SERMON VII.

THE NATURE OF AND OBLIGATIONS TO RESIGNATION TO THE WILL OF GOD.

2 Sam. xv. 26.—"But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee, behold here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him."

In the preceding sermon you have heard, that all the tribulations of the people of God are for their good, and how they are so, whatever discouraging apprehensions they may have of them. If this be so, then, doubtless, it is their duty to be absolutely resigned unto the divine disposal in everything. Of this we have a notable example in the words of our text. David is here in great distress, by means of his son's unnatural rebellion. He finds it necessary to fly from Jerusalem. The priests and Levites accompany him in his flight, and they carry the ark along with them, that by it they might ask counsel of God for him. He had a great concern for the safety of the ark, and therefore orders it back to Jerusalem. None loved the ark and ordinances of the Lord better than he; but since Jerusalem was, by divine appointment, the place for the abode of the ark, he will have it carried back thither; and if the Lord should be pleased to return him to the crown, to the city, to the ark and ordinances of divine worship, well; but if otherwise, he is resigned to the divine disposal: "Let him do to me what seemeth good unto him."

In the words you have two things, 1st, A supposition, and a very afflicting one, namely, that God might see it meet never to restore him to his kingdom, nor to the ark and ordinances of the Lord, but that he might be slain, or obliged to skulk in some corner of the world the remain-
der of his days. 2dly, You have the conclusion he makes upon this supposition; and it is indeed a very good one. He resolves, through grace, to be absolutely resigned to the sovereign will of God. And it is well expressed here, "Let him do to me what seemeth good unto him." He puts himself in the posture of a servant, waiting his master's orders. He considers God's absolute sovereignty, and thereupon commands his soul into silence. Says he, I have nothing to object, all is good to me that seems good to him. Observe with what complacency and holy satisfaction he speaks of the divine disposal. Not only he can do what he will, subscribing to his power; or, he may do what he will, saying amen to his sovereignty; or, he will do what he will, resting in his unchangeableness; but let him do what he will, approving of the wisdom of his dispositions.

Doctrine. It is the duty of all, and the disposition of the saints, to be resigned unto the divine disposal in everything.

I shall, first, mention some things that are no way inconsistent with absolute resignation to God.

First, For a Christian to be sensibly touched with afflicting events, is by no means inconsistent with it. The design of Christianity is not to root out our affections, but to regulate them. Our Lord himself was most sensibly affected with the bitterness of the cup which his Father gave him to drink. He was in an agony; his soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. But, notwithstanding all this commotion of affections in him, there was no irregularity, no rebellion or murmuring, no flinching from obedience to every point of his Father's will. When he makes a supposition of the cup passing from him, he qualifies it thus; "nevertheless, not my will but thine be done."

Some, among the heathens of old, affected a stoical apathy, a sullen carelessness about all the afflictions which befell them, death itself not excepted; and for this they were highly applauded by others as ignorant of God as
themselves. It was called heroism and greatness of spirit: but, in reality, it was cowardice and baseness of spirit. Such behaviour was so far from being the effect of a truly humbled spirit, which is the only great spirit, that it was the effect of the most insufferable pride and contempt, both of God and his providence. Something of this behaviour appeared among the Jews in Isaiah's time; and we find the Lord imputes it to the pride and stoutness of their hearts, Isa. ix. 9, 10, "And all the people shall know, even Ephraim, and the inhabitants of Samaria, that say in the pride and stoutness of their heart, the bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars." That is, providence has blasted this project, but no matter, we will form a better, and be sure to succeed. Therefore, as we must guard on the one hand, against fainting, when we are rebuked of the Lord, so we must guard, on the other, against despising his chastening. We may groan and be grieved, provided we do not grudge and murmur. We may be sorrowful, but not sullen and obstinate.

Secondly, For a Christian to search into the cause of the Lord's contending with him, is very consistent with absolute resignation to his will. Job says, chap. x. 2, "Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me." The Lord does not afflict willingly, not grieve the children of men; that is, there is a cause for every twig of the rod; and therefore the Christian, under the mighty hand of God, may and ought to reflect upon his former ways, and see if he can find out what part of his conduct has provoked the Lord to lift up his hand against him, that so he may take the rebuke, and amend his ways. But when people search into the dispensations of providence, in the bitterness of their spirits, when they ask reasons of the divine conduct in such and such particulars, because they think it hard and unreasonable, then rebellion has the ascendant of resignation: there is an uproar and mutiny in the soul, by unmortified lusts. Examples of which we have in Job; "Why died I not from the womb? why did I not give up
the ghost when I came out of the belly? why did the knees prevent me? or why the breasts that I should suck?" Such questions, and such reasonings, were not becoming one in his circumstances. The good man Asaph offended in this way also, as we see in the seventy-third Psalm.

Thirdly, For a Christian to desire and pray for deliverance from trouble, is no way inconsistent with resignation to the divine disposal. Indeed, to pray absolutely for exemption from trouble while we are in this world, is not agreeable to the will of God, nor is there any instance of this in scripture, and so it can never be accepted of God: and to pray positively, without making a reserve to the wise disposal of God, for deliverance from any particular trial, has as little of the Christian in it as the former, and must sound ungratefully in the ears of the hearer of prayer.

But it is not unbecoming, nor unusual, for Christians of the first rank for resignation, to beg of God that he would deliver them from some particular distresses and trials they labour under. We have frequent examples of this in David, in his Book of Psalms. Sometimes we find him pleading very earnestly with God for relief, and yet still leaving a full latitude to sovereignty. Thus, in the thirty-ninth Psalm, "Remove thy stroke away from me, I am consumed by the blow of thine hand." And again, "O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence and be no more." But that he was resigned in all these petitions, appears from ver. 9th, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." We have the greatest of all examples for this, in the conduct of the Son of God, John xii. 27, "Father, save me from this hour:" but at the same time, he shows his resigned temper of soul, and full resolution to go through with the work he had undertaken; "but for this cause came I unto this hour." And again, "Father, if thou be willing, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not my will but thine be done." Thus you see the Christian may pray, and that earnestly, for the removal of his trouble; but still he must, in his heart, be resigned to the holy and wise disposal of God.
Fourthly, For the Christian to use all lawful means for deliverance from any particular trouble, is perfectly consistent with absolute resignation to divine providence. Thus, when the Christian is in bodily distress, and threatened with the dissolution of his frame, although he must be resigned to the will of God, either as to living or dying, yet it is his duty to use all suitable means for restoring himself to health again. Timothy, who it seems was of a tender and delicate constitution, is exhorted by Paul, to use a little wine for his stomach's sake, and his often infirmities. To use the means is our duty; to be resigned to the will of God with respect to the success of it, is also a duty: and, since they are both duties, the one cannot be inconsistent with the other.

I may add, in the last place, That frequent sallies of fretting are not inconsistent with habitual resignation to the will of God. I speak not this to extenuate the sin of murmuring, which is certainly a very great one, and must be very provoking to God, but for the encouragement of some of God's own children, who may be sore cast down, because of their unsubdued spirit, and the occasional eruption of their passion. Such sallies, we see, are incident to the best of saints. Job, whom the Holy Ghost in the New Testament celebrates for his patience, had several impatient fits, and bitter expressions under them, as may be seen in his book. Asaph, in his haste, uttered some indecent, yea, atheistical expressions; yet Job was a resigned saint, and Asaph a believer both in God and his providence.

I proceed, in the second place, To open the nature of this absolute resignation to the disposal of God.

First, It implies an approbation of the divine conduct, in the whole and every part of it, as holy and good. If you would know, what is the settled judgment of the Christian, about the conduct of God towards himself or others, we will deliver it in the Psalmist's words, Psal. xviii. 30, "As for God, his way is perfect." In the preceding part of the Psalm, he is giving a narrative of some very strange events; and to prevent any unbecoming reflections that
others might make upon them, he delivers his own opinion concerning them in these words, "As for God, his way is perfect." Moses, for a long course of years, had been a spectator of the divine providence. He had seen surprising dispensations both of mercy and judgment; and in his last song he delivers his opinion about them: "He is the rock, his way is perfect; for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity: just and right is he."

The resigned Christian, then, is one who thinks well of God, and approves of his conduct as holy, just, and good, though it be deep and mysterious to him. He will not take upon him to prescribe rules and methods to the only wise God, like the murmuring unmanageable souls, who are full of big swelling reasonings against God and his providence. Oh how many are the sophisms of unbelief! The solid reasonings of faith say, "He hath done all things well."

Secondly, In this Christian resignation, there is an heart-love to the whole, and every part of the divine conduct.

The mind may judge a thing to be right, and the will may comply with it, while, at the same time, there may be the greatest reluctance in the affections. But, as the resigned soul loves the economy of grace, so it loves the economy of providence. The Christian does, with the greatest pleasure and satisfaction, behold his Father's wise and holy hand, moving all the wheels of providence. And thus he gets and maintains a calm mind, under the most terrible dispensations.

In the third place, In this resignation there is a cheerful compliance with all the disposals of providence. The child of God says, after the example of his elder brother, "not my will but thine be done;" and with the chief Apostle, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" what will thou have me to deny? what wilt thou have me so suffer? Give but the word of command, make but the least intimation of what is thy will, and, through grace, mine shall not only acquiesce, but cheerfully comply. No doubt, David loved
the crown of Israel, the city of Jerusalem, the ark of God, and the ordinances of his worship; but if it was the will of God that he should enjoy them no longer, he was ready to comply.

But, concerning this resignation, let the following things be more particularly observed.

First, The subject of Christian resignation, is an heart born again by the Spirit of God. It is one of the graces of the Spirit; but no man hath these graces of the Spirit, but he who is born of the Spirit, and in whom the Spirit dwells. All the graces of the Spirit of God have their counterfeits in hypocrites. As there is a false faith, a false hope, a false joy, so there is a false resignation, which hypocrites are possessed of; something that bears the semblance of true resignation, and passes for it among men. Thus, the sullen and indifferent behaviour of some heathens, under severe calamities, was cried up, by their ignorant admirers, as resignation and patience: whereas God, who searches the heart, saw pride and obstinacy to be the springs of their behaviour. We must conclude, that whatever may look like resignation among men, arising from a natural sweetness of temper, or whatever advantages some may have for the practice of it, arising from constitution or example, yet that resignation, which is in the sight of God of great price, is as much a work of his Spirit as faith or any other grace. None but such can be loyal subjects in the kingdom of God. All others are malcontents: and, from their nature, must be so. It was a most blasphemous speech of one, that if he had been in the divine counsel, he would have ordered things much better than he thought God had done: and yet that poor miscreant did but speak out, what secretly lurks in the hearts of all natural men. We may lay it down as a certain rule, that whosoever are not the subjects of God's kingdom of grace, can never be dutiful subjects in his kingdom of providence. A man who is not pleased with the grace of God, will never be pleased with his providence, except in so far as it enables him to please his own self-
will. Providence, then, which contradicts the rebel's self-will, may break his back; but it is only the grace of God which can bow his heart, into a cheerful compliance with the divine will. When Paul became a subject of the kingdom of grace, his first petition was, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

**Secondly**, The proper object of Christian resignation is God in Christ. The object of the heathen's resignation, such as it was, was God absolutely considered. A sinner out of Christ, who apprehends God as his enemy, may indeed, in a sense, submit to his will, just as the malefactor submits to the sentence of his judge, because there is no possibility of avoiding it: whereas the real Christian not only submits to the will of God, because it cannot be resisted, but, by grace, his spirit is brought to a complacency in it: for he considers it as the will of God in Christ, breathing not only a display of the wisdom and power of God, but good to him; and so he would not wish it to be otherwise. Paul lays it down for certain, that "all things shall work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to his propose." Try then the reality of your resignation by the object of it. Do you resign yourselves to God, absolutely considered, or to God in Christ, as your God.

**Thirdly**, The extent of Christian resignation is unto all things. The Christian has no reserve: he does not except against any part of the will of God, either as to doing or suffering. The hypocrite would be content to resign himself in some things to the will of God, that is, in such things as do not cross his own will; which is by no means acceptable resignation. The murmurers think they could be resigned to any dispensation but the present, and so they are never easy: whereas the true Christian preserves a serene mind under every dispensation; for he reckons himself in the hands of a friend, wise to contrive, powerful to execute, and faithful to fulfil whatever is for his good.

But it may be useful to be more particular here.

In the first place, then, The Christian is resigned to the
will of God, with respect to his station and calling in the world. The great Governor of the world allots unto men their several posts and stations in life. Men, therefore, ought to show their resignation to him in these, by resting satisfied with their outward condition whatever it be. The various conditions of life are like so many seats placed one above another, whereof God hath the disposal. He calls one man, and sets him high, and another beneath him; the third lower still, and so on as it pleaseth him. Now, it is the duty, and the disposition of every true Christian, to be perfectly pleased with the seat assigned him, be it high or low, till God say, arise and go up higher, or arise and come down lower, or arise and give up thy accounts.

Secondly, The Christian is resigned to the will of God, with respect to his gifts. "There are diversities of gifts, though there be but one Spirit;" and his wisdom and sovereignty are very brightly displayed in bestowing these. To one is given, by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge, and so on. Now, it is the duty of the Christian, unto whom the Spirit has distributed more sparingly, to be resigned to the will of God in this matter; and to occupy with what God gives him, and not to envy others on account of their superior abilities. For be his station in the body of Christ never so low, it is both honourable and necessary.

Thirdly, He is resigned to God, with respect to his constitution and health. Health is, so to speak, the sauce of our earthly enjoyments. Without it everything of this kind loses its relish, and many of them become nauseous. Some are of a robust constitution, and little know what trouble is. Others, like Timothy, have their often infirmities. The Lord is the maker of them both. He lodges one soul in a strong, another in a weak tabernacle, as it seemeth good unto him: and therefore it is the duty of every Christian, to be pleased with that body, in which his Sovereign hath lodged his soul.

Fourthly, The people of God are resigned to his will, with
respect to the measure of comfort they are to draw out of earthly things. Houses, lands, riches, friends, and all other things, are neither less nor more to us, than what God makes them. Hence, Solomon observes, that "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." He puts every degree of innocent pleasure into these things, which they severally convey. Hence, from the same object, you have sometimes comfort, and sometimes bitterness. God holds the scales in his hand, and weighs out comfort at one time, and sorrow at another time, and that from the same earthly thing.

Fifthly, He is resigned, with respect to esteem and reputation in the world. A good name is as precious ointment, much to be desired; but, in the depths of sovereign wisdom, it sometimes falls out, that a good man's maintaining the truth, and maintaining a good name in the world, are inconsistent. Thus it was with our Saviour himself. How unsavoury was his name among the Jews? what reproaches did they cast upon him? The Apostles after him, were looked upon as seditious persons: they lost their good name, but it was in a good cause, even the cause of truth; and so they lost it cheerfully.

Sixthly, Believers are resigned to the will of God, as to all the afflictions which befall them in the course of their lives; and this takes in various things. They are resigned with respect to the kind of their afflictions. Heaven is the workshop, so to speak, where crosses are made; and there are various kinds of them: but were the resigned Christian to have them all laid before him, and allowed to lift any one of them that he thought himself best able to bear, he would absolutely decline choosing for himself, and humbly desire of the Lord, that he would choose for him; and in doing so, he would discover much wisdom as well as resignation: for never was a stone in the building more fit for its place, than the cross chosen by the Lord for the shoulders of the Christian who bears it.

They are resigned, with respect to the measure of afflictions. As we are not to choose the kind, neither are we
to choose the degree of our troubles. Two Christians may have each a trial of the same kind, and yet the trial of the one may be to a far greater degree than that of the other. God, in his wisdom, infuses more gall and wormwood into one cup than into another: but he who has the bitterest cup, if he is truly resigned, will say, after the example of his elder brother, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

Christians are resigned, in respect of the multitude of their troubles. The Psalmist says, "many are the troubles of the righteous:" what he adds is very comfortable; "but the Lord delivereth them out of them all." Jacob, Job, David, and other Scripture saints, were exercised with a multitude of afflictions. Sometimes they rolled thick upon them, like one wave upon the back of another: and this is the lot of some valuable Christians still. They go always bowed down. There is no period of life, but what is filled up with a variety of trials. This is a proper field for resignation to display its strength and activity in.

Again, Real Christians are resigned, as to the continuance of their trials. Some are afflicted in one period of their lives, and some in another, and some all the days of their appointed time. If it is the will of God, that we shall have no respite, till we lie down in our graves, we must lay our hands on our mouths, and say, good is the will of the Lord, let it be done.

In the last place, Believers are resigned to the will of God, with respect to their removal out of this world: and this is a matter of very great consequence. It is a piece of the mystery, and of the trial of faith, that the Christian's way to heaven should be through death and the grave: that after a stormy and tempestuous life, he must set his feet into the cold and deep waters of Jordan, before he can tread upon the promised land. The Christian is resigned with respect to death, absolutely considered, as it is a separation of the essential parts of human nature, soul and body. Death has carried on a war against human nature, ever since sin invaded it; and since there is no
discharge in that warfare, the Christian resolves to engage in it, hoping to be victorious through his Redeemer. The Christian is resigned, with respect to the manner of his death, whether it be natural or violent, sudden or lingering. Paul speaks out a resigned temper in this matter, Acts xxii. 13, "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus." He remembered how cheerfully Christ had died for him at Jerusalem; and now he is ready to die for Christ there also. God hath appointed but one way of coming into the world, but there are various ways of going out of it: but it is no great matter with the Christian which way he go out of it, if he gets safely to his Father's house at last. He is resigned also, as to the time of his death. Jacob, the heir of the promise, is starved almost for want of bread in the land of promise, and is obliged to remove with his family into Egypt, where he dies, and leaves his family to be sore and long oppressed. Moses dies on mount Nebo, after he had seen the promised land, and was told he should never set his foot on it. David must be content to leave the world, without seeing a stone laid in the temple of his God, though he had gotten the pattern of it, and provided materials for it. Good king Josiah must die in the field of battle, for not hearkening to the words of Necho from the mouth of God. It is an happy thing for believers, that their times are wholly in the hand of God: that he has the sole power of retaining and dismissing their spirits. Were people allowed to choose the time of their leaving the world, what disorder would it occasion? Some would be for staying longer in the world than God has use for them; and others would be for going away, before they had finished their day as an hireling. In a fit of grief, or hour of temptation, they would cry out with Job, "to be hid in the grave," though God had more work to be accomplished by them. The real Christian resolves to be still doing, till the great Master say, stop: then he cheerfully resigns his saved soul into the hands of God his Saviour.

We proceed now to enquire, why we should be thus ab-
solutely resigned unto the divine disposal in all things. And,

First, We should be so, because he is God, and there is none else besides him. This is a reason assigned by God himself, and therefore it should have weight with us, Psal. xlvi. 10, “Be still, and know that I am God.” When Manasseh was under affliction, and got good by it, it is said, that then he “knew that the Lord he was God.” One great lesson to be learned in the school of affliction is, to know God; and it is long before we learn this aright. If we did, we should not be so stiff-necked and rebellious, under his holy hand. If you ask, what is God? Any body will answer, he is a spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, and so on. But if they really believed him to be what they call him, would they have such a world of difficulties in committing all unto his disposal? No surely. Is it meet to be said to this God, what doest thou? or why doest thou thus? For he giveth not account of any of his matters. Does it become any of us to say, why are my comforts taken from me, while the comforts of others are continued with them? why is my way to the kingdom through thorns and briers, while others ride upon high places? why do others walk in the light, and in perfect calm, while I go mourning without the sun? Are these, and such as these, becoming questions to be put to the Most High? Know you not that all these things, whereof you unjustly complain, are the wondrous doings of the Lord, and therefore challenge your absolute resignation. The great ones of the earth have their special favourites, whom they love and honour above others, and they must not be quarrelled for this. They claim as a privilege, to choose their favourites, and to dispense their favours as they please. If it be thus among men, will we not leave God to the same liberty? must men prescribe to him, or arraign his procedure at their bar? or, shall those who deserve nothing complain, because they enjoy not everything? My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

Secondly, We ought to be resigned, because he is the
Creator, and we are the workmanship of his hands. "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say unto him that fashioneth it, what maketh thou? or thy work, he hath no hands? Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" Be thou never so high, never so far exalted above thy fellow creatures, thou art still but a man: why then wilt thou exalt thyself above God, secretly quarrelling with his conduct, and prescribing rules to him? See how God humbles the prince of Tyrus, when he was swelled with pride like the foam of the sea, Ezek. xxviii. 6, "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God; Behold, therefore, I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness. They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas."

We were merely passive in our first formation; and it is highly reasonable, that in God's management of us, we should be also passive; not offering to choose for ourselves, but resting in the choice of God, be what it will. True Christians say, in the language of the Psalmist in the forty-seventh Psalm, "He shall choose our inheritance for us."

Thirdly, God is the sovereign disposer of all things. He is clothed not only with omnipotence, whereby he can do everything, but also with sovereignty, whereby he may do whatever he pleases. As the potter, he has power over the clay, to make one vessel to honour and another to dis-honour. "He does in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, what seems good unto him." None can defeat his counsels. He sways an uncontrollable sceptre over all that are in heaven, earth or hell. "And who art thou that resistest his will? thou whose breath is in thy nostrils, and art in no way to be accounted of!" what an inconsiderable creature art thou, among the multitude of beings that are the subjects of Zion's king!

Lastly, We ought to be absolutely resigned to God, be-
cause he is the best disposer of all things. The whole household of faith assent to this: he doth all things well. We know not what is best for us, and yet we are fond of choosing for ourselves. The great Pilot of the creation steers always a right course for carrying the passengers to glory. "As for him, his way is perfect, though it be in the deep waters. Though clouds and darkness be round about him, justice and judgment are the habitations of his throne." The whole economy of providence is directed by unerring wisdom, tempered with mercy and truth to them that fear God. And in the issue, all things shall be found to have wrought together for their good.

Now, as resignation is the duty of all, so it is the disposition of the saints in particular: For,

1st, Resignation is a part of the new nature, formed in them by the Holy Ghost. Hence, as I observed before, it is ranked among the fruits of the Spirit, Gal. v. 22, 23. and can be in none but those, in whom the Spirit has begun that good work of grace, which shall be perfected in glory. The new creature is by nature a meek, quiet, and resigned creature; even as the old man is by nature an untame, fierce, and rebellious creature.

Resignation is as essential a part of the new nature, as rebellion is of the old; and therefore it is and must be the disposition of every saint.

2dly, This resignation is an eminent piece of conformity to Jesus Christ: and that, you know, is the earnest desire, the interest, the honour, as well as the indispensable duty of all his saints, Phil. ii. 5. 1 John ii. 6. Nothing appeared more gloriously in Christ, than resignation to his Father's will. This grace, this duty was exemplified by him, both in his doing and suffering: and it was warmly inculcated by him upon his disciples. Now, if this be so, what sort of Christians must those be, who are not habitually resigned to the will of God, but constantly disposed to quarrel and censure his ways as unequal? They contradict the precept and example of Christ, and so blaspheme that worthy name by which they are called.
3dly, We find the saints recorded in scripture to have been thus disposed: not but that they sometimes rebelled and murmured under the hand of the Lord. But, then, this was not their habitual temper and practice: this they did not allow in themselves; nay, they condemned it in themselves, and were grieved for it; witness Asaph in the 73d Psalm. They were so far from priding themselves in it, that they were pained for it, and mourned over it before the Lord. Therefore, when we meet with any bitter expressions about the conduct of providence, uttered by any of the saints in scripture, as Job and others, we must consider them as uttered in their haste, and in the heat of temptation, and not as their settled judgment about the divine conduct.

Lastly, This resignation to the divine will, is an eminent piece of sanctification. David could not have said any thing that savoured more of a spirit of holiness, than the words of the text; "Lo, here am I, let him do to me what seemeth good unto him." All the graces of the Spirit, such as faith, love, joy, patience, are so closely connected with resignation, that they cannot be in any person without it.

I proceed now to the application.

Is it the duty of all, and the disposition of the saints, to be absolutely resigned to the will of God? Then,

1st, This doctrine reproves all those who censure the ways of God as unequal, because they cannot or will not see the reason of them. This was the sin of Israel, Ezek. xviii. 29, "Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal, are not your ways unequal?" Nothing could have been said more false and injurious, being a flat contradiction to what David said by the Spirit, concerning the way of God, "His way is perfect," Psal. xviii. 30. And the Lord refutes the vile calumny cast upon his ways, by a solemn appeal to the consciences of the calumniators, wherein he desires them to consider his ways and their own ways, that they might take their censure off the
former, and lay it upon the latter, where it justly deserved to lie.

My brethren, call not the ways of God unequal, because they lie not square with the perverse wills of men. They are perfectly agreeable unto the eternal rule of righteousness, and unto the eternal decree, whereof they are the accomplishment.

2dly, This doctrine reproves murmurers and fretters, under cross events of providence. Murmurers and complainers, you see, are put in a very black roll, Jude ver. 16. They are the persons upon whom the Lord is to execute judgment; and they deserve it very justly: for, after a sort, they set up themselves as dictators to the only wise God. They are not satisfied with the divine conduct, either towards themselves or others. They misconstrue not only the mysterious, but likewise the plain and easy events of providence. Any dispensation but the present, they think, would be tolerable. In short, your murmurers are the most unmanageable creatures in all the divine dominions. They cannot please God, and God cannot please them; and so they live in a constant war against heaven, and behave, as if they had put on a resolution always to oppose the will of God.

3dly, This doctrine reproves those who use undue means to better their outward condition, as fraud, oppression, injustice, anxious carefulness, and the like. Such persons are not satisfied with God’s allowance. They are not content with their present condition; and this is a great sin, though it is very little thought of, because it is so common. It may be called “Gad, for a troop cometh.” It is a teeming womb of sins, and those of a very heinous nature.

Let me therefore exhort you to an absolute resignation unto the divine disposal in everything: and, to enforce it, I offer these motives following.

1st, Consider the absolute sovereignty of God, whose are all things, and who may dispose of them as he pleases. May not I do with mine own what I please, is a style in which none may speak but Jehovah, who sits upon the
circle of the earth, while the inhabitants of it are as grasshoppers before him. Now, unto holy souls there is a shining beauty in sovereignty. We read but once of our Saviour's rejoicing in spirit: and the occasion of it was remarkable, namely, a display of his Father's sovereignty, Matt. xi. 25. The mysteries of grace as well as the mysteries of providence, must be resolved into the sovereign will of God. Why was Jacob chosen, and Esau rejected? Why was the gospel revealed unto babes, that is, unto poor, weak, and despised persons, while it was hid from the great ones of the world, the men of parts and power? Why are we privileged with the means of grace, while others, partaking of the same human nature, are sunk in the darkness of ignorance? Why, all these are the doings of him who giveth not account of his matters. Why was this part of the creation an angel, that a man, and this a worm? Not from their own choice; but, merely, because the sovereign Lord would have it so. Why are some kingdoms of the world razed, and others raised? Why are some families flourishing, while others are fading? Why are some healthy, while others are sore troubled? How is it that heavy calamities befall some, while others escape, who have no title to heaven's special favour? The reason is still the same; "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight."

2dly, Consider the absolute power of God. Job ix. 4, "He is mighty in strength." The greatest men in the world have a prescribed power: there are bounds and limits set unto it. Thus far it may go, but no further: and hence we are called, not to fear the fury of the oppressor. Yea, the devil himself, who bears the pompous and magnificent title of god of this world, lies bound in a chain strongly twisted by Jehovah's hand, so that it cannot be broken: nor can he do any thing but as the chain is lengthened out. But Jehovah himself is not only powerful: he is the Omnipotent: he can do everything that is consistent with his perfections. "He formeth the mountains, and createth the wind. He declareth unto man
what is his thought, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth. The Lord of Hosts is his name." It is he "who created the heavens and the earth, and upholds them by the word of his power." It is he who, by a deluge of water, swept away the old ungodly world. It is he who rained fire and brimstone upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, whereby they were turned into ashes, and were made an example unto those who afterwards should live ungodly. It is he who parted the waters of the Red Sea for a passage to his people, while he caused them to meet upon Pharaoh, and his chariots, and his horsemen, so that "they sank like lead in the mighty waters." It is he who caused the earth to open and swallow up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, so that all that were round about fled at the cry of them; for they said, "lest the earth swallow us up also." It is he who sent forth his angel, and smote in Sennacherib’s army an hundred and fourscore and five thousand men, in one night. These are instances of the mighty power of God, in a way of judgment: and there are not wanting as eminent instances of his power, in a way of mercy. And, after such an account of the power of the Most High, wilt thou, O man, lift up thine hand against him. Thou art, in his hand, less by far than the moth in thine own. He can bruise us, he can speak, yea, he can look us into nothing.

3dly, Consider the infinite wisdom of God, as it is displayed in the whole economy of providence. Job ix. 4, "He is wise in heart." Praise and glory are ascribed unto him, under the title of God only wise, Rom. xvi. 27. Men of power often want wisdom to direct them in the execution of their power, for great men are not always wise, and so their power degenerates into tyranny and oppression, and often ends in the ruin both of the ruler and the ruled. But the Generalissimo of the world, the great Pilot of the universe, is God only and infinitely wise. All his measures are laid with such depth of wisdom, that nothing can disconcert them. He sees into all possible futurities, so that no event can surprise him. However the sons of men may be
alarmed, his holy and wise hand is always at the upper end of the chain, and he knows and moves every link of it. He sets all the wheels in motion, from the least to the greatest, and they move no way without his direction. There cannot so much as a hair fall to the ground, without his will. This we think a very trivial thing, and yet there is a divine hand in it. The bullets fly promiscuously in the day of battle, yet they are so under the direction of God, that they fall only on those whom he has a mind to kill, and pass by those whom he intends to save alive.

A beautiful line of wisdom runs through the whole scene of providence, which challenges an entire and absolute resignation. The world has now lasted nearly six thousand years; and, during that vast period, there have been strange convulsions and commotions in it. But we may challenge both men and devils, to name but one event of providence, from the creation of the world to this very day, that can in the least impeach the wisdom of its Governor. Your most accomplished statesmen and politicians have been guilty of great imprudencies; they have committed most notorious blunders in their public conduct. But our God has not only the management of this and the other petty kingdom, but he also presides over this whole world, and likewise over the other world, that world of spirits; yet never was there, is there, or shall there be, one piece of maladministration in all his dominions; therefore be you absolutely resigned to the conduct of this wise God, who "is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."

4thly, Consider the justice and equity of him who rules in Jacob, and unto the ends of the earth. Moses, the man of God, after he had seen many strange scenes of providence, gives ample testimony to this, Deut. xxxii. 4, "He is the rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity: just and right is he." He does all things in number, weight and measure. He acts according to the eternal rule of righteousness. True, indeed, his own people bear the burden
and heat of the day, while his enemies lie at ease: the former are often sore afflicted, while the latter have things prospering to their wish. But, my brethren, think honourably of God, notwithstanding this seemingly unequal distribution. Love and hatred are not known by any of these things. Neither poverty nor riches, are badges of Heaven's special favour. The best and the worst of men have been in either state. And if this will not satisfy the unsubdued murmuring sinners, if they will still reflect upon the Governor of the world, as if his ways were unequal, let them know, that there is a day coming, when God will convince them of the hard speeches, which they have spoken against him. Then we shall have a clear commentary upon this obscure text, the providence of God, when the great reasons of state shall be declared, why this nation or kingdom was overthrown, while another, that was as wicked, continued to flourish. Why so many good men were oppressed and borne down, while some of the worst of men had more than their heart could wish. Then the mystery of providence will be clearly unfolded, to the great joy of the resigned, and to the conviction and terrible consternation of the murmurers, who shall go speechless to the pit.

5thly, Consider the faithfulness and mercy of God, that so you may be absolutely resigned unto his disposal. Moses, in that forecited place, celebrates the truth and faithfulness of God, as well as his justice: and Joshua, the successor of Moses, who likewise beheld many strange scenes of providence, gives testimony to the same truth, when he had a near view of death. He appeals unto the consciences of the people, if any "one thing had failed of all the good things which the Lord their God spake concerning them," Josh. xxiii. 14. We are greatly surprised with some dispensations of providence, which now and then fall out in the world: but every one of them is the accomplishment of the divine purpose, which should silence you: and some of them are the accomplishment of the divine mercy, which should make you rejoice. He is good, and kind, and mer-
ciful, who then would not be resigned to his disposal. You never saw, read or heard of any dispensation of providence, so strangely checkered with judgment, that there were no vestiges of the divine goodness in it.

But to move you further to this absolute resignation unto the divine disposal, consider some other things: As, 1st, That resignation is one of those things which God values very highly, as the apostle Peter declares, 1 Pet. iii. 4. Satan and the world call this meekness meanness, and this quietness under the Lord’s hand, dulness and stupidity; for they have names of reproach to all the graces of the spirit and to the duties of Christianity: but the judgment of God is always according to truth; and it is in favour of the meek, humble, and resigned souls. Though they are among the despised things of the world, though they be counted as the filth and offscouring of all things, like the apostles of old, yet God never thinks the less of them, but still honours, esteems, and loves them. As an evidence of this, observe what he says, Isa. lxvi. 1, 2, “Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that you build unto me; and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” He challenges the Jews here, to find him a place to dwell in; but presently he finds out one for himself, and one that they would never have dreamed of, so long as they had a pompous and magnificent temple for him; and that was the heart of a poor and contrite man, that trembled at his word. They would despise such a dwelling; but observe how highly Jehovah speaks of it. “The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; for all those things hath mine hand made.” But I have a piece of workmanship that I value more than them all, and that is, a poor and contrite spirit; a humble, self-denied, resigned soul: and I will enter into that soul as my habitation, and I will dwell in it, when your temple shall be no more; yea,
when the heavens and the earth shall be no more: for I will dwell in it for ever.

2dly, Consider the many precious promises made to meek and resigned souls, which you can never claim the benefit of, so long as you behave like "bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke." It is promised to the meek, that they shall eat, and shall be satisfied, Psal. xxii. 26. Though they may have but a little, yet of that little they shall eat and be satisfied, while the wicked, in their fulness, shall be in straits. While others cry incessantly, "Who will show us any good?" and, like birds of prey, catch at everything they like, right or wrong, when they have got all, they will still be dissatisfied: whereas the resigned soul, that receives the smallest portion from God's hand with thankfulness, will find such satisfaction in it, as will make him far more happy, than if he had all the revenues of the wicked. See also, Psal. xxv. 9, "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way." These are two great and precious promises. If your spirits are absolutely resigned unto the divine disposal, God will guide you in judgment; that is, he will guide you in your practical judgment of things; he will teach you to distinguish between good and evil, sin and duty. In all circumstances he will direct your steps, so that you shall not turn aside. Now, my brethren, this is a great benefit to those that are living in an ensnaring world, and who have enemies within them, ready to lead them aside. If you will but shut your eyes, and give your hand to the Lord, he will lead you safely through all dangers. Moreover, as he will teach you your way, so he will teach you his way; his way of grace, and his way of providence: that is a deep and mysterious way, and yet most perfect, though the world fret and stumble at it. He will show you, how the strangest ways of his providence are consistent with the eternal rule of righteousness, and with the promise, which secures a happy issue of all trials to them that love him. That is likewise a precious promise made to the meek, Isa. xxix. 19, "The meek also shall increase their joy in the
Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the holy One of Israel." Observe, it is not said, the meek shall have joy, but that they "shall increase their joy;" intimating, that in the midst of their afflictions, and when there is as yet no prospect of deliverance, they have joy; but when the deliverance cometh, they increase their joy. If you would have God to strengthen your heart, you must be of good courage. If you would have him to increase your joy, you must not faint or repine, but be resigned in tribulation. Another promise made to the meek, you have, Psal. cxlix. 4, "For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people; he will beautify the meek with salvation." There is a twofold salvation he will beautify them with. 1st, A temporal salvation, by delivering them from their troubles and distresses; so that, "though they have lien among the pots, yet they shall be as doves, whose wings are covered with silver, and feathers with yellow gold." 2dly, With an eternal salvation. He will beautify them "with the fine linen of the saints; with the robe of Christ's righteousness; so that they shall shine forth as the sun;" yea, they shall outshine all the angels of heaven. They, in all their glory, are not arrayed like one of the saints. Let not the people of God, therefore, be discouraged, though they have lien among the pots; for the Lord will be "the lifter up of their head." He will "give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." It is said of him, that "he lifteth up the meek, while he casteth the wicked to the ground." Men tread upon the shrubs and branches that lie among their feet; but those who humble themselves under God's hand, and cast themselves down at his feet, he does not tread upon, but lifts them up and sets them on high; whereas he takes pleasure in mortifying the proud, and casting them down to the ground. The last promise I shall mention, made to meek and resigned souls, is their "inheriting the earth:" and this is made both in the Old and New Testament, Psal. xxxvii. 11. Matt. v. 5. However small their portion of
this earth may be, yet there shall be new heavens, and a
new earth, of which the fretters and murmurers shall not
enjoy one foot breadth; but, being turned out of this
cursed earth which they possessed before, they shall be
thrown down to the pit, where they shall murmur through
eternity: whereas the meek shall inhabit the new earth,
without molestation from any hand.

3dly, Consider the threatenings denounced against such
as fret and murmur, under the hand of the Lord. The
Lord, by the prophet, denounces a woe against him that
striveth with his Maker, Isa. xlvi. 9. And it is several
thousand years, since he threatened to come forth with
ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon
murmurers and complainers. It seems the day of judg-
ment is appointed with a peculiar view unto them, among
others, Jude ver. 15, 16. Think with yourselves, my
brethren, what terror, confusion and shame, will seize
upon the murmurers at that day, when they shall see him
with their eyes against whom they murmured, and when
they shall hear him with their ears, accounting for, and
justifying all those dispensations of his providence, which
they fretted at as hard and unreasonable; when they shall
hear him, convincing them of their ungodly thoughts and
ungodly speeches, which they uttered against him and his
ways, so effectually, that they shall have nothing to reply
in their own defence. How will they be nonplussed? How
will they be filled with shame and confusion, and cry
to the rocks and mountains to fall on them? Therefore,
since there is a day coming, when God will clearly account
for his administration, take heed to your spirits: judge
nothing before the time: pass no rash censures upon him
and his ways now, lest you be put to open shame at that
day, "when he will come to be glorified in his saints, and
admired in all them that believe."

4thly, An unresigned temper of spirit, as it is dishonour-
ing to God, so it is extremely hurtful unto yourselves. A
murmurer against God is his own tormentor: he is the
worst kind of cannibal, for he eats his own flesh: he keeps
himself in a perpetual ferment, and pines away by his own ill-natured and rebellious spirit: Job v. 2, "Envy slayeth the silly one." And Solomon calls it the "rottenness of the bones," Prov. xiv. 30. The misery of the murmurer is, that he can be satisfied with nothing that he has, because of something that he wants. God's taking or withholding something from him that his heart lusteth after, makes him like Amnon, to be lean from day to day, and to despise all the other good things that he enjoys. Thus Ahab fell sick amidst all the riches, honours and pleasures of a kingdom, because of Naboth's vineyard. And Haman, notwithstanding his riches and preferment at court, cried out, "Yet all this availed me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate," Esth. v. 13. And Rachel was so impatient for children, that nothing could make her relish life without them: "Give me children," says she, "else I die." Thus, murmuring under one cross, makes people overlook and undervalue many mercies: yea, it makes them not enjoy, but suffer life.

5thly, Absolute resignation to the divine will keeps a person sweet and easy in all circumstances. He that can just lay himself and all his concerns down at the Lord's feet, with humble confidence that all shall be well, has a serenity of mind much to be desired. That man is fit for all circumstances. Be he poor or rich, high or low, living or dying, he is perfectly easy; and can say with the prophet Habakkuk, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." At present, you live in a world full of uncertainties. If it is well with you to-day, it may be ill with you to-morrow. You know not what variety may be in your lot. But if you are possessed of the resigned temper, you will find yourselves easy in every change.

6thly, Resignation is the way to get good of all your afflictions. It will turn all your crosses into mercies.
They who are so impatient, that they must have the plaster presently removed, need not be surprised that the sore is not whole. And those who will not lie still till the Lord hew and polish them, shall never be pillars in the heavenly Jerusalem, but shall be thrown down as rubbish into the pit. They who will not endure the Lord's furnace of affliction, shall be consumed as dross and stubble by the fire of his wrath, while those who patiently endure the trial, shall at last be brought out of the furnace shining and pure as gold, Job xxiii. 10. Know, then, that the end of your afflictions is your sanctification. And if ever you would attain that blessed end, be resigned: wait the Lord's time. If he casts you down, lie still till his own hand lift you up; and then you shall stand and never fall.

7thly, Consider that your murmuring cannot stop the purposes of God, or change the course of his providence: for he is of one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doth. "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever:" and this is a part of it, that, through many tribulations the righteous must enter into the kingdom of God. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." There is no peradventure here: it is positively asserted. Now, shall the stated method of providence be altered, to gratify every peevish complainer? Must the purposes of the only wise God be broken for our ease, and to please our humour?

To conclude. Christ was resigned. And shall the Christian rebel, and so blaspheme the worthy name by which he is called? Nay, but on the contrary, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, with respect to his Father's will.