

CREATION'S TRAVAIL AND DELIVERY.

SERMON XXVIII.

ROM. viii. 22,

For we know that the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now.

HAVING, in the preceding discourses, considered the groans of the creatures under the sin of men, I now proceed to the illustration of

DOCT. II. That the creatures' pains under the sin of man are travailing-pains, sore indeed, but hopeful, they will not last always, they will be delivered from them.

That this is the sense of this metaphor, appears by comparing ver. 23, "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

The creatures have now had a sharp shower for several weeks; blessed be the Lord it has in part intermitted, and that he has heard prayers in their behalf. Many such showers they have had since Adam's fall; and though they have an intermission of the exquisite pains, they are not well yet; the clouds will return after the rain. But the day will come when they will be quite well, and fairly delivered, and never groan more. What is clear from the scriptures in this point, I shall briefly lay before you, and a more curious inquiry is not fit for the pulpit.—With this view, I shall inquire,

I. When this delivery of the creatures is to come to pass.

II. What delivery shall they then get?

III. Confirm the doctrine of the creatures' delivery.—And then,

IV. Lead you to the practical improvement of the subject.—We are, then,

I. To inquire when this delivery of the creatures is to come to pass.

God, that has appointed a set time for every thing, has also appointed the precise time for the delivery of the groaning creation; and this is plainly revealed to be at the end of the world. For then is that time, Rom. viii. 19, 21: so Rev. xx. 11, "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled; and there was found no place for them." The apostle Peter is very express, that then they shall have their bearing shower, as it were, the sharpest ever they had, but it is the last.

2 Pet. iii. 10, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." Ver. 13, "Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." They have been in their pangs ever since Adam fell, and will not be delivered till then. When that period shall be, I know not; but it is plain the world is come to its old age. The heaven and earth, that beautiful garment, is grown old, as the psalmist foretold long ago, Psalm cii. 6; therefore it cannot be very long ere it will be changed. She that hath had many children is waxed feeble; I mean our mother earth. It is evident she is not so fruitful as she was; neither do her fruits yield such nourishment as sometimes they did, they are both fewer and weaker; hence still less and weaker bodies. And why so with the earth, but because the heavens are in the same condition, and afford not such influences as formerly, in the vigour of their youth? It is observed by astronomers, that the sun shineth more dimly, and appeareth more seldom than before, being much nearer to the earth than in ancient times. So much the nearer, so much the less influence, as appears by comparing summer and winter, the mid-day and evening; so that the mighty giant, having so long run his race, begins also to wax feeble. It is long since our Lord said he would come quickly, Rev. xxii. 20. And most of the prophecies of the holy scripture are already fulfilled. All the seals are opened. Six of the trumpets are already blown. In the time of the seventh, the mystery of God is to be finished, and the world to end, Rev. x. 7. And there is no doubt but it is long since it began to sound. Under this trumpet are contained seven vials; and if these were poured out, then time is no more. There seems to be two of these vials past, and that we are now under the third, expecting the fourth. So that there will be but four of them to come. And it is very agreeable to the dispensations of providence, that the nearer the end, the motion will be the quicker; as in the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah, before their respective captivities, 2 Kings xv. 16, and 23, and downwards. Thus, without dipping further, it is evident we are far advanced in the last times, and that the world is in its old, if not decrepit age; and at the end is the delivery.*—We now proceed,

II. To inquire what delivery the creation shall then get. The

* The author has, in this part of his manuscript, several notes in short hand, which the transcriber could not decipher, from the want of which this part of the subject is not so complete.

creature conceived vanity and misery from the time of Adam's sin, then they shall be delivered of that burden, with which they have been so long big, Rom. viii. 20, 21. Now, according to what I before said on the first general head, we may soberly explain here,

1. They shall fully answer their end, I mean not the very end for which they were created at first, for some of these are inconsistent with the state of glorified saints: 1 Cor vi. 13, "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them." But whatever is their end, they shall fully answer that, God shall have his glory by them; and if he design any benefit to man by them, they shall not be plagued by vanity therein, Rom. viii. 20; 2 Pet iii. 13.

2. They shall be freed from all that evil that cleaves to their nature now by reason of man's sin. For now they have undergone a sad alteration, but then they shall undergo another. They shall be changed: Psalm cii. 26, "They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed." And that it shall be to the better, is evident from Rev. xxi. 1, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea."

3. They shall no more be abused by sinners; they shall never more serve the lust of any man whatsoever, Rom. viii. 21. They shall then be recovered, the groaning creature rescued, never to suffer a relapse any more. However the lusts of the wicked may then be, they must prey upon their own bowels, but they shall get no more of the creation to feed them.

4. They shall serve God's enemies no longer. Their long captivity shall then be at an end; Rom. viii. 21. The sun shall no more bestow one beam of its light on an ungodly wretch, nor shall the face of the earth bear him any longer. One drop of water to cool the tongue, shall no more be at his service. Then they shall bid an eternal farewell to the masters they served so long against their will.

5. All their misery, which was brought on them by man's sin, shall then be at an end. They have shared long with man in his plagues, but then they will get the burden off their back, Rom. viii. 21. The eating of the forbidden fruit cast them into a fever, they have groaned under it ever since; but then they shall get a cool, and never relapse more. Now as to the way this shall be brought to pass, the scriptures are clear in two things:—

(1.) That the world shall go all up in flames at the last day, which we call the general conflagration: 2 Pet. iii. 7, "But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store,

reserved until fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men." The apostle is very particular on this, in the 10th verse: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth, also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." The visible heavens by these means shall pass away with a great noise. What a fearful noise would there be in a burning palace! what a noise, then, must there be arising from a dissolving world! the elements of air, water, and earth, shall be melted down like metal by the fire; the habitable earth shall be burnt up, with the works therein; men's works, cottages, palaces, castles, towns, and cities; God's works, all the creatures therein, birds, beasts, plants, trees, silver, gold, coin, &c.

(2.) That upon the back of this conflagration, there shall be new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, as in 2 Pet. iii. 13. This John sees, Rev. xxi. 1. To this purpose the psalmist speaks, telling us that the heavens and the earth shall be changed, which is quite another thing than to be annihilated. So the apostle Peter calls it only dissolution, 2 Pet. iii. 11. And to this agrees what he says of melting by fire, which, we know, does not annihilate, but only purges the metal from dross.

So far the scripture clearly goes. But what particular creatures shall be renewed in the new earth, their actions, properties, and uses, I will not inquire into these things. It is certain that some creatures came in after sin. Anah found mules in the wilderness, as he fed the asses of Zibeon his father, Gen. xxxvi. 24. The day will discover these things. But when one considers the world was made to be a looking-glass, wherein to behold God's glorious perfections: and that ever since it was made, it has been before sinful man, blinded with sin, except the short time Adam stood, it may occasion some thoughts as to what the state of matters shall be in a new heaven, and in a new earth.—We come now,

III. To confirm the doctrine of the creatures' delivery.—As to this,

1. Consider, that the great day is the day of the restitution of all things: Acts iii. 21, "Whom the heaven must retain, until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the world began." When God made the world, there was nothing but harmony and orderliness in it. But as ever a rude heedless person, by a rash touch of his hand, defaced a fine picture, or disjointed and unframed a curious piece of work; so did Adam's sin the world. But there is a restoration coming.—Consider,

2. That our Lord Jesus is the heir of all things, Heb. i. 2. God gave Adam a charter, to hold of him the great estate of the world. But, rebelling against his God, his estate was forfeited, and that charter-right void, because it depended on his good behaviour. The second Adam coming in his room, the forfeited estate is made over to him, Psalm viii. 5, 6, 7, compared with Heb. ii. 6, 7, 8, "But now we see not yet all things put under him." Ver. 9, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." But still in some sense he has not yet the actual possession of all, there are many of them still in the hands of his enemies, Heb. ii. 8. As Jesus Christ has a right to all the elect, though some of them are yet under the power of sin and Satan, and all of them, except a few singular persons, under the power of death, but Christ at that day will fully recover them all; so the creatures yet in the hand of his enemies, he will then restore, seeing they are all his by his Father's gift; hence we are taught that he will come again out of heaven for that restoration: Acts iii. 21.—Consider,

3. That all the effects of the curse are to be gathered together, and confined for ever with the wicked in the lake: Rev. xx. 14, 15, "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire." Now, they lie scattered up and down through the whole creation, but they shall all meet together there; and therefore it evidently follows, that as to the creatures, their share of them, which makes them groan now, shall then be taken off them, and they for ever made free. As the mud and filthiness that lies in every part of the street being swept together, and cast into the common sink, it is all there then, and in no place else.—It remains,

IV. That we make some improvement.

1. In an use of information.

(1.) This teaches us that every wicked man shall at length get all his own burden to bear himself alone. Many one takes a light lift of the burden of sin, because there are so many to bear a share of it. Men provoke God, and God smites the earth that bears them with a curse, makes their poor beasts groan, &c. But these strokes are far from their hearts; they notwithstanding keep their sins. If they groan at one time, they will recover again. But remember, O impenitent sinner! the day is coming when the creature shall escape, and leave thee in the lurch for all. The whole weight that is on them and thee together now, shall lie on thyself alone, and press

thee down through eternity, while not one of the creatures shall touch it with the least of their fingers.—Learn,

(2.) That people had need to take heed how they use the creatures while they have them. For as much as they are under our feet now, their ears are not nailed to our door-posts to be our slaves for ever. The day of their freedom is approaching. Let us not abuse them to the service of our lusts, lest they witness against us at last. Let us not dishonour their Lord by them, lest they rejoice over us for ever in our misery, when their foot is out of the snare, and ours in it. Let us not put them in God's room, lest they send all the effects of the curse from off themselves on us, and so put us in the same place with devils.—We may hence see,

(3.) That this world, and what is therein, passeth away: 1 John ii. 17, "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof." It is a stage of vanity that will be taken down, and the table of a dying life will come to an end. What marvel is it that man dies, seeing he lives by deaths, the death of the creatures; but this bondage of the creatures will not continue, they will be delivered, and God will support the life of man another way in eternity.

(4.) We may learn what glorious things will be the new heaven and the new earth! When the old cracked pewter vessel is melted down and refined, and cast into a new mould, how unlike will it be to what it was! The heavens and earth are now very glorious, yet sin has marred them. He that made them is not pleased with them, and therefore will have them cast over again. If they be so glorious, even while so far unmade by sin, how great must their glory be when they are again new made!—We learn,

(5.) However large a share the wicked may have here, they will have neither part nor lot in them. For "in the new heavens and new earth dwelleth righteousness," 2 Pet. iii. 13. For the wicked to be there, would be inconsistent with the creatures. But as for the saints, they have a charter, making over the earth to be theirs; which, seeing it is not fully put into their possession now, it must be in the other world: Matth. v. 5, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." But how and in what sense they shall possess it, I am not here to inquire.

2. From this subject we have afforded an use of terror to the wicked. How dreadful shall their case be at the end of the world! Come, O impenitent sinner! behold here, as in a glass, the misery that is abiding thee. Thou canst make a shift now for thy ease, but what wilt thou do then? It is terrible news to thee, that the creature shall be delivered.—For,

(1.) The misery that lies this day on any creature whatever for

thy sake, shall be taken off it, and laid on thee thyself; and when all is laid on thee, thy burden will be insupportable. There is a curse on thee already, as a transgressor of the law, Gal. iii. 10. But a heavy end of the curse lies on the creatures for thy sake: Gen. iii. 17, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake, in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." There is no way to extinguish the curse but by faith in Christ's blood, which thou slightest. Therefore, seeing there must be a removal of it from the creatures, it must needs be turned over on thee, and with thee turned out of the world: Matth. xxv. 41, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Compare Rev. xiv. 10, "Thou shalt also drink of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation, and thou shalt be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." And wilt thou not then cry out with Cain, "My punishment is greater than I can bear?" Gen. iv. 13.

(2.) As thou wilt be deserted of God, so thou wilt be deserted of the creatures in thy misery. No help from heaven, none from earth: Isa. viii. 21, 22, "And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry: And it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king, and their God, and look upward. And they shall look unto the earth, and behold, trouble and darkness, dimness and anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness." When thine enemy falls upon thee, all thy friends will run away from thee. There are two ways by which the ungodly get ease in the world, which will both fail them here.

(1.) Though they have no comfort or satisfaction in God, they can take it in the creature. Though they see no beauty in Christ, they see a great deal in the world. Though the marriage-supper of the King's Son be to them a light matter, yet the farm and the merchandise are not so; Matth. xxii. 4—7. Though they have no heart for the bargain of the everlasting covenant, Prov. xvii. 16, yet they are easy when they can win a few pence or pounds. Though the promises of things unseen are to them hungry things, empty shadows, yet what they can see with their eyes, and get a hold of with their hands, are substantial: Hos. xiii. 6, "According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted, therefore have they forgotten me." Though the man cannot lie on his right side, he can lie full well on his left; though not on his back, looking up to heaven, yet on his face, looking down to the earth. But, ah! sirs, this trade of yours will not last; you will not shift long this way; the creature will be delivered, and what wilt

thou do then? Thou wilt not have a whole side to turn thee to then; thou shalt have as little comfort in the creature then as in God, and that is none at all. He that has but one pillar to lean to, had need to have it a durable one. But thou hast but one, and it cannot last.

(2.) If they cannot find it in one creature, they take it in another. If Haman cannot have the comfort of Mordecai's bowing, he can take it in revenge. If there be not sap enough in one creature, he can go to another, and so make shift. But this trade will not last either. For the whole creation shall be delivered; and if all must go, there will be nothing left thee to ease thee in thy misery. Was not Job in a heavy case, when he was full of sores, his whole body over, and all his friends deserted him? Job. xix. 13—19. But what was all this to what shall be thy case for ever? If you call to the sun that serves you now, it will not bestow one single gleam of light upon you;—to the waters, they will not afford thee one drop to cool thy tongue;—to all that ever thou possessed upon the earth, it will not do thee the least service. For then their term is out, and they will leave thee for ever.—How heavy will all this be!

1st, To be thus left by all thy gods that had most of thy heart when thy days of strength were. O faithless world! is this thy kindness to thy friends? Is this the reward of the precious heart and affections, time and soul, spent on thee? Must they that loved it best, have least comfort of it one day? They whose hearts idolized it, be the only persons abandoned by it in misery? Yes, it must be so, and that justly. For it was no more pleasant to the creature to be set in God's room, than it was to a slave to be forced into the king's throne by his master.

2dly, To be concluded under such misery, when the creature, thy servant and slave, which thou didst use and abuse according to thy will and lust, shall be set free. When the suffering of the creature by thy hands shall cease, then thy suffering shall begin. As the heavens abused by Antichrist are called, on the fall of his kingdom, to rejoice, Rev. xviii. 20; so the abused creatures will turn their groans into songs of triumph upon thy ruin. And to be insulted in misery by any, is sad: but saddest of all to be insulted by those that sometime were our slaves.—This subject may be improved,

3. In an use of comfort to the serious and godly, who notice the groans of the creatures under sin, and join their own groanings with theirs. This cloud that has so black and lowering a side to others, has a fair, white, lightsome side to you.—The creatures shall be delivered.

(1.) The mournful spectacle of the creatures which you see to-day,

if that day were come, ye shall see no more for ever. You not long ago saw the heaven as brass, and the earth as iron, and you heard an extraordinary groaning among the creatures. But their groans are not gone, though become lower; as yet the sun must serve to let wicked men see to dishonour God; the earth and sea must afford God's good creatures to be fuel to men's lusts. Many a good creature must lose its life, to preserve the lives of them who live but to dishonour God; and every creature, meat, drink, and the like, is abused, and groans under the abuse. Well, the day is coming, when they will groan no more; nor shall you need to groan for them. The travailing creation will cast out its sorrows.

(2.) If that day were come, ye shall also be delivered. You shall groan no more under your own burdens. This is the time of your travail, then ye shall be well: John xvi. 20, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Ver. 22, "And now ye therefore have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice: and your joy no man taketh from you." May we not argue here as our Lord doth? If God so clothe the grass, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, will he not much more clothe us? And as the apostle, "Doth God take care for oxen, to deliver them, and will he not take care for us?" If God deliver the old groaning creature, will he not deliver the new creature, that is also groaning? Yea, surely you shall be delivered,—delivered from sin, the body of sin, you now groan under; the cords of guilt shall be broken in pieces; the iron bands of sin's tyrannical power shall be burst asunder; the old tenant, that has sit long against your will, shall be cast out, never to set his foot in again: 1 John iii. 2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God: and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Your candle shall not burn dim any more, nor your fire be weakly. In the garden, now so much overgrown, there shall not be one weed, nay, nor the least seed of one left: "The Egyptians, whom ye see to-day, ye shall see no more for ever." Ye shall be delivered from all the consequences of sin. Though you are at present recovering of the deadly disease, yet the effects of it hang about you; miseries on your soul, body, character, and the like; but then all of these shall take wing, never to return. No more complaints of a weak and crazy body; no more reproaches, crosses, and losses; no more temptations, for when the carcase is removed, why should the eagles gather together? The last enemy, death, shall be destroyed, 1 Cor. xv. 53. Ye shall have a perfect delivery.

There are four words Christ spoke of, or to Lazarus, at raising him from the dead. These he speaks for the elect.

The first word is, "Where have ye laid him?" John xi. 34. The old murderer took away the elect's life among the rest, and every elect soul he has naturally buried in trespasses and sins. But our Lord, coming to seek what was lost, sends the gospel to the elect; and though the party himself cannot discern the gospel-language, yet others do discern it, and hear Christ in the gospel saying of the elect soul, "Where have ye laid him?"

The second word is, "Take ye away the stone," ver. 39. This is spoken for the work of conviction. Though the dead soul cannot hear it, it is heard: "My Spirit," says he, "let him alone no more; conscience, awaken and rouse him up; law, take him by the throat; off with his ignorance of God, of sin, and of himself; break his security, throw by his self-conceit and fig-leave coverings: "Take ye away the stone."

The third word is, "Lazarus, come forth!" ver. 43. This is spoken for the work of conversion. It carries life along with it, the soul hears this voice, and lives. Then the Spirit of Christ enters into the soul, and he that was dead in sin lives to God, and is coming forth in the progress of sanctification. But, O how slowly does he come forth! For though the reigning power of death be broken, yet the grave-clothes are still about him, which entangle him. Though he can move both hands and feet, which he could not do before, yet there are bands on them both. This is all that is heard in time. But good news to the groaning Christian: at the last day, ye shall hear the last word, which is the

Fourth, "Loose him, and let him go," ver. 44. Then not only sin, but all the consequences of it, shall be taken off. No more sin, pain, death, sorrow, or any such thing. Then comes the glorious liberty of the sons of God, which Christ has purchased, which God has promised, which the whole creation is earnestly expecting, and which the spiritual Christian is groaning and waiting for, Rom. viii. 21, 23.—I come now to a

4. And last use, of exhortation as to these things.

(1.) Let us believe, and give God the glory due to his name. Man is changeable, and he that depends upon his promise may soon find that he trusts to a broken reed. But not so with God's promises: Psalm lvi. 10, "In God will I praise his word: in the Lord will I praise his word." Abraham had a promise of a very unlikely thing; he believed the promise, and it was accomplished, Rom. iv. 17—21. Is it unlikely that the creature shall be delivered? Yet God has said it; believe, and give him the glory of his power, that will

perform this great thing. Should all the angels and men in the universe conspire to free the groaning creation, they could not effect it. It is long since they were nonplussed in the case of refreshing the weary earth with a shower of rain: Jer. xiv. 20, "Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers?" Nay, men conspire to hold down, to abuse the creatures, and keep the hold they have got of them. And the earth is made a field of blood for the mastery over them. But God will end the quarrel, and deliver the creature out of wicked hands. The second Adam is as able to restore, as the first was to break in pieces. Give him the glory of his goodness, that will not allow it always to go ill with the good. God's good creatures suffer for man's sake: but a good God will not suffer it always to be so. How much more will he provide, that piety shall not always be ashamed, and wickedness triumph! The day will come, when none will be high but they that are holy. Give him the glory of being mindful of his promise, and stedfast to his word. It is more than five thousand years since he subjected the creature to vanity in hope; and so, to this day, they not only groan, but they travail, in the hope of delivery; and their hope shall not make them ashamed. O that it could make us ashamed of our hope wearing out so soon under afflictions! to whom a few years, months, days, nay, even hours, are sufficient many times to make us hopeless.

(2.) Let us believe this delivery, and walk answerable to the faith of it: 2 Pet. iii. 11, "Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness!"

[1.] Let us use the creatures as servants, not as slaves; allowing them a regard suitable to their natures and use. God has given the creatures into our hands, and they must endure much misery for our profit; and even that may be humbling to us, as being the consequence of sin. But that ever God allowed man to make a sport of the proper effects of sin, to torment and put to pain any creature, merely for his pleasure, is what I do not believe. And therefore grave divines do condemn cock-fighting, and such like, as unlawful recreations; and I think not without good ground. Sure I am, Solomon says, "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast; but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel," Prov. xii. 10. And to whom can the needless torment of the poor creatures create pleasure, but to the cruel or unthinking?

[2.] Let us labour to use the creatures soberly, and in the fear of God, and not abuse them to the service of our lusts. God allows us them for our necessity, convenience, and delight, in sobriety, but

not to be fuel to our lusts. Let us use them so as we would wish to have done in the day when we will see them delivered; that is, use them to the honour of God.

[3.] Let us never build our nest in that tree at the root of which the axe is lying. The creature is passing, lay not the weight of your portion upon it. Ye cannot abide with this world; and if ye could, it will not abide with you. He is a fool, though he act the part of a king on a stage, who looks not for a portion that will be more abiding. For where is he when the stage is taken down?

[4.] Look for your portion in another world, where is an enduring substance: Matth. vi. 19, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:" Verse 20, "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." This world is no continuing city; look out for one that is to come. That is life, which begins after death is subdued, and when men shall die no more. To be easy here is no great matter, but to be so then is what should be our chief concern.

[5.] Be holy in all manner of conversation, 2 Pet. iii. 11. This is the time of God's forbearance, wherein many confusions are suffered in the world: the holy and unholy are mixed: the effects of sin lie on God's good creatures, as well as sinners: but this will draw to an end, and there will be a fair separation. It concerns you now to see on what side you shall be set, to distinguish yourselves by holiness now, from those you would be distinguished from by happiness hereafter.

(3.) And last place. Believe thy delivery, and help it forwards with your prayers. Cry for the great deliverance, the restitution of all things. It is one of six petitions our Lord has put into our mouths, "Thy kingdom come;" and the last in the book of God is, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," Rev. xxii. 20. I would have you to consider,

[1.] That the churches are all groaning together this day; some of them under temporal plagues, being raised by Antichrist; all of them under spiritual plagues, a fearful decay of power and purity among them, whereby the disease is become general. The concern for the Protestant interest is very little at the hearts of some Protestant states. But a due concern for the Protestant religion, the promoting truth and holiness, by a thorough reformation, appears to be very little at the hearts of any of them: Isa. lxiii. 5, "And I looked, and there was none to help: and I wondered that there was

none to uphold : therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me, and my fury it upheld me."

[2.] That the wheels of providence seem to be running speedily forward to great changes in the world. God is shaking the nations, and things appear as in Luke xxi. 10, 11, "Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines and pestilences; and fearful sights, and great signs shall there be from heaven." And who knows what shall be the issue? But we may be sure that the mystery of God is carrying on by them, and a way making towards it being finished.

Let us then, by our prayers, help on the deliverance of the creation, from sin and its consequences, by crying mightily to the Lord, that these glorions things which are spoken of the city of God in the latter days may be fulfilled, and so the end may come.—I now proceed to

DOCT. III. That the whole creation makes a mournful concert in the ears of serious Christians, by their groans under man's sin.—Or,

That how deaf soever others be to the groans of the creature under man's sin, serious Christians will not be so, they will be affected with them.—In speaking to this, I shall be very short.

I shall only, in a few words,

I. Mention the reasons why they so affect serious Christians.

II. Make some improvement.

I. I am to mention the reasons why they so affect serious Christians.—Among others, there are the following:—

1. They are the undoubted mark of man's fall and apostacy from God, which cannot fail to affect a serious heart. Sin has marred the beauty of the creation; and though blackness is no deformity among blackamores, yet it is so amongst the whites. Some glory in their shame, but they will not do so to whom sin has been truly shameful. Now, these groans are the memorials of the fall.

2. They are the constant evidences of God's indignation against, and hatred of sin, which are never wanting in the world. And it is a child-like disposition to be affected with the tokens of their father's anger; though they who have no care to please God, can easily pass the signs of God's displeasure, others cannot.

3. They bring their own sins to remembrance: and a tender conscience disposes persons to think, "This is for my sake, for my provocations, that they suffer." And so the saints groan with the groaning creatures, and long for the common deliverance.

4. God is dishonoured by the sinner's abuse of the creatures. This

makes both the creature and true Christians to groan, to see God's good creatures abused, to the dishonour of their Creator.

II. I am now to make some improvement; and all I propose here, is an exhortation—not to be deaf to the groans of the creation under man's sin, but to be suitably affected with them. God has not only made them groan with their ordinary, but with an extraordinary groan; and if you do not from hence see what an ill thing sin is, what a just God the Lord is, and how severely he punishes, and so set forwards to reformation of life, you may assure yourselves you will see these things more to your cost, when you yourselves shall be made to groan under the heavy hand of the Lord.

Alas! for the security and impenitency of Scotland; nothing of all we have yet met with will rouse us out of it. Take heed that God do not create a new thing amongst us, which whoso shall hear of, their ears shall tingle, and thus groans of another sort from houses and fields shall be heard.

O that we were showing ourselves serious Christians, by our being deeply affected by the groans of the creation under sin! If we were so, we would be,

(1.) Groaning under a sense of our own sin, and the sins of the land: mourning for the dishonour done to God by ourselves and others, by which we have grieved the Spirit of God, and burdened the very earth that bears us.

(2.) We would be weaned from, and in a holy manner wearying of the world, which is a compound of sin, misery, and vanity.

Lastly, We would be longing for the glorious day of the great change abiding the world, when our Lord's kingdom shall be fully come,—the mystery of God finished,—sin and misery swept out of the world,—and the saints and the creatures perfectly delivered. Amen.

FAITHFULNESS TOWARDS GOD EXEMPLIFIED AND REWARDED.*

SERMON XXIX.

NUMB. xiv. 24,

But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land wherinto he went, and his seed shall possess it.

THE Lord being provoked with the murmuring of the people, in consequence of the ill report of the land brought by the spies, though he

* Delivered after the dispensation of the Lord's supper, July, 1712.