

SERMON IV.

A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF GREAT SINS.

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

THE doctrine or observation that now we are pressing from these words, is this:

That the saints and people of God, have no reason for their discouragements, whatever their condition be; no just, true, scripture reason, for their discouragements, whatever their condition be.

It is clear by the words, and proved the last day by some general considerations.

Now more particularly, to make it out by divers instances. Nine things there are, which usually are the grounds and occasions of the discouragements of God's people.

I. Sometimes their discouragements are drawn from their greater and grosser sins.

II. Sometimes they do arise from the weakness of grace.

III. Sometimes they are taken from their failing in and non-acceptance of duty.

IV. Sometimes they are drawn from their want of evidence for heaven, and non-assurance of the love of God.

V. Sometimes they do come from their temptations.

VI. Sometimes from their desertions.

VII. Sometimes from their afflictions.

VIII. Sometimes from their unserviceableness.

IX. Sometimes from their condition itself.

Now if in all these respects, the saints and people of God have no reason to be discouraged, then we may safely conclude, that a godly man should not be discouraged whatever his condition be. I shall labour, therefore, through the grace of Christ, to make out this great truth unto you in all these respects, and begin with the first at this time.

I. Sometimes the discouragements of the saints and people of God, are drawn from their sins, their greater and grosser sins: the peace and quiet of the saints and people of God is many times interrupted by their sins.

Oh, says one, I am a man or woman of a rebellious heart, I have so slight a spirit, so unholy and uneven a conversation, that when I reflect upon my heart and life, I cannot but be discouraged. I know, indeed, it is a great evil for a man to labour under a sore temptation, or a sad desertion; but were my heart good, my life good, my conversation good, I should not be discouraged; but as for me, I have committed and do commit such and such great sins, have I not reason, and just reason now to be discouraged?

No, for discouragement itself is a sin, another sin, a gospel sin; now my sin against the law, is no just cause why I should sin against the gospel. I confess, indeed, there is much evil in every sin, the least sin is worse than the greatest affliction; afflictions, judgments and punishments are but the claws of this lion; it is more contrary to God than the misery of hell: Chrysostom had so great a sense of the evil of it, that when the empress sent him a threatening message, Go, tell her, said he, *Nil nisi peccatum metuo*: I fear nothing but sin. And, in some respects, the sins of the godly are worse than the sins of others, for they grieve the Spirit more, they dishonour Christ more, they grieve the saints more, they wound the name of God more, they are more against the love, and grace, and favour of God than other men's sins are. And the Lord doth see the sins of his own people; yea, so far he sees sin in them, that he doth chastise and afflict them for it; not only *from* their sin, but *for* their sin; and therefore, saith the apostle, in 1 Cor. xi. 30, speaking of the unworthy receiving of the Lord's supper, "For this cause many are sick and weak among you." And he doth not speak only of saints in appearance, and in church estate, but of such also as were saints indeed, and therefore he saith, "We are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." He puts himself in; We are judged that we may not be condemned with the world. Our Saviour Christ saith, Rev. iii. 19, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, be zealous therefore and repent."* It seems, then, it was for sin committed, else why should he say, Repent; and, repent therefore? Repentance is for sin committed already, and these were such as he loved too, whom

* Οσους δε φιλω ελεγχω παιδευω ζηλωσον ουν και μελανοησον.

he threatens thus to rebuke and chastise; and doth any father rebuke, chastise, or correct his child only *from* sin, and not *for* sin? Was not Moses a gracious and a holy man? and yet for his unbelief and sin he lost the land of Canaan. Was not Samson a good man? and yet by his sin he lost his eyes and his life too. Was not David a gracious and a holy man? and yet for his sin the Lord said, "The sword should never depart from his house;" and yet Christ had made satisfaction for his sin too, as well then, as for the saints now. But now, though there be never so much evil in the sins of God's people, yet they have no reason, no just cause or scripture reason to be cast down, and to be discouraged in that respect.

But how may this appear; that notwithstanding the sins of God's own people do grieve the Spirit of God, are a dishonour to Jesus Christ, and do wound the name of God, and the profession of Christ so much; that yet the saints have no reason to be discouraged or cast down?

1. They know, or they may know, that they shall never be condemned for their sin, whatever it be. "There is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus," saith the apostle. Christ was made sin for them; and if Christ be made sin for me, then my sin shall never hurt me. Luther is bold here, for saith he, Christ is made sin-damning, our sin is sin-damned: I confess, indeed, said he, that I have sinned, but sin-damning is stronger than sin-damned, and Christ was made sin-damning for me.* The thing is true, though the expression be strange; Christ was made sin for saints, therefore their sin shall not hurt them. It stands not with the justice of God to exact the payment of one debt twice. Now the Lord Jesus Christ hath not only been arrested, but in gaol for the debt of the saints and people of God, and he hath paid it to the utmost farthing; he hath paid it better than they could have paid it themselves, if they had gone to hell: for if a godly man had gone to hell, and been damned for ever, he would have been always paying, but the debt would never have been paid: Christ paid it all down for the present. And if you look into Scripture, you will find, that

* Fateor me peccasse, sed peccatum meum damnatum in Christo est, qui est peccatum damnans; est autem peccatum illud damnans, fortius peccato damnato.—Luther.

the Lord doth not condemn a man, no not a wicked man, barely for the act of his former sin, but because he will not turn from it. Psalm vii. 11, "The Lord is angry with the wicked every day:" verse 12, "If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready; he hath prepared for him the instruments of death, he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutor." The Lord hath prepared instruments of death against every wicked man; but yet, notwithstanding, though a man be never so wicked, if he turn unto the Lord, God will not discharge those instruments of death upon him, yea, though his sins have been never so great; but, saith the text, "If he turn not," (not because he hath sinned before, only, but because he turns not from his sin,) "he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready." Now there is, always, in the saints and people of God, a turning disposition, although they do sin against God; there is always, I say, a turning disposition in them, and therefore the Lord will not discharge the instruments of death upon them: surely, then, they have no reason to be quite discouraged in this respect.

2. As godly men shall never be condemned for their sins, so their sins shall never part God and them. What is the seeming reason why some are so discouraged about their sins? but because they think they shall not only lose the face and presence of God by their sins, but that they shall lose God himself. But now, I say, the sins of the godly shall never part God and them; their sins may hide God's face: but as their sins did not hinder God and their coming together at first, so their sins shall never part God and them: their sins may cause a strangeness between God and them, but shall never cause an enmity; their sins may hide God's face from them, but shall never turn God's back upon them: those whom God loves, he loves unto the end: "I am the Lord that changeth not," saith he. And as the prophet Isaiah speaks: "As the covenant that the Lord made with Noah, such is the covenant that he makes with his people." Now look into Genesis, chapter viii., and you shall see what the covenant is that the Lord made there with Noah, and with the world by Noah. When Noah came out of the ark, he built an altar, and sacrificed; verse 21, "And the Lord smelled a sweet savour, and the Lord said in his heart, I will

not again curse the ground for man's sake." Why? "For the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." You would think this were a reason why God should curse the ground again; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; man is wicked, therefore, surely God will curse the ground again: nay, saith the Lord, but though you that are poor creatures think so, yet I, that am the God of all grace, I make this covenant with the world by Noah, that I will not curse the ground any more for man's sake; because the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth continually. I confess, indeed, the Hebrew וַיִּשְׁמַע signifies *quamvis*, although; as well as *quoniam*, because: and it may be so translated; "Although the imagination of man's heart is evil," &c. Yet the Chaldee paraphrase, Septuagint, Hierom and Montanus render it, because.* But though it be so translated, yet that is enough to make good the truth and doctrine which I urge from this scripture. The covenant that the Lord makes with his people, is such a covenant as the Lord made with Noah; so saith the prophet Isaiah. What then? Therefore if God be in covenant with a man, he shall never lie under wrath again; for though the world sin, the world shall never be drowned again; and so, though he do sin, he shall never lie under wrath again. Now as for the people of God, they are all in covenant with God, they are under this gracious covenant, and therefore, though the mountains may be removed, God's mercy shall never be removed from them; and though the great hills may be thrown into the sea, the people of God, once in covenant with God, shall never be thrown into hell: and tell me then, have you, that are the people of God, any just cause or reason to be cast down, or to be discouraged?

3. If the very sins of God's people, through the overruling hand of grace, shall be an occasion of more grace and comfort to them than ever they had in all their lives before; then surely they have no reason to be discouraged in this respect. Now mark it, and you shall find, that God doth never suffer his people to fall into any sin, but he intends to make that

* Sensus enim et cogitatio humani cordis, &c.—Hierom.

Οτι εγκειλαι η διανοια.—Sept.

Quia cogitatio.—Montanus.

יִצְחָא לִיבָא אֲרִי—Chaldee Paraphrase.

sin an inlet unto further grace and comfort to them. This ye see in the first great sin that ever was committed by the children of men, the fall of Adam, the Lord himself came and preached the gospel, preached Christ unto fallen man; and surely when God himself preached the gospel, we are to think the man was converted. Now the greatest blessing that ever the world saw, was the righteousness of Jesus Christ; but how came that about? God suffers man to fall, and man's unrighteousness must usher in Christ's righteousness. The Scripture tells us that the Lord suffered Hezekiah to fall, that Hezekiah might know all that was in his heart; he did not know his own heart before, and therefore the Lord let him fall that he might know his own heart. But if you look into the Romans, chapter xi., you shall find in so many words what I am now speaking; verse 32, "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief." Why? "That he might have mercy upon all." Oh, what a blessed design upon unbelief is here! Therefore God concludes all under unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all: sin gets not, but is a loser by every fall of the godly. And if ye look into the Scripture, ye shall observe, that when the people of God fall, usually they fail in that grace wherein they do most excel; and wherein they did most excel, therein they did most miscarry. Abraham did most excel in faith, and therein he did most miscarry: Moses did most excel in meekness, and therein he did most miscarry; we read of no other sin concerning Moses but his anger: Job did most excel in patience, and therein he did most miscarry: Peter did most excel in zeal and resolution for Christ—"Though all the world forsake thee, yet will not I"—and therein he did most miscarry, denying Christ at the voice of a damsel. I say, ye shall observe this, that the saints fell and failed in that grace wherein they did most excel; and they did most excel wherein they did most miscarry: what is the reason of this? but because the Lord, by the over-ruling hand of his grace, did make their very miscarriages, inlets and occasions to their further grace and holiness. God hath a great revenue from the very infirmities of his people. He doth never suffer any of his people to fall into any sin, but he hath a design by that fall, to break the back of that sin they do fall into. Now, then, have the saints and people of God any reason to be

discouraged in this respect? By their sin they may be, and are oftentimes suspended from their comforts and use of their privileges; but by their sin they do not lose their right thereunto. Ye know how it was with the leper in the times of the Old Testament, among the Jews; when he was carried out of the city or town, from his own house, by reason of his uncleanness: or now, if a man that hath the plague, and be carried from his own house by reason thereof; the leper then, and the man that hath the plague or the pest now, may say, Though I be removed from mine own house, and have not the use of my house, yet I have a right to my house still; and though I cannot come to the use of my land, yet I have a right to my land still. So a godly man may say as concerning his sin, This sin of mine, indeed, it is a pest, and the plague of my soul, and a leprosy; but though, by this leprosy of mine, I am now suspended from the use of my comforts, yea, from the full use of my interest in Jesus Christ; yet, notwithstanding, I have an interest in Christ still, I have not lost my interest, still I have right to Christ; although I cannot come to the use of him as I did before, yet I have right unto Jesus Christ now, as I had before: and if all these things be so, why should a godly man be cast down or discouraged in this respect? Surely he ought not to be so.

But suppose a man's sins be such as never were pardoned before; and truly that is my case, for I have sinned a great sin, and I do not read in all the word of God, any example that ever such a sin as mine was pardoned; have I not reason now to be quite discouraged and cast down?

I answer, No; for, I pray, what do you think of Adam? Adam sinned a great sin in our first fall: the Lord himself came and preached the gospel to him, "The seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head." Should Adam have said, Oh, but there is no hope for me, for I have no example or precedent of pardon? Adam could have no example of any that was pardoned before him, because he was the first man, and the first that sinned. Should he have sat down and been discouraged, because he could not find any example for the pardon of the like sin that he had committed? You know what our Saviour Christ said, "Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven, unless it be the sin against the

Holy Ghost ;” every sin, though it be boiled up to blasphemy. You say, you have no example for the pardon of such a sin as your’s is ; but doth not your sin come within the compass of these words, “ Every sin and blasphemy ? ” Surely it doth. Have ye any reason then to be discouraged under the power of this objection ?

But suppose that a man have sinned greatly against his conscience, or against his light, against his knowledge, hath he not just cause or reason then to be cast down, and to be quite discouraged ?

No ; for if there be a sacrifice for such a sin as this is, then a man hath no reason to be quite discouraged ; cause to be humbled, as you shall hear afterward, but no reason to be discouraged. Now in the times of the Old Testament, in times of the law among the Jews, there was a sacrifice, not only for sin committed ignorantly, but also for sin committed against light and against conscience : and I appeal to you, whoever you are that make this objection, do you not think that Peter, when he denied his Lord and Master, sinned against his conscience, against his light, and against his knowledge ? Surely then there is no reason that a man should be quite discouraged, no not in this respect.

But suppose that a man’s sins be exceeding great, gross, and heinous ; for I do confess that possibly a godly man may sin some sin against his light, and against his conscience sometimes ; but as for me, my sin is exceeding great, gross and heinous, and have I not just cause and reason now to be discouraged ?

No, not yet, for though your sin be great, is not God’s mercy great, exceeding great ? is not the satisfaction of Christ great ? are the merits of Christ’s blood small ? Is not God, the great God of heaven and earth, able to do great things ? You grant that God is almighty in providing for you ; and is he not almighty also in pardoning : will ye spoil God of his almightiness in pardoning ? You say your sin is great, but is it infinite ; is there any more infinities than one, and that is God ? Is your sin as big as God, as big as Christ ; is Jesus Christ only a Mediator for small sins ; will you bring down the satisfaction of Christ, and the mercy of God, to your own model ? Hath not the Lord said concerning pardoning mercy, that his “ thoughts are not

as our thoughts, but as the heavens are greater than the earth, so are his thoughts (in this respect) beyond our thoughts." Hath not the Lord said, in Isaiah xliii, unto the people of the Jews, at verse 22, "But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel." Verse 23, "Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offering, neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices." Verse 24, "Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifice; but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thy iniquity." Yet, verse 25, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgression for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Here are sins, and great sins; and if the Lord will therefore pardon sin because it is great, unto his people; then surely they have no reason to be quite discouraged in this respect. Now look what David saith* in Psalm xxv. 11, "For thy name sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity for it is great." Mark his argument, "Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great:" if David use this reason, then may you also; and if this be a reason why God should pardon sin, because it is great; then this cannot be a reason, a just reason, why you should be discouraged.

But suppose that a man's sin be the sin of revolting, declining; for this is my case, will some say: I have striven, and striven against my sin a long while, and I return unto it again. Times were heretofore, that I have been exceeding forward and ready unto what is good; but now I am much declined, abated, and even gone backward with revolting, and deep revolting, and I have lain long so, even for many years. Have I not reason, and just reason now to be discouraged and cast down within myself?

I answer, No, not yet; for though this be a sufficient cause of great humiliation (for backsliding in scripture phrase is called rebellion, and rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft), yet a good man hath no reason to be discouraged in this regard; for thus saith the Lord, Jer. iii. 1, "They say, if a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and

* יכ אוחבל quoniam grandis est.—Hierom.

πολλη γαρ εστι.—Septuagint.

אוחב יגם אוח.—Chaldee Paraphrase.

become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again unto me, saith the Lord." And, verse 12, "Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever." And again, verse 14, "Turn O backsliding children, for I am married unto you." And if ever the Lord Jesus Christ did betroth himself unto any soul, he will never put that soul away again: "I hate putting away," saith God. Men put away their wives among the Jews, but saith the Lord, "I hate putting away." And Isa. l. 1, "Thus saith the Lord, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away, or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?" Among the Jews, the husband did put away his wife upon small occasions. As for adultery, you know that was death; he did not put away his wife upon adultery, she was to die for it: but the husbands put away their wives upon other occasions, and when they put away their wives, they gave the wife a bill of divorce, that so upon all occasions the woman might shew thereby that she was free from such a man. Now, saith the Lord, you that charge me, and complain that I have put you away, come and shew me the bill of divorce: "Thus saith the Lord, where is the bill," &c. Poor soul, thou complainest that I have put thee away, come then and shew me the bill of divorce: let any one who complains that I have put him away and cast him off, come and bring out his bill of divorce; this ye cannot do: men indeed put away, but if ever the Lord Christ doth match himself unto thee, he will never put thee away again.

And whereas you say, that you are declined, and have much revolted, and so have continued even many years, consider whether you be not mistaken; every abatement in affection is not a declining in grace: possibly we may not grieve for sin afterward so much as at our first conversion, yet we may hate it more: at first you may pray more against it, yet afterward watch more against it. We never see the face of sin so ugly, as in the glass of God's free love, and do you not see the free love of God more? Possibly your affections might be higher at the first, but is

not conviction more clear and full? As affections dry up, so we grow more settled in our judgment; and if your judgment be more settled, you are not declined, though your affections be somewhat abated.

And whereas you say, that you have returned to your sin again and again, and have continued under your revolt for many years; I shall only tell you what Mr. Bilney, a blessed martyr once said. Hearing a minister preach very terribly against sin, and saying thus, Behold, thou old sinner, thou hast lain rotting in the grave of thy sin these threescore years, and dost thou now think to go to heaven in one year? dost thou think to go forward to heaven more in one year, than thou hast gone backward to hell these threescore years? Ah, said Mr. Bilney, here is goodly preaching of repentance in the name of Christ! had I heard such doctrine preached heretofore, my poor soul had despaired for ever; but, saith he, the Lord Christ died for sinners, young sinners and old sinners, for one as well as the other; such as have lain long in sin, as well as those that have lain but a little while in sin, if they will come home unto Christ. And you know what our Saviour saith, "If thy brother transgress against thee, forgive him." But, Lord, he hath transgressed against me once, and I have forgiven him: yet, saith our Saviour, forgive him again. Oh but, Lord, I have forgiven him again and again, and yet he returns to his fault again: then forgive him again, saith Christ. But, Lord, how often shall I forgive my brother? Saith our Saviour, If he sin against thee seventy-seven times, and says that he doth repent, do thou forgive so oft. And now shall the Lord Jesus Christ enjoin us to forgive our brother, if he sin against us seventy-seven times; and will not the Lord Christ forgive much more, if a poor soul do turn unto him and say, Lord, I repent me that I have sinned against thee. Will the Lord Christ command me a poor sinner to forgive so many times; how often will the great God forgive? what, seventy-seven times! nay, seven hundred times seven hundred. And have ye any reason then to be discouraged in this respect? surely you have not.

But suppose that a man hath sinned foully, greatly, and he cannot repent, or be humbled enough: for that is my case; I have sinned, I have sinned greatly, and now after all,

my heart is hard, and I cannot be humbled enough, oh, I cannot repent enough: hath he not just cause and reason for his discouragement now, yea now to be quite discouraged?

No, not yet, for what if the Lord will have your humiliation from you by degrees? Should you be so, or so much humbled for the present, it may be it would be with you as it hath been with others, you would never think of your sins afterward; but may be the Lord will have this work of humiliation to stay long upon thy soul, and he will not give it you all at once. Some there are, that when they come into a house, they pay a great income and little rent, others pay a little income and a great rent: so it is with souls that come to Christ; some at the first lay down a great humiliation, and they have lesser of it afterward; some have less at the first, and have more afterwards by continuance in it: and what now if the Lord will lead thy soul in this latter way? this latter way may be the better way if the Lord think fit.

Again: it may be, that if you had so much, or so much humiliation now at the first, you would think, that in, and by, and for your humiliation you should have acceptance with God, and the remission of your sin; if you be kept off from this rock and danger, by your want of that degree of humiliation, which you would have, and so be trained up to prize the Lord's free grace in giving you humiliation, have you any cause to complain?*

Again: if you had so much, or so much humiliation for the present, it may be then, you would have the less humility; a little humility, is as good as a great deal of humiliation, as good being humble, as being humbled. Now because thou art not humbled, therefore thy soul is kept humble; hadst thou many tears, and abundance of tears, may be then thou wouldest be proud, but the Lord doth deny thee tears, and thou art not humbled to the degrees of thy own desires, and so the Lord keeps thee humble by the want of thy humiliation.

Again: it may be, that if you were humbled so, or so much at the present, or at the first, you would have the less

* *Sepe negatur cum quæritur, et conceditur cum non expectatur, ut ex eo constet esse opus divinæ gratiæ.—Bonavent.*

fear of your own heart. The more humbled, it may be, the less after-fear, and the less humbled, the more after-fear, the less humbled, sometimes, the more a man fears his own heart and his own condition. Gracious fear is as good as humiliation, and if that which you want in humiliation you have it made up in fear, have you any reason to be discouraged? I know it is usual with Satan, to say unto the people of God at their first coming on to Christ, that they are not humbled enough, and so keeps them off from mercy and grace. But, I pray, tell me, can ye ever be humbled enough? Can there be any proportion between your sins and your humiliation? The truth is, we should labour that our humiliation be answerable to our sin; but God is not pleased with grief for grief, God is not pleased with sorrow for sorrow; the end of all our sorrow and grief is, to embitter our sin to us, to make us to prize Jesus Christ, to wean us from the delights and pleasures of the creature, to discover the deceitfulness and naughtiness of our own hearts. In scripture phrase, and language of the New Testament, repentance is called an after-wisdom, an after-mind, *μετανοία*, a bethinking of ones self, it is called a conviction; now though you be not humbled unto the degree which you do desire, yet notwithstanding, do you not bethink yourself, are you not convinced of the evil of your former way? hath not the Lord now given you an after-wisdom? and do not you say concerning your sin, Oh, if it were to do again, I would not do it for all the world? Thus it is with the servants and people of God, though they cannot be humbled so much as they would be, yet notwithstanding, they are thus far humbled, thus far grieved, that their sins are embittered, and themselves thereby weaned from the delights and pleasures of the world, convinced of the evil of their sin, and what they want in humiliation they have it in humility, the less humbled, the more they are kept humble, and what they do want at the first, they have it afterwards by degrees, soaking into their souls. Have they then any reason to be discouraged in these respects? surely, no.

But should not a godly, gracious man be fully grieved and humbled for his sin?

Grieved, humbled for his sin? yes, surely: though the Lord, through the over-ruling hand of his grace, do work

never so much good out of my sin unto me, yet I am to be humbled for it, and the rather to be humbled for it, because he works good out of it. I have read indeed of the mother of those three learned men, Lombard, Gratian, and Comæstor, the three great pillars of the Roman Church, for Lombard wrote the Sentences, and Gratian the Popish Decretals, and Comæstor, *Historiam Scholasticam*, that when she lay on her death-bed, and the priest came unto her, and called upon her for repentance of her whoredoms,* for these three, Lombard, Gratian and Comæstor, were her bastards, as the very popish writers do record it, and he, telling her that she must be greatly afflicted, grieved and humbled for her uncleanness, or else she could not be saved, why, said she, I confess, indeed, that whoredom and uncleanness is a great sin, but considering what a great deal of good hath come to the church of God by my sin, that three such great lights have been brought forth into the world by my sin, *non valeo pœnitentiam agere*, I cannot, I will not repent. And thus it is with many poor ignorant souls, when they see, how the Lord by his over-ruling hand doth work good unto them out of their sin, as some outward blessings and mercies, they do not repent of their sin, but rather justify themselves in their sins: but now take a godly man, a gracious soul, and the more that he sees the Lord working good out of his sin, the more he is humbled for it; and upon that very ground, because God works good of it therefore he is humbled the more.

Yet further; it is observed, that though the Lord did ordinarily call David his servant, yet when David had sinned that great sin, he sent the prophet to him, saying, Go, say to David; he had lost the title of servant, now bare David, now single David, now David without the title my servant. And so, though God ordinarily called the people of Israel his people, yet when they had committed that great sin of

* *Hos tres viz. Gratianum, Pet. Lombardum, et Pet. Comæstorem suisse Germanos ex adulterio natos, quorum mater, cum in extremis peccatum suum confiteretur et confessor redargueret crimen perpetrati adulterii, quia valde grave esset et ideo multum deberet dolore et penitentiam agere respondet illa; Pater, scio quod adulterium peccatum magnum est, sed considerans quantum bonum secutum est, cum isti sili mei sint lumina magna in Ecclesia, Ego non valeo penitere. Cui confessor hoc ex dono Dei est, ex te autem adulterium crimen magnum et de hoc doleas, &c.—Decret. fol. i. Gratiani vita.*

idolatry, in the matter of the golden calf, the Lord doth not call them his people, but he saith to Moses, The people, not My people, but The people, and Thy people, Moses; now they had lost their old title. Thus, I say, the sins of God's own people do deprive them, and divest them of their spiritual privileges, and can a gracious heart look upon this, and consider how he is divested and disrobed of his spiritual privileges, and not mourn under it? Can one friend grieve another friend, and not be grieved himself? The saints by their sins, they grieve God, who is their best friend, and therefore certainly they must needs be grieved, they must needs be humbled, or there is no grace; not grieved, not humbled, not gracious. But now because they are grieved, and humbled for sin committed, therefore they are not discouraged; I say, because they are grieved, and because they are humbled for sin committed, therefore they are not discouraged, for discouragement is a hindrance to humiliation, and the more truly a man is humbled for sin committed, the less he is discouraged, and the more a man is discouraged, the less he is truly humbled.

You will say, then, but what is the difference between these? a man is to be humbled, and not discouraged, not discouraged and yet to be humbled, what is the difference between these two, being humbled and being discouraged?

It is a profitable question, and worth our time: by way of answer, therefore, thus,

When a man is humbled, truly humbled, the object of his grief, sorrow or trouble, is sin itself, as a dishonour done unto God: the object of discouragement is a man's own condition, or sin in order to his own condition, the ultimate object of discouragement being a man's own condition. When a man is discouraged, you shall find still, that his trouble runs all out upon his own condition. Oh, saith a discouraged person, I have sinned; I have thus sinned, and therefore my condition is naught, and if my condition be naught now, it will never be better; Lord, what will become of my soul? Still his trouble is about his own condition. But when a man is grieved and truly humbled for sin, his trouble is about sin itself, as a dishonour done unto God. To clear this by Scripture: you know Cain was discouraged, but Cain was not humbled; how may that appear? Cain was

troubled about his condition. Ah, saith he, my punishment is greater than I can bear. On the other side, the poor prodigal was humbled, but not discouraged: how may that appear? his trouble was about his sin, and not about his condition: "I will return unto my Father (saith he), and I will say unto him, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and I am no more worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants." David was sometimes both discouraged and humbled, and then you find his repentance and humiliation to be very brackish; but if you look into the list Psalm, you shall find David humbled but not discouraged, for it is a penitential Psalm, therefore humbled but not discouraged, for still he did keep his assurance; verse 14, "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation." But what was his repentance, his trouble about? It was about his sin, and not about his condition, read verse 23, and so on: "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin, for I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me; against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Still, ye see, his eye is upon his sin, and not upon his condition only. So that I say, when a man is truly humbled and grieved for sin, the object of his grief is sin, as a dishonour done unto God: whun a man is discouraged and not humbled, then his trouble is all about his condition, and what will become of him.

True humiliation, it is no enemy, but a real friend unto spiritual joy, to our rejoicing in God. The more a man is humbled for sin committed, the more he will rejoice in God, and rejoice that he can grieve for sin. He grieves, and rejoiceth that he can grieve for sin, therefore humiliation, by our Saviour Christ, is made an effect of the Comforter: "I will send the Comforter, and he shall convince the world of sin." Because there is comfort always goes along with true humiliation, it is not an enemy but a friend to our spiritual rejoicing; but discouragement is an enemy to spiritual joy. A man that is discouraged is grieved, and he is sad upon his grief, and if ye tell him that he must rejoice in God, and call upon him to rejoice in God, Oh no, saith he, it is not for me to rejoice, I am a man of another disposition, joy doth not

belong to me, or to one in my condition: but now, when a man is truly humbled, the more he is humbled for sin, the more he can rejoice in God; but the more a man is discouraged, the less he rejoiceth in God.

The more a man is humbled, truly humbled for sin, the more he is found in duty; the more a man is discouraged, the more his hands are weakened to duty: as it is with the water, if the water do continue in its true stream, it doth not overflow the banks, it doth not break down the dam: sometimes you have a great fall of water, a great and mighty flood, and then the river overflows the banks, and the water bears down the dam. So here, duty is the bank of sorrow, grief and humiliation for sin; I say, your duties are the banks of all your godly sorrow, and when a man's sorrow or grief doth arise to such an height, that it swells over duty, and a man saith, I will pray no more, it is to no purpose; and I will hear no more, for there is no hope for my soul; and I will examine my own heart no more: when thus sorrow swells over duty, and breaks down the dam of duty, then it is discouragement, it is not humiliation: be not mistaken, this is not humiliation, this is a plain discouragement. There is a great difference then, between discouragement and humiliation. Many people indeed do call their discouragements, humiliation; but the Lord knows, there is not a drop of humiliation in a flood of discouragement: would you therefore be humbled? Oh, then, be not discouraged; for the more you are discouraged, the less you will be humbled; and the more humbled you are, the less discouraged you will be.

But if there be such a great difference between these, and if it be our duty, to be humbled for sin, but not to be discouraged; what should a man do to bear up his heart to the work of humiliation, and yet bear up against all discouragement? How shall I be so humbled, as I may not be discouraged? or what shall a man do that he may be humbled, and yet not be discouraged in his humiliation?

Let Christians carry this rule always up and down with them, namely, That a man is to be humbled for his sin, although it be never so small, but he is not to be discouraged for his sin, though it be never so great. Both these parts are true; a man is not to be discouraged under his sin, although it be never so great; because discouragement itself

is a sin, and that cannot help against sin, sin cannot help against sin. A man is to be humbled for his sin, although it be never so small, for it is a dishonour to God, and little sins make way to great sins. So, then, if thou wouldest be humbled, and not discouraged, carry this rule up and down with you, and always remember it upon all occasions: It is my duty, and I have reason to be humbled for my sin, although it be never so small; but I have no reason to be discouraged under my sin, though it be never so great.

In all your humiliation, be sure that you never part or separate those things that God hath joined together: God hath joined commandment and promise together, the promise and the commandment are born twins; there is never a commandment that you read of, but hath a promise annexed to it, a promise of assistance, a promise of acceptance, and a promise of reward. If you look upon the commandment itself without the promise, then you will despair; if you look upon the promise without the commandment, then you will presume: but look upon promise and commandment, commandment and promise together, then ye will be humbled, in case ye have sinned, but ye will not be discouraged. The Lord, you know, hath given two eyes to man, and if a man should put out one, and say, I can see well enough with the other, what need I have two? he should sin greatly. So for the soul, the Lord hath given two eyes, as I may so speak; the eye of conscience, which is to look upon God's commandment; and the eye of faith, which is to look upon God's promise: and if any man will say, I will put out the eye of faith, I can see well enough with the eye of conscience upon God's commandment, he shall do ill, and very ill: and if a man shall say, I will put out the eye of conscience, for I can see well enough with the eye of faith, he shall do very ill. But whenever you find you have sinned against any commandment, presently say, Where is the promise? I may not look upon the commandment without the promise, nor the promise without the commandment. Thus join both together, and you shall not be discouraged, yet be humbled.

In all your humiliation, take heed that you do not mourn for your sin only in order to your condition, but rather mourn over your condition in order to your sin. Humiliation, you have heard, is objected upon sin itself, as a dishonour to

God; the object of our humiliation is sin itself, as a dishonour done unto God: but now the object of our discouragement, you have heard, is our condition, only our condition. Well, then, would you be humbled so as you may not be discouraged? take heed that you do not stand poring only upon your condition, but rather say thus unto thine own soul; Oh, my soul, thou hast been much mistaken, the Lord pardon it, for all this questioning hath been about thy condition, and what will become of thee; and if at any time thou hast grieved for sin, it hath been in order to thy condition, because thy condition is naught, and because thou didst not know what should become of thee: but now, if thou wouldst be truly humbled, and not be discouraged, then lay aside a little the thoughts of your own condition, and pitch upon sin as a breach of God's law, a transgression of the law of God, a dishonour done to God, and as a breach of the law of love between Christ and you. Thus, I say, if you would be humbled, and not discouraged, rather mourn over your condition in order to your sin, than for your sin in order to your condition.

In your humiliation, take heed that you do not meddle too much with God's prerogative and with God's peculiar. In humiliation, a man is to meddle with that which belongs to man: some things there are that are peculiar to God and are his prerogative. You see how it is with the birds of the air; so long as the birds fly up and down here in the air, they do live comfortably; but if the birds do fly up to the element of fire, it will burn their wings, and they will fall down headlong. So here, so long as a man in his humiliation keeps within his own compass and element, he may walk comfortably there; but if a man in humiliation, will soar up unto God's prerogative, certainly his soul will fall down upon the earth and be much discouraged. Now, I pray, what is more the prerogative and peculiar of God than this, To know who is a reprobate and who is not? When a man is humbled and grieved about his sin, and he finds that he hath sinned much against God, and thereupon he concludes himself to be a reprobate, is not this to come upon God's prerogative? The Scripture tells a man, indeed, what he is for the present: That a man for the present is a drunkard, or a swearer, or a sabbath-breaker, or an adulterer; and therefore the Scripture tells

him for the present, that he is in the state of nature, and under the wrath of God: but doth the Scripture tell him that he is a reprobate, that he can never be converted and turned to God? Surely this is God's great prerogative to know, his secret which he reserves to himself; and therefore when a man goes to be humbled before God, and concludes, Oh, I am a reprobate, and there is no hope for me, and I shall never be converted; this is to soar too high into God's prerogative, and he will burn his wings, and he will fall down into great discouragement. Therefore, in all your humiliation, take heed that you do not fall upon any thing that is the peculiar and prerogative of God, for then you will not be humbled but discouraged.

The more you are humbled and grieved by the sight of God's free love and grace, the more you will be humbled and the less discouraged. When you come to humiliation, you are humbled, because you have sinned against God; but how do you present this God to your own soul: do you present him as a Judge only, or as a Father also: do you present the Lord unto your soul only under the notion or attribute of his greatness, or under the notion and attribute of his goodness also? Luther said thus: When my heart is brisk and jolly, I present God unto myself under the notion of his greatness; but when my heart is low and fearing, then I present God to me under the notion of his goodness: one while I consider Christ as my example, another while as my gift: when my heart is too high, then I consider Christ as my example; when my spirit is too low, I consider Christ as my gift. So do you also. I know you will say, I cannot sometimes present the Lord unto my soul under the notion of a Father, because I have no assurance of his love. Yet you may consider the Lord as gracious in himself, as good in himself, and loving in himself, and say, I have thus and thus sinned against a gracious God, and although thou hast not assurance of God's love to thee in particular, yet if you can present God to your soul, under the notion of his general goodness, as good in himself, you will never be discouraged, but be humbled.

If you would be truly humbled, and not be discouraged; not discouraged, and yet humbled; then beat and drive up all your sins to your unbelief, and lay the stress and weight of all your sorrow upon that sin. As in matter of thank-

fulness, if a man do run up every mercy, unto the fountain mercy, the blood of Jesus Christ, he will be most thankful: so in the matter of humiliation, if a man do run up every sin unto the fountain, the head sin, he will be most humbled. Now what is the great sin, the fountain sin, the head sin of all your sins, but unbelief; and believe it, he is never far from faith, that is humbled for his unbelief, and he will never be discouraged that is not far from faith. Now therefore, if at any time you find your soul in any sin, then say, This hath my unbelief done, I did not think that I had had such an unbelieving heart; oh, what an unbelieving heart have I! This, even all this sin hath my unbelief brought forth. Now the Lord heal my unbelieving heart. A soul grieved for unbelief will never be discouraged too much, nor be humbled too little: he will be humbled in truth for sin, because he is humbled for his unbelief, which is the mother sin; yet he will not be discouraged, because he is humbled for that which doth cause all discouragements. Lay therefore the weight of your sorrow upon this sin, and you shall be truly humbled without unjust discouragement. And thus I have despatched the first particular: by all which you see, that a gracious, godly man, though he hath just cause for humiliation, yet he hath no just and scripture reason to be discouraged for his sin; though he have sinned, and sinned greatly, yet no discouragement is to grow upon this condition.

And thus I have done with the first instance.

SERMON V.

A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF WEAK GRACE.

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

II. Sometimes the discouragements of the saints do arise from the weakness of their graces.

Oh, says one, I am a poor, feeble, and a weak creature: some are strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,