

A LIFTING UP FOR THE DOWNCAST

by William Bridge

Bridge's sermons on Psalm 42 addressing the discouraged and downcast believer, showing why the soul may be cast down and how it may be lifted up through faith. He emphasizes that action and practice in the Christian life matter far more than mere intellectual knowledge of truth.

15 Chapters

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00.1. A Lifting Up for the Downcast

A Lifting Up for the Downcast by William Bridge IN CASE OF 1.—GREAT SINS. 2.—WEAKNESS OF GRACE. 3.—MISCARRIAGE OF DUTIES. 4.—WANT OF ASSURANCE. 5.—AFFLICTION.

6.—TEMPTATION. 7—DESERTION. 8.—UNSERVICE* ABLENESS. 9.—DISCOURAGEMENTS FROM THE CONDITION ITSELF. IN THIRTEEN SERMONS, PREACHED AT STEPNEY, A.D. 1648. The text of this module was taken from a PDF created by Monergism ©For more free books like this, and other theological literature, please visit www.monergism.com

00.3. TO THE READER.

TO THE READER.

Good Reader, The following Sermons on Psalms 42 : I have perused, and find that they are the same which I preached divers years since, being then taken by a good pen as they fell in preaching. They have been long buried in silence, and should have rested in their grave, had not the importunity of some, who heard them preached, raised them from that death. Mine own notes were not legible enough for the press: in answer therefore to their desires, I have corrected these: some things I have altered, some things added, and some repetitions (fit enough for the pulpit) I have filed off; what is wanting let thy goodness supply. I have also joined with them, some other Sermons, of more doctrinal concernment, these being mostly practical, that so thy mind and heart may be at once exercised: wherein I have rather applied myself to the instructive part of preaching, than to scholastical disputation. For I know the Universities have able and faithful men, more fit for that work. Neither have I undertaken any English adversary; and if I have trodden upon any man's toes, I hope he will excuse me, for I can say truly, Sir, I saw you not. And if any man shall say to me, as David's brother Eliab spake to him, 1 Samuel 17:29, "I know thy pride, and malice of thine heart, that thou art come down to see the battle might answer, as David did, "Is there not a cause?" When strange opinions and errors are daily published, is there not a cause, that every man, who loves the truth, should bear his testimony for it? In performance therefore of mine own duty, and for thine establishment, I have spoken something to many truths, which are now questioned. Hold fast what thou hast, lest another take thy crown. "And the Lord Jesus Christ and our God, even the Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, comfort thine heart, and stablish thee in every word, and good work."

Thine in the service of the gospel,

William Bridge

01. SERMON I. - THE GOOD MAN'S PEACE.

SERMON I. - THE GOOD MAN'S PEACE.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God, for I will yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God."—Psalms 42:11. In these words ye read of the sad discouragements of a gracious spirit, with those remedies that be applied and used against them. The discouragements are expressed in two words, under two similitudes: cast-down, disquieted. As a man is bowed or cast down under the weight of some heavy burden, so art thou cast down, O my soul, says David: and as the sea in the time of a storm is much disquieted, so art thou also disquieted within me, O my soul. The remedies that he useth against these discouragements are two: self-reprehension and self-admonition. First, He doth chide himself for his diffidence and distrust in God: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me?" He chides and rebukes himself for it. Secondly, He doth admonish and call upon himself for to wait upon and hope in God: "Hope thou in God." Why? I. Because I shall yet be delivered: "For I shall yet praise him." II. Because salvation belongs unto him alone: "He is the health of my countenance," or, "the salvation of my countenance." III. Because he is in covenant with me, and I with him; he is my God: "The health of my countenance, and my God." '

I begin with the former part of this verse, wherein you may observe these three things:

First, that there is an inward peace and quietude of soul, which the saints and people of God ordinarily are endued with. This is implied.

Secondly, it is possible that this peace may be interrupted so far as Gods people may be much discouraged, cast down and disquieted.

Thirdly, that the saints and people of God have no reason for their discouragements whatever their condition be. Why art thou cast down, and why art thou thus disquieted within me? Thou hast no reason for it. The latter of these being the main, is that indeed which I specially aim at; but because the two former will give the better rise unto this last, and they are also profitable for us to consider, I shall take them in their order, and speak only unto the first at this time, which is this:

There is an inward peace and quietude of soul which the saints and people of God ordinarily are endued with.

Therefore David says here, "Why art thou cast down, and why art thou disquieted within me?" It seems, then, that this was not his ordinary temper, his pulse did not always beat thus high in this way of discouragement; but ordinarily he had peace and quiet within. So that I say, there is an inward peace and quietness of soul, which the saints and people of God ordinarily are endued withal. Ordinarily they are arrayed in white, so they are brought in Revelation 7:13-14. What are these which are arrayed in white robes? At the 13th verse, * They are such as have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," verse 14. This book of the Revelation doth attend much unto the Jewish customs, and among the Jews they had their mourning and their

rejoicing garment. The mourning garment was a black garment and therefore when a man is brought in, in a mourning way, he is brought in in a black garment, as ye find in the next Psalm, the 43rd, and the 2nd verse, "Why go ye in mourning? The word ■■■ signifies black. "Why go ye in black, because of the oppression of the enemy" So that the mourning garment was a black garment; the black garment was the mourning garment. And the white garment was the rejoicing garment; therefore, Ecclesiastes 9:8, it is said, "Let thy garments be always white, and let thy head lack no ointment." Upon which account the nobles amongst the Hebrews were called ■■■■■, because they were clothed with white raiment. Ecclesiastes 10:17, "Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles;" Hebrew, ■■-■■■■■ the son of princes, or of those that are in white. I confess this phrase doth sometimes note the purity and holiness of the person, so Revelation 3:4, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy." But ordinarily it notes the joyfulness and comfortableness of our state; so in Revelation 7, the saints are brought in, in white, not only because of their purity and cleanness, but because of their rejoicing. I say then ordinarily the saints and people of God go in white, they have a peace and a rest within. "Great peace have they that love thy law (says the Psalmist), and nothing shall offend them." Romans 2:10, "But glory, honour and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the gentile." Let him be what he will be, if he be godly, if he work that which is good, glory, honour and peace shall be upon him; not only an outward, but an inward peace he shall have

.And, indeed, how can it be otherwise? For the saints and people of God do walk with God, they converse with God, they do acquaint themselves with God. Now if ye look into Job 22:21, ye shall find that this acquaintance bringeth rest and peace: "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace." The saints and people of God are, as I may so speak, of God's special acquaintance, and so they have peace, for they do walk with God, and have communion with him. They have communion with the Father, and he is the God of all consolation; they have communion and fellowship with the Son, and he is the Prince of Peace; they have communion and fellowship with the Spirit, and he is the Comforter: they have communion with the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit, in and by the gospel; and that is the word of peace, the gospel of peace. How can it therefore be, but that the saints and people of God ordinarily should have peace within? But to make out this more fully unto you. Consider, I pray, how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, with whom the saints and people of God have communion and fellowship, are engaged for their peace. 1. The Father is engaged to give peace unto them. He is engaged by his prerogative, by his commandment, by his promise, by Christ's purchase and by the saints' chastisements. He is engaged by his prerogative. Kings and princes will stand, ye know, for their prerogatives. And this is the great prerogative of God the Father, to give peace, inward peace. "I create the fruits of the lips, peace, peace," Isaiah 57:19. And he is called, the God of peace; the God of consolation: not the God of indignation, not the God of war, but the God of peace. This is the great prerogative of God the Father, to give peace unto his people

He is engaged also, by virtue of his commandment. And therefore if ye look into Isaiah 40:1-2, ye shall find, that he commands the prophets and ministers, to preach comfort, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God (verse 1); Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Suppose a man's affliction, or temptation, be very great or much: he hath

2. But now proceed a little, and ye shall see, that as the Father is engaged, so the Son also is engaged to give peace,' inward peace, and quietude of soul unto his servants.

He is engaged by those qualifications and endowments that he received from God his Father, for this end and purpose. Isaiah 61, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me (says he) and he hath anointed me," why? u that I might comfort those that mourn." That is one end. But I pray look into Isaiah 1., and consider the 4th verse, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." They are plainly the words of Christ, as will appear to you, if you read but the following words: "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned I away the back; I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." So that these are the words of Christ. Well, what doth Christ say here? He tells us, that he hath received the tongue of the learned, to comfort those that are distressed and troubled in conscience, for to help poor wearied souls. Why doth he say, the tongue of the learned? "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned." All men desire to hear the learned: and it is the greatest piece of learning in the world, to speak a word in due season by way of comfort to those that are weary; this is the greatest piece of ministerial learning, and saith Christ, "He hath given me the tongue of the learned." Well, but all learned men have not wisdom to speak in season. Mark what follows. "He hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." But hath Jesus Christ such skill at this work, in comforting those that are troubled? Yes, "He wakeneth morning by morning." As a master is early up in the morning to teach his scholars, so hath God the Father been teaching of Christ from all eternity this great skill: "Morning by morning he wakeneth, morning by morning he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." This is the piece of learnings says Christ, which I have been learning morning by morning of my Father from eternity, and this is that great learning which he had attained unto. So that in regard of this endowment which he hath received from the Father, he is engaged to give peace unto his people; for he hath received the tongue of the learned for this end and purpose, that he might speak a word in season to them that are weary.

He is engaged also, by his own disposition; his sweet, loving, and tender disposition. He is a lion, indeed, of the tribe of Judah, but not that roaring lion seeking to devour. He is a king, indeed, but he comes meekly, riding upon an ass's colt. "He doth not lift up his voice in the streets." When our Lord and Saviour Christ left the world, he said unto his disciples, "My peace I give unto you; my peace I leave with you: not as the world gives peace, but my peace I give unto you," John 14:27. And as soon as ever Christ rose from the dead again, and met with his disciples, what doth he say unto them? When they were all met together, "Peace be unto you," John 20:19. As it was his last words when he left them, so it is the first word that now he useth when he seeth them again. But, O Lord, we have sinned greatly since we saw thee. Be it so, yet "peace be unto you." But, O Lord, here is Peter among us, that hath denied thee since thou sawest us. Be it so, I know it very well, yet "Peace be unto." Peace when he went away, and peace when he came again: this is his language and this is his disposition still. Thus he is engaged.

Yea, he is engaged by office to give peace unto his people. Ye know the apostle calls him our great High Priest. It was the work of the high priest in the Old Testament, to bless the people; and when he did bless the people, what did he say, but, "The Lord bless ye, and give ye peace?" Now

then, if Jesus Christ be our great High Priest, and it be the office of the high priest to bless, and to give peace, then Christ, by virtue of his office also, is engaged to give peace unto his people. Take all these three together; Christ the second Person is engaged: by his endowments he received from the Father; by his own disposition; by his office; and it appears plainly, that there is a great engagement upon Jesus Christ to give peace unto his servants.

3. As the Father and the Son are engaged to give peace and quietude unto the saints and people of God, so also the Spirit, the Holy Ghost is engaged to give peace unto them. For, as I may so speak with reverence, he is, as it were, the great executor of Jesus Christ. When Christ died, he made his will, and gave a legacy to his disciples, "My peace I give unto you and then he sent the Comforter, the Spirit from heaven on purpose to beget peace within their souls.

Yea, the Holy Ghost is not only this executor, to see this will of Christ fulfilled, but he is, as it were, our advocate. Indeed we have but one advocate, that is Christ: but I say, we have, as it were, two advocates; one in heaven above, and one in our bosom. When a man sins, a godly man sins, Satan accuses him in heaven: and therefore says John, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," 1 John 1:2. But if a godly man sin, Satan doth also accuse him to himself. And therefore says the apostle, "We have the Spirit within us, making intercession." And says our Saviour Christ, "I will send another Comforter," John 14:16; so ye read it; but it is the same word that is translated Advocate; "I will send you another Advocate."* Yea, the Spirit of the Lord is our witness also; "For the Spirit shall bear witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God." Now when the Spirit bears witness with a man's spirit, that he is a child of God, then he hath peace and quiet. So that, if you consider all these engagements, the Father engaged, the Son engaged, the Holy Ghost engaged, for the peace and quiet of God's children, must you not needs conclude this point and doctrine, and say, Surely, there is an inward peace and quietness of soul, which ordinarily God's people are endued withal? But our experience seems to speak the contrary; for there are many of God's own people, that have not peace and quiet within them; but are full of doubts and fears about their everlasting condition. The second doctrine therefore speaks to that, is it possible this peace may be interrupted. But some have never had peace all their days. Oh, says one, I have been a long while afflicted, troubled: two, four, six years, and never yet had peace and quiet within me. Either therefore this doctrine is not true, or else I am not godly.

All that may be which you speak of, and yet this doctrine may be true. General rules have always some exceptions. Though the garment that the saints do ordinarily wear, be white, yet here and there some do go in black, and go so a great while. But that there may be no stumbling concerning this matter, I shall desire you to consider with me, some few distinctions.

1. Ye must know, that there is a fundamental peace, which the saints and people of God have; and there is an additional peace. A fundamental peace, which does naturally arise and flow from their justification: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God," Romans 5 : And then there is an additional peace, which arises from the sense of their justification. Possibly a child of God may for a long time lose the latter, but the former he shall never lose. As a woman that hath a great jointure, goes abroad some journey, and meets with thieves, and they take away all the money that she hath about her; but yet, says she, though they have taken away my spending money, they cannot take away my jointure, I have not lost my jointure. So now the saints sometimes, may lose their spending money, they may lose the peace that arises from the sense of their justification; but

as for the peace that arises and issues from their justification itself, the first peace, that they shall never lose. Peace is the churches jointure, and that peace they shall never lose.

2. Ye must know, that there is a great difference between peace, comfort and joy. A man may have peace that hath no comfort; a man may have comfort that hath no joy: one is beyond the other, one a degree above the other. As now, it may be day-light, and yet the sun may not shine forth; the sun may shine forth, and yet not noon-day. Possibly a man may have peace, and yet not much comfort, only stayed upon God; possibly a man may have comfort, and yet not much joy. But now, many a poor soul thinks, because he hath no joy, therefore he hath no comfort; and because he hath not much comfort, therefore no peace. Labour to know the difference between these.

3. Ye must know, that there is a peace which lies in opposition to what one hath been; and a peace, that is in opposition to what one would be. A godly man, a weak Christian, when he considers what he would Be, and what he would have, he hath no rest nor quiet: but now, come unto the same man, and say thus, you remember what a wicked life once you led; ye were a drunkard, or ye were a wanton: what say ye would ye be in that condition again? Oh no, saith he then, I would not be in that condition for all the world. Here now the soul hath peace in opposition to what it hath been, though it hath not peace and quiet in opposition to what it would be.

4. Ye must know, that there is a secret, dormant peace; and there is an awakened and apparent peace: peace in the seed, and peace in the flower. As it is with many a wicked man, for the present he hath great comfort; but when affliction comes, and the day of death comes, then he hath trouble; trouble in regard of sin; why? the sin and guilt was in his heart before, only it lay sleeping there, but now it is risen. So with a godly man in regard of his peace: possibly for the present, he may be full of trouble; but when affliction comes, and the hour of death comes, then he hath peace and comfort: why, it was there before, it was at the bottom, only he was not aware of it, he did not know of it. For now, ask such a weak Christian who is thus full of fear for the present, Ye see there is a drunkard, a swearer, a wanton, would you be in his condition? would you be contented to be in that man's condition? Oh, no, says he; I would not be in such a condition for all the world. And why doth he say so, but because there is a peace and quietude at the bottom, although he be not aware of it? It is true the saints grieve, but then dolent et de dolore gaudent; they rejoice that they can grieve: they are troubled for sin; and they have rest and quiet in this, that they can be troubled for their sin: they have no peace in their sin; but they have peace in this, that they can have no peace in their sin. For say now unto them, are ye troubled that ye are troubled; you are in some measure grieved for sin; and are ye troubled that ye are grieved? No, will they say, I am glad that I am grieved for sin; and the Lord knows, it is my trouble that I can be grieved no more; I have quiet and peace in that I am troubled. Some have peace in the direct act, and some have peace in the reflex act, some have it more at the first hand, and some have it more at the second hand. But consider all these distinctions, and you will find, that there is no godly man, but more or less in some of these respects, he may be said to have peace within. But suppose it be so, what is the issue of this doctrine? what doth it tend and lead unto? The issue is thus much. Then, behold, what a blessed condition the saints and people of God are in! Is it not a blessed thing to have peace within; to have quiet, peace and rest within? If ye have peace within, though ye want peace without, you will be able to bear all your burdens, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmities," Proverbs 18:14. But a wounded spirit who can bear? Some bear agues and fevers; some bear stones and collicks, rackings and tormentings; but a wounded spirit who can bear? Oh,

but "the spirit of a man will sustain his infirmities," if he have peace within; if he be heart-whole, as they say, if he have peace within, then will he be able to bear all his burdens. Ye see into what times we are now fallen; we cannot promise ourselves peace for a day together; suddenly a cloud may arise, in a night, and all our comforts laid in the dark; how good a thing is it then to have peace within, to have rest and quiet within! If I have peace within, I can relieve myself here against all calamity. What though I have trouble from my friends? yet I have peace within: what though I am thus reproached? yet I have peace within; I am wet indeed, my garment is wet; but I am not wet to the skin, I am dry within, I have peace within. "Blessed (says our Saviour) are those that mourn, for they shall be comforted," Matthew 5 :

4. Are those blessed for the present that shall be comforted? How blessed are those then that are comforted, and that have peace and quiet already. This doctrine looks wishly, both upon the ungodly, and upon the godly. It looked once so wishly upon a great man in Germany, that it was the beginning of his conversion and turning to God: I mean Galeacius Carracciolus. He was a papist, a profane person; and coming occasionally to hear Peter Martyr preach, he heard this expression or similitude, when ye see men at a distance skipping, leaping and dancing, ye think the men are mad; but when ye draw near to them, hear what music they have, then ye do not wonder; but ye rather wonder at yourselves that ye should wonder at them. So, said Peter Martyr, when ye look upon the godly at a distance, and see them running after ordinances, and frequenting the means and rejoicing in the ways of God, you think the people are mad, and ye say they are mad; but if you draw near to a godly course, and perceive what music these people have within, you say not they are mad, but you rather wonder at yourselves, that you should wonder at them. Hereupon the Marquess hearing this similitude, was so stricken withal, that he began to look into his condition, and it was the first occasion of his conversion. I say no more. You that are ungodly, ye hear what music the saints have within, peace and quiet within, ordinarily, though here and there, there may be some exception; yet ordinarily, what music they have within! Oh, who would not be godly! But this doctrine also, looks wishly upon you that are godly. And it calls for your thankfulness, that you should praise the Lord for the peace and quiet that you have. You will praise God for your outward peace, especially if it be a peace after war, especially if the war were a civil war, and ye have felt the smart of it, then ye will praise God for peace. You that are godly, and have peace, have had a war within, a civil war within your own bosoms, and ye have felt the smart of trouble of conscience, and now ye have peace; and will ye not be thankful? will ye not praise the Lord, that hath given you this peace and rest?

I confess indeed, it is the duty of all those that have rest, and peace and quiet within, to be very thankful; but there is one thing that hinders my thankfulness, that I cannot praise the Lord for the peace and quiet that I have, and that is, I fear my peace is not right; for there are many that have a counterfeit and a false peace, and I fear that my peace is such, and therefore I cannot praise the Lord, or be thankful for it.

I grant ye, there is a false and counterfeit peace, that wicked men have, even an inward peace. And if ye look into Deuteronomy 29:19, ye may read as much: "And it come to pass when he heareth the words of this curse, that he blesseth himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." So that a man may be in a most cursed way, adding drunkenness to thirst, and yet he may have peace, and say in his heart, it shall go well with me. Questionless, there is a peace of security; there is a peace and a

rest of sleep, as well as of health. A man that is wounded and full of aches and pains, feels them not when he is asleep; but the reason why he doth not feel them, is not because of his health, but because he is asleep. So a man may be freed from the trouble of aches and pains within, because he is asleep, as well as because he is in health. But there is also a peace that is the fruit of the Holy Ghost; as ye read in Galatians 5; "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace." Questionless, there is a false and a true peace. But shall I say, that all my money is counterfeit, because there is counterfeit gold abroad? But to help a little in this; I will speak something of the difference of true and false peace; and yet very briefly, thus:

True saving peace is the child of grace, and the mother of grace. There is a peace that arises from the apprehension of God's common goodness; which is common peace. And there is a special peace, that arises from the apprehension of God's special favour and free grace; true peace is the daughter of that grace, yet it is the parent of inherent grace, or of gracious actions, I should rather say the nurse, for says the apostle, "The peace of God that passes all understanding, keep (or guard) your minds and hearts," Php 4:7; This saving peace, is a guard unto all our graces. As false peace is a guard to our sins, so true peace is a guard unto all our graces.

True saving peace, is such a peace as is wrought by faith. "Being justified by faith, we have peace," Romans 15 : "The Lord give you peace in believing," says the apostle." It comes in a way of faith: true saving peace is wrought by faith. False peace, is such as is either born with us and was never interrupted, being the offspring of nature only; or the emanation of a natural conscience, or such as is wrought out by-time, time working out one's trouble.

True saving peace, will live in the sight of sin. False peace doth not endure the sight of sin; a godly man, the more he doth see his sin, unless he be under temptation, the more peace he hath: a wicked man, the more he doth see his sin, the less peace he hath; and all his peace arises from a not sight of his sin.

True saving peace loves to be examined, is willing to be examined, it loves to be tried. But false peace, cannot endure examination, it flies from the light, it doth not love to be tried.

True saving peace is spoken by God. "I will hear what the Lord will say, for he will speak peace," says the Psalmist, Psalms 85:8. When God speaks peace, he speaks it to a soul under or after temptation. When God speaks peace, he speaks it with a strong hand: giving such peace [as no creature in the world is able to give. When God speaks peace, it is a peace beyond all expression; the peace of God that passeth all understanding, it cannot be uttered. Now though a wicked man have peace, and much peace and quiet within, yet God doth not speak it; for it was not spoken to him in or after temptation, it was not spoken by a strong and irresistible hand ; it is such a peace, as may be wrought by time, time working off the trouble; or the pleasures and contentments of the world may beget the like; it is not a peace that is beyond all expression, a peace beyond all understanding, but a low peace, which you may easily express. But now as for you that are godly, that make this objection, and have this fear and scruple in your hearts, I will here appeal unto your own souls; you know and remember your former trouble; now ye have peace, and ye have rest within; I appeal to you, I say, whether yea or no, when ye were in that trouble, suppose I, or another minister, or ten other of your own choosing, suppose a hundred should have come to you with one promise after another, had we been able to have spoken comfort to you? Oh, no; if the Lord had not spoken comfort to me, it had not been in the power of all the ministers in the world, to

have spoken comfort unto my soul, but the Lord certainly hath done it. Yet I appeal to you; are you not willing to have your peace examined? are you not willing to have your peace, your inward peace tried? yes, with all my soul I would have my peace tried: and truly, I could not hope that my peace were right, if I were not willing to have it examined. Well, yet I appeal to you further; and do not you find that you have peace, even then when you do see your sins? and the more you see your sins upon the back of Christ, the more peace you have? yes ; and do not you find this, that your peace came in, in a way of believing? from the sight of Christ, laying hold on the promise? by the prospect of free grace? yes, I must needs say so, had I not had a promise to stay my soul upon; had I not had a view of free grace; had I not seen the Lord Jesus, I had never had any peace in my poor soul: but the Lord knows, that thus I attained my peace. Well, then, be of good comfort, man or woman, I tell thee from the Lord, thy peace and quiet is right. I know what the danger is of sewing pillows under men's elbows, and speaking peace, where none ought to be spoken: but, I say, if it be thus with thy soul, notwithstanding all thy sins and fears, from the Lord, I say unto thee, thy peace is right; go in peace, and the God of peace tread down Satan under thy feet. But I fear that my peace, my inward peace is not right because it doth not last and continue. The second doctrine answers to that objection: for the second doctrine saith, that a godly man's peace may be interrupted. But one thing yet troubles me, and makes me fear that my peace and quiet is not good, and that is, because I came so lightly and slightly by it. I see how it hath been and is with others of the people of God; some that have been long afflicted and wounded and have been troubled a great while, and so they have had peace: but as for me, it is not so with me, I came lightly and slightly by my peace and quiet, and therefore I do even fear that the Lord never spake peace yet unto my soul.

Dost thou say lightly? how lightly? hast thou stolen thy peace? or have others bought their peace? for you say, others have been much afflicted and troubled, and had a great deal of heart-smart. But I pray tell me, did those who have had all this trouble, did they purchase, or buy their peace at the hand of Christ with all this trouble? or did Christ give them that peace and comfort freely? Buy it! no, surely; they did never purchase it, never buy it, but Christ gave it them freely. Why, if Christ gave it them freely after all their trouble, why may he not give it thee after less trouble? I have read, and so have you, in the gospel, a parable of two that came into the vineyard to work; the one in the beginning of the day, who bare the heat of the day, and the other at the latter end of the day; and both had a penny. When they were both paid, he that was there at the beginning of the day, murmurs, saying, I have been here all this day, and I have borne the heat of the day, and I have but a penny; and the other that came in at the latter end of the day, hath a penny as well as I: the man that had been there working at the beginning and heat of the day, he murmurs; but he that came at the latter end, he did not murmur, nor say, Surely, my penny is naught, because I have a penny given me, as well as he that hath borne the heat of the day. If any should complain, those that have borne the heat of the day, that have been so much troubled, should in reason be the persons, but hath the Lord taken you, and given you a penny, the same peace with him who bare the heat of the day; and will you complain, and say, Surely, my penny is false coin, and my peace naught, because I have not borne nor endured so much trouble as another hath? You know, some children are born into the world with more pain than others, some with less pain: should the child that is born with less pain, say, I am a bastard, because I was not born with so much pain as the other was? When Christ is formed in the souls of men and women, some are regenerate and born again with more pain, some are regenerate and born again with less pain: should he that is born

with less pain, say, I am a bastard, and not a true son, because there was not so much pain at my first regeneration as such an one had? You know how it was with Zaccheus; Christ comes unto his house, and the same day that he came, he said to Zaccheus, "This day is salvation come to thy house?" He had assurance the first day. But Paul is converted; and he lies troubled, and is three days blind. Should Zaccheus now say, Surely, I am not converted, for I never lay three days blind, nor was so much troubled as Paul was? No surely, no more may you say, that your peace, is false because you have not such abundance of trouble as others have; you are not to make another's measure your rule: God goes several ways with his people, as well in regard of peace, as in regard of grace. This therefore I say unto you, look unto your peace itself; have you peace and quietness of soul? Then bless and praise the Lord for that peace of yours: yea, do not only praise the Lord for your peace and quiet, but praise the Lord that ye came so sweetly by it, in a way of free grace; and if for anything you are to be troubled, it is for this, that you should nick-name the grace of God, and call it little or false. Christ calls it free, and you call it false. Oh, be humbled for this, and praise the Lord for any measure of quiet and peace that he hath given unto thee.

But, will another say, all this doth not come up to my case; for I have no peace nor quiet in my soul to be thankful for: some there are that have peace and quiet indeed, and they, no question, ought to be very thankful for it; but my poor soul hath been long afflicted, troubled, and I never yet had assurance of God's love in Christ; I have not this peace and quiet within : what shall I do, that I may attain unto it? or what should a poor soul do, to get and attain this peace and quiet within?

Ye know what the Psalmist says, "I will hear what the Lord will say, for he will speak peace unto his people," Psalms 85:8. It is not in my power, or in the power of any poor creature, to speak peace unto you; but it is the Lord only that must speak peace unto thy soul; and the Lord speaks peace in the way of an ordinance. But what does the Lord say? what does the Lord speak from his word in the way of an ordinance, that I who was never yet settled, may attain unto this inward peace and quietude of soul?

1. He wills you to study and consult much the death, sufferings and fulness of the satisfaction made by Jesus Christ; go down into the grave of Christ; Christ's blood is the object of faith, and faith brings peace: unbelief is a painful sin, and faith is an easing and quieting grace. "Being justified by faith, we have peace," &c., Horn. 5:1. The more you see the free and infinite love of God, the more will your heart be at rest and quiet within you. And where shall you see the love of God, but in the death of Christ? By seeing Christ on the cross, you see divine love in triumph. All true peace within, arises from sight of peace made without: where shall you read of that, but in Christ's death? And therefore says the prophet, "the chastisement of our peace was upon him." In Psalms 41 : ye have a promise made of a great blessing unto him that considereth the poor, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." Who is this poor? Tarnovius tells us, from the 10th verse, that it is Christ in his sufferings: for, as he observes, this psalm is a psalm of Christ, verse 9th, "Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel against me." They are the words of Christ, and Christ speaks this psalm; and this poor to be considered, is Christ in his sufferings: says he, I will not here debate the truth of this interpretation; but if true, the Lord promised here a blessing to him that doth wisely consider the death and sufferings of Christ: and wherein doth that blessing lie and consist?* "The Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble, ■■■■■ ■■■■: in the evil day, or in the day of evil, saith the Chaldee paraphrase: in the day of vexation, saith Symmachus. Now the day of temptation, doubts and

great fears, is an evil day, and a day of vexation: this day will God deliver him from, who doth wisely ponder on the death of Christ: could we see the heart of Christ, we should doubt no more, and in his death you may see his heart, in his blood you may see his heart. Ye know what the prophet Isaiah says, "Lord, wilt thou not ordain peace, who hast wrought all our works for us?" And where shall ye find that God hath wrought all our works for us, but in Christ's grave and death?

2. Ye must not only go unto the. grave of Christ, and study his death, but you must go unto Christ himself for peace, he is the great peace-maker, hath a commission to take up all differences without us, and within us. Ye know his words, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned (says he), that I may speak a word in due season to him that is weary." Go then to Christ, and press this engagement, and say, Lord, thou hast therefore received the tongue of the learned, that thou mayest speak a word in due season to him that is weary. And, O Lord, I am one of those wearied souls; wearied with my temptations, wearied with inward trouble; now, Lord, speak a word in due season to this poor, wounded, and wearied soul. Thus go to Christ.

Only in your addresses to Christ, be sure that ye go in uprightness. Take heed that you do not desire peace merely for the comfort of it, but as an help unto your grace: "He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from him that walks uprightly." Good men seek peace for grace sake; but wicked men and hypocrites, seek grace for peace sake. When you do make your addresses for peace, be sure you come to Christ in uprightness; and take heed that you do not desire peace only for the comfort of it, but as an help unto your grace. And when you go unto Christ for peace, carry the promise with you, go in the way of a promise. Go and wait long on Christ, wait upon him only, and keep his way. Some say they do wait on God, but they do not keep his way, they throw up their duty if they have not comfort presently: but in your addresses to Christ, go and wait long on him; and in case that peace and comfort doth not come presently, lay by that great question a little, whether you be in Christ or no, whether you be the child of God or no. The great trouble is this, oh, I am afraid I am not the child of God, if I did but know that I am the child of God, I should have peace. If peace and comfort therefore do not come presently, lay that question aside a little, and in due time, Christ will answer that question too, only now for the present wait on him, and keep his way.

But, because it will be said, should not we be humbled for sin committed? and is not humiliation a good means to get peace within? Therefore, in all your humiliation, carry Christ along with you. When you go to mourn for sin, begin aloft with Christ: and do not always think to begin below with sin, and so to come up to Christ; but begin aloft with Christ, and so by your humiliation, fall down upon sin. You say, oh, but I would be first humbled before I do go to Christ, but I pray tell me, can ye be humbled and not see your sin? and where can ye have such a prospect of sin, as in the death of Christ? is there anything in the world, that can shew you the misery, ugliness, and damning nature of sin, as the death of Christ? If you begin with Christ, then you will certainly come down to your sin and be humbled for it: but if you begin with sin, you will not certainly come up to Christ. There is many a poor soul that hath said, I will be first humbled for my sin, and then I will go to Christ; but he hath stuck so long in the legal work, that he hath never come at Christ. And if you be humbled before you do come to Christ, you will have no great peace and comfort in your humiliation : but if you first come to Christ, and then carry Christ along with you to your humiliation, then you will have much comfort and peace therein, would you therefore be so humbled as you may have peace thereby; be sure of this, that you carry Christ with you unto that work, do not

begin always with sin to go up to Christ, but rather begin at Christ, and so fall down upon sin.

Labour to mortify your affections, and to get your will melted into the will of God: as the winds are to the sea, so are the affections to the soul of man: so long as the sea is hurried with the wind, it hath no rest or quiet; and what is the reason that our hearts are no more calmed and quieted, but because we have not yet resigned up our wills to the will of God? It is our own will that troubles our peace; get but your will mortified into the will of God, and you will say, Lord, I would fain have peace; yet not my will, but thy will be done: I would have peace presently, yet I have no will but thine; therefore, Lord, when thou wilt, and as thou wilt, not my will, but thine own will be done. Thus do, and you are at rest presently.

Dost thou want peace and comfort and quietude of soul? Take heed how you walk with doubting company; take heed how you walk with those that are full of fears and doubtings. As one drunkard doth make another, and one swearer doth beget another, and one opposer of godliness doth draw on another, and one adulterer doth make another; so one doubting Christian doth make another. You that are weak, and full of doubtings, should go and lean upon those that are strong and have full assurance; and you that have assurance, should give the shoulder to those that are weak, and say, Come, and lean upon me, and I will be an help unto you. You know how it is with the ivy and the vine; the ivy leans upon the oak, and the vine upon the posts or the house-side; the ivy and the vine do not lean one upon another; if the ivy and the vine should come and lean upon one another, what twisting would there be; and both would fall to the ground: but the ivy leans upon the oak, and the vine upon the posts or the house-side. So a weak Christian should go and lean upon a strong Christian: but if one doubter leans upon another doubter, both will fall to the ground. I have read of a woman that was under great temptations, and meeting with another in the same condition, said to her, I am afraid I shall be damned; So am I to, said the other; Oh, but said she again, I do not only fear, but I am sure of it; certainly I shall be damned: Aye, but said the other, yet my condition is worse, for I am damned already. Here was damned and damned: Oh, said one, I shall certainly be damned; Ob, said the other, I am damned already. Oh, what communion is here! is this to build up one another? Do you therefore want comfort and peace? You that are weak, go and lean upon those that are strong, and have full assurance; and you that have assurance, be not unwilling to give forth your shoulder unto those that are weak, and are full of doubtings. And to end all. Dost thou want peace and inward quietude of soul? Whensoever the Lord then doth but begin to speak the least peace unto thine heart, take heed that you do not refuse it, but rather improve it, and stir up yourselves then in a way of believing; praise God for every smile, and rejoice in the least: if a bowed sixpence, as it were, be sent you from heaven, lay it up, even every love-token. Peace is a tender thing. Doth the Lord begin to speak peace to any of your souls? now stir up yourselves in a way of believing, and then Christ will give you more.

Ye know how it was with Nathaniel: when Nathaniel believed upon what Christ had spoken, says Christ unto him, "Believest thou, because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree? I will shew thee greater things; thou shalt see the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." So will the Lord Christ say to a poor soul, I have spoken a word unto thee, and I gave thee a little peace, and dost thou believe because of the word I have spoken unto thee? thou shalt see greater things, and I will give thee abundance of peace. Look into Isaiah 48:18, and there you shall find the Lord speaking thus: "Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments; then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." When the Lord speaks,

and calls upon people to believe, if then they do hearken to him, then shall their peace be like a river. And when does the Lord call in a special manner upon people to believe? When he gives out a word, and when he gives them a little peace, then he is calling upon them to believe; now return, and now believe, says the Lord. Ye know how it was with Elijah : when they wanted rain, and had wanted rain for a long time, Elijah sends his servant towards the sea, to see if he could perceive any rain coming, and Elijah falls down upon his face in prayer; his servant goes, but no sign of rain: he goes again, and no sign of rain ; and the seventh time Elijah's servant perceives a cloud, of the bigness of an hand, and he comes down unto his master, and tells him he had seen a cloud, the bigness of a man's hand : whereupon Elijah concludes and says, "Come, let us up, I hear the noise of many waters." So say I, you have been upon your face, and have been much discouraged, yet if you have been at prayer, and a little refreshment comes, though it be but the bigness of an hand, yet conclude and say, Surely, there is more rain a coming; Come, O my soul, why art thou cast down? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God, and wait on him, I hear abundance of rain coming. When our Saviour Christ sometimes speaks peace, he doth at the first speak by a small word, and if that be improved, then he speaks more. Ye know how it was with Mary; she was at the sepulchre, and had been inquiring after her Lord, and says she to the angels, they have taken away my Lord; and the angels talked to her, but could not comfort her. But at last comes our Saviour Christ, and he speaks to her, and then she was comforted. But what does he say to her? Only one word; Mary: so when a man is in trouble, the Lord comes sometimes and speaks but a word, he takes a promise it may be, and sets on a word thereof upon the soul, and the heart answers, Rabboni, my Lord. Doth the Lord therefore speak but one word unto thee, yet stir up thyself in believing, and hearken unto him, for he will speak yet more fully and plainly; only when he speaks, listen: hearken diligently unto him and improve what he saith, so shall your peace be as a river, and your righteousness as the ocean. And thus I have done with the first argument.

02. SERMON II. -TRUE PEACE MAY BE INTERRUPTED.

SERMON II. -TRUE PEACE MAY BE INTERRUPTED.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me, &c"—Psalms 42:11.

It is possible that the saints and people of God, may be much discouraged, and cast down: though there be an inward peace and quietness of soul, which they are ordinarily endued with, yet possibly this peace may be interrupted, and themselves much discouraged and cast down.

Here are two words in the text speak as much; cast-down, disquieted. And three times in this Psalm, the Psalmist saith, his soul was cast down within him; yet this David was a man of great peace and comfort ordinarily. And as with David, so it was, is, and will be with other saints. This is so ordinary a case, that the Holy Ghost hath provided a standing psalm, or prayer, on purpose for such as are in this condition: Psalms 102 :, the title, "A prayer, or psalm, of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord." In Psalms 119:25, he saith, "My belly cleaves to the dust and that is low indeed. And verse 28, "My soul melteth for heaviness I am not only sad and heavy, but my soul melteth for heaviness. Song of Solomon 5, the Spouse saith, "Her heart was gone;" or, "My soul failed within me." And if we look into Psalms 143 : we find, at the 4th verse, that the Psalmist saith, "My spirit is overwhelmed, and my heart within me is desolate." What do all these expressions high, great and many, speak, but this truth that is now before us? For the more full clearing and opening of it, I shall labour to show-- First, how far it is possible for a good man to be discouraged, or cast down.

Secondly, how it doth come to pass that he is so discouraged.

Thirdly, how those discouragements can stand with his grace and goodness.

Fourthly, how they may be healed and cured. And first. If you ask, how far the discouragements of saints may reach? For, will some say, I know it is possible that the most gracious, holy man, may be much discouraged, but not with such discouragements as mine are.

1. I answer. What are yours? Are you so far disquieted, discouraged, cast down, as to refuse the word, promise, or consolation that is brought unto you? So far may the discouragements of the saints extend: Psalms 77:3, "I remembered God, and was troubled." He doth not say, I remembered my sin, and was troubled, but God; Yea, I was not only troubled, but "I did complain, and my spirit was overwhelmed within me." But when the promise came, and mercy came, and comfort came, did he refuse that too? Yes: verse 2, "My soul refuseth to be comforted."

2. Are you so far discouraged, disquieted, cast down, that your very body feeleth the smart of your discouragements? that you do not only refuse the promise, and all comfort for your soul, but even for your body? Then look into Psalms 102 :, and see if your case may not be paralleled, verse 4, "My heart is smitten and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread: verse 5, " By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my skin:" verse 6, "I am like a pelican of the wilderness, and I am like an owl of the desert:" verse 9, "I have eaten ashes like bread, and

mingled my drink with weeping:" verse 10, "Because of thine indignation and thy wrath; for thou hast lifted me up and cast me down:" verse 11, "My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass." Oh, but I am not only so far discouraged, as to refuse comfort for soul and body, but my soul refuseth duty, and casts off duty too for the present.

3. Therefore, it is possible, that a good and gracious man's discouragements may extend thus far too. You will think it strange that I find an instance for this in that holy man Jeremiah; yet if you look into Jeremiah 20:7—9} you find it made good. Indeed, saith he, "The word was as fire in my bones, and I could not forbear." But for the time he did resolve to forbear preaching in the name of God, which was his duty, which he had commission to do: for, says he, "I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name." This holy, gracious man, was under temptation, he was much discouraged, and thereupon he said so. Yet, verse 13, he saith, "Sing to the Lord, praise the Lord; for he hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evil doers." But then mark the next words; "Cursed be the day wherein I was born; let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed." "Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born to thee." What a sudden change was here, even in the best of the saints, from encouragements to discouragements. Oh, but I have not only cursed the day of my birth, as Jeremiah, and wished that I had never been born; but I am weary of my life, and have sought after mine own death: and was there ever any godly, gracious man, that was thus discouraged, and cast down?

Yes. What think you of Job? "I was weary of my life," 10:1. And in the third chapter, Job, pouring out his complaint in regard of himself, he saith, verse 20, "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul?" verse 21, "Which long for death, but it cometh not, and dig for it more than for hid treasures." Now ye know, that those which dig for gold and silver, dig industriously and earnestly. Thus it is with me, says Job, I am so afflicted, and distressed; and in such bitterness of soul, that I long for death, and dig for it as for hid treasures.

Oh, what a mighty deep of discouragements, may the saints and people of God fall into, and yet be godly, gracious!

Secondly, but why doth God suffer his own people and dearest children to be thus discouraged, and their peace to be interrupted? I know, will some say, that all our present joy and comfort, is but a creature, and so may be eclipsed; and that Satan is near unto the best of God's children, thrusting and pushing them forward into these discouragements, that they may be like unto himself who is a discouraged spirit: but why will God suffer it to be so? In general, it is for their good, for their good they have, and for their good they do want their peace and comfort. The star which led the wise men to Christ, did not always go before them, but sometimes it appeared, sometimes it was hidden from them: but both appearance and hiding was for their benefit; its first appearance invited them to Christ, and its withdrawance made them more diligent in seeking after him. So when Christ hid himself from his mother Mary, she sought him the more, and when she found him, she rejoiced the more: but both his absence and his presence, her fear and her comfort, was for her good; for his absence did increase and draw out her desires, and his presence did increase and draw out her joys. When God is absent from us, then we have testimonies of our love to God, by our desires after him; and when he is present, then we have testimonies of his love to us, by the shines of his countenance; so that whether God shines or not, whether we have comfort or not, both is for our good. Thus in the general, but yet more particularly.

1. Ye know it is God's way and manner to deal with the children, of men, according to their own dispositions, to stoop and condescend unto their infirmities: therefore says the prophet Hosea, "He draws us with the cords of a man." Hosea 11:4. Now it is man's disposition to come to God at the second hand: so long as man can find a fulness in any creature, he comes not to God \$ but first he sees an emptiness in the creature, duty and ordinance, and then he says, oh what a fulness is in God himself, in Christ himself! "The widow that is desolate, trusteth in God," 1 Timothy 5:5; though a widow, yet if not desolate, sometimes, she would not trust; and therefore God suffers a desolation to come upon her widowhood. When David's men took up stones to have stoned him, then, says the text, "He encouraged himself in the Lord his God," 1 Samuel 30:6. So long as man hath encouragement elsewhere, he doth not encourage himself in the Lord his God. This being man's nature, and God having a design of love upon his own children, he suffers a damp and discouragement to pass upon all their comforts: their peace to be interrupted, their hearts disquieted, and their souls discouraged, that so they may encourage themselves in God alone.

2. This inward peace and quietness of soul, is so great a commodity, that God would have the price to be enhanced and raised. Common and ordinary blessings once lost, and found again, are extraordinary: it is a common and ordinary mercy that a man sits in his shop, and walks up and down in his trade; but if he be sick awhile, lose his health, and not able for five or six weeks to look into his shop; if then he can get down but one day, Oh, says he, what an extraordinary mercy and blessing is it, that I should go down again: thus the interruption of an ordinary blessing does raise it to an extraordinary. So long as a man hath his health and strength, though he be able to travel forty, fifty, three-score miles a day, he is not much affected therewith; but if he be sick a little, and at death's door, and then begins to recover, though he can but put forth his hand, or stir his leg, he blesses God, and says, oh, friends, I can stir myself in my bed, I can move my hand, or my leg; what an extraordinary mercy and blessing is this! So in this case, so long as a man hath inward peace and quietness of soul, without interruption, he looks upon it as a common mercy and blessing; but if his peace be a little interrupted, and his soul buffeted by Satan, and then he recovers his peace, Oh, says he, what an extraordinary blessing and mercy is this! Now God will sometimes raise the price of this commodity from an ordinary to an extraordinary blessing, and therefore he doth suffer his own children and dearest servants to be thus discouraged, and their peace to be interrupted.

3. God is a tender Father, and he would have all the love of his children; he would not have his children to love their nurse more than himself: our joy and peace and comfort, is but the nurse of our graces; now when God sees that his children fall in love more with the nurse than with himself, then he removes the nurse, and causes their peace to be suspended and interrupted: he will not have the nurse to be loved more than himself. .

4. Sometimes God doth suffer this cloud to arise upon the peace and comforts of his people, that he may train them up unto more perfection; comfort is the children's milk: ye may observe, therefore, that the weaker Christian hath sometimes more lively, sensible comforts, than the stronger Christian hath; why? but because this inward joy and peace and comfort, is that milk and sweet honey, whereby they are drawn off from the pleasures and sweetness of the world; and as these comforts do wean us from, the worlds comforts, so we have need to be weaned again from these weaners, which God doth sometimes by restraining of them, and so we grow up unto more perfection.

5. Sometimes, again, God sees his children do grow vain and light and frothy and wanton and secure under their peace and comfort, and then he withdraws himself, hides his face, and so they do lose their comfort. This was the case in Song of Solomon 5, where the spouse saith, "My soul faileth within me" at verse 6. But why? "I opened to my Beloved, but my Beloved had withdrawn himself and why had he withdrawn himself?" He comes and makes a tender of love and mercy, verse 2, and she would none, verse 3, "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" that is, I am now laid to sleep; they are words that import security, and upon her security he withdraws himself, and being withdrawn, her soul fails within her. And thus it is many times with the children of God in their particulars; the Lord sees that they grow secure, vain, frothy and wanton under their peace and comfort, then he withdraws himself, and their peace faileth.

6. Our Lord and Saviour Christ is a tender chirurgion, who hath set all our bones which we ourselves have broken by our sins. You know that a wise and an honest chirurgion, though he desire his patient may be quickly cured, yet if he sees the plaister doth not lie right, he takes it off again, for it is not laid right, saith he: so doth Christ do, he sees that the comforts of his people sometimes are not right laid, and therefore, saith he, though I desire this poor wounded soul may be quickly cured, yet because this comfort, this promise, this experience doth not lie right, it must be taken off again. Now the comforts of the saints are so laid sometimes, as the very laying of them doth breed discomfort. As in the sowing of seed; it is not enough that the seed be good, but it must be well sown, else the very sowing thereof may cause weeds: so though light be sown for the righteous, yet sometimes it so is sown, as that the very sowing thereof doth breed these weeds of fears and discouragements, that you may say, and that without prophecy, Here is a poor soul that ere long will be much discouraged, though for the present full of comfort. But this is hard to say: can ye foretell a man's discouragements, even in the time of his comfort? Who is there among all the saints so comforted, concerning whom you may say, Surely this man will be much discouraged again? When a man, a good man, doth lay his spiritual comfort upon outward blessings, you may say beforehand, this man's comfort will never hold, but ere long he will be much disquieted; and this was the reason why the saints in the time of the Old Testament, laboured under so many discouragements, even because they measured the love of God so much by these outward blessings. Psalms 143:4, "Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me." Why so? Verse 3, "Because the enemy prevailed he measured God's love too much by these outward things, and therefore when the enemy broke in upon him, he thought God did not love him, and so he was overwhelmed; thus in regard of all outward blessings. Seest thou therefore a man who raiseth his persuasion of God's love from the smiles of any creature, say of such a man beforehand, oh, this poor soul ere long, will be in the dark, and under some discouragements. When a man is unthankful for true peace, and unhumbled for false peace, he cannot hold his peace long. Before a man is converted, he hath peace within; "For when the strong man keeps the house, all is at peace" but it is false peace: after a man is converted, he hath peace within, and it is true peace; God expecteth that a man should be humbled for his former false peace, and thankful for his present true peace. Now when God sees one both unhumbled for false peace, and unthankful for his present true peace, the Spirit of the Lord is grieved, so it withdraweth, and the soul is comfortless. When a man doth raise his comfort only from somewhat that he doth find within himself; from grace that he doth find within, and not from grace without; from Christ within, and not from Christ without; then his comfort will not hold; *perpetuum est quod habet causam*

perpetuam, that is perpetual, which hath a perpetuating cause : grace without is perpetual, Christ's own personal obedience in the merit of it, is perpetual; but the actings of grace within us, are not perpetual, or not perpetually obvious to sight, and therefore cannot perpetually comfort. Indeed, our grace within, and obedience, is in some respects a cause of our peace. 1st, A causa sine qua non, a cause without which we can have no comfort; for a godly man can have no comfort, if he have no obedience. 2ndly, A cause which doth, remove prohibens, remove what hinders our comfort, namely, our sin. 3rdly A cause witnessing: for there are three that bear witness, the Spirit, water and blood; water, which is our sanctification, is one. 4thly, A cause confirming; for by our obedience and sanctification, our justification is confirmed, and the sense thereof; so that obedience is one cause, but not the only cause of our peace, nor the principal: when therefore you see the streams of a man's comfort run in this channel, raising all his comfort only, or principally from his obedience, or acting of grace within, then you may say, though the stream be now full, stay but a little, and ere long you will see it dried, and this man will be much discouraged. When a man, a good man doth lay his comfort, rather upon the impression, or comings in of the word, than upon the word itself. For example, suppose a man take the Bible, and upon the opening thereof doth pitch on some promise: for the present he is much refreshed and comforted: or suppose that he doth not open the Bible, nor read the Scripture, but sitting down in a dark condition, some promise doth come to him which before he thought not of; now at the coming of this promise, his heart is much raised, warmed and comforted, insomuch that he concludeth, saying, Now I am a child of God, now I know that God loves me, that I have a share in Christ: either this man raiseth his comfort from the word itself, or from the comings in of the word; if from the word itself, how can his comfort die? if upon the bare coming in of the word, how can his comfort live? For when a word comes not, then his comforts fail. We read in Psalms 16 : that "he shall multiply sorrows that hasteneth after another:" your translation reads it thus, "Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another God;" but the word God, ■■■■ ■■■■■■■■ ■■■ ■■■■ ,is not in the Hebrew. The whole verse are the words of Christ; what saith he at verse 2? "Oh my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord, my goodness, holiness, or righteousness is not for thee, but for the saints that are in the earth, and for the excellent in whom is all my delight." But O Lord, our Saviour, what if we do not go to thy goodness, holiness and righteousness, resting upon that alone? He answereth, "Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten after another." And is not this to hasten after another, when men rest upon the bare coming in of the word, or the impressions on the heart that are made thereby? Where do we read in all the Scripture, turn from one end of the Bible to the other, where do we read that Christ hath appointed any such way of comfort as this, that a man should raise his comforts from pitching, or by an opening of the book? If I pitch upon a promise today, and so have comfort, may I not pitch upon a threatening to morrow, and so have no comfort again? Where hath Christ appointed any such way as this, that I should measure God's love, or cast my everlasting condition by the coming in of a particular word? Indeed, God doth sometimes by his providence, upon the opening of the Bible, cause our eye to fall upon some promise, which is a providential comfort; he doth sometimes send a particular word to stay and bear up ones soul in a particular distress or affliction, but not that I should measure his everlasting love, or cast my condition by the coming in of every word. This therefore is to hasten after another; and how many sorrows are multiplied upon the hearts of God's people hereby? How many poor souls are there that walk in this way! God our Father sees it, that the plaister is not right laid, and so he is fain to take it off, but all from a design of love, to lay it

right; and for these reasons God suffers his own people to be much discouraged.

Thirdly, but how can all this stand with grace? Can a man be thus comforted and discouraged, discouraged and then comforted again? thus to and fro in his comfort, yet in Christ, yet gracious, yet holy?

Yes: for though there be much evil in this traversing up and down, yet in the saints there is still a mixture of some grace withal, some grace mixed with their discouragements.* Take the saints and people of God, and though they be much discouraged and cast down, yet still they mourn after God; and though they cannot wait so patiently as they would, yet they say in truth, if they did but know that God would come at last, they would wait all their lives; here is grace; and though they cannot mourn for sins past, for which they are most disquieted, yet they dare not put forth their hand willingly unto any sin present. I have read of one that was so troubled and cast down, that he said and thought, I find so little comfort in my soul, that I would willingly suffer my body to live in burning fire until Christ's coming, so that I might but have the assurance of God's love and favour; and though I am persuaded I shall go to hell, yet my hope is, that my pains here will be mitigated there, in all which trouble, saith my author, nothing in the world could persuade him to do anything willingly that was displeasing to God; this man was at the last comforted, and then he would often say, The devil took advantage of my sorrow for evil things, to make me unthankful for good things. But I speak this to shew, that the saints are never so discouraged, but still there is a grace that is mixed withal, they dare not sin. Yea, and though by their very discouragements, they do sin against the gospel in unbelief, yet by the same discouragements they are kept from their sins against the law, these discouragements being as the lees that do keep the wines.

Yea, and though they do rest too much upon their righteousness, whereby their feet sink into divers sloughs, yet it is because they would be the more obedient to God their Father, and in the midst of all their discouragement profess in truth, I would give all the world for the presence of God; here is grace, a mixture of grace withal; no marvel therefore, that these discouragements may be in a godly gracious man. But is there no evil in this, to be thus fluctuating to and fro, comforted and then discouraged? is there no evil in these discouragements?

Much, very much; I shall not enter into the particulars. But how can they improve Christ as they should in this condition? So long as a man's title for his land is in question, he cannot sow his ground, nor build houses; and if you ask him, why do not you sow your ground, and repair your houses? his answer is ready, I dare not lay out much cost, because my title is in question: so here, so long as a man's title to Christ is in question, he cannot improve Christ as he should. If a man be going a journey, and know not his way, he loseth much of his way and of the comfort of it in inquiring after the way, and thinking whether he be right or wrong; when he comes at three or four turnings, there he stands while he might ride a mile, and when he comes above in the field, and sees a shepherd at a distance from him, he rides up to him to inquire whether he be in his way or not; yea, and all the day long he is thinking of his way, whether he be right; whereas, if he knew his way, he might have many precious thoughts of God and of the word. So in this case, while a man is doubting and fearing, and knows not whether he be in the way to heaven or no, how much precious time is lost! thoughts of Christ lost! thankfulness for mercy lost! Of all hearts, the Scripture saith, an unbelieving heart is an evil heart; and when men's hearts are discouraged and cast down, are they not unbelieving? Who would not therefore take heed of these discouragements,

and of the interruption of their peace?

Fourthly, but suppose now that I have lost my comforts? Times were heretofore, when my soul was full of joy, but now I am quite discouraged; what should a poor soul do to recover his peace and comfort again, that uninterrupted peace may be restored?

Some things by way of question; some things by way of doctrine.

1. Hast thou forgot the years of the right hand of the Most High? hast thou lost all thy experience too? I know that usually when our comforts fail, our former experiences fail, yet not always; for the Psalmist saith here, "My soul is cast down," yet at the same time, verse 6, he saith, "Therefore I will remember thee from the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." So Psalms 77 : The Psalmist having said at the 7th verse, "Will the the Lord cast off for ever; and will he be favourable no more; is his mercy clean gone forever; and doth his promise fail for evermore? hath God forgotten to be gracious?" he addeth in the same breath, "But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." Ye know what the disciples said, "Did not our hearts glow within us while he opened the scriptures to us?" Luke 24:32. Beloved! you have no comfort now, well, but you remember at such a time, when you were all alone in your chamber, and no soul was near you, how the Lord came and opened the scriptures, the promise to your soul, wherewith your heart did glow within you. Have you quite forgotten the openings of those scriptures to you; (I speak not of the glowing's, for I suppose they are now gone) but are the scriptures gone that were then opened to you; did not you say in your last trouble and down-cast condition, if ever the Lord appear to me again, I will never doubt of his mercy more ; and did he not appear unto you and open the promise unto your heart; and have you now forgotten these things? this is your infirmity, why should you not remember the days and times and works and experiences of the right hand of the Most High?

2. Do you not use the means for the restoring of your comforts in such a manner, as thereby you do lose them more? A man may have great desire after some preferment and place, which many ride for, but one is so hasty that he rides over hedge and ditch, and thereby falls and hurts himself, so others get before him, and by his too much haste, he doth lose his place. Thus it is sometimes with good people, they make so much haste to their comfort, that they lose it by their haste; they would have it sooner if they went on in an ordinary way of waiting on God without such posting haste; but they must have it to-day; oh let me know my interest in Christ to-day, saith one, or else I am undone forever. Thus, by stinting and limiting God to a time, they tempt the Holy One, and so are more distant from their comfort; the more the child cries, and is froward under the rod, the longer is the rod continued.

Some seek comfort in a way of reason, and think to reason out their temptation, and to reason in their comfort, but as one saith well, Dispute not with God lest you be confounded, dispute not with Satan lest you be deceived.

Some again tire themselves in duty, neglecting of their calling ; the truth is, prayer is a friend to comfort, and more than ordinary time is to be used in prayer for those that are troubled in conscience, but when men under temptations, and without comforts throw up their callings, thinking that nothing is to be done but prayer, by throwing aside their calling, they lay themselves open to more temptations of Satan, they do so tire out their natural spirits in duty, that they are flat

and dead in duty, so their temptations are the more increased, and their comforts more distanced. Wherefore consider, if you would have comfort restored again, whether you do not use the means of comfort in such a manner, as to set you at a further distance from it.

3. Whether have you not strained, and reached for some outward comfort so far, as to lose your inward comfort? I read of Francis Spira, that when he was in horror of conscience, he could not with peace and quietness behold his wife and children, for, to get an estate for them he denied the truth, and therefore when they came before him in his trouble, he cried out in much horror, how terrible is the sight of these to me! They had been comforts to him before, yet now he could not away with the sight of them. Oh, thought he, for your sakes, and for your provision, I have denied the truth and yielded to these superstitions; and therefore says he, How terrible is the sight of these unto me! What peace or comfort had Judas in the sight of his thirty pence? Look what outward comfort a man strains his conscience for, that will be death unto him to behold. We read of David, that when his men had ventured for the waters of Bethlehem, he would not drink of it, but poured it out before the Lord, for, saith he, "Why should I drink the blood of these men?" He did not sin in desiring of it, nor did he command his men for to venture through the enemies quarters, for those Hebrew words, **■ ■ ■ ■ ■**, quis dabit, who will give me? are but words of wishing, who will give me to drink of the waters of Bethlehem; that is, Oh, that I had the waters of Bethlehem: according to the Hebrew language, but though he sinned not in his desires, yet when he had the waters, he poured them forth before the Lord, and said, "God forbid that I should drink the blood of these men and will you drink the blood of your own conscience? Time was heretofore when you had peace and comfort, and by straining and stretching your conscience for your outward comfort, now you have lost your inward, will you not then take that outward comfort, and pour it forth before the Lord, and say, God forbid that I should drink the blood of mine own peace and comfort? How can any of you have peace, while those stolen and unrestored goods lie by you? But alas! all my comforts do lie prostrate at the feet of my fears, that now I have no peace at all: what shall I do that my peace and comfort may be restored? By way of direction, three things.

1. Look what you would do if you were to be justified, and do the same now: if I were to be justified, having a sight of my own sin and nature, I would, through grace, come to the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and leave the weight of my poor, guilty soul upon it; which act of faith would justify me, and give me peace; for "being justified by faith (saith the apostle), we have peace with God." And as faith doth justify and give peace at the first, so the renewing of this act of faith doth renew our peace; and what is my justifying faith, but in time of temptation to leave myself and condition upon Christ alone, saying, whether godly or ungodly, whether in Christ or not in Christ, now I do not dispute, but leave myself upon Christ alone: this do again, and this will bring peace again.

2. You have now lost your comforts and the shinings of God's face: either God has withdrawn himself for your sin, or not; if not for your sin, he will return again, and that quickly too; if for your sin, labour more and more for to find it out, and to be humbled for it.

I know you will say, oh, but now in this condition I cannot be humbled. But withal remember, that in this condition, that goes for humbling which doth not before, and God will take that for humiliation now, which he would not take before. Psalms 32, saith David, "I said I will confess my transgression unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Dixit non fecit, saith Austin,

he said he would do it, but did not do it fully, yet thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. God took his humiliation although it was very low. Why? Verse 3, 4, we find him under temptation and in much discouragement, for saith he, "My bones waxed old with my roaring all the day long, day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer," yet how ready was God to receive an acknowledgment, and a little humiliation from him at this time.

Oh, but what is all this to us? this was David's case. Nay, saith David, this is not my case alone, for verse 6, "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayest be found." God will receive a little when you are much discouraged. Either therefore God hath withdrawn for your sin, or not; if not, wait but a little, he will return again; if for your sin, labour more and more to be humbled for it, for he will receive that measure of humiliation now, w7hich he will not do at any other time.

3. Are all your comforts gone, and would you have them fain restored? Then read and read the Scripture much; if you cannot read yourself, get some others for to read them to you. When a man's mind is empty, as in temptation and want of comfort, it is empty of Christ, and full of fear, then it doth grind itself, as a quern or mill when empty of corn, one stone grinds another: the more full a man's mind is, the more free from temptations and fears. Now Scripture matter is the most filling matter, the more ye see Christ walking in the sweet shades of divine love toward poor sinners, the sooner will your faith revive, and your comforts be restored; and where can you see Jesus Christ walking, and taking his turns with poor sinners under the shades of divine love, but in the Scriptures? stand there awhile, and you shall see him, and your heart will say, And why not one turn of love with me, oh my Saviour? Study, read, and read much the scriptures. But if I do read the scriptures, and read them much, I shall then meet with some promise, possibly many, and now I cannot apply them being thus discouraged as I am, I shall see the promises indeed, and say, There is such and such an old friend of mine, but it is now mine enemy, the promise will not own me, and I cannot apply it, and so it will do me no good.

Ye cannot tell what the promise will do till you come to apply it; the promise never gives down its power and strength till it be applied, it doth then work when it is put to work, and not before. When Moses saw his rod turned into a serpent, he was afraid of it, and fled from it, but when he put forth his hand and took it by the tail, it was a rod in his hand again, as it was before; it may be you look upon such and such a promise at a distance, and you say, Ob, there is my enemy, now it will not help me, it will sting me, it will undo me, but put forth your hand again to it, and it will become a promise, a rod in your hand, as comfortable as ever it was before. And doth not the promise come to you? go you to it. Sometimes the promise doth come to us, sometimes we go to it; when the promise doth come to you, you have joy, when you go to it, you have peace, and this peace may last longer than the other joy; but remember this as an everlasting rule, that you're very relying upon the promise doth make it yours. But if I do read the scriptures much in this condition of my discouragement, I shall not only meet with the promise, but with a threatening, and that will discourage me more. Not so, for if a threatening make way to the promise, and doth therefore come forth to meet you, that it mav lead you to the promise, have you any hurt thereby? Now as the law was a schoolmaster to bring to Christ, so sometimes the threatening is a schoolmaster to bring you to the promise.

Yea, and God doth therefore sometimes send the threatening that it may lead you to the promise. You know how God appeared to Elijah, first in a wind that did shake the mountains and rocks, but God was not there; then in an earthquake, but God was not there; then in a fire, but God was not there ; then in a still voice, and there was God. So when God appears to a soul, sometimes he doth first send a threatening, and shakes the rocks and mountains, and hard hearts, and his converting grace may not be there, but there is a still voice behind, the voice of the promise, God is there, and all this shaking of the threatening, is but to make way unto the still voice of the promise that is behind.

Oh, but if I should read the scriptures much in this condition, I should meet with many other things which concern not me, there are many histories in the Scripture which suit not with my condition, and so I should get no good or comfort.

Say not so; Christ cures, per modum divertentiae, by way of divertency, as you do those that are grieved. If a friend have lost a husband, or wife, or child, you do not speak of the lost person and say, Oh, what a sweet friend, or husband, or wife, or child you have lost; but you speak of something else, and then afterwards you are able to speak of the person lost, but first you divert his mind from the matter of his grief, and so you do cure his grief. Thus doth Christ also when he cures a poor, wounded, grieved soul, he doth not always speak to the subject matter of grief in hand, but leads the heart sometimes into the consideration of other truths, and then afterwards doth speak unto the matter that is now concerning; he cures by way of divertency.

Study therefore, oh, study the Scriptures much, for thus the Lord will pour wine and oil into your bleeding wounds, and in due time you will say, as David did, "In the multitude of my thoughts, O Lord, thy comforts have comforted my soul" Psalms 94:19. But suppose the Lord do restore to me the joy of my salvation, that the bones which I have broken may rejoice; suppose there be a return of peace and joy, what shall I do then?

I shall not need to tell you what then, you will tell me what then, for you will say, oh, now I must be thankful, now I must believe, now I will never doubt of mercy and of grace again. Only take these few words of advice. Be sure that you understand your comforts rightly; be not mistaken in them: labour to distil and refine your comforts. As there was a mixed company came out of Egypt, which set the Israelites a murmuring; so there is a mixed company that comes with your comforts. Every creature is born into the world with some filth; when you have comfort, labour to find out and separate the dross and filth, put away that mixed company. Rose leaves keep not long in the leaf: distilled comforts keep the longest.

If you would be rid of Satan from coming into your quarters, fall you upon him; the way to keep the enemy out of our country, is to fall into him. So deal with Satan, do him all the mischief you can; be not barely offensive, up and be doing against him.

If you would keep your comforts, put them all into the hand of Christ to be kept for you. A child that knows not how to keep his money, if he get a penny from any friend, he brings it to his father or mother, and saith, Mother, pray keep this penny for me. You have experience that you cannot keep your own comforts, you will lose and spend them quickly. As Jesus Christ is the Lord Treasurer of all our graces, so he is the Lord Keeper of all our comforts; and therefore, when God is pleased to give in any comfort to you, go to Jesus Christ, and say, Lord, keep my comforts for

me, keep my evidences for me, keep my assurance for me: ye must not only depend upon Christ for graces, but for comforts; and as well for the keeping, as for the getting of them. As you have any spiritual comfort from Christ, spend all for Christ: for though in temporal things, the way to have little, is to spend much; yet in spiritual things, the more you spend, the more you have. And therefore, whatsoever comfort you have, spend it with the saints. Do as Moses did: when Moses was in Pharaoh's court, and in great preferment, standing in the presence of the king, he went out to visit his brethren, and to comfort them under their burdens: "I will see (saith he) how it fares with my brethren, under their burdens." So do you also. Hath the Lord spoken peace and comfort to your soul, and do you now stand in the presence of the King of kings, having his face shining on you, with your comforts all restored unto you? Now then go out unto your brethren, and inquire who they are that labour under any burden, and with the same comfort wherewith you have been comforted yourselves, comfort others, knowing this for certain, that the more you spend, the more you shall have, and the longer you shall keep your comforts: yea, and this Christ expects, that what comforts we have from him, we should spend for him. And thus I have also done with this second argument.

03. SERMON III. - SAINTS SHOULD NOT BE DISCOURAGED WHATEVER THEIR CONDITION BE.

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"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me, &c"—Psalms 42:11.

Having spoken of the two first doctrines, the third followeth, which is this: The saints and people of God have no true reason for their discouragements, whatever their condition be.

David had as much cause and reason for his discouragements here as any other, for he did want ordinances, yea, he was kept from the ordinances; therefore, saith he, verses 1, 2, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God?" Yea, after he had known the sweetness of them he was deprived of them, verse 4, "For I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God." And in this condition he had many enemies, he was in the state of affliction and persecution, his enemies reproached him, they reproached him in the matter of his God, and that daily, verses 3 and 10, "While they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? As a sword in my bones mine enemies reproach me, while they say daily unto me, where is thy God?" And he was now under great desertions: though the enemies did reproach him in the matter of his God, yet if God had been present with him, he had been well enough; but they said, "Where is now thy God?" and his own heart said so too, that God had left and forsaken him, which was his failing, verse 9, "I will say unto God, my rock, why hast thou forsaken me?" yet for all this he saith, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" As if he should say, thine enemies do not only reproach thee in the matter of thy God, but thine own heart; thou art now kept from those precious ordinances which once thou didst enjoy; yet why shouldst thou be disquieted or cast down? there is no reason for it. So that the words speak plainly this truth, A godly, gracious man hath no true scripture reason for his discouragements whatever his condition be.

It was a sad condition that the prophet Habakkuk did present unto himself, yet, saith he, chap. 3, "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation," verse 18. But oh, thou servant of God, thou art now under a threatening, and not under a promise, which makes thy very belly to tremble, and wilt thou, canst thou now rejoice? Yes, saith he, verse 16, "When I heard, my belly trembled, my lips quivered at the voice, rottenness entered into my bones; yet will I rejoice in the Lord," &c. But it may be thou thinkest this threatening will never be fulfilled. Yes, saith he, verse 17, "Although the figtree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no meat in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord," &c. But a man may rejoice, though he have no wine to drink or olive to eat, because these are but creatures which are for our refreshment: but wilt thou rejoice, O prophet, if thou wantest thy daily bread, and such creatures as are for our daily nourishment?

Yes, saith he, "Although the field shall yield no meat, and the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stall, yet will I rejoice in the Lord." So that whatever a godly man's condition be, he may rejoice, and there is no true reason for his discouragement.

Indeed, there is no sin so unreasonable, but the sinner thinks he hath reason for it; and so the saints and people of God may think that they have reason for their discouragements: hence it is that they have so many whys and wherefores, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" "Why go I mourning?"

Yea, they may not only seem to have some reason, but, in a way of nature, they have reason for their discouragements; and therefore saith David, "When I saw the prosperity of the wicked, I said, I have cleansed my hands in vain, until I went into the house of the Lord," Psalms 73 : So that, so long as he was in the house of nature, and natural reason, he did see reason for his discouragement.

Yea, not only so, but take things asunder, and consider things by pieces, one from another, abstracting the means from the end, and so the saints may have a true and real reason for their discouragements, for every affliction is grievous. If the husbandman look only upon the breaking up of his ground, without respect to the harvest, he may well be discouraged, but take both together, and so he will not: thus if the saints consider their breakings apart from their harvest, they may see cause for their discouragements; but if they do consider their breaking up and their harvest together, the means and the end together; I say, take all together, and then, whatever their condition be, they have no reason to be cast down or be disquieted.

What is there in or for the saints that may be a sufficient bulwark against all discouragements?

I answer, A godly, gracious man hath propriety and interest in God himself. Some special men and women there are in the world, whom the great God of heaven and earth doth make over himself unto, and they that have him for their God and portion, have no reason to be disquieted whatever their condition be: thus it is with the saints, and therefore the Psalmist doth not barely say, that he would rejoice, but that God was "his exceeding joy," Psalms 43 : Satan may darken this light and joy for a time, but he can never put it out: all the saints and people of God are possessed of this. It is written of Antoninus the Emperor, one of the persecutors in the primitive times, that being environed and compassed about by his enemies, whereby he and all his army in the field were like to be lost for water, he commanded the Christians of his army to pray for rain 5 whereby present relief came to him, his army was preserved, and his enemies destroyed ; whereupon he wrote a letter to the Roman senate in favour of the Christians, and gave this commendation of them in it, That they were a people which were, Deo contenti, content with God, quem circumferunt secum in pectore, whom they did always carry about with them in their bosom : yea, saith he, in that same letter, it is very credible, that although we think them wicked men, Deum pro munimento habere in conscientia, that they have God in their conscience for their bulwark. Thus a heathen, thus an enemy, thus he who was once a persecutor confessed, and shall not we say as much?

Oh but, say some, toile meum et toile Deum, take away that word my, and take away the comfort of that word God; no God to me unless he be my God, and there are many of God's people that cannot say, God is my God, for they do want assurance; and therefore how can they have comfort in this?

Yes, if my very resting on God doth make him mine, I may have comfort in him too; now the saints and people of God may always, and do rest on God, and though Satan saith by way of temptation, you have not believed, you have not rested on God; yet they may say, oh, but now I do rest on God, and so may always have comfort in their propriety and interest in God.

God doth always know them and their conditions. "I know thy works, and thy tribulation, and thy poverty," saith Christ to the church of Smyrna, Revelation 2:9-10 : and this Christ speaks as a relieving comfort to that church in a sad condition; for saith Christ, "Satan shall cast some of you into prison ten days." Yet be of good comfort, Smyrna; I know thee and thy tribulation and poverty; whatever thy condition be, I do know thee in it: and it seems this is a general cordial, for it is given unto all the churches; I know thy works O Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia: it is spoken as a terror, indeed, to Laodicea, for that which is most comfortable to the good is most terrible to the wicked, as the presence of God, the omniscience of God, &c. But to the godly this is a great comfort; whatever my condition be, yet God my Father knows it, and doth know me in it.

God would not have his people be discouraged, and if God their Father and Jesus Christ their Saviour would not have them discouraged, then there is no true reason for their discouragements: now God and Christ would not have his people to be cast down or disquieted whatever their condition be. "Let not your heart be troubled/* saith our Saviour to his disciples, John 14:1. As if he should say, I am now to die, to leave you all, to go to my Father; and when I am gone, you will meet with many troubles, but I would not have you discouraged, let not your heart be troubled. But now if thou diest, we shall then lose thy presence, and what greater trouble or affliction can there be than the loss of thy presence? Well, saith Christ, yet I would not have you troubled at heart; let not your heart be troubled. But if we lose thee, O Lord, we shall lose all the ordinances, and those many sweet opportunities of receiving good for our souls which we have enjoyed by thy presence. Be it so, saith our Saviour, yet I would not have you troubled at the heart; let not your heart be troubled. But, Lord, if we lose thee we shall be as sheep scattered, some will deny thee, all will forsake thee; and when the Shepherd is smitten, we, as sheep, shall be all dispersed, and fall into sad temptations, afflictions and desertions. Well, saith he, however it be, yet I would not have you troubled at the heart, let not your heart be troubled however, this is Christs mind, will and pleasure concerning his disciples. And if you say, how may it appear that God the Father would have his people to be of the same mind and disposition never to be discouraged? It appears plainly, because God hath provided promises of comfort, succour and relief, suitable to all conditions: I dare boldly challenge all men, to shew me any one condition, which God hath not provided a promise of comfort, mercy and succour suitable unto it.

Yea, and if you look upon the promises, and mark them well, you shall find they are so laid, worded and moulded, as that all discouraging objections may be fully answered, and taken off as they rise. For example, suppose the Church of God be under persecution of enemies, Isaiah 54:17, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." But you will say, our enemies, O Lord, are many, they rise up against us, and gather into bodies, and confederate against thy servants; verse 15, he takes off that thus,

Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me, whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake." But, O Lord, they have gotten instruments of death, and the whole

power of the militia and ammunition into their hands. Be it so, saith the Lord, verse 16, "Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work, and I have created the waster to destroy: no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." But, O Lord, they have got authority on their side, and they rise against us in judgment: mark then what follows, verse 17, "And every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn." But this is a promise made unto the Jewish Church only, and not to us. Not so, "this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord," verse 17. So that if you be the servants of the Lord, this promise tells you that it is made to you. But we are in an unbelieving condition, and are not able to lay hold on this promise. Well, but saith this promise, "this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord:" children shall have their inheritance, though for the present they are not able to sue for it, it falls upon them in course. Oh, but we may sin against the Lord, and cut ourselves off from this promise and this inheritance: mark then what follows, "And their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord," not only this promise is of me, but the righteousness, whereby they shall believe, and lay hold on it, and walk under it, is of me, saith the Lord. Oh, how graciously is this promise laid, whereby all unbelieving objections may be taken off! so it is in all the promises; do but observe and mark them, they are so moulded, ordered, worded, as that every word of the promise doth hold forth a distinct answer unto your objections. Now if God have so laid his promises, that all unbelieving objections may be taken off as they rise, what doth this argue, but that God our Father would not have his people discouraged, whatever their condition be? therefore they have no reason for it.

There is no matter of discouragement, which the saints do, or can meet withal, but there is a greater encouragement bound up therewith, or comes along with it: God doth never more graciously appear to his people, than when there is the greatest matter for their discouragement. John lay some years in the bosom of Jesus Christ, whilst Christ lived, but, then he had not the revelation given him; Christ dies, John is afflicted, persecuted, driven into the isle of Patmos, there an exile, and there Christ appears to him, and gives him that blessed book of comfort, the book of the revelation. We read of Jacob, that at one time especially he did so see the Lord, that he called the name of the place, Peniel, "for I have seen the Lord," Genesis 32:30, saith he, and when was that, but when churlish Laban was on one side of him, and his rough brother Esau coming out against him in an hostile way on the other side? Once he had a vision of a ladder, the top whereof was in heaven, and the foot on earth, angels ascending and descending upon it; which in John 1 : Christ interprets to be himself. "You shall see the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man but when had he this vision? not all the while he was in his fathers house, but when he was fain to fly from the anger of his brother, lay in the open field in the night, and had no pillow but an hard stone to lie upon, then doth Christ thus appear to him, and make such a discovery and manifestation of himself, as he never had before. And when was it that Mr. Robert Glover was so filled with heavenly joys, that he cried out, He is come, he is come? Ye read of him in the Book of Martyrs, that for five years together, he was worn out and consumed with fears and troubles; he could neither eat nor sleep, he was so afflicted in his soul upon the apprehension of some backsliding, he thought he must needs be thrown down to bell when he died, yea, he thought, saith the story of him, that he could not more despair in hell, yet after this long time of wrestling with this temptation, it pleased God to come in with comforts : but I say, when was this? why, then especially, when he came within sight of the stake, then he cried out with clapping of his hands, He is come, he is come. Thus doth God, with whom are reserves of mercies, reserve his sweetest

consolations, for the time of our sourest afflictions, and doth temper the one with the other in most fit proportion.

Yea, the Lord doth not only give forth encouragement in time of discouragement, and proportion his encouragements unto our discouragements, but he doth make your discouragements, occasional rises and bottoms, unto your encouragements and comforts. The Lord caused a deep sleep to come upon Adam, and then he took a rib from his side, wherewith he made a help for him; so doth God cause a deep sleep to come upon you in your discouragements, out of which he takes a rib, and builds up a help for you, making the discouragements of the saints, to contribute to their very encouragements. "Behold, saith the Lord, I will allure her (that is the church, his people) and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her, and I will give her, her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope," Hosea 2:14. But a wilderness condition is a lost condition, and what comfort can one have in a lost condition? True, saith God, ye cannot, in and by yourselves, but there I will speak friendly and comfortably to her, and of all the times that I choose to preach gospel to a poor soul, I choose to do it in a wilderness and lost condition. But though the Lord do speak comfortably to us, if we be in a wilderness, a dry and barren place where no food, nor comfort is, how can we be but discouraged? Nay, saith the Lord, but "I will give her, her vineyards from thence:" but if we sin and murmur in the wilderness, as the Israelites did, the Lord will cut us off as he did them, and a wilderness is a place of trouble, wherein we are apt to murmur, and be discouraged : nay, saith the Lord, " But I will give her, her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope " The valley of Achor, was the valley of perturbation, trouble, and of great discouragement, when the men of Israel fled, and fell before the men of Ai, for the sin of Achan, Joshua 7:26; yet it was an inlet to the land of Canaan, to the land of rest. Now, saith the Lord, look as it was with them though the valley of Achor was a valley of trouble and perturbation, yet it was the door by which the Israelites came into the land of rest: so shall it be with you, I will make vour troubles and discouragements, the very door of your hope; the valley of your discouragements shall be the door, and an inlet unto all your rest and comfort. God takes the same way with the members, as he went with the head; Christ's cross was an inlet of glory, his suffering time was the valley of Achor to his disciples, and was it not a door of hope unto them, and unto all the saints? This is God's way; discouragements bring encouragements; and the more discouragements the saints have, the more encouragements they shall have; yea, their discouragements shall contribute to their encouragements, and be a door of hope to them. Now if the valley of Achor shall by promise be a door of hope, why should we be discouraged whatsoever the valley of Achor be, whatever our condition be? A praying man can never be very miserable, whatever his condition be, for he hath the ear of God; the Spirit within to indite, a friend in heaven to present, and God himself to receive his desires as a Father; it is a mercy to pray, though I never have the mercy prayed for; thereby God doth come down to us, and we go up to God. It is the soul's converse with God on earth, and a great ease to a burdened, troubled spirit; for thereby he may go and empty all his heart into the bosom of his best friend. Now every godly gracious man, is a praying man, more or less he prayeth; it is spoken as an argument of Paul's conversion, "Behold he prayeth;" as speech is common unto all men, so prayer unto all Christians; God hath none of his children born dumb; as soon as one of your children is born, it cries, and it sucks, and it sleeps: so with every man that is born of God, as soon as he is born, he cries unto God in prayer, he sucks the breast of the promise, and he sleeps in the bosom of God by divine contentment, being dead unto all the world; it may be he cannot pray as he would, but though he cannot pray as he

would, nor hear as he would, nor perform any duty as he would, yet he prayeth. It may be said of him, "Behold he prayeth turn him where you will, and behold he prayeth: sick, yet behold he prayeth; tempted, yet behold he prayeth; at home or abroad, yet behold he prayeth; and can he be miserable while he prayeth? Surely no, why then should he be discouraged, whatever his condition be?"

If the matter of the saints discouragements, be but a cloud that will blow over and melt away, then no reason for their discouragements, whatsoever their condition be. Now thus it is with the people of God, though they be in a dark, and very dark condition, yet their darkness is but the dark ness of a cloud, and as he said, *Nubecula est, cito transibit*; it is but a cloud, it will soon over. So may they say concerning every matter of their discouragement; It is dark indeed, but this darkness will over; there is a storm comes down upon us, but we shall see land again, the shore again; it is but a cloud, but a cloud. And upon this account David comforted his own heart here, and checked his soul for his immoderate dejection: "Why art thou cast down," &c. "Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him." I shall be delivered, this cloud will over, it will not last, it is but the darkness of a cloud. But how shall it appear that it is but a cloud, and the darkness of a cloud? I think it is night, and dark night with my soul, yea, such a night as shall never know morning. Indeed if I did know that the matter of my discouragement were hut a cloudy darkness, then I would conclude and say, There is no reason for this discouragement: but how shall I know whether this darkness be the darkness of a cloud, or of the night?

If the darkness be such as comes immediately after the rising and shining forth of the promise, then it is but the darkness of a cloud, not of the night: the sun doth not rise to set immediately; and therefore if darkness comes immediately after sun-rising, it is certainly the darkness of an eclipse, or of a cloud, not of the night. There was a fair promise rose and shined upon Joseph, when the Lord said, "that his sheaf should be higher than all the sheaves of his brethren:" yet presently after that there arose a darkness upon him, but it was the darkness of a cloud, and not of the night; why so? because he had a promise first, which did shine upon him. So David had a fair promise of the kingdom, when he was anointed by Samuel; yet a darkness presently rose upon him, but it was the darkness of a cloud only, and not of the night; why? because it was such a darkness as arose immediately after the shinings forth of a promise. And I pray you shew me any Scripture, where you find that ever any darkness arose presently after the breaking, shining forth of a promise, which was more than the darkness of a cloud, which vanished away? Or where do you find in all the Scripture, that ever any poor soul came into the dark, immediately after the giving out of a promise, but that soul did come to the light again? Now as for the darkness that covers the saints, it is usually a darkness that comes after the giving and shining out of a promise; and therefore that darkness is but the darkness of a cloud, and they may say, a cloud, a cloud, and it will pass away.

If a man be so in the dark, as yet he can see to work, and dig up pits, it argues that the darkness is but the darkness of a cloud. A man cannot see to work artificially in the night, but though there be much darkness by reason of a cloud, yet he may see to work, and to dig up pits, because it is day. Now in Psalms 84 : the Psalmist saith, at verse 5, "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, and in whose heart are the ways of them ; who passing through the valley of Baca, dig up pits, the rain also filleth the pits, they go from strength to strength, till they appear before God in Zion." It is an allusion to the practice of the Jews: when some of them went up to Jerusalem, their way lay through the valley of Baca, which was a very dry valley, where no houses were, where no water

was for their relief and refreshment; whereupon they digged up pits, and so the rain fell, and they were refreshed, got strength, and went on to Jerusalem, where they saw the Lord in his ordinances. So saith the Psalmist, "Blessed are they in whose heart the law of God is." There are a generation of men in the world, that have the law of God in their hearts, though they cannot act and work towards God as they would : these sometimes are in a dry and barren condition, where no water or comfort is; yet if in this condition they dig up pits, go to prayer, wait upon God in duty, though they find no comfort springing up in their duty for the present, yet in due time the rain of God's blessing will fill those dry pits and empty duties, whereby their life shall be like unto a pool of water, and they shall go from strength of grace to strength of grace, until they see the Lord. Know ye, therefore, any man that is in this valley of Baca, where no water is, yet if he can find in his heart to dig up pits, to pray, read, hear, meditate, confer, and perform duties; though those duties be empty of comfort for the present, yet the rain of grace and mercy shall fall upon those pits, and he shall go from strength to strength, until he appear before the Lord in glory. Now thus it is with the saints, though darkness, and a great darkness be upon them, yet in that dark condition they are still digging up pits, and therefore this darkness is not the darkness of the night, but the darkness of a cloud, and they may say, this is a cloudy darkness, and it will over ere long.

If the darkness which a man is under be such, as there are some openings of light withal, then it is the darkness of a cloud, and not of the night; though the cloud may cause much darkness, yet ever and anon it opens, and there are some interims of light withal; but the night opens not, there are no interims of light then. Now interims and intermissions of light, are sure and certain pledges of a greater light which is yet to come. You know that when David fled from Absalom, he was in a dark condition, for the text saith, "He went, and he wept," and he went barefoot; his own son persecutes him, drives him from his throne, a great confederacy was raised against him by wicked men, with the child of his own bowels; here was darkness upon darkness, matter of great discouragement, but it was a cloud, and no more.

You will say, how should David have known that it was but the darkness of a cloud?

David prayed, the Lord turn the counsels of Ahithophel into folly; and before David had overcome Absalom, and was restored to his kingdom, Ahithophel did hang himself: David singled out Ahithophel to pray against, and the Lord heard his prayer: that judgment of Ahithophel was the return of David's prayer; here the cloud opened, and this answer of his prayer in the interim, was a seal to David of the full deliverance that came afterwards, for God seals divers matters with the same seal. So when a man is in the dark by reason of some temptation, affliction, or desertion, which he cannot see the end of: if in this interim, before the full deliverance comes, he hath some lesser deliverance, that lesser deliverance in the interim, is a seal unto him of the future deliverance, and he may say, here is a pledge of my full deliverance, for here is the opening of the cloud. Now thus it is always with the people of God; they never are in any affliction, temptation, or desertion, but before their great deliverance comes, they have some special providence, some reviving in the midst of their trouble, some interim, of light, some openings of the cloud; and therefore in the midst of all they may say, surely this my darkness, is not the darkness of a night, but of cloud ; I say, there is no discouragement doth befall the saints, but the matter thereof is a cloud, and they may say, it is but a cloud, it will pass over, and therefore why should they be discouraged? Surely there is no reason for their discouragements whatever their conditions be.

If these things be so, how heavily doth this doctrine fall in reproof upon some, I wish I might not say, some of the servants and people of God! A godly man hath no true reason for his discouragements, whatever his condition is, although it be never so sad; and some are always discouraged, whatever their condition be, although it be never so good 5 whatever falls out, the saints should not be discouraged, no, not at anything, and yet many are discouraged at everything and upon every occasion. Oh, what unworthy walking is this 1 how contrary do you walk to God! And do you know what it is to walk contrary to him? Hath he not said, "If you walk contrary to me, I will walk contrary to you?" But I have reason to be discouraged, for I have no sense and feeling of God's love.

We do not live by feeling, but by faith: it is the duty of a Christian to begin with faith, and so to rise up to feeling: you would begin with feeling, and so come down to faith; but you must begin with faith, and so rise up to feeling. And I pray tell me, is it not sufficient to be as our Master was? Did not Christ want the sense of God's love, when he said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Yea, had not Christ the sense of God's anger upon him when he did perform the greatest act of obedience that ever the sun saw: yet did he then say, I am not the child of God, because I want the sense of God's love, because I am under the sense of God's anger? No, but with the same breath that he said he was forsaken, he said, "My God, my God;" and at the same time he called God Father, "Father, forgive them," &c. So may you do; though God hath forsaken you, though you want the sense of his love, yea, and are under the sense of God's anger; yet at the same time you may say, The Lord is my Father, and you may go to him as your Father: and if you can say, God is my Father, have you any reason for your discouragements? Yet how often are God's own people discouraged and cast down? Oh, you that are the disciples of Christ, labour more and more to follow your Master; and as David here, so do you often say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?"

What a mighty, vast difference, is there between a godly man and a wicked upon this account: a godly, gracious man, hath no reason for his discouragements, whatever his condition be; a wicked man hath no reason for his encouragement, whatever his condition be. A gracious man is apt to be much discouraged, but he hath no true reason for it: a wicked man is apt to be much encouraged, but he hath no true reason for it. It is said of the wicked, Psalms 7 :, "God is angry with the wicked every day : " whatever the day be, God is angry with them; though it be a day of fasting and prayer, yet then is God angry with them; though it be a day of praises and of thanksgiving, then is God angry with them; when he sins most, and when he sins least, God is angry with him; not one day goes over his head, but God is angry with him, and one blow or another God's anger reacheth forth to him every day; he doth not always feel those blows, but God is smiting of him, and is angry with him every day; and therefore, whatever his condition be, there is no reason for his encouragement. Suppose a man were in prison, committed for some great offence, and condemned to die under the displeasure of his prince or state; and his servant should come unto him, saying, Sir, be of good comfort, your wife is well at home, you have very sweet children, an excellent crop of corn, your neighbours love you dearly, your sheep and cattle thrive, and all your houses are in good repair and order: would he not answer that servant, and say, What is all this, so long as I am condemned to die? Thus it is with every wicked man, he is under the displeasure of the great God-, a condemned man, and God is angry with him every day; and if his heart were open to be sensible of it, he would say, You tell me of my friends and goods and name and trade;

but what is all this, so long as I am a condemned person, and God is angry with me every day I rise? but for the present he feeleth not his displeasure, is not sensible of it; yet let him know that there is a day coming, when he will find the truth of this matter no reason for his encouragement, whatever his condition be. And as Saul once cried out, saying, "God hath forsaken me, and the Philistines are upon me;" so shall he cry out and say, God hath forsaken my soul, temptations are now upon me, my sins and guilt are upon me, God hath forsaken me, and the devils are now upon me. But now, as for a godly, gracious man, though his condition be never so sad, and his soul never so much cast down, yet he hath no reason to be discouraged, I say, whatever his condition be. What a glorious condition are the saints in, who would not be in love with this condition; who would not be in Christ; who would not leave the ways of the wicked; who would not be godly? Oh, you that are ungodly, labour to become godly. The exhortation is specially directed to the saints, and with you I must leave a word of exhortation. Take heed and beware of discouragements, of being cast down, you have no reason for it, much reason against it.

Thereby you rejoice the heart of Satan, he claps his hands and laughs to see you cast down, now, oh now, saith he, this man is like to me, I am a despairing spirit, and so is he; I am discouraged and cast down, and so is he; he stands triumphing over you, to see you under these discouragements: when you are sad, he is glad. And as you rejoice the heart of Satan, so you grieve the heart of God; one friend is grieved at the grief, sorrow and discouragement of another, and the more real friendship, the greater is the affliction and trouble of the one, if the other be grieved. Now God is the friend of the faithful, Abraham, the friend of God, actively, passively: God was a friend to him, and he a friend to God; so with all believers; Christ is their friend, "Henceforth call I you no more servants, but friends/" saith Christ; and the Holy Ghost is their friend, for it is the Spirit that comes and dwells in them, and manifests himself to them: and we are said to grieve the Spirit. As God is the worst enemy, so he is the best friend, the truest friend, the most real friend in all the world, therefore when you are cast down and discouraged, you grieve him, you grieve the Father, you grieve the Son, you grieve the Spirit; and do you know what you do when you grieve the Lord? Is it nothing to grieve such a friend?

Thereby you do in some measure, yea, in a great measure, make void and frustrate the end of Christ's coming, who came not only to free us from hell, but from our present fears, e< That being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve him without fear," Luke 1 : And will you then go drooping, discouraged, bowed down under your fears all your days?

Thereby you unfit yourselves for the service of Christ; the passover of old was not to be eaten with any old leaven, the old leaven was to be purged out, and none that were sad and sorrowful were to eat of the holy things. Now, saith the apostle, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast," that is, the gospel feast, "not with old leaven;" and will no bread down with you but leavened bread; sour bread; the bread of mourning? will you thus keep your passover, your Christian feast? Some of you have been doubting, fearing, trembling, cast down, discouraged many years: and is it not yet time to bewail your unbelief; to honour free grace? what, will ye always grieve the Spirit, the Father and Christ; always be frustrating of Christ's work? will ye always be eating old leaven? is it not yet time to say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in him, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

I know indeed that I have no just and scripture reason for my discouragements, but I see there is much reason against it, yet I am one of a troubled spirit, I would fain have it otherwise, that at last I might glorify free grace; what should I do that I may bear up against all discouragements, that I may not be discouraged, whatever my condition be? The only way which the Psalmist useth here is, to hope, trust, believe in God; and how we should use our faith in Christ as that we may not be discouraged, follows after, for the present, take these directions:

1. If we would not be discouraged in any condition, then never lay your comforts upon your condition, nor be in love with any condition for itself; let not your condition itself be the cause or bottom of your encouragements. Hang a cloak or garment upon a rotten peg, and that will break, and the garment will fall down; now there is no condition but is a rotten peg, every condition is alterable, no condition so firm and fast, but is exposed to many changes, it is a rotten hold; God is pillars, his name is Adonai, which signifies so much, and in Isaiah 26 :, we are commanded to trust in the Lord, "For in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength," or "the Rock of Ages." And, saith the Psalmist, "My flesh faileth, and my heart faileth, but God is the Rock of my heart forever," so the Hebrew. Lay your comforts upon your own condition, and you do but build on the sand, which will be carried away with every wind, and storm, and tempest; but if upon Christ himself, upon God himself, ye build upon the Rock, and though the floods, and storms, and winds do rise and beat upon you, yet you shall not lose your comforts, because they are built upon a rock.

2. Be sure that you think of Christ in a right way and manner, as he suiteth with your condition, and as he is. held forth in the gospel. We are very apt to have mis-thoughts of Christ; as Satan doth transform himself into an angel of light, so he would transform Christ before you into an angel of darkness: but the Scriptures hold him forth under such relations as do make him very amiable unto poor sinners. Are you accused by Satan, world, or your own conscience? he is called your Advocate. Are you ignorant? he is called the Prophet. Are you guilty of sin? he is called a Priest, and High Priest. Are you afflicted with many enemies, inward and outward? he is called a King, and King of kings. Are you in straits? he is called your way. Are you hungry or thirsty? he is called Bread and Water of Life. Are you afraid you shall fall away, and be condemned at the last? He is our second Adam, a public person, in whose death we died, and in whose satisfaction we satisfied; as there is no temptation or affliction, but some promise or other doth especially suit therewithal: so there is no condition, but some name, some title, some attribute of Christ doth especially suit with it: and as you do not look on Christ, but in reference to your condition, so you are not to look upon your condition alone, but with Christ's attribute suitable thereunto ; if you look upon Christ's attribute of love without your condition, you may presume; if on your condition without Christ's attribute of love, you may despair: think on both together and you will not be discouraged.

3. If your discouragements begin to arise and press in upon you, check yourself, and say, why should I multiply thoughts without knowledge; why should I tire out my soul with these thoughts; am I able to add one cubit to my spiritual state; am I, by all my thoughtfulness, able to alter my condition; yea, doth not my thoughtfulness set me at a farther distance from the mercy desired? The truth is, the only way to lose the comfort desired, is to be solicitous about it; as the only way to have an outward blessing is to be content to go without it: so the only way to have a spiritual or outward affliction removed, is to be contented that it should be continued, if God and Christ will have it so. But you will have your affliction presently removed, and you must presently know that

you are in the state of grace, and the child of God, or else you will be discouraged, and as the bird in the net, the more it strives, the more it is entangled; so with you also. Wherefore do temptations, afflictions, desertions come, and Satan join with them, and say unto thy soul, This will ever be? answer, Well, but I therefore believe the contrary, because thou sayest so, Satan, who art a liar; yet if God will have it so, I am contented, I leave it to him : whether I shall ever be in this condition or not, is not my question, but now, O Lord, let me serve thee, that is all my desire, let me see thee as thou pleasest, when thou pleasest.

I have done, Lord, I have done; I have been questioning and questioning my condition these many years, I see there is no end of that, yea, the more I do, the more I may, I get nothing by it; why, therefore, oh, my soul, should I tear out myself with this kind of thoughtfulness? thus check yourselves.

4. Whenever you think of anything which is in itself terrible, or matter of discouragement, be sure that you mingle the consideration thereof, with those sweet things which God hath given and prescribed to you. There is nothing terrible, but God hath joined some comfortable thing with it: the name of God is terrible, he is called the great and dreadful God; but to sweeten this, he is called the God of all consolations: death is terrible, it is called the king of terrors; but to sweeten this, it is called a sleep: the day of judgment is terrible; but to sweeten that, our present Advocate shall be our future Judge; yea, our best Friend, and our dear Husband. Now if you abstract the terror of any object from the sweetness of it, no wonder if you be much discouraged. It is our duty to behold things as God presents them, and to take things as God doth give them. What God hath joined together, no man may put asunder. If you consider the sweetness of an object or condition, without the sourness of it, then you may grow too wanton: if you consider the terror of an object or condition, without the sweetness of it, then you may be too fearful: but if you think on both together, then you will fear and believe; and believe and fear, and so be kept from discouragement.

5. If you would not be discouraged whatever your condition be, labour more and more to get your self-love mortified, even religious self-love: all your discouragements are from self-love, not from the venom of your condition, but from the poison of self-love. Oh but I am discouraged, because I have no assurance. Well, but suppose you had assurance, what then? then I should have comfort: and is not here self? Oh but I am discouraged about my everlasting condition. And is not that self? doth not that word condition sound ones self? I dare boldly say, there is no tumult or immoderate discouragement in the soul, but hath self at the bottom. Could I leave myself, and my condition with God and Christ, and mind his service, glory and honour more, God would take care of my comfort: but when I mind myself, and my condition so much, and his service, glory and honour so little, no wonder that I am so much discouraged. Therefore, labour more and more to mortify self-love, and so shall you never be discouraged, whatever your condition be.

6. In case that temptation press in upon you, and urge you to sad discouragements, speak to this purpose unto your own soul. Why should I buy my repentance at so dear a rate? There is none of all these doubtings, unbelieving fears and discouragements, but you will be ashamed and repent of afterwards. You know how it is with the traveller, he thinks the sun is not yet up, and so he loiters and sits down; but the sun creeping up behind the cloud, at last breaks out upon his face, and is got before him, and then he says, O what a fool was I, to think the sun was not up, because

I saw it not, what an unwise man was I thus to loiter and sit down! So it will be with you : you now lie down upon the earth, and your belly cleaves to the dust by reason of your discouragements ; but the grace of God and the love of Christ, is creeping up behind the dark cloud, and it will break out at the last upon you, and shine into your face with the golden beams of mercy; it will prevent you, and be before you ; and then you will say, Oh, what a fool was I to be thus discouraged, what an unworthy creature I, to doubt thus of God's love; I have sinned, I have sinned by all my unbelief: now the Lord pardon me all my doubtings, I am, O Lord, ashamed of these my doubtings and questionings of thy love, pardon them, O Lord, unto my soul. This is that which you must come to, you must at last be ashamed and repent of these your unbeliefs, doubtings and fears, and therefore whenever they press in upon thee, say at the first unto thyself, why should I buy my repentance at so dear a rate, by yielding unto these discouragements? And for this very reason, because that discouragements are to be repented of, therefore the saints and people of God have no reason to be discouraged, whatever their condition be. And thus have I spoken to this truth under a more general consideration; through grace I shall labour to clear it further to you by particulars.

04. SERMON IV - A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF GREAT SINS.

SERMON IV - A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF GREAT SINS.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me, &c". Psalms 42:11. The doctrine or observation that now we are pressing from these words, is this: That the saints and people of God, have no reason for their discouragements, whatever their condition be; no just, true, scripture reason, for their discouragements, whatever their condition be.

It is clear by the words, and proved the last day by some general considerations.

Now more particularly, to make it out by divers instances. Nine things there are, which usually are the grounds and occasions of the discouragements of God's people.

1. Sometimes their discouragements are drawn from their greater and grosser sins.
2. Sometimes they do arise from the weakness of grace.
3. Sometimes they are taken from their failing in and non-acceptance of duty.
4. Sometimes they are drawn from their want of evidence for heaven, and non-assurance of the love of God.
5. Sometimes they do come from their temptations.
6. Sometimes from their desertions.
7. Sometimes from their afflictions.
8. Sometimes from their unserviceableness.
9. Sometimes from their condition itself.

Now if in all these respects, the saints and people of God have no reason to be discouraged, then we may safely conclude, that a godly man should not be discouraged whatever his condition be. I shall labour, therefore, through the grace of Christ, to make out this great truth unto you in all these respects, and begin with the first at this time.

1. Sometimes the discouragements of the saints and people of God, are drawn from their sins, their greater and grosser sins: the peace and quiet of the saints and people of God is many times interrupted by their sins.

Oh, says one, I am a man or woman of a rebellious heart, I have so slight a spirit, so unholy and uneven a conversation, that when I reflect upon my heart and life, I cannot but be discouraged. I know; indeed, it is a great evil for a man to labour under a sore temptation, or a sad desertion; but were my heart good, my life good, my conversation good, I should not be discouraged; but as for me, I have committed and do commit such and such great sins, have I not reason, and just reason now to be discouraged?

No, for discouragement itself is a sin, another sin, a gospel sin; now my sin against the law, is no just cause why I should sin against the gospel. I confess, indeed, there is much evil in every sin, the least sin is worse than the greatest affliction; afflictions, judgments and punishments are but the claws of this lion; it is more contrary to God than the misery of hell: Chrysostom had so great a sense of the evil of it, that when the empress sent him a threatening message, Go, tell her, said he, Nil nisi peccatum metuo: I fear nothing but sin. And, in some respects, the sins of the godly are worse than the sins of others, for they grieve the Spirit more, they dishonour Christ more, they grieve the saints more, they wound the name of God more, they are more against the love, and grace, and favour of God than other men's sins are. And the Lord doth see the sins of his own people; yea, so far he sees sin in them, that he doth chastise and afflict them for it; not only /rom their sin, but for their sin; and therefore, saith the apostle, in 1 Corinthians 11:30, speaking of the unworthy receiving of the Lord's supper, "For this cause many are sick and weak among you." And he doth not speak only of saints in appearance, and in church estate, but of such also as were saints indeed, and therefore he saith, "We are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." He puts himself in; We are judged that we may not be condemned with the world. Our Saviour Christ saith, Revelation 3:19, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, be zealous therefore and repent." It seems, then, it was for sin committed, else why should he say, Repent; and, repent therefore? Repentance is for sin committed already, and these were such as he loved too, whom he threatens thus to rebuke and chastise; and doth any father rebuke, chastise, or correct his child only from, sin, and not for sin? Was not Moses a gracious and a holy man? and yet for his unbelief and sin he lost the land of Canaan. Was not Samson a good man? and yet by his sin he lost his eyes and his life too. Was not David a gracious and a holy man? and yet for his sin the Lord said, "The sword should never depart from his house f and yet Christ had made satisfaction for his sin too, as well then, as for the saints now. But now, though there be never so much evil in the sins of God's people, yet they have no reason, no just cause or scripture reason to be cast down, and to be discouraged in that respect. But how may this appear; that notwithstanding the sins of God's own people do grieve the Spirit of God, are a dishonour to Jesus Christ, and do wound the name of God, and the profession of Christ so much; that yet the saints have no reason to be discouraged or cast down?

1. They know, or they may know, that they shall never be condemned for their sin, whatever it be. "There is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus," saith the apostle. Christ was made sin for them; and if Christ be made sin for me, then my sin shall never hurt me. Luther is bold here, for saith he, Christ is made sin-damning, our sin is sin-damned: I confess, indeed, said he, that I have sinned, but sin-damning is stronger than sin-damned, and Christ was made sin-damning for me. The thing is true, though the expression be strange; Christ was made sin for saints, therefore their sin shall not hurt them. It stands not with the justice of God to exact the payment of one debt twice. Now the Lord Jesus Christ hath not only been arrested, but in gaol for the debt of the saints and people of God, and he hath paid it to the utmost farthing; he hath paid it better than they could have paid it themselves, if they had gone to hell: for if a godly man had gone to hell, and been damned forever, he would have been always paying, but the debt would never have been paid: Christ paid it all down for the present. And if you look into Scripture, you will find, that the Lord doth not condemn a man, no not a wicked man, barely for the act of his former sin, but because he will not turn from it. Psalms 7:11, "The Lord is angry with the wicked every day verse 12, "If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready; he hath prepared for him the

instruments of death, he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutor." The Lord hath prepared instruments of death against every wicked man; but yet, notwithstanding, though a man be never so wicked, if he turn unto the Lord, God will not discharge those instruments of death upon him, yea, though his sins have been never so great; but, saith the text, "If he turn not," (not because he hath sinned before, only, but because he turns not from his sin,) "he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready." Now there is, always, in the saints and people of God, a turning disposition, although they do sin against God; there is always, I say, a turning disposition in them, and therefore the Lord will not discharge the instruments of death upon them: surely, then, they have no reason to be quite discouraged in this respect.

2. As godly men shall never be condemned for their sins, so their sins shall never part God and them. What is the seeming reason why some are so discouraged about their sins? but because they think they shall not only lose the face and presence of God by their sins, but that they shall lose God himself. But now, I say, the sins of the godly shall never part God and them; their sins may hide God's face: but as their sins did not hinder God and their coming together at first, so their sins shall never part God and them: their sins may cause a strangeness between God and them, but shall never cause an enmity; their sins may hide God's face from them, but shall never turn God's back upon them: those whom God loves, he loves unto the end: "I am the Lord that changeth not," saith he. And as the prophet Isaiah speaks: "As the covenant that the Lord made with Noah, such is the covenant that he makes with his people." Now look into Genesis, chapter 8, and you shall see what the covenant is that the Lord made there with Noah, and with the world by Noah. When Noah came out of the ark, he built an altar, and sacrificed; verse 21, "And the Lord smelled a sweet savour, and the Lord said in his heart, I will the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." You would think this were a reason why God should curse the ground again; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; man is wicked, therefore, surely God will curse the ground again: nay, saith the Lord, but though you that are poor creatures think so, yet I, that am the God of all grace, I make this covenant with the world by Noah, that I will not curse the ground any more for man's sake; because the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth continually. I confess, indeed, the Hebrew **■** signifies *quamvis*, although; as well as *quortiam*, because: and it may be so translated; "Although the imagination of man's heart is evil," &c. Yet the Chaldee paraphrase, Septuagint, Hierom and Montanus render it, because. But though it be so translated, yet that is enough to make good the truth and doctrine which I urge from this scripture. The covenant that the Lord makes with his people, is such a covenant as the Lord made with Noah; so saith the prophet Isaiah. What then? Therefore if God be in covenant with a man, he shall never lie under wrath again; for though the world sin, the world shall never be drowned again; and so, though he do sin, he shall never lie under wrath again. Now as for the people of God, they are all in covenant with God, they are under this gracious covenant, and therefore, though the mountains may be removed, God's mercy shall never be removed from them; and though the great hills may be thrown into the sea, the people of God, once in covenant with God, shall never be thrown into hell: and tell me then, have you, that are the people of God, any just cause or reason to be east down, or to be discouraged?

3. If the very sins of God's people, through the overruling hand of grace, shall be an occasion of more grace and comfort to them than ever they had in all their lives before; then surely they have no reason to be discouraged in this respect. Now mark it, and you shall find, that God doth never

suffer his people to fall into any sin, but he intends to make that sin an inlet unto further grace and comfort to them. This ye see in the first great sin that ever was committed by the children of men, the fall of Adam, the Lord himself came and preached the gospel, preached Christ unto fallen man; and surely when God himself preached the gospel, we are to think the man was converted. Now the greatest blessing that ever the world saw, was the righteousness of Jesus Christ; but how came that about? God suffers man to fall, and man's unrighteousness must usher in Christ's righteousness. The Scripture tells us that the Lord suffered Hezekiah to fall, that Hezekiah might know all that was in his heart; he did not know his own heart before, and therefore the Lord let him fall that he might know his own heart. But if you look into the Romans, chapter 11, you shall find in so many words what I am now speaking; verse 32, cc For God hath concluded them all in unbelief." Why? "That he might have mercy upon all." Oh, what a blessed design upon unbelief is here 1 Therefore God concludes all under unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all: sin gets not, but is a loser by every fall of the godly. And if ye look into the Scripture, ye shall observe, that when the people of God fall, usually they fall in that grace wherein they do most excel; and wherein they did most excel, therein they did most miscarry. Abraham did most excel in faith, and therein he did most miscarry: Moses did most excel in meekness, and therein he did most miscarry; we read of no other sin concerning Moses but his anger: Job did most excel in patience, and therein he did most miscarry: Peter did most excel in zeal and resolution for Christ—"Though all the world forsake thee, yet will not I"—and therein he did most miscarry, denying Christ at the voice of a damsel. I say, ye shall observe this, that the saints fell and failed in that grace wherein they did most excel; and they did most excel wherein they did most miscarry: what is the reason of this? but because the Lord, by the over-ruling hand of his grace, did make their very miscarriages, inlets and occasions to their further grace and holiness. God hath a great revenue from the very infirmities of his people. He doth never suffer any of his people to fall into any sin, but he hath a design by that fall, to break the back of that sin they do fall into. Now, then, have the saints and people of God any reason to be discouraged in this respect? By their sin they may be, and are oftentimes suspended from their comforts and use of their privileges; but by their sin they do not lose their right thereunto. Ye know how it was with the leper in the times of the Old Testament, among the Jews; when he was carried out of the city or town, from his own house, by reason of his uncleanness : or now, if a man that hath the plague, and be carried from his own house by reason thereof; the leper then, and the man that hath the plague or the pest now, may say, Though I be removed from mine own house, and have not the use of my house, yet I have a right to my house still; and though I cannot come to the use of my land, yet I have a right to my land still. So a godly man may say as concerning his sin, This sin of mine, indeed, it is a pest, and the plague of my soul, and a leprosy; but though, by this leprosy of mine, I am now suspended from the use of my comforts, yea, from the full use of my interest in Jesus Christ; yet, notwithstanding, I have an interest in Christ still, I have not lost my interest, still I have right to Christ; although I cannot come to the use of him as I did before, yet I have right unto Jesus Christ now, as I had before: and if all these things be so, why should a godly man be cast down or discouraged in this respect? Surely he ought not to be so. But suppose a man's sins be such as never were pardoned before; and truly that is my case, for I have sinned a great sin, and I do not read in all the word of God, any example that ever such a sin as mine was pardoned; have I not reason now to be quite discouraged and cast down?

I answer, No; for, I pray, what do you think of Adam? Adam sinned a great sin in our first fall: the Lord himself came and preached the gospel to him, "The seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head." Should Adam have said, oh, but there is no hope for me, for I have no example or precedent of pardon? Adam could have no example of any that was pardoned before him, because he was the first man, and the first that sinned. Should he have sat down and been discouraged, because he could not find any example for the pardon of the like sin that he had committed? You know what our Saviour Christ said, "every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven, unless it be the sin against the Holy Ghost;" every sin, though it be boiled up to blasphemy. You say, you have no example for the pardon of such a sin as your's is; but doth not your sin come within the compass of these words, "every sin and blasphemy?" Surely it doth. Have ye any reason then to be discouraged under the power of this objection? But suppose that a man have sinned greatly against his conscience, or against his light, against his knowledge, hath he not just cause or reason then to be cast down, and to be quite discouraged?

No; for if there be a sacrifice for such a sin as this is, then a man hath no reason to be quite discouraged; cause to be humbled, as you shall hear afterward, but no reason to be discouraged. Now in the times of the Old Testament, in times of the law among the Jews, there was a sacrifice, not only for sin committed ignorantly, but also for sin committed against light and against conscience: and I appeal to you, whoever you are that make this objection, do you not think that Peter, when he denied his Lord and Master, sinned against his conscience, against his light, and against his knowledge? Surely then there is no reason that a man should be quite discouraged, no not in this respect. But suppose that a man's sins be exceeding great, gross, and heinous; for I do confess that possibly a godly man may sin some sin against his light, and against his conscience sometimes; but as for me, my sin is exceeding great, gross and heinous, and have I not just cause and reason now to be discouraged?

No, not yet, for though your sin be great, is not God's mercy great, exceeding great? is not the satisfaction of Christ great? are the merits of Christ's blood small? Is not God, the great God of heaven and earth, able to do great things? You grant that God is almighty in providing for you; and is he not almighty also in pardoning: will ye spoil God of his almightiness in pardoning? You say your sin is great, but is it infinite; is there any more infinities than one, and that is God? Is your sin as big as God, as big as Christ; is Jesus Christ only a Mediator for small sins; will you bring down the satisfaction of Christ, and the mercy of God, to your own model? Hath not the Lord said concerning pardoning mercy, that his "thoughts are not as our thoughts, but as the heavens are greater than the earth, so are his thoughts (in this respect) beyond our thoughts." Hath not the Lord said, in Isaiah xliii, unto the people of the Jews, at verse 22, "But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel." Verse 23, "Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offering, neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices." Verse 24, "Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifice; but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thy iniquity." Yet, verse 25, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgression for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Here are sins, and great sins; and if the Lord will therefore pardon sin because it is great, unto his people; then surely they have no reason to be quite discouraged in this respect. Now look what David saith in Psalms 25:11, "For thy name sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity for it is great." Mark his argument, "Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great:" if David use

this reason, then may you also; and if this be a reason why God should pardon sin, because it is great; then this cannot be a reason, a just reason, why you should be discouraged. But suppose that a man's sin be the sin of revolting, declining; for this is my case, will some say: I have striven, and striven against my sin a long while, and I return unto it again. Times were heretofore, that I have been exceeding forward and ready unto what is good; but now I am much declined, abated, and even gone backward with revolting, and deep revolting, and I have lain long so, even for many years. Have I not reason, and just reason now to be discouraged and cast down within myself?

I answer, No, not yet; for though this be a sufficient cause of great humiliation (for backsliding in scripture phrase is called rebellion, and rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft), yet a good man hath no reason to be discouraged in this regard; for thus saith the Lord, Jeremiah 3:1, "they say, if a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again unto me, saith the Lord." And, verse 12, "Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever." And again, verse 14, "Turn O backsliding children, for I am married unto you." And if ever the Lord Jesus Christ did betroth himself unto any soul, he will never put that soul away again: "I hate putting away," saith God. Men put away their wives among the Jews, but saith the Lord, "I hate putting away." And Isaiah 1:1, "Thus saith the Lord, where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away, or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?" Among the Jews, the husband did put away his wife upon small occasions. As for adultery, you know that was death; he did not put away his wife upon adultery, she was to die for it: but the husbands put away their wives upon other occasions, and when they put away their wives, they gave the wife a bill of divorce, that so upon all occasions the woman might shew thereby that she was free from such a man. Now, saith the Lord, you that charge me, and complain that I have put you away, come and shew me the bill of divorce: "Thus saith the Lord, where is the bill," &c. Poor soul, thou complaineest that I have put thee away, come then and shew me the bill of divorce: let anyone who complains that I have put him away and cast him off, come and bring out his bill of divorce; this ye cannot do: men indeed put away, but if ever the Lord Christ doth match himself unto thee, he will never put thee away again. And whereas you say, that you are declined, and have much, revolted, and so have continued even many years, consider whether you be not mistaken; every abatement in affection is not a declining in grace: possibly we may not grieve for sin afterward so much as at our first conversion, yet we may hate it more: at first you may pray more against it, yet afterward watch more against it. We never see the face of sin so ugly, as in the glass of God's free love, and do you not see the free love of God more? Possibly your affections might be higher at the first, but is not conviction more clear and full? As affections dry up, so we grow more settled in our judgment; and if your judgment be more settled, you are not declined, though your affections be somewhat abated. And whereas you say, that you have returned to your sin again and again, and have continued under your revolt for many years; I shall only tell you what Mr. Bilney, a blessed martyr once said. Hearing a minister preach very terribly against sin, and saying thus, Behold, thou old sinner, thou hast lain rotting in the grave of thy sin these threescore years, and dost thou now think to go to heaven in one year? dost thou think to go forward to heaven more in one year, than thou hast gone backward to hell these threescore years? Ah, said Mr. Bilney, here is goodly preaching of repentance in the name of Christ! had I heard such doctrine preached heretofore, my poor soul had despaired forever; but, saith he, the

Lord Christ died for sinners, young sinners and old sinners, for one as well as the other; such as have lain long in sin, as well as those that have lain but a little while in sin, if they will come home unto Christ. And you know what our Saviour saith, "If thy brother transgress against thee, forgive him." But, Lord, he hath transgressed against me once, and I have forgiven him: yet, saith our Saviour, forgive him again. Oh but, Lord, I have forgiven him again and again, and yet he returns to his fault again: then forgive him again, saith Christ. But, Lord, how often shall I forgive my brother? Saith our Saviour, if he sin against thee seventy-seven times, and says that he doth repent, do thou forgive so oft. And now shall the Lord Jesus Christ enjoin us to forgive our brother, if he sin against us seventy-seven times; and will not the Lord Christ forgive much more, if a poor soul do turn unto him and say, Lord, I repent me that I have sinned against thee. Will the Lord Christ command me a poor sinner to forgive so many times; how often will the great God forgive? what, seventy-seven times! nay, seven hundred times seven hundred. And have ye any reason then to be discouraged in this respect? surely you have not. But suppose that a man hath sinned foully, greatly, and lie cannot repent, or be humbled enough: for that is my case; I have sinned, I have sinned greatly, and now after all, my heart is hard, and I cannot be humbled enough, oh, I cannot repent enough: hath he not just cause and reason for his discouragement now, yea now to be quite discouraged?

No, not yet, for what if the Lord will have your humiliation from you by degrees? Should you be so, or so much humbled for the present, it maybe it would be with you as it hath been with others, you would never think of your sins afterward; but may be the Lord will have this work of humiliation to stay long upon thy soul, and he will not give it you all at once. Some there are, that when they come into a house, they pay a great income and little rent, others pay a little income and a great rent: so it is with souls that come to Christ; some at the first lay down a great humiliation, and they have lesser of it afterward ; some have less at the first, and have more afterwards by continuance in it: and what now if the Lord will lead thy soul in this latter way? this latter way may be the better way if the Lord think fit.

Again: it may be, that if you had so much, or so much humiliation now at the first, you would think, that in, and by, and for your humiliation you should have acceptance with God, and the remission of your sin; if you be kept off from this rock and danger, by your want of that decree of humiliation, which you would have, and so be trained up to prize the Lord's free grace in giving you humiliation, have you any cause to complain?*

Again: if you had so much, or so much humiliation for the present, it may be then, you would have the less humility; a little humility, is as good as a great deal of humiliation, as good being humble, as being humbled. Now because thou art not humbled, therefore thy soul is kept humble; hadst thou many tears, and abundance of tears, may be then thou wouldest be proud, but the Lord doth deny thee tears, and thou art not humbled to the degrees of thy own desires, and so the Lord keeps thee humble by the want of thy humiliation.

Again: it may be, that if you were humbled so, or so much at the present, or at the first, you would have the less fear of your own heart. The more humbled, it may be, the less after-fear, and the less humbled, the more after-fear, the less humbled, sometimes, the more a man fears his own heart and his own condition. Gracious fear is as good as humiliation, and if that which you want in humiliation you have it made up in fear, have you any reason to be discouraged? I know it is usual

with Satan, to say unto the people of God at their first coming on to Christ, that they are not humbled enough, and so keeps them off from mercy and grace. But, I pray, tell me, can ye ever be humbled enough? Can there be any proportion between your sins and your humiliation? The truth is, we should labour that our humiliation be answerable to our sin; but God is not pleased with grief for grief, God is not pleased with sorrow for sorrow; the end of all our sorrow and grief is, to embitter our sin to us, to make us to prize Jesus Christ, to wean us from the delights and pleasures of the creature, to discover the deceitfulness and naughtiness of our own hearts. In scripture phrase, and language of the New Testament, repentance is called an after-wisdom, an after-mind, μετανοία, a bethinking of ones self, it is called a conviction; now though you be not humbled unto the degree which you do desire, yet notwithstanding, do you not bethink yourself, are you not convinced of the evil of your former way? hath not the Lord now given you an after-wisdom? and do not you say concerning your sin, Oh, if it were to do again, I would not do it for all the world? Thus it is with the servants and people of God, though they cannot be humbled so much as they would be, yet notwithstanding, they are thus far humbled, thus far grieved, that their sins are embittered, and themselves thereby weaned from the delights and pleasures of the world, convinced of the evil of their sin, and what they want in humiliation they have it in humility, the less humbled, the more they are kept humble, and what they do want at the first, they have it afterwards by degrees, soaking into their souls. Have they then any reason to be discouraged in these respects? surely, no. But should not a godly, gracious man be fully grieved and humbled for his sin?

Grieved, humbled for his sin? yes, surely: though the Lord, through the over-ruling hand of his grace, do work never so much good out of my sin unto me, yet I am to be humbled for it, and the rather to be humbled for it, because he works good out of it. I have read indeed of the mother of those three learned men, Lombard, Gratian, and Comaestor, the three great pillars of the Roman Church, for Lombard wrote the Sentences, and Gratian the Popish Decretals, and Comaestor, Historiam Scholasticam, that when she lay on her death-bed, and the priest came unto her, and called upon her for repentance of her whoredoms, for these three, Lombard, Gratian and Comaestor, were her bastards, as the very popish writers do record it, and he, telling her that she must be greatly afflicted, grieved and humbled for her uncleanness, or else she could not be saved, why, said she, I confess, indeed, that whoredom and uncleanness is a great sin, but considering what a great deal of good hath come to the church of God by my sin, that three such great lights have been brought forth into the world by my sin, non valeo penitentiam agere, I cannot, I will not repent. And thus it is with many poor ignorant souls, when they see, how the Lord by his over-ruling hand doth work good unto them out of their sin, as some outward blessings and mercies, they do not repent of their sin, but rather justify themselves in their sins: but now take a godly man, a gracious soul, and the more that he sees the Lord working good out of his sin, the more he is humbled for it; and upon that very ground, because God works good of it therefore he is humbled the more.

Yet further; it is observed, that though the Lord did ordinarily call David his servant, yet when David had sinned that great sin, he sent the prophet to him, saying, Go, say to David; he had lost the title of servant, now' bare David, now' single David, now David without the title my servant. And so, though God ordinarily called the people of Israel his people, yet when they had committed that great sin of idolatry, in the matter of the golden calf, the Lord doth not call them his people, but he

saith to Moses, The people, not My people, but The people, and Thy people, Moses; now they had lost their old title. Thus, I say, the sins of God's own people do deprive them, and divest them of their spiritual privileges, and can a gracious heart look upon this, and consider how he is divested and disrobed of his spiritual privileges, and not mourn under it? Can one friend grieve another friend, and not be grieved himself? The saints by their sins, they grieve God, who is their best friend, and therefore certainly they must needs be grieved, they must needs be humbled, or there is no grace; not grieved, not humbled, not gracious. But now because they are grieved, and humbled for sin committed, therefore they are not discouraged; I say, because they are grieved, and because they are humbled for sin committed, therefore they are not discouraged, for discouragement is a hindrance to humiliation, and the more truly a man is humbled for sin committed, the less he is discouraged, and the more a man is discouraged, the less he is truly humbled.

You will say, then, but what is the difference between these? a man is to be humbled, and not discouraged, not discouraged and yet to be humbled, what is the difference between these two, being humbled and being discouraged?

It is a profitable question, and worth our time: by way of answer, therefore, thus, When a man is humbled, truly humbled, the object of his grief, sorrow or trouble, is sin itself, as a dishonour done unto God: the object of discouragement is a man's own condition, or sin in order to his own condition, the ultimate object of discouragement being a man's own condition. When a man is discouraged, you shall find still, that his trouble runs all out upon his own condition. Oh, saith a discouraged person, I have sinned; I have thus sinned, and therefore my condition is naught, and if my condition be naught now, it will never be better; Lord, what will become of my soul? Still his trouble is about his own condition. But when a man is grieved and truly humbled for sin, his trouble is about sin itself, as a dishonour done unto God. To clear this by Scripture: you know Cain was discouraged, but Cain was not humbled; how may that appear? Cain was troubled about his condition. Ah, saith he, my punishment is greater than I can bear. On the other side, the poor prodigal was humbled, but not discouraged: how may that appear? his trouble was about his sin, and not about his condition: "I will return unto my Father (saith he), and I will say unto him, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and I am no more worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants." David was sometimes both discouraged and humbled, and then you find his repentance and humiliation to be very brackish; but if you look into the list Psalm, you shall find David humbled but not discouraged, for it is a penitential Psalm, therefore humbled but not discouraged, for still he did keep his assurance; verse 14, "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation." But what was his repentance, his trouble about? It was about his sin, and not about his condition, read verse 23, and so on: "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin, for I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me; against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Still, ye see, his eye is upon his sin, and not upon his condition only. So that I say, when a man is truly humbled and grieved for sin, the object of his grief is sin, as a dishonour done unto God: when a man is discouraged and not humbled, then his trouble is all about his condition, and what will become of him.

True humiliation, it is no enemy, but a real friend unto spiritual joy, to our rejoicing in God. The more a man is humbled for sin committed, the more he will rejoice in God, and rejoice that he can

grieve for sin. He grieves, and rejoiceth that he can grieve for sin, therefore humiliation, by our Saviour Christ, is made an effect of the Comforter: "I will send the Comforter, and he shall convince the world of sin." Because there is comfort always goes along with true humiliation, it is not an enemy but a friend to our spiritual rejoicing; but discouragement is an enemy to spiritual joy. A man that is discouraged is grieved, and he is sad upon his grief, and if ye tell him that he must rejoice in God, and call upon him to rejoice in God, oh no, saith he, it is not for me to rejoice, I am a man of another disposition, joy doth not belong to me, or to one in my condition: but now, when a man is truly humbled, the more he is humbled for sin, the more he can rejoice in God, but the more a man is discouraged, the less he rejoiceth in God. The more a man is humbled, truly humbled for sin, the more he is found in duty; the more a man is discouraged, the more his hands are weakened to duty: as it is with the water, if the water do continue in its true stream, it doth not overflow the banks, it doth not break down the dam : sometimes you have a great fall of water, a great and mighty flood, and then the river overflows the banks, and the water bears down the dam. So here, duty is the bank of sorrow, grief and humiliation for sin; I say, your duties are the banks of all your godly sorrow, and when a man's sorrow or grief doth arise to such an height, that it swells over duty, and a man saith, I will pray no more, it is to no purpose; and I will hear no more, for there is no hope for my soul; and I will examine my own heart no more : when thus sorrow swells over duty, and breaks down the dam of duty, then it is discouragement, it is not humiliation : be not mistaken, this is not 'humiliation, this is a plain discouragement. There is a great difference then, between discouragement and humiliation. Many people indeed do call their discouragements, humiliation; but the Lord knows, there is not a drop of humiliation in a flood of discouragement: would you therefore be humbled? Oh, then, be not discouraged; for the more you are discouraged, the less you will be humbled; and the more humbled you are, the less discouraged you will be. But if there be such a great difference between these, and if it be our duty, to be humbled for sin, but not to be discouraged; what should a man do to bear up his heart to the work of humiliation, and yet bear up against all discouragement? How shall I be so humbled, as I may not be discouraged? or what shall a man do that he may be humbled, and yet not be discouraged in his humiliation?

Let Christians carry this rule always up and down with them, namely, that a man is to be humbled for his sin, although it be never so small, but he is not to be discouraged for his sin, though it be never so great. Both these parts are true; a man is not to be discouraged under his sin, although it be never so great; because discouragement itself is a sin, and that cannot help against sin, sin cannot help against sin. A man is to be humbled for his sin, although it be never so small, for it is a dishonour to God, and little sins make way to great sins. So, then, if thou wouldest be humbled, and not discouraged, carry this rule up and down with you, and always remember it upon all occasions: It is my duty, and I have reason to be humbled for my sin, although it be never so small; but I have no reason to be discouraged under my sin, though it be never so great. In all your humiliation, be sure that you never part or separate those things that God hath joined together: God hath joined commandment and promise together, the promise and the commandment are born twins; there is never a commandment that you read of, but hath a promise annexed to it, a promise of assistance, a promise of acceptance, and a promise of reward. If you look upon the commandment itself without the promise, then you will despair; if you look upon the promise without the commandment, then you will presume: but look upon promise and commandment, commandment and promise together, then ye will be humbled, in case ye have sinned, but ye will not be discouraged. The Lord, you know, hath given two eyes to man, and if a man should put out

one, and say, I can see well enough with the other, what need I have two? he should sin greatly. So for the soul, the Lord hath given two eyes, as I may so speak; the eye of conscience, which is to look upon God's commandment; and the eye of faith, which is to look upon God's promise : and if any man will say, I will put out the eye of faith, I can see well enough with the eye of conscience upon God's commandment, he shall do ill, and very ill: and if a man shall say, I will put out the eye of conscience, for I can see well enough with the eye of faith, he shall do very ill. But whenever you find you have sinned against any commandment, presently say, where is the promise? I may not look upon the commandment without the promise, nor the promise without the commandment. Thus, join both together, and you shall not be discouraged, yet be humbled. In all your humiliation, take heed that you do not mourn for your sin only in order to your condition, but rather mourn over your condition in order to your sin. Humiliation, you have heard, is objectated upon sin itself, as a dishonour to God; the object of our humiliation is sin itself, as a dishonour done unto God: but now the object of our discouragement, you have heard, is our condition, only our condition. Well, then, would you be humbled so as you may not be discouraged? take heed that you do not stand poring only upon your condition, but rather say thus unto thine own soul; Oh, my soul, thou hast been much mistaken, the Lord pardon it, for all this questioning hath been about thy condition, and what will become of thee; and if at any time thou hast grieved for sin, it hath been in order to thy condition, because thy condition is naught, and because thou didst not know what should become of thee: but now, if thou wouldst be truly humbled, and not be discouraged, then lay aside a little the thoughts of your own condition, and pitch upon sin as a breach of God's law, a transgression of the law of God, a dishonour done to God, and as a breach of the law of love between Christ and you. Thus, I say, if you would be humbled, and not discouraged, rather mourn over your condition in order to your sin, than for your sin in order to your condition. In your humiliation, take heed that you do not meddle too much with God's prerogative and with God's peculiar. In humiliation, a man is to meddle with that which belongs to man: some things there are that are peculiar to God and are his prerogative. You see how it is with the birds of the air; so long as the birds fly up and down here in the air, they do live comfortably; but if the birds do fly up to the element of fire, it will burn their wings, and they will fall down headlong. So here, so long as a man in his humiliation keeps within his own compass and element, he may walk comfortably there; but if a man in humiliation, will soar up unto God's prerogative, certainly his soul will fall down upon the earth and be much discouraged. Now, I pray, what is more the prerogative and peculiar of God than this, to know who is a reprobate and who is not? When a man is humbled and grieved about his sin, and he finds that he hath sinned much against God, and thereupon he concludes himself to be a reprobate, is not this to come upon God's prerogative? The Scripture tells a man, indeed, what he is for the present: That a man for the present is a drunkard, or a swearer, or a sabbath-breaker, or an adulterer; and therefore the Scripture tells him for the present, that he is in the state of nature, and under the wrath of God: but doth the Scripture tell him that he is a reprobate, that he can never be converted and turned to God? Surely this is God's great prerogative to know, his secret which he reserves to himself; and therefore when a man goes to be humbled before God, and concludes, Oh, I am a reprobate, and there is no hope for me, and I shall never be converted; this is to soar too high into God's prerogative, and he will burn his wings, and he will fall down into great discouragement. Therefore, in all your humiliation, take heed that you do not fall upon any thing that is the peculiar and prerogative of God, for then you will not be humbled but discouraged. The more you are humbled and grieved by the sight of God's free love and grace, the more you will be

humbled and the less discouraged. When you come to humiliation, you are humbled, because you have sinned against God; but how do you present this God to your own soul: do you present him as a Judge only, or as a Father also: do you present the Lord unto your soul only under the notion or attribute of his greatness, or under the notion and attribute of his goodness also? Luther said thus: When my heart is brisk and jolly, I present God unto myself under the notion of his greatness; but when my heart is low and fearing, then I present God to me under the notion of his goodness: one while I consider Christ as my example, another while as my gift: when my heart is too high, then I consider Christ as my example; when my spirit is too low, I consider Christ as my gift. So do you also. I know you will say, I cannot sometimes present the Lord unto my soul under the notion of a Father, because I have no assurance of his love. Yet you may consider the Lord as gracious in himself, as good in himself, and loving in himself, and say, I have thus and thus sinned against a gracious God, and although thou hast not assurance of God's love to thee in particular, yet if you can present God to your soul, under the notion of his general goodness, as good in himself, you will never be discouraged, but be humbled.

If you would be truly humbled, and not be discouraged; not discouraged, and yet humbled; then beat and drive up all your sins to your unbelief, and lay the stress and weight of all your sorrow upon that sin. As in matter of thankfulness, if a man do run up every mercy, unto the fountain mercy, the blood of Jesus Christ, he will be most thankful: so in the matter of humiliation, if a man do run up every sin unto the fountain, the head sin, he will be most humbled. Now what is the great sin, the fountain sin, the head sin of all your sins, but unbelief; and believe it, he is never far from faith, that is humbled for his unbelief, and he will never be discouraged that is not far from faith. Now therefore, if at any time you find your soul in any sin, then say, this hath my unbelief done, I did not think that I had had such an unbelieving heart; oh, what an unbelieving heart have I! This, even all this sin hath my unbelief brought forth. Now the Lord heal my unbelieving heart. A soul grieved for unbelief will never be discouraged too much, nor be humbled too little: he will be humbled in truth for sin, because he is humbled for his unbelief, which is the mother sin; yet he will not be discouraged, because he is humbled for that which doth cause all discouragements. Lay therefore the weight of your sorrow upon this sin, and you shall be truly humbled without unjust discouragement. And thus I have despatched the first particular: by all which you see, that a gracious, godly man, though he hath just cause for humiliation, yet he hath no just and scripture reason to be discouraged for his sin; though he have sinned, and sinned greatly, yet no discouragement is to grow upon this condition. And thus I have done with the first instance.

05. SERMON V. - A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF WEAK GRACE.

SERMON V. - A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF WEAK GRACE.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me, &C."—Psalms 42:11.

II. Sometimes the discouragements of the saints do arise from the weakness of their graces.

Oh, says one, I am a poor, feeble, and a weak creature: some are strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, who do a great deal of service for God in their day; but as for me, I am a poor babe in Christ, if a babe, and so am able to do little or nothing for God. Therefore I am thus discouraged and cast down 5 have I not just cause and reason for it?

No, for "God is able to make all grace to abound towards you, that ye always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work," 2 Corinthians 9:8. And if God have recompensed your weakness with wisdom, then surely you have no cause to complain of your weakness. Sometimes weakness is recompensed with Wisdom 5 for, says Solomon, Proverbs 30:24, "There be four things that are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise:" the ants, the conies, the locusts, and the spider. Wherein doth the wisdom of the ants consist? He tells you in verse 25, "The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in summer." In time of plenty they do lay up for the time of want. Wherein doth the wisdom of the conies consist? He tells you in verse 26, "The conies are a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks:" though they be weak in themselves, yet they dwell in strong places. Wherein doth the wisdom of the locusts appear? He tells you in verse 27, "The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands:" though they be weak alone, yet they do join together, and so are strong. But wherein doth the wisdom of the spider consist? He tells you in verse 28, "The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' chambers:" though the chamber of a king is most swept and cleansed, yet by the industry of her hands she doth take hold on the beams thereof, and dwells on high, out of danger. So that, although these creatures are weak and feeble in themselves, yet by their wisdom, their weakness is recompensed, and they save themselves from injury and wrong, as well as if they were stronger. Now shall the ant, cony, locust and spider, be wise in their kind, and shall not a Christian be so? True, saving grace is the best wisdom; every godly man is a wise man, and though he be but weak in grace, yet he hath true wisdom: the wisdom of the ants, to provide in summer against a rainy day; the wisdom of the conies, to build in the rock Christ; the wisdom of the locusts, to join with others; and the wisdom of the spider, to take hold on those beams of the promises, which are in the chamber of our King, Christ. And if God have thus recompensed your weakness with this wisdom, why should you then complain? But is it then no disadvantage for a man to be weak in grace?

Yes, much, very much; there are many disadvantages which a weak Christian lies under, that a strong Christian doth not. Ye see how the weak fire lies sobbing under the disadvantage of green wood, which the strong fire doth not; so doth Christ as smoking flax lie under many disadvantages, which the strong Christian doth not. As,

Though a man have truth of grace, yet if he be but weak in grace, he is more apt and ready to stumble and fall, and to be turned out of the way. "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees," saith the apostle, Hebrews 12:12, "Lest that which is lame be turned out of the way." A weak man is more apt to fall than a strong; and if he do fall, he is more unable to rise again. A strong man fallen, is quickly up again; but the weak falls, and is ready to fall again when he rises: so it is with a weak Christian, he stumbles often and is apt to fall; and if he have fallen, he is even ready to fall again when he goes about to rise.

He is more easily quenched, in regard of his comforts, than the strong Christian is. A strong Christian will improve that for himself which seems to be against him; but the weak Christian will improve that against himself which is in truth for him. When our Saviour Christ said to the woman of Canaan, "It is not lawful to cast childrens bread before dogs;" she made an advantage of those words, and thereby did gather in upon Christ, saying, "True, Lord, but the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the table." Thus she improved that for herself, which seemed to be against her: why? because she was strong in faith; "O woman," saith our Saviour, "great is thy faith." But when the angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah, Judges 13, he said to his wife, "We shall surely die, because we have seen the Lord." Thus he improved that against him, which did make for him, as his wife truly interpreted the thing, verse 23: why so, but because he was weak in faith. The strong fire burns the more by the very water that is cast upon it, but the weak fire is quenched by the very fuel, wood, or coal that is cast on it, so a weak Christian also is apt to be quenched, even by those very truths and dispensations whereby he should burn and blaze out the more.

He cannot glorify God as the strong Christian may and doth. One sun doth glorify the Creator more than an hundred other stars, because there is much light met in one body; and one strong Christian doth glorify God more, than an hundred lesser, weak saints, because there is much light and grace met in one person. "He that offereth praise, glorifieth me," saith God, Psalms 1:23.

It is an hard thing for the weak Christian to praise God, for he often doubteth of God's love, and therefore cannot praise him as he should; but the strong Christian may, he can say, Blessed be the Lord for this or that mercy, for it comes from love to me. The more a man doth believe above hope and under hope, and the less he doth live by sense, the more he glorifies God. Now the strong Christian is able to exercise his faith in this kind, for says the apostle Paul, "Abraham considered not his own body, but being strong in faith, was persuaded that God was able, and so did give glory unto God," Romans 4 : A weak faith cannot do so, for saith the apostle, verse 13, "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." It seems then that it is the strong, and not the weak faith which doth give glory to God. And would ye know wherein this strong faith differs from the weak faith, in regard of its operation? why, says the apostle, the weak faith staggers at the promise, which the strong faith doth not; the weak faith doth attend too much unto second causes, which the strong faith doth not; the Weak faith judges by what it sees and feels within, but the strong doth not, but by the word without; and therefore it is strong faith which doth give glory unto God especially. A strong Christian will do great things for God, a weak Christian can do but small things, for his strength is but small, and his soul little. Now the greater things we do for God, the more we glorify him. A strong Christian can mind and tend the public, but a weak Christian cannot. I have enough to do at home, saith he, oh, that my own everlasting condition were but settled, and then would I mind the public too. A strong Christian is able to wait

long on God; he that waiteth long with quietness, honours God: but as your weaker children cannot stay long for what they would have, but must be served presently; so the weak Christian also cannot wait long on God for what he would have: but the strong Christian doth. A strong Christian is helpful unto others. "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak," Romans 15 : And again, "Him that is weak in the faith receive you," 14:1. Children and babes are fit to be carried in others arms, but are not able to carry others. The weak Christian is apt to be offended with others, to censure and judge others, and so to make burdens for others to bear, Romans 14:1-2. But the strong Christian is a bearing Christian, a carrying Christian, one that can displease himself that he may help another. Now the more serviceable and helpful a man is to others, the more he glorifies God; thus the strong Christian is, but the weak cannot in all these things give glory to God as the strong Christian may. Surely therefore there are many disadvantages which a weak Christian lies under, that the strong Christian doth not.

Yet there is no reason why he should be discouraged. For weakness doth not exclude from mercy, but inclines God unto mercy, rather. Psalms 6:2, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak." It is spoken of an outward weakness; and if that which is less doth incline God to mercy, then much more that which is greater. And if he have as great an interest in Christ, as many promises to run unto, and as many embraces of love from God the Father, as the strong Christian hath; then there is no just cause why he should be cast down in regard of his weakness.

Now so it is, though your grace be never so weak, yet if ye have truth of grace, you have as great a share and interest in the righteousness of Christ for your justification, as the strong Christian hath. You have as much of Christ imputed to you, as any other. It may be you have gathered less of this manna, for your spending sanctification; but if you be an Israelite indeed, you have so much of this manna, as that you have no lack: for it is said of the Israelites, They gathered some more, some less; yet he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; all which figured that equal proportion, saith Mr. Ainsworth, which all believers have in Christ, the spiritual manna. And if ye look into Scripture, where do God's promises fall more thick, than upon those that are weak in grace? Christ begins his preaching with the promises, Matthew 5; and I pray, what are those persons whom the promises are especially made unto, but such as are weak in grace? "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness. Blessed are those that mourn." He doth not say, blessed are those that are strong in grace; or blessed are those that rejoice in God; or those that have full assurance of their everlasting estate and condition: no, but as if his great work and business were to comfort, uphold, and strengthen the weak, these he begins withal, and many gracious, rich and blessed promises he doth make to them. Yea, the promises are so made to them, as, attended to, will give a full answer unto all their fears: as, for example, the Lord promises, Matthew 12, "That he will not break the bruised reed," &c. Will the weak Christian say, oh, but I am exceeding weak, and very feeble: then our Saviour says, "He will not break the bruised reed." And what more weak and feeble than a bruised reed? an whole reed is not very strong at the best, but bruised it is weak indeed. Will the weak Christian say, oh, but my weakness is mingled with many sins; so the fire in the smoking flax is mingled with smoke, yet says Christ, u I will not quench the smoking flax." ill the weak Christian say, Oh, but, though God do not quench me, yet I shall be quenched; Nay, saith Christ, but I will bring forth judgment unto victory;" it lies on my hand to do it and I will do it. Will the weak Christian say, oh, but, I have much opposition in my way, how can judgment come to victory? then Christ

says, he" will bring forth, εως αν εκβαλλη, thrust forth with violence; it is the same word that is used in other scriptures, noting a force; as if Christ should say, I will force this victory through all opposition, that it shall meet withal. So that the Lord doth not only give several promises to those that are weak in grace, but he doth so lay them, as he doth help to apply them. And if ye look into your experience, who have more kisses, and embraces of love from God our Father, than the weak Christian hath? The parent kisseth the babe and little child, when the elder child is not kissed; for, says he, this is but a little child. And so, when the prodigal comes home, then the father falls upon his neck and kisses him, why? but because upon his first return, he is a babe in Christ; this is my little child, saith the father, and therefore I will kiss him with the kisses of my mouth. And though it be a great affliction to be weak in grace, yet if Christ will condescend unto mine infirmities, why should I be discouraged in regard thereof? Condescending mercy is great and sweet mercy: now though God doth shew mercy unto all his people, yet he will do it by Christ as an high priest; and what is the work and office of the high priest? but to sympathise and bear with the infirmities of those that are weak, "We have not such an high priest (saith the apostle) as cannot be touched with our infirmities," Hebrews 4:15. Three things there are, which do speak out the condescending love of God to those that are weak in grace ; 1. He accepts their duties, though mingled with many weaknesses; and their services, though they grow upon a weak stock,* Revelation 3:8., "I know thy works, (saith Christ to the Church of Philadelphia) for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name."

2. The Lord doth not over-drive those that are weak, but is contented to go their pace with them, Isaiah 40:11, "He shall gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

3. He doth sometimes, yea, oftentimes, yield unto their desires, going, as it were, after them, Matthew 9:18, There came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, my daughter is now dead, but come and lay thine hand on her; and Jesus arose and followed him." The man had faith, for he said, "Only lay thine hand on her, and she shall live yet his faith was weak, for he limited and stinted Christ, both to time and means; *Come down, and lay thine hand on her." In the 8th chapter, a centurion comes to him, for the cure of his servant, and he was strong in faith; for saith Christ, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Christ doth prevent, and goes before him; for when he saith, verse 6, "My servant lies sick, Jesus said to him, I will come and heal him here Christ offered to go; No, Lord, saith the centurion, "Speak the word only." But the ruler desires Christ to go with him, and he followed him; Christ prevents the strong, and he followeth the weak; he commends the strong centurion, and he condescendeth to the weak ruler. What then, though the weak ruler be not commended as the strong centurion was, should he be discouraged? No, because Christ's condescending love was as fit for him, as his commending favour was for the centurion: strong grace shall be more commended, but weak grace shall be much encouraged by the condescending love of Christ.

If Christ have put a Why and Wherefore upon the discouragements of the weak, then they have no true reason to be discouraged, in regard of their weakness. Now if ye look into Matthew 8:26, ye shall find, that our Saviour says to his disciples, "Why are ye doubtful, O ye of little faith?" Ye read in verse 24, that there arose a great tempest, insomuch that the ship was covered with water; was not here cause of fear? yet says Christ, why are ye fearful? Yea, it is said that their Help was asleep; Christ was their only help in the storm, and verse 24, "He was asleep;" had they not then

cause to fear? yet says Christ, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith" The like ye have in Matthew 16:8, Jesus said, "O ye of little faith why reason ye amongst yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?" Here is another Why put upon their discouragements. So again, Matthew 14:31, when Peter began to sink, he cried out, and Christ said unto him, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Here is another Why or Wherefore put upon the discouragement of a weak faith. Now why loth our Saviour speak after this manner to them? Why lo ye doubt? and Why are ye fearful? Not only to reprove their doubting and discouragement, but to shew that there was no reason for it: though their outward discouragements were great and their faith was but small, yet he tells them, that they had no reason for to be discouraged, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? It seems then, by these Why's and Wherefore's, that though a man's faith be small, and his outward discouragements great, yet he hath no just and true reason for to be discouraged. And if a Christian would be discouraged, if he did not sometimes find a weakness and smallness of grace within him, then he hath no reason to be discouraged, because he doth find this weakness. Now ye know, that the kingdom of heaven, both without us, in the gospel, and within us, in regard of the saving effect of the gospel, is compared to a grain of mustard-seed, which, saith our Saviour, is the least of all seeds; but grows up in time, to that stature, height, and bigness, as the fowls of the air come and make their nests in it. So is the gospel, both in the preaching and the effect of it: it begins low, and is very little at the first; and therefore, if a man should not find his grace to be small at the first, he would doubt whether ever the kingdom of heaven were in him or no, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard-seed, the least of all seeds; but I have not found it so *n my soul, I have not found this littleness and smallness of grace, and therefore I do fear that the kingdom of heaven was never in my soul in truth. Thus men would doubt, and be discouraged, if they should not sometimes find their grace to be small. And if so, then why should a man be discouraged, because he doth find it thus? Surely he hath no just cause or reason for it.

Oh, but yet, it is an uncomfortable thing to be weak; strong Christians are full of comfort: they have assurance of God's love, and are full of joy; but the weak are full of fears and doubts. This is my condition; I am most uncomfortable, therefore I am thus discouraged; have I not cause and reason for it?

No: for though the weakness of grace is usually accompanied with doubts and fears, and the strength of grace, with assurance, joy and comfort; yet it is possible, that a man may have a great deal of grace, yet may have no assurance; and a man may have assurance, not doubting of God's love, and yet may have but little grace.

Ye must know, that there is a difference between uncomfortableness and less comfort. If a man be possessed of a great estate in the world, he hath more comfort than another, who hath but the pledge and earnest of it; but though I am not possessed of it, yet if I have the earnest and pledge of it, I may have much comfort in it. Now the least grace, is a pledge and earnest of more, yea, of the greatest measure; and is it not a comfortable thing, for a man to have the pledge and earnest of glory? Such have all those that are weak, though they be but weak in grace. But how shall I know that my little, is a pledge and earnest of more? The Spirit of adoption, is a pledge and earnest of the whole inheritance: and though you cannot do so much service for your heavenly Father, as your elder and stronger brother doth, yet if you do not only obey God because you see a reason in his commandments, but because there is a child-like disposition in you, then have you the Spirit of adoption, and so your little, is a certain pledge of more. And if you mourn over your

little, and wait on God for more, then is your little an earnest of much: Romans 8:23, "And not only they, but ourselves also (saith the apostle) which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." He proves, that the Romans had the first-fruits, the pledge and earnest of more in the Spirit, by their groaning and waiting: do I therefore groan under the present burden of my own weakness, waiting upon God for more, then have I the first fruits of the Spirit; and so that little which I have, is a pledge and earnest of more: and upon this account, though your grace be weak, and small in itself, yet considered as an earnest, it is much: and is it not a comfortable thing, to have the pledge and earnest of glory? Such is the comfort of all those that are weak in grace, and therefore why should they be discouraged in regard of their weakness?

Oh! but, I am not discouraged at my weakness, in regard of the uncomfortableness of it, but in regard of the unserviceableness of it: for if I were strong in grace, I should be able to do more service for God; then I should be able to resist my temptations, and to overcome the evil one: for the apostle John saith, "I write to you young men, because ye are strong, and have overcome the evil one." But I have great temptations, and but small strength to resist them: I have a great deal of work to do for God, and have no strength to do it with; therefore I am thus discouraged, have I not cause and reason now?

No: for the spiritual battle is not always to the strong: our victory lies not in ourselves and our own habitual strength, but in Christ's fresh assistance. How often have the strong fallen, and the weak stood? We read of that young King, Edward the Sixth, that when the Emperor sent to him, desiring that his sister Mary, afterwards Queen of England, might have liberty for the mass in her house, this young prince did stand out against that temptation, when all his Council was for it; yea, when that good man, bishop Cranmer, and that other holy man, bishop Ridley, did yield thereunto, and pressed the King to it, insomuch as the King did break forth into tears, desiring them to be contented; whereupon, the archbishop Cranmer took his schoolmaster, Mr. Cheke, by the hand, and said, Ah, Mr. Cheke! you have such a scholar that hath more divinity in his little finger, than all we have in our whole bodies. Here the weak stood, and the strong did fall; the weak did resist temptation, when the strong did yield; for our strength lies in Christ without us, not in ourselves within us. And if ye look into the 2nd and 3rd chapters of the Revelation, ye shall find, that whereas all the churches are charged with some sin or other, only the Church of Philadelphia is charged with no sin at all, but commended for keeping the word of Christ's patience; and yet this church, and no other, is said to have a little strength. And ye know what Paul saith, "When I am weak, then am I strong; most gladly therefore will I rejoice in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest on me," 2 Corinthians 12:9-10.

Though your grace be weak, yet you may do much for God in your day: "The tongue (says James) is a little member, and boasteth great things; behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth," chapter 3:5. "Behold also the ships, (saith he, verse 4) which though they be so great, yet are they turned about with a very small helm." And shall not a little grace do as much as a little tongue, or as a little fire, or as a little helm? Surely, though grace be little, yet it may be an helm unto all your life, a rudder unto all your practices. Ye see how fruitful weak things are in nature; the strongest persons have not always most children, but the weaker. The herring is a weak fish in comparison of the whale, and what abundance are there? The dove is a feeble bird in regard of the eagle, and yet how fruitful is it? The vine is a weak tree in regard of the oak, and yet it is more fruitful. So in

grace; you may be weak in grace, yet you may be very fruitful. The jailor was but weak in grace as soon as he was converted, nor Zaccheus, nor the thief on the cross; yet what clusters of divine grapes did presently grow upon these branches? And if you may be very fruitful in good, though weak, why should you be discouraged in regard of your weakness?

Oh, but I am not discouraged at my weakness, in regard of my unserviceableness, or unfruitfulness only, but in regard of my own guiltiness; for I have made myself weak in grace by mine own sins; I have fallen into sin, and so have weakened myself and grace: my grace is not only weak, but it is weakened, and weakened by sin; therefore I am thus discouraged, have I not cause and reason now?

No: for possibly you may be mistaken: some do abate in their natural parts, and they think they decay in their graces: as some grow in parts and gifts, and they think they grow in their graces. But if you have not fallen into any great and gross sin, then no such spiritual disease or fever hath seized on you, whereby your grace should be weakened. But suppose the thing be true, which you do object, that you have sinned, and by your own sin your grace is now weakened; then have you cause indeed to be much humbled before the Lord, yet not to be discouraged. For, if nothing have befallen you, but what may possibly befall a true believer, then you have no reason to be cast down as without hope. Now ye know how it was with Samson; he was strong, and of great strength inward and out ward; yet his strength was taken away, and he became as one of us. How so? why, he had laid his head in Dalilah's lap, and so he lost his strength, and was weakened by it; but it cost him dear, both his eyes, and his life too: and if you have so laid your head in Dalilah's lap, that your strength is abated, it may, and it is likely it will cost you dear: yet this case is no other than what may befall one recorded for a true believer. And though your strength be abated, and your grace weakened, through your own sin; yet being true saving grace, it shall never be annihilated, for it is the new creation; and nothing created by God, can be annihilated by us. Man is created by God; he may be killed by man, but he cannot be annihilated, and brought to nothing: the tree and wood may be burnt to ashes, but it cannot be annihilated and brought to nothing, for it is part of the creation. Now your grace was created by God also, if true, though small; and therefore, though it may be weakened by your sin, yet it cannot be annihilated and brought to nothing. And if yet the promise do belong to you, and to your condition, then you have no reason to be discouraged or cast down, in respect of this. Now if ye look into Revelation 3 : ye shall find, that as there are many promises made to the several churches, so there are promises also made to the church of Sardis ; yet this church had fallen and weakened herself; for says Christ to her, verse 13, "Strengthen the things that remain and are ready to die; I have not found thy works perfect so that though your grace be weakened, and that by your own sin, insomuch as all seems to be ready to die, yet there is a promise belonging to such a condition, and therefore no just cause or reason for discouragement, though much cause of humiliation. But I am not discouraged at the weakness of my grace, because of mine own guiltiness only, but because of its likeness and similitude unto common grace; I know that it is a contradiction to say, that a little grace is no grace at all; but my little is so little, that I even fear it is none in truth. If the piece of coin that I have be little, yet if it be gold, it is well; but if it be little, and a counter too, then what am I the better? Now so it is, that I fear my little is but a counter, and not true grace indeed; therefore I am thus discouraged, have I not cause and reason now?

No: for though your grace be never so small, yet if it be good coin, and not a counter, then you have no reason to be discouraged in this regard. Now to satisfy you in this scruple, I will tell you what small, weak, little grace will do, and not do, in opposition to common grace.

It will not oppose much grace; the least spark of fire will not oppose the flame, or resist the flame; water will, because fire and water are contrary: and so, false grace will oppose the highest degree of grace, saying, what need you be so strict and precise? You may go to heaven with less ado: but the least degree of true grace will not oppose the highest.

It loves examination, it loves to examine, and to be examined; for it is sincere, and sincerity is much in examination: it is called ειλιχρινια, for it holds up all its actions to the sun and light; it doth love the work of examination: false, counterfeit, common grace doth not so.

It is very inquisitive after the ways of God, and after further truths : as the man that climbs up into the tree, first gets hold on the lower boughs, then on the higher, and so winds himself into the body of the tree, till he comes to the top, so doth a Christian do; he begins with the lower, then unto the higher, and so to higher discoveries: at the first, therefore, he is most inquisitive, " What shall I do to be saved?" says he; and again, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" False and common grace is not so.

It is much in the work of humiliation; it grows in a waterish place. Now suppose that two herbs be much alike, the one sovereign, and the other naught, and it be told you, that the sovereign, good herb, grows in a waterish place, and the other on a rock, will you not easily discern those by the places where they grow? Thus it is here: the weak grace of the saints, grows in a waterish place, it is much in humiliation; but the common, false grace of hypocrites, grows on a rock. As a weak Christian is very apt to rest upon his own doings, so he is much in doing, and in the work of humiliation most.

It works according to the proportion of its own weakness ; it staggers at the promise, yet it goes to the promise ; it doubts of Christ's love, yet it doth run to Christ; it stumbles, yet it doth keep its way; it is ignorant of Christ, and not so forward in the knowledge of Christ as it should be, yet it is laying of the foundation, Hebrews 6:1. It is the fault of a weak Christian, that he is always laying the foundation, yet he is laying of the foundation; though it works weakly, yet it works according to the proportion of its weakness; but the common, false grace doth not so.

It is willing to learn of others; for, says a weak Christian, I am but a babe in Christ, and therefore why should not I be willing to be carried in others arms? The less I can do, the more I will receive: as the strong Christian is much in doing, so must I be much in receiving: it is not thus with that false and common, counterfeit grace. But as the naturalists do report and write of the lion, that he will not eat of any prey, but what he hath hunted down himself; other beasts will, they will prey upon what is killed by others; but the lion, king of the beasts, is so proud, that he will not eat of that which is killed by another. So, men that are strong in parts and gifts, and have no grace withal, will not eat of that which they do not hunt down themselves; if they hunt it down, then they will close therewith, else not. A strong- graced Christian will, and a weak-faithed Christian will, but he that hath parts and gifts alone, cannot relish that so well, which is brought to hand by another.

It is very sensible of its own weakness: a weak Christian is weak, and he doth feel his weakness, and is very sensible of it; not a man in all the world, saith he, that is more weak than I. Now ye

know, that if a lady or queen come to an house, she hath a great train attending upon her, and though ye see her not, yet if you see her train, you say, she is there still. Such a great queen is grace; though a man have never so little of it, yet it brings a great train with it; and though ye see it not, yet if you see the train, will ye not say, surely the grace of God is here? Thus now it is with you that are weak in grace; these seven things, and a far greater train than these, you may see in your lives, and therefore certainly, you have no just cause and reason for your discouragements in this respect.

Oh, but yet, this is not the thing that doth pinch with me : I hope, through mercy, the root of the matter is in my soul, that this great queen of grace hath taken up her lodging in my heart; but yet I am exceeding weak in grace, and very feeble still: some are weak in grace because they are but new plants, new converts, lately brought home to Christ, and are yet babes in Christ, and so they have excuse for their weakness; but I profess that I have been converted a great while, yet I am weak; I am an old man or woman, yet I am weak in grace; I am an old professor, and yet am weak in grace: therefore I am thus disquieted, have I not just cause and reason now?

No; for though it is a shame for an old man to go in coats, or to be carried in the arms like a babe, as every weak Christian is; and though Christ will upbraid men of their slowness and dullness, that have long sat under the means, yet you have no just cause and reason for discouragement; for though you may be weak in regard of others, yet you may be strong in regard of your former self, and be more strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, than you have been heretofore. And to clear that, consider— The more extensive a man's obedience is unto God's commandments, the more he is grown in grace. Weak Christians are much in some duties, and therein they are most intense: but little or nothing in others: and as they grow in grace, so their hearts are dilated, and extended unto other duties. The more exact and accurate a man is in duty, the more he doth grow in grace; and the more he grows in grace, the more exact and accurate he doth grow in his duty. He that writes better than he did before, doth not write more paper, or make more letters, only he doth write more exactly and accurately: so, the grown Christian doth not perform more duties than he did before, but the same more exactly. The more a man sees and understands his Christian liberty, and yet doth walk more strictly, the more he doth grow in grace : some think they grow in grace, because they have more understanding in their Christian liberty, though they do walk more loosely; these are deceived in their spiritual growth ; but if I know my Christian liberty more fully, and now do walk more strictly in my life, then do I grow in grace indeed. Now is it not thus with you? Yes ! through grace I am able to say, that I see my Christian liberty more than I did heretofore ; and yet I am more strict in my life: though I cannot yet pray as I would, and hear as I would, and perform duty as I would, yet I do perform my duties with more exactness than formerly; and though I have not so much affection as I had in this or that work of God, yet now I find, that I am more dilated, and my obedience is more extended and extensive unto God's ways and commandments than before. Then though you are still weak in regard of others, yet you are grown stronger in regard of your former self, and therefore certainly, you have no just cause or reason to be discouraged in this regard. But suppose that I am yet but weak in grace, and temptations or discouragements press in upon me, in regard of the weakness of my grace; what shall I do that I may be able to bear up my heart against those discouragements?

Then consider what a great charge God the Father hath given to Christ of those that are weak, Isaiah 42:1, "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth; I have put

my spirit upon him." &c.: but why? verse 3, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." This is my charge, saith the Father, which I give to my Son: and upon this account he came into the world, that those who have life might have it in abundance: and for this cause he did die for us, Romans 5:6, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time (or according to the time, that is, the time appointed by the Father), Christ died for the ungodly."

Consider also, what charge our Saviour Christ did give unto his apostles, and in them, to all the ministers of the gospel, concerning those that are weak in grace. c. Peter, Peter, (said our Saviour) lovest thou me? (then) feed my sheep." And again, "Lovest thou me? (then) feed my lambs." And again, thirdly, "Lovest thou me? feed my lambs." Have a care of those that are weak in grace. All the time that Christ lived upon earth, he went about doing good, healing all sicknesses and diseases, and condescending to the weaknesses of men. One comes to him, and thought to have stolen her cure, yet Christ did bear with her. Another comes, and puts an i/upon his will, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;" and he did bear with him. Another comes, and puts an if upon his power, "Lord, if thou canst do anything," &c. Yet Christ did yield to him. And when he left the world, then he charges his apostles with the weak saints, "Feed my lambs;" and again, "Feed my lambs."

Consider also, what a great mercy it is to have a little grace, though it be but a little; for though you have never so little grace, yet if you have grace in truth, you have union with Christ, you have communion with the Father, you have your own nature taken away, and are partakers of the divine nature; you have a right and title unto all the promises; yea, unto all the ordinances; yea, unto all the creatures. Your afflictions are not curses, the curse is taken out of every cross, you have an interest in all that Christ hath done and suffered, you are made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, an inheritance uncorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away: you have God for your portion, Christ for your Saviour, the Spirit for your Comforter, heaven for your inheritance, the angels for your guard, and all the creatures in the earth under your feet; this, and all this you have, though you have never so little grace; and can you read over all this inventory of mercies, and sit discouraged in the midst of them?

Yet if all this will not prevail in the time of your temptation, think with yourself, and consider seriously, how much you shall weaken yourself, yet more and more, by your discouragements in this kind. All discouragements weaken; humiliation weakens not, the greatest humiliation doth not weaken, but the least discouragement doth, upon what account soever. Now if all discouragements do weaken, then what an unreasonable thing is it for me to be discouraged at the sight of my weakness? But so it is, that discouragements, even from the sight of our own weakness, do yet more and more weaken; surely, therefore, it is an unreasonable thing for a man to be discouraged at the sight of his own weakness: wherefore, lift up your hands, oh ye saints, and be ye lift up, oh ye drooping souls. We are commanded, ye may read our commission, Isaiah 35:3, "to strengthen the weak hands, and to confirm the feeble knees, and to say to them that are of a fearful spirit, Be strong, fear not." And if it be our duty to say and speak thus, then it is your duty to encourage yourself in the Lord, and to say to yourself, Be strong, oh my soul, and fear not. Be thankful for your little, and in due time you shall have much: labour also for much, yet be content with little, even with little grace, if God will have it so. And thus I have done with the second instance.

06. SERMON VI. - A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF MISCARRIAGE OF DUTIES.

SERMON VI. - A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF MISCARRIAGE OF DUTIES.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me, &c."—Psalms 42:11.

III. Sometimes the discouragements of the saints and people of God, are drawn from their duties, the failings and successlessness of their duties. For they reason thus: through the Lord's grace and mercy, I have been kept from great and gross sins, yet if the Lord loved me indeed, he would draw my heart near unto himself; but when I come to prayer, or duty, I find so much deadness, dullness and awkness of heart and spirit, that I fear the Lord will never accept such an one as I am, nor such duties as mine are: when I go to prayer, either prayer is altogether absent from me, or I have no life therein; if I go to hear the word, I am not attentive, but filled with distractions; and whatever duty I perform, I want life and love in it. Oh, my heart is like a rock or stone, and therefore I fear the Lord will not accept my duty, and the rather, because I find, that I have been long at prayer, and I am never the better, the Lord hears me not, the Lord regards me not; and have I not just reason and cause to be discouraged now?

No: here is reason, indeed, why you should be afflicted, but no reason yet, why you should be discouraged. I confess, indeed, here is cause and reason of grief and of affliction; for take prayer, to instance only in that, and it is that act and work of the soul, whereby a man doth converse with God; God conversing with man, and man with God. And is it not a sore affliction, for a poor creature to be shut out of God's door, such a friend as God is? Oh, saith Chrysostom, it is more bitter than death, to be spoiled of prayer: and hereupon, as he observes, Daniel chose rather to run the hazard of his life, than to lose his prayer. Prayer is the soul's weapon, and is it not a grief to want a weapon in our spiritual warfare? Prayer is the soul's ornament, the excellent garment of a Christian; and is it not an affliction, to be without this garment, and to be found naked? Prayer is the Christian's element; and as the fish lives in the water as in its element, and dies when it is out, so a Christian lives in prayer as in his element, and his heart dies when he is out of it. Prayer is the soul's provisioner, fetcheth in provision for the soul and for all its graces: the old bird, the dam, goes abroad and fetcheth in meat for the young ones, and they lie in the nest gaping, to receive the meat upon its return; and if the old one be killed abroad, the young ones will die presently at home. So here, prayer goes abroad, and fetcheth in provision for all our graces, and they all lie gaping, to receive this provision from the mouth of prayer; if this be killed, how can those other graces live? The truth is, the more sweetness a Christian finds in any work, the greater is his affliction, if he want that work; now what abundance of sweetness, doth a gracious soul find in prayer? therefore when a man is narrowed, or shut up in prayer, it cannot but be a great affliction to him. But though it be a matter of great affliction, yet a good man hath no reason to be quite discouraged, yea, though he meet with many failings therein, and cannot pray as he would, nor perform duty as he should.

How may that appear?

Thus, every godly, gracious man, is in covenant with God by Jesus Christ; and that covenant is a covenant of grace, which is the great charter, the magna-charta of all his spiritual privileges and immunities. Now in this great charter, the Lord doth proclaim this, that sincerity shall go for perfection; that a little done for God, in the time of temptation, shall be counted much. In this great charter, the Lord doth proclaim unto all his people, that he doth rather regard the bent of the heart, than the enlargement of the heart; that he doth rather regard the will to do, than the doing. In this great charter, the covenant of free grace, the Lord proclaims unto all his people, that if they do fail in prayer, and other duties, for I speak not of prayer only, though I instance in that, he will not cast them off, but he will rather be moved to pity them; for the covenant that the Lord makes with his people, is as the covenant that a man makes with his wife,

I will betroth thee unto me forever," Hosea 2, saith the Lord. Now a man will not put away his wife for every failing, neither will the Lord put away his people, nor cast them off, because he is betrothed to them, though they do fail in duties. Again: in this great charter and covenant of grace, the Lord doth proclaim unto all his children, that what they want in performance, he will make up in indulgence. He proclaims this unto them, that he will require no more than he gives; he will give what he requires, and he will accept what he gives. Now, therefore, am I in that covenant of grace? and are there many failings in all my duties? yet if this be true, that the Lord is more moved by my failings to pity me, than to cast me off, then I have no reason for to be discouraged. And thus it is with every child of God; he is in this covenant of grace, and so the privileges, and immunities of all this great charter, belong unto him.

Though there be many failings in a godly man's duty, yet so long as it is a duty, there is somewhat of Christ therein, there is somewhat of God therein. Now God will not cast away his own, because it is mixt with ours, but he will rather pardon ours, and accept ours, because it is mixt with his. The husbandman doth not cast away his wheat, because it is mixt with chaff; he brings it into his barn, and there is a time, when he will separate the chaff from the wheat; but he doth not cast away the com because it is mixt with chaff, yet this grain of wheat hath nothing of the image of the husbandman upon it: but there is never a duty of a godly man, but hath somewhat of the image of Christ upon it, and therefore, I say, he will not cast away his, because it is mixt with ours, but he will rather pardon and accept of ours, because it is mixt with his.

If our acceptance of duty do not come by the door of performance, but by another door, and that door is Christ, then a godly man hath no reason to be discouraged, though there be many failings in his performance. Now, all our acceptance of duty comes in by Christ, because our sacrifices are mingled with Christ's perfumes, Revelation 8:4, "And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." Our prayers go unto God the Father, through the hand of Christ; did our prayers go immediately out of our own hands into the Father's hand, we might have cause to fear, but it goes by the hand of Christ; Christ takes it, and hath it into the presence of God the Father. As it is with your soul, or your body when you die; though your body be crooked or deformed, and your soul defiled, yet when you die, Christ meets your soul, and invests it with glory, and so brings it into the presence of God the Father; so it is with your duty, your duty, it may be, deformed, defiled, or a crooked duty, but Christ meets your duty, and he clothes it with his glory, and so hath it into the presence of God the Father. And

thus it is with all the saints and people of God; surely, then, though they have cause to be afflicted, by reason of their failing in duty, yet they have no reason at all why they should be discouraged. But I have no parts or gifts in duties, therefore I am thus discouraged: some there are, that have great abilities in duty, they pray, and can pray with great abilities, they go to a sermon, and can bring away every word, and have a great gift in conference; but as for me, I am a poor creature, who want all these gifts, I have no utterance in conference, I have no abilities in prayer, I have no memory for a sermon, my memory is even as a sieve, good things run out presently; I have no gifts at all, a poor seaman, tradesman I am, that have no parts, no gifts in duty; and have not I just cause and reason now to be discouraged?

No: for whosoever you are that make this objection, do ye not know, that the glory of the second temple was greater than the first? Solomon, you know, built a great house, and it was a glorious building, much gold and silver in it: the second temple was not so full of gold and silver, and yet it is said of the second temple, that the glory of it was beyond the glory of the first: why? this reason is given, because "The desire of all nations should come into it." That is, Christ, who is indeed "the desire of all nations," de facto, gold and silver is the desire of all nations; but, de jure, and by right, the Lord Jesus Christ is "the desire of all nations;" and because that Christ, "is the desire of all nations," should come into the second temple, therefore the glory of it was beyond the glory of the first. Now thy soul is the temple of the Holy Ghost; it may be, thou hast not so much gold and silver, not such golden parts and golden gifts as another hath, but if "the desire of all nations," the Lord Jesus Christ, be come into thy soul, hast thou any reason to complain? Thus it is with every child of God, though he hath not those parts and gifts that another hath, yet the Lord Jesus, "the desire of all nations," is come into his temple, into his soul; and therefore, he hath no reason to be discouraged.

If the want of parts and gifts be better for you, then you have no reason to be discouraged for the want of them. Now, you know, that it is better for a man that hath but a little stock, to have a little farm, than to have a great farm and a little stock; a man that hath but a little stock, and a great farm, may for the present brave it out, and converse with company that are in estate beyond him, but at last he will decay and break: better that a man, who hath but a little stock, should have a little farm suitable to his stock. Now God our Father sees, that thou hast a little good, there are some good things found in thee; but these good things, this little stock, is not big enough for a great farm of parts and gifts, and because the Lord sees that thy stock of grace is not great enough for such a great farm of parts, therefore, in design of mercy, he hath thus ordered it, that thou shouldest have a less farm of gifts.

If our parts and gifts do not commend our services and duties unto God, then have you no reason to be discouraged for the want of them. Now, so it is, that they do not commend us, nor our services unto God. When you have good meat in a dish, possibly you will lay flowers upon it, cut oranges and lemons, and lay upon the side of the dish; but a wise man knows, that the meat is never the better for those flowers, or for the sugar that lies on the side of the platter; a wise man knows, that if those were wanting, the meat were never the worse. Beloved, God our Father is of infinite wisdom, these parts and gifts are flowers indeed, and they help to cook out a duty, and to make it more acceptable to men, but the Lord, who is wisdom, knows, that the duty is never the better; and he knows, that when these flowers are wanting, the duty is never the worse. "All flesh is grass, and the flower thereof, and it fades away." Parts and gifts are but flesh, and our wise God

knows the meat is never the worse, when these flowers are wanting. Yea,' if I had all parts and all gifts, that I were able to preach and speak like an angel, and that I were able to cast out devils, yet notwithstanding, if I have not Christ and grace within, my parts and gifts will but sink me deeper into hell. Two men, suppose, do fall into the river, one man hath bags of gold about him, and the other none; he that hath none, makes a shift to swim, and get away; but he that hath the bags of gold about him, sinks by his gold, and he cries out as he sinks, Oh, take away these bags of gold, this gold undoeth me, this gold sinks me 1 So these golden parts and golden gifts, if a man hath not grace withal, hath not Christ within, shall but sink him deeper into hell. These commend us not, I say, nor our service unto God, nor doth the want thereof discommend us unto him.

You say and complain, that you have no parts or gifts; but I pray, hath not the Lord recompensed the want of them some other way unto you? Philosophy saith of nature, Ubi deficit in uno, abundat in altero; Where nature is deficient in one thing, it is abundant in another thing. If a man wants his eyes, he hears the better: and the less he sees, the more he remembers: where nature is wanting in one thing, it is exceeding in another. And as nature, so the God of nature and the God of grace too: it may be you do want a head memory, but hath not the Lord given you a heart-memory, to remember the sermon as you have occasion to use it? Some have parts and gifts, and they want plainness and openness of heart for God; some again have a plain heart, and they want gifts and parts. It is said of Jacob, that "he prevailed with God in prayer, and he was a plain man." Mark how the Holy Ghost doth put these two together, that that man should be the prevailing man with God in prayer who was the plain man: and that man that was the plain man, should he the prevailing man in prayer; a plain man, but prevailing with God. Well, then, though thou art but a plain person, and hast no parts or gifts as others have, yet thou mayest prevail with God, and thy name may be called Israel, prevailing with the Lord. When God denies one, he gives another mercy. Thus it is with all the saints and people of God, and a godly, gracious man may say thus, Well, though I have not great parts and gifts, yet, blessed be the Lord, I have a plain and an open heart for God: and if the Lord hath done thus much for you, and recompensed you in another way, have you any reason then to be discouraged for want of parts and gifts in duties? Certainly you have not.

Oh, but yet, this is not the matter of my discouragement, I am not discouraged for want of parts or gifts in duty, but I want the grace and the holiness of duty, I want the grace and the holiness of prayer: I go to prayer and duty, but the Lord knows, with a dull, dead and a straitened heart; I think, verily, that there is not a more rocky, stony, flinty heart in the world than mine; I offer myself to God sometimes in prayer, but when I come at it, I am not able to speak a word, my heart is so shut up and straitened; and have I not cause and reason now to be discouraged? Is not this matter of just discouragement?

No: for pearls sometimes grow upon rocks; and possibly there may be some pearl of grace growing upon that rocky heart of thine. Yet further—

You say, that you are straitened in duty; but are you satisfied and contented with that condition? or if you had enlargement in duty, would you be satisfied therein? No, I am not satisfied with my straitened condition; and the truth is, though I had never so much enlargement, enlargement alone would never satisfy my soul; but if I had more affection, I would give it up to God, yea, if I had a sea of affection, I would pour it out before the Lord, and if I had prayers, and tears, and enlargements, like the sands upon the seashore, I would offer them all up to God. Well, and is not

this to be enlarged towards God? A poor man that hath never a penny in his purse, sees another, or many others in want, but he hath nothing to relieve them with; yet, saith he, if I had wherewithal, I would relieve all these men, I would clothe them all, I would feed them all: is not this man's heart enlarged now towards the poor, though he hath not a penny to help them with? So in your case; for the present, thy affection is poor, and thou art straitened, but thou sayest, if I had a sea of affection, I would give it all to God; and if I had prayers like the sand upon the sea-shore, I would give them all to God; is not this to be enlarged towards God? God doth give by denying sometimes, and thus he hath dealt by you.

If your condition herein be no other than the conditions of the saints and people of God, then you have no just cause and reason to be discouraged in this respect. Now in Psalms 77:3-4, the Psalmist saith there, "I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed: Lord, (saith he at the 4th verse,) thou holdest mine eyes watching, I am so troubled that I cannot speak." I cannot pray I am so troubled that I cannot speak. A mother hears her child cry, and saith she, now doth this child cry for the breast, yet the child speaks not a word, but the mother knows the meaning of the child's crying, and the language of it: and doth a mother know the language of her child's crying, and doth not God our Father know the language of his child's cry, that cannot speak unto him? The beggar that follows you for alms, is a beggar, though he be dumb and cannot speak; and you say, Send him away with some gift, for he follows us. So here, though your heart be shut up in duty, yet if you can follow God, he looks upon you as a beggar at the throne of grace, and in due time he will serve you, and send you away with comfort.

You would fain have enlargements, and workings of the heart in prayer: but what would you do with those enlargements? Would you shew your enlargements, your excellencies, your graces to God, when you come to duty? A beggar you know, if he have any excellent thing, as gold, or silver, he hides that, and he shews his wounds, he shews his sores: if you mean to give him a penny, and ask him if he have any money, I have twopence, or threepence Sir, saith he, or a penny; but he hides his excellency, and he lays open his wounds; and if he can but open his sores before you, he thinks he doth beg effectually. Beloved, we all go to God in prayer, in forma pauperis, every man sues in this court in the form of a beggar. If thy heart then be straightened, if thy heart be hard, and if thy spirit be dull in duty, you may go to God and open your sores, and wounds before him; you may go and say, Lord, what a hard heart have I, and what a dull and straitened spirit have I! This rather becomes a beggar, and you must come as a beggar, when you come before him; yet you must know that neither your poverty, nor your riches; neither your straitening's in duty, nor your enlargements, do make any alteration in the mind and will of God. Indeed, God seems to deal by us sometimes as a father doth by his little child; he holds a piece of gold or silver in his hand, and saith the father, if you can get this out of my hand you shall have it; so the child strives and pulls, and works, and then the father opens his hand by degrees, first one finger, then another, and then another, and at last his whole hand; and the child thinks he hath got the money by his own strength and labour, whereas the father intended to give it him, but in that way. So here, God intends to give us a mercy in the way of prayer, and he sets us a praying for it, and we think we obtain it by the strength of our own prayer, as if we did move, and change the will of God by our duty; but all the enlargements in the world, make no alteration in the will of God; he is unmoveable, unchangeable, and the same forever; but he will give out his blessings in a way of prayer, therefore it is our duty to pray, yet we must not be discouraged though we cannot pray as

we would.

It is usual with the Lord to restrain prayer, before he doth give enlargement, and to make a man speechless before he openeth his mouth: Luke 1 : we read so of Zacharias, a gracious and holy man, at the 67th verse, it is said of him, that "he was filled with the Holy Ghost and he prophesied Yet if you look into the former part of the chapter, you shall find, that before he was thus filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, he was dumb, and stricken with dumbness, verse 20th, saith the angel to him, " And behold thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak so he continued dumb, before he was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied. It may be, here is a further mystery in this, for Zacharias was a Levitical and a legal priest; and our Lord and Saviour Christ being to come into the world immediately, who knows but that Zacharias was thus stricken with dumbness, to shew, that the Lord will silence all our legal performances, before he will enlarge us with the enlargements of Christ, and of the gospel? This is God's usual way with his people. It may be thou hast gone on in duty in a legal manner, and now thou art stricken with dumbness; yet if God have a design to discover more of Christ to thy soul: and to enlarge thee with the enlargements of the Holy Ghost, have you any cause to complain? As for the dullness of your heart in duty and prayer, though dullness be an ill sin, yet the sense thereof is a good sign : as the thistle is a good sign of a fat ground, though it be an ill weed: so the sense of your dullness is a good sign, though it be an ill weed: for it argues that you are used to private duties: for dullness in private, and pride in public duties is the temptation. Only here remember three things. 1. That you do not measure or judge of your everlasting condition, by your present affection. 2. That you do not forbear duty, because of your dullness in it; because duty is a great remedy against it, and whither should a dead soul go, but to the living God? 3. That one great cause of your dullness, is your doubting, and discouragement; and therefore, no reason that you should be discouraged because of it, lest you augment the same.

What is prayer, and the nature of it? Prayer is the pouring out of the soul to God; not the pouring out of words, nor the pouring out of expressions; but the pouring out of the soul to God. Words, many times, and expressions, are a great way off from the soul; but sighs and groans are next the soul, and have more of the soul in them, than words and expressions many times have: now thou complainest, that thy heart is straitened and dead and dull; but when you are so straitened in prayer, do ye not at that time pour out sighs and groans after prayer, saying, oh, what freedom once I had, O Lord, that I might have the like freedom again? And whereas you say now, that your heart is hardened in duty, consider whether there be not a great mistake about hardness and softness of heart; *Durum est quod tactui non ced'd molle ced'd*; A hard thing doth not yield to the touch, but a soft thing doth. Wax yields when it is touched, because it is soft; and wool yields when it is touched, because it is soft, but an hard thing yields not. And upon this account, it is said of Pharoah, that his heart Was hard, why? because he did not yield to God, he had not a yielding disposition. Now there is many a poor soul complains that his heart is hard, and yet, notwithstanding, he hath a yielding disposition to every truth, a yielding disposition to every affliction and dispensation of God. Wherefore dost thou complain, and say, Oh, my heart is very hard? yet if at this time thou hast a yielding disposition to yield to every truth of God, and to yield to every touch of the Lord's hand, know from the Lord, that here is a soft heart; be not mistaken; but many are mistaken, and because they are mistaken herein, and it is but a mistake, therefore they have no reason for to be discouraged. But I do not only want enlargement and softenings of heart

in duty, but I am oppressed and filled with distractions, my heart is not only dull and dead and straitened, but I feel many positive evil; as the leaves of a tree are eaten up with caterpillars, so I may say, my duties are eaten up with distractions, I never go to duty, but, the Lord knows, a world of distractions comes in upon me, and have I not just cause and reason to be discouraged now?

Surely this is a great evil, for as one saith well, *Tantum temporis oras quantum attendis*; so much time you pray, as you do attend in prayer; and upon this account, if the Lord should abstract all the outgoings of our souls in duty, and all our distractions from our prayers, oh, how little of prayer would be left many times. It were an incivility, you will say, when a petitioner hath gotten the king's ear, for the poor petitioner then to turn his back upon the king: and what an evil must it needs be, when a poor soul hath gotten the ear of God, then to turn the back by way of distractions upon the Lord, who comes down to hear his prayer. We used to say, When the candle burns, the mouse bites not, or the mouse nibbles not; when the candle doth not burn, then the mouse eats the candle; but when the candle burns, the mouse doth not bite the same. And so long as a man's heart is warm and inflamed in prayer, he is freed from distractions; but when a man's heart is cold in prayer, then come these ill distractions. So that certainly, there is a great deal of evil indeed in these distractions. Yet there is no reason for discouragement. For—

What rock is there so firm or fast, but hath some seams of dirt upon it? And what soul is there so firm and fast and immoveable in duty, but hath some seams of dirt or distractions growing upon it? Abraham, the father of the faithful, had birds coming down upon his sacrifice; and what child of Abraham is there, but hath these foul birds, unclean birds of distraction, one time or other coming down upon his sacrifice?

If that these distractions shall not hurt the servants of God, nor their sacrifices, neither them nor their duties, then they have no reason to be discouraged under them, though to be humbled for them. Now it is a true rule, *non nocet, quod non placet*; that which doth not please doth not hurt. These distractions in duty do not please the saints, they lie under them as a heavy burden, they do not please them, therefore they shall not hurt them. You know what the Psalmist saith, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer," Psalms 66:18. Distraction in prayer is a great iniquity; if I regard this iniquity in my prayer, the Lord will not hear my prayer. But when may a man be said to regard iniquity? You know, that if you regard a man that comes to your house, you run and meet him at the door, you bid him welcome, have him in, and set a stool for him, and you give him entertainment: but if you bid the man begone, saying, I will have nothing to do with you, you are my burden, I pray begone; then you do not regard this man. Thus it is with the saints and people of the Lord, distractions press in upon their prayer and duty; but dost thou fetch a stool, dost thou give entertainment, and dost thou bid welcome to these distractions? No; the Lord knows, I bid them begone; the Lord knows, they are my burden; then certainly, as that is true, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer;" so on the contrary, if I do not regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will hear my prayer. A man doth sometimes open a door for one of worth, and others press and crowd in with him, and if the master say to his servant, why did you let all these men in? he answers, Sir, I did not open the door for these, but for another, and these did press and crowd in upon me, and I could not hinder; then is the master satisfied, and the servant excused. So in this case it is, and that often, with the people of God; Christ stands at their door and knocks, they run to meet with him in prayer, and by prayer they open the door of their heart to him; but then distractions press and crowd in upon them, yet they can say in truth, Lord, I never

opened my door for these, but do desire that these, and all these, may be put out again. What, then, do you not think that God will be satisfied with this answer of uprightness? Surely he will, and therefore, though these distractions do crowd in upon you, here is matter of affliction, but not of discouragement.

If these distractions in duties do move the Lord to pity, then thou hast no reason to be quite discouraged, though humbled under these distractions. Ye know how it is with a loving father; a father hath a son, whom he loves dearly, this child of his is crazy-brained, but he hath his Lucida intervalla, and he will speak very good reason sometimes; his father loves to hear this child speak, when he speaks reason; but all on a sudden the child is out; what then? doth his father hate him for that? No; but the bowels of the man yearns, Oh, now my child is out; then the father's heart doth ache over this child whom he takes pleasure in. Thus it is between God and a poor soul, God loves his children dearly, he loves to hear them pray; "Let me hear thy voice, and see thy face (saith Christ), for thy voice is sweet, and thy countenance is comely," Song of Solomon 2:14. God loves to hear his children pray, but every foot they are out; in, and then out again; out, and then in again. But what then? Is the Lord moved hereby to destroy his children? No; but now the heart of your Father aches, and now his bowels yearn: shall there be bowels in the heart of an earthly father this way? and shall there not be bowels in the heart of God our heavenly Father this way? Surely there is. Well, therefore, though in regard of thy distractions, thou hast cause for ever to be humbled, yet certainly thou hast no cause to be quite discouraged.

Oh, but this is not my case; for though I am troubled with many distractions, for which I have cause to be humbled, and though my heart be dead and dull and hard in duty, and though I have no parts and gifts in duty, yet this is not the matter of my discouragement especially; but that which discourageth me concerning duty is this: I pray, and pray, and am never the nearer; I have been praying thus long, thus many years, and am never the nearer: I have an undutiful, disobedient child, and I have been praying thus long, and he is never the better; I have been praying for the sense of God's love thus long, and am never the nearer; I have been praying for such and such a spiritual mercy, thus and thus long, and am never the holier: God regards me not, for he answers me not, and have I not just cause and reason for my discouragements now?

No: for though God doth not answer you presently, yet he doth hear you presently: he heard Moses when he prayed, though he did not grant his prayer; and it is a great mercy that God will receive my prayer, though I never do receive the thing that I pray for, and I may yet say, "Father, I thank thee, that thou hearest me always?"

It is usual with God's own people and dearest children to say and think sometimes, that the Lord doth not answer their prayer, when the Lord doth. There is a two-fold return or answer of prayer; there is a visible return of prayer, and there is an invisible return of prayer. As it is with the vapours that are drawn upward by the heat of the sun; some there are, that do fall again in great rain and hail, and ye hear and see the returns of those vapours in the day; but sometimes the vapours fall in a dew in the night, and you do not see the return thereof, but you go abroad in the morning, and you find the dew upon the ground, although you did not see when the dew fell. So here, your prayers are drawn up by the heat of God's love in Christ; some return upon you again in the day, visibly; some return in the night invisibly, when you see them not: there is a visible, and there is an invisible return of prayer. What more usual with God's people, than to say, and think, that the Lord

doth not hear their prayer, nor make return to them, when indeed he doth, and that visibly unto others also? Luke 1 : you read of Zacharias and Elizabeth, that they were very righteous; verse 6, "They were both righteous before God." And Zacharias and Elizabeth had no children; but Zacharias prayed for children, for at verse 13, the angel said unto him, "Fear not Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear a son, and thou shalt call his name John." The Lord heard his prayer, and sent an angel to tell him his prayer was heard, but Zacharias doubted thereof, verse 18, "Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years." Here he doubts, and it was his sin thus to doubt, as you may see by verse 20, "Behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words." Here plainly now, was a return of prayer, yea, here was a visible return of prayer; and yet Zacharias, though a godly and a holy man, doubted whether the Lord had heard his prayer or no. So that I say, this is no new thing with God's own people and dearest children, to say, and think sometimes, that the Lord doth not answer their prayer, when the Lord indeed doth answer, and that visibly too. But—

If the Lord's not hearing, granting and answering your prayers presently, be sometimes matter of great encouragement, then it is not always a matter of discouragement. Now the Lord's not hearing and granting your prayer presently, is sometimes matter of great encouragement. You have divers children at your table, some younger and some elder, some babes and little ones, some grown; when you come to carve out your meat unto them, you carve first to the little ones, and you do not carve first to the greater, for say you, these little ones will cry, and they have no patience to stay, and therefore they shall be first served; but those greater have more wit and more patience, and they will stay. Beloved, thus now it is between God and us: the Lord hath two sorts of children that come to him in prayer, and he intends to serve them both; but he looks upon those that are weak, and serves them first; as for those that are stronger and have more faith and patience, saith the Lord, you are able to stay, I see your faith and patience, and therefore I will serve the little ones first, but as for you, I will serve you last. Thus it was with Abraham, after the Lord had made Abraham a promise of a seed, he made him stay a great while, why? because he saw he had faith to stay. So now, thou hast not presently a return or answer to thy prayer, why? because the Lord, it may be, sees thou hast strength, faith and patience to stay. And is not this rather matter of encouragement than discouragement? Who ever stayed and waited long upon God, but he had more than he prayed for? Either God answers your prayers presently, or if he do not, he will not only pay you the principal, but he will pay you forbearance money, and you shall have good security, and a pledge for the principal too. The desire is a pledge of the thing desired; prayer is a pledge of the thing prayed for; a waiting heart is a pledge of the thing waited for: and the longer you stay, the more your hearts shall be weaned from the thing prayed for, and the more you shall be taught to wait upon God; and sometimes a waiting frame of heart is a greater mercy than the thing waited for. By this means also, you shall be weaned from your prayer, so as not to rest on it. A child may so love the nurse, as to forget the mother; and one may possibly so love duty, as to forget Christ; but by God's delaying to answer, you are weaned from this nurse, and kept from resting on it. Or, it may be, you came to duty with too high esteem of your own performance, and too low esteem of the duty itself: hereby God teacheth you to come to the duty with high esteem of it, and with low esteem of your own doing it. Yea, the longer you stay, the more you shall be humbled, and your self-despising thoughts, because you cannot pray, may please God more than your best prayer. You see, that when a man angles, he throws his line into

the water, and there is the hook and the bait, those are heavy; then there is the cork, and that is light; and when the fisher, or angler, sees that the light cork is drawn under water, now the fish bites, saith he, now' there is hope, now there is something coming. So, you go to prayer, and there is somewhat heavy and weighty in your spirit; but there is something that is of a corky and light nature in your spirit; the longer you stay, the more your cork shall be drawn under water, that lightness of spirit shall be drawn under water, and so the more you shall be humble and humbled. Thereby you are taught to fan your prayers. There is much chaff amongst the good wheat of our duties, and God's delaying time is our fanning time: when the fish doth not bite, the fisher mends his bait; it may be, saith he, my hook is not well baited. So should you do, when you take nothing by prayer, God's delay calls for your amending.

Yea, by this means you may remember how' you delayed the Lord; he spake often to you, and it was long ere you heard him, shall we think it long ere he hears us, when it was so long ere we heard him? It may be you have forgotten your delays of God, but by this forbearance he doth graciously mind you thereof.

Yea, by God's forbearance to answer you, the Lord teacheth you to forbear; God's forbearance doth teach us forbearance; and is that nothing? Let all this be considered, and you will say indeed, here is more matter of encouragement than discouragement.

If you would be discouraged, in case God should always answer your prayer presently, then you have no reason to be discouraged, because he doth not answer you presently. But now, if the Lord should always answer thy duty and prayer presently, you would be discouraged; why? because you would say thus, I looked into the scripture, and there I find, that God doth not always answer his children presently ; his children have prayed, and then they have waited, and this hath been the way that God hath taken with his children; now God doth not take this way with me, and therefore, I fear I am none of God's children, and so you would be discouraged. Now' I say, if you would be discouraged, in case the Lord should always answer your prayer presently, then you have no reason to be discouraged, because he doth not hear you presently: but you would be discouraged in case the Lord should always hear you presently; you would say then, God doth go not the same way with me, that he goes and hath gone with his children. Surely, therefore, you that are the saints and people of God, have no reason for your discouragement in this respect.

Oh, but I fear that God doth not only delay his answer, but that he denies my prayer.

It may be so, for God doth sometimes deny his own people the thing they pray for, "Ye ask and have not (saith James), because ye ask amiss." Yet they were the people of God. Abulensis observes, that God doth sometimes grant a wicked man his petition, and deny a godly man his petition, that he may encourage wicked men to pray, and teach good men not to rest on their prayers.

Yet if the thing you ask of God be pleasing to him, and he doth still bear up your heart in praying, and depending on him, it argues rather that he delays than denies; for, Psalms 10:17, the preparing of your heart, and the inclining of his ear, go together, and, 1 John 3:22, the apostle saith, "And whatever we ask we receive of him, because (as a sign thereof) we keep his commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in his sight." Be it so, and did Jonah keep his commandments, when he ran to Tarshish? and was not God angry with him when he threw him

into the sea? yet even then he prayed, and the Lord heard his prayer. And did not Christ seem to be displeased and angry with the poor Canaanitish woman, when he said unto her, "It is not meet, to take the children's bread and cast it before dogs?"

Oh, but she did believe; but I fear God will never hear my prayer at all, because there is so much unbelief in my prayer, as there was not in hers. But was it not so with David? "I said in my haste, I am cast out of thy sight, nevertheless the Lord heard my prayer," Psalms 31 : What unbelief was here. "I said in my haste, I am cast out of thy sight;" nevertheless, the Lord heard his prayer.

Oh, but I am afraid yet, that the Lord will never hear my prayer, or regard my duty, because I am so selfish in it; I come unto God in mine affliction, and my affliction makes me go to prayer, my affliction doth make me pray, I cry by reason of my affliction, and this is selfish. And did not those seek themselves at first, who came unto Christ for cure? All true love begins in self-love. The sweetest flower grows on a dirty stalk. And I pray, what think you yet of Jonah? The Lord heard me, saith he, out of hell, and yet I cried, saith he, by reason of mine affliction.

Oh, but I fear the Lord will never hear my prayer, because I was no better prepared, yea, not at all prepared thereunto. Do you not know how the Lord dealt by Hezekiah? Hezekiah prayed, "The Lord shew mercy to every one that is not prepared, according to the preparation of the sanctuary (and, saith the text), the Lord hearkened and healed the people," 2 Chronicles 30:18—20. Yea, God can rain without clouds, without preparations.

Oh, but yet, I am afraid the Lord will not hear my prayer, or regard my duty, for I am a man or a woman of great distempers, many passions, and frowardnesses in my life and conversation. But what think ye of Elijah? Elijah prayed that there might be no rain, and there was no rain for three years and a half; and he prayed for rain, and there was rain: and yet, saith the apostle, "He was a man of like passions as we are," James 5:17 -

Oh, but I fear, I am afraid the Lord will not regard my prayer, or duty, for I am such a one, or such a one, or such a one.

What an one? what an one art thou? Art thou such a one as beginnest to look towards Christ but yet not fully come off? you know what was said concerning Cornelius, Acts 10:31, "Cornelius, thy prayer is come up before me." Yet he did not begin to look towards Christ. Art thou such a one as the publican was? the publican stood and smote himself upon the breast, and he said, "O Lord, be merciful unto me a sinner." And our Saviour saith, "He went away justified, rather than his fellow." Luke 18:13-14. Or art thou such a one as the poor prodigal? he said to his father, "I am not worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thine hired servants?" and the father heard him and overgranted his petition. And if all these things be true, what is there that can justly discourage any poor drooping, doubting soul, in regard of duty; shall his want of parts and gifts, or his abundance of distractions? &c. No :for though a godly man have but weak parts or gifts ; though his spirit and his heart be dull, dead and straitened; though he labour under many distractions in duty; though the Lord hide his face, and defer an answer to his prayer; though the Lord seem to be angry; though there be much unbelief in his duty; though there be a great deal of selfishness; though his heart be not prepared, according to the preparation of the sanctuary; though he be a man of many passions, and great distempers : yet notwithstanding all this he hath no just cause or warrant to be discouraged : cause there is to be humbled under all these things, but no just cause to be

discouraged and cast down. And if so, then by way of application. What mighty encouragement is here, to every poor drooping heart, to come unto God in duty! though dead, though dull, though straitened, yet to come unto God in duty. And what a mighty difference is here between a godly, and a wicked man ! a wicked man goes to prayer, and " his prayer is an abomination to the Lord." And if you look into the 8th of Hosea you shall find at the 13th verse, that the Lord threatens wicked men thus, that when they do come to prayer and to offer a sacrifice to him, that then he will remember their iniquity. At verse 12, "I have written to you the great things of my law, but they are accounted as a strange thing, they sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of my offering, but the Lord accepteth them not; now will I remember their iniquity." Mark the word, Now, now, when? Now when they do come to prayer; now will I remember your iniquity, saith the Lord. I know, saith the Lord, all your carriage in such and such a place, I know your uneleanness, and your adulteries when you were in the dark, when the curtains were drawn about you, and the candle out: I know your carriage at such a tavern, and upon such an ale-bench, how you sat there, and scorned and reviled my children ; I know your opposing, scoffing and jeering at those that are godly; I know all this, and now thou comest to prayer, now swearer, now adulterer, now drunkard, now thou comest to duty, now will I remember thine iniquity. Is it not a sad thing, that the Lord should remember a man's sin at the time when he comes to prayer? yet thus the Lord deals with the wicked. But as for the godly and gracious man it is not so with him; when he comes to prayer, though he have many failings in duty, yet the Lord remembers his mercy, then the Lord remembers his loving-kindness, then the Lord remembers his covenant, "for he is ever mindful of his covenant." Oh, what encouragement is here then for every man to become godly, to get into Christ! and what encouragement is here, for the saints and people of God to come to duty! Oh, you that have but a little faith, have you any reason to be discouraged? will you not at last say to your soul, why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou thus discouraged?

But, suppose that I have done foolishly, and have sinned in being discouraged upon all occasions; suppose I have many failings in duty, and (he Lord doth not answer my prayer presently: what shall I do, that I may bear up my heart against this discouragement, either in regard of my own failing in duty, or in regard of God's not answering?

Take heed, that you do not lay the stress and weight of all your comfort upon duty: either the gift of duty, or the grace of duty, or the present answer of it. So much as ye lay the stress, and weight of your comfort upon duty, so much will you be discouraged in case you do either want duty, or an answer to it. When Paul was tempted and buffeted, he prayed thrice: "For this, (saith he,) I besought the Lord thrice," 2 Corinthians 12:8, that is often, and the Lord gave him no other answer than this, "Paul, my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness." Where upon Paul saith, "Now therefore will I glory in mine infirmities, that the power of the Lord may rest upon me." Hast thou therefore been at prayer? and hast thou prayed thrice or often? and hast thou no answer but this, "My grace is sufficient for thee?" know that thou hast a Paul's answer, and therefore rather glory in this, that the Lord should find thee faithful for to wait upon him, than be discouraged knowing, that the Lord's strength shall be perfected in thy weakness.

Consider seriously and frequently of this rule—That difficulty doth commend duty: the more difficulties your duties do press through to God, the more acceptable they are to him. The less there is to sweeten your duty to you, the more sweet is your duty to God. It is in our performing of

duty, as in the offering of the Jewish sacrifice, in the offering of their sacrifice there were two things, the sacrifice, and the obedience in offering the sacrifice; and the more difficult it was for any poor Jew, by reason of poverty, or the like, to offer this sacrifice, the more and greater was his obedience in offering it; the more difficult in offering, the greater the obedience offered. So also it is in our gospel sacrifices, and in all our duties, there are two things in them; there is the sacrifice, the duty, and there is the obedience in bringing the duty: and the more difficulty in performing the duty, the greater is the obedience to God in the performing of it. Now is it not an hard thing, and very difficult, for a man to pray, and continue praying, when his heart is hardened and his spirit straitened? especially if he be sensible thereof? then he is ready to despond, and say, I can pray no more: and is it not a very hard thing for a man to pray, and persevere in prayer, when he thinks that God doth not regard his prayer? then he is apt to say, Why should I pray any longer, for God regards me not: yet, now, if you do pray and perform your duty, your obedience is the more obediential, and the more acceptable; and if you would but think of this rule— Difficulty doth commend duty, and the less you have to sweeten your action the more sweet it is to God ; I say, if you would but remember this, it would both encourage you to duty, and keep you from discouragement in it. And we must all learn to leave the event and success of our spiritual things unto God himself; so shall we never be discouraged in any duty. For the word of the Lord is sure, and God hath spoken it: "Cast thy gift upon the Lord, and he will sustain thee; he will not suffer the righteous to be moved forever," Psalms 55 : You read it thus : "Cast thy burden upon the Lord:" but in the Hebrew, it is, thy gift; "Cast thy gift upon the Lord." That is, saith Schindler, Quicquid tibi dari donative expelis: Whatsoever thou dost desire that God should give thee, cast that upon the Lord: thou comest to prayer, and thou prayest for such a mercy, or such a gift, cast that on God, and leave it wholly to him. Oh, but the mercy I pray for is a necessary mercy I Be it so, yet it is to be cast on God. But it is a spiritual gift! I pray for pardon of sin, the sense of God's love, growth in grace, consolation to my poor drooping soul. Be it so, yet thou must cast this on God. Many there are, that can leave the event and the success of their outward things unto God, but to leave the event and success of prayer, and their spiritual things unto God, this they cannot understand, and this they are utterly unacquainted with: but whatever thy gift be, cast it upon the Lord, leave the success and the event of all your spiritual things upon God: what then? "and he will sustain thee, and thou shalt not be moved forever." Thou art moved for the present, and thy heart is moved, and thou art much discouraged, yet do but try this way, leave the event to God. Go to prayer, go and perform thy duty leaving the event of that unto God, and the Lord that hath promised will certainly fulfil it, thou shalt be sustained, and though thou art moved for the present, thou shalt not be moved forever. And thus I have done with the third instance.

07. SERMON VII. - A LIFTING UP IN THE WANT OF ASSURANCE.

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"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me,."—Psalms 42:11.

IV. Sometimes the discouragements of God's people are drawn from the want of their evidence for heaven. And thus they reason or argue: I am a poor creature, who doth want assurance of the love of God, and of mine own salvation; therefore I am thus discouraged. Indeed, if I had any evidence of an interest in Christ, I should never be discouraged whatever my condition were: but, alas! I want the assurance of God's love, and of eternal life. Should I now die, I do not know whether I should go to heaven or hell, and what would become of my soul to all eternity. Oh I want assurance of my salvation, and therefore I am thus discouraged. Have I not just cause and reason for my discouragements now?

No, no reason yet. It is indeed a great evil and a sore affliction, to want the assurance of God's love and of one's own salvation; yet, notwithstanding, the want of this assurance is no sufficient ground or bottom for your discouragement. I confess it is a great evil and a sore affliction for a man to want assurance; for sin and affliction are twisted together in the want of assurance. As of all blessings those are the greatest, where grace and comfort are joined together; so where sin and affliction are twisted together, of all afflictions they are the most afflictive. And thus it is in the want of assurance: for as in assurance there is something of grace, and something of comfort or reward; so in the want of assurance there is somewhat of sin or unbelief, and somewhat of affliction too. Sin and affliction, affliction and sin, are both twisted together in the want of assurance. The truth is, a man that wants the assurance of God's love, and of his interest in Christ, is neither fit to receive mercy from God, nor to make return of love and praise to God as he should. Not fit to receive mercy as he should, for though he would have Christ come in, yet by unbelief he shuts the door against him, and he makes an evil interpretation of mercies offered unto him. If a mercy or blessing be tendered unto him, he saith, this comes in judgment to me; it is a blessing indeed in itself, but I fear it is a judgment to me. Thus he makes an ill interpretation of blessings, and so is unfit to receive. And he is not fit to make returns of love to God again: assurance returns praise. And therefore saith the text here, O my soul, wait on God, hope in God, "for I shall yet praise him/" why? "for he is my God." Praise grows upon assurance. And upon this account, I say, he is neither fit to receive mercy, nor to make return of praise as he should.

Yea further, he that wants assurance of God's love, converseth too much with Satan. As he that hath the assurance of God's love, doth converse with Christ, "the Spirit bearing witness to him that he is the child of God so he that doth want assurance, converseth with Satan, and Satan, though falsely, is still bearing witness to his spirit that he is not the child of God. And is it not a misery to be in these converses with Satan, to be under his hellish droppings? David felt one pang of unbelief, and he cried out, and said, "It is too painful for me." Oh, what a pain is it then, to lie bed-ridden of an unbelieving heart. You know a chaste and a loving wife, counts it an affliction to her, to be followed with the solicitations of an unworthy person, to suspect and be jealous of her husband's love; for,

saith she, he doth therefore follow me with these solicitations, making me to suspect my husband's love, that so he may attain his own filthy desires. So saith a gracious soul, the devil is always following and tempting me to suspect the love of Christ, and he doth therefore do it, that he may attain his mind upon me; for the devil knows well enough, that the more I suspect Christ's love, the more I shall embrace Satan's love. The truth is, beloved, this want of assurance of God's love, or interest in Christ, is an inlet to many sins and miseries; for first a man doubts of his own salvation, and after he hath continued doubting, then he riseth up unto a full conclusion, saying, Now know I that Christ doth not love me, I did but doubt before, but now I know he doth not love me. And after he is risen to this conclusion, then shortly he riseth higher, and he goes further, thus : If Christ doth not love me now, he will never love me, and if I have not interest in Christ now, after all the preaching I have heard, and ordinances enjoyed, if I have not an interest in Christ now, I shall never have it; and so the longer I live, the more I aggravate my condemnation ; therefore as good in hell at first as at the last, and therefore now I will even make away with myself. Oh, what a black chain is here, and the first link is the want of assurance. If you should see a child, a pretty child, lie in the open streets, and none own it, would it not make your bowels yearn within you? Come to the little one, and say, Child, where is thy father? I know not, saith the child. Where is thy mother, child? I know not. Who is thy father? what is thy father's name, child? I know not. Would it not make your heart ache to see such a little one in the streets? But for a poor soul to lie in the streets, as it were, and not know his father, whether God be his Father, or the devil be his father; for a soul to say, I do not know my father, whether God in Christ be my Father, yea or no; this is pitiful indeed. The word father is a sweet word, for it sweetens all our duties; take the word Father out of prayer, and how sour is it? Surely, therefore, it is a sad and sore affliction, to want the assurance of God's love in Christ. But now, although it be a great evil, and a sore affliction for to want this assurance, yet I say, the saints and people of God have no reason to be cast down or discouraged, although they do want the same.

How may that appear?

Thus: if the want of assurance be not the damning unbelief, then a man hath no reason to be quite discouraged, although he do want assurance. Now, though there may be much unbelief bound up in the want of assurance, yet I say, the bare want of assurance, is not that unbelief that shall damn one's soul to all eternity, not that unbelief which Christ threatens with damnation. For if you look into John 3:18, you shall find our Saviour speaking thus: "He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." But now, lest any poor soul that would believe and cannot, should be afflicted and troubled at these words, therefore saith our Saviour Christ, in the following words, I will tell you wherein lies the damnableness of unbelief, verse 19, "This is the condemnation (he speaks in relation to the words before), and this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil; for every one that doeth evil hateth the light; neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved or discovered this light is Christ. Now therefore, doest thou hate the light, Christ? and therefore keepest from it, lest thy deeds should be discovered? Or rather on the contrary, doest thou not know there are evil deeds in thy life, and much evil in thy heart? and doest thou not therefore desire to come to Christ, who is the true light that thy deeds may be discovered, and thy sin amended? Then, thou canst not believe as thou wouldest, and though thou doest want

assurance, and though thou hast much unbelief in thee, the Lord Jesus Christ hath spoken it, thou shalt never be condemned to all eternity for this want, but the Lord Christ will pardon this unto thee: and therefore certainly upon this account, God's people have no reason for their discouragement.

If there be such an overruling hand of grace, and mercy upon the want of the saint's assurance, as that it shall work to their and to others good; then they have no reason to be quite discouraged, although they do want assurance. As for their own good: thereby they do gain experience; thereby they come to see the emptiness and nothingness of all their own righteousness. David saith, ye know the scripture, Psalms 116 : "I said in my haste, all men are liars." The words in the Hebrew may be read, "I said in my shaking," I said in my shaking, all men are liars."

David was shaken by men, and then he saw that men were liars. So, when a man is shaken in his own righteousness, then he sees the emptiness and the lying disposition of it; and, I pray, when is a man's own righteousness more shaken, than when he doth want assurance of God's love? Thereby also, a man comes to get more and stronger assurance of God's love; *Certissimum est, quod certum est post incertitudinem*; that is most certain that is certain after uncertainty : the shaken tree grows the strongest. It is observed of Thomas, that of all the apostles, he cried out, and said, "My Lord and my God." Two My's, not one My: My Lord, or My God: but two My's, "My Lord, and My God." Two My's, why? Because he had two No's before, "Unless I may put my finger into his side, I will not believe." So you read it; but in the original there were two No's, I will not, not believe; a double Not. And as there were two No's of unbelief, so there are two My's of faith. So far as a good man is sunk in unbelief, so far he will rise in faith; so much as a man is shaken by unbelief, and in the want of assurance, so much he will rise unto assurance and be confirmed and steeled in it. And as for others: a man is never more fit to comfort, to relieve, to satisfy others in their fears, than when he hath been in fears, and doubting himself. It is a good speech that Maldonat hath out of Bernard: *Citius quidem ego qui infirmus sum*; I would rather believe poor doubting Thomas, than confident Peter: I would rather believe poor doubting Thomas than Peter that never doubted. Thomas having once doubted, knew how to deal with a poor doubting soul. Thus, I say, God doth order the want of assurance to his servants unto their own, and others good: and therefore no reason, that they should be cast down, and quite discouraged, although they do want assurance for the present.

If a man, a gracious man, may have comfort; yea, and live comfortably, although he do want assurance, then he hath no reason to be quite discouraged, in case he want it. Now, though it may seem a paradox to you, yet you shall find a truth in it; I say a man that hath no assurance for the present, may have comfort; yea, he may live comfortably, if things be rightly ordered. For he that hath no assurance, may have hope, and hope is comfortable. He that hath no assurance, may yet rely upon Jesus Christ; and stay his soul upon Christ; and in all reliance there is some comfort. He that hath no assurance, may be justified, and being justified by faith, we have peace with God. He that hath no assurance, may submit unto God's commandments; and saith the Psalmist, "the entrance into thy commandments, giveth light:" and so comfort. "In keeping thy commandments, there is great reward:" and so comfort. "It is a comfortable thing, (saith Solomon) to behold the light:" and in ail light there is some comfort. Now God is light, and the free grace and love of God is light, which a man may behold, that hath no assurance. You do sometimes take a great deal of contentment in the reading of a story: I do not mean a scripture story, but in other books, I say, a

man sometimes takes a great deal of contentment in reading of a story, although it doth not concern him; for, saith he, although this story doth not concern me, yet I take complacency, and contentment in reading of it, because here I read of the valour of such a man; and of the faithfulness of such a man to his friend; and of the excellent carriages and virtues of men. Now, my beloved, is there no excellency in God himself to content the soul? Is there no faithfulness in God? Is there no love and mercy in God himself? Is not the Lord the God of all consolation, and God of mercy, without relation to my condition? Is there not an ocean of excellent love and grace in God himself? How many sweet stories of love and grace, may you read in this little book of the bible?

Besides, a man that hath no assurance, now, and then may have some promise thrown into his soul, to uphold him with. When Elijah was by the brook, and could not enjoy the ordinary meat of the land, a raven brought him meat: and whenever was any godly man in such a condition, but he had one raven or other to bring him comfort? Sometimes a temptation is a raven; God makes it so; sometimes a desertion is a raven; sometimes affliction; sometimes a particular word and promise is thrown into his soul; and is there no comfort there? I say, though a man do want assurance for the present, he may live comfortably. Surely therefore a godly man hath no reason for his discouragement, though for the present he doth want assurance? But I do not only want this settled assurance of God's love, and so the ordinary food of the land; but I have no raven to bring me any comfort; I mean, I have no promise, no particular word to bring in comfort unto my soul, and to uphold me in my dark condition : though I do want a settled assurance, yet if I had a particular word and promise, to uphold my soul, until I had this assurance, I should not be discouraged : but I want this settled assurance, and I have no particular word or promise to uphold my soul with, until it come; and therefore I am thus discouraged: have I not reason now?

I answer, No. For, Christian, what particular word or promise wouldst thou have? Have ye not the whole gospel before you, a bag of golden promises? A father hath two children; and he comes unto one, and gives unto that child a piece of gold, there child, saith he, supply thy want "with that; but unto the other child, he saith, here child, I know that thou art in want, and there are bags of silver and gold in my study; take the key of my study, and go in, and take what thou wilt: is not this latter in as good a condition as the former or rather better? Thus it is with the saints; the Lord is pleased to give now and then, a particular word to some of his children; but unto others, he saith rather, here take the key of faith, for faith is the key, and bath a power to unlock all the promises, I give thee faith, and by this faith, I give thee a power to go unto all my promises: is not this latter in as good a condition as the other? Thus it is, I say, with all the servants of God, "Having therefore these promises," saith the apostle, &c. 2 Corinthians 7:1.

If the promise of grace do belong to you, then you cannot say, I have no word, no promise to uphold me with: now, that the promise of grace doth belong to you, is cleared thus :1. Your very resting on the promise, makes it to belong to you, and it becomes yours, by your resting on it; but you do or have rested on the promise. 2. If the command doth belong to you, then why not the promise? Doth not the word of commandment belong to you, namely, "Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit adultery?" Doth this word of command belong to you? Yea, surely; for the commandment saith, Thou, and thou, and thou shalt not, &c.; and that word Thou doth include Me; the word of promise hath its Thou and Thee and Thy also. Psalms 37 :, "Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed," verse 3 : "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thy heart," verse 5. And if you put

yourself within the compass of the commandment's Thou, God will put you within the compass of the promise's Thou. 3. If you may, and it be your duty to rest on the promise, then it belongs to you: now, you may rest on the promise of grace and holiness for sanctification, and it is your duty so to do, else i/- were no sin not to rest on the promise: but unbelief, and not resting on the promise, sin; only ye must know, that there is a great difference between the promise of consolation and the promise of sanctification. To apply the promise of comfort, without endeavour after holiness, is presumption; but to apply the promise of sanctification, that I may be more holy, is no presumption, but my duty; and if it be your duty to apply and rest on this promise, then it belongs to you.

Oh, but yet, when I go unto the word, or the Scripture, I find, that God's promise still runs upon some condition, and I cannot perform that condition, I do not find that condition in myself; and therefore, I fear, that I may not go unto these promises, and that I have no right to them. But what if a good and gracious man may apply a conditional promise, although he hath not performed the condition? Pray look into Nehemiah, chapter 1: and there you will find, that the Jews being in captivity, Nehemiah goes unto God in prayer, and doth press the promise which God made unto the Jews by his servant Moses, verse 8: "Remember, I beseech thee, thy word that thou commandest thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter ye abroad among the nations; but if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them, though there were of you cast unto the uttermost parts of the earth, yet will I gather them from thence, and I will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there. Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power" The Jews in Babylon were scattered according to the word, but alas, they did not return unto the Lord, and leave their sins, according to the conditions of the promise; yet, notwithstanding, Nehemiah goes unto the Lord, and presseth this promise, and the Lord heard him, and he had acceptance, as ye find in the following chapter.

What if the condition of one promise, be the thing promised in another promise; will ye then fear, that the promise doth not belong to you, because you have not performed the condition of the promise? Now so it is, that the condition of one, is the thing promised in another promise. For example: in one promise, repentance is the condition of the promise, 2 Chronicles 6:37-38; Joel 2:15—19. But in another promise, repentance is the thing promised, Ezekiel 36:26, "I will take away the heart of stone, and give you an heart of flesh." In one promise, faith and coming to Christ is the condition; "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matthew 11:28. But in another promise it is the thing promised, John 6:47, "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me." In one promise, obedience is the condition of it, Isaiah 1:19, "If ye consent and obey, ye shall eat the good of the land." In another promise, it is the thing promised, Ezekiel 36:27, "I will put my Spirit into you, and cause ye to walk in my ways." In one promise, perseverance is the condition, Matthew , 24 :, "He that continueth to the end shall be saved." But in another promise, it is the thing promised. Psalms 1:3 : "His leaf shall not wither" Ezekiel 36 :, "I will put my fear into your hearts, and ye shall not depart from me." In one scripture of the Old Testament, the coming of the Deliverer is promised to the Jews, upon condition that they turn from ungodliness; Isaiah 59:24, "The Redeemer shall come out of Zion, and unto them that turn from ungodliness in Jacob." But in another scripture in the New Testament, turning Jacob from ungodliness is the thing promised; Romans 2:26, "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and turn ungodliness from Jacob?" Now if the condition in one promise, be the thing promised in

another promise, will ye fear that the promise doth not belong to you, because ye have not performed the condition?

And, again, what if the condition of the promise be performed for you, better than you could perform it? In the beginning the Lord made a covenant with man, a covenant of works, "Do this and live and Adam, the first man, stood as a common person for us all, to perform the condition of doing: and if Adam had performed the condition, we all had performed the condition. Now the Lord makes a new covenant of grace with man, and the Lord Jesus Christ is a second Adam, and he stands as a common person, and if he perform the condition, then all his seed do perform the condition. Now the Lord Jesus Christ hath performed the condition for all his seed: although the first Adam did not perform the condition for his seed, yet the second Adam hath performed the condition of the promise and of the covenant for his seed to the full. Now if all these three things be true, namely, that a man may go to the promise, the conditional promise with acceptance, although he hath not performed the condition; that the condition of one promise is the thing promised in another promise; that the Lord Jesus Christ hath performed the condition of the promise for you, better than you can perform it: have ye, then, any reason to be discouraged and to keep off from the promise, because you have not performed the condition? But so it is, that a child of God may go to a conditional promise with acceptance, although he hath not performed the condition; and the condition of one promise is the thing promised in another; and the Lord Jesus, our second Adam, hath performed the condition of all the promises for all his seed: surely, therefore, you have no reason to be discouraged in this respect. But this is not my case, for I do not only want assurance of God's love, and have no particular promise; but, instead of the promise, I have a threatening set upon my soul: oh, the bitter words of the threatening have soaked into my heart. Time was, heretofore, indeed, that I had a promise; j I could say, I had a promise, and I rejoiced in it: but now I have lost my promise, and instead of the promise a threatening is come. Oh, I feel the smart and the anger of the threatening, and have I not just cause and reason to be discouraged now?

No: for if you be drawn to Christ, is it material whether I it be done with a cord of flax or a cord of silk? God hath I two arms whereby he draws us unto himself; the arm of his I love, and the arm of his anger and justice: the arm of his love is put forth in the promise, the arm of his anger and I justice is put forth in the threatening; and with' both these he doth lift up the fallen sinner. What if God lift you up I with his left arm, so you be lifted up! Sometimes he lifts I up with the arm of his threatening, that he may carry us in the arm of his promise; for as the law was a schoolmaster to bring to Christ, so the threatening is a schoolmaster to bring us unto the promise: is the threatening therefore come? then is the promise a coming; for the threatening is given forth in order to that. And if this, which you complain of, may be the condition of the saints, then you have no reason to be discouraged. Now, for the loss of the promise, you know how it was with Joshua : the Lord gave Joshua a gracious promise; " I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee: be strong, be not dismayed, be not afraid, be of good courage, for I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee," Joshua 1:6. But the children of Israel were a little discomfited by the men of Ai, and see how Joshua lost the sight of the promise; in Joshua 7:6-7, "Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face, before the ark of the Lord, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads, and said, Alas, O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would to God we had been content to dwell on the

other side Jordan." Oh, what unbelief is here! what discouragement is here! how had he lost the promise! O Lord, saith he, what shall I say, when Israel turn their backs before their enemies: and oh, what shall we say, when Joshua turned his back upon the promise? But so it was with Joshua here, he had lost the sight of the promise which once he had. And as for the threatening, you know how it was with David; having sinned greatly in the matter of Uriah, the Lord threatens him, "that the sword should never depart from his house;" and the threatening did take hold upon him, and David was under the stroke of the threatening. But was not Joshua godly; and was not David godly? So, then, a godly man may possibly lose the sight of the promise, and have a threatening set on his soul too. But if a promise, given out by the Lord, shall never be reversed, and a threatening may be repealed; then you have no cause to fear in this respect. Now a threatening is therefore given, that it may not be fulfilled. Jonah knew this so well, that he professeth to the Lord, that therefore he fled to Tarshish, because, saith he, "O Lord, I knew that thou art a merciful God." As if he should say, I knew, O Lord, thou art so merciful a God, that though thou hast threatened Nineveh, yet thou wilt reverse thy threatening. But a promise once given unto a soul, shall never be reversed or repealed. It may rise up to an oath, as sometimes it doth, for when God gives a promise to a soul, and opposition ariseth. if then God gives out the same promise again, it amounts to an oath; "As I live (saith the Lord) I will never reverse this promise that I have made to thee." But a promise once given, shall never be reversed or repealed: Galatians 3 : you have the case that is now before you. Saith Paul, at verse 15, "I speak after the manner of men; though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulled or addeth thereunto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made." And therefore, saith the apostle, the promise shall not be disannulled, although the law came after the promise. But if the promise that the Lord gave to Abraham, was not disannulled by the law, that came four hundred and thirty years after; (verse 17) "wherefore then serves the law?" he tells you, verse 19; "It was added because of transgression." So now, say you, if that the promise that God hath given heretofore, be not disannulled, and made void, by the threatening that follows after, wherefore then was the law or the threatening given unto my soul? It was added because of transgression: God had some transgression of yours to discover unto you, that you did not think of, and therefore the threatening and the law came after. But the promise is quite out of sight, and I have lost it. And did not the Jews also lose the sight of the promise which was given to Abraham? When the Lord gave the law, and they stood trembling and quaking before Mount Sinai, did not they then lose the sight of the promise that was given to Abraham? So, say I, although thou hast lost the sight of the promise that once thou hadst, and a threatening be come in the room of it, the promise that was once given thee, it may be four hundred and thirty days ago, or many years ago, shall never be disannulled or reversed. And the reason is this: Because God doth not repent in the matter of the gospel. Ye read in Scripture, that God is said sometimes to repent, "It repented the Lord that he made man;" sometimes it is said that the Lord doth not repent, "I am not a man that I should repent how are these two reconciled; God doth repent, and God doth not repent? Thus to our present purpose: God repents as to the matter of the threatening, but God never repents as to the matter of the promise: God repents as to the matter of the threatening, and therefore saith the Lord to Jeremiah, "I am weary of my repenting." I have threatened, and threatened, and I am weary of threatening. Here God repented as to the matter of the threatening; but God never repents as to the matter of the promise. And therefore saith the apostle, Romans 11:29, "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." And the promise is a great gift. So then, as to the matter of the promise, God

doth never repent. Wherefore, poor soul, hast thou a promise given thee, may be five years ago, may be ten years ago, may be twenty years ago, and hast thou lost the sight of the promise; and instead of the promise is there a threatening come upon thy soul, that makes thy heart quake and tremble? I here tell thee, from the Lord, the promise that was once given unto thee, though now thou hast lost the sight of it, shall never be repealed or recalled. Oh, what matter of encouragement is here! Is here matter of discouragement? nay, rather, here is matter of great encouragement.

Oh, but yet this is not my case: I do not only want assurance of God's love, but I have assurance of God's displeasure; I do not only want assurance of my salvation, but I have assurance of my damnation: I do not only want the testimony of the Spirit, bearing witness with my spirit that I am the child of God; but I have another testimony within my soul, bearing witness to me that I am a reprobate. And have I not cause to be discouraged?

No, not yet; for it may be you look upon the back-side of God's dispensation. If we look upon the face of God's dispensation, we see his love and good pleasure; but if we look on the back-side thereof, we conclude nothing but anger and displeasure. It may be it is so with you in this case. But, if you find no such testimony of reprobation as you speak of, in all the Scripture; then you have no reason to fear or to be discouraged in this respect. Now search the Scripture, and you shall not find in all the word, any ground for such a testimony of reprobation. We read, indeed, of Francis Spira, notorious for his despair; when his friends came to comfort him, having spake comfortable words unto him, that he said, Why go ye about to comfort me? comfort belongs not to me, for I am a reprobate. Oh, said one of his friends, do not say so, for none are able to say so. Yes, said he, as the elect of God have a Spirit within them, bearing witness that they are the children of God; so reprobates have another spirit, bearing witness with their spirits that they are not the children of God, but the children of Satan: and such a spirit of reprobation have I. But, my beloved, if there be such a spirit or a testimony of reprobation as this is, either it must be from the Spirit of God, or from the spirit of Satan: if from the spirit of Satan, then he is a liar, not to be believed; if it be from the Spirit of God, how doth it suit with the word? for the Spirit of God is called the Comforter; can such a spirit of reprobation come from the Comforter? And if you have such a testimony as this is, either you must have it from the word, or from the Spirit of God alone without the word: if from the word, then from the threatening; for it is not from the promise, nor from the command: if from the threatening, a threatening may be repealed, a threatening may be reversed, as you have heard. And if you have it from the Spirit of the Lord, how can it be that the Spirit should be called a Comforter? Surely therefore, if you have such a spirit of reprobation in your bosom, it is from Satan, and he is a liar. But, my beloved, I will in this appeal to you, whether do you not think that there is many a soul now in heaven, that whilst he lived said, I am sure to go to hell? You know that ordinary story of the woman that took a glass in her hand, and throwing it on the ground, said, as sure as this glass breaks, I shall be damned; and the glass broke not. Well then, thy condition is not alone, others of God's people may be and have been led in this way of temptation; and therefore no reason why thou shouldest be cast down or discouraged. But yet this doth not reach my case or condition, for I do not only want the assurance of God's love, and of mine own salvation; but I have wanted assurance this two, this four, this six, this eight, this ten years: and I have continued so long doubting in unbelief, and my heart is so hardened with it, that I am afraid I shall never be healed or saved. Oh, I have sat under such and such precious gospel

means, and if ever I should have had assurance of God's love, I should have had it before this. I have sat under many a comfortable sermon, and under the gospel preached many years, and yet have no assurance of my salvation; surely if the Lord would ever have bestowed assurance upon me, I should have had it ere this: but still unbelieving, and still do I want assurance, and my heart hardened under unbelief, and therefore I am thus discouraged. Have I not cause and reason now?

No, not yet, for our evidence for heaven is in God's keeping, our comforts as well as our graces; and our evidence for heaven, as well as our heaven and salvation; and he will bring it forth when we have most need, in a due time, though not in our time. And if you look into Isaiah xlii, you shall see what a gracious promise the Lord makes unto hardhearted sinners; an invitation and promise together: verses 12 and 13, "Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness, I bring near my righteousness, it shall not be far off, and my salvation, it shall not tarry." Oh, but I have no righteousness to lay my assurance upon. Well, yet saith the Lord, never speak of thy righteousness, man, "I will bring near my righteousness." Oh, but my heart is dead and hard and stout. "Then hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, saith God." Oh, but I am far off from righteousness. Be it so, "Yet hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness, I will bring near my righteousness, it shall not be far off, and my salvation it shall not tarry." But that you may have more full satisfaction in this, I shall desire you to consider three or four propositions.

Though it be possible for a man to attain to full assurance of God's love, yet he may have saving faith that hath no assurance. Faith and assurance differ; and therefore saith the apostle, "Draw near with full assurance of faith." Assurance of faith comforts, but the reliance of faith saves. It is possible that a man or woman may have such an assurance, as that they never doubted of God's love; but ordinarily, a man never had assurance of his salvation, that never doubted of his salvation. The first step to salvation, is to see that there is no salvation; we must go to heaven by hell gates; and he that is not troubled sometimes with Satan, is possessed by him. I say, ordinarily a man never had assurance of his salvation, that never doubted of his salvation. A man may have true saving faith, that yet hath no assurance of his salvation. This is the first. As a man may have true saving faith, and yet no assurance, so a man may have strong faith and assurance, yet many doubts, fears, and mistrustings may be left in his soul. It is observed to my hand, that of all the churches, the church of the Thessalonians are most commended for their faith and their graces, "So that they were examples to all that believed," 1 Thessalonians 1:7, Yet in chap, iii, verse 10, the apostle saith, there was something lacking in their faith: "Night and day praying exceedingly, that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith." Something was lacking in their faith, yet they were examples of faith unto all the churches. As a man may have strong faith with assurance, and yet some doubts and fears may be left in the soul still; so a man may have strong faith and assurance, yet for a long time may be deprived of the feeling of it. And therefore whereas the spouse in the Canticles in one place saith, a I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine;" in another place she saith, "I sought him whom my soul loveth, and I found him not: I opened to my Beloved, and he was gone, and my heart failed; I called and he answered not? As a man may have strong faith, and yet for a great time may be deprived of the feeling of it; so it is possible a man may be a godly, gracious man, yet may continue and go on doubting for a long time, yea possibly, he may die doubting also. The godly and the wicked are contrary. Now for the wicked, you shall find that a wicked man may think his condition good, yet it may be very naught;

he may have hope and persuasion that he shall go to heaven, and he may die in these persuasions, yet he may go to hell. Revelation 3 : ye read thus of the churches of Laodicea, at verse 16, "So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth: I would thou wert cold or hot," verse 15. These were very wicked; had these people any thoughts of mercy, or did they think their spiritual condition was good? Read verse 17. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked?" So that I say, a wicked man may think his condition good, and yet it may be very naught. Yea, daily experience tells us, besides the parable of the foolish virgins, that he may die in these persuasions. So on the contrary, a man may think his condition naught, and go fearing and trembling a long while, yea, even die under these fears, yet his condition may be very good. Consider it rightly, I know indeed, ordinarily, God doth come in with some comfort or other unto a child of God before he dies; but I would be loth to say, and you will be loth to think, that certainly that man goes to hell that doubteth of his salvation, or that dies doubting of his salvation. No, possibly a man may doubt and fear, and doubt long, even die doubting, without a settled assurance of God's love, yet he may go to heaven and be saved for ever. What then, though thou hast stayed long, and hast long wanted assurance, yet God hath not led thee so far as he hath led some, and thy condition is no other than that which may befall the dear servants and children of God.

But, though for the present, you do want assurance of God's love, and of your own salvation: yet if you may conclude by scripture arguments, that you shall have it before you die, then have you no reason to be discouraged: now, though this or that particular Christian, in a case not ordinary, do die under a cloud, and with much fear and doubting about his everlasting condition : yet there are arguments in scripture, whereby a man may ordinarily know, and conclude, that he shall have peace and assurance before he dies. For example, He that is content to stay, and go without a mercy, if God will have it so, shall not want it forever: "For the patient abiding of the meek, shall not be forgotten forever. Psalms 9 : As the way to have affliction continued, is to be discontented under it, so the way to have it removed, is to be contented with it. There is a faith of expectance, a faith of reliance, and the faith of assurance. The faith of expectance, will rise up into a faith of reliance, and the faith of reliance, to the faith of assurance, there is seldom a maybe faith, but hath a shall-be, and it is at the bottom, if God would make it float.

If the Lord hath wrought wonders for thy soul when thou wert in the wilderness, and in a desert; then certainly, he will bring thee into the land of rest. So he dealt by David, so he dealt by Israel, so he will deal by thee.

If thy heart be upright in the matter of thine assurance, God will certainly give assurance unto thee: for ye know what the Psalmist saith, "The Lord will give grace and glory: and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly," Psalms 64:21. If therefore, I say, thy heart hath been upright in the matter of thine assurance, the Lord will give thee assurance, though for the present thou wantest it. Now I pray, when is a man's heart upright in the matter of his assurance, but when he doth desire assurance of God's love, and of his own salvation rather than he may praise and serve God the more, than for his own comfort? For this look in Psalms 9 : and see how David reasons to this purpose, verse 13, 14, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death: that I may shew forth all thy praises in the gates of the daughters of Zion: I will rejoice in thy salvation." Here are three

things observable, first, he was in a very low condition, at the gates of death: from the gates of death, saith he, gates of death, that is, the power of death: "The gates of hell shall not prevail," that is, the powers of hell shall not prevail; so here, the gates of death, that is, the powers of death. David was under the power of death, at the gates of death, and now in this condition he prays unto the Lord for mercy, that the Lord would lift him up, but why doth he pray so? mark his end. At verse 14. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, consider my trouble." Why? "That I may shew forth thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion." O Lord, bring me from the gates of death, that I may praise thee in the gates of the daughter of Zion, not for my own comfort, Lord, but that I may praise thee. Well, but what inference doth he make of this? see what follows in the latter end of verse 14. "I will, or shall rejoice in thy salvation;" O Lord, my heart hath been upright in this petition, and now I know that thou wilt grant my prayer, I will, I shall rejoice in thy salvation. When a man can praise God for what he hath, although his condition be very sad; God will give him more, and give him a better condition. If God shew mercy, saith one, or give a blessing, and I praise God, I pay my debt; but if my case be low and sad, and I praise God, then God is pleased to be called my debtor, and he will certainly pay his debt.

If the Lord be the health of your countenance, you shall have the assurance of your salvation in due time, though now you want it. Thus the Psalmist reasons in the text, "Wait on God, or hope in God, for I shall yet praise him," why? "for he is the health of my countenance." But when is God said to be the health of our countenance? when his smiles make us look cheerly, and his frowns make us look sadly; if I look well when God smiles, though all relations frown; and do look ill, when God frowns, though all my relations smile; then is God the health of my countenance. Now I appeal to you, beloved, you that do want assurance, hath it not been thus with you? Do ye not earnestly desire assurance, yet are content to stay, wait, and go without it, if God will have it so? Hath not the Lord shewn wonders for thy soul, when thou hast been in a wildered condition, in preserving and keeping thee from doing evil to thyself; and have not you been upright in the matter of your assurance, saying thus; O Lord, give me assurance of thy love, not that I may have comfort only, but that I may be more fit to serve thee: and have ye not praised the Lord, in your sad condition, for what you have: and hath not the Lord been the health of your countenance, so that when the Lord hath smiled upon you, then you have looked well; and when the Lord hath frowned upon you, then you have looked ill? surely you cannot but say, I must not deny these things; I cannot be faithful to mine own soul if I should deny them; yea, Lord, thou knowest, and my soul knows it, that thou hast done wonders for me, when I have been in a low, desert, and bewildered condition. And, O Lord, thou knowest I desire assurance of thy love, not for my own comfort only, but that I may be more fit to praise and serve thee. And, Lord, thou knowest I have praised thee, in some measure, for what I have. Yea, Lord, thou art the health of my countenance: when thou smilest upon me, then I look well; and when thou frownest upon me, then I look ill: I may say in truth, The Lord is the health of my countenance. Well, then, I say unto thee from the Lord, go in peace, and be of good comfort, though thou doest for the present want comfort and assurance of thy salvation, thou shalt have it in due time. And if all these things be true, oh, you that are the people or the Lord, have you any reason to be discouraged? certainly you have not: therefore why should you not check yourselves, as David here, and say, "Why art thou cast down, oh my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me?"

Only, by the way, let no man misapply this doctrine, saying, if we should not be discouraged, although we do want assurance, then I will neglect the getting of my assurance. Beloved, ye see into what times we are now fallen, times of war, and rumours of war; times of blood; these are dying times: and is this a time for any of you to want assurance of God's love? When your hay lies abroad in the summer, and you see a shower coming, you say, Cock up, cock up! and I would to God you might not see showers a coming, and yet your evidences for heaven lie at random; wherefore, in the name of the Lord, cock up, cock up : and you that have false assurance—for you have heard that a man may think his condition is good, when it is naught, yea, that he may die so too—look you well into your condition, and consider your condition duly; this is no time to have false assurance : labour, then, to get true assurance; and you that have assurance, labour to grow up more and more into it, and the riches thereof. But suppose, for the present, I do want assurance; I confess, indeed, I ought not to be discouraged, although I do want assurance, as I have heard; but it is an hard thing to bear up one's heart against all discouragements, in the want of the assurance of God's love: but suppose I do want it for the present, what shall I now do, that I may bear up against discouragements in this condition?

Some few things by way of direction here, and so I conclude this argument.

Doest thou want assurance of God's love and of thine own salvation? labour more and more for to put to sea, I mean to the sea and ocean of God's love, and the deeps of Christ's merit and satisfaction. When you are at sea in a storm, or stress of weather, you desire sea room, and if ye have sea room enough, ye think all is well: it may be there are some passengers in the vessel or ship, and they say, For the love of God set us ashore, we are not able to ride out this storm; oh, set us upon some land or other : but the skillful mariner saith, Nay, but still keep to sea; if ye come to the shore we are undone, we are all lost creatures. So in this case, the time of the want of your assurance is a storm time, it is a time of great stress upon your soul; and if ye skill not the methods of Christ, you will say, Oh, now set me upon some duty, upon the coast of mine own righteousness, or mine own holiness: but if you have a skill in the way of the gospel, you will rather cry out, and say, O Lord, keep my soul in the ocean of thy free love; sea room, sea room, and all is well enough. Now there is sea room enough in the ocean of God's free love, and of Christ's merits and satisfaction; but if you touch upon your own righteousness, you do but endanger your soul, and sink your own heart into more despairing doubts and fears; stand off, therefore, now', from your own shore, and keep to sea, even that great sea of God's love and Christ's merits.

If you do want assurance, take heed that you do not hearken unto anything out of an ordinance, contrary unto the comfort which the Lord speaks to you in the time of an ordinance. Ye come to an ordinance, and there the Lord begins to comfort you, so you go away, and ye are satisfied, and your souls are refreshed; but then afterwards, you sit down and parley with Satan, and with your own souls; and ye lose all again, and doubt again, turning God's wine into your own vinegar, and are unsatisfied again. But suppose that a father should give an estate of land unto his child, and make it over to him with the best conveyance that the law can provide and then this son having laid down his conveyance some where negligently, a cunning lawyer, (that he may get money from him,) should come and write on the back-side of this conveyance, for such and such reasons, this conveyance is naught: should the son do well thereupon to say, my father hath done nothing for me, I have been deceived all this while, my father hath given me nothing; were this fair dealing with his father? and if he should run this course, should he ever have any assurance of his land

firm in his own thoughts? Now, so it is with you that are the people of God; the Lord hath given to you a fair inheritance; heaven is your inheritance, the fairest and best inheritance : the Lord hath given it you under hand and seal, and sometimes you think your evidence is clear, and you lay it by, and Satan comes and scribbles on the back of it, and he saith, it is naught; and you believe it, and then you doubt again, and you are unsatisfied again : is this fair dealing with God? Surely no. Wherefore then dost thou want assurance? The way to get it, and the way not to be discouraged in the want of it, is this: take heed that ye never hearken to any thing, out of an ordinance, contrary to the comfort which you have received in an ordinance.

Take heed that you be not discontented with your condition: discontentment breeds discouragement: but dost thou want the assurance of God's love? Say thus with thine own soul; however it be, yet will I wait on God, when the Lord pleaseth he will give me assurance; I will only labour to be contented with my condition. But if ye be discontented, ye will certainly be discouraged.

If you do want assurance of God's love, and of your own salvation, take heed that you do not say, I shall never be assured; take heed you do not say, I shall never have a promise; take heed you do not say, I shall never be comforted ; take heed you do not say, I shall never have the testimony of the Spirit, bearing witness with my spirit, that I am the child of God ; do not say thus, I shall never be helped, I am in a sad condition, and I shall never be better; I am in an uncomfortable condition, and I shall never be comforted ; I want assurance, and I shall never have assurance. Beloved, this ye cannot say, for who knows what God will do, whose ways are in the deep, and whose foot-steps are not known? You know how it is with a sick person; if the physician come, and tell him, there is hope of life, then his heart dies not; but if the physician saith to him, Sir, you are in a great and dangerous fever, and I would wish you to settle your estate, and look out for comfort for your soul, for the truth is, you will never be recovered; then his heart dies. So here, take a poor soul that wants assurance, if he saith, there is hope that I may be assured, he is not discouraged: but if he saith, I have no assurance, and I shall never have it, then he is quite discouraged; it is this word never, that doth discourage: oh, I shall never be encouraged, and I shall never have assurance, and I shall never have the testimony of God's Spirit. Take heed that you do not say, I shall never be assured, that is a temptation; take heed of the word never, in this case.

Carry this for a rule with you, and remember it much; that the less assurance you have, the more precious your obedience may be, and the more kindly God may take it at your hands. It is no great matter for a man to write, and to work by the day light, or candle light; but for a man to write, or to work in the dark, is hard. So here, it is no great matter comparatively, for a man to pray, and to work spiritually, while he is in the light; but for a poor soul to pray, and to work towards God, and to be obedient, when he is in the dark, and hath no assurance of the love of God, is something: I confess indeed that the more assurance you have, the more full your obedience will be, but the less assurance you have, the more ingenuous may be your obedience ; I say, the more full your assurance is, the more full and large your obedience will be; but the less assurance you have, the more ingenuous your obedience may be. Every child will serve his father for his portion, and for his inheritance; but when a child shall doubt of his fathers love, yea, when a child shall conclude and say, I know that my father will disinherit me, I know that my father will bestow nothing upon me, yet I will serve him because he is my father; will not all men say, Here is ingenuousness indeed in this child? So between God and you; it is good for a Christian to be obedient at all times, and the more

assurance you have, the more you are bound to obey; but doth thy soul fear that God will disinherit thee? and yet dost thou say, However it be, I will obey God, for he is my Father; though I cannot see him, yet will I serve him; and though I have no comfort from God, yet will I be obedient to him, for it is my duty, he is my Father? The Lord will take this kindly at thine hands, and what thou wantest in the largeness, shall be made up in the ingenuousness of thine obedience. Wherefore, then, dost thou want assurance of the love of God? Comfort thyself with this, and say within thine own soul, Well, though I do want assurance, I hope, through grace, I am in some measure obedient, and the less assurance I have, the more kindly God takes my obedience at my hand: and therefore why should I be discouraged or cast down? Think, and think often of this rule; and it will help you to be obedient, and bear up your hearts also in the want of assurance. And thus I have done with the fourth instance.

08. SERMON VIII. - A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF TEMPTATION.

SERMON VIII. - A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF TEMPTATION.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me," —Psalms 42:11.

V. Sometimes the discouragements of the saints are drawn from their temptations. And thus they argue with themselves: I am a poor creature, that hath laboured under many temptations, never any so tempted as I have been: these two, three, four, five, six, or many years, that I have lien under these temptations, and no relief comes, no help comes; have I not reason then to be discouraged and cast down?

No; no reason yet: I grant that the least temptations are great afflictions; for the more a man is unfitted by affliction for God's service, either in doing good or receiving good, the worser and more heavy is that affliction to a gracious spirit. Now, though God doth so overrule the temptations of his people, that they receive good thereby, as appeareth afterward, yet the temptation in itself doth indispose a man unto what is good. The more a man is tempted unto what is evil, the more a man is hindered from what is good. It is an affliction to a gracious heart to be conflicting, fighting and combatting with a man: but in temptations, we do combat and conflict immediately with Satan, who is the prince of the air; with principalities and powers; with that evil one, who for his devouring nature is called a lion, for his cruelty is called a dragon, and for his subtlety an old serpent: and in every temptation, a poor soul goes into the field with Satan, and fights a duel with him. "Satan hath (saith Christ to Peter) desired you;" in which duel and combat a man doth not miscarry for this present life barely, but, if he miscarry, he miscarries to all eternity; he dies, is killed and slain to all eternity: oh what a mighty hazard doth a poor soul run in every temptation! The chaste and good woman counts it an affliction to her, so long as she lives, if she be but once violated; if a filthv person meet her in the field, and violate her, though she do not consent unto him; she wrings her hands, and saith, I am undone for ever. No, these temptations are the solicitations of an unclean spirit, and what though a man do not consent unto them, yet thereby his soul suffers violence. Oh, saith a gracious soul, what though I do not consent, yet what an infinite misery is it to be thus abused, defiled, and violenced by these temptations! The more any affliction doth seize on soul and body, the greater it is: it is comfort in a family that the wife is well, when the husband is sick; or that the husband is well, when the wife is down: where both are down at once, it is a sad family indeed. So though the soul be afflicted, yet if the body be well; although the body be afflicted, yet if the spirit be well, it is some comfort: but where both are down, the condition is sad: and seldom doth any great temptation befall a man, but soul and body are both down at once; though at first it falls upon the spirit, yet it descends into and fires the body. And therefore saith Paul, "I received a messenger of Satan, a thorn in my flesh, buffetting of me." As in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, though the comforts be poured out upon the soul and spirit, yet they run down upon the body: so in the troubles of temptation, though they seize first upon the inward man, yet they run upon the skirts of the outward man also. And thus you will find it with Job (chap. 7:1). God had put Job into Satan's hand, only with this reserve, "See that thou spare his life." The devil having the power, first

he loads him with outward afflictions, and then with inward temptations : while he was under his outward afflictions, how sweetly did he carry it, blessing the Lord, saying, " The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away, blessed be his name but when the volley of temptations came, then see what a sad condition the good man was in, how he was all on fire, as if Job could not be found in Job: while he was under these afflictions, he rebuked his wife, for saying, " Curse God, and die;" but now, being under temptations himself, he wisheth to die, and curseth the day of his birth : "My soul chooseth strangling and death rather than my life," Job 7:15. But had this temptation any influence upon his body too? it seems his heart, and soul, and spirit was much disquieted, for he saith, " Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee?" verse 20. But was his body fired with it too? Yes: "When I said, my bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint; then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me with visions." verse 13, 14. As now we find by experience, many poor souls cannot sleep while they are under their temptations; and if you will see the sum and upshot of all, read what he says at verse 20: "I am a burden to myself." And so many now; Why should I live any longer? I am a burden to my family, I am a burden to mine acquaintance, a burden to all my friends, I am a burden to myself; who knows the burden of a poor tempted soul but he that bears it? Hebrews 11:37. Temptations are ranked among the greatest afflictions: "They were stoned, sawn asunder, were tempted:" and, in Hebrews 2 : it is said of our Saviour, that "himself suffered being tempted," yet he sinned not under his temptation. So that there is somewhat of a suffering in every temptation, although one be free from sin. And in Revelation 12:12, it is said, "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea, for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath." And wherein is his wrath more seen than in his temptations. Oh, what a sad and woeful condition is it then to lie under temptations! Yet, let me tell you, though there be some suffering in every temptation, and the least temptation is a great affliction, yet the saints and people of God have no reason to be discouraged or cast down, whatever their temptations be.

How may that appear?

Four demonstrations of it.

If Satan do therefore tempt the people of God, that he may discourage them; then have they no reason to be discouraged because they are tempted by Satan. I say, if Satan's great design, end and aim, in all the temptations of the saints, be to discourage them; then they have no reason to be discouraged because they are tempted, for then they should gratify Satan, and give him his end. Now Satan doth tempt that he may tempt; he tempts unto one sin, that he may tempt unto another; he tempteth a man to sin against the law, that he may make him sin against the gospel; and what greater sin against the gospel, than unbelieving discouragements? He knows or thinks, such and such a person is gone from his kingdom, and he saith, Though I cannot hinder his salvation, but he will be saved do what I can; yet I will hinder his comfort, and make him draw heavily, and if I can but discourage him in his duty, I shall in time make him to cast it off. His great design is to discourage; and therefore whenever any godly man is tempted, he should say, Well, through the grace- of Christ, seeing Satan's design is to discourage, my design shall be to bear up my heart and spirit against all discouragements.

If God our Father doth pity his children under their temptations, and the more they are tempted by Satan, the more they are pitied by God; then have they no reason to be discouraged, whatever

their temptations be. How is it with your own bowels? If you had two children, one that is in your house with you at home, and another that is in Spain or Italy, abroad, exposed to great temptations; is not your pity most towards that child that is abroad, and exposed to most temptations? Your love may be expressed to him that is at home as much another way, but your pitying love is most to him that is abroad. As in the time of a storm, great rain or hail, if you have one child lie in your bosom, or sitting upon your knee, and another that is abroad in the open fields; though your love in one kind may run out to him that is upon your knee, yet, doth not your pitying love run out more to him that is abroad in the open fields? Thus it is with God, he hath two sorts of children; some that are exposed to more temptations, and some that are exposed to less; though his grace and love may run out more in one kind to them that are less tempted, yet his pitying love runs out most unto those that are most tempted. And upon this account you will find in Scripture, that when God saw any of his children were to go into any sad temptation, he did either immediately before, in or after, more than ordinarily reveal himself unto them. The more you are tempted by Satan, the more you are pitied by God. It matters not whether your temptation be great or small: if less, you have the less pity; if more, you have the more pity. Why then should you be discouraged, although your temptations be never so great?

If all the temptations of God's people be overcome and broken, before they do fall on them; then have they no reason to be discouraged or cast down, because they are tempted. Now so it is, Christ was a common person, not only in his death, but in his life; he did act and work and bear as a common person, as our second Adam all along: *Christus non meruit sibi*. Christ did not die for himself, nor obey for himself; but he did die for us, and obey for us, and all his seed were in him, as in a common person. Look whatever evils Christ did bear, those he did bear for us, and we did bear in him, as in our second Adam; and therefore when he was tempted, he stood as a common person in his temptations, and in him all the saints and people of God, who are his seed, were tempted; and in his overcoming they did overcome. For as when the first Adam was tempted, he being a common person, we all were tempted in him; and when he yielded to Satan, we did all yield in him; when he was overcome, we were overcome in him; and when he did eat the forbidden fruit, all his seed did eat in him; and every child of Adam may now say, I did then eat the forbidden fruit: so when Christ was tempted, all his seed were tempted in him; and when he overcame, all his seed overcame in him. And therefore when you read the story of Christ's temptations, ye are not barely to say, Thus and thus Christ resisted for my example: but, in his resisting, I did resist; in his overcoming, I did overcome. For, as I did eat in the first Adam's eating, and yield in the first Adam's yielding; so I did refuse, and resist, and overcome in Christ, the second Adam's refusing, resisting, and overcoming. Thus with all the saints and people of God, who are the seed of the second Adam, Christ hath not only overcome their temptations for them, but in Christ their second Adam they have overcome Satan, and made a spoil of principalities and powers. And therefore why should they be discouraged, whatever their temptations be?

If God hath such an overruling hand of grace upon all the temptations of the saints, as that they shall turn to their good; then they have no reason to be cast down, or to be discouraged, because of them. Now God would never suffer his people to be tempted, but that he intendeth to destroy their temptations by their temptations. Look what is the end and issue of an evil, that was God's design in suffering that evil to come to pass. And this is the end and issue of all the saints' temptations, that thereby they are more enlightened. *Tentatio dat intellectum*. Temptation gives

understanding; tempting times are teaching times.

Thereby they are more humbled; "For this cause (saith Paul) I received a messenger of Satan (he speaks it twice) that I might not be exalted."

Thereby they are the more occasioned to live in God and depend on him. "Watch and pray (saith our Saviour) lest ye fall into temptation." Watching doth note our diligence, praying doth note our dependence. And why watch and pray? but, lest ye enter into temptation.

Thereby the grace and power and might of God in Christ is the more discovered, and revealed to them. "My grace is sufficient for thee," saith God to Paul in the time of his temptation; a word which he had not heard before.

Thereby their graces are more increased, as the Israelites were multiplied by being oppressed. Unus Christianus ten- tatus mille Christiani. One tempted Christian is worth a thousand, saith Luther; for as the wind and breath of the bellows, though contrary to the fire, blows up the fire, and increaseth the flame thereof; so, though the breath of temptation be contrary to grace, yet thereby grace is more increased, and raised to a higher flame. When Satan curs- eth, God blesseth; and when God blesseth, he saith, "Increase and multiply."

Thereby all the saints are made to triumph over Satan. It is a Christian's duty, not only to triumph over the world, but over Satan; therefore saith the apostle, "The God of Peace tread down Satan under your feet." Those are words of triumph, and Paul in the name of other Christians, triumphs over principalities and powers. How' shall a man triumph, if he never have victory; and how shall he have the victory, if he never fights? Therefore God leads his people into the field, that they may fight; but in all this fight, God stands by, Christ stands by, love stands by; and God hath no design but of love upon his children in their temptations.

Yea, upon this account our Saviour saith, that he doth "appoint unto his disciples a kingdom, because they continued with him in his temptations," Luke 22 : And shall his disciples then be down, and be discouraged or complain, because they are with him in his temptations? Surely they have no cause, they have no reason for their discouragements, whatever their temptations be. But I have been tempted long, and long, and long assaulted, yet I have no deliverance.

How long? As long as Christ himself? " He was in all points tempted as we are, sin excepted," Hebrews 4 : Indeed Satan found nothing in him, no tinder to receive the sparks of his temptations; but do but abate the sin of his temptations, and then in all points he was tempted as we are, even as much and as long: for if you look into Luke 4:2, you shall find that he was at one time tempted forty days; and then when Satan left him, the text tells us, " He left him for a season," tor he was daily tempting of him. And though you have been long assaulted, hath not Satan left you for a season, have you not had some intermissions, some revives, some breathing times? Job complained that he was not suffered to swallow his spittle, he had no breathing time, as he thought. But though your temptations have been long, and very long; yet you have had revives, Satan hath left you for a season. And if that be true, That God hath such an overruling hand of grace upon your temptations, that your very temptations shall turn to your good; that thereby you are more enlightened, humbled, and your grace increased; then the longer you are in this school, the better scholar you shall be, the more enlightened, and the more humbled, and the more gracious: why should you then be discouraged, though your temptations be very long? But I am

tempted many times to doubt of my child-ship, Whether I be the child of God or no? And was not Christ our Saviour tempted so? There are but three particular temptations mentioned, in all the forty days of Christ as temptation, and two of them run so: "If thou be the Son of God?" Wherein Satan labours to draw a cloud upon Christ as assurance, and to write an upon his child-ship or sonship. Do you think to march through your enemys country to heaven, and never be at a stand about your condition? Suppose a man should travel through a strange country which was very long, wherein he never was before, and wherein are many cross ways; would you not wonder that he should travel all the way, and never be at a stand about his way, never question his way, whether right or wrong? If you be the child of God, you are now from home, and travelling home, warring in a strange country; and do you think it is possible, and would it not be a wonder, that meeting with so many cross ways, you should never be at a stand about your condition, or question your way, whether you be right or no? Give me leave to propound you a parable. Suppose two men: one goes very brave, fares deliciously, is very merry, and full of money, yet hath no lands, no calling, nothing left him, no friends to maintain him, nor any honest way known to bring him in money, and yet he is full of it; the other works hard, fares meanly, goes plainly, and he is oft complaining, I fear I shall want and miscarry, yet he hath a calling, some land, good friends, and some money? Which of these two, think you, doth come must honestly by his money? Will you not all say, the latter? For though he hath but a little, yet he works, hath a lawful calling, ways known for to bring it in. But as for the other, though fine, brave, and looks high, yet he hath nothing to bring it in; I fear he comes not well by it. So spiritually: there are two sorts of people in the world: one that is very confident of his salvation, and full of comfort, yet he prayeth not in private, reads not, meditates not, examineth not his own heart, takes no pains about his soul, but is often spending, keeping ill company, will be sometimes drunk, swear, and be unclean, yet he is very confident he shall go to heaven; the other prays, hears, reads, meditates, walketh with all strictness in his life and conversation, yet he is always doubting and fearing, but through grace he hath some comfort: which of these two, think you, is in the best condition, and comes most honestly by his comfort? Will you not say, surely, the latter? for though he fears, yet he is always doing, working heaven-ward. The other, though confident and full of comforts, hath no good way for to bring them in, and therefore surely his evidence for heaven is stolen, his comforts are all stolen; but as for the other, though he hath but little comfort, yet he comes truly by it. Thus it may be with you; whilst others swaggering it, and braving it out with their comfort, and false confidence, go to hell, and perish everlastingly. It is a sure rule, that God's promise of mercy doth suppose our misery; if he promise health, he supposeth our sickness; if he promise grace, it supposeth our sin. Now, though in the times of the Old Testament, God promised much outward blessing; yet in the times of the New Testament, the mercy promised is, to send the Comforter; the Spirit who shall bear witness unto our spirits that we are the children of God. Often our Saviour saith, "I will send the Comforter:" why? but to show that in the times of the gospel, the people of God shall labour under doubtings, and be full of fears about their spiritual estate; and therefore, though you do doubt of your childship, which is your evil, yet your state herein, is no other than what may be the state and condition of God's own people in these gospel times; why therefore should you be discouraged in this respect? But I do not only doubt of my child-ship, I am not only tempted to doubt whether I be the child of God or no; but I labour under sad and fearful temptations, I am tempted to strange and horrid things, such as I fear to name; I am even tempted to make away myself; tempted with blasphemous thoughts, to doubt whether there be a God or no; whether the

Scripture be true; and to say that I have sinned against the Holy Ghost: such and such things I am tempted to, as my very soul and flesh doth tremble at; and have I not just cause and reason now to be discouraged and cast down?

I confess this is sad indeed: I do not read in Scripture, though I read of many sins of the godly, that ever any godly man did make away himself. It is a good speech of Austin: *Sibi auferendo presentem vitam, abnegant futuram*; Men by taking away their present life, deny themselves their future life. But because, saith Mr. Perkins, some have done this, whose lives have been counted honest and good formerly; therefore my sentence is thus: I dare not say they are damned, because of their former life; and I dare not say they are saved, because of their sinful death; yet for the temptation itself, I say, if it do not come to act; as there is no duty which a godly man doth perform, but a wicked man may do the same, yet remain wicked; so there is no temptation which a wicked man may yield unto, but a godly man may be tempted unto, yet remain godly: was not Christ himself tempted by Satan to throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple yet he did it not: only my counsel and advice from the Lord is, if any be troubled with such a temptation, be sure you reveal it, and discover it presently; and as for those horrid, blasphemous suggestions which lie so heavy upon your souls, which make your heart and flesh to tremble at the rising of them. Ye have read how it was with the king of Moab, when he could not break through the host of Israel, nor make them cease from following the victory; he presented unto their view a horrid spectacle, sacrificing on the walls his own dear son, and heir to the crown, that so the Israelites, being not able to endure the view of that inhuman sight, might give over the victory. Thus doth Satan do; when he cannot drive a gracious soul out of the field any other way, then he presenteth such horrid, inhuman suggestions to him, that he may scare him from the good ways of God: it is not in our power to hinder Satan from presenting these things to our thoughts. When you come into wicked, ungodly, and profane company, if they will swear, and curse, and blaspheme, you cannot hinder them from speaking, nor yourself from hearing; you may sit down and mourn, saying, Oh, what blasphemy is here! what cursing is here! but do what you can, they will fill your ears with these things. Now Satan, being a spirit, he is able to present these blasphemies to your spirits, and you cannot hinder it: you may cry out and say, Oh, what blasphemy is here! oh what a burden is this to my soul¹ but he can present them to you whether you will or not; and did he not present these things unto Christ himself? "All these things will I give thee (saith he) if thou wilt fall down and worship me." What greater blasphemy can be imagined, than that the God of heaven and earth, as Christ was, should worship Satan; yet hereunto he did tempt our Lord and Saviour. And if our God doth so order the temptations of his children, as that thereby they are kept from sin, have they any reason to be discouraged now by these horrid temptations? Many a man is kept from other sins. Jerome, Luther, Magdeburgensis and others, relate a story of a certain martyr, that when the enemies could not threaten him out of his religion, they sent a very handsome, fair, and beautiful woman to entice him to folly; and he finding himself to be moved, and his lust begin to work, did bite off his tongue, and spit it in her face, thinking that the pain thereof would keep him from that fleshly lust, counting it more ease to combat with pain than with lust, as Austin speaks,* and hereby he was preserved. I do not speak of this fact to commend it, but only to shew that God doth sometimes keep his children from lust by pain. Now in these blasphemous suggestions you find a great deal of pain, and if you were not in these pains, you would be lusting after other evils. God seeth what filthy, vile, lusting hearts you have, and therefore suffers these pains for to come upon you, and so you are kept from lust. Did you never know a man kept from lust by these

temptations? yea, did you never know a man converted to God by occasion of these temptations? I have, and I think many, many poor souls that have lived in an ignorant condition a long time, then it pleased God to suffer Satan to throw in these temptations, these horrid temptations, whereby they are so amazed and startled, that thereupon, they looking into their own condition, were converted unto Jesus Christ. The more delights and complacencies a man takes in sin, the more sinful is the sin: the more a man's flesh trembleth, and his soul is burdened under temptation, the less sinful. Now, cannot you say, in truth, Lord, though these be my greatest burdens, yet they are my least delights? Yes. Well, then, be of good comfort, the Lord doth but hereby keep you from other sins, and therefore why should you be discouraged whatever these temptations be? As for the sin against the Holy Ghost; he never sins against the Holy Ghost, that fears he hath sinned against the Holy Ghost. But these are not my temptations; I praise God I am free from such: but I have other great and strong temptations, and have no strength to resist them. I am a poor, weak person, a weak young man, or a weak young woman, and I fear I shall yield unto my temptations; and therefore I am thus discouraged, have I not just cause and reason now?

No; for out of weakness we are made strong, and when we are weak, then are we strong in the Lord, saith the apostle Paul. Possibly a man may be weak in regard of years, and yet may be strong in regard of grace, and overcome his temptations. In 1 John 2:12, "I write unto you little children," saith the apostle John. Children he doth call them all, for he was their father in Christ. And at verse 13, "I write unto you, fathers (saith he), because ye have known him that is from the beginning: I write unto you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one: I write unto you, little children (saith he), because you have known the Father which, because it is matter of concernment, he repeats again at verse 14: "I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning: I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong, and you have overcome the wicked one." There are three sorts of people in the world; some that are old and aged, some that are children, some that are middle aged, and are called young men, or young women. The aged think that they have no need to learn, they know as much as the minister can tell them; therefore saith the apostle here, "I write unto you, fathers." Children think that they are not yet to learn, and they have time enough before them; therefore saith he, "I write unto you, children." Young persons think they should mind their business, trades and callings; therefore saith he, "I write unto you, young men." And I pray mark what he speaks, words suitable to all these conditions: old men love antiquities, and therefore, saith he, "I write unto you, fathers, because you have known him that is from the beginning." Children love to have the father's and mother's name in their mouth; and therefore saith he, "I write unto you, children, because ye have known the Father." Young men are strong, and are fit for fighting, and therefore saith he, "I write unto you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one." What evil one is that but Satan the tempter? and, of all others, young men are here said to overcome the evil one; of all men and women, young persons do overcome. This time of young men is the overcoming time. And I pray tell me, was David an old man when he slew Goliath? Nay, not thirty years old. Was Joseph an old man when he refused and overcame the temptation of his mistress? Was Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego old persons when they resisted and overcame the temptation of the king, choosing rather to go into the fiery furnace than to yield? Nay, but they are called the three children; and hath not God said, the "young child shall play upon the hole of the asp r" What is the hole of the asp, if temptation be not? And if you consider that story of the Israelites' victory, which God gave them against the Amalekites, ye shall find that they never had a more glorious

victory; so great, that they set up an altar, and called the name of it, "Jehovah Nissi," the Lord my shield. Yet if you look into Deuteronomy you will find that the Amalekites fell upon them when they were weak and weary at Rephidim, and in this weak and weary time they had this glorious victory. What therefore though you be weak and weary, and now are in the valley of Rephidim; yet thou mayest overcome, and have so glorious a victory, that thou shalt set up an altar, and call the name of it, "Jehovah Nissi," the Lord my shield.

Oh, but I have yielded, and been overcome already in my temptation.

Well, but know you not that it is one thing to be overcome in pralio, in the skirmish; and another thing to be overcome in bello, in the battle ; those who are overcome in the skirmish, may overcome in the battle: and let me tell you this, that you are never quite overcome, so long as you keep your weapon in your hand: when a man lieth down before his enemy, and gives up his weapon, then he is overcome indeed ; and when you lie down, and are discouraged, and give all up, saying, I will pray no more, and hear no more, and read no more, all is to no purpose; then are you overcome: but till that be, though you be overcome in the skirmish, you may overcome in the main battle; will you then lie down and be discouraged? or is there any reason why a godly man should be discouraged? No. Surely if this be true, that a man is never quite overcome till he lie down; then, through grace, every godly man should say, I will never give up my weapon: "Why art thou cast down, oh my soul? Still wait on God." But yet all this reacheth not my case or condition ; for I fear that my temptations are not such temptations as are incident unto God's people; as my sin and spot is not the spot of God's people; so that my temptations are not, that they are not such as God's own people do meet withal; and I rather fear it, because that since the time that I have set my face towards heaven, I have met with such temptations as I did never feel before : surely therefore all is not right with me; have I not cause then to be discouraged and cast down?

No; for, I pray, what are the temptations of God's people, and how do they take them?

1. When a godly man is tempted to any sin; if he fall into it, then he is tempted again with unbelief, to think that all is naught, even all that ever he had done before, tempted to aggravate his sin, and to despair. When a wicked man is tempted to what is evil, if he fall into it, then he is tempted to presume, tempted to excuse his sin, and to think, and say, This is but a slip, or youthful carriage, God is merciful, and the like; and so he is tempted to presume. This usually is the way and manner of Satan with the godly and ungodly.

2. When a godly man is tempted to what is evil; if he fall into it, the devil then tempteth him to think it was no temptation, and to lay all upon himself, saying, I have done foolishly, I will go out and weep bitterly; the devil had no hand here in it, it was all mine own. When a wicked man is tempted to what is evil, if he fall into it, he is then tempted afresh to think it is but a temptation, and I was drawn into it by others, it was not myself, Satan tempted me, or such an one tempted me, the woman that thou gavest me, or the friend that was with me; and so he doth lay it on others. This is usually the way and manner of Satan with the godly and ungodly.

3. When a godly man is tempted to what is evil, he rather startles at the sin than at the burden of it. When a wicked man is tempted to what is evil, he rather startles at the burden and at the punishment than at the evil and sin of it. And this we see clearly in the 26th of Matthew; our Saviour tells the disciples, at the 21st verse, that one of them should betray him; whereupon they

were all of them astonished, and said every one, one by one, for Lord, is it I? These were good disciples. Judas yet stirs not: but at verse 25, it is said, "Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered, and said, Master, is it I?" Then; When? Look to verse 24, and you shall read that our Saviour speaks of the burden and punishment of his sin: "The Son of Man goes, as it is written of him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed; it had been good for that man if he had not been born." Then Judas answered, Is it I, Lord? Then he startled. The true and gracious disciples of Christ startled at the sin, when Christ did but name the sin; but then not a word from Judas: but when Christ speaks of the punishment and burden of his sin, then Judas startled, and not a word from them. So that, plainly, a gracious soul startleth at the evil of a temptation more than the burden of it, a wicked man more at the burden than at the evil of it. This is the way of the godly and ungodly in their temptations. And as for you, poor, tempted, doubting souls, that labour under sad temptations, and think it hath not been with you as with others; have you not even found it thus? Can you not say of a truth, Lord, my soul hath found it thus? For after I have sinned, I have been tempted again, to doubt of my child-ship, and to sad despair; when I have been tempted to sin, and have fallen into it, I have laid all upon myself, and said, it is no temptation, but this is my own corruption; yea, Lord, thou knowest my soul hath been more startled at the evil of the temptation, than at the burden; as for the burden of my temptation, I leave that to thee, take it off when thou wilt; but oh that my soul were freed from the evil of it. Then be of good comfort, it is no otherwise with you than what may be with God's dear children; your spot is no other than what may be the spot of God's own people. And whereas you say, I fear that all is not right, because I find such temptations now, since I have looked towards heaven, which I did never feel before: Do you think that Peter ever did deny Christ before he was converted to Jesus Christ? Did David ever number the people whilst he was in the state of nature? Do you read that the children of Israel wanted water and bread while they were in Egypt, or that they met with so many temptations there as they did after God had appeared mightily to them? Was not Christ tempted after baptized, and heard a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased did he ever meet with such temptations, before he was so declared to be the beloved Son of God from heaven? And if God do not measure a godly man by any one action, under any present temptation, nor cast his everlasting condition thereby; then what reason is there why he should be discouraged in this respect? Look into the Scripture, and you shall find, that though God doth chastise his people for their miscarriage, and change of their behaviour under their temptation; yet he doth never measure a godly man, or cast his everlasting condition by that. You will not measure milk when it seeths and wallops, but when it is cool: and God will not measure his children by what they are when they wallop in some temptation, but by what they are when they are cool and most themselves. So he did deal with Job, Jeremiah, and Moses, and all his children: indeed he doth not deal so by the wicked, he measures them sometimes by one carriage, and they are cast thereby, that even everlastingly they are cast thereby. Ananias and Sapphira lied but once to the Holy Ghost, that we read of, and Satan had a hand therein; for saith the apostle, "Why hath Satan filled your heart, that you should lie unto the Holy Ghost?" yet they were cast thereby. It was but one act that Saul did when he spared Agag and the fatlings, yet he was cast thereby. It was but one act that Adam did, and Eve did, when they did eat the forbidden fruit, and Satan tempted them to it, yet they were cast thereby, and all mankind lost thereby. Why? Because they were upon a covenant of works. So when men are under a covenant of works, if they miscarry but in one action, though tempted thereto by Satan, yet God may cast them thereby.

Now all the wicked, still, are under the covenant of works; and therefore though it be but one act wherein they miscarry, and they be drawn thereunto by Satan, yet, God sometimes doth, and justly may cast them thereby unto all eternity. But as for the saints and people of God, they are not under a covenant of works, but of grace, all of them are so; and therefore God deals graciously with them, not measuring them by any one carriage, under one temptation. No, saith the Lord, it is but the time of their temptation, I will not measure this man or woman by what they are now, but as they are when they are cool, most themselves, and out of temptation. Oh what a gracious privilege is this! Who would not labour to get into Christ, to become godly, to be in this covenant of grace! And as for you that are godly, tell me, upon all this account, have you any just cause and reason for your discouragements under your temptations Surely no; whatever your temptations be, yet you have no reason for discouragement. But what then? What shall I do that I may bear up my heart against all discouragements in this kind, that I may not be cast down or discouraged by reason of my temptations? I confess, indeed, that there is no reason why a godly man should be discouraged in this respect; but yet it is a hard thing to bear up against all discouragements in time of temptation: what shall I do in this case, that I may not be discouraged whatever my temptations be?

I will say nothing to your natural temper: if temptations arise from natural causes, then natural means, as physic, are to be used and applied, and people should do well to be persuaded thereunto. But somewhat by way of direction spiritually.

If you would not be discouraged under your temptations, take heed that when you are in temptation, you do not expect too much from any one means of help; over expectation breeds discouragement; disappointment doth breed discouragement: it is not the sadness of your condition, but disappointment that doth cause discouragement. If a man be in debt, and under an arrest; so long as he thinks he hath friends to bail him, or some goods and commodities to make sale of, he is not discouraged; but if he expect much from his friends, and all fail him, and his goods be seized, that he cannot have help come in at that door, nor from any other means, which he expected from, then he is quite discouraged. If a man be in the water, wherein there is danger of drowning; so long as he can get hold of something that will bear him up, he is not discouraged; but if he lay hold of some tuft of grass on the bank side, and that breaks, he falls back again, and is more plunged in the water; and if he be not scared out of all thoughts, he is more discouraged than ever. So here, in temptation, we are as in the water, and in fear of drowning, crying out, we sink, we sink; then we fly to some tuft of grass, some means or other, and if that break or fail, then we are quite discouraged. Would you not, therefore, be dejected or cast down in time of temptation; take heed that you do not lay all your strength upon one tuft of grass; this or that man's counsel; this or that particular means; but say rather, I am now indeed in the deep, and in fear of drowning, and see no means of deliverance; but God's ways are in the deep, and he is infinite, he hath ways and means that I know not of; therefore though I use the means, yet I will not rest on them, and though all tufts of grass break, and anchors come home; yet I will wait on God.

If you would not be discouraged in time of temptation, take heed that you do not say of your temptation, this is no temptation. Satan tempts, first unto what is evil, and then he tempts God's people to think that their temptation is no temptation : as long as man thinks it but a temptation, he thinks, it will not last long, it is but a temptation, it will not hold always, and so his heart is in some measure upheld with hope : but when Satan can persuade, that the temptation is no temptation,

but a worse matter, then the heart sinks and dies: take heed therefore that you do not say that your temptation is no temptation.

Consider what infinite engagements are upon Jesus Christ, to succour and relieve poor tempted souls; you can never be discouraged under temptation, so long as you think, how mightily Christ is engaged to help those that are tempted; and engaged he is many ways; engaged by his own temptations; for he was therefore tempted, that he might be able experimentally to succour those that are tempted : engaged he is by promise; for he hath said he will not quench the smoking flax, yea, though it hath more smoke than fire: engaged he is by his interest in you, and his name upon • you: engaged he is by his own gracious disposition ; when he was upon earth, he cured those that were vexed by Satan: art thou now tempted? thou art now vexed by Satan; Christ is as gracious in heaven as he was on earth : engaged he is by office; for saith the apostle, "We have not such an High-Priest, as cannot be touched with our infirmities, but was in all points tempted as we are, that he might succour those that are tempted; " he is our great High- Priest. When the man-slayer was pursued by the avenger of blood, if the man-slayer fled unto a city of refuge, he was safe there: where he was to stay till the death of the high-priest; and when the high-priest died, then he was set at liberty. The Lord Jesus Christ is our High-Priest; by whose death we are set at liberty; and by whose life we are all preserved: it is his office to succour poor tempted souls, pursued by avengers of blood: and if a good man be faithful in his office, much more will Christ, by whom all other men are faithful. Yea, God our Father hath erected an office for the succouring of poor tempted souls, and Jesus Christ hath this office; whenever therefore you are tempted, and fear you shall miscarry under your temptation, then remember Christ, and say, Oh ! but the Lord Jesus is in office; he is bound to succour poor tempted souls, and such a one am I; he is engaged by his own temptation; he is engaged by promise; he is engaged by his interest in me, and his name upon me; he is engaged by his own disposition; he is engaged by his office, and therefore though I be tempted unto what is evil, yet, avoid, Satan, for I shall be delivered; I am tempted, but I shall be delivered, for the Lord Jesus Christ is engaged for my deliverance. Do but think of Christ's engagement, and you will never be discouraged, whatever your temptations be.

Think not to comfort or relieve yourself in temptation, with mere philosophical or moral reasons, for the disease of temptation is stronger than that physic; temptations answered by reason will return again, but temptations dipt in the blood of Christ will return no more, or not with such violence and success. Ye see how it is with a candle that is blown out, it is easily lighted again, but if you put it into water, then it is more hard to light. So, temptations blown out with resolutions and moral reasons do easily return, but quenched in Christ's blood do not so. Christ is an universal good, reason can hold forth but a particular good; now there is that in an universal good which will answer unto all your ills; but as for moral reasons, the tempter will say to them, Christ we know, and the promise we know, but who are ye? It is God himself, saith the apostle, 2 Corinthians 1. "Who comforteth us in all our tribulations." Are we in the dark? Christ only can light the candle. Be not unwilling to advise with those that have trodden the way of temptation, though they be weaker than yourself. Christ was stronger than any angel, yet in the time of his agony, the angels came and comforted him. Possibly a stronger may be comforted and strengthened by a weak hand in the time of an agony; and temptation-time is agony time. Are you therefore tempted and in the dark? Speak with those children of light that have gone through this dark entry of temptation. Who knows, but that God may speak that comfort to you by a weaker hand, which you could never

obtain by a stronger. But especially speak and converse with the promise; hear what the promise speaketh; the Lord by it saith, that no temptation shall overtake you, " but what is common to men." 1 Corinthians 10:13. Oh ! say you, never any one was troubled with such temptations as I am, but saith the apostle, say not so, "for no temptation hath overtaken you, but what is common to men." You think that your temptation is extraordinary, and the truth is, that is a second temptation at the back of the first; it is a temptation to think that my temptation is extraordinary, yet say you, Oh! my condition is extraordinary, my affliction extraordinary, and my temptation extraordinary: but, says the apostle, "no temptation hath overtaken you, but what is common to men." You think that you shall never be able to bear your temptation. Oh! say you, I am a poor weak creature, my temptation is strong and great, therefore I shall never be able to bear it. But says the apostle, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able." Again, you think that you shall never be rid of this temptation, Oh, say you, I have been tempted thus and thus long, and no deliverance comes, nor any likelihood of deliverance, surely therefore I shall never be delivered: but the apostle saith, "God is faithful who will with the temptation, make a way for escape. He will give an outlet, open a door and window, that this smoke may go out. It may be that you see not this door, it may be out of sight; so the door of the ark was in the time of the flood, but when the ark was built, the door was built. So when Satan built this temptation, God did build a door in the sides thereof, and in due time you shall see it. But may I be sure of that, you will say? Yes, as sure as God is faithful, for he hath pawned his faithfulness for the truth of this promise. "But God is faithful," says the apostle, "who will with the temptation, make a way for escape." Oh, that that men would mind the promise more and all the words thereof. They are so hurried sometimes with the temptation, that they cannot hear the promise. But is all this true? Oh, then attend the promise, hear what the promise speaketh.

Consider also what comforts lie behind your temptations; as temptations sometimes lie in ambush behind your performances, so comforts lie in ambush behind your temptations, and as the greatest temptations do sometimes follow the highest manifestations of God's love (witness the 3rd and 4th chapters of St. Matthew), so the greatest consolations do sometimes follow the worst temptations. When did the angels minister unto Christ, but when he had made a good dispatch of temptations? So it shall be with you also; for Christ was tempted, that by his example and issue of temptation, he might succour you under your temptation. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and what end the Lord made with him, he had twice as much after the temptation was over as he had before; and if you ride out this storm, assuredly the good angels will come and minister to you, and your consolations shall be doubled unto what ye had before. Wherefore, my brethren, take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in this evil day, and having done all to stand; and so much for the fifth instance.

09. SERMON IX. - A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF DESERTION.

SERMON IX. - A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF DESERTION.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me," & c.—Psalms 42:11.

VI. Sometimes the discouragements of the saints are taken from their desersions, spiritual desersions. And this was David as case here, for, saith he, verse 10, "As a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproached me, while they say unto me, where is thy God?" And verse 9, "I will say unto God, my Rock, why hast thou forgotten me 1" And this is the ordinary case of God's children: Oh, saith one, the Lord hath forgotten me, hid his face from me, and hath forsaken my soul, and therefore I am thus discouraged. I do not complain for want or loss of outward mercies and blessings; yea, though all the world should forsake me, I should not be much afflicted, if God and Christ were present with me: but times were, when the candle of the Lord shined upon me, when I walked, as I thought, in the light of his countenance; but now the Lord hath hid his face from me, and hath left and forsaken my soul. Have I not just cause and reason to be cast down now, and to be much disquieted?

No. I grant, and it must needs be granted, that it is a most sad thing for a gracious heart to want the face and presence of God and Christ, to be deserted and forsaken by Christ; yea, I do not know any thing, or any affliction, that is so afflictive to a gracious heart, as this: for, take any other affliction, and though it be great, yet it is but a particular affliction, the loss of some particular good, and the putting out of some one candle, or the hiding of some one star; but if Christ hide his face, and God withdraw or hide himself, it is the darkening of the sun, which brings an universal darkness upon the soul; and it embitters all other afflictions, for as the presence of Christ sweetens all other comforts, so the absence, or forsakings of Christ, do embitter all other sufferings, and cut off all our relief and remedy against them. So long as the face of God shines upon a poor soul, he may run to Christ, and relieve and help himself against his affliction. True, my friends forsake me, my relations forsake me, but Christ hath not forsaken me: but if God and Christ forsake, where shall a man relieve or refresh himself in this stormy day? And as those sins are greatest, that cut off our relief against other sins; so those afflictions are greatest, that cut off our relief against other afflictions. Such is this: of all afflictions, it looks the most like a judgment to a gracious soul. "O Lord (saith David), correct me not in thine anger, nor chasten me in thy hot displeasure," Psalms 6:1. When God hides his face, and forsakes the soul, he seems to correct in anger and in hot displeasure. Herein a Christian doth, as it were, combat with God himself: he fights with men sometimes, and then he is more than a conqueror, because Christ fighteth with him and in him; he fights with Satan, principalities and powers, and then he doth overcome, because Christ is with him: but oh, saith the soul in this desertion, God is mine enemy here I must fight it out hand to hand with divine anger, and what shall I do now, how is it possible that I should now escape? The truth is, this affliction above all others seems to draw a curtain over all our comforts, and to put an end unto all our spiritual joy. What birds sing in the winter time? Some may, but ordinarily they do

not. If you walk abroad in the winter time, and hear no birds sing, and one say to you, What is the reason of this deep silence? two or three months ago, when we walked in the fields, every wood had its several music; how sweetly did the birds sing then, but now they are all silent: what is the reason? you will easily answer, Aye, then indeed it was summer time, then the sun shone upon them, and so they sang; but now the warming and enlivening beams of the sun are gone, they sing no more. Beloved, the light of God's countenance is our spring, desertion is our winter. Show me that saint that is able to sing in this winter time. I confess it is possible for a man to do it, and some there are. Habakkuk was one that learned this song of faith; but how few are able to sing and rejoice when God hides himself. No, saith the soul, two or three months ago the Lord shined upon me, and then I could sing indeed; but now God and Christ is gone, and so all my songs are gone, and joys are gone, and I fear I shall never see them again, or rejoice in Christ again. It is said of Mary, that when she went to Christ's sepulchre, she wept; and though the angel came to her and said, "Why weepest thou?" yet she continued weeping, the presence of an angel could not comfort her. Why? Oh, saith she, "they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Would it not grieve a prince to be dispossessed of and to lose his crown; to be made like an ordinary man? This presence of Christ is the crown of a Christian; and therefore when God had forsaken the church, as we read in Lamentations 5 : she complained, verse 16, "The crown is fallen from my head." Why? verse 20, "Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever, and forsake us so long a time?" Verse 22. "Thou hast utterly rejected us, thou art very wroth against us." Take away the presence of Christ, and ye set a Christian among the ordinary rank of men: and must he not needs be troubled when his crown is thus taken from his head? I have read of a religious woman, that having borne nine children, professed that she had rather endure all the pains of those nine travails at once, than endure the misery of the loss of God's presence. And indeed this affliction of God's forsaking a man, is so great, that if a man feel it not, I even fear it is because he is forsaken indeed. But now, though there be never so much gall and wormwood in this cup, yet the children of God have no reason to faint at the drinking of it; no just cause or reason yet to faint, or be discouraged, or cast down.

How may that appear?

1. For the clearing of this truth to you, ye must know, that God, or Christ is said to forsake a man, either in regard of his power, grace or strength, or in regard of the comfortable feelings of his love, either in regard of union or in regard of vision. 1. In regard of union he never forsakes his own people. 2. In regard of his power, grace and strength, he never forsakes them totally. And, 3. in regard of vision, or comfortable feelings, though he do forsake for a time, yet he will return again. And if all these be true, have they any reason to be much discouraged? For the first, ye know what is said, John 13:1, "Those whom he loves, he loves unto the end." As for the second, ye know what he saith also, Hebrews 13:5, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." "We are kept by the power of God unto salvation," 1 Peter 1:5. And as for the third, hath not the Lord promised, Isaiah 54 : that he will return again with advantage? Verse 7, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercy will I gather thee: in a little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer," verse 8. Now ye know that friends are not much troubled at such a parting, which is but for a time. It is said of the church of Ephesus, that when Paul took leave of them they wept, "because he said they should see his face no more." The saints cannot say so in regard of Christ; though they see not his face

for the present, yet they cannot say, I shall see his face no more, for he will return again, yea, and return with advantage; for though he forsakes for a moment, yet with great mercy, and with everlasting kindness, will the Lord have mercy on them. What then, though you be forsaken for a moment, have you any just cause and reason for your discouragement?

2. If Christ do therefore forsake his people, that he may not forsake them, and hath a design of love, and nothing but of love upon them in his forsaking; then have they no just cause for their discouragements. Now I pray, what is the reason why God doth forsake his people for a time, or a moment, hath he any design but love upon them? Doth he not therefore withdraw himself from them, that he might draw them to himself? Doth he not therefore hide his face for a moment, that he may not turn his back upon them forever? Doth he not therefore forsake them for a moment, that they might die unto all the world, and long after heaven, where there is no forsaking? Doth he not therefore forsake them for a moment, that they might die unto the way of sense, and learn to live by faith, which is the proper work of this life? Doth he not therefore forsake them for a moment, that in this winter of their desertion, the weeds and vermin of their sins may be killed and mortified? Doth he not therefore forsake them for a moment, that he may see their love to him? In time of his presence we have the sense of his love to us; but in the time of his absence, then he seeth, and we ourselves have the sense of our love to him. Doth he not therefore forsake them for a moment, that their very joys and comforts may be more fervent, exalted and enlarged? It is our nature to rejoice most in a comfort, when it is redeemed from the hand of death, and recovered from loss. The wise men, when they saw the lost star again, then they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. Did they not rejoice in the star before? Surely they did, but they rejoiced more, even with exceeding great joy, when they had found the lost star. And this is our nature, we rejoice most in the finding of lost mercies. Now the Lord Christ knows our nature, and therefore that he may raise our joy, our praise, our thankfulness, for his presence, face, and manifestation of his love, he doth sometimes withdraw them. So that in all his withdrawals, he hath a design of love upon our souls: have we any reason then to be much discouraged, though deserted?

3. Though it pleaseth God, to hide his face from his people sometimes, insomuch, as they are in the dark, and in a very dark condition; yet they are never so much in the dark, but that they have light enough to work by: for what day is there in all the year, that is so short, dark, and gloomy, but a man may see to work by? Indeed, sometimes the sun is in the eclipse, sometimes behind a cloud; sometimes it breaks not forth with his golden beams, as at other times: but if the sun be up, and it be day, a man hath always light enough to work by. Now the sun is always up with the saints, it is always day with them; though the beams of the Sun of Righteousness do not shine, yet it is always day; they are not children of darkness; they may have a dark day of it, but though it be never so dark, they may find light enough to do the great work which they came into the world for; which is to believe, and trust, and stay themselves on God; this a man may do in the darkest time, when he hath no light: and therefore saith the prophet, "Let him that walks in darkness, and seeth no light, stay himself upon the name of the Lord?" What then, though you have not so much light as you would have, to refresh yourselves by: yet if you have light enough to do your Father's work by, and the greatest work of this life is to trust in God, and believe, have you then any reason for your discouragements? Thus it is with all the saints; though they may be in the dark, and the sun shines not out upon them, yet it is always day with them, and they have light enough, when it is darkest, to do their Father's work and business by; and therefore certainly, the saints have no

reason to be cast down, and discouraged, although they be much forsaken, deserted, and in the dark. But Jesus Christ hath not only deserted, forsaken, and withdrawn himself from me, in regard of vision; but I fear also in regard of union : not in regard of comfortable feelings only; but in regard of strength and power : and therefore I am afraid, and discouraged, and have I not cause for it?

No. For a man that is in the dark, is not able to judge of his own grace, or Christ's strength in him: now you are in desertion, therefore in the dark, therefore you are not able to judge of your own grace, and Christ's strength in you; yet if you can judge in this condition, and will deal faithfully with your own souls; is there not as much of Christ's strength, and grace in your lives and conversations, as when ye had that presence which ye mourn after, excepting your enlargement in duties? I confess indeed, that a gracious man in time of desertion, hath not those enlargements, as he had when God's face shined upon him; but setting aside your enlargements, what is there in your conversations wanting now, which you had then? and is the very want of enlargement a sufficient reason to say that Christ is gone, and hath forsaken me, not only in regard of vision, but in regard of union, strength, and grace? We read in Song of Solomon 5:5, that when Christ withdraws from the spouse, there is some myrrh left upon the ringles of the door; the spouse ariseth, follows after him, and enquireth for him, saying, « Did you see my Beloved?" She met with the watchmen, they smote her, and she was willing to bear their smiting, that she might hear of Christ; she stands and admireth at the beauty and excellency of her beloved; "White and ruddy, the fairest of ten thousand Now in this desertion of yours, is there not some myrrh upon the ringles of your heart? Do you not still stand admiring Christ, and his excellencies? Do you not enquire after your Beloved? going to one and to another, saying, "Did you see him whom my soul loveth?" Are you not willing that the watchmen should smite you, so ye may but meet with Christ again? And will ye say then, he is only gone in regard of vision, but in regard of union, power, strength and grace too? Surely you have no reason for it. But I am not only forsaken and deserted, and want the comfortable feelings, and manifestations of love which I once had, and do now desire to have; but I do find the contrary tokens of God's displeasure, manifestations of his anger: were it only in the withdrawals of love I might bear it; but Christ is angry, God is angry, appears to be mine enemy and have I not reason now to be much discouraged?

No: for if this hath been the condition of the saints before you, why should you fear your state in this respect? Now look into Isaiah lvii, and you shall find that God saith, I was wroth and smote him he did not only hide his face, but he was wroth; yea, he is not only wroth, but he smote his people too, and yet the promise is, "I will restore comfort to him, and to his mourners:" did not Job think, and say that God was angry with him, and become his enemy? and did not Job's friends think that God loved them and was their friend, and his enemy? yet if you look into Job 42 : you find that God was more pleased with Job, for he was fain to pray for them before they could be accepted; and know ye not that it is Christ's usual manner to personate an enemy when he intends the most friendship, to seem a stranger when he intends the most communion. It is said that God was angry with Moses, Exodus 4 : yet even then he gave him such a promise of mercy as he had not before, ver. 14, 15, and 16. Ye know what David's choice was, "Lord, let me fall into thy hands, and not into the hands of men, for with thee is mercy." It is sometimes a mercy to be immediately chastised by the hand of God our Father.

God might turn us over to the hands of men, but if God I will take us into his own hand, and chastise with his own, hand immediately, there is love in it. If a prince should I say to his officers,

"my whole kingdom is before you, do right, and execute justice and judgment; but as for such and such a family, if they shall commit any fault, I will | chastise them immediately with my own hand, you shall not | meddle with them, I will do it myself," would not this argue love? Thus it is with the saints in the time of desertion, then God takes the soul into his own hand, all creatures and officers of his anger stand and meddle not; in other afflictions God turns us over to his officers, but in desertion, there he doth correct immediately; and therefore though he strikes, yet there is love at the bottom, and the more Christ doth sympathize with you in any affliction, the less cause you have to be discouraged. Christ is our sympathizing High- Priest in all our afflictions, but the more we are like to him in any affliction, the more he doth sympathize, and his heart let out the more unto us. Jesus Christ was in desertion himself, and not only forsaken, but, for our sakes, under the wrath and displeasure of God his Father; and therefore when he sees a soul, not only deserted, but under anger and displeasure of God, then he saith, Oh! there is a soul that is in my case, and so he does most commiserate and compassionate that person. Have you then any reason to be discouraged in this respect? But this is not my case; for I am not only deserted, forsaken, under manifestations of Christ's displeasure; but I have sinned and drawn down this desertion upon my own soul; and therefore now it is that I am thus discouraged, and have I not reason for it?

No, for God doth not always desert and forsake his people for their sins; sometimes he doth, and sometimes he doth not. As appears by comparing the 3rd and 5th chapters of the Canticles. And it may be he doth now withdraw from you, not for your sin; and if there be but a may be of it, there is no reason for discouragement. But suppose it be so, look I pray into Isaiah 57 : again, and see what the Lord hath promised to a poor soul in this condition: verse 17? "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." Will ye say, the Lord doth not only hide his face from you, but he hath smitten you? So here. Will ye say, oh, but I have sinned, and drawn this desertion upon myself? So here: "For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and smote him." Will ye say, oh, but I have sinned on both sides of this desertion: I have sinned before the desertion came, which sin was the cause of it; and I have sinned since: I have been deserted by my frowardness and peevish carriage? So here: "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and hid me;" there is sin on the one side: - "and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart;" there is sin on the other side of desertion: here is sin on both sides; what then, is there any hope, or comfort, or mercy for a heart in this condition? Yes, saith the Lord, "I will restore comfort unto him, and to his mourners." Oh, but it is not comfort that my soul desires; but I have a foul, filthy, unclean, wicked heart of mine own; oh, that my heart were healed: is there any hope of healing mercy in this condition? Yes, saith the Lord, in the text; "I have seen his ways, and will heal him." Oh, but though I be healed, I shall sin again, and wander from God again: nay, saith the Lord, "But I have seen his ways, and will heal him, and will lead him also." But I see no means or likelihood of all this; how can it be? Yes, very well; for saith the Lord, verse 19th "I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace, peace, to him that is afar off; and I will heal him again:" Oh what comfort is here? what an upholding promise is here? Can you read it or think of it, and your heart sink before it? This is but part of my condition, for I have sinned, Christ hath forsaken me; I have sinned, Christ hath smote me, and he goes on smiting, goes on angry, goes on displeased; I have been deserted a long while, in the dark a long while; and I am so far from the light, that it doth even grow darker and darker; my condition being more sad every day than other; every day I am more deserted and my condition worsen ; have I not reason to be cast down and discouraged now?

No: for when was it worst with the Israelites? They had an ill time of it all the time they were in the land of Egypt, a dark time; but was it not worst with them immediately before their deliverance? Did not the taskmasters then beat them? When was it worst with David? Ill at all times in the wilderness; but was it not worst with him at Ziklag, when he had lost his wives, and his own men took up stones against him? Psalms 10, we read that David saith, "Why standest thou afar off, O Lord, and hidest thyself in time of trouble?" hiding is more and worse than standing afar off. When the sun is going down, then it seems to be far off; but when it is hidden, then it is set, and is further off: so saith David, Lord thou art not only afar off, but even out of sight, quite out of sight and art hidden from me; his desertion grew higher and higher : and if you look into Psalms 13, you find that he speaks to the like purpose; "how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? how long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, forever?" As hiding is more than standing afar off; so it is worse than forgetting: for, as Musculus observes well, forgetting is but *remisso amoris*, a man that loves another may forget him, yet he may love him well; but hiding the face is, *Ira*; testimonium the testimony of anger; and it is as if David should have said: Lord, thou doest not only restrain thy love towards me, but thou doest shew tokens of thy displeasure, and anger, and thy displeasure riseth. So Psalms 22, ver. 1, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not," ver. 2. How can this be, saith Augustine, that God should forsake Christ in his sufferings, for these words are spoken of Christ, when God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself? Yes, very well, saith he, for Christ was a common person, stood in our stead, and place, and so personating of us, he saith, "Why hast thou forsaken me!" Yea, and Lord, thou hast not only forsaken me, but my desertion riseth yet higher; for, "I cry in the day-time and thou hearest not." But you may see this abundantly made out in Job 30:20, "I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me; I stand up, and thou regardest me not, thou art become cruel to me; with thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me." Ver. 27, "My bowels boiled, and rest not, the days of affliction prevented me: I went mourning without the sun; I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls." And ver. 26, "When I looked for good, then evil came to me; and when I waited for light, there came darkness." Thus you see that it may be the condition of God's own people, to be worser and worser; and their condition more and more dark in their own apprehensions; and therefore no reason why you should be discouraged in this respect. But my desertions have been so long, that I fear it will never be otherwise with me; God is now gone, Christ is now gone, comfort gone, and I fear now that Christ will never return again; and, this is that which even sinks my soul: I confess the least desertion and forsaking is a great evil: but though I were under the greatest cloud in the world, I should bear it, if I did but think that Christ would return again : but I find in scripture, that there is a final rejection mentioned, as well as a present desertion: the saints and people of God, are it may be deserted for a time; but they are never rejected: David was deserted, but he was not rejected; Saul was rejected, finally rejected; and I fear that I am not only deserted for the present, but finally rejected, that God hath even cast me off; and therefore I am thus discouraged, have I not cause and reason for it now?

No, not yet; for first, it is usual with saints in affliction, to think that God is gone, and will return no more: there is no affliction which the people of God meet withal, and they meet with many, wherein they are so apt, and prone, and ready to write a /lever upon their condition, as in this case of spiritual desertion. If a godly, gracious man fall sick, he doth not say presently, or conclude, I shall never recover again; if he be persecuted by enemies, he doth not conclude presently that he shall never be delivered: but if God hide his face at any time, then comes out this never, I shall never be

delivered, I shall never be restored to comfort again. So Psalms 13 "How long wilt thou hide thy face? what, forever!" So Psalms 77? "Will the Lord cast off forever?" ver. 7? Will he be favourable no more? is his mercy clean gone forever? and doth his promise fail for evermore? This is the proper place and ground, where this unbelieving conclusion grows; when they are in this condition, they rise to a never; oh, it will never be otherwise with me; Christ is gone, mercy is gone, and I shall never see the face of God again. This is usual, and most usual with the saints in this condition.

Therefore you shall observe, that when God doth give out a promise to his children in this condition; the promise is so cast and laid, as may most obviate, and face this objection, and take off our never. Psalms 9:18. "The needy shall not always be forgotten, the expectation of the poor shall not fail forever." So Psalms 103 : "The Lord is merciful and gracious, (verse 8.) slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy: he will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger forever." So Isaiah 57:16, ff For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth." God seeth that in this condition, his people are apt to write a never upon their condition; and therefore that he may condescend unto their infirmities, when he comes to give out a promise, he doth not barely promise mercy; but he puts in the ever into his promise, that he may take off our unbelieving never.

If it be made out unto you by Scripture, that God or Christ is not so gone, but that he will return again; then will you not say, surely I have no reason for my discouragements?

Now for the clearing of that, give me leave to propound several questions to you.

1. Did ye ever read in all the word of God, that a man was finally rejected and forsaken, but an evil spirit from the Lord did seize upon him presently? Saul was finally rejected, and the text saith, that an evil spirit from the Lord seized upon him; and what is the evil spirit, but an envious spirit? The envious man in the gospel, is the evil man; and this evil spirit seized on Saul as soon as God did forsake him; for an envious, malicious, persecuting spirit came upon him against David, and the saints with him. So when God forsakes a man finally, a persecuting spirit enters him. When God forsakes his own children, Satan, that evil spirit comes to them; for when God goes, Satan comes: but there is much difference between a tempting Satan, and a persecuting Satan: tempting Satan comes to the saints, when they are deserted; but a persecuting Satan doth not enter into them. But did ye ever know, or read of any finally rejected, but an evil, persecuting spirit seized on them from the Lord?

2. Do you read of any in all the word whom God did finally forsake, that could not find in their hearts to forsake God and his ways? God doth not forsake us, unless we forsake him; "Ye have rejected me, saith the Lord, and therefore I have rejected you." Possibly a good man may want this sense of God's love; but then he hath the sense of his own sins: possibly he may want the feeling of his own perfection, which is divine love; but then he hath the feeling of his own imperfection. But I say, did you ever read in all the word, of any man finally forsaken, that could not find in his heart to forsake God, and the good ways of God?

3. Did ye ever read in all the word, that God did ever forsake a man, who was sensible of his forsaking, and complained thereof, simply for itself. We read of Saul indeed, that when he was forsaken, he cried out, and said, God hath forsaken me, the Philistines are upon me, God hath

forsaken me, but it is in order to an outward evil; the Philistines are upon me. But the saints when they are forsaken, are sensible of this evil, simply for itself, and think the time long and tedious, when they are so forsaken: "O Lord, (saith David,) how long wilt thou hide thy face from me: what, forever?" But I say, was ever man forsaken, was ever man quite forsaken of God, that was sensible of this evil, only and simply for itself?

4. Did you ever read in all the word of God, that ever a man was finally forsaken, who was tender in the point of sin, who sat mourning after God? We read in the Romans, that when God gave up the Gentiles to their sins, they gave up themselves unto all uncleanness, and were past feeling. The saints and people of God on the contrary, in the time of their desertion, are tender in the point of sin, and they mourn after God: when was a man ever forsaken, whose heart was in this frame?

5. Did you ever read that Christ did finally forsake a man in whose heart and soul, still he did leave his goods, furniture, and spiritual household-stuff? A man sometimes goes from home and sometimes he doth quite leave his house. There is much difference between those two: if a man leave his house; and comes no more, then he carries away all his goods; and when ye see them carried away, ye say, This man will come no more. But though a man ride a great journey, yet he may come again; and ye say, Surely he will come again; why? Because still his goods, wife, and children are in his house. So if Christ reject a man and go away finally, he carries away all his goods, spiritual gifts, graces, and principles: but though he be long absent, yet if his household stuff abide in the heart; if there be the same desires after him, and delight in him, and admiring of him, and mourning for want of him; ye may say, surely he will come again? Why? Because his household-stuff is here still. When did Christ ever forsake a man in whose heart he left his spiritual furniture?

6. Did ye ever know a man finally forsaken of Christ, who did long after the presence of Christ, as the greatest good; and looked upon his absence as the greatest evil and affliction in all the world; being willing to kiss the feet of Jesus Christ, and to serve him in the lowest and meanest condition, so he might but enjoy him? We find that the saints desire, above all things, to be kissed with the kisses of Christ's mouth: and therefore the book of the Canticles doth so begin, chapter 2:1. "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth even because that is the first and the chiefest of the saints desires in this life: but if Christ will not kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, saith a gracious soul, yet I am willing to kiss his feet, as Mary did. There is a time coming, when he will kiss me with the kisses of his mouth forever; but for the present, if I can but kiss his feet here, I have hope to be kissed by him in heaven. Now, I say, did Christ ever forsake a man finally, who did thus long after Christ himself? Can those that are forsaken, mourn after his presence as the best thing, and for his absence as the greatest evil in all the world? I appeal to your own souls, and bosoms herein, whoever you are that labour under this fear, that Christ is gone, and he will return no more; suppose that God hath hid his face from you, seems to forget you, and to be angry with you; yet in the midst of all these darknesses, do you find an evil spirit, an envious, malicious spirit from the Lord, seizing upon you? Do you find, that you can find in your heart to forsake God, and the good ways of God? Yea, rather, do you not find the contrary, though you want the sense of God's love? Have you not the sense of your own sin; and when you want the sense of your own perfection, have you not some sense of your own imperfection? Do you not look upon this desertion, as the greatest affliction in all the world? Can you not mourn after God, and his presence? Doth not Christ every foot, send in one token of his love or another to visit your souls? And are you not

willing to kiss the feet of Jesus Christ? Oh yes, I must needs say, though I have fears that Christ is gone, and will return no more, yet, I praise the Lord, I do not find an envious, malicious persecuting spirit in my soul unto the saints and people of God. I do not find that my heart is willing to forsake Christ, and the good ways of Christ: but I find that I can mourn for the absence of Christ simply for itself, and look upon it as the greatest affliction in the world: that I am ever willing to kiss the feet of Jesus Christ: and to be in the lowest and meanest condition, so he would but return unto my soul again. Yea, and I must needs say, that every foot I receive one token or other, one promise or another to visit me in my condition. Then, be of good comfort; though Christ be absent, yet he will return again; and with great mercy, and with everlasting kindness will he gather your souls unto himself again: and thus I say it shall be with all the saints. Surely therefore they have no reason for their discouragements, whatever their desertions be. Why therefore should not everyone say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou so disquieted within me?"

Upon all this account I see, I have not so much reason for my discouragement: but it is an hard thing to bear up ones heart from sinking in the time of desertion, when God hides his face: what shall I do then, and this may be the condition of us all, that I may bear up my heart against this discouragement, even when I am most in the dark, and Christ hides his face from me, or forsakes me?

Take heed that ye do not measure God's eternal affection, by some present dispensation. There is an eternal displeasure against a man; and there is a present displeasure with a man. Eternal displeasure, or hatred, cannot stand with eternal love; but eternal love, and present displeasure, may stand together. A father may be displeased with the child for the present, and yet may love him with paternal love. So God may, and doth love, though for the present displeased: but when men measure eternal affection, by present dispensation, then they are quite discouraged; and you will find all discouragements in this case do arise from hence. Some there are, that do walk by particular providences, experiences, words, manifestations, and incomes of love; and when they have them, then they are much refreshed; and if they want them, then they are much discouraged, and say, ah, Christ loves me not, and God is gone, will return no more. Why? Because they measure God's eternal love, by some present dispensation: but if God's present dispensations may seem to run cross to his eternal purpose, why then should they be discouraged, and say, He is gone forever? Now so it is, he* may hide his face, he may withdraw', and deny particular comforts, and manifestations, yet love me eternally. Oh, that people would not measure God's eternal affection, by some present dispensation, so should they never be much discouraged.

If you would not be discouraged in this condition, take heed of letting fall any despairing, despondent, unbelieving speeches; for the more busy Satan is about you, in the time of desertion, the more tedious will that time be, and more full of discouragements. Now' look, as it is with some dog; if you let fall a bone, or bread, or meat, the dog stays and waits still; but when he finds none, he goes his ways. So it is with Satan, when a man is in a desertion, he comes, and saith he, this is a time for me to work, who am the firstborn child of darkness; and this soul being in the dark, it is a fit time for me to work upon him; there he stands, and if any despairing, despondent speeches do fall from you, Satan stays the longer; but if none fall he goes away the sooner. Have you therefore been, or are you under any desertion, and let fall any bones for Satan? look back, and gather them all up again, gather up these crumbs again, and mourn over them, and take heed for the time to come; for the more of these fall, the longer Satan stays, and the more you will be discouraged. Be

sure that you hear things indifferently on both sides. There are two parties pleading in your souls in the time of desertion. One that doth plead for Christ, to maintain and bear up the love of Christ in your heart, saying, He is gone indeed, and he doth hide his face; but he will come again, and shine upon you again. There is another party, that doth plead the cause of Satan, against Christ, saying, He is now gone, and will return no more, you shall never see his face again. In this case be sure that you do hear things indifferently, and let not your ear be open to one, and shut to the other. He can never judge rightly, that doth not hear both parties. Though it be no time to judge when you are under temptation, and in the dark; yet how frequently do poor souls judge themselves in this condition, and even judge themselves to be under judgment, why? but because they hearken more to one side than to the other. If Satan come, and tell them a story of God's displeasure, they will be sure to hear that at large; but if Christ come and tell them a story of God's love to sinners, that they hear not; or if they do, yet as a man that reads a book to confute it, is disputing against what he reads all along, so are they also disputing against the words of the gospel all along as they hear them ; saying in their hearts, Oh ! but this is not made for me; it is a good promise, but it belongs not to me, this is not my condition ; and a hundred such oh buts! But is this equal? How is it possible, but that a man should misjudge, and be much discouraged, when he hears thus? Wherefore, my exhortation from the Lord is, which I beseech you in his name to receive; never receive any relation from the law, but be assured your ears be as open for to hear the gospel: never receive any relation, or story from Satan; but let your ear be as open to hear what Christ saith. And why should not this exhortation be received? Had I intreated some great thing for Christ, would you not have done it? But now that I only intreat you to carry things indifferently, to have an ear open, as well to Christ, as to Satan; will ye not yield to it? Oh, methinks every gracious soul should say, well, through grace, I will hearken more to Christ: I confess indeed, I have heard what Satan hath said; hut when comfort hath come, I have turned away mine ear, and have not heard; or if I have heard, I have been disputing against what I have heard, and making objections all along: now the Lord pardon this evil to me; through grace, mine ear shall be more open to Christ, and less open to Satan. So do, and you will never be much discouraged, whatever your desertion be.

Labour more and more for to live by faith: when God seems to be mine enemy, saith Luther, and to stand with a drawn sword against me, then do I cast, and throw myself into his arms: and what better way than to venture upon God in this case? and to' say, whether saved, or not saved; whether damned, or not damned; whether hypocrite, or not hypocrite; I do cast myself upon God at a venture. It is the love, and favour of Christ, that you mourn after, and are discouraged for the want of; you cannot get a more ready, and compendious way to get this love, than, when you are in the dark, to throw yourselves into Christ's arms at a venture ; this takes, and wins the heart of Christ over to you: What! will this poor soul throw himself into my arms (saith Christ) now I do seem his enemy? well, then I will shew myself to be his friend; and this is the proper work of this life: as for those sights and visions of God, they are the work of heaven ; and though God give them sometimes, yet it argues more strength of grace for to be able to live without them. Suppose two men in your work; one that must have his pay presently, his wages presently, yea before he hath done his work: the other will not have his wages till his work be all done, and if ye offer him money, no, saith he, I will stay till all be done, and receive it in a lump together: which of these two, is the ablest man, or which the poorest man? Will you not say, Surely, he that cannot stay, is the poorest? and he that can stay longest for his wages, is the ablest man? So it is here; God hath two

sorts of servants: one that doth go by visions and manifestations of love, and are not able to live at all by faith, but must have sights, and visions, and manifestations every day, or else they die, and murmur or complain. And others say, Oh! but these sights and visions are for heaven; if God will have it so, I am contented to stay till all my work be done: which of these two is the poorest or the strongest? Will not ye say, surely, he that is able to stay, is strongest; and he the poorest, and weakest, that is not able to stay, or to live by faith; Oh I therefore labor more and more to live by faith; and when you are in desertion, say, whether saved, or not saved; whether hypocrite, or not hypocrite, I will stay, I will wait on God, and let him come when he pleaseth. If you lay yourself at Christ's feet, he will take you into his arms. But what need I say more? Is there not enough in the compass of your own experience, to answer unto all your fears in this respect? When you have been in desertion, have you not said that Christ is gone and that he will never come again: and yet hath not Christ come again? Yea, and have you not said in the day of your desertion, If ever Christ do return again, I will never make such unbelieving conclusions as I have done: and hath not Christ returned after this? Now, then, when Satan comes, and suggests jealousies of Christ's love unto you, why are you not more peremptory? Why do you not say to him? this I have heard before, Satan ; thou toldest me this before, that Christ was gone, and would never return again; but I have found it false, he did return, and therefore through grace, I will never believe these false reports of Christ; Christ is faithful, I have always found him so; those whom he loves, he loves to the end; and I know he loves me, Satan, for I love him ; for my love is but the reflection of his love; I could not love him, if he did not love me first, and through grace, I love him ; I know he loves me, because he hath changed me, and is every foot sending me some tokens of love; one promise, or another to uphold my heart; yea, I know, Satan, that Christ doth love me, because thou tellest me that he hates me ; and if he hath loved once he will love me to the end; and therefore though for the present he hides his face from me; yet I shall see his face again. Thus gather in your experiences, and plead with Satan, or your own unbelieving hearts, according unto all these experiences; so shall you be able to live in the time of this desertion, and never be discouraged, whatever your desertions be. And so much for the sixth instance.

10. SERMON X. - A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF AFFLICTION.

SERMON X. - A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF AFFLICTION.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me," &c.—Psalms 42:11.

VII. Sometimes the discouragements of the saints, are from their outward afflictions, and relations. So it was here with David; for, saith he, verse 3, "My tears have been my meat day and night." Whereupon, verse 5, 6, "My soul is cast down within me, then verse 8, "All thy billows are gone over me, verse 10, " As a sword in my bones, whilst they reproach me daily then verse 11, " Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?" To the like purpose he speaketh in the next Psalm, verse 2, "Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" then, verse 5, 6, "Why art thou cast down?" So that his inward discouragements did arise very much from his outward afflictions. And thus it is ordinarily with the people of God; for, saith one, Never was any soul afflicted as I have been, and am: I confess indeed that national calamities are very great j but besides national miseries, I have many, and many personal afflictions; and therefore now it is that I am thus discouraged, have I not reason for it? No.

I grant, and confess it no new thing for God's own children to be much afflicted: " these are they that came out of great tribulations," Revelation 7 : And When God*s people are so afflicted, they are, and will be very sensible of their affliction; in some respects more sensible than wicked men; for the more apprehensive a man is of God*s displeasure under affliction, the more sensible he must needs be of the burden of it. Now the saints and people of God, in the day of their affliction, are more apprehensive of God*s displeasure than wicked men are, and so in some respect s are more sensible of their afflictions. Yea, As they are, and will be very sensible of their afflictions, so they are very apt to be much discouraged, by reason of them. And therefore said the Psalmist, Psalms 143 : Therefore my soul is overwhelmed within me, and my heart is desolate, why? Read verse 3, and ye shall find the reason, "Because the enemy oppressed me." And was not Joshua thus exceedingly cast down, when a party of his men fell before the men of Ai? See how he lies on the ground, chapter 7, and what language he speaks; even the same for substance, that murmuring Israel had spoken: for they said, "Would God we had stayed in Egypt and saith he, "Would God we had stayed on the other side Jordan yet Joshua, a most gracious, holy, blessed servant of God. So that God's own people are apt to be much discouraged, by reason of their afflictions, and outward sufferings. But now I say, let a man's afflictions be never so great, yet if he be in Christ, and have made his peace with God, he hath no reason to be cast down or discouraged, whatever his afflictions be; for, saith our Saviour, "In the world you have trouble; but be of good comfort I have overcome the world. And the more a man is discouraged under his afflictions, the less able he is to bear it. So long as a man's hand hath skin upon it, he is able to put it into the sharpest vinegar, without smarting; but if the skin be off, it doth smart exceedingly, and he can hardly bear it. So long as a man's bones are knit together, and in joint, he may stand under a great burden, but if the shoulder bone be out of joint, who can bear a burden? And what do all our discouragements, but disjoint the soul, and put the spirit on the rack? Discouragements make

afflictions to stay the longer: an impatient patient makes a cruel physician: and the more the child cries under the rod, the longer the rod is continued; what reason therefore, for our discouragements under afflictions? But this truth will appear if you consider, 1. What the afflictions and sufferings of the saints are. 2. Whence they proceed. 3. What accompanies them. 4. What follows them, and what is wrought by them.

First: As for the afflictions themselves. 1. They are part of Christ's purchase for you. Look upon Paul's inventory, 1 Corinthians 3:21. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come." So that death itself, the king of terrors and afflictions, is here reckoned amongst the goods and chattels which Christ hath purchased for you, and left unto you; and if death be yours, then all afflictions are yours; and who will be afraid of that which is his own? 2. They are the gift of God; "To you it is given, not only to believe, but to suffer," saith the apostle. It was the speech of a good man, now in heaven, being once under great afflictions; O Lord, these afflictions are thy pearls, and I will wear them for thy sake. 3. They are but seeming evils; they are real trials and seeming evils. Therefore the apostle saith, "Every affliction seems grievous;" but considering altogether, it is rather a seeming than a real grief. And therefore saith he, 2 Corinthians 6:9-10, "We are as unknown and yet well known: as dying and behold we live: as chastened, but not killed: as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing: as poor, yet making many rich: as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." In which words as Austin observes, he puts a tanquaia, sicut AS upon his afflictions; as if his sufferings were but as afflictions, and not afflictions. When a man takes any physic, he is sick withal, yet because it is but physic-sickness, you do not call it a sickness; it is as a sickness, but not a sickness. Now all the afflictions of the saints, are but their physic, prescribed and given them by the hand of their Father: and therefore, though they be sick therewith, yet it is but as a sickness, not so indeed all things rightly weighed. When an unskilful eye looks upon the threshing of the corn, he saith, why do they spoil the corn? But those that know better, say, the flail doth not hurt the corn, if the cart-wheel should pass upon it, there would be spoil indeed, but the flail hurts not. Now there is no affliction, or suffering that a godly man meets with, but is God's flail. And if you look into Isaiah, xxviii, ye shall find the Lord promiseth, under a similitude, that his cart-wheel shall not pass upon those that are weak, ver. 27, "For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart-wheel turned about upon the cummin, the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with the rod." God will always proportion his rod to our strength. But though mine affliction be not greater than I can bear, yet if it lie too long upon me (say some) I shall never be able to bear it. Nay, saith the Lord, ver. 28, "Bread-corn is bruised, because he will not ever be threshing it." But what is this to us? Yes, it is a parable, for ver. 26, "His God (speaking of the ploughman) doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him?" And if the ploughman have this discretion, much more shall the Lord himself; for, ver. 29, "This also cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." I am God's corn, said the martyr, I must therefore pass under the flail, through the fan, under the millstone, into the oven before I can be bread for him. And if our chaff be severed from our graces by this flail, have we any reason to be discouraged because we are thus afflicted? The truth is, the day of affliction and tribulation, is a godly man's day of judgment, it is all his judgment day, he shall never be judged again, so as to be condemned at the day of judgment; "Ye are judged with the world (saith the apostle) that ye may not be condemned with the world." And when the godly man's affliction day is, he may say, Now is my judgment day, and I shall never be judged again; why therefore should he be discouraged,

whatever his afflictions be? And in the second place. This will appear also, if you consider, whence their afflictions come. If all the sufferings of God's people do come from divine love, the love of God in Christ to them, then have they no reason to be discouraged though they be much afflicted. Every rod is a rod of rosemary to them, fruits of their Father's love. And if you look into Heb. xii, ye shall find both the thing proved, and the inference. The thing is proved at ver. 6, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Which he illustrates by a similitude. Suppose a man have two sons, one a bastard and the other legitimate; he will rather give education and correction to the legitimate son, and neglect the bastard: and saith the apostle, ver. 8, "If ye be without chastisement, then are you bastards, and not sons." What then? Ver. 12, "Wherefore, lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees." As if the apostle should say, if all the sufferings and afflictions and chastisements of the saints, do proceed from love, then have they no reason to hang down their hands or heads. But so it is, that all their sufferings come from love, and therefore no reason for their discouragements. '

Thirdly. This will appear also, if you consider, what comes with the afflictions of the saints. There comes much supporting grace, much light, much of God's presence, fellowship and communion with Christ in all his sufferings. Much supporting grace: "Thy rod, and thy staff comfort me." God never lays a rod upon his children's back, but he first puts a staff into their hand to bear it; and the staff is as big as the rod. It matters not what your afflictions be, great, or small, it is all one, you shall be upheld; and upholding mercy is sometimes better than a mercy that you are afflicted for the want of. But the Lord doth not only uphold his people under sufferings, but he gives forth much light therewithal. The school of the cross, is the school of light. Affliction is our free-school, where God teacheth his children, and learns them how to write, both their sins and their graces. Their sins: so long as leaves are on the trees and bushes, ye cannot see the birds' nests: but in the winter when all the leaves are off, then ye see them plainly. And so long as men are in prosperity, and have their leaves on, they do not see what nests of sins and lusts are in their hearts and lives; but when all their leaves are off, in the day of their afflictions, then they see them and say, I did not think I had such nests of sins and lusts, in my soul and life. Job 36:6. "He withdraweth not his eye from the righteous:" verse 8, "And if he be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction, then he shews them their works and their transgressions, that they have exceeded." Yea, afflictions do not only discover their sins unto them; but it is God's plaster, thereby he doth heal the same: "Before I was afflicted, I went astray," saith David. And Job 36:10, "He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity." Yea, these afflictions and sufferings of the saints do not only discover and heal their sins; but do put them upon the exercise of grace: "In their afflictions (saith God) they will seek me early." Yea, they do not only draw out their graces but discover their graces too, which possibly they did never take notice of before. I have read of some foolish youths, that sitting on the water side, upon the bank, and mingling their legs together in the water, they did not know their own legs; but one standing by, and smiting them on the knees with a staff, every one then knew his own legs, and pulled them up. And so it is many times; there is such a likeness between hypocrites common graces, and the graces of God's children, that the saints do not know their own graces; Oh, saith one, it is no more than a hypocrite may have; but then God smites them with some affliction, and so they feel, and see, and know their own graces: and good reason for it; for when God comes, he discovers all: and when is God more present with his people, than when they are most afflicted? God useth to be at the back of affliction. There heaven opened to Stephen. Afflictions are the rusty lock oftentimes, which opens

the door into the presence chamber. When was Christ with the three children but in the very fiery furnace? And ye have a standing promise for it, "I will be with thee in the fire, and in the water," saith the Lord. And saith the apostle, "Then doth the Spirit of the Lord and of glory, rest upon his children." Yea, and as they have most of God, when they are most afflicted, so in time of their sufferings, they have most communion, and fellowship with Jesus Christ in his sufferings. Therefore saith the apostle Peter, chap. 4: ver. 13, "But rejoice in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings." The word partaker is the same that is used in John; Truly our fellowship is with the Father." And the same that is used in the Corinthians, concerning the Lord's supper, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" You will all grant that you have communion with Christ at the Lord's supper; but the same word being used here shows that you have communion with Christ in his sufferings also; especially when you do suffer for him. And the greater your sufferings are, the more fellowship and communion you have with Christ in his sufferings. Now then, if all this be true, that a Christian hath experience of supporting and upholding grace; much light; his sin discovered and healed; his grace exercised and manifested; God's presence enjoyed; and made partaker of the sufferings of Christ, in and by his afflictions; what reason hath he to be discouraged, although he be much afflicted? But so it is that a Christian hath never more experience of God's upholding, sustaining grace; his sin is never more discovered, and healed; his grace is never more exercised and manifested ; God is never more present with him, than when he is most afflicted: and he is never more partaker of Christ's sufferings than in and by his sufferings. Surely therefore, he hath no reason for his discouragements, whatever his afflictions be.

Fourthly. This will appear if you consider the fruit, benefit, end, and issue of your afflictions, and what they bring forth. "They bring forth the quiet fruits of righteousness," and triumph over Satan; for now poor Job may say, Satan, thou saidst I did not serve God for nought; but now the contrary appears. Yea "they work out an exceeding, eternal weight of glory." And if you look into Philippians , 2 : where we are commanded "to work out our salvation with fear and trembling;" you shall find it is the same word that is used here concerning afflictions; that they work out an exceeding, eternal weight of glory. Now if all my afflictions do bring me in the quiet fruit of righteousness; make me to triumph over Satan; and work out an exceeding weight of glory; have I any reason to be discouraged, although I be much afflicted? Thus it is with all the saints and people of God; though their sufferings may seem to be grievous for the present, yet they bring forth the quiet fruits of righteousness; thereby the saints triumph over Satan; and these sufferings work out an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Surely therefore, a godly, gracious man hath no reason to be discouraged, whatever his affliction be. But my affliction is not an ordinary affliction; my sufferings are not ordinary sufferings; for I have lost all my comforts and am stript naked of all my former blessings and relations: I have been long afflicted, and many afflictions crowd and press in upon me, like so many waves of the sea: only there is this difference; the waves come and go, but my afflictions come and stay; they come and go not; they all stay upon me at once and I see no end of my afflictions: the floods are risen, O God, the water-floods are risen and do cover my soul; yea and these waters of affliction are so deep, that I can feel no bottom, see no end of them: have I not just cause and reason then to be much discouraged?

No: for what if you have been, or would be drunk with the comforts of your own relations? Noah was drunk with his own wine; and how many are there in the world, that have been drunk, even

with the comforts of their own relations? And if God your Father see, that you have been or would be drunk with your own comforts, have you any hurt, that he hath taken them from you for a time? When a wise father sees that his child falls in love with his maid, one that is much beneath him; doth his father do him any wrong, that he removes her from him, or him out of her sight? It may be the present affection of the child saith, my father deals hardly by me: but will the child's reason say so afterwards? No, but he will rather say, at such a time I fell in love with my father's servant, and if my father had not removed her out of my sight, I had been lost and undone for ever. Now all the creatures are servants to the children of God, and it may be, God your Father seeth that you are fallen in love with them that are much beneath you. Or, suppose that a child be to travel some long journey, and his father gives him a staff in his hand; when he is abroad in the fields, some enemy meets him, and takes away his staff, and beats the child therewithal; but a friend comes in, and takes away this staff from both, both from the child and from the enemy; doth he do the child any wrong, in taking away this staff out of the hand of the enemy? May be the child will say, I pray Sir, give me the staff again, for it is mine; True, saith the friend, child, this staff is yours, but you have not strength enough to use it, and manage it against your enemy, he would wrest it out of your hand again, and beat you with it, and therefore I will keep it from you both: doth he therefore do the child any wrong? Thus it is here: the Lord gives a creature-comfort into the hands of his child, and God intends it for u staff (for bread is the staff of life): but Satan comes, and wresteth his staff out of his hand, and beats him therewithal: then comes Jesus Christ, and takes it out of the hands of both; Oh, saith the child of God, but I pray thee, Lord, give me this creature-comfort, for it is my staff. True child, saith Christ, it is thy staff, but thou hast not strength to wield it against Satan, he will abuse thee with it; therefore I will keep it from thee, and in due time thou shalt have it again: doth Christ our Lord and best friend, do him any wrong in keeping it from him?

Oh, but my afflictions are not ordinary and usual, but new and strange.

You think so, but the Apostle saith, "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, as if some new thing had befallen you." And what if God will carry you to heaven by some back way, and let you in at some back door; hath not he promised to lead us in a way that we have not known?

Oh, but I do not only want one mercy, but I do want another and another; afflictions come thick, and I see no end, I feel no bottom. And was it not so with David, the type of Christ? Psalms 40:1-2, "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined his ear unto me, and heard my cry: he brought me out also of an horrible pit; (or as some read it, out of an unbottomed pit) out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." Three things here that are most observable. 1. David was in such an affliction, wherein he did feel no bottom at the first, saw no end. 2. Though he felt no bottom at the first, yet at the last he did, and a rock which God set his feet upon and established his goings. 3. Till he did find this rock, he prayed, and waited patiently, and he was not discouraged. What therefore though our afflictions be as thick as any mire, that therein you do stick so fast, as you cannot get out, that you feel no bottom, see no end; yet if in this case you pray and cry and wait patiently on the Lord, as David did; you shall be set upon a rock in due time, and your goings shall be also established. And whereas you say, that your afflictions are thick and long and hard; how long man? What! is your bush consumed? Do they not make you long more for heaven? When the apprenticeship is hard and tedious, the young man longs for the day of his freedom. Oh, saith he, that I were in my father's house. Oh, that the time of my freedom were come. So here, long and hard afflictions, make us long more for heaven. Now will ye count that too

long, which makes you long more for heaven? And as for your relational comforts; did God ever take away the comfort of an outward relation, and not make it up in the sweetness of spiritual relations? But this is not all my case; for I do not only want such and such comforts, I do not barely want the comforts, and the love of my relations; but I feel the anger, and the smart of them; for my own familiar friends, and acquaintance are become mine enemies; they reproach me, curse me, speak all manner of evil of me without cause; and this they do since I set my face towards heaven : time was heretofore, when they did love me dearly; but now they hate me, they persecute me, and do all manner of evil to me ; and is this nothing? Is not this a just cause, and reason for my discouragement?

No. For if our worst enemies be sometimes our best friends, then what reason is there that we should be discouraged, although we be much opposed? Now so it is many times; as our best friends are our worst enemies by flattering us, so our worst enemies are our best friends by making us more watchful. So many enemies, so many schoolmasters, saith one. Hath not our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ said, "Our enemies are those of our own house, they shall ever revile you and persecute you; but blessed are you, when they do all this for my name's sake." And I pray tell me whether it is worser to be persecuted or to be a persecutor? Your friends persecute you, speak all manner of evil and do all manner of evil to you, even since you have looked towards Christ; and for his sake they do it, for his sake ye are persecuted, opposed, maligned. But you might have been the persecutor, and they the persecuted. Which is worst? Will you not say, oh, it is infinitely better to be opposed for the way of God than to oppose; and to be persecuted than to persecute? I would chuse rather to be persecuted than to be a persecutor. God might have left you to be a persecutor, and your persecuting friends might have been persecuted by you; but now that God hath so ordered it by his providence and grace that you are persecuted and they persecutors, have you any reason to complain or to be discouraged? "Know ye not that the world hateth his own?" So long as the pot stands empty and there is no honey in it, the bees and stinging wasps do not gather about it, but if once there be honey in it, then they flock about it. And so long as you were empty of what is good and walked on with an empty heart, no opposition was made unto you. But now these stinging bees and wasps flock about you, what doth this argue but that you have gotten some honey, somewhat that savoreth of good and of Christ, which you had not before? Why should you not therefore rather praise God for what you have, than be discouraged under your opposition. This is not my case. For I praise God I do not meet with any opposition or persecution from my friends, nor do I need; for my very affliction is an opposition unto what is good, my affliction doth indispose me unto what is good, and expose me unto what is evil, to temptations and many sins; it keeps me from duty, from ordinances and opportunities of doing and receiving good; and therefore I am thus discouraged under my affliction, have I not cause and reason now?

No. For it may be that you are mistaken here and think that you are hindered from the work of God, when indeed you are not. We read of Paul that he was whipped up and down the streets like a rogue, that he was oft imprisoned; and who would not think but that his reproaches and imprisonments should hinder him in the work of his ministry? But he saith that his "sufferings turned to the furtherance of the gospel." When God leads a man into an affliction, then God doth call him to another work. So long as a man is well and in health, he is bound to go abroad and to hear the word; but when he is sick, then his work is not to hear, but to be patient and quiet under

the hand of God; then he is called to that other work which his affliction doth lead him to. It may be, your affliction may hinder you from your former work which God hath called you from, but it doth not hinder you from that work whereunto you are now called by your affliction. And what though my affliction doth hinder me from my former work; yet if God will not fault me for the neglect of that, have I any reason to be discouraged because I do not do it? This is certain, that if God call me to a new work, he will never blame me if I lay by the former. You will not blame your servants if they lay by their former work, when you call them to a new. And when God leads into a new affliction, then he doth call to a new work. And as for matter of temptation and sin, this is certain, that, that affliction doth never expose a man to a new sin, which doth make him sensible of his former sin. Now, as you have heard, the afflictions of the saints do both discover and heal their ««s, making them sensible of them which they were not before. And if you look into Psalms 125:3, you will find a promise to this purpose: "The rod of the wicked shall not rest on the lot of the righteous, lest the righteous put forth their hands to iniquity.⁵* As it is with a master that sets his servant to beat the dust out of his garment, though he cause the rod or stick to pass upon the garment, yet he will not suffer it to rest so long upon the garment, as it shall be torn thereby. Your affliction is God's rod and he suffers it to pass upon your garment. Why? That he may fetch out your dust therewith; but he will not suffer this rod to rest so long upon you as to tear your garment. "Lest the righteous put forth their hand unto iniquity," saith the text. And if this fear of yours be a good sign of your grace, then why should you be discouraged in this respect? Now what better sign of truth and uprightness of heart have you than this: that you are therefore troubled at your affliction, because it doth expose to temptation and sin, and because it doth hinder you from what is good; do you not say so? Lord, thou knowest I am therefore afflicted under this affliction, not because of the burden of it so much, but because thereby I am hindered from doing and receiving good, and exposed to such temptations; as for the affliction itself, though it be great, yet Lord, thou knowest I should submit to it and be quiet under it, were I not thereby exposed unto what is evil. Here now is sincerity, here is uprightness, and will you then be discouraged; nay, rather have you not cause and reason to be much encouraged? This is not my fear, or cause of my discouragement, but I am under a great and sore affliction, so and so afflicted, and I fear I have brought myself into this affliction by my sin: had not my sin been the cause of my affliction, I should not be troubled; but oh, ray affliction is great and long, and I am persuaded that my own sin is the cause thereof. Yea, and that which aggravateth the matter is, I cannot find out what the sin is; if God would but discover it to me, I should be more at quiet. But my sin is the cause of my affliction, and I know not what the particular sin is that hath brought me into this affliction. And have I not just cause and reason for any discouragement now?

No; for did not Jonah bring himself into his affliction by his sin, and yet when did God more fully appear to him, than when he was in the whales belly? Did not David bring himself into his affliction by his sin: he sinned in the matter of Uriah, and the Lord said, "The sword shall never depart from thy house and what was the sword of Absolom, but an affliction which dropped out of that threatening, brought upon him by his sin: and yet when was David as heart in a better frame? "If (saith he) the Lord have any pleasure in me, he will bring me back to the ark again; if not, let him do with me what seemeth good in his eyes. 5 And when did God more fully appear to David than under this affliction? for he prayed, "The Lord turn the counsel of Ahithophel into folly," and God Heard him presently. And if ye look into Deuteronomy 4 :, you shall find a standing promise made for your comfort in this matter: verse 25, " If you shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven

image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger; I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you shall soon utterly perish from the land; ye shall not prolong your days; the Lord will scatter you among the nations, and you shall be left few in number among the heathen, and there you shall serve gods, the work of men's hands. But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thine heart and all thy soul." Here was a great affliction, to be driven out into another country. This affliction was caused by their great sins. Yet the promise is, that if from thence, from this valley and bottom, they did seek the Lord, he would shew mercy to them. And all this in the times of the law: and is not God as gracious now in the times of the gospel, as then in the times of the law? And what though you cannot find out what the particular sin is, it is good to search, but sometimes it is better for a poor soul that it is not discovered; for if I be under an affliction for some particular sin, and find it out, then I am once humbled for it, and go no further: but if I find it not out, I search and search, and so am humbled continually for many sins. And therefore I say, it is sometimes better that the particular sin is not discovered. Why then should a godly, gracious soul be discouraged in this respect? Surely he hath no reason for it.

Yet there is one thing sticks with me in regard of personal afflictions, I fear that they do not come from God's love; were I certain that this affliction did proceed from God's love, then I should never be troubled; but I even see the visible characters of God's displeasure and anger, engraven upon my afflictions, and therefore I am thus discouraged: have I not cause and reason now?

No; for if affliction do rather argue God's love, than hatred, then have you no reason to be discouraged. Now though affliction do not argue God's love; yet, I say, it doth rather argue love than hatred. A man may be no father to a child, yet he may correct him: but if two children commit a fault, and a man take the one and correct him, and let the other go, it argues rather that he is his father than not. So, though chastisements do not always argue God to be our Father, yet it doth rather argue his fatherly love than not. And is there any thing in God, that is not a friend to all the saints? When a man is a friend to another, not only his purse is his friend, his estate is his friend, his staff is his friend; but his sword is his friend. So, if God be a friend to a man, then not only his love is his friend, and his mercy his friend, but his sword is his friend, his anger is his friend. Now God is a friend to all the saints, and therefore his very anger and justice is a friend too. But, What are those visible characters of love, which are engraven upon an affliction?

If affliction be a blessing to one, then it doth come from love; and if a man can bless God under affliction, then it is a blessing to him. Job's affliction was a blessing to him: why? because he blessed God under it: "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away, blessed be his name," &c.

If an affliction do end in our love to God, then it comes from God's love to us; for our love is but a reflection of God's love, and it doth flow from his: and if I can say, I love God never the worsen for this affliction, then I may say, God loves me never the lesser, notwithstanding this affliction.

If an affliction teacheth the mind of God, then it doth come from love: "As many as he loveth, he chastiseth;" and, "Blessed is the man whom thou chastisest, and teachest out of thy law." So that if affliction be a teaching affliction, then it doth come from love.

If it be laid on in measure, and imposed in due and seasonable time, so as a man may grow thereby, then it doth come from love. When a man intendeth to kill and destroy a tree, or to bring it

unto the fire, he cuts it at any time, so as it shall grow no more; but if he cut it in a due time, it argueth that he intendeth it for growth. So when God pruneth and cuts by afflictions, in such a time as men may grow in grace, it argues his love. When God is especially present in affliction, and more present in an affliction than at another time, it argues that the affliction doth come from love. Now whoever you are that make this objection, and fear the affliction doth not come from love, are you not able to say, Thus I find it indeed, though I have been much afflicted, yet through grace I have been able to bless the Lord under my affliction, and to say, "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away," &c. I love the Lord never the lesser for mine affliction, and the Lord hath taught me much in this mine affliction ; I have gained more by my sickness, than by many a sermon; yea, and he hath cut me in due time, for if I had not met with such an affliction at such a time, I did not know what evil I should have fallen into. And this I must needs say, I have had more of God's presence in my affliction, than ever I had before. Well then, be of good comfort, though your affliction be very grievous, yet it doth come from love. And thus it is with all the saints and people of God, and therefore why should they be discouraged, whatever their affliction be? But though a Christian have no reason to be discouraged in regard of his own private affliction, yet hath he not reason to be discouraged, when it goes ill with the public? And thus it is now with us; we see how it is with this poor nation, troubles and calamities from every part, therefore I am thus discouraged; and have I not cause to be cast down, and to be much disquieted now?

Indeed, this is a sad thing; and oh, that we could weep day and night, and pray too, for this poor, bleeding nation! If ever God's people, here in England, had cause to be afflicted, troubled and humbled, under the hand of the Lord, and to run together in prayer, surely they have reason now; yet, saith the Scripture, "Say to the righteous, in evil times, It shall go well with him." Did ever any calamity come down like a storm upon a kingdom, but God did provide some hiding for his own children? Did he not provide an ark for Noah in the time of the flood, and a mountain for Lot in the time of the fire of Sodom? The worst that man can do, is but to kill his neighbour: death is the worst that can fall; and what is death, but an inlet to eternal life unto the people of God? When the saints in the primitive times came to bear witness by their deaths unto the truth of Christ, then they said, Now we begin to be Christians indeed; now we begin to be like to Christ. There is a three-fold death: spiritual death in sin, eternal death for sin, and temporal death which came in by sin. If God spare me from the two former deaths—the spiritual death and eternal death—and only inflict the temporal death, have I any cause to complain? Thus it is with the saints: though they die temporally, yet they are free from the spiritual and eternal death; and what godly man may not say, I could not live long in nature, and shall I now bear witness unto the truth with this little spot of time that remains! Christ died for us, the just for the unjust, and shall not I that am unjust be willing to die for the just! The worst of all is death; the worst of death is gain. When my body is broken, may I not say, if godly, now a poor pitcher is broken, and shall go no more to the well: now a poor prisoner, my soul, is delivered, and I go home unto my Father. But if you look into the 7th of Revelation, you shall find what a glorious issue God doth give unto all his people in the times of public troubles: verse 9, "After this I beheld, and lo a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, kindreds and people stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." A robe is a garment of majesty, palms are an ensign of victory; and saith he, I saw them with robes and palms. The world looks upon my servants as poor and of low spirits, but, saith Christ, I look upon them as under a royal, princely garment, in robes and of a princely spirit. And though the world looks upon them as discomforted, yet, saith Christ

here, they shall overcome, for they have palms in their hands. But who are these; This scripture tells, verse 14, "These are they which come out of great tribulations, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." But why are they in white robes, and their robes washed? Because by their tribulations they are washed from filth. Affliction is God's soap: before a godly man goes into afflictions, his very graces are mixed with sin ; his faith is mixed and dirtied with unbelief and doubtings, his humility with pride, his zeal with lukewarmness: but now, by his tribulation, his garments and robes are made white, and washed, and he shall be of a more royal spirit, and be clothed with robes. But though the Lord make use of my tribulations thus to wash, yet I fear that by these public calamities, I shall be driven from ordinances, the temple and worship of God. Nay, saith he, therefore, at verse 15, "They are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple." But what though we have the ordinances, if Christ be not present with them? He adds, therefore, "And he that sits on the throne shall dwell amongst us." But though we have the presence of Jesus Christ, yet we may suffer much with want. True, yet verse 16, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb which is the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water." Oh, but yet we may be brought in the meanwhile into grievous straits, and be in a sad and mournful condition. True, but there is a time a coming when all tears shall be wiped away from our eyes; and therefore he adds this, at the 17th verse, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." How should tears be wiped away hereafter, if they were not shed for the present? Though then you do fear it now, and shed many tears, yet all shall be wiped away and not one left. Oh, what gracious dealing is here! Thus will Christ deal with his people in troublous times; and therefore though our condition, in regard of the public, be exceeding sad, and very grievous, insomuch as we have all cause to mourn and weep; yet if you be in Christ, and have made your peace with God, you have no reason to be cast down. And thus it is with every godly man: surely, therefore, a godly, gracious man, hath no reason for his discouragements, whatever his affliction be. But what shall we do, then, that we may not be discouraged, whatever our affliction be, whether public or private, national or personal? A good man, indeed, hath no reason to be discouraged under his affliction, but it is a hard thing to bear up against all discouragements under great affliction: what shall we do in this case?

Either you have assurance of God's love in Christ or not; if not, this affliction shall be a messenger to bring it to you. So look upon your affliction; and if you have assurance, then actuate your assurance, reflect much on your interest in, and your peace with God through Christ; put yourselves often upon this disjunction—either there is enough in God alone, or not; if there be not enough in God alone, how can the saints and angels live in heaven, who have no meat, drink, nor clothes there, but God alone? And if there be enough in God alone, why should I not be contented with my condition, and comforted under it, whatever it be? What though men hate me, if Christ loves me? Oh, labour more and more to see your interest in Christ, and ever hold it to your eye!

If you would not be discouraged under your afflictions, remember much your fellowship with Christ in his sufferings; thus: Now by these my sufferings have I fellowship with Christ in all his sufferings; and therefore as Christ died, and did rise again, so though my name dieth, estate dieth, body dieth, and all my comforts die, yet they shall rise again. The apostle argueth, and proves, that the Romans should die no more in their sins, because Christ being risen from the dead, died no more; and therefore, saith he, though you fall into sins, yet you shall die no more, because you are risen

with Christ. So say I, though your afflictions be great, and seem to swallow up all your comforts, yet your comforts shall not be buried in them; for, if godly, you are risen with Christ, and have fellowship with him, and so die no more. When therefore affliction comes, rejoice in that you are made partakers of his sufferings, and say, "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, for though I fall, yet shall I rise again for by my sufferings I have fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, and so in his resurrection, comforts and glories.

If you would not be discouraged under your afflictions, labour more and more to be strangers to the world, and to be acquainted with the ways of God under affliction. The dog doth not bite, or tear, or hurt those that dwell in the house; if a stranger comes, he flies upon him, and tears him, because he is not acquainted with him. And what reason is there that men's afflictions fly upon them and tear them so much as they do, but because they are strangers to, and know not the way of God under them; labour therefore to live by faith above the world, to be a stranger to the world, and be more acquainted with the way of affliction.

Consider what Christ hath borne and left you to bear. There are but two things to bear; sin and sufferings. Christ hath borne all your sins, will not ye bear his sufferings? He hath borne and carried the heavy end of the staff: you have not one sin to bear, and will you not then bear the sufferings?

Consider also, and that frequently and seriously, what abundance of good you and others get, or may get by your afflictions. God by afflictions lets out nothing but corrupt blood. Be of good comfort, man, (said one now in heaven, to another complaining under his afflictions,) Christ will do thee no hurt in the latter end. God never whips his children but for their good, and doth teach both them and others by them. I was converted (said one, telling the story of his conversion) by seeing a man executed; for, thought I, if a man be thus punished with death for breaking one of the laws of men; what do I then deserve, who have broken all the laws of God? Affliction sometimes teacheth the bystander much, but especially it is teaching to yourself; thereby you see and read the fulness of God, the emptiness of the creature, and the vileness of sin. It recalls sin past, and prevents sin to come; it quickens prayer, and enlarges thankfulness. And it may be thou mayest owe thy conversion to some affliction, as a means thereof; and if so much good do come by it, will you be discouraged under it? Think, and think much of the good thereof.

Whenever any affliction comes, do not stand poring on the evil of it, but be sure that you look as well and as much upon what is with you, as upon what is against you: there is no mercy which you can lose, but hath some burden with it: there is no misery that can befall you, but hath some mercy with it. When men lose a mercy, they only consider the sweetness of a mercy lost, and not the burden that they do lose withal. Oh, saith a poor woman, I have lost my husband, so loving, so gracious, so helpful; but not a word of the burden that is gone withal, and so there is much discouragement. When affliction comes men only consider the evil, and not the mercy that doth come withal, and so they are much dejected. Suppose that a loving father in some high room, throw down a bag of gold to his child, and it lights on the child's head, insomuch as it breaketh his head and causeth the blood to come; whilst the child feels the smart thereof, he is impatient and forward; while he looks only upon the leathern bag he is not thankful; but when he looks into the bag, and sees what a great deal of gold his father hath given him, then he speaks well of his father, notwithstanding all the smart of his head. There is never an affliction, but is a bag of gold

given unto the people of God; though it seem a leathern bag without, yet there is gold within; so long as they stand poring upon the leathern bag, or attend unto the smart of their affliction, they are not thankful, they do not praise the Lord, but are much discouraged; but if they would look into the bag, and tell their gold, then they would have comfort, and not be discouraged. I tell you from the Lord, there is gold within; look in this bag, the bag of affliction, tell over all your gold which the Lord hath given you in this affliction, and then you will be quiet. If a mercy be taken from you, consider the burden that is taken away too. If a misery come, consider the mercy that doth come withal; labour ever, labour to see both together, as well what is for you as what is against you, then will you never be much discouraged, although your affliction be never so great. And thus I have done with the seventh instance.

11. SERMON XI. - A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF UNSERVICEABLENESS.

SERMON XI. - A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF UNSERVICEABLENESS.

If art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me?" .—Psalms 42:11, VIII. Sometimes the discouragements of the saints do arise from their employments, work and service.

Either they are not called forth to work for God, as they do desire, or they do want abilities and skill to work, or they have no success in their work. Oh, says one, I am a poor, unuseful, and unserviceable creature; God hath done much for me, but I do nothing for God: others are used and employed for God, but as for me, I am cast by as an useless vessel, in whom God hath no pleasure: and therefore I am thus discouraged, have I not just cause and reason now?

No, for is family work and service nothing, is relation work nothing? There is a three-fold sweat, says Luther; political sweat, ecclesiastical sweat, and domestical sweat. A man may sweat at family work; and it is a great trustment to be trusted with the work of a family: and this work you are entrusted with. Is it nothing for a man to be trusted with the work of his Christian station? The whole body of Christ is divided into many members; every member in the body hath a work suitable unto it: the eye doth not hear, as the ear doth; nor the ear see, as the eye doth; but every member worketh according to that station which it hath in the body. So, "ye being one body, are many members," saith the apostle, and all members have not the same office. Look therefore, as the station is which ye have in the body of Christ, such is the work that ye are entrusted with. And is it nothing for a man to be employed in comforting, relieving, and supporting others! This is so great a service, that the very angels are employed therein, as in a work most suitable to them. For when the Lord would stir up and provoke the children of Israel to repent, he sent a prophet to them. Judges 6:7-8. But when he would comfort, strengthen, and encourage Gideon, he doth not employ the prophet therein, but he sends an angel to him, saying, verse 12, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." And if ye look into the story of the New Testament, ye shall find, that when Christ was on Mount Tabor, in his transfiguration, then the angels are not said to attend upon him; but when he was sweating in the garden, then the angels came and comforted and ministered to him. Why? Because this is angelical work, to comfort, relieve, and support others in the time of distress. Now are you not trusted with this work? How many poor, drooping, tempted, and deserted souls are there whom you may go and administer to ' And is this no work at all? But there is a generation work, a work of special employment, which God doth trust others with; as for me I have none of this work to do, I am a poor, useless, and unserviceable person, one that God doth not use at all, and therefore I am thus discouraged. For is it not a very great mercy to be used and employed for God in the world?

Yes, it is a very great mercy and blessing, I confess, to be used in any work or service of God. This was Moses' commendation, that he was the servant of God; Moses, "the servant of the Lord, is dead." And in this title David gloried more than that he was king of Israel, Psalms 18, "A Psalm of

David, the servant of the Lord." He doth not say, A Psalm of David, the king of Israel. Thus Paul, Peter, James, and Jude do entitle their epistles: Paul, a servant of Christ; and Peter, a servant of Christ; and James, a servant of Christ; and Jude, a servant of Christ. Yea, and Christ himself doth glory in this title of God's servant; and the Father glories in Christ on this account: "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen. My servant the Branch." So that a great privilege it is to be God's servant, used and employed for him. The more serviceable a man is to God the more he doth honor God, and the more he honors God, the more he honors himself. Honor est in honorante. Those that stand before, and wait on kings and princes, honor themselves in honoring their masters. So in honoring God, a man honors himself; yea, and thereby God doth put honor on him: for what is honor but Testimonium de alicujus excellentia, testifying of another's excellency; and the more I testify of any excellency in a man, the more I honor him. Now, when God doth betrust a man with his work, he testifies of an excellency in him: "The Lord hath counted me faithful, and put me into his work," saith Paul. Yea, the greatest greatness in this world is to wait upon the great God. Therefore, saith our Saviour of John the Baptist, "Amongst them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than he." Matthew 11:11. And if ye look into Genesis 1 : ye shall find that the moon is called one of the two great lights, ver. 16, "And God made two great lights, the greater to rule the day, and the lesser to rule the night." But though the moon is said to be lesser than the sun, yet it is said to be one of the two great lights. And why so? are there not other stars greater than the moon? Yes; but because the moon is the most influential and serviceable to the world, therefore it is said to be greater than others. So that in God's account, the more service we do in the world the greater we are, and the more honorable in God's eyes.

Thereby also we are kept from the dint of temptations; idleness breeds temptation. Our vacation is the Devil's term; when we are least at work for God, then is Satan most at work about us. By doing nothing men learn to do evil. Yea, idleness is the burying of a living man.

Great and good employment is the mercy promised. That can hardly be a small mercy, which the great God doth promise; promised mercies are the sweetest mercies. Now the Lord promiseth, Isaiah 58:18, "That if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, &c. the Lord shall guide thee continually; and they that shall be of thee, shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations, and thou shalt be called the repairer of the breaches, the restorer of paths to dwell in. " Here is employment and betrustment promised. The more useful and serviceable a man is to God, the more apt and ready God will be to pardon his failings; not only the failings of his present employment, but of the other part of his life also. What a great failing was that in Rahab, to say the spies were gone, when she had hid them in the top of her house. Yet the Lord pardoned this failing to her. Why? Because she believed, and was useful, and serviceable unto God's great design in that her day. And if ye look into Numb. 12: ye shall find, that though Aaron and Miriam were both engaged in the same sin and evil, of envying and murmuring against Moses, yet the Lord spared Aaron when he struck Miriam with a leprosy. But why (saith Abulensis) was not Aaron smitten with the leprosy as well as Miriam? what, because he was not so deeply in the transgression as she was? No; for verse 1, it is said, "then spake Aaron and Miriam;" not as if she were put on by him; or because that Aaron confessed his sin as she did not? No, for so did Miriam also, for she was a good woman. Or because that God owed Aaron a punishment till afterwards? * No, for that appears not by the text; but he was the high priest, and if he had been smitten with leprosy, it would have brought his ministry under some contempt, the

work of the Lord would have ceased for a time also, and though he failed in this thing, yet he was otherwise a very useful and serviceable man; and God would shew his aptness and readiness to pardon such, rather than others.

If a man be employed for God in any special service and work, the Lord will not only pardon his failings, but if he be faithful in his work, God will bless him, and set a character of love and favor upon him. What a character of love did the Lord set on Caleb and Joshua. Of all men in scripture, it is said of Caleb, that he followed the Lord fully; and this character God himself did set upon him, Numb. 15:24, "But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, &c." But why did God own and dignify Caleb thus? Even because he was faithful in that work, service, and employment which God did call him to.

Yea, the serviceable man is the only man who doth live and speak when he is dead; I mean for God. Some are very active and serviceable for the Devil; whilst they live, they write and print wanton, filthy books; and they speak while they are dead, but it is still for Satan. Others are very active and serviceable for God; while they live, they write and print works of faith and holiness; and they also speak when they are dead. As it is said of Abel, "who being dead, yet speaketh;" but how doth he speak now? The apostle tells us, Hebrews 11 : by faith, by which $\delta\iota\ \alpha\upsilon\sigma\tau\eta\varsigma$, it relates unto $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ faith. Well, but what act of faith did he do? He offered a more excellent sacrifice than his elder brother, which was the work and service of his day. So that the serviceable man is the only man who doth speak when he is dead. Surely therefore, it is a very great privilege and mercy, to be used and employed for God in his work and service. Yet if God will not use me, why should I be discouraged, or complain? Is not God free; and may not he employ whom he pleaseth? Shall the poor potsherd say unto him, why dost thou lay me by? What if God will cross Lands, and lay his right hand on another's head, and his left hand on mine; shall I think to direct and order the hands of God's providence, as Joseph would have altered Jacob's? Is not his work his own; and may not he put it out unto whom he please; and if I complain thereof, is not this my pride? Proud men scorn their own employment, and envy at others. It is a mercy indeed to be employed for God; yet if God will not trust me with his service, as I desire, why should I be discouraged? Yet I may be God's servant. For,

1. The service of God is twofold. Sometimes it is taken for some special employment, which a man is called forth unto. And sometimes it is taken for our ordinary obedience unto God's commandments. In the first sense it is used often in Numb. 4: and frequently in the Old Testament called, the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. So in the new' testament also, Romans 15:31, "That my service may be accepted." In the second sense it is used, Rom. xii.1, "Which is your reasonable service." So also, Revelation 2:19, "I know thy work, charity and service." This latter service, is the saving service, that service whereby, in a special manner, we are called God's servants. And in that respect we may be serviceable to God, though not in the former.

2. As for the service of special employment, that is also various. Sometimes God doth call a man to one kind of service, sometimes to another. He hath several ways of employment; he employed Moses one way, in giving out the law; and he employed Ezra another way, in restoring of the law. Both were employed, but their employments were very different. In 1 Samuel 30 : we read, that when David fought against the Amalekites, to recover his wives and substance, some of his men stayed and tarried by the stuff, to preserve that; and saith David, verse 24, £C As his part is, that

goeth down to the battle; so shall his part be, that tarrieth by the stuff, they shall part alike " Now it may be you are one of those that stay by Christ's stuff, being employed in some lower and meaner service; Christ hath a care of you, and though you stay at home, yet you, even you shall have part in the spoil, as well as those whose work and employment is more honourable.

3. Yea, though God do lay me by for the present, yet he may use me afterward. God did make use of Joseph, but he first laid him by; God did make use of Moses but he first laid him by; God did make use of David, but did he not first lay him by? And if Barnabas, the companion of Paul, were the same person with Barsabas (as some do verily believe, though the Syriac translation is plainly against it, because the name of both was Joses or Joseph, as appears by comparing /lets 1:23, with Acts 4:36. And because this Joses was not called Barnabas from the beginning, but named Barnabas by the apostles, Acts 4:46): if, I say, Barnabas were the same with Barsabas, then it appears plainly, that God doth not always lay a man by, to use him no more, for what abundance of service Barnabas did, the book of the Acts doth declare; yet he was first laid by, in the choice that was between him and Matthew, for the lot fell on Matthew; yet Barnabas is sent out afterwards by the church, Acts 11:22, and by God himself, Acts 13:2, and much service he did do for God : so that though God do lay me by for the present, yet he may use me afterwards.

4. And if a man may be employed for God in some special service, yet may go to hell when all is done; and a man may not be employed, and yet go to heaven afterward: then why should you be discouraged, because you are not so employed? Now what think ye of those which ye read of in Matthew 7, they say at the last day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, cast out devils in thy name and done many wonderful works in thy name?" Works and great works, and many, and wonderful, they did and all in the name of Christ; yet he will say to them, "Depart from me, for I never knew you; or I know you not." Yea, did not our Saviour Christ say concerning Judas, "I have chosen twelve, and one of you is a devil?" A devil, yet an apostle; what greater work, service, or employment, than the work of an apostle? yet possibly a man may be an apostle in regard of employment, and a very devil in regard of life. On the other side, how many good and gracious men are there in the world, who were never used, or called forth unto any special service, such as are now in heaven, and shall be so unto all eternity? What then, though you be not employed, or used as others are; yet surely you have no just cause or reason to be discouraged in this respect.

5. And if it be the property of a good man to rejoice in the service of others; then why should you be discouraged, because others are employed, and you not? A godly man doth mourn for another's sin, as well as for his own, because he mourns for sin as sin, and as a dishonor unto God: so he rejoices in the service of another, as well as in his own, because he rejoices in the work itself, and because God is honoured. You would have God's cart to be driven through your gate. Why? is it not because you may have some toll thereby? Paul said, "However, Christ is preached, and therefore I rejoice and if Christ's work be done, whose hands soever the work comes through, why should you not rejoice? And if it be your duty to rejoice, then surely you have no scripture ground and reason for your discouragement in this regard. But I am not discouraged, because I do want employment, or service; I have more work lies upon my shop-board, than I can turn my hand unto: but I have a great deal of work to do, and I have no skill to do it: oh, I want abilities, I want sufficiencies, I do want endowments; therefore I am thus discouraged, and have I not cause and reason now?

No: for God's greatest works, are not always done by the greatest parts and most choice abilities. Gideon did a great work for God in his generation, yet saith he, Judges 6:15, "Oh, my Lord wherewith shall I save Israel? behold my family is poor in Manasseth," and I am least in my father's house as if he should say, If this great work be done, it must be done by some strong and potent family or person ; but as for me, I am the least in my father's house, and my father's house is the least in Manasseth; yet, saith the Lord to him, I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite Midian as one man." I have read in scripture, that the people have been too many, and the means too strong for God to work by; but I never read that it was too small, or weak for God to work by. God saith, "Who hath despised the day of small things? And if he will not have us to despise the day of his small things, surely he will not despise the day of our small things. Did not the weakness of the apostles overcome the strength of all the world? Who doth not see what weighty buildings God hath sometimes laid upon our laths? He is able to make as great a hole with his needle, as with our bodkin. Our best abilities for God's work, are from the breathings of the Spirit of God. Water is weak in itself, but when the wind blows upon it, how strong is it. So, if the Spirit of God breathe upon us, we are strong, though in ourselves as weak as water: "Not by might, nor by strength, but by the Spirit of the Lord," saith Zechariah. And if ye look upon that great service of the re-building of the temple, when they came out of Babylon, ye shall find, that so long as they went forth in the strength of outward powers, the command of Cyrus, and the like, they were much hindered, and the enemies then caused the work of the Lord to cease; but when the Lord stirred up the spirit of Haggai, Zechariah, Zerrubbabel, and others to build, then they went on and prospered; Why? Because they went forth in the strength of the Spirit of the Lord; not in the strength of man's command, or of their own abilities.

Though the work of the Lord be carried on, not by might nor by strength, but by the Spirit; yet this Spirit doth not always breathe and work alike: Christ sent out his disciples for to preach, to cast out devils, and by the Spirit of the Lord, they did preach, and cast out devils; yet they had not then received so great a measure of the Spirit as afterwards, when he breathed on them, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost;" yea, and though he did thus breathe upon them when he left them, yet they did not then receive in so great a measure of the Spirit as afterwards; for they were still to wait for the promise, that is, the Spirit, Acts 1 :; so that though God will carry on his own work, by his own strength and by his own Spirit, yet the assistance thereof, is not always alike; sometimes it is more and sometimes it is less; even where it falls in truth and power. But though the Spirit doth not always work alike, yet if God call you to any work or service, you shall have so much assistance as is needful for you; only you must know, that Dabitur in hora, it shall be given in that hour, it shall not lie cold and stale by you; but when you come to use it, then it shall be given out unto you, more or less, but sufficient. Before Moses came to his work, he complained of want of abilities, his stammering tongue, and want of eloquence, &c., but when he was warm at his work, and was engaged in it, then we read of no such complaints : God's call, is our wall and strength, "Go in this thy might," saith God to Gideon; and what might was that? the verse tells you, it was the might of his call; for says the Lord in the next words, "Have not I sent thee?" Judges 6:14. Our might then, is in God's call, not in our own abilities: and a little warm assistance, is better than much cold and stale ability. But I fear the Lord hath not called me to this work, but that I am an intruder into the work of the Lord, because I do want abilities.

Nay, but if the Lord do sometimes call a man first, and doth furnish him with abilities afterward, then you have no reason to make such conclusions. Now ye know how it was with Saul; God did first call him, and then he gave him another spirit; he had not that other ruling spirit, before he was called to rule, but after. So the apostles were first called to their office, and then Christ did furnish them with abilities, "Who hath made us able, or meet ministers, not of the letter," &c. When were they made meet, or able? what, before they were called! No, but afterwards. God's call is not like to man's, man's call doth always pre-suppose abilities, God's call doth sometimes bring them. And if God's porters, whom he hath set to keep the door of opportunity, do judge you able, then you are to rest in their judgment; "A. large, and effectual door is opened," says Paul. God hath a door, which when he calls a man to work, he doth then open to him: this door is kept by certain porters, whom God hath appointed to keep the same, and if they judge that you have abilities, then are you to rest and acquiesce therein; for though I am to judge of mine own grace, and not another; yet others are to judge of my gifts, and abilities, and not myself. Some will judge of their own gifts and of others' graces; this is evil, but in reference to work and external service, others are to judge of mine abilities and not myself; as I am to judge of mine internal grace, and not another. Accordingly, Luther counselled Spalatinus, who having many sad thoughts of leaving his ministry: This is, saith Luther to him, a diabolical temptation, and you know not now, why you are afflicted with it; we which are spectators, know it better, therefore you ought rather to trust us than yourself, who in the Lord, before the Lord, yea, the Lord by us, doth exhort you to go on in your work, unto which he hath called you. So say I now to you, you doubt of your call because you do want abilities; but do those porters judge you able, who are set to judge? then are you in this case, rather to rest in their judgment, than in your own. Now God's porters have judged you meet for his work, and have opened the door of opportunity to you; and therefore you have no reason to be discouraged in this respect; only remember this: That the weaker your legs are, the faster you must hold on the hand of free grace.

Oh, but I fear that I am not called to this work, but that I am an intruder, because I meet with so many difficulties in my way. Do you meet with difficulties in your way; what virtue or virtuous action is there but hath some stone upon it? Nulla virtus sine lapide; there is no virtue but hath some stone or other that is rolled upon it. As Christ himself had a stone rolled on him, so every work of Christ, and truth of Christ, and way of Christ, hath one stone or other that is rolled upon it. Yet ye must know that there is a pearl lying under that stone, and the heavier the stone is, the more precious is the pearl; the harder the nut and shell is to crack, the sweeter is the kernel; and in due time Christ will send his angel to roll away the stone from your work and his service, and that before you are aware.* When the women said, as being at a stand, and not knowing what to do, Who shall roll away the stone? then did the angel come, and rolled it away for them before they were aware of it. Peter had the brazen gates opened for him when he came to them; they did not stand open before, but when he came at them, then did they open to him. And if you go on in your way and work which God doth lead you to, the brazen gates which are now shut against you shall then open to you; if, I say, you go on in your work in way of faith, as following the conduct of the Lord. And if God's clearest call to a work hath always been followed with the greatest difficulty, then have you no reason to question your call in regard of difficulties. Now I pray tell me, when Moses went to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt, had not he a clear call for that: yet what abundance of difficulties did he meet with in his way to it? And when the Jews came out of Babylon, did they not meet with many difficulties: some at their coming out, some in their way,

some at the building of the temple; yet had they not a call, and a clear call thereunto? Without all doubt they had. Surely, then, you may have a call, and a clear call to your work and service, yet you may meet with many difficulties in your way, and therefore have no reason to be discouraged in this respect. But I am not troubled, afflicted, or discouraged in regard of my call; for I am persuaded that God hath called me to his work and service: but I am most unserviceable; I do not do that work and service which I am called unto; I lie like a dry log or chip in the family and place where I live. Oh! I am most unserviceable, and therefore I am thus discouraged. That is ill indeed; for every good and gracious man is a serviceable man, more or less he is serviceable in his place and condition. Onesimus, before converted, was unprofitable; but being converted, now profitable, says the apostle. A good man, in scripture, is compared to those things that are most profitable. Is the wicked compared to the green bay tree, which doth bring forth no fruit: the godly is compared to the olive tree, which is all profitable; the fruit profitable, the leaves, bark and the tree profitable. Is a wicked man compared to the goat: a good man is compared to the sheep; and what is in a sheep not profitable? its flesh is profitable, its wool profitable, its skin is profitable, yea its very dung is profitable: and such a sheep was Paul; nothing in Paul not profitable and serviceable: will ye instance in his Jewish and natural privileges? he makes use of them, Philippians 3, to advance the righteousness and knowledge of Christ; yea, "all these (says he) I count as dung and dross in regard of Christ." Will ye instance in his conversion to Christ? he doth make use of that to convert others, and to establish others, by frequently telling the story of it to others. Will ye instance in his parts, gifts and learning? he makes use of his Hebrew sometimes, sometimes of his knowledge in the heathen poets, sometimes of his knowledge in the Roman customs. Will ye instance in his friendship, acquaintance, and interest in men? that he makes use of with Philemon, from Christ, in the case of Onesimus. Will ye instance in his afflictions? he doth make use of them to persuade his people to their duty: "I Paul, a prisoner of Christ, do beseech you," &c. Will ye instance in his temptations? he doth make use of them, and tells the Corinthians how he was buffeted by Satan. Will ye instance in his sins? he doth improve them also for the advancement of God's grace: <e I was a blasphemer, &c. (saith he) but I obtained mercy." Thus, ye see, there was nothing in Paul not profitable, he was all over serviceable and profitable; and if ye be one of these sheep, you will be serviceable and profitable in your place and condition, more or less. I remember the speech of a martyr, when he came to die, and to be burnt for Christ, Oh, said he, thus long have I grown in the orchard of Christ, and have borne some fruit, though not much, yet some; and now that I grow old and dry, and can bear fruit no longer, shall I be taken and thrown into the chimney, to make a fire for the warming of others: what a great mercy and blessing is this! Ye know what Solomon saith, "Whatever thou findest in thy hand to do, do it with all thy might:" and what Jeremiah saith, "Cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently." Art thou therefore unprofitable, unserviceable? then have you cause to be humbled. Yet even in this respect you are not to be cast down or discouraged, for, either you are unserviceable because you want abilities, or, because ye want will and heart thereunto. If you say you want abilities, I have spoken to that already. If you say you are unwilling and do want heart thereunto, then why do you thus complain? he that complains of his own unserviceableness is not unwilling to serve the Lord. But you complain, and say, Oh, I am most unserviceable; therefore you are willing, and have an heart to serve; and if you can speak in truth with Samuel, and say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant is ready to obey;" then you are not unwilling to serve the Lord. Now cannot you say thus in truth? Yes, through grace I am able to say, Speak, Lord, for thy servant is ready to obey. Surely, then, you are

not unwilling; this your unserviceableness doth not arise only from your unwillingness and want of heart; and therefore you have no just reason to be discouraged in this respect. But this is not the matter which doth pinch with me; for according to my poor abilities I have laboured, and have been truly willing to serve the Lord in my generation; but I labour, work, and take pains, and all in vain I labour, and have no success in my labour; I work, and have no success in work ; I serve, and have no success in my service ; and therefore I am thus discouraged, have I not cause and reason now?

No: for possibly you may be mistaken in the matter of success: you may have good and great success and not know thereof. There is a time when the seed doth lie dead under the clods; and saith our Saviour, "Unless the seed dies, it abides alone?" Should the husbandman complain in this time that he hath no success in his sowing? If the devil do oppose by the world without, and assault you with temptations within, it argues that there is good success, though you know it not. Now, does not the world oppose you; and does not the devil assault you with temptations, discouraging you for want of success? Yes, that he doth. Then there is some good success, though for the present it be hidden from your eyes. This is a certain sign, said Luther to Spalatinus, that your work is neither ungrateful to God, nor unprofitable to the church, in that you are troubled with these temptations; for if it were displeasing to God, you would rather long after it, as they do that run before they be sent. Whereas Satan, when he finds such as are truly sent by God, and pleasing to him, he makes them weary of their work by these and the like temptations. And if God's own dearest children have sometimes laboured or toiled all their night or day, and have caught nothing, then no new thing doth befall you in case you want success. Now ye know, and have read, how it was with Noah; an hundred and twenty years he preached to the old world, and not one soul was saved but his own family, eight persons, in the ark. Did not Jeremiah, also, toil in his day and night, and what did he catch? Read what he says, Jeremiah 6:29, "The bellows are burnt, the lead is consumed of the fire, the founder melteth in vain; for the wicked are not plucked away: reprobate silver shall men call them." Yea, doth not Christ himself say, Isaiah 49 : "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and do you think to fare better in this case than Noah, Jeremiah, Christ himself? I confess the want of success in our work, is a great temptation, even one of the greatest temptations; yet if God will have me lay out my strength in vain, why should I be discouraged! The good physician doth not lose his fee, though the patient die; nor shall you lose your reward though ye have no success.

Yet this is not the thing which doth trouble me; for I acknowledge that I have been entrusted with many services, and God hath called me to them; I have been willing thereunto, and have had some good success, but when I look into the Scripture, I find that some have been employed in way of judgment, as Nebuchadnezzar; others in way of mercy, as Nehemiah, &c. Some, again, have been employed in way of mercy to others, as Cyrus, and Judas, but not in love and mercy to themselves; others have been employed in way of mercy to themselves and others too, as Paul, and Peter, &c. Now I fear that either I have been employed in a way of judgment, or that I have not been employed in a way of love and mercy to myself, but for others; and therefore I am thus discouraged and cast down, have I not just cause and reason now?

No: for if God have employed you, and trusted you in his service in a way of love and mercy to yourself, as well as to others, then you have no reason to be discouraged in this respect. Now, when doth God employ a man in a way of love and mercy to himself, as well as for others' good?

When a man's heart is thereby drawn out with love to God. That which ends in love, comes from love; that which ends in your love to God, came from God's love to you. So in outward blessings, if they end in your love to God, then they came from God's love to you. So in the matter of afflictions, if I do love God the more by them, then did they come from God's love to me. So also in the matter of employments, if you do love God by them, and they do end in your love to God, then they came from God's love to you. When God doth employ a man in his service, in a way of love and mercy to him, then he doth more or less acquaint him with his design therein; and if God do acquaint me with his design in his work, then he doth employ me in a way of love to me. He employed the Assyrian as a rod in his hand, to scourge the people of Israel; but they knew not God's design, they went on upon their own design. Therefore saith the prophet Isaiah, in the name of the Lord, chapter 10:6, "I will send him against an hypocritical nation, howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy nations, not a few." The Lord employed Peter to open a door to the Gentiles in the conversion of Cornelius, and though he knew not God's design at the first, yet he did fully know it afterwards; for says he, and the rest, "Now hath God also to the Gentiles, granted repentance unto life." When a man is employed in a way of special love to his own soul, he hath high thoughts of his employment, but low thoughts of his own actings under it; therefore said John the Baptist, "I indeed baptize you with water, but there is one comes after me, he shall baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire, whose shoe-latchet I am unworthy to unloose." But though the employment of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, was good and honourable, yet they had low thoughts thereof, and high thoughts of their own actings, Numb. 16:3; for said they to Moses and Aaron, "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy as if they should say, We are as good as you. Why so? Even because they were not employed in mercy to their own souls, but for others' good.

He that is employed and used in a way of love and mercy, is very tender of the name of God, and doth so act and work as the name of God may not suffer, or be defiled by him. Thus it was with Ezra, though the enemy lay in his way to Judea, yet he would not ask a convoy of the king; for says he, "I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen, to help us against the enemy in the way, because we had spoken to the king, saying, the hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him, and his wrath is against all them that forsake him." Now Ezra was a good man, a man that God did call forth to this employment, not only out of love to others, but to himself and thus did he act for God, being more careful of God's name in the work, than of their own safety. When a man is employed in a way of love and mercy to his own soul also, then he doth grow in grace while he is exercising of his gift. A man that exerciseth a gift for the good of others only, grows in parts, and in pride also; but a good man grows in experience, and so he doth grow in faith: he meets with difficulties and deliverances, so he doth grow in faith; God discovers himself to him in the way, so he still grows in faith, love and holiness. God gives him a promise when he sends him forth, as he did give to Joshua, chap. 1: this he looks much upon, and goes forth in the strength of, and so as he uses his gift in his work, he doth grow in grace thereby, but the other doth not.

He makes no great outward bargain of God's service, neither doth he labour to pocket up much for himself. God employed Moses in a great work, but where do you read of any great estate that he got for himself? We read of Joshua, that when he had brought the children of Israel into Canaan, and divided the land by lot to them, then when he had served others, in the last place he did serve

himself, and that in no great matter. What did Nehemiah get by his service? Not as the former governors did. Why? Because he feared the Lord. So then, if a man be employed in way of love and mercy to himself, he doth not make his employment a shoeing-horn to his own preferment. It is enough for me my Master's work is done, saith he; neither doth God use to pay them all their wages here, whom he employs in mercy to themselves. But as a merchant, if he have to deal with a stranger for a less commodity, he pays him down presently; but if with a friend for some great priced commodity, he takes time, and doth not pay down his money presently. So, if God have to do with a stranger, as Nebuchadnezzar, he will pay him wages presently; but if God deals with a friend, whom he employs in mercy to himself, then he doth put off his full payment till afterwards.

He doth God's work without any great noise or notice of himself, like Christ, "He lifts not up his voice in the street/" and as the angels in Ezekiel 1 : his hands are under his wings; he hath four hands to work with, but they are not seen, they are under his wings. Let your light so shine before men, (says Christ,) that they may see your good works, (not yourselves,) and glorify your Father," not yourselves. As it is with the fisher, so with him; he shews the bait, but hides himself; he holds forth the word of truth, but not himself; though he have four hands to work with, yet they are all under his wings, hidden; but says Jehu, "Come and see my zeal for the Lord of Hosts." This is another difference.

If God do use and employ a man in a way of love and mercy to himself, he is willing to be used, and contented to be laid by and to be used no more. Another man is not so, if he have been used in one thing, he thinks he must be used in other things, and when he hath done, he cannot bear that God should lay him by and use another. Thus it was with Saul, he could not be contented that God should use David. But when God told Eli, that he would lay him and his house by, he answered, "Good is the word of the Lord for he was a good man, and one whom God had used in love and mercy to himself, and so when God had done with him, he was content therewith.

He that is used and employed in a way of love and mercy to himself will do the work of the Lord fully, though he do his own works by halves. Caleb did his own works by halves, and the work of God fully; for he was used in mercy to himself and others. Jehu di 1 the work of the Lord by halves, and his own work fully; for though he was used in mercy to some, and judgment to others, yet not in love to himself. When God doth use a man in a way of judgment, he hath ordinarily more skill at pulling down, and destroying what is man's, than in setting up and building what is God's. But when God doth use him in a way of love and mercy to his own soul, he hath a dexterity in, and a heart to the setting up of what is God's; witness Jehu on the one hand, and' Nehemiah on the other hand. How is it therefore with thee? Hast thou a skill at pulling down what is man's, and no skill nor heart to set up what is God's? Hast thou been employed and used in God's service, and have you done your own work fully, and God's work by halves? Art thou not contented to be laid by, and that God should use another? Dost thou make a noise in the work, and thy hands not under thy wings? Hast thou made a goodly outward bargain of the Lord's work, and his service as a shoeing-horn to thine own ends? Hast thou not grown in experience, faith and holiness, by this work, but in pride rather? Hast thou not been very tender of the name of God in thy service; nor been acquainted with God's design; nor thine heart drawn out the more to love the Lord? Then surely God hath not used or employed thee in love and mercy to thine own soul. But if thine heart have been drawn out with love to God by thy very service and employments, and thou hast been in some measure acquainted with God's design in that service, and hast been very tender of the

name of God, and more .willing to hazard thyself than to defile his name, and hast grown in grace by the exercise of thy gifts, and hast made no bargain of the Lord's service, but hast had thy hands under thy wings, and hast not done God's work by halves, and now after all, art contented that God shall lay thee by, and make use of others; then surely the Lord hath used and employed thee in a way of love and mercy to thine own soul; and therefore why shouldest thou be discouraged in this respect? Certainly you have no just cause or true reason for it. But suppose that the Lord either shall not use me in his service, or if he do, that difficulties and oppositions press in upon me, or that I meet with no success in my work according to my desire, what shall I do, that I may be able to bear up my heart against all discouragements in this kind? In case that God do not call you forth to any work or special employment. Then,

Consider that you have now the more time to mind your own soul, and to attend to your own condition. Some are so employed, that they have not time enough to pray, read, meditate, examine their own hearts, and to look into their own condition. Yea, though a man's work do lie in the ministry, it is possible that he may so mind his public work, as to neglect his private. But now, if thou hast no public employment or service, then you have the more time for to spend upon your own soul, the more time to converse with the Lord in private, and to look into your own condition. And if you be not called forth to work, and yet are willing to work, you shall be paid for that work and service which you never did. As some men shall be punished for those sins which they did never commit in the gross act, because they were willing and had a desire to commit the same. So some shall be paid for that work and service for God, which they never did perform, because they were willing to have done the same. Now, is it not a great mercy to be paid for that work which I never did? Such is the privilege of all those that are not called to service, and yet are willing to it. In case that you are employed in God's work and service, and difficulties press in upon you; then,

Consider that the greater the difficulty is, the greater shall your obedience be in carrying on the work; and the more you do follow after duty, and redeem it from the hand of difficulty, the greater shall your comfort and reward be when all is done. And the more that any service, work, or duty, is oppressed with difficulty, the more assistance may you expect from God; his assistance, help, and income, is given out much according to the difficulties which we do meet withal. If the difficulties be small, then his assistance is less; if the difficulties be great, then is his assistance greater. Now what matter what the difficulties are, so long as my assistance is suitable? This is God's way with his, he doth proportion his assistance unto our impediments. And therefore if your difficulties be great, and more than ordinary, then may you look for great and more than ordinary assistance. Oh, what a comfort is this! In case that you work, and serve, and toil, and do take nothing, having no success, or not so comfortable as you desire; then,

Consider this, that the less success you have, the more are you free from envy. It is a hard thing for a man that works not, not to envy him that works; and for him that hath no success, not to envy him that hath great success. Of all men in the world, the successful man is the most envied. The heathens had this notion amongst them, which they applied to their gods; and therefore when Polycrates, king, or rather tyrant of Samos, prospered so abundantly in all that he undertook, Amasis, the king of Egypt, his friend and confederate, wrote thus to him: "That thou doest well and prosper, is no small joy to me; but I must tell thee plainly, that these great and overflowing successes do not please me, who know full well the nature of the gods, how envious they are. It is my wish concerning myself, and the like I wish for all my friends, sometimes to prosper and

sometimes to miscarry; and in this vicissitude rather to pass my life, than without any alteration to prosper; for I never yet could hear of any who having thus prospered long, did not at the last, end in universal destruction." Which he imputed to the envy of their gods; for their gods were devils; and indeed, what is the reason that the successful men in any kind are the most envied by the world, but because the Devil (who is the envious one) doth provoke thereunto? Yea, always so it is, that success doth raise envy, if hast thou therefore been at work and hast had no success, then shall you be the more free from envy.

Hereby also you are kept from that great temptation of resting on your own labours. As we are very apt to rest on our duties, sufferings and enjoyments; so we are very apt to rest on our own labours and employments. That we may not rest on our duties, God doth sometimes suspend our duty, or our heart in it. That we may not rest on our spiritual enjoyment, God doth sometimes suspend that also. So here. What is the reason that God doth put the sentence of death upon our employments, or doth suspend their success, but that we may be kept from resting on our labours? Were our labours more successful, we should rest more upon them, but by want of success we are weaned from them. This is comfort even in the want of comfort. But in this case, why should not that comfort and support us, which did comfort and support Christ himself? Isaiah 49:2, ye read of his call to his work: "The Lord hath called me from the womb, from the bowels of my mother he hath made mention of my name." Here is his clear call to work, verse 2, ye have his divine assistance, "And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft in his quiver?" Then verse 4, ye have his want of success expressed in many words: "Then said I, I have laboured in vain." Is that all? No: "I have spent my strength for nought." But is that all? No: "and in vain" again. Then at verse 6, God the Father comforts him against this discouragement: "And he said, it is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob: I have given thee for a light to the Gentiles." Though thou hast little success in this work amongst the Jews, thou shalt have great success in a greater. But wherein doth Christ comfort himself in this case of no success in his work amongst the Jews? That we have in verse 4: "Surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God." Whatever judgment men do make, it matters not much, for "my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God." I have done the work which God gave me to do, and therein I have approved myself unto God; and therefore though I have laboured in vain and spent my strength for nought, yet I have comfort in my work, for my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God; I have not lost my labour, for my work is with God. And thus may you also comfort yourself in the want of success; true, I have laboured in vain as to others, but not in vain to myself; I have lost my labour as to others, but not as to my God; for my reward is with God, and though I have spent my strength for nought in regard of men, yet my work is with my God; and in all this work I have approved myself unto him; and therefore whatever the success be, yet will not I be discouraged ; for my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. And thus I have done with this eighth instance, whereby it doth appear that a good man hath no reason or cause to be discouraged in regard of his work or service, however it may fare with him therein.

12. SERMON XII. - A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF DISCOURAGEMENTS DRAWN FROM THE CONDITION ITSELF.

SERMON XII. - A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF DISCOURAGEMENTS DRAWN FROM THE CONDITION ITSELF.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me?". —Psalms 42:11.

IX. Sometimes the discouragements of God's people are drawn from their condition, the condition itself.

Oh, saith one, my condition is exceeding sad, both for soul and body; there is no condition that is like to mine: my affliction and my condition are twisted and woven in together; my affliction, misery, and my calamity are seated in my very condition: they do not only grow upon my condition, but are in the condition itself, and therefore I am thus discouraged; have I not cause and reason for it?

No: I will grant and must confess, it is possible that a godly man's condition in regard of outwards, may be very bad, Cum bene sit mails, et male bonis; when it goes well with those that are bad, and ill with those that are good, I am strongly solicited to believe there is no God, said the heathen: but we have learned better divinity than this. A man's condition may be very bad, and yet the man himself may be very good, and God may be good to him. Yea,

It is possible that a godly man's condition in regard of the world, may be worser than the condition of a wicked man ; for what else is the meaning of the parable of Dives and Lazarus? Jacob was driven out of his father's house and lodged in the open fields, in the night, whilst wicked Esau, profane Esau, stayed at home, and lay in his warm bed: ye do not read that ever Esau did serve so hard a service in Laban's house as Jacob did, nor are ye able to parallel Esau's misery with Jacob's; yet saith the Lord, (C Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated." So that it is possible for a good and godly man's condition, in regard of the world, to be worser than the condition of the wicked. Yea,

It is possible that a godly man's condition may be worser in regard of outwards, after his conversion, worser I say, than before his conversion. Grace is fain sometimes to wear sin's clothes; and a gracious man, sometimes, doth wear the punishment of that sin which he hath committed before his conversion. What think you of Paul? Do you read that ever Paul before his conversion was put into the stocks; that he was whipped up and down the streets like a rogue; that he was imprisoned; that he was stoned by his countrymen? But after his conversion he was so used. In the beginning of that xixth chapter of the Acts, he breathed out threatenings against the saints, and goes out to kill the people of God; but no sooner is Paul converted, but the Jews sought to kill him: so that I say, possibly a gracious man's condition, in regard of outwards may be worser, at least for a time, than it was before he was converted and drawn to God. ' But now, take a godly man's condition, and though it be never so sad, yet there is no reason why he should be discouraged or cast down because of his condition, in itself considered. For,

1. By way of demonstration. If his condition be carved out unto him by the hand of his Father, who is of infinite wisdom and love; then he hath no reason to complain, or to be disquieted. Now look into Psalms 16, see what David saith of Christ, and Christ of the saints, at verse 6, "My lines are fallen unto me in a pleasant place; yea, I have a fair heritage," or a goodly heritage; Why? (verse 5.) "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup."

Three things are most considerable here. First, these words are plainly spoken of our Lord and Saviour Christ, and of his great sufferings, as appears by verse 10. "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." "Men and brethren, (saith the apostle in Acts 2:29.) let me speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day; therefore being a prophet and God had sworn unto him, that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;" he seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ. At the 27th verse of the 2nd chapter ye have the same words that you have here in Psalms 16, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." So that plainly the words of the Psalm are spoken of Christ, and of his great sufferings. But now in the second place; though his sufferings were very great and many, yet saith he, "My lines are fallen unto me in a pleasant place, and I have a goodly heritage;" but why so? The reason is, in the third place, in verse 5, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup;" the Lord, my Father, saith he, hath drawn out my lines for me, he hath measured out my condition and the Lord himself is my portion and the portion of mine inheritance. Thus now, may every godly man say; my lines are fallen unto me in a pleasant place, yea, I have a goodly heritage. Why? for the Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: surely, therefore, he hath no reason to be discouraged, whatever his condition be. Again.

2. If a man do not live upon his condition itself, but upon his call into his condition; then he hath no reason to be discouraged in regard of his condition itself. Now as our Lord and Saviour Christ said, "Man lives not by bread but by every word of God;" so say I, man lives not upon his condition, but upon God's call into his condition; and if God call a man into a condition, he will maintain him in it: therefore you find these two go together, in Psalms 16, "Thou maintainest my lot;" at the latter end of verse 5, "And my lines are fallen to me in a pleasant place." And thus it was with the children of Israel, when they went through the Red Sea; it is said, "The waters stood like a wall on each side of them ye never read before of a wall of water, and yet then the waters were as a wall unto them ; a strange kind of wall, made of waters: but saith the text, " the waters were as a wall," stood as a wall on each side of them. Beloved, God's call is our wall, which will bear off, and bear up one's heart under troubles and discouragements. Oh, saith a gracious soul, what abundance of opposition do I meet withal in my condition; but yet the Lord hath called me into this condition, and therefore I am quiet, I am contented, I am satisfied; I confess I did not think to have met with so much affliction in my condition as now I do; but God hath called me into it, and therefore I have comfort. Thus it is with all the saints, they are led by God's call into their condition, and they can shew their patent, they can say, Here is my call. Now, if a man do not live upon the condition itself, but upon God's call into his condition; and God doth call his people into whatsoever condition they are; then they have no reason to be discouraged by reason of their condition. Again,

3. If there be no condition that a godly man can fall into, but there is some mercy that is mixed with it, and Jesus Christ hath paid for that too, then a man hath no reason to be discouraged, whatever

his condition be. Now you know what Solomon saith: "Shall a living man complain? is not a living dog better than a dead lion?" Some mercy still that is mixed with misery, and Jesus Christ hath paid the reckoning; godly men have nothing to pay, not anything to pay. Suppose you were invited to a great feast, and some of the dishes were not so well dressed or cooked up as you desire, would you find fault; would you complain? No; why? Because this feast doth cost me nothing. The master of the feast may find fault, but I am a guest and it cost me nothing, and therefore I have no reason to complain. Beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ is the great master of the feast, and of all the comforts which you have, and he hath paid all your reckoning, there is nothing for you to pay; and if you bring in your prayers, your tears, your obedience, as matter of payment, they will not be taken; no, saith Christ, I have paid all myself, witness these empty purses, these empty veins of mine; as for you, O my friends, ye are welcome, but you have nothing to pay, not a penny, not a farthing. I say there is no condition that a godly man can fall into, but there is some mercy that is mixed withal, and Christ hath paid the reckoning for the mercy too; surely then, the people of God have no reason to be discouraged by reason of their condition. But (will some say) I am in a poor, low, mean, base and despised condition, and therefore I am thus disquieted; as for those that are in a prosperous estate and condition, they may well bear up their heads and be of good comfort. Rich men indeed and those that are in a prosperous condition, have many opportunities of serving God, publicly and privately, which a poor man hath not; they have time to frequent the ordinances in the week, to converse much with God in private, whilst the poor man is fain to be at work for his living, and glad he can get his living too; there is no man knows the misery of a poor condition but those that are in it. And such is my condition, and therefore I am thus discouraged; have I not cause and reason for it?

No. For whosoever you are that speak or think thus, do you know what the burden of prosperity is? You see a town sometimes upon the side of a hill, and you say, what a fine town is there, what pleasant meadows are about it, what excellent woods, what clean ways unto it. Thus you speak at a distance. But when you draw near unto this town, and go through some of the lanes, you find them very dirty, and then you say, I did not think at a distance, that there had been such a dirty lane about this town; I saw nothing but fine and clean meadows when I was at a distance, I did not think there had been such dirty passages to it. So, when you look upon prosperity at a distance, you think there is no dirty lanes, no foul passages to it and from it; but when you come near unto it, then you find many a dirty passage, and you say, oh, what dirty sloughs are here! The truth is, the more prosperous (I speak now of outward prosperity) a man's condition is, the more opportunities he hath of doing and receiving good. But if you look into Numbers 4 : you shall find that every opportunity of service carries a burden with it; and therefore the service of the Levites, is often, and in many verses of the chapter called a burden; I will name but one, which is the last: "According to the commandment of the Lord, they were numbered by the hand of Moses, every one according to his service, and according to his burden." Service and burden do here go together; burden and service, service and burden. And now poor soul, is it a burden to you, that you are freed from a burden; hath not our Lord and Saviour Christ said, and do you not find it in experience, "That the poor receive the gospel?" Is not a living sprig of a tree better than a dead arm? The poor hen, you know, so long as she lives is upon the dunghill, and there she is scraping, and picking up her living; but when she is dead, then she is brought unto the masters table. The hawk on the contrary, while he is living, is carried upon the fist, and upon the arm, and hath good flesh and provision made for him, and a house to sit in; but when the hawk dieth, then he is thrown

out unto the dunghill. So in this case; so long as a poor, godly man is living here, it may be he is upon the dunghill and picking up his living, a little and a little; but when he dieth, then he is brought into his masters presence. But the rich, ungodly man when he dieth, though while he lived he had great provision, yet then he is thrown out unto the dunghill, and comes no more into his master's presence. Oh, you that are godly, though in a low condition, would you then change your condition with the wicked? The lower your condition is, the higher is your obedience; if you submit unto the work of your condition, this is angelical obedience; for the angels, though in order of nature they are above men, yet at the command of God, they are ministering spirits unto men, attend and look to men that are much below them in nature. And the lower the work is that they do in tending men, the higher is their obedience to God. So say I; the lower the work of your condition is, the higher and more angelical is your obedience in submitting unto your condition, and to the work thereof. Luther said: A poor woman knitting of a pair of stockings in a way of faith, doth a greater work than Alexander did in conquering the world. It was the speech of a good man that is now in heaven: The more riches the more debts. For if a man be not in Christ, all his present riches will be future debts; he will wish: Oh, that I had less of them, oh, that I had never a penny. And I pray tell me, who have most promises in scripture? The poor or the rich? The oppressed or the oppressor? The high or the low? He that is most exercised hath the most promises; and a low condition is an excellent commentary upon those promises. When the sun shines, ye see not the stars; but in the night the stars appear. So, whilst prosperity shines upon us, we do not see the promises; but when the night comes, adversity comes, a dark and low condition comes, then we see those promises which we saw not before. But suppose that a father hath two children, and to one he gives a brave garment, saying unto him: Child, take and wear this garment; but there is all thy portion, I shall give thee no more. The other he gives a mean garment to, but saith he: Child, be contented, it is not thy portion; thy brother's garment is his portion, but though the garment be mean it is not thy portion, I have a good inheritance for thee. Will not this latter child be contented; will he be discouraged think you, because he hath not so brave a garment as the other hath? Why, take a wicked man, and though he have a braver garment, yet it is all his portion, his portion is in this life, there is all thou shalt have, saith God, there is thy portion. But now, as for a godly man, though he have a mean garment, yet it is not his portion. Oh, you that are godly, will you then be discouraged because you have not so brave and fine a garment as another hath? Consider that the Lord himself is your portion.

Oh, but, I praise the Lord, I am not in a poor and low and base condition, my condition is full enough; but I am in an unsettled condition, I am never settled in my condition, sometimes in one condition, and sometimes in another; could I be but settled, though I had the lesser, I should be contented; but my condition is never settled, and therefore I am thus disquieted and discouraged; have I not some reason now?

No: for I pray, what settlement would you have here in this world? The best estate of men is altogether vanity; is there any settlement in vanity? "Verily (saith the Psalmist) the best estate of every man, (or every man in his best estate) is altogether vanity;" so you read it: but in the Hebrew it is, every man standing, *Omnis homo stans*, as Montanus gives it, every man in his most settled estate, so the word signifies; " Verily every man in his most settled estate is altogether vanity."* But suppose that your condition be more unsettled than any others; if God hath no design but love upon you in your unsettlement, then surely you have no reason to be disquieted because of this.

Now, I pray, why doth the Lord suffer the condition of his people to be so unsettled in the world, but that they may settle upon himself? Oh, saith a gracious heart, I see there is no abiding place here, therefore I look for one that is to come, that hath a foundation: had I been settled in the world, I should never have been fixed upon God himself; but being unsettled in the world, I learn to settle upon God himself: God doth therefore carry his children from vessel to vessel, from condition to condition, that their filthy scent may not remain. Beloved, there is no condition here below, that is able to grasp, or hold the love of God to his children; every condition is too narrow" a vessel to hold the love of God in, and therefore God doth lead his people into several conditions, that so he may have the fuller vent for his love : so long as you are in one condition, you do not see or observe your own self and carriage therein, and therefore God leads you into a new condition, that you may see what you did in your former condition. For example : when a man is in health, he doth not then observe his own carriage in the days of health ; therefore God leads him into sickness, and when he is sick then he doth observe what his carriage was while he was in health; then, saith he, how wanton was I, how worldly was I, how vain was I, when I was in health : but when a man is sick, then he doth not observe his carriage in that condition; therefore God leads him into health again, and when he is in health then he seeth what his carriage was while he was sick; and then, saith he, how froward was I, how impatient was I, when I was sick. I say, a man doth not observe the present carriage of his soul in his present condition, and therefore God leads him into a new condition, and then he sees what his carriage was in the old condition. Philosophy tells us, that if a sensible object be laid close to the organ of sense, there will be no sensation; as if a book be held close unto your eye, you will not be able to read a letter; but hold it at a convenient distance, and then you may read it all. So here; so long as a man is in a condition, and that is held close unto him, he doth not see his own carriage therein, but at a distance he doth; wherefore the Lord doth remove him to some distance from his former condition and so he sees and observeth what he was, and did therein. It is an easy thing for a man to sing when the Psalm is set, a child can do it; but it requires some skill to begin, it requires some singing skill to turn readily from one tune to another; but when the Psalm is begun, every one can go on then. A poor weak horse can go on in the road, so long as he keeps the same way; but when he comes to turn out of that way into another, then he stumbles; it requires some strength in a horse to go readily over the cart wracks, to go from one way into another, this requires strength. So every poor weak man, may go on in the same way, and in the same condition, this requires no great store of strength; but to carry the sameness of heart towards God in variety of conditions, this argues strength, this requires skill: what therefore if the Lord will lead you from one condition to another, and so draw out your skill and strength, and hath no design but of love upon you, will you then be discouraged? Thus it is with all the saints; surely therefore they have no reason to be cast down in this respect.

Oh, but I am not so much troubled about my outward condition, as about the condition of my soul, the Lord knows my soul's condition is very sad; for sometimes I am under the ordinances, and sometimes not; sometimes I can stir out to an ordinance, but sometimes oppositions keep me at home; I am not under a settled ordinance; and when I am under the ordinance, I get little good thereby; I hear and I do not remember, my heart is hard and dead and dull, and it is little that I profit, and therefore I am thus discouraged : have I not cause and reason now?

No, not yet. For as for your want of ordinances, if God lead you to the want of an ordinance, he will make the very want of an ordinance, to be an ordinance to you. When the children of Israel came into the land of Canaan, where there was ordinary food, then manna ceased; but when ordinary food could not be had, as in the wilderness, then they had manna, bread that was baked in the clouds; then they had angel's food immediately from God; and immediate mercies that come immediately out of the hand of God, are the sweetest mercies. God doth always give some opportunities of good unto his people; either of doing good, or receiving good; and the less opportunity they have of receiving good, usually the more opportunity they have of doing good: what though your hand be empty of receiving opportunities, yet if your hand be full of doing opportunities, have you any cause to be discouraged? God knows how to give the comfort of an ordinance in the want of an ordinance. When Jonah was in the whale's belly, he prayed, and in his prayer, he looked towards the temple, though he was absent from it, I and the Lord heard his prayer. And beloved, if the Lord do remember your carriage, labour of love, longings, groanings, mournings after the ordinances, as much when you want them, as he remembers your enlargements under them; then you have no reason to be discouraged in this respect. Now look into Psalms 132 : and you shall see how David presseth the Lord to remember him, verse 1, "Lord remember David and all his afflictions;" he was in great afflictions, and he desired the Lord to remember him; but under what notion would he have the Lord remember him? why saith he, remember him? How he sware unto the Lord (verse 2,) and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob; surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed ; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eye-lids, until I have found out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." lie wanted the ordinance, and his heart was restless after it; and now he desires the Lord to remember him for this. So that I say, God will in a special manner remember your carriage, labour of love, longings and groanings after ordinances when you want them. Oh, but though the Lord do remember us in due time; yet what shall we do in the mean time? Mark what follows at verse 6, "Lo, we beard of it at Ephrata, we found it in the fields of the woods." What is that? "Lo we heard of it at Ephrata;" we heard of it, that is, we heard of the ark (which he had spoken of before) and the habitation of the mighty God of Jacob. We heard of it at Ephrata; as if he should say, it was commonly reported and thought that the Lord, would settle his ark, and his house and habitation at Ephrata, at Bethlehem, a plentiful place; but now we have found it in the fields of the wood. Now we find that the Lord would settle his house, and his ark at Jerusalem, which is compassed about with hills full of woods; in the fields of the forest have we found it. Beloved, our eye is all upon Ephrata, upon Bethlehem, upon the plentiful place; but the Lord doth so order things in his goodness, that when he brings his people into the woods, the fields, the forest, there they find his ark, his presence, and his habitation in the midst of it. And what godly man is there, whom God hath called at any time from the ordinance, but he may say thus; lo, we heard of it at Ephrata, but we have found it in the fields of the woods; and if you do not find the presence of God and the ark of God and his habitation at Ephrata; yet if ye find him in the fields of the woods, in the barren forests; have you any cause to complain? No, surely you have not. Oh, but I am in a plentiful place for the present, I am at Ephrata; I am not in the barren fields, I am under plentiful and precious ordinances; but I do not remember, I hear, and I remember not.

Therefore ye must know, that as for your want of memory, there is an head-memory, and there is an heart-memory: some have an head-memory, whereby they are able to give an account presently of all they have heard, in their due order; but they want an heart-memory to suggest the

things to them when they should use the same. Some again have an heart-memory, so as they can remember the things when they should use them; but they have no head-memory. Now if you can remember the things as you are use to them, though you forget the words and method, have you any cause to complain? Though the words heard, do depart from you, yet your heart may be kept sweet by the hearing of them. Water is often poured into a vessel, and runs out presently, yet it keeps the vessel sweet. So now, though you hear, and hear, and hear again, and you cannot remember, and the things heard do not stay by you as you desire, yet your soul may be kept sweet thereby. As for your deadness; it is some life to feel one's own deadness; for there is a death, and a deadness, as I may so speak. There is a life, and a liveliness; a man may be alive and yet not lively, as a sick person. So a man may be under some deadness, and yet not be dead unto death. There is a deadness that is opposite to liveliness; and there is a deadness that is opposite to life. Now you complain, Oh, my heart is dead, my heart is dead; this argues that it is but a deadness that is opposite to liveliness, else you could not feel your own deadness. A man that is stark dead, cannot feel that he is dead; I say therefore, in that you feel your own deadness, it argues, that it is but a deadness that is opposite to liveliness, and not that deadness that is opposite to life itself; and if you be alive in opposition to death, though you have a deadness in you that is opposite unto liveliness, have you any reason to be quite discouraged, and cast down? The tradesman complains that his trade is dead, and you complain that your heart is dead; this argues that your trade is there, and that your trade is in the matter of your heart. As if your unprofitableness, and unfruitfulness under the means and ordinances, ye know that there is a difference between unfruitfulness and less fruitfulness; the good ground brings forth fruit, in some thirty, in some sixty, in some an hundred fold; thirty is less than sixty, yet this is not unfruitfulness; sixty is less fruit than an hundred fold, yet this is not barrenness. A good man may be less fruitful than another, **■**r than he was formerly, yet he may be fruitful; and it may j be thus with you. But suppose you cannot profit under she means, and be indeed unfruitful; yet there is a great deal of difference between the unfruitfulness of the good tree, and the barrenness of the barren fig-tree. Though a good man be unfruitful, yet he is very sensible of his unfruitfulness. Oh, saith he, there is not a more barren, vile, wretched, unprofitable heart in all the world than mine: it is not so with the barren soul. Though a good man may be too unfruitful, yet he doth not cumber the ground; the barren fig-tree doth, Luke 13 :, that is, he doth eat out the heart of the soil from others and doth hinder others ; he is a cumberer to the place and family where he grows and lives: the good man is not so, but though he is unprofitable in his own eyes, yet 1n truth he is profitable to the souls of others. Though a good man doth not profit so much as he should and would, yet he is willing that any means should be used with him for his profit and growth, even to be digged about and dunged: "And I will dig about it and dung it." Luke 13 : Upon which words, saith Bernard: Non refugit faditatem med'ii, qui expectat ffxcundltatem anima: dung is a means unsavory, and he that desires the growth of his grace, will not refuse the foulness of the means, that means which to flesh and blood is unsavory, though a good man may be very unfruitful, yet God will not cut him down, he will prune him and cut him in such a time as he may grow thereby, but he will not cut him down. But the barren fig-tree, he will cut it down; cut it down, saith the owner, why should it cumber the ground any longer? But however it be, art thou unfruitful, unprofitable under the means? then have you cause to be humbled: humble yourself therefore before the Lord your God, yet be you not discouraged.

Oh, but yet this is not my case only; for I do not barely complain of my unprofitableness under the means and ordinances (though that is much) but I fear that my spiritual condition is not right; and if my spiritual condition be not good and right, after I have lived thus long under such searching means and ministry, I fear it will never be right. I do not read in all the scripture that ever an hypocrite was converted; publicans and sinners I read of, but I do not read of an hypocrite converted; and having lived under the means of grace thus long, if now my condition be unsound, then I am a hypocrite, and indeed this I fear, and therefore I am thus discouraged; have I not cause and reason for it?

No. For though you have lien long under the means of grace, and are not converted, yet there is hope, there is hope concerning this. When our Lord and Saviour Christ rose from the dead, the stone was rolled and removed away. And when the Lord Christ doth raise up a poor soul, he will roll away the stone, though it be as heavy as death, though it be as heavy as hypocrisy, though the stone be as heavy as hell itself; yea, Christ will roll away the stone though it hath lien long upon you. And I pray, what think you of Paul? was not Paul a hypocrite before his conversion? "Woe to you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites," saith our Saviour; and saith Paul concerning himself, concerning the law, "I was a pharisee." Our Saviour saith that the scribes and pharisees were hypocrites; and Paul saith concerning himself, he was a pharisee and yet he was converted. There is one hypocrite then converted, and you may read of others. But is not this usual with God's own children; do they not speak it sometimes out, that they are but hypocrites? I am but an hypocrite. Ye read of that blessed martyr, Mr. John Bradford, that being in prison, and writing to a friend, he subscribes his letter thus; Your's in Christ, a most unprofitable, hard-hearted, miserable sinner. And another letter he subscribes thus; Your's in Christ, a very painted hypocrite, John Bradford. Some there are, that think their souls are sincere, and yet they are most unsound. Some again think they are unsound, and yet they are most sincere. But to come a little nearer, and yet I must but touch upon it; did ever hypocrite long and mourn after the presence of God in Christ, as the best thing in all the world; did ever hypocrite dwell, and abide in the work of private examination of his own soul; did ever hypocrite love grace better or more than gifts; or that most, which is the most spiritual, most savory; did ever hypocrite desire peace, and comfort for grace sake, and not rather grace for peace sake; do hypocrites ordinarily think they are hypocrites; where do you find that in the scripture, that hypocrites ordinarily think they are hypocrites? If hypocrisy be a man's burden, it is not his condition. Did ever any hypocrite walk contrary to himself, to his former self? When men were truly converted they did. So you read of Zaccheus, before he was converted, he was a great oppressor and a covetous man; but being once converted, saith he, "Lord, behold, the half of my goods I give unto the poor; and if I have wronged any man, I will restore four-fold;" here he walks contrary to himself. So the jailor, before he was converted, he imprisoned the apostles, and whipped them till the blood ran down upon their backs; but being converted, he hath them into his house, sets meat before them, and washeth their wounds; he walks contrary to his own former self. So Paul, before he was converted, he persecuted the saints and the gospel; after converted, then he did preach the gospel, which before he persecuted: thus he walked contrary to his former self. I have read, or heard of a young man that was given much to jeering and scoffing; and his mother being godly he would frequently jeer and scoff at his own mother; it pleased God at the last to work savingly upon him, and then he would never come into the presence of his mother, but he would fall down upon his knees, not in the morning and evening for a blessing, but whenever he came into the presence of his mother, he would fall down in a reverential way upon his knees, till

she bid him stand up. I do not commend the action, but I speak this to shew, that when a man is converted, and turned to God, then he will walk contrary to himself. Now, whoever you be, that make this objection, have you not found it thus in your own souls? I appeal unto you, cannot you say thus? Indeed it is little I enjoy of God here; but the Lord knows, I do long and mourn for the presence of God in Christ, as the best thing in all the world; and I am much in the examination of mine own heart in private, when no eye doth see me; and I do desire those things most that are the most spiritual, and the most savory, those my soul closeth most with; and I do not desire grace for comfort, but I desire comfort for grace: and ah, Lord thou knowest I have gone up and down fearing for many years together, that I have been an hypocrite; I have sat down weeping and said, Oh, I am an hypocrite, I am an hypocrite, hypocrisy hath been my burden indeed. And Lord, thou knowest, I do now walk contrary to my former self; before the Lord was pleased to work upon me, so and so I lived; but now through grace, I do walk contrary to my former self: then, soul, be of good comfort; for though there may be many failings, for which you should be humbled, yet do not say that thou art an hypocrite; thy condition is, or may be very good: wherefore go in peace and the Lord comfort thee.

Oh, but will some say, this is not my case yet; for I do not only fear that my condition is unsound, but I am afraid that I am concluded under it, and it will never be otherwise; for there are but some few elect and chosen ones that shall be saved to all eternity, it may be one of a hundred, or one of a thousand; and things are now cast in time according to God's decree before time. Indeed, if this were true, That Christ died for all, for all particular men, and that Christ intendeth to save every particular man, as the doctrine of some is, then I should have hope; but I have heard that this doctrine is not true, and that Christ did not die for all men, with intention to save every particular man, and therefore seeing that few are under election, one of a hundred, or two of a thousand, I fear that I am none of them; and therefore I am thus discouraged, have I not cause and reason now?

No: for though this doctrine be true, that there is a certain number of elect persons, who are but few comparatively, and that there is no such thing as general redemption; yet this is in no way prejudicial to there is or growth of your comfort. As for election; it is true indeed that there is a certain number of elect persons, whom God hath chosen to grace and eternal glory, before the foundation of the world was laid; for the apostle Paul saith expressly, Ephesians 1:3, " That we are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world;" he doth not say, blessed be God who hath decreed to choose us, but " who hath chosen us;" nor doth he say, who hath chosen all, but us; where some are chosen, others are left; nor doth he say, who hath chosen us upon foresight of our faith or holiness, but, " that we may be holy," holiness being the fruit of Election ; and if ye look into Matthew 25 : ye shall find that those who stand at Christ's right hand at the day of judgment, unto whom he saith, " Come ye blessed, inherit the kingdom," are such for whom the kingdom was prepared before the foundation of the world.

Now this number of elect persons is certain and unalterable; for the foundation of God standeth sure. And as the schoolmen observe, if a man that is predestinated to life, could be damned, then the will of God might be altered; for when he doth predestinate a man to life, he wills his salvation; and when he damns a man, he wills his damnation; and therefore if those that are predestinated to life can be damned, then the will of God may be altered, which is impossible; for his will is like himself, unchangeable. As the number of elect persons is certain, and cannot be diminished, nor

augmented; so the Lord doth certainly know all those persons, for their names are written in the book of life, and the Lord knows who are his, that is, saith Mr. Bayne, God only knows his collectively; no man or creature doth in this sense know who are God's. But though God only knows by himself, who those are that are approved for his, yet a man may know that he is one of those elect; for if I see myself set apart from the world in time, then may I know that God hath separated me from others before time; and if I have chosen God for my portion, then may I know that God hath chosen me, for we choose him because he hath chosen us first: and if I love God in time and believe on Christ, then I may know that he hath loved me, and given himself for me: for all our grace is but a reflection of his grace. If you see the prints and characters of the seal upon the wax, you know the seal hath been set upon it, though you did not see when it was done. Of this mind was that blessed martyr, Mr. John Bradford, with whom Mr. Fox doth join, in his annotations upon Mr. Bradford's faith. Thus do I wade, saith he, in predestination, in such sort as God hath opened; I begin with creation, from thence I come to redemption, so to justification, and so to election: we must judge of election, by that which cometh after, that is by our faith, and belief in Christ; not that faith is the efficient cause of our election, but the effect rather, and the cause certificatory, or the cause of our certification, whereby we are brought to the knowledge of our election; and to this purpose doth the apostle exhort us to make our calling and election sure; "Give all diligence (saith he) to make your calling and election sure" it seems then that there are some who are elected. That a man may know, and be assured of his own election. That the way to know this, is not to begin aloft, but to begin below with our vocation; and therefore the apostle puts election last, saying, not make your election and your vocation sure; but "make your calling and your election sure." As for universal redemption, ye must know that Christ did indeed die for all men; but it is nowhere said, that he died for all the particular men of the world with intention to save them, which is the thing in question: but that he died for all, that is, both Jew and gentile, is very true; and if ye look into Scripture, and observe how, when, and upon what occasion this speech came in, you will easily see this is the meaning of it. In the times of the Old Testament, Christ is not said to die for all, but he bare the sins of many," Isaiah 53 : not of all, but of many. And so whilst Christ lived, preaching only to the Jews, and commanding his disciples not to go into the way of the gentiles, it is said, "He gave himself a ransom for many;" not for all, but for many: but when the apostles preached to the gentiles, then it is said indeed and not before, that Christ died for all. Why? Because they held forth Christ to the gentile as well as to the Jew. And therefore if ye look into 1 Timothy 2 :, you shall find, that whereas the apostle had said, verse 4, " Who would have all men to be saved;" and verse 5, 6, " For there is one Mediator, who gave himself a ransom for all:" he explains this in regard of the gentiles, verse 7, "Whereunto I am ordained a preacher and an apostle;" a teacher of the gentiles: and thus it is a reason why they should pray for all, even for the heathen magistrates,, verse 1. And to the same purpose doth the apostle John speak, in his first epistle, 2:2 : "And he (speaking of Christ) is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the whole world;" not for the sins of the whole world, as our translation gives it, but, as the Greek and the ancient Syriac renders it, for the whole world. But why, and how is Christ the propitiation for the whole world? What, is Christ the propitiation for every particular man in the world? No, but," the whole world," is opposed to the Jews, unto whom he wrote; for to the believing scattered Jews did he now write, as appears by the title of this epistle, called an epistle general; which title, only those epistles of James, Jude and Peter have, which were written to the scattered Jews, 1 Peter 1:1; James 1:1. So that in this sense, it is true, Christ died for all, that is, for the Jew

and gentile; but that he died for every particular man in the world, with intention to save him, is nowhere to be found in the Scripture. As for the comfortableness of that doctrine of universal redemption; whereas it is said, that it is conducive to the comfort of such as are afflicted and troubled in spirit. If this doctrine of universal redemption be indeed an enemy to the comfort of a poor, doubting, afflicted soul, then you have no reason to be discouraged in regard of this objection, or of your own condition in this respect.

Now to clear that, take these four or five arguments: That doctrine which doth enervate or make void the satisfaction of Christ for actual sins cannot be a friend, but a great enemy to the faith and comfort of a poor, doubting, and afflicted soul; for he is especially troubled for his actual sins; and the great comfort that he hath, lieth in this, that Christ hath satisfied for them. Now what saith the doctrine of universal redemption, to the satisfaction of Christ for actual sins? It plainly tells us that a man may be, and thousands are damned for those very sins which Christ hath satisfied for, and it must needs say so ; for if Christ died for all the particular men in the world, then all the particular men in the world may be saved: and if they may be saved, then Christ did bear their actual sins on the cross, or else a man's sins may be pardoned, which Christ did not bear on the cross; and if Christ did bear the actual sins of all the particular men in the world, then those that are damned, must be damned for those very sins which Christ did bear and satisfy for, or else they are not damned for them. But men are not only damned for their final unbelief, but for sins against the law; for the law is made for the ungodly. And Romans 2:12 : "As many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law?" "And because of these things" (saith the apostle, speaking of actual sins against the law) "the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience." Now if men be damned for their actual sins against the law, and Christ have borne them on the cross and satisfied for them, then men are damned for those very sins which Christ hath satisfied for; and if so, then what is this but to enervate, and make void the satisfaction of Christ? If you pay a debt, and afterwards be thrown into prison for the same debt, doth not the imprisonment make void the satisfaction of your payment. Yet thus now it is according to the principles of this doctrine of universal redemption: surely therefore that doctrine is no friend, but a great enemy to the faith and comfort of a poor, doubting and afflicted soul. The intercession of Christ, in conjunction with the death of Christ, is a great pillar of our Christian consolation, Romans 8:33, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Verse 34, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us: who shall separate us from the love of God? &c." So that our comfort is not only laid on the death of Christ, nor on the intercession of Christ alone, but upon the connection of these two together. And indeed, what comfort would the Jews have in the bare sacrifice, if the high priest did not take the blood thereof and carry it into the holy place, sprinkling the mercy-seat for them, whom the sacrifice was offered for? But according to this doctrine of universal redemption, the intercession of Christ is parted from his death; for though it tells you that Christ died for all, yet it tells you, that he doth not intercede for all; and it must needs say so, for Christ said, " Father, I thank thee that thou hearest me always ; " therefore if Christ should pray for the conversion of all the particular men in the world, then all the particular men in the world should be converted and so saved; but all are not saved or converted, therefore this doctrine must needs divide between the intercession and the death of Christ, and so pull down that great pillar of our Christian comfort, which stands in the conjunction of Christ's death and intercession. That doctrine which is contrary or repugnant to the free grace of God, cannot be a true friend to the comfort of a poor, doubting

soul; for what is our great comfort on this side heaven, but the free grace of God? Now, what is free grace, but the special favour of God shewn to some more than to others? And therefore if you look into Romans 9 : ye shall find, that when the apostle would set out the free grace, of God, saying, " Whom he will, he shews mercy to; and whom he will, he hardens ; " he first shews that Jacob and Esau were alike, alike in regard of their parentage, for both were of Isaac and Rebecca; alike in regard of their work, " For the children being not yet born, and having done neither good or evil, &c.," yet God did love the one and hate the other, shewing mercy to the one and not to the other. Why? Because "God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he will have compassion." ver. 15. So that it is the work of free grace to shew mercy to some and not to others, who are alike unworthy. So again, Ephes, 2: the apostle proving that by grace we are saved; first he shews that the Ephesians by nature were as unworthy as any other, being all by nature the children of wrath, ver. 1, 2, yet those Ephesians did obtain mercy and not others. Why? Because by grace they were saved. So that free grace is that distinguishing mercy of God, whereby he doth shew mercy to some and not to others, who are alike miserable and unworthy. But now this doctrine of universal redemption tells us, that as Christ died for all, so he doth give a sufficiency of grace unto all, and therefore that which distinguisheth one man from another, must be the free will of man and not the free grace of God; for commune qua tenus, commune non distinguit; that which is common, as common, cannot distinguish. As suppose now that a father doth bestow an equal sum of money upon two children, to purchase house or land with; one doth purchase and the other not; the reason why the one purchases and the other not, is, because the one wills it and the other not. Indeed he that purchaseth doth it by his father's help, assistance and money; but what reason is there why he doth make a purchase and the other not, but because he wills it and the other not? So, if God give a sufficiency of grace unto all; that one man doth believe, you will say, is by the grace of God; but the reason why one believes and the other not, is only the will of man, that this man wills it and the other not. Now where free-will hath the casting vote, there the free grace of God doth not reign. But according to the doctrine of universal redemption, free-will is that which doth make the difference between man and man, it is that which hath the casting voice; surely therefore, it is no friend, but a real enemy to the free grace of God, and so an enemy to the comfort of a poor, doubting soul. That doctrine which is opposite to the assurance of my salvation, cannot be a friend to my comfort in time of temptation. For what comfort can I have in my soul, so long as I doubt of my eternal welfare? Now this doctrine of universal redemption, doth destroy the assurance of our salvation; for who doth not know that according to that doctrine, a man may fall from grace as long as he lives? Else (it will tell you) that he should not act freely, but be under a necessity, and necessity and freedom cannot stand together. But if a man may fall from grace as long as he lives, then he can have no assurance of his salvation till he be dead. And if a godly man cannot have assurance of his perseverance in grace, then he cannot have assurance of his salvation. But according to that doctrine a godly man cannot have assurance of his perseverance in grace; for I can have no assurance of any mercy without God's promise. But this doctrine will tell you that God hath nowhere promised to any man, that he shall certainly persevere in grace. Surely therefore it is no friend to our assurance of salvation, and therefore is a real enemy to the faith and comfort of a poor, doubting soul. The more any doctrine doth hang the mercy of God upon conditions to be performed by us, the less comfortable it is and the more it leaves a poor doubting soul in his fears. Now according to this doctrine of universal redemption, the whole mercy of God is made to

depend and hang upon performance of our conditions, yea, upon the performance of the condition of nature. For, say we, if Christ died for all particular men, and so God doth will the salvation of all the particular men in the world, then he doth will this, either absolutely or conditionally; if absolutely, then it must needs come to pass; conditionally therefore, saith this doctrine, God doth will the salvation of all men, upon condition that they repent, believe, and obey; if so, say we, then either God doth will this condition, viz. that all particular men should repent and believe or not; if not, then God doth not will the salvation of all; for he that doth not will the means, doth not will the end; Qui vult finem, vult media ad finem. If God do will this condition, viz. the faith and repentance of all the men in the world; then, say we, he doth will this either absolutely or conditionally; if absolutely, then it must needs come to pass that all men should repent and believe, which they do not. Conditionally therefore, say the maintainers of this doctrine, and what condition is their precedent to faith and repentance, but nature and the work thereof? Yea, what grace or mercy is there in the gospel, but they do tie it up unto our conditions? Will ye instance in the purchase and benefits of the death of Christ? These, say they, are to be given out upon condition. Will ye instance in the grace of the new covenant? All that, say they, is to be given out and is promised upon condition. There is no absolute promise of grace, say they, in all the scripture. Now look what that doctrine is which doth make all grace conditional, that must needs be very obstructive to the hope and comfort of a poor, doubting soul. Such is this doctrine of universal redemption; surely therefore it can be no true friend, but is a real enemy to the consolation of a poor, doubting and afflicted soul. But if Christ did not die for all and every particular man, how can I conclude that he did die for me; can I raise a conclusion of faith unless the proposition be universal?

Although I need not answer this objection because those that make it do themselves answer it, from their own principles and experience, saying, that faith is an assent to the truth of the gospel; and that they were converted unto God and did believe before they held this doctrine of universal redemption. Yet for further answer you must know,

There is a faith of reliance, and there is a faith of assurance. As the faith of assurance hath a shall be of mercy for its bottom; so a may be of mercy is a sufficient ground and bottom for the faith of reliance. Jonathan and his armour-bearer had but a may be of mercy, when they went against their enemies; "It may be the Lord will work for us" 1 Samuel 14 : yet they relied on God. Now, though Christ did not die for all particular men, yet if he died for sinners indefinitely, there is a may be of mercy for me. But so it is, that Christ did die for sinners indefinitely, though not for sinners universally; and therefore there is a sufficient ground for me to believe, and rely on him.

Ye know, or may know, that the act of reliance, is before the act of assurance. I must indeed be assured that Christ is able to save me, before I rely on him, but I must first rely on him, before I can be assured that he will save me; and by this act of reliance, we grow up into assurance; I know that he will shew mercy to me, by my coming to him, and relying on him; for he hath said, "Whoever comes unto me, I will in nowise cast out." Now if my assurance be raised from the act of reliance, then the first ground and bottom of the conclusion of my faith, is not this general proposition; Christ died for all; but this indefinite proposition, Christ died for sinners. And if the conclusion of faith must arise from a general proposition, then take it thus; Whoever comes to Christ, and relieth on him, shall be saved: or thus; Christ died for all those that do come to him, and rely on him. But I come to him, and rely on him, therefore Christ died for me, and I shall be saved by him. So that thus now, ye see the want of that general proposition, Christ died for all

men, is no hindrance to the conclusion, or assurance of our faith; and therefore you have no reason to be discouraged in reference to this objection.

Yet there is one thing more that sticks with me, even that old objection which I cannot be rid of: when I look into my condition, the condition of my soul or body, I find my condition is such as never anyone's condition was; I have conversed with many a godly man and woman, but I do not find that ever he or she was in such a condition as I am ; and I have read the Scripture, but I do not find there that ever any godly man was in such a condition as I am : could I be but persuaded that ever any gracious man was in the like condition, I should have hope and comfort; but I am persuaded that never any godly soul was in such a condition as I am; therefore I am thus discouraged, have I not cause and reason now?

No: for if it be usual with the saints and people of God to think thus, then you have no reason to be discouraged in this respect. Now I pray look what the church saith in Lamentations 1:1-2 : Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow if there be any condition like unto my condition : and it seems that such were the thoughts of God's people whom Peter did write unto in his first epistle, 4:12 : " Beloved (saith he) think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you, you will think that no body's condition is like unto your's, some strange thing is happened unto you. And so in 1 Peter 5:9, "Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world you think that you meet with such afflictions as never were in the world before; be not deceived, saith he. But suppose that your condition be as never any body's was, hath not the Lord said, "Behold I work a new thing?" Is not the name of Christ, <e Wonderful," and are wonders wrought ordinarily? If your condition be as never any body's condition was, then have you an opportunity of glorifying God more than ever any man or woman had; then you have an opportunity of glorifying God, either in doing or in suffering, more than ever any man or woman had. And then, oh, what grace is here, what mercy is here, what love is here to overcome thy soul withal, that thou shouldest have such an opportunity as never man or woman had before! And therefore, what I said unto you often, I must now conclude with: God's people have no reason for their discouragements whatever their condition be.

Thus now I have done with this last instance, and with all the instances. Give me leave to speak something by way of application, in reference to the whole, and so I will shut up this exercise.

If all these things be so, if this be true, that the children of God have no reason for their discouragements, whatever their condition be: then what a mighty necessity is there upon us all, to look into our conditions, and to consider whether we be in Christ or no; whether we be godly, yea, or nay; whether we have made our peace with God, aye, or not: and whether we have faith, aye, or no? All men have not faith, saith the apostle. Indeed all men say they have faith; and should I go from seat to seat, and from bosom to bosom, and knock at every breast in the congregation, asking, whether doth faith dwell here or no? unless it were some few troubled ones, afflicted in conscience, every one of you would say, I do believe, I praise God I do believe, I have faith here within : but all men have not faith, and few there be that do believe. Children, young men and women, faith is not a thing that is born with you; it is a harder thing to believe than to keep the ten commandments. When once you come to know what it is to believe, you will say, oh, it is a harder thing to believe than to do anything; I do not know anything in all the world that is so hard as to

believe. But if you do believe, be in Christ, are godly, and have made your peace with God, blessed are you of the Lord, nothing shall offend you, nothing shall discourage you. But if not godly, if not in Christ, if not believing, everything shall offend thee and discourage thee, and thou hast no reason to be encouraged, whatever thy condition be. Shall we not then, my beloved, all of us, as in the presence of the Lord, seriously look into our condition and consider whether we be in Christ, aye, or not? But suppose I be in Christ, or I be not in Christ; believe, or not believe; what then? If yet you do not believe, if yet you be not in Christ, if yet you be not godly; this doctrine doth here from the Lord hold forth an invitation to you to come unto Jesus Christ: for if a man be in Christ, and be godly, then he hath no reason to be discouraged, whatever his condition be. If a man be not godly, he hath no reason to be encouraged, whatever his condition be. On the one hand there lies all encouragements, on the other hand there lies all discouragements. Now, therefore, in the name of the Lord, do I here, this morning, lay before this congregation life and death; encouragement on the one hand, and discouragement on the other hand: and if there be an adulterer, a swearer, a lying child, or a stealing servant 5 if there be ever a poor wanton, a sabbath breaker, an opposer of God here ; I beseech you, in the Lord, come unto Jesus Christ; by all these encouragements that I have been speaking of, by all the mercies of the new covenant, and by the salvation of thine own soul, man, or woman, I beseech you come unto Jesus Christ. Oh, that men and women would give no rest unto themselves, till they have made their peace with God, and till they have gotten into Jesus Christ. And in case that you be in Christ, and that you do believe, that you be godly, and have made your peace with God; then see that ye walk up unto all these encouragements, see that you walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. Oh, you that are godly, (if these things be as ye have heard,) why hang you down your heads; why are you cast down and disquieted; why do you not walk in the comforts of this truth declared, and in the strength of these encouragements? You see what a venture we have run to speak comfort to you that want comfort. You have heard in several exercises, that a godly man hath no reason for his discouragements, whatever his condition be: not in regard of sin; not in regard of failings and successlessness in duties; not in regard of want of assurance; not in regard of temptation; not in regard of affliction; not in regard of desertion; and now, not in regard of his condition, in itself considered. Now, after all this, I appeal to you, you that are without comfort, do you not think that there are some wicked men in this congregation, that have presumed, when they have heard these things preached, and have said, these things belong to me; and so have endangered their own souls by presumption, comforting themselves when they should not be comforted? I appeal to you, whether you do not think that there are some wicked men in the congregation, that have thus endangered their souls by misapplication of these consolations: and if so, that there hath been this hazard run, and all to comfort you; then will you now refuse this comfort? Oh, you that have refused comfort all this while, receive it in the Lord; and you that were never comforted before, now comfort yourselves, and walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. And you that have gone up and down fearing, trembling, doubting, and much discouraged; yet now at the last say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God, wait on God, trust in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." How you should so hope, and wait, and trust in God, as to bear up your hearts against all discouragements, I shall yet speak to in the next exercise. So much for the ninth and last instance.

13. SERMON XIII. - THE CURE OF DISCOURAGEMENTS BY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.

SERMON XIII. - THE CURE OF DISCOURAGEMENTS BY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God;" or, wait thou, or, trust thou in God. —Psalms 42:11.

You have heard of the saints' discouragements, and the unreasonableness of them; there is no just cause or reason for their discouragements. Would you now hear of some means against them? The Psalmist saith in these words, "Hope thou in God," or trust thou in God, or wait thou on God. And so the doctrine plainly is this:

Faith is the help against all discouragements.

Hoping, trusting, waiting on God, is the special, if not the only means appointed against all discouragements. I had verily fainted, unless I had believed, (saith David,) to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." I had fainted, unless I had believed. Faith bears up the heart against all discouragements. For your more clear understanding of this truth, and our better proceeding, I shall labour, First, to shew you what it is to hope, trust in God, or to wait on him.

Secondly, that faith doth quiet one's heart in the times of discouragements.

Thirdly, that it is the duty of all the saints and people of God, when discouragements do arise, then, and then especially to trust in God and to exercise their faith.

Fourthly, what there is in faith that can bear up the heart against all discouragements, and how faith doth it.

First, if ye ask, what it is to hope in God, to trust in God, and to wait on him?

I answer, that to hope in God, is to expect help from God; to trust in God, is to rely or rest upon God for help; and to wait on him, is to continue and abide in this expectation or reliance. Properly, according to scripture phrase, trusting in God is the recumbency or the reliance of the soul upon God in Christ, for some good thing that lies out of sight. I say, first, it is the recumbency or reliance of the soul upon God, the staying of the soul upon God: so you read in Isaiah 26:3, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee? So the spouse in the Canticles, is found leaning upon her Beloved; and so we are commanded to trust: not ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ only, but ἐπὶ τὸν ἐγείραντα ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, on him that raiseth Christ from the dead: which notes a fiducial repose; so that trusting in God, is to stay upon him. Romans 4:11. And then I say, it is the reliance or the stayance of the soul upon God in Christ; and so I take it to be meant here, for the word here translated, God, hope or trust in God, is in the plural number, Elohim,; and so when the prophet, in Isaiah 26 :, doth exhort unto trusting in the Lord, he gives this reason, at verse 4, " For in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength;" so you read it, but according to the Hebrew thus: " Trust in the Lord for ever, for in Jehovah Jah is everlasting strength." " For in Jehovah Jah : " Jah is

an abridgment or an abbreviation of Jehovah, noting the Son of God; and so when Jesus Christ comes in the end of the world, to sit upon his glorious throne, the converting Jew shall praise him under that name, singing, as you read in Revelation 19 :, " Hallelujah," praise the Jah: which if you compare with Psalms 68 :, you shall find is to be understood of Christ, at verse 4: " Sing unto God, sing praises to his name; extol him that rides upon the heavens, by his name Jah; rejoice before him, extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name Jah;" and they shall sing, Hallelujah. Now if you look into Psalms 68:18, you shall find the reason why this Jah is to be praised: for, saith the Psalm, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men." Which words, Ephesians 4 :, are applied to Christ: " But unto every one of us, is given according to the measure of the gift of Christ." Verse 8, "Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." So that when the prophet doth exhort us to trust in Jehovah Jah, he exhorteth us to trust in the Lord, in Christ; and therefore I say, both according to the Old and New Testament, faith is the repose or recumbency of the soul upon God in Christ. But yet that is not all. A man that doth repose upon God in Christ, trusting in him, doth trust unto him for some good thing that lies out of sight, and therefore the apostle saith, that "faith is the evidence of things not seen," Hebrews 11 :; where he gives divers instances of Abraham. Sarah, Moses, and others, who all did repose upon God for somewhat that lay out of view; and this indeed is only worthy of the name of faith. I will trust a man that is most unworthy, I will trust a thief, I will trust a liar, so far as I can see him. But as Parisicnsis saith wrell, this is fides Deo digna, faith worthy of God, to repose on God for somewhat that lies out of sight, and out of view; and when a man doth thus stay himself upon God in Christ, for somewhat that lies out of sight, then he is said to trust in God; and when a man doth continue thus, then he is said for to wait on God. This is the first. But then,

Secondly, how may it appear that faith, and the exercise thereof, will quiet the soul, suppress or allay discouragements?

You know how it was with Hannah, when she had received a word from God, "She went away (saith the text) and looked no more sorrowful," her heart was quieted; why? she had a word from God; and though before she was a woman of a sorrowful spirit, yet having received a word from God, and believing that word, her heart was quiet. Proverbs 16:3 : "Commit thy works unto the Lord," there is faith; "and thy thoughts shall be established," there is quietude. And if you look again into Isaiah 26 : you shall find that the Scripture is most express for this, verse 3. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." Mark the words. First, the Lord doth here engage himself to give peace unto those that do stay upon him, that have this faith of reliance, though they have not yet attained to the faith of assurance, to be able to say, I know my sin is pardoned, and that Christ is mine, yet, if they can but stay themselves upon God, the Lord doth hereby engage himself to give peace unto them; yea, he doth not only engage himself to give peace unto such a soul as stays himself upon God, but double peace: you read it in your English, perfect peace; thou wilt keep him in perfect peace: but in the Hebrew it is, peace, peace; thou wilt keep him in double peace, he shall have peace, and peace; not peace and doubting; not peace, and no peace : but if he stay himself upon the Lord, he shall have peace, peace; he shall have double peace. Yea, the Lord doth not only engage to give peace unto such a soul, but to keep him in peace; h Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace," or in peace, peace; and all upon this account, because he trusteth in thee; not because he prayed, not because he humbled

himself, (though that is his duty; and he doth thereby placere Deo, though not placare Deum but because he trusteth in thee, because he stayeth himself upon thee. And ye know, that if ye have a business depending at law, though for the present you be much troubled about it; yet, if you have a friend, a lawyer, that is able, faithful and willing to look to it; if you can but leave your business with him, it doth very much quiet your heart; the very leaving your business with him, doth quiet your mind. So here. If a man can but leave his business, and his cause, and his things with God; then he is at rest, and he may say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul," as David did ; which is done by faith. And to clear this a little, three or four things there are that do ordinarily cause disquietude or discouragement. First, the darkness that is in the understanding; for when a man is in the dark, especially if he be alone, he is very apt to be scared, and to be disquieted. Secondly, inordinate and unruly affections, and passions, especially that of fear, whereby the soul is benighted. Thirdly, guilt of conscience. Though there be much water that doth beat upon the ship at sea, yet it sinketh not; but when there is a leak, a hole in the ship, then the ship sinketh, and the water doth become its grave. So, though there be many troubles that beat upon a man, yet his heart doth not sink; but when there is a leak in his conscience, when there is a hole there, when a man hath a guilty conscience, then he sinketh, and his heart fails him. And fourthly, the apprehension of God's greatness, with our distance from him. Now faith cures all this; for in opposition to the first, of darkness, faith brings light into the soul, and shews a man his way, and his warrant for what he doth. Secondly, it doth pare and take off those inordinate and unruly affections and passions that are in the soul; and therefore in Psalms 37 : at verses 1 and 7? you shall find that fretting and trusting are set in opposition. "Fret not thyself because of the evil doer, verse 3, bet trust in the Lord." And again verse 7: "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him; fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way." Thirdly, it doth heal the conscience, and purify that; therefore saith the apostle, "Let us draw near with assurance of faith, having our consciences sprinkled," &c Hebrews 10 : Fourthly, it does also bring the soul near to God; the great work of faith is to bring God and the soul together. So you have it in Ephesians 3:12. "In whom we have boldness, and access with confidence, by the faith of him." Faith gives a man access unto God, and brings him near unto God. But a man may come near unto God, and yet he may fear, and tremble, as the Jews did at Mount Sinai; true, but saith the apostle, "By this faith we have boldness and access." The word is, a freedom of speech; a man by faith may come into the presence of God with open mouth and speak all his mind unto God. Yea, faith doth not only thus bring a man into the presence of God with open mouth, freedom of speech and boldness; but it brings him into the presence of God with open face and uncovered. "We all with open face," saith the apostle, speaking to believers in the times of the gospel; "We all with open face behold, as in a glass, the mirror of the Lord;" with open and uncovered face. There are three vails, or coverings that we read of in the Old Testament, that were throw'n upon faces. 1. There is the vail of obscurity, and that was upon the face of Moses. 2. The vail and the covering of guilt, and so Haman's face was covered, a cloth thrown over his face, and his face w^as covered. 3. And there is the vail of abashment, or shame; and so it is said of the angels, that they cover their faces in the presence of God. Now to shew with what boldness a Christian, and a believer, comes into the presence of God by Christ through faith, as if all vails were taken off; saith the apostle, " We come with open face;" and " we all with open face behold, as in a glass, the mirror of the Lord." And upon this account, a believer may now come with more boldness into the presence of God, than Adam in the state of innocency; for though Adam in the state of innocency had no vail, or covering of guilt thrown over

his face, yet there was a great distance between God and him. But now, since the fall, since Christ's time, God is come into our nature, manifested in the flesh; and so God is come near to us, and by faith we do draw near to God. No wonder, therefore, that the apostle saith, that "by faith we have boldness, and access with confidence." Faith tells a man, that God is come near to him, and he is come near to God; and therefore faith certainly is the great remedy and means against all discouragements that can arise.

Thirdly, how may it appear, that when discouragements do arise, it is the duty of every Christian to exercise faith, and then especially?

You know what David said, "At what time I am afraid, I trust in thee." And the Scripture is most express for this: Isaiah 1:10, "Who is amongst you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his Servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." First, It is possible for one that is the servant of God to be in darkness, and in such a dark condition, where no light nor no comfort is. Secondly, when he is in this dark condition, and discouragements do arise, (the commandment is most express,) then he is to trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. So also our Saviour Christ commands his disciples, John 14:1, "Let not your hearts be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in me." There was a great cloud arising upon Christ's disciples, Christ to be taken from them by death; the Shepherd to be stricken, and the sheep scattered. Now the only means against trouble that Christ prescribes, is this: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me;" and he gives many arguments to press thereunto, in this 14th chapter. This time was the time of Christ's own trouble; Christ was now to die, and to bear the sin of many, and to lie under the sense of his Father's wrath and displeasure; whereupon he saith, that his heart was heavy unto death: but though it was the time of his own trouble, yet he addresseth himself to comfort his disciples against their trouble, and the only means and remedy that he doth prescribe is this, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." So that I say, when discouragements do arise, it is the duty of all Christ's disciples then, and then especially, for to trust in God by Christ; for I pray, what is faith made for, but for such a time as this is? every grace is to be exercised in its season. If a man have sinned, then he is to repent; that is the season for his repentance. If a man have received any mercy from God, then he is to be thankful; that is the season of thankfulness. If another poor Christian be in want, then he is to exercise his charity; that is the season of that grace of charity. If God's face do shine upon a man, then he is to rejoice; that is the season of spiritual joy. If a man be given to wantonness, and have a beautiful object laid before him, then he is to exercise chastity; and that is a season for it. So, when discouragements do arise, then he is to exercise faith; and that is the season, the proper time and season for it. For it is not only our duty to bring forth fruit, but we must bring forth fruit in its season. Psalms 1:2. Now this is the proper, season for faith to work in, when all a man's comforts are out of sight; and therefore when discouragements do arise, then, and then especially, the saints and the people of God are to exercise their faith.

Fourthly, but what power hath faith to suppress and allay discouragements; and what is there in faith that can bear up a man's heart against all discouragements, and how doth faith do it?

Faith doth give a man the true prospect of things, past, present and to come, and of things as they are. Whence are all our fears and discouragements, but from hence, that men do not see things as they are: if evil be stirring, they think it is greater than it is; if good be stirring, they think it is lesser

than it is. If a man be in temptation, then he loseth sight of his former experiences, and so he is much discouraged. If a man be under a desertion, he loseth the sight of what is present, what God is to him, and what he is to God; and so he is discouraged. If a man be under an affliction, he loseth the sight of what is to come; the end, and the issue of the affliction, and so he is disquieted. But now when faith comes, it opens a man's eyes to see things that are invisible; it is the evidence of things not seen: "By faith, Moses saw him that was invisible." And therefore when the apostle Peter doth direct his people for to see things past, present and to come, he exhorts them to a work of faith, Epist. 1.9. * He that lacks these things, is blind;" one of those things is faith, as you read in verse 5, "Give all diligence, add to your faith," &c., then, "He that lacketh these things is blind," at verse 9. But suppose a man do want faith; wherein is he blind? Why, saith the apostle,

He cannot see things afar off," he cannot see into the other world, he cannot see unto the end of a temptation, or affliction, or to the end of a desertion. Well, but though he cannot see things that are to come, yet he may see things that are past: nay, saith he, if a man wants the assurance of God's love, and that is an act of faith, "he hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins: Wherefore the rather (saith he at verso 10) brethren, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." If you would see things past, present and to come, then grow in faith, and assurance of God's love, and so, saith he, shall you be able to see things afar off. Could a man but see what would be the end, and issue of his affliction, he would be quiet under it. It is in regard of our affliction, as it is in regard of your salt, or sea water: take the water as it is in the sea, and so it is salt and brackish; but drawn up by the sun into the clouds, it becomes sweet, and falls down into sweet rain. So take an affliction in itself, and it is salt and brackish; but drawn up by divine love, then it is sweet; and if a soul can but taste the love of God in it, and see what a loving end the Lord will make; he will then find it is very sweet, and say, I could not have been without this affliction; I do not know how any one twig of this rod could have been spared. Now, it is only faith that shews a man the end and the issue of all his troubles. It stands upon the high tower of the threatening and promise, seeing over all mountains and difficulties; it seeth into the other world; it sees through death and beyond death; it sees through affliction and beyond affliction; it seeth through temptation and beyond temptation; it seeth through desertion and beyond desertion; it seeth through God's anger and beyond his anger: I say, it seeth things past, present and to come. Now, if a man had such a power as he were able to fetch in all his former experiences, to see things present as they are, and to see all the events, and issues of things to come, would he not be quiet notwithstanding all that might arise for the present? Thus faith is able to shew a man things past, present and to come; and to shew him greater matter of comfort, than the matter of his troubles is; and in so doing it must needs quiet the soul.

Faith, true saving faith, doth see that in God and in Christ, which answers unto all our fears, wants and miseries; for faith closeth with the name of God; "Let him stay himself upon the name of God," Isaiah 1. Now there is that in God's name that doth answer unto all our fears and wants. For example, Exodus 34 : the Lord descended in the clouds at verse 5, and stood with Moses there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord, ver. 6. the Lord, the Lord: Jehovah, Jehovah: that is, one that gives a being unto things that are not. Will you say, oh, that it were thus, or thus with me? but as Rachel mourned for her children and could not be comforted, because they were not: so do I mourn after my prayers, because they are not; and after duties because they are not; and after humiliations, because they are not. Well, saith the Lord, be of good comfort, for my name is

Jehovah, who do give a being to things that are not; and this he repeateth, the Lord, the Lord; or Jehovah, Jehovah. Well, but though the Lord do give a being to things that are not, this doth not comfort me; for though, I praise the Lord, I can say, my prayers are, and my duties are; yet the Lord knows they are very weak, and my temptations are very strong, and my lusts mighty and therefore I am thus discouraged. Yet, be of good comfort; for, saith the Lord, my name is EL; that is, the strong, or the mighty God; and therefore though thou beest never so weak, and thy duties weak, yet I will carry on the work of my grace in thee; and though thy temptations be never so strong, and thy lusts strong, yet I am stronger, for my name is EL, the mighty God. Oh, but though God be strong, and able to help me ; yet I fear that God is not willing to help me; I know God is able, and that God is strong enough, but I fear the Lord is not willing, and therefore I am thus discouraged: yet, be of good comfort, saith the Lord, for my name is Merciful, that is the next word; the Lord, the Lord ; the Mighty God : and as my name is the Mighty God, and therefore I am able to help thee; so my name is Merciful, and therefore I am willing to help thee. But though the Lord be willing to help me, yet I am a poor unworthy creature, and have nothing at all to move God to help me; yet be of good comfort; for saith the Lord then, my name is Gracious; I do not shew mercy because you are good, but because I am good; nor do I stand upon your desert, but

I shew mercy out of free love; my name is Gracious. Oh, but I have been sinning, I have been sinning a long time, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years: had I come in at first, I might have had mercy; but I have been sinning long, and therefore I fear there is no mercy for me. Yet, saith the Lord, be of good comfort for my name is Long- suffering, that is the next, Gracious and Long-suffering; slow to anger, or long-suffering. Oh, but I have sinned exceedingly, I have sinned abundantly; so many sins as I am never able to reckon up, and to humble myself for; I have broken all my promises with God, and all the vows that I have made unto him; and therefore I am thus discouraged. Yet saith he, be of good comfort, for "I am abundant in goodness and truth:" art thou abundant in sin? I am abundant in goodness: and hast thou broken faith with me? yet I am abundant in goodness and in truth also. Oh, but though the Lord be thus unto his own chosen ones, such as David, Abraham, or Moses, yet I fear the Lord will not be so to me. Yes, saith the Lord at verse 7., "Keeping mercy for thousands:" I have not spent all my mercy upon David or upon Abraham, or upon Paul, or upon Peter; but I keep mercy for thousands. Oh, but yet my sins do recoil, I am the greatest sinner in the world, for I have sinned all kinds of sin, I have sinned all sorts of sins, and therefore I fear there is no hope for me. Yet, saith the Lord, be not discouraged, for I keep mercy for thousands, he forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin" even all sorts and all kinds of sins; the sin of nature and the sin of life; the sin of weakness and the sin of presumption; the sin of ignorance and the sin against knowledge: these, saith the Lord, I forgive, even all sorts and all kinds of sins, and this is my name for ever. Oh, but I am afraid to lay hold upon this promise, for I think this is a doctrine of liberty. Say not so, saith the Lord, at the next verse, " I will by no means clear the guilty:" but if there be ever a poor, drooping, fearing, trembling soul, that desires to know my name, lo, saith the Lord, here is my name, whereby I will be known for ever: " The Lord, Jehovah, that gives a being to things that are not; the mighty God ; the merciful God: the gracious God; abundant in goodness and in truth; reserving mercy for thousands ; forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin ; and this is my name forever." Now faith comes, and closeth with this name of God, leading the soul into this rich wardrobe, and so doth quiet the heart against all discouragements.

Faith doth put the soul under God's commandment, and leaveth God to answer unto all such objections and inconveniences as may come thereby; which if a man can do he may be very quiet. Now true saving faith will enable him to do this. For ye know how it was with the three children, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; they put themselves under God's commandment. The Lord commanded and said, "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image." Well, but the king commands them to fall down before his image. No, say they, we will not stir, we will not bow. But, saith the king, I will make you bow or I will heat the furnace seven times hotter for you. Well, be it so, say they; as for that we are not solicitous, we will do the work that God hath set us to do; we will put ourselves under God's command; we know that our God is able to deliver us; and whether he will deliver us or no, we will leave that to him, let him answer to the inconveniences and mischiefs that follow upon his work; for saith the text: "They trusted in the Lord." And so you know it was with Noah; Noah was commanded to build an ark, for, saith the Lord, yet an hundred and twenty years and the whole world shall be destroyed, and therefore Noah, "build thou an ark for thyself and thy family;" which Noah did and put himself under this command. But now the world, the old world might speak thus (as certainly the language of their conversation was): Noah, dost thou think that thou art the only man in all the world that God loves? Dost thou think, Noah, that God loves thee, one man, more than all the men in the world; and thy one family, more than all the families in the world beside? And if thou dost believe what thou preachest, that the world shall be destroyed by water in an hundred and twenty years, why dost thou marry and beget children, as thou hast done since thou hast preached this doctrine? And Noah, if thou dost make an ark or a ship, who shall be the pilot; who shall be the mariner, the sailor? As for thyself, thou hast been a preacher, and dost thou think that thou and thy few sons are able to guide and govern so great a vessel? If it be as thou preachest, that the beasts, the wild beasts of the field shall come unto this ark; the lion, and the bear, and the tiger, will they not tear thee to pieces? And if all the beasts of the field, two by two, shall come into the ark, Noah, will there not be such a stench in the ark with their dung as will poison thee; shalt thou be ever able to live, thinkest thou? Well, for all this Noah goes on, and he built the ark and leaves God that set him on work to answer to all these objections, and to all those inconveniences that might come by the doing the thing which God commands. And so doth faith always; faith puts a man under the commandment of God, and leaves God to answer to those objections and inconveniences that may come thereby. Now when a man can do thus, must he not needs be quiet?

It is (to speak more briefly) the proper work of faith to resign and give up our wills unto God; for by the resignation of the will unto God, we do trust God with ourselves and conditions.

It is the proper work of faith to fall with a suitable promise and to apply the same. If that plaister of the promise be not laid on the soul with a warm hand it will not stick. And what is the reason that the promise sticks not upon many souls, but because it is laid on with the cold and chill hand of unbelief. Now the hand of faith is a warm hand.

It is the proper work of faith to trade with the call of God; for true saving faith is a venturing grace, but without a call it will not venture.

It is the proper work of faith to see the hand of God in every dispensation; "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away," saith faith. "I was dumb and opened not my mouth, for thou Lord hast done it," saith faith.

It is the proper work of faith to look on both sides of God's dispensation and of our own condition. There is a dark side of a dispensation and there is a light side thereof. Sense and reason look on the dark side alone, faith seeth both sides. Come, my beloved brethren (said Latimer to his fellow prisoners when he went to the stake), though we pass through the fire to-day, yet we shall light such a candle in England, as shall never be put out again. He saw both sides of the dispensation, why? but because he believed.

It is the proper work of faith to see one contrary in another; for it speaks and concludes as the word of faith doth. Now the word of faith speaketh on this wise: "I will give you a door of hope in the valley Achor. And the Lord shall judge his people, and repent towards his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and none shut up or left." Deuteronomy 32:36.

It is the proper work of faith to engage God to succour, Psalms 37:40 : "For the Lord will save them, because they trust in him." So Isaiah 26:3 : "Thou wilt keep them in perfect peace, because they trust in thee." Now when a man can do all these things, will he not be quiet and free from discouragements? Surely he will. Faith can and will do these and all these things. Certainly therefore, faith and faith alone is that grace which will bear up the heart against all discouragements.

Now if faith be such a help against all discouragements, then in case that discouragements do arise, you see what to do: exercise your faith; trust in the Lord, trust in the Lord forever; for in Jehovah Jah is everlasting strength; he is the Rock of Ages, trust in him. Oh, ye people of the Lord, trust in the Lord forever, pour out your hearts before him; wait, hope, trust in the Lord. But will every faith quiet a man's heart against discouragements; suppress and allay our discouragements?

No. There is a feigned and there is an unfeigned faith. There is an effectual and there is an ineffectual faith. There is an operative, working faith and there is a workless faith. Saith the apostle: "Thou sayest thou hast faith, shew' me thy faith by thy works." The more precious a thing is, the more counterfeits there are of it. And what is more precious than faith? Therefore there is a counterfeit faith, and a counterfeit faith will not quiet one's heart, suppress and allay one's fears. Yea, true saving faith will not do it neither in the habit; it is only that faith can do it which God rewardeth. God doth not reward the habit of grace, but the act of grace; he rewardeth men according to their works and not according to their habits. Yea, strong and grown faith will not do it always. A man may have assurance of God's love and yet he may be discouraged. You say indeed, if I had but the assurance of God's love in Christ, and did know that God were mine, and that I had an interest in Jesus Christ, I would never be discouraged. But be not deceived. When David spake the words of the text he had assurance, for he saith: "I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God,"³³ and yet he was discouraged; for he saith : "Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me?" So then it is not every faith, nor always true faith, nor always grown faith can do it. But how then should a man so exercise his faith as he may bear up his heart against all discouragements, in case that discouragements do arise?

You must be humbled for your unbelief. A man can never believe as he should that is not humbled for his unbelief; and he is not far from faith and the workings thereof, that is humbled for unbelief and the workings thereof. You shall see therefore in Lamentations 3 : that as soon as the church

had reproved herself for her unbelief, how presently she gathereth hope; saith she at verse 17: "Thou hast removed my soul far from peace, I forgot prosperity, and I said, my strength and my hope is perished from the Lord." Now she humbles herself for it: "Remembering mine affliction and my misery; the wormwood and the gall; my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me: this I recall to mind, therefore have I hope."—I humbled myself for my former unbelief and despairing thoughts and words; and therefore have I hope. Some think they do well to doubt. Oh, says one, if I should not thus fear and doubt I should grow secure. But a man may be tutus though he be not securus. Safety speaks opposition to danger, security to watchfulness; yea, there is a holy security which we are to labour after, and the more we are freed from these doubting fears, the more we attain unto that security. Would you therefore, so exercise your faith as that you may not labour under sad discouragements? Take heed that you do not please yourself in your doubting, but be humbled for your unbelief. Be sure that you do not go to God immediately without Christ, but with Christ in your arms; "Ye believe in God, believe also in me," saith our Saviour. God out of Christ is a consuming fire, and there is no coming at him; so he is a dreadful God and we tremble at his presence, not rely on him. Now we are very apt to go unto him alone, and to trust in a naked God; for there is much of old Adam in us still: the vessel keeps that savor long wherewith it was first seasoned. And at the first, Adam went unto God immediately, and trusted unto him immediately. But now, says Luther, give me a God clothed with flesh; God manifested in the flesh, is the object of our faith. Take heed of a natural faith, for that will end in discouragement.

If you would so exercise your faith as that you may not be discouraged whatever your condition be; then trust in the Lord himself and not in your own duties, your own enlargements, humiliation, or holiness. I know men say that they do not trust in any of these things, but in God alone. But suppose now that a man should come to borrow a sum of money of you, it may be an hundred pounds, and you will not lend him this sum of money unless he gives you a pawn, or unless such and such men be bound with him; will you say that you trust this man alone? Surely no. So, when a poor soul will not trust the Lord unless he have a pawn from God; unless this or that duty, or enlargement shall become bound for God; do you trust God alone? David saith in the 62: Psalm, at the 5th verse: "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him:" and then see what the issue is at verse 6: "He only is my rock and my salvation, he is my defence, I shall not be moved." He had said at verse 2, thus: "He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence, I shall not be (greatly) moved." But when he had digested this matter a little further and more fully, he leaves out the word greatly and saith, "I shall not be moved." Wherefore, would you so trust in the Lord as you may not be moved, trust in the Lord alone; although you have nothing to be bound with or for the Lord.

If you would trust in the Lord so as you may not be discouraged: then trust in the Lord before you do act, or move, or work in your business. Some there are that will trust in God when they can go no further; they will act, and work, and do what they can; and when they can go no further, then they say, I will trust in the Lord for the rest. But saith the Psalmist, Psalms 37:3 : "Trust in the Lord and do good;" he doth not say, do good and go as far as you can, and when you can go no further, then trust in the Lord. No, but saith he, "Trust in the Lord and do good." But if you think to do good and to go as far as you can, and then to trust; such a trust as this will end in discouragement, and therefore I say, trust in the Lord first before you do work at all.

If you would trust in the Lord, so as you may not be discouraged whatever your condition be, then trust in the Lord Jesus Christ in the first place, before you trust in the promise. Christ's blood is the great and first object of our faith. In times of the Old Testament, they came to Christ by the promise, because Christ was not then come, but promised: now Christ is come, we come to the promises by Christ. Yet mistake not; there is a promise of Christ, and a soul must come to Christ in that promise. But I speak of particular words and promises. Some will not trust in Christ, unless they have this or that particular word set upon their hearts and spirits; and so, indeed, do rather rest on the bare letter of the word, or the sense and impression that is made upon the soul by the setting on of the promise. But all the promises are yea and amen in Christ. Christ therefore is first, and if a man doth trust in the promise first, and so go unto Christ afterwards; then when he wants a particular word or a promise, he will not trust in Christ, but be quite discouraged. But when a man doth trust in the Lord Christ first, and in particular promises afterwards; then, though a particular promise doth not shine forth, yet his faith lives, and he is not discouraged; wherefore, venture upon Jesus Christ first, and then upon the promise as given unto thee by the hand of Christ.

If you would so trust in the Lord, as you may not be discouraged whatever your condition be 5 then, if ever it pleaseth the Lord to give out a promise to you, never let it go, but hold it fast, although you see nothing but the contrary unto the thing promised. This was Abraham's case: the Lord gave Abraham a promise, but Abraham saw the contrary to the thing promised; yet Abraham did not dispute the promise, he did not stagger at the promise, and say, Surely the Lord hath not given me this promise, it was but a delusion, and I was deceived. No; but Abraham still bears up to the promise, and doth not dispute or stagger at the same. So must you do likewise; if ever the Lord give out a promise to you, hold it, keep it, never let it go, although you do see the contrary.

Oh, but this is hard work indeed; and if I should do so,

I fear that I should presume, and that I should tempt the Lord. What, trust in the Lord when there is no means in view? Yea, when I see the contrary unto the thing promised? I would do it, but I fear I should presume, and tempt the Lord.

Tempt the Lord, say ye? Dost thou know what it is for to tempt the Lord? It is said of the children of Israel that they tempted the Lord, and said, Is God amongst us? And when thou sayest, after all the experience of God's presence with thee, Is God with me? is not this rather for to tempt the Lord? It is said of the children of Israel, that they "tempted the Lord, and limited the Holy One of Israel:" and when you limit God, and say, I shall never receive this mercy for now I do see the contrary; is not this rather for to tempt the Lord? Properly, and according to scripture phrase, to tempt the Lord, is to put God upon a trial for the satisfying of one's lust; and therefore if you look into Psalms 78 : you shall find that these two go together, at verse 18, "They tempted God in their heart, by asking meat for their lust." To put God upon a work for the satisfying of one's lust, is indeed to tempt the Lord. Every putting God upon a trial, is not a tempting God: but to put God upon a trial for the satisfying of one's lust, this is to tempt the Lord: and therefore it is said, the wicked Jews came to our Saviour Christ tempting him, and saying, "Show us a sign." Gideon desired a sign, and yet he did not tempt the Lord. Why? Because he did not desire a sign to satisfy his lust, but to strengthen his faith. But now these Jews came, and desired a sign to satisfy their lust; and therefore saith our Saviour Christ unto them, "Ye wicked and adulterous generation." How comes the word, adulterous, in there? Why, look, as it is with a woman that is naught, filthy,

and unworthy; her husband sending a message to her, and warning her to take heed of such company; when the messenger comes, I doubt, saith she, whether you come from my husband, or no; and what sign have you, that ye come from my husband? she knows that he comes from her husband, but because she may go on in her sin, she asketh a sign: How may I know that you come from my husband? So it was with these wicked Jews, they asked a sign that so they might go on in their sins; where upon our Saviour saith, "Ye wicked and adulterous generation." But now, when a poor, doubting, fearing, trembling soul shall desire to believe, and would fain have some token from the Lord to strengthen his faith, he is not adulterous then, nor doth he tempt the Lord, nor presume: for is it presumption for a man to keep the Sabbath day? No. Why? Because it is commanded. Is it presumption for a child to obey his parents? No. Why? Because it is commanded. So it is commanded for a soul to believe, when all comforts are out of sight, and when he sees nothing but what is contrary I to the thing promised. Presumption, properly, is the taking of a thing before it is given or offered. But in this case, the promise is given, and therefore no presumption for to hold it fast. There is a two-fold presumption which you read of in Scripture: one whereby men do rest upon their own works for salvation without Christ: so the Jews did, and therein they presumed of mercy before it was given unto them. Another, whereby men do as they think, or in their way, rest on Christ for salvation, and yet live without works and obedience: and therein they presume also because they take mercy when it is not given them. But if I rest on the promise, or on Christ, that I may be made the more holy, doing what I can to be fruitful in every good work, yet resting upon Christ for all; this is no presumption ; why? because I do not take mercy before it is offered : and though I hold the promise fast, when I see nothing but what is contrary to the thing promised, yet this is no presumption; why? because I do what is commanded: for, says the apostle, " Let 1 them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." Now creation work, is out of nothing, it is light out of darkness. Yet thus are we commanded to ' commit our souls unto God; and therefore though all fail, and we see nothing of the mercy promised, it is no presumption then, to hold and keep fast the promise. But suppose the Lord hath given me a promise and now' after the promise given, I see nothing of the mercy promised and that all my comforts are out of sight; how shall I be able to bear up my heart against all discouragements, notwithstanding I see nothing but what is contrary to the thing promised, and to the mercy desired?

Either thou hast assurance of God's love, or else thou hast not. If thou hast assurance of the love of God, then put thyself often to this disjunction. O my soul, either it is thy duty to believe, or it is not: if it be not thy duty to believe, why dost thou believe at all? If it be not thy duty to believe and rest on Christ, why dost thou rest upon Christ at all? And if it be thy duty to rest on Christ and believe, why then shouldest thou not believe at all times, and trust perfectly unto the Lord? And if you have assurance, then actuate your assurance, mind yourself of your privileges, and your interest in Christ; then you will say unto yourself: What though I have nothing but bad tidings from this world, yet notwithstanding, I have nothing but good tidings from the other world, and from my Father above: and if Christ be mine, then all s mine, life is mine, and death is mine; and what though all my comforts be dead and are gone, and are all out of sight, yet Christ is a living Christ, Christ is a living Saviour; and therefore be of good comfort, O my soul. But if you do want the assurance of the love of God, then yet you must and may look on Christ, who is the brazen serpent, the only brazen serpent, and your very looking upon him in the time of your discouragement, shall go for faith: "Look unto me (saith he) from all the ends of the earth, and be

saved."

Again; If you want assurance, you may and must turn your eye, and your thoughts, from those objections that do invade your faith. It is said of Abraham, "That he considered not the weakness of his own body and this was imputed unto him for believing, that he considered not what might invade his faith: and so this shall be imputed unto you for faith, if, when these objections shall come in upon you, you turn your eye from them, unto Jesus Christ, and do not consider them. And if you do want assurance, then set yourselves to believe that you do believe. "Faith is the evidence of things not seen;" and therefore if your faith be not seen, you must believe that you do believe; thou must believe sometimes that thou hast faith. As there is a feeling in prayer, so faith hath its feeling too; and therefore if you cannot see your faith, you must believe that you do believe. And whether you have assurance, or have not assurance, consider these few things as some helps to your faith in this case:

1. That God doth never lead his people unto any great mercy, but first he doth put the sentence of death upon all means that do tend unto it. Thus it was with Abraham, so with Joseph, so with David, and many others.

2. That it is a great sin to limit God's mercy, as well as to limit his power: you say it is a great sin to limit the power of God; the children of Israel are condemned for this; they limited the Holy One of Israel; they tempted the Lord and limited the Holy One of Israel. Now, doth not a man limit God when he limits his mercy, as well as when he limits his power? And when you say, you shall never have such a mercy granted, because I now see the contrary; is not this to limit his mercy?

3. That when the Lord hath given out a promise to his people, he doth then sometimes try whether they will trust to his naked word, or no. Christ hath his times to try men; and when he gives out a promise, and bringeth the soul into a quite contrary condition, this is his trying time: and therefore hath the Lord now given out a promise unto you; and do you see nothing but what is contrary to the thing promised? Say unto thine own soul, O my soul, it may be Christ is now trying of me, it may be this is my trying time, and therefore now will I wait on God.

4. That God doth oftentimes fulfil one promise by denying another. Hath the Lord therefore given thee a promise, and doest thou see nothing but what is contrary to the thing promised. Now know, and remember, that we have by not having; God doth give by denying, and fulfils some promises by not fulfilling others.

5. That when we see nothing but what is contrary unto our help then is Christ's time to help. I read, as I remember, but twice in the New Testament, that mention is, made of Christ's hour: once in John 13 : "And he knowing that his hour was coming," and that was the hour of darkness : once in John 2:4, when his mother came unto him for wine, he said, " Woman, mine hour is not yet come : " but afterwards, when their own wine was done, and their pots were filled with water; then he turns their water into wine, then Christ's hour was come. So now, when all our bottles are dry, when there is no wine of comfort in our own bottles, then is Christ's hour; and when the hour of darkness is upon our condition, then is Christ's hour: and if thou wouldst but say unto thine own soul: Soul, Christ's time and hour is an hour of darkness ; Christ's time is a time when there is no wine in our own bottles. Now thus it is with me; I have no wine left in my own bottles, my bottles are all dry and empty, and there is an hour of darkness upon my condition, therefore this time is the time for

Christ to help me. This would cause you to wait on God, and exercise faith in the lowest condition, even when you see nothing but the contrary unto your desires, and the Lord's promises.

6. That either you are under an extraordinary affliction or an ordinary. Either you are under an ordinary temptation or an extraordinary. Either you are under an extraordinary desertion or an ordinary. Either thy strait or stress and trouble is ordinary, or else it is extraordinary. If it be an ordinary trouble, why then are you troubled more than ordinary; why are you discouraged extraordinarily? If your affliction or misery be extraordinary, then either God hath brought you into this condition, and hath led you heretofore in a way of extraordinary deliverance or of ordinary deliverance. If God have led you heretofore in a way of ordinary deliverance what mean those wonderful incomes of love and supporting grace that you have had, when your soul hath been ready to sink and to die within you? And if the Lord hath heretofore led you in a way of extraordinary deliverance, and hath now brought you into this extraordinary condition; then know from the Lord, that it is as great a sin for you now not to trust in God for extraordinary mercy, as it would have been for you not to have trusted in the Lord for ordinary deliverance in an ordinary case. You know how it was with the children of Israel, they sinned greatly in the wilderness, so much that the Lord kept them out of the land of Canaan, and many of their carcasses fell in the wilderness; what was the reason? The text tells us they did not believe. Wherein was their unbelief? They did not trust God for meat in the wilderness. Why, but that had been a miracle to have meat in the wilderness; true, yet this was their unbelief, that they did not trust God for meat in the wilderness. Again, they sinned and did not trust God for water. Why, but it was a miracle for them to have water in that place, where no water was naturally; true, yet because the Lord had led them in a way of miracles before, they sinned now in that they did not trust God for miracles; and it was as great a sin that they did not trust God for miracles, being led in a way of miracles, as that they did not trust God for ordinary mercies, when the Lord led them in ways of ordinary mercies. So I say to you; if God lead you in a way of ordinaries, then must you trust God for ordinaries; but if ordinary means cannot be had, and God have led you in a way of extraordinaries, it is then a sin in you to tie God to ordinaries. Are you therefore in an extraordinary case and strait? Know that it is no sin now to trust God for extraordinary mercy, help and relief.

7. And if after all these things your hearts fail you and you would so trust in God, as that you may not be discouraged whatever your condition be; then ask thine own soul these questions. —First: Whether there be any gain by doubting; whether there is any spiritual gain to be made by doubting? Faith purifies the heart but doth doubting purify the heart? Secondly: Whether there is anything in all the world more pleasing to God, than to trust the Lord, in and by Jesus Christ, when all comforts are out of view, and when you see nothing but what is contrary to the thing promised? Thirdly: Whether you must not venture upon Christ at the last; and if you must venture upon Christ at the last, why not now as well as at the last? When a man comes to go over a river, though he ride once and again into the water, and comes out saying, I fear it is too deep for me; yet considering that there is no other way for him he resolves to venture; for, saith he, the longer I stay the higher the waters will rise, and there is no other way for me, and I must through at last, as good at the first as at the last; and so he doth venture through and is safe. Thus it is here. You must venture upon Christ at the last, there is no other way but venturing upon Jesus Christ, thou must do it at the last; and were it not as good for you to do it at the first as at the last? Surely, the longer you stay the harder you will find it to venture, and the more difficulties will arise upon the

work of believing. You say now, oh, but my heart is not humbled; Oh, but I am a great sinner, and should I venture upon Jesus Christ? But will thy heart be more humbled by keeping from Christ; and shalt thou be a less sinner by keeping from him? No, certainly; but the longer you stay from Christ, the harder work it will be to venture upon Christ at the last. Wherefore, if there be ever a poor, drooping, doubting, fearing, trembling heart in all this congregation, know, that I do here in the name of the Lord, call out to you, and say, O soul, man or woman, venture, venture, venture upon Christ now; for you must come to this venturing work at the last, and if ever, it is true here, better at the first than at the last. Must you not venture upon Christ at the last; and if at last why not now? Thus ply and follow your own souls with these three questions. And,

8. If you would so trust in God as that you may not be discouraged whatever your condition be; then consider frequently and seriously, what a blessed thing it is for to wait on God and for God. Yea, what a reasonable thing it is that you should wait for him and on him. For,

He hath waited on you and for your repentance, he waited in the days of Noah for the repentance of the old world, and he waited long, 1 Peter 3:20, a long while also hath he waited for your repentance; and if he had not waited long, what had become of you? Yea, and he hath not only waited, but he doth still, and will wait to shew mercy, Isaiah 30:18, he waiteth to shew mercy on them that wait for his mercy. Now shall God wait for us and for our repentance; and shall not we wait for him and his grace?

Ye have waited on others and do still wait on others; who is there in all the world that you deal with, but you do wait upon; will ye instance in great men; must you not wait long to speak with them; yea, though it be for their own good? It is recorded of Henry, the emperor of Germany, that when he came to speak with the Pope, the Pope made him and his wife and eldest son, stand waiting three days in the cold winter season at his palace gates, before he would speak with the emperor. Will ye instance in your inferiors and such as are beneath you; must you not wait even for them that do wait on you? Your servants, if you bid them do a thing, you must wait till it be done; and if you bid them come, you must wait till they come. Or will ye instance in other creatures? I) o you not wait on the sun for light; on the water for coolness; on the fire for heat? Now if we wait on the creatures, all the creatures, is it not reason- i able that we wait on the Creator? Yet further, do ye not sometimes wait on the lusts of men? yea, ye have sometimes waited on your own lusts, "The adulterer waiteth for the twilight," saith Job. And how often have you waited for an opportunity of sinning? Now will ye wait on men, your inferiors, other creatures, yea, on the wills and lusts of men; and will you not wait on the grace of God?

Look when you give over waiting then may deliverance come; and if it come then how will you be filled with shame and confusion? 2 Kings 6:33, the king said, "It is a vain thing to wait on God any longer." And if ye look into the | next chapter, at verse 1, ye shall find that deliverance came in the next words. No sooner had the King said, "It is a vain thing to wait on God any longer," but the prophet in the next words saith: "Tomorrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel in the gates of Samaria." chap. 7:1. So that deliverance doth sometimes come when men give over waiting. And if deliverance do thus come to you, what shame and grief will this be to you; how will you befool yourself and say, oh, what a fool was I that I could not wait a little longer? I have given over waiting, and lo, now deliverance is come and I have no comfort in it. When you give over waiting, then you lose all your former

labours; though you have performed many duties, yet if you do not wait upon God therein, you do lose all your prayers. It is said of Saul, 1 Samuel 28:6 : "That he inquired of the Lord, who answered him not;" and so he sought unto a woman that had a familiar spirit, ver. 7, Yet 1 Chronicles 10:14, it is said that "he inquired not of the Lord." He inquired and he inquired not; how doth this agree? Well, for though he did inquire of the Lord, yet because he did not wait upon God therein, but gave over waiting, his inquiring in scripture phrase is said to be no inquiring; prayer without waiting, in scripture phrase, is no prayer. Look when a man doth give over waiting, then doth he lose all his labour; his former prayer is nothing, his former duty nothing; it shall not once be remembered or imputed to him. On the other side: if you wait on God he will not always forget your work of faith; though he may seem to forget you, yet "the patient abiding of the meek, shall not be forgotten forever?" Psal. 9: 15. God will come and visit you in due time, "He that doth come, will come, and will not tarry;" yea, and your very waiting (that I may speak with reverence) will make him come the sooner. It is not so with men; if you expect a friend, you do go forth to meet him; but it is not your expecting, waiting, that will make him come. But so it is with God; your very expecting of him and waiting for him will make him come; and therefore the holy men in scripture use this argument with God for mercy: "Let me not be ashamed, for I have waited on thee; " yea, and if God do come, he will come with a recompence, and . pay you all your forbearance money, Is. 35;; yea and when he doth come, you shall be able to triumph in his appearing, and say, " Lo this is our God, we have waited for him : " if you have not waited, you cannot triumph in his appearance; but if you wait, you shall say when he comes, Lo this is my God and I have waited for him; yea? the Lord will not only come, but he will come with a blessing, for " Blessed are all those that wait on him ; " yea, he will not only bless you upon your waiting, but he will strengthen you therein, Isaiah 40 :: "Those that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength." Oh, what a blessed thing is it then for to wait on God; who would not hope, trust, wait on the Lord? Is there anything to be gotten by your sad discouragements, "O ye of little faith?" Are you able to alter one hair of your condition by all your thoughtfulness? Is it not much better now, for to wait on God? Why then do you not call your own heart aside, and say, Come O my soul, why hast thou limited the Holy One of Israel thus long; why hast thou dishonoured Christ thus long by thy vain fears? "Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope, trust, wait on God; for he is the health of my countenance and my God." And thus now I have done with this great argument: ye have had the patience to hear it, the Lord give you grace to practise it. I conclude all with the words of my commission: "Ye that are of a fearful spirit, be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come, even God with a recompence, he will come and save you." - Is. 25:3.

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