

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 xlvi. 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,

who do a great deal of service for God in their day ; but as for me, I am a poor babe in Christ, if a babe, and so am able to do little or nothing for God. Therefore I am thus discouraged and cast down ; have I not just cause and reason for it ?

No, for “ God is able to make all grace to abound towards you, that ye always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work,” 2 Cor. ix. 8. And if God have recompensed your weakness with wisdom, then surely you have no cause to complain of your weakness. Sometimes weakness is recompensed with wisdom ; for, says Solomon, Prov. xxx. 24, “ There be four things that are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise :” the ants, the conies, the locusts, and the spider. Wherein doth the wisdom of the ants consist ? He tells you in verse 25, “ The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in summer.” In time of plenty they do lay up for the time of want. Wherein doth the wisdom of the conies consist ? He tells you in verse 26, “ The conies are a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks :” though they be weak in themselves, yet they dwell in strong places. Wherein doth the wisdom of the locusts appear ? He tells you in verse 27, “ The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands :” though they be weak alone, yet they do join together, and so are strong. But wherein doth the wisdom of the spider consist ? He tells you in verse 28, “ The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings’ chambers :” though the chamber of a king is most swept and cleansed, yet by the industry of her hands she doth take hold on the beams thereof, and dwells on high, out of danger. So that, although these creatures are weak and feeble in themselves, yet by their wisdom, their weakness is recompensed, and they save themselves from injury and wrong, as well as if they were stronger.* Now shall the ant, cony, locust and spider, be wise in their kind, and shall not a christian be so ? True, saving grace is the best wisdom ; every godly man is a wise man, and though he be but weak in grace, yet he hath true wisdom : the wisdom of the

* Admonemur nullam creaturam propter parvitatem contemnendam esse, quando quidem quod illis in corporis mole deest, aliis quibus a Deo ornantur datibus compensari solet.—Cartwright in Prov.

ants, to provide in summer against a rainy day ; the wisdom of the conies, to build in the rock Christ ; the wisdom of the locusts, to join with others ; and the wisdom of the spider, to take hold on those beams of the promises, which are in the chamber of our King, Christ. And if God have thus recompensed your weakness with this wisdom, why should you then complain ?

But is it then no disadvantage for a man to be weak in grace ?

Yes, much, very much ; there are many disadvantages which a weak christian lies under, that a strong christian doth not. Ye see how the weak fire lies sobbing under the disadvantage of green wood, which the strong fire doth not ; so doth Christ's smoking flax lie under many disadvantages, which the strong christian doth not. As,

Though a man have truth of grace, yet if he be but weak in grace, he is more apt and ready to stumble and fall, and to be turned out of the way. " Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees," saith the apostle, Heb. xii. 12, " Lest that which is lame be turned out of the way." A weak man is more apt to fall than a strong ; and if he do fall, he is more unable to rise again. A strong man fallen, is quickly up again ; but the weak falls, and is ready to fall again when he rises : so it is with a weak christian, he stumbles often and is apt to fall ; and if he have fallen, he is even ready to fall again when he goes about to rise.

He is more easily quenched, in regard of his comforts, than the strong christian is. A strong christian will improve that for himself which seems to be against him ; but the weak christian will improve that against himself which is in truth for him. When our Saviour Christ said to the woman of Canaan, " It is not lawful to cast children's bread before dogs ; " she made an advantage of those words, and thereby did gather in upon Christ, saying, " True, Lord, but the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the table." Thus she improved that for herself, which seemed to be against her : why ? because she was strong in faith ; " O woman," saith our Saviour, " great is thy faith." But when the angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah, Judges xiii, he said to his wife, " We shall surely die, because we have seen the Lord." Thus he improved that against him, which did make for him,

as his wife truly interpreted the thing, verse 23: why so, but because he was weak in faith. The strong fire burns the more by the very water that is cast upon it, but the weak fire is quenched by the very fuel, wood, or coal that is cast on it; so a weak christian also is apt to be quenched, even by those very truths and dispensations whereby he should burn and blaze out the more.

He cannot glorify God as the strong christian may and doth. One sun doth glorify the Creator more than an hundred other stars, because there is much light met in one body; and one strong christian doth glorify God more, than an hundred lesser, weak saints, because there is much light and grace met in one person. "He that offereth praise, glorifieth me," saith God, Psalm l. 23.

It is an hard thing for the weak christian to praise God, for he often doubteth of God's love, and therefore cannot praise him as he should; but the strong christian may, he can say, Blessed be the Lord for this or that mercy, for it comes from love to me.

The more a man doth believe above hope and under hope, and the less he doth live by sense, the more he glorifies God. Now the strong christian is able to exercise his faith in this kind, for says the apostle Paul, "Abraham considered not his own body, but being strong in faith, was persuaded that God was able, and so did give glory unto God," Rom. iv. A weak faith cannot do so, for saith the apostle, verse 13, "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." It seems then that it is the strong, and not the weak faith which doth give glory to God. And would ye know wherein this strong faith differs from the weak faith, in regard of its operation? why, says the apostle, the weak faith staggers at the promise, which the strong faith doth not; the weak faith doth attend too much unto second causes, which the strong faith doth not; the weak faith judges by what it sees and feels within, but the strong doth not, but by the word without; and therefore it is strong faith which doth give glory unto God especially.

A strong christian will do great things for God, a weak christian can do but small things, for his strength is but

small, and his soul little. Now the greater things we do for God, the more we glorify him.*

A strong christian can mind and tend the public, but a weak christian cannot. I have enough to do at home, saith he, oh, that my own everlasting condition were but settled, and then would I mind the public too.

A strong christian is able to wait long on God; he that waiteth long with quietness, honours God: but as your weaker children cannot stay long for what they would have, but must be served presently; so the weak christian also cannot wait long on God for what he would have: but the strong christian doth.

A strong christian is helpful unto others. "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak," Rom. xv. 1. And again, "Him that is weak in the faith receive you," xiv. 1. Children and babes are fit to be carried in others' arms, but are not able to carry others. The weak christian is apt to be offended with others, to censure and judge others, and so to make burdens for others to bear, Rom. xiv. 1, 2. But the strong christian is a bearing christian, a carrying christian, one that can displease himself that he may help another. Now the more serviceable and helpful a man is to others, the more he glorifies God; thus the strong christian is, but the weak cannot in all these things give glory to God as the strong christian may. Surely therefore there are many disadvantages which a weak christian lies under, that the strong christian doth not.

Yet there is no reason why he should be discouraged.

For weakness doth not exclude from mercy, but inclines God unto mercy, rather. Psalm vi. 2, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak." It is spoken of an outward weakness; and if that which is less doth incline God to mercy, then much more that which is greater.

And if he have as great an interest in Christ, as many promises to run unto, and as many embraces of love from God the Father, as the strong christian hath; then there is no just cause why he should be cast down in regard of his weakness.

Now so it is, though your grace be never so weak, yet if

* Ολιγοπισος ολιγοψυχος, 1 Thess. v. 14.

ye have truth of grace, you have as great a share and interest in the righteousness of Christ for your justification, as the strong christian hath. You have as much of Christ imputed to you, as any other. It may be you have gathered less of this manna, for your spending sanctification ; but if you be an Israelite indeed, you have so much of this manna, as that you have no lack : for it is said of the Israelites, " They gathered some more, some less ; yet he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack ;" all which figured that equal proportion, saith Mr. Ainsworth, which all believers have in Christ, the spiritual manna.

And if ye look into Scripture, where do God's promises fall more thick, than upon those that are weak in grace ? Christ begins his preaching with the promises, Matt. v. ; and I pray, what are those persons whom the promises are especially made unto, but such as are weak in grace ? " Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness. Blessed are those that mourn."

He doth not say, Blessed are those that are strong in grace ; or blessed are those that rejoice in God ; or those that have full assurance of their everlasting estate and condition : no, but as if his great work and business were to comfort, uphold, and strengthen the weak, these he begins withal, and many gracious, rich and blessed promises he doth make to them. Yea, the promises are so made to them, as, attended to, will give a full answer unto all their fears : as, for example, the Lord promises, Matt. xii., " That he will not break the bruised reed," &c. Will the weak christian say, Oh, but I am exceeding weak, and very feeble : then our Saviour says, " He will not break the bruised reed." And what more weak and feeble than a bruised reed ? an whole reed is not very strong at the best, but bruised it is weak indeed. Will the weak christian say, Oh, but my weakness is mingled with many sins ; so the fire in the smoking flax is mingled with smoke, yet says Christ, " I will not quench the smoking flax." Will the weak christian say, Oh, but, though God do not quench me, yet I shall be quenched ; Nay, saith Christ, " but I will bring forth judgment unto victory ;" it lies on my hand to do it and I will do it. Will the weak christian say, Oh, but, I have much opposition in my way, how can judgment come to victory ? then Christ says, he will bring

forth, *εως αν εκβαλλη*, thrust forth with violence; it is the same word that is used in other scriptures, noting a force;* as if Christ should say, I will force this victory through all opposition, that it shall meet withal. So that the Lord doth not only give several promises to those that are weak in grace, but he doth so lay them, as he doth help to apply them.

And if ye look into your experience, who have more kisses, and embraces of love from God our Father, than the weak christian hath? The parent kisseth the babe and little child, when the elder child is not kissed; for, says he, this is but a little child. And so, when the prodigal comes home, then the father falls upon his neck and kisses him, why? but because upon his first return, he is a babe in Christ; this is my little child, saith the father, and therefore I will kiss him with the kisses of my mouth.

And though it be a great affliction to be weak in grace, yet if Christ will condescend unto mine infirmities, why should I be discouraged in regard thereof? Condescending mercy is great and sweet mercy: now though God doth shew mercy unto all his people, yet he will do it by Christ as an high priest; and what is the work and office of the high priest? but to sympathise and bear with the infirmities of those that are weak, "We have not such an high priest (saith the apostle) as cannot be touched with our infirmities," Heb. iv. 15. Three things there are, which do speak out the condescending love of God to those that are weak in grace; 1. He accepts their duties, though mingled with many weaknesses; and their services, though they grow upon a weak stock,* Rev. iii. 8., "I know thy works, (saith Christ to the Church of Philadelphia) for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." 2. The Lord doth not over-drive those that are weak, but is contented to go their pace with them, Isa. xl. 11, "He shall gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

* Matt. vii. 5, *εκβαλε προλον την δονον*.

Matt. ix. 38, *οπως εκβαλη εξαλας*.

Matt. x. 5, *δαιμονια εκβαλλετε*.

* Christus fidem et jansi infirmam fovet.

3. He doth sometimes, yea, oftentimes, yield unto their desires, going, as it were, after them, Matt. ix. 18, "There came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is now dead, but come and lay thine hand on her; and Jesus arose and followed him." The man had faith, for he said, "Only lay thine hand on her, and she shall live:" yet his faith was weak, for he limited and stinted Christ, both to time and means; "Come down, and lay thine hand on her." In the viith chapter, a centurion comes to him, for the cure of his servant, and he was strong in faith; for saith Christ, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Christ doth prevent, and goes before him; for when he saith, verse 6, "My servant lies sick, Jesus said to him, I will come and heal him:" here Christ offered to go; No, Lord, saith the centurion, "Speak the word only." But the ruler desires Christ to go with him, and he followed him; Christ prevents the strong, and he followeth the weak; he commends the strong centurion, and he condescendeth to the weak ruler. What then, though the weak ruler be not commended as the strong centurion was, should he be discouraged? No, because Christ's condescending love was as fit for him, as his commanding favour was for the centurion: strong grace shall be more commended, but weak grace shall be much encouraged by the condescending love of Christ.

If Christ have put a *Why* and *Wherefore* upon the discouragements of the weak, then they have no true reason to be discouraged, in regard of their weakness. Now if ye look into Matt. viii. 26, ye shall find, that our Saviour says to his disciples, "Why are ye doubtful, O ye of little faith?" Ye read in verse 24, that there arose a great tempest, insomuch that the ship was covered with water; was not here cause of fear? yet says Christ, Why are ye fearful? Yea, it is said that their Help was asleep; Christ was their only help in the storm, and verse 24, "He was asleep;" had they not then cause to fear? yet says Christ, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" The like ye have in Matt. xvi. 8, Jesus said, "O ye of little faith why reason ye amongst yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?" Here is another Why put upon their discouragements. So again, Matt. xiv. 31, when Peter began to sink, he cried out,

and Christ said unto him, "O thou of little faith, wherefore lidst thou doubt?" Here is another Why or Wherefore put upon the discouragement of a weak faith. Now why loth our Saviour speak after this manner to them? Why do ye doubt? and Why are ye fearful? Not only to reprove their doubting and discouragement, but to shew that there was no reason for it: though their outward discouragements were great and their faith was but small, yet he tells them, that they had no reason for to be discouraged, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? It seems then, by these Why's and Wherefore's, that though a man's faith be small, and his outward discouragements great, yet he hath no just and true reason for to be discouraged.

And if a Christian would be discouraged, if he did not sometimes find a weakness and smallness of grace within him, then he hath no reason to be discouraged, because he doth find this weakness. Now ye know, that the kingdom of heaven, both without us, in the gospel, and within us, in regard of the saving effect of the gospel, is compared to a grain of mustard-seed, which, saith our Saviour, is the least of all seeds; but grows up in time, to that stature, height, and bigness, as the fowls of the air come and make their nests in it. So is the gospel, both in the preaching and the effect of it: it begins low, and is very little at the first; and therefore, if a man should not find his grace to be small at the first, he would doubt whether ever the kingdom of heaven were in him or no, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard-seed, the least of all seeds; but I have not found it so in my soul, I have not found this littleness and smallness of grace, and therefore I do fear that the kingdom of heaven was never in my soul in truth. Thus men would doubt, and be discouraged, if they should not sometimes find their grace to be small. And if so, then why should a man be discouraged, because he doth find it thus? Surely he hath no just cause or reason for it.

Oh, but yet, it is an uncomfortable thing to be weak; strong christians are full of comfort: they have assurance of God's love, and are full of joy; but the weak are full of fears and doubts. This is my condition; I am most uncomfortable, therefore I am thus discouraged; have I not cause and reason for it?

No: for though the weakness of grace is usually accompanied with doubts and fears, and the strength of grace, with assurance, joy and comfort; yet it is possible, that a man may have a great deal of grace, yet may have no assurance; and a man may have assurance, not doubting of God's love, and yet may have but little grace.

Ye must know, that there is a difference between uncomforableness and less comfort. If a man be possessed of a great estate in the world, he hath more comfort than another, who hath but the pledge and earnest of it; but though I am not possessed of it, yet if I have the earnest and pledge of it, I may have much comfort in it. Now the least grace, is a pledge and earnest of more, yea, of the greatest measure; and is it not a comfortable thing, for a man to have the pledge and earnest of glory? Such have all those that are weak, though they be but weak in grace.

But how shall I know that my little, is a pledge and earnest of more?

The Spirit of adoption, is a pledge and earnest of the whole inheritance: and though you cannot do so much service for your heavenly Father, as your elder and stronger brother doth, yet if you do not only obey God because you see a reason in his commandments, but because there is a child-like disposition in you, then have you the Spirit of adoption, and so your little, is a certain pledge of more.

And if you mourn over your little, and wait on God for more, then is your little an earnest of much: Rom. viii. 23, "And not only they, but ourselves also (saith the apostle) which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." He proves, that the Romans had the first-fruits, the pledge and earnest of more in the Spirit, by their groaning and waiting: do I therefore groan under the present burden of my own weakness, waiting upon God for more, then have I the first fruits of the Spirit; and so that little which I have, is a pledge and earnest of more: and upon this account, though your grace be weak, and small in itself, yet considered as an earnest, it is much: and is it not a comfortable thing, to have the pledge and earnest of glory? Such is the comfort of all those that are weak in

grace, and therefore why should they be discouraged in regard of their weakness?

Oh! but, I am not discouraged at my weakness, in regard of the uncomfortableness of it, but in regard of the unserviceableness of it: for if I were strong in grace, I should be able to do more service for God; then I should be able to resist my temptations, and to overcome the evil one: for the apostle John saith, "I write to you young men, because ye are strong, and have overcome the evil one." But I have great temptations, and but small strength to resist them: I have a great deal of work to do for God, and have no strength to do it with; therefore I am thus discouraged, have I not cause and reason now?

No: for the spiritual battle is not always to the strong: our victory lies not in ourselves and our own habitual strength, but in Christ's fresh assistance. How often have the strong fallen, and the weak stood? We read of that young King, Edward the Sixth, that when the Emperor sent to him, desiring that his sister Mary, afterwards Queen of England, might have liberty for the mass in her house, this young prince did stand out against that temptation, when all his Council was for it; yea, when that good man, bishop Cranmer, and that other holy man, bishop Ridley, did yield thereunto, and pressed the King to it, insomuch as the King did break forth into tears, desiring them to be contented; whereupon, the archbishop Cranmer took his schoolmaster, Mr. Cheke, by the hand, and said, Ah, Mr. Cheke! you have such a scholar that hath more divinity in his little finger, than all we have in our whole bodies. Here the weak stood, and the strong did fall; the weak did resist temptation, when the strong did yield; for our strength lies in Christ without us, not in ourselves within us. And if ye look into the iind and iiird chapters of the Revelation, ye shall find, that whereas all the churches are charged with some sin or other, only the Church of Philadelphia is charged with no sin at all, but commended for keeping the word of Christ's patience; and yet this church, and no other, is said to have a little strength. And ye know what Paul saith, "When I am weak, then am I strong; most gladly therefore will I rejoice in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest on me," 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

Though your grace be weak, yet you may do much for God in your day: "The tongue (says James) is a little member, and boasteth great things; behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth," chapter iii. 5. "Behold also the ships, (saith he, verse 4) which though they be so great, yet are they turned about with a very small helm."* And shall not a little grace do as much as a little tongue, or as a little fire, or as a little helm? Surely, though grace be little, yet it may be an helm unto all your life, a rudder unto all your practices. Ye see how fruitful weak things are in nature; the strongest persons have not always most children, but the weaker. The herring is a weak fish in comparison of the whale, and what abundance are there? The dove is a feeble bird in regard of the eagle, and yet how fruitful is it? The vine is a weak tree in regard of the oak, and yet it is more fruitful. So in grace; you may be weak in grace, yet you may be very fruitful. The jailor was but weak in grace as soon as he was converted, nor Zaccheus, nor the thief on the cross; yet what clusters of divine grapes did presently grow upon these branches? And if you may be very fruitful in good, though weak, why should you be disengaged in regard of your weakness?

Oh, but I am not disengaged at my weakness, in regard of my unserviceableness, or unfruitfulness only, but in regard of my own guiltiness; for I have made myself weak in grace by mine own sins; I have fallen into sin, and so have weakened my self and grace: my grace is not only weak, but it is weakened, and weakened by sin; therefore I am thus disengaged, have I not cause and reason now?

No: for possibly you may be mistaken: some do abate in their natural parts, and they think they decay in their graces: as some grow in parts and gifts, and they think they grow in their graces. But if you have not fallen into any great and gross sin, then no such spiritual disease or fever hath seized on you, whereby your grace should be weakened.

But suppose the thing be true, which you do object, that you have sinned, and by your own sin your grace is now

* Quod autem tam minuta et infirma animalia in rupibus domicilia sibi excipient, confirmare nos debet, ut non dubitemus etiam infirmi et imbellos quæ difficilia sunt aggredi dummodo officii ratio id postulet. Cartwright in Prov. xxx. 14. quatuor parva sunt in terra.

weakened ; then have you cause indeed to be much humbled before the Lord, yet not to be discouraged. For, if nothing have befallen you, but what may possibly befall a true believer, then you have no reason to be cast down as without hope. Now ye know how it was with Samson ; he was strong, and of great strength inward and outward ; yet his strength was taken away, and he became as one of us. How so ? why, he had laid his head in Dalilah's lap, and so he lost his strength, and was weakened by it ; but it cost him dear, both his eyes, and his life too : and if you have so laid your head in Dalilah's lap, that your strength is abated, it may, and it is likely it will cost you dear : yet this case is no other than what may befall one recorded for a true believer.

And though your strength be abated, and your grace weakened, through your own sin ; yet being true saving grace, it shall never be annihilated, for it is the new creation ; and nothing created by God, can be annihilated by us. Man is created by God ; he may be killed by man, but he cannot be annihilated, and brought to nothing : the tree and wood may be burnt to ashes, but it cannot be annihilated and brought to nothing, for it is part of the creation. Now your grace was created by God also, if true, though small ; and therefore, though it may be weakened by your sin, yet it cannot be annihilated and brought to nothing.

And if yet the promise do belong to you, and to your condition, then you have no reason to be discouraged or cast down, in respect of this. Now if ye look into Rev. iii. ye shall find, that as there are many promises made to the several churches, so there are promises also made to the church of Sardis ; yet this church had fallen and weakened herself ; for says Christ to her, verse 13, "Strengthen the things that remain and are ready to die ; I have not found thy works perfect :" so that though your grace be weakened, and that by your own sin, insomuch as all seems to be ready to die, yet there is a promise belonging to such a condition, and therefore no just cause or reason for discouragement, though much cause of humiliation.

But I am not discouraged at the weakness of my grace, because of mine own guiltiness only, but because of its likeness and similitude unto common grace ; I know that it is a

contradiction to say, that a little grace is no grace at all ; but my little is so little, that I even fear it is none in truth. If the piece of coin that I have be little, yet if it be gold, it is well ; but if it be little, and a counter too, then what am I the better ? Now so it is, that I fear my little is but a counter, and not true grace indeed ; therefore I am thus discouraged, have I not cause and reason now ?

No : for though your grace be never so small, yet if it be good coin, and not a counter, then you have no reason to be discouraged in this regard. Now to satisfy you in this scruple, I will tell you what small, weak, little grace will do, and not do, in opposition to common grace.

It will not oppose much grace ; the least spark of fire will not oppose the flame, or resist the flame ; water will, because fire and water are contrary : and so, false grace will oppose the highest degree of grace, saying, What need you be so strict and precise ? You may go to heaven with less ado : but the least degree of true grace will not oppose the highest.

It loves examination, it loves to examine, and to be examined ; for it is sincere, and sincerity is much in examination : it is called *ειλυρωνια*, for it holds up all its actions to the sun and light ; it doth love the work of examination : false, counterfeit, common grace doth not so.

It is very inquisitive after the ways of God, and after further truths : as the man that climbs up into the tree, first gets hold on the lower boughs, then on the higher, and so winds himself into the body of the tree, till he comes to the top, so doth a christian do ; he begins with the lower, then unto the higher, and so to higher discoveries : at the first, therefore, he is most inquisitive, "What shall I do to be saved ?" says he ; and again, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?" False and common grace is not so.

It is much in the work of humiliation ; it grows in a waterish place. Now suppose that two herbs be much alike, the one sovereign, and the other naught, and it be told you, that the sovereign, good herb, grows in a waterish place, and the other on a rock, will you not easily discern those by the places where they grow ? Thus it is here : the weak grace of the saints, grows in a waterish place, it is much in humiliation ; but the common, false grace of hypocrites,

grows on a rock. As a weak christian is very apt to rest upon his own doings, so he is much in doing, and in the work of humiliation most.

It works according to the proportion of its own weakness ; it staggers at the promise, yet it goes to the promise ; it doubts of Christ's love, yet it doth run to Christ ; it stumbles, yet it doth keep its way ; it is ignorant of Christ, and not so forward in the knowledge of Christ as it should be, yet it is laying of the foundation, Heb. vi. 1. It is the fault of a weak christian, that he is always laying the foundation, yet he is laying of the foundation ; though it works weakly, yet it works according to the proportion of its weakness ; but the common, false grace doth not so.

It is willing to learn of others ; for, says a weak christian, I am but a babe in Christ, and therefore why should not I be willing to be carried in others arms ? The less I can do, the more I will receive : as the strong christian is much in doing, so must I be much in receiving : it is not thus with that false and common, counterfeit grace. But as the naturalists do report and write of the lion, that he will not eat of any prey, but what he hath hunted down himself ;* other beasts will, they will prey upon what is killed by others ; but the lion, king of the beasts, is so proud, that he will not eat of that which is killed by another. So, men that are strong in parts and gifts, and have no grace withal, will not eat of that which they do not hunt down themselves ; if they hunt it down, then they will close therewith, else not. A strong-graced christian will, and a weak-faithed christian will, but he that hath parts and gifts alone, cannot relish that so well, which is brought to hand by another.

It is very sensible of its own weakness : a weak christian is weak, and he doth feel his weakness, and is very sensible of it ; not a man in all the world, saith he, that is more weak than I.† Now ye know, that if a lady or queen come to an house, she hath a great train attending upon her, and though ye see her not, yet if you see her train, you say, she is there still. Such a great queen is grace ; though a man have never so little of it, yet it brings a great train with it ; and

* *Aelian de animal.*

† *Deo placet fides infirma modo, nobis non placet fidei infirmitas.*—Austin.

though ye see it not, yet if you see the train, will ye not say, surely the grace of God is here? Thus now it is with you that are weak in grace; these seven things, and a far greater train than these, you may see in your lives, and therefore certainly, you have no just cause and reason for your discouragements in this respect.

Oh, but yet, this is not the thing that doth pinch with me: I hope, through mercy, the root of the matter is in my soul, that this great queen of grace hath taken up her lodging in my heart; but yet I am exceeding weak in grace, and very feeble still: some are weak in grace because they are but new plants, new converts, lately brought home to Christ, and are yet babes in Christ, and so they have excuse for their weakness; but I profess that I have been converted a great while, yet I am weak; I am an old man or woman, yet I am weak in grace; I am an old professor, and yet am weak in grace: therefore I am thus disquieted, have I not just cause and reason now?

No; for though it is a shame for an old man to go in coats, or to be carried in the arms like a babe, as every weak christian is; and though Christ will upbraid men of their slowness and dulness, that have long sat under the means, yet you have no just cause and reason for discouragement; for though you may be weak in regard of others, yet you may be strong in regard of your former self, and be more strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, than you have been heretofore. And to clear that, consider—

1. The more extensive a man's obedience is unto God's commandments, the more he is grown in grace. Weak christians are much in some duties, and therein they are most intense: but little or nothing in others: and as they grow in grace, so their hearts are dilated, and extended unto other duties.

2. The more exact and accurate a man is in duty, the more he doth grow in grace; and the more he grows in grace, the more exact and accurate he doth grow in his duty. He that writes better than he did before, doth not write more paper, or make more letters, only he doth write more exactly and accurately: so, the grown christian doth not perform more duties than he did before, but the same more exactly.

3. The more a man sees and understands his christian liberty, and yet doth walk more strictly, the more he doth grow in grace : some think they grow in grace, because they have more understanding in their christian liberty, though they do walk more loosely ; these are deceived in their spiritual growth ; but if I know my christian liberty more fully, and now do walk more strictly in my life, then do I grow in grace indeed. Now is it not thus with you ? Yes ! through grace I am able to say, that I see my christian liberty more than I did heretofore ; and yet I am more strict in my life : though I cannot yet pray as I would, and hear as I would, and perform duty as I would, yet I do perform my duties with more exactness than formerly ; and though I have not so much affection as I had in this or that work of God, yet now I find, that I am more dilated, and my obedience is more extended and extensive unto God's ways and commandments than before. Then though you are still weak in regard of others, yet you are grown stronger in regard of your former self, and therefore certainly, you have no just cause or reason to be discouraged in this regard.

But suppose that I am yet but weak in grace, and temptations or discouragements press in upon me, in regard of the weakness of my grace ; what shall I do that I may be able to bear up my heart against those discouragements ?

Then consider what a great charge God the Father hath given to Christ of those that are weak, Isa. xlii. 1, "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth ; I have put my spirit upon him." &c. : but why ? verse 3, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." This is my charge, saith the Father, which I give to my Son : and upon this account he came into the world, that those who have life might have it in abundance : and for this cause he did die for us, Rom. v. 6, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time (or according to the time, that is, the time appointed by the Father), Christ died for the ungodly."

Consider also, what charge our Saviour Christ did give unto his apostles, and in them, to all the ministers of the gospel, concerning those that are weak in grace. "Peter, Peter, (said our Saviour) lovest thou me ? (then) feed my sheep." And again, "Lovest thou me ? (then) feed my

lambs." And again, thirdly, "Lovest thou me? feed my lambs." Have a care of those that are weak in grace. All the time that Christ lived upon earth, he went about doing good, healing all sicknesses and diseases, and condescending to the weaknesses of men. One comes to him, and thought to have stolen her cure, yet Christ did bear with her. Another comes, and puts an *if* upon his will, "Lord, *if* thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;" and he did bear with him. Another comes, and puts an *if* upon his power, "Lord, *if* thou canst do any thing," &c. Yet Christ did yield to him. And when he left the world, then he charges his apostles with the weak saints, "Feed my lambs;" and again, "Feed my lambs."

Consider also, what a great mercy it is to have a little grace, though it be but a little; for though you have never so little grace, yet if you have grace in truth, you have union with Christ, you have communion with the Father, you have your own nature taken away, and are partakers of the divine nature; you have a right and title unto all the promises; yea, unto all the ordinances; yea, unto all the creatures. Your afflictions are not curses, the curse is taken out of every cross, you have an interest in all that Christ hath done and suffered, you are made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, an inheritance uncorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away: you have God for your portion, Christ for your Saviour, the Spirit for your Comforter, heaven for your inheritance, the angels for your guard, and all the creatures in the earth under your feet; this, and all this you have, though you have never so little grace; and can you read over all this inventory of mercies, and sit discouraged in the midst of them?

Yet if all this will not prevail in the time of your temptation, think with yourself, and consider seriously, How much you shall weaken yourself, yet more and more, by your discouragements in this kind. All discouragements weaken; humiliation weakens not, the greatest humiliation doth not weaken, but the least discouragement doth, upon what account soever. Now if all discouragements do weaken, then what an unreasonable thing is it for me to be discouraged at the sight of my weakness? But so it is, that discouragements, even from the sight of our own weakness, do yet

more and more weaken ; surely, therefore, it is an unreasonable thing for a man to be discouraged at the sight of his own weakness : wherefore, lift up your hands, oh ye saints, and be ye lift up, oh ye drooping souls. We are commanded, ye may read our commission, Isa. xxxv. 3, "to strengthen the weak hands, and to confirm the feeble knees, and to say to them that are of a fearful spirit, Be strong, fear not." And if it be our duty to say and speak thus, then it is your duty to encourage yourself in the Lord, and to say to yourself, Be strong, oh my soul, and fear not. Be thankful for your little, and in due time you shall have much: labour also for much, yet be content with little, even with little grace, if God will have it so.

And thus I have done with the second instance.

SERMON VI.

A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF MISCARRIAGE OF DUTIES.

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

III. Sometimes the discouragements of the saints and people of God, are drawn from their duties, the failings and successlessness of their duties.

For they reason thus : through the Lord's grace and mercy, I have been kept from great and gross sins, yet if the Lord loved me indeed, he would draw my heart near unto himself ; but when I come to prayer, or duty, I find so much deadness, dulness and awkness of heart and spirit, that I fear the Lord will never accept such an one as I am, nor such duties as mine are : when I go to prayer, either prayer is altogether absent from me, or I have no life therein ; if I go to hear the word, I am not attentive, but filled with distractions ; and whatever duty I perform, I want life and love in it. Oh, my heart is like a rock or stone, and therefore I fear the Lord will not accept my duty, and the rather, be-