

SERMON III.

THE DISEASES THAT MAKE A STOPPAGE TO ENGLAND'S MERCIES DISCOVERED, AND ATTENDED WITH THEIR REMEDIES.

DELIVERED IN A SERMON AT ST. MARGARET'S ON FISH STREET HILL,
LONDON.

"Thy destruction is of thyself, but thy salvation is of me."
"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."—Luke xiii.

PREACHED IN 1642.

PREFACE.

TO THE READER.—It is God's wont to warn before he smite a people, thereby walking himself after his own rule, Deut. xx. 10, 13, who would have no city to be destroyed until peace hath first been offered to it. The sword of the Lord is ever drawn, his bow bent, his arrows prepared, his instruments of death made ready, his cup mingled; yet he doth not use to pour down his plagues, until he hath rained a shower of mercy before them: he doth not surprise men at unawares. God never discharges his murdering pieces, until he hath first discharged his warning ones: *pax domini*, Luke x., "Peace to this house," was sounded at every door where the apostles came. All ages and nations will bear witness to this truth; the old world, Sodom, Pharaoh, &c.: but no nation or age can better subscribe to God's goodness and fair dealing in this, than we, who have been warned sometimes by prodigious signs, as by the appearance of that wonderful comet, A. D. 1618, as importing some strange changes which we have seen and heard since; and as if its last influence might seem to end in this island when it blazed over England, it was seen no more; and Herlicius Stargardensis, a noted astrologer, held, that its influence was like to continue between twenty and thirty years. Sometimes by his ministers, by his administration of justice, and dealing with other nations: how long hath the sword walked circuit in Germany and in Ireland? Sometimes by lesser and lighter judgments: how long hath the plague continued in this city without intermission? Sometimes by taking many godly out of the world, and the removing many others out of the kingdom, who were wont to stand in the gap; sometimes by a general withdrawing himself, pulling down his hangings, not assisting his ordinances, &c. And unless we will wilfully shut our eyes, how hath the goodness, patience, bounty, merciful and powerful dealings of God towards us, and for us of late, been as an hand put forth to lead us home unto him, to cause us to meet him, and take warning, that we might prevent these wasting calamities that are gathered together in a black cloud, as though they meant to empty themselves in a shower of blood upon our heads? But we are so far from taking warning, that we study to hasten our own ruin: almost every one instead of bringing his bucket of water to quench the fire that is already flaming about our ears, brings

their bellows in their hands to blow up these coals of dissension in all places, so that now not only is there a kingdom divided, but the head and the members divided, and the members among themselves, cities and towns divided, yea families divided, parents against children, brother against brother, and familiar friends become bitter enemies one to another; the most sure symptom and presage of a fearful desolation to fall upon all, unless some speedy remedy be applied to this desperate disease, and the great God himself become our physician and heal our distempers. I shall desire to commend these two Sermons (the third and fourth of this volume) to thy serious consideration: in the one thou shalt see there is a stoppage made of God's mercies, who was coming to heal us but we would not be healed; the causes are discovered and the remedies prescribed, that could we so go to work to open these stoppings, and bring God again into the way of his mercies; could we see our sins removed and God returned, I might then truly say that there would be yet hope for England: the other Sermon is a preparative to bear that cross that so many have already on their backs, viz. of being turned out of all our earthly comforts; a sad calamity indeed, but now too usual; and when so many of our neighbour's houses are on fire, why should we think to escape scot free that are as deep in sin as they? Being, therefore, forewarned, let us be forearmed, and get into God and his favour, as that one necessary thing for us all to look after, as the only means to keep us from sinking under the waves that flow in upon all, especially on God's people; experience shewing, that if we will live in the power of godliness, and not walk in the same excess of riot with the world, we shall make ourselves a prey, and had need to have our helmets on to catch the blows that fall upon us, and resolve to sit loose from the world, that we may suffer the spoiling of our goods with joy, and be able to say with that noble Spartan, who being told, 1. of the death of his children, answered: I knew well they were all begot mortal. 2. That his goods were confiscate: I knew what was but for mine use was not mine. 3. That his honour was gone: I knew no glory could be everlasting on this miserable earth. 4. That his sentence was to die: That is nothing; nature hath given the like sentence both of my condemners and of me. Now should we get a stock of faith, and learn how to use it, to live by it when our lands, our stocks, our trades, our friends, our wit, our shifts (as the ordinary means of our livelihood) shall fail us. That we may live not only above our fears and troubles and doubts, but above the world, above ourselves, in God and in Christ, in whom we may see supply to all our wants, satisfaction to all our desires, and have recompense for all our losses, and every thing that may make for our good and welfare: light in our darkness, life in our death, strength in our weakness, riches in our poverty; and comfort ourselves, that we serve a Master that will one day right all our wrongs, reckoning the injuries that be done to his as done to himself; so that we should not think much to part with our country, our children, our possessions, our life, if the world will take them from us, for Christ and his gospel's sake. All these, and much better than these shall be restored to us one day; and we may say thus to ourselves: Yet I am not miserable so long as my Redeemer is happy; he lives, and I shall live with him. Men may take from me my goods, but they cannot rob me of my grace; they may banish me from my country, but not from heaven; take from me my life, but not my happiness: no, my faith, my heaven, my soul, my happiness is in his keeping, that will safely preserve them for me, and me for them. But I fear I have held thee too long in the porch, I shall now open thee the door and let thee in, praying God to make those lessons as profitable to thee, as the Au-

thor's desire was they might both in his preaching them and his willingness to have them published for the public good.

J. A.

“ So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men, and they fled before the men of Ai.”—JOSH. vii. 4.

IN this chapter you have a treatise concerning Achan's sin, branching itself into three parts; one concerning the commission of the sin, the second concerning the discovery of it, and the third concerning the punishment thereof. As for the sin itself, the commission thereof, what it was, you read in the first verse, that the children of Israel had committed a trespass. God had commanded that all the spoil of Jericho should be consecrated unto himself, and that the first fruits of all should be his. Jericho being the first city that they took in the land of Canaan, by right it did belong unto God; all the treasure, silver and gold, wealth and goods that was therein, properly it did belong unto God. Now Achan he plays the thief, and does appropriate some of God's goods and wealth unto himself. This was charged upon him as a sin, and so upon all Israel, as at the first verse: keeping from God any thing that does belong unto him, is a sin. Now in the second place this sin was discovered by occasion of the defeat that was before the town of Ai. They passing on from Jericho, at the second verse, unto the town of Ai, they laid siege to it; but their siege was broken up, and three thousand men fled, and thirty-six men were slain, verses 4, 5. Sins committed in one city, will follow us unto another, and overtake us there. Oh what unexpected ways and means hath God for to bring out men's sin to light. Three thousand men flee before the men of Ai, and thirty-six men are slain, and this was made the means of discovery of Achan's sin; who would have thought that there should have been such a discovery as this?

The work was hindered by this defeat, and that sets them on work to search out the cause, and shews,

That afflictions should set us on work, to search out our sins, and the cause of them.

That sins shall not always be pocketed up, but shall be discovered, though never so secret.

That God hath strange ways to discover men's sins.

But why must the children of Israel be beaten here by the men of Ai, and why must one man's sin be punished upon all? Surely the children of Israel were in covenant one with another, and so being in covenant together, the sin of the one not being punished by the rest, was charged upon all the rest. As for England, either we are in covenant one with another, or else we are not; either there is a national covenant, or else there is not. If there be not a national covenant, as was among the Jews, why do we not rather say, the churches of England, than the church? And if there be a national covenant, the sin of one is made the sin of the rest, what sins do we bring upon ourselves. But they must flee before the men of Ai; why? Because that the men of Ai were to be destroyed with a great destruction. Therefore God does first suffer them to prevail, the more to embitter and stir up the spirits of Israel against them: this did provoke them.

Whence I take up these two observations:

The first is this: Where God is in a way of mercy towards a people, there sin makes a stoppage in his proceedings.

The second is this: When God intends utterly to destroy his enemies, he does first suffer his own servants, and dearest children to flee and fall before them.

Concerning the first:

First, Where God is in a way of mercy towards his people, there sin does make a stoppage in his proceedings; so here God was in a way of mercy towards his people, carrying of them into the land of Canaan, but in the way they sin, Achan plays the thief; mark what a stoppage this made in the way of mercy; so you have it in Josh. xxiv. 20. Though God be about to do you good, and have done you good, yet "if you forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, he will turn" from the good he is a doing, "and do you hurt, after he hath done you good." So in Jer. xxviii. 9, "At what instant I shall say or speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build, and to plant it:" that is, at what time I shall give sensible testimony of good to a land or nation: "If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good," &c. So that sins committed against God when he is in a way of mercy, do

make a stoppage in those proceedings of mercy. There are these two or three reasons for it:

Sins committed when God is in a way of mercy, are a slighting of mercy. Amongst yourselves, if you be doing any special work before others, that they may take notice of you, and they slight your work, you will leave off work, and work no more; now, I say, when as God is in a way of mercy, and you then sin against him, your sins do slight mercy, nay then, says God, I will turn away; it will make a stoppage in this work.

Again, those mercies that come unto God's people, come unto them in the way of a promise. And God's promises they are either spiritual, concerning spiritual things, or temporal, concerning temporal things. If they be spiritual promises, concerning spiritual things, then they are absolute, bottomed and grounded upon no condition; as the promise he made that "he would drown the world no more," says the prophet Isaiah; such a covenant as he made with Noah, he makes with his people, that runs upon no condition: he doth not say, If the world goes on and serve me, I will drown it no more: but the promise runs upon no condition, and so the promise of grace runs upon no condition: for if it runs upon a condition of faith, God promises to give faith, God promises perseverance, upon the exercise of grace he promises to give the exercise of grace, all spiritual promises run upon no condition. But now outward promises run upon condition, and therefore if men do not keep the condition, God takes himself free, and will turn himself out of the way of his mercy. You have an expression to this purpose, Num. xiv. 34, "After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days (each day for a year) shall you bear your iniquity, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise." Will God break his promise? As much as if he should have said, I have promised to bring you into the land of Canaan, upon such and such conditions; but now, if you do not perform the condition, I count myself free, and you shall know my breach of promise, that I will not give you the thing that I am about to give you.

God never gives his people any mercy, but he gives it them in a way in a way of mercy. He does not think it

enough to give them that which is mercy, but he will give it them in a way of mercy. As now in your gifts to God, if you be gracious, you do not think it enough to do that which is gracious, but do it in a gracious manner; so God in his gifts to you, will not only give you that which is mercy, but he will give it you in a way of mercy: but now if God should be in a way of mercy towards his people, and they sin against him, and he should go on to give them the mercy, they would be hardened in their sin, and so it would not come unto them in the way of mercy. Therefore, if God be in a way of mercy towards his people, and they sin against him, he will break off the course of his mercy, and go another way, and there shall be a stoppage made in these proceedings.

But you will say we see the contrary: who have more blessings, and outward mercies, than the church of Rome? Who more sinful? What adulteries, what idolatries, sorceries, opposition of saints and ministers? And you know what plenty is among them, and God goes on to give them mercy after mercy, outward blessing after outward blessing, and therefore this is not true, we see it in experience otherwise, that our sins do not make a stoppage in the proceedings of mercy.

But for answer hereunto, The thing is not true, God does not go on in a way of blessing and mercy towards them. Beloved, of all afflictions, it is the greatest affliction to be without affliction; of all judgments, it is the greatest judgment to want judgment: as you may see for this purpose, Isa. i., "Why should you be stricken any more; ye will revolt more and more." It is the greatest stroke not to be smitten, and the greatest affliction to be denied affliction, when there is use and need of it: now though the people of Rome, and that party flourish in the world, yet their souls are smitten, God smites them with blindness, and with spiritual death, so that there is a stoppage made in the proceedings of mercy.

But I rather answer it thus: When God is in a way of mercy towards his people, towards his church, then sin will make a stoppage. Those of Rome are no true church, the church was in Babylon, but Babylon was not the church; the church was in Egypt, but Egypt was not the church;

Lot was in Sodom, Sodom was not in Lot's family; Rome is called Babylon, Egypt, and Sodom; they are not the church of God; but if the church of God sin when God is in a way of mercy, a stoppage shall be made rather for them than for others, for these two or three reasons:

They are in God's house, and their sin is greater. The great house of God is as a great man's house, who hath some servants that doth his work abroad in the field, some that tend in his chamber, that are nearer round about him: if those servants that are near him be naught and vile, it makes more to the dishonour of the master, than if those were so that are abroad in the field; now God's people are a people that are round about him, near unto him, his household servants, and therefore if they sin when God is in a way of mercy, God will turn out of that way, and there shall be a stoppage made in God's proceedings.

Their sin is of all others the most scandalous, and therefore the worse, the more dishonouring to God, the more provoking. If two men be drunk, one a professor and the other not; why there is no scandal arises from the drunkenness of him that is no professor; but if a professor be gotten in, and made drunk, they are all so, what a scandal ariseth? And so, if two commit adultery, the one a professor, and the other not, the scandal ariseth from the professor; profession is the ground of scandal. And therefore, 2 Sam. xx. 12, when as Amasa was slain and laid in his blood, the people made a stay and went no further, till they drew him out of the way, and cast a cloth over him; so when a professor falls and lies in his blood, there is a stand made in people's duties and conversations; and therefore just that there should be a stop made in the proceedings of God's mercy.

Their sins are most against the remedy. Sins against the remedy, are the greatest sins: and therefore his sin is greatest that commits adultery being married, than his that commits fornication, though both be evil, because he sins against the remedy; now the people of God have more remedies against sins than others, more light, more grace, more means, more helps; and therefore if they sin when God is in a way of mercy, God will rather make a stoppage in them than in others. Oh, that I might leave this impression upon you

that are professors and godly, that you may take heed how you sin against God.

Why should this be, that so small a sin should turn the great God of heaven out of the way of his mercy? Achan commits but a small sin, and what a mighty stop is made in the way of mercy? So, David numbers the people, it was no great matter, and a plague breaks out presently; what is the reason, that for sins that are little and small, such a stoppage should be made in the proceedings and mercy of the great God?

For answer three things:

1. There is nothing small between God and us, and it is true; if thou hast but the least crumb of bread, it is a great mercy, because it comes from the great God; and if you commit a sin, though never so little in your own eyes, it is great, because committed against the great God; I may boldly say thus much, that men sin a great sin in saying their sin is small.

2. Sometimes what falls short in the greatness of the sin, is made up in the number of sins. Great sins do go alone, smaller sins do go by companies: as with creatures so with sins; you shall observe it so in the heavens, and in the air, and in the water, and in the earth: in the heavens, but one great sun, many less stars; in the air, you have but few great and kingly birds, the eagle she flies alone, but your pigeons that are lesser fly by flights; in the water your great whale goes alone, but your lesser herrings go by shoals; on the earth the great elephant goes alone, your lesser sheep go by flocks, and your hogs by herds; the lesser sands infinite in number, rocks fewer. And so with men's sins; great sins they go alone, but lesser sins go by companies, and oftentimes the number of your lesser sins do make up what is wanting in the greatness of your sin. A man may be drunk but once or twice in his life, in the gross act of it, but he may be so often in drunken company, and spend away so many hours which shall amount to drunkenness; a man may commit adultery but once in his life, but he may have as many unclean thoughts as shall amount to adultery. So, that what falls short in the greatness of sin, is made up in the number; and therefore say not, why should God for a

a little sin turn out of the way of mercy? it may be the number of your little sins amount to the greatest sin.

3. Beloved, God will make good his name to the utmost, and his name is, "A jealous God;" now a husband's jealousy ariseth not when he sees his wife commit adultery, but if he do but see her playing and sporting with a stranger; so God's jealousy ariseth, not only when we commit the gross act of idolatry, when we bow before an idol, but if we be sporting and playing with superstition; for God is a jealous God. And though the husband do not see cause enough to turn away his wife, because of her sporting, and playing, and dallying, he may see cause enough to deny such a courtesy; so God, though he does not give a bill of divorce for such a sin which you count lesser, yet he may see cause enough to make a stoppage in his proceedings of mercy. Thus the doctrine stands firm, when God is in a way of mercy towards his people, if they do sin against him, their sins may make a stoppage in his proceedings. By way of application;

Hence you may see what the reason is, why there is a stop made now of late in our England mercies. This last year God hath done great things for England, as ever England saw, and that man that sees it not, I shall think that Scripture hath taken hold upon him, which you have in Jer. xxvii. 5, 6., "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord, for he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh," whether out of envy or malice, but when good comes upon a people, he shall not see it: but who doth not see what a black cloud is drawn over us again: when the waters swell and stand up, you say, surely there is a stop made; the waters do not run down as before, not long since justice and judgment did run down like a mighty stream; but now, how the waters swell, gather, and stand up again: wicked men lie in prison, and those not censured: priests and Jesuits lie condemned, and those not executed: the plague is begun, and that is not quenched; the sword hath begun to drink deep in our brethren's blood, and that is not sheathed: the wrath of our king is enkindled: divers of our parliamentary worthies accused of high treason; certainly there is a stoppage made in the proceedings of England's mercies; oh, beloved, this our sin hath done.

But you will say unto me, Shall there be a stoppage made for ever in the mercies of England?

You will find, for answer, if you look into Scripture, that there is a twofold stoppage of mercy: final and present: final, as God was in a way of mercy towards Saul, and was about to settle the kingdom upon him and his posterity for ever; but he sinned, and the Lord turned away from Saul and turned away from him for ever; there was a final stoppage of mercy made. Now though there be a stop made in the way of God's mercy towards England, I conceive there is not a final stoppage. And my reasons are these:

Because that though many difficulties and mountains do arise, yet we see how one after another they do melt.

And because God hath raised up instruments that are unwearied in his service, working night and day, and are unwearied in the work of the Lord.

As also because that the type of this work does speak as much. The children of Israel's coming out of Babylon, and building the temple, is a type of our coming out of antichristian bondage, the great reformation that is now begun: now then though there were many lets and hindrances by Tobiah and Sanballat, and others, they could never hinder it fully, but it recovered itself, and was driven on: so in this building and work of reformation, though the Tobiahs and Sanballats of the times may cause the work to cease for a time, the building shall get up, and shall not fully cease, but the work of reformation shall be driven on in the despite of all the enemies. Therefore it is not a final stop now made in England's mercies. But there is a present stop, as when the plague broke out in David's time; and such a stoppage is made now.

But what evil and hurt is in this, if a final stoppage be not made?

Is it nothing in your ears, and in your hearts, that the Lord should turn out of a way of mercy? you read in Judges ii., when the angel came with a message unto the people, and told them that the Canaanites should be as "thorns in their sides, and a snare unto them, they lift up their voice and wept, and they called the name of the place Bochim:" you shall be brought into Canaan, the promised land, but the natives shall be so mixed amongst you, as they shall be thorns in your sides, hereupon they lift up their voice and wept: and

so, though the work of reformation be carried on, the Canaanites may be left to be as thorns in your sides, until Christ come. Oh that we could lift up our voice and weep, that the place might be called Bochim.

When God breaks off in the way of his mercy, then his wrath breaks out; he does not turn out of the way of his mercy, but he turns into the way of his judgment. Why to a loving child this a very cutting word, Your father is angry with you; I may speak this to you, there is a stop made in England's mercy, and your Father is angry, this is much.

If there be a stoppage made in England's mercy though but present, there is an obstruction in all your comforts: you are sensible of the obstructions of your body, will you not be sensible of State obstructions, of Church obstructions? Suppose you were in Ireland begirt with the enemy, and were in danger to have your convoy cut off, that should bring you victuals and supply, would it not make you fear? Beloved, we have been begirt with enemies a long time, and God hath raised us up a convoy to bring us victuals; we do not know whether our convoy shall be taken away, though but for the present. Certainly there is a thief in our candle that does make our comforts smear out.

But what is that thief in our candle? It is apparent to us that there is a stop made in England's mercy, what are those sins, for it is a day of humiliation, that have made a stoppage in England's mercy?

This is that I especially aim at, that you may see what you are to be humbled for this day and others. Parallel our condition with others in Scripture, and we shall find six or seven things especially, that do make a stoppage in mercy coming to a people, and you shall find them in our land.

An unwillingness and backwardness to the great work of reformation, to the great work that God is now about, is one thing that doth make a stoppage in the proceedings of England's mercy. When the children of Israel were in Egypt, they groaned unto the Lord, God sent a deliverer to them, Moses, and they being vexed by their task-masters, after he came, they murmured, and for anguish of soul, hearkened not unto Moses; God bare with that, till he got them on the other side of the water carried them through the Red Sea, when they came there, though they did sin and murmur, God

did not swear they should not enter into Canaan, but at the last they made them a captain, and they would return back to Egypt; says God, seeing you are there, I swear in my wrath you shall never enter into my rest, but your carcasses shall fall here; you shall neither go backward nor forward: we have a long time, the Lord look upon us, set under Egyptian darkness, and the Lord hath sent his messengers to you to draw you out, and you would not, or for anguish of soul you hearkened not; well, but now there is a tender of reformation made, and hath been lately: if people say now, What need this reformation; were not things well before? This provokes the Lord, and causes him to say, Your carcasses shall fall. And yet oh how hath this been among us, what ado is here, says one; what need this work; were not things well before? 2 Kings x. 32., "In those days the Lord began to cut Israel short." What days were those? They were in a way of reformation, and they cut short the reformation; and in those days the Lord began to cut them short of mercy. At verse 18., he got the worshippers of Baal by craft; at verse 25., he slays them; at verse 29., they break down the images in the house of Baal: howbeit at verse 29, "From the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not," &c. Then at verse 32., when they thus cut short reformation, the Lord began to cut them short. You know what our Saviour Christ says, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you, and you would not; behold your house is left unto you desolate." Beloved, when Christ comes to gather us, as certainly there is a time when Christ comes a gathering, and if the people will not be gathered, then behold thy house is left desolate. God hath made a tender of reformation lately, among you, this is one sin that hath made a stoppage in the proceedings of your mercy, people have been backward and unwilling unto this great work of reformation.

A tempting of God does also stop and hinder the proceedings of mercy. They tempted the Lord, and the Lord's mercy was stopped.

You find in Scripture, people are said to tempt God; either when they doubt of God's presence, after God hath especially appeared to them: "they tempted God, and said, Is God amongst us?" after God had appeared to them.

Again, when a man does not rely, and live upon God's all-sufficiency, when God hath appeared in that way. It is said of the Israelites "they tempted God, and said, can God provide a table in the wilderness?" As Musculus observes well, The Israelites were not so silly, as to think God was not able; they knew God opened the rock, and brought them through the Red Sea, but this was the language of their conversation, "can God provide a table in the wilderness?"

A man is said to tempt God, when he does tie and limit God unto ordinary means, when God is in an extraordinary way. And so it is said of Ahaz that he tempted God, and would not take a sign; what is the meaning of that? that is that he would go in an ordinary way "why (says he) should I tempt God, and require a sign," and go in an extraordinary way? I will go in an ordinary way: when as God is in an extraordinary way of mercy towards his people, to tie God to ordinary means is a tempting of God. Now I appeal to you, whether or no, we have not tempted God, God hath appeared gloriously, oh yet we have said God is among us? how few live upon God's all-sufficiency, notwithstanding he hath appeared so gloriously; and we see no way and means for such a reformation as is spoken of, tying and limiting of God unto an ordinary way, when God is working extraordinarily. This is a second sin that hath made a stoppage in England's mercy, this tempting of God.

Abusing of God's instruments which he raiseth up for to do his work by, doth exceedingly provoke and make a stoppage in the mercy of God. There are two ways whereby his instruments are abused: either idolizing and deifying of them, or wronging, scorning and jeering of them, falsely accusing and condemning of them. The first way the Jews sinned, when they cried "the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord," and deified that; well, says Christ, "there shall not be one stone left upon another." God raised up the king of Sweden, people idolized him, he was taken away and a stoppage was made in that way of mercy: on the other side scorning and evil speaking of the instruments of reformation, and falsely accusing them that God does set up, this makes a stoppage in mercy, Numb. xii., Moses was appointed by God to bring them into Canaan, mark how they speak against him verse 2., "And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Mo-

ses; hath he not also spoken by us?" see what follows, verse 9, 10., "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them and he departed. And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle, and behold Miriam became leprous," &c. Mark what a step is made, verse 15., "Miriam was shut out of the camp seven days, and the people journied not," only because they opened their mouths against this instrument of God that was employed in this work. So Numb. xvi. 1., Korah, Dathan and Abiram rise up against Moses and Aaron instruments that God employed in his service, you may see what became of it in the following part of the chapter, the Lord would have consumed the whole congregation, "And Moses said to Aaron, take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them, for there is wrath gone out from the Lord." verse 45, 46. Oh, my beloved, I would to God we were not guilty here: the Lord hath raised up a blessed and happy parliament, and hath made them instruments of much good unto this kingdom; some idolize and deify them, others again have accused them as traitors, the great senators and judges of our kingdom, no less than traitors: thus have the instruments of the Lord been abused, and how can this but make a stoppage in our mercy?

What is this to us? we have not accused them, that is done above.

I pray do but consider the place diligently, Numb. xvi., it is said, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and the two hundred and fifty princes, men of renown, rose up against Moses, but wrath breaks out upon the whole congregation, and the Lord would have consumed them all, why? because they were not humbled. And if upon all this evil that hath been done to the instruments of God, we have not been humbled, the wrath of God may break out upon us all, and justly it should be, that a stop should be made in England's mercy.

Carrying on the work of reformation, and the great affairs of the church, upon the shoulders of human prudence, will make a stoppage in the way of mercy. You know that when David brought back the ark, they were very cheerful, and went along withal, nothing fearing, at last Uzzah lays his hand upon the ark, and is smitten, a cloud ariseth, David is dismayed, a stop is made in the business, what is the matter?

The text tells us, they carried the ark upon the cart, and it should have been carried upon men's shoulders. So when God is bringing back the ark, men set it upon a cart, and upon the shoulder of human wisdom; oh, says one, there is no government appointed in the church, it is a matter of human prudence, and so will you cart the ark of God? look that God will make a stoppage in mercy. And this is another sin that provokes God to make a stoppage in our England's mercy.

As prayer and humiliation do exceedingly further the work of God in the hands of his people; so the falling and slacking of the hands in those two works, doth make a stop in mercy, and hath done in our mercy. In 2 Kings xxiii., we read there, that good king Josiah went a great way in the work of reformation; the law is brought out, his heart trembles, the images are pulled down, he executes justice upon Baal's priests; yet notwithstanding all he had done, "The Lord turned not from the fierceness of his wrath wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah," verse 26, 29, 30; he went out to battle with Pharaoh Necho, and Pharaoh Necho slew good king Josiah; oh, what a stoppage was made in Judah's mercy; what is the matter? let us enquire into that; here are two causes; at verse 26., you have mention made of Manasseh's sin, "The Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal;" the people were not thoroughly humbled for their father's sins: and good king Josiah goes up to war, and did not seek the Lord before, as he should have done. So that want of humiliation and slacking in the work of prayer made this stop. On the contrary, you shall read a notable place, Ezra viii. 21, 22, 23., when the Jews came out of Babylon to build the temple, they were way-laid by their enemies, and in the midst of the field Ezra proclaims a fast; a strange kind of fasting and praying to be in the field, so it was then, in the field by the river's side they go to fasting and prayer: but Ezra might have had a guard from the king, why had he not? verse 22., "For I was ashamed to ask of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen, to help us against the enemy, in the way, because we had spoken unto the king, saying; The hand of our God is upon all them for good that

seek him, but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him: so we fasted and besought our God for this, and he was intreated of us." Mark, fasting and prayer was their convoy; oh, beloved, what will not fasting and prayer do, when we are beset with divers enemies? there must be these two, the slacking of these make a stop. As for prayer, first, you know how it was with the Israelites when they fought against Amalek, when Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, when he let fall his hand, Amalek prevailed; slacking in prayer made a stop. And so likewise for humiliation; there are two things that are opposite to that, which makes a stop: spiritual pride, and also nice curiosity concerning the means of grace. Spiritual pride makes a stop. Paul was caught up into the third heaven, and had great revelations; but lest he should be proud, and a stop should be made in that mercy, a messenger of Satan is sent to buffet him. It is recorded of a Frenchman having read excellent lectures of divinity, some of his auditors came to him and desired him that he would print them, he was so puffed up withal; as he broke out into this blasphemy: Lord Jesus, how art thou beholden to me! If I had turned my wits against thee, how much hurt could I have done thee! whereupon he was stricken with such blindness, ignorance, and dulness, that afterwards he was two years learning the Lord's prayer; this I speak to shew what a stoppage, spiritual pride will make.

And for curious niceness about the means of grace, 1 Sam. vi. The ark being in the hands and country of the Philistines, they sent it back, and so the ark returning, God was returning; but at the 19th verse, the Lord smote of the people fifty thousand three score and ten men, why? because they had looked into the ark of the Lord: their foolish niceness and curiosity about the ark, what a stoppage it made in the way of mercy! It is recorded by historians, that before the great massacre in France, the protestants were grown so curious about preaching, that no preaching would down with them, but acute sententious preaching. Beloved, both these are opposite to humiliation; and where these two, humiliation falls, and prayer slacks, there is a stoppage made, then will the Lord say to mercy, Stand, go no farther. For the present, God be thanked, there is a day

of humiliation, and a spirit of prayer up in the field, but when of late the enemies began to fall, how did men leave off prayer, and began to insult over the enemies; the Lord saw this, and therefore a stoppage was made in England's mercy.

An unthankful receiving of the mercies that God hath given us, and a slight beholding of the great works he hath done before us now lately, is another sin that hath made a stoppage in our mercy. It is said, Ps. cvi. 7, concerning the Israelites, "Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt, they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies, but provoked him at the sea, even the Red sea;" there lies the emphasis, at the sea, even the Red sea that God carried them through. So you have a notable place for this purpose, Hosea ix. 14, 15, "Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts," they shall conceive, mercy shall be begun, but it shall not bring forth, why? at verse 15, "All their wickedness is in Gilgal:" why, how was all their wickedness in Gilgal? they had much wickedness in other places: but the meaning is, Gilgal was the first place they went into when they went into Canaan, and there they were circumcised, and there the Lord rolled away their reproach, and therefore it was called Gilgal; now to sin in Gilgal, in that place where the Lord had done so much for them, though they sinned in other places, yet the sin there was so great, as if all the sin were there, because that was a place of special mercy; "for there I hated them, for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more;" there is a stoppage made in mercy, when sin is in Gilgal, in the place of such and such mercy. So, my beloved, you all know what great things the Lord hath done for this place, you were brought exceeding low, into great straits, oh, poor afflicted distressed England; but in the midst of all your troubles and fears, the Lord created a parliament for you, and delivered you with great deliverances; and if after all this you will go on in the way of sin, and thanklessly regard all that God hath done, this provokes God to make a stop. Mark how Ezra reasons for this purpose, Ezra ix., they had committed a great sin in taking of the daughters of the country to themselves to wife, verse 10: "And now, oh, our God, what shall we say after this? for

we have forsaken thy commandments," Ezra xiii., "and after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our trespass; seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this:" see where the emphasis lies, not deliverance only, but such deliverance: "should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? Wouldst thou not be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?" Now, my beloved, you see where he sets the emphasis, and truly have not we this word, *such*, written upon our deliverances; you were oppressed in your estates, and you are delivered from those manifold oppressions; you were oppressed in your consciences by the inventions of men, and you are delivered from those heavy oppressions in a great measure; you were in great danger to have lain in blood, you and your children, and you were delivered from that bloody war with Scotland; and your parliament worthies of late, delivered from a hellish conspiracy, I had almost said as bad as that of the powder plot: and now I say, after such deliverances, if you will go on still in the way of sinning, how just is it with God to say, O England, I thought to have done thee good, and to have built thee, but because he that was a drunkard before, is a drunkard still; he that was a swearer before, is a swearer still; he that was a sabbath-breaker before, a liar, and unclean person before, is so still: therefore I will now unkingdom thee, and unchurch thee; if after such mercies and such deliverance you shall go on in a way of sin, I will make a stop in mercy, and in all the good I thought to do; this hath made a stop in our England's mercies.

The last sin that makes a stop in England's mercy, is a worldly disposition, whereby a man hangs back unto the great work of God, and the glorious reformation that is now a doing. You know that when they came out of Babylon, and were to build the temple, the people were for their ceiled houses, and the temple went not on so long as they stuck to their cieled houses, but when once they were brought off from their cieled houses, the temple was built, and they settled. So now, the Lord is about to rebuild you, and build a temple among you; if our hearts be after our cieled houses,

how just is it with God to say, I thought to do you good, but you will not be at the cost; I know you would have your brethren in Ireland delivered, but you will not be at the cost, you that are rich will not lend twenty, or thirty, or a hundred pounds towards it; I thought to have gone on and purged the whole kingdom, but you will not be at the cost, you would have the pictures out of your windows, but you are loth to be at the cost to buy new glass; you would have preaching ministers in every congregation, but you are loth to be at the charge; this makes a stop in our England's mercy. Thus I have to my poor ability shewed you the seven sins that make a stop in the Lord's proceedings of mercy; the Lord grant we may lay them to heart, and be humbled for them.

We grant these are the sins that do make a stop in England's mercy, and the Lord is gone out of the way of mercy, and is angry: how shall we open a way to England's mercy; how shall we bring God back again, and how may the Lord's anger be appeased?

In answer to this, I shall shew you it is a hard thing to appease God's anger when it is gone out.

It must be done, and that quickly.

I shall shew you what you shall do, that you may do it.

Therefore it is an exceeding hard thing and very difficult to appease God's anger. God's anger is compared to a stream; "Tophet is prepared of old for the king (saith the text) and out of his mouth goes a stream of fire." It is hard to turn a stream, you may easily turn the water when it is in the gutter before it comes into the stream, but when it is gotten into the river, it is hard turning of it; God's wrath is a stream, it is hard turning of it.

When you do solicit God to turn out of the way of his wrath, and turn into a way of mercy, you solicit him to that which is not for his ease, that is a burthen to him. Though you think you have great interest in a man, if you solicit him to that which is not for his ease, you will hardly obtain: now God says in Scripture, it is an ease to him to be avenged on his adversaries; ah, "I will ease myself of myself of my adversaries:" when you turn him from wrath, you turn him from ease.

Again, there are but few to do it. If the sea break over

the banks, and there are but few to stop it, it is hard to do; if fire hath taken two or three houses in a street, and but few to quench it, it is hard to do: the fire of God's anger is broken out, and there are but few to quench it: it is a hard thing, therefore.

Again, God seems to be engaged in the way of his wrath. God walks according to his word. Now, says God, you would have me return again to the way of my mercy, and leave off mine anger, and for this purpose you tell me you do pray and humble yourselves and reform; but was it not so in Josiah's time? his heart melted, and he prayed, and broke down the images and pictures, and the offenders, Baal's priests, were punished; nevertheless I turned not from the fierceness of my wrath: why should I turn from mine anger now, for your sakes, more than in Josiah's time? Oh, it is a hard thing to turn God from his anger.

But it must be done, and done quickly. If a fire be broken out, and not quenched quickly, it is more hard to quench; if the sea break in at a place, and be not stopped quickly, it is more hard to stop. Run in and make an atonement quickly, says Moses to Aaron; it must be done quickly.

What then shall we do? Do as Joshua did. There are six things that Joshua did here, when they fled before the men of Ai. 1. He was very sensible of God's stroke that was given to them, for he says, Lord, would we had been contented in the wilderness. 2. He was humbled under God's hand, for it is said, he rent his clothes, and fell down upon the earth. 3. And he prayed, and cried mightily unto God, as you read in the chapter. 4. And he put away the evil of their doings. 5. And he punished Achan the offender. 6. He made a holy resignation. And there must be a concurrence of all these six things if we would bring God back into the way of his mercy towards England.

We must be sensible of God's stroke. Though men be greatly afflicted, yet if they be not sensible of their affliction, and of the stroke that God gives them; says God, I have spent one rod upon them, and they do not feel it, I will lay on till blood come. God will make men sensible of their afflictions, and of the afflictions of the church, else he lays on more.

Again, Though a man be very sensible of God's stroke and

hand, yet, notwithstanding, if he be not humbled under the hand of the Lord, God will not exalt him; for, says the Lord, I have promised, indeed, that if men humble themselves under my mighty hand, they shall be exalted; and I have said, if the people, upon whom my name is called, humble themselves, I will hear. He humbled himself much. This will mortify your sins as your sins mortified and took captive your duties, and this must be done thoroughly. And to move us to it, take notice of the general darkness that is in the land, how few know what they would have in a way of reformation, what is agreeable to God's way. Ezek. xliii. 10, 11. The way to see stars in the day, is to go to the bottom of a well. But now here is a company not humbled, what fashion have they left since; wherein does it appear that you are more humbled? this must be.

Though that a man be humbled, yet, notwithstanding, if he does not pray and cry mightily to God, he cannot fetch God back again, for, says God, I am engaged to my word, and I walk by rule. When I threatened Nineveh, the king went from his throne, and went in sackcloth and ashes, and they cried mightily unto me; and do you think if you do not cry mightily, that I will return in mercy to you? Oh, says God, I have given you more than Nineveh, you know more and you must do more; they cried mightily, and shall not you cry mightily? We must pray more than ordinary; so did Moses; and for motives to it: 1. It is all that some of you can do: you cannot help other ways, by building God an house, lending money, &c., but you may pray. 2. If you be idle, you will envy those that do pray; for it is a sure rule, those that stand by will envy the workmen; and what that will do you may see in Cain's envy of Abel when his sacrifice was rejected. 3. The scales may seem to hang even, it may be your grain of prayer may turn them to mercy. 4. The Lord seems to be going, he is rising: when the judge sits still the malefactor does not lift up his voice and cry after him; but when the malefactor is condemned, and the judge riseth, and goes off the bench, then the poor malefactor lifteth up his voice, and cries, Good, my lord; good, my lord. So when God is rising and going off the bench shall men cry, and cry mightily unto him; pray, and pray mightily unto him. Beloved, the Lord seems to be going off the bench; oh, you

that never prayed, now pray ; you that have despised prayer and praying-meetings, now pray ; you that have a heart to pray, pray now, and cry mightily unto the Lord your God.

Though a man does pray, and cry mightily unto God, yet, notwithstanding, if he does not turn from the evil of his doings, all is nothing. Yet, says the Lord, I am constant to my rule, and I have promised, Isa. lvi. 9, " If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger and speaking vanity." If you put away the evil of your doings, what then ? Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer presently ; thou shalt cry, and he answer sensibly, and say, There am I. And so Judges x. 14. they having come and cried to the Lord, the Lord gives them this answer, " Go and cry unto the gods which you have chosen, let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation. And the children of Israel said to the Lord, We have sinned ; do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee, deliver us only we pray thee this day. And they put away the strange gods from among them and feared the Lord." They cried before, but now they prayed and put away their strange gods ; " And his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel." So now will the Lord do when people are sensible of his hand, and are humbled, and cry, and cry much unto him, and put away the evil of their doings : this will prevail. Wherefore, beloved in the Lord, let us now join together in this work, and for the Lord's sake put away the evil of your doings. All you that hear me this day are of three sorts, either such as do live upon your lands, or such as live upon your trades, or such as live by keeping taverns and ale-houses. If you be such as live upon your lands, then think, and say with yourselves, I see there is a stoppage made in England's mercy, come, oh my soul, it may be it is my sin hath done it ; it may be I have lived so much upon my lands, that I have lived little or nothing upon Christ ; I will learn to live more upon Christ and less upon my lands. If you be such as live upon your trades, say, Husband, wife, children, servants, it may be it is our sin that hath made this stop ; our lying, our false dealing, our breaking of the Sabbath, selling upon the Sabbath for gain ; it may be it is our poor family that hath made this stop ; let us put away the evil of our doings. If you be such as keep taverns and ale-houses, say, It may be it is the drunkenness

that I have suffered in my house, the thousands of oaths that are sworn in my family; for my part I will never have Ireland's blood lie at my door, therefore, servants, children, friends, I charge you, no more lying, no more swearing, no more Sabbath-breaking; for the Lord's sake, and for our poor brethren's sake in Ireland, let us put away the evil of our doings. You that have been drunkards, swearers, or adulterers, put away the evil of your doings; it may be this will bring God back again.

But though there be this, yet unless the troubles of England, the Achans be brought forth to punishment and thrown overboard, the sea cannot be appeased, the storm will not down. For, says the Lord, I am the same God that I was when wrath brake out upon Israel; then stood up Phinehas, and slew Zimri and Cosbi, and my wrath was stayed. When wrath broke out in Joshua's time, Achan was brought forth and punished, and so my wrath was stayed. Do you think that I will take less at your hands? Therefore let us pray that the Achans may be brought forth, and when they are brought forth, justify the worthies of the Lord, own them, guard them, and stand by them. And when the work is done, rejoice with fear and trembling, wash your feet in the blood of the wicked, and give glory to God, and say, Blessed be the Lord, who only doth great things; marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; who would not fear thee?

He made an holy resignation of himself to be at God's disposing, so we may see Araunah did, 1 Chron. xxi. 23: "Then Ornan said to David, Take it to thee," &c. He gave up his threshing-floor, and his oxen, and his threshing instruments; those things that were his livelihood. So should we offer up our shops, our trades, yea ourselves and all we have to God.

Thus you have heard, when God is in a way of mercy, sin does make a stoppage in his proceedings. You acknowledge there is a stoppage made in our mercy; you have heard that those sins are as thieves in our candle, that do smear out our comforts; you have heard what a hard thing it is to bring God back to mercy again; you have heard the work must be done; and you have heard what to do: wherefore let every man, as in the sight of God, go home and think, and say, and resolve with himself, I have not been much affected with Ire-

land's condition, I confess it, the Lord forgive me, but I will look more into it than ever I have done; I have not been much humbled for my own sin, and the sins of the time, but the Lord pardon it, and I will be more humbled; I have not cried unto the Lord, but from this day following I will cry mightily unto the Lord my God, it may be he will return. And I will put away the evil of my doings: I have been an unclean person, I have been a Sabbath-breaker, and have been proud of this coat, and that gold lace; I will be proud no more, farewell all bad company; and I will pray that justice may be done upon all Achans and troublers of Israel, and when it is done I will rejoice with trembling. And thus I have done the first doctrine: when God is in a way of mercy towards his people, there sin makes a stoppage in his proceedings.