

The Christian in Complete Armour - Part 6

by William Gurnall

William Gurnall emphasizes the necessity of donning the whole armor of God to withstand spiritual battles and recover declining grace.

Scripture: Psalm 49:4, Ecclesiastes 8:8, Luke 22:53, Hebrews 12:11, James 1:13

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Christian Armor"

Description

William Gurnall preaches about the necessity of preparing and arming oneself for the inevitable evil day of affliction and death. He emphasizes that this evil day is grievous to the senses, brings to remembrance past sins, reveals hidden evils in the heart, invites temptation from Satan, and often has a sorrowful outcome. Gurnall urges that it is a duty for every individual to equip themselves with spiritual armor to withstand this evil day, as it is unavoidable and requires diligent preparation to face its challenges.

Transcript

Direction Third.

A Second Exhortation to Arm, and an Argument

urging the Exhortation.

'Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand

in the evil day, and having done all, to stand' -- Eph. 6:13

The Apostle in these words reassumes his former exhortation mentioned, ver. 11, and presseth it with a new force, from that more particular discovery which he gives of the enemy, ver. 12, where, like a faithful scout, he makes a full report of Satan's great power and malice; and also discloseth what a dangerous design he hath upon the saints--no less than to despoil them of all that is heavenly --from all which he gives them a second alarm, and bids them 'Arm! arm!' 'Wherefore take unto you,' &c. In the words consider--FIRST. The exhortation with the inference, 'wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God.' SECOND. The argument with which he urgeth the exhortation, and that is double--First. 'That you may be able to withstand in the evil day.' Second. 'Having done all, to stand.' That is, both able to fight and able to conquer.

DIRECTION III.--FIRST GENERAL PART.

[The Exhortation with the Inference.]

'Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God,' -- Eph. 6:13

As for the first general, 'the exhortation,' we shall waive it as to the substance of it--it being the same with what we have handled, ver. 11; only there are two observables which we shall lightly touch--the one, from the repetition of the very same exhortation so soon, one verse only [being] interposed; the other from the verb the apostle useth here, which being not the same with ver. 11, affords a different note. There it is 'put on;'[1] here it is, 'take unto you.'[2]

FIRST OBSERVABLE.

[Why the apostle renews so soon the same

exhortation; also, what truths ministers

ought to preach.]

Here observe the repetition of the same exhortation and that in so short a space. Sure it was not for want of matter, but rather out of abundance of zeal, that he harps the second time on the same string. Indeed he is a better workman, who drives one nail home with reiterated blows, than he which covets to enter many, but fastens none. Such preachers are not likely to reach the conscience, who hop from one truth to another, but dwell on none. Every hearer is not so quick as the preacher, to take a notion as it is first darted forth; neither can many carry away so much of that sermon which is made up all of varieties --where a point is no sooner named, but presently it pulls back its hand, and another makes a breach and comes forth; before the first hath been opened and hammered upon the conscience by a powerful application--as where the discourse is homogeneous, and some one necessary truth is cleared, insisted on, and urged home with blow upon blow. Here the whole matter of the discourse is akin, and one part remembered, brings the memory acquainted with the other; whereas in the former, one puts the other in a weak memory. Short hints and away may please a scholar, but [are] not so profitable for others. The one [way is] more fit for the schools, the other for the pulpit. Were I to buy a garment in a shop, I should like him better that lays one good piece or two before me that are for my turn, which I may fully peruse, than him who takes down all his shop, and heaps piece upon piece, merely to show his store, till at last for variety I can look wishly[3] on none, they lie so one upon another. Again, as it is profitable thus to insist on truths, so it is not unbecoming a minister to preach the same truths again and again. Paul here goes over and over the same exhortation, ver. 11, 13, and elsewhere tells us this is 'not grievous' to him, but to them 'it is safe,' to hear the same things over and over, Php. 3:1. There are three sorts of truths must in our ministry be preached oft.

First Sort. Fundamental truths; or, as we call them, catechise-points, that contain truths necessary to be known and believed. The weight of the whole building lies on these ground-cells, more than on superstrucory truths. In a kingdom there are some staple commodities and trades, without which the common weal could not subsist, as wool, corn, &c., in our country, and these ought to be encouraged above others, which though they be an ornament to the nation, yea, add to the riches of it, yet are not so necessary to the subsistence of it. Thus here. There is an excellent use of our other ministerial labours, as they tend to beautify and adorn, yea, enrich the Christian with the knowledge of spiritual mysteries, but that which is chiefly to be regarded is the constant faithful opening of those main truths of the gospel. These are the landmarks, and show us the bounds of truth; and as it is in towns that butt one upon

another, if the inhabitants do not sometimes perambulate, and walk the bounds, to show the youth what they are, when the old studs are gone, the next generation may lose all their privileges by their encroaching neighbours, because not able to tell what is their own. There is no fundamental truth, but hath some evil neighbour, heresy I mean, butting on it; and the very reason why a spirit of error hath so encroached of late years upon truth is, because we have not walked the bounds with our people in acquainting them with, and establishing their judgments on, these fundamental points, so frequently and carefully as is requisite. And people are much in the fault, because they cast so much contempt upon this work, that they count a sermon on such points next to lost, and only child's meat.

Second Sort. Those truths are oft to be preached, which ministers observe to be most undermined by Satan, or his instruments, in the judgments and lives of their people. The preacher must read and study his people as diligently as any book in his study, and, as he finds them, dispense like a faithful steward unto them. Paul takes notice that the Galatians had been in ill handling by false apostles, who had even bewitched them back to the law in that great point of justification, and see how he beats upon that one point. Our people complain, we are so much, so oft reproving the same error or sin, and the fault is their own, because they will not leave it. Who will blame the dog for continuing to bark, when the thief is all the while in the yard? Alas! alas! it is not once or twice rousing against sin will do it. When the people think the minister shows his laziness, because he preacheth the same things, he may then be exercising his patience in continuing to exhort and reprove those who oppose, waiting, if at last, God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. We are bid to lift up our voice like a trumpet, and would you have us cease while the battle lasts, or sound a retreat when it should be a battle?

Third Sort. Truths of daily use and practice. These are like bread and salt; whatever else is on, these must be on the board at every meal. Saint Peter was of this mind: 'I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them,' II Peter 1:12. He had, you may see, been speaking of such graces and duties, that they could not pass a day without the exercise of them, and therefore will be ever their monitor, to stir up their pure minds about them. All is not well, when a man is weary of his ordinary food, and nothing will go down but rarities. The stomach is sickly, when a man delights rather to pick some sallet, than eat of solid meat; and how far this dainty age is gone in this spiritual disease, I think few are so far come to themselves, as yet to consider and lament. O sirs, be not weary, as in doing, so not in hearing those savoury truths preached you have daily use of, because you know them and have heard them often. Faith and repentance will be good doctrine to preach and hear to the end of the world; you may as well quarrel with God, because he hath made but one heaven, and one way to it, as with the preacher, for preaching these over and over. If thy heart were humble, and thy palate spiritual, old truths would be new to thee every time thou hearest them. In heaven the saints draw all their wine of joy, as I may so say, at one tap, and shall to all eternity, and yet it never tastes flat. God is that one object their souls are filled with, and never weary of; and can anything of God and his love be wearisome to thee in the hearing here? I am not all this while an advocate for any loiterer in our Lord's vineyard, for any slothful servant in the work of the gospel, who wraps up his talent in idleness, or buries it in the earth, where, may be, he is digging and playing the worldling all the week, and then hath nothing to set before his people on the Lord's-day, but one or two old mouldy loaves, which were kneaded many years before. This is not the good steward. Here are the old, but where are the new things which he should bring out of his treasure? If the minister labours not to increase his stock, he is the worst thief in the parish. It is wicked for a man trusted with the improving of orphans' estates, to let them lie dead by him; much more for a minister not to improve his gifts, which I may call the town-stock, given for the good of the souls of both rich and poor. If that preacher was wise, Ecc. 12:9, who 'still taught the people knowledge,' that is, was ever going on,

endeavouring to build them higher in knowledge, and that he might, did give 'good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs;' then surely he will be proved a foolish preacher at last, that wastes his time in sloth, or spends more of it in studying how to add to his estate out of his people's, than how to add to their gifts and graces, by a conscionable endeavour to increase his own.

SECOND OBSERVABLE.

[The best of saints subject to decline in their graces,
and why we are to seek a recovery of them.]

The second observable in the exhortation is taken from the verb which the apostle useth,[4] which signifies not only to take, but to take again, or recover a thing which we have lost, or reassume a thing which for the present we have left. Now the apostle--writing to the saints at Ephesus, who, at least many of them, were not now to put on this armour by a conversion--or the first work of faith, which no doubt had already passed upon many among them --he, in regard of them and believers to the end of the world, hath a further meaning; that is, that they would put on more close where this armour hangs loose, and [that] they would recover, where they had let fall any duty, or decayed in any grace. So that the note is,

Doctrine. That the Christian should have an especial care to repair his broken armour--to recover his decaying graces. This armour may be battered--I might show sad examples in the several pieces. Was not Jacob's girdle of truth and sincerity unbuckled, when he used that sinful policy to get the blessing? He was not the plain man then, but the supplanter, but he had as good have stayed God's time--he was paid home in his own kind. He puts a cheat on his father; and did not Laban put a cheat on him, giving Leah for Rachel? What say you to David's breast-plate of righteousness in the matter of Uriah? was it not shot through, and that holy man fearfully wounded--who lays almost a year, for aught we read of him, before he came to himself, so far as to be thoroughly sensible of his sin, till Nathan, a faithful chirurgeon, was sent to search the wound, and clear it of the dead flesh which had grown over it? And Jonah, otherwise a holy prophet, when God would send him on an errand to Nineveh, he hath his shoes to seek, I mean that preparation and readiness with which his mind should have been shod, to have gone at the first call. Good Hezekiah, we find how near his helmet of hope was of being beaten off his head, who tells us himself what his thoughts were in the day of his distress, that he should 'not see the Lord in the land of the living,' expecting that God would never let go his hold, till like a lion he had broke his bones, and at last made an end of him. Even Abraham himself, famous for faith, had yet his fits of unbelief and distrustful qualms coming over his valiant heart. Now in this case the Christian's care should be to get his armour speedily repaired. A battered helmet is next to no helmet in point of present use. Grace in a decay is like a man pulled off his legs by sickness; if some means be not used to recover it, little service will be done by it, or comfort received from it. Therefore Christ gives this church of Ephesus, to whom Paul wrote this epistle, this counsel, 'to remember from whence she has fallen, to repent and do her first works.' How many does a declining Christian wrong at once?

First. He wrongs God, and that in a high degree, because reckons upon more honour to be paid him in, by his saints' grace, than by all other talents which his creatures have to trade with in the world. He can in some sense better bear the open sins of the world, than the decays of his saints' graces. They by abusing their talents, rob him but of his oil, flax, and wool; but the Christian, by the other, bereaves him of the glory which should be paid him from his faith, zeal, patience, self-denial, sincerity, and the rest. Suppose a master should trust one servant with his money, and another with his child to be looked to; would he not

be more displeased to see his dear child hurt, or almost killed by the negligence of the one, than his money stolen by the carelessness of the other? Grace is the new creature--the birth of the Spirit; when this comes to any harm by the Christian's careless walking, it must needs go nearer the heart of God, than the wrong he hath from the world, who are trusted with nothing like this.

Second. He that declines in grace, and labours not to repair it, wrongs his brethren, who have a share in one another's grace. He wrongs his whole body that seeks not a cure for a wound in any member. We are bid to 'love one another,' II John 5; but how shall we show our love to one another? The very next words will direct us. 'And this is love, that we walk after his commandments,' ver. 6. Indeed we show little love to our brethren by sinning, whereby we are sure either to ensnare them or grieve them; and how to let grace go down and sin not go up, is [a] riddle to any that know what they both are.

Third. The Christian wrongs himself in not endeavouring to repair his broken armour, and [to] recover his declining grace. By this he loses the evidence of his inheritance, at least so blots it that it cannot be so clearly perceived by him. A declining Christian must needs be a doubting Christian, because the common symptom of a hypocrite is to wear and waste, like a stake set in the ground, which rots, while true grace like the tree grows. Is not this the knot which the devil poseth many poor souls withal, and finds them work for many years to untie? If thou wert a Christian thou wouldst grow. Right saints go from strength to strength, and thou goest from strength to weakness. They go up the hill to Zion --every ordinance and providence is a step that bears him nearer heaven--but thou goest down the hill, and art farther from thy salvation than when thou didst first believe, as thou thoughtest. And doth it stand with thy wisdom, Christian, to put a staff into the devil's hand, an argument into his mouth, to dispute against thy salvation with? If you held an estate by the life of a child, which upon the death of it should all go away from you, that child, I warrant you, should be well looked unto; his head should not ache, but you would post to the physician for counsel. I pray what is your evidence for that glorious estate you hope for? Is it not Christ within you? Is not this new creature--which may well be called Christ for its likeness to him--the young heir of heaven's glory? and when that is sick or weak, is it not time to use all means for its recovery? Whilst thus, thou canst neither live nor die comfortably. Not live! a man in a consumption has little joy of his life; he neither finds sweetness in his meat, nor delight in his work, as a healthful man doth. O how sweet is the promise to faith, when active and vigorous! how easy the yoke of the command to the Christian, when his conscience is not galled with guilt, nor his strength enfeebled by temptation! But the Christian in a declining condition, he tastes not the promise, every command is grievous, and every duty burdensome to him; he goes in pain like one whose foot is out of joint, though the way be never so pleasant. And he is as unfit to die as he is to live. Such a one can like no more to hear the news of death, than a tenant that wants his rent doth to hear the quarter day. This made David beg time of God. 'O spare me a little, that I may recover strength.'

Having shown you why the Christian should endeavour to recover his declining graces, it will be very requisite to give a word of counsel to the Christian.

First. A word of counsel to direct him how to judge of the declining state of grace, that he may not pass a false judgment upon himself therein.

Second. A word of counsel to direct him, when he finds grace to be in a declination, how he may recover it.

[A word of counsel, showing from what

we may not, as also from what we may,

judge our graces to be declining.]

First. A word of counsel to direct the Christian how to judge of the declining state of grace, that he may not pass a false judgment upon himself therein.

How may a Christian judge whether grace be declining in him or no? First. I shall resolve this negatively, and show by what he is not to judge his grace to decline. Second. I shall resolve it positively, and show by what he may certainly conclude a decay of grace.

First. I shall resolve this negatively, and show by what he is not to judge his grace to decline, and that in several particulars.

1. Christian, do not judge grace to be fallen weaker, because thy sense of corruption is grown stronger. This oft lies at the bottom of poor souls' complaints in this case. O they never felt pride, hypocrisy, and other corruptions, so haunt them as now. None knows how they are vexed with these and the like, besides themselves. Now let me ask thee who makest this sad moan, whether thou dost not think these corruptions were in thee before thou didst thus feel them? how oft hast thou prayed as formally, and not been troubled? how oft hast thou stood chatting with the same lusts, and thy soul hath not been laid low before the Lord with such abasement of thyself as now? Deal faithfully between God and thy soul, and tell not a lie for God by bearing false witness against thyself. If it be thus, thou hast rather a comfortable sign of grace growing than decaying. Sin cannot be on the getting hand, if the sense of sin grow quick; this is the concomitant of a thriving soul. None [are] so full of complaints of their own hearts as such; the least sin goes now to their very souls, which makes them think viler of themselves than ever. But it is not the increase of sin in them, but the advance of their love to Christ, makes them judge so. When the sun shines with some power, and the year gets up, we observe, though we may have frosts and snow, yet they do not lie long, but are soon dissolved by the sun. O it is a sweet sign that the love of Christ shines with [such] a force upon thy soul, that no corruptions can lie long in thy bosom, but they melt into sorrow and bitter complaints. That is the decaying soul, where sin lies bound up and frozen, [where] little sense of or sorrow for it appears.

2. Take heed thou thinkest not grace decays, because thy comfort withdraws. The influence of the sun comes where the light of it is not to be found, yea, is mighty, as appears in those mines of gold and silver, which are concocted by the same. And so may the actings of grace be vigorous in thee, when least under the shines of his countenance. Did ever faith triumph more than in our Saviour, crying, 'My God, my God?' here faith was at its meridian, when it was midnight in respect of joy. Possibly thou comest from an ordinance, and bringest not home with thee those sheaves of comfort thou usest to do, and therefore concludest grace acted not in thee as formerly. Truly if thou hast nothing else to go by, thou mayest wrong the grace of God in thee exceedingly. Because thy comfort is extrinsical to thy duty--a boon which God may give or not, yea, doth give to the weak, and deny to the strong. The traveller may go as fast, and ride as much ground when the sun doth not shine, as when it doth--though indeed he goes not so merrily on his journey--nay, sometimes he makes the more haste. The warm sun makes him sometimes to lie down and loiter, but when dark and cold, he puts on with more speed. Some graces thrive best, like some flowers, in the shade, such as humility, dependence on God, &c.

3. Take heed thou dost not mistake, and think thy grace decays, when may be it is only thy temptations increase, and not thy grace that decreases. If you should hear a man say, because he cannot to-day run

so fast, when a hundred weight is on his back, as he could yesterday without any such a burden, that therefore he was grown weaker, you would soon tell him where his mistake lies. Temptation lies not in the same heaviness alway upon the Christian's shoulder. Observe, therefore, whether Satan is not more than ordinary let loose to assault thee--whether thy temptations come not with more force and violence than ever. Possibly, though thou dost not with the same facility overcome these, as thou hast done less, yet grace may act stronger in conflicting with the greater, than in overcoming the less. The same ship, that when lightly ballasted, and favoured with the wind, goes mounting, at another time deeply laden and going against wind and tide, may move with a slow pace, and yet they in the ship take more pains to make it sail thus, than they did when it went faster.

Second. I shall resolve it positively, and show by what he may certainly conclude that grace is declining; and that in a threefold respect. 1. In reference to temptations to sin. 2. In reference to the duties of God's worship. 3. The frame of thy heart in worldly employments.

1. In reference to temptations to sin, and that is threefold.

(1.) When thou art not so wakeful to discover the encroachings of sin upon thee as formerly. At one time we find David's heart smote him when he but rent the skirt of Saul's garment; at another time, when his eye glanced on Bathsheba, he takes no such notice of the snare Satan had him in, and so is led from one sin to another, which plainly showed that grace in him was heavy-eyed, and his heart not in so holy a frame as it had been. If an enemy comes up to the gates, and the sentinel [does] not so much as give an alarm to the city of his approach, it shows he is off his guard, either fallen asleep or worse. If grace were awake, and thy conscience had not contracted some hardness, it would do its office.

(2.) When a temptation to sin is discovered, and thou findest thy heart shut up that thou dost not pray against it, or not with that zeal and holy indignation, as formerly upon such occasions, it is a bad sign, that lust hath got an advantage of thy grace, that thou canst not readily betake thyself to thy arms. Thy affections are bribed, and this makes thee so cold a suitor at the throne of grace for help against thine enemy.

(3.) When the arguments prevailing most with thee to resist temptations to sin, or to mourn for sins committed, are more carnal and less evangelical than formerly. May be thou rememberest when thy love to Christ would have spit fire on the face of Satan tempting thee to such a sin, but now that holy fire is so abated that if there were not some other carnal motives to make the vote full, it would hazard to be carried for it, rather than against it. And so in mourning for a sin, there is possibly now some slavish arguments, like an onion in the eye, which makes thee weep, rather than pure ingenuity arising from love to God whom thou hast offended; this speaks a sad decay, and the more mixture there is of such carnal arguments, either in the resisting of, or mourning for sin, the greater the declination of grace is. David's natural heat sure was much decayed, when he needed so many clothes to be laid on him, and yet he felt so little heat; the time was he would have sweat with fewer. I am afraid, many their love to Christ will be found, in these declining times, to have lost so much of its youthful vigor, that what would formerly have put them into a holy fury and burning zeal against some sins, such as Sabbath-breaking, pride of apparel, neglect of family duties, &c., hath now much ado to keep any heat at all in them against the same.

2. In reference to the duties of God's worship.

(1.) If thy heart doth not prompt thee with that forwardness and readiness as formerly to hold communion with God in any duty. Possibly thou knowest the time when thy heart echoed back to the motions of God's

spirit bidding thee seek his face: 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek;' yea, thou didst long as much till a Sabbath, or a sermon-season came, as the carnal wretch doth till it be gone; but now thy pulse doth not beat so quick a march to the ordinances public or secret. Nature cannot but decay if appetite to food go away. A craving soul is the thriving soul; such a child that will not let his mother rest, but is frequently crying for the breast.

(2.) When thou declinest in thy care to perform duties in spiritual sort, and to preserve the sense of those more inward failings, which in duty none but thyself can check thee of. It is not frequency of duty, but spirituality in duty, [that] causeth thriving, and therefore neglect in this point soon brings grace into a consumptive posture. Possibly, soul, the time was thou wert not satisfied with praying, but thou didst watch thy heart strictly; as a man would every piece in a sum of money he pays, lest he should wrong his friend with any brass or uncurrent coin--thou wouldst have God not only have duty, but duty stamped with that faith which makes it current, have that zeal and sincerity which makes it gospel-weight; but now thou art more careless and formal. O look to it, poor soul, thou wilt, if thou continue thus careless, melt in thy spiritual state apace. Such dealings will spoil thy trade with heaven. God will not take off these slightly duties at thy hands.

(3.) When a Christian gets little spiritual nourishment from communion with God, to what it hath done. The time had been, may be, thou couldst show what came of thy praying, hearing, and fasting, but now the case is altered. There is a double strength [which] communion with God imparts to a soul in a healthful disposition--strength to faith, and strength for our obedient walking. Dost thou hear and pray, and get no more strength to hold by a promise, no more power over, or brokenness of heart under, thy usual corruptions? What! come down the mount, and break the tables of God's law, as soon as thou art off the place! as deep in thy passion, as uneven in thy course as before! There is a sure decay of that inward heat, which should and would, if in its right temper, suck some nourishment from these.

3. The frame of thy heart in worldly employments.

(1.) When thy worldly occasions do not leave thee in so free and spiritual a disposition, to return to the presence of God as formerly. May be thou couldst have come from thy shop and family employments to thy closet, and find they have kept thee in frame, yea, may be delivered thee up in a better frame for those duties; but now it is otherwise, thou canst not so shake them off but they cleave to thy spirit, and give an earthly savour to thy praying and hearing. Thou hast reason to bewail it; when nature decays, men go more stooping; and it is a sign some such decay is in thee, that thou canst not, as thou usest, lift up thy heart from earthly to spiritual duties. They were intended as helps against temptation, and therefore when they prove snares to us there is a distemper on us. If we wax worse after sleep, the body is not right, because the nature of sleep is to refresh; if exercise indisposeth for work, the reason is our bodies. So here.

(2.) When thy diligence in thy particular calling is more selfish. Possibly thou hast wrought in thy shop, and set close at thy study, in obedience to the command chiefly. Thy carnal interests have swayed but little with thee, but now thou tradest more for thyself, and less for God. O have a care of this.

(3.) When thou canst not bear the disappointment of thy carnal ends in thy particular calling, as thou hast done. Thou workest and gettest little of the world, thou preachest and art not much esteemed, and thou knowest not well how to brook these. The time was thou couldst retire thyself into God, and make up all thou didst want elsewhere in him; but now thou art not so well satisfied with thy estate, rank, and condition. Thy heart is fingering for more of these than God allows thee, this shows declining. Children are

harder to be pleased, and old men--whose decay of nature makes them more froward, and in a manner children a second time --than others. Labour therefore to recover thy decaying grace, and as this lock grows, so thy strength with it will, to acquiesce in the disposal of God's providence.

[Directions for the recovery of declining grace.]

Second. We come now to give a few directions to the Christian, to show him, when he finds grace to be in a declining state, he may recover it.

Inquire faithfully into the cause of thy declining. The Christian's armour decays two ways, either by violent battery, when the Christian is overcome by temptations to sin, or else by neglecting to furbish and scour it with the use of those means which are as oil, to keep it clean and bright. Now inquire, which of these have been the cause of thy decay. It is like, both concur.

Direction First. If thy grace be weakened by any blow given it by any sin committed by thee, there then lies a threefold duty upon thee towards the recovery of it.

1. Duty. Thou art to renew thy repentance. It is Christ's counsel, Rev. 2:5, to Ephesus, 'Repent and do the first works,' where it is not only commanded as a duty, but prescribed as a means for her recovery; as if he had said, 'Repent, that thou mayest do thy first works.' So, Hosea 14:2, the Lord sets backsliding Israel about this work, bidding her 'take with you words and turn to the Lord;' and ver. 4, he then tells her he will take her in hand to recover her of her sins, 'I will heal their backslidings.' A repenting soul is under the promise of healing, and therefore, Christian, go and search thy heart, as thou wouldst thy house, if some thief or murderer lay hid in it to cut thy throat in the night, and when thou hast found the sin that has done thee the mischief, then labour to fill thy heart with shame for it, and indignation against it, and so go big with sorrow, and cast it forth before the Lord in a heart-breaking confession. Better thou do this, than Satan do thy errand to God for thee.

2. Duty. When thou hast renewed thy repentance, forget not, delay not then, to renew thy faith on the promise for pardon. Repentance, that is like purging physic to evacuate the peccant humour, but if faith come not presently with its restorative, the poor creature will never get heart, or recover his strength. A soul may die of a flux of sorrow as well as of sin. Faith hath an incarnating virtue, as they say of some strengthening meat; it feeds upon the promise, and that 'is perfect, converting'--or rather restoring --'the soul,' Ps. 19:7. Though thou wert pined to skin and bones, all thy strength wasted, yet faith would soon recruit thee, and enable every grace to perform its office cheerfully. Faith sucks peace from the promise, called 'peace in believing.' From peace flows joy, 'being justified by faith we have peace with God,' Rom. 5:1; and, 'We rejoice in the hope of glory,' ver. 2; and joy affords strength, 'The joy of the Lord is our strength.'

3. Duty. Back both these with a daily endeavour to mortify those lusts which most prevail over thy grace. Weeds cannot thrive and the flowers also. When grace doth not act vigorously and freely, conclude [that] it is oppressed with some contrary lust, which weighs down its spirits, and makes them lumpish, even as superfluous humours do load the natural spirits in our bodies, [so] that we have little joy to stir or go about any business till they be evacuated. And therefore ply this work close; it is not a day's work or two in the year, like physic in the spring and fall; nothing more vain, than to make a bustle, as the Papists do at their Lent, or as some unsound professors among ourselves, who seem to bestir themselves before a sacrament or day of fasting, with a great noise of zeal, and then let those very lusts live peaceably in them all the year after. No, this is child-play to do and undo; thou must mortify daily thy lusts by the Spirit, Rom.

8:13. Follow but this work conscionably, in thy Christian course, making it thy endeavour, as constantly as the labouring man goes out every day to work in the field where his calling lies, to watch thy heart, and use all means for the discovery of sin, and as it breaks forth to be humbled for it, and be chopping at the root of it with this axe of mortification, and thou shalt see by the blessing of God what a change for the better there will be in the constitution of thy grace. Thou who art now so poor, so pale, that thou art afraid to see thy own face long in the glass of thy own conscience, shalt then reflect with joy upon thy own conscience, and dare to converse with thyself without those surprisals of horror and fear which before did appall thee. Thy grace, though it shall not be thy rejoicing, yet it will be thy evidence for Christ, in whom it is, and lead thee in with boldness to lay claim to him; while the loose Christian, whose grace is overgrown with lusts, for want of his weeding-hook, shall stand trembling at the door, questioning whether his grace be true or no, and from that doubt of his welcome.

Direction Second. If, upon enquiry, thou findest that thy armour decays, rather for want of scouring, than by any blow from sin presumptuously committed, as that is most common and ordinary--for rust will soon spoil the best armour, and negligence give grace its bane, as well as gross sins--then apply thyself to the use of those means which God hath appointed for the strengthening [of] grace. If the fire goes out by taking off the wood, what way [is there] to preserve it, but by laying it on again?

1. I shall sent thee to the Word of God; be more frequently conversant with it. David tells us where he renewed his spiritual life, and got his soul so oft into a heavenly heat, when grace in him began to chill. The Word, he tells us, quickened him. This was the sunny bank he sat under. The Word draws forth the Christian's grace, by presenting every one with an object suitable to act upon. This is of great power to rouse them up; as the coming in of a friend makes us, though sleepy before, shake off all drowsiness to enjoy his company. Affections are actuated when their object is before them. If we love a person, love is excited by sight of him, or anything that minds us of him; if we hate one, our blood riseth much more against him when before us. Now the Word brings the Christian graces and their object together. Here love may delight herself with the beholding Christ, who is set out to life there in all his love and loveliness. Here the Christian may see his sins in a glass that will not flatter him; and can there any godly sorrow be in the heart, any hatred of sin, and not come forth, whole the man is reading what they cost Christ for him?

2. From the word go to meditation. This is as bellows to the fires. That grace which lies choked and eaten up for want of exercise, will by this be cleared and break forth. While thou art musing this fire will burn, and thy heart grow hot within thee, according to the nature of the subject thy thoughts dwell upon. Resolve, therefore, Christian, to inclose time from all worldly suitors, wherein thou mayest every day, if possible, at least take a view of the most remarkable occurrences that have passed between God and thee.

(1.) Ask thy soul what takings it hath had that day, what mercies heaven hath sent into thee? and do not, when thou hast asked the question, like Pilate, go out, but stay till thy soul has made report of God's gracious dealings with thee. And, if thou beest wise to observe, and faithful to relate them, thy conscience must tell thee, that the cock was never turned, the breast of mercy never put up all the day, yea, while thou art viewing these fresh mercies, telling over this new coin, hot out of the mint of God's bounty, ancient mercies will come crowding in upon thee, and call for a place in thy thoughts, and tell thee what God hath done for thee months and years ago. And indeed old debts should not be paid last; give them, Christian, all a hearing one time or another, and thou shalt see how they will work upon thy ingenuous spirit. It is with the Christian in this case, as with some merchant's servant that keeps his master's cash; he tells his master he hath a great sum of his by him, and desires he would discharge him of it, and see how his accounts stand, but he can never find him at leisure. There is a great treasure of mercy always in the

Christian's hands, and conscience is oft calling the Christian to take the account, and see what God has done for him; but seldom it is he can find time to tell his mercies over. And is it any wonder that such should go behind-hand in their spiritual estate, who take no more notice of what the gracious dealings of God are with them? How can he be thankful that seldom thinks what he receives? or patient when God afflicts, that wants one of the most powerful arguments to pacify a mutinous spirit in trouble, and that is taken from the abundant good we receive at the hands of the Lord as well as a little evil? how can such a soul's love flame to God, that is kept at such a distance from the mercies of God, which are fuel to it? And the like might be said of all the other graces.

(2.) Reflect upon thyself, and bestow a few serious thoughts upon thy own behaviour--what it hath been towards God and man all along the day. Ask thy soul, as Elisha his servant, 'Whence comest thou, O my soul? where hast thou been? what hast thou done for God this day? and how?' And when thou goest about this, look that thou neither beest taken off from a thorough search, as Jacob was by Rachel's specious excuse, nor be found to cocker thyself, as Eli his sons, when thou shalt upon inquiry take thy heart tardy in any part of thy duty. Take heed what thou doest, for thou judgest for God, who receives the wrong by thy sin, and therefore will do himself justice if thou wilt not.

3. From meditation go to prayer. Indeed, a soul in meditation is on his way to prayer; that duty leads the Christian to this, and this brings help to that. When the Christian has done his utmost by meditation to excite his graces, and chase his spirit into some divine heat, he knows all this is but to lay the wood in order. The fire must come from above to kindle, and this must be fetched by prayer. They say stars have greatest influences when they are in conjunction with the sun; then sure the graces of a saint should never work more powerfully than in prayer, for then he is in the nearest conjunction and communion with God. That ordinance that hath such power with God, must needs have a mighty influence on ourselves. It will not let God rest, but raiseth him up to his people's succour, and is it any wonder if it be a means to rouse up and excite the Christian's grace? How oft do we see a dark cloud upon David's spirit at the beginning of his prayer, which by that time he is a little warm in his work, begins to clear up, and before his ends breaks forth into high actings of faith and acclamations of praise? Only here, Christian, take heed of formal praying, this is as baneful to grace as not praying. A plaster, though proper and of sovereign virtue, yet if it be laid on cold, may do more hurt than good.

4. To all the former, join fellowship and communion with the saints thou livest amongst. No wonder to hear a house is robbed that stands far from neighbours. He that walks in communion of saints travels in company, he dwells in a city where one house keeps up another, to which Jerusalem is compared. It is observable concerning the house in whose ruins Job's children were entombed, that a wind came from the wilderness and smote the four corners of it. It seems it stood alone. The devil knows what he does in hindering this great ordinance of communion of saints--in doing this he hinders the progress of grace, yea, brings that which Christians have into a declining, wasting state. The apostle couples those two duties close together, to 'hold fast' our 'profession,' and to 'consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works,' Heb. 10:23,24. Indeed it is a dangerous step to apostasy, to forsake the communion of saints; hence it is said of Demas, he 'hath left us, and embraced the present world.' O what mischief has Satan done us in these few late years, in this one particular! what is become of this communion of saints? where are there two or three to be found that can agree to walk together? Those that could formerly suffer together, cannot sit together at their Father's table, can hardly pray one with or one for another. The breath of one Christian is strange to another that once lay in his bosom. 'This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.'

DIRECTION III.--SECOND GENERAL PART.

[The Argument with which he urgeth the Exhortation.]

'That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand,' Eph. 6:13.

We come to the argument with which the apostle urgeth the exhortation, and that is double. FIRST. The first hath respect to the hour of battle--'that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day.' SECOND. The second to the happy issue of the war, which will crown the Christian thus armed, and that is certain victory--'and having done all, to stand.'

First Argument--This hath respect to the Hour of Battle.

'That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day.'

But what is this evil day? Some take this evil day to comprehend the whole life of a Christian here below in this vale of tears, and then the argument runs thus:--Take to yourselves the whole armour of God, that you may be able to persevere to the end of your life, which you will find, as it were, one continued day of trouble and trial. Thus Jacob draws a black line over his whole life--'few and evil have the days of the years of my life been,' Gen. 47:9. What day shines so fair that overcasts not before night, yea, in which the Christian meets not with some shower or other, enough to deserve the name of an evil day?

Every day hath its portion, yea, proportion. Sufficient is the evil of the day; we need not borrow and take up sorrows upon use of the morrow, to make up our present load. As we read of 'daily bread,' so [also] of a 'daily' cross, Luke 9:23, which we are bid to take, not to make. We need not make crosses for ourselves, as we are prone to do; God in his providence will provide one for us, and we are bid to take it up, but we hear nothing of laying it down, till cross and we lie down together.

Our troubles and our lives are coetaneous; [they] live and die together here. When joy comes, sorrow is at its heel--staff and rod go together. Job himself, that good man, whose prosperity the devil so grudged, and set forth in all his bravery and pomp, Job 1:10, as if his sun had no shadow, hear what account he gives of this his most flourishing time, 'I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet;' Job 3:26. There were some troubles that broke his rest; when his bed was, to thinking, as soft as heart could wish, even then this good man tosses and tumbles from one side to the other, and is not quiet.

If one should have come to Job and blessed him with his happy condition, and said, 'Surely, Job, thou couldst be content with what thou hast for thy portion, if thou mightest have all this settled on thee and thy heirs after thee;' he would have said, as once Luther, 'that God should not put him off with these.' Such is the saints' state in this bottom, that their very life here, and all the pompous entertainments of it, are their cross, because they detain them from their crown.

We need nothing to make our life an evil day, more than our absence from our chief good, which cannot be recompensed by the world, nor enjoyed with it. Only this goodness there is in this evil, that it is short. Our life is but an 'evil day,' it will not last long. And sure it was mercy that God hath abridged so much of the term of man's life in these last days--days wherein so much of Christ and heaven are discovered, that it would have put the saints' patience hard to it, to have known so much of the upper world's glory, and then be kept so long from it, as the fathers in the first age were.

O comfort one another, Christians, with this: Though your life be evil with troubles, yet it is short--a few steps, and we are out of the rain. There is a great difference between a saint in regard of the evils he meets with, and the wicked, just as between two travellers riding contrary ways--both taken in the rain and wet--but of whom one rides from the rain, and so is soon out of the shower, but the other rides into the rainy corner--the farther he goes, the worse he is. The saint meets with troubles as well as the wicked, but he is soon out of the shower--when death comes he has fair weather; but the wicked, the farther he goes the worse--what he meets with here is but a few drops, the great storm is the last. The pouring out of God's wrath shall be in hell, where all the deeps of horror are opened, both from above of God's righteous fury, and from beneath of their own accusing and tormenting consciences.

Others take the phrase in a more restricted sense, to denote those particular seasons of our life wherein more especially we meet with afflictions and sufferings. Beza reads it *tempore adverso*--in the time of our adversity. Though our whole life be evil, if compared with heaven's blissful state; our clearest day, night, to that glorious morning; yet one part of our life, compared with another, may be called good, and the other evil. We have our vicissitudes here. The providences of God to his saints here, while on this low bottom of earth, are mixed and parti-coloured, as was signified by the 'speckled' horses, Zech. 1:8, in Zechariah's vision--red and white, peace and war, joy and sorrow, checker our days. Earth is a middle place betwixt heaven and hell, and so is our state here; it partakes of both. We go up hill and down, till we get to our journey's end, yea, we find the deepest slough nearest our Father's house--death, I mean--into which all the other troubles of our life fall, as streams into some great river, and with which they all end, and are swallowed up. This being the comprehensive evil, I conceive it is meant here, being made remarkable by a double article, that day, that evil day;[5] not excluding those other days of tribulation which intervene. These are but so many petty deaths, every one snatching away a piece of our lives with them, or like pages sent before to usher in this king of terrors that comes behind.

The phrase being opened, let us consider the strength of this first argument, with which the apostle reinforceth his exhortation of taking to ourselves the whole armour of God, and that consists in three weighty circumstances.

First. The nature and quality of this day of affliction, it is an evil day. Second. The unavoidableness of this evil day of affliction implied in the form of speech, 'that you may withstand in the evil day.' He shuts out all hope of escaping; as if he had said, You have no way to withstand, please not yourselves with thoughts of shunning battle, the evil day must come, be you armed or not armed. Third. The necessity of this armour, to withstand. As we cannot run from it, so [we cannot] bear up before it, and oppose the force which will be made against us, except clad with armour. These would afford several points, but for brevity we shall lay them together in one conclusion.

[The day of affliction and death is evil,

and in what respects.]

Doctrine. It behoves every one to arm and prepare himself for the evil day of affliction and death, which unavoidably he must conflict with. The point hath three branches. First. The day of affliction and death is an evil day. Second. This evil day is unavoidable. Third. It behoves every one to provide for this evil day.

First Branch. The day of affliction, especially death, is an evil day. Here we must show how affliction is evil, and how not.

1. It is not morally or intrinsically evil; for, if it were evil in this sense, God could not be the author of it. His nature is so pure, that no such evil can come from him, any more than the sun's light can make night. But this evil of affliction he voucheth for his own act. 'Against this family do I devise an evil,' Micah 2:3, yea more, he so appropriates it to himself, that he will not have us think any can do us evil beside himself. It is the prerogative he glories in, that there is no evil in the city, but it is of his doing, Amos 3:6. And well it is for the saints that their crosses are all made in heaven; they would not else be so fitted to their backs as they are. But for the evil of sin, he disowns it, with a strict charge that we lay not this brat, which is begotten by Satan upon our impure hearts, at his door. 'Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man,' James 1:13.

2. If affliction were thus intrinsically evil, it could in no respect be the object of our desire, which sometimes it is, and may be. We are to choose affliction rather than sin, yea, the greatest affliction before the least sin. Moses chose affliction with the people of God, rather than the pleasures of sin for a season. We are bid rejoice when we fall into divers temptations, that is, afflictions. But in what respects then may the day of affliction be called evil?

(1.) As it is grievous to sense in Scripture, evil is oft put as contradistinguished to joy and comfort. 'We looked for peace, and behold not good.' A merry heart is called a good heart, a sad spirit an evil spirit, because nature hath an abhorrency to all that opposeth its joy, and this every affliction doth, more or less, Heb. 12:11. No affliction, while present, is joyous, but grievous; it hath, like physic, an unpleasing farewell to the sense. Therefore Solomon, speaking of the evil days of sickness, expresseth them to be so distasteful to nature, that we shall say, 'We have no pleasure in them.' They take away the joy of our life. Natural joy is a true flower of the sun of prosperity, it opens and shuts with it. It is true indeed, the saints never have more joy than in their affliction, but this comes in on another score; they have a good God that sends it in, or else they would be as sadly on it as others. It is no more natural for comfort to spring from afflictions, than for grapes to grow on thorns, or manna in the wilderness. The Israelites might have looked long enough for such bread, if heaven had not miraculously rained it down. God chooseth this season to make the omnipotency of his love the more conspicuous. As Elijah, to add to the miracle, first causeth water in abundance to be poured upon the wood and sacrifice, so much as to fill the trench, and then brings fire from heaven by his prayer, to lick it up; thus God pours out the flood of affliction upon his children, and then kindles that inward joy in their bosoms which licks up all their sorrow; yea, he makes the very waters of affliction they float on, add a further sweetness to the music of their spiritual joy, but still it is God that is good, and affliction that is evil.

(2.) The day of affliction is an evil day, as it is an unwelcome remembrancer of what sinful evils have passed in our lives. It revives the memory of old sins, which, it may be, were buried many years ago in the grave of forgetfulness. The night of affliction is the time when such ghosts use to walk in men's conscience's; and as the darkness of the night adds to the horror of any scareful object, so doth the state of affliction, which is itself uncomfortable, add to the terror of our sins, then remembered. Never did the patriarchs' sin look so ghastly on them, as when it recoiled upon them in their distress, Gen 42:21. The sinner then hath more real apprehensions of wrath than at another time; affliction approximates judgement, yea, it is interpreted by him as a pursuivant sent to call him presently before God, and therefore needs beget a woeful confusion and consternation in his spirit. O that men would think of this, how they could bear the sight of their sins, and a rehearsal sermon of all their ways, in that day! That is the blessed man indeed, who can with the prophet then look on them, and triumph over them. This indeed is a dark parable, as he calls it, as 'I will open my dark saying upon the harp; wherefore should I fear in the

days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?' Ps. 49:4,5.

(3.) The day of affliction makes the discovery of much evil to be in the heart, which was not seen before. Affliction shakes and roils the creature; if any sediment be at the bottom, it will appear then. Sometimes it discovers the heart to be quite naught that before had been seeming good. These suds wash off the hypocrite's paint; *natura vexata prodit seipsam* --when corrupt nature is vexed it shows itself. And some afflictions do that to purpose. We read of such as are offended when persecution comes, they fall quite out with their profession, because it puts them to such cost and trouble; others in their distress, 'that curse their God,' Isa. 8:21. It is impossible for a naughty heart to think well of an afflicting God. The hireling, if his master takes up a staff to beat him, throws down his work and runs away, and so doth a false heart serve God. Yea, even where the person is gracious, corruption is oft found to be stronger, and grace weaker, than they were thought to be. [In the case of] Peter, who set out so valiantly at first to walk on the sea, the wind doth but rise and he begins to sink; now he sees there was more unbelief in his heart than he before suspected. Sharp afflictions are to the soul as a driving rain to the house; we know not that there were such crannies and holes in the house, till we see it drop down here and there. Thus we perceive not how unmortified this corruption, nor how weak that grace is, till we are thus searched, and made more fully to know what is in our hearts by such trials. This is the reason why none have such humble thoughts of themselves, and such pitiful and forbearing thoughts towards others in their infirmities, as those who are most acquainted with afflictions. They meet with so many foils in their conflicts, as make them carry a low sail in respect of their own grace, and a tender respect to their brethren--more ready to pity than censure them in their weaknesses.

(4.) This is the season when the evil one, Satan, comes to tempt. What we find called the time of 'tribulation,' Matt. 13:21, we find in the same parable, Luke 8:13, called the time of 'temptation.' Indeed they both meet; seldom doth God afflict us, but Satan addeth temptation to our wilderness. 'But this is your hour,' saith Christ, 'and the power of darkness,' Luke 22:53. Christ's sufferings from man, and temptation from the devil, came together. Esau, who hated his brother for the blessing, said in his heart, 'The days of mourning for my father are at hand, then will I slay my brother Jacob,' Gen. 27:41. Times of affliction are the days of mourning; those Satan waits for to do us a mischief in.

(5.) The day of affliction oft hath an evil event and issue; and in this respect proves an evil day indeed. All is well, we say, that ends well; the product of afflictions on the Christian is good; the rod with which they are corrected yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and therefore they can call their afflictions good. That is a good instrument that lets out only the bad blood. 'It was good for me that I was afflicted,' saith David. I have read of a holy woman who used to compare her afflictions to her children. They both put her to great pain in the bearing; but as she knew not which of her children to have been without--for all the trouble in bringing forth --so neither which of her afflictions she could have missed, notwithstanding the sorrow they put her to in the enduring. But to the wicked the issue is sad, (a.) In regard of sin; they leave them worse, more impenitent, hardened in sin, and outrageous in their wicked practices. every plague on Egypt added to the plague of hardness on Pharaoh's heart. He that for some while could beg prayers of Moses for himself, at last comes to that pass that he threatens to kill him if he come at him any more. O what a prodigious height do we see many come to in sin, after some great sickness or other judgment! Children do not more shoot up in their bodily stature after an ague, than they in their lusts after afflictions. O how greedy and ravenous are they after their prey, when once they get off their clog and chain from their heels! When physic works not kindly, it doth not only leave the disease uncured, but the poison of the physic stays in the body also. Many appear thus poisoned by their afflictions, by the breaking out of their

lusts afterward. (b.) In regard of sorrow; every affliction on a wicked person produceth another, and that a greater than itself, the greatest comes the last, which shall rive him fit for the fire. The sinner is whipped from affliction to affliction, as the vagrant from constable to constable, till at last he comes to hell, his proper place and settled abode, where all sorrows will meet in one that is endless.

Second Branch. This evil day is unavoidable. We may as well stop the chariot of the sun, when posting to night, and chase away the shades of the evening, as escape this hour of darkness, that is coming upon us all. 'There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit, neither hath he power in the day of death, and there is no discharge in that war,' Ecc. 8:8. Among men it is possible to get off when pressed for the wars, by pleading privilege of years, estate, weakness of body, protection from the prince, and the like; or if all these fail, possibly the sending another in our room, or a bribe given in the hand, may serve the turn.

But in this war the press is so strict, that there is no dispensation. David could willingly have gone for his son--we hear him crying, 'Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son;' but he will not be taken, that young gallant must go himself. We must in our own person come into the field, and look death in the face. Some indeed we find so fond as to promise themselves immunity from this day, as if they had an insuring office in their breast. They say they have made a covenant with death, and with hell they are at an agreement.

When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto them. And now, like debtors that have fee'd the sergeant, they walk abroad boldly, and fear no arrest. But God tells them as fast as they bind he will loose: 'Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand.' And how should it, if God will not set his seal to it? There is a divine law for this evil day, which came in force upon Adam's first sin, that laid the fatal knife to the throat of mankind, which hath opened a sluice to let out his heart-blood ever since.

God, to prevent all escape, hath sown the seeds of death in our very constitution and nature, so that we can as soon run from ourselves, as run from death. We need no feller to come with a hand of violence, and hew us down. There is in the tree a worm which grows out of its own substance that will destroy it; so in us, those infirmities of nature that will bring us down to the dust. Our death was bred when our life was first conceived. And as a woman cannot hinder the hour of her travail--that follows in nature upon the other--so neither can man hinder the bringing forth of death with which his life is big.

All the pains and aches man feels in his life are but so many singultus morientis naturæ--groans of a dying nature; they tell him his dissolution is at hand. Beest thou a prince sitting in all thy state and pomp, death dare enter thy palace, and come through all thy guards, to deliver the fatal message it hath from God to thee, yea, runs its dagger to thy heart. Wert thou compassed with a college of doctors consulting thy health, art and nature both must deliver thee up when that comes.

Even when thy strength is firmest, and thou eatest thy bread with a merry heart, that very food which nourisheth thy life gives thee withal an earnest of death, as it leaves those dregs in thee which will in time procure the same. O how unavoidable this day of death be, when that very staff knocks us down to the grave at last, which our life leans on and is preserved by! God owes a debt to the first Adam and to the second. To the first he owes the wages of sin, to the second the reward of his sufferings.

The place for full payment of both is the other world, so that except death come to convey the man thither, the wicked, who are the posterity of the first Adam, will miss of that full pay for their sins, which the threat-

ening makes due debt, and engageth God to perform. The godly also, who are the seed of Christ, these should not receive the whole purchase of his blood, which he would never have shed but upon the credit of that promise of eternal life which God gave him for them before the world began. This is the reason why God hath made this day so sure. In it he dischargeth both bonds.

Third Branch. It behoves every one to prepare, and effectually to provide for this evil day, which so unavoidably impends us: and this upon a twofold account. 1. In point of duty. 2. In point of wisdom.

1. In point of duty.

(1.) It is upon our allegiance to the great God, that we provide and arm ourselves against this day. Suppose a subject were trusted with one of his prince's castles, and that he should hear that a puissant enemy was coming to lay siege to this castle, and yet he takes no care to lay in arms and provision for his defence, and so it is lost. How could such a one be cleared of treason? doth he not basely betray the place, and with it his prince's honour into the enemy's hand? Our souls are this castle, which we are every one to keep for God. We have certain intelligence that Satan hath a design upon

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