

the work of God himself; it is an imitation of the highest pattern. In this we are associates and co-workers with God. For the Highest himself shall establish Sion.

A DISCOURSE UPON THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER.

The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.—Exod. XV. 9, 10.

AN anniversary commemoration of a memorable deliverance falling upon this day, hath caused a diversion of my thoughts, to look back not only upon a mercy never to be forgotten, but to look forward to that deliverance which is to come, parallel to this in the text. Israel was a type of the church, Pharaoh a type of the church's enemies in all ages of the world, both of the spiritual enemy Satan, and of the temporal, his instruments.

The deliverance was a type of the deliverance that Christ wrought upon the cross by his blood; also of that Christ works upon his throne, the one from the reign of sin, the other from the empire of antichrist.

This was the exemplar of all the deliverances the church was to have. As the Assyrian should 'lift up a staff against Jerusalem, after the manner of Egypt,' so the Lord should lift his rod up for them 'upon the sea, after the manner of Egypt,' when 'the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing,' Isa. x. 26, 27, when the power of the enemies shall be destroyed by the strength of Christ. The Lord himself makes it his pattern in those victories he is to gain for his people. When he calls upon his arm to 'awake as in the ancient days,' when he 'cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon, and made the depth of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over,' Isa. li. 9–11, then 'the redeemed of the Lord shall come with singing unto Sion;' the song of Moses, while they stand upon a sea of glass, a brittle, frail, and stormy world, Rev. xv. 3. And our Redeemer makes this his pattern and rule when he comes to tread the wine-press in wrath, and make them drunk with his fury, that then he would 'remember the days of old, Moses and his people, when he divided the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name,' Isa. lxiii. 1, 2, 11, that his power may be as glorious in the latter as it was in the former, and all deliverances of the church from the beginning to the end be knit together to be an everlasting matter of praise to his name.

This historical narration is to have a more universal accomplishment; the deliverance from Egypt is promised to be fulfilled a second time, and God would act the same part over again, as also their deliverance from Og king of Bashan, after the ascension of Christ: Ps. vi. 22, 'The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring my people from the depths of the sea.' This is after he had ascended, ver. 18; when he came to 'wound the head of his enemies,' ver. 21. So Isa. xi. 15, 'The Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams; and make men go over dry-shod.' Nilus with its seven streams was the glory of Egypt, and Rome with its seven hills is the glory of the papacy, Rev. xvii. 9. So

Zech. x. 10, 'I will bring them again out of the land of Egypt, and they shall pass through the sea with affliction, and the depths of the river shall dry up.' Pharaoh and his army cannot revive and stand up in their former ranks, but there shall be deliverances with resemblances to that, when the enemies shall be as arrogant and furious as Pharaoh, and the church as dejected and straitened as Israel.

The text is a part of Moses his song; a carmen, ἐπινίκιον, a song after victory, a panegyric; the praise of God, attended with dancing, at the sight of the Egyptian wrecks, ver. 20.

1. It was then real; the Israelites then sang it.

2. It is typical; the conquerors of antichrist shall again triumph in the same manner, Rev. xv. 3.

3. It was an earnest of future deliverance to the Israelites. When God appeared for them in their first exit, he would not fail in that work which should conduce so much to his glory; it was a pledge that his purchased people should pass over, and be planted in the mountain of his inheritance, ver. 16, 17. There is in the words,

1. A description of the enemy.

2. His defeat.

The enemy is introduced laying his counsel, and vaunting his resolution, by an elegant climax, and orderly proceeding: 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied,' &c. They laid the foundation deep in counsel, built their resolves high in power, and then applauded themselves in their insolence.

I will pursue. Had he no reflections upon his former unsuccessful attempts to keep the Israelites in slavery? Or could he with any reason hope to reduce them with his baffled strength to that yoke which had been broken by a powerful arm? Had he not reason freshly to remember his own inability to remove one of the plagues sent upon them, to promote Israel's rescue? Was that high arm which brought them out of Egypt broken, God's weapons blunted, his magazine of plaguing ammunition wasted, and his strength too feeble to preserve those he had by a strong hand redeemed? These things be obvious to Pharaoh's thoughts. Yet, I will still pursue. How heady and rash are the church's enemies! Infatuation is the usher to destruction. When you find the church's enemies lose their wits, you may quickly expect they will lose their strength and lives.

I will divide the spoil. He promiseth them this victory before the conflict, encourages his soldiers with hopes of the prey, which was the recovery of their jewels, which the Israelites had borrowed by God's order, and the Egyptians had lent them by a secret impression, and the flocks and herds of the poor Israelites to boot.

How great is the pride of the church's enemies! They strut without thinking of a superior power to curb them, and promise themselves the accomplishment of their designs, without fearing the check of providence. Thus did Sisera's mother triumph in a presumptuous hope before a victory, Judges v. 30, and sing *Te Deum* before a conquest. *Ventosa et insolens natio*, is the title Pliny gives the Egyptian nation.

My lust shall be satisfied upon them. תמלאמו נפשי, my soul shall be satisfied. How revengefully do they express themselves! They apprehend themselves cheated of their jewels by the Israelites: such an apprehension would increase rage and animosity.

I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy, תורישמו ידי, my hand shall disinherit them. I will reduce them like a company of fearful fugitives, by brandishing a drawn sword, that they shall quickly return to their former

bondage, and become the perpetual inheritance of the Egyptians. How secure are the church's enemies! The sight of a glittering sword, and an edict for a return, they thought, would quell their spirits. It is true they had to deal with an unarmed people, unprovided for defence, whose late slavery had rendered them unfit for military exercises, an unequal match for a numerous and disciplined army. But what if they were? Had they not the same power to protect them in their march, which had brought them out of their bondage? This the enemies never reflected on. Pride and security are always twins.

In ver. 10 you have their defeat. The sea quenched the fire of their rage, and laid flat the towers of their proud confidence. God blows with his wind, the strong east wind, Exod. xiv. 21, a strength added to its natural fierceness, which made the meeting of the floods more swift and fierce. Some think thunders and lightnings burst out of the pillar of fire in the cloud, when 'God looked upon them,' Exod. xiv. 24.

They 'sank like lead,' suddenly, easily, irrecoverably; they were lashed before, now executed. Other plagues had a mixture of patience, this is a pure cup of the indignation of God.

The defeat is described,

1. By the author: 'Thou didst blow.'

2. Instrument: 'Thy wind, the sea;' wind and the sea conspire together against the enemies, when God orders them.

3. Victory, or success of this order: 'The sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters.'

General observations.

1. The greatest idolaters are the fiercest enemies against the church of God. It is the Egyptian is the enemy. No nation had more and more sordid idols.* The Persians adored the sun, the greatest benefactor to the world, in the rank of inanimate creatures; other nations several stars, but none did so much abuse the reason of man as that accursed nation. Onions, garlic, cats, oxen, flies, and crocodiles; those dunghill creatures were their adored deities. And how much better adoration is the swaddling clouts of our Saviour, or the straw which was in the manger, or the tail of the ass he rode upon, and so many splinters of the cross, which, if put together, would make a Colossus! For this, among the rest, may the church professing such worship be called spiritual Egypt.

2. The church's enemies are not for her correction, but her destruction: 'I will pursue; my hand shall destroy them.' They breathe out nothing but slaughters; 'My hand shall destroy them;' down with it, down with it even to the ground, and 'men are famous as they can lift up axes upon the thick trees,' Ps. lxxiv. 5.

3. How desperate are sometimes the straits of God's Israel in the eye of man! How low their spirits before deliverance! They here behold a deep sea before them and a raging enemy behind them; hear a confused noise of women and children in the midst of them; feel the pantings of their own hearts, and perhaps see a consternation in the faces of their governors; they see themselves disarmed of weapons, lying almost at the mercy of an oppressor with a well-furnished army; they repent of what God had done for them, and are more ambitious of slavery than liberty; quarrel with Moses, (and, as one of their historians saith, were about to stone him), Exod. xiv. 10-12. Without doubt they then thought him a liar, and it is likely had no more honourable thoughts at that time of God; for when they saw the happy success in the miraculous overthrow of the Egyptians, then 'they be-

* *Ægyptii diis sæcundi.—Hieron.*

lieved God and his servant Moses,' Exod. xiv. 31, as if they gave credit to neither of them before. They had a pillar of fire and a cloud, the chariot of God, a greater argument to establish them than the preparation of their enemies to terrify them. But what a faithless creature is man under the visible guard of heaven, and so far naturally from living by faith that he will hardly draw establishments from sense !

4. God orders the lusts of men for his own praise. He had forced Pharaoh to let the people go ; he had stopped the streams of his fury ; when he removes his hand and pulls up the dam, Pharaoh returns to his former temper with more violence, thereby giving occasion for God's glory in his own destruction. He serves himself of the desperate malice of his enemies, to make his wisdom and other attributes more triumphant.

5. The nearer the deliverance of the church is, the fiercer are God's judgments on the enemies of it, and the higher the enemies' rage. The former plagues were but small gashes in the Egyptian state ; but when the time approached of the Israelites' perfect deliverance, then the firstborn in every house, the delight and strength of the parents, is cut off ; and at the completing of it, the glory, power, and strength of Egypt buried in the sea. The fuller beams of mercy on the one are attended with more scorching darts of judgment on the other.

6. All creatures are absolutely under the sovereignty of God, and are acted by his power in all their services. 'Thy wind': all are subject to his conduct, and are the guardians of his people, and the conquerors of his enemies. How easy is it for the arm of Omnipotency to demolish the strongest preparations against his Israel, and with a blast reduce their power to nothing ! The sea suffers violence to preserve his people, and the liquid element seems transformed into a wall of brass. God can make the meanest creatures ministers of his judgments, raise troops of flies to rout the Roman army, as it was in Trajan's siege of the Agarenes.

7. By the same means God saves his people, whereby he destroys his enemies : the one sank, the other passed thorough. That which makes one balance sink makes the other rise the higher. The Red Sea was the guardian of Israel and the executioner of Egypt, the Israelites' gallery to Canaan and the Egyptians' grave. The cloud that led the Israelites through the Red Sea blinded the Egyptians ; the waters that were fifteen cubits high above the mountains kept the ark from dashing against them, whereby Noah might be endangered, and drowned the enemies, though never so high according to human stature.

8. The strength and glory of a people is more wasted by opposing the interests of the church than in conflicts with any other enemy. Had the Egyptian arms been turned against any other enemy, they might have prospered, or at least retired with a more partial defeat, or saved their lives though under chains ; but when they would prepare them against God's Israel, they meet with a total defeat where they expected victory, and find their graves where Israel found their bulwarks : the choicest of their youth, the flower of their nobility, the strongest of their chariots and horses, at one blow overthrown by God.

9. We may take notice of the folly of the church's enemies. Former plagues might have warned them of the power of God, they had but burned their own fingers by pinching her, yet they would set their force against almighty power, that so often had worsted them ; it is as if men would pull down a steeple with a string.

But the observations I shall treat of are,

1. When the enemies of the church are in the highest fury and resolution, and the church in the greatest extremity and dejection, then is the fittest time for God to work her deliverance fully and perfectly. When the enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil,' &c., then 'God blowed with his wind,' then 'they sank.'

2. God is the author of all the deliverances of the church, whosoever are the instruments. 'Thou didst blow with thy wind; who is like unto the Lord among the gods?'

1. For the first, When the enemies of the church are in the highest fury, &c. Great resolutions against God meet with great disappointments. The church's straits are the enemies' hopes, but God's opportunity. When their fury is highest, God's love is nearest.

1. There are four seasons on the part of the enemy God takes hold of:

(1.) Flourishing prosperity. Here is Pharaoh in the head of a gallant army, the Israelites in a pound, at his mercy. The Egyptians' prosperity is a forerunner of their destruction, the adversity of the other of their salvation. Haman is in the top of his favour when the Jews are marked out for slaughter, and then himself is marked out for ruin. Prosperity, like rain, makes the weeds of pride and atheism to grow up, and then they are fit matter for God's sickle to cut down. When 'the clusters of the vine of the earth are ripe,' full of an outward glory and sweetness, then 'the angel thrusts in his sharp sickle,' Rev. xiv. 18. There is an ἀκμὴ set them. When 'the great city is clothed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, decked with gold and precious stones,' Rev. xviii. 16, and come to the highest point of its glory and prosperity, then shall God thicken the clouds of his vengeance, and bring their riches to nought in one hour.

(2.) Swelling pride: 'I will pursue,' &c. Pride is provoking, because it is a self-deifying, and sets up the creature as God's mate. God stands upon his honour, and loves to attack those that would equal themselves with him. Pride sunk the glory of the fallen angels into misery, and so it will that of the serpent's seed. This is the immediate forerunner of destruction, Prov. xvi. 18. Men have their hairy scalp, the prime of their strength, and pride of their hearts, when God wounds them, Ps. lxxviii. 21. Egypt was become Rahab, pride itself, as the word signifies, and so God called it by that name, Isa. li. 9. When Egypt mounted to Rahab, to the top of pride, then God cut it. When the dragon bristled, and erected his stately head to seize upon the prey, then God wounded him, put an end to Egypt's pride and the Israelites' fear. He loves to beat down the pride of the one, and raise up the lowliness of the other. When Herod will assume the title of a god, given him by the acclamations of the people, an angel shall immediately make him a banquet for worms, Acts xi. 22, 23. When Sennacherib had prospered in his conquest of Judea, had taken many strong towns, closely beleaguered Jerusalem, thundered out blasphemies against God, and threatenings against his people, then comes an angel, makes an horrible slaughter in a night, sends him back to his own country, where, after the loss of his army, he lost his life by the hands of his own children. A greater pride cannot be expressed than what the apostle predicts of the man of sin, and that hath been extant for some time in the world: 2 Thes. ii. 4, 'Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God,' in additions to the word, clipping the institutions of God, and adding new, and canonizing new mediators of intercession; who sits in the temple of God in a profession of Christianity, shewing himself that he is God, assuming the name of God and the title of God in being called *most holy*. And perhaps it will yet amount to a higher step than it hath yet done before he be consumed by the

brightness of the Lord's coming, since all that yet lets and hinders is not taken out of the way. The higher the pride, the nearer the fall. When Goliath shall defy the God of Israel, a stone from a sling, thrown by the hand of David, our great David the antitype, shall lay him vomiting out his soul and blasphemies on the earth. We are many times more beholding to the enemies' insolence than our own innocence: Deut. xxxii. 27, 'Were it not that God feared the wrath of the enemy,' *i. e.* in their pride, lest 'their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and say, Our hand is high,' a sinful Israel should not have so many preservations.* When they will 'ascend into heaven, and exalt their throne above the stars of God;' when they will 'ascend above the heights of the clouds, and be like the Most High; then shall they be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit,' Isa. xiv. 13-15. The highest towers are the fairest marks for thunder, and the readiest tinder for the lightning of heaven. When Tyrus had set her heart as the heart of God, then would God defile her brightness, and make her die the death of them that are slain in the midst of the sea, Ezek. xxviii. 6-8.

(8.) Eager malice. Nothing would satisfy the Egyptians here but the blood of the Israelites. 'My hand shall destroy them;' they were under a cruel bondage, attended with anguish of spirit, before God began their rescue. The serpent's seed have the same principles of craft and malice sown in their nature, that are resident in his; ever since the beginning, he endeavoured to shape men into the same form and temper with himself; their rage would raze out the very foundation of Israel, and not suffer the name to be had any more in remembrance,' Ps. lxxxiii. 4. They love to be drunk with the blood of the saints, and are no more satisfied with blood than the grave with carcases; they repair their arrows, and watch for an opportunity to discharge them, and never want poison but opportunity. This is God's time to deliver. When Pharaoh would pollute the land with the blood of the Hebrew males, and ordain them to be dragged from the womb to the slaughter, then God raises up himself to attempt the rescue of Israel; yet he bears with his insolence, punisheth him, but not destroys him. But when he would be still stiff against a sense of the multitude of plagues, and a greater mercy of patience in them; when he would arm for the field against that God the smart of whose force he had felt, and resolves to destroy or bring back the Israelites upon the point of his sword, God would then bear no longer, but make the water his sepulchre. When Haman designs the ruin of the Jews, procures the king's commission, sends despatches to all the governors of the provinces, sets up a gibbet for Mordecai, and wants nothing but an opportunity to request the execution, he tumbles down to exchange his prince's favours for an exaltation on the gallows, Esther vi. 4, vii. 10. When the serpent increased his malicious cruelty, and cast out a flood against the church, God makes the earth, the carnal world, to give her assistance, and repel the force that Satan used against her: Rev. xii. 15, 16, 'The earth helped the woman.' When 'multitudes shall gather together in the valley of decision,' then shall 'the Lord roar out of Sion, and be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel,' Joel iii. 14, 16. And when spiritual Egypt shall make a war against Christ, who sits upon the white horse, and combine all their force for the destruction of his people, then shall the beast and the false prophet be taken and brought to their final ruin, and their force be broken in a lake of fire, as that of Egypt was in a sea of water, Rev. xix. 19, 20. The time of their greatest fierceness shall be the time of Christ's fury; he will strike them sorest when he finds

* Trap on Exod. p. 2.

them cruellest; their rage shall rouse up his revenge. When the men of Sodom, to which the antichristian state is likened, shall be resolutely bent to wickedness, they shall be struck with blindness, and that blindness succeeded by destruction; then will God set bounds to the outrageous waves, and snatch the prey out of the teeth of the lions.

(4.) Confident security. 'I will divide the spoil, my lust shall be satisfied upon them.' God lets the enemy 'come in like a flood' and torrent, with a confidence to carry all before him, before he 'lifts up a standard against him,' Isa. lix. 19. Then shall the Spirit of the Lord stir up himself gloriously in the principles and actions of his people, and the Redeemer shall come to Sion. God will set his force against their confidence, and break their impetuosity by his own power. When the enemies of the church think they have entangled it in such a snare, reduced it to so low a condition as to be secure of her ruin with a blast and puff, then God will 'arise and set her in safety from them that puff at her,' Ps. xii. 5. This will be the case of Babylon, when she shall say, 'I sit as a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow,' then 'shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine,' for then God will stir up his strength to judge her, Rev. xviii. 7. It is in the time of the antichristian polity, and mutual congratulations, with the highest security for their happy success, triumphing over the dead bodies of the witnesses, that they shall stand again upon their feet (the same persons, if politically dead, others witnessing the same doctrine, if they were corporeally dead), and damp all their mirth and triumph, and turn their security into fears; then shall glory be given to the God of heaven, and the ark of his testament be seen in his temple, and the power of the Lord be magnified, Rev. xi. 10, 11. When they shall all be gathered together to the battle of the great day of the Lord, the place is called *Armageddon*, Rev. xvi. 14, 16, &c., גֶּרֶן וְהָרִם. A cursed troop, an army under God's *anathema*, when they have the greatest confidence. When Jerusalem shall be penned up by a siege, it shall be 'a cup of trembling in the hands of her enemies,' Zech. xii. 2. Fear shall seize upon them in the midst of their confidence. The sun was risen upon Sodom just before the devouring shower of fire and brimstone. With what derision would they have entertained any messenger, that should have assured them of such a shower in so clear a day! No doubt but the Egyptian horses went prancing into the sea, and their riders confident of catching their prey; when they saw the waters congealed, they had not the least suspicion but that the division of the sea was made in their favour, till the chariot wheels were taken off, and the waters ready to roll upon them, Exod. xiv. 23, 25.

2. As something on the part of the church's enemies forwards the deliverance, so there is some regard God hath to the church's straits: *cum duplicantur lateres, venit Moses*. It is God's usual method to let the church be in great distress before he commands deliverance. The distress of the church was great in the concern of this day, though it was not sensible, the deliverance being known near as soon as the danger.

The church is to be in the depths of the sea before she be fully delivered, Ps. lxxviii. 22. The Jews were to pass through the sea with affliction before the pride of Assyria should be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt depart away; after that, he would strengthen them in the Lord, and they should walk up and down in his name, Zech. x. 11, 12. The sharpest pangs precede deliverance; it was so when Christ came in the flesh, it will be so at every new rising of Christ in his Spirit. When things were at a low ebb; when the sun set in the greatest darkness of error, idolatry, and profaneness; when the Jews, the only spot of ground God had, was as a

wilderness, almost barren of any grace ; when the great predictions of the prophets were unminded, and less understood ; when Urim and Thummim had ceased, and the spirit of prophecy was shut up : then Christ comes in the fulness of time to work an universal relief for mankind. When the day of vengeance is in the heart of the Redeemer, he shall look and find none to help, he shall wonder to find none to uphold ; therefore his own arm shall bring salvation, Isa. lxiii. 5.

This has always been God's method. With his Son, the powers of darkness had their hour, and triumphed when they had laid him in the grave, before he was raised by the glory of his Father. The witnesses must be killed by the hand of their enemies, before they stand upon their feet, and ascend up into heaven, in the sight of their adversaries, Rev. xi. 7. When the church shall walk in darkness, 'grope for the wall like the blind, mourn like doves, look for salvation, and it shall seem far off,' then will the Lord 'put on a helmet of salvation on his head, and the garments of vengeance for clothing, and be clad with zeal as a cloak,' Isa. lix. 9, 10, 11, 17. The break of day is ushered in by a thicker darkness than that which clouded the night before. The sharpest persecution that ever the church had, was in the time of Diocletian, a little before Christianity was to rule his empire in the exaltation of Constantine. Abraham was in hardship, out of his country, when he received the promises of the Messiah ; and Israel in the wilderness, when the oracles of God were delivered to them. Confusion of the church precedes always the communication of light.

The reasons of the doctrine are these.

1. This makes for God's glory. The creature cannot in this condition challenge any share in the honour of the deliverance, or pare off so much as a splinter of his glory. Had the Israelites been armed, and drawn into a strong battalion, and so defeated the Egyptian army, the victory would rather have been challenged by them than ascribed to God ; but neither the strength of their multitude nor the wisdom of their guides were able to protect them. Counsel failed, and heads were feeble. Then did God get himself a name, when they were upon the point of a remediless ruin. It was manifest the name of the Lord got David the victory, since he encountered unarmed with Goliath, who could have crushed him like a fly had he been in his fingers.

The time of the church's depression is the time of God's exaltation. He waits for the extremity to lift up himself. When paleness is upon the face of his people, when the cedars of Lebanon hang their heads, when the church's beauty seems a lamentable deformity, and Sharon is like a wilderness, then will God arise, Isa. xxxiii. 9, 10. God never builds up Sion, but he ordains all things in a method for his appearance in the greatest glory : Ps. cii. 16, 'When the Lord shall build up Sion, he shall appear in his glory,' that is, when the church is destitute, ver. 17.

(1.) God exalts his power. His right hand then becomes 'glorious in power,' Exod. xv. 6. He loves to appear in his dress as a Creator, when there is no fitness in the subject to answer his end but what he bestows upon it. When Jerusalem becomes 'a rejoicing, and her people a joy,' it is an act of creating power : Isa. lxxv. 18, 'For, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing.' When the creature can give them not the least assistance, then will they be sensible of God's unbounded sufficiency, and their own necessary dependence. God never had too little help from his creature in a deliverance ; he hath sometimes complained of too much, and disbanded some of the church's forces, as in the case of Gideon, Judges vii. As Christ rules in the midst of his enemies, so doth God's power most visibly in the midst of distresses. A physician's skill is most conspicuous when the disease is most

dangerous and most complicated, and nature at the lowest ebb. It is more glory to God to quench the fire in its fullest rage than to extinguish it in its first smoke and sparkles. God loves the fairest mark to shoot at, and will rather down with Goliath than with the ordinary Philistines, grapple with the great rather than with a light danger, that the Lord may appear to be 'a man of war,' Exod. xv. 3. As God shews his mercy in his people's redemption, he will shew his strength in their conduct, Exod. xv. 13. He that made this deliverance a standing monument of his power, entitles himself by it: Isa. xliii. 16, 'Thus saith the Lord, which makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters.'

(2.) His kindness to, and care of, his people. When the straits are remediless, and the counsels whereby the projects are laid not to be defeated by human skill; when God seems to have forgot, then in a seasonable deliverance he shews himself the careful watchman of Israel. When the ship is in a raging storm, and Christ asleep, he will leave his own ease to keep his word and content his people. When the church thinks God hath forgotten his mercies, and they have forgotten their dependence; when the misery is so pressing that there is no faith of a deliverance left: then Christ comes, when faith is scarcely to be found upon the earth, Luke xviii. 8, to exalt his mercy in the depths of their misery, and work terrible things they looked not for, Isa. lxiv. 3. The Israelites would not have understood God's care in their protection without this or the like strait. God had a new opportunity to shew his watchfulness over them, to turn the cloud, which went before them as their guide, behind them for their defence, Exod. xiv. 19. The scoffs of the enemy at the church's misery are God's motive to help her: 'I will restore health to thee, because they called thee an outcast,' Jer. xxx. 17. It is in straits we see God's salvation, not man's: Exod. xiv. 13, 'Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.'

(3.) His justice. He lets the church be encompassed with miseries, and the enemies in a combination against her, that he may overthrow them at once. God makes a quicker dispatch with the Egyptians when they were united than when they had assaulted Israel with a smaller body. His righteousness gets glory at one blow, when he makes them to lie down together, Isa. xliii. 17. His justice is unblemished in striking when their wickedness is visibly ripe; the equity of it must needs be subscribed, that when the enemy's malice is greatest, when they have no mixture of compassion, it is the clearest righteousness to crush them without any mixture of mercy. God brings things to that pass that he may honour both his justice and mercy in the highest; that the black horses and the white horses may march firm together, Zech. vi. 6; the black horses that brought death and judgment northward to Babylon, where the church was captive; the white horses that followed them, and brought deliverance to his people: the one to be instruments of his judgments, the other of his mercies. God loves to glorify those two attributes together; he did so in the redemption of mankind by the death of his Son, and he doth so in the deliverance of his church. There is a conformity of the church to Christ in her distress, that there may be a conformity of God's glory in temporal to his glory in eternal salvation. God singles out a full crop to be an harvest for both. A wicked man is said to be 'waited for' by the sword, Job xv. 22. God attends the best season for revenge, when mercy to the one shall appear most glorious, and vengeance on his enemies most equitable, and all disputes against his proceedings be silenced.

2. It makes to the church's advantage. God had a work to do upon mount Sion and on Jerusalem, before he would 'punish the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks,' Isa. x. 12. His end shall

be attained in the correction of his church, before his glory shall be exalted in the destruction of her enemies. There are enemies in the hearts of his people to be conquered by his grace, before the enemies to her peace and prosperity shall be defeated by his power. He will let them be in the fire, till, like gold, they may have a purer honour in a brighter lustre.

(1.) Humiliation is gained hereby. God would not presently raze out the Canaanites, lest the wild beasts should increase upon them, Deut. vii. 22. Too quick deliverances may be occasions to multiply the wild beasts of pride, security, and wantonness in the heart; humility would have but little footing. There is need of a sharp winter to destroy the vermin before we can expect a fruitful spring. Without humiliation, the church knows not how to receive nor how to improve any mercy. The enemies hasten their own ruin by increasing the measure of their sins, and Israel's deliverance by being instruments to humble their hearts. The sooner the plaster hath drawn out the corrupt matter, the sooner it is cast into the fire. God hereby prevents the growth of weeds in that ground he intends to enrich with new mercies.

(2.) A spirit of prayer is excited. Slight troubles make but drooping prayers; great straits make it gush out, as the more the bladder is squeezed the higher the water springs. We hear not of the Israelites crying to the Lord after their coming out of Egypt, till they had a sight of the formidable army: Exod. xiv. 10, 'They were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord.' Prayer gains mercies, but scarce springs up free without sense of distress. We then have recourse to God's power, whereby he is able to relieve us, when we are sensible of our own weakness, whereby we are unable to relieve ourselves. Men will scarce seek to God, or trust him, while any creature, though but a reed, remains for their support; they are destitute before they pray, or believe God regards their prayers: Ps. cii. 17, 'He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.' Distress causes importunity, and God will do much for importunity's sake, Luke xi. 8.

(3.) Discovery of sincerity. Hereby God discovers who are his people, and who are not; who are in the highest form of Christianity, and who are not in the school, or at least but in the lowest form. He separates the good corn from the useless chaff. No question but there were some among the Israelites that, in this extremity, acted faith upon the remembrance of the wonders God had wrought for them in Egypt before their departure. Certainly they did not all murmur against Moses. Were there no Calebs and Joshuas that followed God fully in a way of faith and submission? Their faith and courage had not been conspicuous without this extremity. Thunderings and lightnings, and terrible things in righteousness, are to prove us, whether the fear of God be before our faces that we sin not, Exod. xx. 18, 20. God separates the dross. You never know a new building without pulling down, to separate the rubbish and rotten rafters from the sound materials. Abraham was put upon hard work, the imbruing his hands in the blood of his only son, to prove his integrity. When God sees his sincerity, he diverts the blow; not only delivers him from his grief, his son from his danger, but renews the promise of the Messiah to him as a reward. Deliverance then comes when God hath separated the corn from the stubble.

(4.) A standing encouragement for future faith. When the straits are greatest from whence God delivers us, there is a stronger foundation for a future trust. When the distress is inconsiderable, faith afterwards will be more feeble. A large experience heartens and strengthens faith in the promise. When gloomy clouds are blown over, the brighter and thinner will not be much feared. When we see the sun melt the thickest over our heads,

we shall not doubt its force to dissolve the lesser vapours which may afterwards assemble. When the ship hath escaped a raging storm, we shall not doubt it in a less. God often puts them in mind of their deliverance in the Red Sea, to strengthen their faith and dependence on him. It must needs be an establishment to faith, for deliverances from great straits are some kind of obligation on the honour of God. When the Israelites had provoked God by murmuring, and wished they had died in Egypt, and not in the wilderness, Moses intercedes with this argument, The Egyptians shall hear of it, from whom God brought up Israel with a strong hand; and it would disparage God's power, and tax him with an inability to bring his people into the land he intended. Then God grants their pardon, Num. xiv. 13, 14, 15.

(5.) Engagement to future obedience. It is upon this account God pre-faceth the law with his mercy in delivering them out of Egypt. The strongest vows are made in the greatest straits. Many obligations there are when the extremity forces us to cry. When we are in the jaws of death, God may have his terms of us; when we are at some distance, we will have our own. The lower a person is, the more readily will he bend to any condition; hope of deliverance will make him stoop. And when God snatches his people as firebrands out of the fire, they are more obliged to him from common ingenuity, and must be more ashamed of breaking their vows than if their mercies were of a great alloy. If common patience leads to repentance, a rescue from an amazing danger is a stronger cord to draw us to repentance and obedience. And it is certain that when the church in sincerity makes vows to God, it will not be long before God puts her into a condition to pay them, and furnish her with incentives to a holy ingenuity.

(6.) The greater thankfulness. The more straitened, the greater thankfulness for enlargement. As we hear not of the Israelites' prayers, after they came out of Egypt, till they were in the pound, so we read of none of their songs, though they had matter enough for them, in their first departure, till God had dashed in pieces the enemy, and 'thrown the horse and the rider into the sea.' Then, and not till then, had they a deep sense, how 'glorious God was in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders,' Exod. xv. 11. Great mercies unveil God's face more to the view of his people. When Israel inherits great salvation, then the Lord shall inherit the praise of Israel. When we have less mercies, we take little notice of the author. God hears the language of but one of our bones; but when he 'delivers the poor from him that is too strong for him, and spoils him, then all my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee?'

(7.) To prevent future mischief to the church. The destruction of the greatest enemies is a disarming the less. God, by this destruction, struck a terror into those nations, upon whose confines Israel was to march into Canaan, who, without so remarkable a rebuke of providence, would have been desirous to finger some of their prey. Then 'trembling took hold of the mighty men of Moab. All the inhabitants of Canaan did melt away; fear and dread fell upon them by the greatness of the arm of God, that they should be as still as a stone, till they passed over the river,' Exod. xv. 15, 16. Their present deliverance was a passport for their future security in their journey; and no enemies troubled them in the way but those upon whom God had a mind to shew his power.

How doth God deliver when the season is thus?

1. Suddenly. They sank like lead in the mighty waters, which quickly reaches the bottom. Judgment comes like lightning. Death and hell are said to 'ride upon horses,' Rev. vi. 8. They are too swift for God's enemies, and will easily win the race of them. Destruction comes, 'as travail

upon a woman with child,' 1 Thes. v. 3. How suddenly did God turn the Assyrian camp into an Aceldama, overthrow a powerful army, and make their tents their tombs in the space of a night ! He will dash them 'in pieces like a potter's vessel,' Ps. ii. 9, all in bits at a stroke. He comes suddenly; he 'rides upon a cherub,' Ps. xviii. 10. But because the motion of an angel is not so intelligible, he adds another metaphor from the nimblest of sensible things; 'he flies upon the wings of the wind,' to assist his people in extremity. The enemy comes like a 'whirlwind,'* and God comes forth as a 'whirlwind of fury,' Jer. xxx. 23. The whirlwind of his judgments shall be as quick as the whirlwind of their malice; a continual whirlwind, when the other is vanishing; it 'shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked,' when the other shall be as fruitless as a snowball against a wall of brass. The enemy beholds him not till he be upon him; for the 'clouds are as dust under his feet,' Nahum i. 3, and obscure his appearance, as the raising the dust doth the march of a troop. He comes unawares upon them in a cloud. The execution is sudden. They shall be 'cut down as grass,' Ps. xxxvii. 2, which this moment faceth the sun, triumphing in its natural bravery, and the next moment is cut off from its root with one shave of a scythe. He quencheth them as tow is quenched in water, Isa. xliii. 17, as the snuff of a candle is quenched by being bruised by the fingers. He cuts them off as foam, the excrement of the water, Hosea x. 7, which bursts in pieces like a bubble, on the sudden. Vengeance comes upon Tyre and Sidon swiftly and speedily, Joel iii. 4. Tyre comes of צור, which signifies to afflict, to straiten. Sidon of צרה; the word signifies to pursue. All persecutors are threatened in Tyre and Sidon with a swift destruction. God delays the time to try the faith and patience of his people, to make the expected deliverance more sweet and welcome, and mercy more singular. He may have some of the seed of Christ in the loins of some of his enemies. But when he doth draw his sword, he gives a sudden blow before the enemy fears it, or his people expect it. The Jews in Babylon, when the chains of their captivity were unloosed, were like those that dream, they could scarce believe they were freed when the enemy felt himself punished. In all other plagues, God sent Moses as an herald, with warning to Pharaoh; but in this God surprised him, and hurried him to destruction, without giving him any caution. Like 'chaff that the tempest carrieth away, and is seen no more,' Job xxi. 18: so shall the plagues of spiritual Egypt 'come in one day,' Rev. xviii. 8; yea, 'in one hour,' ver. 17. And the church shall be like a lily, which, by the assistance of the dew, flourisheth in the morning, when over night it looked as if it were withered.

2. Magnificently. Sometimes in deliverance God puts the frame of nature in confusion. 'He melts the mountains, cleaves the valleys, as wax before the fire, and as waters poured down a steep place,' Micah i. 4, *i. e.* he wastes the strength and riches of his enemies when he comes to judge. When he appears in the generation of the righteous, he shall appear in such glory, as to make the adversaries in great fear, and strike a terror into them, Ps. xiv. 5. God will perform it in a prodigious and unusual way. God might have taken off the wheels of the Egyptian chariots before they had entered the gap of the sea, and hindered them from approaching so near his beloved people; he might have afflicted their hands with the palsy, and rendered them incapable to manage their weapons; or might have sent a spirit of emulation among them, and made them sheathe their swords in one another's bowels. But though this had secured his people, it would not have rendered his operation so illustrious, as the making that which was a means

* 'They came out as a whirlwind to scatter me.'—Hab. iii. 14.

of his people's security to be his enemies' destruction, and the waters at once indulgent to the Israelites, and severe to the Egyptians. He magnifies his judgments and mercies by one and the same stroke, and drowns the enemies in the sea, whereby he delivers the Israelites. So he preserved Daniel in the midst of those lions which devoured his accusers. The more contrary things are to an eye of reason, the fitter subjects they are for the exaltation of God. As Christ, the head, so the church, the body, is raised out of the grave by the glory of God the Father, Rom. vi. 4. His right hand shall find his enemies, Ps. xxi. 8; his right hand shall teach him terrible things, Ps. xlv. 4. Then shall he come with a shout, as one refreshed with wine, recruited with new spirits, and risen from sleep, Ps. lxxviii. 65. He calls upon all creatures to be assistant to Cyrus in the design of his people's deliverance, Isa. xlv. 8. He will perfect it by a way of creation, ('I have created righteousness' to deliverance) with the manifestation of his, and he makes things serve against their natural order appointed by God. Thus, when God shall appear for the final overthrow of spiritual Egypt, he shall come with voices, thunders, and lightnings, an earthquake out of the temple, and appear as magnificently in the garb of a judge as he did on Sinai in that of a law-giver, Rev. xvi. 19, and make the ten horns, which were the support of the beast, to be the instruments of her desolation, Rev. xvii. 16.

3. Severely. They sank to the bottom like lead in the mighty waters. God sends out the greatest judgments against those that deal sharply with his people, greater than against any other part of the world, Zech. vi. 6. The black horses, the instrument of the execution of his anger, were sent towards Babylon, where his people were in captivity; but the bay horses, of a mixed colour, noting a mixture of mercy and judgments, are sent towards other parts of the world, to walk, not to run, signifying the patience of God to those parts which had not yet oppressed his people. God deals not so smartly with those, as with them that are enemies to Israel. In such concerns he answers his people 'by terrible things in righteousness.' When he appears as a God of salvation to his people, he appears terrible in his righteousness to his enemies: Ps. lxxv. 5, 'By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation.' His judgments shall be as terrible as they are righteous. The executioners of his vengeance ride upon horses, to shew their readiness to any warlike engagement; upon red horses, of a bloody colour, to shew the severity of their commission against the enemies of God, Zech. i. 8. He will pay all arrears together, that they shall be forced to say, God is true to the word of his threatening, as well as that of his promise; as the Amalekites, in Samuel's time, paid the scores of their ancestors in the time of the Israelites' travel through the wilderness: 1 Sam. xv. 2, 'I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for them in the way when they came up from Egypt.' So when God reckons with Babylon for all the blood of the saints and prophets,—Rev. xviii. 20, 'The blood of all the prophets and saints that were slain upon the earth, shall be found upon her skirts, and avenged on her,'—he gives unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath; all that she hath done shall come into his remembrance, Rev. xvi. 19. And how severe it shall be is expressed, Rev. xiv. 19, 20; she shall be cast into the great wine-press of the wrath of God, as grapes bruised with the greatest strength, and crushed in pieces, both skin and stones. And to express it more sensibly to our understandings, he speaks of the flowing of the 'blood out of the wine-press into the horses' bridles,' by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs, two hundred miles; not that we should understand it literally, but the Spirit of God is so particular in describing the height of the deluge of blood to the

bridles of the horses, the length of the flood to the space of two hundred miles, to set before our apprehension the severity of the wrath that shall be poured out upon them. And as God never repented of his judgments upon Egypt, so never will he of those which are to come upon Babylon.

4. Universally, and therefore severely. 'The horse and the rider did God cast into the sea;' the chariots, the host, and the chosen captains were drowned there, Exod. xv. 1, 4. The waters covered the enemy, there was not one of them left, Ps. lx. 11, Exod. xiv. 28. Not a messenger to carry back the news; their floating bodies and wrecks were the first that gave notice of the defeat to their remaining countrymen. God throws off all tenderness, his bowels are silent, he strikes like a wrathful enemy, lanceth not like a tender chirurgeon; so shall it be with the partners of their sins, every man that worships the beast and his image, shall drink of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, and whoever receiveth the mark of his name, Rev. xiv. 9-11. The sun, the political power that defends it, shall be darkened; the rivers, whereby their traffic and riches come into them, shall be dried up; all that have any dependence on them, recourse to them, stand in the defence of the power of Egypt, shall fall under the indignation of God.

5. Totally, irrecoverably. They sank as lead. God will make an utter end; affliction shall not rise up a second time, Nahum i. 9, 10. He overtakes them when they are drunk in the height of their pleasure, while they are making their confederacies against the church, while they are folden together like thorns, they shall be devoured like stubble fully dry. Παιήσει τὴν ἐχθρίαν: Luke xviii. 7, 'He will avenge his own; he will avenge them speedily;' he will act so as if wrath were his only and proper work; he will do it to purpose, and perfectly. The Egyptian carcasses lay as trophies of the victory, Exod. xiv. 30. Their former plagues had something of patience; punishment was inflicted, but life preserved; judgments sent, but, upon promise of reformation, quite removed. Now patience folds her hands, and stands spectator, while justice opens hers, and becomes a sole actor; mercy runs on the side of Israel, and wrath marcheth without any impediment against the Egyptians. As they like lead, so irrecoverably shall Babylon fall like a millstone in the depths of the sea, and shall be found no more at all; all her mirth and jollity shall for ever cease, Rev. xviii. 21-23. When things fall to the bottom of the sea, they are entombed there for ever; no skill can restore them to their former station; when judgment turneth the key, and locks them in, there is no more opening the door.

6. And all this justly. Pharaoh had commanded that the Hebrew male children should be exposed to the mercy of the river, to find their death in the water as soon as they had breathed in the air, Exod. i. 22; and God makes them perish in that element to which they had adjudged the harmless infants. Now God pays the law-maker and his counsellors with the same coin, and makes the malefactors food for the inhabitants of the deep, who had before fed the crocodiles with the blood of the innocent. God shall reward Babylon as she hath rewarded his people, and double unto her the cup she hath filled for others, Rev. xviii. 6. Upon this account shall praise be given to God, that he hath given them blood to drink who have shed the blood of his saints and prophets, Rev. xvi. 6. 'Thou art righteous, O Lord, because thou hast judged thus.' As she hath kindled fires to consume the witnesses of Christ, so God shall kindle a fire to consume her, Rev. xvii. 16: 'She shall be utterly burnt with fire,' Rev. xviii. 8. Some think Rome will at length be consumed with fire from heaven. She is indeed spiritual Sodom, Rev. xi. 8; and as she answers it in carnal and spiritual sins, she may par-

take of the same visible and spiritual judgments. Whether the punishment will be the same for kind I know not, but certainly it will be such a kind of punishment whereby the judgments of God shall be read, both in proportion and kind of it, as a retaliation for her sins ; and the Scripture speaks of fire coming down from God out of heaven upon the last enemies of the church that shall afflict the beloved city, alluding to the fire upon Sodom, and that which descended upon the persecutors of Elijah, Rev. xx. 9.

7. Wisely. He cuts off the spirits of princes, as he took off the wheels of the Egyptian chariots, Ps. lxxvi. 12, either by infatuating their counsels, or turning them as the rivers of waters into other channels. He stripped the Egyptians first of their wealth, and now spoils them of their strength ; he kept a bridle upon the waters till the enemies were got into the midst of them, and then commands the sea to swallow them up in the depths of her bowels. When men lay their counsels deep, second them by an invincible strength, have almost brought them to their imagined period ready to bring forth, God disappoints their hopes, baffles their counsels, renders their projects frothy, raiseth a storm and blows the ship from its harbour, contrary to its intended course, and glorifies his wisdom by overthrowing their designs when they have brought them to a birth. He watches upon the evil, to divert it from the innocent object upon the malicious actor. As God watches for the fittest season to bring evil upon his people, Dan. ix. 14, he will be as diligent to watch for the fittest opportunity to bring judgment on his enemies. God hath promised vengeance, but he hath reserved the knowledge of the ' due time ' to himself, when he will make their foot to slide, Deut. xxxii. 35. Every mercy is then most seasonable. Usually God lets men bring the ball almost to the goal, and then kicks it from them, and them from it ; and the wisdom of God hath been, and will be, glorious in the overthrow of the remaining enemies of the church, in making them which were horns to defend the beast to be carpenters to ruin him, Rev. xvii. 16.

Use 1. Of comfort. How dear is the church to God ! When God was engaged in the deliverance of his people, he sinks the strength of Egypt rather than one hair of the Israelites' heads should perish ; they went safe over, while no man or horse of the enemies escaped. God gave Egypt for Israel's ransom, Isa. xliii. 3 ; and the sea should have drowned the whole land, rather than the enemies have hurt his people. So did the contrivers of the powder plot come to destruction, when not one hair of a head was lost, or one splinter of the place they intended was shaved off, by the prepared gunpowder. God sits in heaven and laughs at the little petty designs of men, Ps. ii. 4. God that is infinite to countermine them, infinitely powerful to defeat them, hath them in derision. Christ in glory mocks at the folly of earth-worms. The decree of God, which settles Christ a king, assures him a kingdom, and secures his people as it did his person, Ps. ii. 7. God is ' a sun and shield,' Ps. lxxxiv. 11 ; a shield to defend them, and a sun to extinguish the fire of the enemy's fury by shining upon it. God values no nation for the security of his people. The Babylonians, a warlike nation, shall sink under the army of Cyrus, for the restoration of the captive Jews : Isa. xliii. 4, ' I will give men for thee, and people for thy life.' He had given Egypt for their ransom before, and Ethiopa and Seba in the time of Asa ; and still, in after ages, God was of the same mind. God is as gracious to his people as terrible to his enemies ; he is light to the one, when he is fire to the souls and bodies of the other, Isa. x. 17. Christ still sits the Watchman of Ephraim with God, Hosea ix. 8. He inspects his church, and waits to bring the day of visitation upon his enemies. The covenant is of special force with God to move him to deliver his people : Isa. lxiii. 8, ' He

said, Surely they are my people ; so he was their Saviour.' It seems to refer to the deliverance from Egypt. Shall I have so little regard to the league I have entered into with their fathers, as to be unconcerned in their misery? There is hope in Israel till God forgets his covenant, and Christ strip himself of the name of a Saviour. Christ hath his priestly habit in heaven for his people, but eyes as flames of fire, quick and piercing, to consume the very hearts of his enemies, and feet like fine brass to trample upon them, Rev. i. 13-15. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, to tear his enemies, as well as a Lamb slain, to expiate the sins of his people. He hath meekness for his friends, and terrible majesty for his enemies : Ps. xlv. 4, 'In thy majesty ride prosperously, because of meekness.' His kindness to his people makes him ride in majesty against the others. God will not be at rest till he hath revenged the cause of his people. Egypt will be drowned, Babylon will fall, Rev. xviii. 2. Christ can have no satisfaction without it. The executioners of his judgments in the north country, which was Babylon, lying northward from Jerusalem, do quiet his Spirit, both as tending to the glory of his justice and the manifestation of his mercy to his people, Zech. vi. 8. Christ will stain his garments in the blood of Edom and Bozrah, Isa. lxiii. 2, 3 : Edom, the posterity of Esau ; Bozrah, a city of Moab, types of the church's enemies. The Jewish doctors, by Edom in the prophets, understand Rome. Christ sits in heaven till his enemies be made his footstool. All the time of his sitting, God is acting and preparing things for a final issue. There is a strong cry of blood, and a file of prayers ; the one will be revenged, and the other will be answered. Their own pride and cruelty witness against them. God hath a noise of petitions every day for a full end ; a combined importunity will prevail. But clouds now hang over us ; a gloomy storm seems to threaten us. God may indeed blow over the cloud. Our Saviour hath the command of the storms and winds in heaven, as well as he had upon the earth. The pillar of the cloud, which hath hitherto conducted us, may be our guardian in the rear to defend us. But yet, if he doth suffer them to prevail, they shall be but as whisks to brush off the dust, wisps of straw to cleanse the filthy pot. You know what is to be done with them when their work is done. Their language indeed is, Let Sion be defiled ; but they understand not the counsel of the Lord, who in time will make the horn of Sion iron, and her hoofs brass, Micah iv. 11. Though the beasts that ascend out of the bottomless pit do kill God's people, Rev. xi. 7, yet, even in this victory of theirs, Satan himself shall be overcome. As when Christ was taken out from among the living by Satan's means, it was but for a time, but himself was cast out for ever, so, after this victory, the church shall overcome, Rev. xi., and God shall break the head of the leviathan in the waters ; and when he doth, by his wisdom, contrive ways of salvation, he will, by his power, execute them, and save in such a way as may most glorify himself, and witness that the salvation was the immediate work of his arm : Hosea ii. 7, 'I will save them by the Lord their God.'

2. Remember former deliverances in time of straits. In our plenty of mercies, we should not be unmindful how near we were to the pit, nor let the impression of God's power, wisdom, and mercy wear off from our hearts. The Israelites were apt to forget the most signal mercies, though they had seen them, and had more sensibly tasted the sweetness of them than their posterity. God, therefore, often puts them in mind of them ; the Lord that brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the iron furnace, Deut. iv. 20 : Hosea xii. 9, 'I the Lord your God from the land of Egypt.' It was the more fit to be remembered by them, because many of them were fitter subjects for God's wrath with the Egyptians than for his delivering-

kindness, since she committed whoredoms in Egypt in her youth, *i. e.* had been guilty of the Egyptian idolatry, Ezek. xxiii. 3. Unmindfulness of former experiences may make you hopeless of future deliverances. The remembrance of former mercies is a ground of confidence in God for the like mercies for the future. God recalls to his people's minds, in their afflictions, the memorable defeat of the Moabites by his sole power, in the time of Jehoshaphat's reign; they should, from that deliverance, hope for as great from the hands of God in their straits. And, Zech. x. 11, God would have them consider their deliverance at the Red Sea as a ground of hope in the time of their distress.

3. Thankfully remember former deliverances. If we have not some praise for God, we may suspect ourselves. It is observed that the city Shushan, the royal seat of the Persian monarchy, was portrayed upon the east gate of the temple,* not because of the Persian command, or because of their fear of that king, as some think, but to have a thankful remembrance of the wonderful deliverance of Purim, which was wrought in Shushan, Esth. ix. 26. If it had been only by the Persians' command, it would have been defaced after the fall of that monarchy, which held but thirty-four years after the building of the second temple. The 136th Psalm is a good copy, where is a threefold exhortation to thankfulness in the beginning, and one at the end; and in the record of every mercy, the burden of every verse is, 'his mercy endureth for ever.' How should we imitate the psalmist! He broke the teeth of the invincible leviathan in '88, and sent a strong wind to disperse the fleet, 'for his mercy endureth for ever.' God prevented the dreadful blast of gunpowder, 'for his mercy endureth for ever.' God sent the light of the gospel into England, and freed it from the yoke of antichrist's tyranny, 'for his mercy endures for ever.' God hath been a wall of fire about Ireland, in the protection of it, 'for his mercy endureth for ever.' Let mercy receive the praise of what our own wisdom and power could not effect. The way to overcome the same enemies we fear, is to praise God for what he hath before acted against them. The strength of a people consists in praises, as well as praying: Ps. viii. 2, 'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength;' in the evangelist, 'thou hast perfected praise,' Mat. xxi. 16. The more hallelujahs we put up, the more occasion God may give us for them. If we have any fears of the overflowing deluge God formerly delivered us from, our non-improvement of those deliverances, the fruits whereof we enjoy this day, may strengthen our fears. When Israel was idolatrous in Jeroboam's reign, yet God delivered them from the Syrians, because he saw their affliction was bitter, and there was no helper; yet when they did not thankfully improve it to a reformation, God denounced judgments against them for their idolatry: 2 Kings xiv. 26, 27, 'The Lord said not that he would blot out the name of Israel;' so that he had not yet denounced it, for he waited to see the improvement of this mercy. But before the end of Jeroboam's reign, by the prophet Hosea, who began to prophesy in his time, he declared their final captivity, from whence they are not restored to this day. Praise for former mercies is a means to gain future ones; the music of voices in Jehoshaphat's camp, praising the beauty of holiness, was a prologue of a deliverance from a formidable army, 2 Chron. xx. 21, 22, and more successful than the warlike music of drums and trumpets.

4. Exercise faith on the power of God manifested in deliverances in the time of straits. It is not for want of ability in God, but for want of faith in us, that we at any time go groaning under misery. Faith would quiet the soul. When David relied upon God, and found by experience God sus-

* Lightfoot, Temple, cap. iii. p. 9.

taining him, he would not then be afraid of ten thousand, Ps. iii. 5, 6. Let that be our carriage which is recorded of the Israelites after this memorable defeat: Exod. xiv. 31, 'They believed the Lord, and his servant Moses.' We must never expect to see God's arm bare without faith in him. Christ can do no great work where unbelief is predominant. Unbelief doth not strip God of his power and mercy, but it stops the streams and effluxes of it. Unbelief against experience is a double sin. It is gross when against a bare word, worse when against the word confirmed by a witness. Israel was past thoughts of any relief in this strait, but expected to perish by the hand of their enemies, yet God brought them into straits in mercy, to bring them out of straits with power. He makes their distress a snare to their enemies, and a scaffold for their faith. That deliverance ought to be a foundation for our trust in God, though bestowed upon another nation; yet not so much upon them as a state, but as a church, and a type of those future ones under the gospel which are yet expected. Well, then, trust upon this foundation. Great trust in God is a sort of obligation upon God. Men, out of generosity, will do much for them that depend upon them. Dependence on God magnifies his attributes; this will bring deliverance, whereby God will magnify himself. Do not distrust him, till you meet with an enemy too strong for him to quell, a Red Sea too deep for him to divide, an affliction too sturdy for him to rebuke, an Egyptian too proud for him to master; then part with your faith, but not till God hath parted with his power, which he hath formerly evidenced.

5. Expect and provide for sharp conflicts. God brings into straits before he delivers. Another deliverance is yet to come; the church's distresses are not come to a period; Babylon hath another game to play. The right of the devil to tyrannise over the mystical body was taken away at the death of the head, yet he still bruiseth Christ's heel, and bites, though he cannot totally overcome. As long as Christ's enemies are not made his footstool, as long as there is the seed of the serpent in the world, as long as Christ's members want a conformity to the head, Satan's pinches must be expected; as long as the beast is in being, he will make war with the followers of the Lamb; his power is to continue forty-two months, to make war with the saints, and to overcome them, Rev. xiii. 5, 7. Forty-two months, of years; it is like the time is not expired. One thousand six hundred and twenty years, which make forty-two months; no ending since he first had his power. When his time draws near to an end, he will bite sharpest. This deliverance from Egypt is yet again to be acted over, and that must be at the end, when the whole Israel of God shall be freed from Antichrist, the antitype of Pharaoh.

6. Yet let us not be afraid. Apostasies may be great. There will be but two witnesses; not two in number, but in regard of the fewness of those that shall bear testimony to the doctrine of Christ. There may be no advocate for the church. Sion may be an outcast, cast out of the affection of many that served or favoured her; but the sharpest convulsions in the world are presages of an approaching redemption, Luke xxi. 28, and the gospel will shine clearer, as the sun doth after it hath been muffled with a thick cloud. The words in the mouths of the witnesses will be most killing and convincing. Fear not a natural above a supernatural power. Was not all the church God had in the world in as low a condition at the Red Sea? Not a soul that we read of exempt (or but few, as Job, and some few others in other parts), yet the church was then delivered for a pattern, to shew forth the power of God in the ages to come. What though there may be a want of instruments? Are not all instruments outlived by God? Has God dismissed the care of his people? Is he not always the church's guardian?

He must be dethroned before he can be disarmed. While heaven is too high for human hands to reach, the church is too well guarded for them to conquer. Fear not, till Christ lets his sceptre fall out of his hands, and ceases to rule in the midst of his enemies, and flings away the keys of death and hell; fear not till God strips himself of his strength wherewith he is clothed; he is clothed with strength, Ps. xciii. 1. Though there be little strength in the church, there is an almighty one in their confederate. It is no matter what the enemy resolves against what God ordains. Pharaoh intended to destroy, God intended to deliver. God will have his will, and Pharaoh's lust goes unsatisfied. When the enemies are most numerous, God shall darken their glory and strength, and then shall he be the hope and strength of his people, Joel iii. 14-16. The valley of Achor, the valley of the sharpest trouble, shall be a door of hope, Hosea ii. 15. That God that can create a world out of nothing, can create deliverance when there is no visible means to produce it. What can be too hard for him that can work without materials, that can make matter when it is wanting, and call non-entities into being? He created the world with a word, and can destroy the sturdiest men in the world with a look. The strongest devil trembles before him, and the whole seed of the serpent is but as the dust of the balance before the breath of his mouth. He looked the Egyptian host into disorder, and their chariot wheels into a falling sickness, Exod. xiv. 24. He created the world by a word; he restored Jerusalem by a word, Isa. xlv. 26, 27, dispirited Egypt by a look. There is no need of an arm; a word, and a look of omnipotency, will be efficacious both for the one and the other; one royal edict from him will perform it: Ps. xlv. 4, 'Thou art my King, command deliverance for Jacob.' He hath authority as a king, engagement as the church's king. As he hath right of dominion, so he hath an office of protection, which the church of right may claim. And is it Jacob that wants deliverance? Be not afraid, but sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, Isa. viii. 12, 13. To trust in his power is to sanctify his name, and regard him as the sovereign of all creatures, and the Lord of hosts. If we sanctify his name by relying on his power, he will sanctify his name by engaging his power.

7. To this end study the promises God hath made to his church, and what predictions are upon record. It is a title of the faithful, that they are such as keep the sayings of the book of the Revelation, Rev. xxii. 9. The angel that came to John owns himself his fellow-servant, and of the prophets, and those that keep the sayings of that book. See God's bond, and behold his witness; compare the promise, the prophecy, and performance. See his mercy in making them, his truth in performing them; let these be as the Hur and Aaron to support the glory of God in our souls. This will be a matter of praise, and furnish us with arguments to spread before God. Daniel first looked into the book for the set time of the Jews' return from Babylon, Dan. ix. 2, and took his rise for pleas from thence. You may have need of this food; a divine promise is the best cordial at a stake or gibbet, or when a sword is at your breast.

8. When a time of straits comes, wait patiently upon God. Let not hope sink when reason is nonplussed by storms, and sees nothing but wrecks. Wait upon God in the way of his judgments, Isa. xxvi. 8, in his storms as well as calms. God waits to be gracious, and therefore we should wait to be gratified. Not to wait, is to be partners in that sin which brought destruction upon the church's enemies, viz. pride. It concerns God more in point of his glory to hasten deliverance in its due time, than us in point of security; but there is as much danger in coming too soon as too late. By waiting, we imitate the highest pattern, who waits with patience for the refor-

mation of his enemies, and Christ, who waits for the total victory. The longer God keeps the church at any time under the enemy's chains, the sweeter will be his mercy to the one, and the severer his justice on the other. The Israelites waited, and God followed Pharaoh with plagues, as he followed them with burdens, and took his time to cut off their oppressors, with most glory to himself, and most comfort to them. The vision hath its appointed time. Impatience will not make God break the chains of his resolves, but patience will bring down the blessing with great success, and big with noble births. God is not out of the way of his wisdom and grace, and we can never keep in our way but by patience in waiting; by this we give him the honour of his wisdom; by too much hastiness we check and control him, and will not let him be the master and conductor of his own blessings. We many times get more good by waiting than we do by enjoying a mercy. Such a posture keeps the soul humble and believing, whereas many times, when we receive a mercy too hastily with one hand, we let go faith and humility with the other. Sincere souls have the strongest and most heavenly raptures in a time of waiting: Isa. xl. 31, 'They mount up with wings like eagles.'

9. In times of such straits, be found only in a way of duty. If our straits should ever prove as hard as the Israelites' at the Red Sea, *i.e.* have something of a resemblance to their case, let us follow Moses his counsel to them: Exod. xiv. 13, 'Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.' Let us not anticipate God's gracious designs. If we will have our finger where God only will have his arm, God may withdraw this arm, and leave us to the weakness of our own fingers. Let them that want a God to relieve them use sinful and unworthy shifts for their deliverance. If any success be found out of the way of duty, it may be attended with a curse, and want that favour of God which only can sanctify it. We may purchase a present deliverance with a more durable plague at the end of it, because we forfeit that favour which only can work a real freedom. Sinful ways do not glorify God, but disparage him. Our actions at such a time particularly should adorn the gospel, not discredit it, for it is by the sword of his mouth that such enemies will be destroyed, and every sword cuts best when it is sharpest and cleanest, not when it is blunt and rusty. Not but that lawful means may, nay, they must be used. Noah, though he went into the ark by God's command, and was not to stir out without his order, yet he sets open the windows, and sends forth a raven and a dove, to bring him notice when the waters were dried up. It is a foolish thing to offend God, who only can help us in our straits, and by our sin to hold his sword in his sheath, which, upon our obedience, would be drawn for our relief. We know not how soon we may need him, and our distress be such, that none but he can bring salvation. Let no sin be a bar in the way.

10. Be much in prayer. Israel cried unto the Lord before God did relieve, Exod. xiv. 10. 'The persecuted church cried, travailing in birth, and found a security both for herself and her offspring, Rev. xii. 2, &c. The distress of the time is an argument to be used: Ps. cxliii. 3, 4, 'Have mercy upon us, Lord, for we are exceedingly filled with contempt.' When enemies are high, and access to God free, it is an high contempt of God not to use the privilege he allows us, and it is to trust in an arm of flesh rather than an arm of omnipotence; to think him either inexorable or unable. And for encouragement, consider you have Christ armed against his spouse's enemies, and provided with merit to make her prayers successful. Our prayers may at last be turned into praises, and we may say with David, Ps. ix. 6, 'O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end.'