

and as the greatest temptations do sometimes follow the highest manifestations of God's love (witness the 3rd and 4th chapters of St. Matthew), so the greatest consolations do sometimes follow the worst temptations. When did the angels minister unto Christ, but when he had made a good dispatch of temptations? So it shall be with you also; for Christ was tempted, that by his example and issue of temptation, he might succour you under your temptation. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and what end the Lord made with him, he had twice as much after the temptation was over as he had before; and if you ride out this storm, assuredly the good angels will come and minister to you, and your consolations shall be doubled unto what ye had before. Wherefore, my brethren, take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in this evil day, and having done all to stand; and so much for the fifth instance.

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## SERMON IX.

### A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF DESERTION.

*“Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me,” &c.—Psalm xlii. 11.*

VI. SOMETIMES the discouragements of the saints are taken from their desertions, spiritual desertions.

And this was David's case here, for, saith he, verse 10, “As a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproached me, while they say unto me, Where is thy God?” And verse 9, “I will say unto God, my Rock, why hast thou forgotten me?” And this is the ordinary case of God's children: Oh, saith one, the Lord hath forgotten me, hid his face from me, and hath forsaken my soul, and therefore I am thus discouraged. I do not complain for want or loss of outward mercies and blessings; yea, though all the world should forsake me, I should not be much afflicted, if God and Christ were present with me: but times were, when the candle of the Lord shined upon me, when I walked, as I thought, in the light of his countenance; but now the Lord hath hid

his face from me, and hath left and forsaken my soul. Have I not just cause and reason to be cast down now, and to be much disquieted ?

No. I grant, and it must needs be granted, that it is a most sad thing for a gracious heart to want the face and presence of God and Christ, to be deserted and forsaken by Christ ; yea, I do not know any thing, or any affliction, that is so afflictive to a gracious heart, as this : for, take any other affliction, and though it be great, yet it is but a particular affliction, the loss of some particular good, and the putting out of some one candle, or the hiding of some one star ; but if Christ hide his face, and God withdraw or hide himself, it is the darkening of the sun, which brings an universal darkness upon the soul ; and it embitters all other afflictions, for as the presence of Christ sweetens all other comforts, so the absence, or forsakings of Christ, do embitter all other sufferings, and cut off all our relief and remedy against them. So long as the face of God shines upon a poor soul, he may run to Christ, and relieve and help himself against his affliction. True, my friends forsake me, my relations forsake me, but Christ hath not forsaken me : but if God and Christ forsake, where shall a man relieve or refresh himself in this stormy day ? And as those sins are greatest, that cut off our relief against other sins ; so those afflictions are greatest, that cut off our relief against other afflictions. Such is this : of all afflictions, it looks the most like a judgment to a gracious soul. " O Lord (saith David), correct me not in thine anger, nor chasten me in thy hot displeasure," Psalm vi. 1. When God hides his face, and forsakes the soul, he seems to correct in anger and in hot displeasure. Herein a christian doth, as it were, combat with God himself : he fights with men sometimes, and then he is more than a conqueror, because Christ fighteth with him and in him ; he fights with Satan, principalities and powers, and then he doth overcome, because Christ is with him : but oh, saith the soul in this desertion, God is mine enemy here I must fight it out hand to hand with divine anger, and what shall I do now, how is it possible that I should now escape ? The truth is, this affliction above all others seems to draw a curtain over all our comforts, and to put an end unto all our spiritual joy. What birds sing in the winter time ? Some

may, but ordinarily they no not. If you walk abroad in the winter time, and hear no birds sing, and one say to you, What is the reason of this deep silence? two or three months ago, when we walked in the fields, every wood had its several music; how sweetly did the birds sing then, but now they are all silent: what is the reason? you will easily answer, Aye, then indeed it was summer time, then the sun shone upon them, and so they sang; but now the warming and enlivening beams of the sun are gone, they sing no more. Beloved, the light of God's countenance is our spring, desertion is our winter. Show me that saint that is able to sing in this winter time. I confess it is possible for a man to do it, and some there are. Habakkuk was one that learned this song of faith; but how few are able to sing and rejoice when God hides himself. No, saith the soul, two or three months ago the Lord shined upon me, and then I could sing indeed; but now God and Christ is gone, and so all my songs are gone, and joys are gone, and I fear I shall never see them again, or rejoice in Christ again. It is said of Mary, that when she went to Christ's sepulchre, she wept; and though the angel came to her and said, "Why weepest thou?" yet she continued weeping, the presence of an angel could not comfort her. Why? Oh, saith she, "they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Would it not grieve a prince to be dispossessed of and to lose his crown; to be made like an ordinary man? This presence of Christ is the crown of a christian; and therefore when God had forsaken the church, as we read in Lam. v., she complained, verse 16, "The crown is fallen from my head." Why? verse 20, "Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever, and forsake us so long a time?" Verse 22. "Thou hast utterly rejected us, thou art very wroth against us." Take away the presence of Christ, and ye set a christian among the ordinary rank of men: and must he not needs be troubled when his crown is thus taken from his head? I have read of a religious woman, that having borne nine children, professed that she had rather endure all the pains of those nine travails at once, than endure the misery of the loss of God's presence. And indeed this affliction of God's forsaking a man, is so great, that if a man feel it not, I even fear it is because he is forsaken indeed. But now,

though there be never so much gall and wormwood in this cup, yet the children of God have no reason to faint at the drinking of it; no just cause or reason yet to faint, or be discouraged, or cast down.

How may that appear?

1. For the clearing of this truth to you, ye must know, that God, or Christ is said to forsake a man, either in regard of his power, grace or strength, or in regard of the comfortable feelings of his love, either in regard of union or in regard of vision. 1. In regard of union he never forsakes his own people. 2. In regard of his power, grace and strength, he never forsakes them totally. And, 3. in regard of vision, or comfortable feelings, though he do forsake for a time, yet he will return again. And if all these be true, have they any reason to be much discouraged? For the first, ye know what is said, John xiii. 1, "Those whom he loves, he loves unto the end." As for the second, ye know what he saith also, Heb. xiii. 5, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." "We are kept by the power of God unto salvation," 1 Pet. i. 5. And as for the third, hath not the Lord promised, Isaiah liv., that he will return again with advantage? Verse 7, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercy will I gather thee: in a little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer," verse 8. Now ye know that friends are not much troubled at such a parting, which is but for a time. It is said of the church of Ephesus, that when Paul took leave of them they wept, "because he said they should see his face no more." The saints cannot say so in regard of Christ; though they see not his face for the present, yet they cannot say, I shall see his face no more, for he will return again, yea, and return with advantage; for though he forsakes for a moment, yet with great mercy, and with everlasting kindness, will the Lord have mercy on them. What then, though you be forsaken for a moment, have you any just cause and reason for your discouragement?

2. If Christ do therefore forsake his people, that he may not forsake them, and hath a design of love, and nothing but of love upon them in his forsaking; then have they no just cause for their discouragements. Now I pray, what is the

reason why God doth forsake his people for a time, or a moment, hath he any design but love upon them? Doth he not therefore withdraw himself from them, that he might draw them to himself? Doth he not therefore hide his face for a moment, that he may not turn his back upon them for ever? Doth he not therefore forsake them for a moment, that they might die unto all the world, and long after heaven, where there is no forsaking? Doth he not therefore forsake them for a moment, that they might die unto the way of sense, and learn to live by faith, which is the proper work of this life? Doth he not therefore forsake them for a moment, that in this winter of their desertion, the weeds and vermin of their sins may be killed and mortified? Doth he not therefore forsake them for a moment, that he may see their love to him? In time of his presence we have the sense of his love to us; but in the time of his absence, then he seeth, and we ourselves have the sense of our love to him. Doth he not therefore forsake them for a moment, that their very joys and comforts may be more fervent, exalted and enlarged? It is our nature to rejoice most in a comfort, when it is redeemed from the hand of death, and recovered from loss. The wise men, when they saw the lost star again, then they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. Did they not rejoice in the star before? Surely they did, but they rejoiced more, even with exceeding great joy, when they had found the lost star. And this is our nature, we rejoice most in the finding of lost mercies. Now the Lord Christ knows our nature, and therefore that he may raise our joy, our praise, our thankfulness, for his presence, face, and manifestation of his love, he doth sometimes withdraw them. So that in all his withdrawings, he hath a design of love upon our souls: have we any reason then to be much discouraged, though deserted?

3. Though it pleaseth God, to hide his face from his people sometimes, insomuch, as they are in the dark, and in a very dark condition; yet they are never so much in the dark, but that they have light enough to work by: for what day is there in all the year, that is so short, dark, and gloomy, but a man may see to work by? Indeed, sometimes the sun is in the eclipse, sometimes behind a cloud; sometimes it breaks not forth with his golden beams, as at other times: but if the

sun be up, and it be day, a man hath always light enough to work by. Now the sun is always up with the saints, it is always day with them; though the beams of the Sun of Righteousness do not shine, yet it is always day; they are not children of darkness; they may have a dark day of it, but though it be never so dark, they may find light enough to do the great work which they came into the world for; which is to believe, and trust, and stay themselves on God; this a man may do in the darkest time, when he hath no light: and therefore saith the prophet, "Let him that walks in darkness, and seeth no light, stay himself upon the name of the Lord." What then, though you have not so much light as you would have, to refresh yourselves by: yet if you have light enough to do your Father's work by, and the greatest work of this life is to trust in God, and believe, have you then any reason for your discouragements? Thus it is with all the saints; though they may be in the dark, and the sun shines not out upon them, yet it is always day with them, and they have light enough, when it is darkest, to do their Father's work and business by; and therefore certainly, the saints have no reason to be cast down, and discouraged, although they be much forsaken, deserted, and in the dark.

But Jesus Christ hath not only deserted, forsaken, and withdrawn himself from me, in regard of vision; but I fear also in regard of union: not in regard of comfortable feelings only; but in regard of strength and power: and therefore I am afraid, and discouraged, and have I not cause for it?

No. For a man that is in the dark, is not able to judge of his own grace, or Christ's strength in him: now you are in desertion, therefore in the dark, therefore you are not able to judge of your own grace, and Christ's strength in you; yet if you can judge in this condition, and will deal faithfully with your own souls; is there not as much of Christ's strength, and grace in your lives and conversations, as when ye had that presence which ye mourn after, excepting your enlargement in duties? I confess indeed, that a gracious man in time of desertion, hath not those enlargements, as he had when God's face shined upon him; but setting aside your enlargements, what is there in your conversations

wanting now, which you had then? and is the very want of enlargement a sufficient reason to say that Christ is gone, and hath forsaken me, not only in regard of vision, but in regard of union, strength, and grace? We read in Canticles v. 5, that when Christ withdraws from the spouse, there is some myrrh left upon the ringles of the door; the spouse ariseth, follows after him, and enquireth for him, saying, "Did you see my Beloved?" She met with the watchmen, they smote her, and she was willing to bear their smiting, that she might hear of Christ; she stands and admireth at the beauty and excellency of her beloved; "White and ruddy, the fairest of ten thousand." Now in this desertion of yours, is there not some myrrh upon the ringles of your heart? Do you not still stand admiring Christ, and his excellencies? Do you not enquire after your Beloved? going to one and to another, saying, "Did you see him whom my soul loveth?" Are you not willing that the watchmen should smite you, so ye may but meet with Christ again? And will ye say then, he is only gone in regard of vision, but in regard of union, power, strength and grace too? Surely you have no reason for it.

But I am not only forsaken and deserted, and want the comfortable feelings, and manifestations of love which I once had, and do now desire to have; but I do find the contrary tokens of God's displeasure, manifestations of his anger: were it only in the withdrawings of love I might bear it; but Christ is angry, God is angry, appears to be mine enemy and have I not reason now to be much discouraged?

No: for if this hath been the condition of the saints before you, why should you fear your state in this respect? Now look into Isaiah lvii, and you shall find that God saith, "I was wroth and smote him;" he did not only hide his face, but he was wroth; yea, he is not only wroth, but he smote his people too, and yet the promise is, "I will restore comfort to him, and to his mourners:" did not Job think, and say that God was angry with him, and become his enemy? and did not Job's friends think that God loved them and was their friend, and his enemy? yet if you look into Job xlii. you find that God was more pleased with Job, for he was fain to pray for them before they could be accepted; and know ye not that it is Christ's usual manner to personate an

enemy when he intends the most friendship, to seem a stranger when he intends the most communion. It is said that God was angry with Moses, Exod. iv. yet even then he gave him such a promise of mercy as he had not before, ver. 14, 15, and 16. Ye know what David's choice was, "Lord, let me fall into thy hands, and not into the hands of men, for with thee is mercy." It is sometimes a mercy to be immediately chastised by the hand of God our Father. God might turn us over to the hands of men, but if God will take us into his own hand, and chastise with his own hand immediately, there is love in it. If a prince should say to his officers, "my whole kingdom is before you, do right, and execute justice and judgment; but as for such and such a family, if they shall commit any fault, I will chastise them immediately with my own hand, you shall not meddle with them, I will do it myself," would not this argue love? Thus it is with the saints in the time of desertion, then God takes the soul into his own hand, all creatures and officers of his anger stand and meddle not; in other afflictions God turns us over to his officers, but in desertion, there he doth correct immediately; and therefore though he strikes, yet there is love at the bottom, and the more Christ doth sympathize with you in any affliction, the less cause you have to be discouraged. Christ is our sympathizing High-Priest in all our afflictions, but the more we are like to him in any affliction, the more he doth sympathize, and his heart let out the more unto us. Jesus Christ was in desertion himself, and not only forsaken, but, for our sakes, under the wrath and displeasure of God his Father; and therefore when he sees a soul, not only deserted, but under anger and displeasure of God, then he saith, Oh! there is a soul that is in my case, and so he does most commiserate and compassionate that person. Have you then any reason to be discouraged in this respect?

But this is not my case; for I am not only deserted, forsaken, under manifestations of Christ's displeasure; but I have sinned and drawn down this desertion upon my own soul; and therefore now it is that I am thus discouraged, and have I not reason for it?

No, for God doth not always desert and forsake his people for their sins; sometimes he doth, and sometimes he doth

not. As appears by comparing the iiii<sup>d</sup> and v<sup>th</sup> chapters of the Canticles. And it may be he doth now withdraw from you, not for your sin; and if there be but a *may be* of it, there is no reason for discouragement. But suppose it be so, look I pray into Isaiah lvii. again, and see what the Lord hath promised to a poor soul in this condition: verse 17, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." Will ye say, the Lord doth not only hide his face from you, but he hath smitten you? So here. Will ye say, oh, but I have sinned, and drawn this desertion upon myself? So here: "For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and smote him." Will ye say, oh, but I have sinned on both sides of this desertion: I have sinned before the desertion came, which sin was the cause of it; and I have sinned since: I have been deserted by my frowardness and peevish carriage? So here: "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and hid me;" there is sin on the one side: "and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart;" there is sin on the other side of desertion: here is sin on both sides; what then, is there any hope, or comfort, or mercy for a heart in this condition? Yes, saith the Lord, "I will restore comfort unto him, and to his mourners." Oh, but it is not comfort that my soul desires; but I have a foul, filthy, unclean, wicked heart of mine own; oh, that my heart were healed: is there any hope of healing mercy in this condition? Yes, saith the Lord, in the text; "I have seen his ways, and will heal him." Oh, but though I be healed, I shall sin again, and wander from God again: nay, saith the Lord, "But I have seen his ways, and will heal him, and will lead him also." But I see no means or likelihood of all this; how can it be? Yes, very well; for saith the Lord, verse 19<sup>th</sup> "I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace, peace, to him that is afar off; and I will heal him again:" Oh what comfort is here? what an upholding promise is here? Can you read it or think of it, and your heart sink before it?

This is but part of my condition, for I have sinned, Christ hath forsaken me; I have sinned, Christ hath smote me, and he goes on smiting, goes on angry, goes on displeased; I have been deserted a long while, in the dark a long while;

and I am so far from the light, that it doth even grow darker and darker; my condition being more sad every day than other; every day I am more deserted and my condition worsen; have I not reason to be cast down and discouraged now?

No: for when was it worst with the Israelites? They had an ill time of it all the time they were in the land of Egypt, a dark time; but was it not worst with them immediately before their deliverance? Did not the taskmasters then beat them? When was it worst with David? Ill at all times in the wilderness; but was it not worst with him at Ziklag, when he had lost his wives, and his own men took up stones against him? Psalm x, we read that David saith, "Why standest thou afar off, O Lord, and hidest thyself in time of trouble?" hiding is more and worse than standing afar off. When the sun is going down, then it seems to be far off; but when it is hidden, then it is set, and is further off: so saith David, Lord thou art not only afar off, but even out of sight, quite out of sight and art hidden from me; his desertion grew higher and higher: and if you look into Psalm xiii, you find that he speaks to the like purpose; "how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? how long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever?" As hiding is more than standing afar off; so it is worse than forgetting: for, as Musculus observes well, forgetting is but *remisso amoris*; a man that loves another may forget him, yet he may love him well; but hiding the face is, *Iræ testimonium* the testimony of anger; and it is as if David should have said: Lord, thou doest not only restrain thy love towards me, but thou doest shew tokens of thy displeasure, and anger, and thy displeasure riseth. So Psalm xxii, ver. 1, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me! I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not," ver. 2. How can this be, saith Augustine, that God should forsake Christ in his sufferings, for these words are spoken of Christ, when God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself? Yes, very well, saith he, for Christ was a common person, stood in our stead, and place, and so personating of us, he saith, "Why hast thou forsaken me!" Yea, and Lord, thou hast not only forsaken me, but my desertion riseth yet higher; for, "I cry in the day-time and thou hearest not." But you may see this abundantly made out in Job xxx. 20, "I cry unto thee, and thou dost

not hear me ; I stand up, and thou regardest me not, thou art become cruel to me ; with thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me." Ver. 27, "My bowels boiled, and rest not, the days of affliction prevented me : I went mourning without the sun ; I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls." And ver. 26, "When I looked for good, then evil came to me ; and when I waited for light, there came darkness." Thus you see that it may be the condition of God's own people, to be worsed and worsed ; and their condition more and more dark in their own apprehensions ; and therefore no reason why you should be discouraged in this respect.

But my desertions have been so long, that I fear it will never be otherwise with me ; God is now gone, Christ is now gone, comfort gone, and I fear now that Christ will never return again ; and this is that which even sinks my soul : I confess the least desertion and forsaking is a great evil : but though I were under the greatest cloud in the world, I should bear it, if I did but think that Christ would return again : but I find in scripture, that there is a final rejection mentioned, as well as a present desertion : the saints and people of God, are it may be deserted for a time ; but they are never rejected : David was deserted, but he was not rejected ; Saul was rejected, finally rejected ; and I fear that I am not only deserted for the present, but finally rejected, that God hath even cast me off ; and therefore I am thus discouraged, have I not cause and reason for it now ?

No, not yet ; for first, it is usual with saints in affliction, to think that God is gone, and will return no more : there is no affliction which the people of God meet withal, and they meet with many, wherein they are so apt, and prone, and ready to write a *never* upon their condition, as in this case of spiritual desertion. If a godly, gracious man fall sick, he doth not say presently, or conclude, I shall never recover again ; if he be persecuted by enemies, he doth not conclude presently that he shall never be delivered : but if God hide his face at any time, then comes out this *never*, I shall *never* be delivered, I shall never be restored to comfort again. So Psalm 13 "How long wilt thou hide thy face ? what, for ever !" So Psalm 77, "Will the Lord cast off for ever ?" ver. 7, "Will he be favourable no more ? is his mercy clean gone for

ever? and doth his promise fail for evermore?" This is the proper place and ground, where this unbelieving conclusion grows; when they are in this condition, they rise to a *never*; oh, it will never be otherwise with me; Christ is gone, mercy is gone, and I shall never see the face of God again. This is usual, and most usual with the saints in this condition.

Therefore you shall observe, that when God doth give out a promise to his children in this condition; the promise is so cast and laid, as may most obviate, and face this objection, and take off our *never*. Psalm ix. 18. "The needy shall not always be forgotten, the expectation of the poor shall not fail for ever." So Psalm ciii. "The Lord is merciful and gracious, (verse 8.) slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy: he will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever." So Isaiah lvii. 16, "For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth." God seeth that in this condition, his people are apt to write a *never* upon their condition; and therefore that he may condescend unto their infirmities, when he comes to give out a promise, he doth not barely promise mercy; but he puts in the *ever* into his promise, that he may take off our unbelieving *never*.

If it be made out unto you by Scripture, that God or Christ is not so gone, but that he will return again; then will you not say, surely I have no reason for my discouragements?

Now for the clearing of that, give me leave to propound several questions to you.

1. Did ye ever read in all the word of God, that a man was finally rejected and forsaken, but an evil spirit from the Lord did seize upon him presently? Saul was finally rejected, and the text saith, that an evil spirit from the Lord seized upon him; and what is the evil spirit, but an envious spirit? The envious man in the gospel, is the evil man; and this evil spirit seized on Saul as soon as God did forsake him; for an envious, malicious, persecuting spirit came upon him against David, and the saints with him. So when God forsakes a man finally, a persecuting spirit enters him. When God forsakes his own children, Satan, that evil spirit comes to them; for when God goes, Satan comes: but there is much difference between a tempting Satan, and a persecu-

ting Satan : tempting Satan comes to the saints, when they are deserted ; but a persecuting Satan doth not enter into them. But did ye ever know, or read of any finally rejected, but an evil, persecuting spirit seized on them from the Lord ?

2. Do you read of any in all the word whom God did finally forsake, that could not find in their hearts to forsake God and his ways ? God doth not forsake us, unless we forsake him ; “ Ye have rejected me, saith the Lord, and therefore I have rejected you.” Possibly a good man may want this sense of God’s love ; but then he hath the sense of his own sins : possibly he may want the feeling of his own perfection, which is divine love ; but then he hath the feeling of his own imperfection. But I say, Did you ever read in all the word, of any man finally forsaken, that could not find in his heart to forsake God, and the good ways of God ?

3. Did ye ever read in all the word, that God did ever forsake a man, who was sensible of his forsaking, and complained thereof, simply for itself. We read of Saul indeed, that when he was forsaken, he cried out, and said, “ God hath forsaken me, the Philistines are upon me ;” God hath forsaken me, but it is in order to an outward evil ; the Philistines are upon me. But the saints when they are forsaken, are sensible of this evil, simply for itself, and think the time long and tedious, when they are so forsaken : “ O Lord, (saith David,) how long wilt thou hide thy face from me : what, for ever ?” But I say, was ever man forsaken, was ever man quite forsaken of God, that was sensible of this evil, only and simply for itself ?

4. Did you ever read in all the word of God, that ever a man was finally forsaken, who was tender in the point of sin, who sat mourning after God ? We read in the Romans, that when God gave up the Gentiles to their sins, they gave up themselves unto all uncleanness, and were past feeling. The saints and people of God on the contrary, in the time of their desertion, are tender in the point of sin, and they mourn after God : when was a man ever forsaken, whose heart was in this frame ?

5. Did you ever read that Christ did finally forsake a man in whose heart and soul, still he did leave his goods, furni-

ture, and spiritual household-stuff? A man sometimes goes from home, and sometimes he doth quite leave his house. There is much difference between those two: if a man leave his house, and comes no more, then he carries away all his goods; and when ye see them carried away, ye say, This man will come no more. But though a man ride a great journey, yet he may come again; and ye say, Surely he will come again; why? Because still his goods, wife, and children are in his house. So if Christ reject a man and go away finally, he carries away all his goods, spiritual gifts, graces, and principles: but though he be long absent, yet if his household stuff abide in the heart; if there be the same desires after him, and delight in him, and admiring of him, and mourning for want of him; ye may say, surely he will come again? Why? Because his household-stuff is here still. When did Christ ever forsake a man in whose heart he left his spiritual furniture?

6. Did ye ever know a man finally forsaken of Christ, who did long after the presence of Christ, as the greatest good; and looked upon his absence as the greatest evil and affliction in all the world; being willing to kiss the feet of Jesus Christ, and to serve him in the lowest and meanest condition, so he might but enjoy him? We find that the saints desire, above all things, to be kissed with the kisses of Christ's mouth: and therefore the book of the Canticles doth so begin, chapter ii. 1. "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth;" even because that is the first and the chiefest of the saints desires in this life: but if Christ will not kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, saith a gracious soul, yet I am willing to kiss his feet, as Mary did. There is a time coming, when he will kiss me with the kisses of his mouth for ever; but for the present, if I can but kiss his feet here, I have hope to be kissed by him in heaven. Now, I say, did Christ ever forsake a man finally, who did thus long after Christ himself? Can those that are forsaken, mourn after his presence as the best thing, and for his absence as the greatest evil in all the world? I appeal to your own souls, and bosoms herein, whoever you are that labour under this fear, that Christ is gone, and he will return no more; suppose that God hath hid his face from you, seems to forget you, and to be angry with you; yet in the midst of all these darknesses, do you

find an evil spirit, an envious, malicious spirit from the Lord, seizing upon you? Do you find, that you can find in your heart to forsake God, and the good ways of God? Yea, rather, do you not find the contrary, though you want the sense of God's love? Have you not the sense of your own sin; and when you want the sense of your own perfection, have you not some sense of your own imperfection? Do you not look upon this desertion, as the greatest affliction in all the world? Can you not mourn after God, and his presence? Doth not Christ every foot, send in one token of his love or another to visit your souls? And are you not willing to kiss the feet of Jesus Christ? Oh yes, I must needs say, though I have fears that Christ is gone, and will return no more, yet, I praise the Lord, I do not find an envious, malicious persecuting spirit in my soul unto the saints and people of God. I do not find that my heart is willing to forsake Christ, and the good ways of Christ: but I find that I can mourn for the absence of Christ simply for itself, and look upon it as the greatest affliction in the world: that I am ever willing to kiss the feet of Jesus Christ: and to be in the lowest and meanest condition, so he would but return unto my soul again. Yea, and I must needs say, that every foot I receive one token or other, one promise or another to visit me in my condition. Then, be of good comfort; though Christ be absent, yet he will return again; and with great mercy, and with everlasting kindness will he gather your souls unto himself again: and thus I say it shall be with all the saints. Surely therefore they have no reason for their discouragements, whatever their desertions be. Why therefore should not every one say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou so disquieted within me?"

Upon all this account I see, I have not so much reason for my discouragement: but it is an hard thing to bear up ones heart from sinking in the time of desertion, when God hides his face: what shall I do then, and this may be the condition of us all, that I may bear up my heart against this discouragement, even when I am most in the dark, and Christ hides his face from me, or forsakes me?

Take heed that ye do not measure God's eternal affection, by some present dispensation. There is an eternal displeasure against a man; and there is a present displeasure with a

man. Eternal displeasure, or hatred, cannot stand with eternal love ; but eternal love, and present displeasure, may stand together. A father may be displeased with the child for the present, and yet may love him with paternal love. So God may, and doth love, though for the present displeased: but when men measure eternal affection, by present dispensation, then they are quite discouraged; and you will find all discouragements in this case do arise from hence. Some there are, that do walk by particular providences, experiences, words, manifestations, and incomes of love; and when they have them, then they are much refreshed; and if they want them, then they are much discouraged, and say, Ah, Christ loves me not, and God is gone, will return no more. Why? Because they measure God's eternal love, by some present dispensation: but if God's present dispensations may seem to run cross to his eternal purpose, why then should they be discouraged, and say, He is gone for ever? Now so it is, he may hide his face, he may withdraw, and deny particular comforts, and manifestations, yet love me eternally. Oh, that people would not measure God's eternal affection, by some present dispensation, so should they never be much discouraged.

If you would not be discouraged in this condition, take heed of letting fall any despairing, despondent, unbelieving speeches; for the more busy Satan is about you, in the time of desertion, the more tedious will that time be, and more full of discouragements. Now look, as it is with some dog; if you let fall a bone, or bread, or meat, the dog stays and waits still; but when he finds none, he goes his ways. So it is with Satan, when a man is in a desertion, he comes, and saith he, This is a time for me to work, who am the firstborn child of darkness; and this soul being in the dark, it is a fit time for me to work upon him; there he stands, and if any despairing, despondent speeches do fall from you, Satan stays the longer; but if none fall he goes away the sooner. Have you therefore been, or are you under any desertion, and let fall any bones for Satan? look back, and gather them all up again, gather up these crumbs again, and mourn over them, and take heed for the time to come; for the more of these fall, the longer Satan stays, and the more you will be discouraged.

Be sure that you hear things indifferently on both sides. There are two parties pleading in your souls in the time of desertion. One that doth plead for Christ, to maintain and bear up the love of Christ in your heart, saying, He is gone indeed, and he doth hide his face; but he will come again, and shine upon you again. There is another party, that doth plead the cause of Satan, against Christ, saying, He is now gone, and will return no more, you shall never see his face again. In this case be sure that you do hear things indifferently, and let not your ear be open to one, and shut to the other. He can never judge rightly, that doth not hear both parties. Though it be no time to judge when you are under temptation, and in the dark; yet how frequently do poor souls judge themselves in this condition, and even judge themselves to be under judgment, why? but because they hearken more to one side than to the other. If Satan come, and tell them a story of God's displeasure, they will be sure to hear that at large; but if Christ come and tell them a story of God's love to sinners, that they hear not; or if they do, yet as a man that reads a book to confute it, is disputing against what he reads all along, so are they also disputing against the words of the gospel all along as they hear them; saying in their hearts, Oh! but this is not made for me; it is a good promise, but it belongs not to me, this is not my condition; and a hundred such oh buts! But is this equal? How is it possible, but that a man should misjudge, and be much discouraged, when he hears thus? Wherefore, my exhortation from the Lord is, which I beseech you in his name to receive; never receive any relation from the law, but be assured your ears be as open for to hear the gospel: never receive any relation, or story from Satan; but let your ear be as open to hear what Christ saith. And why should not this exhortation be received? Had I intreated some great thing for Christ, would you not have done it? But now that I only intreat you to carry things indifferently, to have an ear open, as well to Christ, as to Satan; will ye not yield to it? Oh, methinks every gracious soul should say, Well, through grace, I will hearken more to Christ: I confess indeed, I have heard what Satan hath said; but when comfort hath come, I have turned away mine ear, and have not heard; or if I have heard, I have been disputing

against what I have heard, and making objections all along : now the Lord pardon this evil to me ; through grace, mine ear shall be more open to Christ, and less open to Satan. So do, and you will never be much discouraged, whatever your desertion be.

Labour more and more for to live by faith : when God seems to be mine enemy, saith Luther, and to stand with a drawn sword against me, then do I cast, and throw myself into his arms : and what better way than to venture upon God in this case ? and to say, whether saved, or not saved ; whether damned, or not damned ; whether hypocrite, or not hypocrite ; I do cast myself upon God at a venture. It is the love, and favour of Christ, that you mourn after, and are discouraged for the want of ; you cannot get a more ready, and compendious way to get this love, than, when you are in the dark, to throw yourselves into Christ's arms at a venture ; this takes, and wins the heart of Christ over to you : What ! will this poor soul throw himself into my arms (saith Christ) now I do seem his enemy ? well, then I will shew myself to be his friend ; and this is the proper work of this life : as for those sights and visions of God, they are the work of heaven ; and though God give them sometimes, yet it argues more strength of grace for to be able to live without them. Suppose two men in your work ; one that must have his pay presently, his wages presently, yea before he hath done his work : the other will not have his wages till his work be all done, and if ye offer him money, No, saith he, I will stay till all be done, and receive it in a lump together : which of these two, is the ablest man, or which the poorest man ? Will you not say, Surely, he that cannot stay, is the poorest ? and he that can stay longest for his wages, is the ablest man ? So it is here ; God hath two sorts of servants : one that doth go by visions and manifestations of love, and are not able to live at all by faith, but must have sights, and visions, and manifestations every day, or else they die, and murmur or complain. And others say, Oh ! but these sights and visions are for heaven ; if God will have it so, I am contented to stay till all my work be done : which of these two is the poorest or the strongest ? Will not ye say, surely, he that is able to stay, is strongest ; and he the poorest, and weakest, that is not able to stay, or to live by

faith; Oh! therefore labor more and more to live by faith; and when you are in desertion, say, whether saved, or not saved; whether hypocrite, or not hypocrite, I will stay, I will wait on God, and let him come when he pleaseth. If you lay yourself at Christ's feet, he will take you into his arms.

But what need I say more? Is there not enough in the compass of your own experience, to answer unto all your fears in this respect? When you have been in desertion, have you not said that Christ is gone and that he will never come again: and yet hath not Christ come again? Yea, and have you not said in the day of your desertion, If ever Christ do return again, I will never make such unbelieving conclusions as I have done: and hath not Christ returned after this? Now, then, when Satan comes, and suggests jealousies of Christ's love unto you, why are you not more peremptory? Why do you not say to him? this I have heard before, Satan; thou toldest me this before, that Christ was gone, and would never return again; but I have found it false, he did return, and therefore through grace, I will never believe these false reports of Christ; Christ is faithful, I have always found him so; those whom he loves, he loves to the end; and I know he loves me, Satan, for I love him; for my love is but the reflection of his love; I could not love him, if he did not love me first, and through grace, I love him; I know he loves me, because he hath changed me, and is every foot sending me some tokens of love; one promise, or another to uphold my heart; yea, I know, Satan, that Christ doth love me, because thou tellest me that he hates me; and if he hath loved once he will love me to the end; and therefore though for the present he hides his face from me; yet I shall see his face again. Thus gather in your experiences, and plead with Satan, or your own unbelieving hearts, according unto all these experiences; so shall you be able to live in the time of this desertion, and never be discouraged, whatever your desertions be.

And so much for the sixth instance.