

THE FREENESS OF THE
GRACE AND LOVE OF GOD
TO BELIEVERS DISCOVERED,

IN REFERENCE TO

- 1.—THEIR SERVICES AND SUFFERINGS. 2.—THEIR CONSO-
LATIONS. 3.—THEIR SALVATION AND
ETERNAL GLORY.

TOGETHER WITH

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE FEAR OF GOD. THE GOODNESS AND
PLEASANTNESS OF BROTHERLY LOVE. THE WISDOM OF
HEARING THE VOICE OF THE ROD. REPENTANCE
THE ONLY WAY TO PREVENT JUDGMENTS.

IN SEVEN SERMONS.

1671.

TO THE READER.

THE labours of this Reverend Author (now with God) both in print and in preaching, have already praised him in the gate, and make his name and memory still remain and continue like a precious ointment, notwithstanding the vain endeavours of some, to make both himself and writings ridiculous; in which kind, though they may be abundantly repayed, since a late Author makes some on all sides guilty of the like; yet there is cause to fear (whatsoever innocent design may be pretended by those *witty men*) that religion itself may be contemned and slighted by such practices.

It is hoped that these Sermons will give no occasion for such cavils. but that they may be of use to some persons, to direct and confirm them in the good old ways of God, though they may want much of those advantages, which it may be the Author's own hand would have bestowed upon them. And upon that account the reader is desired not to be offended, though some things may not be so exact or plain as might be wished, nor to impute it to the Author in the least, but to look upon it only as the fault of the transcriber or publisher.

Yet hoping that notwithstanding these disadvantages, some may (through the blessing of God) reap profit and benefit by them, they are here published and submitted to the judgment of the candid reader.

J. O.

ON THE
FREENESS OF THE GRACE AND LOVE
OF GOD.

SERMON I.

“ Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own ? Is thine eye evil because I am good ? So the last shall be first, and the first last ; for many be called but few chosen.”—MATT. XX. 15, 16.

I do intend, God willing, to shew you the freeness of the grace of God in reference to men's employments and sufferings, and therefore have made choice of this scripture, wherein you have the parable of certain labourers in the vineyard ; the parable is propounded and applied ; propounded from verse 1 to verse 16 : “ For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard, and when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard ; and he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing in the market-place ; and he said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you, and they went their way ; and again he went about the sixth hour, and the ninth hour, and did likewise ; and about the eleventh hour he went out and saw others idle, and he said unto them, Why stand you here all the day idle ? and they said unto him, Because no man hath hired us : he said unto them, Go you also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, that shall you receive. So when even was come, the Lord said unto his steward of the vineyard, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last even to the first ; and when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny, but when the first came they supposed that they should have received more, and they likewise received every man a penny, and when they had received it, they murmured

against the good man of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us that have borne the burthen and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst thou not agree with me for a penny? take that thine is, and go thy way; I will give unto this last, even as unto the first. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? Is thy eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last; because many are called, but few chosen."

And thus far the parable goes, to shew that all is of free grace, both for service and for suffering. Now if you mind the 1st verse of the parable, you will find it brought in with a, *for*: "For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man," &c. The former chapter saith, "For we have forsaken all to follow thee, and what shall we have? But Jesus saith, He that hath forsaken father or mother, wife or children, houses or lands for my sake, shall receive a hundred fold, and inherit eternal life; and they that are last shall be first, and the first shall be last."

Thus shall it be in suffering, many that are first shall be last; and so it shall be in service, in employment, and in labour. For after he had spoken this parable of the labourers, he concludes, "the last shall be first, and the first last;" concluding for suffering and for service: and he gives the reason of it from our election; "For many are called but few chosen:" and shews the grounds of it, that it is of free grace; "The first shall be last, and the last first." So that as to service and as to suffering, all is of free grace. Now take these words as they are in relation to the former, and they will afford us this doctrine:

That there is much of the freeness of the grace of God laid out both in our services and sufferings.

Free grace in the matter of our services and labour, and free grace in the matter of our sufferings: "The first shall be last, and the last first; for many shall be called, but few chosen."

For the prosecution of this doctrine, I shall

First, labour to shew you, That it is a great mercy to be used for God, and by God, either in a way of service or suffering for his name.

Secondly, That there are some that God doth especially single out to serve him, or to suffer for him.

Thirdly, That it is the free grace of God that one serves above another.

Fourthly, I shall shew wherein this free grace of God doth appear or shine forth in the matter of our employment and sufferings.

Fifthly, I shall shew why God will order and dispose of our services and sufferings in the way of free grace or free love.

First, I say, It is a great mercy to be used for God, or by God in the matter of service or sufferings, it is a great mercy to be employed in any work for God. For,

1. The more serviceable any man or woman is for God, the more they honour God; and the more they honour God, the more will God honour them. When I testify of any excellency in God, then I honour God; when God testifies of any honour in me, then God honours me; as now when God calls me to any service, then God testifies an excellency in me, then God honours me. When a governor puts any honour upon a common soldier, he calls him forth to special service; so it is an honour for a man to be serviceable to God. This was the honour of Moses; "Moses, the servant of the Lord." And when the Holy Ghost puts an honour upon David, he says, "The Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord." Not, The Psalm of David, the king of Israel; no, The Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord. So in the New Testament, this was Paul's honour; "Paul, the servant of the Lord." Now is it not a great honour to honour God, and to be owned by God? Thus it is with them that serve the Lord.

2. The more serviceable any man is for God in his generation, the more apt God is to accept of his work, though there be failings in the work. Observe what great failings there was in Aaron, yet God accepted of the work.

3. The more serviceable any man is whilst he lives, the more comfortably he will die, when he comes to die. What is a man's comfort upon his death bed, but that according to his measure he hath served God? Saith Christ, "Glorify me, O Father, for I have done the work that thou hast sent me to do." And so it is a man's comfort to do the work that

God gives him to do; yea it will be his comfort at the day of death.

4. The more serviceable any man is whilst he lives, the more he shall speak when he is dead; there are them that being dead yet speak. Why what speaks Abel, but faith, good works, good examples? He offered a better sacrifice than Cain; he was truly serviceable to God in his day, and now he speaks when he is dead. Thus Abel did, and thus it is with a serviceable man. Look how it is with a wicked man that is serviceable to the devil, and that writes wicked and wanton books that speak when he is dead; so is it with a man that is serviceable unto God. This honour is in the service of God above all others: and, to say no more, this is the thing that is desired more in some respects than the enjoyment of heaven: "I desire (saith the apostle) to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is best of all; yet nevertheless, for your sakes, and the service of the churches, I desire to live." So that I say, in one respect, this is more desirable than heaven; for no such work is to be done in heaven. And is it not a great matter, very great to be serviceable unto God, to be used and employed by God either in service or suffering?

As it is a great mercy to serve for God, so is it not a great mercy to suffer for God; to be called out to suffer for the name of Christ? for saith the former chapter, "We have forsaken father and mother, wife and children, houses and lands for the sake of Christ; but saith Christ, He that forsakes so much for me, shall receive a hundred fold, and eternal life; yea, he that suffers for me shall reign with me." You carry a burthen, but Christ carries the heavy end, and you have communion with Christ also thereby; and thereby, also, your heart shall be filled with comfort, yea, even the comfort of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God dwells in every believer; and that man that suffers for God, the Spirit of God rests upon him as the dove rested upon the earth. And so saith Peter; "The Spirit of God and of glory resteth in you." A man is never more glorified than when he suffers for God. Remember that. When our Saviour Christ was upon the cross, he was then glorious before the eyes of heaven, and never more glorious than then, for

“now is the Son of man glorified:” so may you say when in sufferings, Now am I glorified. Oh, the glory of a christian! Nay, says the martyr when going to the stake, Now I begin to be a christian. And thereby he is assured of eternal life and salvation. “Our present light afflictions (saith the apostle) work an eternal and exceeding weight of glory.” And says our Saviour, “If ye be reviled and reproached for my sake, happy are you.” And if you look into Phil. i. 28, you will find that sufferings are an evidence to us. Thus now you see, it is a mercy, yea, a great mercy to suffer for the name of Christ. That is the first thing.

Secondly: But then there are some that God doth graciously single out to service, or to suffer for him; this honour all the saints have not, but some God doth graciously single out not only to service, but to suffer for him. Now there is a providential service, and there is a mercenary service; there is a judicial service, and a gracious service; some that God doth single out graciously: possibly a man may be providentially used in the service of God; thus Naaman had a servant in his house that was providentially made use of for his conversion. So I say, a man may be made use of providentially, and also mercenarily and judicially. So the devils have been; “Whom shall I send to be a lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets? Send me; and he went.” This is a judicial service; and thus the devils do serve for wages; and them also that are the instruments of the devil. Persecutors are judicial servers; they are them that make clean the dishes. So that I say, there are them that may serve God providentially, mercenarily and judicially. Providentially, and so all the creatures serve him. Mercenarily, so they served him that said, “Lord, Lord, have we not done many wondrous works, yet Christ says he never knew them, depart from me.” And then there is a judicial service, as when God gave license and power to destroy the ten tribes: but then, as there is a providential service, a mercenary service, and a judicial service, so there is also a gracious service; there are some that God doth graciously single out to serve him and to serve him in suffering for him. Did not God graciously single out Caleb to serve him? For it is said, “he followed God fully.” And did not God in the New Testament single out Paul? “Go thy way to Ananias.

And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said, Arise, go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou shalt do," Acts ix. 6. So I say, God doth graciously single out some not only to serve him, but to suffer for him.

Thirdly, What is it that makes the difference, that some are employed in the work and service of God, when others are not? It is only the free grace of God. It may be, you may think it is from men, that the providential hand doth fall upon one more than upon another; or that it is the will of men to single out whom they will for sufferings; but it is only the free grace of God. Look, what the sovereignty of God doth in a way of judgment and affliction, that, the free grace and love of God doth in a way of mercy. As now, suppose two men be together in a transgression, one is singled out to judgment, the other is not. Why? The sovereignty of God orders it so. "Think ye that they on whom the tower of Siloam fell, were greater sinners than others." No. A man may be wrapt up in great afflictions and calamities as Job was; and why so? It is the sovereignty of God: I will do what I will with my own. So look, what God's sovereignty doth in a way of judgment, the same the free grace of God doth in a way of mercy. Oh, is it not a great mercy to be singled out to suffer for the name of Christ, Phil. i. 29, "Unto you it is given not only to believe, but to suffer for Christ." So I say, it is not only to believe, but to suffer; and so God doth graciously choose some and not others for this great work.

Fourthly, But wherein doth the free grace of God shine forth and appear in the matter of our services and sufferings?

I answer, In many things: will you begin with your own employments? What is the reason one man is called forth to an employment, and not another? It is only the free grace of God. What is the reason one man hath success in a work, and not another? It is only the free grace of God. But to clear it the more unto you; the more unlikely any person is to serve or suffer for God, the more the free grace of God shines forth in that person. Now who are those that God doth generally make use of in his service, but those that are the most unlikeliest persons? As now will you instance

n matter of men's places, estates, callings; there were two servants concerned in the conversion of Naaman; the servant of the prophet, and Naaman's own servant. Who is the most likely now? Certainly the servant of the prophet; yet you see the other doth it: so that I say, the unlikeliest oftentimes God makes use of, which is to shew forth the freeness of his grace: will you instance in the matter of ability as to the ministry; who more unfit and unlikely to be used in the gospel, than a company of fishermen, poor fishermen? for it is said, they perceived they were unlearned, and yet you find them made use of by our Saviour for the promulgation of the gospel. Will you instance in the matter of free grace? Who was so commended as Nathaniel that came to Christ? "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile." Who more unlikely to be used in God's service than Paul? Was it likely Paul should bring any honour to God, who was whipt and scourged up and down town like a malefactor? yet this man preached: and do you think he was like to do any good by his preaching? yet you find it is said, "He did more than they all;" and God blessed his ministry, and he converted the gentiles. Why is this but to shew that God will make use of them that are most unlikely to do him service: "For they that are first shall be last;" and this only to shew the freeness of his grace.

But wherein doth the grace of God appear as to our sufferings? for the great thing is to stand our ground: to this I answer;

Is it not a great mercy, that the great God of heaven and earth should call us worms to bear witness to his name, his great name, yea, to suffer for it?

Is it not a great mercy and favour, that God will take notice of all the injuries that are done unto them that suffer for him, as done unto himself? "I know thy works," saith God; do men jeer thee and reproach thee for the sake of Christ? then happy art thou. What wrong is done unto them that suffer for God, he takes it as done unto himself: so that I say, it is a great mercy and favour, that the God of heaven should take those injuries as done unto himself, that are done unto us. Nay, saith God, "I will give you a mouth, and tell you what you shall speak when you come be-

fore men." "Take no thought for what you shall speak for it shall be given you."

Is it not a great mercy, that your hearts shall be filled with joy in the midst of sufferings? "They went away rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer."

Is it not a great mercy, that some shall stand, that are likeliest to fall, when others fall, that were likely to stand?

Is it not a great mercy, that those whom the adversaries think shall dishonour and mar the work of God, that they should bring more honour to God, and suffer more powerfully and strongly for him than others, and that they should be used most for God?

Is it not a great mercy, that when God seems to have most displeasure against us, his love should be then most set upon us, as it is in sufferings? Who would but think, that when we are given into the hands of wicked men, it is from the displeasure of God against us, when yet it is from the free grace and great love of God unto us?

Is it not a great mercy to consider, that what is our greatest misery *seemingly*, that that should contribute to our greatest mercy? Thus it is in our sufferings for the name of God: you see what great and wondrous things were done by the death of Christ; so also what wonders were done by Joseph in Egypt when he was sold thither by the maliciousness of his brethren; it is the way of God unto his people that the more others work to do them *harm*, the more God doth order it to prove for their *good*; which is only from the free grace, love, and favour of God. We never did any work yet, but free grace paid us for it: even the work of suffering God pays us for that: he was a preacher to day, yet carried to prison, that paid him for it. Yea, christians are paid for the work they never did: and what is the reason of it, but only the free grace of God. Thus you see wherein the free grace of God appears and shines forth.

Fifthly. Why will God carry on the work of our services and sufferings in the way of free grace? Why, God will order our employments and sufferings in a way of free grace that we may not be proud of them; we are apt to be proud of our employments and sufferings, and therefore God will carry on his work so, as that he may keep us from the sin of pride and haughtiness, when we shall con-

sider it is the free grace of God to single us out to service or sufferings. Why should we be proud? God loves to confound the wicked and ungodly in the world by making those that are the most unlikely to be serviceable to himself; and by ordering their services and sufferings in a way of free grace. This God doth to confound the wisdom and reason of worldly men. "Many are called, but few chosen." God hath set the weak to confound the strong. Again, God doth dispose of his work in a way of free grace, that none may be discouraged from his service, or suffering for him. If none but great and mighty and holy men were to be used in God's service, then the weak would be discouraged and despised, and we should be ready to say, I am not worthy. Now God doth so order and dispose of his work, as not to discourage the weak, but to give encouragement to all. Well then if so, a word for application. Is this a truth that we have heard, that all that God doth either as to the ordering of our services or sufferings is in a way of free grace? What have we then to say, but as Job, "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away; blessed be the name of the Lord?" You say, that God chooses whom he pleases to serve him, or to suffer for him; and that it is out of free grace: if so, why should not *all* suffer? But you hear it is not all but some, that God doth graciously single out to suffer for himself.

But here some may say, I am weak, and do not any work for God.

But give me leave: is family work nothing? The apostle insists much upon that in his epistles, he calls much upon parents, children, masters and all to do their duty. Reformation work is a great work, or else the apostle would never have spoken so much of it, and exhorted so much to it.

Is it nothing to do the work of your generation; to do the work that is suitable unto your condition? All men are not called to all works: there is a peculiar work to every man. Now is comforting work nothing? Is supporting work nothing? Is relieving work nothing? This comforting work it is angelical work. Is it nothing to improve the talent that God hath given thee? This will be the great question at the day of judgment, Faithful or not faithful? There are none but have talents more or less, which they must then answer for.

But you may be ready to say, I have no work. That is a

mistake ; for there are none but have work : therefore look unto that which is your work.

But you may say again, Though I have work and service, yet my service may be a judicial service, or a mercenary service, or a providential service : now how shall I distinguish my service, whether it be a providential, a judicial, a mercenary service, or whether God hath graciously singled me out to serve him in a way of free grace and love ?

In answer to this, take these two or three things.

1. If it be a work or service given you by free grace, then God will lead you more and more, and bring you to be acquainted with the design of his work. When Peter was called to open the door of the temple, at first he did not know the design, but afterwards he was told it. So thus it is with thee : if God do call thee to work, he will acquaint thee with the design of the work.

2. If you serve God in a way of free grace, then you will be contented with your work : yea, you will be contented to be used for God, to be laid out for God, you will say, I am contented, because God hath called me.

3. When God doth make use of a man in a way of free grace, then that man doth not make any great bargains for himself : they that serve God any other way, will make great bargains for themselves, make use of his service to increase their estates : but now they that serve God out in a way of free grace, will not do so. Therefore now you that are at work, do you pocket up at work ? Do you make great bargains for yourselves ? If so, this is no free grace work.

But you will say, I am afraid I do not serve God in a way of free grace, because I have no success in my work. But you may observe in the scripture, that sometimes a man may be called to work by free grace, and may have success at the beginning as Joseph had many years, and yet the success may leave him.

As now there are them that preach many years, and never convert one soul, yet this should not discourage them ; for free grace may call you to a work, and yet you may not find that success in it which you expected.

But then again, here is the great question yet behind ; suppose God doth deal with the children of men in a way of free grace and love, then what is my duty, and what shall I

do, that I may so serve and suffer, as to serve and suffer under the conduct of free grace ?

In answer to this, you may take in these following particulars.

If you would serve and suffer under the conduct of free grace, then serve your call fully ; and go to the utmost of the thing called unto, leaving God to do his work : do your work to the utmost, and leave God to do his. When God called Joshua to do a work fully and he did it, God shewed mercy to him, and to his posterity after him : and so when Jehu was called to a work, and he did it by halves, God blew upon him, and upon his posterity after him. Therefore I say, when God calls us to a work, let us do our work fully, and leave God to do his work.

If you would serve God under the conduct of free grace, then when you find any warmth or heat upon your affections, take the hint of this opportunity for the doing of that work God calls you to.

If you would serve God under the conduct of free grace, then do not envy others that are more employed, that have better success, and are better paid than yourselves : observe how it is with two servants in a great shop, the one at one end, the other at the other end ; the one may take more money than the other, yet they do not envy one another : and why ? but because they both serve one master. Thus it should be with the saints and servants of God, they all serve one Master ; and therefore one should not envy another because he is more employed or hath better success.

If you would serve God under the conduct of free grace, then be sure you do not serve for wages ; mercenary in your service. It becomes those that serve under free love to be very free in their service : saith one, I have been wrought upon by my neighbour, and ever since I have endeavoured to do him good. Now it is God that hath wrought upon us by his free grace ; and if so, let us freely serve him and labour to do him all the honour we can. When the prodigal first thought of returning home unto his father's house, he saith first, " Let my father make me as one of his hired servants." This was a legal expression ; I will be hired, " Let him make me as one of his hired servants ;" but when he saw his father's love he talked no more of his hired service. Inheritance is

not of the bond-woman but of the free. I do confess, indeed, it is not unlawful to look unto the recompence of reward; yea, it is lawful for us to do it. But now do you desire to serve under the conduct of free grace, then look not for wages; do not do as an hireling, as the labourers of the vineyard: no, do it freely in a way of love, thankfulness and believing.

If you would serve under the conduct of divine love, then serve God with fear upon the account of his goodness "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." If you do serve and work, then fear upon the account of God's goodness to you.

And to conclude this application. If you would serve as those that serve under the conduct of free grace and love, then have a care that in all your workings you depend upon nothing but the free grace of God in reference to your call; and if so, why then should you not willingly suffer for the name of Christ? Would you know whether you are called to suffer? why this is a certain rule, when the case is so with you, that you must either suffer or sin.

But then a second word of application may be this. Is it so, that so much of the free grace is laid out in reference to our services and sufferings? then let us freely and willingly suffer for the name and cause of Christ.

Is it so, that so much of the free grace of God is laid out in reference to our services and sufferings? then why should we not be contented with our sufferings; not only contented in suffering, or contented upon suffering, but contented with sufferings. Our Saviour tells us, that "they that will be his disciples, must deny themselves, take up the cross and follow him." Not only take up the cross, but follow him; yea, and deny themselves. Some will deny themselves in this or that, but will not take up the cross; but saith our Saviour, "If any man will follow me, let him take up the cross and follow me." Thus, now, if Christ calls us to suffer, let us suffer freely, because his grace is free.

If you would serve under the conduct of free grace, then take heed of any legal *therefore* upon your sufferings, Matt. ix. 27, "Then answered Peter, and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all and followed thee, what shall we have,

therefore?" This was a legal *therefore*. Christ answered and said, "You shall have your reward; but many that are first shall be last, and the last first." The only way to take away this legal *therefore*, is to look more and more upon the free grace of God, either in your services or sufferings for him; for this all must do, that either serve God or suffer for him, under the conduct of free grace. Do you desire to serve God either as to employments or sufferings under the conduct of free grace and love? then look more and more upon his free grace, and depend upon it in reference to your call, in reference to your assistance, in reference to your dependence, and in reference to your reward, seeing all is of free grace, bless the name of the Lord. Thus it is both in suffering work and in service, the first shall be last, and the last first.

Therefore as you would desire to serve or suffer under the conduct of free grace, rejoice and bless God for his free grace; remember this, that whether we serve or suffer it is of free grace.

Thus you see how the free grace of God shines forth both in our services and sufferings. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own: is thine eye evil because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last, because many are called, but few chosen."

SERMON II.

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace; comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work."—3 THESS. II. 16, 17.

HAVING already treated of the freeness of the grace of God in reference to our employments and sufferings, I do intend to shew you, also, the freeness of the grace of God in reference to our comforts and consolations; and this text, you see, saith, God hath given us "everlasting consolation," and tells us further, that God hath given us this everlasting consolation "through grace."

Therefore, without any further explication, you see that

free love is written upon all our spiritual comforts. For what is more free than gift? "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, hath given us everlasting consolation and hope through grace." Therefore it is by the grace, by the free grace of God that we are truly comforted.

There is much of the freeness of God's grace and love laid out in our spiritual comforts and consolations.

For the opening of this argument.

First, I shall shew you that it is a great mercy to be truly comforted.

Secondly, That it is possible for God's own people to live a great while without any considerable comfort.

Thirdly, That it is not in the power of any creature, or any thing on this side God or Christ, to comfort a poor, distressed, drooping soul.

Fourthly, That when God doth give or bestow comfort upon any, he gives and bestows it in a way of free grace.

Fifthly, To shew wherein the grace and love of God is manifested in the matter of our spiritual comforts.

Sixthly, Why God will deal with us in the way of free grace and love in the matter of our comforts.

Seventhly, When a man may be truly said to be comforted in a way of free grace and love.

Eighthly, What a poor drooping soul must do, that he may be truly comforted in a way of free love; and in case he be so comforted, what returns he should make. Of these in order.

First, I say it is a great mercy to be truly comforted; for it is a promised mercy, and promised mercies are no small mercies: now this is a mercy promised, Matt. v. 4, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

As this is a mercy promised, so it is the proper birth, fruit, and effect of the Holy Ghost. Gal. v. 22, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith." Joy and peace are the proper fruits of the Holy Ghost, and therefore no small mercies.

As this comfort is the proper birth, fruit, and effect of the Holy Ghost, so it is the main part of the kingdom of God. Rom. xiv. 17, "For the kingdom of God is not meat nor drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

It is a main part in the kingdom of God, and if so, no small matter.

This comfort is reward also, as well as a main part of the kingdom of God. Comfort and joy in the Holy Ghost is both duty and reward; so it is promised in the forementioned scripture, Matt. v., "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted;" and if so, then surely it is no small thing.

As it is duty and reward, so it is that grace whereby you are enabled to read your other graces. When a man is under great temptations, sorrows and afflictions, it is a hard thing to read his graces; but now this helps us to read our graces. Some will say they cannot read their graces, they lie at the bottom. As to explain it, take this plain comparison: there are many fishes in a fish-pond, but now in rainy and foul weather the fish lie all at the bottom, and are not to be seen; but in fair weather the fish swim and are visible: so if it be foul weather upon a soul, if it be dark and gloomy weather, the soul cannot read his graces; but now when God shines upon him, then he is enabled to read them, yea, though his graces lie at the bottom, as I may say, yet the poor soul is able to read them. And if it be so, it is no small thing; it is no small matter to read our graces, our other graces.

As it is that grace whereby you are enabled to read your other graces, so it is that whereby you joy in all good things. Grief and sorrow straiten the soul, straiten the heart; but joy and comfort dilate the soul, widen and open the heart: "I will run in the way of thy commandment, when thou shalt enlarge my heart," Psalm cxix. 32.

As by this grace you are enabled to joy in all good things; so it is also that grace whereby you are enabled to bear up against every evil thing, to bear up under all afflictions. Are you reproached? By this comfort you are enabled to bear up against reproaches; for saith the apostle Peter, "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you." Are you reproached? Comfort will turn that to your benefit and blessing. Are you persecuted? "Blessed are you when men shall revile and persecute you, rejoice," &c. Are you not only persecuted, but beaten too? Comfort will bear

up your hearts under all stripes and afflictions, for we find Paul and Silas sung in the stocks. Well but this is not all.

This is the grace that will strengthen and establish you in the good ways of God. Mark how they go together in 2 Thess. ii. 16, 17: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." Comfort and establishment go together; and if it be so, it is no small matter.

This is that grace that will give a beauty and lustre to your profession. The comforted christian is the truly beautiful christian. If a man have never so much beauty in his face, yet if his face be wrinkled with grief and blubbered with tears, the beauty of his face is not seen; but when joy and comfort comes, that wipes off all, and his beauty then is seen. So here, comfort doth not only take away reproach from your profession, but it gives a lustre, a beauty to your profession. The comforted christian, I say, is the truly beautiful christian; and if so, surely it is a great mercy to be truly comforted.

That is the first thing in general, that it is a great mercy to be truly comforted.

Secondly, As it is a great mercy to be truly comforted, so it is possible for God's own servants and dearest children to live a long time without any considerable comfort, any fundamental comfort; their hearts may faint. "My heart and my soul fainteth," saith the Psalmist; and you know how it was with Daniel, x. 17. You may see how he was bowed down, he complains there was no strength remained in him, until there came one and touched him, and set him upon his legs again. A good man may faint and want comfort, and all the former comforts that he hath had may be eclipsed. "Restore to me the joy of thy salvation," Psalm li. 12, saith David; his glory and comfort was eclipsed. Yea, possibly a gracious soul may live a long time without comfort. "How long wilt thou forget, yea, forget me, O Lord; what, for ever?" Psalm xiii. 1. I say a man may live a long time without any considerable comfort. There is a time when God will try his people, and see whether they will take comfort from his hand or from another hand; it may be it

may be so with you sometimes, God may try whether you will wait upon him, and believe in him, and rest upon him for comfort.

Thirdly, As a man may live long without comfort, so it is not in the power of any thing, on this side God and Christ, to give comfort to a poor drooping soul. This is the Lord's prerogative: "I am the Lord that comforteth." This is his name: "Father of mercies, and God of all comfort and consolation." And 2 Cor. vii. 6, "Nevertheless God that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us," &c. It is God's prerogative only to do it; comforting work is creation work; it is not in the power of the creature, but of the Creator. Isaiah lvii. 19: "I create the fruit of the lips, peace, peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord, and I will heal him." It is God's work to comfort, and not in the power of any other; man may be instrumental to comfort, but it is none but God alone that can do the work.

But some may object and say, Can none but God alone comfort?

No, none but God alone can rate off Satan. If a great dog or mastiff be worrying a child or a sheep, a stranger comes and strikes him and calls him off, but the dog takes no notice of him; but when the master comes he rates him off presently: none but the master can do it. So here it is none but God that can rate off Satan from worrying the poor drooping soul, when it is under temptation, none but God the master. It is not in the power of any creature, but in the power of God alone; it is in the power of none but the third person in the Trinity, the Spirit of God. What needed the third person in the Trinity to have come into the world, as he is now, if any other could comfort? As none can redeem but Christ, the second person of the Trinity, because the second person came from heaven on purpose to redeem; so none can comfort but God, and his Spirit, because the third person came from heaven to do it. There is none but God alone that can comfort a poor soul.

That is the third particular.

Fourthly, When God doth bestow comfort, he bestows it and gives it in a way of free grace, in a way of free love and grace. See but how they go together in the text, "Who

nath given us everlasting consolation through grace." I will give you one scripture more to prove it, and consider it well, Job xxxiii. ; you have there the draught of a man's conversion. First he goes on in his sin ; and all on a sudden God gives in a word to him, at verses 14, 15 : " For God speaketh once, yea twice, but man perceiveth it not : in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed ; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction." And then the soul is filled with horror of conscience, as in verse 19, " He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain." And when God hath done thus, then he justifies him, and gives him faith, and shews him true righteousness, as in verse 23, " If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness." This is justification, and when this is done, then the Lord comforts him, as in verse 25, " His flesh shall be fresher than a child's, he shall return to the days of his youth." You see God comforts him in a way of free love ; and in verse 26, " He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him, and he shall see his face with joy, for he will render unto man his righteousness." God comforts in a way of free love, he comforts how he pleaseth, and as far as he pleaseth ; but whensoever he comforts, it is still I say in a way of free love. You may see it in Isa. lxxv. 14 : it is said, " Behold my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but you shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit." And thus also saith the Lord in the former verse, " Behold my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry ; behold my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty ; behold my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed." God comforts whom he pleaseth and as far as he pleaseth, and it is all free, out of free love. John xiv. 20 : " At that day you shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." And at verse 16, " And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." This work of comforting is properly the work of the Holy Ghost ; and the Holy Ghost breathes as the wind, where it listeth ; and therefore I say, comforts whom and how he pleaseth, and all

in a way of free love and free grace. This is the fourth particular.

Fifthly, Wherein is the love, the free love of God manifested to us in the matter of our comforts? I answer in many things.

I will pitch but upon three only.

1. The greater he is that giveth, and the greater the thing is that is given, and the lesser or meaner the person is that the thing is given unto, the more free is the love of him that gives and bestows the thing. Now this comfort and consolation is a great thing, it is a very great matter, it is a birth of the Holy Ghost. Is that a small thing? It is part of the kingdom of God. Is that a small matter? It is both duty and reward. Is that small? It is that which exceeds all the joy of the world. "Lift up the light of thy countenance upon me: thou hast put more gladness into my heart, more than in the time that their oil and their wine increased," Ps. iv. 7. Ask a poor drooping soul and he will tell you that it is a great thing, for it comes from a great God. Isa. lvii. 15: "For thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I will dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Unto that soul that trembles, unto that soul will God bring comfort and will be nigh unto him. Now if a prince should rise from his throne to come and help up a poor fallen cripple, would it not be looked upon as an act of very great favour. Yet thus God does when he comes to comfort, the great "high and lofty One" comes down from his throne, as it were to lift up a poor drooping soul. Oh, what free grace is this! But,

2. The more God doth cross hands, (understand me) the more I say that God doth cross hands in the matter of our comforts, the more doth the free grace of God appear in our comforts; when Jacob blessed Joseph's two children, "he crossed his hands, and he laid his right hand upon the younger, and his left hand upon the elder; Not so, father," says Joseph; now what doth this shew but only the freeness of his love; and so if God shall cross hands in the matter of our comfort, what doth this argue but the freeness of his

love and grace; and God doth sometimes do thus when he comes to comfort, he doth cross hands. Sometimes two men have been in the same transgression, and the one hath been comforted and the other not; what shall we say of Peter and of Francis Spira. Spira having professed the truth, and being called to witness to it, did deny it; so did Peter, he denied Christ, yet Peter was comforted, but Spira never comforted, but lay despairing and roaring out to his death, "I am a reprobate, I am a reprobate, no hope for me, no hope for me;" Peter was comforted, Spira was never comforted. What do you think of David and Cain, Cain murders his brother Abel, a godly man; David murdered Uriah, a godly man too: Uriah had been with him in all his troubles, and was a very good man, but though David was an adulterer also, yet a messenger is sent to him that says, "Thy sins are forgiven thee:" but Cain was not comforted, but driven out from the presence of the Lord. So that I say there may be two in a transgression, and the one may be comforted and the other not. Look into the Scriptures and into your own experiences, and you will find great sinners comforted, and lesser sinners not comforted, and great sinners converted and comforted sooner than others. Zaccheus was a great sinner and yet was comforted; the jailor was a great sinner and yet comforted; and yet many that have walked very closely with God have not been comforted. Ps. lxxxviii. 15. Heman complains sadly in verse 14: "Lord, why castest thou off my soul, why hidest thou thy face from me: I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted;" and yet he walked close with God, as you may find in the former part of the Psalm. Yet we find sometimes, I say, the greatest sinners converted and soonest comforted. Now what is this but crossing of hands in the matter of our comforts, and this is only to shew forth the freeness of the grace of God; and the free grace and love of God is most abundantly, most eminently manifested to the soul by this crossing of hands.

3. The more unbelieving any man is that is comforted, the more doth the freeness of the grace of God appear. Dearly beloved brethren, it is with our consolation as it is with our justification and our sanctification; when God

comes to justify a man he finds him ungodly ; yet he justifies the ungodly, and not only the ungodly, but the unbelieving also : and therefore the Lord said, " Go and compel them to come in." They were unbelieving persons, yet God calls them. And so it is also in the matter of our sanctification ; when God comes to sanctify men, he finds them unwilling to be sanctified : but as God justifies them though unwilling because he doth it freely, so he sanctifies them too, though unwilling, because he sanctifies freely. And so it is also in the matter of our comforts. When God comes to comfort he finds the soul unwilling many times. " My soul refused to be comforted," saith the Psalmist, Psalm lxxvii. 2. And so again, " Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope," Psalm cxix. 49. I was unwilling, but thou causedst me to hope whether I would or no. When God comes to comfort, he doth it though men are unwilling to be comforted. It is very strange that it should be so, and yet such is the unbelief of men's hearts, that as before conversion they are unwilling to be turned, so after conversion they are unwilling to be comforted. Now this is that I say, that the more unwilling any man is to be comforted, yet if God doth comfort him, the more free doth the grace of God appear in it. God doth comfort though souls are unwilling. Oh, the freeness, the freeness of the grace of God in the matter of our comforts. Thus you see how and wherein the free grace of God appears and is manifested in our spiritual comforts and consolations. That is the fifth particular.

Sixthly, Why will God deal with us in a way of free grace in the matter of our comforts and consolations ; would it not be better in a way of settlement, in a constant way, would not that be best ? No, take notice of this, that there is no way to make a mercy sure like this. I know no mercy that is so sure as that which is wrought and given in a way of free grace and free love. They go together in the text : " Everlasting consolation through grace." The only way, I say, to make a thing sure, is to receive it in this way in which God gives it, that is in a way of free grace. Pray tell me, did not God choose David freely and his house. Yea, it was freely in opposition to the house of Saul, 2 Sam. vi. 21. Says David to Michal Saul's daughter, " It was before the Lord, which chose me

before thy father and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel," &c. God chose him freely also in opposition to his own brethren. And was not his house sure? The covenant was sure, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, "Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, for this is all my salvation and all my desire." God hath made me his chosen, and his mercies to me are sure. God will deal with us in a way of free grace that our mercies may be sure. "By grace ye are saved;" and if so, what a comfort is it that God will so order and dispose of it, that we may be sure of it and depend upon it; for God will have us depend upon him for our spiritual comforts: and what will make us more depend upon him, than to know that he gives all in a way of free grace? We must depend upon God both for our spiritual and our outward comforts; seeing what he doth he doth freely, we must freely depend upon him for comfort. But,

Seventhly, When may a man be said to be truly comforted in a way of free grace? I cannot deny but I am comforted, saith a poor soul, but I know not whether it be in a way of free grace and free love: now how may I know that I am comforted in a way of free grace?

I shall speak to this negatively and affirmatively.

1. Negatively. There is a comfort that is the daughter of time. A man or woman is sorrowful, but time wears it out, time comforts them. This comfort that springs from and ariseth out of time, is not true comfort, neither is that man truly comforted by free grace. But when the soul is truly comforted in a way of free grace, then he is comforted by the Holy Ghost; the Holy Ghost bearing witness that he is the child of God.

There is a comfort that ariseth from the satisfaction of a natural conscience. A man knows by nature that there is a God, and that this God is to be prayed unto, and therefore he prays accordingly; and when he hath done, his natural conscience is satisfied, and he is then comforted: but now if a man's comfort arise only from this, from the satisfaction of a natural conscience, that man is not truly comforted; for he that is truly comforted, is comforted by joy in believing: "In whom believing, ye rejoice," Rom. xv. 13.

There is a comfort that ariseth from a man's non-attendance to his own condition. Men may be comforted, why? because they never look into their condition, how it stands between God and their souls. There is a comfort arising not only from a man's conscience, but from the non-attendance to his own condition, and hereupon he is secure; but this is not the comfort that ariseth from free grace and free love.

There is a comfort that doth arise from the use of the creature. Men are troubled in their minds, and they run presently to the tavern, to their music or merry company to put it off, and so it may be are comforted; but if a man's comfort arise only from the creature, he is not truly comforted, not comforted with the comfort of free grace and love. He that is comforted in this way, it is but a diversion to him, and not true comfort. As straw when set on fire will make a flash and a flame, but black ashes remain behind; so when men are troubled, and they run to the tavern, or to music and merry company, all this is but a flash, black ashes remain behind. Provoked trouble will be angry trouble, and angry will be most troublesome; when men run to merriment to divert trouble, they provoke it.

There is a comfort that doth arise from the common work of the Holy Ghost: "Some who have tasted of the heavenly gift, and are made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and yet fall away," Heb. vi. 4. The false ground "received the word with joy." Now if a man's comfort ariseth from these common workings of the Holy Ghost, it is not true comfort; for he that is truly comforted, is comforted in a way of free love, his comfort is unspeakable. "Whom having not seen you love, in whom though now you see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8. Thus you see, negatively, when a man is not truly comforted in these five particulars.—A man is not truly comforted from time, nor from the satisfaction of a natural conscience, nor from a non-attendance to his condition, nor from the use of the creature, nor lastly from the common workings of the Holy Ghost. But,

2. Affirmatively. We have heard when a man may be said not to be comforted. Now when may a man be said to be comforted, truly comforted in a way of free grace? Be-

loved in the Lord, are you willing to have your comforts tried? False and counterfeit things do not love trial; now if you be willing to be tried, to have your comforts tried, it is a sign and a hope that your comforts may be true: but I shall not insist on this. There are two or three things I shall speak to here.

If you have been comforted by the word of promise set on upon your souls by God, then are you truly comforted in a way of love and free grace, for what is the promise but the word of grace. But some may say, I have had a promise, but I fear it may be from the devil, for the devil may bring a promise; did he not bring a promise unto Christ? Matt. iv. 6, saying, "He shall give his angels charge over thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up." This promise was brought to Christ by the devil, and it may be my promise may be handed to me by Satan, and set on upon my soul by him. But do but mark this, I will only say this one thing to thee, poor soul, to ease thee of this objection: If Satan bring a promise to you, it is to lead you into sin, to draw you into sin and to that which is evil; as this to Christ here, "He will give his angels charge concerning thee, cast thyself down." He brought a promise to do evil: "Cast thyself down." But now if God hand a promise to you, it is for your doing of good; therefore says Christ to Satan, "It is written:" I have a word and a promise too: "It is written thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." The devil brought this that he might do evil, and God gave Christ a word to keep him from evil. And so when you are brought into temptations, great temptations, if you have a word of promise brought home to your hearts to bear you up under temptation, it is not the devil that gives it in to you, that hands it to you. No, for the devil is no friend to faith, no friend to stay you up, for the tempter will not act against the temptation. Saith Luther, Though the devil be magnipotent, yet he is not omnipotent; though he be mighty, yet he is not almighty. And therefore I say, if you have a promise come to you to help you to do good, it is not of Satan but of God; for he is almighty, he is able to comfort. That is the first.

Would you know whether you be comforted in a way of free grace and love, you may know it by the ebbing

and flowing of your comforts, which will ebb and flow according to the cause. They say the marigold opens and shuts with the sun, when the sun shines it opens, when the sun withdraws it shuts, it opens and shuts according to the withdrawing and shining of the sun; and so if your comforts be true, the more the righteousness of Christ opens before you, the more the Sun of righteousness shines upon you, the more you will be comforted. If your comforts be true, the more the freeness of the love of God is opened to you, the more will the comfort of the soul be enlarged; if your comforts be true, the more God shines with his countenance, the more is the soul comforted. "Lord, (says David in Ps. lv. 6) lift up the light of thy countenance upon us, thou hast put more gladness in my heart than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." Now according to the opening and shutting of these things, so will your comforts be. How is it therefore with you; is there any ebbing and flowing? How is the righteousness of Christ; how is the light of God's countenance discovered to you; are they laid open to you? Then are you truly comforted in a way of free grace and love. That is the second.

If you be comforted in a way of free grace and love, then your comforts are true friends to holiness of life. That comfort that is wrought by the grace of God without you, is the greatest friend to the grace of God within you, and to holiness in your lives. False comfort is a friend to sin, a neighbour, a guard to sin; but no friend to true and gracious comfort; yea, those that have this false comfort can endure sins against conscience. But now where there is true comfort, and comfort from the grace of God, there conscience is as the apple of the eye, and the man cannot endure the least sin, he cannot bear the least mote of sin to lie upon his conscience. How is it therefore with you; is your comfort a friend to holiness of life; and can you say, The more comforted I am, the more holy I am? Then you are truly comforted.

But suppose I want comfort now, and that I am one of a drooping, trembling spirit and of an afflicted heart; what shall I do that I may be comforted and comforted in a way of free grace? I answer:

Go away and be sensible of your unbelief; for it is want

of believing that hinders our comfort, and when the Comforter comes, he will convince the world of sin and especially of unbelief. Would you then be comforted in a way of free love? Go then I say and be sensible of your unbelief, and be humbled for it.

Observe what those things are that hinder your spiritual comforts, and take heed of them. They are many. I will only name some of them. As,

Worldly fears and worldly delights; these are enemies to true comfort.

Sins against conscience: they that sin against knowledge, will hardly have peace of conscience; nay it is pity they should have peace, lest they be engaged and encouraged thereby to sin; those that sin against conscience will hardly have peace. Do you think to have the Spirit to be your friend whom you grieve so often? If then you would be truly comforted, you must have a great care of sinning against conscience and thereby grieving the Spirit, that "Spirit whereby you are sealed to the day of redemption," Ephes. iv. 30. Would you then be truly comforted? Observe I say these things that hinder your spiritual comfort; can you think that what you grieve most should comfort you most? Therefore as you expect true comfort, have a care of grieving the Spirit of God.

If at any time God make a tender of grace, or offer a word of comfort and peace to you; be sure you do not refuse it. We are apt to refuse to be comforted, but be sure you accept of it, especially in time of temptation.

Be sure you do not rest upon your own performances in reference to your comforts. Brethren and beloved, think on these things, and compare them with your own daily experiences. I say, if you would be truly comforted, do not rest on your own performances. As we are apt to rest upon our own righteousness in reference to our justification; so we are apt also to rest upon our own performances in reference to our comforts. Oh, take heed you do not go about to establish your own comforts upon the bottom of your own performances, for if you do, you will not submit to the consolations of God.

If you would be comforted in a way of free grace and love, then study much the freeness of the grace of God.

What is the reason people are no more comforted? It is because they see no more of the grace of God, the free grace of God. The more you look into the riches and freeness of God's grace, the more you will be comforted.

If you want comfort at any time, walk graciously in the want of it. When you want comfort go to God and say: Lord, although I cannot see thee, yet will I serve thee; and although I cannot enjoy thee, yet I will obey thee; and although I cannot see thy face, yet I will follow after thee, if by any means I may obtain thee. Walk graciously in the want of your comforts.

Set yourself to rejoice in him that gives you comfort, 'Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice,' saith the apostle, Phil. iv. 4. He doth not only say, Humble yourself for sin; which is a duty and a great duty; but he saith "Rejoice, and again I say, rejoice in the Lord." Rejoice in the Lord who gives you comfort freely. As much as you have been humbled for sin formerly, so much should you now rejoice that you have been comforted, and freely comforted by the grace of God; rejoice so much in the Lord of your comforts.

To name them only: If you would be comforted in a way of free grace and love, then be thankful for your comfort. He that is thankful for a little, shall have much; be thankful therefore to God for your comfort.

Would you be comforted in a way of free grace and love; then go to God for that comfort. Friends and beloved; God is willing, most willing to comfort; and, what will you not go to him? God is willing to make good his name and his title; now this is one of his titles, I am the Lord that comforteth. He is willing to do what Christ was sent to do; "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me to comfort all that mourn," Isa. lxi. 2. Is not God willing to do it? He hath sent the Comforter also to comfort you, yea he hath given his ministers charge to comfort you: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," Isa. xl. 1; and are not you willing now to receive what God hath promised? "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you," John xiv. 15. You will be troubled and reason with yourselves, yet I will not leave you comfortless. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and ye shall be comforted,"

Isa. lxvi. 13. Therefore now, oh, poor drooping soul, go to God, for he is willing to comfort thee, if thou be but willing to go to him. Only in your going to God observe these two or three directions.

1. When you go to God for comfort, go to the office which he hath set up for comfort, the office of the Holy Ghost.

2. When you go to God, shut your eyes, and cast yourself at an adventure upon the free grace of God.

3. In going to God for comfort you must stay God's leisure; some come and ask God, and because they do not receive an answer presently, they are gone; but be sure you do willingly stay God's leisure. Thus I say, would you have comfort? You must observe these things, to go to God's office, to shut your eyes, and to cast yourselves at adventure upon the free grace of God, and then you must stay God's leisure; thus doing you shall be truly comforted; and when you have obtained this comfort and are thus truly comforted, then take these few rules with you, and so I conclude.

1. Take as much pains to keep your comfort as ever you did to get it.

2. Labour more and more to increase it, for if it do not increase it will certainly decrease.

3. Be comfortable to, and comforting of others; for how do you know but that God hath comforted you, to this very end, that you might comfort others; Paul was so, and be sure to shew comfort for comfort's sake.

Brethren and beloved in the Lord, do not receive this grace in vain; but go, all you that have this comfort, and magnify the riches of God's grace, the freeness of the grace of God that hath comforted you, and say, What, such a one as I comforted! Others of thy children, Lord, have walked closely with thee, but I have walked loosely; and shall I be comforted and not they? Oh, what free grace is this! I have been a great sinner, Lord, and what, am I comforted? Oh, what free grace is this! There are some that have walked in the light, and they are now in darkness; but I have walked in the dark, and yet am now in the light; oh, what free grace is this! Go away, therefore, and magnify the riches of God's grace in the matter of your comforts.

Thus you have heard how the freeness of the grace of God

is written upon all your comforts, your comforts and consolations are all deeply enamelled with the free grace of God; and that much of his free love is laid out in your comforts and consolations. And thus I conclude with the words of my text: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace; comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work."

SERMON III.

"For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."—EPH. II. 8.

IN the former exercise I have been shewing you the freeness of the love and grace of God in the matter of our comforts and divine consolations. I shall now, in the third place, shew you the freeness of the grace of God in reference to our salvation and eternal glory, and therefore follow these words which the apostle speaks at the latter end of verse 5, "By grace are ye saved;" and so you see the same in verse 8, "For by grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

But why should he say the same words again in so short a compass? Why, it was to shew, not only that his heart was full of the free grace and love of God, but to shew, also, that he thought he could never speak enough of it, and therefore he repeats it, "By grace ye are saved:" "For by grace are ye saved." That is to say, from first to last you are saved by the free grace and love of God.

From whence, then, I take up this doctrine:

That there is much of the free love and grace of God laid out in the matter of our salvation and eternal glory.

For the clearing of this point, I shall endeavour to shew you,

First, That it is a matter of infinite happiness and of great concernment to go to heaven and to be saved for ever.

Secondly, To shew you how this mercy is obtained, this

mercy of salvation and eternal glory; I shall shew it is of free grace and free love.

Thirdly, I shall answer two objections.

Fourthly, I shall shew you wherein the free grace and love of God appears in the matter of our salvation.

Fifthly, Shew you why God chooseth to save the children of men in a way of free love and grace.

First, I shall speak a little by way of introduction: it is a great matter and of infinite concernment to be saved and to go to heaven for ever. For,

1. You are thereby saved from wrath to come. You count it here a great matter to be saved from the wrath of man, but it is a far greater mercy to be delivered from the wrath of devils, to be delivered from their fury and malice, and not to lie at their mercy to all eternity. Yea,

2. You shall be delivered from all sorrow, both inward and outward; and if so, how blessed and happy are you, for you shall die in the Lord: "And blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours," &c. Rev. xiv. 13. It is a mercy to have meat and drink, and a bed to lie on, but it is a greater mercy not to need them: in heaven you shall be freed from these needs and necessities. You walk here, but it is with a burden; you hear now, but it is with a burden; you repent now, but it is with a burden: but in heaven you shall be freed, not only from the guilt of the neglect of duty, but from the burden of duty also; heaven knows of no duty that hath a burden with it. Thus you shall be freed. Again,

3. You shall not only be freed from these troubles, but you shall also be brought into a possession, into "an inheritance that is incorruptible, that fadeth not away;" where you shall enjoy the company of saints and angels, and that without suspicion or jealousy one of another. Here you have the company of saints, but either you suspect them or they you, either they are jealous of you or you of them; but heaven knows no suspicions, no jealousies; saints live there without suspicions.

4. If you go to heaven and be saved, you shall then be filled with glory. If you have but a little taste of glory here, you are ready to break under it, under a little glory; but the time will come when you shall be filled with glory, and your

hearts shall bear up under it ; your bodies shall be changed ; “ your vile bodies shall be changed, and made like unto Christ’s glorious body ; ” you shall be filled with glory, soul and body both. Yea,

5. If you be saved, your graces shall be always in act, always in exercise ; your understandings shall be fully enlightened, your difficulties shall be removed, and you shall see them all little and easy upon you, and your wills, hearts and affections shall be drawn out to God with infinite satisfaction and infinite delight : “ I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness, ” Psalm xvii. 15. All delight ariseth from enjoying things suitable : now what is more suitable for a rational creature than to enjoy his ends. When a husband hath been at sea from his wife half a year or a year, what joy it is to her to see him come home again. So for a poor soul to see Christ, what joy is it, after he hath withdrawn himself a great while ? Here we have communion with Christ but in part, and interrupted ; but then you shall be ever, for ever with the Lord, and have communion with him without interruption. Now we see joy and glory but darkly ; and if there be so much sweetness to see Christ in a glass, oh, then, what sweetness will it be to see him face to face, and enjoy him for ever. And, to say no more,

6. If you be saved you shall have the knowledge of the continuance of this condition. Though a man’s condition be never so happy in itself, yet if he think it will not continue, that man is unhappy in the midst of his happiness. This is the unhappiness of hell, men shall know and be assured that they shall never be delivered out of it, never, never, never : and this is the happiness of heaven, that men shall always rejoice, and shall be assured that they shall so continue to do ever, ever, ever.

Secondly, But in what way does a man come to this attainment ; how and in what way is a man saved ? Why in a way of free love and grace, for if God bestow any thing in a way of gift, it is free, for what is more free than gift. Now do but consider what these things are which are called in Scripture, salvation ; and you may observe that they all come in a way of gift.

Sometimes salvation is put for the Author of salvation, Jesus Christ : “ Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in

peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation," Luke ii. 29, 30. That is, Christ the Author of our salvation. And so saith Christ to Zaccheus, "This day is salvation come to thy house;" that is, Christ. Now this salvation is obtained in a way of gift. Saith Christ to the woman of Samaria, "If thou hadst known the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink," &c., John iv. 10. He calls himself the gift of God.

Sometimes salvation is put for the means of salvation, for the gospel: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation," Heb. ii. 3; that is, the means of salvation, the gospel. This salvation is also called the gift of God: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xiii. 11.

Sometimes salvation is put for eternal glory. "Who would have all men to be saved, both Jew and gentile." And this salvation is the gift of God too. Rom. vi. 23, "But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," Now salvation, as to the Author of it, as to the means of it, and as to the salvation itself; it is all of free grace, all given in a way of free love and grace; and therefore it must needs be that much of the free grace and love of God is laid out in our salvation.

Thirdly. But you will say, If it be so, that by free grace we are saved, then what need we use the means of salvation; you say we are saved by grace, by free grace, wherefore then need we endeavour?

Yes, we are to endeavour: do you not use your endeavour to get your daily bread? and yet that is the gift of God. Your livelihood is the gift of God, for you say, "Give us this day our daily bread." It is then the gift of God, and yet we are to use the means. And so we are to do what we can, although not what we should in the matter of our salvation; because by our endeavour and using the means we shew our dependence upon God, and our obedience to him, because he hath commanded it. For,

Again, Although, I say with the apostle, "By grace ye are saved, and not of works;" yet works are necessary, good works are necessary in regard of our thankfulness to God; and necessary, as they are an evidence of our salvation, saith the apostle; although I say, by grace ye are saved, yet you

are to be in the performance of good works. Eph. ii. 10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works;" the same word, good works. That is the third general. But,

Fourthly, Wherein doth the freeness of the grace of God appear in the matter of our salvation?

There is a great deal of free grace in this, that God should ordain us to eternal life and salvation. 2 Tim. i. 9, "Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Again,

To name them. Is it not great grace, mercy and favour, that God should send his own Son from heaven to die for us and to purchase our salvation, yet so he did. "Ye are bought with a price." What price? "The blood of Jesus Christ, who gave himself a ransom for you," 1 Tim. ii. 6.

Is it not a great mercy, a very great favour, that we that had broken the first covenant, and had not performed the conditions of it, that we should be set up again as I may say; that God should set us up again, under another covenant, that runs without any condition; and yet so he did, Heb. viii. 10. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law into their mind and write them in their heart, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."

Yet further, it is in the matter of our salvation, as it is in the matter of our consolation and comfort; and as I said of that, so I say also of this: That the greater, and the more glorious any mercy is, and the more worthy and great the person is that giveth it, and the more unworthy the person is that receives it, the more doth the grace of him appear who giveth it; now what greater mercy, what more glorious mercy, than heaven and salvation? It is called the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven; it is called the kingdom of glory, and eternal glory; it is called joy, enter into the joy of our Lord: and great is the joy of our Lord; that joy which was set before Christ, that is the joy of the saints in heaven, "It is such as eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," 1 Cor. ii.

9. Paul was wrapt up to heaven, but when he came down he was not able to declare the glory thereof; those that are in a war, are better able to declare the passages of it than those that write it, but yet they are not able to declare it all. So the apostle could speak something of this great and infinite glory, but was not able to declare it all. There was one, who was asked by his prince, What God was? he desired first, two days to answer, when they were past he required four days, and after four days, he asked eight days to answer; so if you should ask me what glory that is, which is in my text, I must take two days, and then four days, and then eight days to answer, and yet then I should not be able to declare, nor be able to express, this glory which is wrapt up in this one word, salvation.

But it may be this blessed estate is bestowed only upon those that are worthy? No, not so, this is most commonly bestowed upon those that are most unworthy: what is more unworthy than a dog? Why, was not Stephen looked upon as a dog? Yea, were not the Gentiles looked upon as dogs? Saith Christ; "Why cast ye the children's bread to dogs?" Now though salvation was of the Jews, for Christ came of the Jews, yet salvation is now for the Gentiles; and among the Gentiles who was more unworthy than a blasphemer, and a persecutor of the saints and servants of God, and such a one was Paul, and yet he was saved, though he was not only undeserving of it, but deserving quite the contrary; now who more undeserving than those that deserve the contrary? yet by grace even they are saved, therefore, saith the Psalmist, Ps. viii. 3. "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him," &c. So I say, that the more glorious any mercy is, the more unworthy the receiver is, and the greater he is that gives, the more free is the thing given, and thus it is with our salvation. Salvation is a great, and glorious mercy, and this salvation is given, and that is great and glorious too, and it is given unto man who is most unworthy, and it is given by God who is most infinite and excellent above us. But again.

The more God doth cross hands in the matter of our salvation, the more free is his grace, in his bestowing of it upon

us: for as I shewed you before, that God doth cross hands in the matter of our comforts, so I say now, that God doth cross hands in the matter of our salvation also; for he doth often save them that are most unlikely to be saved, as Paul, and Matthew the publican, and who more unlikely than Zaccheus or the thief on the cross, or the jailor? yet were these saved, though very unlikely to be saved. And so on the contrary, who more likely to be saved, than the young man in the gospel, that came to Christ, yet you know he was rejected: the young man he comes unto Christ, and says, Matt. xix. 16. "Good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? Says Christ, Keep the commandments; All these things have I kept, saith he, from my youth upward; then saith Christ, Go, sell all that thou hast and then thou shall have treasures in heaven, and it is said he went away sorrowful." Mark now, was not this a forward young man, a very forward man, "all these, saith he, have I kept from my youth upward," and Christ doth not contradict him, and yet notwithstanding, this man could not do what Christ commanded him, he could not sell all he had; it was too hard for him to learn that lesson which Christ set him, for it is said that he went away sorrowful; and therefore saith Christ, "A rich man shall hardly enter in the kingdom of heaven:" and what is this but only to shew that God doth often cross hands in the matter of our salvation, to shew that "the first shall be last, and the last first," for God loves to cross hands in the matter of our salvation; and therefore we find in Scripture that there are some that come to Christ and say as the scribe in Matt. viii. 19: "Master, I will follow thee wheresoever thou goest," and Christ seems to put him off, and yet in the next verse almost he puts one forward, and he excuses himself and says, "Suffer me to bury my father," but Christ saith, "Follow me," &c. Thus you see what crossing of hands there is in the matter of our salvation, to shew "the first shall be last, I say, and the last first." Friends, stay but a little while, until the day of judgment, and then you will see what crossing of hands there will be; then you shall see some men at the right hand of Christ, whom you would have thought would never have been saved, and then also you shall see some on the left hand of Christ, whom you would have thought

would never have been there. God, I say, will cross hands in the matter of our salvation, and the more he doth so, the more doth the freeness of his grace appear to them that are saved. Again,

Yet one thing more, the more our salvation is laid upon the arch or pillar of grace and love, the more free is the grace of God, and the more free it doth appear in the bestowing of it. Now what are the arches and pillars of free grace and love, upon which our salvation under Christ is laid. I shall name some of them.

The absoluteness of the covenant. That God justifies the ungodly. Thus our righteousness is not in us but in Christ. That the guilt of our sins by which we lay liable to condemnation is removed. That a little sincerity covers a great deal of infirmity. That what God calls our's is not indeed our's, but God's, as our graces, our duties, which are not indeed our's but God's. That God will in due time glorify us and honour us. Sin doth provoke God and causeth him to be angry with us, but grace doth provoke him to love us; and therefore the pillars of our salvation are laid under Christ upon grace, upon free grace and love: and thereby the freeness of the grace of God doth the more appear in the matter of our salvation. And that is the fourth general. But then,

Fifthly, Salvation is a work of grace; and seeing we are saved by grace alone, why then doth God choose to save men in this way of free grace? I answer,

It is because this is the most honourable way unto God. The papists are not ashamed to say that it is most honour to a man to be saved by works, but I am sure it is more honour and more honourable unto God to save by his free grace.

If there was somewhat of the good pleasure of God in the world's condemnation, all the reason in the world then that there should be free grace in the way of salvation. Pray how came Adam to stand for the whole world? He was not chosen by us, why it was the good pleasure of God that he should stand for the whole world, and that he sinning, we should be all guilty of sin by, and through him: so I say, if there was, as I may speak with reverence, somewhat of the good pleasure of God in the old world's condemnation, why then should there not be free grace in the soul's salvation, Rom. v. 15. "But not as the offence, so also is the free gift,

for if through the offence of one, many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift of grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

God would have heaven and salvation to be of one piece; he would have the work of heaven to be the same; now there were many angels that fell, and many thousands that stood, why how came they to stand that did stand, more than the others that fell? it was only by free grace, they were elect angels. Now men and angels in heaven are of the same choir and sing the same song; and therefore those men that are saved, oh, who are they? why they are the elect, and they have great cause to glorify the grace, the free grace of God.

God saves men in a way of free love and grace, because none shall miss of salvation. As God will punish and condemn all the proud, all the wicked, that none shall escape; so he will also save all that he hath a mind to save, by free grace because they shall not miss of salvation.

God will save men in such a way as whereby he may be glorified to all eternity, and therefore he saves them in a way of free grace and love; for what have we to praise God for in heaven, but only for free grace, free grace, to glorify his name for that; therefore I say, God will save men in this way of free love and grace, that he may be thereby glorified hereafter to all eternity, and thus I have done with the doctrine; now go along with me a little by way of application.

If we be saved by free grace, if free grace and love be the foundation of our salvation, why should we not then stand clear from all our own works, as to the meritorious ends of them; for grace and works are opposed, and therefore faith as a work can neither justify nor save. I confess the apostle saith, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," but what follows, "for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure," Phil. ii. 12, 13.

If we be saved by grace, why should we not be tender of the grace of God, of the name of God, of the free grace of God, and of the great name of God. Are you saved by grace and will you turn grace into wantonness? Oh, my friends, I say, if you be saved by grace and by grace alone, how

tender should you be of the name of God and of the free grace of God.

If we be saved by grace, then we may here see the reason why many do take so much pains as they think for heaven, and yet fall short of it and go to hell; why it is because salvation lies under the conduct of free grace. Some men abstain from sin that they may not be damned, others perform holy duties, read and hear, &c., that they may go to heaven, yea "many strive and shall not enter," because salvation is of free grace.

If by grace ye are saved, and that there is much of the free grace of God in our salvation, why then should you doubt of it? I confess it is a hard thing to have assurance of your salvation, and if you have it, it is free grace to you more than to another, and free grace is the founder of it, if you have it. But yet, O soul, if by grace we are saved let us not then doubt of it, for it is most sure; if you are saved by grace, I say, why doubt ye then, oh, ye of little faith. O christians, comfort yourselves with these words, "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," Luke xii. 32. It is his good will and pleasure, it is in a way of free grace and love.

But you may say though it be in a way of free grace and love, yet it may not be for me, it may none of it be mine, saith the soul.

Nay, say not so, but mark what an inference the Psalmist makes and draws up from this general. Psalm cxxx. 4, 5: "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope." And so in Psa. ciii. speaking at large of the grace, mercy and goodness of God, in the 8th verse he saith: "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy;" but what is the conclusion: "Bless the Lord all ye his hosts, bless the Lord all his works, bless the Lord O my soul." The very last words are, "bless the Lord O my soul;" from the consideration of the freeness of the grace of God in general he draws up this conclusion, "bless the Lord O my soul."

But you may say: Though God will save by grace, yet surely all shall not be saved by grace. Shall all men be saved; is God so free?

No, all men shall not be saved, for saith the apostle, Gal. v. 15: "We through the spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith; for in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but the new creature." But shall not all be saved? No, saith the same apostle, Eph. v. 6: "Let no man deceive you, for no whoremonger, nor unclean person, &c., hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God." There is no place for unclean things in heaven. You know what the apostle saith to the Galatians, "The inheritance is not to the bondwoman nor to her children." So that I say that God doth not save all, but those he doth save are saved by free grace.

But you would know who those are that are saved, or that shall be saved for ever; why, thus briefly only to name things:

Look who those are that are justified, they shall be certainly saved.

Those that are willing to part with all for Christ and for the service of Christ, they shall certainly be saved. "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life." Matt. xix. 29.

They that stand at Christ's right hand here, they shall be sure to stand at Christ's right hand at the day of judgment; and so be saved. "Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of his Spirit; he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing," 2 Cor. v. 5; it is the very same word which is used for "work out your own salvation," &c. So that there is a working up of the soul unto eternal glory; and if Christ hath wrought you unto the self-same thing whilst you live here, then you are at his right hand now: and then you may be sure to stand at his right hand at the day of judgment, and so shall be sure to be saved for ever to all eternity.

Those that are tender to Christ's little ones, that are tender to those that are despised in this world, and ready to help and assist them according to their wants, they shall surely be saved for ever. "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I

was a stranger, and ye took me in; I was naked, and ye clothed me; sick, and ye visited me; in prison, and ye came unto me. And the righteous answer, Lord, when did we see thee sick, or naked, or hungry, and fed thee, and clothed thee?" why saith he, "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," Matt. xxv. 35. So I say, look who these are that are tender of Christ's little ones and are ready to help them, and to relieve them according to their wants and necessities; those are they that shall be saved to all eternity.

Those that "strive together for the faith in times of affliction," those are they that shall be saved for ever. "That ye stand fast in one Spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel," Phil. i. 27. So I say, look who those are, that in the time of persecution strive for the faith, they shall surely be saved and that to all eternity. Yet one thing more.

Those that come to Christ in time of temptation, they shall be saved freely to all eternity. For saith our Saviour Christ, John vi. 39: "And this is my Father's will that hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day;" in verse 37, says Christ, "him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out," and I will give you the reason, saith he, "For it is the will of my Father that I should lose none which he hath given unto me, but that they should rise at the last day." How is it therefore with you, holy and beloved brethren in the Lord? Do you come to Christ in your temptations? Do you strive together in love for the faith in time of persecution? Are you tempted; are you brought low? Remember this, that Christ is able to raise you up and to save you to all eternity; and therefore, O soul, doubt not of your salvation.

But some may say, I am guilty of this doubting, what shall I do that I may not doubt of my salvation?

This is too large a subject to speak to now, I shall only say this to it. Let me desire you to study much the freeness of the grace of God in general; and consider also much and frequently, the particular instances of grace and mercy that God hath shewn to others, and you will find it is all of free grace; yea and this scripture shews you that all is of free

grace ; and therefore though it be a hard thing for us to get assurance of our salvation ; yet the particular instances and examples of the mercies that God hath bestowed upon others, should much encourage us and bear us up, and should stir us up to get assurance. Grace and mercy being shewn to others doth not only shew that it may be had, but that mercy hath been had. When you see the ice trodden then you say you will venture. So you say, such a one was unworthy, such a one profane, and yet he hath obtained mercy and why may not I ? Therefore if you would have assurance of your salvation, think much of the freeness of the grace of God ; and withal consider the particular instances and examples of others, that have obtained this mercy and that in a way of free grace and love too.

And lastly to conclude, Is it so, that God saves the soul freely, and that our salvation is only by the free grace and love of God ? Why then should we not come with boldness for salvation since it is so free ; oh, let none be discouraged, but let it stir us up to come with boldness and to plead for it, if it be free. Is salvation free and will not poor sinners come to receive it ? Come, oh, come freely for salvation, Christ Jesus is willing to make good his own name, and this is his name, he is called " Jesus, and he shall save his people." This is the will also of my Father, that you should come unto me, John vi. Christ Jesus hath now salvation in his hands, and will you not come and ask for it ? But methinks I see salvation in your faces ; methinks I hear a voice among you saying, " What shall we do to be saved ? "

In answer to which thus : " Believe in the Lord Jesus ; and venture your salvation upon him. "

And then if you will be saved you must become as little children ; for saith our Saviour, " unless you become as little children, you cannot be saved. " Matt. xviii. 3. " You cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. " As little children, how ? Why not seeking great things ; little children do not seek great things, you must become as little children, low and humble, not seeking great things, for great things become not little children. You must be willing to part with all at Christ's command and for his service ; and for want of this the young man went away without eternal life : " Go and sell all that thou hast and follow me, and he could not do it ; " and he

lost heaven by it; he would keep earth and he lost heaven by it. But once more,

Be not only willing to part with all for Christ's sake, and at his command; but go and cast yourself at adventure upon his free grace and love, and then go and work, and perform duties and pray and use endeavour; work as if there were no grace to be saved by, and bear thyself still upon free grace, and build upon the grace of God, as though there were no works. Thus do and you shall be saved to all eternity, for ever and for ever.

SERMON IV.

"But so did not I, because of the fear of God."—NEH. v. 15.

In this chapter, there are three things most considerable.

First, The voice or cry, at the beginning of the chapter; "And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives, against their brethren the Jews." And then,

Secondly, you have made known to you, what Nehemiah did in this case, in verse 6, 7, "And I was very angry when I heard their cry, and these words, then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers," &c.

Thirdly, You hear more of Nehemiah's acting at verses 14, 15, "Moreover from that time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor: for the former governors that had been before me, were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver, yea even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because I feared God, because of the fear of God."

From hence then observe this truth or doctrine.

That those that truly fear God will not do as others do.

The true fear of God will keep men from doing those things that other men will do; yea, though an action be to a man's advantage, yet they that fear God will not do it, if

it be evil; and so it was with Nehemiah. "But so did not I, because of the fear of God." For the opening of this we shall,

First, Inquire what it is to fear God; and we shall,

Secondly, Shew you that a man that truly fears God, will do as Nehemiah did, neither can he do as others do.

Thirdly, We shall shew you, what there is in this fear of God, that doth lay such a balance upon men's hearts, that they cannot do as others do.

Fourthly, We shall answer this question, whether a man that fears God, may not sometimes do as others do.

Fifthly, I shall shew you the issue and consequence of this truth.

And then I shall make some application.

First, If you ask what this fear of God is, I answer in the general. That it is a passion of the soul whereby a man doth flee from imminent evil. But now further, if you ask me, What the fear God is, I say that it is twofold:

A servile fear, and a filial fear.

A servile fear, whereby a man fears God upon the account of hell or judgment, or because of the wrath of God.

But now a fear of God, not only because of his judgments, but because of displeasing him, because of his love, because we would not offend; this is a filial fear, to fear him because we would not do contrary to his commands; and thus did Abraham, when he would have offered up his son Isaac: "For saith God, (Gen. xxii. 12.) "By this I know thou fearest God," because he obeyed his command, and was afraid to do contrary.

This fear of God, this filial fear, is not only because of his love, but of his love in conjunction with his greatness also: the greater a man is, the more we fear him, and the nearer he is in relation to us, the more we reverence him. Yet further, as the love of God in conjunction with his greatness, calls for our fear; so also,

The word and works of God call for our fear; for the word of the Lord is mighty, and his works are wonderful; for it is said of God, "that he is fearful in praises, working wonders." Thus if you ask me what this filial fear is, I say it is a fear whereby we fear him, because of his love, because of his

greatness, and because of his word, and works. That is the first.

Secondly, A man that truly fears God, cannot do as others can do; for in the text we find that Nehemiah had an opportunity in his hand, to *make* himself, to *raise* himself, to make himself rich, as to outward things: but you see what he saith, "But so did not I, as others did because I feared God;" where the true fear of God is planted in a man's heart, he cannot, he will not do, as other men can and will do: I shall clear this to you by instancing in some particulars.

He that fears God, cannot do as others do in the matter of his choice; you know how it was with the damsel, the daughter of Herodias, Matt. xiv. 7, 8, when she had danced before Herod, he was so delighted with her, that he gave her this privilege, to choose what she would to the half of his kingdom, and she asked the head of John the Baptist. She was bad, and her choice was bad; not having the fear of God in her heart. But when Esther had her choice, she chose the contrary, for she chose the freedom of John the Baptist, in the freedom of the Jews: she acted not as the other did, because of the fear of God; they that fear the Lord cannot do as others do. I may instance in Moses also, he would not do as others; for saith he "I will choose rather to suffer afflictions with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," Heb. xi. 25. And why did he thus? but only because of the fear of God.

As they that fear God, will not do as others do in the matter of their choice; so neither will they do as others do in the matter of worship; for what saith Joshua, "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord;" Josh. xxiv. 15. "Do you what you please. Therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth, and put away the God's which your fathers served, or the gods of Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." As for me I will worship God, worship you whom you will; thus you see what they will do that fear the Lord.

Will you instance in the matter of your callings, for a man really is what he is in his calling, in his trade; or will you instance in the divine calling, you know what the apostle Paul saith; some, saith he, "preach Christ out of envy, and some out of good will," some to get a livelihood by it, to make a

trade of it, to get riches, and honours, and estates; but so did not I, because of the fear of God; no great advantages will make a man that fears God, to do as others do; he saith always, others do so and so, but so will not I, because I fear the Lord.

A man that fears God cannot do as others can do, in the matter wherein he is intrusted. You know how it was with the spies, Caleb brought a good report of the land of Canaan, because he feared God; but so did not the others.

They that fear the Lord cannot do as others do, in the matter of afflictions. A man that fears the Lord, can love the Lord in adversity, and fear him in prosperity. It is said of king Ahaz, that he sinned more and more, because of his afflictions: but Jehoshaphat did not so, when he was under great afflictions and troubles, for he sought to the Lord, and laboured after faith and strength from him, that so he might be established: but so doth not the wicked man, because he feareth not God.

As there is a great difference between a good man, and a wicked man, or between one that fears the Lord, and one that doth not in the matter of afflictions: so there is a difference also in the matter of their refreshment, in their eating, and drinking and recreation. Job i. 5. "And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them." Job sanctified them, and so cannot a wicked man do; but a man that fears the Lord can do this. And,

A man that truly fears the Lord cannot do as others do, in the matter of right and propriety: they that fear not God will take advantage upon others, in the matter of their right and propriety. You may see what Abraham did; Lot would not let Abraham have his right, though it was his right, yet Abraham because he feared God, and for peace sake, gives up his right; but those that fear not the Lord cannot do so. Thus you see, that those that truly fear God cannot, will not do as others do, in the matter of his choice, of his worship, of his calling, of his afflictions, of his refreshments, or of his right and propriety. And that is the second general. But.

Thirdly, What is there in this fear of God, that should balance the soul, and cause it not to do as others do? Why,

By the fear of God a man is enabled to depart from evil, as

the Psalmist saith. There are two seeds in the world, the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent: now these two seeds rule in the whole world; in some the seed of the woman rules, and in some the seed of the serpent: now they that are of the seed of the woman can fear the Lord, but they that are of the seed of the serpent cannot fear the Lord; and therefore no wonder that they that fear the Lord cannot, will not do as others do; why, it is because they are of another seed, they are of the seed of the woman.

As they that fear the Lord are of another seed, so they are also of another principle, and therefore they cannot do as others do. Principles are the springs of all actions, and every man acts according to his principle, according to the principle that is in him. Now he that fears the Lord differs from another man in his principles, and so he doth also in his actions and in his ends.

Look into his ends, and you shall see how they differ from other men's. Ends are the seeds of actions; and if so, a man that fears the Lord, his ends differ from other men's, and then no wonder that he cannot, will not do as others do. Again,

As he differs in his ends, so also in his conscience; every man is according as his conscience is. Take a man that fears the Lord, and he is tender of his conscience; but others that have their consciences burnt and seared are not so: and if so, then no wonder that he that fears the Lord cannot, will not do as others do.

As he that fears the Lord differs in the matter of his conscience, so he differs also in the matter of his restraints. A wicked man abstains it may be from one evil to commit another; but he that fears the Lord abstains from all evil because of the fear of God, which the other doth not. A wicked man is bad in good company, and a good man is good in bad company, yea he is the same in all company; therefore he that fears the Lord cannot, will not do as others do. But,

Fourthly, Is it possible for a man that fears the Lord to do sometimes as others do?

Yes, he may, for the apostle speaks plainly concerning the same, Rom. xii. 1. Mark what he saith: "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye be not conformable

to this present world," &c. But now observe this, that it is one thing what a man doth in a sudden passion, and another thing what he doth in his serious consideration. For take a man that fears the Lord, and in his sudden passion he shall deny Christ as well as another; but in the way of serious consideration he shall never do it. And further take notice, that it is one thing what a man doth in a particular action, and another thing what he doth in his common practice; for you may find in Scripture, that God's people have sometimes run away from God as to a particular action, but yet in their constant course they feared the Lord. And therefore those that fear the Lord do not do as others do, because if they turn aside, they repent of their so doing and turn to God again. So I say there is still a difference between them that fear the Lord and those that do not. But,

Fifthly, Suppose a man do truly fear the Lord, what is the issue and consequence thereof? Why the issue will be this; if you fear the Lord, God will deal well with you, he will deal well with you in a special manner; he will make a difference between you and another in his dispensations. Ps. i.: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night; he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in his season, his leaf also shall not wither, but whatsoever he doth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like unto the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish." Thus you see how God's dispensations shall be to them that fear him; it shall go well with them, but not so to the wicked. It is said that "Those that feared the Lord spake often one to another." And it is said in Isa. viii. 11, 12, "For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me, not to walk in the way of this people," &c. Ps. cxii. 6, 7, 8, you may find there that there will be a great difference one day, between them that fear the Lord and they that do not: "Surely he shall not be moved for ever, the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not be afraid of

evil tidings, his heart is fixed trusting in the Lord: his heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies. He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor, his righteousness endureth for ever, his horn shall be exalted with honour. The wicked shall see it and be grieved, he shall gnash his teeth and melt away, the desire of the wicked shall perish. Yea God will do great things for them that fear him; he will put his law into their hearts, that thereby they may keep his commandments." He will do greatly for them, for his eye shall be upon them. The eye of the Lord is upon the righteous, and his ear is open to their cry. He is ready to answer those that fear him upon all accounts. Read what the Psalmist saith, Psalm xxxi. 19, "Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, that thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men."

Yea further, if you truly fear the Lord, the eye of God shall be upon you for good: "Unto him will I look that trembleth," unto him will I look that feareth, saith the Lord.

Again, if you truly fear the Lord, the Lord will delight in you.

Yea, God will be a God unto you, God will be a strong tower to you, and he will sanctify all unto you. And to say no more, they that fear the Lord shall want no good thing. Oh what a blessed thing is it then to fear the Lord, for from him God will withhold no good thing. And thus you see the issue of this fearing of God. Consider it, consider I say the consequence and issue of it, and let it be so many motives to stir you up more and more to fear the Lord.

So much shall serve for the doctrinal part, now then by way of application.

Here we may see what a sad excuse that will be which many make, that say they do but as others do; but alas, this is an excuse fit for the lips of those only who fear not God at all. But,

If this doctrine be true, then here you may see who those are that fear God in truth. There are many pretenders to it, but we find here that those that truly fear the Lord cannot, will not do as others do. They will not do as others

do in the matter of their choice, in the matter of their worship, nor of their calling, nor in what they are entrusted with, nor in their refreshments, nor in their afflictions, nor in their right and propriety; and if it be so, how few are there that fear the Lord in truth. They that truly fear God say always as Nehemiah, "But so did not I because of the fear of God." There are many that lie quiet under sins of omission, and under sins of commission too; but so will not I because of the fear of God. Do others sin, and do others act contrary to the will of God; yet let us not do so, but let us say with Nehemiah, But so will not I because of the fear of God. Oh therefore let me desire all to fear the Lord. And for you that do fear the Lord, be you comforted, for comfort belongs to you. Everlasting mercy belongs to you who fear the Lord. "I have loved you with an everlasting love," Jer. xxxi. 3.

But it may be some will say, I am afraid I do not fear the Lord, and so this comfort doth not belong to me. Why consider,

Do you make conscience of what you do, doth your conscience accuse you or not for what you do, do you find conscience accuse or excuse?

Have you not sinned in the dark, when none could accuse but God only; and do you act and walk and live and labour as if you were in the presence and sight of God? If you do thus, then you do fear the Lord, "and then it shall be well with you," Eccles. viii. 12. Again,

Do you run and speak one to another? If so, then this is to fear the Lord, for it is said that they that feared the Lord spake often one to another," Mal. iii. 16. And,

Do you truly desire to fear the Lord, then look into Nehemiah, and observe his spirit well, and do accordingly. And to say no more,

Have you had advantages to make you rich in this world, and would you not take them, because of the fear of God? Then certainly you have received free grace, and you have the Spirit of God; for this is a true sign that you have true grace in your heart, and that you are one of them that truly fear the Lord; and therefore be you comforted, for comfort belongs unto you, everlasting mercy belongs unto you.

But it may be some will say, Suppose I do not fear the

Lord, what shall I do that I may fear the Lord, fear him as I should do, fear him more and more.

For answer, If you would fear the Lord in truth, then

Be humbled for want of this fear. That man is not far from grace, who is humbled for the want of grace. A man will never be humbled for unbelief, unless he be humbled for the want of faith.

Go to God and beg of him to fulfil his promise. God hath said, "I will put my fear into their hearts;" now go to God, I say, and beg and desire him that he would make good this promise to you.

If you would fear God in truth, then observe what that is that is nearest and dearest to you, and give that up to God. You know Abraham offered up Isaac, his only son, and saith God, "By this I know thou fearest me." And further,

If you would fear the Lord in truth, then worship God according to his own appointment; take heed of mingling of God's worship with any of man's inventions, for he that doth so, feareth not God nor worshippeth him according to his own appointment. And then,

If you would fear the Lord in truth, then take heed of sinning when you have an opportunity. Again,

If you would fear God more, then love the Lord more, labour to strengthen your love to God. Again,

If you would have your fear strengthened more and more, then study much the free grace of God in giving out his mercy to one more than to another: "Two in a field, the one taken and the other left; two walking together, the one taken and the other left." If you would strengthen your fear study much the free grace of God.

If you would fear the Lord in truth, live much in and study much upon dependence wholly upon God; it is our great duty to depend upon God.

If a man be upon a high tower, and another holds him from falling by the hand only, he will certainly be very fearful of offending him that holds him so. Why we are thus in the hand of God, and our dependence is upon him for every thing; how fearful ought we then to be of offending this God. Oh, study your dependence upon God more and more. And,

Again, use the world as using it not. Deal with men as

in the presence of God; and when you are dealing with men, be sure to deal with God before all the men in the world.

Again, let your eye be very much upon the severity and justice of God, upon his severity and justice. Consider God's severeness to Adam in eating the forbidden fruit; and his severeness to Moses for a word, that for one word God would not let him enter into the promised land; and consider his severity to David for numbering the people. Yea,

Again, consider that God can not only destroy the body, but soul and body too. Therefore, O man, fear him "that can destroy both body and soul, when he will, in hell fire."

Thus, now, if you would have your fear strengthened, then study these things; consider and meditate upon these things. But yet a little further.

If you would strengthen your fear of God more and more, then labour after more communion with him now, in this world, while you are here. We use to say, 'Too much familiarity breeds contempt; but here it is not so, for by familiarity and communion with God we shall have more sweetness and more delight in his ways, more strength in his service, more comfort in our afflictions. If you would, therefore, have these advantages, then labour to walk more close with God, and to have more communion with him; labour therefore, I say, to have more communion with God if you would fear him more and more. The greater a person is here on earth, as I told you before, the more we fear him; and the nearer he is in relation to us, the more we reverence him.

My friends, would you obtain everlasting mercy, would you have everlasting mercy belong to you? then labour to fear the Lord in truth yet more and more. And I beseech you to think of this truth, meditate upon it, think of it upon all occasions, and say, Do others slubber over duties? so will not I, because I fear the Lord. Do others walk injuriously? so will not I, because I fear the Lord. Do others do contrary to the will of God? but so will not I, because I fear the Lord. Let this truth go up and down with you, and it will keep you in your dealing both with God and man. Remember the character of one that fears the Lord; he is one that cannot, will not do as others do, for so saith the text: "But so did not I, because of the fear of God."

SERMON V.

“ Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.”—PSALM CXXXIII. 1.

In this short Psalm we may see the excellency of the saint’s communion, fellowship, and brotherly agreement.

It is described and commended.

First, Described from the fountain of it, from God as a Father, and therefore he says, “ How good and how pleasant it is for brethren.”

Secondly, Described, also, from the act and exercise thereof, which is, “ to dwell together in unity.”

Thirdly, It is commended from the goodness, and profitableness, and pleasantness of it. It is a good thing, a profitable thing for brethren to dwell together in unity; behold how good it is in the eyes of men; behold how pleasant it is beyond expression “ for brethren to dwell together in unity.”

And the goodness and pleasantness of it is expressed by two similitudes. It is compared to the precious ointment upon the head of Aaron: verse 2, “ It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that run down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard; that went down to the skirts of his garment.”

It is compared, also, to the dew that fell upon Hermon and the hills of Zion: verse 3, “ As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion.” &c. Thus, you see, the design of this Psalm is to declare the goodness and profitableness of unity between brethren, from whence, then, I take up this observation:

That a loving agreement between the saints, among themselves, is exceeding pleasant and very profitable.

Some things are pleasant but not profitable, and some things are profitable and not pleasant, as physic, &c.; but communion and fellowship, and a loving agreement among the saints is both pleasant and profitable.

It is a pleasant thing for the saints and people of God to agree together; for the same word which is used here for *pleasant*, is used also in the Hebrew for a harmony of music, such as when they rise to the highest strains of the viol, when the strings are all put in order to make up a harmony,

so pleasant is it, such pleasantness is there in the saints' agreement.

The same word is used also in the Hebrew for the pleasantness of a corn field. When a field is clothed with corn, though it be cut down, yet it is very pleasant, oh, how pleasant is it; and such is the saints' agreement.

The same word in the Psalmist is used also for the sweetness of honey, and of sweet things in opposition to bitter things. And thus you see the pleasantness of it, by its being compared to the harmony of music, to the corn field, to the sweetness of honey, to the precious ointment that ran down Aaron's beard, and to the dew that fell upon Hermon and the hills of Zion: and all this is to discover the pleasantness, profitableness and sweetness of the saints' agreement: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is," &c. It is a pleasant thing to behold the sun, but it is much more pleasant to behold the saints' agreement and unity among themselves.

There are many times breakings and losings in the love of the saints, and therefore when they come to an agreement and union among themselves again, it must needs be very pleasant and profitable and sweet, for things once lost and found again are very sweet. And upon this account it is, that the commandment of love is called "a new commandment," because it is broken so often, and so often renewed again. And the Psalmist speaks here of the sweetness and pleasantness of unity, because there is no sweetness in division; but unity is a good way and means to keep out trouble and evil division from among the people. And,

Further, the more difficulty any mercy is obtained with, the sweeter it is when obtained. There are many things which are hard to come by, but when they are obtained they are sweet; and so there are many difficulties in the way of love and sweet agreement, and the people of God are encumbered with many difficulties, they have many things to put them out of the way of love and of sweet agreement among themselves, and therefore saith the apostle, Phil. i. 27, "Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ; that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one Spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."

Again. The more suitable any thing is to our condition,

the more pleasant and sweet it is. Now this brotherly love and union is a conjunction of suitable things, and is suitable to our condition, and suitable things are delightful unto men, and the more suitable any thing is, the more we delight in it. And this agreement, this union, is every way suitable to our own condition as we are *men*; and is also suitable to all the creatures, for they run together and agree together. And it is suitable to us also as we are *christians*, it is suitable to Christ's command: "A new command (saith he) I give unto you, that you love one another." It is suitable to Christ's own example, who hath loved us; and suitable also to the gospel, which is a gospel of peace: "Let your conversation be as becometh the gospel, that you be of one spirit and of one mind." So, I say, this holy agreement is every way suitable, and therefore the more pleasant and delightful, and so it ought to be unto us.

As it is pleasant and delightful, so it is a profitable good: "Behold how good a thing it is," it is very profitable. For is it not profitable for the "dew to fall upon Hermon, and upon the hills of Zion, to make them fruitful?" Why such is the dew of holy agreement, when it falls upon the hearts of men: and this doth make men increase and multiply in the church, and to be fruitful in good works; the Psalmist saith, "God commandeth his blessing;" and when God blesseth, we shall certainly increase and multiply; and this I say doth increase the church, and hereby are the saints both increased and delighted by the blessing of God on them, they do increase in things that are good and profitable; and this was the thing which Christ prayed for, yea prayed for again and again; yea as I said it is the great thing which Christ hath commanded: a new command &c. Is it not therefore good and profitable to love one another?

Again, This is the mercy and the grace that is promised, specially in the latter times glorious things are spoken of, and and promised to the last days; and this is one of those things which are promised, and if so, it is then certainly good and profitable.

Again, This is the legacy which Christ left with his disciples and people; saith he, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you,"

John xiv. 27, and therefore surely this agreement among brethren is very good and profitable.

Again, Certainly it is good and profitable to walk worthy of the high calling to which Christ hath called us, as the apostle speaks, Eph. iv. 1, 2, 3, "I beseech you to walk worthy of the vocation, wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," &c.

Again, Is it not good and profitable that our prayers should be heard, that God should hear and grant our requests and prayers? Why, look into the Scriptures, and you will find that our love is a help to our prayers; it is a help unto us, whereby to have our prayers heard and answered.

Again, Is it not good and profitable for a man to know that he is a child of God, and that he hath an interest in Christ? Why, look into 1 John iii. 14, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren:" there is a day of death, of natural death, whereby man shall pass from life to death; and there is likewise a time of spiritual life; when a man passeth from death to life. Now how shall I know whether I am "passed from death to life?" Why, if I love the brethren. Yea, saith Christ, "Hereby shall all know that you are my disciples, if you love one another:" not only yourselves shall know it, but others shall know it also; and is it not then very good and profitable? For hereby you shall know that your prayers are heard; and by this also you shall know that you are passed from death to life; and hereby you shall not only know yourselves to be Christ's disciples, but others shall know it also; and if it be so, then certainly it must be good and profitable.

Again, This will give a relish and a savour to all your enjoyments; it is the salt of all your comforts: "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another."

Although our condition be never so prosperous, yet if we cannot agree among ourselves, if love and peace be wanting, that sours all the rest; and though the ordinances be never so sweet, and our privileges never so many, yet if we be not united together in love, all is made sour; this is that which sours all our enjoyments, the want of love and agreement, for that gives a relish to all our enjoyments when we have it.

Again, This is that which will make all things easy unto you, though they be never so hard in themselves; whereas the contrary will make all things hard though never so easy: if I am to do a work or service for one: why, though the work be never so hard of itself, yet love will make it easy; many complain and say they cannot profit by the ordinances: why, what is the reason? It is for want of love to them; there are jars and contentions between friend and friend, between this man and the other man; why, it is for want of love: love would make all things easy for you, though never so hard. Now put all these things together, and then you may see, what a pleasant and profitable thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity, to love, to unite, to live in unity one with another.

Well then if this be so, why should we not all abound in it? Why do not we love and agree one with another, if it be so good and profitable as we have heard, then let us all agree together.

But it may be some will say, we do live together in love and unity, and we are united one to another, but

Yet give me leave to mind you of what the apostle saith, 1 Thess. iv. 9, "But as touching brotherly love, you need not that I write unto you; for you yourselves are taught of God to love one another, and indeed ye do it towards all the brethren which are in all Macedonia; but we beseech you brethren that you increase more and more." Though you do it, yet we beseech you to increase it more and more, and so I say to you: yea and Christ hath commanded it also, and you must do it in obedience to his command.

If our love be right as it should be, then we shall love others also, even our neighbours and friends and brethren; we shall love them as ourselves. "The second commandment (saith our Saviour) is like unto it, that you love your neighbour as yourself." Pray for yourselves, do all the good you can for yourselves, avoid all iniquity that may come upon yourselves, and to prove your love to be right do all this for your neighbours also, and love them as yourselves.

If our love be as it should be, we shall then love others, because they are godly, let them be of this opinion, or of the other opinion, yet that matters not; though they be not of my opinion, yet if my love be right, I love them because they

are godly, and I love him most that is most godly ; and as he increaseth in godliness, so must my love increase toward him.

If your love be true, and such as it ought to be, then you will love one another, and love your brother ; as Christ loved you, even so ought you to love one another ; how was that ? Why, Christ loved you freely, in opposition to all the injuries you had done unto him : it is said, 1 John i. 6, 7, “ If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth ; but if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another :” and in John iii. 16, “ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.” Yea Christ hath so loved us, that he hath laid down his life for us ; and we are to love as Christ loved, even to the laying down of our lives for our brethren.

If your love be true, it ought to be without restriction, yea and without all dissimulation : I say you are to love without any restriction, the only measure of love is to know no measure ; and you are to love without any dissimulation, yea, and your love ought to be also, without degeneration ; many do begin to love spiritually, but end carnally ; but true love is without restriction, dissimulation, or degeneration.

If your love be true and such as it ought to be, then it will never be bought, neither can it be sold ; love cannot be bought, and if it be true love, it will never be sold, neither directly nor indirectly.

If your love be as it ought to be it will be singular, it will make you singular in your love. “ Love your enemies, saith Christ ; It hath been said you shall hate your enemies, and love your neighbours,” but I say unto you, love them both, “ love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and despitefully use you ; for if you love them that love you what reward have you, do not even the publicans so,” Matt. v. 43, 44, 45. Love them that hate you, this is singular love ; and love where it is true will make a man thus singular in his ways and carriage.

True love is a praying love. Says one, “ I never loved any man, till I had prayed for him in particular.” True love, I say, is a praying love.

And true love is a love at all times, at one time as well as another.

And a man that loves truly declares that he is loosened

from the world, and that he is one that is wrought upon by the Holy Ghost. In the primitive times, it was said that they were all of one heart, and all things were common among them; and when we are thus of one heart and of one mind it doth declare that we have been wrought upon by the Holy Ghost; and therefore certainly there is a great mistake in men's love; all men say they love the saints; they love them in words, though I am afraid many love them but little in their hearts.

But you will say, How far is our love to be exercised, upon whom and how far? I say no more but this, so far as the word brethren doth extend, so far this union and love ought to go, "Behold how pleasant and how good it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." So far, I say, as this word brethren extends; and that is so far as God is their Father, it matters not for opinion or what judgment they are of; if God be their Father they are your brethren, and are to be beloved by you, and so far is your love to reach and extend.

But you will say, Wherein doth this love consist?

Why, in these three things:

In the matter of our judgments.

In the matter of our affections. And

In the matter of our practice.

1. In the matter of our judgments. "Be of the same mind one towards another, mind not high things but condescend to men of low estate; be not wise in your own conceit, recompence no man evil for evil; if it be possible as much as in you lieth, live peaceably with all men." Rom. xii. 16.

2. In the matter of our affections, in the 10th verse of this chapter: "Be kindly affectioned one towards another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another."

3. In the matter of our practice, read the 3rd verse of this chapter: "For I say through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." Thus you see how we should act as to our judgments, affections, and practices one toward another.

But you will say, If this be so, then how much is our

love wanting one toward another, but what shall we do that our love to one another may be more knit together; what shall we do that we may advance and rise to this holy agreement, both in our own hearts and others?

For answer hereunto take these directions.

Be serious in this work and lay aside the former hinderances of your love, and your former divisions; and let not any of you say this is the fault, and that is the fault, and such a one is the cause of it, and such a one is the occasion of it. No, but lay the fault on yourselves, lay it upon yourselves and not upon others, and say, "It is I, the Lord knows it is I; it is I that have raised this storm;" and say as David, "I have sinned, I have sinned." Let not your former divisions be forgotten, but take warning by them; lay not the fault, I say, upon others, but upon yourselves, and acknowledge it and say, It is I, I Lord that have sinned. And,

If you do desire to be serious in this work, then do you desire peace; and if it be possible live at peace with all men. The same word that is used in the original for persecutors, is also used for peace, to shew that we should follow after it with might and main, as persecutors follow those they persecute, and that if possible we should live at peace with all.

Be sure you strengthen your love; love must be strengthened else this union cannot continue; it is the property of love to interpret things in the best sense, to interpret things well.

It is the property of love to speak highly of the person or thing beloved; where there is a uniting and a sweet agreement, there love will speak high things of each other.

The property of love is to cover the infirmities of those they love; and indeed how can there be any agreement if infirmities be not covered. It is the property of love to give no offence, nor to take any; and it is a great sign that there is no agreement, nor no love, when people are so apt to give offence and to take offence; for true love is apt to do neither, but to take all in good part.

True love knows how to give and how to take admonitions. And thus you have heard what love will do; therefore I beseech you to strengthen your love to one another; yea, I

beseech you in the Lord to increase it more and more one toward another.

But you may say further, Suppose there be a difference in the matter of our judgments or opinions; what shall we do to remove it? Why,

Be sure of this, that you do not mistake the meaning of that scripture which your judgment is founded upon. It is said "There was a division among the people because of Christ;" why for what was it, what was the reason of it? It was because of misunderstanding, and for want of a right understanding of Christ. So I say, this division may come for want of a right understanding of the Scriptures, upon which our judgment is grounded and founded. But

Consider, O man, whether you do not settle your judgment upon the judgment or opinion of any, or upon the knowledge of another. "Hast thou faith," saith the apostle, "have it to thyself before God;" Rom. xiv. 22. But is not a man then to confess his faith before others when he is called to it? Yes, but the apostle speaks here of lesser things; if thou hast faith have it to thyself in little disputable things; and do not rely upon others, but look to thyself and give things a time; "in due time God will reveal," saith the apostle.

If you desire this holy agreement, then do what you can to keep union in the ministry and between the ministry. It was not for nothing that our Saviour prayed, John xvii. 11, 21, "Holy Father keep through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are, that they all may be one as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." It is not good for people to cry, "I am for Paul, and I am for Apollos, and I am for Cephas," and the like, this is the way to make division; therefore do all you can to live in love and unity; for love is of God and the contrary is of the devil.

Take heed of disputation, what have we got this many years by disputation? Those that are weak are sooner brought in by humiliation than by disputation.

If after all this there do remain division among you, by reason of your judgments or opinions; then remember the apostle's rule and be sure to walk by it; for, saith he(as we instanced before) "Let no man think more highly of himself

than he ought to think, but to think soberly; as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." The apostle directs us to live humbly and to walk meekly one toward another; and not to be rash or to think highly of ourselves. But further:

If you would live in love and unity, then let us look upon other men's infirmities in conjunction with their excellencies, and their excellencies in conjunction with their infirmities; and thereby the one will take away or hide the other. Let us not pore only upon a man's infirmities, upon his *buts* as I may say; he is a godly man but———: therefore if you would agree, join his infirmities and his excellencies together, and then look upon him.

If you should meet with any provocation that may weaken your love one toward another, then be sure to take that as an opportunity to exercise your patience and your love; when you meet a beggar in the streets full of sores, then you think you have an opportunity to exercise your charity, to give something. And so you should say when you are provoked by another to debilitate your love and affection, you may say, Why now have I an opportunity to exercise my patience. Again,

If you will live in love and unity, then you must resolve with the grace of God, to love where you are not beloved; let love arise above all difficulties; labour for a gospel spirit, to love though you are not loved. A legal spirit is a fretful spirit, saith Christ, "You know not of what spirit you are of;" labour, I say, after a gospel spirit, yea the spirit of Christ "who was as a lamb, he opened not his mouth." If you would live in love and unity, then take heed of a legal spirit, and labour after this gospel spirit. Again,

If you would agree together and live in love and unity, then be humbled for the want of love to one another, and take heed for the future of those things that hinder your love one toward another. There are four or five of them, observe them and take heed of them.

1. Pride. A proud man is much given to contention.

2. Passion. For though a man dislikes and is sorry for what he hath done in his passion when it is over; and though what he doth in his passion be one thing, and what he doth

in his serious consideration is another thing; yet we are to take great heed of passion.

3. Another enemy to love is strangeness; strangeness ends in enmity. When brethren and friends grow strangers one to another, then they surmise things one of another, and that destroys love and unity.

4. Another is designing one against another. True love knows no designs upon others. No man can endure to have designs laid against him. Designing causeth anger, enmity and hatred, and hinders true love one toward another.

5. Another is whispering: "A whisperer separateth true friends," Prov. xvi. 28. But now if any one should come to me and tell me any thing against a brother, I would not believe the whisperer till I had spoken with the other; for a cause can never be truly known nor judged of, till both parties have been heard speak. Thus you may see the five things that hinder love, that is, pride, passion, strangeness, designing one upon another, and hearkening unto whisperers. Now as you desire to live in love and unity, observe these things, and take heed of them.

Let me say to you, holy and beloved brethren, if you would love one another, then forgive one another, and live more unto God who loveth you; live more to God, lest he should turn his love to hatred and wrath against you.

Strengthen your love to God himself; the more love you have to God, the more will you love others.

If you would live in love and unity, then you must willingly take wrong, and give up your right for peace sake and for agreement. Saith Abraham to Lot, "Let there be no difference between my herdmen and thy herdmen, for we are brethren." Now Abraham was the elder, and therefore it was his right to have the choice; but yet for peace sake he gives up his right, and says to Lot, "Take what you will, the right-hand or the left." There was a division between them, and the Canaanites were in the land, and therefore it was no good time for them to be at difference one with another. When the Canaanites were in the land, it was no good time then for good men to strive, and therefore Abraham for peace sake gives up his right. So I say for peace sake and for a holy agreement, you should willingly give up your right, and render up your own right to preserve peace

and unity one with another. O friends, love one another, that you may declare yourselves to be heavenly children, to be children of your heavenly Father. Consider Phil. i. 27 : " Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ ; that whether I come or be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one Spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."

O friends, let me beseech you to love one another, and to take all advantages that may increase your love. How can you shew your face before the free love and grace of God, if you do not love one another ? With what face can you go to God for free grace and love, when you yourselves have no love for your brethren.

If a poor man should do a rich man a great deal of prejudice, and if this rich man should nevertheless invite this poor man to a feast, and welcome him, and do him abundance of good ; would you not say that this is wonderful love and kindness, because the poor man is no way able to gratify him, or to make any requital for what he receives, but only by thankfulness : it may be he may be thankful to him. Why thus it is with us now, this is our own case ; for we have done great injury to God, and yet God hath loved us, and hath given us blessings and riches. And what doth he expect for it all ? Surely no reward from us, for he knows we are poor and not able to gratify him ; no, he expects nothing, but only that we should love one another. Says God, You can do nothing for me, all that I desire is, that you would love one another in truth. How then, I say, will you be able to shew your faces before the God of heaven, if you love not one another.

Oh look after this love, which is so much commended in this little Psalm. Oh how sweet and perfuming it is, it is as sweet as honey, " it is like unto the oil that ran down Aaron's beard, like the dew upon Hermon, and as the dew that fell down upon the mountains of Zion." Yea this it that which is sweet and profitable, that which will perfume you. Now if you do desire that God's perfume may come upon you, and that the dew of God's blessings may fall upon you, labour more and more to love one another, and let not love be wanting. I cannot tell how it may be with you, yet let me desire you, as you would honour yourselves now, and as

you desire happiness in this life, and also to be blessed hereafter to all eternity, observe this new commandment to love one another. And as you do desire to declare that you have received free grace, and that you have that seal with which God seals the soul for his own, to live with him for ever, be exhorted to be of one mind, and love one another. "Rejoice in the Lord, and be of one mind;" be united one to another, and let your hearts abound in love more and more one toward another.

SERMON VI.

"The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it."—
MICAH VI. 9.

METHINKS I see a great rod ready to be laid upon the back of this nation, and I would therefore at this time endeavour to inform you what the voice of this rod is; and have to that end chosen this scripture to speak unto.

In this chapter then you have God's controversy with his own people, set down at the end of verse 2: "For the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel." And then he chargeth them with

1. Unthankfulness for many years, in verses 3, 4, 5: "O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherewith have I wearied thee? Testify against me, for I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt," &c.

2. He chargeth them with formality, and shews them the evil of it, in verses 6, 7: "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams," &c. And then,

3. He pleads against them, in verse 8: "He hath shewed thee O man what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justice and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." And then,

4. He seals up the sentence in this verse of my text: "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it."

Wherein you have three things especially remarkable.

1. The people the Lord's voice crieth unto, and that is unto the city. "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city."

2. You have an exhortation to hear the voice of the rod. "Hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it."

3. You have an argument to press you so to do; it is your wisdom: "The man of wisdom shall see thy name." "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city," that is, unto Samaria and Jerusalem, the chief cities: "And the man of wisdom shall see thy name;" the dispensations of God in the way of his mercy or justice are his name. As a man is known by his name, so God is known by his dispensations; which though they be dark to the world, yet the man of wisdom shall see them and discern them. "Therefore hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it," the rod; that is, the rod of correction. Now there is,

1. The rod of power and dignity, "He shall send his rod out of Zion."

2. There is a rod of discrimination: "I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you under the bond of the covenant," Ezek. xx. 37,

3. There is the rod of direction: "Thy rod and thy staff they shall comfort me."

4. There is a rod of government, both ecclesiastical and civil. As for ecclesiastical, saith Paul, "Shall I come unto you with a rod;" and as for civil, "He that spareth the rod hateth the child."

5. There is a rod of destruction: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, and dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel," Psalm ii. 9.

Now it is a rod of correction that we are to understand here, from whence I take up this observation:

That when God visits the transgressions of his people with a rod, it is their best wisdom to hear the rod and who hath appointed it; it is their true interest and best wisdom so to do.

For the opening and clearing hereof, I shall speak to these four or five propositions.

First, That God doth not steal upon a people with his judgments, but he first warns them before he smites them.

Secondly, When God smites his own people, he deals with them in the way of rod.

Thirdly, That God's rod is a teaching rod.

Fourthly, That the message of the rod is commonly sent to the great cities and to the great towns of a nation or people.

Fifthly, When God smites his own people with the rod, it is their best wisdom and their duty to hear the rod, and who hath appointed it.

First, Though God consumes a nation at once, and destroys a nation at once, at last; yet he still doth and will warn a people before he destroys them: God will not steal upon a people with his judgments, but he first warns them before he consumes them. He hath his murdering pieces which he will discharge in due time, but he will first discharge his warning pieces. And God doth sometimes warn people by his word, and sometimes by his works and dispensations. Ezek. xxxiii. 2, "Son of man, speak unto the children of thy people, and say unto them, If I bring a sword upon the land," &c. And at the 7th verse he applies it. So saith he, "Thou, O son of man, I have set thee as a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word from my mouth, and warn them from me." Would you know what this warning is, why it is a warning by the word.

Sometimes God warns his people by his works and dispensations, by his judgments upon others and by his afflictions upon themselves, he brings a lesser judgment to prevent a greater; it is with the works of God as it is with his word. Now God doth sometimes hew down men by the word, yea he hews them down by the ministry of the word. There is a time when God will hew down sinners by the ministry of the word, and lays them upon the ground a drying, as I may say, for hell, before they come there. Matt. iii. "The tree that bringeth not forth fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." Hosea vi. 5, "Therefore I have hewed them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of my mouth," &c. There is a time of hewing down, a time when God will hew men down by the ministry of the word; and as he doth thus by his word, so he doth the same also by his works and dispensations: and though God may and can des-

troy a people at once, yet he will not seize upon them before he warns them. That is the first proposition.

Secondly, When God smites his own people he deals with them in the way of the rod; though he punish others with scorpions, yet, saith he, for you that are in covenant with me, if you sin, "I will visit your transgressions with a rod." Look what worldly afflictions come upon the saints; they are struck with the rod. What greater afflictions do you read of than what fell upon Job; why yet it was the stroke of the rod: "Let him take away his rod from me," Job ix. 34. When God deals with his people, I say, he deals with them in the way of the rod; and if you ask the reason why God uses the rod with his own people, I answer,

1. Because they are his own children. "If you endure chastisement God deals with you as with children; if you be without chastisement you are bastards and not sons," Heb. vii. 7, 8. I know no better argument against the Church of Rome, says Luther, than this, that she reigns without the cross. If two children are fighting together, and a man comes and parts them, and strikes one of them and not the other, you will presently imagine that the child which he strikes is his own. And so if you ask why God useth the rod to his people, I answer, because they are his own children. And,

2. As they are children, so he loves them, and he that spareth the rod hateth the child. Now God doth not hate his children, "for every son that he loveth he chastiseth;" God loves his children and therefore he deals with them in the way of the rod.

3. There is "much folly bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction bringeth it out," saith Solomon, and therefore God doth sometimes correct his people because of their folly.

Why do schoolmasters use the rod, but only to make children learn their lessons; if they would learn without he would not use the rod. And why doth God use the rod with his people, but to learn them their lessons; for these reasons therefore doth God use the rod with his people.

But you will say, Doth not God use the rod with the wicked too; do not they come under the rod as well as the righteous?

I answer, Solomon saith, "The rod is for the back of the fool;" and wicked men are called fools in Scripture. God doth sometimes chastise the godly by the wicked; the wicked are the rod in God's hand. And sometimes, again, God doth punish wicked men by the saints, the saints being the rod in God's hand. Sometimes, I say, wicked men are the rod for the godly: "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff of their hand is mine indignation," Isa. x. 5. And sometimes the godly are the rod of God in the hand of God for punishing the wicked: "The portion of Jacob is not like them, for he is the former of all things, and Israel is the rod of his inheritance, the Lord of hosts is his name. Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war, for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms," Jer. li. 19, 20. So, I say, as the Lord whips the saints by the wicked, so he also lashes the wicked by the godly, they being the rod in the hand of the Lord.

But you will say is there no difference between these two?

I answer, Yes, for there is a whipping rod, a rod of correction, and there is also a breaking rod; a whipping rod for the saints and a breaking rod for the wicked. In the iind Psalm it is said, "Thou wilt rule them with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Though God doth afflict his own people with the rod—the wicked being the rod in God's hand—yet he will cast that rod into the fire when he hath done with it; but though he doth also punish the transgressions of the wicked by the righteous, they being the rod in God's hand, yet will he not cast that rod also into the fire upon that account. The saints may rejoice when they see the wicked punished, because they know that themselves shall not be thrown into the fire; but the wicked have no cause to rejoice when they see the godly afflicted, because they may be sure they themselves shall be thrown into the fire when they have done their work. The child may laugh when he sees the rod thrown into the fire, because he knows he shall not be thrown in himself.

Though God doth visit the transgressions of his people with a rod, yet it is a rod that chastiseth in measure, as you may find Isa. xxvii. 7, 8: "Hath he smitten him as he smote those that smote him, or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him? In measure when it shooteth

forth thou wilt debate with it; he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind." And so in Psalm lxxxix. 31, 32: "If his children forsake my law, then will I visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes." And so 2 Sam. vii. 14: "I will be his Father and he shall be my son; if he commit iniquity I will chastise him with the rod of men and with the stripes of the children of men." So I say, though God chastise his own people with a rod, yet it is in measure, but the bones of the wicked shall be broken, it shall fall very heavy upon them.

Though God doth visit the transgressions of his people with a rod, yet it is in season, it is but what is very seasonable; they are so cut and lopt as that they may grow again. "He that spareth the rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes," Prov. xiii. 24, or in the morning; that is, he doth it in season: but now the wicked are so cut off that they never grow more.

Though God visiteth the transgressions of his people with a rod, yet his loving kindness he will never take away from them. "If they sin (saith God), I will visit them with a rod, but my loving kindness I will not take away from them," Ps. lxxxix. 33. But it is not so with the wicked.

Though God doth visit the transgressions of his people with a rod, yet he will not suffer the rod to rest upon their backs. If your garments be dirty or dusty, you take a rod or a wand and beat out the dust, but when it is out you do not let the rod rest upon the garment; so God causeth his rod to pass upon his people, but when their dirt and filth is out and removed, he will take away the rod from off them, and will not suffer it to rest upon their backs. So that you see there is a vast difference between the rod of the wicked and the rod of the godly in these particulars: the rod of the wicked is a breaking rod, but the rod of the godly is a correcting rod; the rod of the godly is thrown into the fire, the rod of the wicked is not so; the rod of the godly is seasonable, the rod of the wicked is not; the rod of the godly is in love, the rod of the wicked not so; and, lastly, God will not let the rod rest upon the back of the righteous, but the rod of the wicked shall never be removed. And that is the second proposition.

Thirdly, God's rod is a teaching rod: when God smites

his people he deals with them in the way of the rod, and that is a teaching rod, it brings a message with it. For the clearing of this I shall shew you,

1. What those lessons are which the rod teacheth.

2. How this rod teacheth.

1. If you ask what lessons this rod teacheth ; I answer in the general, the rod teacheth the same lesson that the word teacheth, the rod teacheth no new doctrine ; but more particularly, the rod hath a lesson for

The converted, and for

The unconverted.

If you be unconverted, the rod calls upon you to turn to God. If a drunkard be sick, the rod of sickness says, O drunkard, leave off thy drunkenness and turn to the Lord. This lesson the rod teacheth ; and it taught the jailor, and Paul, and the prodigal. When the rod of misery and poverty was upon the prodigal, why then, says he, " I will return to my father, for in my father's house is bread enough." Thus the rod teacheth the unconverted to turn to the Lord. Art thou in thy sins still, therefore, O poor sinner, and hast thou gone on a great while in thy sins, and hath God warned thee often by his word to turn to him, and doth he now come upon thee with his rod ? why this is all but to teach thee the same lesson still, though in another way ; and the lesson is, " Hear and your souls shall live," but if you will not hear the whipping, the correcting rod, you shall hear and feel the breaking and the destroying rod. This is the lesson which the rod teacheth the unconverted.

If you be converted, the rod calls upon you to mortify your sins more and more. " The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil, so do stripes the inward parts of the belly," Prov. xx. 20. " By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged," Isa. xxvii. 9. By this, that is, by affliction, by the rod ; if therefore you have neglected any duty that you have performed heretofore, or ought to perform, the rod now calls upon you to do it, now " remember your first works and repent."

If you be converted, the rod calls upon you to prize those common mercies which you have not valued heretofore. You have had peace, but you have not prized it ; now the rod of war should teach you to prize it : you have had a quiet habitation, but have not prized it ; now the rod of tumult calls

upon you to prize your quiet habitation, and to be thankful for it. This is another lesson which the rod teacheth.

If you be converted, the rod calls upon you to honour your own graces, "knowing that tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed," Rom. v. 3. You know how it is with a countryman that makes hay; the hay lies abroad, and he sees a black cloud a coming, and he calls to his men to cock up and gather up the hay. Why, look into the nation, and see what a cloud is over us! this calls upon the people of God to gather up their evidences. Here is a black cloud over us: oh, all ye people of God, gather up your evidences, that by the dark night of affliction you may have light to read your own graces. This is another lesson the rod teacheth.

If you be converted, the rod calls upon you to sympathize with others in their afflictions; by you own afflictions you are called upon to compaasionate others in their afflictions.

And, lastly, if you be converted, the rod calls upon you to provide for your great and last change. David understood this, and therefore he says, "Lord, teach me so to number my days, that I may apply my heart to true wisdom," Psalm xc. 12.

These are the lessons which the rod teacheth.

2. If you would know further what the rod teacheth, I answer negatively,

The rod doth not teach you by any skill or knowledge of its own, but the Spirit of the Lord in the rod, that teacheth; "Blessed is the man that thou chastenest and teachest him out of thy law," Ps. xciv. 12. By the rod a man shall see that presented to him which lay hid before. When the glass is shaken you see that sand which you could hardly or not at all perceive before; so when a man is shaken by affliction, his sins are discovered by him; and a sight of sin is the first step to conversion.

By the rod you are humbled and broken and made more fit and capable to receive instruction. When the young horse is once well broke, then he is afterwards fit for the saddle; now afflictions break men and fit them for God's service and for God's work. If a narrow mouthed vessel be in continual motion and unfixed, you cannot pour any liquor into it; you must first fix the vessel, and then you may put what you will

into it: so afflictions will fix you and settle you. You have many a poor man that no ground will hold him, as we use to say, till afflictions come, and then they settle him. If you sow seed, you must first plough the ground, and then you sow the seed. Now what soul is there which doth not need God's plough? Why God's rod is his plough; and when this rod comes and breaks and humbles the heart, then it will receive the good seed of God's word into the furrows of the heart. And further,

By the rod a man will be forced to lay hold of and stick to those promises which he could not lay hold on before; for when the rod comes and brings him low, the man is glad to run to the promise: and truly it is a very great comfort to us that we have a promise to run unto when we are brought low with the rod. And thus you see what lessons the rod teacheth, and also how the rod teacheth: it is a teaching rod. And so I have done with the third proposition; the next follows.

Fourthly, As the rod is teaching, and doth bring a message with it; so this message is sent especially to the great cities and towns of a nation or people. "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city" here in the text. Why what city or cities? It was Jerusalem and Samaria. But did not God's voice cry unto the lesser towns and villages? Yes; but when a national rod comes, the message is especially sent to the great towns and cities of a nation. For,

The rod comes to avenge the quarrel of the word. Look, therefore, on that place or people that have had the greatest opportunities, as to hearing of the word and having the means of grace, and yet have abused them; the greater controversy hath the rod with that place or people. Now great towns and cities have commonly the greatest opportunities as to the word and ordinances, and many times they are most abused in and by these; and therefore the voice of the rod is especially to great towns and cities. "Woe unto thee, Capernaum." And why unto Capernaum and not to the towns and villages? Why! "Woe unto thee, Capernaum, for thou hast been exalted unto heaven," in regard of the means, and yet hast not repented, Matt. xi. 23; therefore, Woe unto thee above all the rest of the towns about thee. And so, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, (saith Christ) I cannot but weep over thee; I

would have gathered you but you would not," &c. Therefore I cannot but weep over you; though the lesser towns and villages shall be destroyed as well as the great ones, yet I weep not over them but over Jerusalem, for she hath had the means of grace more abundantly and yet hath not repented; and therefore I cannot but weep over it. When the rod comes, I say, it comes more directly to the great towns and cities of a nation.

God will be sure to punish those who are ringleaders of rebellion in a nation. Now great cities and towns if they are not good, are ringleaders to other towns to do evil; even as a great oak, which drops upon the lesser trees under him, spoils their growth and corrupts them. And so if a man be rich and not good, he drops upon others and spoils others. So I say, great towns if not good, spoil and corrupt the lesser towns and villages; as, if they be good, they are an help and an encouragement to others in goodness. Therefore the Lord's voice crieth unto the cities, and they should all hear the rod, and who hath appointed it. That is the fourth proposition. The fifth and main followeth, that,

Fifthly, When the Lord doth visit the transgressions of his people with a rod, it is their true interest and best wisdom to hear the rod and who hath appointed it.

There are three things in this proposition:

1. When God doth visit the transgressions of his people with a rod, it is their duty to hear what the rod saith. And,
2. Not only to hear what the rod saith, but also to consider who hath appointed it. And,
3. It is their true interest and best wisdom so to do.

I shall not much insist upon these. But for the first:

1. When the Lord doth visit the transgressions of his people with a rod, it is their duty to hear what the rod saith; for as you hear, God's rod is a teaching rod, and therefore when the rod comes, it is your duty to lay your ear close to the rod to hear what it says, for otherwise you will be found despisers of its message. If a king send his ambassador to speak and treat with another, and he turns his ear from him and will not hear him, why, will not he be found a despiser of the message? Now the rod is a messenger, an ambassador, and it comes from heaven; if you will not hear it, you despise the message of the rod. Not

hearing is despising; therefore when the rod comes, hear the message of it. "My son, despise not the chastening of the Almighty," saith Solomon, Prov. iii. 11.

2. It is your duty to hear the rod, and also to consider who hath appointed it; not only to hear the instrument, but the author also whereby the rod is acted and guided. For

Thereby you will honour God in his dispensations. It was the speech of Mr. Dod when the soldiers broke into his house and plundered him, saith he, It is the Lord that hath taken them away. He did not say, This thing *they* have taken away, and *they* have taken away such and such things; no, he would not give them that honour, but as Job said, when the Sabeans took away his goods, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away;" so said he, I will not honour them so much, as to say that *they* have taken away any thing from me, but the Lord hath done it; and thereby he gives God the honour of his dispensations, and so must you if you will hear the rod and who hath appointed it.

By hearing the rod and who hath appointed it, you will much strengthen your faith.

By hearing the rod and who hath appointed it, you will be enabled to submit sweetly to the sharp anger of God's dispensations: "I was dumb and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it," saith David, Psalm xxxix. 9. So when Shimei cursed David, his servants would have taken off his head; No, saith David, "Let him alone, it is the Lord that hath bidden him," 2 Sam. xvi. 11. Mr. Fox makes mention of a young man, a martyr, that when he was upon the cart going to the fire, his father, who was a papist, came out of his house, and would have beaten him, but the people hindering him, Pray, said he, let him alone, for he is my father. So I say, by hearing the rod and who hath appointed it, you will submit unto the Lord, because he is your Father.

By hearing the rod and who hath appointed it, you will be led to prayer, and be brought to pray. Prayer becomes a man or woman when they are under the rod. Pray tell me, when the child is whipped by his father, doth the child fall down to the rod, and beg of the rod to spare him? no, but he falls down to him in whose hand the rod is, to his master or his father, and cries to him, O spare me, pray spare me. So be not stubborn, but fall down to the Lord when you are

under the rod, and say, Lord spare me. Do not say to the rod, Spare me; do not cry to that when it is upon your backs; no, but see God and observe his hand and cry to him for help. But then,

3. As it is our duty to hear the rod and who hath appointed it, so it is also our true interest and best wisdom to do it, because it is the way to prevent further strokes. When a child is under the rod and will not submit, Why, says the master, since you are so stout and so stubborn, I will try who shall be master, you or I. And so he strikes on still, until the child cries out, I have done: Why then, says the master, I have done too. And thus it is with us, when we are under the rod, if we be stubborn, and refuse to hear the rod of God and who hath appointed it, Well, says God, I will try who shall be master, you or I. What is the reason that some men go so long, so many years with the rod upon their backs, but because they have not heard the rod and who hath appointed it. But now when a man shall say, Lord, I have done; Why then, says God, I have done too, O soul.

Beloved, it is our best wisdom and our best course, to hear the rod and who hath appointed it.

All that I shall say for application is this: It is our true interest and best wisdom, when the rod comes, to hear the rod and who hath appointed it, as hath been proved.

Oh then that men were wise and did understand it in this day. O England, England, the rod is in thy streets at this time; certainly there is a swinging rod hangs over this nation. O England, what shall I say unto thee, but what the prophet saith here, "Hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it." O London, "Hear thou the rod and who hath appointed it." O Norwich, "Hear thou the rod and who hath appointed it." O Yarmouth, "Hear thou the rod and who hath appointed it;" for you shall thereby honour God and strengthen your own faith, you shall be able to keep silence in the evil day; you shall be made more fit to pray, and the rod will be sooner removed from you. Therefore as you desire that God may have the honour of all his dispensations, and that your faith may be strengthened, and that you may be enabled to be silent in an evil day; then "Hear the rod and who hath appointed it."

But you will say, What shall we do that we may hear the

rod and who hath appointed it? We do confess that there is a smart rod upon the back of this nation, and upon the back of our families; but what shall we do that we may hear the rod and who hath appointed it?

I answer, stand and look upon the rod, and you will find two things especially in the rod:

1. Your sin. And 2. God's design.

As for your sin, look what sin that is which God holds before your face, before your conscience, all the time he is striking of you with the rod, that is the sin he strikes you for. If a dog worry a sheep, you commonly go and beat the dog in the face of the worried sheep, that the dog may thereby know and understand for what he is beaten: so when the Lord comes and holds out one sin for you to look on especially, then you may be sure the rod comes upon you for that sin.

Again, Look what sin that is which doth naturally bring the rod, that is the cause of it. As for example, if a man be drunk, and do thereby bring himself into a fever, will you not say that drunkenness was the cause of it?

Again, Look what sin that is which is most like the rod of all others; that sin is that which brings the rod. As for example, suppose the rod of this nation be decay of trading, may we not think that some stolen wedge of gold is in this nation, which is the cause of this rod, because it is like it. Or suppose the rod of this nation be, the Lord's forsaking of it; may we not think that apostacy is the cause of it, because it is like it. Therefore, if you would hear the rod and who hath appointed it, then observe what sin that is which is the cause of it. But,

2. And so to conclude, as you are to look upon your sin, so also upon God's design in the rod. Now God seldom or never gives any mercy to a people, but he first brings them into the quite contrary condition. As for example, if God intends to give you great assurance of his love, he will first suffer you to fall into great temptations and darkness, that he may thereby fit you for great assurance. Or if God intend to raise you to great honour in the world, he will first suffer you to lie under some great reproach, that you may be thereby the more fit for your honour. And so if God intend to fix and settle a nation, he will first suffer it to come into

great confusion and tumult, because the Lord will thereby prepare that nation for the glorious settlement which he intends.

How is it therefore with you; do you feel or see the rod of God upon this nation, or upon your families, or upon the back of your own particular person? then "Hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it." For God's rod is a teaching rod, and it brings many lessons with it. Therefore what I say to one, I say to all, and to my own soul also, "Hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it."

SERMON VII.

"Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."—AMOS IV. 12.

IN this chapter the prophet Amos endeavours to pronounce some heavy judgments against God's own people, Israel, wherein there are three things most considerable:

1. The judgment threatened.
2. The cause of the judgment. And
3. The inference thereupon.

1. The judgment threatened. And that is in the 2nd and 3rd verses: "The Lord hath sworn by his holiness, that lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fish-hooks." As if he should say, I will send anglers among you, that shall pull you out of your houses, as the little fishes are pulled out of the water. And then he goes on in the 3rd verse, "And ye shall go out at the breaches, saith the Lord." Though you be great and strong, yet will I make breaches among you, saith the Lord. This is the judgment threatened.

2. Here is the cause of the judgment, and that is threefold:

Oppression, as at the 1st verse: "Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy," and so forth.

Another cause is idolatry, and superstition; as at verses 4, 5, "Come ye to Bethel, and transgress at Gilgal, multiply

transgression; proclaim and publish the free offering, for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord God.

The third cause is their incorrigibleness, as at verse 6, "I have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places, yet have ye not returned to me, saith the Lord." And at verse 7, "And also I have withholden rain from you, and I have caused it to rain upon one city, and not upon another city, so two or three cities wandered unto one city to drink water, but they were not satisfied, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord," and at verse 9, "I have smitten you with blasting and with mildew, when your gardens, and your vineyards, and your fig-trees, and your olive trees increased, the palmer worm devoured them, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord," and at verse 10, "I have sent among you the pestilence, after the manner of Egypt, your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses, and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord," and at verse 11, "I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a fire-brand plucked out of the burning, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord."

Thirdly, Therefore by way of inference he concludes;

"Therefore this will I do unto thee O Israel, and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

In these words you have a double inference which God makes.

Therefore thus will I do unto thee, I have been a long time striving with you, as if he should say, and I have been at a stand whether I should punish you or not, yet have ye not returned unto me, therefore now I am resolved, "thus will I do unto thee." And then

Now I am resolved, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel, therefore do thou prepare to meet thy God, O Israel; I do not send you a challenge, saith God, that you should prepare to meet with your God to fight with him, or to resist him, not to meet God in his anger and to oppose him, no; but prepare to meet thy God by preventing his judgments, with your repentance, and returning unto him. If a man be coming to your house, and you go out to meet him, why then

you prevent him by meeting of him; so when we prevent God's judgments by our repentance, we are said to meet with God.

From hence then I take up this observation or doctrine.

That when God is resolved to come out against a nation or people, it is their duty to prepare to meet with God.

For the opening and prosecuting hereof I shall labour to shew you,

First, That God doth seem sometimes to be at a stand concerning a people, whether he should trust to them any longer or not, or whether he should punish them or not.

Secondly, That if they do not come to him, and meet with him, he will then resolve to go out against them in his wrath.

Thirdly, That when God doth resolve to go out against a people in his wrath, it is their duty to prepare to meet him.

Fourthly, I shall labour to shew, how a people or family or person, may prepare themselves to meet with God in the way of his anger, when he is going out against them.

First, Though God is always resolved in himself what to do with a people, yet he seems to us to be at a stand, whether he should deliver them or not, or whether he should punish them or not, whether he should shew mercy to them or not; as you may see *Exod. xxxiii. 5*, "For the Lord said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, ye are a stiffnecked people; I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment and consume thee; therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee," that I may shew, or make known what to do unto thee, as it is in the Hebrew: this is speaking after the manner of men; and so in *Gen. xviii. 21*, "I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me, and if not I will know;" and again, *Gen. xxii. 12*, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do any thing unto him, for now I know that thou fearest God;" speaking after the manner of men. And again *Hosea vi. 4*, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee, O Judah, what shall I do unto thee;" and *Hosea xi. 8*, "How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim, how shall I deliver thee Israel, how shall I make thee as Admah, how shall I set thee as Zeboim:" here are four hows in our translation, though but two in the Hebrew, "How shall I give thee up, how shall I deliver thee, how shall I make thee as Admah,

how shall I set thee as Zeboim :” as if the Lord, to speak after the manner of men, were in a great strait, and knew not what to do, was not resolved what to do ; so I say though God is always resolved in himself, yet he seems to us to be at a stand sometimes, whether he shall shew mercy or no.

But you will say, how doth this come to pass, that God doth sometimes seem to be thus at a stand.

I answer, you know how it is with a tender father, that hath a rebellious child ; saith the father, I will thrust him out of doors, I will utterly cast him off, I have often admonished him and threatened him and corrected him, and yet he is never the better, therefore I am resolved even to turn him out of doors ; aye, but then he reflects and thinks again, He is my child, he is the son of my bowels, how shall I, how can I give him up, how can I turn him out of doors ? Why now God is more tender to his children, than any father can be to his children, and therefore his being at a stand doth speak out and declare his bowels to his people : his bowels are at work whilst their sins provoke him ; one while he looks upon their sins and another while he looks upon Christ’s satisfaction ; one while he hears the law call, Justice, justice, another while he hears Christ cry, Mercy, mercy ; there is justice and mercy both in God, that he may have the honour of both, and therefore God seems to be at a stand sometimes ; says God, These are my people, and if I punish them the enemies will reproach me, and I shall be dishonoured, and they are my people still for all their sinning against me, and thus God seems to be at a stand.

But you will say, When may God seem to be at a stand, and not to be resolved what to do speaking after the manner of men.

I answer, when the saints and ministers of God know not what is best to be done in regard of the times, then is God at a stand, for, saith the Lord, “ Shall I do any thing, and not reveal it to my servants the prophets :” therefore I say when the saints and servants and ministers of God are at a stand, and know not what to do, then, God seems to be at a stand.

When the dispensations of God go forward and backward, then the Lord seems to be at a stand ; when a man goes out of his house about his business, and goes forward and back-

ward in the street, you will say, that man is not well resolved what to do, nor which way to go; and thus it seems to be sometimes with God, his dispensations in the world go forward and backward, and this is the time that God is as it were at a stand, whether he shall shew mercy or no; and so I have done with the first general.

Secondly, That though God seem to be at a stand sometimes, yet if men do not come unto him and meet him, he will resolve to go forth against them, "Therefore thus will I do unto thee:" I have been a long time striving with you, and yet have ye not returned unto me, and now I am resolved, and this is God's message.

Now for the clearing of this.

I shall open the truth of it unto you.

I shall prove it. And,

I shall shew you, when God may be said to go forth against a people or nation.

For opening of it, you must not think, as I said before, that God is at any time unresolved in himself, or that he knows not what to do, no, "For known to God are all his works from the beginning of the world," unto the end, says the apostle, Acts xv. 18. There is nothing future, or to come, to God; God is not measured, neither doth he measure by time; there is nothing before nor after with God in eternity; all is present and altogether before him at once, and therefore I say, God is not at any time unresolved in himself, what he shall do with this or that people. Now further, God is said to will a thing in a twofold respect, either in regard

Of his decree, or

Of his dispensations.

In regard of his decree, his love is from eternity and yet the same man may seem to be a child of wrath in regard of the dispensation. Every elect person is a child of God from eternity in regard of God's decree, and yet he is a child of wrath until he be converted in regard of God's dispensations. So when I say, that God seems to be at a stand and unresolved, and that if men do not come unto him he will then go forth against them; this is not to be understood in regard of his decree, but in regard of his dispensations. But

For the proof of it. It is said, "God will not always

strive with the children of men," neither will he always wait and expect fruit from a fruitless and barren people; read the parable of the fig tree, Luke xiii. 7: "A certain man had a fig tree &c. and he said unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold these three years I come, seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none, cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground." Now though this parable doth concern the Jews, it concerns us also, wherein we may see there are three times, which go over the heads of all those that sit under the gospel.

A time of soul mercy; a time of God's forbearance; and a time of judgment or cutting down.

There is a time of forbearance and striving, a time when God seems to be at a stand, but then if men will not come unto him, he will resolve to go forth against them. Rom. ii. 4, 5: "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance; but after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds." So I say that though God seem to be at a stand as to his dispensations, yet if men do not come in unto him, he will then resolve to go forth against them in his wrath.

But you will say further, when may God be said to go forth against a nation or people in his anger.

For answer you may know it by God's dispensations, if his dispensations do bespeak so much, and do plainly declare that God is going forth against a nation or people, then you may be sure that he is resolved to go forth in his anger: and therefore,

Observe when a judgment comes that is extraordinary, then the Lord is gone out against that people. "The Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth, the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands," Ps. ix. 16.

Look when God restrains prayer from a people, when he knocks off and draws off the hearts of his children from praying for such a people, then is God certainly come out against them in his wrath.

When all things work together for the worst, then the Lord is against that people; when all things instead of working

together for the best, do the contrary, and work together for the worst, then is God surely against that people.

As you may know when God is resolved to go out against a people in his dispensations, so you may also know it by our practices. As when God afflicts a people for crying sins, and yet incorrigibleness follows, then doth the Lord resolve to go against that people in wrath. As you may see in this chapter wherein our text is, there you find the people were guilty of great sins, of great oppression, and great superstition and idolatry, and God did not only afflict them for these sins but for others too, and therefore you find in the 7th verse, "I have withheld the rain from you, and have caused it to rain upon one city, and not upon another." Here was distinction of judgments according to their several sins. And so at the 11th verse: "I have overthrown you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were as firebrands plucked out of the burning." &c. God exercised them with several afflictions, and they were distinguishing afflictions too, and yet they were incorrigible; God tells them that he had afflicted them with cleanness of teeth and want of rain, "and yet have they not returned unto me, saith the Lord, therefore thus will I do unto thee," &c. Thus you see what distinguishing afflictions they were exercised with, "I have sent the pestilence among you, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord;" and yet after all these sore strokes, they still remained incorrigible, and therefore God was resolved to go forth against them in his wrath, and so I have done with the second general.

Thirdly, It is the duty of a people or nation to prepare to meet the Lord, when he is coming out against them. "Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel, and because I will do thus, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

For the clearing of this I shall endeavour to shew you:

That it is a dreadful thing to meet with God in the way of his anger and justice.

That though it be dreadful, yet it is not so dreadful to the people of God as to others.

That though it be not so dreadful to the people of God as to others, yet it is very uncomfortable for them too to meet with God in his wrath.

That when God is gone forth against a people in his anger,

and in the way of his wrath, it is their duty to prepare to meet with God.

It is a very dreadful thing to meet with God in the way of his anger, "Who may abide the day of his wrath? It is a fearful thing (saith the apostle) to fall into the hand of the living God," Heb. x. 31; "For our God is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 29, not a warming fire. There is a warming fire in your houses, and that is very comfortable in cold weather, but there is a consuming fire also, a fire that burns down houses and cities, and that fire is very terrible and dreadful; why our God is a consuming fire; your fire consumes your wood and coal, but it doth not consume your house, it doth not remove the rocks; but the fire of God's anger doth so, as you may see, Nahum i. 5, 6, "The mountains quake at him, the hills melt, and the earth is burnt at his presence, yea the world, and all that dwell therein; who can stand before his indignation, and who can abide the fierceness of his anger, his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him." Thus you see it is a very dreadful thing to meet with God in the way of his anger. But

Though it be dreadful and terrible, yet it is not so dreadful to the people of God as to others.

Though God be angry with his own people; yet it is but little in comparison to what he is with others; as in Zech. i. 2: "The Lord was sore displeased with your fathers," and at the 12th verse, there it is said, "God had indignation against them threescore and ten years," and then at the 15th verse: "And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease, for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction." Here you see God was greatly displeased with the heathen, and but little displeased against his people; his displeasure is but little to them in comparison with what it is to others.

Though God be angry with his own people, yet his anger is their friend. If a man be my friend, not only his purse is my friend, but his sword also, if I have occasion; so if God be my friend, not only his love is my friend, but his anger too; but it is not so with the wicked.

Though God be angry with his own people, yet they have

always free grace to fly unto and to be their friend ; but it is not thus with the wicked.

Though God be angry with his own people, yet they know, or may know that God is in covenant with them, and that they have some sweet and precious promises which belong to them. "Who can abide the fierceness of his wrath," &c., Nahum i. 5, 6. But look at the 7th verse, "The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him." In the worst times the people of God have promises to run unto for shelter : mark how the promise comes in here ; having shewed the fierceness of God's wrath in the 5th and 6th verses, "Who can stand before his presence," &c. ; he comes in with this promise at the 7th verse, "The Lord is good, and a strong hold in the day of trouble ; he knoweth them that trust in him."

Though God be angry with and afflict his own people, yet they know, or may know that God is afflicted with them, Christ partakes in their afflictions with them.

Though God do afflict his own people for their sins, yet they know, or may know that God always gives a due allowance in reference to their sins and infirmities ; the best gold must have an allowance of some dross, and the best saint must have an allowance upon the account of his infirmities. Says the Lord, Hosea xi. 8, "How shall I make thee as Admah, and set thee as Zeboim ?" Why did not the Lord say, How shall I make thee as Sodom or Gomorrah ? says Jerome, it was because Admah and Zeboim were lesser cities, and were drawn into sin by the example of the great cities of Sodom and Gomorrah : and so the ten tribes were drawn into sin by the great cities of Judah and by Jerusalem, and therefore God says, "How shall I make thee as Admah," &c. So, I say, God doth always give an allowance to his own people, even in the day of his wrath.

Though God be angry with his own people, yet they may see God smile sometimes, even through his frowns. Faith doth many times pull the vizard from the face of Christ, as I may say, that when he seems to be their enemy, yet still they know that all things shall work together for their good.

Though God be angry with his own people, yet they know, or may know, that God will always have a hiding-place for

them, and so he will never provide for others. It may be observed, that when God's people in former times were persecuted in one part of the world, they had always acceptance and entertainment in some other part of the world; and when they were persecuted from thence, they had still acceptance elsewhere, according to that of Christ, "If they persecute you in one city, flee unto another, until the Son of Man come," Matt. x. 23. Why what is the meaning of this, but that God will always have some hiding-place for his people, until Christ come again.

Though God be angry with his own people, yet they know or may know that they are delivered from wrath to come, and they may comfort themselves thus: It is true that this dispensation of God toward me is in anger, but yet I am delivered from wrath to come. But now it is not so with others. The present dispensations of God's wrath upon the wicked, are but forerunners of his eternal wrath which shall come upon them. But it is not so with the saints. And so I conclude this second particular, That though it be very dreadful when God goes forth against a people in his wrath, yet it is not so dreadful to the people of God as it is to others. But,

Though it be not so terrible for the people of God to meet with God in his anger, and as it is for others; yet it is a very hard and uncomfortable thing for them to meet with God in this way, for they are used to have other kind of meetings with God, they use to meet him in the assemblies, to meet him in love, there the saints desire to meet with God. But,

If God do go forth against a people in his wrath, it is their duty, the duty of them all, and of God's own people also, to go forth to meet God. It is here commanded in the text, by way of reason. It is the duty of God's people and of others also, to honour God when they are under his dispensations. Now when men go forth to meet God, then they honour him. Abraham and Lot intended to honour the angel, and therefore they went forth to meet him; Joseph would honour his father Jacob, and therefore he went forth to meet him; Moses would honour his father Jethro, and therefore he went forth to meet him; Abigail would honour David, and therefore she went forth to meet him; Martha

would honour Christ, and therefore went forth to meet him; Cornelius and the believing Romans would honour Paul, and therefore they went forth to meet him. And so if a man be coming to your house, if you would honour him, you go forth to meet him. Why now it is our duty to honour God, and therefore it is our duty also to prepare to meet with God, that we may thereby honour him.

And further, it is the duty of all God's people to hold a compliance with his dispensations. Now if you do not go to meet with God, you do not comply with his dispensations. So that I say, when God comes forth against a people, it is their duty to go forth and to prepare to meet him. And so I come to the fourth general which was proposed.

Fourthly, If it be the duty of a people, when God goes forth against them in his anger, to prepare to meet him; why then what shall we do to prepare ourselves to meet with God, for sometimes God seems to be at a stand, and to be unresolved what to do, and sometimes he is resolved to go forth against a people: now what shall we do that we may prepare to meet God in both these cases?

I shall answer these two questions, and speak to them distinctly, and so conclude without any further application.

If you would meet with God in this case, then break off from your uncertainties and leave them. Do not stand, Shall I, shall I? as we say, in reference to your repentance and newness of life, be not uncertain in your judgments and practices. As in Hosea vi. 4, "O Ephraim (saith God), what shall I do unto thee?" Why, Lord, might they say, why art thou at an uncertainty with us? Why, saith God, because you are at an uncertainty with me; your goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away. Sometimes you take up good resolutions, but they fade away again presently; sometimes you are grieved and troubled for sin, but your repentance fades away as the morning dew; sometimes you will perform duties, but your goodness fades away quickly: and therefore I am at this uncertainty with you, because you are at such uncertainty with me. Would you then meet with God in this case, why then break off from your uncertainties, that is the first.

If God seem to be at a stand, then do you repent and turn

to God, for this is that which God expects and looks for, "Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord." The Lord repeats it again and again, in the close of several verses, though I have been at a stand, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. Therefore, I say, when God seems to be at a stand, be sure that you return unto God; and what I say unto one, I say unto all, and to my own soul also: Doth the Lord seem to be at a stand with us, then let us all return to the Lord by repentance, it may be he stays his hand to see what we will do.

If God seem to be at a stand, and if you would meet with him, then go and make your choice: Chuse rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

If the Lord seem to be at an uncertainty in point of his dispensations, and if you would meet with God, then take heed that you do not desire the woeful day, take heed that there be none among you who do desire the woeful day to come. A day of confusion in a nation is a woeful day, a day of civil war is a woeful day, civil war begins with uncivil sins, and ends in uncivil butcheries. Again,

If God seem to be at a stand in point of his dispensations, and if temptations do then come to draw you off from God, then do you answer all with this: How shall I do this thing and yet not sin against God, how shall I do this thing and yet not sin against my own conscience; shall the Lord have his *hows* for you as I may say, and will you have none for him? Shall the Lord say, How shall I give thee up, O England! How shall I give thee up, O London! How shall I give thee up, O Yarmouth! and will not you say, How shall I sin against the Lord; shall the Lord's bowels yearn and turn within him for you, and shall not you turn to God? Shall the Lord say, O drunkard, how shall I give thee up? O swearer, how shall I give thee up? O sabbath-breaker, how shall I give thee up? O unclean person or the like, how shall I give thee up? And shall not you say, How shall I do this thing and yet not sin against God? Therefore do thus and then you will be able to meet with God in this case.

But as for the second part of this question. Suppose the

Lord be resolved, as I hope he is not, to go forth against this nation, you may observe how he stands hovering as it were over the nation; but if God should resolve to go out against us, would you know how to prepare to meet with God?

Then you must observe what those evils are that do provoke God, and labour and strive against them till they be removed; and in order hereunto,

If you would meet with God in the way of his justice and anger, then you must get Christ into your arms, as I may say, and so go forth and meet God. It is written of one, that when he would gain favour of his king, he used to get the king's son in his arms, and so he got the favour he desired; so if you would find favour with God, get Jesus Christ into your arms, and so go forth to meet him.

If you would meet with God in the way of his anger and justice, then you must humble yourself before him and submit unto him: there are two parts in humiliation, sorrow for sin, and submission to God; now it may be you are wanting in one of those, therefore labour to abound in both, and so go forth to meet God.

If you would meet with God in the way of his anger and justice, then do you live justly, and deal justly and righteously. "He hath shewed thee O man what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Micah vi. 8. Oh, my friends, labour to do what God commands and what God expects: now when he comes out against a people in the way of his justice, he expects that they should be found doing justice; read verse 9, "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it:" God's voice is to scare us, and to cause us to leave sin and to turn unto him, and therefore he says, "Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it."

If you would meet with God in the way of his anger, then present unto God your free will offerings, and pray unto him and seek his face. When Jacob went forth to meet his brother Esau, he sent presents to him, and his brother's face was changed. Oh, what will become of those that never prayed one prayer more in private for all this anger and wrath of God that seems to be coming out against us!

If you would meet with God in his anger, then get suffering grace: how can you be able to meet with God in the way of his anger in suffering times, if you have not suffering grace?

If you would meet with God in his anger, be sure to be doing the work of your present day. Shew mercy to those that want mercy. They that are merciful shall obtain mercy with God. What will your money avail you in the day of God's wrath? The only way to meet with God in his wrath is to shew mercy.

If you would be able to meet with God in the way of his anger, then wait upon God in the way of his judgments, and in due time you shall be able to say, This is our God; "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him;" and if God be going, lay hold of him, take hold upon him, for so we are commanded. Isa. xxvii. 4, 5, "Fury is not in me," &c. Or, "Let him take hold of my strength that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me."

If you would meet with God in the way of his anger, then lay aside your particular interests, and think it your duty and desire to do it.

If you would prepare to meet with God in the way of his anger, then now, whilst you have a little time, go and set yourself and your house in order, that whatsoever may come, you may have nothing else to do but to die; and then if God do come in judgment and anger, you may be able to say, I have heard the rod and have trembled and have prepared to meet with God. And if God should not come in wrath, but some other way, yet you will have great comfort in your preparing to meet with God. For either God will come out against the nation in anger or he will not; if he do not, you will not lose by your preparing to meet him; but if he do, and you are prepared to meet with him, then will God meet with you in love, because you have prepared to meet with him in anger.

Therefore as you desire to be found doing the work that God would have you to do in this case, think of and remember what hath been spoken. All you that hear this word of God, prepare to meet with God; you know not how soon the Lord may come out against you in wrath, his dispensations in the world seem to run backward and forward: therefore be

always ready and prepared to meet with God, which way soever he may come, according to this of our text: "Thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do thus unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

END OF VOL. II.