SERMON VI.

THE GREAT ADVANTAGE OF AFFLICTIONS TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

Gen. xlii. 36.—"And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not; and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me."

It is amazing to think of the divine condescension, in establishing such a close connexion betwixt his own glory and the good of his people. The right improvement of this consideration, is enough to quiet the mind of a Christian, under the most dark and perplexing event of Providence that can befall him. What greater security would we have, that all things shall work together for our good, than this, that our good is in a close connexion with the divine glory: yet how ready are we to put asunder what God hath joined? The Christian, in the hastiness of his spirit, occasioned by a multiplicity of sore trials, is apt to say with Jacob, "all these things are against me:" whereas, the promise says, that all these things shall work together for his good.

In this chapter we are told, that Jacob's sons were sent down to Egypt to buy corn, because of the famine in their own land. Joseph, their brother, whom they had sold, was now governor of all the land of Egypt; and it was he who sold to all the people of the land. He knew his brethren when they came to him, though they did not know him. He dealt severely with them at the first, which brought their old guilt to their remembrance. He threatens them as spies; puts them all in prison for three days; takes
Simeon and binds him before their eyes, to keep him until they should return; and orders them to bring their youngest brother Benjamin along with them, the favourite son, whom the father would not send with his brethren at first, lest peradventure some mischief should befall him.

When they came home and told all this unto their father, the good old man, in a fit of strong grief, cries out, "Me have ye bereaved of my children." It is a supplement, but a natural one, as appears from what follows; ye have bereaved me, or robbed me. They had sold Joseph into the hands of the Ishmaelitish merchants, though their father knew it not, but imagined that he was destroyed by wild beasts; and this deed of theirs gave rise to what befell the other two, to wit, the binding of Simeon, and the demanding of Benjamin; so that they were justly chargeable with robbing the old man of his sons. New trials bring old ones of the same kind fresh to remembrance.

The fate of Simeon's and Benjamin's puts Jacob in mind of his son Joseph; and so he makes an enumeration of some heavy trials with respect to him. "Joseph is not." He reckoned that he was dead long ago. "Simeon is not;" he was bound by the governor of the land of Egypt, and he gave him up for dead also. And as for Benjamin, whom they wanted to take along with them, it is likely, he thought, that if he went once away, he would never see him more: so that here was a train of sore trials; and the old man, under the weight of them, cries out, "all these things are against me;" or, as it is in the original, "upon me:" that is, they are extremely heavy upon me, insomuch that they cannot be borne; they will sink me even to the grave. Yet in all this God had a kind design towards Jacob and his family. He was to bring much good to him out of these sore trials; but he, in the excess of his grief, could not see how this breach upon breach, made upon his family, could tend to his and their advantage; and therefore he says, "all these things are against me."

The observation from the words is, whatever discouraging thoughts the Christian may have under the trials of
life, yet it is most certain, that not one of them are against him, but all of them for his good. This observation I propose to illustrate.

First, They are, by divine appointment, subservient to the great work of sanctification in him. The Apostle, speaking of our earthly parents, says, "They, verily, for a few days, chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." Parents chastise their children after their own pleasure, which is often not well regulated; yea, often they chastise, rather for gratifying their own passion than profiting their children: but our heavenly Father chastises his children always for their profit. And if it be asked, where is the profit they get by it? The answer is, they are made partakers of their Father's holiness, and that is the greatest gain.

Afflictions are his lance, whereby he lets out the humours. They are the furnace into which he casts the vessels of mercy, not to destroy them, but to prepare them unto glory. He sits as a skilful refiner watching over his metal, that nothing be lost but the dross; and he brings it at length out of the furnace, shining and pure as gold. Now, my brethren, sanctification is a thing absolutely necessary to us; "for without holiness no man shall see the Lord:" and then, it is the top of the desires of the saints. If there is any one thing which they wish for above another, it is, that they may be made partakers of his holiness. And if this be so, then, certainly, that which is a mean of advancing holiness in them, must needs be profitable unto them. But afflictions are one of these means; and therefore the Christian must not say with Jacob, "all these things are against me." True, indeed, some carry a cross who are not following after Jesus. Many are under great afflictions, and, at the same time, in the gall of bitterness. But you must consider, that the good effect of afflictions is by the appointment of God: therefore, when the chosen of God are called to take up the cross, this divine appointment will be upon it; and so sanctification will flow from
it. The crabbed tree of the cross, by the kindly influence of the Holy Ghost, brings forth fruits of righteousness, to the praise and glory of God. Hence the righteous are said to flourish like the palm-tree, which grows the more that it is pressed down.

Secondly, The difficulties occurring in the Christian's life are not against him, but for his good; because by them he is conformed unto Jesus Christ his head; of whom we have, among others, this surprising account, "that he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." How strong and nervous are the expressions. A man of sorrows is more than a sorrowful man: It is a man, as it were, made up of sorrows. Now, as conformity to Christ is the indispensible duty of the saints, so it is their interest; and, at the same time, the greatest piece of honour that can be conferred upon them, Rom. viii. 29. However, let it be observed, that conformity to Christ lies not in mere suffering. It is not our being afflicted, but our bearing afflictions in a Christian manner, that makes us conformed to Jesus Christ. Hence the Apostle says, "Behold we count them happy which endure;" that is, who hold out with patience, resignation and resolution, still persevering in the exercise of grace, and in the practice of duty. There was a peculiar temper and disposition of mind appeared in Christ, through the whole scene of his suffering; and the more or less of that temper that the Christian discovers, under his trials, just so much the more or less is he conformed unto Jesus. When he left the world, as the apostles succeeded him in preaching the gospel, so they succeeded in suffering for the sake of it; and under their sufferings, they gave the world a very bright representation of their Master's temper. And truly, the first man that died in defence of Christianity, I mean Stephen, seems to be as much moulded into the spirit of his Master as any man could be. He left the world with a meekness and patience, and good will towards men, and even his enemies, much like to what the Redeemer discovered upon his leaving the world. The one said, "Father, forgive them,
for they know not what they do." The other, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

Thirdly, The afflictions occurring in the life of a Christian are for his advantage, because by them his graces are exercised and manifested. The stubbornness and rebellion of the Israelites in the wilderness, exercised and displayed the meekness of Moses. Neither had we heard so much of the patience of Job, if he had not laboured under a variety of the sorest calamities. The afflictions of good men not only discover the habit of grace in them, or show them to be gracious, but the graces which they have are brought forth into action. The rust and dimness which they contracted in time of peace, is rubbed off in the time of affliction, and they shine illustrious as arms in the day of battle. It is an honour to be called forth from the crowd, and made an object of admiration to angels, to the world, and to men. These blessed spirits above, behold with joy and admiration the faith, the hope, the patience, the meekness, and the resignation of the saints on earth under their trials. It is an honour to be called to give evidence of the power of the grace of God, and of the reality that is in the religion of Christ. There are many, whose names send forth a savoury perfume in the churches of Christ to this very day, who would have long since sunk in oblivion, had it not been for some eminent trial, wherewith they were exercised, and under which they eminently displayed the grace of God in them.

Fourthly, Whatever dismal apprehensions the Christian may have of the troubles in his life, they are for his good; because, often, they are the means of preventing much sin, that otherwise would be committed. It is oftentimes a mercy to the Lord's people, that their way is hedged up with thorns, otherwise they would break over and tread upon forbidden ground, Hos. ii. 6. and that there is a wall reared up, so that they cannot find their paths. When the Lord sends a cross to meet them, as he did Abigail to meet David, they may say with him, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who sent thee this day to meet me." That
meeting, you know, prevented much bloodshed and mischief, which David, in his wrath, designed against Nabal and his family. Thus, I say, the Lord makes the afflictions of his children serve to restrain corruption in them, which would otherwise break forth. One is in poverty and straits: the Lord, by these, prevents pride, oppression, and trusting in uncertain riches, which, perhaps, the Christian would have fallen into, if his circumstances had been better. Another complains of the loss of children, or other dear and useful relations, and says with Jacob, "all these things are against me." Why, it is likely, if these earthly comforts had been continued, they would have usurped God's room in the believer's heart; and if so great an evil was prevented by removing them, then, certainly, their death was for our good.

Fifthly, Trials in the life of the child of God are for his profit, because they crucify him unto the world, and all things therein. It is said of the Hebrews, that they "endured a great fight of affliction, and took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves, that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance:" Sanctified afflictions indeed! The people of God, as well as others, are too much inclined to take up their resting place on this side Jordan. They would fain settle in the wilderness, in some fits at least, without fighting their way through to the heavenly Canaan: therefore God makes thorns and briers to spring up in all those places they choose to rest in, that so they may arise and depart, saying, surely this is not our rest, because it is polluted. We are apt not only to groan, but to continue big with expectations from the creature, in the midst of repeated disappointments. We are still for hewing out the other cistern, and smiting the other rock, though the cistern holds no water, and though the rock flashes fire in our face, and burns it, instead of yielding water for our refreshment.

Now, as this earthly disposition is dishonouring to God, and prejudicial to the saints, so God makes use of afflictions to be the death of it. He exercises his people with
sore trials, perhaps both within and without, and continues them, so that they go all their days in the bitterness of their souls, and never eat their bread with pleasure. He suffers them to meet with one disappointment upon the back of another; so that they are at length, in a great measure, deadened to the world. Their expectations and affections are carried off it, and raised to heaven, to the more substantial and durable things within the vail. They look upon it as a crucified thing, as a flower which the Spirit of God has blown upon and blasted; and so they leave it in their affections and pursuits. They turn their backs upon it, and their faces are as though they would go up to Jerusalem. Now, certainly, that which produces such a notable effect as this, is good; and therefore, instead of saying with Jacob, "all these things are against me," the followers of the Lamb ought to say with David, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes."

In the sixth place, The afflictions in the life of a believer are not against him, but for him, whatever he may apprehend; inasmuch as by these he gets a treasure of valuable experiences, Rom. v. 3, 4, "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." Trials, especially if they be of any continuance, afford the children of God many experiences of his love, mercy, power, and faithfulness. In his love, and in his pity, he has frequently relieved them when they were sore oppressed. In his faithfulness, he has brought about the accomplishment of promises that seemed to be forgotten. His powerful arm has, before their eyes, given things that seemed desperate and hopeless, a surprising turn to the advantage. Thus the saints have frequent opportunities of observing how good and gracious the Lord is; and by these they come to a better understanding of his methods of providence, both towards the world in general, and towards particular persons, which seem strange unto such as never have observed them in their own case.
Moreover, in a long series of trials, they get many experiences of their own deceitful hearts, and though these be painful unto them, yet they are very profitable; for thus they learn when and where to be most upon their guard; and thus they are not in such danger, as those are who know the deceitfulness of their heart, only by speculation or report.

Again, Christians, in long afflictions, become acquainted with the power and craft of the grand adversary. Hence they are said "not to be ignorant of his devices." He is ready with his temptations at all times. In times of affliction he seeks to winnow: he is sure to come when the corn is under the flail. It is profitable to reflect on these experiences: by them the heart is filled with gratitude, and the Christian furnished with new matter for songs of praise.

Seventhly, The troubles of Christians are much to their advantage, because they tend to excite longing desires to be freed from the body of sin, and be ever with the Lord, where holiness shall be completed as well as happiness. They remember, that being in an imperfect state, they cannot be exempted from trouble. They are sensible, that the remainder of sin in them is the occasion of their being cast down, and made to lie as broken vessels among the pots; therefore they long for the approach of that day, when they shall be perfectly free of sin, and set down under the refreshing beams of the Sun of righteousness, that shall not be eclipsed through the long days of eternity.

In the next place, The afflictions of life do good to the Christian, by being the remembrancers of sin. As we are apt to forget God the law-giver, so we are very ready to forget our sins, which are the transgressions of that law. Now, afflictions readily bring them to remembrance, and that in two ways, 1st, In general. Were we not sinners, we would not be sufferers; for as sin brought death into the world, so it brought in afflictions, which are near a-kin to it: For whereas the former absolutely dissolves the frame of nature, so the other weakens and prepares it for dissolu-
tion. The effect naturally reminds us of the cause: so, when the Christian is under affliction, he is not only reminded of sin, but he may be led into such views of its nature, demerit, and consequences, as will be very profitable unto him. But, 2dly, They are not only remembrancers of sin in general, but they often bring some particular sins to the remembrance of the Christian. Thus it was with Joseph’s brethren: the harsh treatment they met with in Egypt, brought their guilt concerning their brother fresh to their remembrance, Gen. xlii. 21. A guilty conscience is still jealous. An old sin, especially if it be of a heinous nature, often appears and haunts the sinner like a ghost, upon his meeting with new trials. The waves of guilt, and the waves of affliction meeting together, create a tempestuous sea in the soul. And if it be enquired how it is that afflictions bring particular sins to remembrance, I answer, in two things, 1st, As God does not afflict willingly, or for nought, so it is natural for the Christian to enquire into the cause; and upon enquiry he will readily fix upon some particular sin or sins in his life, the guilt of which oppresses him most. 2dly, There is often such an affinity betwixt the affliction and the sin thereby brought to remembrance, as that the former appears evidently to be the chastisement of the latter, as we see in the case of Adoni-bezek, Judg. i. 7. Now, it is profitable to the Christian to have some particular sins brought to remembrance by affliction, though they be long since pardoned; for this causes him to repeat his esteem of the atonement made by Christ, to renew his repentance, to double his diligence, and to be more and more watchful.

Ninthly, The difficulties of the Christian are by no means against him, but much to his advantage, as they afford an opportunity of displaying unto him the glory of the divine attributes, which are especially concerned in supporting him under his afflictions, and delivering him from them at last. It was upon this account, that the great apostle Paul gloried, and took pleasure in infirmities, reproaches, and distresses. These things considered in themselves,
could never be pleasant to any man; but considered as means of displaying the divine power, wisdom, mercy, and faithfulness, they are both pleasant and profitable to the real Christian.

How gloriously does God display his power in the afflictions of his people? how often is the strength of the strength of Israel made perfect in them? He giveth power to the faint, and unto them that have no might, he increaseth strength, and enables them to bear such burdens, as makes them a wonder not only unto many, but even unto themselves. His power shines in restraining Satan, who seeks to winnow them; in restraining their own corruptions, which would lead them to murmur; and in restraining the power of the men of the world, who would oppress them.

How glorious an appearance does the wisdom of God make in the field of the Christian's afflictions? He shows himself a skilful physician, in making up the medicines of his people. He knows our frame: he remembers we are but dust: he is well acquainted with the delicate constitution of the new creature in the Christian, and so he makes every dispensation issue in the strengthening of it. What a joyful prospect of the manifold wisdom of God would Jacob have, after he and his family were carried down to Egypt, when he saw his son Joseph not only alive, but living in honour next to the king. And the rejoicing views which Joseph himself had of the divine wisdom, throughout the whole scene, may be learned from what he says to his brethren, after his father's death, when they were afraid, that he would avenge himself upon them.

The faithfulness of God is also displayed amidst the difficulties of a believer, as in the case of Abraham, the father of the faithful. After the promise was confirmed unto Isaac, that in him his seed should be called, the promise-maker commands him to do that which, in all appearance, would absolutely frustrate the promise. He commands Abraham, with his own hand, to slay his son, the
son of the promise, and offer him up a sacrifice, which was as much as if he had bidden him kill the Messiah, and de-
prise the world of a Saviour: yet, out of that dark dispen-
sation, there arose unto Abraham the greatest glory of the
divine faithfulness that ever appeared, until the actual
coming of the Messiah.

And as for the divine mercy: "Like as a father pitieth
his children, so the Lord pities them that fear him;" so
that, with the Psalmist, they may sing aloud of his mercy.
Now every body must allow, that such manifestations of
the divine perfections are very profitable to the Christian;
and if so, he cannot in justice say, that afflictions, which
are the occasions of them, are against him.

Tenthly, Afflictions are for the advantage of the children
of God, because, under them, they are allowed sometimes
more than ordinary communion with God. I do not say
that this is the Christian's ordinary allowance: nay, some-
times the want of this is his greatest trial. But some-
times the Lord causes light to arise in the midst of dark-
ness: he communicates unto them such degrees of light,
life and comfort, that their inward man has been revived,
renewed, and refreshed to a wonder. Thus it was with
holy Jacob when he had wrestled all the night with the
angel, even to the disjointing of his thigh. He gave the
place a new name, calling it Peniel, "for," says he, "I
have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." This,
you know, was at a time, when the patriarch was in great
fear that his brother Esau would make an attack upon
him, and smite him, as he expresses it, and the mother
with the children. The Psalmist also gives testimony to
this, when he says, "In the multitude of my thoughts
within me, thy comforts delight my soul." And thus has
it been with many of the Lord's people; he has made all
their bed in their sickness, so that it has been soft, and
sweet, and easy unto them. They have felt his left hand
under their head, and his right hand embracing them.
They have got such manifestations of his love, his grace,
his glory, and such clear evidences of their special interest
in his favour, that they have been made to say with David, "It was good for me that I was afflicted."

But, further, the trials of the children of God are greatly for their profit, as they are the means of making them walk more closely and humbly with God, all their days. Thus good king Hezekiah, when he was recovered out of that sickness which was likely to be unto death, resolved to give glory to God, by walking softly all the remainder of his days. David, in his prosperity, said, "I shall never be moved;" and it was very foolishly said. But in the day of adversity he considered better, and learned to know in whom his standing was. Sanctified afflictions make a strong believer. Job winds up his case unto a supposition of being killed out-right, and even then he resolves to cleave unto the Lord. And as they make a strong, so they make a humble and self-denied believer. The Lord schooled Job, until he made him vile in his own eyes. Nay, my brethren, take for confirmation of what I say, the great example of the Son of God. Who among the saints, who among the sons of men, had difficulties, trials and afflictions, any way equal to his? yet never was faith carried so high, nor humility so deep, as in him. His faith conflicted with the pain, the shame, the ignominy of the cross; yea, which was worse than any or all of these, with the wrath and desertion of his holy Father, and yet it was victorious over them all.

In the last place, The difficulties which occur in the life of the Christian in this world, are much to his advantage; for they will make the rest above more sweet and refreshing unto him. There will certainly be a sweetness and refreshment in the heaven of afflicted believers, that would not have been in the heaven of Adam, supposing him to have stood in innocence. Meat has a peculiar relish to the hungry, and drink to the thirsty. Rest is not so refreshing to any as to the labouring man. And doubtless, the heaven of rest on the other side Jordan, will be the more acceptable unto the saints, that they are for a season sore tossed on the tempestuous sea of life.
Before I proceed to the application, let me shortly enquire, Whence it is that Christians are so apt to mistake the designs of providence towards them, in the difficulties and trials which befall them on earth, saying with Jacob, as in my text, “all these things are against me.”

First, This proceeds from unbelief, which is a teeming womb of fears and jealousies of God. Though there is not in real saints an evil heart of unbelief, yet there is much unbelief in their hearts: and their unbelief is the most malignant member of the whole body of sin. It is a whisperer, that deals in separating chief friends. It casts mist and dust, and darkness upon the mind of the Christian, so that he cannot discern the kindness and good will of God often towards him, in the dispensations of his providence. The conduct of the Israelites in the wilderness, is a plain proof of the power of unbelief. Though they were guilty of many other sins, yet unbelief was the original of them all, and the procuring cause of their judgments. The Apostle expressly declares, they entered not into the earthly Canaan, because of unbelief. They were never reduced to any straits, but they fell a murmuring against God, and against Moses. Their unbelief made them doubt about every thing. Hear their provoking questions; “Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Can he give bread also? Can he provide flesh for his people?” Sinful and shameful questions! especially considering what proofs of the divine power had been gotten by those who proposed them. Take heed, then, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God: for if unbelief have the ascendant in the soul, and be allowed to judge in the conduct of providence, it will be sure to give in a verdict to the dishonour of God, and the discouragement of your souls.

Secondly, The people of God are apt to mistake the designs of providence towards them, from ignorance of his complex plan. “God’s way are in the seas; his paths in the deep waters; and his footsteps are not known; yet all his ways are perfect; he is a God of truth, and without
iniquity; just and right is he." We see this and the other
dispensation of providence as it falls out, and we judge of
it by itself, without considering its connexion with the
whole scheme. Take that dispensation, the selling of
Joseph into the hands of the Ishmaelitish merchants by
itself, and you cannot see how it could work either for his
own good, or for the good of his father's family; but take
it, in connexion with the other turns of providence in
Joseph's history, and you will readily perceive, as Joseph
owns, that God meant it for good.

There is a close connexion, a beautiful harmony, among
all the dispensations of providence. God acts consistently
with himself, and consistently with the good of his people;
and therefore, when there appears any inconsistency in
his conduct to us, we should be sure to impute this to our
own ignorance, and not unto him, who does all things well.

In the last place, Our mistaking the designs of God in
adverse dispensations, is partly owing to a conviction of
guilt. We are all sinful creatures. Fears and jealousies
are the inseparable attendants of sin. Hence we take the
alarm, when we meet with cross events of providence, and
are apt to imagine that a design for our hurt is laid against
us. We are conscious to ourselves that we have offended
God, and that we justly deserve his wrath, and so we are
ready to suspect, that the cross dispensations which befall
us, come as the punishment of a judge, and not as the
chastisement of a father.

I pass on now to the Improvement.

First, From this doctrine we learn, that the men of the
world have no reason to triumph over the saints of God, in
their calamities. David's enemies insulted over him, in
his distress; saying, "The Lord hath forsaken him; per-
secute and take him, for there is none to deliver him." So
foolish are they, and unacquainted with the ways of God,
that they take outward prosperity to be a badge of the
special favour of heaven, and therefore they said to David,
when matters went cross with him, "Where is thy God?" To
which it may be answered, our God is in the heaven,
in the earth, and everywhere, except in the hearts of those who propose such a question; and they shall find him there at last, if they amend not their ways.

Let not then the wicked triumph over the saints of the Most High, for he will never leave them, nor forsake them. Though he may suspend the sensible manifestations of his love for a season, yet the love itself changeth not, but, like God himself, is invariably the same. Though he may change the course of his providence towards them, as to outward things, they shall be made better, and not worse by the change.

Secondly, If all things issue in the good of the Christian, we infer, that all things must work for the ruin of the ungodly. In reference hereunto, we may observe what the Apostle says to Titus, "Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure." The wicked are like filthy vessels, which defile everything that is put into them. As a foul stomach turns the wholesomest food into noxious humours, so the best things which the wicked enjoy, are by themselves abused unto their ruin.

All the ordinances of the gospel work for their destruction. Christ is himself a stumbling block to them. His word is unto them the savour of death unto death. His ministers work upon them, according to that commission, Isa. vi. 10, "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert and be healed." Every step of providence towards them helps on their destruction. If they are in adversity, God is their adversary. If they pass under the rod, they are not within the bond of the covenant. If they are in prosperity, their table becomes a snare unto them. Their fellowship both with saints and sinners, is to their hurt. If their days upon earth are lengthened out, it is that they may fill up the measure of their iniquity.

Thirdly, From this doctrine, we may learn the comfortable state of the true Christian, in every situation. Let
me here adopt a line out of Moses' farewell sermon, to the tribes and people of Israel. "Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency. All things shall work together for your good." If you are in prosperity, you shall not be destroyed by it like the foolish. If you suffer affliction on your bodies, on your souls, on your good names, on your relations, or any thing else, be not afraid; say not with Jacob, "all these things are against me." All is well with you, and shall be well. My brethren, here is soul-quieting doctrine, under all the convulsions and commotions that are or may be in the world, or the church. Here is solid ground for absolute resignation to the will of God, in all the events of his providence. Choose not, therefore, for yourselves; but let God, as good reason is, choose for you, and rest quietly in the choice he makes. Resignation, under the most cross dispensations, would have been your indispensable duty, although God had not told you, how much good he designs to you by them. Since, then, he has informed you of this, how inexcusable will you be, if you rebel? how aggravated will your murmuring be? O then be still, and know that he is God.

In the last place, This doctrine lays a foundation for rejoicing under the greatest tribulations. "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say rejoice." However singular the trials of believers are, with whatever heightening circumstances they are attended, why should you be discouraged, after you have heard from the mouth of the Lord, how much the worst of them are to your advantage; "Therefore lift up the hands that hang down, and confirm the feeble knees. Why lie you thus upon your faces? up and be doing; the Lord is with you; the Lord is before you; the Lord is on every side."