

woman, I have lost my husband, so loving, so gracious, so helpful; but not a word of the burden that is gone withal, and so there is much discouragement. When affliction comes men only consider the evil, and not the mercy that doth come withal, and so they are much dejected. Suppose that a loving father in some high room, throw down a bag of gold to his child, and it lights on the child's head, insomuch as it breaketh his head and causeth the blood to come; whilst the child feels the smart thereof, he is impatient and forward; while he looks only upon the leathern bag he is not thankful; but when he looks into the bag, and sees what a great deal of gold his father hath given him, then he speaks well of his father, notwithstanding all the smart of his head. There is never an affliction, but is a bag of gold given unto the people of God; though it seem a leathern bag without, yet there is gold within; so long as they stand poring upon the leathern bag, or attend unto the smart of their affliction, they are not thankful, they do not praise the Lord, but are much discouraged; but if they would look into the bag, and tell their gold, then they would have comfort, and not be discouraged. I tell you from the Lord, there is gold within; look in this bag, the bag of affliction, tell over all your gold which the Lord hath given you in this affliction, and then you will be quiet. If a mercy be taken from you, consider the burden that is taken away too. If a misery come, consider the mercy that doth come withal; labour ever, labour to see both together, as well what is for you as what is against you, then will you never be much discouraged, although your affliction be never so great.

And thus I have done with the seventh instance.

SERMON XI.

A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF UNSERVICEABLENESS.

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

VIII. SOMETIMES the discouragements of the saints do arise from their employments, work and service.

Either they are not called forth to work for God, as they do desire, or they do want abilities and skill to work, or they have no success in their work. Oh, says one, I am a poor, unuseful, and unserviceable creature; God hath done much for me, but I do nothing for God: others are used and employed for God, but as for me, I am cast by as an useless vessel, in whom God hath no pleasure: and therefore I am thus discouraged, have I not just cause and reason now?

No, for is family work and service nothing, is relation work nothing? There is a three-fold sweat, says Luther; political sweat, ecclesiastical sweat, and domestical sweat. A man may sweat at family work; and it is a great betrustment to be trusted with the work of a family: and this work you are betrusted with.

Is it nothing for a man to be trusted with the work of his christian station? The whole body of Christ is divided into many members; every member in the body hath a work suitable unto it: the eye doth not hear, as the ear doth; nor the ear see, as the eye doth; but every member worketh according to that station which it hath in the body. So, "ye being one body, are many members," saith the apostle, and all members have not the same office. Look therefore, as the station is which ye have in the body of Christ, such is the work that ye are betrusted with.

And is it nothing for a man to be employed in comforting, relieving, and supporting others! This is so great a service, that the very angels are employed therein, as in a work most suitable to them. For when the Lord would stir up and provoke the children of Israel to repent, he sent a prophet to them. Judges vi. 7, 8. But when he would comfort, strengthen, and encourage Gideon, he doth not employ the prophet therein, but he sends an angel to him, saying, verse 12, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." And if ye look into the story of the New Testament, ye shall find, that when Christ was on Mount Tabor, in his transfiguration, then the angels are not said to attend upon him; but when he was sweating in the garden, then the angels came and comforted and ministered to him. Why? Because this is angelical work, to comfort, relieve, and support others in the

time of distress.* Now are you not trusted with this work? How many poor, drooping, tempted, and deserted souls are there whom you may go and administer to! And is this no work at all?

But there is a generation work, a work of special employment, which God doth trust others with; as for me I have none of this work to do, I am a poor, useless, and unserviceable person, one that God doth not use at all, and therefore I am thus discouraged. For is it not a very great mercy to be used and employed for God in the world?

Yes, it is a very great mercy and blessing, I confess, to be used in any work or service of God. This was Moses' commendation, that he was the servant of God; Moses, "the servant of the Lord, is dead." And in this title David gloried more than that he was king of Israel, Psalm xviii, "A Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord." He doth not say, A Psalm of David, the king of Israel. Thus Paul, Peter, James, and Jude do entitle their epistles: Paul, a servant of Christ; and Peter, a servant of Christ; and James, a servant of Christ; and Jude, a servant of Christ. Yea, and Christ himself doth glory in this title of God's servant; and the Father glories in Christ on this account: "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen. My servant the Branch." So that a great privilege it is to be God's servant, used and employed for him.

The more serviceable a man is to God the more he doth honor God, and the more he honors God, the more he honors himself. *Honor est in honorante.* Those that stand before, and wait on kings and princes, honor themselves in honoring their masters. So in honoring God, a man honors himself; yea, and thereby God doth put honor on him: for what is honor but *Testimonium de alicujus excellentia*, testifying of another's excellency; and the more I testify of any excellency in a man, the more I honor him. Now, when God doth betrust a man with his work, he testifies of an excellency in him: "The Lord hath counted me faithful, and

* Quasi angelus sibi munus consolandi miseros tanquam gloriosius percipiat, munus autem objurgandi impios tanquam minus nobile, hominibus remittat.—Cajetan.

Ac si angeli proniores essent ad laborantem consolandum quam ad gratulandum triumphanti.—Mendoza in 1 Sam. cap. i. § 6.

put me into his work," saith Paul. Yea, the greatest greatness in this world is to wait upon the great God. Therefore, saith our Saviour of John the Baptist, "Amongst them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than he." Matthew xi. 11. And if ye look into Gen. i., ye shall find that the moon is called one of the two great lights, ver. 16, "And God made two great lights, the greater to rule the day, and the lesser to rule the night." But though the moon is said to be lesser than the sun, yet it is said to be one of the two great lights. And why so? are there not other stars greater than the moon? Yes; but because the moon is the most influential and serviceable to the world, therefore it is said to be greater than others. So that in God's account, the more service we do in the world the greater we are, and the more honorable in God's eyes.

Thereby also we are kept from the dint of temptations; idleness breeds temptation. Our vacation is the Devil's term; when we are least at work for God, then is Satan most at work about us. By doing nothing men learn to do evil. Yea, idleness is the burying of a living man.*

Great and good employment is the mercy promised. That can hardly be a small mercy, which the great God doth promise; promised mercies are the sweetest mercies. Now the Lord promiseth, Isaiah lviii. 18, "That if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, &c. the Lord shall guide thee continually; and they that shall be of thee, shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations, and thou shalt be called the repairer of the breaches, the restorer of paths to dwell in." Here is employment and betrustment promised.

The more useful and serviceable a man is to God, the more apt and ready God will be to pardon his failings; not only the failings of his present employment, but of the other part of his life also. What a great failing was that in Rahab, to say the spies were gone, when she had hid them in the top of her house. Yet the Lord pardoned this failing to her. Why? Because she believed, and was useful, and serviceable unto God's great design in that her day. And if ye look into Numb. xii. ye shall find, that though Aaron and Miriam were both engaged in the same sin and evil, of

*Homines nihil agendo male discunt agere. Otium est vivi hominis sepultura. Sen.

envying and murmuring against Moses, yet the Lord spared Aaron when he struck Miriam with a leprosy. But why (saith Abulensis) was not Aaron smitten with the leprosy as well as Miriam? what, because he was not so deeply in the transgression as she was? No; for verse 1, it is said, "then spake Aaron and Miriam;" not as if she were put on by him; or because that Aaron confessed his sin as she did not? No, for so did Miriam also, for she was a good woman. Or because that God owed Aaron a punishment till afterwards? * No, for that appears not by the text; but he was the high priest, and if he had been smitten with leprosy, it would have brought his ministry under some contempt, the work of the Lord would have ceased for a time also, and though he failed in this thing, yet he was otherwise a very useful and serviceable man; and God would shew his aptness and readiness to pardon such, rather than others.

If a man be employed for God in any special service and work, the Lord will not only pardon his failings, but if he be faithful in his work, God will bless him, and set a character of love and favor upon him. What a character of love did the Lord set on Caleb and Joshua. Of all men in scripture, it is said of Caleb, that he followed the Lord fully; and this character God himself did set upon him, Numb. xv. 24, "But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, &c." But why did God own and dignify Caleb thus? Even because he was faithful in that work, service, and employment which God did call him to.

Yea, the serviceable man is the only man who doth live and speak when he is dead; I mean for God. Some are very active and serviceable for the Devil; whilst they live, they write and print wanton, filthy books; and they speak while they are dead, but it is still for Satan. Others are very active and serviceable for God; while they live, they write and print works of faith and holiness; and they also speak when they are dead. As it is said of Abel, "who being dead, yet speaketh;" but how doth he speak now? The apostle tells us, Heb. xi. by faith, by which *δι' αἰῆς*, it relates unto *πιστις* faith. Well, but what act of faith did he

* *Λεγέται και Ααρων δια το της ιεροσυνης αξιωμα με λεπροθνηαι*
Chrysostom, Hom. 8. ad Colos.

do? He offered a more excellent sacrifice than his elder brother, which was the work and service of his day. So that the serviceable man is the only man who doth speak when he is dead. Surely therefore, it is a very great privilege and mercy, to be used and employed for God in his work and service. Yet if God will not use me, why should I be discouraged, or complain? Is not God free; and may not he employ whom he pleaseth? Shall the poor potsherd say unto him, why dost thou lay me by? What if God will cross hands, and lay his right hand on another's head, and his left hand on mine; shall I think to direct and order the hands of God's providence, as Joseph would have altered Jacob's? Is not his work his own; and may not he put it out unto whom he please; and if I complain thereof, is not this my pride? Proud men scorn their own employment, and envy at others. It is a mercy indeed to be employed for God; yet if God will not trust me with his service, as I desire, why should I be discouraged? Yet I may be God's servant. For,

1. The service of God is twofold. Sometimes it is taken for some special employment, which a man is called forth unto. And sometimes it is taken for our ordinary obedience unto God's commandments. In the first sense it is used often in Numb. iv. and frequently in the old testament called, the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. So in the new testament also, Rom. xv. 31, "That my service may be accepted." In the second sense it is used, Rom. xii. 1, "Which is your reasonable service." So also, Rev. ii. 19, "I know thy work, charity and service." This latter service, is the saving service, that service whereby, in a special manner, we are called God's servants. And in that respect we may be serviceable to God, though not in the former.

2. As for the service of special employment, that is also various. Sometimes God doth call a man to one kind of service, sometimes to another. He hath several ways of employment; he employed Moses one way, in giving out the law; and he employed Ezra another way, in restoring of the law. Both were employed, but their employments were very different. In 1 Sam. xxx. we read, that when David fought against the Amalekites, to recover his wives and substance, some of his men stayed and tarried by the stuff,

to preserve that; and saith David, verse 24, "As his part is, that goeth down to the battle; so shall his part be, that carrieth by the stuff, they shall part alike." Now it may be you are one of those that stay by Christ's stuff, being employed in some lower and meaner service; Christ hath a care of you, and though you stay at home, yet you, even you shall have part in the spoil, as well as those whose work and employment is more honourable.

3. Yea, though God do lay me by for the present, yet he may use me afterward. God did make use of Joseph, but he first laid him by; God did make use of Moses but he first laid him by; God did make use of David, but did he not first lay him by? And if Barnabas, the companion of Paul, were the same person with Barsabas (as some do verily believe, though the Syriac translation is plainly against it,* because the name of both was Joses or Joseph, as appears by comparing Acts i. 23, with Acts iv. 36. And because this Joses was not called Barnabas from the beginning, but named Barnabas by the apostles, Acts iv. 46): if, I say, Barnabas were the same with Barsabas, then it appears plainly, that God doth not always lay a man by, to use him no more, for what abundance of service Barnabas did, the book of the Acts doth declare; yet he was first laid by, in the choice that was between him and Matthew, for the lot fell on Matthew; yet Barnabas is sent out afterwards by the church, Acts xi. 22, and by God himself, Acts xiii. 2, and much service he did do for God: so that though God do lay me by for the present, yet he may use me afterwards.

4. And if a man may be employed for God in some special service, yet may go to hell when all is done; and a man may not be employed, and yet go to heaven afterward: then why should you be discouraged, because you are not so employed? Now what think ye of those which ye read of in Matthew vii, they say at the last day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, cast out devils in thy name and done many wonderful works in thy name?" Works and great works, and many, and wonderful, they did and all in the name of Christ; yet he will say to them, "Depart from me, for I never knew you; or I know you not." Yea, did not

* Quidam eundem putant.—Emman. Sa. Alp. Salmeron, in Acts i. Vide Transl. Syriac in Acts xv. 22.

our Saviour Christ say concerning Judas, "I have chosen twelve, and one of you is a devil?" A devil, yet an apostle; what greater work, service, or employment, than the work of an apostle? yet possibly a man may be an apostle in regard of employment, and a very devil in regard of life. On the other side, how many good and gracious men are there in the world, who were never used, or called forth unto any special service, such as are now in heaven, and shall be so unto all eternity? What then, though you be not employed, or used as others are; yet surely you have no just cause or reason to be discouraged in this respect.

5. And if it be the property of a good man to rejoice in the service of others; then why should you be discouraged, because others are employed, and you not? A godly man doth mourn for another's sin, as well as for his own, because he mourns for sin as sin, and as a dishonor unto God: so he rejoices in the service of another, as well as in his own, because he rejoices in the work itself, and because God is honoured. You would have God's cart to be driven through your gate. Why? is it not because you may have some toll thereby? Paul said, "However, Christ is preached, and therefore I rejoice;" and if Christ's work be done, whose hands soever the work comes through, why should you not rejoice? And if it be your duty to rejoice, then surely you have no scripture ground and reason for your discouragement in this regard.

But I am not discouraged, because I do want employment, or service; I have more work lies upon my shop-board, than I can turn my hand unto: but I have a great deal of work to do, and I have no skill to do it: oh, I want abilities, I want sufficiencies, I do want endowments; therefore I am thus discouraged, and have I not cause and reason now?

No: for God's greatest works, are not always done by the greatest parts and most choice abilities. Gideon did a great work for God in his generation, yet saith he, Judges vi. 15, "Oh, my Lord wherewith shall I save Israel? behold my family is poor in Manasseth, and I am least in my father's house:" as if he should say, If this great work be done, it must be done by some strong and potent family or person; but as for me, I am the least in my father's house, and my father's house is the least in Manasseth; yet, saith the Lord to him,

“ I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite Midian as one man.” I have read in scripture, that the people have been too many, and the means too strong for God to work by; but I never read that it was too small, or weak for God to work by. God saith, “ Who hath despised the day of small things? And if he will not have us to despise the day of his small things, surely he will not despise the day of our small things. Did not the weakness of the apostles overcome the strength of all the world? Who doth not see what weighty buildings God hath sometimes laid upon our laths? He is able to make as great a hole with his needle, as with our bodkin.

Our best abilities for God’s work, are from the breathings of the Spirit of God. Water is weak in itself, but when the wind blows upon it, how strong is it. So, if the Spirit of God breathe upon us, we are strong, though in ourselves as weak as water: “ Not by might, nor by strength, but by the Spirit of the Lord,” saith Zechariah. And if ye look upon that great service of the re-building of the temple, when they came out of Babylon, ye shall find, that so long as they went forth in the strength of outward powers, the command of Cyrus, and the like, they were much hindered, and the enemies then caused the work of the Lord to cease; but when the Lord stirred up the spirit of Haggai, Zechariah, Zerrubabel, and others to build, then they went on and prospered; Why? Because they went forth in the strength of the Spirit of the Lord; not in the strength of man’s command, or of their own abilities.

Though the work of the Lord be carried on, not by might nor by strength, but by the Spirit; yet this Spirit doth not always breathe and work alike: Christ sent out his disciples for to preach, to cast out devils, and by the Spirit of the Lord, they did preach, and cast out devils; yet they had not then received so great a measure of the Spirit as afterwards, when he breathed on them, saying, “ Receive ye the Holy Ghost;” yea, and though he did thus breathe upon them when he left them, yet they did not then receive in so great a measure of the Spirit as afterwards; for they were still to wait for the promise, that is, the Spirit, Acts i.; so that though God will carry on his own work, by his own strength and by his own Spirit, yet the assistance thereof, is not al-

ways alike; sometimes it is more and sometimes it is less; even where it falls in truth and power.

But though the Spirit doth not always work alike, yet if God call you to any work or service, you shall have so much assistance as is needful for you; only you must know, that *Dabitur in hora*, it shall be given in that hour, it shall not lie cold and stale by you; but when you come to use it, then it shall be given out unto you, more or less, but sufficient. Before Moses came to his work, he complained of want of abilities, his stammering tongue, and want of eloquence, &c., but when he was warm at his work, and was engaged in it, then we read of no such complaints: God's call, is our wall and strength, "Go in this thy might," saith God to Gideon; and what might was that? the verse tells you, it was the might of his call; for says the Lord in the next words, "Have not I sent thee?" Judges vi. 14. Our might then, is in God's call, not in our own abilities: and a little warm assistance, is better than much cold and stale ability.

But I fear the Lord hath not called me to this work, but that I am an intruder into the work of the Lord, because I do want abilities.

Nay, but if the Lord do sometimes call a man first, and doth furnish him with abilities afterward, then you have no reason to make such conclusions. Now ye know how it was with Saul; God did first call him, and then he gave him another spirit; he had not that other ruling spirit, before he was called to rule, but after. So the apostles were first called to their office, and then Christ did furnish them with abilities, "Who hath made us able, or meet ministers, not of the letter," &c. When were they made meet, or able? what, before they were called! No, but afterwards. God's call is not like to man's, man's call doth always pre-suppose abilities, God's call doth sometimes bring them.

And if God's porters, whom he hath set to keep the door of opportunity, do judge you able, then you are to rest in their judgment; "A large, and effectual door is opened," says Paul. God hath a door, which when he calls a man to work, he doth then open to him: this door is kept by certain porters, whom God hath appointed to keep the same, and if they judge that you have abilities, then are you to rest and acquiesce therein; for though I am to judge of mine own

grace, and not another; yet others are to judge of my gifts, and abilities, and not my self. Some will judge of their own gifts and of others' graces; this is evil, but in reference to work and external service, others are to judge of mine abilities and not myself; as I am to judge of mine internal grace, and not another. Accordingly, Luther counselled Spalatinus, who having many sad thoughts of leaving his ministry: This is, saith Luther to him, a diabolical temptation, and you know not now, why you are afflicted with it; we which are spectators, know it better, therefore you ought rather to trust us than yourself, who in the Lord, before the Lord, yea, the Lord by us, doth exhort you to go on in your work, unto which he hath called you. So say I now to you, you doubt of your call because you do want abilities; but do those porters judge you able, who are set to judge? then are you in this case, rather to rest in their judgment, than in your own. Now God's porters have judged you meet for his work, and have opened the door of opportunity to you; and therefore you have no reason to be discouraged in this respect; only remember this: That the weaker your legs are, the faster you must hold on the hand of free grace.

Oh, but I fear that I am not called to this work, but that I am an intruder, because I meet with so many difficulties in my way.

Do you meet with difficulties in your way; what virtue or virtuous action is there but hath some stone upon it? *Nulla virtus sine lapide*; there is no virtue but hath some stone or other that is rolled upon it. As Christ himself had a stone rolled on him, so every work of Christ, and truth of Christ, and way of Christ, hath one stone or other that is rolled upon it. Yet ye must know that there is a pearl lying under that stone, and the heavier the stone is, the more precious is the pearl; the harder the nut and shell is to crack, the sweeter is the kernel; and in due time Christ will send his angel to roll away the stone from your work and his service, and that before you are aware.* When the women said, as being at a stand, and not knowing what to do, Who shall roll away the stone? then did the angel come, and rolled it away for them

* Nisi ipse elevasset lapidem non inventa fuisset sub eo hæc margarita.—Heb. Prov.

before they were aware of it. Peter had the brazen gates opened for him when he came to them; they did not stand open before, but when he came at them, then did they open to him. And if you go on in your way and work which God doth lead you to, the brazen gates which are now shut against you shall then open to you; if, I say, you go on in your work in way of faith, as following the conduct of the Lord.

And if God's clearest call to a work hath always been followed with the greatest difficulty, then have you no reason to question your call in regard of difficulties. Now I pray tell me, when Moses went to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt, had not he a clear call for that: yet what abundance of difficulties did he meet with in his way to it? And when the Jews came out of Babylon, did they not meet with many difficulties: some at their coming out, some in their way, some at the building of the temple; yet had they not a call, and a clear call thereunto? Without all doubt they had. Surely, then, you may have a call, and a clear call to your work and service, yet you may meet with many difficulties in your way, and therefore have no reason to be discouraged in this respect.

But I am not troubled, afflicted, or discouraged in regard of my call; for I am persuaded that God hath called me to his work and service: but I am most unserviceable; I do not do that work and service which I am called unto; I lie like a dry log or chip in the family and place where I live. Oh! I am most unserviceable, and therefore I am thus discouraged.

That is ill indeed; for every good and gracious man is a serviceable man, more or less he is serviceable in his place and condition. Onesimus, before converted, was unprofitable; but being converted, now profitable, says the apostle. A good man, in scripture, is compared to those things that are most profitable. Is the wicked compared to the green bay tree, which doth bring forth no fruit: the godly is compared to the olive tree, which is all profitable; the fruit profitable, the leaves, bark and the tree profitable. Is a wicked man compared to the goat: a good man is compared to the sheep; and what is in a sheep not profitable? its flesh is profitable, its wool profitable, its skin is profitable, yea its very dung is profitable: and such a sheep was Paul; nothing in

Paul not profitable and serviceable: will ye instance in his jewish and natural privileges? he makes use of them, Phil. 3, to advance the righteousness and knowledge of Christ; yea, "all these (says he) I count as dung and dross in regard of Christ." Will ye instance in his conversion to Christ? he doth make use of that to convert others, and to establish others, by frequently telling the story of it to others. Will ye instance in his parts, gifts and learning? he makes use of his Hebrew sometimes, sometimes of his knowledge in the heathen poets, sometimes of his knowledge in the Roman customs.* Will ye instance in his friendship, acquaintance, and interest in men? that he makes use of with Philemon, from Christ, in the case of Onesimus. Will ye instance in his afflictions? he doth make use of them to persuade his people to their duty: "I Paul, a prisoner of Christ, do beseech you," &c. Will ye instance in his temptations? he doth make use of them, and tells the Corinthians how he was bufeted by Satan. Will ye instance in his sins? he doth improve them also for the advancement of God's grace: "I was a blasphemer, &c. (saith he) but I obtained mercy." Thus, ye see, there was nothing in Paul not profitable, he was all over serviceable and profitable; and if ye be one of these sheep, you will be serviceable and profitable in your place and condition, more or less. I remember the speech of a martyr, when he came to die, and to be burnt for Christ, Oh, said he, thus long have I grown in the orchard of Christ, and have borne some fruit, though not much, yet some; and now that I grow old and dry, and can bear fruit no longer, shall I be taken and thrown into the chimney, to make a fire for the warming of others: what a great mercy and blessing is this! Ye know what Solomon saith, "Whatever thou findest in thy hand to do, do it with all thy might:" and what Jeremiah saith, "Cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently." Art thou therefore unprofitable, unserviceable? then have you cause to be humbled. Yet even in this respect you are not to be cast down or discouraged, for, either you are unserviceable because you want abilities, or,

* Του γαρ ζενος εσμεν.—Acts xvii. 28. Aratus.

Φθειρονσιν ηδη κρηστα ομιλιαι κα και.—1 Cor. xv. 33. Menander.

Κρηστες αι ψευσται κακα θηρια γασερες αργοι.—Titus i. 12. Epimenides.

because ye want will and heart thereunto. If you say you want abilities, I have spoken to that already. If you say you are unwilling and do want heart thereunto, then why do you thus complain? he that complains of his own unserviceableness is not unwilling to serve the Lord. But you complain, and say, Oh, I am most unserviceable; therefore you are willing, and have an heart to serve; and if you can speak in truth with Samuel, and say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant is ready to obey;" then you are not unwilling to serve the Lord. Now cannot you say thus in truth? Yes, through grace I am able to say, Speak, Lord, for thy servant is ready to obey. Surely, then, you are not unwilling; this your unserviceableness doth not arise only from your unwillingness and want of heart; and therefore you have no just reason to be discouraged in this respect.

But this is not the matter which doth pinch with me; for according to my poor abilities I have laboured, and have been truly willing to serve the Lord in my generation; but I labour, work, and take pains, and all in vain: I labour, and have no success in my labour; I work, and have no success in work; I serve, and have no success in my service; and therefore I am thus discouraged, have I not cause and reason now?

No: for possibly you may be mistaken in the matter of success: you may have good and great success and not know thereof. There is a time when the seed doth lie dead under the clods; and saith our Saviour, "Unless the seed dies, it abides alone." Should the husbandman complain in this time that he hath no success in his sowing? If the devil do oppose by the world without, and assault you with temptations within, it argues that there is good success, though you know it not. Now, does not the world oppose you; and does not the devil assault you with temptations, discouraging you for want of success? Yes, that he doth. Then there is some good success, though for the present it be hidden from your eyes. This is a certain sign, said Luther to Spalatinus, that your work is neither ungrateful to God, nor unprofitable to the church, in that you are troubled with these temptations; for if it were displeasing to God, you would rather long after it, as they do that run before they be sent. Whereas Satan, when he finds such as are truly sent by God, and

pleasing to him, he makes them a weary of their work by these and the like temptations.

And if God's own dearest children have sometimes laboured or toiled all their night or day, and have caught nothing, then no new thing doth befall you in case you want success. Now ye know, and have read, how it was with Noah; an hundred and twenty years he preached to the old world, and not one soul was saved but his own family, eight persons, in the ark. Did not Jeremiah, also, toil in his day and night, and what did he catch? Read what he says, Jer. vi. 29, "The bellows are burnt, the lead is consumed of the fire, the founder melteth in vain; for the wicked are not plucked away: reprobate silver shall men call them." Yea, doth not Christ himself say, Isa. xlix., "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought:" and do you think to fare better in this case than Noah, Jeremiah, Christ himself? I confess the want of success in our work, is a great temptation, even one of the greatest temptations; yet if God will have me lay out my strength in vain, why should I be discouraged! The good physician doth not lose his fee, though the patient die; nor shall you lose your reward though ye have no success.

Yet this is not the thing which doth trouble me; for I acknowledge that I have been entrusted with many services, and God hath called me to them; I have been willing thereunto, and have had some good success, but when I look into the Scripture, I find that some have been employed in way of judgment, as Nebuchadnezzar; others in way of mercy, as Nehemiah, &c. Some, again, have been employed in way of mercy to others, as Cyrus, and Judas, but not in love and mercy to themselves; others have been employed in way of mercy to themselves and others too, as Paul, and Peter, &c. Now I fear that either I have been employed in a way of judgment, or that I have not been employed in a way of love and mercy to myself, but for others; and therefore I am thus discouraged and cast down, have I not just cause and reason now?

No: for if God have employed you, and trusted you in his service in a way of love and mercy to yourself, as well as to others, then you have no reason to be discouraged in this res-

* Cogitent sibi hanc causam cum Christo communem esse.—Calvin.

pect. Now, when doth God employ a man in a way of love and mercy to himself, as well as for others' good ?

When a man's heart is thereby drawn out with love to God. That which ends in love, comes from love; that which ends in your love to God, came from God's love to you. So in outward blessings, if they end in your love to God, then they came from God's love to you. So in the matter of afflictions, if I do love God the more by them, then did they come from God's love to me. So also in the matter of employments, if you do love God by them, and they do end in your love to God, then they came from God's love to you.

When God doth employ a man in his service, in a way of love and mercy to him, then he doth more or less acquaint him with his design therein; and if God do acquaint me with his design in his work, then he doth employ me in a way of love to me. He employed the Assyrian as a rod in his hand, to scourge the people of Israel; but they knew not God's design, they went on upon their own design. Therefore saith the prophet Isaiah, in the name of the Lord, chapter x. 6, "I will send him against an hypocritical nation, howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy nations, not a few." The Lord employed Peter to open a door to the Gentiles in the conversion of Cornelius, and though he knew not God's design at the first, yet he did fully know it afterwards; for says he, and the rest, "Now hath God also to the Gentiles, granted repentance unto life."

When a man is employed in a way of special love to his own soul, he hath high thoughts of his employment, but low thoughts of his own actings under it; therefore said John the Baptist, "I indeed baptize you with water, but there is one comes after me, he shall baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire, whose shoe-latchet I am unworthy to unloose." But though the employment of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, was good and honourable, yet they had low thoughts thereof, and high thoughts of their own actings, Numb. xvi. 3; for said they to Moses and Aaron, "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy:" as if they should say, We are as good as you. Why so? Even because they

were not employed in mercy to their own souls, but for others' good.

He that is employed and used in a way of love and mercy, is very tender of the name of God, and doth so act and work as the name of God may not suffer, or be defiled by him. Thus it was with Ezra, though the enemy lay in his way to Judea, yet he would not ask a convoy of the king; for says he, "I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen, to help us against the enemy in the way, because we had spoken to the king, saying, the hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him, and his wrath is against all them that forsake him." Now Ezra was a good man, a man that God did call forth to this employment, not only out of love to others, but to himself; and thus did he act for God, being more careful of God's name in the work, than of their own safety.

When a man is employed in a way of love and mercy to his own soul also, then he doth grow in grace while he is exercising of his gift. A man that exerciseth a gift for the good of others only, grows in parts, and in pride also; but a good man grows in experience, and so he doth grow in faith: he meets with difficulties and deliverances, so he doth grow in faith; God discovers himself to him in the way, so he still grows in faith, love and holiness. God gives him a promise when he sends him forth, as he did give to Joshua, chap. i.; this he looks much upon, and goes forth in the strength of, and so as he uses his gift in his work, he doth grow in grace thereby, but the other doth not.

He makes no great outward bargain of God's service, neither doth he labour to pocket up much for himself. God employed Moses in a great work, but where do you read of any great estate that he got for himself? We read of Joshua, that when he had brought the children of Israel into Canaan, and divided the land by lot to them, then when he had served others, in the last place he did serve himself, and that in no great matter. What did Nehemiah get by his service? Not as the former governors did. Why? Because he feared the Lord. So then, if a man be employed in way of love and mercy to himself, he doth not make his employment a shoeing-horn to his own preferment. It is enough for me my Master's work is done, saith he; neither

doth God use to pay them all their wages here, whom he employs in mercy to themselves. But as a merchant, if he have to deal with a stranger for a less commodity, he pays him down presently; but if with a friend for some great priced commodity, he takes time, and doth not pay down his money presently. So, if God have to do with a stranger, as Nebuchadnezzar, he will pay him wages presently; but if God deals with a friend, whom he employs in mercy to himself, then he doth put off his full payment till afterwards.

He doth God's work without any great noise or notice of himself, like Christ, "He lifts not up his voice in the street," and as the angels in Ezek. i., his hands are under his wings; he hath four hands to work with, but they are not seen, they are under his wings. "Let your light so shine before men, (says Christ,) that they may see your good works, (not yourselves,) and glorify your Father," not yourselves. As it is with the fisher, so with him; he shews the bait, but hides himself; he holds forth the word of truth, but not himself; though he have four hands to work with, yet they are all under his wings, hidden; but says Jehu, "Come and see my zeal for the Lord of Hosts." This is another difference.

If God do use and employ a man in a way of love and mercy to himself, he is willing to be used, and contented to be laid by and to be used no more. Another man is not so, if he have been used in one thing, he thinks he must be used in other things, and when he hath done, he cannot bear that God should lay him by and use another. Thus it was with Saul, he could not be contented that God should use David. But when God told Eli, that he would lay him and his house by, he answered, "Good is the word of the Lord;" for he was a good man, and one whom God had used in love and mercy to himself, and so when God had done with him, he was content therewith.

He that is used and employed in a way of love and mercy to himself, will do the work of the Lord fully, though he do his own works by halves. Caleb did his own works by halves, and the work of God fully; for he was used in mercy to himself and others. Jehu did the work of the Lord by halves, and his own work fully; for though he was used in mercy to some, and judgment to others, yet not in love to himself.

When God doth use a man in a way of judgment, he hath ordinarily more skill at pulling down, and destroying what is

man's, than in setting up and building what is God's. But when God doth use him in a way of love and mercy to his own soul, he hath a dexterity in, and a heart to the setting up of what is God's; witness Jehu on the one hand, and Nehemiah on the other hand. How is it therefore with thee? Hast thou a skill at pulling down what is man's, and no skill nor heart to set up what is God's? Hast thou been employed and used in God's service, and have you done your own work fully, and God's work by halves? Art thou not contented to be laid by, and that God should use another? Dost thou make a noise in the work, and thy hands not under thy wings? Hast thou made a goodly outward bargain of the Lord's work, and his service as a shoeing-horn to thine own ends? Hast thou not grown in experience, faith and holiness, by this work, but in pride rather? Hast thou not been very tender of the name of God in thy service; nor been acquainted with God's design; nor thine heart drawn out the more to love the Lord? Then surely God hath not used or employed thee in love and mercy to thine own soul. But if thine heart have been drawn out with love to God by thy very service and employments, and thou hast been in some measure acquainted with God's design in that service, and hast been very tender of the name of God, and more willing to hazard thyself than to defile his name, and hast grown in grace by the exercise of thy gifts, and hast made no bargain of the Lord's service, but hast had thy hands under thy wings, and hast not done God's work by halves, and now after all, art contented that God shall lay thee by, and make use of others; then surely the Lord hath used and employed thee in a way of love and mercy to thine own soul; and therefore why shouldst thou be discouraged in this respect? Certainly you have no just cause or true reason for it.

But suppose that the Lord either shall not use me in his service, or if he do, that difficulties and oppositions press in upon me, or that I meet with no success in my work according to my desire, what shall I do, that I may be able to bear up my heart against all discouragements in this kind?

In case that God do not call you forth to any work or special employment. Then,

Consider that you have now the more time to mind your own soul, and to attend to your own condition. Some are so employed, that they have not time enough to pray, read, meditate, examine their own hearts, and to look into their own condition. Yea, though a man's work do lie in the ministry, it is possible that he may so mind his public work, as to neglect his private. But now, if thou hast no public employment or service, then you have the more time for to spend upon your own soul, the more time to converse with the Lord in private, and to look into your own condition.

And if you be not called forth to work, and yet are willing to work, you shall be paid for that work and service which you never did. As some men shall be punished for those sins which they did never commit in the gross act, because they were willing and had a desire to commit the same. So some shall be paid for that work and service for God, which they never did perform, because they were willing to have done the same. Now, is it not a great mercy to be paid for that work which I never did? Such is the privilege of all those that are not called to service, and yet are willing to it.

In case that you are employed in God's work and service, and difficulties press in upon you; then,

Consider that the greater the difficulty is, the greater shall your obedience be in carrying on the work; and the more you do follow after duty, and redeem it from the hand of difficulty, the greater shall your comfort and reward be when all is done.

And the more that any service, work, or duty, is oppressed with difficulty, the more assistance may you expect from God; his assistance, help, and income, is given out much according to the difficulties which we do meet withal. If the difficulties be small, then his assistance is less; if the difficulties be great, than is his assistance greater. Now what matter what the difficulties are, so long as my assistance is suitable? This is God's way with his, he doth proportion his assistance unto our impediments. And therefore if your difficulties be great, and more than ordinary, then may you look for great and more than ordinary assistance. Oh, what a comfort is this!

In case that you work, and serve, and toil, and do take

nothing, having no success, or not so comfortable as you desire; then,

Consider this, that the less success you have, the more are you free from envy. It is a hard thing for a man that works not, not to envy him that works; and for him that hath no success, not to envy him that hath great success. Of all men in the world, the successful man is the most envied. The heathens had this notion amongst them, which they applied to their gods; and therefore when Polycrates, king, or rather tyrant of Samos, prospered so abundantly in all that he undertook, Amasis, the king of Egypt, his friend and confederate, wrote thus to him: * "That thou doest well and prosper, is no small joy to me; but I must tell thee plainly, that these great and overflowing successes do not please me, who know full well the nature of the gods, how envious they are. It is my wish concerning myself, and the like I wish for all my friends, sometimes to prosper and sometimes to miscarry; and in this vicissitude rather to pass my life, than without any alteration to prosper; for I never yet could hear of any who having thus prospered long, did not at the last, end in universal destruction." Which he imputed to the envy of their gods; for their gods were devils; and indeed, what is the reason that the successful men in any kind are the most envied by the world, but because the Devil (who is the envious one) doth provoke thereunto? Yea, always so it is, that success doth raise envy. † Hast thou therefore been at work and hast had no success, then shall you be the more free from envy.

Hereby also you are kept from that great temptation of resting on your own labours. As we are very apt to rest on our duties, sufferings and enjoyments; so we are very apt to rest on our own labours and employments. That we may not rest on our duties, God doth sometimes suspend our duty, or our heart in it. That we may not rest on our spiritual enjoyment, God doth sometimes suspend that also. So here. What is the reason that God doth put the sentence of death upon our employments, or doth suspend their success, but that we may be kept from resting on our labours?

* Ω δε λεγει. &c.—Herodotus.

† P. uctus honos oneris, fructus honoris onus.

Were our labours more successful, we should rest more upon them, but by want of success we are weaned from them. This is comfort even in the want of comfort.

But in this case, why should not that comfort and support us, which did comfort and support Christ himself? Isa. xlix. 2, ye read of his call to his work: "The Lord hath called me from the womb, from the bowels of my mother he hath made mention of my name." Here is his clear call to work, verse 2, ye have his divine assistance, "And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft in his quiver." Then verse 4, ye have his want of success expressed in many words: "Then said I, I have laboured in vain." Is that all? No: "I have spent my strength for nought." But is that all? No: "and in vain" again. Then at verse 6, God the Father comforts him against this discouragement: "And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob: I have given thee for a light to the Gentiles." Though thou hast little success in this work amongst the Jews, thou shalt have great success in a greater. But wherein doth Christ comfort himself in this case of no success in his work amongst the Jews? That we have in verse 4: "Surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God." Whatever judgment men do make, it matters not much, for "my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God." I have done the work which God gave me to do, and therein I have approved myself unto God; and therefore though I have laboured in vain and spent my strength for nought, yet I have comfort in my work, for my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God; I have not lost my labour, for my work is with God. And thus may you also comfort yourself in the want of success; true, I have laboured in vain as to others, but not in vain to myself; I have lost my labour as to others, but not as to my God; for my reward is with God, and though I have spent my strength for nought in regard of men, yet my work is with my God; and in all this work I have approved myself unto him; and therefore whatever the success be, yet will not I be discouraged; for my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God.*

* Proprie autem dici non potest quod Christus frustra laboravit ne quidem

And thus I have done with this eighth instance, whereby it doth appear that a good man hath no reason or cause to be discouraged in regard of his work or service, however it may fare with him therein.

SERMON XII.

A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF DISCOURAGEMENTS DRAWN FROM THE CONDITION ITSELF.

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

IX. SOMETIMES the discouragements of God’s people are drawn from their condition, the condition itself.

Oh, saith one, my condition is exceeding sad, both for soul and body; there is no condition that is like to mine: my affliction and my condition are twisted and woven in together; my affliction, misery, and my calamity are seated in my very condition: they do not only grow upon my condition, but are in the condition itself, and therefore I am thus discouraged; have I not cause and reason for it?

No: I will grant and must confess, it is possible that a godly man’s condition in regard of outwards, may be very bad, *Cum bene sit malis, et male bonis*; when it goes well with those that are bad, and ill with those that are good, I am strongly solicited to believe there is no God, said the heathen: but we have learned better divinity than this. A man’s condition may be very bad, and yet the man himself may be very good, and God may be good to him. Yea,

respectu judæorum tum quod Christus omnium conversionem vere non intendit sed tantum eorum quos efficaciter convertere voluit qui principaliter sunt electi tum quod opus predicationis Christi apud eos qui non erant convertendi, usum suum tamen habuit vel quod erat futurum hoc illis in testimonium in die judicii vel quod ad consolationem nostram id fecit ut videlicet predicatorum non nimium dolerant et animum abjicerent si semen ab illis projectum aliquando viderent in animis audientium non fructificare. *Estius in Loc.*

Sensus igitur hoc loco sio esse poterit; consumpsi frustra vires, &c. quasi, dicat; non est quod quisquam existimet id circo me frustra laborasse, quod non missus venerim aut aliter atque oporteret rem tractarim in aliquove deliquerim conditio (sic enim significat מַשְׁפָּט) studia et actiones omnes me sic significat פְּלִעַם) imo omnia mea a Deo meo a patre omnium Deo disposita et ordinata fuere. *Forerius in Esai. cap. 49.*