

and spend their days in gluttony and luxury ! And shall not a Christian find much more delight in applying himself to God ? We should delight that we can, and have hearts to ask, such gifts, that thousands in the world never dream of begging. To be dull is a discontentedness with our own petitions. Delight in prayer is the way to gain assurance. To seek God, and treat him as our chiefest good, endears the soul to him. Delighting in access to him will inflame our love ; and there is no greater sign of an interest in him than a prevalent estimation of him. God casts off none that affectionately clasp about his throne.

To this purpose,

1. Pray for quickening grace. How often do we find David upon his knees for it ! God only gives this grace, and God only stirs this grace.

2. Meditate on the promises you intend to plead. Unbelief is the great root of all dumpishness. It was by the belief of the word we had life at first, and by an exercise of that belief we gain liveliness. What maintains our love will maintain our delight ; the amiableness of God and the excellency of the promises are the incentives and fuel both of the one and of the other. Think that they are eternal things you are to pray for, and that you have as much invitation to beg them, and as good promise to attain them, as David, Paul, or any other ever had. How would this awaken our drowsy souls, and elevate our heavy hearts, and open the lazy eyelids to look up ! And whatever meditation we find begin to kindle our souls, let us follow it on, that the spark may not go out.

3. Choose the time when your hearts are most revived. Observe when God sends an invitation, and hoist up the sails when the wind begins to blow. There is no Christian but hath one time or another a greater activeness of spirit. Choose none of those seasons which may quench the heat and dull the sprightliness of your affections. Resolve beforehand this, to delight yourselves in the Lord, and thereby you shall gain the desire of your hearts.

A DISCOURSE OF MOURNING FOR OTHER MEN'S SINS.

And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.—EZEKIEL IX. 4.

WHEN God in the former chapter had charged the Jews with their idolatry, and the multiplicity of abominations committed in his temple ; and, ver. 18, had passed a resolve that he would not spare them, but deal in fury with them, though they should solicit him with the strongest and most importunate supplications ; in this chapter he calls and commissions the executioners of his just decree : ver. 1, ' He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand ;' and declares whom, and in what manner, he would punish, and whom he would pardon. The execu-

tioners of God's vengeance are the Chaldeans, described by the situation of them from Judea, and the direct road from that country to Jerusalem : ver. 2, 'Six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lies towards the north.' Babylon lay north-east from Jerusalem, and this gate was the way of entrance for travellers from those parts. It led also into the court of the priests, which shews from whence the judgment should come, and upon whom it should light.

Six men. A certain number. Whether the Holy Ghost alludes to a particular number of nations, which the Chaldean army might be composed of under their prince, who reigned over several countries ; or respects the other chief captains or marshals of his army which are named, Jer. xxxix. 3, or speaks with reference to the other places wherein the city was assaulted by that army, as some think, is uncertain.

And every man a slaughter-weapon in his hand. A hammer of destruction, an instrument of death ; the word seems to signify a weapon much like a pole-axe.

And one of them clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side. Christ, say the ancients (and so they understood it before, and in Jerome's time), who appears here in his priestly habit, a linen garment being the vestment of the priests, Lev. xvi. 4. White is an emblem of peace. Christ seals his people with his Spirit, the Spirit of peace. Calvin rejects not this interpretation, but rather understands it of an angel whom God commissioned to secure his people in this destroying judgment. And indeed angels have often appeared in the form of men, and clothed with linen ; as to Daniel, chap. x. 5 ; xii. 6, 7. Christ's royal power is founded upon his priestly office, which is the ground of all the spiritual and temporal salvation believers have from God.

Inkhorn. The word is so translated. Though the word, say some, signifies a table, such as they then used to write upon with a pen of iron ; or rather it signifies a case to put those pens in wherewith they wrote.

And they went and stood beside the brazen altar. It is uncertain whether this respects the original cause of their punishment, viz., their offering sacrifices to their idols upon that altar which was consecrated to the service of God, or else respects the sacrifices of vengeance, those were instrumentally to offer to God's justice. The judicial punishment of God's enemies is called a sacrifice in Scripture, Isa. xxxiv. 6 ; a sacrifice in Bozrah ; Jer. xlvi. 10, God's day of vengeance is called God's sacrifice in the north country.

Obs. 1. With what a small number, if God please, can he destroy a city or nation. But six mentioned. Almightyness needs not great numbers to effect his will ; no, not a man, since he can do it by his immediate hand, and command judgment in a trice.

2. How quick are God's creatures to obey his call for the punishment of a rebellious people. He calls those six men, and they presently appear ready to execute God's pleasure.

3. God doth not bring judgments on a people till their wickedness hath overgrown the goodness of his own children. Six to destroy, but one to preserve ; a sixfold work of judgment to one of preservation, intimating that there were six bad to one good in the city.

4. The security of God's people in this world, as well as that to come, depends upon the priestly office of Christ.

Ver. 3. *And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house.* The glory of God, which was in the propitiatory above the cherubims, went from one cherub to

another till it came to the threshold ; as birds that are leaving their nests leap from one branch to another till they fly quite away.

Obs. 1. God is not fixed to any one place ; he hath his temple among his people ; discovers himself in his ordinances, but upon provocations departs. The glory of God and his ordinances are not entailed upon any nation longer than they walk worthy of them.

2. The glory of God's ordinances is obscured among a people before judgments come upon them. The glory of God went up from the cherub. ' I will take away the hedge of my vineyard, and it shall be eaten up ; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down,' Isa. v. 5. The ordinances of God are understood by some interpreters to be the hedge and wall of a people ; when God takes away the hedge, the breach is made wide for every wild beast to enter and tread it down. The presence of God in his ordinances, the presence of God in his providences, is the hedge of a people. The temple is forsaken by God, and then polluted, in judgment, by men, ver. 7. God then comes to the man clothed with linen, that had the writer's inkhorn by his side, and said unto him, ' Go through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof,' ver. 4 ; and ver. 5, he commands the executioners of his wrath to go after him, and smite without any pity both small and great, beginning at his sanctuary. *וְהָיָה* ; interpreters trouble themselves much what this mark should be, and tell us from Origen, that a believing Jew told him the ancient Samaritan letter called *tau* was written like a cross ; but that is a fancy, the ancient Samaritan letter being the same with the Phenician, was not writ in that form. Some say it was the law, because the Hebrew word *תורה*, signifying the law, begins with that letter, to shew that such were to be marked that were devoted to the observance of the law.* Marked they were, saith Calvin, with a *tau* ; because that being the last letter in the alphabet, shews that the people of God are of the lowest account among men, and the offscouring of the world ; *א* being the first letter of *תחיה*, *vives*, noted the preservation of them. *On the foreheads.* Alluding to the custom of the eastern countries to mark their servants on the foreheads with the names of their masters ; † not on their visible foreheads, but on their invisible consciences. The conscience is the forehead of the soul, as eminent in the heart as a forehead in the body. ‡

The blood of Christ upon the conscience is the best mark of distinction, as the blood of the paschal lamb upon the posts was the mark whereby the Israelites were discerned from the Egyptians, and the edge of the angel's destroying sword diverted from them. It was a mark of a special providence of God. The destroying judgments were to follow the sealing angel, and not touch those that were marked by him on the forehead.

Obs. 1. All judgments have their commissions from God, whom to touch, whom to overthrow. God doth not strike at random. The man in the linen garment was to bridle the Chaldeans, and direct their swords to the right objects. God overpowers the natural inclinations of all his creatures, whom he appoints executioners. God hath a hook in the nostrils of leviathan ; nothing can be done without the leave of providence, ' man forms the weapons, God gives the edge and directs the stroke.

2. In the highest fury and vengeance, God hath reserves of mercy for his own people. Angels are appointed to be preservers of his children in the midst of the destroying of a people. Invisible angels are joined with visible enemies, to conduct and govern their motions according to the command of

* Vossius de Arte Grammat. lib. i. cap.

† Grotius.

‡ Oecolampad.

their great general. God's judgments are dispensed with greater kindness to his people, than desires to take vengeance upon his enemies. He hath a heart of mercy as well as a hand of justice.

3. God is more careful of his people than revengeful against his enemies. He first orders the sealing of the mourners, before he orders the destruction of the rebels; he will first honour his mercy in the protection of the one, before he will glorify his justice in the destruction of the other. The angel hath orders to secure Lot before Sodom was fired. The executioners of his wrath were to march after the securing angel, not before him, nor equal with him, and were only to cut off those whom the angel had passed by.

4. If you take this mark for a mark on the conscience, then observe, that serenity of conscience is a gift of God to his people in the time of severe judgments. As when death is near, the conscience of a good man is most serene, and sings sweetly in his breast the notes of his own integrity. In judgments as well as in death, God sets conscience upon its pleasant notes. But this mark is not properly meant here; the conscience is a mark to ourselves, but this is a mark to the executioners.

5. The places where God hath manifested the glory of his ordinances, are the subjects of his greatest judgments upon their provocations. Go through the city, through Jerusalem; that Jerusalem wherein I have manifested my glory, which I have entrusted with my oracles, which I have protected in the midst of enemies, like a spark in the midst of many waters. Go through that city, into the midst of it, and let not your eye spare.

6. The greatest fury of God in a time of judgment often lights upon the sanctuary, ver. 6. Begin at the sanctuary, defile the house. Not a man of them escaped, as Ecolampadius notes: ver. 7, 'I was left.' He saw not in the vision what was done in the city, but he was left alone in the temple. The whole Sanhedrim, the seventy ancients, had revolted to idolatry, Ezek. viii. 11, and the stroke first lights upon them: ver. 6, 'Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.'

In the verse observe,

1. God's care in the preserving his people. He commands the angel to go through the midst of the city, and set a mark, a visible mark, upon their foreheads.

2. The qualification of the persons so preserved. He doth not say, all that have not committed idolatry, but such as sigh, which signifies,

1. The intenseness of their grief: 'Sigh and cry,' פָּנָה, notes an intense groaning and sorrow.

2. The extensiveness of the object: 'all the abominations.'

Doct. Lamenting the sins of the times and places wherein we live, is a duty incumbent on us, acceptable to God, and a great means of preservation under public judgments.

There are three branches.

1. It is a duty.

2. A duty acceptable to God. God has his eye particularly upon them that practise it.

3. It is a means of preservation under public judgments.

1. It is a duty. If we are by the prescript of God to bewail in confession the sins of our forefathers, committed before our being in the world, certainly much more are we to lament the sins of the age wherein we live, as well as our own: Lev. xxvi. 40, 'If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers. If then their uncircumcised be humbled, then will I remember my covenant.' Posterity are part of the same body with their ancestors, and every member in a nation is part of the body of a nation;

every drop in the sea is a part of the ocean. God made a standing law for an annual fast, wherein they should afflict their souls, the 'tenth day of the seventh month,' answering to our September, and backed it with a severe penalty. 'He whose soul was not afflicted in that day, should be cut off from among his people,' which the Jews understand of 'cutting off by the hand of the Lord,' Lev. xxiii. 27, 29. The particular sin for which they were thus annually to afflict their souls, was that national sin of the golden calf, in the judgment of the Jewish doctors.

It was also the practice of holy men in their private retirements; as Daniel, chap. ix. 5, 6. He bewails the sins of his ancestors; and Nehemiah, chap. i. 6. Much more it is our duty to bewail a present guilt. The church's eyes are compared to the fish-pools of Heshbon, Cant. vii. 4, in her weeping for her own and others' sins. To what purpose has God given us passions, but to honour him withal? And our affections of grief and anger cannot be better employed, than for the interest, nor better bestowed, than for the service of him who implanted those passions, in us. Our natural motions should be ordered for the God of nature, and spiritual ordered for the God of grace.

1. This was the practice of believers in all ages. Before the deluge,* Seth called the name of his son, which was born at the time of the profaning the name of God in worship, Enos, which signifies sorrowful or miserable, that he might in the sight of his son have a constant monitor to excite him to an holy grief for the profaneness and idolatry that entered into the worship of God: Gen. iv. 26, 'He called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the Lord;' הוהל, profane it by calling upon it.

The rational and most precious part of Lot was vexed with the unlawful deeds of the generation of Sodom, among whom he lived, 2 Peter ii. 7, 8; he had a horror and torment in his righteous soul at the execrable villanies he saw committed by his neighbours, καταπονόμενον, afflicted under it, as under a grievous burden. It was a rack to him, as the other word, ver. 8, βασάνισεν, signifies. The meekest man upon earth, with grief and indignation, breaks the tables of the law, when he saw the holiness of it broken by the Israelites, and expreseth more his regret for that, than his honour for the material stones, wherein God had with his own finger engraven the orders of his will. He is more desirous to destroy the idol, than preserve the tables; such an indignation against their sin could not well be without grief for it. David, a man of the greatest goodness upon record, had a deluge of tears, because they kept not God's law: Ps. cxix. 136, 'Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.' Besides his grief, which was not a small one, horror seized upon him upon the same account, Ps. cxix. 53, like a storm that tossed him to and fro. How doth poor Isaiah bewail himself, and the people among whom he lived, as 'men of polluted lips!' Isa. vi. 5. Perhaps such as could hardly speak a word without an oath, or by hypocritical lip service, mocked God in the very temple.

Jeremiah is upon the same practice, Jer. xiii. 17, when his soul should weep in secret for the pride of the people; and, as if he was not satisfied with a few tears, wisheth his head were a full springing fountain to weep for the slain of the daughter of his people; for the sin the cause, as well as the calamity the effect, Jer. ix. 1. He wishes his head to be filled with the vapours from his heart, and become a fountain.

What a transport of sorrow had Ezra, when he heard of the people's sins, and the mingling the holy seed with that of idolaters! A horror ran through

* Broughton, Lives of the Fathers, p. 7. Crit in loc.

his whole soul. His astonishment is twice repeated, Ezra ix. 3, 4. Every faculty was alarmed at the sin of the people.

It is probable John Baptist used himself to those severities which are mentioned, Mat. iii. 4, because of the sinfulness of that generation among whom he lived.

Paul discovers it to be a duty, when he reproves the Corinthians for being puffed up, instead of mourning for that fornication which had been committed by one of their profession, 1 Cor. v. 2. And when he writes of some that made the glorious gospel subservient to their own bellies, he mixes his tears with his ink : Philip. iii. 18, 19, 'I tell you weeping, they are enemies to the cross of Christ. The primitive Christians did much bewail the lapses of their fellows. Celerinus, among the epistles of Cyprian, acquaints Lucian of his great grief for the apostasy of a woman, through fear of persecution, which afflicted him so, that in the time of Easter, the time of their joy in that age, he wept night and day, and was resolved that no delight should enter into his heart, till through the mercy of Christ she should be recovered to the church. And we find the witnesses clothed in sackcloth when they prophesied in a sinful time, to shew their grief for the public abominations, Rev. xi. 3. The kingdom of Satan can be no pleasure to a Christian, and must therefore be a torment.

2. It was our Saviour's practice. As he had the highest love to God, so he must needs have the greatest grief for his dishonour. He sighed in his spirit for the incredulity of that generation, when they asked a sign, after so many had been presented to their eyes : Mark viii. 12, 'He sighed deeply in his spirit.' And the hardness of their hearts at another time raised his grief as well as his indignation, Mark iii. 5. He was sensible of the least dishonour to his Father : Ps. lxxix. 9, 'The reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell upon me.' I took them to heart. Christ pleased not himself when his Father was injured ; as the apostle descants upon it, when he applies it to Christ, Rom. xv. 3. His soul was more pierced with the wrongs done to God, than the reproaches which were directed against his own person. His grief was inexpressibly greater than can be in any creature, because of the inimitable ardency of his love to God, the nearness of his relation to him, and the unspotted purity of his soul. Christ had a double relation : to man, to God. His compassion to men afflicted him with groans and tears at their bodily distempers ; his affection to his Father would make him grieve as much to see him dishonoured, as his love to man made him groan to see man afflicted. This grief for sin was one part of Christ's sacrifice and suffering ; for he came to make a full satisfaction to the justice of God by enduring his wrath, to the holiness of God by offering up an infinite sorrow for sin, which it was impossible for a creature to do. We cannot suppose that Christ should only accept the punishment, but not bewail the offence which was the cause of it. A sacrifice for the sins of others, without remorse for those sins, had not been acceptable ; it had not been agreeable to the purity of his human nature. He wept at Jerusalem's obstinacy, as well as for her misery, and that in the time of his triumph. The loud hosannas could not silence his grief, and stop the expressions of it, Luke xix. 41. It was like a shower when the sun shined. If Christ as our head was filled with inward sorrow for men's displeasing the holiness of God, it is surely our duty, as his members, to imitate the afflictions of the head. He is unworthy of the name of Christ, who is not afflicted as Christ was, nor can call Christ his master, who doth not imitate his graces, as well as pretend to believe his doctrine ; he cannot see that God, who hath distinguished him from the

world, dishonoured, his precepts contemned, but he must have his soul overcast with a gloomy cloud. It is our glory to value the things he esteemed, to despise the things he condemned, to rejoice in that wherein he was delighted, and to grieve for that which was the matter of his sorrow and indignation. Thus was he afflicted, though he had a joy in the assurance of his Father's favour, and the assistance of his Father's power. The highest assurance of God's love in particular to us, ought not to hinder the impressions of grief for the dishonour of his name. Did Christ ever look upon the swinish world without melting into pity? Did he bleed for the sins of the world, and shall not we mourn for them?

3. Angels, as far as they are capable, have their grief for the sins of men. The Jewish doctors often bring in the angels weeping for sin.* And one tells us, that in an ancient Mahomedan book he finds an answer of God to Moses, Even about this throne of mine there stand those, and they are many, that shed tears for the sins of men. But the Scripture tells us they rejoice at the repentance of men, Luke xv. 10. The Lord is glorified by the return of a subject; the subject advantaged by casting down his arms at the feet of his Lord. They do therefore, as far as they are capable, mourn for the revolts of men, *suo modo*, as Beza upon the place. They can scarce rejoice at men's repentance without having a contrary affection for men's profaneness. If they are glad at men's return, because God is thereby glorified, it cannot be conceived but they mourn for, and are angry with their sins, because God is thereby slighted. Unconcernedness at the dishonour of God cannot consist with their shining knowledge and burning love. They cannot behold a God so holy, so glorious, so worthy to be beloved, without having some regret for the neglects and abuses of him by the sons of men. How can they be instruments of God's justice if they are without anger against the deservers of it?

II. It is an acceptable duty to God. Since it is an imitating the copy of our Saviour, it is acceptable to God; nothing can please him more than to see his creatures tread in the steps of his Son.

1. It is a fulfilling the whole law, which consists of love to God and love to our neighbours. It is set down as a character of charity, both as it respects God and man, not to rejoice in iniquity, 1 Cor. xiii. 5, *i. e.* to be mightily troubled at it.

(1.) It is a high testimony of love to God. The nature of true love is to wish all good to them we love, to rejoice when any good we wish doth arrive unto them, to mourn when any evil afflicts them, and that with a respect to the beloved object. *Τὸ φιλεῖν, τὸ βούλεσθαι τινὶ ἃ αἰτᾶται ἀγαθὰ, ἐκείνου ἕνεκα, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοῦ συναλγεῖν τοῖς λυπηραῖς.*† Where there is this love, there is a rejoicing at one another's happiness, a grieving at one another's misfortunes. If it be a part of love to rejoice at that whereby God is glorified, it is no less a part of love to mourn for that whereby God is vilified. So strait is the union of affection between God and a righteous soul, that their blessings and injuries, joys and sorrows, are twisted together. The increase of God's glory is the greatest good that can happen to a soul enamoured of him; his dishonour, then, is the greatest misery. A gracious soul is like John Baptist, content to decrease that Christ might increase in the esteem of men. He is like Jonathan, that would rather have the crown upon David's head than his own, as the words intimate, 1 Sam. xxiii. 17, 'Thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee.' And grieved more for his father's displeasure against David than against himself. So doth a Christian

* Grotius, Luc. xv. 7. Ob peccatum Hebræi angelos flentes inducunt.

† Aristot. Rhetor. lib. i. cap. iv.

grieve more for the wrongs of God than for those of his own liberty, estate, or life.

Joshua was more careful of the name of God than of the safety of the people singly considered : Joshua vii. 9, 'What wilt thou do unto thy great name?' The glory of God is not dear to that man that can without any regret look upon his bespattered name. What affection hath he to his friend, who can see him torn in pieces by dogs, and stand unconcerned at his calamity? God indeed is incapable of suffering; but what rending is to a creature, that is sin to the divine Majesty. Can that man be said to love God, who hath no reflection when he sees others tumbling God from his throne, and setting up the devil in his stead; who can hear the tremendous name of God belched out by polluted lips upon every vile occasion, and made the sport of stage and stews, without any inward resentment?

He only esteems God as his king who cannot see his laws broken without remorse. How loyally did Moses his affection to God work when he heard the name of God blasphemed, and saw a calf usurp the adoration due to the God of heaven! And David felt the stroke of that sword in his own bowels which was directed against the heart of God, Ps. cxxxix. 20-22. The dearer God's name is to any, the more affected they are that God and Christ are loved and honoured less than they desire they should be.

It is hard sometimes to discern this love to God when God's interest and ours are joined, when we would mask our displeasure against some men's offences with a care of God's honour, which is nothing but a hatred of the person sinning, or revenge against him for some conceived injury to us. The apostles' calling for fire from heaven upon the Samaritans when they refused Christ, Luke ix. 53-55, might seem to be a generous concern for their Master's honour, but Christ knew it proceeded much from their natural enmity which the Jews bore to the Samaritans. The best way to judge is, when the interest is purely God's, and hath no fuel of our own discontents to boil up, either grief or anger. Such an affection cannot but be highly acceptable to God, who is affected with the love of the creature, and honours them that honour him, as well as despises those that lightly concern themselves for him.

(2.) Love to our neighbour. Nothing can evidence our love to man more than a sorrowful reflection upon that wickedness which is the ruin of his soul, the disturbance of human society, and unlocks the treasures of God's judgments to fall upon mankind. 'Sin is a reproach to a people,' Prov. xiv. 34. It is always an act of charity to mourn for the reproaches and ruin of a people. It is a gross enmity to others to see them stab themselves to the heart, jest with eternal flames, wish their damnation at every word, run merrily to the bottomless gulf, and all this without bestowing a sigh upon them, and pitying their madness; the greater should be our grief, by how much the further they are from any for their own destruction. If Cain discovered both his enmity to God and also to his brother, in grieving that his brother's works were so good, Abel must needs, in the practice of the contrary duty, manifest his love to Cain in grieving that his works were so bad. Our Saviour's tears for the Jews discovered no less a concern for their misery than for God's dishonour. Anger for sin may have something of revenge in it; grief for sin discovers an affection both to God and the sinner. A duty which respects at once the substance of both the tables cannot but be pleasing to God.

2. It is an imitating return for God's affection. How doth God resent the injuries done to his people, as much as those done to himself? Those sins that immediately strike at his glory are not accompanied with such

quick judgments as those that grate upon his servants. Sharp persecutions that tear the people of God in pieces, have fuller vials of judgment here than volleys of other sins which rend the name of God. When Cain affronted God by his sacrifice, God comes not to a reckoning with him till he had added the murder of his brother to his former crimes against his Maker. A sweeter and more thankful return, and a more affectionate imitation of God, there cannot be, than to resent the injuries done to God more than those done to ourselves. The pinching of his people doth most pierce his heart, a stab to his honour, in gratitude, should most pierce theirs. The four kings that came against Sodom, Gen. xiv. 9, &c., sped well enough in their invasion, gained the victory, and had been in a fair way to have enjoyed the spoil, had they not laid their hands upon Lot, which was the occasion of their disgorging their prey. As God engaged himself in the recovery of Lot, so Lot concerned himself in the honour of God; God's anger is stirred at the captivity of Lot, and Lot's vexation is awakened at the injuries against God. What troubles his children, raises sensible compassion in him to the sufferer, and revenge upon the persecutor. Whatsoever doth blaspheme the name of God, doth at the same time rack a sincere heart. A persecutor cannot injure a believer, but Christ records it as a wrong done to himself; and Christ cannot be dishonoured by men, but a righteous soul doubles his grief. Here is a mutual return of affection and estimation which is highly pleasing.

3. This temper justifies God's law and his justice. David's grief being for man's forsaking the law, testified his choice valuation of it. When we dislike and disapprove of others' sins as well as our own, we acknowledge the glory of the law, that it is just, holy, and good, and set our seal of approbation to it. It justifies the holiness of the law in prohibiting sin, the righteousness of the law in condemning sin; it owns the sovereignty of God in commanding, and the justice of God in punishing. The law requires two things, obedience to it, and suffering for the transgression of it. This frame of heart approves of the obedience the law requires of men as rational creatures, and justifies the sufferings the law inflicts upon men as impenitent sinners. Unless we mourn for the sins of others, and thereby shew our distaste, we cannot give God the glory of his judgments which he sends upon a people. This disowning of sin is very acceptable to God, because by it men honour that law for whose violations they are so troubled, and own God's right of imposing a law upon his creatures, and the creatures' vileness in disgracing that law.

4. It is a sign of such a temper God hath evidenced himself in Scripture much affected with. It is a sign of a heart of flesh, the noblest work of God in the creature. A sign of a contrite heart, the best sacrifice that can smoke upon his altar, next to that of his Son. This he will not despise, because it is a beam of glory dropped down from him, and ascending in a sweet savour to him, Ps. li. 17. Without this, we cannot have a sufficient evidence that we are truly broken-hearted. We may mourn for our own sins for secret by-ends, because they are against our worldly interests, and have reproaches treading upon the heels of them; we may mourn for the sins of our friends, out of a natural compassion to them, and as they are the prognostics of some approaching misery to them; but in sorrowing for the sins of the world, we have not so many and so affecting obligations to divert us from a sound aim in our sorrow. To be affected with the dishonour of God in the sins of others, is a distinguishing character of a spiritual constitution from a natural tenderness. It is both our duty and God's pleasure. No grief is sweeter to God, nor more becoming us.

III. It is a means of preservation from public judgments. Noah did not preach righteousness without a sensible reflection on that unrighteousness he preached against; and he of all the world had the security of an ark for him and his family, when all the rest struggled for life, and sunk in the waters. No mere man ever wore more black for the funeral of God's honour than David, nor was any blessed with more gracious deliverances. The more zeal we have for God (which is an affection made up of grief and anger) the more protection we have from him. 'The steps of a man' (good man, our translation renders it; but the word is נָבֵר, a valiant man) 'are ordered by the Lord, and he delights in his way,' Ps. xxxvii. 23. The more courage we have for God, the more we may expect both his conduct and security. If there be any hope in a time of actual or threatened judgments, it is by laying our mouths in the dust, Lam. iii. 29. If there be any ground of hope, it will shine forth when we are in such a posture. There might be others in Jerusalem who had not complied with the idolatry of that age, but none exempted from the stroke of the six destroyers, but those whose mouths lay in the dust, and whose cries against the common sin ascended to heaven. Only the mourners among the good men are marked by the angel for indemnity from the public punishment.

1. Sincerity always escapes best in common judgments, and this temper of mourning for public sins is the greatest note of it. This is the greatest note of sincerity. We read of an Ahab who put on sackcloth for his own sin, and humbled himself before the Lord; of a Judas sorrowing that he betrayed his master. Self interest might broach their tears, and force out their sorrow; but never an Ahab, or Judas, or any other ungodly person in Scripture, lamented the sins of others. Nay, they were all eminent for holiness that were noted for this frame, whom we have mentioned before: Moses, a non-such for speaking with God face to face; David, who only had that honourable title of a man after God's own heart; Isaiah, who had the fullest prospect of evangelical glory of all the prophets; Ezra, a restorer of his country; Daniel, a man greatly beloved; Christ, the Redeemer of the world; and Paul, the only apostle rapt up in the third heaven; he was also humbled for the sins of the Corinthians, 2 Cor. xii. 21. Ezra hath a mighty character: Ezra vii. 10, he 'prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.' And he both mourned for and prayed against the common sin. Lot is not recorded for this without a glorious epithet; the Spirit of God overlooks those sins of his mentioned in Scripture, and speaks not of him by his single name, but 'just Lot,' 'his righteous soul,' 2 Peter ii. 7, 8; a sincere righteousness glittered in his vexation for the wronged interest of God. What a mark of honour doth the Holy Ghost set upon this temper! It is not drunken Lot, or incestuous Lot, with which sins he is taxed in Scripture; this publicly-religious spirit covered those temporary spots in his scutcheon. When all other signs of righteousness may have their exceptions, this temper is the utmost term, which we cannot go beyond in our self-examination. The utmost prospect David had of his sincerity, when he was upon a diligent inquiry after it, was his anger and grief for the sin of others. When he had reached so far, he was at a stand, and knew not what more to add: Ps. cxxxix. 21-24, 'Am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them mine enemies. Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me.' If there be anything that better can evidence my sincerity than this, Lord, acquaint me with it; 'know my heart,' *i. e.* make me to know it. He whose sorrow is only for matter confined within his own breast, or streams

with it in his life, has reason many times to question the truth of it; but when a man cannot behold sin as sin in another without sensible regret, it is a sign he hath savingly felt the bitterness of it in his own soul. It is a high pitch and growth, and a consent between the Spirit of God and the soul of a Christian, when he can lament those sins in others whereby the Spirit is grieved; when he can rejoice with the Spirit rejoicing, and mourn with the Spirit mourning. This is a clear testimony that we have not self-ends in the service of God; that we take not up religion to serve a turn; that God is our aim, and Christ our beloved. Now, upright persons have special promises for protection: Ps. xxxvii. 18, 19, 'The Lord knows the way of the upright; they shall not be ashamed in an evil time.' They shall not be ashamed in it, though they may be dashed by it; they shall have a blessed inward security, though they may not always have an outward, when the wicked shall consume away as the fat of lambs, and exhale in the smoke. God's eyes are upon them in the worst of straits. If ever he shew himself strong, it is for those that are 'perfect in heart' before him. This is the end of the rolling and running of his 'eyes about the earth,' 2 Chron. xvi. 9. To such he is both a sun and a shield; a sun to comfort them, and a shield to defend them that walk uprightly, Ps. lxxxiv. 11. There may be an uprightness in the heart, when there is an unknown or a negligent crookedness in some particular path; and when men are negligent in reproving others for such sins as open the clouds of judgments, God may be a sun to such, to give them some comfort in a common calamity, but scarce a shield to defend them from it.

2. This frame clears us from the guilt of common sins. He that is not afflicted with them contracts a guilt of those insolences against God by a tacit approbation, or not hindering the torrent by his prayers, tears, endeavours. Sin is not to be viewed without horror; we share in the guilt if we manifest not our detestation of the practice. The Corinthians had not approved themselves clear in the matter of the incestuous person till they had mourned for it, 2 Cor. vii. 11. Jacob was afraid he should be charged by God as a murderer and thief, as well as Simeon and Levi, if he did not profess his loathing of it: Gen. xlix. 6, 'O my soul, come not thou into their secrets; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united! for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall.' His soul should bear a testimony against their secrets; he would count it his dishonour to give their sin any countenance before God or man. David intimates, Ps. ci. 3, that if he did not hate the works of those that turn aside, the guilt of them would cleave to him. If we can patiently bear the dishonour of God without marks of our displeasure, we shall be reckoned in the common infection, as one lump with the greatest sinners. He that is not with Christ is against him; he that is not on the side of God by a holy grief, is on the side of sin by a silent consent. A thorough distaste of sins, upon the account of their abomination to God, frees us from the guilt of them in the sight of God. To mourn for them, and pray against them, is a sign we would have prevented them if it had lain in our power; and where we have contributed to them, we, by those acts, revoke the crime. When we cannot be reformers, all that we can do is to turn mourners, and in our places admonishers and reprovers; and God is righteous not to charge the guilt where it is not contracted or revoked. But where any are infected with common sins, they must expect to taste of some common judgments.* The Israelites did partake of some of the Egyptian sins; and though God was upon their deliverance, yet he inflicteth upon them some of the Egyptian

* Lightfoot, Glean. on Exod. vi. 13.

plagues. The plague of lice, which was the first God brought, without being imitated by the magicians, was common upon the Israelites as well as the Egyptians; for God did not sever Goshen from Egypt till the plague of flies: *Exod. viii. 12, 23*, 'In that day will I sever the land of Goshen; I will put a division between my people and thy people.' And therefore, in *Ps. lxxviii.*, the psalmist, reckoning those plagues, never mentions the lice, because that was inflicted upon Israel as well as Egypt. This is a way to keep the soul from common infection. It is difficult for a soul to defile itself with the sins of the times, when tears are continually running down the eyes for them. It is an antidote against the sin, and against the plague which follows at the heels of it. If we look not upon them with grief, we are in danger to be snared in the same temptation. Besides, not sorrowing for them is an implicit consent to them; and by consenting to them, we are little better than actors in them. By grieving for them, we enter our dissent, and pass our vote against them. When any sin becomes national, it is imputed to the body of the nation; as, in some transgressions of the law, the whole body of the nation of the Jews was involved; and there is no way for any particular person to remove the guilt from him, but by disowning it before God.

3. A grief for common sins is an endeavour to repair the honour God has lost. It is a paying to God that, by repentance (as much as lies in a creature), which is due from the worst sinner himself; it is to keep up some of God's glory, when so much is trodden down. And when the grief is accompanied with a more exact obedience, it repairs the honour God hath lost by the miscarriage of others. It is an endeavour to wipe off the stains from the robe of the glory of God. And those that bear up God's glory in the world shall find, if need be, the creative, omnipotent power of God stretched out for their defence in as eminent a manner as the cloud by day, which preserved the Israelites from the scorching of the sun, or the flaming fire by night, which prevented their wandering into by-ways and precipices; for upon all the glory shall be a defence, *Isa. iv. 5*, *i. e.* upon those that bear the mark of his glorious redemption, and bear up his honour among the sons of men. When we concern ourselves for God's honour, God will concern himself for our protection. God never was, or ever will be, behind-hand with his creature in affection. Moses was zealous for God's glory against the golden calf, and God concerned himself for his honour against Aaron and Miriam, *Numb. xii.*, and then against the tumults of the people.

4. The mourners in Sion are humble, and humility is preventive of judgments. To lie flat upon the ground, is a means to avoid the stroke of a cannon-bullet. 'When men are cast down, he shall save the humble person,' *Job xxii. 29*. They lie lowest in the dust before God, who concern themselves not only with the weight of their own sins, but with that of others. Pride is a preparation for judgment; the higher the tower aspires, the fitter tinder it is for lightning; the bigger anything swells, the nearer it is to bursting; the prouder any man is, the plainer butt he is for an arrow of God's wrath. Pride lifts up itself against God's laws and sovereignty, as much as this frame of spirit acknowledges and submits to him. It was a temper contrary to this caused God to send worms to banquet upon Herod: *Acts xii. 23*, 'He gave not God the glory.' He was not afflicted with the sin of the people, nor reproved them for ascribing to him the honour of God. A soul affliction for common sins is a bar to judgments. God revives the spirit of the humble, *Isa. lvii. 15*. They that share in the griefs of the Spirit, shall not want the comforts of the Spirit. God is concerned in honour, by virtue of his promise, not to neglect those whom he hath promised to revive. He dwells with the contrite spirit; who more contrite than he that grieves for

public sins, and family sins, and city sins, as well as his own private? Men do not use to fire their own houses, much less God the house and heart, which is dearer to him than either first or second temple, or local heaven itself. I might add,

5. That such keep covenant with God. The contract runs on God's part to be an enemy to his people's enemies, *Exod. xxiii. 22.* It must run on our parts to love that which God loves, hate that which God hates, grieve for that which grieves and dishonours him; who can do this by an unconcernedness? Those that keep covenant with God shall not fail of one tittle of it on God's part. 6. Such also fear God's judgments, and fear is a good means to prevent them. The old world feared not God's threatening of the deluge, and that came and swallowed them up. The Sodomites feared not God's judgments, and that hastened the destroying shower. The advice of the angel upon the approach of judgments, is to fear God, and give glory to him, *Rev. xiv. 7.* And then follows another, *ver. 8,* with the news of Babylon's fall: 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen.' The fall of Babylon is the preservation of his people.

IV. The use. 1. Reproof for us. Where is the man that hangs his harp upon the willows at the time the temple of God is profaned? A head, a fountain of tears for common sins, is a commodity rare to be found even in hearts otherwise gracious. The mourners have been for number but a few, like the gleanings of the vintage; but the sinners in Sion for multitude, like the weeds in fallow ground. What multitudes of those that disparage God, and trample upon his sovereign commands, rend in pieces the very law of nature, as well as the rights of religion! It were well if there were one to six, as was intimated in the beginning there might be in Jerusalem; but we have reason to fear that one marker for the secret mourners would be too much for an hundred destroyers. I do not question but there are some that sigh for the abominations they see and hear of, and that because they are dishonourable to God, as well as injurious to themselves. But who of us present here can say, we have been deeply enough, and graciously enough, affected with them? Certainly, both you and I may bring a charge against ourselves before the throne of God for this neglect, that we have not been thoroughly humbled for, and frequently bewailed public iniquities, and spread them before God in secret. If we are unconcerned in common sins, can we imagine God will leave us unconcerned in common judgments? If we endeavour not to keep up the glory of God, he will extract glory to himself out of our ashes. If this frame be so little regarded among professors, what shall we say to many others, that have as little remorse for the stabs of God's honour as they would have for the tragedy of an East India prince, nay, for the death of some inconsiderable fly; that have resentments for wrongs done to themselves, and sorrow at command for any worldly loss, but not one spark of regret for affronts offered to God? In this cause their hearts are as dry as heath in a parching summer. Who laments the tearing the name of God in pieces by execrable oaths? Who bewails the impudent uncleanness boasted of by concubines in the face of the sun? Who mourns for so many thousand foreheads bearing the mark of the beast, and so many thousands more preparing to receive it? It reproves, then,

1. Those that make a mock and sport of sin, so far they are from mourning for it. The wise man gives them the title of fools: *Prov. xiv. 9,* 'Fools make a mock at sin;' which, though it seems too low a character for such abominable works, yet in Scripture it hath a greater import than in our common discourse; it signifies an atheist, *Ps. xiv. 1.* Prodigious madness!

to make that our sport which is the dishonour of God, the murderer of Christ, the grief of the Spirit, and the destruction of the soul; that which opens the flood-gates of wrath, and brings famines, plagues, wars upon a people! If mourning for others' sins be an affection like that of angels, delighting in others' sins is an affection like that of devils. He is at the greatest distance from Christ that looks pleasantly upon that which Christ could not regard without grief and anger. God seems to seal up such to destruction, as well as the mourners to preservation: Isa. xxii. 12, 13, 'And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping and mourning, to baldness and girding with sackcloth: and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine: let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die.' They were ranters instead of mourners, and God passes this sentence on them, 'Their iniquity shall not be purged from them till they die.' If we carry ourselves jollily at the sins of others, we evidence that the concerns of God are of little concern to us, that we have slight thoughts of his glory, and cast it at the heels of our own passions.

2. Those that make others' sins the matter of invectives, rather than of lamentations, and bespatter the man without bewailing the sin. We should consider common sins with affection to God, and pity to the offenders, with a desire that they may restore, by a true conversion, the glory they have robbed God of by an accursed rebellion. While we hate the sin, we should evidence that we love the man.* We must never love the wickedness, nor hate the person. We pity a sick man, though we loathe his disease. Sinners are miserable enough without our hatred, and by hating them we make ourselves more miserable, by committing a fault against reason and nature, and do them no good. The more wicked any man is, the more worthy of pity, by how much the more his crime is our hatred. God, who is infinite purity, hates men's sins, because they are enemies to his holiness; but he hath a common affection to their persons, as they are the effects of his goodness and creative power. Our exclamations against common sins ought not to exceed lamentations for them. There ought to be more grief in our hearts, than fire in our tongues. They break the whole law that lament not the crime out of love to the law-maker, and grieve not for the sinner out of love to their neighbour.

3. Those who are imitators of common sins, instead of being mourners for them; as though others did not pilfer God's right fast enough, and were too slow in pulling him from his throne; as if they grieved that others had got the start of them in wickedness. It is a pious sadness, and a blessed grief, to be affected with common sins, without being fettered by them; to mourn for them, without cleaving to them; to be transported with sorrow for them, without being drawn by a love to them.

4. Those that fret against God, instead of fretting against their own foolishness, Prov. xix. 3. The sins of good men are many times provocations to God to draw up the sluice from the hearts of wicked men, and give liberty to their lusts, for the chastening of others; and therefore, in grieving for the sins of others, they implicitly grieve for their own.

5. Those who are more transported against others' sins, as they are, or may be, occasions of hurt to them, than as they are injuries to God. How warm are we often in our own cause, and how cold in God's! We partly satisfy our own discontent by such a carriage, but not our duty.

6. Those who are so far from mourning for common sins, that they never

* Nonnunquam sævituri in culpam sævimus in hominem.—*Prosper.*

truly mourned for their own; who have yet the treasures of wickedness, after the rod of God hath been upon them : Micah vi. 9, 10, 'Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked?' reflecting upon the rod they had felt. Common sins are but a glass wherein we may see our common nature. The best men have the worst sins in their nature, though, by grace, they have them not in their practice. He that grieves not for other men's sins, more or less, never grieved truly for his own. He that is not concerned for the dishonours of God by others, is little concerned for the dishonour of God by himself. Let us use our eyes for those ends for which God hath given them; they are instruments of sight, and instruments of sorrow.

It is necessary for us to mourn for our own sins. We can never mourn for others' sins unless we mourn for our own. If we sorrow not for our own, the sorrow we may pretend to have for others proceeds not from a right cause. We have that one sin of Adam in our nature, which subjected the whole world to an anathema. Let us not stay in generals; every man will lay the fault upon sin in the bulk, without reflecting on the sin in his own bowels. We can complain particularly of those sins that are common, and why should we rest in generals when we come to our own? *Dolus versatur in universalibus*, it is a deceitful sorrow that is for sin in a heap. Is there not perfidiousness to God, coldness in his ways, too much slighting the gospel, want of bowels and compassion, incorrigibleness under judgments, houses fired and pride not consumed; falseness in resolutions, like oxen moving with the touch of the goad, and presently standing still; deceitful bows, letting the string slip after they have stood fully bent? Hosea x. 4. There may be sins among us that may cause a storm that we little think of; the mariners little suspected Jonah to be the cause of the tempest till he discovered it himself. He that never mourned for his own sins cannot perform this duty so necessary for his preservation, and therefore cannot expect the mark of God in a time of public judgment. He that would rightly mourn for the corruptions of others, must inquire whether he hath not the same in his own bowels, and fling the hardest stone at them. Judah calls for Tamar to the flames for that crime which himself had been a partner and actor in; so apt are we to be severe against others' sins, and indulgent to our own. The best have need to mourn for their own sins in relation to the public; the only good man in the ship was Jonah, and for his sin was the storm sent, and the rest like to be wrecked.

Use 2. Of comfort to such as mourn for common sins. All the carnal world hath not such a writ of protection to shew in the whole strength of nature, as the meanest mourner in Sion hath in his sighs and tears. Christ's mark is above all the shields of the earth; and those that are stamped with it have his wisdom to guard them against folly, his power against weakness, the everlasting Father against man, whose breath is in his nostrils. We see that God doth not strike at random, but reserves a sweetness for his servants in the midst of his fury against his enemies; he hath his messengers to mark as well as his executioners to strike; the issuing the resolute orders of his fury hinders not those of his grace and compassion to his own. He will have a care of his balsam trees that distil this precious liquor, no less than he commanded the Israelites in their sharpest wars to have a care of the 'fruitful trees of a land,' Deut. xx. 19. God in the six verses following the text gives the like charge to the executioners of his judgments, as David did to the army concerning Absalom: 2 Sam. xviii. 5, 'Deal gently with the young man;' Ezek. ix. 6, 'Come not near any man upon whom is the mark.' He makes provision first for the security of those, before he unsheathes his sword against his enemies. The deluge flows not from heaven till Noah be

cased in the ark, nor is Sodom on fire till Lot be lodged in the mountain. God will always have a church in the world, and suffer a generation of his own to inhabit the earth. God's attributes shall not interfere one with another; his truth remains firm notwithstanding the provocations of men. When those people were ripe for judgments, God had his mourners among the idolaters, which he marks for preservation. When he had threatened great judgments, Joel ii. 30, 31, the turning the sun into darkness and the moon into blood, he promises a remnant in Jerusalem and Sion: ver. 32, 'And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered; for in mount Sion, and in Jerusalem, shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.' Neither the fury of men shall, nor the judgments of God will, extinguish the church; nor the malice of men, because of God's power; nor God himself, because of his truth: 'The Lord hath said.' God will either preserve under judgments, or take away in them to a place of happiness. It is thought by some that the reason Enoch was snatched to heaven in the midst of his life, according to the rate of living in that age, was because he was afflicted with the sins of those among whom he lived. And indeed he could scarce walk with God without grieving that others disdained to walk with him, and acted contrary to him. God would take him from that affliction, as well as from the danger of being corrupted by the age. He will either have his chambers wherein to hide them here till the indignation be overpast, Isa. xxvi. 20, 21; or his mansions to lodge them in for ever with himself. What hurt is it to any to be refused a hiding-place here, that he may be conducted to the possession of a glorious residence for ever? That judgment that takes off the fetters of a wicked man for execution, knocks off the fetters of the godly for a jail delivery; like fire, it consumes the dross and refines the gold. The day of God's wrath is 'a day of gloominess to the wicked,' Joel ii. 2; but as the morning spread upon the mountains to the godly mourners, the dawning of comfort to them. God, out of the same pillar of the cloud, diffused light upon the Israelites, and shot thunders and lightnings upon the Egyptians, to which perhaps the prophet might here allude.

Use 3. Mourn for the sins of the time and place where you live. It is the least dislike we can shew to them. A flood of grief becomes us in a flood of sin. How well would it be if we were as loud in crying for mercy, as our sins at the present are in crying for vengeance! While judgments run to seize our persons, our grief should run to damp the judgments; moist walls choke the bullet. It is far better to mourn for the cause of judgments, than to mourn under them. The jolly blades were the first prey to the enemy: Amos vi. 1-3 to verse 7, 'They that chaunt to the sound of the viol, and drink wine in bowls, shall go captive with the first that go captive.' We of this city have most reason to mourn; the metropolis of a nation is the metropolis usually of sin, and the fairest mark for the arrows of God's indignation. The chief city of a nation is usually threatened in Scripture: Rabbah of the Ammonites, Damascus of Syria, Tyrus of Phenicia, Babylon of the Chaldean empire, Jerusalem of Judea; and, suitably, why not London of England? And let no man think that mourning is a degenerate and effeminate disposition. Doth Solomon ever imprint the same character on mourning as he doth on laughter? Eccles. ii. 2. Doth he ever vilify that with a term of madness, and call the mourners bedlams? How can any, who hath not put off the title and nature of man, behold without amazement and grief men so bold as to pull down the judgments of God upon them, and force his indignation! This temper is a pious embalming Christ's crucified honour; shall any man that professeth Christ have so little love to him, as not to

bestow a groan upon him when he sees him freshly dishonoured and abused? If we had not committed any sin in our whole life, there is cause of mourning for the abominations of the world. Christ had an unspotted innocence and an unexpressible grief for Jerusalem's sins and misery: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee, and thou wouldest not!' Never doth sorrow more appear in love than when it is more for what dishonours God than what pincheth us. Men may pretend a grief for the sins of the times, when it is only for themselves, that they have not those pleasing opportunities of greatening themselves, and that estimation in the world, that stage for pride and covetousness to act upon, which they desire. Our mourning is then right, when we grieve not so much that we, as that God, is a sufferer. It should be proportionable where there are great breaches of God's law; our grief should be as full as, if possible, to fill up the ditch that is digged. The Septuagint in the text implies it, καταστεναζόντων. Paul and Barnabas tore their garments (a sign of a great grief and indignation) when the heathens would have sacrificed to them as gods, Acts xiv. 13. They used not the same expressions in smaller sins; but this was against the nature of God, and a multitude engaged in it. The greater the sin, the greater the sorrow. I need not mention the sins among us; the impudent atheism, contempt of the gospel, putrefying lust, barefaced pride, rending divisions, many sins visible enough to be grieved for, and too many to be spoken of. The sorrow should be universal. Not for one sin which may be against any man's particular interest; but for all, even those that our carnal advantage is not concerned in. God is dishonoured by one as well as by another, and Christ is crucified by one as well as by another. It must be attended with a more strict obedience. It is the highest generosity to wear Christ's livery when others put it off and lay it aside as useless. No doubt but Joseph of Arimathea mourned as well as the rest for the sufferings of our Saviour; but he testified also an heroic affection to him in going boldly to Pilate to beg the body of Jesus for an honourable burial, when none of the other disciples sought after it, but trusted more to the swiftness of their heels for their own security, than concerned themselves for the honour of their Master. While others therefore are defiling the world with their abominations, let us be washing it with our tears, and filling heaven with our cries; that when God marcheth in his fury, we may be secure by his acceptance of our humiliations.

Motives.

1. This is a means to have great tokens of the love of God. No question but Christ in his agony bewailed the sins of the world, and then was an angel sent to comfort him, and assure him of an happy issue. It was just after the testimony of his displeasure against Peter for dissuading him from that death, whereby he was to honour God, and wash off the stain of sin, and repair the violations of the law, whereby he manifested a concern for his Father's honour, that he was transfigured, and had therein the earnest of an heavenly glory, and that transporting voice, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear you him,' Mat. xvi. 23, xvii. 1, 2, &c.

2. It is a means to prevent judgments. Tears cleansed by the blood of Christ are a good means to quench that justice which is a consuming fire. Sin puts a stop to the working of God's bowels, and opens the magazines of wrath; grief for it disarms God's hand of his thunders, and may divert his darts from our hearts. No other defence is often left against the strength of judgments after sin hath made its entrance. A 'holy seed in Jerusalem' is the guard of it in the time of Sennacherib's invasion: Isa. vi. 13, 'The holy seed shall be the substance thereof.' Growth in sin ripens judgments, turns blossoms and buds into fruit, rods into scorpions; grief for it turns scorpions

into rods, lessens a judgment if not wholly prevents it. The water of repentance is the best way to quench the flames of sin and sparks of wrath. If good men fall under a common judgment, it may be often for a defect in this temper. This was Austin's opinion: that many good men are taken away with the wicked in common judgments; because, though they do not commit the same sins, yet they connive at their iniquities, and so are lashed with rods; temporally chastened, but not eternally punished.*

3. It will sweeten judgments. Such may say of judgment as Paul of death, O judgment, where is thy sting! It is a double burden to lie under the weight of common judgments and the weight of common sins; grief for them is a means to remove the guilt, and thereby to ease thee of a judgment. If we are concerned in mourning for sin, we shall be more fit to honour God, if he makes us fall under his stroke. A holy sorrow will bring us into a submissive frame. Aaron had been, without question, humbled for his timorous compliance with the people in the making of the golden calf; and when God came to strike him near in his own children, he held his peace, Lev. x. 3. No doubt but his former humiliation fitted him for his present patience.

4. Our repentance for our own sins was never right, unless we are of this temper. Repentance is a justice towards God, and therefore is conversant about other men's sins in a hatred of them. It is for sin as sin, and sin is sin in whatsoever subject it be, and worthy of hatred according to right reason, and therefore that grace whereby a man hates it in his own person, will engage him to hate it wheresoever it is; and we always grieve for the increase of that which is the object of our hatred. A truly just man hates the injury committed against another as well as that against himself. That filthiness which displeaseth a penitent in his own act, displeaseth him in another's act, there being the same adequate reason, and sin being of the same nature against God in another as in himself. It is all abominations in the text; this is an argument of sincerity. To mourn for one may be from self-interest, to mourn for all must be from a pure affection.

5. It is an argument of a true affection to God. To mourn for sin when it is rare, though gross, is not so much a sign of sincerity as to mourn for it when it is epidemical, when the foundations of godliness are out of course, and the graces contrary to those sins are generally discountenanced; as it is a greater sign of sincerity to love the word when it is generally slighted, than to love it when all admire it. What a noble affection had that lady in Samuel, 1 Sam. iv. 19, &c., that grieved not so much for the loss of her father, husband, friends, but bewailed the departure of the glory of Israel, and, implicitly at least, the sin that occasioned it! How did her affection to God drown all carnal affections! Her sorrow for the ark stifled the sorrow of her travail, and the joy at the birth of her son. She regarded it not. This is an evident token of affection, when we mourn most for the sins which most dishonour God, and the sins of those persons that seem to be nearer to God, and cast most reproaches upon his name.

6. Shall we be outstripped by idolaters? The mourning for others' sins was a custom kept up in Israel after their revolt from God unto Jeroboam. When Naboth was put to death for a pretended crime of blasphemy, a fast was proclaimed, to lament his sin, 1 Kings xxi. 12; and though with a wicked intention, to palliate a murder with the cloak of religion, yet it evidenceth this mourning for the gross sins of others to be a common sentiment among them, and practised upon the like occasions.

7. We have just fears of judgments; we know not whence they will come,

* August. de Civit. Dei. lib. i. cap. ix.

from the north or from the south. God sets up his warnings in the heavens; we behold him frowning and preparing his arrows, and are we careless in what posture we shall meet him? He hath spit in our faces, made us a by-word and reproach; should we not be humbled? Num. xii. 14, 'If her father had spit in her face, should she not be ashamed?' God seems to be departing. He hath, as it were, kept open market a long time; he seems now to be putting up his wares, removing his candlestick, withdrawing the power of his ordinances, recalling his messengers; the light is almost in the socket. The voice of God is received with a deaf ear, the reproofs and admonitions of God have not a kindly operation, the signs of judgment amaze us, and the amazement quite vanishes. We start like a man in a dream, and fall back upon our pillow, and snort out our sleep. Can we expect God to stay? He seems to be upon the threshold of the temple, come down already from the cherubims, and is it not high time to bewail our own sins, and the common abominations that have so polluted the place of his habitation, that we may say we cannot see how God can stay with honour to himself? If we bewail the sins that provoke him to it, God may stay; if he will not, let us at least shew this affection to him at parting. This is not a thing unbecoming the highest Christian. Doth not the Spirit grieve for the sins of others, which play the wantons with the grace of God? Eph. iv. 30, 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.' The Holy Spirit hath no sins of his own to grieve for. Shall we be above that which the Spirit of God thinks himself not above? Shall we refuse mourning for that which goes to the heart of the Holy Ghost? Let us therefore examine what are our own sins, what are the abominations of the times and places wherein we live; make inquisition for the one, that we may drag them out before the Lord, and in our places endeavour to stop and reform the other. As the true fire of love to God will melt us into tears, so it will heat us into zeal. He is no friend that will complain of a toad's being in another's bosom, but not strive to kill it. It will shew either cowardice or falseness. That zeal is wild-fire that is not accompanied with an holy sorrow, and that sorrow is crude which is not accompanied with a godly zeal.

A DISCOURSE FOR THE COMFORT OF CHILD-BEARING WOMEN.

Notwithstanding she shall be saved in child-bearing, if they continue in faith, and charity, and holiness, with sobriety.—1 TIM. II. 15.

I SHALL not take my rise any higher than ver. 12, where the apostle orders that a woman should not teach: 'But I suffer not a woman to teach,' *i. e.* publicly.

Two reasons are rendered.

1. She was last in creation.* 'Adam was first formed, then Eve.'

2. First in defection: ver. 14, 'And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression.' The fall of man was the fruit of the woman's first doctrine, and therefore she is not suffered to teach

* Hierom.