, and by a united strength more likely to do

 good to others; They have a good reward of their

 labour; whatever service they do, it is returned to

 them another way. He that serves himself only,

 has himself only for his paymaster, and commonly

 deserves more than is paid him, and is ungrateful

 to himself, if he should serve him, would be to him;

 witness him that labouro everlasting, and yest bereaves

 his soul of good; he has no reward of his labour;

 but he that is kind to another has a good reward;

 the pleasure and advantage of holy love will be an

 abundant recompense for all the work and labour

 of love.

 (2.) Hence he infers the mischief of solitude;

 He to him that is alone; he lies exposed to many

 temptations which good company and friendship

 would prevent and help him to guard against; he
wants that advantage which a man has by the com- 1. A king is not happy, unless he have wisdom, v. 13,
tenance of his friend, as iron has of being sharpen- 14. He that is truly wise, prudent, and pious, though ened by iron. A monastic life then was surely ne- he be poor in the world, and very young, and, upon ver intended for a state of perfection, nor should both accounts, despaired and little notice taken of, is those be reckoned the greatest lovers of God who better, more truly valuable and worthy of respect, cannot find in their hearts to love any one else.
is likely to do better for himself, and to be a greater blest to his fellow-men, than is he who, being a king, a man therefore venerable, but beset with vanity and for his dignity, if he be foolish, and knows not for gravity, and and how to manage public affairs himself, nor will be admonished and advised by others; who knows not to be admonished, will not suffer any counsel or ad- monition to be given him; no one about him dares contradict him; he will not hearken to the counsel and admonition that are given him. It is so far from being any part of the honour of kings, that it is the greatest dishonour to receive them. 

(1.) Occasional succour in an exigence. It is good for two to travel together, for if one happen to fall, and perhaps so as not to be able to get up himself, the other will be ready to help him up; a friend in need is a friend indeed; whereas if one travel alone, and get a fall, he may be lost for want of a little help. If a man fall into sin, his friend will help to restore him with the spirit of meekness; if he fall into trouble, his friend will help to comfort him and assuage his grief.

(2.) Mutual warmth. As a fellow-traveller is of use, (amicus pro vehiculo—a friend is a good sub- stitute for a carriage,) so is a bed-fellow; If two lie together, they have heat. So virtuous and gracious affections are excited by good society, and Chris-
tians warm one another by provoking one another to love and to good works.

(3.) United strength. If an enemy find a man alone, he is liable to prevail against him; with his own single strength he cannot make his part good, but, if he have a second, he may do well enough, two shall withstand him; “You shall help me against mine enemy, and I will help you against your’s;” according to the agreement between Joab and Abishai, (2 Sam. x. 11.) and so both are con-
querrors, whereas, acting separately, both had been conquered; as was said of the ancient Britons, when the Romans invaded them, Dum singuli posu-

nunt, universi vincuntur—While they fight in de-
tached parties, they sacrifice the general cause. In our spiritual warfare we may be helpful to one an-
other as well as in our spiritual work; next to the com-
fornation of communion with God, is that of the com-
munion of saints. He concludes with this proverb, 
A threefold cord is not easily broken, any more than a bundle of arrows, though each single thread and each single arrow is. Two together he compares to a bundle of arrows where two are closely joined in truly love and fellowship, Christ will by his Spirit come to them, and make the third, as he joined himself to the two disciples going to Emmaus, and then there is a threefold cord that can never be broken. They that dwell in love dwell in God, and God in them.

13. Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished. 14. For out of prison he cometh to reign; whereas also he that is born in his kingdom becometh poor. 15. I considered all the living which walk under the sun, with the second child that shall stand up in his stead. 16. There is no end of all the people, even of all that have been before them: they also that come after shall not rejoice in him. Surely this also is va-

nity and vexation of spirit.

Solomon was himself a king, and therefore may be allowed to speak more freely than another, con-
cerning the vanity of kingly state and dignity, which he shall have been an uncertain thing; he had said so, Prov. xxvii. 24. The crown doth not endure to
every generation; and his sun is: and it so. Nothing is more slippery than the highest post of honour, without wisdom and the people’s love.
CHAPTER V.

Solomon, in this chapter, discourses, I. Concerning the worship of God, prescribing that as a remedy against all those vanities which tend to weary us, he recom- mendeth the going to the house of God, and keeping communion with him; but withal, he gives a necessary caution against the vanities which are too often found in religious exercises, which deprive them of their excellency, and render them unable to help against other vanities. If our religion be a vain religion, how great is that vanity! Let us therefore take heed of vanity, 1. In hearing the word, and offering sacrifice, v. 1. 2. In prayer, v. 2, 3. 3. In making vows, v. 4, 5. 4. In pretending to divine dreams, v. 7. Now, (1.) For a remedy against those vanities, he prescribes the fear of God, v. 7. (2.) To prevent the offence that might arise from the present sufferings of good people, he directs us to look up to God, v. 8. II. Concerning the wealth of this world, and the vanity and vexation that attend it. The fruits of the earth indeed are necessary to the support of life, (v. 9.) but as for silver, and gold, and riches, 1. They are unsatisfying, v. 10. 2. They are unprofitable, v. 11. They are disquieting, v. 12. 3. They often prove hurtful and destroying, v. 13. 5. They are perishing, v. 14. 6. They must be left behind when we die, v. 15, 16. 7. If we have not a heart to make use of them, they are a great deal of uneasiness, v. 17. And therefore he recommends to us the comfortable use of that which God has given us, with an eye to him that is Giver, as the best way both to answer the end of our having it, and to obviate the misuse of it that commonly attend great estates, v. 18–20. So that if we can but learn out of this chapter how to manage the business of religion, and the business of this world, (which two take up most of our time,) so that both may turn to a good account, and neither our sabbath-days nor our week-days may be lost, we shall have reason to say, We have learned two good lessons.

K EEP thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. 2. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth therefore let thy words be few. 3. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.

Solomon's design in driving us off from the world, by showing us its vanity, is to drive us to God and to our duty; that we may not walk in the way of the world, but by religious rules, nor depend upon the wealth of the world, but on religious advantages; and therefore,

I. He here sends us to the house of God, to the place of public worship, to the temple, which he himself had built at a great and costly expense; and he frequently refers us to it, that we should know more of the vanity of the world, and would find that happiness which is in vain sought for in the creature. David, when he was perplexed, went into the sanctuary of God, Ps. lxix. 17. Let our disappointments in the creature turn our eyes to the creature of God, and have recourse not to the word of God's grace, and consult that, to the throne of his grace, and solicit that. In the word and prayer there is a balm for every wound. II. He charges us to behave ourselves well there, that we may not miss of our end in coming thither. Religious exercises are not vain things, but, if we mismane them, they become vain to us. And therefore,

1. We must address ourselves to them with all possible seriousness and care; "Keep thy feet, not to keep them back from the house of God, (as Prov. xxv. 17.) nor go slowly thither, as one unwilling to draw nigh to God, but look well to thy going, ponder the path of thy feet, lest thou take a false step. Address thyself to the worship of God with a solemn pause, and take time to compose thyself for it, not going about it with precipitation, which is called hastening with the feet, Prov. xix. 2. Keep thy thoughts from reviving and wandering from it; keep them fixed and united toward wrong objects, for in the business of God's house there is work enough for the whole man, and all too little to be employed." Some think it alludes to the charge given to Moses and Joshua, to cut off their shoes, (Exod. iii. 5. Josh. v. 15.) in token of subjection and reverence, Keep thy feet clean, Exod. xxx. 19. 2. We must take heed that the sacrifice we bring be not the sacrifice of fools, of which we see they are fools, and their sacrifice an abomination to the Lord, (Prov. xxv. 8,) that we bring not the torn, and the lame, and the sick, for sacrifice; for we are plainly told that it will not be accepted, and therefore it is folly to bring it; that we rest not in the sign and ceremony, and the outside of the performance, without regarding the sense and meaning of it, for that is the sacrifice of fools; bodily exercise, if that be all, is a jest; none but fools will think thus to please him who is a Spirit, and requires the heart; and we shall see their folly when they find what a great deal of pains they have taken to no purpose for want of sincerity. They are fools, for they consider not that they do evil; they think they are doing God and themselves good service, when really they are putting a great affront upon God, and a great cheat upon their own souls, by their hypocritical devotions. Men may be doing evil, even then when they profess to be doing good, and even then when they do not know it, when they do not consider.

They know not but to do evil, so some read it. Wicked minds cannot choose but sin, even in the acts of devotion. Or, They consider not that they do evil; they act at a venture, right or wrong, pleasing to God or not, it is all one to them. 3. That we may not bring the sacrifice of fools, we must come to God's house with hearts disposed to know and do our duty. We must be ready to hear. (1.) We must diligently attend to the word of God, and preached; "Be swift to hear the exposition which the priests give of the sacrifices, declaring the intent and meaning of them, and do not think it enough to gaze upon what they do, for it must be a reasonable service, otherwise it is the sacrifice of fools." (2.) We must resolve to comply with the will of God as it is made known to us; hearing is often put for obeying, and that is it that is better than sacrifice, 1 Sam. xv. 22. Isa. i. 16. Ke the word, and when they have finished their holy duties, we come with this upon our heart, Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears. Let the word of the Lord come, (said a good man,) and if I had 600 necks I would bow them all to the authority of it.

4. We must be very cautious and considerate in all our approaches and addresses to God; (v. 2.) Be not rash with thy mouth, in making either prayers, or protestations, or promises; let not thy heart be hasty to utter before God. (1.) When we are in the house of God, in solemn assemblies for religious worship, we are in a special manner before God, and in his presence; there where he has promised to meet his people, where his eye is upon us, and ours ought to be unto
him. (2.) We have something to say, something to utter before God, when we draw nigh to him in holy duties; he is one with whom we have to do, with whom we have business of vast importance. If we come without an errand, we shall go away without any advantage. (3.) What we utter before God must come from the soul, and therefore we must not be rash with our mouth, never let our tongue outrun our thoughts in our devotions; the words of our mouth must always be the product of the meditations of our hearts. Thoughts are words to God, and words are but wind, if they be not copied from the thoughts. Lip-labour, though ever so well laboured, if that be all, is but lost labour in religion, Matth. xv. 8, 9. (4.) It is not enough that what we say comes from the heart, but it must come from a composed heart, and not from a sudden heat or passion. As the mouth must not be rash, so the heart must not be hasty; we must not only think, but think twice, before we speak, when we are to speak either from God in preaching, or to God in prayer, and not utter any thing indecent and undigested, I Cor. xiv. 15.

5. We must be sparing of our words in the presence of God, we must be reverent and deliberate; not talk to God as boldly and carelessly as we do to our fellows; what comes uppermost, not repeat things over and over, as we do to one another, that what we say may be understood and remembered, and may make impression; no, when we speak to God, we must consider, (1.) That between him and us there is an infinite distance; God is in heaven, where he reigns in glory over us and all the children of men, where he is attended with an innumerable company of holy angels, and is far excelled above all our blessing and praise. He is the Lord of his people's mean and vile, unlike God, and utterly unworthy to receive any favour from him, or to have any communion with him; therefore we must be very grave, humble, and serious, and be reverent in speaking to him, as we are when we speak to a great man that is much our superior; and, in token of this, let our words be few, that they may be well chosen, Job ix. 14. This does not condemn all long prayers; were they not good, the Pharisees had not used them for a resource; Christ prayed all night; and we are bid to continue in prayer; but it condemns careless, heartless praying, vain repetitions, (Matth. vi. 7.) repeating Pater-noster by tale. Let us speak to God, and of him, in his own words, words which the scripture teaches; and let our words, words of our own invention, be few, lest, not speaking by rule, we speak amiss.

(2.) That the multiplying of words in our devotions will make them the sacrifices of fools, v. 5. As confused dreams, frightful and perplexed, and such as disturb the sleep, are an evidence of a hurry of business which fills our head; so, many words, and hasty ones, used in prayer, are an evidence of folly reigning in the heart, ignorance of, and unacquaintedness with, both God and ourselves, low thoughts of God, and careless thoughts of our own souls. Even in common conversation, a fool is known by the multitude of words; they that know best are often the least talkative; and, consequently, there, no doubt, a praying fool shall fall, (Prov. x. 8, 10.) shall fall short of acceptance. Those are fools indeed who think they shall be heard, in prayer, for their much speaking.

4. When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. 5. Better is it that thou shouldst vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.

6. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thy hands? 7. For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities; but fear thou God. 3. If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than they.

Four things we are exhorted to in these verses.

1. To be conscientious in paying our vows. A vow is a bond upon the soul, (Numah. xxx. 2.) by which we solemnly oblige ourselves, not only, in general, to do that which we are already bound to do, but, in some particular instances, to do that which we were not under any antecedent obligation to do, whether it respects honouring God, or serving the interests of his kingdom among men. When, under the sense of some affliction, (Ps. lxvi. 14,) or in the pursuit of some mercy, (1 Sam. i. 11.) thou the word, and thy vow is not before the Lord, God, know that thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, and thou cannot go back; therefore,

1. Pay it; perform what thou hast promised, bring to God what thou hast dedicated and devoted to him, pay that which thou hast vowed, pay it in full, and keep not back any part of the price, pay it in kind, do not alter it, or change it, so the law was, Lev. xxvii. 10. Have we vowed to give our own selves unto the Lord? let us, then, be as good as our word, act in his service to his glory, and not sacrilegiously alienate ourselves.

2. Defer not to pay it; if it be in the power of thine hands to pay it to-day, leave it not till to-morrow; do not beg a day, nor put it off to a more convenient season. By delay the sense of the obligation slackens and cools, and is in danger of wearing off; we thereby discover a loathness and backwardness to perform our vow; and Qui non est hostis, cras minus aequus erit.—He who is not inclined to-day, will he be inclined to-morrow? or, as it is, Hos. 11. 8, 9, the more difficult it will be to bring ourselves to its performance, death may not only prevent the payment, but fetch thee to judgment, under the guilt of a broken vow.

Two reasons are here given why we should speedily and cheerfully pay our vows. (1.) Because otherwise we affront God; we play the fool with him, as if we designed to put a trick upon him; and God has no pleasure in fools; (more is implied than is expressed;) the meaning is, He greatly abhors such fools, and such foolish dealings. Has he need of fools? No; Be not deceived, God is not mocked, but will surely and severely reckon with those that thus play fast and loose with him. (2.) Because otherwise we wrong ourselves, we lose the benefit of the making of the vow, nay, we incur the penalty for the breach of it; so that it had been better a great deal not to have vowed, more safe, and more to our advantage, than to vow and not pay. Not to have vowed had been but an emission, but this vow, and not paying, injures the guilt of treachery and perjury; it is lying to God, Acts v. 4.

II. To be cautious in making our vows; this is necessary in order to our being conscientious in performing them, v. 6. 1. We must take heed that we never vow any thing that is sinful, or may be an occasion of sin, for such a vow is ill-made, and must be broken. Suffer not thy mouth, by such a vow, to cause thy flesh to sin, as Herod's rash promise caused him to cut off the head of John the Baptist.
2. We must not vow that which, through the frailty of the flesh, we have reason to fear we shall not be able to perform; as those that vow a single life, and yet know not how to keep their vow. Hereby, (1.) They shame themselves; for they are forced to say before the angel, It was an error; that either they did not mean, or did not consider, what they said; and, take it which way you will, it is an admission of a vow, do not seek to evade it, nor find out excuses to get clear of the obligation of it; say not before the priest, who is called the angel, or messenger, of the Lord of hosts, that, upon second thoughts, thou hast changed thy mind, and desirest to be absolved from the obligations of thy vow; but stick to it, and do not seek a hole to creep out at. Some by the angel understand the guardian angel, which they suppose to attend every man, and to inspect what he does. Others understand it of Christ, the Angel of the covenant, who is present with his people in their assemblies, who searches the heart, and cannot be imposed upon; provoke him not, for God's name is in him, and he is represented as strict and jealous, Exod. xxi. 20. 21. (2.) They expose themselves to the wrath of God, for he is angry at the voice of those that thus lie unto him with their mouth, and flatter him with their tongue, and is displeased at their declamations, and desire their overthrow, because they blast their enterprises, and defeats those purposes which, when they made these vows, they were seeking to God for the success of. If we treacherously cancel the words of our mouths, and revoke our vows, God will justly overthrow our projects, and walk contrary, and at all adventures, with those that thus walk contrary, and at all adventures, with him. It is a snare to a man, after vows, to make inquiry. II. To God's people. Many, old, pretended to have known the mind of God by dreams, and were so full of them, that they almost made God's people forget his name by their dreams; (Jer. xxiii. 25, 26.) and many, now, perplex themselves with their frightful or odd dreams, or with other people's dreams, as if they foreboded this or the other disaster; those that heed dreams shall have a multitude of them to fill their heads with; but in them all there are divers vanities, as there are in all their other labours. They are but the idle impertinent chat of children and fools, and therefore never heed them, forget them, instead of repeating them, lay no stress upon them, draw no disquieting conclusions from them, but fear thou God, have an eye to his sovereign dominion, set him before thee, keep thyself in his love, and be afraid of offending him, and then thou wilt not disturb thyself with foolish dreams. "They are but like the idle importunate chat of children and fools, and therefore never heed them, forget them, instead of repeating them, lay no stress upon them, draw no disquieting conclusions from them, but fear thou God, have an eye to his sovereign dominion, set him before thee, keep thyself in his love, and be afraid of offending him, and then thou wilt not disturb thyself with foolish dreams." The way not to be dismayed at the signs of heaven, nor afraid of the idols of the heathen, is, to fear God as King of nations, Jer. x. 2, 5, 7. IV. With that to keep down the fear of man, 2. 3. Set God before thee, and then, if thou seest the oppression of the poor, thou wilt not marvel at the matter, nor find fault with Divine Providence, nor think the worse of the institution of magistracy, when thou seest the ends of it thus perverted, nor of religion, when thou seest it will not secure men from evil. Observe, 1. A melancholy sight on earth, and such as cannot but trouble very good man that has a sense of justice and a concern for mankind, to see the oppression of the poor, because they are poor, and cannot right themselves, and the violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, oppression under colour of law, and backed with power. The kingdom in general may have a good government, and yet it may so happen that a particular kingdom may be committed to a bad man, by whose mal-administration justice may be perverted; so hard is the for the wisest of kings, in giving preferments, to be sure of their men; they can but redress the grievance when it appears. 2. A comfortable sight in heaven. When things look thus dismal, we may satisfy ourselves with this, (1.) That, though oppressors be high, God is above them, and in that very thing wherein they deal proudly, Exod. xviii. 11. God is higher than the highest of creatures, than the highest of princes, than the king that is higher than Agag, (Numb. xxvii. 7.) than the highest angels, the thrones and dominions of the upper world; God is the Most High over all the earth, and his glory is above the heavens; before him, princes are worms, the brightest but glow-worms. (2.) That, though oppressors be secure, God has his eye upon them, takes notice of, and will reckon for, all their violent perverting of judgment; he regards, not only sees it, but observes it, and keeps it on record, to be called over again; his eyes are upon their ways. See Job xxiv. 23. (3.) That there is a world of angels, for there are higher than they, who are employed by the divine justice for protecting the injured, and punishing the injurious. Sennacherib bore himself high upon his paws of office, but one noble angel overset him and all his forces. Some, by those that are higher than they, understand the great council of the nation, the presidents to whom the princes of the provinces are accountable, (Dan. vi. 2.) the senate that receives complaints against the proconsuls, the courts above, to which appeals are made from the inferior courts, which are necessary to the good government of a kingdom. Let it be a check to oppressors, that perhaps their superiors on earth may call them to an account; however, God, the Supreme in heaven, will. 9. Moreover, the profit of the earth is for all: the king himself is served by the field. 10. He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase. This is also vanity. 11. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what is good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes? 12. The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. 13. There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. 14. But those riches perish by evil travail; and he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand. 15. As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, with which he may carry away in his hand. 16. And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind? 17. All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness. Solomon had showed the vanity of pleasure, gaiety, and fine works, of honour, power, and royal dignity; and there is many a covetous worldling that will agree with him, and speak as slightly as he does of these things; but money, he thinks, is a substantial
thing, and, if he can but have enough of that, he is happy; that is the mistake which Solomon attacks, and attempts to rectify, in these verses; he shows that there is as much vanity in great riches, and the loss of the eye about them, as there is in the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life; and a man can make himself no more happy by hoarding an estate than by spending it.

1. He grants that the products of the earth, for the support and comfort of human life, are valuable things; (v. 9.) The profit of the earth is for all; man's body, being made of the earth, thence has its maintenance; (Job xxviii. 5.) and that it has so, and that a barren land is not made his dwelling, (as he has deserved for being rebellious, Ps. lxviii. 6.) is not in vain. The earth gives them fruit. The earth is profit to be gotten out of the earth; and it is for all, it needs it, it is appointed for all, there is enough for all; it is not only for all men, but for all the inferior creatures; the same ground brings grass for the cattle that brings herbs for the service of men. Israel had bread from heaven, angels' food, but (which is a humbling consideration) the earth is our storehouse, and the beasts fellow-commoners with us. The king himself is served by the field, and would not be without a share of the fruit of it, and take out its products. This puts a great honour upon the husbandman's calling, that it is the most necessary of all other to the support of man's life; the many have the benefit of it, the mighty cannot live without it; it is for all, it is for the king himself. Those that have an abundance of the fruits of the earth, must remember they are for all, and therefore must look upon themselves as stewards of their abundance, out of which they must give to those that need; they must be not only masters and soft clothing are only for some, but the fruit of the earth is for all. And even those that suck the abundance of the seas, (Deut. xxxiii. 19.) cannot be without the fruit of the earth, while those that have a competency of the fruit of the earth may despise the abundance of the sea.

11. He maintains that the riches that are more than these, that are for hoarding; not for use, are vain things, and will not make a man easy or happy. This which is said of the earth, xii. 11. that a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses, is what Solomon here undertakes to prove by divers arguments.

1. The more men have, the more they would have, v. 10. A man may have but a little silver, and be satisfied with it, may know when he has enough, and covet no more. Godliness, with contentment, is great gain. I have enough, says Jacob; I have all, and abound, says St. Paul; but (1.) He that loves silver, and sets his heart upon it, will never think he has enough, but enlarges his desire as hell, (Hab. ii. 5.) lays house to house and field to field, (Isa. v. 8.) and, like the daughters of the horse-leech, still cries, Give, give. Natural desires are at rest when that which is desired is obtained, but corrupt desires are insatiable; nature is content with little, grace with less, but lust with nothing. (2.) He that has silver in abundance, and has it increased even fast upon him, yet does not find that it yields any solid satisfaction to his soul; there are bodily desires which silver itself will not satisfy; if a man be hungry, ingots of silver will do no more to satisfy his hunger than clods of clay; much less will worldly abundance satisfy spiritual desires; he that has ever so much silver, covets more, not only of that, but of something else, something of another nature. They that make themselves drudges to the world are spending their labour for that which satisfies not, (Isa. Iv. 2.) which fills the belly, but will never fill the soul, Ezek. vii. 19.

2. The more men have, the more occasion they have for, and the more they have to do with it, so that it is as broad as long; when goods increase, they are increased that eat them, v. 11. The more meat, the more mouths. Does the estate thrive? And does not the family, at the same time, grow more numerous, and the children grow up to need more? The more men have, the better house they must build, iii. 12. The more guests they must entertain, the more they must give to the poor, and the more they will have hanging on them, for where the careasse is, the eagles will be. What we have, more than food and raiment, we have for others; and then what good is there to the owners themselves, but the pleasure of beholding them with their eyes?

And a poor pleasure it is: an empty speculation is all the difference between the owners and the sharers; the owner sees that as his own which he gives away; he has as much of the real benefit of as he; only he has the satisfaction of doing good to others, which indeed is a satisfaction to one who believes what Christ said, that it is more blessed to give than to receive; but to a covetous man, who thinks all lost that goes beside himself, it is a constant vexation to see others eat of his increase.

3. The more men have, the more can they have about it, which perplexes them, and disturbs their repose; (v. 12.) refreshing, but not long, to the support and comfort of this life as food is. Now, (1.) Those commonly sleep best that work hard, and have but what they work for; The sleep of the labouring man is sweet, not only because he has tired himself with his labour, which makes his sleep the more welcome to him, and makes him sleep soundly, but because he has little to fill his head with care about, and so break his sleep. His sleep is sweet, though he has been but little asleep himself, or his weariness rocks him asleep; and, though he eat much, yet he can sleep well, for his labour gets him a good digestion. The sleep of the diligent Christian, and his long sleep, is sweet, for, having spent himself and his time in the service of God, he can cheerfully return to God, and repose in him as his Rest. (2.) Those that have every thing else often fail to secure a good night's sleep; either their eyes are held open by care, or their sleep are unquiet, and do not refresh them; and this is because of their abundance, that breaks their sleep, and disturbs it; both the abundance of their care, (as that rich man's, who, when his ground brought forth plentifully, thought within himself, What shall I do? Luke xii. 17.) and the abundance of what they eat and drink, which overcharges the heart, makes them sick, and so hinders their repose. Ahasuerus, after a banquet of wine, could not sleep; and perhaps consciousness of guilt, both in getting and using what they have, breaks their sleep as much as any thing; but God gives his beloved sleep.

4. The more men have, the more danger they are in, both of doing mischief, and of having mischief done them; (v. 13.) There is an evil, a sore evil, which Solomon himself had seen under the sun, in this lower world, this theatre of sin and wo—riches kept for the owners thereof, (who have been industrious to hoard them, and keep them safe,) to them hurt, they had better have them not. Their riches do them hurt, make them proud, secure, and in love with the world, draw away their hearts from God and duty, and make it very difficult for them to enter into the kingdom of heaven, nay, help to shut them out of it. (2.) They do hurt with their riches, which not only put them into a capacity of gratifying their own lusts, and living luxuriously, but give them an opportunity of oppressing others, and dealing hardly with them. (3.) Often they sustain hurt by their riches; they would not be envied, would not be robbed, if they were not
rich. It is the fat beast that is led first to the slaught-er. A very rich man (as one observes) has sometimes been excepted out of a general pardon, both as to life and estate, merely on account of his vast and overgrown estate; so riches often take away the life of the owners thereof, Prov. i. 19.

5. The more men have, the more they have to lose, and perhaps they may lose it all, v. 14. Those riches that have been laid up in parentage, and kept with a great deal of care, perish by evil travail, by the very pains and care which they take to secure and increase them; many a one has ruined his estate by being over-solicitous to advance it, and make it more, and has lost all by catching at all. Riches are perishing things, and all our care about them cannot make them otherwise; they make themselves winging, and fly away. He that thought he should have made his son a gentleman leaves him more than a gentle estate, when he can take none into the world, in pity to him, helped him with swaddling-clothes, so, when he goes out, they help him with grave-clothes, and that is all: see Job i. 21. Ps. xlix. 17. This is urged as a reason why we should be content with such things as we have, 1 Tim. vi. 7. In respect of the body, we must go as we came, the dust shall return to the earth as it was; but sad is our case if the soul return as it came, for we are then laid up in sin, and if we find our estate, we have better have been born; and that seems to be the case of the worldlying here spoken of, for he is said to return in all points as he came, as sinful, as miserable, and much more so. This is a sore evil; he thinks it so, whose heart is glued to the world, that he shall take nothing of his labour which he may carry away in his hand; his riches will not go with him into another world, nor stand him in any stead there. If we labour in religion, the grace and evidence thereof will follow us, and may be carried away in our hearts, and shall be better for it to eternity; that is meat that endures: but, if we labour only for the world, to fill our hands with that, we cannot take that away with us; we are born with our hands gripping, but die with them extended, letting go what we held fast. So that, upon the whole matter, he may well ask, What profit has he that has laboured for the wind?

Note, Those that labour for the world labour for the wind; for that which has more sound than substance, which is uncertain, and always shifting its point, unsatisfying, and often hurtful, which we cannot hold fast, and which, if we take up with it as our portion, will no more feed us than the wind, Hos. xii. 1. Men will see that they have laboured for the wind, when, at death, they find the profit of their labour is all gone, gone like the wind, they know not whither.

7. Those that have much, if they set their hearts upon it, have not only uncomfortable deaths, but uncomfortable lives too, v. 17. This covetous worldling, that is so bent upon raising an estate, all his days he eats in darkness and much sorrow, and it is his sickness and wrath; he has not only no pleasure of his estate, nor any enjoyment of it himself, for he eats the bread of sorrow, (Ps. cxxxvii. 2.) but a great deal of vexation to see others eat of it. His necessary surcharged makes him sick, make his heart fret, and he seems as if he were angry that himself and those about him cannot live without meat. As we read the last clause, it intimates how ill this covetous worldling can bear the common and unavoidable calamities of human life; when he is in health, he eats in darkness, always dull with care and fear about what he has; but, if he be sick, he has much sorrow and wrath with his sickness; he is vexed that his sickness takes him off from his business, and hinders him in his pursuits of the world; vexed that all his hopes and wealth would not buy him any case or relief; but especially terrified with the apprehensions of death, (which his disease are the harbingers of,) of leaving this world, and the things of it, behind him, which he has set his affections upon, and removing to a world he has made no preparation for. He has not any sorrow after a godly sort, does not sorrow to repentance, but he has sorrow and wrath, is angry at the providence of God, angry at his sickness, angry at all about him, fretful and peevish, which doubles his affliction, and makes a good man lessens and lightens by patience and joy in his sickness.

18. Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him; for it is his portion. 19. Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and has given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God. 20. For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth him in the joy of his heart.

Solomon, from the vanity of riches hoarded up, here infers, that the best course we can take, is, to use well what we have, to serve God with it, to do good with it, and take the comfort of it to ourselves and our families; this he had before pressed, ch. ii. 24.—iii. 22. Observe,

1. What it is that is here recommended to us; not to indulge the appetites of the flesh, or to take up with present pleasures or profits for our portion, but soberly and moderately to make use of what Providence hath given us; for this is the sum of the passage through this world. We must not starve ourselves, either through covetousness, because we cannot afford ourselves food convenient, or through eagerness in our worldly pursuits, or through excessive care and grief, but eat and drink what is fit for us, to keep our bodies in good plight for the serving of our souls in God's service. We must not kill ourselves with labour, and then leave others to enjoy the good of it, but take the comfort of that which our hands have laboured for, and that not now and then, but all the days of our life which God gives us. Life is God's gift, and he has appointed us the number of the days of our life: (Job xiv. 5.) let us therefore spend those days in serving the Lord our God with joyfulness and gladness of heart. We must not do the business of our calling as a drudgery, and make ourselves slaves to it, but we must rejoice in our labour, not grasp at more business than we can go through with, but give diligence and discretion in all our business, and take the pleasure in the calling wherein God has put us, and go on in the business of it with cheerfulness; this is to rejoice in our labour, whatever it is, as Zebulon in his going out, and Issachar in his tents.

2. What is urged to recommend it to us.

(1.) That it is good and comely to do this; it is well, and it looks well; they that cheerfully use what God has given them, thereby honour the Giver, answer the intention of the gift, act rationally and generously, do good in the world, and make what they have turn to the best account, and this is both
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...that he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he: 4. For he cometh with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness. 5. Moreover, he hath not seen the sun, nor known any thing: this hath more rest than the other. 6. Yea, though he live a thousand years twice told, yet hath he seen no good: do not all go to one place?

Solomon had showed, in the close of the foregoing chapter, how good it is to make a comfortable use of the gifts of God's providence; now here he shows the evil of the contrary, having, and not using; gathering to lay up for I know not what contingent emergencies; being not to lay it out on the most urgent occasions present; this is an evil which Solomon himself saw under the sun. v. 1. A great deal of evil there is under the sun; there is a world above the sun, where there is no evil, yet God causes his sun to shine upon the evil as well as upon the good, which is an aggravation of the evil. God has lighted up a candle for his servants to work by, but they bury their talent as slothful and unprofitable, and so misapply the light, and are unworthy of it. Solomon, as a king, has inspected the treasures of his subjects, and took notice of this evil as a prejudice to the public, who are damaged, not only by men's prodigality on the one hand, but by their penuriousness on the other; as it is with the blood in the natural body, so it is with the wealth of the body politic; if, instead of circulating, it stagnates, it will be of ill consequence. Solomon, as a preacher, observed the evils that were done, that he might reprove them and warn people against them. This evil was, in his days, common, and yet then there was great plenty of silver and gold, which, one would think, should have made people less fond of riches; the times also were peaceable, nor was there any prospect of trouble, which to some is a temptation to hoard; but no providence will of itself, unless the grace of God work it, cure the corrupt affection that is in the carnal mind to the world and the things of it, nay, when riches increase, we are most apt to set hearts upon them. Now concerning this miseric, observe,

1. The abundant reason he has to serve God with joyfulness and gladness of heart; how well God has done for him;

1. He has given him riches, wealth, and honour, v. 2. Note, (1.) Riches and wealth commonly gain people honour among men. Though it be but an image, if it be a golden image, all people, nations, and languages, will fall down, and worship it. (2.) Riches, wealth, and honour, are God's gifts, the gifts of his providence, and not given, as his rain and sunshine, alike to all, but to some, and not to others, as God sees fit. (3.) Yet they are given to many that do not make a good use of them, to many to whom God does not give wisdom and grace to take the comfort of them, and serve God with them. The gifts of common providence are bestowed on many to whom are denied the gifts of special grace, without which the gifts of providence often do more hurt than good.

2. He wants nothing for his soul, of all that he desires. Providence has been so liberal to him, that he has as much as heart could wish, and more, Ps. lxiii. 7. He does not desire grace for his soul, the better part; all he desires, is, enough to gratify the sensual appetite, and that he has: his belly is filled with these hid treasures, Ps. xvii. 14. 3. He is supposed to have a numerous family, to beget a hundred children, which are the stay and strength of his house, and as a quiver full of ar-
to him, which are the honour and credit of his house, and in whom he has the prospect of having his name built up, and having all the immor-
tality this world can give him. They are full of children, (Ps. xvii. 14.) while many of God's people are written childless, and stripped of all.

7. To complete his happiness he is supposed to live many years, and many days, for our life is to be reckoned rather by days than years; the days of his years are many, and so healthful is his constitution, and so slowly does age creep upon him, that they are likely to be many more. Nay, he is supposed to live a thousand years, which no man (that we know of) ever did; nay, a thousand years 
twa told, a small part of which time, one would think, were enough to convince me of their own experience, of the folly both of those that expect to find all good in worldly weal, and of those that expect to find any good in it in using it.

II. The little heart he has to use this which God gives him, for the ends and purposes for which it was given him. This is his fault and folly, that he renders not again according to the benefit done unto him, and serves not the Lord God, his Benefactor, with joyfulness and gladness of heart, in the abundance of this day of prosperity he is not joyful. Trias es, et felix? Are thou happy, yet sad? See his folly:

1. He cannot find in his heart to take the comfort of what he has himself. He has meat before him, he has wherewith to maintain himself and his family comfortably, but he has not power to eat thereof; his sordid nuggett temper will not suffer him to lay it out, no not upon himself, no not upon that which is most necessary for himself. He has not power to reason himself out of this absurdity, to conquer his covetous humour. He is weak indeed, who has not power to use what God gives him, for God gives him not that power but withholds it from him, to punish him for his other abuses of his wealth; because he has not the will to serve God with it, God denies him the power to serve himself with it.

2. He suffers those to prey upon him, that he is under no obligations to; A stranger eateth it. This is the common practice of misers, they will not trust their own children, perhaps; but retainers and hangers-on, that have the art of wheedling, insinuate themselves into them, and find ways of devouring what they have, or getting it to be left to them by their wills. God orders it so that a stranger eats it; strangers devour his strength, Hos. vii. 9. Prov. v. 10. This may be well called vanity, and an evil disease. What we have we have in vain, if we do not use it; and that temper of mind is certainly a most wretched dismuster, which keeps us from using it. Our worst diseases are those from the corruption of our own hearts.

3. He deprives himself of the good that he might have had of his worldly possessions; not only forfeits it, but robs himself of it, and throws it from him; His soul is not filled with good, v. 3. He is still unsatisfied and uneasy. His hands are filled with riches, his barns filled, and his bags filled, but his soul is not filled with good, no, not with that good, for it is still craving more. Nay, (v. 6.) he has not seen good, he cannot so much as please his eye, for that is still looking further, and looking with envy on those that have more. He has not even the sensible good of an estate. Though he looks not beyond the things that are seen, yet he looks not with any true pleasure on them.

4. He has no burial, nor agreeable to his rank, no decent human burial, no burial of an ass; either through the soddeness of his temper he will not allow himself a fashionable burial, but forbid it; or the strangers that have eaten him up leave him so poor, at last, that he has not wherewithal, or those to whom he leaves what he has so little esteem for his memory, and are so greedy of what they are to have from him, that they will not be at the charges of burying him handsomely, which his own children, if he had left it to them, would not have grudged him.

III. The condition which the preacher gives to an unimply birth before him, An unimply birth, a child that is carried from the womb to the grave is better than he. Better is the fruit that drops from the tree before it is ripe, than that which is left to hang on till it is rotten. Job, in his passion, thinks the condition of an unimply birth better than his, when he was in adversity; (Job iii. 16.) but Solomon here pronounces it better than the condition of a worldling in his greatest prosperity, when the world smiles upon him the common

1. He grants the condition of an unimply birth, upon many accounts, to be very sad; (v. 4.) He comes in with vanity, for, as to this world, he that is born, and dies immediately, was born in vain, and he departs in darkness, little or no notice is taken of him; being an abortive, he has no name, or, if he had, it would soon be forgotten and buried in oblivion, it would be covered with darkness, as the body iswith the earth. Nay, (v. 5.) he has not seen the sun, but for the darkness of the womb he is hurri-

ed immediately to that of the grave, and which is worse than not being known to any, he has not known any thing, and therefore has come short of that which is the greatest pleasure and honour of man. Those that live in wilful ignorance, and know nothing to purpose, are no better than an unimply birth that has not seen the sun, nor known any thing.

2. Yet he prefers it before that of a covetous miser; this unimply birth has more rest than the other, for this has some rest, but the other has none; this has no trouble and disquiet, but the other is in perpetual agitation, and has nothing but trouble, trouble of his own making. The shorter the life is, the longer the rest; and the fewer the days, and the less we have to do with this troublesome world, the less trouble we know.

'Tis better die a child at four, Than live, and die so at fourscore.

The reason he gives why this has more rest, is, because all go to one place to dwell in, and this is sooner at his rest, v. 6. He that draws a thousand years goes to the same place with the child that does not live an hour, ch. iii. 20. The grave is the place we shall all meet in. Whatever differences there may be in men's condition in this world, they must all die, are all under the same sentence, and, to outward appearance, their deaths are alike. The grave is, to one as well as another, a land of silence, of darkness, of separation from the living; and a sepulchre-phlegmatic, it is the common den of rich and poor, honourable and mean, learned and unlearned; the short-lived and long-lived meet in the grave, only one rides post thither, the other goes by a slower conveyance; the dust of both mingle, and lie undistinguishable.

7. All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled. 8. For what hath the wise more than the fool? what hath the poor, that knoweth to walk before the living? 9. Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire: this is also vanity and vexation of spirit. 10. That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is man: neither
may he contend with him that is mightier than he.

The preacher here further shows the vanity and folly of heaping up worldly wealth, and expecting happiness in it.

1. How much soever we toil about the world, and get out of it, we can have for ourselves no more than a maintenance; (v. 7.) *All the labour of man is for his mouth, which craves it of him;* (Prov. xvi. 26.) it is but food and raiment, what is more, others have, not we; it is all for the mouth; what care but for the bread for meat? there is nothing for the head and heart, nothing to nourish or enrich the soul. A little will serve to sustain us comfortably, and a great deal can do no more.

2. Those that have ever so much, are still craving; let a man labour ever so much for his mouth, yet *the affluence is not filled.* (1.) Natural desires are still returning, still pressing; a man may be fed to-day, and yet hungry to-morrow. (2.) Worldly sinful desires are insatiable, ch. v. 16. *Wealth to a worldling is like drink to one in a dropsey,* which does but increase the thirst. Some read the whole verse thus; *Though all a man's labour fail out to his own mind,* (ari ejus obvieniat—to so as to correspond with his views, Juv.) just as himself would have it, *yet his desire is not satisfied,* still he has a mind to something more. (2.) The desires of the soul find nothing in the wealth of the world to give them any satisfaction. *The soul is not filled;* so the word is. When God gave Israel their request, he sent leanness into their souls, Ps. cvi. 15. He was a fool, who, when his barns were full, said, *Soul, take thine ease.*

3. A fool may have as much worldly wealth, and may enjoy as much of the pleasure of it, as a wise man; nay, and perhaps not be so sensible of the vexation of it; *What has the wise more than the fool?* v. 8. Perhaps he has not so good an estate, so good a trade, nor such good pre-eriment, as the fool has. Nay, suppose them to be equal in their possessions, what can a wise man, a scholar, a wit, a politician, squeeze out of his estate more than needful supplies? But a half-witted man may do this. A fool can fare as well and relish it, can dress as well, and make as good a figure in any public appearance, as a wise man; so that if there were not pleasures and honour peculiar to the mind, which the wise man has more than the fool, as to his worldly wealth they would be upon a level.

4. Even a poor man, who has business, and is discreet, diligent and dexterous, in the management of it, may get as comfortably through this world as he that is loaded with an overgrown estate. Consider what the poor has less than the rich, if he but *knows to walk before the living,* knows how to conduct himself decently, and do his duty to all, how to get an honest livelihood by his labour, how to spend his time well, and improve his opportunities. *What has he?* Why, he is better beloved, and more respected, among his neighbours, and has a better interest, than many a rich man that is griping and haughty. *What has he?* Why, he has as much of the comfort of this life, has *food and raiment,* and is *therewith content,* and so is as truly rich as he that has abundance.

5. The enjoyment of what we have cannot but be as well, more perhaps, than a greedy grasping at more; (v. 9.) *Better is the sight of the eyes, making the best of that which is present,* than *the wandering of the desire,* the uneasy walking of the soul after things at a distance, and the affecting of a variety of imaginary satisfactions. He is much happier that is always content, though he has ever so little, than he that is always coveting, though he has ever so much. We cannot say, *Better is the sight of the eyes than the fixing of the desire upon God,* and the rest of the soul in him; it is better to live by faith in things to come than to live by sense, which dwells only upon present things; but *better is the sight of the eyes than the resting of the desire after the world,* and the things of it, than which nothing is more uncertain or more unsatisfying at the best. *This wandering of the desire is vanity and vexation of spirit;* it is vanity at the best; if what is desired be obtained, it proves not what we promised ourselves from it, but commonly the wanderers are exposed and disappointed, and then it turns to *vexation of spirit.*

6. Our lot, whatever it is, is that which is appointed us by the counsel of God, which cannot be altered, and it is therefore our wisdom to reconcile ourselves to it, and cheerfully to acquiesce in it; (v. 10.) *That which has been, or, as some read it, that which is, and so likewise that which shall be, is named already,* it is already determined in the divine foreknowledge, and all our care and pains cannot make it otherwise than as it is fixed; *Jacta est alea—The die is cast;* it is therefore folly to quarrel with that which will be as it is, and wisdom to make a virtue of necessity. We shall have what pleases God, and let that please us.

7. Whatever we attain to in this world, still we are but men, and the greatest possessions and preferences cannot set us above the common accidents of human life; *That which has been,* and is, that busy animal that makes such a stir and such a noise in the world, is *named already;* he that made him gave him his name, and *it is known that it is man,* that is his name by which he must know himself, and it is a humbling name, Gen. v. 2. He called their name Adam; and all theirs have the same character, *red earth.* Though a man could make himself master of all the treasures of kings and princes, yet he is a man still, mean, mutable, and mortal, and may at any time be involved in the calamities that are common to men. *It is good for rich and great men to know and consider that they are but men,* Ps. ix. 20. *It is known that they are but men;* let them put what face they will upon it, and, like the king of Tyre, *set their heart as the heart of God,* yet the Egyptians are men, and not gods, and it is known that they are so.

8. How far soever our desires wander, and how closely soever we endeavours keep pace with them, we cannot strive with the Divine Providence, but must submit to the dispositions of it, whether we will or no. If it is man, he may not contend with him that is mightier than he; it is presumption to arrogate God's proceedings, and to charge him with folly or iniquity; nor is it to any purpose to complain of him, *for he is in one mind, and who can turn him?* Elisha pacifies Job with this incontestable principle, *That God is greater than man,* (Job xxxiii. 12.) and therefore man may not *contend with him,* nor resist his judgments, when they come with commission. A man cannot with the greatest riches make his part good against the arrests of sickness or death, but must yield to his fate.

11. Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better? 12. For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? For who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?

Here, 1. Solomon lays down his conclusion, which he had undertaken to prove, as that which was fully
confirmed by the foregoing discourse; "There be many things that increase vanity; the life of man is vain, at the best, and there are abundance of accidents that concur to make it more so; even that which pretend to increase the wealth of pleasure, does but increase the vanity, and make it more vexatious.

2. He draws some inferences from it, which serve further to evince the truth of it.

(1.) That a man is never the nearer to true happiness for the abundance that he has in this world; What is man the better for his wealth and pleasure, his honour and preferment? What remains to man? What redundance in it, what overplus, what advantage, when he comes to balance his accounts? Nothing that will do him any good, or turn to account.

(2.) That we do not know what to wish for, because that which we promise ourselves most satisfaction in, often proves most vexatious to us: Who knows what is good for a man in this life, where every thing is vain, and any thing, even that which we most covet, may prove a calamity to us.

Thoughtful people are in care to do every thing for the best, if they knew it; but as it is an instance of the corruption of our hearts, that we are apt to desire that as good for us which is really hurtful, as children that cry for knives to cut their fingers with; so it is an instance of the vanity of this world, that what, according to all probable conjectures, seems to be for the best, often proves otherwise; such is our short-sight in viewing issues and events of things, and such broken reeds are all our creature-confidence. We know not how to advise others for the best, nor how to act ourselves, because that which we apprehend likely to be for our welfare may become a trap.

(3.) That therefore our life upon earth is what we have no reason to take any great complacency in, or to be confident of the continuance of: It is to be reckoned by days, it is but a vain life, and we spend it as a shadow, so little is there in it substantial, so fleeting, so uncertain, so transitory, is it, and so little in it to be found of, or to be depended on. If all the comforts of life be vanity, life itself can have no great reality in it, to constitute a happiness for us.

(4.) That our expectations from this world are as uncertain and deceitful as our enjoyments are. Since the vanity is, it cannot be called a man what shall be, or what is after the sun? He can no more please himself with the hopes of what shall be after him, to his children and family, than with the relish of what is with him, since he can neither foresee himself, nor can any one else foretell to him, what shall be after him; nor shall he have any intelligence sent him of it when he is gone; his sons come to honour, and he knows it not; so that, look how we will, Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

CHAP. VII.

Solomon had given many proofs and instances of the vanity of this world and the things of it; now, in this chapter,

I. He recommends to us some good means proper to be used for the redress of these grievances, and the amending of ourselves against the mischief we are in danger of from these things. He proposes the following ways,

1. Care of our reputation, v. 1. 2. Seriousness, v. 2. 3. Calmness of spirit, v. 7. 4. Prudence in the management of all our affairs, v. 11. 5. Submission to the will of God in all events, accompanying ourselves to every condition, v. 13. 15. 6. A conscientious avoiding of all dangerous extremities, v. 16. 18. 7. Mildness and tenderness toward those that have been injurious to us, v. 19. 22. In short, the best way to save ourselves from the vexation which the vanity of the world creates us, is, to keep our temper, and to maintain a strict government of our passions. He laments his own iniquity, as that which was more vexatious than any of these vanities, that mystery of iniquity, the having of many wives, by which he was drawn away from God and his duty, v. 23. 29.

II. A GOOD name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth. 2. It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart.

3. Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. 4. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning: but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. 5. It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools. 6. For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool. This also is vanity.

In these verses, Solomon lays down some great truths, which seem paradoxes to the unthinking part, that is, the far greatest part, of mankind.

I. That the honour of virtue is really more valuable and desirable than all the wealth and pleasure in this world; (v. 1.) A good name is better before good ointment, so it may be read; it is preferable to it, and will be rather chosen by all that are wise. Good ointment is here put for all the profits of the earth, among the products of which oil was reckoned one of the most valuable, for all the delights of sense, for ointment and perfume, which rejoice the heart, and it is called the oil of gladness, nay, and for the highest titles of honour with which men are dignified, for kings are anointed. A good name is better than all riches; (Prov. xxii. 1.) a name for wisdom and goodness with those that are wise and good— the memory of the just; this is a good that will bring a more grateful pleasure to the mind, will give a man a larger opportunity of usefulness, and will go further and last longer, than the most precious box of ointment; for Christ paid Mary for her ointment with a good name, a name in the gospels, (Matth. xxvi. 13.) and we are sure he always pays with advantage.

II. That, all things considered, our going out of the world is a greater kindness to us than our coming into the world was; The day of death is preferable to the birth-day; though, as to others, there was joy when a child was born into the world, and where there is death, there is lamentation, yet, as to ourselves, if we have lived so as to merit a good name, the day of our death, which will put a period to our cares, and toils, and sorrows, and remove us to rest, and joy, and eternal satisfaction, is better than the day of our birth, which ushered us into a world of sin, trouble, and vanity, and vexation. We were born to uncertainty, but a good man does not die at uncertainty. The day of our birth clogged our souls with the burden of the flesh, but the day of our death will set them at liberty from that burthen.

III. That it will do us more good to go to a funeral than to go to a festival; (v. 2.) It is better to go to the house of mourning, and there weep with them that weep, than to go to the house of feasting, to a wedding, or a wake, there to rejoice with them that do rejoice. It will do us more good, and make better impressions upon us. We may lawfully go to both, as there is occasion; our Saviour both feasted at the wedding of his friend in Cana, and wept at the grave of his friend in Bethany; and we may possibly both glorify God, and do good, and get good, in the house of feasting; but, considering how we
are apt to be vain and frothy, proud and secure, and indulgent of the flesh, it is better for us to go to the house of mourning, not to see the pomp of the funeral, but to share in the sorrow of it, and to learn good morals from the dead, who is gone back from his long home, and from the mourners, who go about the streets.

The uses to be gathered from the house of mourning, are, 1. By way of information; That is the end of all men; it is the end of man as to this world, a final period to his state here, he shall return no more to his house; it is the end of all men; all have sinned, and therefore death passes upon us; we must thus be left by our friends as the mourners are, and acquaint our own decease. What is the lot of others will be ours; the cup is going round, it will come to our turn to pledge it shortly. 2. By way of admonition: The living will lay it to his heart. Will they? It were well if they would, they that are spiritually alive will lay it to heart, and, as for all the survivors, one would think they should; it is their own fault if they do not; for nothing is more easy and natural than the death of others to be put in mind of our own. Some perhaps will lay that to heart, and consider their latter end, who would not lay a good sermon to heart.

For the further proof of this, (v. 4.) he makes it the character, (1.) Of a wise man, that his heart is in the house of mourning; he is much conversant with mournful subjects; and it is both an evidence and a furtherance of his wisdom; the house of mourning is the wise man’s school, where he has learned many a good lesson, and there, where he is serious, he is in his element. When he is in the house of mourning, his heart is there, to improve the spectacles of mortality that are presented to him; nay, when he is in the house of feasting, his heart is in the house of mourning, by way of sympathy with those that are in sorrow.

(2.) It is the character of a fool, that his heart is in the house of mirth; his heart is all upon it, to be merry and jovial, his whole delight is in sport and gaiety, in merry stories, merry songs, and merry company, merry days, and merry nights. If he be at any time in the house of mourning, he is under a restraint, his heart at the same time is in the house of mirth; this is his folly, and helps to make him more and more foolish.

IV. That gravity and seriousness better become us, and are better for us, than mirth and jollity, v. 3.

The common proverb says, “An ounce of mirth is worth a pound of sorrow.” It is true, but it is putting an example in exchange for a contrary lesson; Sorrow is better than laughter, more agreeable to our present state, where we are daily sinning, and suffering ourselves, more or less, and daily seeing the sins and sufferings of others. While we are in a vale of tears, we should conform to the temper of the climate; it is also more for our advantage, for by the sadness that appears in the countenance, the heart is often made better. Note, 1. That is best for us which is best for our souls, best for the heart to be made better, though it be displeasing to sense. 2. Sadness is often a happy means of seriousness, and that affliction which is impairing to the health, estate, and family, may be improving to the mind, and make such impressions upon that, as may alter its temper very much for the better; may make it humble and meek, loose from the world, penitent for sin, and careful of duty.

Vexatio doli intellectuum—Vexation sharps the intellect. Perpetual hissing, weeping, and mourning, if I had not been made wretched. It will follow, on the contrary, that by the mirth and frolicksome-ness of the countenance the heart is made worse, more vain, carnal, sensual, and secure, more in love with the world, and more estranged from God and spiritual things, (Job xxi. 12, 14.) till it become utterly unconcerned in the afflictions of Joseph, as those, Amos vi. 5, 6. and the king and Haman, Esth. iii. 15.

We should therefore make great allowances to those that are abused, and ill dealt with, and not be severe in our censures of them, though they do not act so discreetly as they should; we know not what we should do if it were our own case.

II. He argues against it; let us not fret at the
power and success of oppressors, nor be envious at them, for,

1. The character of oppressors is very bad, so some understand, v. 7. If he that had the reputation of a wise man, becomes an oppressor, he becomes a mad man, his reason is departed from him, he is no better than a roaring lion and a raging bear, and the gifts, the bribes, he takes, the gains he seems to reap by his oppressions, do but destroy his heart, and quite extinguish the poor remains of sense and virtue in him, and therefore he is rather to be pitted than envied; let him alone, and he will act so foolishly, and drive so furiously, that in a little time he will ruin himself.

2. The issue, at length, will be good; Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof; by faith see what the end will be, and with patience expect it. When proud men begin to oppress their poor honest neighbours, they think their power will bear them out in it, they doubt not but to carry the day, and gain the point; but it will prove better in the end than it seemed in the beginning, their power will be broken, their wealth gotten by oppression will be wasted and gone, they will be humbled and brought down, and reckoned with for their injustice, and oppressed innocence will be both relieved and recompensed. Better was the end of Moses's treaty with Pharaoh, that proud oppressor, when Israel was brought forth with triumph, than the beginning of it, when the tale of bricks was doubled, and every thing looked discouraging.

He arms us against it with some necessary directions. If we would not be driven mad by oppression, but preserve the possession of our own souls,

1. We must be clothed with humility; for the proud in spirit are they that cannot bear to be trampled upon, but grow outrageous, and fret themselves, when they are hardly bested; that will break a proud man's heart which will not break a humble man's sleep. Morbid pride, therefore, and a lowly spirit will easily be reconciled to a low condition.

2. We must put on patience; bearing patience, to submit to the will of God in the affliction, and waiting patience, to expect the issue in God's due time. The patient in spirit are here opposed to the proud in spirit, for where there is humility, there will be patience; those will be thankful for any thing, who own they deserve nothing at God's hand, and the patient are said to be better than the proud, they are more easy to themselves, more acceptable to God, and more likely to see a good issue of their troubles.

3. We must govern our passion with wisdom and grace; (v. 9.) Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry; those that are hasty in their expectations, and cannot brook delays, are apt to be angry if they be not immediately gratified: **Be not angry at proud oppressors, or any that are the instruments of your trouble.** (v. 4.) Be not soon angry, not quick in apprehension or action, and resenting it, nor let your heart be to express your resentment any longer; God is not long angry:** for though anger may come into the bosom of a wise man, and pass through it as a way-faring man, it rests only in the bosom of fools, there it resides, there it remains, there it has the innermost and uppermost place, there it is hugg'd as that which is dear, and laid in the bosom, and not easily parted with. He therefore that would approve himself so wise as not to give place to the devil, must not let the sun go down upon his wrath.** Eph. iv. 26, 27.

4. We must make the best of that which is; (v. 10.) **Take it not for granted that the former days were better than these,** nor inquire what is the cause that they were so, for therein thou dost not inquire wisely, since thou inquir'st into the reason of the thing before thou art sure that the thing itself is true; and besides, thou art so much a stranger to the times past, and such an incompetent judge even of the present times, that thou canst not expect a satisfactory answer to the inquiry, and therefore thou dost not inquire wisely; may, the supposition is a foolish reflection upon the providence of God in the government of the world.** Note, (1.) It is folly to cry out of the badness of our own times, when we have more reason to cry out of the badness of our own hearts, (if men's hearts were better, the times would mend,) and when we have more reason to be thankful that they are not worse, but that even in the worst of times we enjoy many mercies, which help to make them not only tolerable, but comfortable. (2.) It is folly to cry up the goodness of former times, so as to derogate from the mercy of God to us in our own times; as if former ages had not the same things to complain of that we have, or if, perhaps, in some respects, they had not, yet as if God had been unjust and unkind to us in casting our lot in an iron age, compared with the golden ages that went before us; this arises from nothing but fretfulness and discontent, and an aptness to pick quarrels with God himself. We are not to think there is any universal decay in nature, or degeneracy in mankind, God has been always good, and men always bad; and if, in some respects, the times are now worse than they have been, perhaps, in other respects, they are better.

11. Wisdom is good with an inheritance; and by it there is profit to them that see the sun. 12. For wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it. 13. Consider the work of God; for who can make that straight which he hath made crooked? 14. In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him. 15. All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness. 16. Be not righteous over-much; neither make thyself over-wise: why shouldst thou destroy thyself? 17. Be not over-much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldst thou die before thy time? 18. It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thy hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all. 19. Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city. 20. For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not. 21. Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken, lest thou hear thy servant curse thee: 22. For oftentimes thinke thou, also were thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.

Solomon, in these verses, recommends wisdom to us as the best antidote against those distempers of mind, which we are liable to, by reason of the

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vanity and vexation of spirit that there are in the things of this world.

Here are some of the praises and the precepts of wisdom.

1. The praises of wisdom. Many things are here said, its commendation, to engage us to get and retain wisdom.

1. Wisdom is necessary to the right managing and improving of our worldly possessions; Wisdom is good with an inheritance; an inheritance is good for little without wisdom. Though a man have a great estate, though it come easily to him, by descent from his ancestors, if he have not wisdom to use it for the end for which he has it, he will also make friends in his destruction. (Prov. xvi. 9.)

Wisdom is as good as an inheritance, yea, better too, so the margin reads it; it is more our own, more our honour, will make our greater blessings, will remain longer with us, and turn to a better account.

2. It is of great advantage to us throughout the whole course of our passage through this world; by it there is real profit to them that see the sun, both to those that have it, and to their contemporaries. It is pleasant to see the sun, (ch. xi. 7.) but that pleasure is not comparable to the pleasure of wisdom. The light of this world is an advantage to us in doing the business of this world; (John xi. 9.) but to them that have that advantage, unless withal they have wisdom wherewith to manage their business, that advantage is worth little to them. The clearness of the eye of the understanding is of greater use to us than bodily eye-sight.

3. It contributes much to our safety, and is a shelter to us from the storms of trouble, and its scorching heat; it is a shadow, so the word is, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Wisdom is a defence, and siomeny, that is, as money is a defence. As a rich man makes his wealth, so a wise man makes his wisdom, a strong city. In the shadow of wisdom, (so the words run,) and in the shadow of money, there is safety. He puts wisdom and money together, to confirm what he had said before, that wisdom is good with an inheritance. Wisdom is as a wall, and money may serve as a thorn-hedge, which protects the field.

4. It is joy and true happiness to a man. This is the excellency of knowledge, divine knowledge, not only above money, but above wisdom too, human wisdom, the wisdom of this world, that it gives life to them that have it. The fear of the Lord, that is, wisdom, and that is life, it prolongs life. Men's wealth exposes their lives, but their wisdom preserves them. Now whereas wealth will not lengthen out the natural life, true wisdom will give spiritual life, the earnest of eternal life; so much better is it to get wisdom than gold!

5. It will put strength into a man, and be his strength and support; (v. 19.) Wisdom strengthens the wise, strengthens their spirits, and makes them bold and resolve, by keeping them always on sure grounds; it strengthens their interest, and gains them friends. True wisdom doeth not in the dust as their friends, and doeth not for their sakes suffer their sufferings, and against the attacks that are made upon them, more than ten mighty men, great commanders, strengthen the city. They that are truly wise and good are taken under God's protection, and are safer than if ten of the mightiest men in the city, men of the greatest power and interest, should undertake to secure them, and become their patrons.

11. Some of the precepts of wisdom, that wisdom will be of so much advantage to us.

1. We must have an eye of God and lay his hand in every thing that befalls us; (v. 13.) consider the work of God. To silence our complaints concerning cross events, let us consider the hand of God in them, and not open our mouths against that which is his doing; let us look upon the disposal of our condition and all the circumstances of it as the work of God, and consider it as the product of his eternal counsel, which is fulfilled in every thing that befalls us. (1 Cor. x. 13.) God is wise, just, and good, and there is an admirable beauty and harmony in his works, and all will appear, at last, to have been for the best. Let us therefore give him the glory of all his works concerning us, and study to answer his designs in them. Consider the work of God, as that which we cannot make any alteration of. Who can make that straight which he has made crooked? Who can change the nature of things from what is settled by the God of nature? If he set a hedge too high, will he put a place? And if he hedge up the way with thorns, who can get forward? If desulting judgments go forth with commission, who can put a stop to them? Since therefore we cannot mend God's work, we ought to make the best of it.

We must accommodate ourselves to the various dispensations of Providence, that respect us, and do the work and duty of the day in its day, v. 14.

Observe,

1. How the appointments and events of Providence are counterchanged. In this world, at the same time, some are in prosperity, others are in adversity; the same persons, at one time, are in great prosperity, at another time, in great adversity; nay, one event prosperous, and another grievous, may occur to the same person at the same time; both come from the hand of God, out of his mouth both evil and good, (Isa. xlii. 26.) and he has set the one over against the other, so that there is a very short and easy passage between them, and they are a foil to each other; day and night, summer and winter, are set the one over against the other, that in prosperity we may rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and in adversity may weep as though we wept not, for we may plainly see the one from the other, and quickly exchange the one for the other; and it is to the end that man may find nothing after him, that he may not be at any certainty concerning future events, or the continuance of the present scene, but may live in a dependence upon Providence, and be ready for whatever happens. Or, that man may find nothing in the word of God which he can pretend to amend.

2. How we must comply with the will of God, in events of both kinds. Our religion, in general, must be the same in all conditions, but the particular exercises of wisdom and life must, according to the outward condition does, that we may walk after the Lord. [1.] In a day of prosperity, (and it is but a day,) we must be joyful, be in good, be doing good, and getting good, maintain a holy cheerfulness, and serve the Lord with gladness of heart in the abundance of all things. "When the world smiles, rejoice in God, and praise him, and let the joy of the Lord be thy strength." [2.] In time of adversity, (and that is not in all times, too,) consider. When times of affliction are proper times for consideration, then God calls to consider, (Hag. i. 5.) then, if ever, we are disposed to it, and no good will be gotten by the affliction without it. We cannot answer God's end in afflicting us, unless we consider why and wherefore he contends with us. And con-
sideration is necessary also to our comfort and support under our afflictions.

3. We must not be offended at the greatest prosperity of wicked people, nor at the smallest calamities that may befall the godly in this life, v. 15. Wisdom will teach us how to construe those dark chapters of Providence, so as to reconcile them with the wisdom, holiness, goodness, and faithfulness of God. We must not think it strange; Solomon tells the reader of this kind in his time; "All things have been in the days of my vanity; I have taken notice of all that passed, and this has been as surprising and perplexing to me as anything." Observe, Though Solomon was so wise and great a man, yet he calls the days of his life the days of his vanity, for the best days on earth are so, in comparison with the days of eternity. Or perhaps he refers to the days of his apostasy from God, (those were indeed the days of his vanity,) and refers upon himself as one thing that required him to infidelity, or, at least, to indifference in religion, that he saw just men perishishing in their righteousness, that the greatest piety would not secure men from the greatest afflictions by the hand of God, nay, and sometimes did expose men to the greatest injuries from the hands of wicked and unreasonable men. Naboth perished in his righteousness, and Abel long before. He had also seen men prolonging their lives in their wickedness; they live, and become old, yea, and are mighty in power; (Job xxii. 7.) by their fraud and violence they screen themselves from the sword of justice. "Now, in this, consider the work of God, and let it not be a stumbling-block to thee." The calamities of the righteous are preparing them for their future blessedness, and the wicked, while their days are prolonged, are but ripening for ruin. There is a judgment to come, which will rectify this seeming irregularity, to the glory of God, and the full satisfaction of all his people, and we must wait with patience till then.

4. Wisdom will be of use both for caution to saints in their way, and for a check to sinners in their way.

(1.) As to saints, it will engage them to proceed and persevere in their righteousness, and yet will be an admonition to them to take heed of running into extremes; A just man may perish in his righteousness, (v. 14.) while that zeal which is directed to the defense and rash zeal, pull trouble upon his own head, and then reflect upon Providence as dealing hardly with him; (v. 16.) "Be not righteous over-much. In the acts of righteousness, govern thyself by the rules of prudence, and be not transported, no not by a zeal for God, into any intemperate heats or passions, or any practices unbefitting the character, or dangerous to thine interests. Note, There may be over-doing in well-doing. Self-deny and mortification of the flesh are good; but if we prejudice our health by it, and unfit ourselves for the service of God, we are righteous over-much. To reprove those that offend, is good, but to cast that pearl before swine, who will turn again and rend us, is to be righteous over-much. "Make not thyself overs Wise; be not opinionative, and conceited of thine own abilities; set not up for a dictator, nor pretend to give law, and give judgment upon, all about thee; set not up for a judge, that is said and done, nor busy thyself in other men's matters; as if thou knewest every thing, and couldst do any thing. Why shouldst thou destroy thyself as fools often do by meddling with strife that belongeth not to you? Why shouldst thou provoke authority, and run thyself into the briers, by needless conti dictions, and by going out of thy sphere to correct what is amiss? Beware as serpents, beware of men." (2.) As to sinners, let it not prevail with them to forsake their sins, yet it may restrain them from growing very exorbitant. It is true, there is a wicked man that pro longs his life in his wickedness; (v. 15.) but let none say, they are they may safely be as wicked as they will; no, be not over-much wicked, (v. 17.) do not run to an excess of riot. Many that will not be wrought upon by the fear of God, and a dread of the terrors of hell, to avoid all sin, will yet, if they have ever so little consideration, avoid these acts that are against their health and estate, and expect them to public justice. And Solomon here makes use of these considerations. "The magistrate bears not the sword in vain, has a quick eye and a heavy hand, and is a terror to evil-doers; therefore be afraid of coming within his reach, be not so foolish as to lay thyself open to the law, why shouldst thou die before thy time? Solomon, in these two cautions, had probably a special regard to some of his own subjects that were dissatisfied to his government of themselves meditating the revolt which was made immediately after his death. Some, it may be, quarreled with the sins of their governor, and made that their pretence; to them he says, Be not righteous over-much. Others were weary of the strictness of the government, and the temple-service, and that made them desirous to set up another king; but he frightens both from their seditious practices with the sword of justice, and others likewise." A just man may perish in his righteousness, they that are of a seditious spirit; from meddling with them that were given to change.

5. Wisdom will direct us in the mean between two extremes, and keep us always in the way of our duty, which we shall find a plain and safe way; (v. 18.) "It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this, wisdom, this 'care, not to run thyself into snares; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand, never slacken thy diligence, nor abate thy resolution to maintain a due decorum, and a good government of thyself. But such as are of a seditious spirit, they must carefully manage their headsstrong passions must be held from hurrying thee into one mischief or other, as the horse and mule that have no understanding; and, having taken hold of it, keep thine hand, and withdraw not thine hand from it, for if thou do, the liberty that they will take will be as the forthing of water, and thou wilt not easily recover thy hold again. Be conscientious, and yet be cautious, and to this exercise thyself. Govern thyself steadily by the principles of God's word, for, God warns thee, if thou do fears God shall come forth out of all these straits and difficulties which they run themselves into that cast off that fear. The fear of the Lord is that wisdom which will serve as a clue to extricate us out of the most intricate labyrinths. Honesty is the best policy. They that truly fear God have but one end to serve, and therefore act steadily. God has likewise promised to direct those that fear him, and to order their steps not only in the right way, but out of every dangerous way, Ps. xxxviii. 23, 24.

6. Wisdom will teach us how to conduct ourselves in reference to the sins and offences of others, which commonly contribute more than any thing else to the disturbance of our repose, which contract both guilt and grief.

(1.) Wisdom teaches us not to expect that those we deal with should be faultless; we ourselves are not so, no other. True, there is the wise as much as any thing, and arms them against the danger that arises from provocation, (v. 19.) so that they are not put into disorder by it; they consider that those that they have dealings and conversation with are not incoramate angels, but sinfull sons and daughters of Adam, even the best are so, that such as there is a just man upon earth, that doth good, and sinneth not, v. 20. Solomon has this in his prayer, (1 Kings viii. 46.) in his proverbs, (Prov. xx. 9.) and here in his preaching.
It is the character of just men, that they do good; for the tree is known by its fruits. [2.] The best that do good, yet cannot be expected there are defects, no, not one thing of which they are perfectly free from sin: but many of those that are sanctified are not sinless. None that live on this side heaven live without sin; if we say, We have not sinned, we deceive ourselves. [3.] We sin even in our doing good; there is something defective, nay something offensive, in our best performances. That which, for the substance of it, is good, and pleasing to God, is not so well done as it should be, and omissions in duty are sins, as well as omissions in good. It is well to see what the earth that is subject thus to sin and infirmity; the spirits of just men, when they are got clear of the body, are made perfect in holiness, (Heb. xii. 23.) and in heaven they do good, and sin not.

(2.) Wisdom teaches us not to be quick-sighted, or quick-scented, in apprehending and resenting affronts; but to wink at many of the injuries that are done us, and act as if we did not see them; (v. 21.) "Take no heed to all words that are spoken, set not thy heart to them; vex not thyself at men's peevish reflections upon thee, or suspicions of thee, but be as a deaf man that hears not; (Ps. xxxviii. 13, 14.) be not solicitous or inquisitive to know what people say of thee; if they speak well of thee, it will feed thy pride, if ill, it will stir up thine passion; see therefore that thou approve thyself to God and thine own conscience, and then heed not what men say of thee.

Hearteners, we say, seldom hear good of themselves; if thou heed every word that is spoken, perhaps thou wilt hear thine own servant curse thee, when he thinks thou dost not hear him; thou wilt be told that he does, and perhaps told falsely, if thou have thine ear open to tale-bearers, Prov. xix. 12. Nay, perhaps it is true, and thou mayest stand behind the curtain, and hear it thyself, mayest hear thyself not only blamed and despised, but cursed, the worst said of thee, and wished to thee, and that by a servant, one of the meanest rank, of the meanest degree, thy own servant, who should be an advocate for thee, and protect thy good name, as well as thy other interests; perhaps it is a servant thou hast been kind to, and yet he requires thee thus ill: and this will vex thee, thou hadst better not have heard it. Perhaps it is a servant thou hast wronged, and dealt unjustly with, and thought he dares not tell thee so, he tells others so, and tells God so, and then thine own conscience will join with him in the reproach, which will make it much more uncomfortable. Thou standest at the mercy even of the meanest. And perhaps there is a great deal more evil said of us than we think there is, and by those from whom we little expected it. But we do not consult our own repose, no, nor our credit, though we pretend to be jealous of it, if we take notice of every word that is spoken diminishingly of us; it is easier to pass by twenty such affronts than to avenge one.

(3.) Wisdom is in midst of our own faults; (p. 22.) "Be not enraged at those that speak ill of thee, or wish ill to thee; for oftentimes, in that case, if thou retire into thyself, thy own conscience will tell thee that thou thyself hast cursed others, spoken ill of them, and wished ill to them, and thou art paid in thine own coin." Note, When any affront or injury is done us, it is reasonable to examine our consciences, whether we have not done the same, or been guilty of what is accused to others. If, upon reflection, we find we have, we must take the new repentance for it, must justify God, and make use of it to qualify our own resentments. If we be truly angry with ourselves, as we ought to be, for backbiting and censuring others, we shall be the less angry with others for backbiting and censuring us. We must show all meekness towards all men, for we ourselves were sometimes foolish, Tit. iii. 2, 3. Matth. vii. 1, 2. James iii. 1, 2.

All this have I proved by wisdom I said, I will be wise; but it was far from me. 24. That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out? I applied my heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness: 26. And I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whose pleasure God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her. 27. Behold, this have I found, (saith the Preacher,) counting one by one, to find out the account. 28. Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found: but a woman among all those have I not found. 29. Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

Solomon had hitherto been proving the vanity of the world, and its utter insufficiency to make men happy; now here he comes to show the vileness of sin, and its certain tendency to make men miserable; and this, as the former, he proves from his own experience, and it was a dear-bought experience. He is here, more than any where in all this book, putting on the habit of a penitent. He reviews what he had been discoursing of already, and tells us that what he had said was what he knew, and was well assured of, and what he resolved to stand by; All this have I proved by wisdom, v. 23. Now here, 1. He owns and laments the deficiencies of his wisdom. He had wisdom enough to see the vanity of the world, and to experience that that would not make a portion for a soul; but, when he came to inquire further, he found himself at a loss, his eye was too dim, his line was too short, and though he discovered this, there were many other things which he could not prove by wisdom.

1. His searches were industrious. God had given him a capacity for knowledge above any; he set up with a great stock of wisdom; he had the largest opportunities of improving himself that ever any man had. And, (1.) He resolved, if it were possible, to gain his point; I said, I will be wise; he earnestly desired it as highly valuable, he fully designed it as that which he looked upon to be attainable, he determined not to sit down short of it, Prov. xviii. 1. Many are not wise, because they never said they would be so, being indifferent to it; but Solomon, it is plain for the most part, was always ambitious of wisdom. Whereas, if he made trial of unusual pleasures, he still thought to acquaint his heart with wisdom, (ch. ii. 3.) and not to be diverted from the pursuits of that; but perhaps he did not find it so easy a thing as he imagined, to keep up his correspondence with wisdom, while he addicted himself so much to his pleasures. However, his will was good; he said, I will be wise. And that was not all, (2.) He resolved to spare no pains; (v. 25.) "I applied my heart, and my heart turned every way, I left no stone unturned, no means untried, to compass what I had in view. I set myself to know, and to search, and to seek out, wisdom, to accomplish myself in all useful learning, philosophy, and divinity." If he had not thus closely applied himself to study, it had been but a jest.
for him to say, I will be wise; for those that will attain the end must take the right way. Solomon was a man much given to quickness, and yet, instead of using that (with many) as an excuse for slothfulness, he pressed it upon himself as an inducement to diligence, and the easier he found it to master a good notion, the more intent he would be that he might be master of the more good notions. Those that have the best parts should take the greatest pains, as those that have the largest stock should trade most. He applies it to his little ones, that not only to know what lay hid on the surface, but to search what lay hid out of the common view and road; nor did he search a little way, and then give it over, because he did not present find what he searched for, but he sought it out, went to the bottom of it; nor did he aim to know things only, but the reason of things, that he might give an account of them.

2. Yet his success was not answerable or satisfying; I said, I will be wise, but I am a far from me, I could not find out. After all, This only I know, that I know nothing, and the more I know, the more I see there is to be known, and the more sensible I am of my own ignorance. That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out? He means God himself, his counsels and his works; when he searched into these, he presently found himself puzzled and run astray; he could not order his speech by reason of darkness. It is higher than heaven, and deeper than hell. But he had taught, the more is nothing which we have to do which is not plain and easy; the word is nigh us; (Prov. viii. 9.) but there is a great deal which we would wish to know, which is far off, and exceeding deep, among the secret things which belong not to us. And, probably, it is a culpable ignorance and error that Solomon here laments, that his pleasures, and the many amusements of his court, had blinded his eyes, and cast a mist before them, so that he could not attain to true wisdom, as he designed.

II. He owns and laments the instances of his folly, in which he had exceeded, as, in wisdom, he came short. Here is,

1. His inquiry concerning the evil of sin. He applied his heart to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness. Observe, (1.) The knowledge of sin is a difficult knowledge, and hard to be attained; Solomon took pains for it. Sin has many disguises with which it covers itself, as in innocence and sin, and it is very hard to strip it of these, and to see it in its true nature and colours. (2.) It is necessary to our repentance for sin, that we be acquainted with the evil of it, as it is necessary to the cure of a disease, to know its nature, causes, and malignity. St. Paul therefore valued the divine law, because it discovered sin to him, Rom. vii. 7. Solomon, who, in the days of his folly, had set his wits on work to invent pleasures, and sharpen them, and take advantage at it, now in the midst of seeing now that God had opened his eyes, is as industrious to find out the aggravations of sin, and so to put an edge upon his repentance. Ingenious sinners should be ingenious penitents, and wit and learning, among the other spoils of the strong man armed, should be divided by the Lord Jesus. (3.) It well becomes penitents to say the worst they can of sin, for the truth is, we can never speak ill enough of it. Solomon here, for sin, says, he that sinneth, and liveth, it is not by any means to be numbered. Of the sickness of sin; that is it which lays the greatest stress upon this inquiry, to know the wickedness of folly; by which perhaps he means his own iniquity, the sin of uncleanness, for that was commonly called folly in Israel, Gen. xxxix. 9. Or it may be taken there generally for all sin. Many extenuate their sins with this, They were folly; but Solomon sees wickedness in those follies; an offence to God, and a wrong to conscience; This is wickedness, Jer. iv. 18. Zech. v. 8. [2.] Of the folly of sin; for there is a wickedness in folly, so there is a folly in wickedness, even foolishness and madness. Wilful sinners are fools and madmen; they act contrary both to right reason and to their true interest.

2. The great fruit of this inquiry. (1.) He now discovered more than ever of the evil of that great sin which he himself had been guilty of, the loving of many strange women; (1 Kings xi.) this is that which he here most feelingly laments, and in very pathetic expressions. (2.) He found the remembrance of the sin very grievous. How oh heavy did it lie upon his conscience, what an agony was he in upon the thought of it; the wickedness, the foolishness, the madness, that he had been guilty of! I find it more bitter than death. As great a terror seized him, in reflection upon it, as if he had been under the arrest of death. Thus do they that have their sins set in order before them by a sound conviction, cry out against them; they are bitter as gall, nay, bitter as death, to all true penitents. Uncleanness is a sin that is, in its own nature, more paining than death itself. Death may be made honourable and comfortable, but uncleanness can be no other than shame and pain. Prov. v. 9, 11. [2.] He had found the temptation to the sin very dangerous, and that it was extremely difficult, and next to impossible, for those that ventured into the temptation to escape the sin, and for those that had fallen into the sin to recover themselves by repentance. The heart of the adulterous woman is snares and nets; she plays her game to ruin souls with as much art and subtlety as ever any fewer used to do in a small bird. The methods such sinners use are both deceiving and destroying as snares and nets are. The unwary souls are enticed into them by the bait of pleasure, which they greedily catch at, and promise themselves satisfaction in; but they are taken before they are aware, and taken irrecoverably. Her hands are as bands, with which, under colour of fond embraces, she holds these fast that she has seized; they are held in the cords of the own sin, and are not to be got out. Thus do they that live in uncleanness and lasciviousness, Rom. vi. 12. Lust gets strength by being gratified, and it is more prevalent. [3.] He reckoned it a great instance of God's favour to any man, if by his grace he has kept him from this sin; He that pleases God shall escape from her, shall be preserved either from being tempted to this sin, or from being overcome by the temptation. Those that are kept from this sin, must acknowledge it is God that keeps them, and not any strength or resolution of their own, must acknowledge it is God. St. Paul, as aationToken for you, the blessing of grace, sufficient for them, to arm them against this sin, must be careful to please God in every thing, by keeping his ordinances, Lev. xviii. 30. [4.] He reckoned it a sin, that is, as sore a punishment of other sins as a man can fall under in this life: The sinner shall be taken by her. First, Those that allow themselves in other sins, by which their minds are blinded, and their consciences debauched, are the more easily drawn to this. Secondly, It is just with God to leave those who fall into it. See Rom. i. 26, 28. Eph. iv. 18, 19. Thus does Solomon, as it were, with horror, bless himself from the sin in which he had plunged himself.

(2.) He now discovered more than ever of the general corruption of man's nature. He runs up that stream to the fountain, as his father had done before him, on a like occasion; (Ps. lxi. 5.) Behold, I was shapen in iniquity.
Ecclesiastes, 12, 8.

He endeavoured to find out the number of his actual transgressions; (v. 27.) "Behold, this I have found, I thought I could have understood my errors, and have brought in a complete list, at least, of the heads of them; I thought I could have counted them one by one, and have found out the account." He desired to find them out as a penitent, that he might the more particularly acknowledge them; and, generally, the more particular we are in the sense of our sins, the more comfort we have in the sense of the pardon; he desired it also, as a preacher, that he might the more particularly give warning to others. Note, A sound conviction of one sin will put us upon inquiring into the whole confederacy; and the more we see amiss in ourselves, the more diligently we should inquire further into our own faults, that what we see not may be discovered to us, Job xxxix. 32.

[2.] He soon found himself at home, and perceived that they were innumerable; (v. 28.) "which yet my soul seeks, I am still counting, and still desirous to find out the account, but I find not, I cannot count them all, nor find out the account of them to perfection. I still make new and amazing discoveries of the desperate wickedness that there is in my own heart," Jer. viii. 19, 10. Who can know it? Who can understand his errors? Who can tell how often he offendeth? Ps. xix. 12. He finds that if God enters into judgment with him, and accounts his actions, he is not able to answer for one of a thousand, Job ix. 3. This he illustrates, by comparing the corruption of his own heart and life with the corruption of the world, where he scarcely found one good man among a thousand, nay, among all the thousand wives and concubines which he had, he did not find one good woman; "Even so," says he, "when I come to recollect and review my own thoughts, words, and actions, and all the complexions of my character, perhaps among those that were many I might find one good among a thousand, and that was all, the rest even of these had some corruption or other in them." He found (v. 20.) that he had sinned even in doing good; but for those that were effeminate, that pissed in the indulgence of his pleasures, they were all naught; in that part of his life there did not appear so much as one of a thousand good. In our hearts and lives there appear good acts, and good intentions; but all is not well. Doubtless, this is not intended as a censure of the female sex in general; it is probable that there have been, and are, more good women than good men; (Acts xvii. 4, 12.) he merely alludes to his own sad experience; and perhaps there may be this further in it, he does, in his proverbs, warn us against the snares both of the evil man and of the strange woman, Prov. ii. 12, 16. v. 14. v. 3. Now he had observed the ways and works of the evil man, and seen to be more deceitful and dangerous than those of the evil men, that it was more difficult to discover their frauds and elude their snares; and therefore he compares sin to an adulteress, (Prov. ix. 13.) and perceives he can no more find out the deceitfulness of his own heart than he can that of a strange woman, whose ways are moveable; that thou canst not know them.

[3.] He therefore runs up all the streams of actual transgression to the fountain of original corruption, and the degeneracy from his primitive rectitude; (v. 29.) "Lo, this only have I found; when I could not find out the particulars, yet the gross account was manifest enough; it is as clear as the sun, that man is corrupt and revolted, and is not as he was made." Observe, First, How man was made by the wisdom and goodness of God; God made man upright; Adam the first man, so the Chaldee. God made him and he made him upright, such a one as he should be; being made a rational creature, he was, in all respects, such a one as a rational creature should be, upright, without any irregularity, one could find no fault in him; he was upright, determined to God only, in opposition to the many inventions which he afterwards turned aside to. Man, as he came out of God's hands, was (as we may say) a little picture of his Maker, upright, good and upright.

Secondly, How he was marred, and, in effect, unmade, by his own folly and badness; They have sought out many inventions; they, our first parents, or the whole race, all in general, and every one in particular. They have sought out great inventions, so some; inventions to become great as gods, Gen. iii. 5. Or, the inventions of the great ones, so some; of the angels that fell, the Magnifies, Or, many inventions. Man, instead of resting in what God had found for him, was for seeking to mend himself, like the prodigal that left his father's house, to seek his fortune. Instead of being for one, he was for many; instead of being for God's institutions, he was for his own inventions. The law of his creation would not hold him, but he would be at his own disposal, and follow his own sentiments and inclinations. Yain man would be wise, wiser than his Maker; is giddy and unsettled in his pursuits, and therefore has many inventions. That he forsakes God, wanders endlessly. Men's actual transgressions are multiplied. Solomon could not find out how many they are; (v. 28.) but he found they were very many. Many kinds of sins, and those often repeated; they are more than the hairs on our heads, Ps. xi. 12.

Chap. VIII.

Solomon, in this chapter, comes to recommend wisdom to us, as the most powerful anludate against both the temptations and vexations that arise from the vanities of the world. Here is, 1. The benefit and praise of wisdom, v. 1-7. Some particular instances of wisdom prescried to us. 1. We must keep in due subjection to the government God has set over us, v. 2. 2. We must get ready for sudden evils, and especially for sudden death, v. 6. 3. We must arm ourselves against the temptations of the wicked, v. 7. 4. We shall think it strange, v. 9, 10. The impuunity of oppressors makes them more daring, (v. 11.) but in the issue it will be well with the righteous and ill with the wicked; (v. 18, 19.) and therefore the present prosperity of the wicked and afflictions of the righteous ought not to be a stumbling-block to us, v. 14. 4. We must cheerfully use the gifts of God's providence, v. 15. We must with an entire satisfaction acquiesce in the will of God, and, not pretending to find the bottom, we must humbly and silently adore the depth of his unsearchable counsels, being assured they are all wise, just, and good, v. 16, 17.

1. Who is as the wise man? and who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? a man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the boldness of his face shall be changed. 2. I counsel thee to keep the king's commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God. 3. Be not hasty to go out of his sight: stand not in an evil thing; for he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him. 4. Where the word of a king is, there is power; and who may say unto him, What doest thou? 5. Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing; and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment.

Here is,

1. An encomium of wisdom, (v. 1.) that is, of
true piety, guided in all its exercises by prudence and discretion. The wise man is the good man, that knows God, and glorifies him, knows himself, and does well for himself; his wisdom is a great happiness to him; for,

1. It advances him above his neighbours, and makes him more excellent than they; Who is as the wise man? Not, Heavenly wisdom will make a man an incomparable man. No man without grace, though he be learned, or noble, or rich, is to be compared with a man that has true grace, and is therefore accepted of God.

2. It makes him useful among his neighbours, and very serviceable to them; Who but the wise man knows the interpretation of a thing, understands the times and the events of them, and their critical junctures, so as to direct what Israel ought to do? 1 Chron. xii. 32.

It makes him a joy in the eyes of his friends; it makes his face to shine, as Moses's did when he came down from the mount; it puts honour upon a man, and a lustre on his whole conversation, makes him to be regarded and taken notice of, and gains him respect; (as Job xxix. 7, &c.) it makes him lovely and amiable, and the darling and blessing of his country; The strength of his face, the sorrness and severity of his countenance, (so some understand, and make this clause, should be changed by it into that which is here so much obliged. Even whose natural temper is rough and morose, by wisdom are strangely altered, they become mild and gentle, and learn to look pleasant.

3. It imbolds a man against his adversaries, their attempts, and their scorn; The boldness of his face shall be doubled by wisdom; it will add very much to his courage in maintaining his integrity, when he not only has an honest cause to plead, but by wisdom knows how to urge it, and where to find the interpretation of a thing. He shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with his enemy in the gate.

II. A particular instance of wisdom pressed upon us, and that is, subjection to authority, and a dutiful and peaceable perseverance in our allegiance to the government which Providence has set over us. Observe,

How the duty of subjects is here described:

1. We must be observant of the laws. In all those things wherein the civil power is to interpose, whether legislative or judicial, we ought to submit to its order and constitutions; I counsel thee; it may as well be supplied, I charge thee, not only as a prince but as a preacher: he might do both; "I recommend it to thee as a piece of wisdom; I say, whatever those say that are given to change, keep the king's commandments; whoever the sovereign power is lodged, be subject to it. Observe the mouth of a king," (so the phrase is,) "say as he says, do as he bids thee; let his word be a law, or rather let the law be his word." Some understand the following clause as a limitation of this obedience; "Keep the king's commandments, yet so as to have a regard to the oath of God, so as to keep a good conscience, and not to violate thy obligations to God, which are prior and superior to thine obligations to the king;" but that is only near the edge that are Caesar's, but so as to reserve pure and entire to God the things that are his.

2. We must not be forward to find fault with the public administration, or quarrel with every thing that is not just according to our mind, nor quit our post of service under the government, and throw it up, upon every discontent; (v. 3.) "Be not hasty to go out of his sight, when he is displeased at this; (ch. x. 4.) or when thou art displeased with him; fly not off in a passion, nor entertain such jealousies of him as will tempt thee to renounce the court, or forsake the kingdom." Solomon's subjects, as soon as his head was laid low, went directly contrary to this rule, when, upon the rough answer which Rehoboam gave them, they were hasty to go out of his sight, would not take time for second thoughts, nor admit proposals of accommodation, but cried, To your tents, O Israel. "There may perhaps be a just cause for to go out of his sight; but be not hasty to do it, act with great deliberation.

3. We must not presume to try to show what is wrong, for it is shown us; "Stand not in an evil thing; in any offence thou hast given to thy prince, humble thyself, and do not justify thyself, for that will make the offence much more offensive. In any ill design thou hast, upon some discontent, conceived against thy prince, do not proceed in it; but if thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or hast thought evil, lay thy hand upon thy mouth." Prov. xxx. 32. We shall find, The wise man doth not argue into an evil thing, yet we must not stand in it, but recede from it as soon as it appears to us to be evil.

4. We must prudently accommodate ourselves to our opportunities, both for our own relief, if we think ourselves wronged, and for the redress of public grievances; A wise man's heart discerns both time and judgment; (v. 3.) it is the wisdom of subjects, in applying themselves to their prince, to consider both at what season, and in what manner, they may do it best and most effectually, to pacify his anger, obtain his favour, or obtain the revocation of any grievous measure prescribed. Either, in dealing with Ahasesurus, took a deal of pains to discern both time and judgment, and it sped accordingly. This may be taken as a general rule of wisdom, that every thing should be well timed; and our enterprises are then likely to succeed, when we embrace the exact opportunity for the man's prosperity.

2. What arguments are here used to engage us to be subject to the higher powers; they are much the same with those which St. Paul uses, Rom. xiii. 1, &c.

(1) We must needs be subject, for conscience-sake, and that is the most powerful principle of subject; we must be subject because of the oath of God, the oath of allegiance, which we have taken to be faithful to their master, to their king, and to the people as the king and the people, 2 Chron. xxiii. 16. David made a covenant, or contract, with the elders of Israel, though he was king by divine designation, 1 Chron. xi. 3. "Keep the king's commandments, for he has sworn to rule thee in the fear of God, and thou hast sworn, in that fear, to be faithful to him." It is called the oath of God, because he is a Witness to it, and will avenge the violation of it.

(2) For wrath's sake; because of the sword which the prince bears, and the power he is intrusted with, which make him very formidable; He does whatsoever pleases him; he has a great authority, and a great ability to support that authority; (v. 4.) Where the word of a king is, giving orders to seize a man, there is power; there are many that will execute his orders, which makes the wrath of a king, or supreme government, like the roaring of a lion, and like messengers of death. Who may safely face him, What dread thou! He that contemplates him, does it at his peril. Kings will not bear to have their orders disputed, but expect they should be obeyed. In short, it is dangerous contending with sovereignty, and what many have repented. A subject is an unequall match for a prince. He may command me, who has legs at command.

(3) For the sake of our own comfort; Whoso keeps the commandment, and lives a quiet and peaceful life, shall feel no evil thing; to which both of the apostle answers, (Rom. xiii. 3.) Will thou not then be afraid of the power of the king? Do that
which is good, as becomes a dutiful and loyal subject, and knowledge, ordinarily, have praise of the same. He that does no ill, shall feel no ill, and needs fear none.

6. Because to every purpose there is time and judgment; therefore the misery of man is great upon him. 7. For he knoweth not that which shall be: for who can tell him when it shall be? 8. There is no man that hath power over the spirit, to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death; and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it.

Solomon had said, (v. 5.) that a wise man’s heart discerns time and judgment; a man’s wisdom will go a great way, by the blessing of God, in moral prognostications; but here he shows that few have that wisdom, and that even the wisest may be surprised by a calamity which they had not any foresight of, and therefore it is our wisdom to expect, and prepare for, sudden changes. Observe,

1. All the events concerning us, with the exact time of them, are determined and appointed in the counsel and foreknowledge of God, and all in wisdom; To every purpose there is a time prefixed, and it is the best time, for it is time and judgment, time appointed both in wisdom and righteousness; the appointment is not chargeable with folly or iniquity.

2. We are very much in the dark concerning future events, and the time and season of them; Man knoweth not that which shall be himself, and who can tell him when or how it shall be? v. 7. It cannot either be foreseen by him, or foretold to him; the stars cannot foretell a man what shall be, nor any of the arts of divination; God has, in wisdom, concealed from us the knowledge of future events, that we may be always ready for changes.

3. It is our great unhappiness and misery, that, because we cannot foresee an evil, we know not how to avoid it, or guard against it, and, because we are not aware of the proper successful season of actions, therefore we lose our opportunities, and miss our way; Because to every purpose there is but one way, one method, one proper opportunity, therefore the misery of man is great upon him; because it is hard to hit that, and it is a thousand to one but he misses it. Most of the miseries men labour under had been prevented, if they could have been foreseen, and the happy time discovered to avoid them. Men are miserable, because they are not sufficiently sagacious and attentive.

4. Whatever other evils may be avoided, we are all under a fatal necessity of dying, v. 8. (1.) When the soul is required, it must be resigned, and whatsoever purpose to dispute it, either by arms or arguments, ourselves, or by any friend; There is no man that has power over his own spirit to retain it, when it is summoned to return to God who gave it. It cannot fly any where out of the jurisdiction of death, nor find any place where its rights do not run. It cannot abscond so as to escape death’s eye, though it is hid from the eyes of all living. A man has no power to adjourn the day of his death, nor can he by prayers or breathes, nor by no bulwark be taken, no es.......* protection, or impudence, f allowed. We have not power over the spirit of a friend, to retain that; the prince, with all his authority, cannot prolong the life of the most valuable of his subjects, nor the physician with his * Excuse - Ed. 1 Respite.—Ed. force, nor the orator, with his eloquence, nor the best saint, with his intercessions. The stroke of death can by no means be put by, when our days are determined, and the hour appointed us is come.

(2.) Death is an enemy that we must all enter the lists with, sooner or later; There is no discharge in that war, no dismission from it, either of the men of business, or of the faint-hearted, as there was among the Jews, Deut. xx. 5. 8. While we live, we are struggling with death, and we shall never put off the harness till we put off the body, never till the discharge till death has obtained the mastery; the youngest is not released as a fresh-water soldier, nor the oldest as miles emeritus—a soldier whose merits have entitled him to a discharge. Death is a battle that must be fought; There is no sending to that war, so some read it; no substituting another to muster for us, no champion admitted to fight for us; we must ourselves engage, and are concerned to provide accordingly, as for a battle.

3. Men’s wickedness, by which they often evade or outface the justice of the prince, cannot secure them from the after effects of death, nor can the most obstinate sinner harden his heart against those terrors. Though he strengthen himself ever so much in his wickedness, (Ps. lii. 7.) death will be too strong for him; the most subtle wickedness cannot outwit death, nor the most impudent wickedness outlive death. Nay, the wickedness which men give themselves to, will be so far from delivering them from death, that it will deliver them up to death.

9. All this I have seen, and applied my heart unto every work that is done under the sun: there is a time wherein one man ruleth over another to his own hurt. 10. And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done. This is also vanity. 11. Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. 12. Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him: 13. But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.

Solomon, in the beginning of the chapter, had warned us against having any thing to do with sedition subjects; here, in these verses, he encourages us, in reference to the mischief of tyrannical and oppressive power, such as he had complained of before, ch. iii. 16.—iv. 1.

1. He had observed many such rulers, v. 9. In the serious views and reviews he had taken of the children of men and their state, he had observed that many a time one man rules over another to his hurt; that is, (1.) To the hurt of the ruled, many understand it so; whereas they ought to be God’s ministers unto their subjects for their good, (Rem. xi. 4.) to administer justice, and to preserve the public peace and order. this judge should employ their power for their hurt, to invade their property, encroach upon their liberty, and patronize the acts of injustice. It is sad with a people, when these that should protect their religion and rights aim at the destruction of both. (2.) To the hurt of the rulers, so we renede-
11, to their own hurt, to the feeding of their pride and covetousness, the gratifying of their passion and revenge, and so, to the filling up of the measure of their sins, and the hastening and aggravating of their ruin. 

Agno agenda reputatis—What hurt men do to others, will return, in the end, to their own hurt. 

2. He had observed them to prosper and flourish in the abuse of their power; (v. 10.) I saw those wicked rulers come and go from the place of the Holy One, being acquitted, and return in peace from the place of judicature, (which is called the place of the Holy One, because the judgment is the Lord's, (Deut. i. 17.) and he judges among the gods, (Ps. lxxii. 1.) and is with them in the judgment, (2 Chron. xix. 6.) and they continued all their days in office, never reckoned with for their mal-administration, but died in honour, and were buried magnificently; their commissions were durams vitae—during life, and not quasi ad suum finem, during good behaviour; and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done; their wicked practices were not remembered against them to their reproach and infamy when they were gone. Or rather, it denotes the vanity of their dignity and power, for that is his remark upon it in the close of the verse; This is also vanity. They are proud of their wealth, and power, and honour, because they sit in the place of gods. (Job xii. 20.) Man is in the dust; (1.) Their bodies from being buried in the dust; I saw them laid in the grave; and their pomp, though it attended them thither, could not descend after them, Ps. xlix. 17. (2.) Nor their names from being buried in oblivion; for they were forgotten, as if they had never been. 

3. He had observed that their prosperity hardened them in their wickedness, v. 11. It is true of all sorts in general, an unfeigned, unexampled hardness of wicked rulers, that, because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily, they think it will never be executed, and therefore they set the law at defiance, and their hearts are full in them to do evil; they venture to do so much the more mischief, fetch a greater compass in their wicked designs, and are secure and fearless in it, and commit iniquity with a high hand. Observe, (1.) Sentence is past against evil works, and evil workers, by the righteous Judge of heaven against the evil works of princes and great men, as well as of inferior persons. (2.) The execution of this sentence is often delayed a great while, and the sinner goes on, not only unpunished, but prosperous and successful. (3.) Impunity hardens sinners in impiety, and the patience of God is shamefully abused by many, who, instead of being led by it to repentance, are confirmed by it in their imperenity. (4.) Sinners herein do have themselves, for though the sentence be not executed speedily, it will be executed the more severely, at last. Vengeance comes slowly, but it comes surely; and wrath is in the mean time treasured up against the day of wrath. 

4. He foresaw such an end of all these things as would be sufficient to keep us from quarrelling with the Divine Providence upon account of them. He supposes a wicked ruler to do an unjust thing a hundred times, and that yet his punishment is deferred, and God's patience toward him is prolonged, much beyond what was expected, and the days of his power are lengthened out, so that he continues to oppress; yet he intimates that he should not be discouraged. 

(1.) God's people are certainly a happy people, though they be oppressed; It shall be well with them for God, I say, with all them, and them only, which fear before him. Note, (1.) It is the character of God's people that they fear God, have an awe of him upon their hearts, and make conscience of their duty to him; and this, because they see his eye always upon them, and they know it is their concern to approve themselves to him. When they be at the mercy of proud oppressors, they fear God more than they fear them. They do not quarrel with the providence of God, but submit to it. (2.) It is the happiness of all that fear God, that in the worst of times it shall be well with them; their happiness in God's favour cannot be prejudiced, nor their communion with God interrupted, by their troubles, if they are in a good case, for they are kept in a good frame under their troubles, and in the end they shall have a blessed deliverance from, and an abundant recompense for, their troubles. And therefore surely I know, I know it by the promise of God, and the experience of all the saints, that, however it goes with others, it shall go well with them. All is well that ends well. 

(2.) Wicked people are certainly a miserable people, though they prosper, and prevail, for a time, the curse is as sure to them as the blessing is to the righteous; It shall not be well with the wicked, as others think it is, who judge by outward appearance, and as they themselves expect it will be; nay, we to the wicked, it shall be ill with them; (Isa. iii. 10, 11.) they shall be reckoned with for all the ill they have done; nothing that befalls them shall be really well for them. Nihil potest ad males pervenire quod prostitit, into nihil quod non necat—No event can accrue to the wicked which will do them good, rather, no event which will not hurt them. Seneca. Note, (1.) The wicked man's days are as a shadow, not only uncertain and declining, as all men's days are, but altogether unpromising. A good man's days have some substance in them; he lives to a good purpose; a wicked man's days are all as a shadow, empty and worthless. (2.) These days shall not be prolonged to what he promised himself; he shall not live out half his days, Ps. lv. 23. Though they may be prolonged, (v. 12.) beyond what others expected, yet his day shall come to fall. He shall fall short of everlasting life, and then his long life on earth will be worth little. (3.) God's great quarell with wicked people is for their not fearing before him; that is at the bottom of their wickedness, and cuts them off from all happiness.

14. There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked: again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous. I said, that this also is vanity. 15. Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry; for that shall abide with him of his labour the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun. 16. When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth: (for also there is that neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes:) 17. Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun; because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea, further, though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it.

Wise and good men have, of old, been perplexed with this difficulty, how the prosperity of the wicked
and the troubles of the righteous can be reconciled with the holiness and goodness of the God that governs the world; concerning this, Solomon here gives us his advice.

1. He would not have us to be surprised at it, as though some strange thing happened, for he himself saw it in his days, v. 14. (1.) He saw just men, to whom it happened according to the work of the wicked, who, notwithstanding their righteousness, suffered very hard things, and continued long to do so, and to be punished for some great wickedness. (2.) He saw wicked men, to whom it happened according to the work of the righteous, who prospered as remarkably as if they had been rewarded for some good deed, and that from themselves, God, from men. We see the just troubled and perplexed in their own minds, the wicked easy, fearless, and secure; the just crossed and afflicted by the Divine Providence, the wicked prosperous, successful, and smiled upon; the just censured, reproached, and run down, by the higher powers, the wicked applauded and preferred.

2. He would have us to take occasion hence, not to charge God with iniquity, but to charge the world with vanity. No fault is to be found with God; but as to the world, This is vanity upon the earth, and again, This is also vanity, it is a certain evidence that the things of this world are not the best things, nor were ever designed to make a portion and happiness for us, if they had. God only would have not allotted so much of this world’s wealth to his worst enemies, and so much of its troubles to his best friends; there must therefore be another life after this, the joys and griefs of which must be real and substantial, and able to make men truly happy or truly miserable, for this world does neither.

3. He would have us not to fret and perplex ourselves about it, or make ourselves uneasy, but cheerfully to enjoy what God has given us in this world, to be content with it, and make the best of it, though it be much better with others, and such as we think very unworthy; (v. 15.) Then I commended joy, a holy security and serenity of mind, arising from a confidence in God, and his power, providence, and promise, because a man has no better thing under the sun (though a good man has much better things above the sun) than to eat and drink, that is, soberly and thankfully to make use of the things of this life according as his rank is, and to use them as he can or will, that is, to dwell with him of his labour, that is all the fruit he has for himself of the pains that he takes in the business of the world; let him therefore take it, and much good may it do him; and let him not deny himself that, out of a peevish discontent, because the world does not go as he would have it; That shall abide with him during the days of his life which God gives him under the sun. Our present life is a life under the sun, but the life of the world above is the life of the world to come, which will commence and continue when the sun shall be turned into darkness, and shine no more. This present life must be reckoned by days; this life is given us, and the days of it allotted to us, by the counsel of God, and therefore, while it does last, we must accommodate ourselves to the will of God, and study to answer the ends of life.

4. He would not have us undertake to give a reason for, or why this is so, for his way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters, past finding out, and therefore we must be contented and piously ignorant of the meaning of God’s proceedings in the government of the world, v. 16, 17. Here he shows,

(1.) That both he himself and many others had very closely studied the point, and searched far into the reasons of the prosperity of the wicked and the afflictions of the righteous; he, for his part, had applied his heart to know this wisdom, and to see the business that is done, by the Divine Providence, upon the earth, to find out if there were any certain scheme, any constant rule or method, by which the affairs of this lower world were administered, any course of government as sure and steady as the course of nature, so that by what is done now we might as certainly foretell what will be done next, as by the moon’s changing now we can foretell when it will be at the full; this he would fain have found out. Of this sort had likewise set themselves to make this inquiry with so close an application, that they could not find time for sleep, either day or night, nor find in their hearts to sleep, so full of anxiety were they about these things. Some think Solomon speaks of himself, that he was so eager in prosecuting this great inquiry, that he could not sleep for thinking of it.

(2.) That it was all labour in vain, v. 17. When we look upon all the works of God, and his providence, and compare one part with another, we cannot find that there is any such certain method by which the work that is done under the sun is directed; we cannot discover any key by which to decypher the character, nor, by consulting precedents, can we know the practice of this court, nor what the judgment will be. [1.] Though a man be ever so industrious, though he labour to seek it out; [2.] Though he be ever so ingenious, though he be a wise man; and, [3.] Solomon, and can fathom the counsels of kings themselves, and trace them by their footsteps; nay, [3.] Though he be very confident of success, though he think to know it, yet he shall not, he cannot, find it out. God’s ways are above ours, nor is he tied to his own former ways, but his judgments are a great deep.

CHAP. IX.

Solomon, in this chapter, for a further proof of the vanity of this world, gives us four observations which he had made upon a survey of the state of the children of men in it. 1. He observed, that, commonly, as to outward things, good and bad men fare much alike, v. 1, 3, 11. That death puts a final period to all our employments and enjoyments in this world, (v. 4, 6) whence he infers that it is our wisdom to enjoy the comforts of life, and mind the business of life, while it lasts, v. 7, 10. III. That the world’s providence often crosses the fairest and most hopeful probabilities of men’s endeavours, and great calamities often surprise men ere they are aware, v. 11, 12, 14. That wisdom often makes men very useful, and yet gains them little respect, and that persons of great merit are slighted, v. 12, 13. And what is there then in this world, that should make us fond of it?

1. For all this I considered in my heart, even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise and their works, are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them. 2. All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good, and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath. 3. This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea also, the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

It has been observed concerning those who have pretended to search for the philosopher’s stone, that
though they could never find what they sought for, yet in the search they have hit upon many other useful discoveries and experiments. Thus Solomon, when, in the close of the foregoing chapter, he affi-
tied his heart to know the work of God, and took a
great deal of pains to search into it, though he
expected of finding it out, yet he found out that
which abundantly recompensed him for the search,
gave him some satisfaction, which he here gives
us; for therefore he considered all this in his heart,
and weighed it deliberately, that he might declare
it the good of others. Note, What we are to declare
we should first consider, think twice before we
speak once; and what we have considered we
should then declare; I believed, therefore have I
spoken.

The great difficulty which Solomon met with in
studying the book of providence, was, the little dif-
ference that is made between good men and bad,
in the distribution of comforts and crosses, and the
disappearance of events: this has perplexed the minds of
many wise and contemplative men; Solomon dis-
courses of it in these verses, and though he does not
undertake to find out this work of God, yet he says
that which may prevent its being a stumbling-block
to us.

1. Before he describes the temptation in its strength,
he lays down a great and unquestionable
truth, which he resolves to adhere to, and which, if
it should be necessary, shall be sufficient to break
the force of the temptation. This has been the way
of God's people in grappling with this difficulty. Job,
before he discourses of this matter, lays down the
doctrine of God's omniscience, (Job xxiv. 1.) Jer-
emiah the doctrine of his righteousness, (Jer. xii. 1.)
another prophet that of his holiness, (Hab. 1. 13.)
the psalmist that of his goodness and peculiar favour
to his own people; (Ps. lxxiii. 1.) and that is it which
Solomon here fastens upon, and resolves to abide by,
that though good and evil seem to be dissimilar,
and promiscuously, yet God has a particular care of
and concern for, his own people; The righteous and
the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God,
under his special protection and guidance; all their
affairs are managed by him for their good; all their
wise and righteous actions are in his hand, to be re-
compensed in the other world, though not in this.
They seem as if they were given up into the hand of
good and evil. This is not an instance against them,
but what is given them from above; the events that
affect them do not come to pass by chance, but all according to the will and counsel of God, which will turn that to be for them which seemed to be most against them. Let this make us
easy, whatever happens, that all God's saints are
in his hand, Deut. xxxiii. 3. John x. 29. Psalms
xxxii. 11.

2. He lays this down for a rule, That the love
and hatred of God are not to be measured and judg-
ed of by men's outward condition. If prosperity
were a certain sign of God's love, and affliction of
his hatred, then it might justly be an offence to us
to see the wicked and godly fare alike. But the
matter is not so; No man knows either love, or ha-
ted, by all that is before them in this world, by
those things that are the objects of sense. These
we may judge by those who are suffered; if we
love God with all our heart, thereby we may
judge of that he loves us; as we may know likewise that
we are under his wrath, if we be governed by that car
nul mind which is enmity to him; these will be
known by that which shall be hereafter, by men's
everlasting state; it is certain that men are happy or
miserable, according as they are under the love or
hated of God, but not according as they are under the
smiles or frowns of the world, and therefore if
God loves a righteous man, (as certainly he does,) he
is happy, though the world frown upon him; and
if he hate a wicked man, (as certainly he does,) he
is miserable though the world smile upon him; then
is the offence of this promiscuous distribution of
events ceased.

3. Having laid down these principles, he ac-
knowledges that all things come alike to all; so it
has been formerly, and therefore we are not to think
it strange, if it be so now, if it be so with us and our
families. Some make this, and all that follows to
v. 13. to be the perverse reasonings of the atheists
against the notion of God's providence; but I ra-
ther take it to be Solomon's concession, which he
might the more freely make, when he had fixed
those truths which are sufficient to guard against
any ill use that may be made of what he grants.
Observe here, v. 2.

(1.) The great difference that there is between
the characters of the righteous and the wicked,
which, in several instances, are set the one over
against the other, to show that though all things
come alike to all, yet that does not in the least con-
found the eternal distinction between moral good and
evil, but that remains immutable. [1.] The righ-
teous are clean, have clean hands and pure hearts;
the wicked are unclean, under the dominion of un-
clean lusts, pure perhaps in their own eyes, but
not cleansed from their filthiness. God will cer-
tainly put a difference between the clean and the
unclean, the precious and the vile, in the other
world, though he does not seem to do so in this.

(2.) The righteous sacrifice, they make con-
scious of worshipping God according to his will, both
with inward and outward worship; the wicked sacrifice
not, they live in the neglect of God's worship, and
grudge to part with any thing for his honour. What
is the Almighty, that they should serve him? [3.]
The righteous are good, good in God's sight, they
do good in the world; the wicked are sinners, vic-
lating the laws of God and man, and provoking to both. [4.] The wicked man swears, has a
veneration for the name of God, but profanes it by
swearing rashly and falsely; but the righteous man
fears on oath, swears not, is sworn, and then
with great reverence; he fears to take an oath,
because it is a solemn appeal to God as a Witness
and Judge; he fears, when he has taken an oath, to
break it, because God is righteous, who takes ven-
gence.

(2.) The little difference there is between the
conditions of the righteous and the wicked in this
world; There is one event to both. Is David rich?
So is Nabal. Is Joseph favoured by his prince? So
is Haman. Is Ahab killed in a battle? So is Jo-
siah. Are the bad figs carried to Babylon? So are
the good, Jer. xxiv. 1. There is a vast difference
between the original, the design, and the nature; of
the same event to the one and to the other; the ef-
fects and issues of them are likewise vastly differ-
ent; the same providence to the one is a favour of
life unto life, to the other, of death unto death,
though, to outward appearance, it is the same.

4. He owns this to be a very great grievance to
those that are wise and good; This is an evil, the
greatest perplexity, among all things that are done
under the sun; (v. 3.) nothing has given me more dis-
turbance than this, that there is one event unto all,
that all men are alike affected and governed by evil-doers; for therefore is it that the hearts of the
sons of men are full of evil, and fully set in them to
do evil, ch. viii. 11. When they see that there is one
event to the righteous and the wicked, they wickedly
infer thence, that it is all one to God whether they
are righteous or wicked, and therefore they stick
at nothing to gratify their lusts.

5. For the further clearing of this great difficulty,
as he began this discourse with the doctrine of the

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happiness of the righteous, (whatever they may suf- fer, they and their works are in the hands of God, and therefore in good hands, they could not be in better,) so he concludes with the doctrine of the misery of the wicked; however they may prosper, 

madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead. Envy not the prosperity of evil-doers, for, (1.) They are now madmen, and all the delights they seem to be blessed with are but like the pleasant dreams and fancies of a distracted man. They are mad upon their idols, (Jer. 1. 38.) and mad against God's people. Acts xxvi. 11. When the prodigal repented, it is said, He came to himself, (Luke xv. 17,) which intimates that he had been be- side himself before. (2.) They will shortly be de- ad men. They make a mighty noise and bustle while they live, but after awhile they go to the dead, and there is an end of all their pomp and power; they will then be reckoned with for all their madness and outrage in sin. Though, on this side death, the righ- teous and the wicked seem alike, on the other side death there will be a vast difference between them.

4. For to him that is joined to all the liv- ing there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion. 5. For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a re- ward; for the memory of them is forgotten. 6. Also their love and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun. 7. Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. 8. Let thy garments be alway white; and let thy head lack no ointment. 9. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy por- tion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun. 10. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest.

Solomon, in a fret, had praised the dead more than the living; (ch. iv. 2.) but here, considering the ad- vantages of life to prepare for death, and make sure the hope of a better life, he seems to be of another mind.

I. He shows the advantages which the living have above those that are dead, v. 4–6.

1. While there is life there is hope. Deum spiro, spero—While I breathe, I hope. It is the privilege of the living, that they are joined to the living, in relation, commerce, and conversation, and, while they are so, there is hope. If a man's condition be, upon any account, bad, there is hope it will be amened; if the heart be full of evil, and madness be in it, yet, while there is life, there is hope, that, by the grace of God, there may be a blessed change wrought; but after men go to the dead, (v. 3.) It is too late then: what is then frit, is then laid aside for ever filthy. If men be thrown aside as useless, yet, while they are joined to the living, there is hope that they may yet again take root, and bear fruit; he that is alive, is, or may be, good for something, but he that is dead, as to this world, is not capable of being any further serviceable; therefore a living dog is better than a dead lion, the meanest beggar alive has that comfort of this world, and does that service to it, which the greatest prince, when he is dead, is utterly incapable of.

2. While there is life, there is an opportunity of preparing for death; The living know that which the dead have no knowledge of, particularly they 

know that they shall die, and are, or may be, there- by influenced to prepare for that great change, which will come certainly, and may come suddenly. Note, The living cannot but know that they shall die, that they must ends die; they know they are under a sentence of death; they are necessarily affected in mo- tory by its messengers, and feel themselves declin- ing. This is a needful, useful, knowledge; for what is our business, while we live, but to get ready to die! The living know they shall die, it is a thing yet to come, and therefore provision may be made for it; the dead know they are dead, and it is too late, they are on the other side the great gulf fixed.

3. When life is gone, all this world is gone with it, as touts. (1.) There is an end of all our account- ance with this world, and the things of it; The dead know not any thing of that which, while they lived, they were intimately conversant with. It does not appear that they know any thing of what is done by those they leave behind. Abraham is ignorant of us; they are removed into darkness, Job x. 22. (2.) There is an end of all their enjoyments in this world; They have no more a reward for their toils about the world, but all they got must be left to others; they have a reward for their holy actions, but none for their worldly ones; the meats and the belly will be destroyed together, John vi. 27. 1 Cor. vi. 13. It is explained, v. 6. Neither have they any more a portion for ever; none of that which they imagined would be a portion for ever, of that which is done, and got under the sun. The things of this world will not be a portion for the soul, because they will not be a portion for ever; they that choose them, and have them for their good things, have only a por- tion in this life. Ps. xvii. 14. The world can only be an ammity for life, not a portion for ever. (3.) There is an end of their name; there are but few whose names survive them long, the grave is a land of forgetfulness, for the memory of them that are laid there, is soon forgotten; their place knows them no more, nor the lands they called by their own names. (4.) There is an end of their affections, their friendships, and enmities; Their love, and their hatred, and their envy, are now vanished; the good things they loved, the evil things they hated, the prosperity of others, which they envied, are now all at an end with them. Death parts those that loved one another, and puts an end to their friendship, and those that hated one another too, and puts an end to their quarrels. Actio moritur cum persona—The person and his actions die to- gether. There we shall be never better for the friends, their love can do us no kindness; nor ever the worse for the enemies, their hate will no more reach us, nor can we do us no damage. There the wicked cease from troubling. Those things which now so affect us, and fill us, which we are so concerned about, and so jealous of, will there be at an end.

II. Hence he infers that it is our wisdom to make the best use of life that we can, while it does last, and manage wisely what remains of it.

1. Let us reish the comforts of life while we live and cheerfully take our share of the enjoyments of it. Solomon himself was one of those who are ensnared by the abuse of sensitive delights, warns others of the dan- ger, not by a total prohibition of them, but by di- recting the sober and moderate use of them; we may use the world, but must not abuse it; take what is to be had out of it, and expect no more.
ing and melancholy, go thy way, like a fool as thou art, and get into a better temper of mind.

[1.] "Let thy spirit be easy and pleasant, then let there be joy and a merry heart within; a good heart, so the word is; which distinguishes this from carnal mirth and sensual pleasure, which are the evil of the heart, but this is purely spiritual. We must enjoy ourselves, we must enjoy our friends, enjoy our God, and be careful to keep a good conscience, that nothing may disturb us in these enjoyments. We must serve God with gladness, in the use of what he gives us, and be liberal in communicating it to others, and not suffer ourselves to be oppressed with inordinate care and grief about the world. We must eat our bread as Israelites, not in our mourning; (Deut. xxvi. 14.) as Christ, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me;" Acts ii. 46. See Deut. xxviii. 47.

[2.] "Make use of the comforts and enjoyments which God has given thee; eat thy bread, drink thy wine, thine, not another's; not the bread of deceit, or the wine of violence, but that which is honestly got, else thou canst not eat it with any comfort, nor expect a blessing upon it; thy bread, and thy wine, such as are agreeable to thy place and station, not excelling what others have; now it is, 'Thou hast given thy angels charge over thee, the ends for which thou art intrusted with it, as being but a steward.'

[3.] 'Evidence thy cheerfulness; (v. 8.) Let thy garments be always white; observe a proportion in thine expenses; reduce not thy food, in order to gratify thy pride, nor thy clothing, in order to gratify thy voluptuousness. Be neat, wear clean linen, and be not slovenly. Or, 'Let thy garments be white, in token of joy and cheerfulness,' which were expressed by white raiment; (Rev. iii. 4.) "and, as a further token of joy, let thy head lack no ornament that is fit for it;" our Saviour admitted this piece of pleasure at a feast, (Matt. xxvi. 7.) and David observes it among the gifts of God's bounty to him, (Ps. xxiii. 5.) 'Thou anointest my head with oil.' Not that we must place our happiness in any of the delights of sense, or set our hearts upon them, but what God has given us we must make as comfortable a use of as we can afford, under the fear of the Lord, the impression of conscience, and the contempt of world, and not for getting the poor.

[4.] "Make thyself agreeable to thy relations; I've joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest; do not engross thy delights, making much of thyself only, and not caring what becomes of those about thee, but let them share with thee, and make them easy too. Have a wife; for even in paradise it was not good for man to be alone. Keep to thy wife, to one, and do not multiply wives; (Solomon had found the mischief of that;) "keep to her only, and have nothing to do with any other." How can a man live joyfully with one with whom he does not live honestly? 'Love thy wife; and the wife whom thou lovest wilt be likely to live joyfully with.' When we do the duty of relations, we may expect the comfort of them. See Prov. v. 19. "Live with thy wife, and delight in her society; live joyfully with her, and be most cheerful when thou art with her. Take pleasure in thy family, thy vine and thy olive plants.'

(2.) The qualifications necessary to this cheerfulness; "Rejoice, and have a merry heart, if God now accepts thy works. If thou art reconciled to God, and recommended to him, then thou hast reason to be cheerful, otherwise not." Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people, for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, Hos. ix. 1. Our first care must be to make our peace with God, and obtain his favour, to do that which he will accept of, and then, Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy. Note, these whose works God has accepted have reason to be cheerful, and ought to be so. "Now that thou cutest the bread of thy sacrifices with joy, and partakest of the wine of thy drink-offerings with a merry heart, now God accepts thy works; thy religious services, when performed with holy joy, are pleasing to God; he loves to have his servants sated at the table of his bounty, and take a hearty relish of it." (3.) The reasons for it; "Live joyfully, for;"

[1.] "It is all little enough to make thy passage through this world easy and comfortable; The days of thy life are the days of thy vanity; there is nothing here but trouble and disappointment; thou wilt have time enough for sorrow and grief when thou canst not help it, and therefore live joyfully while thou canst, and perplex not thyself with thoughts and cares about to-morrow; sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. Let a gracious serenity of mind be a powerful antidote against the vanity of the world."

[2.] "It is all thou canst get from this world; That is thy portion in the things of this life; in God, and another life, thou shalt have a better portion, and a better recompense for thy labours in religion; but for thy pains which thou takest about the things under the sun, this is all thou canst expect, and therefore therefore, why shouldst thou "sigh in secret, and cry to me" in "the days of thy vanity?""

2. Let us apply ourselves to the business of life, while life lasts, and so use the enjoyments of it, as by them to be fitted for the employments; "Therefore eat with joy, and a merry heart, not that thy soul may take its ease, (as Luke xix. 19.) but that thy soul may take the more pains, and the joy of the Lord may be its strength, and oil to its wheels," v. 10. Whatever thy hand finds to do, do it with thy might. Observe here, (1.) There is not only a work for us to do in this life, and the chief good we are to inquire after, is, the good we should do, Eccl. i. 3. This is the world of service, that to come is the world of recompense; this is the world of preparation and preparation for eternity; we are here upon business, and upon our behaviour. (2.) Opportunity is to direct and quicken duty; that is to be done, which our hand finds to do, which occasion calls for; and an active hand will always find something that can be "turned to account to the glory of God. What can be done, of necessity, our hand will here find a price in it for the doing of, Prov. xvii. 16. (3.) What good we have an opportunity of doing, we must do, while we have the opportunity, and do it with our might, with care, vigour, and resolution, whatever difficulties and discouragements we may meet with in it. Harvest-days are busy days; and we must make hay while the sun shines. Servings God and working out our salvation must be done with all that is within us; and all little enough. (4.) There is good reason why we should work the works of him that sent us, while it is day, because the night comes, wherein no man can work, John ix. 4. We must up and be doing now with all possible diligence, because our doing-time will be done shortly, and we know not how soon. But this we know, that if the work of life be not done when our time is done, we are undone for ever; There is no work to be done, no device to do it, no knowledge for speculation, nor wisdom for practice, in the grave, whither thou goest. We are all going toward the grave, every day brings us a step nearer it; when we are in the grave, it will be too late to mend the errors of life, too late to repent, and make our peace with God, too late to lay up any thing in store for eternal life; it must be done now or never. The grave is a land of darkness and silence, and therefore there is no doing any thing for our souls there, it must be done now or never; John xii. 35.

11. I returned, and saw under the sun..."
ECCLESIASTES, and men; The yet torious, retard ways have known you mightv of encouraging, to overfilling, to overconfidence, to overworks; man and wise, 8.30 of which to us seem casual, and we call them chance, but really they are according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, here called 
time in the language of this book, ch. iii. 1. Ps. xxxi. 15 Time and chance happen to them all. A sovereign Providence breaks men's measures, and blasts their hopes, and teaches them that the way of man is not in himself, but subject to the divine will. We must use means, but not to trust to; if we succeed, we must give God the praise; (Ps. xlv. 3.) if we be crossed, we must acquiesce in his will, and take our lot.

2. We are often surprised with the evils we were in little fear of; (v. 12.) Man known not his time, the time of his calamity, his fall, his death, which, in scripture, is called our day, and our hour. (1.) We know not what troubles are before us, which will take us off our business, and take us out of the world, what time and chance will happen to us, nor what one day, or a night, may bring forth. It is not for us to know the times, no, not our own time, when, or how, we shall die. God has, in wisdom, kept us in the dark, that we may be always ready. (2.) Perhaps we may meet with trouble in that very thing wherein we promise ourselves the greatest satisfaction and advantage; as the fishes and the birds are drawn into the snare and net by the bait laid to allure them, which they are grieved to know are the sons of men often snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them, before they are aware. And these things too come alike to all. Men often find their bane where they sought their bliss, and catch their death where they thought to have found a prize. Let us therefore never be secure, but always ready for changes, that, though they may be sudden, they may be no surprise or terror to us.

13. This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me: 14. There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it. 15. Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. 16. Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard. 17. The words of wise men are heard in quiet, more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools. 18. Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good.

Solomon still recommends wisdom to us as necessary to the preserving of our peace and the perfection of our business, notwithstanding the vanities and crosses which human affairs are subject to. He had said, (v. 11.) Bread is not always to the wise; yet he would not therefore be thought either to disparage, or to discourage, wisdom; no, he still retains his principle, that wisdom excels folly as much as light excels darkness, (Ch. ii. 13.) and we ought to love and embrace it, and be governed by it, for the sake of its own intrinsic worth, and the capacity it gives us of being serviceable to others, though we ourselves should not get wealth and preferment by it. This wisdom, this which he here describes, wisdom which enables a man to serve his country, out of pure affection to its interests, when he himself gains no advantage by it, no, not so much as thanks for his pains, or the reputation of it, this is the wisdom which, Solomon says, seemed great unto him, v. 15.
A public spirit, in a private sphere, is wisdom, which those who understand things that differ, cannot but look upon as very magnificent.

I. Solomon here gives an instance, which, probably, was a case in fact, in some neighbourhood, (for his instruction did great service in a time of public distress and danger; (v. 14.) There was a little city, (no great prize, whoever was master of it,) there were but few men within it to defend it, and men, if men of fortitude, are the best fortifications of a city; here were few men, and, because few, feeble, fearful, and ready to give up their city as not tenable. Against this little city a great king came with a numerous army, and besieged it, either in pursuit of some business and purpose of it, or in revenge for some affront given him, to chastise and destroy it; thinking it stronger than it was, he built great bulwarks against it, from which to batter it, and doubted not in a little time to make himself master of it. What a great deal of unjust vexation do ambitious princes give to their harmless neighbours! This great king needed not fear this little city; why then should he frighten it? It would be little profit to him; why then should he put money into his expectation of it? But, as unreasonably and insatiably greedy as little people sometimes are to lay house to house, and field to field, great kings often are, to lay city to city, and province to province, that they may be placed alone in the earth, (Isa. v. 8.) Did victory and success attend the strong? No; there was found in this little city, among the few men that were in it, one poor wise man; a wise man, and yet poor, and not preferred in any place of profit or power, in the city; and yet not given to men according to their merit, and meekness for them, else such a wise man as this had not been a poor man. Now,

1. Being wise, he served the city, though he was poor; in their distress they found him out, (Judg. xi. 7.) and begged his advice and assistance; and he by his wisdom delivered the city, either by prudent instructions given to the besieged, directing them to some unthought-of stratagem for their own security, or by a prudent treaty with the besiegers, as the woman at Abel, 2 Sam. xx. 16. He did not upbraid them with the contempt they had put upon him, in leaving him out of their council, nor tell them he was poor, and had nothing to lose, and therefore cared not what became of the city; but did his best for it, and was blessed with success. Note, Private interests and personal resentments must always be sacrificed to the public good, and forgotten when the common welfare is considered.

2. Being poor, he was slighted by the city, though he was wise, and had been an instrument to save them all from ruin; No man remembered that same poor man, his good services were not taken notice of, no recompense was made him, no marks of honour put upon him, but he lived in as much poverty and obscurity as he had done before; riches were not to this man of understanding, nor favour to this man of discretion, he was not much thought of for his name and for his person. Men and princes are not rich who have well merited of their prince and country have been ill paid; such an ungrateful world do we live in. It is well that useful men have a God to trust to, who will be their bountiful Rewarder; for, among men, great services are often envied, and rewarded with evil for good.

II. From this instance he draws some useful inferences; looks upon it, and receive instruction.

1. Hence he observes the great usefulness and excellency of wisdom; it makes men wise, as a prudent man, which is the honour of a man, is to be preferred before a robust body, in which many of the brute creatures excel man. A man may by his wisdom effect that which he could never compass by his strength; and may overcome those, by outwitting them, who are able to overpower him. Nay, wisdom is better than weapons of war, offensive or defensive, v. 18. Wisdom, that is, religion and piety, (for a wise man is here expresse to a sinner,) this is better than all military endowments or accoutrements, for it will engage God for us, and then we are safe in the greatest perils, and successful in the greatest enterprises. If God be for us, who can be against us, or stand before us?

2. Hence he observes the commanding force and power of wisdom, though it labour under external disadvantages; (v. 17.) The words of wise men are such as they speak, being rational and to the purpose, being spoken calmly and with deliberation, (though, not being rich and in authority, they dare not speak loud, nor with any great assurance,) will be hearkened to and regarded, will gain respect, nay, will gain the point, and sway with men, more than the imperious champed of him that rules among fools, who, like fools, chose him to be their ruler, for his noise and blistering, and, like fools, do it, to gain the loud assent of all that is there with every body else. A few close arguments are worth a great many big words; and those will strike sail to fair reasoning, who will answer them that he is a sour and insolent according to their folly. How forcible are right words! What is spoken wisely should be spoken calmly, and then it will be heard in quiet, and calmly considered. But passion will lessen the force even of reason, instead of adding any force to it.

3. Hence he observes that wise and good men, notwithstanding this, must often content themselves with the satisfaction of having done good, or, at least, endeavoured it, and offered it at it, when they cannot do the good they would do, nor have the praise they should have. Wisdom capacitates a man to serve his neighbours, and he offers his service; but, alas, if he be poor, his wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard, v. 16. Many a man is buried alive in poverty and obscurity, who, if he had but fit encouragement given him, might be a great blessing to the world; many a pearl is lost in its shell. But there is a day coming, when wisdom and goodness shall be in honour, and the righteous shall shine forth.

4. From what he had observed of the great good which one wise and virtuous man may do, he infers what a great deal of mischief one wicked man may do, and what a great deal of good he may be the hindrance of; One sinner destroyeth much good. As to himself, a sinful condition is a wasteful condition. How many of the good gifts both of nature and Providence does one sinner destroy, and make waste of—good sense, good parts, good learning, a good disposition, a good estate, good meat, good drink, and abundance of God's good creatures, all made use of in the service of sin, and so destroyed and lost, and the end of giving them frustrated and perverted! He who destroys his own soul destroys much good. A wise man, with what a great deal of mischief may one wicked man do in a town or country! One sinner, who makes it his business to deal with others, may defeat and frustrate the intentions of a great many good laws, and a great deal of good preaching, and draw many into his pernicious ways; one sinner may be the ruin of a town, as one Achab troubled the whole camp of Israel. The wise man, who delivered the city, had had his Due respect to the pernicious ways of the city, but the sinner hindered it, and invidiously diminished the service. And many a good project, well laid for the public welfare, has been destroyed by some one subtle adversary to it. The wisdom of some would have healed the nation, but through the wickedness
of a few, it would not be healed. See who are a kingdom's friends and enemies, if one saint does much good, and one sinner destroys much good.

CHAP. X.
This chapter seems to be like Solomon's proverbs, a collection of wise sayings and observations, rather than a part of his sermon; but the preacher studied to be sententious, and to aggravate every point that he brought in his preaching. Yet the general scope of all the observations in this chapter, is, to recommend wisdom to us, and its precepts and rules, as of great use for the right ordering of our conversation, and to caution us against folly.

1. He recommends wisdom to private persons, who are in an inferior station. 1. It is our wisdom to preserve our reputation, in managing our affairs dexterously, v. 1. 2. To be submissive to our superiors, if at any time they do us wrong, v. 4. 3. To keep our conversation quiet and peaceable lives, and not to meddle with those that are factious and seditionist, and are endeavouring to disturb the government, and the public peace; the folly and danger of which is hinted in this verse.

2. Folly is easily and readily brought into our conversation, as well as all the other vices. 1. There are many who would bring folly into our conversation, it may be, to make their speech more lively, and to savour: a foolish man's speech shows, v. 3. 2. To govern our tongues well, v. 12. 15. 5. To be diligent in our business and provide well for our families, v. 18, 19. 6. Not to speak ill of our rulers, nor in secret, v. 20. 11. He recommends wisdom to rulers; let them not think that, because their subjects must be quiet under them, therefore they may do what they please; nor, but, 1. Let them be careful whom they prefer to places of trust and power, v. 3. 7. Let rulers not make it a custom to speak discreetly, he generon and not childish; temperate, and not luxurios, v. 16, 17. Happy the nation, when princes, and people, make conscience of their duty, according to these rules.

DEAD flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour. 2. A wise man's heart is at his right hand; but a fool's heart at his left. 3. Ye also, when he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool.

In these verses, Solomon shows, 1. What great need wise men have to take heed of being guilty of any instance of folly; for a little folly is a great blemish to him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour, and is as hurtful to his good name as dead flies are to a sweet perfume, not only spoiling the sweetness of it, but making it to send forth a stinking savour. Note, (1.) True wisdom is true honour, and will gain a man a reputation, which is like a box of precious ointment, pleasing and very valuable. (2.) The reputation that is got honestly, and by a great deal of wisdom, may be easily lost, and by a little folly; because envy fastens upon eminency, and makes the worst of the mistakes and miscarriages of those who are cried up for wisdom, and improves them to their disadvantage; so that the folly which in another would not be taken notice of, in them is severely censured. Those who make a great profession of religion have need to walk very circumspectly, to abstain from all appearances of evil, and approaches towards it, because many eyes are upon them, that watch for their halting; their character is soon sullied, and they have a great deal of reputation to lose.

2. What a great advantage a wise man has above a fool in the management of business; (v. 2.) A wise man's heart is at his right hand, so that he goes about his business with dexterity, turns his hand readily to it, and goes through it with despatch; his counsel and diligence are ready to him, whenever he has occasion for them; but a fool's heart is at his left hand, it is always to seek when he has any thing to do that is of importance, and therefore he goes awkwardly about it, like a man that is left-handed; he is soon at a loss, and at his wit's end.

3. How apt fools are, at every turn, to proclaim their own folly, and expose themselves; he that is either witless or graceless, either silly or wicked, if he be ever so little from under the check, and control, to his own places of power and use, the way, soon shows what he is; his wisdom fails him, he is guilty by some impropriety or other, he says to every one he meets, that he is a fool, (v. 3.) he discovers it as plainly as if he had told them so. He cannot conceal it, and he is not ashamed of it. Sin is the reproach of sinners, wherever they go.

4. If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding pacifieth great offences. 5. There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, as an error which proceedeth from the ruler: Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place. 7. I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth. 8. He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whose breaketh a hedge, a serpent shall bite him. 9. Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith; and he that cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby.

The scope of these verses is to keep subjects loyal and dutiful to the government; in Solomon's reign, the people were very rich, and lived in prosperity, which perhaps made them proud and peevish, and when the taxes were high, they thought they had enough to pay them with, it is probable that many carried it insolently toward the government, and threatened to rebel. To such Solomon here gives some necessary cautions.

I. Let not subjects carry on a quarrel with their prince upon any private personal disgust; (v. 4.) "If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, if, upon some misinformation given him, or some miscarriage of his, he is displeased at thee, and threaten thee, yet leave not thy place, forget not the duty of a subject, revolt not from thy allegiance, do not, in a passion, quit thy post in his service, and throw up thy commission, as despairing ever to regain his favor; no, wait awhile, and then wilt find he is not implacable, but that yielding pacifieth great offences." Solomon speaks for himself, and for every wise and good man that is a master, or a magistrate, that he could easily forgive those, upon their submission, whom yet, upon their provocation, he had been very angry with. It is fairer and better to yield to an angry prince than to contend with him.

II. Let not subjects commence a quarrel with their prince, though the public administration be not in every thing as they would have it. He grants there is an evil often seen under the sun, and it is a king's evil, an evil which the king only can cure, for it is an error which proceedeth from the ruler; (v. 5.) it is a mistake which rulers, consulting their personal affections more than the public interests, are too often guilty of, that men are not preferred according to their merit, but folly is set in great dignity, men of shattered brains, and broken fortunes, are made the business of others and present, while the rich men of good sense and good estates, whose interest would oblige them to be true to the public, and whose abundance would be likely to set them above temptations to bribery and extortion, yet sit in low
places, and can get no preferment; (v. 6.) either the ruler knows not how to value them, or the terms of their advancement, diligence, or talent do not comply with. It is ill with a people, when vicious men are advanced, and men of worth are kept under. This is illustrated; (v. 7.) I have seen servants upon horses; men not so much of mean extraction and education, (if that were all, it were the more excusable, nay, there is many a wise servant, who with good reason has rule over a son that causes shame,) but of sordid, servile, mercenary, dispositions, I have observed these rise against their princes, while princes, men of noble birth and qualities, fit to rule a kingdom, have been forced to walk as servants upon the earth, poor, and despised. Thus God, in his providence, punishes a wicked people; but as far as it is the ruler's act and deed, it is certainly his error, and a great evil, a grievance to the subject, and very provoking; but it is an error under the sun, which will certainly be rectified above the sun, and when it shall shine no more, for in heaven it is only wisdom and holiness that are set in great dignity. But if the prince be guilty of this error, yet let not the subjects leave their places, nor rise up against the government, nor form any project for the alteration of it; nor let the prince carry on the humour too far, nor set such servants, such beggars, on horseback, as will ride furiously over the ancient landmarks of the constitution, and threaten the subversion of it.

Thus people violently attempt any changes, nor make a forcible entry upon a national settlement, for they will both find it of dangerous consequence, which he shows here by four similitudes, the scope of which is to give us a caution not to meddle to our own hurt. Let not princes invite the rights and liberties of their subjects; let not subjects mutiny and rebel against their princes: for, (1.) He that diggeth a pit for another, it is ten to one but he falls into it himself, and his vengeful dealing returns upon his own head. If princes become tyrants, or subjects become rebels, all histories will tell both what is likely to be their fate, and that it is at their utmost peril, and it were better for both to be content within their own bounds. (2.) Whoso breaks a hedge, an old hedge, that has long been a landmark, let him expect that a serpent or adder, such as harbour in rotten hedges, will bite him; some viper or other will rise upon his hand, Acts xxviii. 3. God, by his ordinance, as a hedge, has enclosed the prerogatives and powers of princes, their persons are under his special protection; those therefore that form any treasonable designs against their peace, their crown and dignity, are but twisting halters for themselves. (3.) Whoso removes stones, to pull down a wall or building, does but pluck them upon himself, he shall be hurt therewith, and will wish that he had let them alone. Those that aspire after a well-built, well-settled, government, under colour of redressing some grievances, and correcting some faults in it, will quickly perceive, not only that it is easier to find fault than to mend, to demolish that which is good than to build up that which is better, but that they thrust their own fingers into the fire, and overwhelm themselves in the ruin they occasion. (4.) He that cleaveth the wood, especially if, as it follows, he doth so for himself, is derged thereby; the chimney, or his own axe-head, will fly in his face. If we meet with knotty pieces of timber, men of perverse and ungodly spirits, and we think to master them by force and violence, and hew them to pieces, they may not only prove too hard for us, but the attempt may turn to our damage.

2. Rather let both prince and people act towards each other with prudence, mildness, and good temper; Wisdom is profitable to direct the ruler how to manage a people that are inclined to be turbulent, so as neither, on the one hand, by a supine negligence of duty, and the neglect of correction, nor on the other hand, by rigour and severity, to exasperate and provoke them to any seditionary practices. It is likewise profitable to direct the subjects how to act towards a prince that is inclined to bear hard upon them, so as not to alienate his affections from them, but to win upon him, by humble remonstrances, (not insolent demands, such as the people made upon Rehoboam,) by patient submissions, and peaceable entreaties. The same rule is to be observed in all relations, for the preserving of the comfort of them; let wisdom direct to gentle methods, and forbear violent ones.

1. Wisdom will teach us to whet the tool we are to make use of, rather than, by leaving it blunt, oblige ourselves to put to so much the more strength, (v. 10.) We might save ourselves a great deal of labour, and prevent a great deal of danger, if we did what before we cut, consider and premeditate what is fit to be said and done in every difficult case, that we may accommodate ourselves to it, and may do our work smoothly and easily both to others and to ourselves. Wisdom will direct how to sharpen and put an edge upon both ourselves and those we employ, not to work deceitfully, (Ps. lxi. 2.) but to work cleanly and cleverly. The mower loses no time when he is whetting his scythe.

2. Wisdom will teach us to enchant the serpent we are to meddle with, rather than think to out-hiss it; (v. 11.) The serpent will bite, if he be not by singing and music charmed and enchanted, against which therefore he stoppeth his ears; (Ps. lxi. 4, 5.) and a babber is no better to all those who enter the lists with him, and therefore must not think by dint of words to out-talk him, but by prudent management to enchant him. He that is lord of the tongue, so the phrase is, (a foolish man is lord of his speech,) and may say what he will, it is as dangerous dealing with him, as with a serpent uncharmed; but, if you use the enchantment of a mild and humble submission, you may be safe, and out of danger; herein wisdom, the meekness of wisdom, is profitable to direct. By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, Prov. xxv. 15. Jacob enchanted Esau with a present, and Abigail David. To th' sword may say any thing, it is wisdom to say not that is provoking.

12. The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious: but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself. 13. The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness: and the end of his talk is mischief and madness. 14. A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him who can tell him? 15. The labour of the foolish weareth every one of them; because he knoweth not how to go to the city.

Solomon having showed the benefit of wisdom, and of what great advantage it is to us in the management of business; and having encouraged the use of folly, and how it exposes men, which perhaps comes in as a reflection upon those rulers who set folly in great dignity. 1. Fools talk a great deal to no purpose, and they show their folly as much by the multitude, impertinence, and mischieffulness of their words, as by any thing; whereas the words of a wise man's mouth are gracious, are grace, manifest grace in his heart, and minister grace to the hearers, are good, and such as become him, and good to all about him.
the lips of a fool not only expose him to reproach, and make him ridiculous, but will swallow him self, and bring him to ruin, by provoking the government to take cognizance of his sedious talk, and call him to an account for it. Adonijah foolishly speak against his own life, 1 Kings ii. 23. Many a man has been sunk by having his own tongue fall upon him, Ps. lxiv. 8. See what a fool’s talk is.

(1.) It takes rise from his own weakness and wickedness: The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness; the foolishness bound up in his heart, that is the corrupt spring out of which all these polluted streams flow, the evil treasure out of which evil things are brought. As soon as he begins to speak, you may perceive his folly; at the very first he talks idly, and passionately, and like himself.

(2.) It rises up to fury, and tends to the hurt and injury of others; The end of his talk, the end it comes to, is madness; he will presently talk himself into an indescribable ure, and break out into the wild extravagancies of a distracted man; the end he aims at, is, mischief: as, at first, he appeared to have little government of himself, so, at last, it appears he has a great deal of malice to his neighbours; that root of bitterness bears gall and wormwood. Note, It is not strange if those that begin foolishly, end foolishly; for an ungoverned tongue, the more you keep it, the more it gives out, and grows the more violent.

(3.) It is all the same over and over; (v. 14.) A fool also is full of words, a passionate fool especially, that runs on endlessly, and never knows when to take up; he will have the last word, though it be but the same with that which was the first; what is wanting in the weight and strength of his words, he endeavours in vain to make up in the number of them; and they must be repeated, because otherwise there is nothing in them to make them regarded.

Note, Many, who are empty of sense, are full of words, and the least solid are the most noisy. The following words may be taken either, [1.] As checking him for his vainglorious boasting in the multitude of his words, what he will do, and what he will have, not considering that which every body knows, that a man cannot tell what shall be in his own time, while he lives, (Prov. xxvii. 1.) much less can one tell what shall be after him, when he is dead and gone. Would we duly consider our own ignorance, and uncertainty about, future events, it would cut off a great many of the idle words we foolishly multiply. Or, [2.] As mocking him for his talkologies; he is full of words, for, if he do but speak the most trite and common thing, a man cannot tell what shall be, because he loves to hear himself talk, he will say it again, what shall be after him, who can tell him? Like Battus in Ovid:

Sub illis—

Under those mountains were they,

They were under those mountains, I say.

 whence vain repetitions are called Battologies, Matth. vi. 7.

2. Fools toil a great deal to no purpose; (v. 15.) The labour of the foolish, to accomplish their designs, wears every one of them. (1.) They weary themselves in that labour which is very foolish and absurd. All their labour is for the world and the body, but that perisheth, and in this talk, they spend their strength and exhaust their spirits, and weary themselves for very vanity, Hab. ii. 13. Isa. iv. 2. They choose that service which is perfect drudgery, rather than that which is perfect liberty. (2.) That labour which is necessary, and would be profitable, and might be gone through with ease, weary them, because they go about it awkwardly, and foolishly, and so make their business a toil to them, which, if they applied them selves to it prudently, would be a pleasure to them. Many complain of the labours of religion as grievous, which they would have no reason to complain of, if the exercises of Christian piety were always under the direction of Christian prudence. The foolish tire themselves in endless pursuits, and never bring any thing to pass, because they know not how to go to the city, because they have not capacity to apprehend the plainest thing, such as the entrance into a great city is, where one would think it were impossible for a man to miss his road. Men’s imprudent management of their business robs them both of the comfort and of the benefit of it. But it is the excellency of the way to the heavenly city, that it is a highway, in which the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err; (Isa. xxxv. 8.) yet sinful folly makes men miss that way.

16. Wo to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning! 17. Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness! 18. By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through.

19. A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry; but money answereth all things. 20. Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bed-chamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.

Solomon here observes,

Now how much the happiness of a land depends upon the character of its rulers; it is well or ill, with the people, according as the princes are good or bad.

(1.) The people cannot be happy when their princes are childish and voluptuous; (v. 16.) Wo unto thee, O land, even the land of Canaan itself, though otherwise the glory of all lands, when thy king is a child, not so much in age (Solomon himself was young when his kingdom was established) as in understanding; when the prince is weak and foolish as a child, fickle and fond of changes, fretful and humourous, easily imposed upon, and hardly brought to business, it is ill with the people. The body staggers, if the head be giddy. Perhaps Solomon wrote this, with a foresight of his son Rehoboam’s ill conduct; (2 Chron. xiii. 7.) he was a child all the days of his life, and his family and kingdom fared the worse for it. Nor is it much better to be a people, when their princes eat in the morning, make a god of their belly, and make themselves slaves to their appetites. If the king himself were a child, yet if the princes and privy counsellors are wise and faithful, and apply themselves to business, the land may do the better; but if they addict themselves to their pleasures, and prefer the gratifications of the flesh before the despatch of the public business, which they disdained for by eating and drinking in a morning, when judges are employed, and do not eat to live, but live to eat, what good can a nation expect?

(2.) The people cannot but be happy, when their rulers are generous and active, sober and temperate, and men of business, v. 17. The land is then blessed, [1.] When the sovereign is governed by principles of honour, when the king is the son of nobles, actuated and animated by a noble spirit, which scorns to do any thing base, and unbecoming so high
a character, which is solicitous for the public welfare, and prefers that before any private interests. Wisdom, virtue, and the fear of God, beneficence, and a readiness to do good to all mankind, these enoble the royal blood. [2.] When the subordinate magistrates, not being in such a hurry about the things they have in hand, to gratify their appetites, when they eat in due season, that is, when they have despatched their business, and get them an appointment. God gives the creatures their meat in due season, (Ps. cxlv. 15.) let us not take ours unseasonably, lest we lose the comfort of seeing God give it us. Magistrates should eat for strength, that their bodies may be fitted to serve their souls in the service of God and their country, and not for drunkenness, to make their habits suit them for God or man, and particularly to sit in judgment, for they will err through wine, (Isa. xxviii. 7.) will drink and forget the law, (Prov. xxxi. 5.) It is well with a people, when their princes are examples of temperance, when those that have most to spend upon themselves know how to deny themselves.

2. Of what ill consequence slothfulness is both to private and public affairs; (v. 18.) By much slothfulnes, and idleness, the neglect of business, and the love of ease and pleasure; the building decays, drops through first, and by degrees drops down; if it be not kept well covered, and care not be taken to repair the breaches, as any happen, it will rain in, and the timber will rot, and the house will become unfit to dwell in: it is so with the family and the affairs of it; if men cannot find in their hearts to take pains in their callings, to tend their shops, and look after their own business, they will soon run in debt, and go behind-hand, and, instead of making what they have, more, for their children, will make it less; it is so with the public; if the king be a child, and will take no care, if the princes eat in the morning, and will take no pains, the affairs of the nation suffer loss, and its interests are prejudiced, its honour sullied, its power weakened, its borders encroached upon, the course of justice obstructed, the treasure exhausted, and all its foundations out of course; and all this, through the slothfulness and self-seeking of those that should be the repairers of its breaches, and the restorers of paths to dwell in, Isa. lviii. 12.

3. How industrious, generally, all are, both princes and people, to get money, because that serves for all purposes, v. 19. He seems to prefer money before mirth; A feast is made for laughter, not merely for eating, but chiefly for pleasant conversation, and the society of friends; nor the laughter of the fool, which is madness, but that of wise men by which they fit themselves for business, and severe studies. Spiritual feasts are made for spiritual laughter, holy joy in God. Wine makes merry, makes glad the life, but money is the measure of all things, and answers all things. Pecunia obdient omnia—Money commands all things. Though wine makes merry, it will not be a house for us, nor a bed, nor clothing, nor provisions and portions for children, nor money, nor anything of this kind, but what all these. The feast cannot be made without money, and though men have wine, they are not so much disposed to be merry, unless they have money for the necessary supports of life. Money, of itself, answers nothing; it will neither feed nor clothe, but, as it is the instrument of commerce, it answers all the occasions of this present life; what is to be had, may be had for money, but it answers nothing to the soul, it will not procure the pardon of sin, the favor of God, the peace of conscience, nor the soul, as it is not redeemed, so it is not maintained, with corruptible things, as silver and gold. Some refer this to rulers; it is ill with the people when they give up themselves to luxury and riot, feasting and making merry, not only because their business is neglected, but because money must be had, to answer all these things, and, in order to that, the people squeezed by heavy taxes.

4. How cautious subjects have need to be, that they harbour not any disloyal purposes in their minds, nor to array up any factious cabals or consultations against the government, because it is ten to one that they are discovered and brought to light, v. 20. "Though rulers should be guilty of some errors, yet be not, upon all occasions, arraigning their administration and running them down, but make the best of them. "Here, (1.) The command teaches us our duty; Curse not the king, nor in thy thought, do not wish ill to the government in thy mind." All sin begins there, and therefore the first rises of it should be curbed and suppressed, and particularly that which proceeds from sedition. Curse not the rich, the princes and governors, in thy bed-chamber, in a conclave or club, of persons disaffected to the government; associate not with such; come not into their secret; join not with them in speaking ill of the government, or plotting against it. (2.) The reason consults our safety; "Though the design be carried on ever so secretly, every act of the air shall carry the voice to the king, who has more spies of that kind than of any other, and that which has wings shall tell the matter, to thy confusion and ruin." God sees what men do, and hears what they say, in secret; and, when he pleases, he can bring to light by strange and unsuspected ways. Wouldst thou then not be hurt by the powers that be, nor be afraid of them? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same; but if thou do that which is evil, be afraid, Rom. xiii. 3, 4.

CHAP. XI.

In this chapter, we have, 1. A pressing exhortation to works of charity and bounty to the poor, as the best cure of the vanity which our worldly riches are subject to, and the only way of making them turn to a substantial good account, v. 1-6. 2. A serious admonition to prepare for death and judgment, and to begin betimes, even in the days of our youth, to do so, v. 7-10.

1. OAST thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days. 2. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight: for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth. 3. If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be. 4. He that observeth the wind, shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. 5. As thou knowest not what is the way of the wind, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all. 6. In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand: for thou knowest not whether thou shalt prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.

Solomon had often, in this book, pressed it upon rich people to take the poor part of other men as themselves; here he presses it upon them to do good to others with them, and to abound in liberality to the poor, which will, another day, abound to their account. Observe,
ECCLESIASTES.

1. How the duty itself is recommended to us, v. 1.

1. Cast thy bread upon the waters, thy bread-corn upon the low places, so some understand it, alluding to the husbandman, who goes forth, bearing precious seed, sparing bread-corn from his family for his seediness, knowing that, without that, he can have no harvest another year; thus the charitable man takes from his bread-corn for seed-corn, abridges himself to supply the poor, that he may sow besides all waters, (Isa. xxxiii. 20.) because, as he sows, he must reap, Gal. vi. 7. We read of the harvest of the river, Isa. xxxii. 5. Waters, in scripture, are put for multitudes, (Rev. xvi. 5.) and there are multitudes of poor, we do not want objects of charity; waters are put also for mourners, the poor are men of sorrows. Thou must give bread, the necessary supports of life, not only give good words, but good things, Isa. lviii. 7. It must be thy bread, that which is honestly got; it is no charity, but injury, to give that which is none of charity to give; first, do justly, and then love mercy. "Thy bread, which thou didst design for thyself, let the poor have a share with thee, as they had with Job, ch. xxxi. 17. Give freely to the poor, though it may seem thrown away and lost, as that which is cast upon the waters. Send it a voyage, send it at a venture, as merchants that trade by sea; trust it upon the waters, it shall not sink.

2. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; be not a scrupulous dispenser of works of charity." (1.) "Give much, if thou hast much to give, not a pitance, but a portion, not a bit or two, but a mess, a meal; give a large dole, not a paltry one; give good measure, (Luke vi. 38.) be generous in giving, as they were, when, on festival days, they sent portions to them for whom nothing was prepared, (Neh. viii. 10.) worthy portions." (2.) "Give to many, to seven, and also to eight; if thou meet with seven objects of charity, give to them all, and then, if thou meet with an eighth, give to that, and if with eight more, give to them also; to give one not thyself with the good thou hast done, from the good thou hast further to do, but hold on, and mend. In hard times, when the number of the poor increases, let thy charity be proportionably enlarged." God is rich in mercy to all, to us, though unworthy, he gives liberally, and upbraideth not with former gifts, and we must be merciful, as our heavenly Father is.

II. The reasons with which it is pressed upon us.

Consider,

1. Our reward for well-doing is very certain. "Though thou cast it upon the waters, and it seem lost, thou thinkest thou hast given thy good word with it, and art likely never to hear of it again, yet thou shalt find it after many days, as the husbandman finds his seed again in a plentiful harvest, and the merchant his venture in a rich return. It is not lost, but well laid out, and well laid up; it brings in full interest, in the present gifts of God's providence, and graces and comforts of his spirit; and the present receipt is but the earnest of the reward to come, as that of the Lord." Seneca, a heathen, could say, Nihil magis possidere me credam quam bene donata—I possess nothing so completely as that which I have given away. Hoc habeo quodcumque dedi; he sunt divini certa in quacunque sorte humana levitate—Whatever I have imparted I still possess; these riches remain with me through all the vicissitudes of life. "Thou shalt find it, perhaps not quickly, but after many days; the return may be slight, but it is sure, and will be so much the more plentiful." Wheat, the most valuable grain, lies longest in the ground. Long voyages make the best returns.

2. Our opportunity for well-doing is very uncertain; "Thou knowest not what evil may be upon the earth, which may deprive thee of thine estate, and put thee out of a capacity to do good, and therefore, while thou hast wherewithal, be liberal with it; im prove the present season, as the husbandman in sowing his ground, before the frost comes," We have reason to expect evil upon the earth, for we are born to trouble; what the evil may be we know not, but, that we may be ready for it, whatever it is, it is our wisdom, in the day of prosperity, to be in good, to be doing good. Many make use of this as an argument against giving to the poor, because they know not what hard times may come, when they may want themselves; whereas we should therefore the rather be charitable, that, when evil days come, we may have the comfort of having done good while we were able; we would then hope to find mercy both with God and man, and therefore should now show mercy. If by charity we trust God with what we have, we put it into good hands, against bad times.

III. How he obviates the objections which might be made against this duty, and the excuses of the uncharitable.

1. Some will say, that what they have is their own, and they have it for their own use, and will ask, Why should we cast it thus upon the waters? Why should I take my bread, and my flesh, and give it to I know not whom? So Nabal pleaded, 1 Sam. xxv. 11. Look up, man, and consider how soon thou wouldst be starved in a barren ground, if the clouds over thy head should plead thus, that they have the waters, but thou hast not the clouds to bring them to thee. If they are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth, to make it fruitful, till they are wearied and spent with watering it, Job xxxvii. 11. Are the heavens thus bountiful to the poor earth, that is so far below them, and wilt thou grudge thy bounty to thy poor brother, who is bone of thy bone?—Or thus; some will say, Though we give but little to the poor, yet, thank God, we have as charitable a heart as any. Nay, says Solomon, if the clouds be full of rain, they will empty themselves; if there be charity in the heart, it will show itself, Jam. ii. 15. 16. He that draweth out his soul to the hungry will reach forth his hand to them as he has ability.

2. Some will say, that their sphere of usefulness is low and narrow, they cannot do the good that they see others can, who are in more public stations, and therefore they will sit still, and do nothing. Nay, says he, in the place where the tree falls, or happens to be, there it shall be, for the benefit of those who walk by it. To do good is the duty of every christian, and may be a blessing to that place, whatever it is, where the providence of God casts him; wherever we are, we may find good work to do, if we have but hearts to do it. Or thus; some will say, "Many present themselves as objects of charity who are unworthy, and I do not know whom it is fit to give it to." "Trouble not thyself about that," (says Solomon;) "give as discreetly as thou canst, and then be satisfied, that, though the person should prove undeserving of the bounty, yet, if it be given with an honest heart, thou shalt not lose thy reward; which way soever the charity is directed, north or south, thine shall be the benefit of it." This is commonly applied to death; therefore let us do good, and, as good trees, bring forth the fruits of righteousness, because death will shortly come, and cut us down, and we shall then be determined to an unchangeable state of happiness or misery, according to what was done in the body. As the tree falls at death, so it likely will be, as the tree planted in the earth.

3. Some will object the many discouragements they have met with in their charity; they have been reproached for it as proud and pharisaical; they have but little to give, and they shall be despised, if they do not give as others do; they know not but their children may come to want it, and they had better lay it up for them; they have taxes to pay,
and purchases to make; they know not what use will be made of their charity, nor what construction will be put upon it; these, and a hundred such objections, he answers in one word; (v. 4.) He that observes the wind shall not sow, which signifies doing good; and he that regards the clouds shall not reap, which signifies getting good; if we stand thus magnifying every little difficulty, God will make us to do without a sail, and many a thing will be easily done, and facing hard ship and danger where there is none, we shall never go on, much less go through, with our work, nor make any thing of it. If the husbandman should decline or leave off sowing for the sake of every flying cloud, and reaping for the sake of every blast of wind, he would make but an ill account of his husbandry at the year’s end. The duties of religion are as necessary as sowing and reaping, and will turn so much to our own advantage; the discouragements we meet with in these duties are but as winds and clouds, which will do us no harm; and which those that put on a little courage and resolution will despise and easily break through. Note, Those that will be deterred and driven off by small and seeming difficulties from great and real duties, will never bring anything to pass in religion, for there will always arise some wind, some cloud or other, at every work we are about; heavens, winds and clouds are in God’s hands, are designed to try us, and our Christianity obliges us to endure hardness.

4. Some will say, “We do not see in which way what we expend in charity should ever be made up to us, we do not find ourselves ever the richer; why should we depend upon the general promise of a blessing on the charitable, unless we saw which way to expect the operation of it?”

To this he answers, “But the Lord shall be the ra\er of his servants, and he shall be kind to his elect.” (Ps. viii. 33.) Or thou shalt see; thou mayest be sure he will make good his word of promise, though he does not tell thee how or which way, and though he works in a way by himself, according to the counsels of his unsearchable wisdom; he will work, and none shall hinder; but then he will work, and none shall direct or prescribe to him; the blessing shall work insensibly, but irresistibly; God’s work shall certainly agree with his word, whether we see it or no.”

Note. The ignorance of the work of God is shown in two instances. (1.) We know not what is the way of the Spirit; of the wind, so some; we know not whence it comes, or whither it goes, or when it will turn; yet the seamen lie ready waiting for it, till it turns about in favour of them; so we must do our duty, in expectation of the time appointed for the blessing. Or it may be understood of the human soul; we know that God made us, and gave us these souls, but how they entered into these bodies, are united to them, animate them, and operate upon them, we know not; the soul is a mystery to itself, no marvel then that the work of God is so to us. (2.) We know not how the bones are fashioned in the womb of her that is with child; we cannot describe the manner either of the formation of the body, or of its information with a soul; both, we both, know are the work of God, and we acquiesce in his work, but cannot, in either, trace the process of the operation; we do not know the birth of the child that is conceived, though we know not how it is formed, nor need we doubt the performance of the promise, though we perceive not how things work towards it. And we may well trust God to provide for us that which is convenient, without our anxious disguising cares, and therein to recompense us for our charity, since it was without any knowledge or foretaste of ours, that our bodies were formed in our mother’s womb, secret, and our souls found the way into them; and so the argument is the same, and urged to the same extent, with that of our Saviour, (Matth. vi. 25.) The life, the living soul that God has given us, is more than

meat; the body, that God has made us, is more than raiment; let him therefore that has done the greater for us be cheerfully depended upon to do the lesser.

5. Some say, “We have been charitable, have given a great deal to the poor, and never yet saw any return for it; many days are past, and we have not found it again.”

To which he answers, (v. 6.) Yet go you a little speed, and let slip no opportunity. In the morning, sow thy seed upon the objects of charity that offer themselves early, and, in the evening, do not withhold thy hand, under pretence that thou art weary; as thou hast opportunity, do being good, some way or other, all the day long, as the husbandman follows his seadness from morning till night. In the morning of youth, lay out thyself to do good; give out of the little thou hast to begin the world with; and, in the evening of old age, yield not to the common temptation old people are in to be penurious; even then withhold not thy hand, and think not to excise thyself from charitable works by purposing to make a charitable will, but do good to the last, for thou knowest not which work of charity and piety shall prosper, both as to others and as to thyself, this or that, but hast reason to hope that both shall be alike good. Be not weary of well-doing, for in due season, he shall make it to come forth, and that is the best time, you shall reap.”

Gal. vi. 9. This is applicable to spiritual charity, our pious endeavours for the good of the souls of others; let us continue them, for, though we have long laboured in vain, we may at length see the success of them. Let ministers, in the days of their seadness, sow both morning and evening; for who can tell which shall prosper?

7. Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun: 8. But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity. 9. Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

10. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh; for childhood and youth are vanity.

Here is an admonition both to old people and to young people, to think of dying, and get ready for it. Having, by many excellent precepts, taught us how to live well, the preacher comes now, toward the close of his discourse, to teach us how to die well, and to put us in mind of our latter end.

1. He applies himself to the aged, writes to them as fathers, to awaken them to think of death, v. 7, 8. Here is,

1. A rational concession of the sweetness of life, which old people find by experience; Truly the light is sweet; the light of the sun is so; it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold it; light was the first thing made in the formation of the great world, as the eye is one of the first in the formation of the body, the little world; it is pleasant to see the light; the heathen were so charmed with the pleasure of it, that they worshipped the sun; it is pleasant by it to see other things, the many agreeable prospects it puts for life, Job iii. 20, 23. It cannot be denied that life is sweet; it is sweet to bad men, because they have their portion in this life; it is sweet to good men, because they have this life as the time of their
preparation for a better life; it is sweet to all men; nature says it is so, and there is no disputing against it; nor can death be desired for its own sake, but dreaded, unless as a period to present evils, or a passage to future good. Life is sweet, and therefore we have need to double a guard upon ourselves, lest we love it too well.

2. A caution to think of death, even in the midst of all happiness. Death is most sweet, and we are most apt to forget death; If a man live many years, yet let him remember the days of darkness are coming. Here is, (1.) A summer's day supposed to be enjoyed—that life may continue long, even many years, and that, by the goodness of God, it may be made comfortable, and a man may rejoice in them all. Those are those that live many years in this world, escape many dangers, receive many mercies, and therefore are secure that they shall want no good; and that no evil shall befall them, and the pitcher which has come so often from the well, safe and sound, shall never come home broken. But who are they that live many years, and rejoice in them all? Alas! none; we have but hours of joy for months of sorrow. However, some rejoice in their years, their many years, more than others; if these two things meet, a prosperous state, and a cheerful spirit, these two indeed may do much towards enabling a man to rejoice in them all. Yet let them remember the states, and the worst cheerful spirit has its damps; jovial sinners have their melancholy qualms, and cheerful saints have their gracious sorrows; so that it is but a supposition, not a case in fact, that a man should live many years, and rejoice in them all. But, (2.) Here is a winter's night proposed to be expected, after this summer's day; yet let this hearty old man remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many. Note, (1.) There are days of darkness coming, as the fruit of our lying in the grave; there the body will lie in the dark, the eyes see not, the sun shines not. The darkness of death is opposed to the light of life, the grave is a land of darkness, Job x. 21. (2.) Those days of darkness will be many; the days of our lying under ground will be more than the days of our living above ground. They are many, but they are not infinite; many as they are, they will be numbered and finished when the heavens are no more. (3.) They are days of darkness coming, from the mouth of the night, so the longest night will have its morning. (4.) It is good for us often to remember those days of darkness, that we may not be lifted up with pride, nor hallowed asleep in carnal security, nor even transported into indecencies by vain mirth. (5.) Notwithstanding the long continuance of life, and the many comforts of it, yet we must remember the days of darkness, because those will certainly come, and they will be with much the less terror, if we have thought of them before.

II. He applies himself to the young, and writes to them as children, to awaken them to think of death; (v. 9, 10.) here we have, 1. An ironical concession to the vanities and pleasures of youth; Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth. Some make this to be the counsel which the atheist and the epicure give to the young man, the poisonous suggestions against which Solomon, in the close of his life, urge them; but it is more emphatical, if we take it, as it is commonly understood, by way of irony, like that of Elijah to the priests of Baal, Cry aloud, for he is a god; or of Micaiah to Ahab, Go to Ramoth-Gilead, and prosper; or of Christ to his disciples, Sleep on now. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, live a merry life, follow thy sports, and take thy pleasures; let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, cheer thee with its fancies and foolish hopes; entertain thyself with thy pleasing dreams, walk in the ways of thy heart, do whatever thou hast a mind to do, and stick at nothing that may gratify the sensual appetite; Quicquid liber licet—Make thy will thy law; walk in the ways of thy heart, and let thine heart talk after thine eyes, a rambling heart after a roving eye; what is pleasing to thine own eyes do it, whether it be pleasing in the eyes of God or no." Solomon speaks thus ironically to the young man, that he may thus make him a witness of his own foolishness, and which he would fain have leave to do, in which he places his happiness, and on which he sets his heart. (2.) That he wishes all about him would give him this counsel, would preclude him to such smooth things as these, and cannot break any advice to the contrary, but reckons these his enemies that bid him be sober and serious. (3.) To expose his folly, and the great absurdity of a voluptuous vicious course of life; the very description of his folly, that it is all this, is his folly, and that to live in them impartially, is enough to show how contrary to reason those act that live such a life. The very opening of the cause is enough to determine it without any argument. (4.) To show, that, if men give themselves to such a course of life as this, it is just with God to give them up to it, to abandon them to their own hearts' lusts, that they may walk in their own counsels, Hos. iv. 17.

A powerful check is given to these vanities and pleasures; "Know thou, that for all these things God shall bring thee into judgment, and duly consider that, and then live such a luxurious life, if thou canst, if thou darest." This is a acts:—a corrective to the foregoing concession, and plucks in the reins he had laid on the neck of the young man's lust. "Know then, for a certainty, that, if thou dost take such a liberty as this, it will be thy everlasting ruin, thou hast to do with a God who will not let go unvisited and unpunished. (1.) The judgment is ready to come. (2.) We must every one of us be brought into judgment, however we may now put far from us that evil day. (3.) We shall be reckoned with for all our carnal mirth and sensuous pleasures in that day. (4.) It is good for all, but especially for young people, to know and consider this, that they may not, by the indulgence of their youthful lusts, treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, the wrath of the Lamb. (5.) A warning, and an exhortation inferred from all this, v. 10. Let young people lock to themselves, and manage well both their souls and their bodies, their heart and their flesh. (1.) Let them take care that their minds be not lifted up with pride, or disturbed with anger, or any sinful passion; Remove sorrow, or anger, from thy heart; the word signifies any disorder or perturbation of the mind. Young people are apt to be impatient of check and control, to vex and fret at any thing that is humiliating and mortifying to them, and their proud hearts rise against every thing that creases and contradicts them. They are so set upon that which is pleasing to sense, that they cannot bear any thing that is displeasing, but it goes with sorrow to their heart; their pride often discoutnt them, and makes them uneasy. "Put that away, and the love of the world, and lay thine expectations low from the creature, and not from the God who will render unto every man according of sorrow and anger to thee." Some by sorrow here understand that carnal mirth described v. 9. the end of which will be bitterness and sorrow. Let them keep at a distance from every thing which will be sorrow in the reflection. (2.) Let them take care that their bodies be not defiled by intemperance, uncleanness, or any fleshly lusts; "Put away evil from the flesh, and let not the members of thy body be instruments of unrighteousness. The evil of sin will be the evil of punishment, and that which thou art fond of, as good for the
flesh, because it gratifies the appetites of it, will prove evil, and hurtful to it, and therefore put it far from thee, the further the better."

The preacher, to enforce his admonition both to old and young, urges, as an effectual argument, that which is the great argument of his discourse, the vanity of all present things, their uncertainty and insufficiency.

1. He reminds old people of this; (v. 8.) All that comes is vanity; yea, though a man live many years, and rejoice in them all. That is come already, and all that is yet to come, how much soever men promise themselves from the concluding scenes, it is all vanity. What will be, will do no more to make men happy than what has been. All that come into the world are vanity; they are altogether so, at their best estate.

2. He reminds young people of this; Childhood and youth are vanity. The dispositions and actions of childhood and youth have in them a great deal of impertinence and iniquity, sinful vanity, which young people have need to watch against, and get cured. The pleasures and advantages of childhood and youth have in them no certainty, satisfaction, or continuance; they are passing away; these flowers will soon wither, and these make us fall; let them therefore knit them into good fruit, which will continue and abound to a good account.

**CHAP. XII.**

The wise and penitent preacher is here closing his sermon; and he closes it, not only like a good orator, but like a good preacher, with that which was likely to make the best impressions, and which he wished might be powerful and lasting upon his hearers. Here is, 1. An exhortation to young people to begin betimes to be religious, and to put it off to old age, (v. 1.) enforced with arguments taken from the calamities of old age, (v. 1. 5.) and that great change that death will make upon us, v. 7, 8. 11. A repetition of the great truth he had undertakent to prove in this discourse, the vanity of the world, v. 8. 11. III. A confirmation and recommendation of what he had written in this and his other books, as worthy to be duly weighed and considered, v. 9. 12. IV. The whole matter summed up and concluded with a charge to all to be truly religious, in consideration of the judgment to come, v. 13, 14.

1. **REMEMBER** now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; 2. While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened; nor the clouds return after the rain: 3. In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened; 4. And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low; and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird; and all the daughters of music shall be brought low: 5. Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail; because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: 6. Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel be broken at the cistern: 7. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

Here is,

I. A call to young people to think of God, and mind their duty to him, when they are young; Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth. This is, 1. The royal preacher's application of his sermon concerning the vanity of the world, and every thing in it. "You that are young flatter yourselves with expectations of great things from it, but believe those that have tried, it yields no solid satisfaction to dwell; therefore, that you may not be deceived by this, nor tempted to essay to do it, remember your Creator, and so guard yourselves against the mischiefs that arise from the vanity of the creature." 2. It is the royal physician's antidote against the particular diseases of youth, the love of mirth, and the indulgence of sensual pleasures, the vanity which childhood and youth are subject to; to prevent and cure this, remember thy Creator. Here is, (1.) A great duty pressed upon us, to remember our God as our Creator; not only to remember that God is our Creator, that he made us, and not we ourselves, and is therefore our rightful Lord and Owner, but we must engage ourselves to him with the considerations which his being our Creator lays us under, and pay him the honour and duty which we owe him as our Creator. Remember thy Creator; the word is plural, as it is, Job xxxv. 10. Where is God my Maker? For God said, Let us make man, us, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. (2.) The proper season for this duty, in the days of thy youth; the days of thy choice, so some; thy choice days, thy choosing days. "Begin, in the beginning of thy days, to remember him from whom thou hast thy being, and go on according to that good beginning. Call him to mind when thou art young, and keep him in mind throughout all the days of thy youth, and never forget him. Guard thus against the temptations of youth, and thus improve the advantages of it."

II. A reason to enforce this command; While the evil days come not, and the years, of which thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. Do it quickly, 1. "Before sickness and death come; do it while thou livest, for it will be too late to do it when death has removed thee from this state of trial and probation to that of recompense and retribution. The days of sickness and death are the days of evil, terrible to nature, evil days indeed to those that have forgotten their Creator; these evil days will come, sooner or later; as yet they come not; for God is long-suffering to us-ward, and gives us space to repent; the continuing of life is but the deferring of death, and, while life is continued and death deferred, it concerns us to prepare, and get the property of death altered, that we may die comfortably."

2. Before old age comes, which, if death prevent not, will come, and they will be years of which we shall say, We have no pleasure in them; when we shall not relish the delights of sense, as Barzillai, (2 Sam. xix. 35.) when we shall be loaded with bodily infirmities, old and blind, or old and lame; when we shall be taken off from our usefulness, and our strength shall be labour and sorrow; when we shall either have parted with our relations, and all our old friends and acquaintance in them, and see them weary of us; when we shall feel ourselves die by inches; these years draw nigh, when all that comes will be vanity, the remaining months all months of vanity, and there will be no pleasure but in the reflection of a good life on earth, and the expectation of a better life in heaven.
These are no ambiguities; the order, and shows,
(1.) How many are the calamities of old age, and that, if we should live to be old, our days will be such as we shall have no pleasure in; which is a good reason why we should return to God, and make our peace with him, in the days of our youth, and not till then find it to be old; for it will be no thanks to us to leave the pleasures of sin, when they have left us, nor to return to God, when need forces us; it is the greatest absurdity and ingratitude imaginable, to give the cream and flower of our days to the devil, and reserve the bran and refuse and dregs of them for God; this is offering the torm, and the lame, and the sick, for the sacrifice; and besides, old age being thus clogged with infirmities, it is the greatest folly imaginable to put off that needful work which requires the best of our strength, when our faculties are in their prime, and especially to make the work more difficult by a longer continuance in sin, and laying up treasures of guilt in the conscience, to add to the burdens of age, and make them much heavier. If the calamities of age will be such as here represented, we shall have need of something to support and comfort us then, and nothing will be more effectual to do this than the thoughts of the good works we have done for us, that we began betimes to remember our Creator, and have not since laid aside the remembrance of him.
How can we expect God should help us when we are old, if we will not serve him when we are young? See Ps. lxxi. 17, 18.

The decays and infirmities of old age are here elegantly described in figurative expressions, which have some difficulty in them to us now, who are not acquainted with the common phrases and metaphors used in Solomon's age and language; but the general scope is plain—to show how uncomfortably, generally, the days of old age are.
[1.] Then the sun and the light of it, the moon, and the stars, and the light which they borrow from it, will be darkened; they look dim to old people, in consequence of the decay of their sight; their countenance is clouded, and the beauty and lustre of it are eclipsed; their intellectual powers and the ideas which are in their soul are darkened; their understanding and memory fail them, and their apprehension is not so quick, nor their fancy so lively, as it has been; (light is often put for joy and prosperity) the days of their mirth are over, and they have not pleasure either of the converse of the day or the repose of the night, for both the sun and the moon are darkened to them.
[2.] Then the clouds return after the rain; as when the weather is disposed to wet, so no sooner is one cloud blown over than another succeeds it, so it is with old people, when they are got free from one pain or ailment, they are seized with another, so that their distempers are like a continual dropping in a very rainy day. The end of one trouble is, in this world, but the beginning of another, and deep calls unto deep. Old people are often afflicted with delusions of rheum, like soaking rain, after which still more clouds return, feeling the humour, so that it continues grievous, and thereby the body as it were, melts away.
[3.] Then the keepers of the house tremble; the head, which is as the watch-tower, shakes, and the arms and hands, which are ready for the preservation of the body, shake too, and grow feeble, upon every sudden approach and attack of danger; that vigour of the animal spirits, which used to be exerted for self-defence, falls, and cannot do its office; old people are easily dispirited and discouraged.
[4.] Then the strong men shall bow themselves; the legs and thighs, which used to support the body, and bear its weight, bend, and cannot serve for labour, as they have done, but are soon tired. Old men, that have been in their time strong men, are become weak, and stoop for age, Zech. viii. 4. God takes no pleasure in the legs of a man, (Ps. cxlvii. 10.) for their strength will soon fade; but in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength, he has everlasting arms.
[5.] Then the grinders cease, because they are few; the teeth, with which we grind our meat, and prepare it for concoction, cease to do their part, because they are few; they are rotted and broken, and perhaps have been drawn, because they ached; some old people have lost all their teeth, and others have but few left; and this infirmity is the more considerable, because the meat, not being well chewed, the want of teeth, is not well digested, which has as much an influence as any thing upon the other decays of age.
[6.] Those that look out of the windows are darkened; the eyes wax dim, as Isaac's, (Gen. xxvii. 1.) and Ahijah's, 1 Kings xiv. 4. Moses was a rare instance of one, who, when 120 years old, had good eye-sight, but ordinarily, the sight decays in old people as soon as any thing, and it is a mercy to them that art helps nature with spectacles. We must therefore need to improve our sight well while we have it, because the light of the eyes may be gone before the light of life.
[7.] The doors are shut in the streets; old people keep within doors, and care not for going abroad to entertainments; the lips, the doors of the mouth, are shut in eating, because the teeth are gone, and the sound of the grinding with them is lost, so that they have not command of their meat in their mouths, which they used to have; they cannot digest it in their stomach, and therefore little grist is brought to the mill.
[8.] Old people rise up at the voice of the bird; they have no sound sleep as young people have, but a little thing disturbs them, even the chirping of a bird; they cannot rest, for coughing, and therefore rise up at cock-crowing, as soon as any body is stirring; or they are apt to be jealous, and timorous, and full of care, which breaks their sleep, and makes them wake at every noise. They are wiser to rise up and retire to bed, rise up, and retire, as in a fright, at those voices of birds, of ravens, or screech-owls, which soothsayers omen to.
[9.] With them, all the daughters of music are brought low; they have neither voice nor car, can neither sing themselves, nor take any pleasure, as Solomon had done in the days of his youth, in singing men and singing women, and musical instruments, ch. ii. 8. Old people grow hard of hearing, and unapt to distinguish sounds and voices.
[10.] They are afraid of that which is high, afraid to go to the top of any high place, either because, for want of breath, they cannot reach it, or, their heads being giddy, or, their legs failing them, they dare not venture to it; or they frighten themselves with fancies, that that which is high will fall upon them. Fear is in the way; they can neither ride nor walk with their usual boldness, but are afraid of every thing that lies in their way, lest it throw them down.
[11.] The almond-tree flourisheth; the old man's hair is grown white, so that his head looks like an almond-tree in the blossom. The almond-tree blossoms before any other tree, and therefore fitly shows what haste old age makes, in seizing upon men; it prevents their expectations, and comes faster upon them than they thought of. Gray hairs are here and there upon them, and they perceive it not.
[12.] The grasshopper is a burthen, and desire fails. Old men can bear nothing, the lightest thing sits heavy upon them, both on their bodies and on
their minds, a little thing sinks and breaks them; perhaps the grasshopper was some food that was
loved upon to be very light of digestion; John Bapt-
ist's meat was locusts; but even that lies heavy
upon an old man's stomach, and therefore desire is
failed, he has no appetite to his meat, neither shall he regard the desire of women, as that king, Dan.
xi. 37. Old men become mindless and listless, and the pleasures of sense are to them tasteless and
sick.

It is probable that Solomon wrote this when he
was himself old, and could speak feignedly of the
infirmities of age, which perhaps grew the faster
upon him, for the indulgence he had given himself
in sensual pleasures. Some old people bear up bet-
ter than others under the decays of age, but, more
or less, the days of old age are and will be evil days,
and of little pleasure. Great care therefore should
be taken to pay respect and honour old people
that they may have something to balance their
grievances, and nothing may be done to add to them.
And all this put together makes up a good reason
why we should remember our Creator in the days of
our youth, that he may remember us with favour,
when these evil days come, and his comforts may
delight our souls when the delights of sense are in
a manner worn out.

Therefore remember thy Creator in the
days of thy youth, because death is certainly before thee, perhaps it is very near thee, and it is a serious
ting to die, and thou shouldest feel concerned with
the utmost care and diligence to prepare for it.
[1.] In an unchangeable state. Make all then to go to his long home and lead all these
infirmities and decays of age are harbingeres of, and
advances toward, that awful remove. At death, man goes from this world, and all the employments
and enjoyments of it; he is gone for good and all, as
to his present state; he is gone home; for here he
was a stranger and pilgrim; both soul and body go
to the place whence they came, v. 7. He is gone
to his rest, to the place where he is to abide. He is
gone home, to the house of the dead, and for the
world this world is not his. He is gone to his long
home; for the days of his lying in the grave will be
many. He is gone to his house of eternity; not only
to his house whence he shall never return to this
world, but to the house where he must be for ever.
This should make us willing to die, that at death we
must go home; and why should we not long to go to
our Father's house? And this should quicken us
to get Ready to die, that we must then go to our long
home, to an everlasting habitation.
[2.] Death will be an occasion of sorrow to our
friends that love us; when man goes to his long
home, the mourners go about the streets, the
real mourners, and those, as now with us, distinguished
by their habits as they go along the streets; the
mourners for ceremony, that were hired to weep
for the dead, both to express and to excite the real
mourning. When we die, we not only remove to a
melancholy house before us, but we leave a melancholy
house behind us. Tears are a tribute due to the
dead, and this, among other circumstances, makes it a serious thing to die. But in vain do we
weep; for he who was before the house of mourning, and see the mourners go about the streets, if it do not help to make us serious and pious mourners in the closet.
[3.] Death will dissolve the frame of nature, and
take down the earthly house of this tabernacle,
which is elegantly described, v. 6. Then shall the
sick. cordon, by which soul and body were wonder-

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untied, and those old friends be forced to part; then
shall the golden bowl, which held the waters of life
for us, be broken; then shall the fitcher, with which
we used to fetch up water, for the constant support
of life, and the repair of its decays, be broken, even
at the fountain, so that it can fetch up no more, and
the wheel, all these organs that serve for the col-
lecting and distributing of nourishment, shall be
broken, and disabled to do their office any more;
the body shall become like a watch when the spring
is broken, the motion of all the wheels is stopped
and they all stand still; the machine is taken to
pieces; the heart beats no more, nor does the blood
circulate. Some apply this to the ornaments and
utensils of life; rich people must, at death, leave be-
hind them their clothing, and furniture of silver and
gold, and poor people their earthen pitchers, and
the drawers of water will have their wheel broken.
[4.] Death will resolve us into our first principles,
v. 7. Man is a strange sort of creature, a ray of
heaven united to a ced of earth; at death, these are
separated, and each goes to the place whence it came.

First, The body, that ced of clay, returns to its
own earth, it is made of the earth; Adam's body was
so, and we are of the same mould; it is a house of
clay, at death it is laid in the earth, and in a little
while, it will be resolved into earth, not to be distin-
guishable from common earth, according to the promise,
( Gen. iii. 19.) Dust thou art, and therefore to dust
thou shalt return. Let us not therefore indulge the
appetites of the body, nor pamper it, (it will be
worms' meat shortly,) nor let sin reign in our mortal
bodies, for they are mortal, Rem. vi. 12.

Secondly, The soul, that beam of light, returns to
that God, who, when he made man of the dust of
the ground, breathed into him the breath of life, to
make him a living soul; and shall become like a
spirit, which is a part of God, and is the spirit of every man within him. When the fire
consumes the wood, the flame ascends, when the
ashes return to the earth out of which the wood grew.
The soul does not die with the body; it is
redeemed from the power of the grave; (Ps. xlix.
15.) it can subsist without it, and will in a state of
separation from it, as the candle burns, and burns
brighter, when it is taken out of the dark lantern
and exposed of the light. It is used to be said, that
the soul is the light of the body; and this is, in a
sense, true. It goes to God as a Judge, to give account
of itself, and to be lodged either with the spirits in
prison, (1 Pet. iii. 19.) or with the spirits in paradise,
(Luke xxiv. 43.) according to what was done in
the body. This makes death terrible to the wicked,
whose souls go to God as an Avenger; and comfort-
able to the good soul, whose soul go to God as a
Father, into whose hands they cheerfully commit them, through a Mediator, cut of whom sinners
may justly dread to think of going to God.

8. Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher: all
is vanity. 9. And moreover, because the
preacher was wise, he still taught the people
knowledge; yea, he gave good heed and sought out,
and set in order many proverbs. 10. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words; and that which was written was upright, even words of truth. 11. The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd. 12. And further, by these, my son, be admonish-
ed: of making many books there is no end, and
much study is a weariness of the flesh. Solomon is here drawing towards a close, and is

Ecclesiastes, XII.
loath to part, till he has gained his point, and prevailed with his hearers, with his readers, to seek for that satisfaction in God only, and in their duty to him, which they can never find in the creature.

1. He repeats his text, v. 8. 1. As that which he had fully demonstrated the truth of, and so made good his undertaking in this manner, he had taught his hearers; and both his reasons and his application were to the purpose. 2. As that which he desired to inculcate both upon others and upon himself, to have it ready, and to make use of it, upon all occasions; we see it daily proved, let it therefore be daily improved; Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

11. He recommends what he had written upon this subject, by divine direction and inspiration, to our serious consideration. The words of this book are faithful, and well worthy our acceptance, for—

1. They are the words of one that was a convert, a penitent, that could speak by dear-bought experience of the vanity of the world, and the folly of expecting great things from it. He was Coheleth, one gathered in from his wanderings, and gathered home to that God from whom he had revolted. Vanity of vanities, saith the penitent. All true penitents are convinced of the vanity of the world, for they find it to be none other than themselves; the burden of life, which they complain of it.

2. They are the words of one that was wise, wiser than any; endowed with extraordinary measures of wisdom; famous for it among his neighbours, who all sought unto him, to hear his wisdom, and therefore a competent judge of this matter; not only wise as a prince, but wise as a preacher—and preachers have need of wisdom to win souls.

3. He was one that made it his business to do good, and to use what means; Because he was wise, and knew he had not his wisdom for himself, any more than he had it from himself; he still taught the people that knowledge which he had found useful to himself, and hoped might be so to them too. It is the interest of princes to have their people well taught in religion, and no disarrangement to them to teach them themselves the good knowledge of the Lord, but their duty to encourage those whose office it is to teach them, and to speak comfortably to them. Christ, as God, is not the only wise, the common people, be despised, no, not by the wisest and greatest, as either unworthy or incapable of good knowledge; even those that are well taught, have need of to be still taught, that they may grow in knowledge.

4. He took a great deal of pains and care to do good, designing to teach the people knowledge; he did not put them off with any thing that came next to hand, because they were inferior people, and he a very wise man; but, considering the worth of the souls he preached to, and the weight of the subject he preached on, he gave good heed to what he read and heard from others, that, having stocked himself well, he might bring out of his treasury things new and old. He gave good heed to what he spake and wrote himself, and was choice and exact in it; all he did was elaborate. (1.) He chose the most profitable way of preaching, by proverbs, or short sentences, which would be memorable among the people, and remain to them a long and laboured period. (2.) He did not content himself with a few parables, or wise sayings, and repeat them again and again, but he furnished himself with many proverbs, a great variety of grave discourses, that he might have something to say on every occasion. (3.) He did not only give them such observations as were obvious and trite, but he sought out such as were surprising and uncommon; he digged into the mines of knowledge, and did not only pick up what lay on the surface. (4.) He did not deliver his heads and observations at random, as they came to mind, but methodised them; and set them in order, that they might appear in more strength and lustre.

5. He put what he had to say in such a dress as he thought would be most pleasing; He sought to find out acceptable words, words of delight; (v. 10.) and in such a style of discourse that good matter might not be spoiled by bad striping, and by the uniformity of the expression. Ministers should study, not for big words, or for fine words, but acceptable words, such as are likely to please men for their good, to edification, 1 Cor. x. 33. They would win souls must contrive how to win upon them with words filly spoken.

6. That which he wrote for our instruction of unquestionable certainty, and what we may rely upon; That which was written was upright and sincere, according to the real sentiments of this, the Prince of men, even words of truth, the exact representation of the thing as it is. These are sure not to miss their way who are guided by these words. What good will acceptable words do us, if they be not upright, and words of truth? Most are for smooth things, that flatter them, rather than right things, that direct them; (Isa. xxx. 10.) but to those that understand themselves, and their own interest, words of truth will ever prove more dear to them.

7. That which he and other holy men wrote, will be of great use and advantage to us, especially being inculcated upon us by the exposition of it, v. 11. Here observe, (1.) A double benefit accruing to us from divine truths, if duly applied and improved; they are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness. They are of use, [1.] To excite us to our duty; they are as goads to the ox that draws the plough, putting it forward when he is slack, and quickening him, to mend his pace. The truth of God is a goad to the heart, (Acts ii. 37.) and put them upon bethinking themselves, when they trifle and grow remiss, and exerting themselves with more vigour in their work. While our good affections are so apt as they are, to grow flat and cool, we have need of these goads. [2.] To engage us to persevere in our duty; they are as nails to those that are wavering and inconstant, to fix them to that which is good; they are as nails to those that walk beside the ways of the wicked, to keep them from falling; and nails to such as are desultory, and draw aside; means to establish the heart, and confirm good resolutions, that we may set our course to our duty, nor ever be taken off from it, but that what good there is in us may be as a nail fastened in a sure place, Ezra ix. 8. (2.) A double way of communicating divine truths, in order to these benefits. [1.] By the scriptures, as the standing rule, the words of the wise, of the prophets, who are called wise men, Matt. xxiii. 24. These we have in black and white, and may have recourse to them at any time, and make use of them as goads and as nails; by them we may teach ourselves, let them but come with pungency and power to the soul, let the impressions of them be deep and durable, and they will make us wise to salvation. [2.] By the ministry; to make the words of the wise more profitable to us, it is appointed that they should be impressed and fastened by the masters of assemblies. Solemn and grand assemblies for the reception of the divine institution, intended for the honour of God and the edification of his church, and are not only serviceable, but necessary, to those ends. There must be masters of these assemblies, who are Christ's ministers, and, as such, are to preside in them, to be God's mouth to the people, and their's to God. Their business is to fasten the words of the wise, and drive them as nails to the head, in order to which, the word of God is likewise as a hammer, Jer. xxviii. 29.
That which is written, and thus recommended to us, is of divine origin. Though it comes to us through various hands, (many wise men, and many masters of assemblies,) yet it is given by one and the same shepherd, the great Shepherd of Israel, that leads Joseph like a flock, Ps. lxxx. 1. God is that one Shepherd, whose good Spirit edited the scriptures, and assists the masters of the assemblies in opening and applying the scriptures. These words of the wise are the true sayings of God, on which we may rest our souls; from that one Shepherd all ministers must receive what they deliver, and speak according to the light of the written word.

9. The sacred inspired writings, if we will but make use of them, are sufficient to guide us in the way to true happiness, and we need not, in the pursuit of that, to till ourselves with the search of other writings; (v. 12.) And further, nothing now remains but to tell thee that of making many books there is no end; (1.) Of writing many books. If what I have written, serve not to convince thee of the vanity of the world, and the necessity of being religious, neither wouldst thou be convinced, if I should write ever so much. "If the end be not attained in the use of those books of scripture which God has blessed us with, neither should we obtain the end, if we had twice as many more; nay, if we had so many that the whole world could not contain them, (John xxi. 25.) and much study of them would but confound us, and would rather be a weariness to the flesh than any advantage to the soul; we have as much as God saw fit to give us, saw fit for us, and saw us fit for. Much less can it be expected that those who will not by these be admonished, should be wrought upon by other writings. Let men write ever so many books for the conduct of human life, write till they have tired themselves with much study, they cannot give better instructions than those we have from the word of God. Or, (2.) Of buying many books, making ourselves masters of them, and masters of what is in them, by much study; still the desire of learning would be unsatisfied; it will give a man indeed the best entertainment, and the best accomplishment, this world can afford him, but if we be not by these admonished of the vanity of the world and human learning, among other things, and its insufficiency to make us happy without true piety, alas, there is no end of it, nor real benefit by it; it will weary the body, but never give the soul any true satisfaction. The great Mr. Selden subscribed to this, when he owned that in all the books he had read, he never found that on which he could rest his soul, but in the holy scripture, especially Tit. ii. 11, 12. By these therefore let us be admonished."

13. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. 14. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

The great inquiry which Solomon prosecutes in this book, is, What is that good which the sons of men should do? ch. ii. 3. What is the true way to true happiness, the certain means to attain our great end? He had in vain sought it among those things which most men are eager in pursuit of, but here, at length, he has found it, by the help of that discovery which God anciently made to man, (Job xxviii. 28.) That serious godliness is the only way to true happiness; Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, the return entered upon the writ of inquiry, the result of this diligent search; you shall have all I have been driving at in two words. He does not say, Do you hear it, but Let us hear it; for preachers must themselves be carriers of that word which they preach to others; must hear it as from God; those are teachers by the head, who teach others, and not themselves, Rom. ii. 21. Every word of God is pure and precious, but some words are worthy of more special remark, as this here; the Masorites begin it with a capital letter, as that Deut. vi. 4. Solomon himself puts a note before it, demanding attention in these words, Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Observe here,

1. The summary of religion. Setting aside all matters of doubtful dispute, to be religious, is, to fear God and keep his commandments. (1.) The root of religion is the fear of God reigning in the heart; a reverence of his majesty, a deference to his authority, and a dread of his wrath. Fear God, worship God, give him the honour due to his name, in all the instances of true devotion, inward and outward. See Rev. xiv. 7. (2.) The rule of religion is the law of God revealed in the scriptures. Our first toward God must be taught by his commandments, (Isa. xxxix. 13.) and those we must keep, and carefully observe. Wherever the fear of God is uppermost in the heart, there will be a respect to all his commandments, and care to keep them. In vain do we pretend to fear God, if we do not make conscience of our duty to him.

2. The vast importance of it; This is the whole duty of man; it is all his business, and all his blessedness; our whole duty is summed up in this, and our whole comfort is bound up in this. It is the concern of every man, and ought to be his chief and continual care; it is the common concern of all men, of their whole time. It is nothing to a man whether he be rich or poor, high or low, but it is the main matter, it is all to a man, to fear God, and do as he bids him.

3. A powerful inducement to this, v. 14. We shall see of what vast consequence it is to us, that we be religious, if we consider the account we must every one of us shortly give of ourselves to God; thence he argued against a voluptuous and vicious life, (ch. ix. 9.) and here for a religious life. God shall bring every work into judgment. Note, (1.) There is a judgment to come, in which every man's eternal state will be finally determined. (2.) God himself will be the Judge, God-man will, not only because he has a right to judge, but because he is perfectly fit for it; infinitely wise and just. (3.) Every work will then be brought into judgment, will be inquired into, and called over again. It will be a day to bring to remembrance every thing done in the body. (4.) The great thing to be then judged of concerning every work, is, whether it be good or evil, conformable to the will of God, or a violation of it. (5.) Even secret things, both good and evil, will be brought to light, and brought to account, in the judgment of the great day; (Rom. ii. 16.) there is no good work, no bad work, hid, but shall then be made manifest. (6.) In consideration of the judgment to come, and the strictness of that judgment, it highly concerns us now to be very strict in our walkings with God, that we may give up our account with joy.
EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS

OF THE

SONG OF SOLOMON.

All scripture, we are sure, is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for the support and advancement of the interests of his kingdom among men, and it is never the less so for there being found in it some things dark and hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable, wrest to their own destruction. In our belief both of the divine extraction, and of the spiritual exposition, of this book, we are confirmed by the ancient, constant, and concurring testimony, both of the church of the Jews, to whom were committed the oracles of God, and who never made any doubt of the authority of this book, and of the Christian church, which happily succeeds them in that trust and honour.

I. It must be confessed, on the one hand, that if he who rarely reads this book, be asked, as the enmarch was, Understandest thou what thou readest? he will have more reason than he had to say, How can I, except some man shall guide me? The books of scripture-history and prophecy are very like one another, but this Song of Solomon's is very unlike the songs of his father David; there is not the name of God in it, it is never quoted in the New Testament, we find not in it any expressions of natural religion, or pious devotion, no, nor is it introduced by vision, or any of the marks of immediate revelation; it seems as hard as any part of scripture to be made a savour of life unto life, nay, and to those who come to the reading of it with carnal minds, and corrupt affections, it is in danger of being made a savour of death unto death; it is a flower out of which they extract poison; and therefore the Jewish doctors advised their young people not to read it till they were thirty years old, lest by the abuse of that which is most pure and sacred, (horrendum dictu—horrible to say!) the flames of lust should be kindled with fire from heaven, which is intended for the altar only. But,

II. It must be confessed, on the other hand, that, with the help of the many faithful guides we have for the understanding of this book, it appears to be a very bright and powerful ray of heavenly light, admirably fitted to excite pious and devout affections in holy souls, to draw out their desires toward God, to increase their delight in him, and improve their acquaintance and communion with him. It is an allegory, the letter of which kills those who rest in that, and look no further, but the spirit of which gives life, 2 Cor. iii. 6. John vi. 63. It is a parable, which makes divine things more difficult to those who do not love them, but more plain and pleasant to those who do, Matth. xiii. 14, 16. Experienced Christians here find a counterpart of their experiences, and to them it is intelligible, while they neither understand it, nor relish it, who have no part or lot in the matter. It is a song, an Epithalamium, or nuptial song, wherein, by the expressions of love between a bridegroom and his bride, are set forth, and illustrated, the mutual affections that pass between God and a distinguished remnant of mankind. It is a pastoral; the bride and bridegroom, for the more lively representation of humility and innocence, are brought in as a shepherd and his shepherdess. Now, 1. This song might easily be taken in a spiritual sense by the Jewish church, for whose use it was first composed, and was so taken, as appears, by the Chaldee Paraphrase and the most ancient Jewish expositors. God betrothed the people of Israel to himself, he entered into covenant with them, and it was a marriage-covenant. He had given abundant proofs of his love to them, and required of them that they should love him with all their heart and soul. Idolatry was often spoken of as spiritual adultery, and doing upon idols, to prevent which, this song was penned, representing the complacency which God took in Israel, and which Israel ought to take in God, and encouraging them to continue faithful to him, though he might seem sometimes to withdraw and hide himself from them, and to wait for the further manifestation of himself in the promised Messiah. 2. It may more easily be taken in a spiritual sense by the Christian church, because the descensions and communications of divine love appear more rich and free under the gospel than they did under the law, and the communion between heaven and earth more familiar. God sometimes spoke of himself as the Husband of the Jewish church, (Isa. lxx. 4. Hos. xx. 16, 19.) and rejoiced in it as his bride, Isa. lxii. 4, 5. But more frequently is Christ represented as the Bridegroom of his church, (Matt. xxv. 1. Rom. vii. 4. 2 Cor. xi. 2. Eph. v. 32.) and the church as the bride, the Lamb's wife, Rev. xix. 7.—xxi. 2, 9. Pursuant to this metaphor, Christ and the church in general, Christ and particular believers, are here discoursing with abundance of mutual esteem and endearment. The best key to this book is the 45th Psalm, which we find applied to Christ in the New Testament, and therefore this ought to be so too. It requires some pains to find out what may, probably, be the meaning of the Holy Spirit in the several parts of this book: as David's songs are many of them level to the capacity of
SOLOMON'S SONG, I.

Chap. I.

In this chapter, after the title of the book, (v. 1.) we have Christ and his church, Christ and a believer, expressing their esteem for each other. 1. The bride, the church, speaks to the Bridegroom, (v. 2. 4.) to the daughters of Jerusalem, (v. 5. 6.) and then to the Bridegroom, v. 7. II. Christ, the Bridegroom, speaks in answer to the complaints and request of his spouse, v. 8. 11. III. The church expresses the great value she has for Christ, and the delights she takes in communion with him, v. 12. 14. IV. Christ commends the church's beauty, v. 15. V. The church replies, chapter iv. 16. 19. Where there is a fire of true love to Christ in the heart, this will be of use to blow it up into a flame.

1. The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.

We have here the title of this book, showing,

1. The nature of it; it is a song, that it might be the better answer the intention, which is to stir up the affections, and to heat them, which poetry will be very instrumental to do. The subject is pleasing, and therefore fit to be treated of in a song, in singing of which we may make melody with our hearts unto the Lord. It is evangelical; and gospel-times should be times of joy, for gospel-grace puts a new song into our mouths, Ps. xcvi. 1.

2. The dignity of it; it is the song of songs, a most excellent song; not only above any human composition, or above all the other songs which Solomon penned, but even above any other of the scripture-songs, as having more of Christ in it.

3. The penman of it; it is Solomon's; it is not the song of fools, as many of the songs of love are, but the song of the wisest of men; nor can any man give a better proof of his wisdom than to celebrate the love of God to mankind, and to excite his own love to God, and that of others with it. Solomon's songs were a thousand and five; (1 Kings iv. 32.) those that were of other subjects are lost, but this of seraphic love remains, and will, to the end of time. Solomon, like his father, was addicted to poetry, and, which way soever a man's genius lies, he should endeavour to honour God, and edify the church, with it. One of Solomon's names was Je-didiah, beloved of the Lord; (2 Sam. xii. 25.) and none so fit to write of the Lord's love, as he that had himself so great an interest in it; none of all the apostles wrote so much of love, as he that was himself the beloved disciple, and lay in Christ's bosom. Solomon, as a king, had great affairs to mind and manage, which took up much of his thoughts and time, yet he found heart and leisure for this and other religious exercises. Men of business ought to be devout men, and not to think that their business will excuse them from that which is every man's great business—to keep up communion with God. It is not certain when Solomon penned this sacred song; some think that he penned it after he recovered himself by the grace of God from his backslidings, as a further proof of his repentance, and as if, by doing good to many with this song, he would atone for the hurt he had perhaps done with loose, vain, amorous, songs, when he loved many strange wives; now he turned his wit the right way. It is more probable that he penned it in the beginning of his time, while he kept close to God, and kept up his communion with him; and perhaps he put this song, with his father's psalms, into the hands of the chief musician, for the service of the temple, not without a key to it, for the right understanding of it. Some think that it was penned upon occasion of his marriage with Pharaoh's daughter, but that is uncertain; the tower of Lebanon, which is mentioned in this book, (ch. vii. 4.) was not built, as it is supposed, till long after that marriage. We may reasonably think that when in the height of his prosperity he loved the Lord, (1 Kings iii. 3.) he thus served him with joyfulness and gladness of heart in the abundance of all things. It may be rendered, The song of songs, which is concerning Solomon, who, as the son and successor of David, on whom the covenant of royalty was entitled, as the founder of the temple, and as one that excelled in wisdom and wealth, was a type of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and yet is a greater than Solomon; this is therefore a song concerning him. It is here fitly placed after Ecclesiastes; for when by that book we are thoroughly convinced of the vanity of the creature, and its insufficiency to satisfy us, and make a happiness for us, we shall be quickened to seek for happiness in the love of Christ, and that true transcendent pleasure which is to be found only in communion with God through him. The voice in the wilderness, that was to prepare Christ's way, cried, All flesh is grass.

2. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth; for thy love is better than wine. 3. Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee. 4. Draw me, we will run after thee. The King hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee; we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee.

5. I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem; as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. 6. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.

The spouse, in this dramatic poem, is here first introduced addressing herself to the Bridegroom, and then to the daughters of Jerusalem.

I. To the Bridegroom; not giving him any name or title, but beginning abruptly, Let him kiss me;
like Mary Magdalen to the supposed Gardener, (John xx. 15.) "If thou hast borne him hence, meaning Christ, but not naming him; the heart had been his, and let me know now that this is so, then the tokens of his favour." Thus the Old Testament Church desired Christ's manifesting himself in the flesh, to be no longer under the law as a schoolmaster, under a dispensation of bondage and terror, but to receive the communications of divine grace in the gospel, in which God is reconciling the world unto himself, binding up and healing what by the law was torn and smitten; as the mother kisses the child that she has cherished. "Let him no longer send to me, but come himself; no longer speak by angels and prophets, but let me have the words of his own mouth, those gracious words, (Luke iv. 22.) which will be to me as the kisses of his mouth, sure tokens of reconciliation, as Esau's kissing Jacob was." All gospel-duty is summed up in our kissing the Son; (Ps. ii. 12.) so all gospel-grace is summed up in his kissing us, as the father of the prodigal kissed him when he returned a penitent. It is a kiss of repentance. Kiss Thee, the Spirit, says, (Prov. xxvii. 6.) so are the kisses of grace to the wounds of the law. Thus all true believers earnestly desire the manifestations of Christ's love to their souls; they desire no more to make them happy than the assurances of his favour, the lifting up of the light of his countenance upon them, (Ps. iv. 6, 7.) and the knowledge of that love of his which passes knowledge; this is the one thing they desire, Ps. xxvii. 4. They are ready to welcome the manifestations of Christ's love to their souls by his Spirit, and to return to them in the humble professions of love to him, and complacency in him, above all. "The fruit of his lips is praise, Isa. xi. 19. Let him give me ten thousand kisses, whose very fruition makes me desire him more and more, whereas all other pleasures sour and wither by using those of the Spirit become more delightful." So Bishop Reynolds.

(1.) Because of the great esteem she had for his love; Thy love is better than wine. Wine makes glad the heart, revives the drooping spirits, and exhilarates them, but gracious souls take more pleasure in loving Christ, and being loved of him, in the fruits and gifts of his love, and in the pledges and assurances of it, than any man ever took in the most exquisite delights of sense, and it is more reviving to them than ever the richest cordial was to one near death, who was sure of his recovery. If we take the change of the person, (Heb. xi. 13.) who speaks of him as absent, or as if she was afraid to speak to him; but, in the next words, she sees him near at hand, and therefore directs her speech to him, "Thy love, thy loves," (so the word is,) "so earnestly desire, because I highly esteem it." (2.) Because of the diffusive fragrancy of his love, and the fruits of it; (v. 3.) "Because of the savour of thy good ointment, the agreeableness and acceptableness of thy graces and comforts to all that rightly understand and embrace them. Thy name is an ointment poured forth, (v. 4.) and all that whereby thou hast made thyself known; thy very name is precious to all the saints, it is an ointment and perfume which rejoices the heart." The unfolding of Christ's name is as the opening of a box of precious ointment, which the room is filled with the odour of; the preaching of his gospel was the manifesting of the savour of his knowledge in every place, 2 Cor. iv. 6. Then Spirit and the oil of gladness wherewith Christ was anointed, (Heb. i. 9.) and all true believers have that unction, (1 John ii. 27.) so that he is precious to them, and they to him, and to one another. A good name is a precious ointment, but Christ's name is more fragrant than any other. Wisdom, like oil, makes the face to shine; but the Redeemer outshines, in beauty, all others. The name of Christ is not now like ointment scaled up, as it had been long, (Ask not after my name, for it is secret,) but like ointment poured forth; which denotes both the freeness and the fulness of the communications of his grace by the gospel.

(3.) Because of the general affection that all holy souls have to him; Therefore do the virgins love thee. It is Christ's love shed abroad in our hearts, that draws them out in love to him; all that are pure from the corruptions of sin, that preserve the chastity of their own spirits, and are true to the vows they have made to God, that not only suffer their affection to be violated, but cannot bear so much as to be solicited by the world and the flesh, those are the virgins that love Jesus Christ, and follow him whithersoever he goes, Rev. xiv. 4. And because Christ is the Darling of all the pure in heart, let him be ours, and let our desire be toward him and toward the kisses of his mouth.

The Bridegroom's fellowship, 4. Observe here,

(1.) Her petition for divine grace; Draw me. This implies sense of distance from him, desire of union with him; "Draw me to thyself, draw me nearer, draw me home to thee." She had prayed that he would draw nigh to her; (v. 2.) in order to that, she prays that he would draw nigh to him. "Draw me, not only with the moral suspense which there is in the fragrant of the good ointments, not only with the attractions of that name which is an ointment poured forth, but with supernatural grace, with the cords of a man and the bands of love," Hos. xi. 4. Christ has told us that none come to him but such as the Father draws, John vi. 44. We are not only weak, and cannot come of ourselves any further than we are helped, but we are naturally backward and averse to come, and therefore must pray for those influences and operations of the Spirit by which we may be enabled to come to him and be willing, Ps. cxv. 3. "Draw me, else I move not; overpower the world and the flesh that would draw me from thee." We are not driven to Christ, but drawn in such a way as is agreeable to rational creatures.

(2.) Her promise to improve that grace; Draw me, and then we will run after thee. See how the doctrine of special and effectual grace consists with our duty, and is a powerful engagement to, and yet reserves all the glory of all the good that is in us to God only. Observe, [1.] The flowing forth of the soul after Christ, and its ready compliance with him, are the effect of his grace; we could not run after him, if he did not draw us, 2 Cor. iii. 5. Phil. iv. 13. [2.] The grace which God gives us must diligently improve;
when Christ by his Spirit draws us, we must with our spirits run after him. As God says, I will, and you shall, (Ezek. xxxvi. 27.) so we must say, 'We will, and we shall.' (Ps. lix. 3.) when with loving-kindness to us he draws us, (Jer. xxxi. 3.) we with loving-kindness to him must run after him, Isa. xl. 31. Observe the difference between the petition and the promise; "Draw me, and then we will run." When Christ pours out his Spirit upon the church in general, which is his bride, all the members of it do then receive enlivening, quickening influences, and are made to run to him with the more cheerfulness, Isa. lv. 3. Or, "Draw me," (says the believing soul,) "and then I will not only follow thee myself as fast as I can, but will bring all mine along with me; We will run after thee, and the virgin that love thee, (v. 3.) and all that I have any interest in, or influence upon, I and my house, (Josh. xxiv. 15.) I and the transgressors, whom I will teach thy ways," Ps. li. 15. Those that put themselves forth, in compliance with divine command, to get their zeal still further increased, are many, 2 Cor. ix. 2. Those that are lively will be active; when Philip was drawn to Christ, he drew Nathanael; and they will be exemplary, and so will win those that would not be won by the word.

(3.) The immediate answer that was given to this prayer; The King has drawn me, has brought me into his chambers. It is not so much an answer fetched by faith from the word of Christ's grace, as an answer fetched by experience from the workings of his grace. If we observe, as we work in the returns of prayer, we may find that sometimes, while we are yet speaking, Christ hears, Isa. lxv. 24. The Bridegroom is a King; so much the more wonderful is his condescension in the invitations and entertainments that he gives us, and so much the greater reason have we to accept of them, and to run after him. God is the King that has made the marriage-covenant with his Son, (Matt. xxvii. 2.) and inings in even the face of his Son, which the most shy and bashful are compelled to come in.

They that are drawn to Christ are brought not only into his courts, into his palaces, (Ps. xlv. 15.) but into his presence-chamber, where his secret is with them, (Ps. xxv. 14.) where he is free with them, (John xiv. 21.) and where they are safe in his pavilion, Ps. xxvii. 5. Isa. xxvii. 5. Those that wait at wisdom's gate, shall be made to come (so the word is) into her chambers, they shall be led into truth and comfort.

(4.) The wonderful complacency which the spouse takes in the honour which the King put upon her. Being brought into the chamber, [1.] "We have what we would have; our desires are crowned with unspeakable delights; all our griefs vanish, and we will be glad and rejoice. If a day in the courts, much more an hour in the chambers, is better than a thousand days, else would they be glad, and have reason to go on their way rejoicing, as the chieftains; (Acts viii. 39.) and that joy will enlarge our heart, and be our strength, Neh. viii. 10. [2.] All our joy shall centre in God; "We will rejoice, not in the ointments, or the chambers, but in thee. It is God only that is our exceeding joy, Ps. xlii. 4. We have no joy but in Christ, and which we are indebted to him for." Gaudium in Domino—Joy in the Lord, was the ancient salutation, and Salus in Domino sempiterna—Eternal salvation in the Lord. [3.] "We will retain the memory of his kindness, and of the promise he has made to us, and never will forget; we will remember thy love more than wine; not only thy love itself, (v. 2.) but the very remembrance of it, shall be more grateful to us than the strongest cordial to the spirits, or the most palatable liquor to the taste. We will remember to give thanks for thy love, and it shall make more durable impressions upon us than anything in this world.

(5.) The communion which a gracious soul has with all the saints in this conversation with Christ. In the chambers to which we are brought, we not only meet with him, but meet with one another; (1 John i. 7.) for the upright love thee; the congregation, the generation, of the upright love thee. Whatever others do, all that are Israelites indeed, and faithful to God, will love Jesus Christ. Whatever differences of apprehension and affection there may be among Christians in other things, this they are all agreed in, Jesus Christ is precious to them. The upright here are the same with the virgins, v. 3. All that remember his love more than wine, will love him with a superlative love. Nor is any love acceptable to Christ but the love of the upright, love in sincerity, Eph. vi. 24.

II. The spouse applies herself to the daughters of Jerusalem, v. 5, 6. The church in general, being in distress, speaks to particular churches to guard them against the danger they were in, of being offended at the church's sufferings, 1 Thess. iv. 3. Or, the believer speaks to those that were professors at large in the church, but not of it; or to weak Christians, babes in Christ, that labour under much ignorance, infirmity, and mistake, not perfectly instructed, and yet willing to be taught, in the things of God. She observed these by-standers look disdainfully upon her, because of her blackness, in respect both of sins and sufferings, upon the account of which she supposed she had little reason to expect the kisses she wished for, (v. 2.) or to expect that they should join with her in her joys, v. 4. She therefore endeavours to remove this offence; she owns she is black; guilt blackens; the heresies, scandals, and offences, that happen in the church, make her black; and the best saints have their failings; sorrow blackens, that seems to be especially meant; the church is often in a low condition, mean, and poor, and in appearance despicable; her beauty sullied, and the grace that is in her with mourning: she is an mourning, mourning weeds, clothed with sackcloth, as the Nazarites that were become blacker than a coal, Lam. iv. 8.

Now, to take off this offence,

1. She asserts her own comeliness notwithstanding; (v. 5.) I am black, but comely; black as the tents of Kedar, in which the shepherds lived, which were very coarse, and never whitened, weather-beaten and covered with scabs. I am, as it were, the curtains of Solomon, the furniture of whose rooms, no doubt, was sumptuous and rich, in proportion to the stateliness of his houses. The church is sometimes black with persecution, but comely in patience, constancy, and consolation, and never the less amiable in the eyes of Christ; black in the account of men, but comely in God's esteem; black in some that are a scandal to her, but comely in others that are not; and when they are black in themselves, they are black in others, and in all others; and I says, I am black in myself, and I am comely in all others; but I am black, and I am comely. The Israelites are black in themselves, but comely in Christ, with the comeliness that he puts upon them; black outwardly, for the world knows them not, but all glorious within, Ps. xlv. 13. St. Paul was weak, and yet strong; (2 Cor. xii. 10.) and so the church is black, and yet comely; a believer is a sinner, and yet a saint; his own righteousness are as filthy rags, but he is clothed with the robe of Christ's righte-
ousness. The Chaldee Paraphrase applies it to the people of Israel's blackness when they made the golden calf, and their commonness when they repented of it.

2. She gives an account how she came to be so black. The blackness was not natural, but contracted, and was owing to the hard usage that had been given her; Look not upon me, so scrupulously, because I am black. We must take heed with what eye we look upon the church, especially when she is in black. Thou shouldest not have looked upon the days of the blackness, the day of his affliction, Obad. 12. Be not offended; for,

(1.) I am black, by reason of my sufferings; The sun has looked upon me. She was fair and comely, whiteness was her proper colour, but she got this blackness by the burden and heat of the day, which she was forced to bear. She was sun-burnt, seared with tribulation and persecution; (Matt. xxiii. 6, 21.) and the greatest beauties, if exposed to the weather, are soon tarnished. Observe how she mitigates her troubles; she does not say, as Jacob, (Gen. xxxi. 40.) In the day the drought consumed me, but The sun has looked upon me; for it becomes not God's suffering people to make the worst of their sufferings. But what was the matter? [1.] She fell under the displeasure of those of her own house; My mother's children were angry with me. She was in perils by false brethren; her foes were those of her own house, (Matt. xvi. 3.) brethren by birth, who are the posterity of her mother, and are admitted to a same sacred corporation; the children of the church her mother, but not of God her Father; they were angry with her. The Samaritans, who claimed kindred to the Jews, were vexed at any thing that tended to the prosperity of Jerusalem, Neh. ii. 10. Note, It is no new thing for the people of God to fall under the anger of their own mother's children. It was thou, a man, mine equal, Ps. lv. 12, 13. This makes the trouble the more heart-breaking; from such it is taken unkindly; and the anger of such is implacable; a brother offended is hard to be won. [2.] They dealt very hardly with her; They made me the keeper of the vineyards. First, They seduced me to sin, drew me into false worships, to serve their gods, which was like dressing their vineyards, keeping the vine of Sodom; and they would not let me keep my own vineyard, serve my own God, and observe those pure worship, which he gave me, in charge, and which I do, and ever will, own for mine. These are the grievances which good people complain most of in a time of persecution, that their consciences are forced, and that those, who rule them with rigour, say to their souls, Bow down, that we may go over, Isa. li. 23. Or, Secondly, They brought me into trouble, imposed that upon me which was toilsome, and burdensome, and very disgraceful. Keeping the vineyards was base, servile, work, and very grievous, Isa. lxi. 5. Her mother's children made her the drudge of the family. Cursed be their anger for it was fierce, and their wrath for it was cruel. The spouse of Christ has met with a great deal of hard usage.

(2.) My sufferings are such as I have deserved; for my own vineyard have I not kept. How unjustly indeed my brethren are in persecuting me, God is here representing; not because I am justly made a slavish keeper of men's vineyards, because I have been a careless keeper of the vineyards God has intrusted me with. Slothful servants of God are justly made to serve their enemies, that they may know his service, and the service of the kings of the countries, 2 Chron. xii. 8. Deut. xxviii. 47, 48. Ezek. xx. 23, 24. "Think not the worse of the ways of God for my sufferings, for I smart for my own folly." Note, When God's people are oppressed and persecuted, it becomes them to acknowledge their own sin to be the producing cause of their troubles, especially that carelessness in keeping their vineyards, so that it has been like the field of the slothful.

7. Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions? 3. If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents. 9. I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots. Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold. 11. We will make thee borders of gold, with studs of silver.

Here is,

I. The humble petition which the spouse presents to her Beloved, the shepherdess to the Shepherd, the church and every believer to Christ, for a more free and intimate communion with him. She turns from the thoughts of the feet of the flock, and the complaint of her sins and of her troubles, and looks up to heaven for relief and succour against both, v. 7. Where observe, 1. The title she gives to Christ, O thou whom my soul loveth. Note, It is the undoubted character of all true believers, that their souls love Jesus Christ, which intimates both the sincerity and the strength of their love; they love him with all their hearts; and they that do so may come to him boldly, and may humbly plead it with him. 2. The opinion she has of him as the good Shepherd of the sheep; she doubts not but he feeds his flock, and makes them rest at noon. Jesus Christ graciously provides both repast and repose for his sheep; they are not starved, but well fed; not scattered upon the mountains, but fed together; fed in green pastures; and, in the hot time of the day, fed by the still waters, and made to lie down under a cool refreshing shade. Is it with God's people a manner of odd and troublous life? Flocks and fowls! Christ has rest for them, he carries them in his arms, Isa. xi. 11. 3. Her request to him that she might be admitted into his society; Tell me where thou feedest. Those that would be told, that would be taught, what they are concerned to know and do, must apply themselves to Jesus Christ, and beg of him to teach them, to tell them. "Tell me where to find thee, where I may have conversation with thee, where thou feedest and tendest thy flock, that there I may have some of thy company." Observe, by the way, We should not, in love to our friends and their company, tempt them, or urge them, to neglect their business, but desire such an enjoyment of them as will consist with it, and, rather, if we can, to join with them in their business, and help to forward it. "Tell me where thou feedest, and there I will sit with thee, walk with thee, feed thy flock with thine, and not hinder thee or myself, bring thy work with me." Note, They whose souls love Jesus Christ, earnestly desire to have communion with him, by his word in which he speaks to us, and by prayer in which we speak to him, and to share in the privileges of his flock; and we may learn from the care he takes of his church to provide convenient food and rest for it, how to take care of our own souls, which are our charge.

4. The plea she uses for the enforcing this request; For why should I be as one that turneth aside by,
gives of his spouse. To be given in marriage, in the Hebrew dialect, is to be praised; (Ps. lxviii. 63; margin; so this spouse is here; her husband and her compeer the Solomon, (Prov. xxxi. 28.) he praises her, as is usual in poems, because... 1. He calls her his love; (v. 2.) it is an endeavoring compellation often used in this book; “My friend, my companion, my familiar.” 2. He compares her to a set of strong and stately horses in Pharaoh’s chariots. Egypt was famous for the best horses, Solomon had his from thence, and Pharaoh, no doubt, had the choicest the country afforded for his own chariots. God had furnished him with his own weakness, and the devils had made a prey of by her enemies; “Fear not,” says Christ; “I have made thee like a company of horses, I have put strength into thee as I have done into the horse, (Job xxxix. 19.) so that thou shalt with a gracious boldness mock at fear, and (not be affrighted,) like the lion, Prov. xxviii. 1. “The Lord has made thee as his goodly horse in the day of battle, Zech. x. 9. I have compared thee to my company of horses which triumphed over Pharaoh’s chariots, the holy angels, horses of fire.” Hab. iii. 13. Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses; and see Is. lxiii. 13. We are weak in ourselves, but if Christ make us as horses, strong and bold, we need not fear what all the powers of darkness can do against us. 3. He admires the beauty and ornaments of her countenance; (v. 10.) Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, the attire of the head, curls of hair, or favours, so some; or knots of ribbands; thy neck also with chains, such as persons of the first rank wear, chains of gold. The ordinances of Christ are the ornaments of the church; the graces, gifts, and comforts of the Spirit, are the adorning of every believing soul, and beautify it; these render it, in the sight of God, of great price. The ornaments of the saints are many, but all orderly disposed in rows and chains, in which there is a mutual connexion with, and dependence upon, each other. The beauty is not from any thing in themselves, from the neck, or from the cheeks, but from the ornaments with which they are set off. It was comeliness which I put upon thee, saith the Lord God; for we were born not only naked, but polluted, Ezek. xvi. 14.

IV. His gracious purpose to add her ornaments; for God has given true grace, he will give more grace; to him that has shall be given. Is the church crowned with the crown of grace, as the horses in Pharaoh’s chariots? Is she crowned with the exercise of grace, as with rows of jewels, and chains of gold? She shall be yet further beautified; (v. 11.) We will make thee borders of gold, inlaid, or enamelled, with stud of silver. Whatever is wanting, shall be made up, till the church and every true believer come to be perfect in beauty; see Ezek. xvi. 14. This is here undertaken to be done by the churches, but Ezekiel gives the number of the three persons in the Head; We will do it; that is, God, by his Spirit, will make man; so let us new-make him, and perfect his beauty.” The same that is the Author, will be the Finisher, of the good work; and it cannot miscarry.

12. While the King sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof. 13. A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts. 14. My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi. 15. Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair, thou host doves’ eyes. 16. Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green. 17.
The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.

Here the conference is carried on between Christ and his spouse, and endearments are mutually exchanged.

1. Believers take a great complacency in Christ, and in communion with him. To you that believe, he hath promised, above any thing in this world, 1 Pet. ii. 7. Observe,

1. The humble reverence believers have for Christ as their Sovereign, v. 12. He is a King, in respect both of dignity and dominion; he wears the crown of honour, he bears the sceptre of power, both which are the unspeakable satisfaction of all his people. This King has his royal table spread in the gospel, in which is made for all nations a feast of fat things, Isa. xxv. 6. Wisdom has furnished her table, Prov. ix. 1. He sits at this table to see his guests, (Matth. xxii. 11.) to see that nothing wanting that is fit for them; he sups with them, and they with him; (Rev. iii. 20.) he has fellowship with them, and rejoices in them; he sits at his table to bid them welcome, and carve for them, as Christ brake the five loaves, and gave to his disciples, that they might distribute to the multitude; he sits there to receive petitions, as Ahasuerus admitted himself at the banquet. He has promised to be present with his people in his ordinances always. Then believers do him all the honour they can, and study how to express their esteem of him, and gratitude to him, as Mary did when she anointed his head with the ointment of spikenard that was very costly, one pound of it worth three hundred pence, and so fragrant, that the house was filled with the pleasing odour of it; (John xii. 3.) which story seems as if it were designed to this passage, for Christ has a sitting at table. When good Christians, in any religious duty, especially in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, where the King is pleased, as it were, to sit with us at his own table, have their graces exercised, their hearts broken by repentance, healed by faith, and inflamed with holy love and desire towards Christ, and with joyful expectations of the glory to be revealed, then the spikenard scents forth the King thereof; Christ is pleased to receive the self-honoured guest, and to accept of it as an instance of respect to him, as it was in the wise men of the East, who paid their homage to the new-born King of the Jews, by presenting to him frankincense and myrrh. The graces of God's Spirit in the hearts of believers are exceeding precious in themselves, and pleasing to Christ; and his presence in ordinances draws them out into act and exercise. If he withdraw, graces wither and languish, as plants in the absence of the sun; if he approach, the face of the soul is renewed, as of the earth in the spring; and then it is time to bestir ourselves, that we may not lose the glee, nor lose the game; for nothing is done acceptably, but what graces do, Heb. xii. 28.

2. The strong affection they have for Christ as their Beloved, their well-beloved, v. 13. Christ is not only beloved by all believing souls, but is their well-beloved, their heart's love, their soul's delight; he is their Captain, and they their hearts, which no rival can be admitted to, the innermost and uppermost place. Observe,

1. How Christ is accounted of by all believers; He is a bundle of myrrh, and a cluster of camphire, something, we may be sure, may every thing, that is pleasant and delightful. The doctrine of his gospel, and the comforts of his Spirit, are very refreshing to them, and they rest in him, and enjoy him, and all the delights of sense are comparable to the spiritual pleasure they have in meditating on Christ, and enjoying him. There is a complicated sweetness in Christ, and an abundance of it; there is a bundle of myrrh, and a cluster of camphire; we are not straitened in him in whom there is all fulness. The word translated camphire, is copher, the same word that signifies aloes, or frankincense; Christ is a Cluster of merit and righteousness to all believers, a golden treasure the doors of which they never enter; he is the frankincense for their sins. Observe what stress the spouse lays upon the application; he is unto me, and again, unto me all that is sweet; what ever he is to others, he is so to me; he loved me, and gave himself for me; he is my Lord, and my God.

(2.) How he is accepted; He shall lie all night between my breasts, near my heart. Christ lays the beloved disciples in his bosom; and thus they lay their beloved Saviour in their bosoms? why should not they embrace him with both arms, and hold him fast, with a resolution never to let him go? Christ must dwell in the heart, (Eph. iii. 17.) and, in order to that, the adulteries must be put from between the breasts; (Hos. ii. 2.) no pretender must have his place in the soul. He shall be as a bundle of myrrh or perfume bag, between my breasts, always sweet to me; or his effigies in miniature, his love-tokens, shall be my delight, and leading to the custom of those that are dear to each other. He shall not only be laid there for awhile, but shall lie there, shall abide there.

II. Jesus Christ has a great complacency in his church, and in every true believer; they are amiable in his eyes; (v. 15.) Behold, thou art fair, my love; and again, Behold, thou art fair. He says this, not to make her proud, (humility is one principal ingredient in spiritual beauty,) but, 1. To show that there is a real beauty in believers who are such as they are, and are thereby beautified; they are truly fair. 2. That he takes great delight in that good work, which his grace has wrought on the souls of believers; so that, though they have their infirmities, whatever they think of themselves, and the world thinks of them, he thinks them fair. He calls them friends; the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, is in the sight of God of great price, 1 Pet. iii. 4. 3. To comfort them, if they should consider that beauty of own blackness, let them be told again and again that they are fair. 4. To engage all who are sanctified to be very thankful for that grace which has made them fair, who by nature were deformed, and changed the Ethiopian's skin. One instance of the beauty of the spouse is here mentioned, that she has doves' eyes, as ch. iv. 1. Those are fair, in Christ's account, who have not the piercing eye of the eagle, but the pure and chaste eye of the dove; not like the hawk, who, when he seeks upward, still has his eye upon the prey on earth; but a humble modest eye, such an eye as discovers a simplicity and godly sincerity, and a dove-like innocency. Eyes enlightened and guided by the Holy Spirit, that blessed Dove; weeping eyes; I did mourn as a dove, Ezek. vii. 16.

III. The church expresses her value for Christ, and returns esteem for esteem; (v. 16.) Behold, thou art fair unto my eyes, my Heart; thou art fair unto me another. Israel saith of God, Who is like thee? (Exod. xv. 11.) And God saith of Israel, Who is like thee? (Deut. xxxiii. 29.) Lord, saith the church, "Dost thou call me fair? No; if we speak of strength, thou art strong; (Job ix. 19.) so, if of beauty, thou art fair; I am fair no otherwise than as have thine image stamped upon me; thou art the great Original, I am but a faint and imperfect copy. (1 John i. 27.) If I be thin, thou thinkest me— the shadow of thee, (John i. 16.—iii. 34.) Thou art fair in these, and (which is more) pleasant to all that are thine. Many
SOLOMON'S SONG, II.

are fair enough to look at, and yet the sorriness of their temper renders them unpleasant; but thou art fair, yea, pleasant." Christ is pleasant, as he is ours, in covenant with us, in relation to us. Thou art pleasant now, when the King sits at his table. Christ is always precious to believers, but in a special manner pleasant, when they are admitted into communion with him, when they hear his voice, and see his face, and taste his love. It is good to be here.

Having expressed her esteem of her husband's person, she next, like a loving spouse, that is transported with joy for having disposed of herself so well, applauds the accommodations he had for her entertainment; his bed, his house, his rafters, or galleries, (v. 16.) which may fitly be applied to these holy ordinances in which believers have fellowship with Jesus Christ, receive the tokens of his love, and return their pious and devout affections to him, increase their acquaintance with him, and improve their advantages by him. Now, 1. These she calls ours, Christ and believers have a joint interest in them. As husband and wife are heirs together, (1 Pet. iii. 7.) so believers are joint heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 17. They are his institutions, and their privileges; in them Christ and believers meet. She does not call them mine, for a believer will own nothing as his, but what Christ shall have an interest in; nor thine, for Christ has said, All that I have is thine, Luke xvi. 31. All is ours, if we are Christ's. They are all, that is, for love of Christ. What is his, is ours. We claim to all that is his. 2. These are the best of the kind. Does the colour of the bed, and the furniture belonging to it, help to set it off? Our bed is green, a colour which, in a pastoral, is preferred before any other, because it is the colour of the fields and groves, where the shepherd's business and delight are. It is a refreshing colour, good for the eyes, and it denotes fruitfulness. I am like a green olive-tree, Ps. lii. 8. We are married to Christ, that we should bring forth unto God, Rom. vii. 4. The beams of our house are cedar; (v. 17.) which, probably, refers to the temple Solomon had lately built for communion between God and Israel, which was of cedar, a strong sort of wood, sweet, durable, and which will never rot, typifying the firmness and continuance of the church, the gospel-temple; the galleries for walking are of fir, or cypress, some sort of wood that was pleasing both to the sight and smell, intimating the delight which the saints take in walking with Christ, and conversing with him. Every thing in the covenant of grace, (on which footing all their treaties are carried on,) is very firm, very fine, and very fragrant.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter, I. Christ speaks both concerning himself, and concerning his church, v. 1, 2. II. The church speaks to him, and asks him what it must do, and how it may be helped. She had in communion with Christ, v. 3, 4. 2. Entertaining herself with the present tokens of his favour, and taking care that nothing happen to intercept them, v. 5. 3. Triumphing in his approbation toward her, v. 8, 9. 4. Repeating the gracious calls he had given her to go along with him a walking, invited by the pleasures of the returning spring, (v. 10, 13.) out of her obscurity, (v. 14.) and the charge he had given to the servants to destroy hurtful and overbearing ways, (v. 15.) 5. Rejoicing in her interests in him, v. 16. 6. Longing for his arrival, v. 17. They whose hearts are filled with love to Christ, and hope of heaven, know best what these things mean.

1. AM the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. 2. As the lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters.

See here, 1. What Christ is pleased to compare himself to; and he condescends very much in the comparison: he that is the Son of the Highest, the bright and morning Star, calls and owns himself the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the valleys, to express his presence with his people in this world, the easiness of their access to him, and the beauty and sweetness which they find in him; and to teach them to adorn themselves with him, as shepherds and shepherdesses, when they appeared gay, were decked with roses and lilies, garlands and chaplets of flowers. The rose, for beauty and fragrancy, is the chief of flowers, and our Saviour prefers the clothing of the lily before that of Solomon in all his glory. Christ is the Rose of Sharon, where, probably, the best roses grew, and in most plenty; the Rose of the field, so some; denoting that the gospel salvation is a common salvation; it lies open to all; whoever will may come, and gather the rose-buds of privileges and comforts that grow in the covenant of grace; he is not a Rose locked up in a garden, but all may come and receive benefit by him, and comfort in him. He is a Lily for whiteness, a Lily of the valleys for sweetness, for those which we call so are a strong perfume. He is a Lily of the valleys, or low places, in his humiliation, exposed to injury; humble souls see most beauty in him; whatever he is to others, to them that are in the valleys he is a Lily. He is the Rose, the Lily; there is none besides; whatever excellency is in Christ, it is in him singularly, and in the highest degree. I will set thee as a lily among the myrtles, (v. 2.) (1.) She is as a lily; he himself is the Lily, (v. 1.) she is as the lily; the beauty of believers consists in their conformity and resemblance to Jesus Christ; they are his love, and so they are lilies, for these are made like Christ in whose hearts his love is shed abroad. (2.) As a lily among thorns; as a lily compared with thorns; the church of Christ as far exceeds all other societies, as a bed of roses excels a bush of thorns, as a lily compared with thorns. The wicked, the daughters of this world, such as have no love to Christ, are as thorns, worthless and useless, good for nothing but to stop a gap; may, they are noxious and hurtful, they came in with sin, and are a fruit of the curse; they choke good seed, and hinder good fruit, and their end is to be burned. God's people are as lilies among them, scratched and torn, shaded and obscured, by them, they are dear to Christ, and yet exposed to hardships and trials; and yet they must expect it, for they are planted among thorns, (Ezek. ii. 6.) but they are nevertheless dear to him, he does not overlook or undervalue any of his lilies for their being among thorns. When they are among thorns, they must still be as lilies, must maintain their innocence and purity, and, though they are among thorns, must not be turned into thorns, must not render railing for railing, and if they thus preserve their character, they shall still be owned as conformable to Christ. Grace in the soul is a lily among thorns, corruptions are thorns in the flesh, (2 Cor. xii. 7.) as are Canaanites to God's Israel; (Josh. xxxvii. 13.) but the lily that is now among thorns, shall shortly be transplanted out of this wilderness into that paradise where there is no prickling brier or grieving thorn, Ezek. xxviii. 24.

3. As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

4. He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love. 5. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love. 6. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth em-
brace me. 7. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.

Here.

1. The spouse commends her Beloved, and prefers him before all others; As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, which perhaps does not grow so high, nor spread so wide, as some other trees, yet is useful and serviceable to man, yielding pleasant and profitable fruit, while the other trees are of little use, no, not the cedars themselves, till they are cut down, so is my Beloved among the sons, so far does he excel them all, all the sons of God, the angels; that honour was put upon him, which was never designed for them; (Heb. i. 4.) all the sons of God are created much more than all, than the choicest of them, Ps. xlv. 2. Name what creature you will, and you will find Christ has the pre-eminence above them all. The world is a barren tree to a soul, Christ is a fruitful one.

II. She remembers the abundant comfort she has had in communion with him; she sat down by him with great delight, as shepherds sometimes repose their flocks, sometimes converse with one another, under a tree. A double advantage she found in sitting down so near the Lord Jesus. 1. A refreshing shade; I sat down under his shadow, to be sheltered by him from the scorching heat of the sun, to be cooled, and so to take some rest. Christ is to believers as the shadow of a great tree, may, of a great rock in a weary land, Isa. xxxiii. 2—xxv. 4. When a poor soul is parched with convictions of sin, and the terror of the law, (Ps. xxxiii. 4.) when fatigued with the troubles of this world, as Elijah when he sat down under the juniper tree, (1 Kings xix. 4.) they find that in Christ, in his name, his graces, his comforts, and his undertaking for poor sinners, which revives them, and keeps them from fainting; they that are weary and heavy laden in Christ may find rest. It is not enough to pass by this shadow, but we must sit down under it; here I dwell, for I have desired it; and we shall find it not like Jonah's gourd, that soon withered, and left him in a heat, both inward and outward, but like the tree of life, the leaves whereof were not only for shelter, but for the healing of the nations. We must sit down under this shadow with delight, must put an entire confidence in the protection of it, (as Judges ix. 15.) and take an entire complacency in the refreshment of it. But that is not all. 2. Here is pleasing, nourishing, food; this tree drops its fruits to those that sit down under its shadow, and they are welcome to them, and will find them sweet unto their taste, whatever they are to others; believers have tasted that the Lord Jesus is gracious, (1 Pet. ii. 3.) his fruits are all the precious privileges of the new covenant, purchased by his blood, and communicated by his Spirit; promises are sweet to a believer, yea, and precepts too; I delight in the law of God after the inward man. Partake are sweet, and peace of conscience sweet, as assurances of God's love to the souls of the Holy Ghost; the hopes of eternal life, and the present earnest and foretastes of it, are sweet, all sweet to those that have their spiritual senses exercised. If our mouths be put out of taste for the pleasures of sin, divine consolations will be sweet to our taste, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

III. She owns herself obliged to Jesus Christ for all, as far as she had in communion with him; (ver. 4.) "I sat down under the apple-tree, glad to be there, but he admitted me, nay, he pressed me, to a more intimate communion with him; Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, why standest thou without? He brought me to the house of wine, the place where he entertains his special friends; from lower to higher measures and degrees of comfort; from the fruit of the apple-tree to the more generous fruit of the vine. To him that values the divine joys he has, more shall be given. One of the rabbins, by the banqueting-house, understands the temple, or the house of God; the congregation where the interpretation of the Law was given; the place where God, by his Spirit, may apply it to Christian assemblies, where the gospel is preached, and gospel-ordinances are administered, particularly the Lord's supper, that banquet of wine, especially to the inside of those ordinances, communions with God in them. Observe, 1. How she was introduced; "He brought me in, wroght in me an inclination to draw nigh to God, helped me over my discouagements, took me by the hand, guided and led me; He gave me an access to God as a Father, Eph. ii. 18. We had never come into the banqueting-house, and never been acquainted with spiritual pleasures, if Christ had not brought us, by opening for us a new and living way, and opening in us a new and living fountain. 2. How she was entertained; His banner over me was love; he brought me in with a banner displayed over my head, not as one he triumphed over, but as one he triumphed in, and whom he always caused to triumph in him; (Ps. ii. 8.) when the gospel is compared to a banner, or ensign, (Isa. xi. 12.) and that which is represented in this banner, written in it in letters of gold, letters of blood, is love, love; and this is the entertainment in the banqueting-house. Christ is the Captain of our salvation, and he enlists all his soldiers under the banner of love; in that they centre, to that they must continually have an eye, and be animated by it; the love of Christ must constrain them to fight manfully. When the city was taken, the conqueror set up his standard in it; "He has conquered me with his love, overcome me with kindness, and that is the banner over me." This she speaks of as what she had formerly had experience of, and she remembers it with delight. Eaten bread must not be forgotten, but remembered with thankfulness to that God who has fed us with manna in this wilderness.

IV. She professes her strong affection and most profound dependence on Jesus Christ; His love, as love, overcome, overpowering, it. David explains this, when he says, (Ps. cxxix. 20.) My soul breaks for the longing that it has unto thy judgments, and, (v. 18.) My soul faints for thy salvation; languishing with care to make it sure, and fear of coming short of it. The spouse was now absent perhaps from her Beloved, waiting for his return, and cannot bear the grief and distance of delay. O how much better is it with the soul when it is sick of love to Christ, than when it is surfeited with the love of this world! She cries out for cordial; "O stay me with flagons, or ointments, or flowers, any thing that is reviving; comfort me with apples, with the fruits of that Apple-tree, Christ, (ver. 3.) with the merit and mediation of Christ, and the sense of his love to my soul." Note, They that are sick of love to Christ, shall not want spiritual supports, while they are yet waiting for spiritual comforts.

V. She experiences the power and tenderness of divine grace, relieving her in her present faintings, ver. 6. Though he seemed to have withdrawn, yet he was even then a very present Help. 1. To sustain the love-sick soul, and to keep it from fainting away; "His left hand is under my head, to bear it up, nay, as a pillow to lay it easy." David experienced God's hand upholding him then when his soul was following hard after God, (Ps. ixi. 18.)
8.) and Job, in a state of desertion, yet found that God put strength into him, Job xxviii. 6. All his saints are in his hand, which tenderly holds their aching heads. 2. To encourage the love-sick soul to continue waiting till he returns; “For, in the mean time, his right hand embraces me, and thereby gives me an unquestionable assurance of his love.” Believers will call their strength and comfort to the supporting left hand, and embracing right hand, of the Lord Jesus.

VI. Finding her beloved thus nigh unto her, she is in great care that her communion with him be not interrupted; (v. 7.) I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem. Jerusalem, the mother of us all, charges all her daughters, the church charges all her members, the believing soul charges all its powers and faculties, the spouse charges herself, and still about her, not to stir up, or awake, her love until he please, now that he is asleep in her arms, as she was borne up in his, v. 6. She gives them this charge by the rose and the hinds of the field, by every thing that is amiable in their eyes, and dear to them, as the loving hind, and the pleasant roe; “My love is to me dearer than those can be to you, and will be disturbed, like them, with a very little noise.”

Note, 1. Those that experience the sweetness of communion with Christ, and the sensible manifestations of his love, cannot but desire the continuance of these blessed views, these blessed visits. Peter would make tabernacles upon the holy mount, Matth. xvii. 4. 2. Yet Christ will, when he pleases, withdraw those extraordinary communications of himself, for he is a free Agent, and the Spirit, as the wind blows where and when it listeth, and in his pleasure it becomes us to acquiesce. But, 3. Our care must be, that we do nothing to provoke him to withdraw, and to hide his face; that we carefully watch over our own hearts, and suppress every thought that may grieve his good Spirit. Let those that have comfort, be afraid of sinning it away.

3. The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. 9. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice. 10. My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. 11. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; 12. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. 13. The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

The church is here pleasing herself exceedingly with the thoughts of her further communion with Christ, after she is recovered from her fainting fit.

1. She rejoices in his approach, v. 8. (1.) She hears him speak; “It is the voice of my Beloved calling to me to tell me he is coming.” Like one of his own sheep, she knows his voice before she sees him, and can easily distinguish it from the voice of a stranger. (John vi. 46.)

2. The virgins’ and all the maidens of the court stand ready, and, like a faithful friend of the Bridegroom, she rejoices greatly for cause of the Bridegroom’s voice, John iii. 29. With what an air of triumph and exultation does she cry out, “It is the voice of my Beloved, it can be the voice of no other, for none beside can speak to the heart, and make that burn.” (2.) She sees him come, sees the goings of our God, our King, Ps. lxviii. 24. Behold, he comes. This may very well be applied to the prospect which the Old Testament saints had of Christ’s coming in the flesh. Abraham saw his day at a distance, and was glad. The nearer the time came, the clearer discoveries were made of it; and they that waited for the coming of Christ, lived by faith, till they saw his day, and triumphed in the sight. Behold, he comes; for they had heard him say, (Ps. xl. 7.) Lo, I come; to which their faith here affixes its seal. Behold, he comes, as he has promised. [1.] He comes cheerfully and with great alacrity; he comes leaping and skipping like a roe, and like a young hart, (v. 9.) as one pleased with his own undertaking, and that had his heart upon it, and his delights with the sons of men. When he comes to be baptized with the baptism of blood, how was he straitened till it was accomplished! Luke xii. 50. [2.] He comes, slighting and surmounting all the difficulties that lay in his way; he comes leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills, so some read it; making nothing of the discouragements he was to break through; the curse of the law, the death of the cross, must be undergone, all the powers of darkness must be grappled with; but, before the resolution of his grace, these great mountains become like a valley. Whatever opposition is given at any time to the deliverance of God’s church, Christ will break through it, will get over it. [3.] He comes speedily, like a roe, or a young hart; they thought the time long, (every day a year,) but really he hastened; as now, so then, surely he comes quickly; he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. When he comes for the deliverance of his people, he flies upon a cloud, and never stays beyond his time, which is the best time. We may apply it to particular believers, who find, that, even when Christ has withdrawn sensible comforts, and seems to forsake, yet it is but for a small moment, and he will soon return, with everlasting loving-kindness.

2. She pleases herself with the glimpses she has of him, and the glances she has of his favour; He stands behind our wall, I know he is there, for sometimes he speaks to me through the windows, looks at it, and displays himself through the lattice. Such was the state of the Old Testament church while it was in expectation of the coming of the Messiah; the ceremonial wall is called a wall of partition, (Eph. ii. 14.) a vail; (2 Cor. iii. 13.) but Christ stood behind that wall, they had him near them, they had him with them, though they could not see him clearly; he that was the substance was not far from the shadows, Col. ii. 17. They saw him looking through the windows of the ceremonial institutions, and smiling through those lattices; in their sacrifices and purifications Christ discovered himself to them, and gave them intimations and earnest of his grace both to engage and to encourage their longings for his coming. Such is our present state in comparison with what it will be at Christ’s second coming; we now see him through a glass darkly, the body is a wall between us and him, through the windows of which we now and then get a sight of him, but not face to face, as we hope to see him shortly. In the sacraments Christ is near us, but it is behind the wall of external signs, through those lattices he manifests himself to us; but we shall shortly see him as he is. Some understand this of the state of a believer when he is under a cloud; Christ is out of sight and yet not far off. (Job xxviii. 12.) Others (Job xxvi. 24.) and compare Job xxviii. 13. She calls the wall that intervenes between her and her Beloved, our wall, because it is sin, and no thing else, that separates between us and God, and that is a wall of our own erecting; (Isa. lix. 1.) behind that he stands, as waiting to be a-cou
SOLOMON'S SONG, II.

7. that observe the time of their coming, and the time of their singing, and so shame us who know not the judgment of the Lord, understand not the times, nor do that which is beautiful in its season, do not sing in singing time.

10. This fig tree puts forth its green figs, by which we know that summer is nigh, (Matt. xxiv. 32.) when the green figs will be ripe figs, and fit for use, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell: the earth produces not only flowers, (v. 12.) but fruits; and the smell of the fruits which are profitable, is to be preferred far before that of the flowers, which are only for show and pleasure. Serpents, they say, are driven away by the smell of vines; and who is the old serpent, and who the true vine, we will see hereafter.

Now this description of the returning spring, as a reason for coming away with Christ, is applicable, First, To the introducing of the gospel in the room of the Old Testament dispensation, during which it had been winter-time with the church. Christ's gospel warms which was cold, and makes that fruitful which was before dead and barren; when it comes to any place, it puts a beauty and glory upon that place, (2 Cor. ii. 7, 8.) and gives ministers occasion for joy. Spring-time is a pleasant time, and so is gospel-time. Apostle laureatetur ut omnia solv—Behold what joy the dawning age inspires! said Virgil, from the Sibyls, perhaps with more reference to the setting up of the Messiah's kingdom at that time than he himself thought of. See Ps. cxvi. 11. Arise then, and improve this spring-time; come away from the world and the flesh, come into fellowship with Christ, 1 Cor. i. 9.

Secondly, To the delivering of the church from the power of the enemy, or the persecuting enemies, and the restoring of liberty and peace to the elect, of winter suffering and restraint. When the storms of trouble are over and gone, when the voice of the turtle, the joyful sound of the gospel of Christ, is again heard, and ordinances are enjoyed with freedom, then arise and come away to improve the happy juncture. Walk in the light of the Lord, sing in the ways of the Lord: when the churches had rest, then were they edified, Acts ix. 31.

Thirdly, To the conversion of sinners from a state of nature to a state of grace; that blessed change is like the return of the spring, a universal change, and a very comfortable one; it is a new creation, it is being born again. The soul that was hard, and cold, and frozen, and unprofitable, like the earth in the winter, becomes fruitful, like the earth in spring; and, by degrees, like it, brings its fruits to perfection. This blessed change is owing purely to the approaches and influences of the Sun of righteousness, who calls to us from heaven to arise, and come away, out of summer, gather in summer.

Fourthly, To the consolations of the saints after a state of inward dejection and despondency. A child of God, under doubts and fears, is like the earth in winter, its nights long, its days dark, good affections chilled, nothing done, nothing got, the hand scaled up. But comfort will return, the birds shall sing again, and the flowers appear; arise, therefore, poor drooping soul, and come away with thy beloved. Arise and shake thyself from the dust, Isa. iii. 2. Arise, shine, for thy light is come, (Isa. xxv. 1.) walk in that light, Isa. ii. 5.

Fifthly, To the resurrection of the body at the last day, and the glory to be revealed. The bones that lie in the grave, as the roots of plants in the ground during the winter, shall then flourish as an herb, Isa. xxvi. 14.—xxvii. 19. That shall be an eternal farewell to winter, and a joyful entrance upon an everlasting spring.

14. O my dove, that art in the clefts of
The rock, in the secret places of the stairs, 
let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely. 15. Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes. 16. My beloved is mine, and I am his: He feedeth among the lilies. 17. Until the day break, and the shadows flee away: turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe, or a young hart, upon the mountains of Bether.

Here is, 1. The encouraging invitation which Christ gives to the church, and every believing soul, to come into communion with him, v. 14. (1.) His love is now his dove: David had called the church God's turtle-dove, (Ps. lxxxvii. 19.) and so she is here called; a dove for beauty, her wings covered with silver, (Ps. lxxviii. 13.) for innocence and innocensiveness; a gracious spirit is a dove-like spirit, harmless, loving quietness, and cleanliness, and faithful to Christ, as the turtle to her mate. The Spirit descended like a dove on Christ, and so he does on all Christians, making them of a meek and quiet spirit. She is Christ's dove, for he owns her; and delights in her; she can find no rest but in him, and she loves him, and he loves her, and so when she returns, (2.) This dove is in the clefts of the rock, and in the secret places of the stairs. This speaks, either, [1.] Her praise; Christ is the Rock, to whom she flies for shelter, and in whom alone she can think herself safe, and find herself easy, as a dove, in the hole of a rock, when struck at by the birds of prey, Jer. xlvi. 28. Moses was hid in a cleft of the rock, that he might behold something of God's glory, which otherwise he could not have borne the brightness of. She retires into the secret places of the stairs, where she may be alone, undisturbed, and may the better commune with her own heart. Good Christians will find time to be private. Christ often withdrew to a mountain himself alone, to pray. [2.] Her blame; she creeps into the clefts of the rock, and the secret places, for fear and shame; any where to hide her head, being heartless and discouraged, and shunning even the sight of her Beloved, being conscious to herself of her own unfitness and unholiness to come into his presence, and speak to him, she drew back, and was like a silly dove without heart, Hos. vii. 11. (3.) Christ graciously calls her out of her retirements; Come, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; she was mourning like a dove, (Isa. xxxviii. 14.) bemoaning herself like the doves of the valleys, where they are near the clefts of the impending rocks, mourning for her iniquities, (Ezek. xii. 16.) and refusing to be comforted. But Christ calls her to lift up her face without spot; being purged from an evil conscience, (Job. xi. 13.—xxvi. 26.) to come boldly to the throne of grace, having a great High Priest there, (Heb. iv. 16.) to tell what her petition is, and what her request; Let me hear thy voice, hear what thou hast to say; what would ye that I should do unto you? Speak freely, speak up, and fear not a slight or reproof. (4.) For her encouragement, he tells her, Do not think evil of his thoughts, or whatever she thought of herself; Sweet is thy voice; thy praying voice, though thou canst but chatter like a crane or a swallow, (Isa. xxxviii. 14.) it is music in God's ears; he has assured us, that the prayer of the upright is his delight; he smelled a sweet savour from Noah's sacrifice, and the spiritual sacrifices are no less acceptable, 1 Pet. ii. 5. This does not so much commend our services, as God's gracious condescension in making the best of them, and the efficacy of the much incense which is offered with the prayers of saints, Rev. viii. 3. "That countenance of thine, which thou art ashamed of, is comely, though now mournful, much more will it be so when it becomes cheerful." Then the voice of prayer is sweet and acceptable to God, when the countenance, the conversation in which we show ourselves before men, is holy, and so comely and acceptable to our profession; those that are sanctified have the breeze commended to God.

2. The charge which Christ gives to his servants, to oppose and suppress that which is a terror to his church, and drives her, like a poor frightened dove into the clefts of the rock, and which is an obstruction and prejudice to the interests of his kit glem in this world, and in the heart; (v. 15.) Take us the foxes, (take them for us, for it is good service both to Christ and the church,) the little foxes, that creep in insensibly; for, though they are little, they are great mischief; they spoil the vines, that must by no means be suffered to do at any time, especially now when our vines have tender grapes, that must be preserved, or the vintage will fail. Believers are as vines, weak, but useful, plants, their fruits are as tender grapes at first, which must have time to come to maturity. This charge, to take the foxes, is, (1.) A charge to particular believers to molest their own corruptions, their sinful desires, which can be suppressed with little pain, the little foxes, that destroy their graces and comforts, quash good motions, crush good beginnings, and prevent their coming to perfection. Seize the little foxes, the first risings of sin, the little ones of Babylon, (Ps. cxlviii. 9.) those sins that seem little, for they often prove very dangerous. Whatever we find a hindrance to us in that which is good, we must put away. (2.) A charge to all in their places to oppose and prevent the spreading of all such opinions and practices as tend to corrupt men's judgment, debauch their consciences, perplex their minds, and discourage their inclinations to virtue and piety; persecutors are foxes, (Luke xiii. 32.) false prophets are foxes, Ezek. xiii. 4. Those that sow the tares of heresy or schism, and, like Diotrephes, trouble the peace of the church, and obstruct the progress of the gospel, they are the foxes, the little foxes, which must not be knocked off the tree, (Ch. xi. 16.) not to destroy men's lives, but taken, that they may be tamed, or else restrained from doing mischief.

3. The believing profession which the church makes of her relation to Christ, and the satisfaction she takes in her interest in him, and communion with him, v. 16. He had called her to rise, and come away with him, to let him see her face, and hear her voice; now this is her answer to that call, in which, though at present in the dark, and at a distance, (1.) She comforts herself with the thoughts of the mutual interest and relation that were between her and her beloved; My beloved to me, and I to him, so the original reads it very emphatically; the conscience of the language speaks the largeness of her affection; "What he is to me, and I to him, may better be conceived than expressed." Nete, 1. It is the unspeakable privilege of all true believers, that Christ is theirs; My beloved is mine; (taken from her, as her own, and also by the Spirit, "but possession and tenure," I receive from his fullness:) believers are partakers of Christ, they have not only an interest in him, but the enjoyment of him, are taken not only into covenant, but into communion, with him. All the benefits of his glorious undertaking, as Mediator, are made over to them. He is that to which, the world neither is, nor can be, all that which they need and desire, and which will make a complete happiness for them. All he is, theirs, and all he has, is
he has done, and all he is doing; all he has promised in the gospel, all he has prepared in heaven, all is yours. 2. It is the undoubted character of all true believers, that they are Christ’s, and then, and then only, he is theirs: they have given their own selves to him, (2 Cor. viii. 5.) they receive his doctrine and obey his law, they bear his image, and espouse his interest; they belong to Christ. If we be his, he is wholly, his only, his for ever, we may take the comfort of his being ours. (2.) She comforts herself with the thoughts of the communications of his grace to his people; He feeds among the lilies. When she wants the tokens of his favour to her in particular, she rejoices in the assurance of his presence with all believers in general, who are as lilies in his eye; he feeds among them, he takes as much pleasure in them, and their assemblies, as a man does in his table or in his garden, for he walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, he delights to converse with them, and to do them good.

4. The church’s hope and expectation of Christ’s coming, and her prayer grounded thereon. (1.) She doubts not but that the day will break, and the shadows will flee away. The gospel-day will dawn, and the shadows of the ceremonial law will flee away; this was the comfort of the Old Testament church, that after the long night of that dark dispensation, the day-spring from on high would at length visit them, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and of them that live in the shadow of death; and therefore the night vanishes, so do the shadows of the day when the substance comes. The day of comfort will come after a night of desertion. Or it may refer to the second coming of Christ, and the eternal happiness of the saints; the shadows of our present state will flee away, our darkness and doubts, our griefs and all our grievances, and a glorious day shall dawn, a morning when the uprightness shall have done away a day that shall have no night after it.

(2.) She regards the presence of her beloved, in the mean time, to support and comfort her; “Turn, my beloved, turn to me, come and visit me, come and relieve me, be with me always to the end of the age. In the day of my extremity, make haste to help me, make no long tarrying. Come over even the mountains of division; interposing time and days, with some gracious anticipations of that light and love.”

(3.) She begs that he would not only turn to her for the present, but hasten his coming to fetch her to himself; “Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Though there be mountains in the way, thou canst, like a roe, or a young hart, step over them with ease, O show thyself to me, or take me up to thee.”

**CHAP. III.**

In this chapter, I. The church gives an account of a sore trial wherewith she was exercised through the withdrawing of her beloved from her, the pains she was at before she recovered the comfortable sense of his favour again, and the resolution she took when she did recover it, not to lose it again, as she had done through her own carelessness, v. 1–5. II. The daughters of Jerusalem admire the excellencies of the church, v. 6. III. The church admires Jesus Christ under the person of Solomon, his bed, and his looks towards it, (v. 7, 8.) his chalmer, v. 9, 10.

She calls upon the daughters of Zion, who were admiring her, to admire him rather, especially as he appeared on his coronation-day, and the day of his nuptials, v. 11.

1. By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. 2. I will rise now, and go about the city; in the streets, and in the broad ways, I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. 3. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? 4. It was but a little that I passed from him, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother’s house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me. 5. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till I please.

God was not wont to say to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me, in vain; and yet here we have the spouse for a great while seeking her beloved in vain, but finding him at last, to her unspeakable satisfaction. It was hard to the Old Testament church to find Christ in the ceremonial law, and the types and figures which were used in the old order. He was long was the consolation of Israel looked for before it came; the watchmen of that church gave little assistance to those who inquired after him; but at length Simeon had him in his arms, whom his soul loved. It is applicable to the case of particular believers, who often walk in darkness a great while, but at even time it shall be light, and they that seek Christ to the end shall find him at length. Observe,

I. How the spouse sought him in vain upon her bed, (v. 1.) when she was up and looking about her, grace in act and exercise, though her beloved was withdrawn, yet she could not see him at a distance, (ch. ii. 8.) but now it was otherwise. She still continued her affection to him, still it was he whom her soul loved, that bond of the covenant still continued firm; “Though he slay me, I will trust in him; though he leave me, I will love him. When I have him not in my arms, I have him in my heart.” But she wanted the communion she used to have with him; as David, when he thirsted for God, for the living God. She sought him, but, (1.) It was by night on her bed, it was late and lazy seeking. Her understanding was clouded, it was by night, in the dark; her affections were chilled, it was on her bed, half asleep. The wise virgins slumbered in the absence of the Bridegroom. It was a dark time with the believer; she saw not his signs, and yet she sought them. They whose souls love Jesus Christ will continue to seek him, even in the silence and solitude: their reins instruct them to do so, even in the night season. (2.) She failed in her endeavour. Sometimes lie is found of them that seek him not, (Isa. lxv. 1.) but here he is not found of one that sought him; either for the punishment of her corruptions, her slothfulness and security, (we miss of comfort, because we do not seek it aright;) or for the exercise of graces, her faith and patience, to try whether she will continue seeking; the west wind of God, he was emboldened; (Ps. lxxviii. 2, 3.) and yet she is not driven off by the disappointment from the use of further means; she resolves, “I will rise now, I will not lie here if I cannot find my Beloved here, nor be content if he be withdrawn. I will rise now without delay, and seek him imme
Disappointments in and prefer city, How must a Enough be Mary gospel-church. not streets, such Christ that delight faith. when ordinances, him found good time. He found him, good as Christ hid evidence of the city, whom Jesus. Those means; whom and night, to make known and him; I held him, held him fast, as the women, when they met with Christ after his resurrection, held him by the feet, and worshipped him, Matth. xxviii. 9. "I would not let him go. Not only, I would never do any thing to provoke him to depart, but I would by faith and prayer prevail with him to stay, and by the exercise of grace preserve inward peace. Those that know how hard comfort is come by, and how dear it is bought, will be afraid of forfeiting it, and playing it away, and will think nothing too much to do to keep it safe. Non minor est virtus quam quaeve farteri tuere—As much is implied in securing our acquisitions as in making them. Those that have laid hold on wisdom must retain her, Prov. iii. 18. Those that hold Christ fast, in the arms of faith and love, shall not let him go, he will abide with them.

6. How desirous she was to make others acquainted with him, she brought him to my mother's house, that all my relations, all who are dear to me, might have the benefit of communion with him." When Zaccheus found Christ, or rather was found of him, salvation came to his house, Luke xix. 9. Whenever we find Christ, we must take him home with us to our houses, especially to our hearts. The church is our mother, and we should be concerned for her interests, that she may have Christ present with her, and be earnest in prayer for his presence with his people and ministers always. They that enjoy the tokens of Christ's favour to their own souls, should desire that the church, and all religious assemblies in their public capacity, might likewise enjoy the tokens of his favour.

7. What care she was in that no disturbance might be given him; (v. 5.) she repeats the charge she had before given (ch. ii. 7.) to the daughters of Jerusalem, not to stir up, or awake, her Love, when he had sought to be hid among her sisters; she gives them a strict charge to keep all quiet, and in good order, to be very observant of him, careful to please him, and afraid of offending him. The charge given to the church in the wilderness concerning the angel of the covenant, who was among them, explains this; (Exod. xxviii. 21.) Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not. See that none of you stir out of your places, lest you disturb him, but with quietness work, and mind your own business; make no noise, let all clamour and bitterness be put far from you, for that grieves the Holy Spirit of God, Eph. iv. 30, 31. Some make this to be Christ's charge to the daughters of Jerusalem, not to disturb or disquiet his church, nor trouble the minds of the disciples; for Christ is very tender of the peace of his church, and all the members of it, even the little ones; and these that trouble them shall bear their judgment, Gal. v. 10.

6. Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant? These are the words of the daughters of Jerusalem, to whom the charge was given, v. 5. They had looked shyly upon the bride, because she was black; (ch. i. 6.) but now they admire her, and
speak of her with great respect; Who is this? How beautiful she looks! Who would have expected such a curious and magnificent person to come out of the wilderness? As when Christ rode in triumph into Jerusalem, they said, Who is this? And of the accession of strangers to the church, she herself says, with wonder, (Isa. lxxix. 21) Who has begotten these?

1. This is applicable to the Jewish church, when, after forty years' wandering in the wilderness, they came out of it, to take a glorious possession of the Land of promise; and this may very well be illustrated by what Balaam said of them at that time, when they ascended out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, and he stood admiring them, From the toh of the rocks I see him. How goodly are thy tent, O Jacob! Numb. xxviii. 9.—xxix. 3.

2. It is applicable to any public deliverance of the church of God, as particularly out of Babylon, the Old Testament, and the New Testament, Babylon; then the church is like pillars of smoke, ascending upward in devout affections, the incense of praise, from which, as from Noah's sacrifice, God smells a sweet savour; then she is amiable in the eyes of her friends, and her enemies too cannot but have a veneration for her, and worship at her feet, knowing that God has loved her, Rev. iii. 9. Sometimes the fear of the Jews was upon their neighbours, when they saw that God was with them of a truth, Exod. iv. 18.

3. It is applicable to the recovery of a gracious soul out of a state of desertion and despondency. (1.) She ascends out of the wilderness, the dry and barren land, where there is no way, where there is no water, where travellers are still in want, and ever at a loss; here a poor soul may long be left to wander, but shall come up, at last, under the conduct of the Comforter. (2.) She comes up like pillars of smoke, like a cloud of incense ascending from the altar, or the smoke of the burnt-offerings. This intimates a fire of pious and devout affections in the soul, whence this smoke arises, and the mounting of the soul heaven-ward in this smoke, (as Judges xiii. 20.) the heart lifted up to God in the heavens, as the sparks fly upward. Christ's return to the soul gives life to its devotion, and its communion with God is most reviving, when it ascends out of a wilderness. (3.) She is perfumed with myrrh and frankincense; she is replenished with the graces of God, which are as sweet spices, or as the holy incense, which, being now kindled by his gracious returns, sends forth a very fragrant smell; her devotions be now peculiarly lively, she is not only acceptable to God, but amiable in the eyes of others also, who are ready to cry out with admiration, Who is this? What a monument of mercy is this! The graces and comforts with which she is perfumed, are called the fountains of the merchant, for they are so fathom-deep, and deep-seated, by our Lord Jesus, that he hid the Merchant, with all the store of his goods, a long time, and was at vast expense, no less than that of his own blood, to purchase them for us. They are not the products of our own soil, nor the growth of our own country; no, they are imported from the heavenly Canaan, the better country.

7. Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; three-score valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel. 8. They all hold swords, being expert in war; every man hath his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night. 9. King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon. 10. He made the pillars thereof of silver, the base thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple; the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem. 11. Go forth O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.

The daughters of Jerusalem stood admiring the spouse, and commending her, but she overlooks their praises, is not puffed up with them, but turns to the more greater glory to Christ. She would not lock off her to him who recommends him to their esteem, and sets herself to applaud him. Here he is three times called Solomon, and we have that name but three times besides in all this song, ch. i. 5.—viii. 11, 12. It is Christ that is here meant, who is greater than Solomon, and of whom Solomon was an illustrious type for his wisdom and wealth, and especially his building of the temple.

Three things she admires him for; The magnificence of his bed (7.) Behold his bed, even Solomon's, very rich and fine; for such the curtains of Solomon were. His bed, which is above Solomon's, so some read it. Christ's bed, though he had not where to lay his head, is better than Solomon's best bed; the church is his bed, for he has said of it, This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell. The hearts of believers are his bed, for he lies all night between their breasts, Eph. iii. 17. Heaven is his bed, the rest into which he entered, when he was delivered from all his toils. Or, it may be meant of the sweet repose and satisfaction which gracious souls enjoy in communion with him; it is called his bed, because, though we are admitted to it, and therefore it is called our bed, (ch. i. 16.) yet it is his peace that is our rest, John xiv. 27. I will give you rest, Matt. xi. 28. It is Solomon's bed, whose name signifies peace, because in his days Judah and Israel dwell safely under their vines and fig-trees.

That which she admires his bed for, is, the guard that surrounded it; they that rest in Christ not only dwell at ease, (many do so who yet are in the greatest danger,) but they dwell in safety; their holy serenity is under the protection of a holy security; this bed had three-score valiant men about it, as yemen of the guard, or the band of gentle-men-pensioners, they are of the valiant of Israel, and a great many bold and brave men David's reign had produced; the life-guard-men are well-armed; they all hold swords, and know how to hold them, they are expert in war, well skilled in all the arts of it; they are posted about the bed at a convenient distance; they are in a posture of defence, every man with his sword upon his thigh, and his hand upon his sword, ready to draw upon the first alarm, and this, because of fear in the night, because of the danger feared; for the lives of princes, even the wisest and best, as they are more precious, so they are more exposed, and require to be more guarded, than the lives of commoners. Or, because of the fear of it, and the apprehension which the spouse may have of danger, these guards are set for her satisfaction, that she may be quiet from the fear of evil, which believers themselves are subject to, especially in the night, when they are under a cloud as to their spiritual state, or in any outward trouble more than ordinary. Christ himself was under the special protection of his Father in his whole undertakings, and the shadow of his hand was hid with him, (Isa. lxxxix. 2.) he had legions of angels at his command. The church is well guarded, more are with her than are against her; lest any hurt this vineyard, God himself keeps it night and day; (Isa. xxvii. 2, 3.) particularly believers, when they expose themselves in Christ, and with him, though it
may be night-time with them, and they may have their fears in the night, are yet safe, as safe as Solomon himself in the midst of his guards; the angels have a charge concerning them, ministers are appointed to watch for their souls, and they ought to be valiant men, expert in the spiritual warfare, holding the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and having that girt upon their thigh, always ready to them for the silencing of the fears of God's people; but the attributes engaged for the safety of believers, are kept as in a strong hold by his power, (1 Pet. i. 5.) are safe in his name, (Prov. xviii. 10.) his peace protects those in whom it rules, (Phil. iv. 7.) and the effect of righteousness in them is quietness and assurance, Isa. xxxii. 17. Our danger is from the rulers of the darkness of this world, but we are safe in the armour of light.

II. The splendour of his chariot, v. 9, 10. As Christ and believers rest in safety under a sufficient guard, so when they appear publicly, as kings in their coaches of state, they appear in great magnificence. This chariot was of Solomon's own contriving and making, the materials very rich, silver, and gold, and cedar, and purple: he made it for himself, and yet made it for the daughters of Jerusalem, to oblige them. Some by this chariot, or coach, understand, (the place is no where else referred to in scripture,) understood the human nature of Christ, in which the divine nature rode as in a chariot; it was a divine workmanship; A body hast thou prepared me; the structure was very fine, but that which was at the bottom of it, was, love, pure love to the children of men. Others make it to represent the everlasting gospel, in which, as in an open chariot, Christ shows himself, and, as in a chariot of war, rides forth triumphantly, conquering, and to conquer, (Rev. x. 1.) and they are silver, for the words of the Lord are pure silver, (Ps. xii. 6.) they, are better than thousands of gold and silver; it is hung with purple, a princely colour, all the adornments of it are dyed in the precious blood of Christ, and that gives them this colour; but that which completes the glory of it, is love, it is paved with love, it is lined with love, not love of strangers, as Solomon's was in the days of Rehoboam, but love of those that are his, an everlasting love, a holy love. Silver is better than cedar, gold than silver, but love is better than gold, better than all, and it is put last, for nothing can be better than that. The gospel is all love.

Mr. Durham applies it to the covenant of redemption, the way of our salvation, as it is contrived in the eternal counsel of God, and manifested to us in the scripture. This is that work of Christ himself, wherein the glory of his grace and love to sinners most eminently appears, and which makes him amiable and admirable in the eyes of believers, in this covenant, love is conveyed to them, and they are carried in it to the perfection of love, and, as it were, ride in triumph. It is admirably framed and contrived, both for the glory of Christ, and for the comfort of believers; it is well-ordered in all things, and sure; (2 Sam. xxviii. 5.) it has pillars that cannot be shaken; it is made of the wood of Lebanon, which can never rot; the basis of it, is the everlasting covenant; the most lasting metal; the blood of the covenant, that rich purple, is the cover of this chariot, by which believers are sheltered from the wind and storms of divine wrath, and the troubles of this world; but the midst of it, and that which is all in all, is love, that love of Christ which passes knowledge, and the dimensions of which are immeasurable.

III. The lustre of his royal person, when he appears in his greatest pomp, v. 11. Here observe, 1. The call that is given to the daughters of Zion, to acquaint themselves with the glories of king Solomon; Go forth, and behold him. The multitude of the spectators adds to the beauty of a splendid cavalcade; Christ, in his gospel, manifests himself; let each of us add to the number of those that give honour to him, by giving themselves the satisfaction of looking upon him. Who should pay respects to Zion's King, but Zion's daughters? They have reason to rejoice greatly when he comes, Zech. ix. 1. Behold him, then; look with pleasure upon Christ in his glory; look upon him with an eye of faith, with the eye of the soul, the eye of faith, sight seeing, behold, and admire him, behold, and love him, upon him, and know him again. (2.) Go forth, and behold him, go off from the world, as those that see no beauty and excellency in it, in comparison with what is to be seen in the Lord Jesus. Go out of yourselves, and let the sight of his transcendent beauty put you out of conceit with yourselves. Go forth to the place where he is to be seen, to the work through which his purveyors Zaczheim.

2. The direction that is given them to take special notice of that which they would not see every day, and that was, his crown, either the crown of gold adorned with jewels, which he wore on his coronation-day; (Solomon's mother, Bath-sheba, though she did not procure that for him, yet, by her seasonable interposals, she helped to secure it to him when Adonijah was catching at it;) or the garland, or crown of flowers and green tied with ribbons, which was his in the other world, and which, above the levity of his nuptials. Perhaps Solomon's coronation-day was his marriage-day, the day of his espousals, when the garland his mother crowned him with was added to the crown his people crowned him with. Applying this to Christ, it speaks, (1.) The many honours put upon him, and the power and dominion he is intrusted with; Go forth, and see king Jesus, with the crown wherewith his Father crowned him, (Rev. xix. 16.) when he was well pleased; when he set him as king upon his holy hill of Zion; when he advanced him to his own right hand, and invested him with a sovereign authority, both in heaven and in earth, and put all things under his feet. (2.) The disheour put upon him by his persecutors. Some apply it to the crown of thorns, with which his mother, the Jewish church, crowned him on the day of his death, which was the day of his espousals, when he declared him his beloved Son, in which he was well pleased; when he set him as king upon his holy hill of Zion; when he advanced him to his own right hand, and invested him with a sovereign authority, both in heaven and in earth, and put all things under his feet. (3.) It seems especially to mean the honour done him by his church, as his mother, and by all true believers, in whose hearts he is formed, and of whom he has said, These are my mother, and sister, and brother, Matt. xii. 50. They give him the glory of his unworthiness; to him is glory in the church, Eph. iii. 21. When believers accept of him as theirs, and join themselves to him in an everlasting covenant, (1.) It is his coronation-day in their souls; before conversion they were crowning themselves, but then they begin to crown Christ, and continue to do so from that day forward; they appoint him their Head, they bring every thought into obedience to him; they set up his throne in their hearts, and cast their creaturely things from them. (2.) It is his espousals, in which he betrothes them to him for ever in loving-kindness and in mercies, joins them to himself in faith and love, and gives himself to them in the promises and all he has, to be theirs. Thou shalt not be for another, so will I also be for thee; (Hos. iii. 5.) and to him they are presented as chaste virgins. (5.) It is the day of the gladness of his heart, he declares him the honours that his people do him, pleased with the migration of his interest among them. Does Satan fall before them? In that
1. Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair: thou hast doves’ eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from mount Gilead.

2. Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing, whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them. 3. Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate within thy locks. 4. Thy neck is like the tower of David, built up for an armory, wherein there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men. 5. Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.

6. Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get thee to the mountains of prey, and to the hill of frankincense. 7. Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.

Here is,

1. A large and particular account of the beauties of the church, and of gracious souls on whom the image of God is renewed, consisting in the beauty of holiness. In general, he that is a competent judge of beauty, whose art is not, or is according to art, and what all must subscribe to, he has said, Behold, thou art fair. She had commended him, and called all about her to take notice of his graces; hereby she recommends himself to him, gains his favour, and, in return for her respects, he calls to all about him to take notice of her graces. Those that honour Christ, he will honour, 1 Sam. ii. 30. He does not flatter her, nor design hereby either to make her proud of herself, or to court her praises of him; but, 1. It is the plentifulness of error in her present dejections; whatever others thought of her, she was amiable in his eyes. 2. It is to teach her what to value herself upon, not any external advantages, (which would add nothing to her, and the want of which would deprive her of nothing that was really excellent,) but upon the concelliness of grace which he had put upon her. 3. It is to invite others to think well of her too, and to join themselves to her in her love to him, and their art loved of me, and therefore thou art fair; all the beauty of the saints is derived from him, and they shine by reflecting his light; it is the beauty of the Lord our God that is upon us, Ps. xc. 17. She was espoused to him, and that made her beautiful. Uxor fulget radius marit—The spouse shines in her husband’s rays. It is repeated; Thou art fair, and again, Thou art fair; not only the certainty of it, but the pleasure he took in speaking of it.

As to the representation here made of the beauty of the church, the images are certainly very bright, the shades strong, and the comparisons bold; not proper indeed to represent any external beauty, for they were not designed to do so, but the beauty of holiness, the new man, the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible. Seven particulars are specified, a number of perfections, for the church is nurtured with manifold graces by the seven spirits that are before the throne, Rev. i. 4. 1. Her eyes; a good eye contributes much to a beauty: Thou hast doves’ eyes, clear and chaste, and often cast up toward heaven. It is not the eagle’s eye, that can face the sun, but the dove’s eye, a humble, modest, mournful, eye, that is the praise of those whom Christ loves. Ministers are the church’s eyes; (Isa. iii. 6.) Thou seest women shall see eye to eye; they must be like doves’ eyes; harmless and inoffensive, (Ezek. x. 16.) having their conversation in the world, in simplicity and godly sincerity. Wisdom and knowledge are the eyes of the new man; they must be clear, but not haughty, not exercised in things too high for us. When our aims and intentions are sincere and honest, then we have doves’ eyes; when we look not unto idolas, (Ezek. xviii. 6.) but have our eyes ever toward the Lord, Ps. xxv. 15. The doves’ eyes are within the locks, which are as a shade upon them, so that, [1.] They cannot find us long; we are here in this world, we know but in part; a hair hangs in our eyes, we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness; death will shortly cut these locks, and then we shall see all things clearly. [2.] They cannot be fully seen, but as the stars through the thin clouds. Some make it to intimate the bashfulness of her looks; she suffers not her eyes to wander, but limits them within her locks.

2. Her hair; it is compared to a flock of goats, which looked white, and were composed of the hills of the mountains, like a fine head of hair; and the sight was the more pleasant to the spectator, because the goats have not only gravity from their beards, but they are comely in going; (Prov. xxx. 29.) but it was most pleasant of all to the owner, much of whose riches consisted in his flocks. Christ puts a value upon that in the church, and in believers, which others make no more account of than of their hair; he told his disciples that the very hairs of their head are numbered, (Matt. x. 29.) and our Saviour speaks of it as if it were a matter of great condescension in God to set them before his eyes.

3. Her hands are compared to the flocks, (Matth. x. 30.) and that not a hair of their head should perish, Luke xxii. 18. Some by the hair here understand the outward conversation of a believer, which ought to be comely, and decent, and agreeable to the holiness of the heart. The apostle opposes good works, such as become the professors of godliness, to the plaiting of the hair, 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10. Mary Magdalene’s hair was beautiful when she wiped the feet of Christ with it. 4. Her hair is compared to the flocks, (Matth. x. 30.) and that not a hair of their head should perish, Luke xxii. 18. Some by the hair here understand the outward conversation of a believer, which ought to be comely, and decent, and agreeable to the holiness of the heart. The apostle opposes good works, such as become the professors of godliness, to the plaiting of the hair, 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10. Mary Magdalene’s hair was beautiful when she wiped the feet of Christ with it. 5. Her hands are compared to the flocks, (Matth. x. 30.) and that not a hair of their head should perish, Luke xxii. 18. Some by the hair here understand the outward conversation of a believer, which ought to be comely, and decent, and agreeable to the holiness of the heart. The apostle opposes good works, such as become the professors of godliness, to the plaiting of the hair, 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10. Mary Magdalene’s hair was beautiful when she wiped the feet of Christ with it.
(4.) Her lips; these are compared to a thread of scarlet; (v. 3.) red lips are comely, and a sign of health, as the paleness of the lips is a sign of faintness and weakness; her lips were of the colour of scarlet, but thin lips, like a thread of scarlet; the next words explain it; Thy speech is comely, always with grace, good, and to the use of edifying, which adds much to the beauty of a Christian. When we praise God with our lips, and with the mouth make confession of him to salvation, then they are as a thread of scarlet. All our good works and good words must be washed in the blood of Christ, dyed like the scarlet thread, and then, and not till then, they are acceptable to God. The Chaldee applies it to the chief priest, and his prayers for Israel on the day of atonement.

(5.) Her temples, or cheeks, which are here compared to a piece of honeysuckle; this may refer to the context, as in the following verse, yet it is a metaphor. There is no such flower as honeysuckle. This word is a corruption of the Chaldee word mcmch, meaning her cheeks, which is compared to a blush in the face. Humility and modesty, blushing to lift up our faces before God, blushing at the remembrance of sin, and in a sense of our unworthiness of the honour put upon us, will beautify us very much in the eyes of Christ. The blushes of Christ’s bride are within her locks, which intimates (says Mr. Durham) that she blushing when no other sees, and for which none sees but God and conscience; also that she seems like many other modest graces of her beauty, but modesty surpasses that too; yet the evidences of all these, in a tender walk, appear, and are, comely. (6.) Her neck; this is here compared to the tower of David; (v. 4.) this is generally applied to the grace of faith, by which we are united to Christ, as the body is united to the head by the neck; this is like the tower of David, furnishing us with weapons of war, especially bucklers and shields, as the soldiers are supplied with them out of that tower; faith is our shield, (Eph. vi. 16.) they have that it never want a buckler, for God will compass them with his favour as with a shield. When this neck is like a tower, straight, and stately, and strong, a Christian goes on his way, and works with courage and magnanimity, and does not hang a drooping head, as he does when faith fails. Some make the shields of the mighty men, that are here said to hang up in the temple, to be the action of faith, the value of David’s worthies; their shields were preserved, to keep in remembrance them and their heroic acts, intimating, that it is a great encouragement to the saints to hold up their heads, to see what great things the saints in all ages have accomplished and won by faith. In Heb. xi. we have the shields of the mighty men hung up, the exploits of believers, and the trophies of their victories.

(7.) Her breasts; these are like two young roes that are twins, v. 5. The church’s breasts are both for ornament, (Ezek. xvi. 7.) and for use, they are the breasts of her consolation, (Isa. lxvi. 11.) as she is said to suck the breasts of kings, Isa. lx. 16. Some apply these to the two Testaments; others to the two sacraments, the seals of the covenant of grace; others to the ministers, who are to be spiritual nurses to the children of God, and to give out to them the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby; and, in order to that, are themselves to feed among the little Christ feeds, (ch. ii. 16.) that they may be to the babes of the church as full breasts. Or, the breasts of a believer are his love to Christ, which he is pleased with, as a tender husband is with the affection of his wife, who is therefore said to be to him as the loving hind, and the pleasant roe, because her breasts satisfy him at all times, Prov. v. 19. This includes also his edifying others, and communing with them, which adds much to a Christian’s beauty.

II. The Bridegroom’s resolution hereupon to receive to the mountain of myrrh, (v. 6.) and there to make his residence. This mountain of myrrh is supposed to signify the mount Moriah, on which the temple was built, where incense was daily burnt to the honour of God; Christ was so pleased with the beauty of his church, that he chose this to be his rest for ever, here he will dwell till the day break and the shadows flee away. Christ’s parting promise to his disciples, as he rejoices to stay in the city, as Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. Where the ordinances of God are duly administered, there Christ will be, and there we must meet him at the door of the tabernacle of the meeting. Some make these to be the words of the spouse, either modestly ashamed of the praises given her, and willing to get out of the hearing of them, or desirous to be constant to the holy hill, not doubting but there to find suitable and salutary relief in all her straits, and there to cast anchor, and wish for the day which, at the time appointed, would break, and the shadows flee away. The holy hill (as some observe) is here called a mountain of myrrh, which is bitter, and a hill of frankincense, which is sweet, for there we have occasion both to mourn and rejoice; repentance is a bitter sweet, but in heaven it will be all frankincense, and no myrrh. Prayer is compared to the mountain, and Christ will meet his praying people, and will bless them.

III. His repeated commendation of the beauty of his spouse; (v. 7.) Thou art all fair, my love. He had said, (v. 1.) Thou art fair; but here he goes further, and, in review of the particulars, as of those of the creation, he pronounces all very good; “Thou art all fair, my love, thou art all over beautiful, and there is nothing amiss in thee, and thus hast all beauties in thee; thou art sanctified and chosen, (2 Cor. v. 17.) there is not only a new face and a new name, but a new man, a new nature; there is no spot in thee, as far as thou art renewed.” The spiritual sacrifices must be without blemish; there is no spot but such as is often the spot of God’s children, none of the leopard’s spots. The church, when Christ shall present it to himself a glorious church will be altogether without spot or wrinkle, Eph. v. 27.

3. Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions’ dens, from the mountains of the leopards. 9. Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. 10. How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices! 11. Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb; honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon. 12. A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. 13. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spike erad; 14. Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.

These are still the words of Christ to his church, expressing his great esteem of her and affection to.
her, the opinion he had of her beauty and excellency, the desire he had of, and the delight he had in, her converse and society. And so ought men to love their wives as Christ loves the church, and takes pleasure in it as if it were spotless and had no fault, which he cannot be displeased with infirmity.

Now, observe here,

I. The end-earing names and titles by which he calls her, to express his love to her, to assure her of it, and to engage and excite her love to him. Twice here he calls her My spouse, (v. 8, 11.) and three times My sister, my spouse, v. 9, 10, 12. Mention was made (ch. iii. 11.) of the day of his espousals, and, after that, she is called his spouse, not his wife only, but his spouse, the same in all things, but especially as to the covenant of grace, which, between Christ and his church, between Christ and every true believer. Christ calls his church his spouse, and his calling her so makes her so, "I have betrothed thee unto me for ever; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." He is not ashamed to own the relation, but, as becomes a kind and tender husband, he speaks affectionately to her, and calls her his spouse, which can never but strongly engage her to be faithful to him. Nay, braver and more correct, among men is sufficient to set forth Christ's love to his church, and, to show that all this must be understood spiritually, he owns her in two relations, which, among men, are incompatible, My sister, my spouse. Abraham's saying of Sarah, "She is my sister, was interpreted as a denying her to be his wife; but Christ's church is to him both a sister and a spouse, Matth. xii. 50. a sister and mother. His calling her sister, is grounded upon his taking our nature upon him in his incarnation, and his making us partakers of his nature in our sanctification. He clothed himself with a body, (Heb. ii. 14.) and he clothes believers with his Spirit, (1 Cor. vi. 17.) and so they become his sisters. They are children of God his Father, (2 Cor. vi. 18.) and so they become his sisters; he that sanctifies, and they that are sanctified, are all of one, (Heb. ii. 11.) and he owns them, and loves them, as his sisters.

II. The gracious call he gives her to come along with him as a faithful bride, that must forget her own people and her father's house, and leave all to cleave to him. *Ubi tu Caius, ibi ego Caius—Where thou Caius art, I Caius will be.* Come with me from Lebanon, v. 8. It is, 1. A precept; so we take it, like that, (ch. i. 10, 13.) Rise up, and come away. All that are by faith come to Christ, must come with Christ, in holy obedience to him, and compliance with him. Being joined to him, we must walk with him. This is his command to us daily, "Come with me, my spouse; come with me to God as a Father, come with me onward, heavenward, come forward with me, come up with me; come with me from Lebanon, from the top of Amman, from the lions' dens." These mountains are to be considered, (1.) As seemingly delightful places; Lebanon is called that goodly mountain, Deut. xxxii. 55. We read of the city of Lebanon, (Isa. vii. 4.) and its sweet smell, Hos. xiv. 6. We read of the pleasant dew of Hermion, (Ps. cxxxii. 3.) and the joy of Hermion; (Ps. lxxix. 12.) and we may suppose the other mountains here mentioned to be pleasant ones; and so this is Christ's call to his spouse to come off from the world, all its products, all its pleasures, to sit loose to all the delights of sense; all those must do so that would come with Christ; they must take the affronts of all present things; you, though they be placed at the upper end of the world, on the top of Amman, and the top of Shenir, though they enjoy the highest satisfactions the creature can propose to give, yet they must come away from them all, and live above the tops of the highest hills on earth, that they may have their conversation in heaven. Come from those mountains, to go along with Christ to the holy mountain, the mountain of myrrh, v. 6. Even while we have our residence on these mountains, yet we must look beyond from them, look beyond them to the hills. No; our helps come from the Lord, Ps. cxxi. 1, 2. We must look beyond them, to the things that are not seen, (as these high hills are,) that are eternal. From the tops of Shenir and Hermion, which were on the other side Jordan, as from Pisgah, they could see the land of Canaan; from this world we must look forward to the better country.

(2.) They are to be considered as really dangerous; such as are considered as the tops of the mountains, but, though there are in them lions' dens; they are mountains of the leopards, mountains of prey, though they seem glorious and excellent, Ps. lxxvi. 4. Satan, that roaring lion, is the prince of this world, in the things of it he lies in wait to devour; on the tops of these mountains there are many dangerous temptations to those who take up their residence in them; and therefore come with me from them; let us not set our hearts upon the things of this world, and think the things of this world worth the taking. Come out from the temples of idolaters, and the societies of wicked people; so some understand it; *Come out from among them, and be ye separate.* Come from under the dominion of your own lusts, which are as lions and leopards, fierce upon us, and making us fierce.

2. It may be taken as a promise; Thou shalt come with me from Lebanon, from the lions' dens; that is, (1.) "Many shall be brought home to me, as living members of the church, from every point, from Lebanon in the north, Amman in the west, Hermion in the east, Shenir in the south, from all parts, to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Matth. viii. 11. See Isa. xlix. 11, 12. Some come from the tops of these mountains, some of the great men of this world, shall give themselves to Christ. (2.) The church shall be delivered from her persecutors, in due time; though now she dwells among lions, Ps. lxxxv. 4.) Christ will take her with himself from among their dens.

III. The great delight Christ takes in his church, and in all believers. He delights in them,

1. As in an agreeable bride, adorned for her husband, (Rev. xvi. 2.) who greatly desires her beauty, Ps. lxxiv. 11. No expressions of love can be more passionate than these here, in which Christ manifests his affection to his church; and yet that great proof of his love, his dying for it, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, goes beyond them all. A spouse, so dearly bought and paid for, could not but be dearly loved; such a price being given for her, a high value must needs be put upon her accordingly; and both together may well set us a wondering at the height and depth, and length and breadth, of the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that love in which he gave himself for us, and gives himself to us. Observe,

1) How he is affected towards his spouse; *Thou hast ravished my heart;* the word is used only here, *Thou hast hearted me,* or, *Thou hast unhearted me.* New words are coined to express the inexpressibleness of Christ's surprising love to his church; and the strength of that love is set forth by that which is a weakness in men, who are so much in love with one object, as to be heartless to everything else. This may refer to that love which Christ had to the church before the worlds were, when his delights were with the sons of men, (Prov. viii. 31.) that first love, which brought him from heaven to earth, to seek and save them at such vast expense, yet including the complacency he takes in them when he brought them to himself. Note, Christ's
The honey is upon his church; so it has appeared all along; his treasure is in it, is his peculiar treasure, (Exod. xix. 3.) and therefore there his heart is also. "Never was love like unto the love of Christ, which made him even mindless of himself, when he emptied himself of his glory, and freely gave all shame and pain, for our sakes. The wound of love towards us, which he had from eternity in himself, made him neglect all the wounds and reproaches of the cross;" so Bishop Reynolds here. Thus let us love him.

(2.) What it is that affects him with delight.

[1.] The regard she has to him; Thou hast raised my heart with one of thine eyes, says Prov. v. 9., i.e. with one glance of thine eyes. Christ is with delight fully pleased with those that look unto him as their Saviour, and through the eye of faith dart their affections to him above any rival whatsoever, and whose eyes are ever towards him; he is soon aware of the first look of a soul towards him, and meets it with his favours.

[2.] The ornaments she has from him, that is, the providence she yields to him, for that is the chain of her heart which enriches her soul, which are connected as links in a chain; the exercise of these graces in a conversation which adorns both herself and the doctrine of Jesus Christ, which she professes to believe, as a gold chain is an ornament to persons of quality, and an entire submission to the commanding power of his law, and the constraining power of his love; having shaken off the bands of our neck, by which we were tied to this world, (Isa. lii. 2.) and the yoke of transgression, wound band with the cords of love, as chains of gold, to Jesus Christ, and our necks are brought under his sweet and easy yoke, to draw in it; this recommends us to Jesus Christ, for this is that true wisdom which, in his account, is an ornament of grace unto the head, and chains about the neck, Prov. i. 9.

[3.] The affection she has for him; How fair is thy love! how beautiful is it! Not only thy love itself, but all the fruits and products of it, its working in the heart, its works in the life. How well does it become a believer thus to love Christ, and what a pleasure does Christ take in it! Nothing recommends us to Christ so as this does. How much better is thy love than wine! Than all the wine that was poured out to the Lord in the drink-offerings; hence the fruit of the vine is said to cheer God and man, Judges ix. 13. She had said of Christ's love, It is better than wine; (ch. i. 2.) and now Christ says so of her's; there is nothing lost by praising Christ, nor will he be behindhand with his friends in kindness.

[4.] The ointments, the odours, wherewith she is perfumed, the gifts and graces of the Spirit, her good works, which are an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God, Phil. iv. 18. The smell of thine ointment is better than all spices, such as the queen of Sheba presented to Solomon, camel-loads of them, (1 Kings x. 2.) or, rather, in all the spices that were used in compounding the holy incense which was burned daily on the golden altar; love and obedience to God are more pleasing to Christ than sacrifice or incense. The smell of her garb too, the visible professions she makes of religion, and relation to Christ, before men, and wherein she appears to the world, this is very grateful to Christ, as the smell of Lebanon. Christ having put upon his spouse the white robes of his righteousness, (Rev. lii. 8.) and the righteousness of saints, (Rev. v. 12.) and this perfumed with holy joy and comfort, he is well-pleased with it.

[5.] Her words, both in her devotions to God, and her discourses with men; (v. 11.) Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honey-comb, drop that which is very sweet, and drop it freely and plentifully. If what God speaks to us be sweeter to us than the honey and the honey-comb, (Ps. xix. 10.) what we say to him in prayer and praise shall also be pleasing to him; Sweet is thy voice. And if, out of a good treasure, (ch. ii. 13.) you bring forth good things, if you speak be always with grace, if our lips have knowledge aright, if they disperse knowledge, they then, in Christ's account, even drop as the honey-comb, cut-drop it. Honey and milk (the two staple commodities of Canaan) are under thy tongue; that is, in thy heart; not only reserved there for thy own use as a sweet morsel for thyself, but ready there for the use of others. In the word of God there is milk and honey, (ch. ix. 6.) and all moment, milk for babes, honey for those that are grown. Christ is well pleased with those that are full of his word.

2. As in a pleasant garden. And well may a very great delight be compared to the delight taken in a garden, when the happiness of Adam in innocence was represented by the putting of him in a garden, a garden of pleasure. This comparison is pursued, v. 12-14. The church is fitly compared to a garden, to a garden which, as usual, had a fountain in it; where Solomon had made it, he made him pools of water, (Eccle. ii. 5, 6.) not only for curiosity and diversion, in water-works, but for use, to water the gardens; Eden was well watered, Gen. ii. 10.-xiii. 10. Observe,

(1.) The peculiarity of this garden; it is a garden enclosed, a paradise separated from the common earth; it is appropriated to God, he has set it apart for himself. Israel is God's portion, the lot of his inheritance, (Deut. xxxiii. 9.) it is enclosed for secrecy; the saints are God's hidden ones, there are the ways they know them not; Christ walks in his garden unseen. It is enclosed for safety; a hedge of protection is made about it, which all the powers of darkness cannot either find or make a gap in. God's vineyard is fenced; (Isa. v. 2.) there is a wall about it, a wall of fire. It has a spring in it, and a fountain, but it is a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed, which sends its streams abroad, (Prov. v. 16.) but it is shut up; the fountain of a loving heart; surely, by any lisp of a loving hand must be muffled or polluted. Their pleasures of believers are as gardens enclosed; grace in them is as a spring shut up there in the hidden man of the heart, where the water that Christ gives is a well of living water, John iv. 14.-vii. 38. The Old Testament church was a garden enclosed by the partition wall of the ceremonial law; the Bible was then a spring shut up and a fountain sealed, it was confined to one nation; but now the wall of separation is removed, the gospel preached to every nation, and in Jesus Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew.

(2.) The products of this garden; it is as the garden of Eden, where the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food, Gen. ii. 9. Thy plants, or plantations, are an orchard of honeymatres with pleasant fruits, (v. 9.) It is not like the vineyard of the man void of understanding, that was all grass over with thorns and nettles; but here are fruits, pleasant fruits, all trees of frankincense, and all the chief spices, v. 14. Here is great plenty of fruits, and great variety, nothing wanting which might either beautify, or enrich, this garden, might make it either delightful or serviceable to its great Lord; every thing here is the best of the kind; their chief spices were much more valuable, because much more durable, than the choicest of our flowers. Solomon was a great master in botany as well as other parts of natural philosophy; he treated largely of trees, (1 Kings iv. 33.) and perhaps had reference to some specific qualities of the fruits here specified.
which made them very fit for the purpose for which he alludes to them; but we must be content to observe, in general, that saints in the church, and graces in the soul, are very truly compared to these fruits and spices; for, [1.] They are planted, and do not grow of themselves; the trees of righteousness are the planting of the Lord, (Isa. xi. 3.) grace springs from an incorruptible seed. [2.] They are precious and of high value; hence we read of the precious sons of Zion and their precious faith, they are plants of renown. [3.] They are pleasant, and of a sweet savour to God and man, and, as such, they are sent to the church; [4.] They are profitable and of great use; saints are the blessings of this earth, and their graces are their riches with which they trade as the merchants of the east with their spices. [5.] They are permanent, and will be preserved to good purpose, when flowers are withered and good for nothing. Grace, reduced into glory, will last for ever.

15. A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon. 16. Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.

These seem to be the words of the spouse, the church, in answer to the commendations which Christ, the Bridegroom, had given of her as a pleasant-fruitful garden. Is she a garden?

1. She owns her dependence upon Christ himself to make this garden fruitful; to him she has an eye, (v. 15.) as the Fountain of gardens, not only the Founder of them, by whom they are planted, and to whom they owe their being, but the Fountain of them, by whom they are watered, and to whom they owe their continuance and well-being, and without whose constant supplies, they would soon become like the dry and barren wilderness; to him she gives all the glory of her fruitfulness, as being nothing without him; O Fountain of gardens, Fountain of all good, of all grace, do thou fail me.

Does a believer say to the church, All my springs are in thee, in thee, O Zion? (Ps. lxxxvii. 7.) The church transmits the praise to Christ, and says to him, All my springs are in thee; thou art the Weld of living waters, (Jer. ii. 12.) out of which flow the streams of Lebanon, the river Jordan, which had its rise at the foot of mount Lebanon, and the waters of the sanctuary, which issued out from under the threshold of the house, Ezek. xlvii. 1. They that are gardens to Christ, must acknowledge him a Fountain to them, from whose fulness they receive, and to whom it is owing that their souls are as a watered garden, Jer. xxxii. 12. The city of God on earth is made glad with the rivers of waters, and the rivers of Lebanon, the river Jordan, and the new Jerusalem has its pure river of water of life proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, Rev. xxii. 1.2.

2. She implores the influences of the blessed Spirit to make this garden fragrant; (v. 16.) Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south. This is a prayer, (1.) For the church in general, and in that there may be a plentiful effusion of the Spirit upon it, in order to its flourishing and steps to God; [2.] When the Spirit is poured out, these flow forth, and then the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, Isa. xxxiv. 15. This prayer was answered in the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, (Acts ii. 1.) ushered in by a mighty wind; then the apostles, who were bound up before, flowed forth, and were a sweet savour to God, 2 Cor. ii. 15. (2.) For particular believers. Note, [1.] Sanctified souls are as gardens, gardens of the Lord, en closed for him. [2.] Graces in the soul are as spices that burn, to bring forth sweet savours, strong and useful. [3.] It is very desirable that the spices of grace should flow forth both in pious and devout affections, and in holy, gracious actions, that with them we may honour God, adorn our profession, and do that which will be grateful to good men. [4.] The blessed Spirit, in his operations upon the soul, is as the north and the south wind, which blows where it listeth, and from several points, John iii. 8. [5.] That is the fountain of life: and when he comes, and the south wind of comforts; but all, like an old man, brought out of God's treasuries, and fulfilling his word. [5.] The flowing forth of the spices of grace depends upon the gales of the Spirit; he stirs up good affections, and works in us both to will and to do that which is good; it is he that makes manifest the savour of his knowledge by us. [6.] We ought therefore to wait upon the Spirit of grace for his quickening influences, to pray for them, and to lay our souls under them. God has promised to give us his Spirit, but he will for this be inquired of.

3. She invites Christ to the best entertainment the garden affords; Let my beloved then come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits; let him have the honour of all the products of the garden, it is fit he should, and let me have the comfort of his acceptance of them, for that is the best account they can be made to turn to. Observe, (1.) She calls it his garden; for these are his, that he has possessed them, and brought them out of God's treasuries, and not till then. The fruits of the garden are his pleasant fruits, for he planted them, watered them, and gave the increase. What can we pretend to merit at Christ's hands, when we can invite him to nothing but what is his own already? (2.) She begs he would visit it, and accept of what it produced. The believer can take little pleasure in his garden, unless Christ, the Beloved of his soul, come to him, nor have any joy of the fruits of it, unless they redound some way or other to the glory of Christ, and he will think all he has, well bestowed upon him.

CHAP. V.

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ's gracious acceptance of the invitation which his church had given him, and the kind visit which he made to her, v. 1. II. The account which the spouse gives of her own folly, in putting a slight upon her Beloved, and the distress she was in by reason of his withdrawals, v. 2-. 5. III. The inquiry of the daughters of Jerusalem concerning the amiable perfections of her Beloved, (v. 9.) and her particular answer to that inquiry, v. 10.-16. Unto you that believe he is thus precious.

1. I AM come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

These words are Christ's answer to the church's prayer in the close of the foregoing chapter, Let my Beloved come into his garden, and let us know it. See how ready God is to hear prayer; how ready Christ is to accept the invitations that his people give him, though we are backward to hear his calls, and accept his invitations. He is free in conceding to us, while we are shy of ascending to him. Observe how the return answered the request, and outdid it.

1. She called him her Beloved, (and really he
was so,) and therefore invited him, because she loved him; in return to this, he called her his sister and spouse, as several times before, ch. iv. Those that make Christ their best Beloved, shall be owned by him in the nearest and dearest relations.

2. She called the garden his, and the pleasant fruits of it his, and he acknowledges them to be so; It is my garden, it is my spice. When God was displeased with Israel, he turned them off to Moses. They are thy people; (Exod. xxxvi. 7.) and he called the appointed feasts of the Lord their appointed feasts; (Isa. i. 14.) but, now that they are in his favour, he owns them for his garden; though of small account, yet it is mine. They that in sincerity give up themselves and all they have, and do, to Jesus Christ, he will do them the honour to stamp them, and what they have, and do, for him, with his own mark, and say, It is mine.

3. He was come into his garden, and he says, I am come, Isa. viii. 9. Thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. When Solomon prayed that God would come, and take possession of the house he had built for him, he did come, his glory filled the house, (2 Chron. vii. 2.) and (v. 16.) he let him know that he had chosen and sanctified this house, that his name might be there for ever. They that throw open the door of their souls to Jesus Christ, shall find him in every place where he records his name, he will meet his people, and bless them, Exod. xx. 24.

4. She desired him to eat his pleasant fruits, to accept of the sacrifices offered in his temple, which were as the fruits of his garden, and he does so, but finds they were not ready for eating, therefore he does himself gather them; as the fruits are his, so is the preparation of them; he finds the heart unready for his entertainment, but does himself draw out the wine, he has, and places them in the garden planted there. What little good there is in us, would be shed and lost if he did not gather it, and preserve it to himself.

5. She only desired him to eat the fruits of the garden, but he brought along with him something more, honey, and wine, and milk, which yield substantial nourishment, and which were the products of Canaan, Immanuel's land. Christ delights himself with the sweetness of his people; he has found in his bosom a banquet of wine; it is but plain fare, and what is natural, honey and milk, but, being kindly designed, it is kindly accepted; imperfections are overlooked, the honey-comb is eaten with the honey, and the weakness of the flesh passed by, and pardoned, because the spirit is willing. When Christ appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, he did eat with them a piece of honey-comb, (Luke xxiv. 42, 43.) in which this scripture was fulfilled. He did not drink the wine only, which is liquor for men, for great men, but the milk too, which is liquor for children, little children, for he was to be the holy child Jesus, that had need of milk.

6. She only invited him to come himself, but he, bringing his own entertainment along with him, brings his friends too, and invites them to share in the provisions. The more the merrier, we say, and here, where there was so much plenty, there was not the worse fare. When our Lord Jesus fed five thousand at once, they did all eat, and were filled. Christ invites all his friends to the wine and milk which he himself drinks of, (Isa. lv. 1.) to the feast of fat things, and wines on the lees, Isa. xxv. 6.

The great work of man's redemption, and the riches of the covenant of grace, are a feast to the Lord Jesus, and they ought to be so to us. The invitation is very free, and hearty, and loving; Eat, O friends. If Christ comes to sup with us, it is we that sup with him, Rev. iii. 20. Eat, O friends. Those only that are Christ's friends are welcome to his table; his enemies, that will not have him to reign over them, have no part or lot in the matter. Drink, yea, drink abundantly. Christ, in his gospel, has made plentiful provision for poor souls; he fills the hungry with good things; but there is enough for each, we are not straitened in him or in his grace; let us not therefore be straitened in our own bosoms. Often thy mouth wide, and Christ will fill it. Be not drunk with wine, be filled with the Spirit, Eph. v. 18. Those that entertain Christ must bid his friends welcome with him; Jesus and his disciples were called together to the marriage, (John ii. 2.) and Christ will have all his friends to rejoice with him in the day of his gladness, and his proposals to his church, and, in token of that, to feast with him. In spiritual and heavenly joys there is no danger of exceeding; there we may drink abundantly, drink of the river of God's pleasures, (Ps. xxxvi. 8.) and be abundantly satisfied, Ps. lxiv. 4.

2. I sleep, but my heart wakeeth: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.

3. I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them? 4. My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.

5. I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.

6. I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself; and was gone: my soul failed when he spake; I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer. 7. The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my vail from me.

8. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.

In this song of loves and joys, we have here a very melancholy scene; the spouse here speaks, not to her Beloved, (as before, for he is withdrawn,) but of him, and it is a sad story she tells of her own folly and ill conduct toward him, notwithstanding his kindness, and of the just rebukes she felt under for it; perhaps it may refer to Solomon's own apostasy from God, and the sad effects of that apostasy, after God had come into his garden, had taken possession of the temple he had built, and he had feasted with God upon the sacrifices; (ch. 2.) however, it is applicable to the too common case both of churches and particular believers, who by their carelessness and slackness provoke Christ to withdraw from them. Observe,

1. The indisposition that the spouse was under, and the listlessness that had seized her; (v. 2.) I sleep, but my heart wakes. Here is, 1. Corruption appearing in the actions of it; I sleep; the wise virgins slumbered. She was on her bed, (ch. ii. 1.) but now she sleeps. Spiritual distempers, if not striven against at first, are apt to grow upon us, and
to get ground. *She slept*; pious affections cooled, she neglected her duty, and grew remiss in it, she indulged herself in her ease, was secure and off her watch. This is sometimes the bad effect of more than ordinary enlargements, a good cause. St. Paul himself was in danger of being puffed up with abundant revelations, and of saying, *Soul, take thine ease,* which made a *thorn in the flesh* necessary for him, to keep him from sleeping. Christ's disciples, when he was come into his garden, the garden of his agony, were heavy with sleep, and would have slept with him. True Christians are not always alike lively and vigorous in religion. 2. Grace remaining, notwithstanding, in the habit of it; "*My heart wakes,* my own conscience reproaches me for it, and ceases not to rouse me out of my sluggishness. *The spirit is willing,* and, *after the inner man,* I delight in the law of God, and *with my mind I serve that.* I am, for the present, overpowered by temptation, but all does not go one way in me. I sleep, but it is not a dead sleep, I strive against it; probably I stand sleep, I cannot be easy under this indisposition." Note. (1.) We ought to take notice of our own spiritual slumberers and distempers, and to reflect upon it with sorrow and shame that we have fallen asleep, when Christ has been nigh us in his garden. (2.) When we are lamenting what is amiss in us, we must not overlook the good that is wrought in us, and preserved alive. "*My heart wakes in Christ,* who is dear to me as my own heart, and is my Life; when I sleep, he neither slumbers nor sleeps." II. The call that Christ gave to her, when she was under this indisposition; *It is the voice of my Beloved;* she knew it to be so, and was soon aware of it, which was a sign that her heart was awake. Like the child Samuel, she heard at the first call, but did not, like him, mistake the person; she knew it to be the voice of Christ. He knocks, to awaken us to come and let him in; knocks by his word and Spirit, knocks by afflictions and by our own consciences; though, this is *not distressing to me,* as it is referred to, (Rev. iii. 20.) *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.* He calls sinners into covenant with him, and wails into communion with him. Those whom he loves he will not let alone in their carelessness, but will find some way or other to awaken them, to rebuke and chasten them. When we are unmindful of Christ, he thinks of us, and provides that our faith fail not. Peter denied Christ, but the Lord turned, and looked upon him, and so brought him to himself again. Observe how moving the call is, *Open to me, my sister, my love.* 1. He snes for entrance, who may demand it; and knocks, who could easily knock the door down. 2. He gives her all the kind and most endearing titles imaginable, *My sister, my love, my dove, my unfeigned;* he not only gives her no hard names, nor upbriahs her with unkindness in not sitting up for him, but, on the contrary, studies how to express his tender affection to her still; *blessing-kindness he will not utter imperfectly.* Those who turn and turn again to Christ, he looks upon as his sisters, his loves, his doves, and all that is dear; and, being clothed with his righteousness, they are unfiended. This consideration should induce ours to open to him. Christ's love to us should engage ours to him, even in the most self-denying instances. *Open to me.* Can we deny entrance to such a friend, to such a guest? Shall we not converse more with one that is infinitely worthy of our acquaintance, and respect, and love, and esteem, than we only can be grudgers by it? 3. He pleads distress, and begs to be admitted *sub forma fustis—under the character of a poor traveller,* that wants a lodging; "*My head is wet with the dew,* with the cold drops of the night; consider what hardships I have undergone to merit thee, which surely may merit from thee so small a kindness as this." When Christ was crowned with thorns, which, no doubt, fetched blood from his blessed head, then was his head *wet with the dew;* "Consider what a grief it is to me to be thus unlively kind, as much as it would be to a tender husband to be kept out of doors by his wife in a rainy stormy night."

Do we thus requite him for his love? The slights which can be put on Jesus Christ are to him as a *continual drafting on a very rotten dye.*

III. The excuse she made to put off her compliance with this call; (v. 3.) *I have put off my coat,* how shall I put it on again? She is half asleep, she knows the voice of her Beloved, she knows his knock, but cannot find in her heart to open to him; she was undressed, and would not be at the pains to dress her again; she had washed her feet, and would not have occasion to wash them again. She could not send another to open the door, (it must be her own act and deed to let Christ into our hearts,) and yet she was loath to go herself; she did not say, *I will not open,* but *How shall I?* Note, Frivolous excuses are the language of prevailing slothfulness in religion; Christ calls to us to open to him, but we pretend we have no mind, or we have no strength, or we have no time, and therefore think we may be excused, as the sluggard that will not plough by reason of cold. And those who ought to watch for the Lord's coming, with their lamps girt, if they ought themselves, and put out of their way they will find it difficult to recover their former resolution, and to put it on again; it is best therefore to keep tight. Making excuses, (Luke xiv. 18.) is interpreted making light of Christ; (Matt. xxii. 5.) and so is it. Those put a great contempt upon Christ that cannot find in their hearts to bear a cold blast for him, or get out of a warm bed.

IV. The powerful influences of divine grace, by which she was made willing to rise, and open to her Beloved. *If we could not prevail with her by our way of persuasion, he put in his hand by the hole of the door, to unbolt it, as one weary of waiting. v. 4.* This intimates a work of the Spirit upon her soul, by which she was of unwilling made willing, Ps. cx. 3. The conversion of Lydia is represented by the *opening of her heart,* (Acts xvi. 14.) and Christ is said to open his disciples' understandings, Luke xxiv. 45. He that *formed the spirit of man knows all the avenues to it,* and which way to come in. It is not only possible for God to find all the ways in which to put in his hand for the conquering of prejudices, and the introducing of his own doctrine and law. He has the key of David, (Rev. iii. 7.) with which he opens the door of the heart in such a way as is suited to it, as the key is fitted to the wards of the lock; in such a way as not to put a force upon its nature, but only upon its ill nature.

V. Her compliance with these methods of divine grace at last; *My bowels were moved for him.* The *bowels* were moved for a good work, on a very rainy day. Her *affections;* *My bowels were moved for him,* as those of the two disciples were, when Christ made their heart to burn within them. She was moved with compassion to her Beloved, because his *head was wet with the dew.* Note, Tenderness of spirit, and a heart of flesh, prepare the soul for the reception of Christ into it; and therefore his love to us is represented in such a way as is most affecting. Did Christ redeem us in his pity? Let us in pity receive him, and, in the strength that are his, when at any time they are in distress.

This good work, wrought upon her affections, raised her up, and made her ashamed of her dulness and slothfulness; (v. 5.) *I rose up to open to my Beloved;* his grace inclining her to do it, and con quer the opposition of unbelief. It was her own
act, and yet he wrought it in her. And now her
hand dropped with myrrh upon the handles of the
lock.

Either. 1. She found it there when she applied
her hand to the lock, to short it back; he that
put in his hand by the hole of the door, left it there
as an evidence that he had been there. When
Christ has wrought powerfully upon a soul, he
leaves a blessed sweetness in it, which is very de-
lightful to it; with this he oiled the lock, to make it
go easy. Note, When we apply ourselves to our
duty, in the lively exercises of faith, under the in-
fluence of divine grace, we shall find it will go on
much more readily and sweetly than we expected.
If we will but rise up, to open to Christ, we shall
find the difficulty we apprehended in it, strangely
overcome, and shall say with Daniel, now let my
Lord speak, for thou hast strengthened me, Dan.
x. 19. Or, 2. She brought it thither. Her bowsels
being moved for her Beloved, who had stood so long
in the cold and wet, when she came to open to him, she
presumed to point his head, and so to refresh and
comfort him, and perhaps to prevent his catch-
ning cold; she was in such haste to meet him, that
she would not stay to make the usual preparation,
but dipped her hand in her box of ointment, that she
might readily anoint his head, at his first coming in.
Those that open the doors of their hearts to Christ,
those everlasting doors, must meet him with the
lively exercises of faith, and other graces, and with
the acts of compassion they beget.

VI. Her sad disappointment, when she did open
to her Beloved. And here is the most melancholy
part of the story; I opened to my Beloved, as I
intended, but alas! my Beloved had withdrawn him-
self, and was gone; my Beloved was gone, was
gone, so the word is. She did not open to him at
his first knock, and now she came too late, when
afterward she would have inherited this blessing.
Christ will be sought while he may be found; if we
slip our time, we lose our passage. Note, 1. Christ
justly rebukes our delays with his denials, and sus-
pects the communications of comfort from those
that are remiss and drowsy in their duty. 2.
Christ’s departures are matter of great grief and
lamination to believers. The royal psalmist never
complains of any thing with such sorrowful accents
as God’s hiding his face from him, and casting him
off. The same is here, as if he were out of heart
with her hands, crying, He is gone, he is gone; and
that which cuts her to the heart, is, that she may
thank herself, she provoked him to withdraw. If
Christ departs, it is because he takes something
unkindly.

Now observe what she does, in this case, and
what befell her.

(1.) He she calls him her Beloved, being resolv-
edly cloudy and dark sover the day be, she
will not quit her relation to him, and interest in him.
It is a weakness, upon every apprehension either
of our own failings, or of God’s withdrawals, to
conclude hardly as to our spiritual state. Every
desertion is despair. I will say, Lord, I believe,
though I must say, Lord, help my unbelief. Though
he leave me, I love him, he is mine.

(2.) She now remembers the words he said to her,
when he went in white clothes and expressions
made upon her, reproaching herself for her folly in
not complying sooner with her convictions. “My
soul failed when he spake; his words melted me
when he said, My head is wet with the dew; and
yet, wretch that I was! I lay still, and made ex-
cuses, and did not open to him.” The smothering
and stifling of our convictions is a thing that will be
very bitter in the reflection, when God opens our
eyes. Sometimes the word has its effect immedi-
ately on the heart, but it melts it afterward, upon
second thoughts. My soul now melted because
of his words which he had spoken before.

(3.) She did not go to bed, but went in pur-
suit of him; I sought him, I called him. She
might have saved herself this labour, if she would but
have bestirred herself, when he first called; but we
cut ourselves out a great deal of work, and create
ourselves a great deal of trouble, by our own sloth-
fulness and carelessness in improving our opportuni-
ties. Yet it is her praise, that, when her Beloved is
withdrawn, she continues seeking him; her desires
are more ardent, and her importunities after him more solicitous, by his withdrawals.
She calls him by prayer, calls after him, and begs
of him to return; and she not only prays, but uses
means, she seeks him in the ways wherein she used
to find him.

(4.) Yet still she missed of him; I could not find
him, he gave me no answer. She had no evidence
of his favour, no sensible comfort, but was at-
time weary in all her works, and her importunities
for love toward her. Note, There are those who have
a true love for Christ, and yet have not immediate
answers to their prayers for his smiles; but he gives
them an equivalent, if he strengthens them with
strength in their souls, to continue seeking him, Ps.
cxxxviii. 3. St. Paul could not prevail for the re-
moving of the thorn in the flesh, but was answered
with grace sufficient for him.

(5.) She was ill treated by the watchmen; They
found me, they smote me, they wounded me, v. 7.
They took her for a low woman, (because she went
about the streets at that time of night, when they
were walking their rounds,) and beat her ac-
cordingly. Disconsolate saints are taken for sinners,
and are censured and reproached as such. Thus
Hannah, when she was praying in the bitterness of
her soul, was wounded and smitten by Eli, one of
the prime watchmen, when he said to her, How
long wilt thou be drunken? So counting her a
daughter of Belial. 1 Sam. i. 14, 15. It is no new
thing for those that are of the loyal loving subjects
of Zion’s King, to be misrepresented by the watch-
men of Zion, as enemies, or scandals, to his king-
dom; they could not abuse and persecute them but
by putting them into an ill name. Some apply it to
those ministers who, though watchmen by office,
yet misapply the word to awakenned consciences,
and thus wound and hurt them. But observe, these
grievances, add affliction to the afflicted, and make
the hearts of the righteous sad, whom God would
not have made sad, (Ezek. xiii. 22.) discouraging
those who ought to be encouraged, and talking to the
grief of those whom God has wounded, Ps. lxi.
26. Those watchmen were bad enough, that could
not, or would not, assist the spouse in her inqui-
ries after her Beloved; (ch. iii. 3.) but there were
much worse things that hindered her with their severe
and uncharitable censures, smote her, and wounded
her with their reproaches, and, though they were
the keepers of the wall of Jerusalem, as if they had
been the breakers of it, took away her vail from
her, rudely and barbarously, as if it had been only a
pretence of modesty, but a cover of the contra-
ry. They whose outward appearances are all
good, and yet are inviudiously condemned, and run
the same, for hypocrites, have reason to complain, as
the spouse here, of the taking away of their vail
from them.

(6.) When she was disabled by the abuses the
watchmen gave her, to prosecute her inquiry her-
sclf, she gave charge to those about her, to as-
sist her in the inquiry; (v. 8.) I charge you, O
daughters of Jerusalem, all my friends and acquain-
tance, if you find my Beloved, it may be you may
meet with him before I shall, what shall ye tell him?
So some read it; “Speak a good word for me, tell
him that I am sick of love." Observe here, [1.] What her condition was, she loved Jesus Christ to that degree, that his absence made her sick, extremely sick, she could not bear it, and she was in pain for his return, as a woman in travail, as Ahab for Naboth's vineyard, which he so passionately coveted. This is a sickness which is a sign of a healthful constitution of soul, and will certainly end well, a sickness that will be not unto death, but life. It is better to be sick of love to Christ than at ease in love to the world. [2.] What course she took in this condition; she did not sink into despair, and conclude she should die of her disease, but she sent after her Beloved; she asked the advice of her neighbours, and begged their prayers for her, that they would intercede with him on her behalf; "Tell him, though I was careless, and foolish, and slothful, and rose not up so soon as I should have done, yet I love him; he knows all things, he knows that I do; represent me to him as sincere, though in many instances coming short of my duty; nay, represent me to him as an object of his pity, that he may have compassion on me, and help me." She does not bid them tell him how the watchmen had abused her; how unrighteoussoever they were in it, she acknowledges that the Lord is righteous, and therefore bears it patiently; but, "Tell him that I am wounded with love to him." Gracious souls are more sensible of Christ's withdrawings than of any other trouble whatsoever.

غانل وانس, تونلغانل وانس—
The lover languished, but not his love.

9. What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us? 10. My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. 11. His head is as the most fine gold; his locks are bushy, and black as a raven: 12. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and filthy set: 13. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers; his lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh: 14. His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl; his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires: 15. His legs are as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold; his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars: 16. His mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

Here is,

1. The question which the daughters of Jerusalem put to the spouse concerning her Beloved, in answer to the charge she had given them, v. 9. Observe

1. The respectful title they give to the spouse, O thou fairest among women. Our Lord Jesus makes his spouse truly amiable, not only in his eyes, but in the eyes of all the daughters of Jerusalem. The church is the most excellent society in the world; the communion of saints the best communion, and the beauty of the sanctuary a transcendent beauty; the saints are the most excellent people; holiness is the symmetry of the soul; it is its agreement with itself; it manifests itself to all that are competent judges of it; even those that have little acquaintance with Christ, as those daughters of Jerusalem here, cannot but see an amiable beauty in those that bear his image, which we should love, wherever we see it, though in different dresses.

2. Their inquiry concerning her Beloved. "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved? If thou wilt have us to find him for thee, give us his marks, that we may know him, when we see him." (1.) Some take it for a flighty question, blaming her for making such ado about him; "Why shouldst thou be so passionate in inquiring after thy Beloved, no matter how others do? Why shouldst thou be so set upon him more than others that yet have a kindness for him?" These that are zealous in religion are men wondered at by such as are indifferent to it. The many careless ones laugh at the few that are solicitous and serious, "What is there in him, that is so very charming, more than in another person? If he be gone, than, who art the fairest among women, wilt soon have another with an equal flame of love; Cænus hearts see nothing excellent or extraordinary in the Lord Jesus, give his person or offices, in his doctrine or in his favours; as if there were no more in the knowledge of Christ, and in communion with him, than in the knowledge of the world, and in its conversation.

(2.) Others rather take it for a serious question, and suppose that they who put it, intended, [1.] To comfort the spouse, who, they knew, would recover new spirits, if she did but talk awhile of her Beloved; she would please her better, or would give a more powerful diversion to her grief, than to be put upon the pleasing task of describing the beauties of her Beloved. [2.] To inform themselves; they had heard, in general, that he was excellent and glorious, but they desired to know more particularly. They wondered what moved the spouse to charge them concerning her Beloved, with so much vehemence and concern, and therefore concluded there must be something more in him than in another beloved, which they are willing to be continued off. Then there begin to be some hopes of people, when they begin to inquire concerning Christ and his transcendent perfections. And sometimes the extraordinary zeal of one, in inquiring after Christ, may be a means to provoke many; (2 Cor. ix. 2.) as the apostle, by the faith of the Gentiles, would stir up the Jews to a holy emulation. Rom. xi. 14. Soch.

II. The account which the spouse gives of her Beloved, in answer to this question. We should always be ready to instruct and assist those that are inquiring after Christ. Experienced Christians, who are well acquainted with Christ themselves, should do all they can to make others acquainted with him. 1. She assures them, in general, that he is one of incomparable perfections, and unparalleled worth; (v. 10.) "Do not you know my Beloved? Can the daughters of Jerusalem be ignorant of him that is Jerusalem's Crown, and crowned Head? Let me tell you then." (1.) That he has every thing in him that is lovely and amiable; My beloved is white and ruddy, the colours that make up a complete beauty. This points not at any extraordinary beauty of his body, when he should be incarnate. It was never said of the child Jesus, as of the child Moses when he was born, that he was exceeding fair; (Acts vii. 20.) but his divine glory, and the concurrence of every thing in him as Mediator, to make him truly lovely in the eyes of those that are enlightened to discern spiritual things. In him we may behold the beauty of the Lord, he was the holy child Jesus, that was his fairness. If we look upon him as made to us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Re- demption, he appears, in all, very amiable. His love to us renders him very lovely; he is . . .
the spotless innocence of his life, ruddy in the bloody sufferings he went through at his death; white in his glory, as God; (when he was transfigured, his raiment was white as the lights;) ruddy in his assuming the nature of man, Adam—red earth; white in his tenderness toward his people, ruddy in his terrible appearances against his and their enemies. His is the glory of God's mercy.

(2.) That he has that loveliness in him which is not to be found in any other; He is the chiefest among ten thousand; a nonesuch for beauty, fairer than the children of men, than any of them, than all of them; there is none like him, nor any to be compared with him; everything else is to be accounted loss and dung, in comparison of him, Phil. iii. 8. He is higher than the kings of the earth, (Ps. lxxxix. 27.) and he has obtained another excellent name, so that any of the principalities and powers of the upper or lower world, Phil. ii. 9. Heb. i. 4. He is a Standard-bearer among ten thousand; so the word is, the tallest and comliest of the company. He is himself lifted up as an Ensign, (Isi. xi. 10.) to whom we must be gathered, and must always have an eye. And there is all the reason in the world that he should have the innermost and uppermost place in our souls, who is the fairest of ten thousands, and has in him vanity and things beautiful for us.

2. She gives a particular detail of his accomplishments, conceals not his power or comely proportion; every thing in Christ is amiable. Ten instances she gives of his beauty, which we need not be nice in the application of, lest the wringing of them bring forth blood, and prove the wresting of them. The design, in general, is, to show that he is every way qualified for his undertaking, and has all that in him which may recommend him to our esteem, love, and confidence. Christ's appearance to John, (Rev. i. 13, &c.) may be compared with the description which the spouse gives of him here, the scope of both being to represent him transcendentally glorious, that is, both great and gracious, made lovely in the eyes of believers, and making them happy in himself.

(1.) His head is as the most fine gold; The head of Christ's God, (Col. ii. 19.) and it is promised to the saints, that the Almighty shall be their Gold, (Job xxii. 25.) their D'fence, their Treasure; much more was he so to Christ, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, Col. ii. 9. Christ's head bespeaks his sovereign dominion over all, and his vital influence upon his church and all its members; this is as gold, gold; the former word signifies shining gold, the latter strong solid gold; Christ's sovereignty is both beautiful and powerful. Nehemiah's monarchy is compared to a head of gold, (Dan. ii. 38.) because it excelled all the other monarchies, and so does Christ's government.

(2.) His locks are bushy and black; not black as the tents of Kedar, whose blackness was their deformity, to which therefore the church compares herself, (ch. i. 5.) but black as a raven, whose blackness is his beauty. Sometimes Christ's hair is represented as white, (Rev. i. 14.) denoting his eternity, that he is the Ancient of days; but here as black and bushy, bespeaking him ever young, and that there is in him no decay, nothing that waxeth old. Every thing that belongs to Christ is amiable in the eyes of a believer, even his hair is so; it was pity that it should be wet, as it was, with the dew, and these locks with the drops of the night, while he waited to be gracious, v. 2.

(3.) His eyes are as the eyes of doves, fair and clear, as crystal, as the crystal of the river of waters, which doves delight in, and in which, as in a glass, they see themselves; they are washed, to make them clean, washed with milk, to make them white, and fitly set, neither starting out nor sunk in. Christ is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, for they are dove's eyes, Hab. i. 13. All believers speak with pleasure of the omniscience of Christ, as the spouse here of his eyes; for though it be terrible to his enemies as a flame of fire, (Rev. i. 14.) yet it is amiable and comfortable to his friends, his dove's eyes, as it is a witness for him in heaven. These are all things, thou knowest that I love thee. Blessed and holy are they that walk always as under the eye of Christ.

(4.) His cheeks (the risings of the face) are as a bed of spices, raised in the gardens, which are the beauty and wealth of them, and as sweet flowers, or towers of sweetness. There is that in Christ's countenance which is amiable in the eyes of all the saints, in the least of them, and not a part of the face, but all of the face. The half disclosures Christ makes of himself to the soul are reviving and refreshing, fragrant above the richest flowers and perfumes.

(5.) His lips are like lilies, not white like lilies, but sweet and pleasant; such are the words of his lips to all that are sanctified, sweeter than honey, and the honey-combs; such the kisses of his lips, all the communications of his love to his people. He stood there in his life-time, and he they that heard him wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.

His lips are as lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh.

Never any lilies in nature dropped myrrh, but nothing in nature can fully set forth the beauty and excellency of Christ, and therefore, to do it by comparison, there must be a composition of images.

(6.) His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl, a noted precious stone, v. 14. Great men had their hands adorned with gold rings on their fingers, set with precious stones; but, in her eye, his hands themselves were as gold rings; all the instances of his power, the works of his hands, all the performances of his providence and grace, are all rich, and pure, and precious gold, as the precious onyx and the sapphire; all fitted to the purpose for which they were designed, as gold rings to the finger; and all beautiful and very becoming, as rings set with beryl. His hands, which are stretched forth, both to receive his people, and to give to them, are thus rich and comely.

(7.) His bowels are as bright as ivory, for so it should be rendered, rather than his belly, for it is the same word that was used for bowels, (v. 4.) and is often ascribed to God, (as Isa. lxix. 13. Jer. xxxii. 20.) and so it denotes his tender compassion and affection for his spouse, and the love he has to her even in her desolate and deserted state. This love is like bright ivory finely polished, and richly overlaid with sapphires. The love itself is strong and firm, and the instances and circumstances of it are bright and sparkling, and add much to the inestimable value of it.

(8.) His legs are as pillars of marble, so strong, so stately, and no disgrace, no, not to the sockets of fine gold, upon which they are set, v. 15. This bespeaks his stability and steadfastness; where he sets his foot he will fix it; he is able to bear all the weight of the government that is upon his shoulders, and his legs will never fail under him; this sets forth the stateliness and magnificence of the goings of our God, our King, in his sanctuary, (Ps. lxviii. 24.) and the steadiness and evenness of all his dispensations toward his people. The ways of the Lord are equal, they are all mercy for people; these are the pillars of marble, more lasting than the stately pillars of Lebanon.

(9.) His countenance (his port and mien) is as Lebanon, that stately hill; his aspect beautiful and charming, like the prospect of that pleasant forest or park, excellent as the cedars, which, in height and strength, excel other trees, and are of excellent use.
Christ is a goodly Person; the more we look upon him the more beauty we shall see in him.

(10.) His mouth is most sweet, it is sweetness itself, it is sweetness; so the word is; it is pure essence, na; it is the quintessence of all delights, v. 16. The words of his mouth are all sweet to a believer, sweet as milk to babes, to whom it is agreeable; and therefore all her desire is towards him, (Ps. xxx. 10.) to whom it is delicious. The kisses of his mouth, all the tokens of his love, have a transcendent sweetness in them, and are most delightful to them who have their spiritual senses exercised. To you that believe he is precious.

3. She concludes with a full assurance both of faith and hope, and so gets the mastery of her trouble.

(1.) There is a full assurance of faith concerning the complete beauty of the Lord Jesus; "He is altogether lovely. Why should I stand to mention particulars, when throughout there is nothing amiss?" She is sensible she does him wrong in the particular descriptions of him, and comes far short of the dignity and merit of the subject, and therefore she breaks off with this general encomium; He is truly lovely, he is wholly so; there is nothing in him but what is amiable, and nothing amiable but what is in him; he is all desires, he has all in him that one can desire, and therefore all her desire is towards him, and she seeks him thus carefully, and cannot rest contented in the want of him. Who cannot but love him so lovely?

(2.) Here is a full assurance of hope concerning her own interest in him; "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend; and therefore wonder not that I thus long after him." See with what a holy boldness she claims relation to him, and then with what a holy triumph she proclaims it. It is propriety that sweetens excellence. To a suffering Christian, and not to see him as ours, would be rather a torture than a happiness; but to see one that is thus lovely, and to see him as ours, is a complete satisfaction. Here is a true believer,

[1.] Giving an entire consent to Christ; "He is mine; my Lord, and my God;" (John xx. 28.) mine, according to the tenor of the gospel-covenant; mine in all relations; bestowed upon me, to be all that to me that my poor soul stands in need of.

[2.] Taking an entire companionship in Christ. It is spoken of here with an air of triumph; "This is he whom I have chosen, and to whom I have given up myself; none but Christ, none but Christ; this is he on whom my heart is, for he is my Best-beloved; this is he in whom I trust, and from whom I expect all good, for this is my Friend." Note, Those that make Christ their Beloved, shall have him their Friend; he has been, and will be, a special Friend to all believers. He loves those that love him; and those that have him their Friend have reason to glory in him, and speak of him with delight. "Let others be governed by the love of the world, and seek their happiness in its friendship and favours, This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend. Others may do as they please, but this is my soul's Choice, my soul's Rest, my Life, my Joy, my All; this is he whom I desire to live and die with."}

CHAP. VI.

In this chapter, I. The daughters of Jerusalem, moved with the description which the church had given of Christ, inquire after him. II. Her love interests them where they may meet with him, v. 2-5. III. Christ is now found of those that sought him, and very highly applauds the beauty of his spouse, as one extremely smitten with it, (v. 4, 7.) preferring her before all others, (v. 8, 9.) recommending her to the love and esteem of all her neighbours, (v. 10.) and, lastly, acknowledging the impressions which her beauty had made upon him, and the great delight he took in her; x. 11.-13.

1. WHITHER is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? Whither is thy beloved turned aside, that we may seek him with thee? 2. My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.

Here is,

I. The inquiry which the daughters of Jerusalem made concerning Christ, v. 1. They still continue their high thoughts of the church, and call her, as before, the fairest among women; for true sanctity is true beauty. And now they raise their thoughts higher concerning Christ, Whither is thy Beloved gone? that we may seek him with thee. This would be but an indelicate, unacceptable, compliment, if the song were not to be understood spiritually; for love is jealous of a rival, would monopolize the Beloved, and cares not that others should join in seeking him; but they that truly love Christ are desirous that others should love him too, and be joined to him; nay, the greatest instance of duty and respect that the church's children can show to their mother, is, to join with her in seeking Christ.

The daughters of Jerusalem had asked, (ch. v. 8.) Whither is thy Beloved? Are there any other belov Sebastains, wondering that the spouse should be so passionately in love with him, are now of another mind, and are themselves in love with him; for, 1. The spouse had described him, and showed them his excellencies and perfections; and therefore, though they have not seen him, yet, believing, they love him. They that undervalue Christ, do so because they do not know him; when God, by his word and Spirit, discovers him to the soul, with that ray of light that openeth the eyes of the blind, he shall be kindled. 2. She had expressed her own love to him; her rest in that love, and had triumphed in it; This is my Beloved; and that flame in her breast scattered sparks into theirs. As sinful lusts, when they break out, defile many, so the pious zeal of some may provoke many, 2 Cor. ix. 2.

The spouse had besought their help in seeking her Beloved; (ch. v. 8.) but now they beg hers, they perceive that now the cloud she had been before, which had defiled the skies, was blown up, and, while she was describing her Beloved to them, she herself retrieved her comfort in him. Dropping Christians would find benefit themselves by talking of Christ, as well as do good to others.

Now here, (1.) They inquire concerning him, Whither is thy Beloved gone? Which way must we steer our course, in pursuit of him? Note, Those that are made acquainted with the excellencies of Christ, and the comfort of an interest in him, cannot but be inquisitive after him, and desirous to know where they may meet with him. (2.) They offer their service to the spouse to accompany her in quest of him; We will seek him with thee. Those that would find Christ must seek him, seek him early, seek him diligently; and it is best seeking Christ in concert, to join with those that are seeking him. We must seek for communion with Christ, in communion with saints. We know whither our Beloved is gone; he is gone to heaven to his Father, and our Father, he took care to send us notice of it, that we might know how to direct to him, John xx. 17. We must by faith see him there, and by prayer seek him there; with boldness, enter into the holiest, and herein must join with the generation of them that seek him, (Ps. cvii. 6.) even with all that in every place call upon him, 1 Cor. i. 2. We must pray with, and for, others.
II. The answer which the spouse gave to this inquiry, v. 2, 3. Now she complains not any more as she had done, (ch. v. 6.) "He is gone, he is gone," that she knew not where to find him, or doubted she had lost him for ever; no,

1. Now she knows very well where he is; (v. 2.) "My Beloved is not to be found in the streets of the city, she saw him not at the watchmen's places; if he go not in the vineyard, and if I look for him there, I have in vain looked for him;" (as his parents sought him among their kindred and acquaintance, and found him not;) "but he is gone down to his garden, a place of privacy and retirement." The more we withdraw from the hurry of the world, the more likely we are to have acquaintance with Christ, who took his disciples into a garden, there to be witnesses of the agonies of his love. Christ's church is a garden enclosed, and therein the Lord, the comeliness of the world; it is his garden, which he has planted, as he did the garden of Eden, which he takes care of, and delights in: though he is gone up to paradise above, yet he comes down to his garden on earth: it lies low, but he condescends to visit it, and wonderful condescension it is. Will God in very deed dwell with man upon the earth? Those that would find Christ, may expect to meet with him in his garden, the church, for there he resides; (v. 4.) or, (as Mr. Tindal) (Exod. 33. 17.) they must attend upon him in the ordinances which he has instituted, the word, sacraments, and prayer, wherein he will be with us always, even to the end of the world.

The spouse here refers to what Christ had said, (ch. v. 1.) I am come into my garden; it is as if she had said, "What a fool was I to fret and toil myself in seeking him where he was not, when he himself had told me where he was! Words of direction and comfort are often out of the way, when we have occasion to use them, till the blessed Spirit brings them to our remembrance, and then we wonder how we overlooked them. Christ has told us that he would come into his garden, thither therefore we must go to seek him.

The beds, and lesser gardens, in this greater, are the particular churches, the synagogues of God in the land; (Ps. lxxiv. 8.) the spices and lilies are particular believers, the planting of the Lord, and pleasure with him, and common with him; and when he calls down his church, it is, (1.) To feed among the gardens, to feed his flock, which he feeds not, as other shepherds, in the open fields, but in his garden; so well are they provided for! Ps. xxiii. 2. He comes to feed his friends, and entertain them; there you may not only find him, but find his table richly furnished, and a hearty welcome to it. He comes to feed himself, to please himself with the products of his own grace in his people; for the Lord takes pleasure in those that fear him. He has many gardens, many particular churches of different sizes and shapes; but, while they are his, he feeds them all, manifests himself among them, and is well pleased with them. (2.) To gather lilies, wherewith he is pleased to entertain and adorn himself; he picks the lilies one by one, and gathers them to himself; and there will be a general harvest of them at the great day, when he will send forth his angels, to gather all his lilies, that he may be for ever glorified and admired in them.

2. She is very confident of her own interests in him; (v. 3.) "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine; the relation is mutual, and the knot is tied, which cannot be loosed, for he feeds among the lilies, and my communion with him is a certain token of my interest in him." She had said this before; (ch. ii. 16.) but, (1.) Here she repeats it, as that which she resolved to abide by, and which she took an unspeakable pleasure and satisfaction in; she liked her choice too well to change. Our communion with God is very much maintained and kept up by the frequent renewing of our covenant with him, and rejoicing in it. (2.) She had occasion to repeat it, for she had acted unkindly to her Beloved, and, for her so doing, he had justly withdrawn himself from her, and therefore there was occasion to take fresh hold of the covenant, which continues firm between Christ and believers, notwithstanding their failings and his. Ps. lxxxix. 30-33. "I have been careless and wanting in my duty, and yet I am my Beloved's;" for every transgression in the covenant does not throw us out of covenant. "He has justly hid his face from me and denied me his comforts, and yet my Beloved is mine;" for rebukes and chastenings are not only consistent with, but they flow from, covenant love. (3.) When we want a full assurance of Christ's love, we must live in faith, as our God and Redeemer; "Thou wilt not the sensible consolation I used to have, yet I will cleave to this, Christ is mine, and I am his." (4.) Though she said the same, before, yet now she inverts the order, and asserts his interest in her first; "I am my Beloved's, entirely devoted and dedicated to him; and then her interest in him and in his grace; "My Beloved is mine, and I am happy, truly happy, in him." If our own hearts are true, but without the faithfulness of God, there is no room left to question his being ours; for the covenant never breaks on his side. (5.) It is now her comfort, as it was then, that he feeds among the lilies, that he takes delight in his people, and converses freely with them, as we do with those with whom we feed; and therefore, though, at present, he be withdrawn, I shall meet with him again; I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

4. Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah; comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners. 5. Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me: thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead. 6. Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep, which go up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins, and there is not one barren among them. 7. As a piece of pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks. 8. There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number. 9. My dove, my undefiled, is but one: she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her: the daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her. 10. Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?

Now we must suppose Christ graciously returned to his spouse, from whom he had withdrawn himself, returned to converse with her, for he speaks to her, and makes her to hear joy and gladness; returned to favour her, having forgiven and forgotten all her unkindnesses, for he speaks very tenderly and respectfully to her.

I. He pronounces her truly amiable; (v. 4.) Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, a city in the tribe of Manasseh, the common meeting place; her name signifies pleasant, the situation, no doubt, being very happy, and the buildings fine and uniform. Thou art comely as Jerusalem, a city compact together, (Ps. cxxii. 5.) and which Solomon had built and
beautified, the joy of the whole earth; it was an honor to the world, (whether they thought so or no,) that there was such a city in it. It was the holy city, and that was the greatest beauty of it; and fitly is the church compared to it, for it was founded and typified by it. This is the Jerusalem that is above, (Gal. iv. 26.) the heavenly Jerusalem; (Heb. xii. 22.) in it God has his sanctuary, and is, in a special manner, present; thence he has the tribute of praise issuing; it is his rest for ever, and therefore it is comely as Jerusalem, and, being so, is terrible as an army with banners.

Church-censures, duly administered, strike an awe upon men's consciences; the word (the weapon of God to destroy the devil) is in this age fitly attended. (2 Cor. v. 20.) and even an unbeliever is convinced and judged by the solemnity of holy ordinances, 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. The saints by faith overcame the world; (1 John v. 4.) nay, like Jacob, they have power with God, and prevail, Gen. xxxiii. 28. II. He owns himself in love with her, v. 5. Though, for a small moment, and in a little wrath, he had hid his face from her, yet now he gathers her with very opening instances of everlasting loving-kindness, Is. lix. 8, &c.; so some read it; " Turn the eyes of faith and love toward me; for they have lifted me up; look unto me, and be comforted." When we are calling to God to turn the eye of his favour towards us, he is calling to us to turn the eye of our obedience towards him. We read it as a strong expression of love, " Turn away thine eyes from me, for I cannot bear the brightness of them; they have quite overcome me, and I am prevailed with to overlook all that is past," as God said to Israel, " Let me alone, or I must yield," Exod. xxxii. 10. Christ is pleased to borrow these expressions of a passionate lover, only to express the tenderness of a compassionate Redeemer, and the delight he takes in his redeemed, and in the workings of his own grace in them.

III. He repeats, almost word for word, part of the description he had given of her beauty; (ch. 4. 1--5.) her hair, her teeth, her tresses; (v. 3--7.) not because he could not have described it in other words, and by other similitudes, but to show that he had still the same esteem for her, since her unkindness to him, and his withdrawals from her, that he had before; lest she should think, that, though he would not quite cast her off, yet he would think the worse of her while he knew her, he says the same of her now, that he had done, for those to whom much is forgiven, will love the more, and, consequently, will be the more below. Christ has said, I love those that love me. He is pleased with his people, notwithstanding their weaknesses, when they sincerely repent of them, and return to their duty, and commends them as if they were already arrived at perfection.

IV. He prefers her before all her competitors, and sees all the beauties and perfections of others must be wanting in her; (v. 8, 9.) " There are, it may be, three women, as Esthers, have by their beauty attained to the royal state and dignity, and fourscore concubines, whom kings have preferred before their own queens, as more charming, and those attended by their maids of honor, virgins without number, who, when there is a ball at court, appear in great splendour, with beauty that dazzles the eyes of the spectators; but my dove, my undefiled, is one, a holy one." 1. She is the beauty of the world, and view the societies of men who reckon themselves wise and happy, kings, courts, senators, counsels, or whatever incorporations you may think valuable, they are none of them to be compared with the church of Christ; their honours and beauties are nothing to her. Who is like unto thee, O Israel? Deut. xxxiii. 29. iv. 6, 7.

There are particular persons, as virgines without number, who are famed for their accomplishments, the beauties of their address, language, and performance. Love is one of holiness is beyond all other beauty; " My dove, my undefiled, is one, has that one beauty, that she is a dove, an undefiled dove, and mine, and that makes her excels the queens and virgins, though they were ever so many." 2. She includes them all; " Other kings have many queens, and concubines, and virgins, with whose conversation they entertain themselves, but my dove, my undefiled, is to me instead of all; in that one I have more than they have in all theirs." " Though many are called, some are virgins, some of great dignity, others of less, some of longer standing, and many particular believers, of different gifts and attainments, some more eminent, others less so, yet they all constitute but one catholic church, are all but parts of that whole, and that is my dove, my undefiled." Christ is the Centre of the church's unity; all the children of God, that are scattered abroad, are gathered by him, (John xii. 32.) and meet in him, (Eph. i. 10.) and are all one body.

V. He shows how much she was esteemed, not by him only, but by all that had acquaintance with her, and stood in relation to her. It would add to her praise to say, 1. That she was her mother's darling; she had that in her, from a child, which recommended her to the particular affection of her parents; as Solomon himself is said to have been tender, and an only one in the sight of his mother, (Prov. vii. 4.) so was she the only one of her mother, as dear as if she had been an only one; and if there were many more, yet she was the choice one of her that bare her; more excellent than all the societies of men this world ever produced. All the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, are nothing, in Christ's account, compared with the church, which is made up of the excellent ones of the earth, the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, and more excellent than their neighbours. 2. That she was admired by all her acquaintance, not only the daughters, who were her juniors, but even the queen and the concubines, who might have reason to be jealous of her as a rival; they all blessed her, and wished well to her, praised her, and spake well of her; the daughters of Jerusalem called her the fairest among women; all agreed to give her the pre-eminence for beauty, and every sheath bowed to her. Nete. (1.) Those that have any sense of things, can but be convinced in their consciences, (whatever they say,) that godly people are excellent people: many will give them their good word, and more, their good will. (2.) Jesus Christ takes notice what people think and speak of his church, and is well pleased with them that honour such as the Lord, and takes it ill of those that despise them, particularly when they are under a cloud, that offend any of his little ones. He has said, in that sermon that was given of her, and makes it his own; (v. 10.) Who is she that looks forth as the morning? This is applicable both to the church in the world, and to grace in the heart.

1. They are amiable as the light, the most beautiful of all visible things; Christians are, or should be, the lights of the world. The patriarchal church looked forth as the morning, when the promise of Messiah was first made; God had appointed the spring from on high visited this dark world. The Jewish church was fair as the moon; the ceremonial law was an imperfection light, it shone by reflection, it was changeas the moon, did not make day, nor was the Sun of righteousness yet risen; but
the Christian church is clear as the sun, exhibits a great light to them that sit in darkness. Or, we may apply it to the kingdom of grace, the gospel-kingdom. (1.) In its rise, it looks forth as the morning after a dark night; it is discovering, (Job xxxviii. 12, 13.) and very accordingly, it looks forth pleasantly, with calmness and concern; but it is small in its beginnings, and scarcely perceptible at first. (2.) It is, at the best, in this world, but fair as the moon, which shines with a borrowed light, which has her changes and eclipses, and her spots too, and, when at the full, does but rule by night. But, (3.) When it is perfected in the kingdom of glory, then it will be clear as the sun, the church clothed with the sun, with Christ the Sun of righteousness, Rev. xii. 1. They forsook God when he gave forth his strength; (Judg. v. 31. Matt. xiii. 43.) they shall shine in inexpressible glory, and that which is perfect will then come; there shall be no darkness, no spots, Isa. xxx. 26.

2. The beauty of the church and of believers, is not only amiable, but awful as an army with banners. The church, in this world, is as an army, as the camp of Israel in the wilderness; its state is militant; it is in the midst of enemies, and is engaged in a constant conflict with them. But there are soldiers in this army. It has its banners; the gospel of Christ is an ensign, (Isa. xi. 12.) the love of Christ, ch. ii. 4. It is marshalled, and kept in order and under discipline; it is terrible to its enemies, as Israel in the wilderness was, Exod. xv. 14. When Balaam saw Israel encamped according to their tribes, by their standards, with colours displayed, he said, How greatly are thy tents, O Jacob, Numb. xxiv. 5. When the church preserves her purity, she secures her honour and victory; when she is fair as the moon, and clear as the sun, she is truly great and formidable.

11. I went down into the garden of nuts, to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded. 12. Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib. 13. Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies.

Christ being now returned to his spouse, and the breach being entirely made up, and the falling out of these lovers being the renewing of love, Christ here gives an account both of the distance and of the reconciliation.

1. That when he was withdrawn from his church as his spouse, and did not comfort her, yet even then he had his eye upon it as his garden, which he took care of; (v. 11.) "I went down into the garden of nuts, or myrtles, to see the fruits of the valley; I caused a man to go by my garden, to see it as it was." When he was out of sight, he was no farther off than the garden, hid among the trees of the garden, in a low and dark valley; but then he was observing how the vine flourished, that he might do all that to it which was necessary to promote its flourishing, and might delight himself in it as a man does in a fruitful garden. He went to see whether the pomegranates budded. Christ observes the beauty of his beloved, and then he be as the grinace in the soul, and the early buds of devout affections and inclinations there; and is well pleased with them, as we are with the blossoms of the spring.

2. That yet he could not long content himself with this, but suddenly felt a powerful, irresistible inclination in his own bosom to return to his church, as his spouse, being moved with her lamentations after him, and her languishing desire towards him; (v. 12.) "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib. I could not any longer keep at a distance, my repinings were kindled together, and I presently resolved to fly back to the arms of my love, my dove." Thus Joseph made himself strange to his brethren, for awhile, to chaste them for their former unkindnesses, and make trial of their present temper, till he could no longer refrain himself, but, or ever he was aware, burst out into tears, and said, I am Joseph, Gen. xlv. 1. And perhaps it was (Prov. xxii. 29.) that though she said in her haste I am cut off from before thine eyes, yet, at the same time, he heard the voice of her supplications, and be came like the chariots of Amminadib, which were noted for their beauty and swiftness. My soul put me in the chariots of my willing people; so some read it; "the chariots of their faith and hope, and love, their desires, and prayers, and expectations, which they sent after me, to fetch me back, as chariots of fire, with how much desire they are to embrace me, as willing people, and ought to be, a willing people. (2.) If they continue seeking Christ, and longing after him, even when he seems to withdraw from them, he will graciously return to them in due time, perhaps sooner than they think, and with a pleasing surprise. No chariots sent for Christ shall return empty. (3.) All Christ's gracious returns to his people take rise from himself. It is not they, it is his own soul, that puts him into the chariots of his people; for he is gracious because he will be gracious, and loves his Israel because he would love them; not for their sakes, be it known to them.

3. That he, being returned to her, kindly courted her return to him, notwithstanding the discouragements she laboured under. Let her not despair of obtaining as much comfort as ever she had before this distance happened, but take the comfort of the return of her Beloved, v. 13. Here, (1.) The church is called the Shulamite, referring either to Solomon, the bridegroom in type, by whose name she is called, in token of her relation to him, and union with him; thus believers are called Christians from Christ; or referring to Salem, the place of her birth and residence, as the woman of Shunem is called the Shunamite. Heaven is the Salem whence the saints have their birth, and where they have their citizenship; those that belong to Christ, and are bound for heaven, shall be called Shulamites.

(2.) She is invited to return, and the invitation most earnestly pressed; Return, return; and again, "Return, return; recover the peace thou hast lost and forfeited; come back to thy former compos edness and cheerfulness of spirit." Note, Good Christians, after they have had their comfort disturbed, are sometimes hard to be pacified, and need to be earnestly persuaded to return again to their rest. As revolting sinners have need to be called to again and again, (Gal. 4. 25.) so disquieted saints have need to be called to again and again, Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye droop? why art thou cast down, O my soul?

(3.) Being returned, she is desired to show her face, That we may look upon thee. Go not longer with thy face covered like a mourner. Let these that have made their peace with God, lift up their faces without spot; (Job xxii. 56.) let them come bold, as an eminent believer, (2. Cor. 4. 18.) pleased with the cheerfulness and humble confidence of his people, and would have them look pleasant. Let us look upon thee, not I only, but the holy angels, who rejoice in the consolation of saints, as well as in the conversion of sinners: not I only, but all
the daughters." Christ and believers are pleased with the beauty of the church.

(4.) A short account is given of what is to be seen in her. The question is asked, What will ye see in the Shulamite? And it is answered, as it were the company of two armies. [1.] Some think she gives this account of herself; she is shy of appearing, unwilling to be looked upon, having, in her own account, no form or comeliness. Alas! says she, What will you see in the Shulamite? Nothing that is worth your looking upon; nothing but as it were the company of two armies actually engaged, where nothing is to be seen but blood and slaughter. The watchmen had smitten her, and wounded her, and she carried in her face the marks of those wounds, which as it were had been fighting. She had said, (ch. i. 6.) Look not upon me, because I am black; here she says, "Look not upon me, because I am bloody." Or, it may denote the constant struggle that is between grace and corruption in the souls of believers; they are in them as two armies continually skirmishing, which makes her ashamed to show her face.

[2.] Others think her Beloved gives this account of her. "I will tell you what you shall see in the Shulamite; as she was in the army of two, two armies, or two parts of the same army, drawn out in rank and file; not only as an army with banners, but as two armies, with a majesty double to what was before spoken: she is as Mahanaim, as the two hosts which Jacob saw, (Gen. xxxii. 1, 2.) a host of saints, and a host of angels ministering to them; the church militant, the church triumphant." Behold two armies; in both the church appears beautiful.

CHAP. VII.

In this chapter, I. Christ, the royal Bridegroom, goes on to describe the beauties of his spouse, the church, in many instances, and to express his love to her, and the delight he has in her conversation, v. 1—9. II. The spouse, the church, expresses her great delight in him, and the desire that she had of communion and fellowship with him, v. 10—13. Such mutual esteem and endearment are there between Christ and believers! And what is heaven but an everlasting interchange of loves between the holy God and holy souls!

1. How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter! the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman: 2. Thy navel is like a round goblet which wanteth not liquor; thy belly is like a heap of wheat set about with lilies: 3. Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins: 4. Thy neck is as a tower of ivory; thine eyes like the fish-pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bathrabbin; thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon, which looketh toward Damascus: 5. Thy head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair upon thy head like purple: the King is held in the galleries. 6. How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights! 7. This thy stature is like to a palm-tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes. 8. I said, I will go up to the palm-tree, I will take hold of the boughis thereof; now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy nose like apples: 9. And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.

The title which Jesus Christ here gives to the church is new, O prince's daughter, agreeing with Ps. xlv. 13. where she is called the king's daughter. She is in respect her daughter, born from above, begotten of God, and his workmanship, bearing the image of the King of kings, and guided by his Spirit. She is so by marriage; Christ, by bestowing her to himself, though he found her mean and despicable, has made her a prince's daughter; she has a princely disposition, something in her truly noble and generous; she is daughter and heir to the Prince of the kings of the earth; if children, then heirs. Not here we have,

I. A large description of the beauty of the spouse, which, some think, is given by the virgins her companions, and that those were they who called upon her to return; it seems rather to be given by Christ himself, and that it is designed to express his love to her, and delight in her, as before, ch. iv. 1, &c. and ch. vi. 5, 6. The similitudes are here different from what they were before, to show that the beauty of holiness is such as nothing in nature can reach; you may still say more of it, and yet come short of it. That which our love, ch. 4. was immediately upon the espressus; (ch. iii. 11.) this, upon her return from a by-path; (ch. vi. 13.) yet this exceeds that, to show the constancy of Christ's love to his people; he loves them to the end, since he made them precious in his sight, and honourable. The spouse had described the beauty of her Beloved in ten particulars; (ch. v. 11, &c.) and now she describes her in as many, for he will not be behindhand with her in respects and endearments. These that honour Christ he will certainly honour, and make honourable. As the prophet, in describing the corruptions of degenerate Israel, reckons from the sole of the feet even unto the head, (Isa. i. 6.) so here the beauties of the church are reckoned from foot to head, that, as the apostle speaks, when he is comparing the church, as here, to the natural body, (1 Cor. xii. 23.) more abundant honour might be bestowed on those parts of the body, which we think to be less honourable, and which you shall see as noble and exalted. The text says,

1. Her feet are here praised; the feet of Christ's ministers are beautiful in the eyes of the church, (Isa. l. 7.) and her feet are here said to be beautiful in the eyes of Christ; How beautiful are thy feet with shoes! When believers, being made free from the captivity of sin, (Acts xii. 8.) stand fast in the liberty with which they are made free, preserve the tokens of their enfranchisement, have their feet shod with the preparatio of the gospel of peace, and walk steadily according to the rule of the gospel, then their feet are beautiful with shoes, they tread firm, being well armed against the troubles they meet with in their way. When we rest not in good affections, but they are accompanied with sincere endeavours and resolutions, then our feet are beautiful with shoes. See Ezek. xvi. 10.

2. The joints of the thighs are here said to be like jewels, and these curiously wrought by a cunning workman. This is explained by Eph. v. 28, and Col. ii. 19, where the mystical body of Christ is said to be held together by joints and bonds, as the hips and knees (both which are the joints of the thighs) serve the natural body in its strength and motion. The church is then conformed in Christ's eyes, when those joints are kept firm by holy love and unity, and the communion of saints. When believers act in religion from good principles, and are steady and regular in their whole conversation, and turn themselves easily to every duty in its time and place, then the joints are like jewels.
3. The navel is here compared to a round cup or goblet, that wants not any of the agreeable liquor that one would wish to find in it, such as David's cup that ran over, (Ps. xxiii. 5.) well-shaped, and not as that miserable infant whose navel was not cut. Ezek. xvi. 4. The fear of the Lord said to be health to the navel. See Prov. iii. 8. When the soul wants not that fear, then the navel wants not liquor.

4. The belly is like a heap of wheat in the store-chamber, which perhaps was sometimes, to make show, adorned with flowers. The wheat is useful, the lilies beautiful; there is every thing in the church, which may be to the members, the body of Christ, of use and ornament. All the body is nourished from the belly; it denotes the spiritual prosperity of a believer, and the healthful constitution of the soul, all in good plight.

5. The breasts are like two young roes that are twins, v. 3. By the breasts of the church’s consolations those are nourished who are born from its belly, (Isa. xlvi. 3.) and by the navel received nourishment in the womb. This comparison we had before.

6. The neck, which before was compared to the tower of David, (ch. iv. 4.) is here compared to a tower of ivory, so white, so precious; such is the faith of the saints, by which they are joined to Christ their Head. The name of the Lord, improved by faith, is to the saints a strong and impregnable tower.

7. The eyes are likened to the fish-foods in Heshbon, or the artificial fish-ponds, by a gate, either Jerusalem, or of Heshbon, which is called Bath-rabbim, the daughter of a multitude, because a great thoroughfare. The understanding, the intentions of a believer, are clean and clear as these ponds. The eyes, weeping for sin, are as fountains, (Jer. ix. 1.) and comely with Christ.

8. The nose like the tower of Lebanon, the forehead or face set like a flint, (Isa. l. 7.) unshut as that tower was impregnable. So it denotes the magnanimity and holy bravery of the church, or, as others, a spiritual sagacity to discern things that differ, as animals strangely distinguished by the smell. This tower looks toward Damascus, the head city of Syria, denoting the boldness of the church, in facing its enemies, and not fearing them.

9. The head like Carmel, a very high hill near the sea, v. 5. The head of a believer is lifted up above his enemies, (Ps. xxvii. 6.) above the storms of the lower region, as the top of Carmel was, pointing heaven-ward. The more we get above this world, and the nearer to heaven, and the more secure and serene we become by that means, the more amiable we are in the eyes of the Lord Jesus.

10. The hair of the head is said to be like purple. This denotes the universal amiableness of a believer in the eyes of Christ, even to the hair, or, as some understand it, the pins with which the hair is dressed. Some by the head and the hair understand the governors of the church, or, as others, that they do so carefully to do their work well much to her comeliness. The head like crimson, (so some read it,) and the hair like purple, the two colours worn by great men.

11. The complacency which Christ takes in his church thus beautified and adorned; she is lovely indeed, if she be so in his eyes; as he puts the cosmetics upon her, so it is his love that makes this come-ness truly valuable; for he is an unex-"}

rest for ever, here will I dwell; and Ps. cxlvii. 11. The Lord takes pleasure in those that fear him. And if Christ has such delight in the galleries of communion with his people, much more reason have the to dwell in them, and to reckon a day there better than a thousand.

2. He was even struck with admiration at the beauty of his church; (v. 6.) How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love! How art thou made fair! So the word is; ‘not born so, but made so with the comeliness which I have put upon thee. Holiness is a beauty beyond expression; the Lord Jesus is wonderfully pleased with it: the outward aspect of it is fair, the heart of it is pleasant and highly agreeable, and the complacency he has in it is inexpressible; O my dearest for delights; so some read it.

3. He determined to keep up communion with his church.

(1.) To take hold of her as of the boughs of a palm-tree. He compares her stature to a palm-tree; (v. 7.) so straight, so strong, does she appear, when she is looked upon in her full proportion. The palm-tree is observed to flourish most when it is loaded; so the church, the more it has been afflicted, the more it has multiplied, and the branches of it are emblems of victory. Christ says, “I will go up to the palm-tree, to entertain myself with the shadow of it, (v. 8.) and I will take hold of its boughs, and observe the beauty of them.” What Christ has said, he will do, in favour to his people; we may be sure he will do it, for his kind purposes are never suffered to go unfulfilled on the ground; and if he take hold of the boughs of his church, take early hold of her branches, when they are young and tender, he will keep his hold, and not let them go.

(2.) To refresh himself with her fruits. He compares her breasts (her pious affections toward him) to clusters of grapes, a most pleasant fruit; (v. 7.) and he repeats it; (v. 8.) They shall be, they shall be to me, as clusters of the vine, which make glad the heart. “Now that I come up to the palm-tree, now thy graces shall be exerted and excited.” Christ’s presence with his people kindles the holy heavenly fire in their souls, and then their breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, a cordial to themselves, and acceptable to him. And since God, at first, breathed into men’s nostrils the breath of life, and breathes the breath of the new life still, the smell of their nostrils is like the smell of apphies, or oranges, which is pleasing and reviving. The Lord exercised a sweet power on Noah’s soul when he said Gen. viii. 21. And, lastly, the roof of her mouth is like the best wine; (v. 9.) her spiritual taste and relish, or the words she speaks to God and man, which come not from the teeth outward, but from the roof of the mouth, these are pleasing to God; the flavour of the upright is his delight. And when those that fear the Lord speak one to another as becomes them, the Lord hearkens and hears with pleasure, Mal. iii. 16. It is like that wine which is, [1.] Very palatable and grateful to the taste; it goes down sweetly, it goes straightforwardly; so the margin reads it; it moves itself a right, Prov. xxi. 31. The pleasures of sense seem right to the carnal appetite, and go down smoothly, but they are often wrong, and, compared with the pleasure of communion with God, they are harsh and rough; nothing goes down so sweetly with a gracious soul, as the wine of God’s consolations. [2.] It is a grace typically represented by his Spirit with his people shall be reviving and refreshing to them, as that strong wine which makes the lips even of those that are asleep, (that are ready to faint away in a deliquium,) to speak. Unconverted sinners are asleep, saints are often drowsy, and listless, and half asleep; but the word and Spirit of Christ will put life and vigour into the soul, and
out of the abundance of the heart that is thus filled, the mouth will speak. When the apostles were filled with the Spirit, they spake with tongues the wonderful works of God (Acts ii. 10, 12.) and they who, in opposition to being drunk with wine, wherein excess, and filled with the Holy Ghost, spake in tongues in psalms and hymns, Eph. v. 18, 19. When Christ is thus commending the sweetness of his spouse's love, excited by the manifestation of his, she seems to put in that word, for my Beloved, as in a parenthesis. "Is there anything in me that is pleasant or valuable? As it is from, so it is for my Beloved." Then he delights in our good affections and services, when they are all for him, and devoted to his glory.

10. I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me. 11. Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. 12. Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves. 13. The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.

These are the words of the spouse, the church, the believing soul, in answer to the kind expressions of Christ's love in the foregoing verses.

I. She here triumphs in her relation to Christ, and her interest in him, and in his name will she bow all the day long. With what a transport of joy and holy exultation does she say, (v. 10.) "I am my Beloved's, not my own, but entirely devoted to him, and owned by him." If we can truly say that Christ is our Beloved, we may be confident that we are his, and he will save us, Ps. cxix. 94. The gracious discoveries of Christ's love to us should engage us greatly to rejoice in the hold he has of us, his sovereignty over us, and propriety in us; which is far less a flag of comfort than a bond of duty. Intimacy of communion with Christ should help to clear up our interest in him.

Glorying in this, that she is his, to serve him, and reckoning that her honour, she comforts herself with this, that his desire is toward her, that is, he is her Husband; it is a periphrasis of the conjugal relation, Gen. iii. 16. Christ's desire was strongly toward his chosen remnant, when he came from heaven to earth to seek and save them; and when, in pursuance of his undertaking, he was even straitened till the baptism of blood he was to pass through for them was accomplished, Luke xii. 30. He desired Zion for a habitation; this is a comfort to believers, that, whosoever slights them, Christ has a desire toward them, such a desire as will again bring him from heaven to earth, to receive them to himself; for he longs to have them all with him, John xvii. 24. -xiv. 3.

II. She nobly and earnestly desires communion with him; (v. 11, 12.) "Come, my Beloved, let us take a walk together, that I may receive counsel, instruction, and comfort, from thee, and may make known my wants and grievances to thee, with freedom, and without interruption." Thus Christ walked with the two disciples that were going to the village called Emmaus, and talked with them, till he made their hearts burn within them. Observe here, 1. Having received fresh tokens of his love, and full assurances of her interest in him, she presses forward toward further acquaintance with him; as blessed Paul, who desired yet more and more of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, Phil.
be in act and exercise, whether we be fruitful in the fruits of righteousness, and whether our fruit abound. And especially let us inquire whether the tender grapes appear, and whether the pomegranates bud forth, what good motions and dispositions there are in us, that are yet young and tender, that they may be protected and cherished with a prudent care, that they may not be broken or blasted, or rubbed off, but cultivated, that they may bring forth fruit unto perfection. In this inquiry into our own spiritual state, it will be good to take Christ along with us; because his presence will make the vine flourish, and the tender grape appear, as the returning sun revives the gardens; and because to him we are concerned to approve ourselves; if he sees the vine flourish, and the tender grape appear; if we can appeal to him, Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee; if his Spirit witness with our spirit, that our souls prosper, it is enough. And if we would be acquainted with ourselves, we must beg of him to search and try us, to help us in the search, and discover us to ourselves.

4. She promises to her Beloved the best entertainment she can give him at her country-seat; for he will come to us, and sup with us, Rev. iii. 20. [1.] She gives him her best of all, and whatever else she had for him, it would utterly be condemned, if her heart were not entire for him; "There therefore will I give thee my loves; I will repeat the professions of it, honour thee with the tokens of it; and the outgoings of my soul toward thee, in admissions and desires, shall be quickened and enlarged, and my heart offered up to thee in a hot flame." [2.] She promises him her best provision, v. 13.

There we shall find pleasant odours, for the man-drares give a smell; the love-flowers or lovely ones, so the word signifies, or the love fruits; it was something that was in all respects very grateful, so valuable, that Rachel and Leah had like to have fallen out about it, Gen. xxx. 14. We shall also find that which is good for food, as well as pleasant to the eye, all the rarities that the country affords; And all states are full manner of pleasant fruits. Note, [1.] The fruit of all true exercise is pleasant to the Lord Jesus. Note, [2.] These must be carefully laid up for him, devoted to his service and honour, must be always ready to us when we have occasion for them, as that is which is laid up at our gates, that, by our bringing forth much fruit, he may be glorified, John xv. 18. Note, [3.] There is a great variety of these pleasant fruits, with which our souls should be well stocked; we must have all sorts of them, grace for all occasions, new and old, as the good householder has in his treasury; not only the products of this year, but remains of the last, Matt. xiii. 52. We must not only have that ready to us, for the service of Christ, which we have heard, and learned, and experienced, lately, but must retain that which we have formerly gathered; nor must we content ourselves only with what we have laid up in store, in the days of old, but, as long as we have the power to bring them forth, must keep them; that our stock may increase, and we may be thoroughly furnished for every good work. Note, [4.] Those that truly love Christ will think all they have, even their most pleasant fruits, and what they have treasured up most carefully, too little to be bestowed upon him, and he is welcome to it all; if it were more and better, it should be at his service. It is all from him, and therefore it is fit it should be all for him.

CHAP. VIII.

The affections between Christ and his spouse are as strong and lively here, in this closing chapter of the song, as ever, and rather more so. 1. The spouse converses her importunity for a more intimate communion and fellowship with him, v. 1. 3. II. She charges the daughters of Jerusalem not to interrupt her communion with her Beloved; (v. 4.) and they, thereupon, admire her dependence on him, v. 5. She repeats her former proposal, and when she raises up by her prayers, (v. 5.) that he would by his grace confirm that blessed union with him, to which she was admitted, v. 6. 7. IV. She makes intercession for others with all the affection she has to herself, (v. 8, 9.) and pleases herself with the thoughts of her own interest in Christ, and his affection to her, v. 10. V. She owns herself his tenant for a vineyard she held of him at Baal-hamon, v. 11, 12. VI. The song concludes with an interchange of parting requests, and Christ charges his spouse that she should often let him hear from her; (v. 13.) and she begs of him that he would hasten his return to her, v. 14.

1. THAT thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despaired. 2. I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate; 3. His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me. 4. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please.

Here, 1. The spouse wishes for a constant intimacy and freedom with the Lord Jesus. She was already betrothed to him, but, the nuptials being not yet solemnized and published, (the bride, the Lamb's wife, will not be completely ready till his second coming,) she was obliged to be shy, and keep at some distance; she therefore wishes she may be taken for his sister, he having called her so, (ch. v. 1.) and that she might have the same chaste and innocent familiarity with him that a sister has with a brother, an own brother, that sucked the breasts of the same mother with her, who would therefore be exceeding tender of her, as Joseph was of his brother Benjamin. Some make this to be the prayer of the Old Testament church, that the church of Christ's incarnation, that the church might be the better acquainted with him, when, forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he should also himself likewise take part of the same, and not be ashamed to call them brethren. It is rather the wish of all believers for a more intimate communion with him, that they might receive the Spirit of sanctification, and so Christ might be as their Brother, that they might be as his brethren, which then they are, when by grace they are made partakers of a divine nature, and he that sanctifies, and they that are sanctified, are both of one, Heb. ii. 11, &c. It becomes brethren and sisters, the children of the same parents, that have been nursed at the same breast, to be very loving to, and tender of, one another; such a love the spouse desires might be between her and her Beloved, that she might call him brother.

2. She promises herself then the satisfaction of making a more open profession of her relation to him, than at present she could make; "When I should find thee without, any where, even before company, I would kiss thee, as a sister does her own brother, especially her little brother that is now sucking the breast of her mother;" for so some understand it; "I would use all the decent freedom with thee that could be, and should not be despaired for, as doing any thing unbecoming the modesty of my sex." The church, since Christ's
3. She promises to improve the opportunity she should then have for cultivating an acquaintance with him: (v. 2.) "I would lead thee, as my brother, by the arm, and hang upon thee; I would show thee all the house of my precious things, would bring thee into my mother's house, into the church, into the solemn assemblies, (ch. iii. 4.) into my clearest jewels, into the sanctuary and communion with Christ;" and "there thou wouldst instruct me;" (so some read it;) as brethren inform their sister of what they desire to be instructed in. Those that know Christ, shall be taught of him; and therefore we should desire communion with Christ, that we may receive instruction from him. He is come, that he might give us an understanding; or, "My mother would instruct me, when I have thee with me." It is the presence of Christ, in and with his church, that makes the word and ordinances instructive to his children, which shall all be taught of God.

4. She promises him to bid him welcome to the best she had; she would cause him to drink of her spiced wine, and the juice of her pomegranate, and bid him welcome to it, wishing it better, for his sake. The exercise of grace and the performance of duty are spiced wine to the Lord Jesus, very acceptable to him, as expressive of a grateful sense of his favours. Those that are pleased with Christ must study to be pleasing to him; and they will not find him hard to be pleased. He reckons hearty welcome his best entertainment; and if we have that, he will bring his entertainment along with him.

5. She doubts not but to experience his tender care of her, and affection to her; (v. 3.) that she should be supported by his power, and kept from fainting in the hardest services and sufferings; His left hand shall be under my head; and then I shall be comforted with his love; His right hand shall embrace me. Thus Christ laid his right hand upon John, when he was ready to die away, Rev. i. 17. See also Dan. x. 18. 18. It may be read as it is, ch. ii. 6. His left hand is under my head; for the words are the same in the original, and so it speaks an immediate answer to her prayer; she was answered with strength in his soul, Ps. cxix. 8. While she is following hard after Christ, his right hand sustains us; (Ps. lxxiii. 8.) underlayment are the everlasting arms.

6. She charges those about her to take heed of doing anything to interrupt the pleasing communion she now had with her Beloved, (v. 4.) as she had done before, when he thus strengthened and comforted her with his presence: (ch. ii. 7.) Let me charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, and regard not Zion, when thou goest up, or weep should you awake, my Love, until he waken? The church, our common mother, charges all her children, that they never do any thing to provoke Christ to withdraw, which we are very prone to do. Why should you put such an affront upon him? Why should you be such enemies to yourselves? We should thus reason with ourselves when we are tempted to do that which will grieve the Spirit.

5. Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple-tree: there thy mother brought thee forth; there she brought thee forth that bare thee. 6. Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. 7. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.

Here,

I. The spouse is very much admired by those about her. It comes in a parenthesis, but in it gospel-grace lies as plain, and as much above ground, as any where in this mystical song: Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? Some make those the words of the Bridegroom, expressing himself well pleased with her reliance on him, and resignation of herself to his guidance. They are rather the words of the daughters of Jerusalem, to whom she spake; (v. 4.) they see her, and bless her; the angels in heaven, and all her friends on earth, are the joyful spectators of her bliss. The Jewish church came up from the wilderness, supported by the divine power and favour, Deut. xxxiii. 10, 11. The Christian church was raised up from a low and desolate condition by the grace of Christ relied on, Gal. iv. 27. Particular believers are then amiable, nay, admirable, and divine grace is to be admired in them, when by the power of divine grace they are brought up from the wilderness, leaning with a holy confidence and complacency upon Jesus Christ their Beloved. This bespeaks the beauty of a soul, and the wonders of divine grace: 1. In the conversion of sinners. A sinful state is a wilderness, remote from communion with God, barren and dry, and in which there is no true comfort, it is a wandering wasting state; out of this wilderness we are concerned to come up, by true repentance, in the strength of the grace of Christ, supported by our Beloved, and carried in his arms. 2. In the consolation of saints. A soul convinced of sin, and truly humbled for it, is in a wilderness, quite at a loss; and there is no coming out of this wilderness, but leaning on Christ as our Beloved, by faith, and not leaning to our own reason, nor trusting to our righteousness or strength of our own as sufficient for us, but going forth, and going on, in the strength of the Lord God, and making mention of his righteousness, even his own, who is the Lord our Righteousness. 3. In the salvation of those that belong to Christ. We must go up from the wilderness of this world, having our conversation in heaven; and, at death, we must remove thither, leaning upon Christ; must live and die by faith in him; To me to live is Christ; and it is he that is Gideon in death.

II. She addresses herself to her Beloved.

1. She puts him in mind of the former experience which she and others had had of comfort and success in applying to him. (1.) For her own part; "I raised thee up under the apple-tree, I have many
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a time wrestled with thee by prayer, and have prevailed. When I was alone in the acts of devotion, retired in the orchard, under the apple-tree, (which Christ himself was compared to, (ch. ii. 3.) as Nathaniel under the fig-tree (John i. 48.) meditating and praying, then I raised thee up, to help me, and comfort me, as the disciples raised him up in the storm, saying, Master, carost thou not that we perish? (Mark iv. 38.) and the church, (Ps. xlv. 22.) "I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee." Not without experience have we had of Christ's readiness to yield to the importunities of our faith and prayer, should encourage us to continue instant in our addresses to him, to strive more earnestly, and not to faint; I sought the Lord, and he heard me, Ps. xxxiv. 4. (2.) Others also had had like experience of comfort in Christ, as it follows there, (Ps. xxxiv. 5.) They looked unto him, as well as I, and were enlightened. There thy father, saith the Lord, the forth, the uncircumcised, or believing souls, in whom Christ was formed, Gal. v. 15. They were in pain for the comfort of an interest in thee, and travailed in pain with great sorrow; so the word here signifies; but they brought thee forth, the pangs did not continue always, they that had travailed in convictions, at last brought forth in consumations, and the pain was forgotten for joy of the Saviour's birth; by this very similitude our Lord illustrates the joy which his disciples would have in his return to them, after a mournful separation for a time, John xvi. 21, 22. After the bitter pangs of repentance, many a one has had the blessed birth of comfort; why then may not I?

2. She begs of him that her union with him might be confirmed, and her communion with him continued, and made more intimate; (v. 6.) Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; (Isa. xxxvii. 3.) "Love in that, is this which all those desire above any thing, that know how much their happiness is bound up in the love of Christ. (2.) "Let me never lose the room I have in thy heart; let thy love to me be ensured, as that deed which is sealed not to be revoked, that cabinet which is sealed up, not to be robbed. Let nothing ever prevail either to separate me from thy love, or, by suspending the communion, to make me of no use to thee.

(3.) "Let me always be near and dear to thee, as the signet on thy right hand, not to be parted with, (Jer. xxxii. 24.) engraven upon the palms of thy hand, (Isa. xlix. 14.) loved with a peculiar love." (4.) "Be thou my High Priest; let my name be written on thy breast-plate, nearer thy heart, as the names of all the tribes were engraven like the engravings on a signet, in twelve precious stones on the breast-plate of Aaron, and also on two precious stones on the two shoulders or arms of the Ephod," Exod. xxxviii. 11, 12, 21. (5.) "Let thy power be engaged for me, is an evidence of thy love to me; let me be not only a seal upon thine heart, but a seal upon thine arm; let me be ever borne up in thine arms, and know it to my comfort." Some make these to be the words of Christ to his spouse, commending her to be ever mindful of him, and of his love to her; however, if we desire and expect that Christ should set us as a seal on his heart, surely he will set him as a seal on ours.

3. To enforce this petition, she pleads the power of love, or her love to him, which constrained her to be thus pressing for the tokens of his love to her.

(1.) Love is a violent vigorous passion. [1.] It is strong as death; the pains of a disappointed lover are like the pains of death; nay, the pains of death are nothing in comparison of the agonies of the beloved Object. Christ's love to us was strong as death; for it brake through death itself; he loved us, and gave himself for us. The love of true believers to Christ is strong as death, for it makes them dead to every thing else; it even parts between soul and body, while the soul, upon the wings of devout affections, soars up to heaven, and even forgets that it is yet clothed and clogged with flesh. Paul, in a rapture of this love, knew not whether he was in the body, or out of the body. By it a believer is crucified to the world. [2.] Jealousy is cruel as the grave, which swallows up and devours all; those who truly love Christ are jealous of every thing that would draw them from him, and especially jealous of themselves, lest they should do any thing to provoke him to withdraw from them, and rather than so do, would pull out a right eye and cut off a right hand, than which what can be more cruel? Weak and trembling saints, who conceive a jealousy of Christ, doubting of his love to them, that and that it is not necessary to them like the grave, never wastes the spirits more; but it is an evidence of the strength of their love to him. [3.] The coals thereof, its lamps, and flames, and beams, are very strong, and burn with incredible fury and irresistibl force, as the coals of fire that have a most vehement flame, a flame of the Lord, (so some read it,) a powerful piercing flame, as the lightning, Ps. xxxix. 7. Holy love is a fire that begets a vehement flame in the soul, and consumes the dross and chaff that are in it, melts it down like wax into a new form, and carries it upward as the sparks toward God and heaven.

(2.) Love is a valiant and victorious passion. Holy love is so; the reigning love of God in the soul is constant and firm, and will not be drawn off from him, either by fair means or foul, by life or death, Rom. viii. 38.

[6.] In death, and all its terrors, will not frighten a believer from loving Christ; Many waters, though they will quench fire, cannot quench this love, no, nor the floods drawn it; (v. 7.) the noise of these waters will strike no terror upon it let them do their worst, Christ shall still be the Best-beloved. The overflowing of these waters will strike no damp upon it, but it will enable a man to rejoice in tribulation; Though he slay me, I will love him, and trust in him. No waters could quench this love, nor any thing; it waded through the greatest difficulties, even seas of blood. Love sat king upon the floods; let nothing then abate our love to him.

[2.] Life, and all its comforts, will not entice a believer from loving Christ; If a man could hire him with all the substance of his house, to take his love off from Christ, and set it upon the world and the flesh again, he would reject the proposal with the utmost disdain; as Christ, when the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them, were offered him, to buy him off from his undertaking, said, Get thee hence, Satan; it would utterly be condemned; offer those things to those that know no better. Love will enable us to repel, and triumph over, temptations from the smiles of the world, as much as from its frowns. Some give this sense of it; If a man would give all the substance of his house to Christ, as an equivalent instead of love, to excuse it, it

8. We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts: what shall we do for our sister, in the day when she shall be spoken for? 9. If she be a wall, we will build upon her
a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar. 10. I am a wall, and my breasts like towers; then was I in his eyes as one that found favour. 11. Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon: he let out the vineyard unto keepers: every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver. 12. My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.

Christ and his spouse having sufficiently confirmed their love to each other, and agreed it to be on both sides strong as death, and inviolable, they are here, in these verses, like a loving husband and his wife, consulting together about their affairs, and considering what they should do. Yoke-fellows, having laid their hearts together, to contrive about their relations, and about their estates; and, accordingly, this happy pair are here advising with one another about a sister, and a vineyard.

They shall be the keepers of their sister, their little sister, and the disposing of her. 1. The spouse proposes her case with a compassionate concern; (v. 8.) We have a little sister, and she has no breasts; she is not grown up to maturity; what shall we do for this little sister of ours in the day that she shall be spoken for, so as that we may do well for her? (1) This may be understood as spoken by the Jewish church concerning the Gentile world. God had been very merciful to the Jewish church; yet she was so weak, so poor, so sick, and so sickly, that she was not able to carry on her own business. God had endowed the church with the word of God, and with the ordinances of the Lord; and she was richly endowed, but what shall become of the poor Gentiles, the barren that has not borne, and the desolate? Isa. liv. 1. Their condition (say the pious Jews) is very deplorable and forlorn: they are sisters, children of the same fathers, God and Adam, but they are little, because not dignified with the knowledge of God; they have no breasts, no divine revelation, no scriptures, no ministers, no breasts of consolation drawn out to them, whereby they might grow in grace, so that they could minister to the names of the Gentiles, and draw out to them the covenants of promise; no breasts of instruction themselves to draw out to their children to nourish them, (1 Pet. ii. 2.) What shall we do for them? We can but pity them, and pray for them. Lord, what wilt thou do for them? The saints, in Solomon's time, might know, from David's psalms, that God had mercy in store for them, and they begged it might be hastened to them. Now the tables are turned, the Gentiles are betrothed to Christ, and ought to return the kindness by an equal concern for the bringing in of the Jews again, our eldest sister, that once had breasts, but now has none. If we take it in this sense, the unbelieving posterity of these pious Jews contradicted this prayer of their fathers; for when the day came that the Gentiles should be spoken for, and courted to Christ, instead of considering what to do for them, they plotted to do all they could against them, which filled up the measure of their iniquity; 1 Thess. ii. 16. Or, (2.) It may be applied to any other that belong to the election of grace, but are yet uncalled; they are remotely related to Christ and his church, and sisters to them both; other sheep that are not of this fold, John x. 15. Acts xviii. 10. They have no breasts, none yet fashioned, (Ezek. xvi. 7.) no affection to Christ, no principle of grace. The day will come when they shall be spoken for; when the chosen shall be called, shall be courted for Christ, by the ministers, the friends of the Bridegroom. A blessed day it will be, a day of visitation! What shall we do, in that day, to promote the match, to conquer their coryness, and persuade them to consent to Christ, and present themselves chaste virgins to him? Nete, Those that through grace are brought to Christ themselves, shall contrive what they can, or shall they do as others; they shall help others to him, to carry on the great design of this gospel, to open the door to espouse souls to Christ, and convert sinners to him from whom they have revolted.

2. Christ soon determines what to do in this case, and his spouse agrees with him in it; (v. 9.) If she be a wall, if the good work be once begun with the Gentiles, with the souls that are to be called in, if the little sister, when she shall be spoken for by the gospel, will but receive the word, and build herself a church, Christian foundation, and frame her dealings to turn to the Lord, as the wall is in order; I am the house, we will build upon her a palace of silver, or build her up into such a palace; we will carry on the good work that is begun, till the wall becomes a palace, the wall of stone a palace of silver; which goes beyond the boast of Augustus Caesar, that what he found brick he left marble. This little sister, when once she is joined to the Lord, shall be made to grow into a holy temple, a habitation of God through the Spirit, in whose temple we all are the temple.

If she be a door, when this palace comes to be finished, and the doors of this wall set up, which was the last thing done, (Neh. vii. 1.) then we will enclose her with boards of cedar, we will carefully and effectually protect her, that she shall receive no damage. We will do it; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, all concur in contriving, carrying on, and crowning, the blessed work when the time comes. Whatever is wanting shall be set in order, and the work of faith shall be fulfilled. It is a difficult matter for the owen of a wall to build another, or for a wall to build another wall, or for my breasts to build another wall, or my breasts to build another wall of breasts, and my breasts like towers. This she speaks, not as upbraiding her little sister that had no breasts, but comforting herself concerning her, that he who had made her what she is, who had built her up upon herself, and made her to grow up to maturity, could, and would do the same kindness for those whose case she bore upon her heart; Then was I in his eyes as one that found favour. See, (1) What she values herself upon, her having found favour in the eyes of Jesus Christ; those are happy, truly happy, and for ever so, that have the favour of God, and are accepted of him. (2) How she ascribes the good work of God in her to the good will of God toward her; "He has made me a wall, and my breasts as towers, and then in that instance more than in any thing, I experienced his love to me. Hail, thou that art highly favoured, for in thee Christ is formed." (3) What he assumes of God takes in the work of his own hands. When we are made as a wall, as a brazen wall, (Jer. i. 18.—xv. 20.) that stands firm against the blast of the terrible ones, (Isa. xxv. 4.) then God takes delight in us to do good. (4) With what joy and triumph we ought to speak of God's grace towards us, and with what satisfaction we should look back upon the special times and seasons when we were in his eyes as those that find favour; these were days never to be forgotten.

II. They are here consulting about a vineyard.
they had in the country, the church of Christ on earth, considered under the notion of a vineyard; (v. 12.) Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-ha-
mon, had a kingdom in the possession of a multi-
tude, a numerous people. As he was a type of
Christ, so his vineyard was a type of the church
of Christ. Our Saviour has given us a key to these
verses in the parable of the vineyard let out to un-
thankful husbandmen, Matth. xxi. 33. The bargain
was, that every one of the tenants having so much
of the vineyard assigned to him, as would bear a
twenty thousand, he was to pay the annual rent of a
thousand pieces of silver; for we read, (Isa. vii.
25.) that in a fruitful soil there were a thousand
vines at a thousand silverlings. Observe,
1. Christ's church is his vineyard, a pleasant and
peculiar place, privileged with many honours; he
delights to walk in it, as a man in his vineyard, and
is pleased with its fruits.
2. He has intrusted each of us with this vineyard,
as keepers of it; the privileges of the church are
that good thing which he has committed to us, to
be kept as a sacred trust; the service of the church
is to be our business, according as our capacity is;
Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. Adam, in
innocency, was to dress the garden, and to keep it.
3. He expects rent from those that are employed
in his vineyard, and intrusted with it. He comes,
seeking fruit, and requires gospel-duty of all those
who are his vineyard's keepers. Every one of what
rank or degree soever, must bring glory and honour
to Christ, and do some service to the interest of
his kingdom in the world, in consideration of what
benefit and advantage they enjoy by their share of
the privileges of the vineyard.
4. Though Christ has let out his vineyard to keep-
ers, yet still it is his, and he has his eye always upon
it for good; for if he did not watch over it night
and day (v. 11.) the vineyard, to whom he has let it out, would keep it but in vain, Ps.
cxxvii. 1. Some take these for Christ's words; (v
12.) My vineyard, which is mine, is before me; and they observe how he dwells upon his propriety in
it; It is my vineyard, which is mine; so dear is his
work to him, it is his own in the world, (John
xvi. 1.) and therefore he will always have it under
his protection; it is his own, and he will look after it.
5. He who enjoys the privileges of the vineyard,
must have them always before her; the
keeping of the vineyard requires constant care and
diligence. They are rather the words of the spouse;
My vineyard, which is mine, is before me. She had
adorned her fault and folly in not keeping her
own vineyard, (ch. i. 6.) but now she resolves to
改革. Our hearts are our vineyards, which we
must keep with all diligence; and therefore we
must have a watchful jealous eye upon them at all
times.
6. Our great care must be to pay our rent for
what we hold of Christ's vineyard, and to see that
we do not go behindhand, nor disappoint the mes-
sengers he sends to receive the fruits; (Matt. xxi.
34.) Thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and
shall have. The main of the profits belong to
Christ; and him and his praise all our fruits must be
dedicated to.
7. If we be careful to give Christ the praise of
our church-privileges, we may then take to our-
ourselves the comfort and benefit of them. If the Own-
er of the vineyard has had his due, the keepers of
it shall be well paid for their care and pains; they
shall have two hundred, which sum, no doubt, was
looked upon as good profit. They that work for
Christ are working for themselves, and shall be
unspeakable gainers by it.

13. Thou that dwellest in the gardens,

the companions hearken to thy voice: cause
me to hear it. 14. Make haste, my beloved, and
be thou like to a roe or to a young hart
upon the mountains of spices.

Christ and his spouse are here parting for awhile;
they must stay below in the gardens on earth, where she has work to do for him, he must remove to the
mountains of spices in heaven, where he has busi-
tness to attend for her, as an Advocate with the Fa-
ther. Now observe with what mutual endearments
they part:
1. If he desires to hear often from her; she is ready
at her pen, she must be sure to write to him, she
knows how to direct it; (v. 13.) "Thou that, for
the present, dwellest in the gardens, dressing and
keeping them till thou remove from the garden
below to the paradise above; thou, O believer,
whenever thou art, that dwellest in the garden,
of solemn ordinances, in the gardens of church-
fellowship and communion, the companions are so
happy as to hear thy voice, cause me to hear it too."

Observe, (1.) Christ's friends should keep a good
correspondence one with another, and, as dear com-
panions, speak often to one another, (Mal. iii. 16.)
and hearken to one another's voice; they should
edify, encourage, and respect, one another. They
are companions in the kingdom and patience of
Christ, and therefore, as fellow-travellers, should
keep up mutual freedom, and not be shy of, or
strange to, one another. The communion of saints
is an article of our covenant, as well as an article
of our creed; to exhort one another daily, and be glad
to be exhorted one by another. Hearken to the
voice of the church, as far as it agrees with the
voice of Christ; his companions will do so.

(2.) In the midst of our communion with one
another, we must not neglect our communion with
Christ, but let him see our countenance, and hear
our voice; he here bespeaks it; "The companions
that dwellest in the gardens, it is a pleasure to them;
cause me to hear it. Thou makest thy complaints to them
when any thing grieves thee; why dost thou not
bring them to me, and let me hear them? Thou
art free with them; be as free with me, pour out
thy heart to me." Thus Christ, when he left his
disciples, ordered them to send to him upon every
occasion; Ask, and ye shall receive. Note, Christ
not only accepts and answers, but even courts, his
people's prayers, not reckoning them a trouble to
him, but it is a comfort and sweet to him. He
causes him to hear our prayers, when we not only
pray, but wrestle and strive in prayer. He loves to
be pressing importuned, which is not the man-
ner of men. Some read it, "Cause me to be heard;
thou hast often an opportunity of speaking to thy
companions, and they hearken to what thou sayest;
speak of me to them, let my name be heard among
them, let me be the subject of thy discourse." (v
14.) One word with Christ; (which the reasoner and
Usher used to say,) "before you part." No subject is more be-
coming, or should be more pleasing.

2. She desires his speedy return to her; (v. 14.)
Make haste my Beloved, to come again, and re-
ceive me to thyself; be thou like a roe, or a young
hart, upon the mountains of spices; let no time be
lost; it is pleasant dwelling here in the gardens, but
to depart and be with thee is far better; that there-
fore it is to him, he has and wants. Even so, come,
Lord Jesus, come quickly. Observe,
(1.) Though Jesus Christ be now retired, he will
return. The heavens, those high mountains of sweet
spices must contain him, till the times of refreshing
shall come; and those times will come, when every
eye shall see him, in all the pomp and power of the
upper and better world; the mystery of God being
finished, and the mystical body completed.

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(2.) True believers, as they are looking for, so they are hastening to, the coming of that day of the Lord; not that they would have him make more haste than good speed, but that the intermediate counsels may all be fulfilled, and then that the end may come—the sooner the better. Not that they think him slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but thus they express the strength of their affections to him, and the vastness of their expectations from him when he comes again.

(3.) Those only that can in sincerity call Christ their Beloved, their Best-beloved, can, upon good grounds, desire him to hasten his second coming. As for those whose hearts go a whoring after the world, and who set their affections on the things of the earth, they cannot love his appearing, but dread it rather, because then the earth, and all the things of it, which they have chosen for their portion, will be burnt up: but they that truly love Christ, long for his second coming, because it will be the crown both of his glory and their bliss.

(4.) The comfort and satisfaction which we sometimes have in communion with God in grace here, should make us breathe the more earnestly after the immediate vision, and complete fruition, of him in the kingdom of glory. The spouse, after an en-}

dearing conference with her Beloved, finding it must break off, concludes with this affectionate request for the perfecting and perpetuating of this happiness in the future state. The clusters of grapes, that meet us in this wilderness, should make us long for the full vintage in Canaan. If a day in his courts be so sweet, what then will an eternity within the vail be! If this be heaven, O that I were there!

(5.) It is good to conclude our devotions with a joyful expectation of the glory to be revealed, and holy humble breathings towards it. We should not part but with the prospect of meeting again. It is good to conclude every sabbath with thoughts of the everlasting sabbath, which shall have no night at the end of it, nor any week-day to come after. It is good to conclude every sacrament with thoughts of the everlasting feast, when we shall sit down with Christ at his table in his kingdom, to rise no more, and drink of the wine new there; and to break-up every religious assembly, in hopes of the general assembly of the church of the first-born, when time and days shall be no more. Let the blessed Jesus hasten that blessed day. Why are his chariot wheels so long a coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariots?

END OF VOLUME THIRD.