

and sets on a word thereof upon the soul, and the heart answers, Rabboni, my Lord. Doth the Lord therefore speak but one word unto thee, yet stir up thyself in believing, and hearken unto him, for he will speak yet more fully and plainly; only when he speaks, listen: hearken diligently unto him and improve what he saith, so shall your peace be as a river, and your righteousness as the ocean.

And thus I have done with the first argument.

SERMON II.

TRUE PEACE MAY BE INTERRUPTED.

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

It is possible that the saints and people of God, may be much discouraged, and cast down: though there be an inward peace and quietness of soul, which they are ordinarily endued with, yet possibly this peace may be interrupted, and themselves much discouraged and cast down.

Here are two words in the text speak as much; *cast-down*, *disquieted*. And three times in this Psalm, the Psalmist saith, his soul was cast down within him; yet this David was a man of great peace and comfort ordinarily.

And as with David, so it was, is, and will be with other saints. This is so ordinary a case, that the Holy Ghost hath provided a standing psalm, or prayer, on purpose for such as are in this condition: Psalm cii., the title, “A prayer, or psalm, of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord.” In Psalm cxix. 25, he saith, “My belly cleaves to the dust;” and that is low indeed. And verse 28, “My soul melteth for heaviness:” I am not only sad and heavy, but my soul melteth for heaviness. Canticles v., the Spouse saith, “Her heart was gone;” or, “My soul failed within me.” And if we look into Psalm cxliii., we find, at the 4th verse, that the Psalmist saith, “My spirit is overwhelmed, and my heart within me is desolate.” What do all these expressions

high, great and many, speak, but this truth that is now before us ?

For the more full clearing and opening of it, I shall labour to show—

First, How far it is possible for a good man to be discouraged, or cast down.

Secondly, How it doth come to pass that he is so discouraged.

Thirdly, How those discouragements can stand with his grace and goodness.

Fourthly, How they may be healed and cured.

And first. If you ask, How far the discouragements of saints may reach ? For, will some say, I know it is possible that the most gracious, holy man, may be much discouraged, but not with such discouragements as mine are.

1. I answer. What are yours ? Are you so far disquieted, discouraged, cast down, as to refuse the word, promise, or consolation that is brought unto you ? So far may the discouragements of the saints extend : Psalm lxxvii., verse 3, “I remembered God, and was troubled.” He doth not say, I remembered my sin, and was troubled, but God ; Yea, I was not only troubled, but “I did complain, and my spirit was overwhelmed within me.” But when the promise came, and mercy came, and comfort came, did he refuse that too ? Yes : verse 2, “My soul refuseth to be comforted.”

2. Are you so far discouraged, disquieted, cast down, that your very body feeleth the smart of your discouragements ? that you do not only refuse the promise, and all comfort for your soul, but even for your body ? Then look into Psalm cii., and see if your case may not be paralleled, verse 4, “My heart is smitten and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread :” verse 5, “By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my skin :” verse 6, “I am like a pelican of the wilderness, and I am like an owl of the desert :” verse 9, “I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping :” verse 10, “Because of thine indignation and thy wrath ; for thou hast lifted me up and cast me down :” verse 11, “My days are like a shadow that declineth ; and I am withered like grass.” Oh, but I am not only so far discouraged, as to refuse comfort for

soul and body, but my soul refuseth duty, and casts off duty too for the present.

3. Therefore, it is possible, that a good and gracious man's discouragements may extend thus far too. You will think it strange that I find an instance for this in that holy man Jeremiah; yet if you look into Jer. xx. 7—9, you find it made good. Indeed, saith he, "The word was as fire in my bones, and I could not forbear." But for the time he did resolve to forbear preaching in the name of God, which was his duty, which he had commission to do: for, says he, "I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name." This holy, gracious man, was under temptation, he was much discouraged, and thereupon he said so. Yet, verse 13, he saith, "Sing to the Lord, praise the Lord; for he hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evil doers." But then mark the next words; "Cursed be the day wherein I was born; let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed." "Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born to thee." What a sudden change was here, even in the best of the saints, from encouragements to discouragements. Oh, but I have not only cursed the day of my birth, as Jeremiah, and wished that I had never been born; but I am weary of my life, and have sought after mine own death: and was there ever any godly, gracious man, that was thus discouraged, and cast down?

Yes. What think you of Job? "I was weary of my life," x. 1. And in the iiird chapter, Job, pouring out his complaint in regard of himself, he saith, verse 20, "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul?" verse 21, "Which long for death, but it cometh not, and dig for it more than for hid treasures." Now ye know, that those which dig for gold and silver, dig industriously and earnestly. Thus it is with me, says Job, I am so afflicted, and distressed; and in such bitterness of soul, that I long for death, and dig for it as for hid treasures.

Oh, what a mighty deep of discouragements, may the saints and people of God fall into, and yet be godly, gracious!

Secondly, But why doth God suffer his own people and dearest children to be thus discouraged, and their peace to

be interrupted? I know, will some say, that all our present joy and comfort, is but a creature, and so may be eclipsed; and that Satan is near unto the best of God's children, thrusting and pushing them forward into these discouragements, that they may be like unto himself who is a discouraged spirit: but why will God suffer it to be so?

In general, it is for their good, for their good they have, and for their good they do want their peace and comfort.* The star which led the wise men to Christ, did not always go before them, but sometimes it appeared, sometimes it was hidden from them: but both appearance and hiding was for their benefit; its first appearance invited them to Christ, and its withdrawance made them more diligent in seeking after him. So when Christ hid himself from his mother Mary, she sought him the more, and when she found him, she rejoiced the more: but both his absence and his presence, her fear and her comfort, was for her good; for his absence did increase and draw out her desires, and his presence did increase and draw out her joys. When God is absent from us, then we have testimonies of our love to God, by our desires after him; and when he is present, then we have testimonies of his love to us, by the shines of his countenance; so that whether God shines or not, whether we have comfort or not, both is for our good. Thus in the general, but yet more particularly.

1. Ye know it is God's way and manner to deal with the children of men, according to their own dispositions, to stoop and condescend unto their infirmities: therefore says the prophet Hosea, "He draws us with the cords of a man." Hosea xi. 4. Now it is man's disposition to come to God at the second hand: so long as man can find a fulness in any creature, he comes not to God; but first he sees an emptiness in the creature, duty and ordinance, and then he says, Oh what a fulness is in God himself, in Christ himself! "The widow that is desolate, trusteth in God," 1 Tim. v. 5; though a widow, yet if not desolate, sometimes, she

* Sic verus justitiæ sol nonnunquam oritur et ad nos accedit aliquando rursum a nostro climate aberrat utrumque tamen beneficium nostrum est.

Frumentum in terram jactum eget aliquo tempore ut congelatur et induretur aliquo etiam ut molliatur neutrum illi obest, utrumque necessarium est unum ut crescat alterum ut radices agat. Granat.

would not trust; and therefore God suffers a desolation to come upon her widowhood. When David's men took up stones to have stoned him, then, says the text, "He encouraged himself in the Lord his God," 1 Sam. xxx. 6. So long as man hath encouragement elsewhere, he doth not encourage himself in the Lord his God. This being man's nature, and God having a design of love upon his own children, he suffers a damp and discouragement to pass upon all their comforts: their peace to be interrupted, their hearts disquieted, and their souls discouraged, that so they may encourage themselves in God alone.

2. This inward peace and quietness of soul, is so great a commodity, that God would have the price to be enhanced and raised. Common and ordinary blessings once lost, and found again, are extraordinary: it is a common and ordinary mercy that a man sits in his shop, and walks up and down in his trade; but if he be sick awhile, lose his health, and not able for five or six weeks to look into his shop; if then he can get down but one day, Oh, says he, what an extraordinary mercy and blessing is it, that I should go down again: thus the interruption of an ordinary blessing does raise it to an extraordinary. So long as a man hath his health and strength, though he be able to travel forty, fifty, three-score miles a day, he is not much affected therewith; but if he be sick a little, and at death's door, and then begins to recover, though he can but put forth his hand, or stir his leg, he blesses God, and says, Oh, friends, I can stir myself in my bed, I can move my hand, or my leg; what an extraordinary mercy and blessing is this! So in this case, so long as a man hath inward peace and quietness of soul, without interruption, he looks upon it as a common mercy and blessing; but if his peace be a little interrupted, and his soul buffeted by Satan, and then he recovers his peace, Oh, says he, what an extraordinary blessing and mercy is this! Now God will sometimes raise the price of this commodity from an ordinary to an extraordinary blessing, and therefore he doth suffer his own children and dearest servants to be thus discouraged, and their peace to be interrupted.

3. God is a tender Father, and he would have all the love of his children; he would not have his children to love their nurse more than himself: our joy and peace and comfort, is

but the nurse of our graces; now when God sees that his children fall in love more with the nurse than with himself, then he removes the nurse, and causes their peace to be suspended and interrupted: he will not have the nurse to be loved more than himself.

4. Sometimes God doth suffer this cloud to arise upon the peace and comforts of his people, that he may train them up unto more perfection; comfort is the children's milk: ye may observe, therefore, that the weaker christian hath sometimes more lively, sensible comforts, than the stronger christian hath; why? but because this inward joy and peace and comfort, is that milk and sweet honey, whereby they are drawn off from the pleasures and sweetness of the world; and as these comforts do wean us from the world's comforts, so we have need to be weaned again from these weaners, which God doth sometimes by restraining of them, and so we grow up unto more perfection.*

5. Sometimes, again, God sees his children do grow vain and light and frothy and wanton and secure under their peace and comfort, and then he withdraws himself, hides his face, and so they do lose their comfort. This was the case in Canticles v, where the spouse saith, "My soul faileth within me," at verse 6. But why? "I opened to my Beloved, but my Beloved had withdrawn himself:" and why had he withdrawn himself? He comes and makes a tender of love and mercy, verse 2, and she would none, verse 3, "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" that is, I am now laid to sleep; they are words that import security, and upon her security he withdraws himself, and being withdrawn, her soul fails within her. And thus it is many times with the children of God in their particulars; the Lord sees that they grow secure, vain, frothy and wanton under their peace and comfort, then he withdraws himself, and their peace faileth.

6. Our Lord and Saviour Christ is a tender chirurgion, who hath set all our bones which we ourselves have broken

* Ignorandum non est consolationes spirituales esse infantium cibum et lac dulce quo Deus nutrit suos et a mundi voluptatibus avocat ut harum voluptatum inescati dulcedine alias omnes consolationes contemnunt et amoris divini dulcedine capti omnem amorem mundi abjiciant.

Deus negat suis consolationes ut fiant perfectiores.—Granat.

by our sins. You know that a wise and an honest chirurghion, though he desire his patient may be quickly cured, yet if he sees the plaister doth not lie right, he takes it off again, for it is not laid right, saith he: so doth Christ do, he sees that the comforts of his people sometimes are not right laid, and therefore, saith he, though I desire this poor wounded soul may be quickly cured, yet because this comfort, this promise, this experience doth not lie right, it must be taken off again. Now the comforts of the saints are so laid sometimes, as the very laying of them doth breed discomfort. As in the sowing of seed; it is not enough that the seed be good, but it must be well sown, else the very sowing thereof may cause weeds: so though light be sown for the righteous, yet sometimes it so is sown, as that the very sowing thereof doth breed these weeds of fears and discouragements, that you may say, and that without prophecy, Here is a poor soul that ere long will be much discouraged, though for the present full of comfort.

But this is hard to say: can ye foretel a man's discouragements, even in the time of his comfort? Who is there among all the saints so comforted, concerning whom you may say, Surely this man will be much discouraged again?

When a man, a good man, doth lay his spiritual comfort upon outward blessings, you may say beforehand, this man's comfort will never hold, but ere long he will be much disquieted; and this was the reason why the saints in the time of the Old Testament, laboured under so many discouragements, even because they measured the love of God so much by these outward blessings. Psalm cxliii. 4, "Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me." Why so? Verse 3, "Because the enemy prevailed:" he measured God's love too much by these outward things, and therefore when the enemy broke in upon him, he thought God did not love him, and so he was overwhelmed; thus in regard of all outward blessings. Seest thou therefore a man who raiseth his persuasion of God's love from the smiles of any creature, say of such a man beforehand, Oh, this poor soul ere long, will be in the dark, and under some discouragements.

When a man is unthankful for true peace, and unhumbléd for false peace, he cannot hold his peace long. Before a man is converted, he hath peace within; "For when the strong

man keeps the house, all is at peace ;” but it is false peace : after a man is converted, he hath peace within, and it is true peace ; God expecteth that a man should be humbled for his former false peace, and thankful for his present true peace. Now when God sees one both unhumbled for false peace, and unthankful for his present true peace, the Spirit of the Lord is grieved, so it withdraweth, and the soul is comfortless.

When a man doth raise his comfort only from somewhat that he doth find within himself ; from grace that he doth find within, and not from grace without ; from Christ within, and not from Christ without ; then his comfort will not hold ; *perpetuum est quod habet causam perpetuantem*, that is perpetual, which hath a perpetuating cause : grace without is perpetual, Christ’s own personal obedience in the merit of it, is perpetual ; but the actings of grace within us, are not perpetual, or not perpetually obvious to sight, and therefore cannot perpetually comfort. Indeed, our grace within, and obedience, is in some respects a cause of our peace. 1st, A *causa sine qua non*, a cause without which we can have no comfort ; for a godly man can have no comfort, if he have no obedience. 2ndly, A cause which doth, *removere prohibens*, remove what hinders our comfort, namely, our sin. 3rdly A cause witnessing : for there are three that bear witness, the Spirit, water and blood ; water, which is our sanctification, is one. 4thly, A cause confirming ; for by our obedience and sanctification, our justification is confirmed, and the sense thereof ; so that obedience is one cause, but not the only cause of our peace, nor the principal : when therefore you see the streams of a man’s comfort run in this channel, raising all his comfort only, or principally from his obedience, or acting of grace within, then you may say, though the stream be now full, stay but a little, and ere long you will see it dried, and this man will be much discouraged.

When a man, a good man doth lay his comfort, rather upon the impression, or comings in of the word, than upon the word itself. For example, suppose a man take the Bible, and upon the opening thereof doth pitch on some promise : for the present he is much refreshed and comforted : or suppose that he doth not open the Bible, nor read the Scripture, but sitting down in a dark condition, some promise

doth come to him which before he thought not of; now at the coming of this promise, his heart is much raised, warmed and comforted, insomuch that he concludeth, saying, Now I am a child of God, now I know that God loves me, that I have a share in Christ: either this man raiseth his comfort from the word itself, or from the comings in of the word; if from the word itself, how can his comfort die? if upon the bare coming in of the word, how can his comfort live? For when a word comes not, then his comforts fail. We read in Psalm xvi., that "he shall multiply sorrows that hasteneth after another:" your translation reads it thus, "Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another God;" but the word God, *יֵרֵבוּ עֲצֻבוֹתָם אַחֵר מֵאֵל*, is not in the Hebrew. The whole verse are the words of Christ; what saith he at verse 2? "Oh my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord, my goodness, holiness, or righteousness is not for thee, but for the saints that are in the earth, and for the excellent in whom is all my delight." But O Lord, our Saviour, what if we do not go to thy goodness, holiness and righteousness, resting upon that alone? He answereth, "Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten after another." And is not this to hasten after another, when men rest upon the bare coming in of the word, or the impressions on the heart that are made thereby? Where do we read in all the Scripture, turn from one end of the Bible to the other, where do we read that Christ hath appointed any such way of comfort as this, that a man should raise his comforts from pitching, or by an opening of the book? If I pitch upon a promise to-day, and so have comfort, may I not pitch upon a threatening to morrow, and so have no comfort again? Where hath Christ appointed any such way as this, that I should measure God's love, or cast my everlasting condition by the coming in of a particular word? Indeed, God doth sometimes by his providence, upon the opening of the Bible, cause our eye to fall upon some promise, which is a providential comfort; he doth sometimes send a particular word to stay and bear up ones soul in a particular distress or affliction, but not that I should measure his everlasting love, or cast my condition by the coming in of every word. This therefore is to hasten after another; and how many sorrows are multiplied upon the hearts of

God's people hereby? How many poor souls are there that walk in this way! God our Father sees it, that the plaister is not right laid, and so he is fain to take it off, but all from a design of love, to lay it right; and for these reasons God suffers his own people to be much discouraged.

Thirdly, but how can all this stand with grace? Can a man be thus comforted and discouraged, discouraged and then comforted again? thus to and fro in his comfort, yet in Christ, yet gracious, yet holy?

Yes: for though there be much evil in this traversing up and down, yet in the saints there is still a mixture of some grace withal, some grace mixed with their discouragements.* Take the saints and people of God, and though they be much discouraged and cast down, yet still they mourn after God; and though they cannot wait so patiently as they would, yet they say in truth, if they did but know that God would come at last, they would wait all their lives; here is grace; and though they cannot mourn for sins past, for which they are most disquieted, yet they dare not put forth their hand willingly unto any sin present. I have read of one that was so troubled and cast down, that he said and thought, I find so little comfort in my soul, that I would willingly suffer my body to live in burning fire until Christ's coming, so that I might but have the assurance of God's love and favour; and though I am persuaded I shall go to hell, yet my hope is, that my pains here will be mitigated there, in all which trouble, saith my author, nothing in the world could persuade him to do any thing willingly that was displeasing to God; this man was at the last comforted, and then he would often say, The devil took advantage of my sorrow for evil things, to make me unthankful for good things. But I speak this to shew, that the saints are never so discouraged, but still there is a grace that is mixed withal, they dare not sin.† Yea, and though by their very discouragements, they do sin against the gospel in unbelief,

* *Revertre anima mea in requiem tuam, Psal. cxvi., observemus verbum revertendi quo admonemur, fieri quidem subinde, ut animus piorum optata requie privatur et variis discriminibus inquietetur verum juxta id accidere consolationis quod suo tempore conceditur illis divinitus ut ad quietam suam revertantur. Muscul. in Psal. cxvi.*

† שמריִם Faeces a שמר custodivit quia vina sua vi conservant.

yet by the same discouragements they are kept from their sins against the law, these discouragements being as the lees that do keep the wines.

Yea, and though they do rest too much upon their righteousness, whereby their feet sink into divers sloughs, yet it is because they would be the more obedient to God their Father, and in the midst of all their discouragement profess in truth, I would give all the world for the presence of God; here is grace, a mixture of grace withal; no marvel therefore, that these discouragements may be in a godly gracious man.

But is there no evil in this, to be thus fluctuating to and fro, comforted and then discouraged? is there no evil in these discouragements?

Much, very much; I shall not enter into the particulars. But how can they improve Christ as they should in this condition? So long as a man's title for his land is in question, he cannot sow his ground, nor build houses; and if you ask him, Why do not you sow your ground, and repair your houses? his answer is ready, I dare not lay out much cost, because my title is in question: so here, so long as a man's title to Christ is in question, he cannot improve Christ as he should. If a man be going a journey, and know not his way, he loseth much of his way and of the comfort of it in inquiring after the way, and thinking whether he be right or wrong; when he comes at three or four turnings, there he stands while he might ride a mile, and when he comes above in the field, and sees a shepherd at a distance from him, he rides up to him to inquire whether he be in his way or not; yea, and all the day long he is thinking of his way, whether he be right; whereas, if he knew his way, he might have many precious thoughts of God and of the word. So in this case, while a man is doubting and fearing, and knows not whether he be in the way to heaven or no, how much precious time is lost! thoughts of Christ lost! thankfulness for mercy lost! Of all hearts, the Scripture saith, an unbelieving heart is an evil heart; and when men's hearts are discouraged and cast down, are they not unbelieving? Who would not therefore take heed of these discouragements, and of the interruption of their peace?

Fourthly, but suppose now that I have lost my comforts?

Times were heretofore, when my soul was full of joy, but now I am quite discouraged; what should a poor soul do to recover his peace and comfort again, that uninterrupted peace may be restored?

Some things by way of question; some things by way of doctrine.

1. Hast thou forgot the years of the right hand of the Most High? hast thou lost all thy experience too? I know that usually when our comforts fail, our former experiences fail, yet not always; for the Psalmist saith here, "My soul is cast down," yet at the same time, verse 6, he saith, "Therefore I will remember thee from the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." So Psalm lxxvii. The Psalmist having said at the 7th verse, "Will the Lord cast off for ever; and will he be favourable no more; is his mercy clean gone for ever; and doth his promise fail for evermore? hath God forgotten to be gracious?" he addeth in the same breath, "But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." Ye know what the disciples said, "Did not our hearts glow within us while he opened the scriptures to us?" Luke xxiv. 32. Beloved! you have no comfort now, well, but you remember at such a time, when you were all alone in your chamber, and no soul was near you, how the Lord came and opened the scriptures, the promise to your soul, wherewith your heart did glow within you. Have you quite forgotten the openings of those scriptures to you; (I speak not of the glowings, for I suppose they are now gone) but are the scriptures gone that were then opened to you; did not you say in your last trouble and down-cast condition, if ever the Lord appear to me again, I will never doubt of his mercy more; and did he not appear unto you and open the promise unto your heart; and have you now forgotten these things? this is your infirmity, why should you not remember the days and times and works and experiences of the right hand of the Most High?

2. Do you not use the means for the restoring of your comforts in such a manner, as thereby you do lose them more? A man may have great desire after some preferment and place, which many ride for, but one is so hasty that he rides over hedge and ditch, and thereby falls and hurts himself, so others get before him, and by his too much

haste, he doth lose his place. Thus it is sometimes with good people, they make so much haste to their comfort, that they lose it by their haste; they would have it sooner if they went on in an ordinary way of waiting on God without such posting haste; but they must have it to-day; oh let me know my interest in Christ to-day, saith one, or else I am undone for ever. Thus, by stinting and limiting God to a time, they tempt the Holy One, and so are more distant from their comfort; the more the child cries, and is froward under the rod, the longer is the rod continued.

Some seek comfort in a way of reason, and think to reason out their temptation, and to reason in their comfort, but as one saith well, Dispute not with God lest you be confounded, dispute not with Satan lest you be deceived.

Some again tire themselves in duty, neglecting of their calling; the truth is, prayer is a friend to comfort, and more than ordinary time is to be used in prayer for those that are troubled in conscience, but when men under temptations, and without comforts throw up their callings, thinking that nothing is to be done but prayer, by throwing aside their calling, they lay themselves open to more temptations of Satan, they do so tire out their natural spirits in duty, that they are flat and dead in duty, so their temptations are the more increased, and their comforts more distanced. Wherefore consider, if you would have comfort restored again, whether you do not use the means of comfort in such a manner, as to set you at a further distance from it.

3. Whether have you not strained, and reached for some outward comfort so far, as to lose your inward comfort? I read of Francis Spira, that when he was in horror of conscience, he could not with peace and quietness behold his wife and children, for, to get an estate for them he denied the truth, and therefore when they came before him in his trouble, he cried out in much horror, How terrible is the sight of these to me! They had been comforts to him before, yet now he could not away with the sight of them. Oh, thought he, for your sakes, and for your provision, I have denied the truth and yielded to these superstitions; and therefore says he, How terrible is the sight of these unto me! What peace or comfort had Judas in the sight of his thirty pence? Look what outward comfort a man strains his conscience for,

that will be death unto him to behold. We read of David, that when his men had ventured for the waters of Bethlehem, he would not drink of it, but poured it out before the Lord, for, saith he, "Why should I drink the blood of these men?" He did not sin in desiring of it, nor did he command his men for to venture through the enemy's quarters, for those Hebrew words, מי יחי, *quis dabit*, who will give me? are but words of wishing, who will give me to drink of the waters of Bethlehem; that is, Oh, that I had the waters of Bethlehem: according to the Hebrew language, but though he sinned not in his desires, yet when he had the waters, he poured them forth before the Lord, and said, "God forbid that I should drink the blood of these men;" and will you drink the blood of your own conscience? Time was heretofore when you had peace and comfort, and by straining and stretching your conscience for your outward comfort, now you have lost your inward, will you not then take that outward comfort, and pour it forth before the Lord, and say, God forbid that I should drink the blood of mine own peace and comfort? How can any of you have peace, while those stolen and unrestored goods lie by you?

But alas! all my comforts do lie prostrate at the feet of my fears, that now I have no peace at all: what shall I do that my peace and comfort may be restored?

By way of direction, three things.

1. Look what you would do if you were to be justified, and do the same now: if I were to be justified, having a sight of my own sin and nature, I would, through grace, come to the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and leave the weight of my poor, guilty soul upon it; which act of faith would justify me, and give me peace; for "being justified by faith (saith the apostle), we have peace with God."

And as faith doth justify and give peace at the first, so the renewing of this act of faith doth renew our peace; and what is my justifying faith, but in time of temptation to leave myself and condition upon Christ alone, saying, Whether godly or ungodly, whether in Christ or not in Christ, now I do not dispute, but leave myself upon Christ alone: this do again, and this will bring peace again.

2. You have now lost your comforts and the shinings of God's face: either God has withdrawn himself for your sin,

or not; if not for your sin, he will return again, and that quickly too; if for your sin, labour more and more for to find it out, and to be humbled for it.

I know you will say, Oh, but now in this condition I cannot be humbled.

But withal remember, that in this condition, that goes for humbling which doth not before, and God will take that for humiliation now, which he would not take before. Psalm xxxii., saith David, "I said I will confess my transgression unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." *Dixit non fecit*, saith Austin, he said he would do it, but did not do it fully, yet thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. God took his humiliation although it was very low. Why? Verse 3, 4, we find him under temptation and in much discouragement, for saith he, "My bones waxed old with my roaring all the day long, day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer," yet how ready was God to receive an acknowledgment, and a little humiliation from him at this time.

Oh, but what is all this to us? this was David's case. Nay, saith David, this is not my case alone, for verse 6, "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayest be found." God will receive a little when you are much discouraged. Either therefore God hath withdrawn for your sin, or not; if not, wait but a little, he will return again; if for your sin, labour more and more to be humbled for it, for he will receive that measure of humiliation now, which he will not do at any other time.

3. Are all your comforts gone, and would you have them fain restored? Then read and read the Scripture much; if you cannot read yourself, get some others for to read them to you. When a man's mind is empty, as in temptation and want of comfort, it is empty of Christ, and full of fear, then it doth grind itself, as a quern or mill when empty of corn, one stone grinds another: the more full a man's mind is, the more free from temptations and fears. Now Scripture matter is the most filling matter, the more ye see Christ walking in the sweet shades of divine love toward poor sinners, the sooner will your faith revive, and your comforts be restored; and where can you see Jesus Christ walking, and taking his turns with poor sinners under the shades of

divine love, but in the Scriptures? stand there awhile, and you shall see him, and your heart will say, And why not one turn of love with me, oh my Saviour? Study, read, and read much the scriptures.

But if I do read the scriptures, and read them much, I shall then meet with some promise, possibly many, and now I cannot apply them being thus discouraged as I am, I shall see the promises indeed, and say, There is such and such an old friend of mine, but it is now mine enemy, the promise will not own me, and I cannot apply it, and so it will do me no good.

Ye cannot tell what the promise will do till you come to apply it; the promise never gives down its power and strength till it be applied, it doth then work when it is put to work, and not before. When Moses saw his rod turned into a serpent, he was afraid of it, and fled from it, but when he put forth his hand and took it by the tail, it was a rod in his hand again, as it was before; it may be you look upon such and such a promise at a distance, and you say, Oh, there is my enemy, now it will not help me, it will sting me, it will undo me, but put forth your hand again to it, and it will become a promise, a rod in your hand, as comfortable as ever it was before.

And doth not the promise come to you? go you to it. Sometimes the promise doth come to us, sometimes we go to it; when the promise doth come to you, you have joy, when you go to it, you have peace, and this peace may last longer than the other joy; but remember this as an everlasting rule, that your very relying upon the promise doth make it yours.

But if I do read the scriptures much in this condition of my discouragement, I shall not only meet with the promise, but with a threatening, and that will discourage me more.

Not so, for if a threatening make way to the promise, and doth therefore come forth to meet you, that it may lead you to the promise, have you any hurt thereby? Now as the law was a schoolmaster to bring to Christ, so sometimes the threatening is a schoolmaster to bring you to the promise.

Yea, and God doth therefore sometimes send the threatening that it may lead you to the promise. You know how

God appeared to Elijah, first in a wind that did shake the mountains and rocks, but God was not there; then in an earthquake, but God was not there; then in a fire, but God was not there; then in a still voice, and there was God. So when God appears to a soul, sometimes he doth first send a threatening, and shakes the rocks and mountains, and hard hearts, and his converting grace may not be there, but there is a still voice behind, the voice of the promise, God is there, and all this shaking of the threatening, is but to make way unto the still voice of the promise that is behind.

Oh, but if I should read the scriptures much in this condition, I should meet with many other things which concern not me, there are many histories in the Scripture which suit not with my condition, and so I should get no good or comfort.

Say not so; Christ cures, *per modum divertentie*, by way of divertency, as you do those that are grieved. If a friend have lost a husband, or wife, or child, you do not speak of the lost person and say, Oh, what a sweet friend, or husband, or wife, or child you have lost; but you speak of something else, and then afterwards you are able to speak of the person lost, but first you divert his mind from the matter of his grief, and so you do cure his grief. Thus doth Christ also when he cures a poor, wounded, grieved soul, he doth not always speak to the subject matter of grief in hand, but leads the heart sometimes into the consideration of other truths, and then afterwards doth speak unto the matter that is now concerning; he cures by way of divertency.

Study therefore, oh, study the Scriptures much, for thus the Lord will pour wine and oil into your bleeding wounds, and in due time you will say, as David did, "In the multitude of my thoughts, O Lord, thy comforts have comforted my soul," Psalm xciv. 19.

But suppose the Lord do restore to me the joy of my salvation, that the bones which I have broken may rejoice; suppose there be a return of peace and joy, what shall I do then?

I shall not need to tell you what then, you will tell me what then, for you will say, Oh, now I must be thankful, now

I must believe, now I will never doubt of mercy and of grace again. Only take these few words of advice.

Be sure that you understand your comforts rightly; be not mistaken in them: labour to distil and refine your comforts. As there was a mixed company came out of Egypt, which set the Israelites a murmuring; so there is a mixed company that comes with your comforts. Every creature is born into the world with some filth; when you have comfort, labour to find out and separate the dross and filth, put away that mixed company. Rose leaves keep not long in the leaf: distilled comforts keep the longest.

If you would be rid of Satan from coming into your quarters, fall you upon his; the way to keep the enemy out of our country, is to fall into his. So deal with Satan, do him all the mischief you can; be not barely offensive, up and be doing against him.

If you would keep your comforts, put them all into the hand of Christ to be kept for you. A child that knows not how to keep his money, if he get a penny from any friend, he brings it to his father or mother, and saith, Mother, pray keep this penny for me. You have experience that you cannot keep your own comforts, you will lose and spend them quickly. As Jesus Christ is the Lord Treasurer of all our graces, so he is the Lord Keeper of all our comforts; and therefore, when God is pleased to give in any comfort to you, go to Jesus Christ, and say, Lord, keep my comforts for me, keep my evidences for me, keep my assurance for me: ye must not only depend upon Christ for graces, but for comforts; and as well for the keeping, as for the getting of them.

As you have any spiritual comfort from Christ, spend all for Christ: for though in temporal things, the way to have little, is to spend much; yet in spiritual things, the more you spend, the more you have. And therefore, whatsoever comfort you have, spend it with the saints. Do as Moses did: when Moses was in Pharaoh's court, and in great preferment, standing in the presence of the king, he went out to visit his brethren, and to comfort them under their burdens: "I will see (saith he) how it fares with my brethren, under their burdens." So do you also. Hath the Lord spoken peace and comfort to your soul, and do you now

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

And thus I have also done with this second argument.

SERMON III.

SAINTS SHOULD NOT BE DISCOURAGED WHATEVER THEIR
CONDITION BE.

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

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

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

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

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