

stand in the presence of the King of kings, having his face shining on you, with your comforts all restored unto you? Now then go out unto your brethren, and inquire who they are that labour under any burden, and with the same comfort wherewith you have been comforted yourselves, comfort others, knowing this for certain, that the more you spend, the more you shall have, and the longer you shall keep your comforts: yea, and this Christ expects, that what comforts we have from him, we should spend for him.

And thus I have also done with this second argument.

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### SERMON III.

SAINTS SHOULD NOT BE DISCOURAGED WHATEVER THEIR  
CONDITION BE.

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

HAVING spoken of the two first doctrines, the third followeth, which is this:

The saints and people of God have no true reason for their discouragements, whatever their condition be.

David had as much cause and reason for his discouragements here as any other, for he did want ordinances, yea, he was kept from the ordinances; therefore, saith he, verses 1, 2, “As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God?” Yea, after he had known the sweetness of them he was deprived of them, verse 4, “For I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God.” And in this condition he had many enemies, he was in the state of affliction and persecution, his enemies reproached him, they reproached him in the matter of his God, and that daily, verses 3 and 10, “While they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? As a sword in my bones mine enemies reproach me, while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?”

And he was now under great desertions: though the enemies did reproach him in the matter of his God, yet if God

had been present with him, he had been well enough; but they said, "Where is now thy God?" and his own heart said so too, that God had left and forsaken him, which was his failing, verse 9, "I will say unto God, my rock, why hast thou forsaken me?" yet for all this he saith, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" As if he should say, Thine enemies do not only reproach thee in the matter of thy God, but thine own heart; thou art now kept from those precious ordinances which once thou didst enjoy; yet why shouldst thou be disquieted or cast down? there is no reason for it. So that the words speak plainly this truth, A godly, gracious man hath no true scripture reason for his discouragements whatever his condition be.

It was a sad condition that the prophet Habakkuk did present unto himself, yet, saith he, chap. iii, "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation," verse 18. But oh thou servant of God, thou art now under a threatening, and not under a promise, which makes thy very belly to tremble, and wilt thou, canst thou now rejoice? Yes, saith he, verse 16, "When I heard, my belly trembled, my lips quivered at the voice, rottenness entered into my bones; yet will I rejoice in the Lord," &c.

But it may be thou thinkest this threatening will never be fulfilled. Yes, saith he, verse 17, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no meat in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord," &c.

But a man may rejoice, though he have no wine to drink or olive to eat, because these are but creatures which are for our refreshment: but wilt thou rejoice, O prophet, if thou wantest thy daily bread, and such creatures as are for our daily nourishment?

Yes, saith he, "Although the field shall yield no meat, and the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stall, yet will I rejoice in the Lord." So that whatever a godly man's condition be, he may rejoice, and there is no true reason for his discouragement.

Indeed, there is no sin so unreasonable, but the sinner thinks he hath reason for it; and so the saints and people of

God may think, that they have reason for their discouragements : hence it is that they have so many whys and wherefores, “ Why hast thou forsaken me ? ” “ Why go I mourning ? ”

Yea, they may not only seem to have some reason, but, in a way of nature, they have reason for their discouragements ; and therefore saith David, “ When I saw the prosperity of the wicked, I said, I have cleansed my hands in vain, until I went into the house of the Lord,” Psalm lxxiii. So that, so long as he was in the house of nature, and natural reason, he did see reason for his discouragement.

Yea, not only so, but take things asunder, and consider things by pieces, one from another, abstracting the means from the end, and so the saints may have a true and real reason for their discouragements, for every affliction is grievous. If the husbandman look only upon the breaking up of his ground, without respect to the harvest, he may well be discouraged, but take both together, and so he will not : thus if the saints consider their breakings apart from their harvest, they may see cause for their discouragements ; but if they do consider their breaking up and their harvest together, the means and the end together ; I say, take all together, and then, whatever their condition be, they have no reason to be cast down or be disquieted.

What is there in or for the saints that may be a sufficient bulwark against all discouragements ?

I answer, A godly, gracious man hath propriety and interest in God himself. Some special men and women there are in the world, whom the great God of heaven and earth doth make over himself unto, and they that have him for their God and portion, have no reason to be disquieted whatever their condition be : thus it is with the saints, and therefore the Psalmist doth not barely say, that he would rejoice, but that God was “ his exceeding joy,” Psalm xliii. Satan may darken this light and joy for a time, but he can never put it out ; all the saints and people of God are possessed of this. It is written of Antoninus the Emperor, one of the persecutors in the primitive times, that being environed and compassed about by his enemies, whereby he and all his army in the field were like to be lost for water, he commanded the christians of his army to pray for rain ; whereby present re-

lief came to him, his army was preserved, and his enemies destroyed; whereupon he wrote a letter to the Roman senate in favour of the christians, and gave this commendation of them in it. That they were a people which were, *Deo contenti*, content with God, *quem circumferunt secum in pectore*, whom they did always carry about with them in their bosom: yea, saith he, in that same letter, it is very credible, that although we think them wicked men, *Deum pro munimento habere in conscientia*, that they have God in their conscience for their bulwark.\* Thus a heathen, thus an enemy, thus he who was once a persecutor confessed, and shall not we say as much?

Oh but, say some, *tolle meum et tolle Deum*, take away that word *my*, and take away the comfort of that word *God*; no God to me unless he be my God, and there are many of God's people that cannot say, God is my God, for they do want assurance; and therefore how can they have comfort in this?

Yes, if my very resting on God doth make him mine, I may have comfort in him too; now the saints and people of God may always, and do rest on God, and though Satan saith by way of temptation, You have not believed, you have not rested on God; yet they may say, Oh, but now I do rest on God, and so may always have comfort in their propriety and interest in God.

God doth always know them and their conditions. "I know thy works, and thy tribulation, and thy poverty," saith Christ to the church of Smyrna, Rev. ii. 9, 10: and this Christ speaks as a relieving comfort to that church in a sad condition; for saith Christ, "Satan shall cast some of you into prison ten days." Yet be of good comfort, Smyrna; I know thee and thy tribulation and poverty; whatever thy condition be, I do know thee in it: and it seems this is a general cordial, for it is given unto all the churches; I know thy works O Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia: it is spoken as a terror, indeed, to Laodicea, for that which is most comfortable to the good is most

\* Δια τον Θεον ου φερουσι κηρα συνειδησιν ιεκος ουν εστιν ους υ πολαμβαρουμεν α Θεους ειναι Θεον εχουσι αυτο μιν εν συνειδησει τετειχισμενον.—Justin Mart. 2 Apol.

terrible to the wicked, as the presence of God, the omniscience of God, &c. But to the godly this is a great comfort; whatever my condition be, yet God my Father knows it, and doth know me in it.

God would not have his people be discouraged, and if God their Father and Jesus Christ their Saviour would not have them discouraged, then there is no true reason for their discouragements: now God and Christ would not have his people to be cast down or disquieted whatever their condition be. "Let not your heart be troubled," saith our Saviour to his disciples, John xiv. 1. As if he should say, I am now to die, to leave you all, to go to my Father; and when I am gone, you will meet with many troubles, but I would not have you discouraged, let not your heart be troubled. But now if thou diest, we shall then lose thy presence, and what greater trouble or affliction can there be than the loss of thy presence? Well, saith Christ, yet I would not have you troubled at heart; let not your heart be troubled. But if we lose thee, O Lord, we shall lose all the ordinances, and those many sweet opportunities of receiving good for our souls which we have enjoyed by thy presence. Be it so, saith our Saviour, yet I would not have you troubled at the heart; let not your heart be troubled. But, Lord, if we lose thee we shall be as sheep scattered, some will deny thee, all will forsake thee; and when the Shepherd is smitten, we, as sheep, shall be all dispersed, and fall into sad temptations, afflictions and desertions. Well, saith he, however it be, yet I would not have you troubled at the heart, let not your heart be troubled however, this is Christ's mind, will and pleasure concerning his disciples.

And if you say, How may it appear that God the Father would have his people to be of the same mind and disposition never to be discouraged? It appears plainly, because God hath provided promises of comfort, succour and relief, suitable to all conditions: I dare boldly challenge all men, to shew me any one condition, which God hath not provided a promise of comfort, mercy and succour suitable unto it.

Yea, and if you look upon the promises, and mark them well, you shall find they are so laid, worded and moulded, as that all discouraging objections may be fully answered,

and taken off as they rise. For example, suppose the Church of God be under persecution of enemies, Isa. liv. 17, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." But you will say, Our enemies, O Lord, are many, they rise up against us, and gather into bodies, and confederate against thy servants; verse 15, he takes off that thus, "Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me, whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake." But, O Lord, they have gotten instruments of death, and the whole power of the militia and ammunition into their hands. Be it so, saith the Lord, verse 16, "Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work, and I have created the waster to destroy: no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." But, O Lord, they have got authority on their side, and they rise against us in judgment: mark then what follows, verse 17, "And every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn." But this is a promise made unto the Jewish Church only, and not to us. Not so, "this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord," verse 17. So that if you be the servants of the Lord, this promise tells you that it is made to you. But we are in an unbelieving condition, and are not able to lay hold on this promise. Well, but saith this promise, "this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord:" children shall have their inheritance, though for the present they are not able to sue for it, it falls upon them in course. Oh, but we may sin against the Lord, and cut ourselves off from this promise and this inheritance: mark then what follows, "And their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord," not only this promise is of me, but the righteousness, whereby they shall believe, and lay hold on it, and walk under it, is of me, saith the Lord. Oh, how graciously is this promise laid, whereby all unbelieving objections may be taken off! so it is in all the promises; do but observe and mark them, they are so moulded, ordered, worded, as that every word of the promise doth hold forth a distinct answer unto your objections. Now if God have so laid his promises, that all unbelieving objections may be taken off as they rise, what doth this argue, but that God

our Father would not have his people discouraged, whatever their condition be? therefore they have no reason for it.

There is no matter of discouragement, which the saints do, or can meet withal, but there is a greater encouragement bound up therewith, or comes along with it: God doth never more graciously appear to his people, than when there is the greatest matter for their discouragement. John lay some years in the bosom of Jesus Christ, whilst Christ lived, but, then he had not the revelation given him; Christ dies, John is afflicted, persecuted, driven into the isle of Patmos, there an exile, and there Christ appears to him, and gives him that blessed book of comfort, the book of the revelation. We read of Jacob, that at one time especially he did so see the Lord, that he called the name of the place, Peniel, "for I have seen the Lord," Gen. xxxii. 30, saith he, and when was that, but when churlish Laban was on one side of him, and his rough brother Esau coming out against him in an hostile way on the other side? Once he had a vision of a ladder, the top whereof was in heaven, and the foot on earth, angels ascending and descending upon it; which in John i. Christ interprets to be himself. "You shall see the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man;" but when had he this vision? not all the while he was in his father's house, but when he was fain to fly from the anger of his brother, lay in the open field in the night, and had no pillow but an hard stone to lie upon, then doth Christ thus appear to him, and make such a discovery and manifestation of himself, as he never had before. And when was it that Mr. Robert Glover was so filled with heavenly joys, that he cried out, He is come, he is come? Ye read of him in the Book of Martyrs, that for five years together, he was worn out and consumed with fears and troubles; he could neither eat nor sleep, he was so afflicted in his soul upon the apprehension of some backsliding, he thought he must needs be thrown down to hell when he died, yea, he thought, saith the story of him, that he could not more despair in hell, yet after this long time of wrestling with this temptation, it pleased God to come in with comforts: but I say, when was this? why, then especially, when he came within sight of the stake, then he cried out with clapping of his hands, He is come, he is come. Thus doth God, with

whom are reserves of mercies, reserve his sweetest consolations, for the time of our sourest afflictions, and doth temper the one with the other in most fit proportion.

Yea, the Lord doth not only give forth encouragement in time of discouragement, and proportion his encouragements unto our discouragements, but he doth make your discouragements, occasional rises and bottoms, unto your encouragements and comforts. The Lord caused a deep sleep to come upon Adam, and then he took a rib from his side, wherewith he made a help for him; so doth God cause a deep sleep to come upon you in your discouragements, out of which he takes a rib, and builds up a help for you, making the discouragements of the saints, to contribute to their very encouragements. "Behold, saith the Lord, I will allure her (that is the church, his people) and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her, and I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope," Hosea ii. 14. But a wilderness condition is a lost condition, and what comfort can one have in a lost condition? True, saith God, ye cannot, in and by yourselves, but there I will speak friendly and comfortably to her, and of all the times that I choose to preach gospel to a poor soul, I choose to do it in a wilderness and lost condition. But though the Lord do speak comfortably to us, if we be in a wilderness, a dry and barren place where no food, nor comfort is, how can we be but discouraged? Nay, saith the Lord, but "I will give her her vineyards from thence:" but if we sin and murmur in the wilderness, as the Israelites did, the Lord will cut us off as he did them, and a wilderness is a place of trouble, wherein we are apt to murmur, and be discouraged: nay, saith the Lord, "But I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope." The valley of Achor, was the valley of perturbation, trouble, and of great discouragement, when the men of Israel fled, and fell before the men of Ai, for the sin of Achan, Joshua vii. 26; yet it was an inlet to the land of Canaan, to the land of rest. Now, saith the Lord, look as it was with them though the valley of Achor was a valley of trouble and perturbation, yet it was the door by which the Israelites came into the land of rest: so shall it be with you, I will make your troubles and discouragements

agements, the very door of your hope; the valley of your discouragements shall be the door, and an inlet unto all your rest and comfort. God takes the same way with the members, as he went with the head; Christ's cross was an inlet of glory, his suffering time was the valley of Achor to his disciples, and was it not a door of hope unto them, and unto all the saints? This is God's way; discouragements bring encouragements; and the more discouragements the saints have, the more encouragements they shall have; yea, their discouragements shall contribute to their encouragements, and be a door of hope to them. Now if the valley of Achor shall by promise be a door of hope, why should we be discouraged whatsoever the valley of Achor be, whatever our condition be?

A praying man can never be very miserable, whatever his condition be, for he hath the ear of God; the Spirit within to indite, a friend in heaven to present, and God himself to receive his desires as a Father; it is a mercy to pray, though I never have the mercy prayed for; thereby God doth come down to us, and we go up to God. It is the soul's converse with God on earth, and a great ease to a burdened, troubled spirit; for thereby he may go and empty all his heart into the bosom of his best friend. Now every godly gracious man, is a praying man, more or less he prayeth; it is spoken as an argument of Paul's conversion, "Behold he prayeth;" as speech is common unto all men, so prayer unto all christians; God hath none of his children born dumb; as soon as one of your children is born, it cries, and it sucks, and it sleeps: so with every man that is born of God, as soon as he is born, he cries unto God in prayer, he sucks the breast of the promise, and he sleeps in the bosom of God by divine contentment, being dead unto all the world; it may be he cannot pray as he would, but though he cannot pray as he would, nor hear as he would, nor perform any duty as he would, yet he prayeth. It may be said of him, "Behold he prayeth:" turn him where you will, and behold he prayeth: sick, yet behold he prayeth; tempted, yet behold he prayeth; at home or abroad, yet behold he prayeth; and can he be miserable while he prayeth? Surely no, why then should he be discouraged, whatever his condition be?

If the matter of the saints' discouragements, be but a cloud that will blow over and melt away, then no reason for their discouragements, whatsoever their condition be. Now thus it is with the people of God, though they be in a dark, and very dark condition, yet their darkness is but the darkness of a cloud, and as he said, *Nubecula est, cito transibit*; it is but a cloud, it will soon over. So may they say concerning every matter of their discouragement; It is dark indeed, but this darkness will over; there is a storm comes down upon us, but we shall see land again, the shore again; it is but a cloud, but a cloud. And upon this account David comforted his own heart here, and checked his soul for his immoderate dejection: "Why art thou cast down," &c. "Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him." I shall be delivered, this cloud will over, it will not last, it is but the darkness of a cloud.

But how shall it appear that it is but a cloud, and the darkness of a cloud? I think it is night, and dark night with my soul, yea, such a night as shall never know morning. Indeed if I did know that the matter of my discouragement were but a cloudy darkness, then I would conclude and say, There is no reason for this discouragement: but how shall I know whether this darkness be the darkness of a cloud, or of the night?

If the darkness be such as comes immediately after the rising and shining forth of the promise, then it is but the darkness of a cloud, not of the night: the sun doth not rise to set immediately; and therefore if darkness comes immediately after sun-rising, it is certainly the darkness of an eclipse, or of a cloud, not of the night. There was a fair promise rose and shined upon Joseph, when the Lord said, "that his sheaf should be higher than all the sheaves of his brethren:" yet presently after that there arose a darkness upon him, but it was the darkness of a cloud, and not of the night; why so? because he had a promise first, which did shine upon him. So David had a fair promise of the kingdom, when he was anointed by Samuel; yet a darkness presently rose upon him, but it was the darkness of a cloud only, and not of the night; why? because it was such a darkness as arose immediately after the shinings forth of a promise. And I pray you shew me any Scripture, where you find that

ever any darkness arose presently after the breaking, shining forth of a promise, which was more than the darkness of a cloud, which vanished away? Or where do you find in all the Scripture, that ever any poor soul came into the dark, immediately after the giving out of a promise, but that soul did come to the light again? Now as for the darkness that covers the saints, it is usually a darkness that comes after the giving and shining out of a promise; and therefore that darkness is but the darkness of a cloud, and they may say, a cloud, a cloud, and it will pass away.

If a man be so in the dark, as yet he can see to work, and dig up pits, it argues that the darkness is but the darkness of a cloud. A man cannot see to work artificially in the night, but though there be much darkness by reason of a cloud, yet he may see to work, and to dig up pits, because it is day. Now in Psalm lxxxiv. the Psalmist saith, at verse 5, "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, and in whose heart are the ways of them; who passing through the valley of Baca, dig up pits, the rain also filleth the pits, they go from strength to strength, till they appear before God in Zion." It is an allusion to the practice of the Jews: when some of them went up to Jerusalem, their way lay through the valley of Baca, which was a very dry valley, where no houses were, where no water was for their relief and refreshment; whereupon they digged up pits, and so the rain fell, and they were refreshed, got strength, and went on to Jerusalem, where they saw the Lord in his ordinances. So saith the Psalmist, "Blessed are they in whose heart the law of God is." There are a generation of men in the world, that have the law of God in their hearts, though they cannot act and work towards God as they would: these sometimes are in a dry and barren condition, where no water or comfort is; yet if in this condition they dig up pits, go to prayer, wait upon God in duty, though they find no comfort springing up in their duty for the present, yet in due time the rain of God's blessing will fill those dry pits and empty duties, whereby their life shall be like unto a pool of water, and they shall go from strength of grace to strength of grace, until they see the Lord. Know ye, therefore, any man that is in this valley of Baca, where no water is, yet if he can find in his heart to dig up pits, to pray, read, hear, meditate,

confer, and perform duties; though those duties be empty of comfort for the present, yet the rain of grace and mercy shall fall upon those pits, and he shall go from strength to strength, until he appear before the Lord in glory. Now thus it is with the saints, though darkness, and a great darkness be upon them, yet in that dark condition they are still digging up pits, and therefore this darkness is not the darkness of the night, but the darkness of a cloud, and they may say, This is a cloudy darkness, and it will over ere long.

If the darkness which a man is under be such, as there are some openings of light withal, then it is the darkness of a cloud, and not of the night; though the cloud may cause much darkness, yet ever and anon it opens, and there are some interims of light withal; but the night opens not, there are no interims of light then. Now interims and intermissions of light, are sure and certain pledges of a greater light which is yet to come. You know that when David fled from Absalom, he was in a dark condition, for the text saith, "He went, and he wept," and he went barefoot; his own son persecutes him, drives him from his throne, a great confederacy was raised against him by wicked men, with the child of his own bowels; here was darkness upon darkness, matter of great discouragement, but it was a cloud, and no more.

You will say, How should David have known that it was but the darkness of a cloud?

David prayed, the Lord turn the counsels of Ahithophel into folly; and before David had overcome Absalom, and was restored to his kingdom, Ahithophel did hang himself: David singled out Ahithophel to pray against, and the Lord heard his prayer: that judgment of Ahithophel was the return of David's prayer; here the cloud opened, and this answer of his prayer in the interim, was a seal to David of the full deliverance that came afterwards, for God seals divers matters with the same seal.\* So when a man is in the dark by reason of some temptatiom, affliction, or desertion, which he cannot see the end of: if in this interim, before the full deliverance comes, he hath some lesser deliverance, that lesser deliverance in the interim, is a seal unto him of the future deliverance, and he may say, here is a pledge of my

\* Deus uno sigillo sigillat diversas materias.

full deliverance, for here is the opening of the cloud. Now thus it is always with the people of God; they never are in any affliction, temptation, or desertion, but before their great deliverance comes, they have some special providence, some reviving in the midst of their trouble, some interim of light, some openings of the cloud; and therefore in the midst of all they may say, surely this my darkness, is not the darkness of a night, but of cloud; I say, there is no discouragement doth befall the saints, but the matter thereof is a cloud, and they may say, it is but a cloud, it will pass over, and therefore why should they be discouraged? Surely there is no reason for their discouragements whatever their conditions be.

If these things be so, how heavily doth this doctrine fall in reproof upon some, I wish I might not say, some of the servants and people of God! A godly man hath no true reason for his discouragements, whatever his condition is, although it be never so sad; and some are always discouraged, whatever their condition be, although it be never so good; whatever falls out, the saints should not be discouraged, no, not at any thing, and yet many are discouraged at every thing and upon every occasion. Oh, what unworthy walking is this! how contrary do you walk to God! And do you know what it is to walk contrary to him? Hath he not said, "If you walk contrary to me, I will walk contrary to you?"

But I have reason to be discouraged, for I have no sense and feeling of God's love.

We do not live by feeling, but by faith: it is the duty of a christian to begin with faith, and so to rise up to feeling: you would begin with feeling, and so come down to faith; but you must begin with faith, and so rise up to feeling. And I pray tell me, is it not sufficient to be as our Master was? Did not Christ want the sense of God's love, when he said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Yea, had not Christ the sense of God's anger upon him when he did perform the greatest act of obedience that ever the sun saw: yet did he then say, I am not the child of God, because I want the sense of God's love, because I am under the sense of God's anger? No, but with the same breath that he said he was forsaken, he said, "My God,

my God ;” and at the same time he called God Father, “Father, forgive them,” &c. So may you do ; though God hath forsaken you, though you want the sense of his love, yea, and are under the sense of God’s anger ; yet at the same time you may say, The Lord is my Father, and you may go to him as your Father : and if you can say, God is my Father, have you any reason for your discouragements ? Yet how often are God’s own people discouraged and cast down ? Oh, you that are the disciples of Christ, labour more and more to follow your Master ; and as David here, so do you often say, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul ?”

What a mighty, vast difference, is there between a godly man and a wicked upon this account : a godly, gracious man, hath no reason for his discouragements, whatever his condition be ; a wicked man hath no reason for his encouragement, whatever his condition be. A gracious man is apt to be much discouraged, but he hath no true reason for it : a wicked man is apt to be much encouraged, but he hath no true reason for it. It is said of the wicked, Psalm vii., “God is angry with the wicked every day :” whatever the day be, God is angry with them ; though it be a day of fasting and prayer, yet then is God angry with them ; though it be a day of praises and of thanksgiving, then is God angry with them ; when he sins most, and when he sins least, God is angry with him ; not one day goes over his head, but God is angry with him, and one blow or another God’s anger reacheth forth to him every day ; he doth not always feel those blows, but God is smiting of him, and is angry with him every day ; and therefore, whatever his condition be, there is no reason for his encouragement. Suppose a man were in prison, committed for some great offence, and condemned to die under the displeasure of his prince or state ; and his servant should come unto him, saying, Sir, be of good comfort, your wife is well at home, you have very sweet children, an excellent crop of corn, your neighbours love you dearly, your sheep and cattle thrive, and all your houses are in good repair and order : would he not answer that servant, and say, What is all this, so long as I am condemned to die ? Thus it is with every wicked man, he is under the displeasure of the great God, a condemned man,

and God is angry with him every day ; and if his heart were open to be sensible of it, he would say, You tell me of my friends and goods and name and trade ; but what is all this, so long as I am a condemned person, and God is angry with me every day I rise ? but for the present he feelth not his displeasure, is not sensible of it ; yet let him know that there is a day coming, when he will find the truth of this matter no reason for his encouragement, whatever his condition be. And as Saul once cried out, saying, " God hath forsaken me, and the Philistines are upon me ;" so shall he cry out and say, God hath forsaken my soul, temptations are now upon me, my sins and guilt are upon me, God hath forsaken me, and the devils are now upon me. But now, as for a godly, gracious man, though his condition be never so sad, and his soul never so much cast down, yet he hath no reason to be discouraged, I say, whatever his condition be. What a glorious condition are the saints in, who would not be in love with this condition ; who would not be in Christ ; who would not leave the ways of the wicked ; who would not be godly ? Oh, you that are ungodly, labour to become godly.

The exhortation is specially directed to the saints, and with you I must leave a word of exhortation. Take heed and beware of discouragements, of being cast down, you have no reason for it, much reason against it.

Thereby you rejoice the heart of Satan, he claps his hands and laughs to see you cast down, now, oh now, saith he, this man is like to me, I am a despairing spirit, and so is he ; I am discouraged and cast down, and so is he ; he stands triumphing over you, to see you under these discouragements : when you are sad, he is glad.

And as you rejoice the heart of Satan, so you grieve the heart of God ; one friend is grieved at the grief, sorrow and discouragement of another, and the more real friendship, the greater is the affliction and trouble of the one, if the other be grieved. Now God is the friend of the faithful, Abraham, the friend of God, actively, passively : God was a friend to him, and he a friend to God ; so with all believers ; Christ is their friend, " Henceforth call I you no more servants, but friends," saith Christ ; and the Holy Ghost is their friend, for it is the Spirit that comes and

dwells in them, and manifests himself to them: and we are said to grieve the Spirit. As God is the worst enemy, so he is the best friend, the truest friend, the most real friend in all the world, therefore when you are cast down and discouraged, you grieve him, you grieve the Father, you grieve the Son, you grieve the Spirit; and do you know what you do when you grieve the Lord? Is it nothing to grieve such a friend?

Thereby you do in some measure, yea, in a great measure, make void and frustrate the end of Christ's coming, who came not only to free us from hell, but from our present fears, "That being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve him without fear," Luke i. And will you then go drooping, discouraged, bowed down under your fears all your days?

Thereby you unfit yourselves for the service of Christ; the passover of old was not to be eaten with any old leaven, the old leaven was to be purged out, and none that were sad and sorrowful were to eat of the holy things. Now, saith the apostle, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast," that is, the gospel feast, "not with old leaven;" and will no bread down with you but leavened bread; sour bread; the bread of mourning? will you thus keep your passover, your christian feast? Some of you have been doubting, fearing, trembling, cast down, discouraged many years: and is it not yet time to bewail your unbelief; to honour free grace? what, will ye always grieve the Spirit, the Father and Christ; always be frustrating of Christ's work? will ye always be eating old leaven? is it not yet time to say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in him, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

I know indeed that I have no just and scripture reason for my discouragements, but I see there is much reason against it, yet I am one of a troubled spirit, I would fain have it otherwise, that at last I might glorify free grace; what should I do that I may bear up against all discouragements, that I may not be discouraged, whatever my condition be?

The only way which the Psalmist useth here is, to hope,

trust, believe in God; and how we should use our faith in Christ as that we may not be discouraged, follows after, for the present, take these directions:

1. If we would not be discouraged in any condition, then never lay your comforts upon your condition, nor be in love with any condition for itself; let not your condition itself be the cause or bottom of your encouragements. Hang a cloak or garment upon a rotten peg, and that will break, and the garment will fall down; now there is no condition but is a rotten peg, every condition is alterable, no condition so firm and fast, but is exposed to many changes, it is a rotten hold; God is pillars, his name is Adonai, which signifies so much, and in Isa. xxvi., we are commanded to trust in the Lord, "For in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength," or "the Rock of Ages." And, saith the Psalmist, "My flesh faileth, and my heart faileth, but God is the Rock of my heart for ever," so the Hebrew.\* Lay your comforts upon your own condition, and you do but build on the sand, which will be carried away with every wind, and storm, and tempest; but if upon Christ himself, upon God himself, ye build upon the Rock, and though the floods, and storms, and winds do rise and beat upon you, yet you shall not lose your comforts, because they are built upon a rock.

2. Be sure that you think of Christ in a right way and manner, as he suiteth with your condition, and as he is held forth in the gospel. We are very apt to have mis-thoughts of Christ; as Satan doth transform himself into an angel of light, so he would transform Christ before you into an angel of darkness: but the Scriptures hold him forth under such relations as do make him very amiable unto poor sinners. Are you accused by Satan, world, or your own conscience? he is called your Advocate. Are you ignorant? he is called the Prophet. Are you guilty of sin? he is called a Priest, and High Priest. Are you afflicted with many enemies, inward and outward? he is called a King, and King of kings. Are you in straits? he is called your way. Are you hungry or thirsty? he is called Bread and Water of Life. Are you afraid you shall fall away, and be condemned at the last? he

\* צור-לבבי Psalm lxxiii. 26.

is our second Adam, a public person, in whose death we died, and in whose satisfaction we satisfied; as there is no temptation or affliction, but some promise or other doth especially suit therewithal: so there is no condition, but some name, some title, some attribute of Christ doth especially suit with it: and as you do not look on Christ, but in reference to your condition, so you are not to look upon your condition alone, but with Christ's attribute suitable thereunto; if you look upon Christ's attribute of love without your condition, you may presume; if on your condition without Christ's attribute of love, you may despair: think on both together and you will not be discouraged.\*

3. If your discouragements begin to arise and press in upon you, check yourself, and say, Why should I multiply thoughts without knowledge; why should I tire out my soul with these thoughts; am I able to add one cubit to my spiritual state; am I, by all my thoughtfulness, able to alter my condition; yea, doth not my thoughtfulness set me at a farther distance from the mercy desired? The truth is, the only way to lose the comfort desired, is to be solicitous about it; as the only way to have an outward blessing is to be content to go without it: so the only way to have a spiritual or outward affliction removed, is to be contented that it should be continued, if God and Christ will have it so. But you will have your affliction presently removed, and you must presently know that you are in the state of grace, and the child of God, or else you will be discouraged, and as the bird in the net, the more it strives, the more it is entangled; so with you also. Wherefore do temptations, afflictions, desertions come, and Satan join with them, and say unto thy soul, This will ever be? answer, Well, but I therefore believe the contrary, because thou sayest so, Satan, who art a liar; yet if God will have it so, I am contented, I leave it to him: whether I shall ever be in this condition or not, is not my question, but now, O Lord, let me serve thee, that is all my desire, let me see thee as thou pleasest, when thou pleasest.

\* *Christus titulos sibi sumit, qui presenti rerum conditioni convenient unde varium suæ gloriæ radium in singulis epistolis ad ecclesias spargit, pro varia fortuna, qua sunt ecclesiæ; quo docet, illud immensæ, divinæ majestatis imprimis esse mente contemplandum; quod in rem presentem maxime conducatur.*—Brightman in *Apocalyps.*, cap. ii. p. 43.

I have done, Lord, I have done; I have been questioning and questioning my condition these many years, I see there is no end of that, yea, the more I do, the more I may, I get nothing by it; why, therefore, oh, my soul, should I tear out myself with this kind of thoughtfulness? thus check yourselves.

4. Whenever you think of any thing which is in itself terrible, or matter of discouragement, be sure that you mingle the consideration thereof, with those sweet things which God hath given and prescribed to you. There is nothing terrible, but God hath joined some comfortable thing with it: the name of God is terrible, he is called the great and dreadful God; but to sweeten this, he is called the God of all consolations: death is terrible, it is called the king of terrors; but to sweeten this, it is called a sleep: the day of judgment is terrible; but to sweeten that, our present Advocate shall be our future Judge; yea, our best Friend, and our dear Husband. Now if you abstract the terror of any object from the sweetness of it, no wonder if you be much discouraged. It is our duty to behold things as God presents them, and to take things as God doth give them. What God hath joined together, no man may put asunder. If you consider the sweetness of an object or condition, without the sourness of it, then you may grow too wanton: if you consider the terror of an object or condition, without the sweetness of it, then you may be too fearful: but if you think on both together, then you will fear and believe; and believe and fear, and so be kept from discouragement.

5. If you would not be discouraged whatever your condition be, labour more and more to get your self-love mortified, even religious self-love: all your discouragements are from self-love, not from the venom of your condition, but from the poison of self-love. Oh but I am discouraged, because I have no assurance. Well, but suppose you had assurance, what then? then I should have comfort: and is not here self? Oh but I am discouraged about my everlasting condition. And is not that self? doth not that word *condition* sound ones self? I dare boldly say, there is no tumult or immoderate discouragement in the soul, but hath self at the bottom. Could I leave myself, and my condition with God and Christ, and mind his service, glory and honour

more, God would take care of my comfort: but when I mind myself, and my condition so much, and his service, glory and honour so little, no wonder that I am so much discouraged. Therefore, labour more and more to mortify self-love, and so shall you never be discouraged, whatever your condition be.

6. In case that temptation press in upon you, and urge you to sad discouragements, speak to this purpose unto your own soul. Why should I buy my repentance at so dear a rate? There is none of all these doubtings, unbelieving fears and discouragements, but you will be ashamed and repent of afterwards. You know how it is with the traveller, he thinks the sun is not yet up, and so he loiters and sits down; but the sun creeping up behind the cloud, at last breaks out upon his face, and is got before him, and then he says, O what a fool was I, to think the sun was not up, because I saw it not, what an unwise man was I thus to loiter and sit down! So it will be with you: you now lie down upon the earth, and your belly cleaves to the dust by reason of your discouragements; but the grace of God and the love of Christ, is creeping up behind the dark cloud, and it will break out at the last upon you, and shine into your face with the golden beams of mercy; it will prevent you, and be before you; and then you will say, Oh, what a fool was I to be thus discouraged, what an unworthy creature I, to doubt thus of God's love; I have sinned, I have sinned by all my unbelief: now the Lord pardon me all my doubtings, I am, O Lord, ashamed of these my doubtings and questionings of thy love, pardon them, O Lord, unto my soul. This is that which you must come to, you must at last be ashamed and repent of these your unbeliefs, doubtings and fears, and therefore whenever they press in upon thee, say at the first unto thyself, Why should I buy my repentance at so dear a rate, by yielding unto these discouragements? And for this very reason, because that discouragements are to be repented of, therefore the saints and people of God have no reason to be discouraged, whatever their condition be.

And thus have I spoken to this truth under a more general consideration; through grace I shall labour to clear it further to you by particulars.