

FAITH'S RECOGNITION OF TAKING GOD FOR A REFUGE AND
PORTION, ILLUSTRATED.*

PSALM cxlii. 5.

*I cried unto thee, O Lord, I said, Thou art my refuge, and my portion,
in the land of the living.*

LAST Lord's day I opened the nature of the refuge for poor sinners, pressed you to flee into it, and to say each of you for yourselves, Thou art my refuge, and shewed how ye should say it. I now propose another doctrine, viz.

Doct. That those who have said to God in Christ, Thou art my refuge and portion, should recognize, reflect upon, and call to mind their so saying. Or, Those who have taken God in Christ for their refuge and portion, should recognize their so doing. *I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion.* David said this in the cave, and afterwards he comes over it again.

In handling this doctrine, I shall proceed as follows,

I. I shall shew what is imported in this recognisance of that deed or saying of the soul.

II. Why they should recognise it.

III. Apply.

1. I am to shew what is imported in this recognisance of that deed or saying of the soul; *I said it.* It imports,

1. A remembrance of the solemn transaction, Psal. ciii. 18. This is a deed never to be forgotten, but always to be kept in remembrance. It was God's quarrel with Tyre, that they remembered not the brotherly covenant with Edom, Amos i. 9. How much more if we remember not the covenant with God himself? But it fares with many in effect, as with men in other cases, they say the word, but afterwards they never mind they said it: for alas! they *remember it as waters that pass away*, which is in effect, it slips out of their mind, Job vi. 16. But, O ye who have said this, remember,

(1.) What you said. You said that God in Christ should be your refuge, that under the shade of his wings you hid yourselves, and that, renouncing all other refuges, as refuges of lies, you did betake yourselves to the covert of Christ's righteousness, and that there ye would abide for your portion; which was a formal acceptance of and laying hold on the covenant.

(2.) To whom you said it. To God in Christ speaking to you in the gospel-offer, and inviting you into the refuge. What men

* This second sermon was preached at Ettrick, August 26, 1721.

say to their superiors, they think themselves specially concerned to mind. And surely what ye have said to God, ye ought in a peculiar manner to remember, and awe your hearts with the consideration of the majesty of the party to whom ye said it, Psal. xvi. 2. "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord." For he is not one with whom we may deal falsely.

(3.) How ye said it. Did ye not say it in your hearts, while God in Christ was held out as a refuge for you? And the language of the heart is plain language with a heart-searching God. Did not some of you say it with your mouths? and did not all communicants say it solemnly before the world, angels, and men, by their receiving the elements of bread and wine?

(4.) Upon what grounds you said it. Did you not see a necessity of a refuge for you, and a necessity of taking God in Christ for your refuge? Ye had rational grounds for it, and lasting grounds that can never fail; so that ye can never have ground to retract, nor shift about for another refuge, Jer. ii. 31.

(5.) Where ye said it. Remember the spot of ground, where ye said it in prayer, where ye said it at the communion-table, Psal. xlii. 6. The stones of the place will be witnesses of your saying it, Joshua xxiv. 27.

2. A standing to it, without regretting that we said it, remembering what is said, John vi. 66—69. "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Men often repent what they have said and therefore will not own they have said it. But gracious souls will not repent their saying this, but will abide by it. If they were to make their choice a thousand times, having chosen God in Christ for their refuge and portion, they would not alter, but their first choice would be their last choice, Jer. iii. 19. "I said, thou shalt call me, my Father, and shalt not turn away from me." Many alterations may be in men's circumstances in the world, but there can never be one that will afford ground for retracting this saying.

3. An owning of the obligation of it, *I said*, and am obliged thereby to stand to it: *For I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back*, Jud. xi. 35. God in Christ is yours, and ye are his by your own consent; ye are no more your own; ye have said the word, and must own that it is binding on you; and ye must beware that after vows ye make not inquiry. Whoever may pretend they

have their choice yet to make of a refuge and portion to themselves ye cannot: ye are engaged already, and yet ye are not in safety to hearken to any other proposals, more than a woman who has already signed her contract with one man.

4. A professing of it confidently without being ashamed of it: q. d. "I own it before all men, and am not ashamed of my choice." Antichrist allows some of his vassals to carry his mark in their right hand, Rev. xiii. 10. But all the followers of the Lamb have their mark on their forehead, where it will not hide, Rev. xiv. 1. The world would put the people of God to shame on the head of their refuge and portion, as if they had made a foolish bargain of it, Psal. xiv. 6. "You have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the Lord is his refuge." But sincerity will make men despise that shame, as David said, "And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight."

5. A satisfaction of heart in it: q. d. "I said it, and O but I am well pleased that ever I said it; it was the best saying I could ever say," Psal. xvi. 2, 5, 6, 7. And this is in effect to say it over again. And good reason there is for them who have sincerely said it, to be well satisfied in their refuge, and to rejoice in their portion. The reflecting upon it may afford solid delight and content of heart. Ye who have taken the Lord for your refuge, may with much satisfaction reflect on it; for ye have,

(1.) A safe refuge, Prov. xviii. 10. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe. Chap. xxix. 25. Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord, shall be safe." Ye may sing the 91st psalm as your own charter for safety. Whatever storms blow, no plague shall come near thy dwelling while thou dwellest there. Revenging justice can do nothing against you there: the fiery law cannot throw the fire-balls of its curses within the border of your refuge: Rom. viii. 1, "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Gal. iii. 13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." God, who without the refuge is a consuming fire to sinners, within it is refreshing, warming, enlightening fire to them. However heavy days of common calamity ye may see, ye may be very easy in your refuge, having such a covert above your head, Job v. 22. "At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh," like the child in the shipwreck, smiling at the motions of the broken board.

(2.) A well furnished refuge: *Thou art my refuge and my portion*, says David in the text. There will never be any need to leave it for want of provision, and to shift elsewhere. God in Christ is a full portion in the refuge, of which we may afterwards speak more

particularly. There is nothing the man wants and is really in need of, but he shall have it there, Psal. lxxxiv. 11. "For the Lord God is a sun and shield: The Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." What is in the refuge? There is a fulness there, yea, all fulness, Col. i. 19, *For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.* And where all fulness is, [1.] There is not any thing wanting to make the sinner happy; there is a variety of provision, yea, all manner of provision, Cant. vii. ult. "At our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old." Rev. xxi. 7. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." [2.] There is plenty of every thing; no exhausting of any part of the provision; nothing will ever run short there, Rev. xxii. 2, "In the midst of the street of it, and of either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

(3.) The only refuge where men can be safe, Psal. xviii. 31, "*For who is God save the Lord? or who is a rock save our God?* There are other refuges indeed, but then they are all refuges of lies, and they will be all swept away, and those who lodge in them left naked, and open to all ruin, Isa. xxviii. 17. "The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place." All must come to your refuge or perish, Acts iv. 12. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." So that your duty and interest both say to you in this case, Let them return unto you, but return not ye unto them.

(4.) A near-hand refuge, Jer. xxiii. 23. *Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off?* God in Christ is every-where present; so be where ye will, ye are always within a step of your refuge, to be made by faith, Rom. x. 6, 7, 8. "But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above); or Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ from the dead); but what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the word of faith which we preach." Hence the people of God have had the benefit of their refuge, when they were cast into prisons, dungeons, banished to remote parts of the world. The cities of refuge were so situated, that some of them were on this side Jordan, and some on that side, that they might be near to flee to. In a moment thou mayst flee into thy refuge by faith. Hence faith is called a looking, Isa. xlv. 22. *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.*

(5.) A refuge none can stop your way to. However the child of God be blocked up, like David in the cave, however he may be hampered, none in the world can stop his way thither: *I said, Thou art my refuge.* God himself has prepared the way; and there is no stop in it for any that mind it. Hence Christ says to the spouse, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone," &c. Cant. ii. 10, 11. Enemies, may stand betwixt you and all created refuges, but nothing can hold you out of this refuge, who by faith go thither. "For, says the apostle, I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, Rom. viii. 38, 39.

(6.) A ready refuge. The gates stand open night and day to receive the refugees, Zech. xiii. 1. "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." None who flee thither are refused, or denied access; John vi. 37. *Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.* The father meets the prodigal son while he was yet a great way off; and no man can be more ready to enter the refuge, than the Refuge is to receive him.

(7.) A lasting refuge; a refuge for time, for all times, be they never so bad, Psal. lxii. 8. *Trust in him at all times:—God is a refuge for us.* From the beginning to this day, throughout all generations, this refuge has lasted, Psal. xc. 1. and will last a refuge for sinners to the end. And it is a refuge for eternity too, when all other refuges shall be razed, Isa. xxv. 4. "Thou hast been a refuge to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, &c. Heb. vii. 25. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

6. A pleading the benefit of it; q. d. "I have said it, and plead the benefit of God's refugees, safety and sanctification; Lam. iii. 24. "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him." God loves to have his people pleading their interest in him, Jer. iii. 4, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" The saints are very pointed and peremptory in it, Psal. cxvi. 6, "Oh Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds." And this they do over the belly of discouragements, Isa. lxiii. 16, "Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art

our Father, our Redeemer, thy name is from everlasting." We should hold by it, and by no means quit it, as the guilty did by the horns of the altar. Therefore saith the apostle, Heb. x. 25, "Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward."

II. The next head is to shew why they who have taken God in Christ for their refuge and portion, should recognise their so doing. They should do it,

1. For the honour of God in Christ. It tends to the Lord's honour for his people to be often recognising and re-acknowledging their subjection to him, and their consent to the covenant, Jer. iii. 4, forecited. For it says, they remember it, stand to it, own it, profess it consistently, are satisfied in it, and plead the benefit of it. For this cause the sacrament of the supper was instituted, and is often to be celebrated, that so the covenant may be confirmed and recognised again and again.

2. To revive the impressions of it on their own souls, Psal. xvi. 2. *O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord.* We are apt to forget what we have most solemnly said unto the Lord in the covenant. Hence Moses says unto the children of Israel, Deut. iv. 23, "*Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God which he made with you.*" How soon did Peter and the rest of the disciples forget, after the first communion, what they had said unto the Lord? The hearts of the best are fickle; impressions of good are easily worn off them, and very soon too do they begin to grow weak. We have much need therefore to be putting ourselves in mind of what passed in that case, lest the heart be like the adulteress, *which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God,* Prov. ii. 17.

3. Because there is a competition in our case betwixt the Lord, and the world with the lusts thereof: and after we have said to the Lord, *Thou art my refuge and my portion,* these will set upon us to take them for a refuge and a portion. Wherefore this is necessary in that case to make a decision of the case still, and to silence the Lord's competitors, and cut off their pretences to us: even as a woman already espoused would recognise her espousals, to silence one continuing to make suit to her, Tit. ii. 12.

4. To excite ourselves to the duty of the relation constituted by that saying. If we have taken refuge under the shadow of the Lord's wings, we must be as obedient children, walking according to the law of our God, our Husband, elder Brother, and King. If we have taken him for our portion, we must live to and for him, as we live by him, Psal. ciii. 18. But we will be ready to neglect our duty, if we call not to mind the engagements to it, taken upon us.

5. *Lastly*, To strengthen us in the faith of the privileges of the relation. It will serve to confirm our trust in him for safety and satisfaction, when we remember that we have said unto the Lord, *Thou art my refuge and my portion*. It will be a means to cause us to adhere to him as such, Job xiii. 15. *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him*.

I come now to apply this doctrine to them that have said the Lord is their refuge and their portion, and to those who cannot be brought to say it,

FIRST, Let me address myself to you who have said unto the Lord, *Thou art my refuge and my portion*, at a communion-table or otherwise.

First, Since ye have said it, recognise, reflect upon, and call to mind your saying it.

1. Do it often; often call to mind your saying it. We find David often upon it, Psal. xvi. 2. forecited. Psal. xxxi. 14, "I said, *Thou art my God*." exix. 57, "Thou art my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep thy words." cxl. 6, "I have said unto the Lord, *thou art my God*." Ye cannot remember it too often; for it is a thought that is always seasonable. It must be habitually in your mind: it must never be out of it, either virtually or expressly. For your hearts are apt to forget the Lord: and, forgetting him, and your relation and engagement to him, ye go astray.

2. Do it occasionally at some times in an explicit manner. Renew this your transaction with God, and set it again before your eyes expressly, and that on these four occasions especially.

(1.) When a temptation is before you to sin, in thought, word, or deed; as Joseph did, Gen. xxxix. 9. *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* Many think they are to be excused in the woful out-breakings of their corruption, because forsooth they are provoked and tempted: as if a soldier should say, he did not yield to the enemy until he attacked him. But ye are called to resist temptation, that ye may resist it, to remember that ye have said unto the Lord, *Thou art my refuge and portion*. Let that thought pass through your heart before ye yield, and it will help you to stand.

(2.) When ye find yourselves unfit or backward to duty, take this into your thoughts in a believing manner: so will ye see both what may excite you to duty, and what may encourage, strengthen, and oil the wheels of your soul: as Paul experienced, Rom. vii. 24, 25, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Here is your relation to God, and your privilege.

(3.) When ye are in danger or difficulties that ye know not how to get through; then remember, that ye have said to the Lord, *Thou art my refuge*. This is the way to compose your souls in a patient waiting for God, and comfortable expectation of relief from him; whether they be dangers of your soul, body, outward estate, reputation, &c.

(4.) When ye are under the world's frowns, things going wrong with you there, when the persons or things of the world disappoint you in your expectations from them: then remember ye have said, *Thou art my portion*. This will be of use to compose your heart under all these, since these are not, but God is your portion.

3. Do it sometimes in a solemn stated manner, taking some time by yourself alone to review what passed betwixt God and your soul in the day you said, *Thou art my refuge and portion*. Self-examination is necessary after as well as before a communion: and I must say, it is a very bad sign, when people are at no pains that way after a communion. If ye have not done it as yet, see that ye do it this night; retire yourselves by yourselves a while, and review what you said to the Lord this day eight-days; to whom, how, upon what grounds, and where ye said it. And particularly examine yourselves, whether ye said it sincerely or not, *Thou art my refuge*. If you have made God in Christ your refuge then,

(1.) Ye will have a superlative esteem of him above all persons and things, 1 Pet. ii. 7. *Unto you that believe he is precious*. The city of refuge was better to the refugee than all the land of Canaan besides, for there only could he be in safety of his life. And God in Christ will be better to the sincere soul than all persons or things else, Psal. lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Luke xiv. 26, "If any man come after me, and hate not his father and mother, &c. he cannot be my disciple."

(2.) Ye will have fled to him for safety from sin, as well as from wrath, Matth. i. 21, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." Ye will have made his sanctifying Spirit, as well as his justifying blood, your refuge. And because the sincere refugee flees from sin as sin, your souls will be longing to be rid of all sin, counting it as your enemy and the pursuing avenger; and the remains of sin in you, will be your soul's burden, Rom. vii. 24, forecited.

(3.) Ye will look for safety from God in Christ alone, and not from the law or your own works: *For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified*, Gal. ii. 16. From thence will be the support of your souls. When a man is without the city of refuge, if the aven-

ger of blood pursue hot, then he quickens his pace; if he halts, then he halts, all his motions and comforts depending on his motions or haltings. But when he has got within the city, it is not so with him. Thus as to men out of Christ, the great motives to obedience are fear of punishment and hope of reward by their works, which are the great grounds of their comfort: but the soul which has made God in Christ its refuge, looks for its safety only in Christ's works and suffering, Phil. iii. 3. *rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh*; and so its labour is turned into a *labour of love*, Heb. vi. 10.

Secondly. Since ye have said, That God in Christ is your refuge, hold by it, and carry yourselves accordingly.

I. Abide in your refuge, John xv. 4. Cleave to God in Christ as your refuge for ever, Acts xi. 23. Your continuance there is necessary to evidence your sincerity, John viii. 31. "If ye continue in my love, then are ye my disciples indeed." Drawing back is dangerous, Heb. x. 38, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." It speaks hypocrisy, 1 John i. 19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us." And,

(1.) Venture not out without the borders of your refuge, Heb. iii. 12, Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." A man is no longer in safety than he is within the refuge, Num. xxxv. 25, 27. For without it death reigns, without it is nothing but the land of darkness and shadow of death.

(2.) Beware of betaking yourselves to any other refuges, for their is no safety in them, Acts iv. 12. forecited. Every man is sensible he needs a defence, something to trust to for safety in his straits: but all things else beside God in Christ will be found lying refuges which will not secure you, Isa. xxviii. 17. And,

[1.] Make not men your refuge. For, "Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited," Jer. xvii. 5, 6. David was not one that had much experience of men's falsehood, and disappointing the expectations of those that trusted in them, Psal. cxlii. 4, "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me; refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. Therefore saith he, It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man. It is

better to trust in the Lord than to put trust in princes, Psal. cxviii. 8, 9. Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth : in that very day his thoughts perish. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God," Psal. cxlvi. 3, 4, 5. Wherefore in all cases where ye may be in hazard this way of placing confidence in men, beware of it, and place your confidence in God.

[2.] Nor make world's wealth your refuge, Prov. xviii. 11. "The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit." O what safety are men apt to promise to themselves from their abundance ! and yet after all it proves but a refuge of lies : Psal. lii. 6, 7, "The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him. Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength ; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness." Much need is there then to take heed to the advice, Psal. lxii. 10, *If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.*

[3.] Nor make your own works and duties your refuge. Paul could not trust himself under that covert, but desired to be "found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith," Phil. iii. 9. It is natural to men, when conscience is raised on them, and begins to pursue them, to flee to their own works and doings, and to seek refuge about mount Sinai for their guilty souls, as the Jews did, who sought after righteousness, not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law, Rom. ix. 33. Your only safety is under the covert of blood.

[4.] Nor uncovenanted mercy, mercy for mere mercy's sake, as many do, who, not careful to be savingly interested in Christ, betake themselves to mercy, without betaking themselves to Christ by faith. These, justice will draw from the horns of the altar ; for *without shedding of blood is no remission*, Heb. ix. 22. It is mercy through a propitiation, that is the only safe refuge for a guilty creature ; for, said the publican, *God be merciful [propitious Gr.] to me a sinner*, Luke xviii. 11.

2. Improve your refuge for safety, comfort and establishment in all cases. This is the life of faith which all believers are called to as that wherein their duty and interest jointly lie, Gal. ii. 20, "I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me : and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." And,

(1.) With respect to sin, improve your refuge. When ye are assaulted with temptation from the devil, the world, and the flesh,

betake yourselves to God in Christ for safety and preservation, as Paul did, Rom. vii. 24, 25, forecited. Ye are in this world as in a wilderness, where your souls' enemies are ready to attack you, and cause you to violate your fidelity to your Lord and Husband; ye should then cry out to him, that ye suffer violence, and flee into the arms of his grace, where ye may be safe. Thus did Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 9, who being harassed with a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, besought the Lord, that it might depart from him; and received this answer, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Mens' grappling with temptation in their own strength, is the cause why so often they come foul off, Prov. xxviii. 26, *He that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool.*

(2.) With respect to the law as a covenant of works. There is no standing before it, but under this covert. Sometimes it invades the believer, and makes high demands of him for his salvation. [1.] Thou art a sinner, and justice must be satisfied for thy sin: then flee thou into thy refuge, and hide thyself in the wounds of the Redeemer; plead the satisfaction of his death and sufferings, and hold them betwixt you and the fiery law: so shall ye stop its mouth, Job xxxiii. 23, 24, "If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness: then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." [2.] Thou canst not have a right to heaven without working for it works perfectly good, and exactly agreeable to the law. For it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10. Then improve your refuge, and by faith laying hold on Christ's perfect obedience to all the ten commands, plead that as your security, and so you shall be safe, Rom. v. 5, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." [3.] If the law yet insist and say, But thy nature is corrupt and stained; flee to thy refuge, and plead the holiness of Christ's birth and nature, by virtue of which imputed to thee, thou art without spot before the throne of God, Cant. iv. 7; Rom. iv. 8, both formerly cited. Here is your only safety in this case.

(3.) With respect to the evil day, Jer. xvii. 17. We have just ground to expect a day of trial, a day of common calamity, and this church and land, as well as each of us may lay our account with personal trials and afflictions. And we should improve our refuge in that case for our comfort and establishment.

[1.] Before it come. The prospect of trials is often very heavy, and unbelief taking a view of them, is ready to rack and torture the

heart with that, how one shall be carried through. But the man who has taken God for his refuge, should improve it, so as to establish his heart in the faith of through-bearing, come what will come, Hab. iii. 17, 18, "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." There is good reason for it: for however great the trial be, our refuge is sufficient both against sin and danger: therefore says Paul, Phil. iv. 13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Jer. xv. 11. "Verily it shall be well with thy remnant, verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil, and in the time of affliction."

[2.] When it is come. Whatever storms blow, believers have such a cover over their heads, as may afford safety, comfort, and establishment: for *if God be for us, who can be against us?* Rom. viii. 31. There is a kindly invitation given to all God's people, with respect to the evil day, Isa. xxvi. 20. "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." And the voice of faith in answer thereto is, "My soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast," Psal. lvii. 1. It is good news, that Zion's God reigneth, whatever the time brings forth.

(4.) With respect to death. Death is of all terribles the most terrible, and is therefore called *the king of terrors*. But those who have taken God in Christ for their refuge, have what may comfort and establish them, even in that case. Even from the last enemy God it a refuge. So that,

[1.] The fear of death ought not to perplex and terrify them. David could say, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me," Psal. xxiii. 4. Death can do no harm to those whose refuge the Lord is. For,

[2.] The sting of death cannot reach them. They may sit within their refuge and sing, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56, 57. The refuge was provided against sin and death in a peculiar manner, and they may expect all safety in it, under the covert of the wings of a crucified Redeemer. And it is the weakness of faith that makes them so fearful about it.

SECONDLY. Ye who cannot be brought to say unto God in Christ *Thou art my refuge and my portion*, to take God in Christ for your refuge; I would have you,

1. To reflect on the folly of this your course. And you may see it, if you consider, that,

(1.) There is no safety for you without this refuge. Ye are guilty and the avenger is the justice of God, by which ye will undoubtedly fall, if ye get not within this refuge. Ye must either be in Christ, or God will pursue you as an enemy. And, [1.] He is a just God, and ye cannot escape by flattering him, Gen. xviii. 25. *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* [2.] He is every where present and ye cannot flee from him, Psal. cxxxix. 7. [3.] He is omnipotent; and so ye cannot resist him and make head against him. "Who hath hardened himself against him and hath prospered?" Job ix. 4. [4.] He is eternal, and ye cannot outlive him. See 2 Thess. i. 6—9.

(2.) That however long ye delay, ye must draw to it at last, or perish. And who knows but ye may come too late?

2. I would have you instantly to repent, and turn to this refuge, Zech. ix. 12. "Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope." Though ye have sit many calls, and given Christ many refusals, yet there is room for your saying unto him, *Thou art my refuge, and my portion*; he allows you to take your word again, and rue upon him. Jer. xiii. 27. *O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?* How peremptory were the people in their refusal, Jer. ii. 25. "Thou saidst, There is no hope. No, for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." Yet see chap. iii. 1. "But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord." Christ insists upon your saying to him, *Thou art my refuge, and my portion*; gives you one offer of himself after another: why so, but because he would have you yet to be wise, and turn to him. Come, then, sinners, while yet there is room.