

## SERMON XII.

### THE GOOD AND MEANS OF ESTABLISHMENT.

PREACHED AT STEPNEY, JANUARY 6, 1655.

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*“ But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”*—1 PETER v. 10.

SOME think these words are spoken in the way of a promise from God;\* others think they are spoken in the way of a desire and prayer to God.† They are a promise, say some, because they are brought in to comfort and relieve these dispersed saints against the temptations of Satan and opposition of the world, which the apostle had mentioned in the former verses (8 and 9), as also because those words, “ perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you,” are found in some books in the future tense of the indicative mood, to be read thus: “ Shall perfect, stablish, strengthen and settle you;”‡ but I find the copies ordinarily to give them in the optative. Beza tells us that all our books, excepting three, do read these words in the optative mood.|| And Estius,§ though the vulgar latin renders them in the future tense of the indicative, saith that all such copies are of less credit, and that although the words should be in the future tense, it comes all to the same reckoning; forasmuch as the Hebrews, whom the New Testament follows much, do ordinarily put futures for optatives as well as for preceptives. So Num. xx. 17, we translate the words thus: “ Let us, I pray thee, pass through thy country;” and

\* Promissionem adjungit apostolus.—Salmeron, Grotius, Gerardus, Tirinus, Thom. Aquinus.

† Ad precatorem se convertit apostolus.—Calvin, Beza, Piscator, H. Illiricus, Estius, Gomarus. Aretius.

‡ Καταρτισει, στηριξει, σθενωσει, θεμελιωσει.

|| Omnes nostri codices, tribus tamen exceptis, scripta hæc habent optandi modo.—Beza in loc.

§ In nonnullis quidem exemplaribus græcis verba sunt indicativa modi temporisque futuri, quem admodum in latinis, verum ea minus probatæ sunt fidei.—Estius in loc.

yet the word in the Hebrew is in the future tense: "We will pass through," &c.\* So Jer. xl. 15, we read, "Let me go, I pray thee, and I will smite Ishmael;" and yet the word in the Hebrew is, "I will go and smite Ishmael."† So that according to the Hebrew, the future is ordinarily put for the optative in a way of desire and petition. But the words here used are in the optative mood,‡ and therefore, by that argument, we cannot conclude these words to be spoken in the way of a promise. It is true, indeed, that they contain matter of much comfort and relief for those that suffer under the temptations of Satan or oppositions of the world, but so they do, also, though they be spoken in a way of prayer; and it is usual with the apostles to conclude their epistles with a short prayer, and that prayer with a doxology; and so doth the apostle here: "The God of all grace, who hath called you, &c., perfect, stablish, strengthen and settle you; to whom be glory for ever and ever:" a promise is not so concluded, but a prayer is.|| I conceive, therefore, that these words are spoken in way of a prayer; wherein we have,

First, The mercy, and the blessing prayed for.

Secondly, the arguments ensuring it.

First, As for the mercy and blessing prayed for; it is expressed in four words: perfect, stablish, strengthen and settle you. Some think they are synonymous, all intending the same thing, the confirmation and perseverance of those dispersed christian Jews.§ But though they may aim at the same general thing, yet there are several particulars under that general which the words seem to point at. The first word, which we render *perfect*, should, I think, be translated otherwise. It is the same word that is used Matt. iv. 21, and Mark i. 19, for mending of their nets; and the same that is used, Gal. vi. 1, "You that are spiritual *restore* such an one with the spirit of meekness;" and it signifies such a restoring

\* בעכרה. Παρολευσομεθα δια της γης.—Septuagint.

† לאכה. Πορευσομαι δε.—Septuagint. Ibo nunc.—Montanus.

‡ Καταρτισαι, στηριξαι, σθενωσαι, θεμελωσαι.

|| Postquam satis incubuit in monitiones nunc se ad precationem convertit, nam frustra in nerem fundetur doctrina nisi Deus per Spiritum suum operetur.—Calvin in loc.

§ Quod pluribus verbis rem unam designat Petrus, nempe fidelium confirmationem, hoc ideo facit ut sciamus raræ esse difficultatis cursum nostrum persequi et proinde singulari Dei gratia opus esse.—Calvin in loc.

as is of unjointed members.\* Now these christians being scattered, the apostle prays that God would please to joint them again. Thus the God of all grace, after you have suffered, and been shattered, bring you into order, restore and repair you. But suppose that God restore and mend us, yet we may fall again. True, but I do not only pray for you, saith Peter, that ye may be restored and mended, but that ye may be confirmed, so as ye may not fall away: "The God of all grace stablish you also." The word signifies to fasten, and confirm, and establish; † so Rom. i. 11; 1 Thess. iii. 1, 2. But though we be so confirmed by the grace of God that we cannot fall away, yet we may be weak and labour under great infirmity. True, but "I have prayed for you, that you may be strengthened also." ‡ But though we be strong and confirmed, so as we shall never fall quite away from grace, yet we may be unsettled. True, but I have not only prayed against your apostacy, but against your unsettlement: "The God of all grace restore, stablish, strengthen and settle you," even as the foundation of the house is settled. || So that he doth not only pray for these saints that they may be restored and put into joint, in opposition to their scattering, but for confirmation in opposition to apostacy, and for settlement in opposition to all unsteadfastness, and for strength of grace in opposition unto weakness, the cause and ground of all unsettledness. Now these graces he doth assure them of by divers arguments. Some drawn from the nature of God, he is the God of all grace; not of grace only, as the Syriac reads the words, omitting the word *all*, but he is the God of all grace: and therefore though you have need of much grace, yet you need not be discouraged, for the God whom you deal with is a God of all grace; and under this title have I prayed unto him for you. It is good closing with God in prayer by that title and attribute which is most suitable to our condition. Other arguments are drawn from the precedent work of God

\* Significat ergo apostolus relam bonorum operum quam teximus facile ac cito in hac vita rumpi nisi accedat Dei καταρτισμος.—Gerard.

Significat enim καταρτιζειν, membra in corpore luxata reponere.—Ibid.

Beza compingat Erasm. instauret.

† Στηριζειν significat figere, firmitur statuere, Septuag. utuntur pro στῆναι stare fecit: quod alibi exponunt pro στήρεω, alibi pro στήλω, alibi pro βεβαιω.

‡ Θενουν, significat roborare αδενω valeo, opponitur αδενεια.

|| Θεμελειουν, fundare

upon them: "Who hath called you unto his eternal glory," Now the gifts and calling of God are without repentance: "Whom he hath called, them he hath also glorified." And therefore seeing he hath called you, you may be assured that he will confirm, strengthen and settle you. God's calling grace doth assure us of his confirming grace; "He that hath called you unto eternal glory, even he (*αυτος*, is emphatical, and omitted in the English to be read, thus, The God of all grace, who hath called you, &c.), he himself establish you," &c.\* But our sufferings do still abound, for we are a dispersed people. Be it so, yet your sufferings are but a modicum, a little, *ολιγον*, both in regard of measure and time: and after you have thus suffered a little, and a little while, the God of all grace will restore, stablish, strengthen and settle you. This have I prayed for you. So that the doctrine from the verse is this:

It is a great blessing of God, and worthy of all our prayer, to be established and settled in the truth and good ways of God. Settling grace and mercy, in opposition both to outward and inward trouble, is a great mercy, and well worth praying for.

It is a great mercy and blessing to be outwardly settled. The apostle speaks here in reference to that opposition and hatred which they met with from the world, in scattering them as a people and as a church; for saith he, verse 9, "Be steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world:" as also in reference to those temptations of Satan which they laboured under; for saith he, verse 5, "Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." So that I say,

First, It is a great mercy for a nation and state to be settled.

Secondly, A mercy and great blessing for a church to be settled.

Thirdly, A great blessing and mercy for a particular soul to be settled in the good ways of God.

It is a great mercy and blessing, for a nation or kingdom

\* *Emphaticum quoque illud quod in Græco textu hæc verba Ο δε Θεος πασης χαριτος, conjunguntur cum sequentibus αυτος καταρτισαι: ostendit enim apostolus ex eodem gratiæ fonte et primam ad gloriam coelestem vocationem et ultimam hujus beneficii consummationem provenire.—Gerard.*

to be in a settled state and condition, outwardly: for it is the mercy promised; and promised mercies are no small mercies. Now the Lord promiseth to his people, when he deals with them in a way of mercy, to settle and establish them, Jer. xxiv. 6, "For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land, and I will build them, and not pull them down, and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. So chap. xxxii. 37, "And I will cause them to dwell safely;" yea, vease 41, "I will rejoyce over them, to do them good; and I will plant them in this land assuredly, with my whole heart, and with my whole soul." This also was that mercy which the Lord promised to David, 2 Sam. vii. 16, "But thine house, and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee, and thy throne shall be established for ever." And if ye look into 2 Chron. ix. 8, ye shall find, that this establishing of a nation or kingdom, is both a sign, and a fruit of God's love; "Blessed be the Lord thy God," said the Queen of Sheba to Solomon, "which delighteth in thee, to set thee on his throne, to be king for the Lord thy God; because thy God loved Israel, to establish them for ever, therefore made he thee king over them," &c. On the other side; when God is angry with a people, then he pours a spirit of giddiness and perverseness on them, that they run to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are as the leaf shaken with every wind, 1 Kings xiv. 15, the Lord threatens Israel "to smite them, as a reed is shaken in the water, because they had made them groves, provoking the Lord to anger." A great judgment then it is, to be shaken like a reed in the water. This also is a fruit of God's anger; and when a people are in this posture, it argues that God hath smitten them in his anger. But when may a people be said to be thus smitten, as a reed shaken in the water? Even then, when they are driven to and fro with every wind, when they are easily moved, and put by their station, so that any one that rises up against them, may afflict them, and lay them low. And if this unsettled, shaking condition, be a great judgment upon a nation or people; then surely the contrary is a great mercy, it is a great blessing indeed for any kingdom or nation to be in a settled estate and condition.\*

\* Sicut solet moveri arundo in aqua scilicet quia arundines facilliter moventur

Secondly, As it is a mercy and blessing for a nation to be settled and established, so for the church of God: for when the church hath this rest, then it is edified, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, Acts ix. 31.

Establishment is the mercy promised to the church also, Isa. ii. 2, "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains:" what is more settled on earth than a mountain? The house of the Lord shall be as a mountain upon the mountains in the last days; great shall be the glory of the latter days. As the sins and apostacies of the latter days, shall be the greatest sins and apostacies; so the glory of the churches, shall be the greatest in the last days: and the establishment of the churches, is not only promised, but promised as part of the glory of the latter times.

It is that mercy and blessing which the apostles laboured for continually. First they took a great deal of pains to convert, and bring men home to God; being converted, the apostles then formed them into several churches; and churches being planted, then their great work and business was to establish them, Acts xiv. 21, "And when they had preached the gospel to that city" or had gospelized that city, "and had taught many," or had disciplined many, or those that were fit and worthy, "they returned again to Lystra, to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith," &c.\*

This they also prayed for; and therefore as the apostle Peter shuts up his Epistle with this prayer for the dispersed christian-Jews: so the apostle Paul doth close up his Epistle to the Corinthians, with the same desire and prayer for them; 2 Cor. xiii., "And this also we wish, even your perfection," verse 9, *την υμων καθαρωσαν*. And, Rom. xvi. 25, he concludes thus: "Now to him that is of power to establish you," &c. *υμας σθηριξαι* where the apostle Paul useth two of

in aqua quocunque vento impellente, aut levi aquarum decursu, ita Israeli incideret in magnas calamitates et Deus faceret eum tam passibilem ut a quocunque insurgente contra eum posset percuti.—Abulens. in Loc.

\* *Ευαγγελισαμενοι την πολιν εκεινην και μαθητευσαντες ικανους επιστηριζοντες τας ψυχας των μαθητων παρακαλουντες εμμενειν τη πιστει.*

these four words that are used by Peter. The closing wish doth always fall upon some precious mercy.

And as it is the mercy prayed for, so sometimes it is made the signal mercy, whereby the church is declared to be the church of Christ; "Whose house ye are," saith the apostle to the Hebrews, "if you hold fast the confidence of your rejoicing, stedfast to the end." An house is settled, fixed, and established; a tent is removable, but a house is not so: unworthy are those of the name of the house of God, that are unsettled in the truth: "These things write I unto thee, saith Paul to Timothy, "that thou mayest know how to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth." Yea, every member of a church, should be the pillar in the house of God. So the Lord promiseth to the church of Philadelphia. Surely therefore it is matter of great importance for a church and people of God, to be settled and established.

But thirdly and especially: It is a great mercy and blessing for a particular soul to be settled in the truth, and established in the good ways of God. "It is a good thing," saith the apostle, "that the heart be established with grace, not with meats, which have not profited them that have been exercised therein." Possibly a man's heart may be comforted and strengthened with meats, Ps. civ. 15, it is said, "And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart." Where the same word is used by the Septuagint, that is here used in the text.\* But the apostle Paul doth relate to the ceremonial law: for the Jews converted to Christ, were too superstitiously addicted to the observation of legal ceremonies, especially those which concerned meats,† and difference of meats, Rom. xiv. 2; Col. ii. 16, and to those is this speech opposed; "It is good that the heart be established with grace:" as if he should say, some think to find establishment in the observation of meats, and doctrines for the Jewish ceremonies, but the best establishment, is in the doctrine of the gospel, and the grace of

\* *Ἁγίος καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου ἡρῶσει.*—Septuagint.

† *Judæi ad Christum conversi superstitiosius inhærebant observationi legalium ceremonialium cum primis discrimini ciborum a Moyse prescripto illis hæc sententia est opposita.*—Gerrard in loc.

God revealed in the gospel. Some think that by grace here, we are to understand *holiness*, and those spiritual gifts whereby men are sanctified. But having said in the former words, "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines:" these words seem to comply and correspond better with them, if by grace we understand the doctrine of the New Testament; from which the Galatians are said to fall, "Ye are fallen from grace," when they returned to the law: but in both respects, it is a good or beautiful thing, that the heart be established with grace.\* For,

It is the ground of all our fruitfulness: ye know how it is with a tree or plant, though in itself it be never so good, yet if it be not settled in the earth, it bringeth forth no fruit: if the plant be good, and the soil good, it may bring forth good fruit; but if you be always removing it from one place to another, it cannot bring forth fruit. And what is the reason that many are so unfruitful in their lives, but because they are so unsettled in their hearts and judgments? The tree that is planted by the water's side, brings forth fruit in its season, Ps. i. But as for the ungodly, it is not so with them, "They are as the chaff," that brings forth no fruit, whom "the wind drives to and fro." And the truth is, an unsettled man, is neither fit to receive good, nor to do good. So long as the vessel is moved up and down, ye cannot pour the liquor into it; and who can write exactly when his arm is jogged? Can any man walk exactly in a crowd, which one while carrieth him this way, and another while that way? No surely: neither can an unsettled, unestablished heart walk exactly with the Lord his God.

It is the bottom of all our praises: The birds do not ordinarily sing till they be set; they do not usually sing flying; but when they are fixed, then they begin to sing: so saith David, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed;" and what then? then saith he, "I will sing and give praise;" but not till then: and what is the reason that many pass so many years of their lives in doubtings and fears, never prais-

\* Quidam in genere intelligunt interna et spiritalia Dei dona quibus homines sanctificantur; quidam doctrinam Christianam fide susceptam. Oratiam Christianismi, ut sit sensus firmitatem et stabilimentum cordis quaerendum esse in gratia Dei quam N. T. mediator Christus attulit, non in observatione ciborum quam Moses tradidit. Ibid.

ing God for any love, or mercy to them? but because they are unsettled in their spiritual estate and condition.

It is the beginning of our perseverance: then I begin to persevere, when I begin to settle, and to be established; as instability is the beginning of apostacy, so settledness is the beginning of perseverance.

It is that good thing which pleaseth God exceedingly: God was so pleased with Jehoshaphat upon that account, that he passed by, and winked at all his infirmities, even because his heart was fixed and established, 2 Chron. xix. 2, the prophet reproves him for joining with the ungodly; "Nevertheless," saith he, "there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart:" so ye read it: but I think rather, "And hast fixed, established, or set thine heart to seek God." On the contrary, it is said of Rehoboam, though he did many good things, that "he did evil in the sight of the Lord, because he prepared not;" or, because he fixed not, established not, set not his heart to seek God, 2 Chron. xii. 14, it is the same word which we translate, *establish*, in other scriptures,\* as Ps. xl. 2, "He hath set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings;" and it notes, such a fixation and settlement, whereby a man doth so continue in his way and course that he will not be put out of it. This Rehoboam wanted; for he was רַלְבָּ, a soft hearted man naturally: and though he did many things that were right and good, yet he was led by the counsel of his young men, and his heart was not set and fixed to seek the Lord: but Jehoshaphat was of a stedfast spirit, and would not be put out of his way, and therefore though he did some things amiss, yet the Lord commends him, and accepts of him: so that, although a man do many good things; yet if his heart be not fixed, and established, the Lord will pass by, and not regard the same: but though a man do commit great evils, yet if his heart be set to seek the Lord, God will pardon and pass by all his failings. Oh, what a blessed frame of heart, is this fixed spirit. Surely it is that grace wherein God is much delighted: an unsettled soul God cares not for,

\* רַךְ in Niphal בְּרַךְ Paratus, sirmus stabilis qui nec everti nec impediti queat in Purl. et Hiphil. paravit preparavit firmavit canfirmavit, stabilivit, includit firmitatem et certitudinem.—Shindlerg.

nor for any work or service that is done by him. We read of hundreds and thousands of vessels of gold, silver, and brass that were in the temple, but not of one crystal glass or vessel; why so, saith one, but because that is of a brittle, fragile, and uncertain nature? which, as it hath no colour of its own, so it is apt to receive the colour of any liquor.\* So is an unsettled man, and unconstant, whom God cares not for in his temple and service. Who cares for the service of a fool; or regards the prayers, desires, and petitions of a fool? If a fool knock earnestly at your door, you say to your servant, Go not to the door, it is the fool that knocketh; and if a fool come and speak to you, you regard not what he saith. Now an unconstant, unsettled soul, is a foolish soul. It is the property of a fool to be always beginning; he begins a good work, and then he leaves it off; then he begins another, and he leaves off that; *Stultus semper incipit vivere*, the fool doth always begin to live: and the same word in the Hebrew, and Scripture phrase, that signifies an inconstant man, signifies a fool: † and if ye look into Eccles. v., ye shall find, that the sacrifice of fools, is called so upon account of unconstancy and unsettledness; for, says Solomon, “When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it, for he hath no pleasure in fools; pay that which thou hast vowed,” verse 4. ‡ And therefore, if an unsettled man pray and knock at God’s door, he will say, Let him alone, regard him not, it is that unsettled fool, that unconstant fool, who is off and on, to and fro in my service. God hath no pleasure in fools, and an unsettled, unestablished soul, is a fool in Scripture language; surely therefore he is so in the eyes of God. But if a man be fixed and established, the Lord delighteth in him, and in all those works and services that are done by him. Establishing grace is a great mercy.

\* Cur quæso in tanta multitudine vasorum, ne unum quidem vitreum reperitur? dices quod cum facile frangatur est symbolum inconstantiae, quam Deus, vult a suo templo exulare. Ita est, sed ulterius addo, quod vitrum quam expers est coloris proprii, tam facile refert alienos, quibuscunque enim liquoribus imbitur statim concolor efficitur, sub hoc igitur typo voluit Deus a suo obsequio arcere eos omnes qui non servant unam vivendi rationem, sed in diversa studia feruntur, et nunc hos nunc illos mores imitantur.—Mendoza in Reg. i. cap. i. p. 300.

† כמיל stultus, insipiens, varius, mobilis, levis, inconstans.

‡ כיאוך חפע בכמילום.

And it is also the character of a good and gracious person, whereby he is distinguished from the ungodly of the world.\* A good man lives and dwelleth at the sign of a settled conversation; he is planted by the rivers of water, Ps. i., the wicked are as the chaff that are driven to and fro, not settled, not planted. It is true indeed, that a moral, civil man, may be naturally of a fixed spirit, serious, staid, and settled in his moralities; but though he be settled in what is morally good, yet he is also settled upon his lees, in what is spiritually evil; settled in prejudice against the saints, and against the power of godliness; settled in his neglect of the sabbath, &c., and though he be of a fixed spirit and temper naturally, yet that fixation doth not arise to any high or great matter. It is an easy thing to cast up the account truly, where the sum is small: morality is a small sum.† When did you hear of a boat cast away in the river, the narrow waters? It is the ship that puts to sea, that doth make the shipwreck: small boats seldom miscarry in the narrow waters. Now the civil, moral man, doth trade in the narrow waters, and he boasts that he doth not miscarry: some make shipwreck of faith, and a good conscience, but as for me, saith he, I walk constantly, evenly, and these many years have made no shipwreck of my profession, as others have done: but, I pray, what is the reason? He never put to sea, he never yet did launch forth into the great ocean of the gospel; he trades in the narrow waters of his own righteousness, and therein he is exact and constant. But now, take a godly, gracious man, and he doth abound in the work of the Lord, and yet he is established in it; according to that of the apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 58, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; Why? Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." Surely therefore it is a great mercy and blessing, to be settled in the truth, and established in the good ways of God; a mercy for a nation, a mercy for

\* Ut venti in autumnno arbores non tollunt, sed folia secum in auras forunt sic tristia, leves tamen mentes movent fortes et in pietate firmas non evertunt. Origen. Homil. xiii. in Numb.

Maximum malæ mentis indicium fluctuatio.—Sen.

† Virtus est circa difficile bonum, sed in parvis operibus constantem esse non est difficile.—Aquin.

a church, a mercy for a particular person to be thus established: and therefore,

Secondly, It is worthy of all our prayers; which is the second part of the doctrine: for saith the doctrine, It is a great blessing, and worthy of all our prayers, to be settled, and established in the good ways of God.

It is that mercy, grace, and blessing, which we all need. "Man in his best estate," or according to the Hebrew expression, Man in his most consistent, and settled estate, "is altogether vanity." Man at the best is a poor, wavering, and unsettled creature: yea, saith the scripture, God saw no stability in his angels; and therefore if we do naturally labour under such instability, we have all need to pray, and to pray much for this grace of establishment.

It is God only who doth give out this grace, it belongs unto him alone to establish nations, churches, and persons. He is able to establish those who do come to him for it: "Now to him that is of power to establish you," &c. Rom. xvi. 25. He is willing to do it: "But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you, and keep you from evil," 2 Thess. iii. 3. He is engaged to do it, for he hath promised to do it, as hath been proved already, and it is his prerogative: "Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God," 2 Cor. i. 21. As for a land or nation, it is the Lord alone that doth settle it: "He looseth the girdles of princes, and maketh them to wander or stagger like a drunken man," Job xii. 25. Again, "He girdeth their loins with a girdle," ver. 18. He speaketh the word, and it standeth fast; who said to Solomon, and so to all the princes of the earth, "If thou wilt walk before me in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes, and my judgments, then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever," 1 Kings ix. 4, 5. As for a church, it is he alone who doth settle and establish it: "And of Zion it shall be said, this and that man was born in her, and the Highest himself shall establish her," Psalm lxxxvii. 5. And as for a particular person, it is God alone that doth settle him, both in his outward and spiritual condition. In his outward condition, "The Lord will destroy the house of the proud, but he will establish the border of the widow," Prov. xv. 25;

and in his spiritual estate and condition, "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, comfort your hearts (saith the apostle), and establish you in every good word and work," 2 Thess. ii. 17. And the psalmist doth address himself unto God for this, saying, "Establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands, establish thou it," Psalm xc. 17. And if it be so great a blessing to be thus settled and established, if we have so great need of establishing grace, and it belongs unto God alone to work it; then surely it is not only a matter worthy of our prayer, but our duty also, to say and pray with the psalmist, "Stablish thou, O Lord, the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands, establish thou it." And thus you have the doctrine cleared in the parts thereof.

If it be so great a mercy and blessing, to be settled, fixed, and established in the truth, and good ways of God; then what cause have all those that are now established, to praise the Lord, and say, I was a poor, unsettled person, but through grace I am now settled. The more unsettled the times are, and men in the times, the greater is the mercy to be truly fixed and established. Hath the Lord, therefore, settled your heart in these unsettled times? Oh, then give thanks unto the Lord, and say, "My heart is fixed; O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise."

Oh, but I cannot find this fixation of spirit in my soul, nor that stedfastness in my life, as I desire, and therefore I cannot praise the Lord as I should.

It may be so. Yet know that there is much difference between variety of grace and instability of spirit. The exercise of various graces, is a great blessing; instability of spirit is a great evil. Ye may exercise one grace which you did not exercise before, and you may perform one gracious work which you did not before; yet this no instability of spirit. You must know also, that there is a kind of shaking which is consistent with this true settledness and establishment of heart. Ye see how it is with the ships in the harbour, and with those ships which lie at anchor, though they be not driven, and tossed up and down with the waves of the sea, yet in the time of a storm, they do move and are shaken. So it may be with thy soul: though thou hast cast anchor within the vail, and art come unto thy harbour, yet thou

mayest be somewhat moved and shaken; but though you be in some measure shaken, yet you are not tossed up and down as those that are not at anchor; and therefore, oh, what cause have you in these unsettled times, for to praise the Lord.

If establishment be so great a blessing, what a sad condition are those in, that are not established, not settled, not fixed, either in their judgments, or lives? Not a mountebank come to town, but they must run to him for some of his salves; not a wandering star appear, but they must go to him for some of his light. These are those unlearned and unstable souls; these are those that are laid out for a prey unto Satan's instruments: as Satan goes up and down, seeking whom he may devour, so do his instruments; and there are a people that through the just judgment of God, shall be a prey unto them: and who are those, but these unlearned and unstable souls? Some again are unsettled in their lives and practises; sometimes they are for God, and sometimes against him; sometimes for his service, and sometimes against it: these are those that are contrary to all men, and to themselves: these are those that are like to Ephraim, whose righteousness is like the morning dew, fading and vanishing: and both these are as the picture or map in the frame, which you may carry from one room to another; hang it in this room, and it suits well with it; carry it into another room, hang it up there, and it suits well with that; and whatever room you hang it in, it can comply therewith: whereas, if it be in no frame, only glued or plastered to the wall, ye cannot remove it without tearing of it. So in this case; take a good, and gracious, fixed soul, and you may sooner tear him than remove him from the truth, or the good ways of Christ: but an unsettled person, is for every room, and for every company; carry him into one company, and he can comply with it; carry him into a second, third, or fourth, he can comply with all; why? but because his heart is unfixed, not established. But woe unto him, for he is upon the road to apostacy; instability is the highway to apostacy. Oh, the sad condition of those that are not established.

What shall we do then, that we may be established? It is a mercy and great blessing for a nation, church, and parti-

cular person to be settled ; what shall we do, that in all these respects we may be established ?

As for a nation or christian state. It must first settle religion : such a nation can never be settled, till religion be settled ; for religion is the main mast, and if that be not strengthened, all the tackling will be loose, Isa. xxxiii. 23, "The tacklings are loosed," saith the prophet ; "they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread their sail : " and Deut. xxviii. 9, it is said, "The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy store-houses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto, and he shall bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee," verse 8, yea, "The Lord shall establish thee, &c., if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways," verse 9. "And all the people of the earth shall be afraid of thee," verse 10. And if ye look into the Books of the Kings, and Chronicles, ye shall observe that in the latter days of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, before their captivity, these kingdoms were unsettled, only upon this account, because religion was not settled ; as religion was settled, so the land was settled ; and as religion was unsettled, so was the land unsettled. Men think that the settlement of religion is to be an after work : First, say they, let us look to our being, the settlement of the land ; and then look to our well-being, the settlement of religion : But if we consult with God in the Scriptures, we shall find that a professing nation, shall never be settled, till religion be settled ; and as that wavers, so shall the state waver also. Would you therefore have a land settled ? pray for the settlement of religion in the first place.

Then must there be care taken for a succession of godly magistrates : a good magistrate, is a good steersman : but if one steer one way, and his successor steer another way, how can the state be settled ? While the children of Israel had a good judge, the people served the Lord ; but when Joshua was dead, "And the elders who had seen all the great works of the Lord, they forsook the Lord, and the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hand of their enemies," Judges ii. 7, 11—15. "Then God raised up other judges, and the Lord was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their ene-

mies," verse 18. But when that judge was dead, they returned, and corrupted themselves, and so the anger of the Lord was hot against them again, verses 19, 20. Then God raised up Othniel, and he judged Israel, and the Spirit of the Lord came on him, and the Lord delivered their enemies into his hand, chap. iii., and so the land had rest forty years, verse 10, 11. But when Othniel died, the children of Israel did evil again, and so the Lord delivered them into the hands of their enemies, verses 12—14. Then God raised up Ehud, and he judged Israel, and subdued their enemies, verse 30; but when Ehud was dead, the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord again, chap. iv. 1, and the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan. Then they cried unto the Lord, and he raised up Deborah and Barak, who destroyed their enemies, praised God, and settled religion, and the land had rest forty years, chap. v. 31. Thus unsettled was the land, whilst there was no succession of godly magistrates. Would you therefore have your land settled? pray for a continuation, and succession of godly magistrates, and that care may be now taken for this thing: thus shall your land and state be established.

Yet this is not enough; but these godly, righteous men, must not only do some righteous things; but govern in righteousness: for the throne is established by righteousness: though righteous men do rule, yet if they oppress the people, and do not govern in righteousness, the nation cannot be settled. Now God hath promised a new heaven, and a new earth, wherein righteousness dwells; not where righteous things shall be done, and where righteousness shall now and then pass through it; but where righteousness shall take up its habitation and dwelling. Pray, and pray much for this; for by this shall your throne be established.

Yet this is not all; but the governors of a nation, must believe and trust in the Lord; not ruling and managing the affairs of the nation by policy only, and moral prudence; but they must trust in the Lord, and live, and act by faith in their government; for saith the Lord to Ahaz, "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established," Isa. vii. 9. So that if princes, governors, and rulers, will trust in their own strength, or in their confederacies with other nations,

they and their land cannot be settled: but if in all their dealings with the nations, they rule and act in a way of faith towards God, then shall the land be established. And therefore let them, and all the people, remember the good counsel of that good king Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 20, "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper."

As for a church. All the churches must know, that they are a people which of all others, are laid out for sufferings; unto them especially it is given, not only to believe, but to suffer for Christ; and the serious consideration hereof, will help to establish them: for when the apostles went up and down confirming the disciples, and churches, what doctrine did they preach unto them but this? Acts xiv. 21, "They returned to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God."

If particular churches would be settled and established, they must have all the officers, and ordinances of Christ then; as a ship under sail, with all its sails out, is beautiful and doth move evenly; so shall they also do. A church is never settled, till it have all those officers in it, which our Lord and Saviour Christ hath appointed. And what is the reason that many are so unsettled at this day, but because they do either despise, or neglect those offices, and officers, which are the fruits of Christ's ascension, and which he hath given for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine," Eph. iv. 11—14. What is more uncertain than a weathercock that is carried about with every wind? If you forsake the ministry, and those officers which Christ hath given to his church, this will be your state and condition, saith the apostle here. Now, when pride or covetousness gets into churches, then, though they have some of Christ's officers amongst them, yet they will not be for all: for, say they, we are not able to maintain more than one; and, saith that one, if another be chosen, I must have less, and rule less. Oh, that churches therefore, would take heed of these great sins, pride,

and covetousness; which will always keep them in an unsettled condition.

Let all the churches know, what the word of God's patience is, and observe and keep the same: For saith our Saviour to the church of Philadelphia, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world; and him that overcometh, will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out," Rev. iii. 10, 12. He that overcometh, is the same that keepeth the word of Christ's patience: what is that? In all times: there is some truth, which is the trying, suffering truth. In Luther's time, the doctrine of justification by faith alone, was the word of God's patience; in queen Mary's time, that truth which opposed transubstantiation, was the word of God's patience; In Athanasius' time, the doctrine of Christ's Deity was the word of Christ's patience. There is always some truth or other, the profession and owning whereof, saith, here is the patience of the saints, Now if the churches keep that word, and overcome in the keeping of it, the Lord Christ will make every member of them, as a pillar in the temple of God, that shall go no more out.

In case any difficulty or trouble do arise in a church which is beyond their own light and strength, they must call in the help of other churches: for when there was such a knot as the church of Antioch could not untie, they sent to the church and apostles at Jerusalem, Acts xv. 16; who having settled the matter, they sent the result and decrees unto other churches concerned, whereby they had peace and establishment.

But especially, it is the duty of all the churches to pray, and pray much for this great mercy of establishment; for the Lord hath said, Isa. lxii. 6, "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." Such a time as this there is a coming; we are commanded to pray, and to pray earnestly for it; and the Lord hath not only promised the mercy, but to give hearts to pray for it: for saith he, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace, day nor night," where-

fore let us give him no rest: so shall the churches have rest, and be established.

As for particular persons. Wouldst thou be established in the truth, and good ways of God? Then observe what those things are, which do make others unsettled, and take heed thereof. In case a man doth decay, or break in his estate; some great merchant, tradesman, or farmer break, you will diligently look into the causes of it, and say, this man lived at too high a rate, beyond his estate; or he was bound for others, or he kept ill company, or he did not keep his accounts well, and therefore I will take heed of these things. Now will ye observe the causes of an outward break, and will ye not observe what are the reasons that so many are unsettled, break and decay, in the trade of their souls? Surely, either it is because they do want primitive breakings; for the stony ground comes to nothing at the last, though it hath much joy at the first, because it wants depth of earth. The stick that is thrust into the earth, is more easily pulled up than the plant which is rooted in the earth. So are all those who have no root in themselves. Or because they take up great resolutions, without answerable pre-deliberations; whereas we know that the needle must play about the polar point, before it comes to stand and settle; he that would hit the mark, must take his level before he parts with his arrow. And if men resolve before they have fully considered, they will ere long be unresolved again. Or because men do not walk by a settled rule: he can never be settled, that doth not walk by a settled rule: a man's own thoughts and apprehensions are unsettled things; the Hebrew word for *thoughts*,\* comes from a root which signifies to move, as the tops of trees, because as the tops of the trees waver, and are in continual motion, so are our thoughts and apprehensions. But the word of the Lord is settled as the heavens, Ps. cxix. "Thy word is for ever settled in heaven." So long as I want the divine counsel of the word, my heart is like a vagrant, that is most unstable, said Bernard; for whilst I am not subject to God, I am contrary to myself. Or because they are divided in their own hearts: a double minded man, is unstable in all his ways, saith the apostle; and when men have a heart, and a heart,

\* חַפְּזוֹת cogitationes quæ in corde sunt sicut ramus in arbore hinc inde diffusus.

לב ולב a heart for the world, yet a good mind to Christ; how is it possible but they should be most unsettled? Or because they are too confident of their own strength and judgment: whereas the only way to be firm and stedfast, is to be sensible of one's own infirmity. We read of a two-fold confidence in Peter; a confidence in Christ, and a confidence in his own strength: when he was confident in Christ, saying, "Master, if it be thou, command that I come unto thee," he did not miscarry; but when he was confident in his own strength, saying; "Lord, though all men forsake thee, yet will not I," then he fell, and fell foully. "Hold thou me up," said the Psalmist, "and I shall be safe, and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually," Ps. cxix. 119. But if men lean to their own understanding, are confident of their own strength, and think that they are able to deal with all gainsayers, and so will try all things, God leaves them to their own opinions, and they scrabble upon the door, and do change their behaviour. Or because men do forsake the ministry, which Christ hath given to the churches for their edification, perfection, and establishment, Eph. ix. 11—14. Or because they have too fair an opinion of those that are erroneous, thinking that they may be godly, though they be never so unsound in their judgments, whereby they are drawn into society and communion with them, and so fall from their own stedfastness; whereas the apostle tells us of the error of the wicked, 2 Peter iii. 17, and that men may be wicked upon the account of their errors in judgment, James v. 19, 20, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins:" and our Lord and Saviour Christ calling upon us to beware of false prophets, Matt. vii. 15, tells us, that they are corrupt trees, and cannot bring forth good fruit, verse 16, 17, 18. As if he should say, if you would take heed, and beware of them, you must know them, and not think that they are good men; for if you think that they may be good, notwithstanding their errors in doctrine, you will be misled by them, and removed from your stedfastness. Or because that men do not improve their christian communion for the life and power of godliness, but for light only, and discoursing

notions : whereas the apostle Paul writing to Timothy, saith, "Keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding oppositions of science, falsely so called ; which some professing, have erred concerning the faith," 1 Tim. vi. 20, 21. And what is the reason, that not only some, but many have now erred concerning the faith, and have fallen from their steadfastness, but because they have been thus affected ? Or because they have not been built on the rock Christ ; but on some sandy, and washy foundation : whereas the Psalmist saith, "He set my feet on a rock, and established my goings," Ps. xl. 2, but if men be upon the sand, they must needs fall, and great will be their fall, as their profession is great. Sometimes men live high, and profess beyond that stock of grace which they have : but if you would be kept and established, observe what the causes, and reasons are, of the instability and apostacy of others, and take heed thereof.

But what shall I do, that I may be more settled in regard of my judgment ; and that I may be established in the present truth ?

Get a clear and distinct understanding in the things and truths of the gospel : labour, not only to know, but to get a clear, and judicious apprehension, and clearness in the truths of Christ ; Ps. cvi., it is said of the Israelites, that when they saw the Egyptians drowned in the sea, "They sang the praises of God, and believed his words," verse 12, "yet they soon forgat his works," verse 13. And why so ? but because they had no clear understanding in them, verse 7, "Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt." And this apostle Peter, doth join the unlearned and unstable man together, 2 Peter iii. "Which they that are unlearned, and unstable, wrest to their own destruction," verse 16. Some would have it read thus : "Which those that are unteachable, and do refuse." But unlearned suits well enough with the original, *αμαθεις* :\* for what is the reason that men are so unstable, but because they are not grounded, and studied, in the body of divinity ? They take up some truth by hear-say, and education ; and not being studied in them, they are soon removed from them : study therefore, and get a clear and

\* Græcum *αμαθεις* proprie significat indociles qui nolunt rectius instrui et informari, qui monstratæ ex verbo Dei cœlesti veritati locum dare renunt.—Gerard in loc.

distinct knowledge in the great mysteries and truths of the gospel.

Take heed of unsettling principles; for they will baptize your judgment into a conformity with them; such as the apostacy of saints, and falling from grace. If a man hold that he may be a saint to day, and none to-morrow; a saint the third day again, and none the fourth day; must not he needs be unsettled in judgment? It is commonly known that Bertius wrote a book de Apostasia Sanctorum, of the apostacy of the saints;\* and as well known, that being then a protestant, he after fell away unto popery: and when he came to France, and made a renunciation of his former faith, and shewed the reasons of his conversion to the popish faith, he tells us in his printed oration, that *primus conversionis gradus*, the first step to his popish conversion was, the knowledge of, and contending for, that doctrine, that faith, as an act justifies; and that the *to credere*, is imputed to us for our justification in the sight of God. And well might that principle have such an influence upon him, being brought forth by his former unsettling principles. Unsettling principles will make an unsettled judgment; and an unsettled judgment, will bring forth an unsettled life, and practice. Take heed therefore of unsettling principles.

Be sure that you do not make any impression, the rule and square of your judgment; judge not doctrines by impressions; "We have a more sure word of prophesy, whereunto ye shall do well, that you take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place," saith the apostle, 1 Pet. i. 19. Where do ye find in all the scripture, that God hath put heart-impressions into the chair, to be judge of doctrines? If I judge of a doctrine by an impression made upon my soul, the devil

\* Cum improbarem illam novatorum sententiam, qua docebant non justificari nos a Deo nisi justitia aliena videremque illius sententiæ. Authores in dicto illo B. Pauli fides credentis reputatur ipsi in justitiam vocem fidei non proprie accipere sed per catalepsin aut metonymiam ita scil. ut per fidem non ipsa fides sed objectum fidei Christus scil. vel obedientia Christi significaretur; ostendi non tamen id a Scripturis esse alienum sed etiam nervos religionis, hoc est studium bonorum operum ea sententia succidi suscepti ergo adversus. Sibrand. Lubbertum, acerrimum novæ illius arrogantis et prophanæ opinionis patronum grave certamen hic ergo primus suit meæ ad fidem catholicam conversionis gradus.—Petri Bertii Oratio qua rationem reddit cur romano catholicam fidem amplexus sit. page 19.

knows how to fetch me off quickly from the truth: what settlement, or establishment of soul can there be, whilst men will make their light within them, the rule of their judging doctrines? The word of God without, is my rule; the light within, is my help to understand that rule: but if I judge of doctrines by impressions of the word on my heart, I can never be settled; therefore take heed of that.

Get into the house of God: God's house, is an house of establishment; there he commandeth his blessing, and life for evermore; there if one fall, another may help him up; and if one err, another may inform him; there the Lord hath promised to make men pillars for stedfastness: "And he that overcometh, I will make him (saith Christ) a pillar in the temple of God, and he shall go no more out," Rev. iii. 12. Ye know how it is with the bee: so long as it is fair, and sun-shining weather, it is abroad in the fields; but if the winds be high, and rough, it doth then keep its hive. Now as Solomon saith, Learn of the pismire; so say I, Learn of the bee. Are the winds high and rough? Keep your hive; and your hive, or rather God's house, will keep you.

Go not into those companies, and meetings, where the false prophet, and unclean spirit are, and where false doctrine is taught; false doctrine is a great leaven. Ye read of three leavens in the New Testament: 1. The leaven of hypocrisy, Luke xii. 1. "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." 2. The leaven of ill company, and society, 1 Cor. v. 6. "A little leaven, leaveneth the whole lump." 3. The leaven of false doctrine, Matt. xvi. 6. 11, 12; Gal. vi. 8, 9. "This persuasion, is not of him that calleth you; a little leaven, leaveneth the whole lump," verse 9. Possibly all these three leavens may be in such a meeting: but the two last are certainly. And can you think to be under the power of these leavens, and to come away unleavened? It argues unsettledness to go to such a meeting; and by your going, you will be more settled in your unsettledness: as men are confirmed in that grace which they bring to God's ordinances: so they will be confirmed in that sin, which they carry to the devil's ordinances. Who can come freely off from the devil's ground? Will men tempt God, and think to prosper? And what is it to tempt God, but to put him upon an unnecessary protection, and preservation of us? Take

heed therefore, how you come at such meetings, lest you leaving God, he do leave you.

Whatever truth you know, do not only know it in a spiritual way, but put the same into practice; for he that knows truth carnally, is not far from error; and the way to be established in the truth, is to walk therein; "As ye have therefore received Christ (saith the apostle) so walk in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith," Col. ii. 6, 7.

Then go to God for his establishing grace, and put your judgments into the hand of Christ to keep them for you: even as you would put your children, or family into God's hand, to keep them for you, when you are absent from them; so put your judgment into God's hand, to keep it for you also: for it is God alone who doth settle us, even the God of all grace; and he hath said, Prov. xvi. 3., "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established:" it is he that hangeth weights on the wings of the wind who hath founded the earth on nothing; and therefore though your thoughts be as fleeting and uncertain as the wind; yet he can hang weights upon them, he can make you solid, staid, sober, who do now stagger to and fro like a drunken man. And if you put your judgment into Christ's hand, he will keep it for you; for faithful is he who hath called you, who will also establish your hearts in the truth received.

But what shall I do, that I may be more settled in my life, and established in the good ways of God? for I want settlement in my ways and practises.

You must be very sensible of your own unsettledness, and be humbled for it: he is not far from grace, that is sensible of his sin, that is contrary to it; he is not far from humility, that is sensible of his pride; not far from sincerity, that is sensible of his hypocrisy; not far from faith, that is sensible of his unbelief; not far from establishment, that is very sensible of his own unsettledness.

Labour for a serious spirit, a staid, solid, and a serious spirit; a serious spirit, and an established heart go together, Prov. iv. 26., "Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established." Young men generally, are more unsettled, than ancient men: and what is the reason of it, but

because ancient men are the more serious and ponderous? Young men are the less serious, and so the more unsettled. Labour therefore to be more serious, for the more you think of the greatness of God, and the great things of your everlasting estate and condition, the more serious you will be.

Be sure that you do not live upon your condition itself, but on the God of your condition: that is perpetual, which hath a perpetuating cause.\* God is perpetual, but your condition is uncertain, although it be never so firm and good; therefore live not upon your condition I say, but on the God of your condition.

Take heed of a divided heart, that you have not a mind, and a mind: "The double-minded man, is unstable in all his ways," saith the apostle. Now a man may have a mind, and a mind thus; when his conscience runs one way, and his affection another way. So it was with Herod; his conscience told him, that John was a just, and an holy man, and a powerful preacher; therefore his mind was to deliver him; but his affection was to gratify the damsel which begged John's head, and so his mind was to kill him. Pilate also had a mind, and a mind; the mind of his conscience was to deliver Christ; but the mind of his affection, was to gratify and please the Jews. Zedekiah had a mind, and a mind; the mind of his conscience was to spare Jeremiah; but the mind of his affection was to gratify his nobles: and between these two minds, how unconstant was he? So now, if the mind of your conscience lie one way, and the mind of your affection lie another way, you will be wrung like Paul's ship, between two streams; one while you will be a servant unto your affection, another while a servant to your conscience, and so between both, you will never be settled: take heed therefore of this divided heart; the Lord hath promised to give us one heart, Ezek. xi., oneness in regard of God, that we shall be one with him; oneness in regard of men, that we shall be one with them: oneness in regard of our selves, that we shall not be divided in our own souls: therefore pray unto him for this oneness, and he will fulfil this his promise.†

\* Perpetuum est quod habet causam perpetuantem.

† Et dabo eis cor unum. Mihi soli deserviens non idolis, nunc enim divisum quando habent cor quo et me et idola colunt sic interpretatur R. David eodemque

Be sure that you put on the whole armour of God; for if you do not withstand in the day of temptation, ye cannot stand; "for ye fight not with flesh and blood," saith the apostle, but with a more crafty, powerful enemy: and therefore, if any place lie open, he will be sure to find it out. You know how it was with Ahab; a man drew a bow, and shot an arrow at a venture, and wounded him between the joints of the harness. Now Satan knows where your naked, open place is, and therefore if you be not harnessed all over, with every duty, with every truth, and with every ordinance, you cannot withstand him: wherefore saith the apostle, "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand; stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace: Above all, take the shield of faith, and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, and pray always with all manner of prayer, and supplication, and watch thereunto," &c. Eph. vi. 13—18.

The more delight and contentment that you find in the good ways of God, the more your hearts will be fixed, established, and staked down to them: comfort and establishment go together, 2 Thess. ii. 17. A man will never hold to that work long, which he finds no comfort and delight in: when the devil draws a man from duty, he doth not tell him at the first, that the duty is naught or evil; but he labours to clog the way of that duty with many difficulties; for saith he, if I can make this man draw heavily, and uncomfortably in his duty, he will soon cast it off. And indeed, what is the reason that men are so off and on, to and fro, in the good

sensu vertit Chald. Paraph. Alii cor unum. Simplex vocari putant quasi dicat faciam ut me simplici ac sincero animo colant: alii unum id est amicum atque consentiens quod in christianis factum fuisse scribit, Lucas, Act. 4. multitudinis autem credentiam erat cor unum et anima una. Septuag. videntur pro  $\kappa\alpha\iota$   $\delta\omega\sigma\omega$   $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\iota\varsigma$   $\kappa\alpha\rho\delta\iota\alpha\nu$   $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\gamma\alpha\nu$  et dabo illis cor alterum. Novum qui sensus magnopere mihi placet, id enim videtur dicere voluisse cum dixit unum et cum dixit spiritum novum, confirmat hanc interpretationem, Ezek. xxxvi. 25., hanc eandem repetens sententiam non dixit dabo vobis cor unum, sed dabo vobis cor novum et spiritum novum quanquam Jer. xxxii. 39., cor unum et viam unam dixit quid autem vocet cor alterum et spiritum alterum declarat statim cum dicit auferam cor lapideum de carne eorum et dabo eis cor carneum.—Maldonat. in Ezek. xi. 19.

ways of God, but because they do not find delight and contentment in them? Do you therefore desire to be fixed and established? labour more and more then, to make your way to heaven easy and comfortable to you.

Now that the way to heaven may be made sweet and easy to you: be sure that you do not separate between God's commandment and his promise: there is no one thing which God hath commanded us to do, but he hath promised strength, and grace to perform it with: if I look upon the command alone, then the work doth seem hard to me; but if I take in the promise, then it is most sweet and easy. Be sure that you apply yourself unto God's work, according unto God's method; let that be first which he hath made first; and that last, which he hath made last: a faggot, or billet is easily drawn from the stack, if you begin aloft; but if you will take out that first, which doth lie below, it will come hardly: so in regard of duties; there are some duties which do lie above, and some that lie beneath; some are to be performed first, and some after: first you must believe, and then do good; "Trust in the Lord," saith the Psalmist, "and do good:" but if you will do good before you believe, then it will come off with difficulty. God's own method observed, makes his way sweet and easy. Be sure that you improve, and make use of that variety which God hath given you: *varietas resocillat*, variety refresheth, and God's variety is most refreshing: but if I will hold myself only to one duty, when God hath given me many, and so neglect God's variety, no wonder that his work is made hard and tedious: are you therefore weary with praying? Apply yourself unto reading. Are you weary in reading? Away then to conference. Possibly your heart may be backward to prayer; but by that time you have been a while reading and meditating, you shall be fit for prayer; and having been a while at prayer, you shall be more fit for conference: but if you will keep yourself only to one duty, your way to heaven will be more difficult. Observe therefore God's variety, and neglect not the same. Be sure that you do not stint yourself unto any work, or duty, so as to say, Thus far will I go, and no further. If a man be in a journey, and hath fixed all his stages, he rides in continual pain and fear, lest he should not reach his appointed place, by his time appointed: but if he say, I will go as

far as the providence of God will carry me, then he rides more at ease in his mind all the day long. So in our journey to heaven; if you say, Thus far I will go this day, and no further; then you will go in continual pain, lest you should not reach your appointed stage: but if you say, I will pray morning, evening, and as much as I can, hear as much as I can, read, and meditate as much as I can; I will go as far for heaven this day as I can, then the work of God will come off with more ease and sweetness, and with less difficulty: I speak not this against set times of prayer and duty: but against stinting and limiting God, and your own hearts. Oh, let us take heed of that. If you would so sweeten the ways of God, as that you may be more fixed and established therein, then labour more and more to naturalize them unto your own souls; violent things never hold, natural things do: the sun is constant in rising every morning, for it is natural: the stone, if thrown up into the air, will descend constantly; for it is natural. So, if the work of God be natural to you, you will be constant in it; and though you be put by it, yet you will return again, and again. Labour therefore to naturalize the work of God to your own soul; so shall it be more and more sweet and easy; and you will be more fixed, settled, and established therein; for it is delight that doth give fixation.

If you would be fixed and established in the good ways of God, then consider these ensuing motives: thereby you shall rid and free yourselves from temptations, which will otherwise press in and return upon you. The Jews saw that Pilate was wavering, and not fixed for Christ, so they came upon him with new volleys of temptations, and carried him at the last: but when the disciples saw that Paul's heart was fixed on his journey to Jerusalem, they gave over their siege, and left him to his own thoughts: and though Naomi did persuade Ruth to return unto her own country and kindred, yet at the last she left speaking to her, for saith the text, "She saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her," Ruth i. 18. As an unsettled spirit doth lie open unto new temptations, and doth invite them; so a settled, fixed and established heart shall be freed from them.

This fixation of soul is a great honour upon your profession, and thereby ye shall walk worthy of the gospel, Phil. i.; he

that is unsettled, unconstant and uneven in his course, doth bring no honour unto his profession, but lays stumbling-blocks before the blind, and doth offend the world. Do you not see, say they, what a giddy and unsettled people some of these professors are? But there or there is a man that doth walk closely with God; there is a christian indeed. He that keeps his constancy keeps his dignity.\*

Thereby you shall rejoice the hearts of those that are set over you in the Lord, who do watch for your souls. If you stand fast, we live, say they, and your constancy is our rejoicing.

You have been constant in seeking earthly things, which are in their own nature unconstant; and will ye be constant in seeking unconstant things, and not constant in seeking those things that are most constant, and durable riches.†

If you be not constant in good, you will be constant in what is evil; if not settled in the truth, you will be tenacious of error. Which is the greatest evil, tenacity in error or instability in truth? I say not; but seldom any are unstable in good but they are most tenacious in what is evil.

And the more unsettled you are, the more you make the way to heaven difficult and uneasy: you think and say, Oh, this work of God is exceeding hard, and very difficult, and therefore you leave it off; then you come to it again, and then you leave it off again; but by your leaving it off you do make it difficult.‡ If a horse be ridden with an even hand, he will go well all the day; but if sometimes you ride him upon the spur, and then he stand awhile, and then ride him on the spur again, and then he stand and take cold again, he will sooner tire: and what is the reason that many men are so often jaded, tire, and give in, but because they do not keep an even pace in good? Now, therefore, as you do desire that the way to heaven may be more easy to you, that you may not be tenacious in what is evil, that you may not

\* Qui servat constantiam, servat dignitatem.

† Multos annos laborant homines et constantes sunt pro rebus mundi inconstantibus et fugitivis; quia inconstantes sumus pro æterna et constanti gloria.

‡ Difficile putabis perseverare at difficilius est iterum incipere, multo molestius inceptare sepius, equi minorem vim faciunt cum continuant iter, trahentes currum quam cum repetere volunt postquam steterunt: non fugiunt difficultatem qui cessant ab opere, nam perseverando facilius fiet, si potuisti incipere quod difficilius est poteris continuare facilius.—Euseb. Nierem. de Adorat. lib. iii. c. 7.

grieve the ministers of the gospel, instruments of your good and conversion, that you may not lie open unto sad and new temptations, and that you may not be a scandal to the good name of God; for what hurt hath the precious name of God done to you? labour to be more settled, fixed and established; which that you may be, think and think much on these motives.

And, lastly, go to God by prayer for this fixation and establishment of soul, he is apt and ready to pardon your former unevenness and want of establishment. In Psalm lxxviii. 37, it is said of the Israelites, that "they were not stedfast in the covenant; yet God, being merciful, forgave their iniquity," verse 38. And he it is alone who hangeth weights on the wings of the wind; and therefore though your spirits have been as light as the wind itself, yet he will hang weights upon them; therefore go to him, for he is the God of all grace, who having called you to his eternal glory, after you have suffered awhile, will restore, strengthen, stablish and settle you.