

GOD'S END IN SENDING CALAMITIES AND AFFLICTIONS ON HIS PEOPLE.

By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged ; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin.—ISAIAH XXVII. 9.

IN the former part of this chapter, the Lord by the prophet expresseth his wrath and severity against his people, enemies* and oppressors, and his mercy and favour to his people : that in terrible threatenings ; this in gracious promises, both repeated in variety of expressions again and again.

He begins with the former, ver. 1, where he threatens to do severe and terrible execution upon the oppressors of his people, under the notion of leviathan and the dragon, or the whale in the sea, i. e. upon the greatest and most potent of them ; those whose power seems irresistible, who devour all before them, as the whales do the smaller fish ; upon them altogether, uniting their forces and complicating their interests. *Leviathan a tri addere, copulare* ; signifying an addition of many creatures united in one.

Ver. 2. Here is his favour to his people, he would make them like a vineyard of red wine ; bring them into a flourishing, a fruitful condition. They should bring forth the best and most acceptable fruit, red wine being the best and strongest wine in that country. Their state should be matter of praise and joy ; *sing*.

Ver. 8. Under the notion of water, he promises whatever was requisite to make it flourish and fructify. There should be no drought to hinder its thriving ; ' water it every moment.' Nor should anything violently break, or privily creep in to hurt it : ' I the Lord will keep it ;' he doth and will do it ' night and day ;' ' every moment ' of both.

Ver. 4. ' Fury is not in me ' towards my vineyard ; my people having humbled themselves, and reformed what was a provocation to me, I am at peace with them. But if there be briars and thorns in my vineyard, where there should be nothing but the choicest vines, such as bring forth pricks instead of grapes ; tear, and rend, and wound, instead of bringing forth fruit acceptable to God and man ; such as are both barren themselves and pester the vineyard, and hinder it from being fruitful : these I will consume and burn up together.

Ver. 5. So will I proceed against those that are as briars and thorns in

* Qu. ' people's enemies ' ?—ED.

my vineyard, those that are as hurtful plants, or fruitful* weeds, unless they take the course to make peace with me; unless they lay hold of my arm, ready to destroy them, and apply themselves to me in ways and means that may pacify me.

Ver. 6. He adds another promise of establishing and multiplying his people, and making them fruitful of a multitude of converts and plenty of fruit.

Ver. 7. Whereas it might be objected, that the Lord seems to have no such peculiar favour for his people, since he doth so severely judge and chastise them; it is here shewed that there is a vast difference betwixt his proceedings against them and others; he does not smite and destroy them as he does his and their enemies. And the difference is more punctually declared in the two next verses.

Ver. 8. He corrects them in measure, his love moderates his displeasure. When it shooteth forth, or when he casts them forth as disobedient children, he doth not cast them off or utterly reject them.

When he debates with them by judgments, he remembers mercy, which considers their relations and their weakness, and favourably proportions their sufferings accordingly.

When the most boisterous wind, as is the east wind, is raised, which might scatter and utterly dissipate them, he allays it so as it does but fan and winnow them.

Another difference is in the text. 'The Lord has quite another end in chastening his people and judging their enemies; he proceeds against these with an intent to destroy them; against his people with a design to purge and refine them. 'By this,' &c.

So that here we have the end and use of the chastenings and afflictions wherewith the Lord exercises his people, viz., the purging of their iniquity and taking away their sin. And the instance here is, in that which was the capital crime of Israel and Judah, the sin to which they were before the captivity most addicted, viz., idolatry, worshipping false gods, or the true God otherwise than he had appointed. 'When he maketh,' &c.; when the altars erected for sacrifices in the high places shall be utterly demolished, the stones of them beaten as small as chalk, or limestones to make lime or parget of; the groves also and images cut down and demolished. The end and fruit of the Lord's judging and chastening them, was the destroying of idolatry, the instruments and monuments of it: under the chief sin, comprising the rest.

Obs. The end of those calamities and afflictions which befall the people of God, is to purge out their iniquity and to take away their sins; their troubles and sufferings are to purify their hearts and to reform their lives. That which is aimed at in the sad dispensations they are exercised with, is mortification and reformation; the removing of sin, of all sorts thereof, both sin and iniquity, from all parts, both heart and life.

Nothing is more evident in Scripture than this truth, and it is most frequently declared. We shall instance in some few places for many: Isa. i. 25, I will turn my afflicting and reforming hand upon them, and by the calamities inflicted will destroy those that are incurable, and refine the rest both from more gross and more specious evils, both dross and tin. 1 Cor. xi. 32, Ye are chastened of the Lord, that those sins which are the cause for which the Lord condemns the world, may be removed, and so your condemnation prevented.

Hence it is that outward calamities and afflictions are expressed by a fire and a furnace, such as are used for the refining of metals, and the consuming or separating of that dross which doth debase them. Isa. xlviii. 10, His

* Qu. 'unfruitful'?—Ed.

people being not yet sufficiently refined, he had made choice of a furnace of affliction further to purge them more thoroughly; Isa. iv. 4, the filth, *i. e.* sin, which made them filthy and loathsome in the sight of God; and blood, *i. e.* all manner of defilement and pollution. Ezek. xvi. 6, Hos. vi. 8, 'By the spirit of judgment,' *i. e.* by judgments inflicted on them; 'By the spirit of burning,' *i. e.* by the fire of affliction, which, as the fire of a finer, burns up and wastes the baser parts of the purer metal; and sometimes they are expressed by a wind or a fan, whose end and use is to cleanse the floor, and separate the wheat from the chaff, ver. 8 and Mat. iii. 12.

This is it which is more or less aimed at in all sorts of sufferings, not only in those which are for correction, but also in those that are for trial or for righteousness' sake.

1. Those that are for correction called *παιδείας*; the proper end of these afflictions is the amendment of the afflicted. The Lord makes his children smart for sin, that they may be afraid of it, and no more venture on it. He lets them fall into trouble, or lets calamities fall on them, that they may fall no more into sin; this is evident by the texts fore-quoted. The Lord aims at this, not only in the execution, but in the threatening of chastisements: Rev. iii. 19, 'Be zealous,' be no more lukewarm. That was the sin for which he threatens to chastise Laodicea: 'And repent,' *i. e.* reform, and abandon those evils which provoke me to severe proceedings. He intends this in shewing and shaking the rod.

2. Those that are for trial, called *δοκιμασίας*. Their principal end may be for to try the truth or strength of grace; to discover or prove our faith, love, patience, sincerity, constancy; but that it is the only end, appears not. The mortifying of sin and taking away iniquity may be intended in this also. We find both these expressed together in Scripture, as jointly intended in afflictions and sufferings. Those that are to try and prove the people of God, are also to purge and refine them, Dan. xi. 85; shall fall into calamities, brought on that people by Antiochus, specified ver. 88; and this not only to try them, but to purge them and cleanse them; so chap. xii. 10, and Zech. xiii. 8, 9. Not only to try them, as gold is tried by the fire, whether it be the precious metal it is taken for, but to refine them as silver is refined, which is put into the fire, and continued there till the dross be wasted or wrought out of it.

3. Those that are for righteousness' sake, called *διωγμοί*, persecutions. That which moves wicked men to persecute them may be their righteousness, while that which the Lord aims at in leaving them to persecution, may be the taking away their sin. Those sufferings which befell the believing Hebrews were trials, and are called chastenings; yet were inflicted by their persecutors for their profession of Christ, and faithfulness to him; but that which God intended therein was what a father aims at, or should do, in correcting his child, Heb. xii. 5-7. *Ad hoc corripit, ut emendet*, says Cyprian, lib. iv. epist. 4, when he is giving account for what sins persecution befell them in his times, and what design the Lord had therein, *vapula-mus itaque ut meremur*, &c. The Lord corrects his children by the hand of persecutors, that he may reform and amend them, that by this their iniquity may be purged.

For the further confirmation of this truth,

1. In general it is evident in Scripture, that the Lord aims at the good of his people in afflicting them; and intends to do them good by whatever calamities befall them: Rom. viii. 28, 'All things,' afflictions and sufferings especially; for it is spoken with a particular respect to them. This was the Lord's design in all trials, calamities, and sad dispensations, wherewith the

children of Israel were exercised in the wilderness, Deut. viii. 15, 16, Jer. xxiv. 5. That complication of calamities which befell the Jews in the captivity, was designed and ordered for the good of the faithful. They lost their estates, all being a prey to the soldiers; their relations, many of them falling by the sword; their liberty, being prisoners and captives; their country, being carried into a strange land; yea, the ordinances of worship, the temple being destroyed; yet all these dreadful losses were for their good.

Now, which way such evils may prove good to the people of God, we may learn by that of David, Ps. cxix. 67, 71. Before he was afflicted, he was a transgressor, he took liberty to leave God's way; but by his afflictions he was taught to keep it; he had learned thereby not to transgress.

Indeed, we cannot well imagine how afflictions should possibly do us good, if they did not help us against sin; for this is it which withholds good things from us, both spiritual and temporal, or hinders them from being good. Holiness (upon which spiritual and eternal mercies depend) cannot thrive, but as sin declines; and temporal blessings can scarce be blessings, unless we be helped against sin; the more outward enjoyments we have, the more snares, if sin be not mortified and avoided.

2. The Lord, in afflicting his people, proceeds not as a judge, but as a Father. A judge punishes offenders, because justice must be done, the law must be satisfied; others must be deterred from breaking the laws, and many times, by the death of the delinquent, so as to leave no place for his reformation.

But a father corrects his child that he may make him better, that he may offend no more; not because he would shew himself just, but because he is affectionate, and would have that avoided, which might impair his affection, or hinder the course of his love and delight. And under this notion doth the Lord represent himself, when he chastises his people: Prov. iii. 11, 12, 'He corrects whom he loves;' and because he will love, he chastens; that sin which is displeasing and hateful to him, may be avoided; and so his people may continue the children of his love and delight. By affliction, therefore, would he have their iniquity purged; he would have this to be the fruit of it.

8. This appears by the nature and properties of an end in three particulars, which we may apply to the Lord, according to our imperfect way, conceiving of him, as he gives us leave, after the manner of men.

(1.) That is an end which sets the agent a-work, and excites him to act. *Finis movet efficientem ad agendum*. The purging and refining of his people is assigned in Scripture as the motive or reason why the Lord takes this course, Jer. ix. 7, and Ezek. xviii. 30-32. Therefore will he judge them, that they may turn from their transgressions, and cast them away.

(2.) The end gives measure to the means; *media mensuram et modum accipiunt ex fine*, Arist. Pol. i. cap. vi. Means are used in such measure and degree as will be sufficient to effect the end, and no more, nor otherwise. The Lord afflicts his people in such measure and manner as may be effectual to purge their iniquity, &c., ver. 8. As a physician proportions what he administers according to the nature of his patient's distemper, and the quality of the humour that is to be purged; such ingredients, so much of them, and no more than he judges sufficient for the cure; so doth the Lord, as it were, exactly weigh and measure what afflictions, and what proportion and degree thereof, may serve to mortify sin, and reclaim his people from it.

If less will serve, he 'stirs not up all his wrath,' Ps. lxxviii. 38, and lays a restraint upon the wrath of men too, Ps. lxxvi. 10, cxxxviii. 7.

If less will not serve the turn, he lets out more; if a gentle fire will not refine them, he heats the furnace, Jer. ix. 7, makes it hotter, and melts them.

(3.) When the end is attained, there is no more need, no more use of the means. The Lord, when the iniquity of his people is purged, will no more chasten and afflict them for that end and purpose, Isa. x. 12. When he has sufficiently chastised his people, so as the end for which he chastened them is accomplished, he will make no more use of oppressors to afflict them. When his children submit, and give ground to hope they will offend no more, the rod shall be burned. The Assyrian, called his rod, ver. 5, shall be so dealt with, ver. 16, 17. When his people are sufficiently humbled and reformed, there shall be no more yokes nor burdens, ver. 27.

Use. For exhortation; to advise in the fear of God, to comply with his end in judging and afflicting us. The Lord hath been judging his people many years; he hath made his power known, even the power of his wrath in judging us. He hath followed us year after year with terrible judgments. He hath revealed his wrath from heaven against our apostasies and rebellions, by sword, by plague, by fire, yea, and by famine too; and such a famine as expresses more wrath than any of the rest: those ruining us only in our outward concerns, but this threatening ruin to our souls; and is the more grievous judgment, because the generality are less sensible of the danger and grievousness of it. He has given the sword a commission to eat flesh and drink blood; and, as if the wrath of man had been too little, he has armed the powers of heaven against us, and sent destroying angels to make havoc amongst us, and to cut down thousands and ten thousands in city and country. And after all these instruments of wrath, as if they had not done enough, he himself has appeared against us in a posture yet more dreadful; we have seen him march against us, and pass through us as a consuming fire, devouring our strength, our riches, our glory; laying all our pleasant things desolate, and making such terrible devastations, as may strike every one that sees, or hears, or that thinks of it, with horror and trembling.

Now, what is the Lord's end in all this? Why, if he have mercy for the nation, and design not our utter ruin, by this should our iniquity be purged; and this should be the fruit of all, to take away our sin.

Nay, he has been judging professors amongst us; he has been visiting his own people, not in such a way as he visits those with whom he is well pleased; they have seen the day of a severe visitation; they have had their share in the public calamities, and a great share thereof has been the portion of many; they have not escaped the displeasure of God, and the wrath of man has been more bent against them than others. Those that observe the Lord in the way of his judgments, cannot but take notice that many of them have seemed more particularly pointed at those who profess him.

And besides our share (whatever it has been) in national sufferings, he has been visiting us with more particular and personal chastisements. He has been breaking us with great breaches; his hand has made breaches, not only in our congregations, but breaches in our families; sad breaches in our dear relatives; great breaches in some of our estates; large breaches in our liberties, our soul liberties. He has broken us with breach upon breach, Job xvi. 14; and some of us may say, our breach is great like the sea, who can heal us?

And after all that is come upon us, shall we wipe our mouths, and say, We are innocent, we have not so much offended him as others, we have not so highly provoked him? Shall we justify ourselves, and condemn the Lord's

proceedings against us ? Shall we think he has no controversy with us, when he is pleading it so severely ? Shall we say he is at peace with us, when he has been contending with us, and is so to this day ? When we see for all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still, shall we imagine he is well pleased with us, when his displeasure is so evidently revealed from heaven against us ?

O no, far be this from us. Surely this nation has highly provoked God ; surely his people have provoked him. The provocations of his sons and daughters are not small, if they be not greater than those of others. The hand, the rod of God speaks this ; the many, the sharp rods wherewith he has corrected us, speak this aloud, if our consciences be silent or asleep.

This being our case, the truth before us shews us what is our great duty at this day, the duty of the nation, the duty of the people of God especially. Though others will not see when God's hand is stretched out, what it points at, yet they should see. Though others will not regard, yet they should lay it to heart, and apply their minds, and consciences, and souls to it.

The end of all that is befallen us is the purging of our iniquity ; and what does the Lord expect from us, but to comply with this end, in mortifying sin, and cleansing our heart and life from it ? Those sins especially, for and by which we have suffered, this is it which the word, which the providence of God now calls us to, and hath made it so much our duty, as I know not whether anything else can be more, or be so much the duty of all sorts at this day.

If, after all that has come upon us for our unfruitfulness under the means of grace, when the axe has been laid to the root, again and again, and we have been so often in apparent danger of being cut down, or of being left desolate of the means by which our souls should live, we still continue barren ;

If, after all, &c., for our worldliness, we will still so highly esteem earthly things, and affect them, and pursue them as worldlings do, and seek them for such ends, and convert them to such uses, as the custom is ;

For our neglect of holiness in the power of life, and exercise and growth of it, we will still content ourselves with a slothful, easy, cheap, fruitless profession of it, and be more indifferent whether we have more or less of it than we are to outward things, and much better content with a little holiness, than with a little of the world, and less concerned whether our souls thrive or no, than whether we thrive in our earthly affairs ;

If, after all, &c., for our pride, folly and vanity, we will still be more vile this way ;

If, after all, &c. for our contentions, divisions, decay, and loss of brotherly love, we will not seek union with, nor express love to one another, in lesser differences, but live in open contradiction to so many express precepts of the gospel, and let envy, strife, bitterness, wrath, malice or ill-will, and evil-speaking continue, and continue in these, and such like, the apparent works of the flesh ;

If, when the Lord has laid any of us aside for unserviceableness, &c., we labour not for a more serviceable temper ;

If, after we have lost such mercies, opportunities, advantages, by our unthankfulness, murmuring, repining ; the dread of having our carcases fall in the wilderness, bring us not to an effectual sense of our sin ;

If we still remain proud, selfish, carnal, unprofitable, unmortified, unreformed : if we continue under the guilt of these, and other sins, for which the Lord has been contending with us ;—

Our guilt will be exceeding great, and our danger such as I cannot easily express. Let me endeavour it in some particulars, which may serve as mo-

tives to enforce this duty of complying with the Lord's end, in afflicting and bringing calamities upon us.

1. Otherwise our calamities are like to continue ; the Lord may wear out this generation in his displeasure ; he may cause our carcases to fall in the wilderness, and swear in his wrath that we shall never enter into his rest. So he did with the Israelites, when what befell them in the wilderness did not purge their iniquity. We shall shew ourselves hereby to be such as they were, 'a people that err in our hearts, and have not known his ways,' Ps. xcv. 10, 11—the ways that he leads us to by afflictions, nor the way that would lead us out of them speedily and comfortably. This will move the Lord to come to that severe resolution, 'I will deliver you no more ;' for this was it which brought him to that resolution against the Israelites, when neither former deliverances, nor present oppressions, took away their sin, Judges x. 11–13, Isa. ix. 12, 13. If our transgressions and iniquities be upon us, we may pine away in them, Ezek. xxxiii. 10, and languish under fears, restraints, distractions, calamities, all our days. Thus we may make our condition desperate, and deliverance hopeless ; and propagate our miseries to our posterity, and leave them the sad heirs of what our sin has brought upon us.

There is no way of mercy out of trouble, but by leaving the sin which brought us into it ; no ordinary way, &c., Isa. ix. 12, 13.

2. This may increase the affliction upon you, add more weight, and put more sting into it ; this may strengthen your bonds, and make your yokes heavier, and less tolerable. Whenas your fears and troubles are but by fits, and with some intermission, this may raise them to, and fix them in, a continued paroxysm.

If less will not serve to purge your iniquity, you may expect a larger dose, that which will prove more bitter, and in the working, may make you sick at heart. Those that have but lost one or two dear relatives may be bereaved of all, and left to weep for their children, so as not to be comforted, because they are not.

Those that have but seen the flame at a distance, or been but frightened, or a little scorched with it, may have it kindle, and break forth round about them.

Those that have but lost part of their estates, if this take not away their sin, may be stripped of all, stripped naked, as some have been, and set as in the day that they were born, and made as a wilderness ; as the Lord in like case threatens, Hosea ii. 8.

Those that have but been threatened by the sons of violence, or a little disturbed, may be given up into their hands, or delivered up to their will ; and not only see, but feel, the paws of those lions which before they did but fear.

Those that have but been straitened as to spiritual provision, and only not fed with the hand they desired, may have no hand at all left to feed them.

It is the Lord's ordinary method, when a gentler fire will not purge and refine, to make the furnace hotter.

3. This may multiply your afflictions, and make them come in upon you as waves and billows in a storm, so as you may have cause to complain with the prophet, Ps. xlii. 7, the depths above and the depths below, the displeasure of God and the wrath of men, may correspond to pour out themselves upon you as it were waterspouts ; as though they called one upon another, and did conspire as it were to overwhelm you. If one will not be effectual to purge your iniquity, God may try another and another ; yea, seven times more, and it may be all at once. You see what the Lord threatens, Lev.

xxvi. 18, 21, 23, 24, 27, 28. The stubborn child, that will not yield to his father's will when he is correcting him, must expect to be scourged again and again; he cannot escape many lashes. You know your heavenly Father's will in chastising you is to purge your iniquity and take away your sin, to quicken you to a more vigorous proceeding in a course of mortification. Now, since you know his will, if you do it not, you leave nothing for yourselves but a fearful expectation of many stripes, of multiplied afflictions and calamities.

4. This may bring more grievous evils upon you than any you have yet met with, outward calamities. The little finger of what this incorrigibleness will bring upon you, may be heavier and more intolerable than the loins of all you have yet suffered. You have been chastised with whips; but if this do not take away your sin, beware lest the Lord do not make use of scorpions. You are warned of this by the advice that Christ gives to one who had been under a great affliction, John v. 14. Those that will sin more must suffer more, whatever they have suffered already. How grievous soever that seems to be which is past, if it purge not thine iniquity, there is something worse yet to come.

Why, you may say, Is there any worse judgment than the sword? Is there anything more dreadful than such a plague as has been destroying us? Is there anything more terrible than such a fire as was consuming us? Our hearts tremble within us, and horror surprises us, when we do but think of the woes that are past; can there be anything worse yet to come? Indeed, there would be no fear of it, if by these our iniquity had been purged; but if these have no such effect upon us, we are in danger to know by experience that the Lord's treasures of wrath are not yet exhausted, there is but a little thereof in comparison yet spent upon us; the vials of his indignation are not yet emptied; we have but yet had a taste thereof; the worst of all, the dregs, are at the bottom, and these we expect will be poured out upon us if our sin continue. Oh that we could with fear and trembling labour to prevent it, by complying with the Lord's end in what is come upon us already, so that by this our iniquity may be purged!

5. The Lord may give you over, and refuse to correct any more. You are in danger of this if the Lord find that former corrections are in vain, and in vain they are if they attain not their end; and their end they cannot obtain if they do not take away your sin.

It seems a condition acceptable to flesh and blood to be without afflictions and sufferings; but to those who judge of things as they are indeed, and as the Scripture represents them, for the Lord to refuse to afflict when afflictions are needful, signifies one of the highest degrees of divine wrath, and is a more dreadful judgment than any of those outward calamities which the Lord calls his sore judgments; sword, famine, pestilence, fire, speak not more indignation in God than this.

When a man gives over a stubborn child, after all correction has done no good upon him, and says, I will whip him no more, I see it is in vain, all that I have done is to no purpose, there is no hopes of reclaiming him, let him go on and take his course; the condition of that child is more sad and lamentable than of such a one as his father corrects most severely: 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten,' Rev. iii. What affection has he for those whom he will not rebuke? &c.: 'Blessed is the man,' &c., Ps. xciv. 12, 18. Their condition seems cursed whom he will not chastise, Heb. xii. 7, 8. If they be his children whom he thus forbears, yet he deals not with them as his own children, he has not at this time, in these circumstances, so much favour for them, but as the children of strangers whom a man will not trouble himself to correct.

When the Lord is expressing the highest indignation, he doth it in threatening to judge and punish those no more against whom his wrath is kindled, Isa. i. 5, Hos. iv. 14-17.

6. He may leave you to spiritual judgments. This usually is the issue of not improving outward calamities, and is the dreadful consequence of the Lord's forbearing to inflict. Outward afflictions are his rods, but these are his swords; and when upon incorrigibleness under those, he takes up these, his wrath is raised to the height. Formerly he fell upon their outward concerns, which are less considerable, now he falls upon their souls; the iron enters into their souls, and the more dangerously and mortally because insensibly. That wrath begins here which will burn to the bottom of hell. When he gives stubborn souls up to blindness of mind, hardness of heart, scaredness of conscience, vile affections and lusts, and a reprobate sense, oh these are the first-born of the second death. No greater severity, short of hell, than in the inflicting of these.

Yea, but does he inflict these upon any that belong to him?

Ans. The not improving of other afflictions may provoke the Lord to leave his children to spiritual judgments, and to some measure and degrees of these now mentioned, and to others also more woful than any outward calamities. This may provoke the Lord to bring upon his people a famine of the word, as he threatens, after other judgments had been ineffectual, Amos viii. 11-13. Not a scarcity, but a famine, and that more dreadful than a famine of bread and a thirst for water, so that they shall run to and fro, &c., and the virgins and young men shall faint and swoon for thirst.

2. Or if the word and ordinances be continued, this may provoke him to deny his presence and concurrence, to withdraw his Spirit, and withhold his influences, upon which the power and efficacy of them depends; so that the staff of bread shall be broken while it is in their hands, and the ordinances become dry breasts, so that they can suck nothing but wind out of them which are appointed for spiritual nourishment, Isa. lvi. 3, 4. Oh what a curse would you think it, if all you eat or drink should neither strengthen, nourish, nor refresh you! But this is worse, it is a curse upon spiritual blessings.

8. Or this may provoke him to leave you to backslidings, and inward decays and declinings, and to smite your souls with a spiritual consumption; so that inward strength shall waste away, grace shall wither, and holiness hang the head like a blasted flower. You think a consumption of the body worse, though less sensible, than the stone or gout. What, then, is a soul-consumption? You think poverty, or the loss of an estate, a great affliction; oh, but to grow poor unto God, to have your spiritual substance wasted, and your heavenly treasure consumed, that is a more terrible stroke to those who are taught of Christ to pass a true judgment of things.

4. This may provoke him to give you up in some degrees to your hearts' lusts; to fall into some gross sin, and wallow in it, as Solomon into false worship and sensuality; or, which I fear is too ordinary, and the sad case of too many amongst us, to indulge themselves in such sins as are less reproachful amongst professors: habitual lukewarmness in serving the Lord; indifference as to their spiritual and heavenly interests; loose, careless, unwatchful walking tolerated; selfishness, unserviceableness in their places, sensualness, and flesh-pleasing, and worldliness, sinking deep and sticking fast in the mire and clay of it.

To be left to these evils is a more grievous judgment than to be given up to the hands of our enemies, or to be left to fly before them, which yet seemed less tolerable to David than a destroying pestilence.

5. Or this may provoke him to give them up to some hardness of heart, and searedness of conscience, in some degree; so that though their sin be often reprov'd, and the danger thereof discovered, yet reproofs make no impression, conviction will not fasten. If it be a way they are fastened to by affection or interest, they will not believe it is a sin, or such a sin as they need be severe against; especially if they can get some fig-leaves to hide its shame, some pretences to excuse its sinfulness. If they can but believe it will not damn them, say what you can against it, it will not prevail. Such stiffness against convictions of sin, and the like untractableness as to duty, is the symptom of an insensible conscience and an hardened heart; and to be given up to it is a spiritual judgment of a dreadful importance.

6. Or this may provoke him to send a spirit of delusion, which may lead you out of the way of truth, and seduce to relinquish part of that faith which should be earnestly contended for by the saints; or to give you up to a spirit of wantonness and unsobriety, so as to disrelish those wholesome practical truths, and that teaching which tends most to the promoting of the power of godliness in heart and life, and would lead you up to higher degrees of holiness, self-denial, mortification, crucifiedness to the world, and all spiritual fruitfulness; and to dote upon trifling questions, frivolous opinions, vain imaginations, the niceties of this or that way and persuasion, empty notions, strains of fancy, which make neither mind, nor heart, nor life better. This is a kind of spiritual frenzy, a delirium, a soul-dotage; and you count not only a furious, but a trifling, frenzy to be a lamentable distemper in nature, much more lamentable in a spiritual delirium.

7. Or he may be provoked hereby to send a spirit of terror. When other scourges will not serve the turn, he may wound the conscience, Job vi. 4, and give you those wounds that are intolerable, Prov. xviii. 14. He may kindle a hell in your souls, and set that worm a-gnawing there which is some of the torture of hell itself. He may make you *Magor-missabibs*, terror round about, a terror to yourselves, a terror to others, while himself is a terror to you. Wherever you look for comfort, ease, relief, you may be disappointed: Ps. lxxvii. 8, 'I remembered God, and was troubled.' The thoughts and remembrance of God, of Christ, of heaven, of the promises, instead of relieving you, may add to your trouble and torture. All the springs of comfort may run nothing but waters of Marah; the bitterness of death may be in them. The Lord's loving-kindness is better than life, Ps. lxxiii. 8; to be bereaved of the sense of it is therefore worse than death. Oh what is it then to be under the terrors of the Lord!

Oh, if the terrors of the Lord be dreadful to you, take heed you be not found under the guilt of not improving more tolerable afflictions. Take heed you continue not under this guilt. You are in the highway to spiritual judgments, if outward calamities do not take away your sin. It is the Lord's method to proceed higher and higher in the demonstrations of his anger, and to let out more wrath (as he doth in these judgments), when lesser significations of his displeasure are not effectual.

7. This is the way to be rejected of the Lord; for those that are not his to be rejected wholly, for those that are his to be in part rejected, Jer. vii. 28, 29. Those that receive not correction, i. e. who yield not to what is required and intended in correction, their case is to be bitterly lamented; such being rejected of the Lord as the generation of his wrath. So Jer. vi. 29, 30. All the means the Lord has used for the refining of this people are in vain, all his labour is lost. Though he has blown up the fire in the furnace to such an heat as the bellows themselves are burnt by it, though the

lead (used then, as now quicksilver is used, in the fining of silver, to melt it more easily, and with less waste) be quite consumed, yet the founder melteth in vain; all is to no purpose. The wicked things, or, as in the Hebrew, wickednesses, are not removed from them. Refuse silver shall they be called, such as will not pass, but will be rejected in payment. The Lord hath rejected them as dross, not silver, or that which has too much dross in it to be current.

Though he will not utterly reject those that belong to him, yet if they be not refined by their afflictions, he may deal with them as if he utterly rejected them. He may proceed against them as against those whom he utterly rejects, so as no eye may be able to see any difference; as in the captivity, to which this rejecting refers, no difference was to be seen between those that were better and those that were worst.

Though they lose not the relation of children, yet he may treat them as though they were not his children, as though he were not their Father; nay, as though he were an enemy, Isa. lxiii. 10, Jer. xxx. 14, 15. Because their iniquities were increased, when by their afflictions they should have been taken away, though he do not disinherit them, yet may he leave them without hopes of inheriting; so that it may be all one as to their apprehensions, as if they were disinherited; nothing may be left them, in their own sense, but a fearful expectation of judgment.

8. This provokes the Lord to bring destruction. This endangers your ruin, the ruin of your country, the ruin of yourselves. This exposes to national desolation, or personal destruction, Isa. i. 5; and the issue of revolts after smiting, ver. 7. As temporal judgments, when not improved, end in spiritual, so spiritual judgments end in ruin, Isa. lvi. 9-11, Zeph. iii. 7, 8. He that learns not righteousness by public judgments, so as to be thereby more refined and mortified, he doth his part to bring utter ruin upon the place and country where he lives. This desolation of it, when it comes, may be charged upon him. Those that should stand in the gap, and make up the hedge, do hereby make the breach wider, and pull away that which might put a stop to the current of ruining wrath. If this land perish, those that might have saved it, by complying with God's end in judging us, have destroyed it, by not improving judgments for this end. And it is no wonder that those whose hand makes way for destroying judgments, whoever they be, do perish by them. Even those that have interest in God may be ruined and cut off by this sin, and may perish for it. Those that reform not themselves and their families, when they have real admonitions from heaven to do it, may have Eli's doom, though they have special relation to God, as Eli had. Those that are of the Lord's planting, and by the hand of affliction have been lopped and pruned, and yet continue barren, or have wild grapes found in their branches, the Lord, when he lays the axe to the root of the tree, may cut them down as well as others; they may fall by this sin. And it is not more comfortable to die for righteousness' sake than it is dreadful to die in and for sin. And though the Lord may rescue their souls from everlasting miseries, when they fall by the stroke of temporal wrath (as some of the Corinthians fell, 1 Cor. xi.), yet will they be saved so as by fire, and escape the wrath to come very narrowly, even as firebrands plucked out of the fire.

Oh then, if you would not plunge yourselves into this misery, look that by this your iniquity be purged, otherwise there is great danger of the Lord's high displeasure, and the severest acts and expressions of it. But this is not all, though this be terrible. There is danger also of great and heinous guilt. It is a crime of an high provocation, not to be mortified and refined

by calamities and afflictions, whether common or personal; there is much to aggravate it, and render it exceeding sinful.

(1.) It is a double disobedience. The Lord calls upon you by his word to purge out and put away sin. When this is not effectual, he summons you to do it by judgments and afflictions. He calls for it both by his word and by his rod. He requires it by a word, that you may see, Jer. ii. 31; and 'by a rod, that you may hear, Micah vi. 9. To yield neither to one nor the other is to add disobedience to disobedience. Not to comply with his word, clearly discovering this to be your duty, and frequently urging it on you, is heinous disobedience. But to stand out against it, when it is enforced with the rod, is plain rebellion. If a prince enjoin a subject to do this or that, and he refuse, that is a disobedience that will not easily escape without some mark of his displeasure. But if hereupon he raise a force, and begirt the house or castle of such a subject, and threaten to batter or storm it unless he yield, to stand out in that case will be rebellion. So it is in this. Here is one provocation added to another, and the latter worse than the former, Zeph. iii. 2. Not obeyed, and which is more, and doubles the guilt by an addition of something worse, 'she received not correction.'

(2.) It is a strange boldness and impudence not to put away sin, not to cease from it, when the Lord is smiting for it, and declaring his displeasure against it by real rebukes; such are branded in Scripture as those that know no shame, Zeph. iii. 5. How does that appear? Why, the Lord warned them by judgments, ver. 6, yet they received not instruction, but still corrupted their doings, ver. 7. And as those that have a whore's forehead, Jer. iii. 3, because she was not brought by the chastisement mentioned to put away her sin, therefore, says he, 'thou hast a whore's forehead,' &c.

What impudence would you judge it for a servant, who has been beaten for his faults, to tell his master, while the rod is in his hand, he will not leave it, he will do it again. While you do not purge your hearts, and reform your ways, after chastenings for this purpose, you tell the Lord, while the rod is upon or over you, you will not be mortified or refined. This is the language of your hearts and ways.

(3.) It is madness, spiritual folly with a witness. As if one who has drunk poison, should spill the antidote that should secure him from the mortal danger thereof, instead of vomiting up that which so endangers him, yea, and should be ready to swallow down more, when that already taken is still working in his bowels. Sin is worse to the soul than poison to the body. Not to receive correction is to refuse the antidote, and so to let the poison work on, yea, to heighten the mortal danger of it by new additions. It argues stupendous foolishness, and such as is inveterate, and almost past cure, if the rod will not cure it, Prov. xxii. 15. If the rod will not fetch it out, it is fast bound up indeed. The bond of this folly and iniquity is exceeding strong, little hopes anything will break it if the hand of God upon his children do it not. It is desperate and incorrigible folly, that will not be removed by severe handling, Prov. xxvii. 22.

(4.) It argues great hardness and obduration, and signifies he is very much hardened in those evils for which the Lord corrects him, when his chastising hand does not conquer and prevail against them, Jer. v. 8. It is for those who have made their faces harder than a rock, not to receive correction, but to refuse to return when the Lord has been striking and consuming them; it is a sign not only of natural, but contracted hardness. Such was that stigmatised in Ahaz, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22, 'This is that king Ahaz.' Here is a hardened wretch indeed, here is a signal instance of

obduration to sin more in or after distress. It is some stiffness not to yield to the word, Zech. vii. 11, 12, even this makes way for great wrath. Oh but to stand out against the hand of God too, not to be pliable nor tractable, when we have been under the mighty hand of God, this speaks obduration with a witness. If that be as the adamant, this is harder than a rock or flint, the issue more dreadful.

(5.) It argues much affection, a heart greatly in love with it, when he will not leave it, whatever it cost him ; when the smart of one scourge after another will not make him leave his hold of it ; when the rod, though in the hand of God, will not drive him from it ; when he cleaves to its breasts, though there be wormwood upon them, and the Lord has embittered it by afflictions ; when he will not quit its embraces though plague sores be upon it, and the marks of divine displeasure are plainly visible.

That love to sin is so far from being mortified, that it is predominant and greater than the fear of any other evil, when he will endanger the loss of relations, liberty, estate, life, yea, the favour of God and the pledges of it, gospel, and ordinances, and his presence in them ; when he will run all hazards rather than quit it ; expose himself to temporal calamities or spiritual judgments, yea, run upon destruction itself rather than leave it.

(6.) It is brutishness, worse than that of the horse and mule ; for these you may restrain from mischief by bit and bridle ; you may hedge up their way with thorns, and keep them within compass. But those that are not mortified, reformed, by afflictions, they break through the hedge, though of thorns, as afflictions are called, Hos. ii. 6.

When Balaam's ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand, she turned aside out of the way, and would not be forced into it, Num. xxii. 28. What brutishness is it to venture on in a way when the Lord stands to stop it, as it were, with a sword in his hand ; yea, after ye have been wounded by it, and felt the weight and sharpness of it !

Hence, those who are not reduced and reformed by afflictions, are expressed in Scripture by dromedaries, wild asses, Jer. ii. 28, 24 ; untamed heifers, Hos. iv. 16 ; bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke, Jer. xxxi. 18.

(7.) It argues great pride ; a heart lifting up itself against God ; not only pride in carriage towards men, but in deportment towards the Most High. When the soul is truly humbled, it yields, submits, to whatsoever the Lord would have him leave, or whatsoever the Lord will have him do, Acts ix. 6 ; and in this pliability to the will of God, doth the nature of true evangelical humiliation most consist.

But pride is in its exaltation yet unbroken, when it will not leave that temper, those ways, and designs, and actions that the Lord would have him leave ; when he does not yield, submit, and stoop to the divine will herein, though the Lord himself has been laying weight upon him. All the Lord's dispensations have not yet humbled him ; he is yet stout against the Almighty ; nor is pride hid from his eyes, till he be withdrawn from his purpose, Job xxxiii. 17.

(8.) It is contempt of God, and argues that there is no fear, or little fear, of God in the heart ; for when should the fear of God shew itself, but when the Lord is angry, and appears terrible ? And how should it appear, if not in leaving that which has provoked God to anger, and at which he has been actually expressing himself displeased ? Not to leave sin, when the Lord has been judging you for it, is in effect to say, I will take my own course, let the Lord do what he will, let him do what he can with me for it. The Lord reads and hears such language in your hearts and ways, when they are not refined and reformed by judgments and chastenings. This is to despise

the chastenings of the Lord, and to make nothing of his severity ; to slight the Lord himself, when he will least endure it ; when he is executing judgment, and expects you should submit and stoop to his will with fear and trembling.

(9.) This is to affront God, and run cross to his design, and defeat his end, in these proceedings. If a person observe not exactly the letter of a law, yet if he satisfy the end and design of it, he will be in equity excused ; but a punctual observance of the words, if the end of the law be crossed, will leave him a transgressor. But if you be not more mortified and refined by afflictions, you run cross, both to the plain words of God, and to his design in these dispensations, and affront him every way, walk as contrary to the great God as may be.

(10.) It argues the person is incurable, and the case hopeless, for this is one of the last remedies ; and when the last fails, nothing more is to be hoped for. Food and sleep are the first means for the support of health and life, but when these will not serve, we use physic ; but if physic also be ineffectual, the case is desperate. The word and ordinances should purge and mortify us, and take away our sin ; but if these do it not, the Lord makes use of his afflictions and sharp dispensations, these are his physic ; but if these fail too, which is the last remedy, what hope is there then left ?

You see by these particulars our danger ; how dreadful it is for those that have been exercised with public judgments, or personal chastenings, not to be purged or refined thereby. If sin, so great a sin ; if the wrath of God in such expressions of it be not feared, it is to those who are past fear. Make it appear that you are far from such a desperate distemper, by complying with the Lord's end in what has befallen us. Make that your great business, which the Lord has made so, by improving what has come upon us, so as this may be the effect, to take away sin.

There is another consideration by which I would enforce this great duty, and that is the advantage we shall reap by complying with the Lord's end in bringing afflictions and calamities upon us ; and,

1. The putting away our sin, and the purging our iniquity, is in itself so great an advantage, that this alone, duly considered, may be sufficient to lead us to a full and cheerful compliance to the will of God herein. For what is sin ? It is our poverty ; it is the sickness and languor of our souls ; it is a noisome and a pestilent disease ; it is lameness, and blindness, and impotency ; it is a monstrous and loathsome deformity ; it is a dungeon, with fetters and vermin ; in a word, it is misery. It is really as great an evil to our souls as these are to our bodies. It is so represented in the word of truth. It is all these, it is more, it is worse than all these ; and what an advantage would it be to be rid of such a horrid, a hideous evil as this.

It is the worst poverty, that which makes you poor towards God, poor and naked in his sight, in his account, who sure can best judge what is riches and what is poverty. He counts them miserably deluded who think they are rich, while their iniquity continues, and judges them poor and naked, however their goods be increased, if their sin be not done away ; so Christ, of Laodicea, because of her lukewarmness, that one sin, Rev. iii. Now what an advantage would a poor man count it, to be freed from this poverty and nakedness ! This you may gain by putting away your sins ; you are freed from the most wretched poverty.

Sin is the soul's sickness, a mortal disease which has been the death of millions and millions ; a noisome and destructive disease ; a leprosy, a plague, a cancer, a gangrene. In Scripture language it is no better, it is worse. The purging of your iniquity is the purging out of such a pestilent

humour, the freeing of you from such a loathsome and dangerous disease ; and would you not count it a happiness to be raised from such a sickness, to be rid of such a leprosy : a great advantage to be cured of the plague, the plague of the heart, a soul gangrene ?

If your child, or a dear relative, were blind, or lame, or dumb, or otherwise impotent ; if he were frantic, or lunatic, or a natural fool, what would you give to have them freed from such a misery ? The case is your own ; sin is worse than these to your souls, if you will believe the report of the Holy Ghost concerning it in Scripture. It makes you lame, blind, impotent ; it is the most stupid foolishness, the highest frenzy and madness, only you may be cured at an easier rate : do but put away your sin, and the cure is wrought, the work is done, your soul is made whole. Thus you may be freed from the most ugly and monstrous deformity, that which makes you loathsome and ugly in the sight of God, which he (in whose love and delight your souls are infinitely concerned) doth not only hate but abhor.

Thus may you be freed from the most miserable restraint, the most dismal and nasty dungeon ; thus may you shake off your fetters, and be rid of the vilest vermin ; only by quitting your iniquity, and putting away your sin. Do but this, and so far as it is done you are discharged of all misery and wretchedness.

Oh, if our souls and consciences, if our families or congregations, if our religious or civil assemblies, if our country, if the world were but purged of iniquity, which pesters, troubles, disorders, confounds all, what a happy change would there be ! Men would be like angels, who are now, for want of this, like brutes or devils ; earth would be like heaven, which is now, through sin, the unhappiest region in the world next to hell ; our commerce in the world would be a communion with God, while now we converse together as fools or sharks, as foxes or tigers, either over-reaching, or vexing, or preying one upon another. Oh, if ungodliness, and unrighteousness, and unsobriety were put away, there would be a new heaven and a new earth ; there would be a new, a happy face of things everywhere ; there would be a face of heaven, of the peace and order and happiness of heaven, upon our souls and consciences, upon our families, upon our assemblies, upon our country, upon the world. Alas, that the world will not be persuaded to be so happy upon so easy terms ! But shall those who profess themselves children of light, shall the people of God be guilty of such madness and cruelty to themselves and others ? Shall nothing, no, not the hand, no, not the rod of God, lead them, so far as they can, to rid the world of these miseries, and to possess all, so far as they can reach, of these blessed advantages ? Oh be persuaded to purge iniquity out of your hearts, lives, families ; to endeavour the rooting of it out from the place where you live, and from every place that your influence can reach. Be exemplary herein as to your own persons, and the great advantages you will gain and enjoy thereby may induce the world to follow you herein ; or however you shall not lose your reward. To be rid of sin yourselves (so great a misery, all miseries in one), is a most rich blessed advantage.

2. This is the way to deliverance ; a sure, a speedy way to be delivered, and that in mercy too. To be delivered from the grievances and afflictions that are upon you, and from those that are approaching ; from what you feel, and from what you fear. Afflictions are but the means to purge your iniquity ; the taking away your sin, that is the end of all this. When the end is once attained, no wise agent will further make use of the means ; there is no need of them. When your iniquity is purged, the Lord will see no need of continuing what afflicts you for that purpose ; and he who afflicts

not willingly, nor delights to grieve his children, will not afflict and grieve them needlessly.

When the child submits, and gives hopes he will offend no more, the rod is laid aside, the father's severity gives way to the expressions of his love and compassion. And so the Lord represents himself, Jer. xxxi. 18-20.

When the metal is sufficiently purified, and the dross wasted or wrought out, the furnace is no further useful, the finer sees no need to keep it in the fire. Oh, if our iniquity were once purged, the Lord would quickly take us out of the furnace; nor would there be any danger either of continuing longer in it or of having it made hotter.

Not only the wisdom and mercy of God, but his truth and faithfulness, makes this sure to us; for he has promised it frequently, 2 Chron. vii. 14; which is an answer to Solomon's prayer, chap. vi. 26, 27, and xxx. 6, 8, 9. If we turn from our evil ways, then will the Lord heal, though the wound seem incurable. Though our breaches seem great, like the sea, and such as none can repair, yet will the Lord heal them, certainly, speedily, mercifully.

Oh if we were in a capacity for such a mercy, if our iniquity were but purged, how soon would he give over this sharp course of physic we have been under! If this work were but accomplished upon mount Zion, how soon would he lay aside the sharp tools we are apt to complain of! If our iniquity were but taken away, how soon would he put an end to the days of blackness and thick darkness! How soon would this day of judgment and calamity clear up into a day of mercy and salvation! How certainly would the day of a gracious visitation dawn upon us once again!

Yea, if the generality of the nation should not be purged, yet if those who have interest in God should comply with this his end in judging and chastening, if their sin be hereby taken away, possibly the Lord might be prevailed with by them, and for a few in comparison might spare the whole. The holy seed may be the substance of support of it, as Isa. vi. 18. We see the Lord would have spared Sodom for ten righteous persons, Gen. xviii. 32. And though that may be thought a special favour (granted at the importunity of Abraham, an extraordinary person) to spare so many for so few, and so may not pass for a common rule; so that ordinarily from thence we might draw a like conclusion; yet that in Job seems more general, Job xxii. 30, for (as it may be read) 'The innocent shall deliver the island.' There is such pureness in those who are refined by the furnace of affliction, and they may pass for innocent whose sin is thereby taken away. So Jer. v. 1, if there be any considerable number purged from the common iniquity. So Isa. lxviii. 8, that people is expressed by a vine, so withered or barren that the vine-dresser may be ready to cut it down as dead, yet if one spy in it some cluster that may afford wine, there may be hopes, since it is not quite dead, it may be recovered, and so the whole vine and branches may be spared for a good cluster; hereby signifying that the generality may escape for those few that are upright.

So that this is the way, not only to procure deliverance for yourselves, but others; not only for your persons and families, but for cities and countries. It is the way to become saviours, i. e. to prevail with the Lord to appear as a God of salvation to the community against whom he otherwise would proceed as a destroyer.

But if the end of God be not herein complied with, especially by those from whom it is most expected, a deliverance in mercy is hopeless. We make it desperate, and leave ourselves or others no expectation of it in an ordinary way, and according to those rules by which the Scriptures shew us the Lord commonly proceeds.

It is true indeed the Lord is not confined to rules, nor ties himself to walk in the common path. He may save and deliver a people, as it were, by prerogative. And so he did Israel, while their iniquity was not purged, 2 Kings xiv. 25-27, by Jeroboam, who did evil, and departed not from it, ver. 24.

(1.) But this was not in mercy, nor was it lasting. It was rather a reprieve than a deliverance. The advantages thereof (such as they were) were but of short continuance. In the next chapter, you may see them all in blood and confusion.

(2.) And to be delivered from outward afflictions, if sin be not taken away, either before or upon deliverance, is but to be reserved for greater calamities. Sin still remaining will curse and blast temporal deliverance, and the fruits of it, and will make it appear in the issue that there is little or no mercy therein, how specious soever they may seem. So that what we call deliverance by prerogative is not a deliverance in mercy, if the sin of a people be not taken away, either before it or by it; for this brings a curse upon such deliverance, as it does upon other temporal blessings. The Lord threatens it for this sin amongst others, Mal. ii. 2. Not laying to heart God's judgments and chastenings; not giving glory to him, by answering his end therein, and turning from sin, will make freedom from such calamities, if it be a blessing in such a case, to be a cursed blessing, such as will bring more misery than advantage.

(3.) And if such a deliverance as is neither durable nor merciful were desirable, yet have we no ground to expect it; for faith must be grounded upon common rules and ordinary promises, not upon extraordinary proceedings, and looks (when it would have firm support) not at what the Lord *may* do, by prerogative or absolute sovereignty, but at what he *hath declared he will* do. Faith can have no encouragement at all from what is merely possible; it looks for some certainty, and acts not but upon a sure word. Now it is only possible the Lord may deliver a people, when their sin is not taken away, but it is highly probable he will not, he has declared so much against it. It is only certain he will deliver those in mercy whose iniquity is purged, for the promise of it is to them, and to them alone. If, then, by the calamities you would be freed from, your iniquity be purged, if this be the fruit, &c., you may be certain of deliverance, if it be good for you, and of that as soon as ever it will be so.

8. Hereby you will gain that which is better than deliverance, even this very thing. The purging of your iniquity is better than any outward deliverance; for sin is worse than afflictions and calamities. That is clear in Scripture, in reason, and even in the judgment of those whose practice contradicts it. There is that in sin which is more hateful, more dreadful, more grievous and afflictive in itself, and to those who have either spiritual sense or true judgment, than there is in afflictions. It is far and incomparably the greater evil, and therefore freedom from sin, though but in part, is far better than total freedom and full deliverance from outward calamities.

If the Lord should defer deliverance, yet if thereby he purge you more and more from sin, he shews you more mercy, and does that which is better for you than if he should presently deliver you, he is more kind and gracious to you than if he should fully repair all the losses and breaches that afflictions has made upon you. It be unquestionably better to be freed from a greater evil than from a less.

Moreover, the more iniquity is purged the more does holiness increase; these being such contraries, as the exclusion of one lets in the other, and the declining of one is the advance of the other. And the one gains as

many degrees as the other losses. As darkness vanishes, light increases ; and as sickness is removed, health and strength is recovered. So as sin is expelled, holiness grows. Hence in some places of Scripture the purging of iniquity is the fruit and end of afflictions and chastenings. In other places, the increase of holiness is the fruit thereof, Heb. xii. 10. So that by improving afflictions for the taking away sin, you will partake more of holiness. That is the advantage you will reap thereby, and it is so rich and considerable as all the advantages of outward deliverance are not to be compared with it. For holiness, it is the health, the strength, the beauty, liberty, safety, the riches, the dignity, the comfort, the life, the happiness of the soul, either formally or efficiently ; it either is these, or brings these to the soul. And those who will judge of things as Christians, and not as worldlings or sensualists ; those who will not be carried away with the common error and delusion of them whose minds the god of this world has blinded, will judge the health and strength of the soul to be the best health, &c., and that which makes the soul rich, more valuable than all earthly riches, and so an increase of holiness far more desirable than the advancement of their outward estate ; and that which adorns, honours, and advances their souls in the sight of God, incomparably better than all worldly honours, dignity, or preservation ; and that which makes the soul free, more than that which frees the body from restraint, &c. They will count these soul-advantages so much better as the soul is to be preferred before the body, or outward concerns.

Now, outward deliverance brings you but these lower and less considerable advantages, restores health or strength to the body, repairs your estates, or makes you rich on earthly accounts, or brings you to a freer, safer, or higher condition in the world. But afflictions, though they be continued, if they be improved for the purging iniquity, and consequently for the increase of holiness, they make your souls strong and healthful, they make your minds truly free, and great, and noble ; they render you lovely and honourable in the sight of God ; they enrich your souls with heavenly treasure, with the riches of God, in comparison of which worldly wealth is but thorns or thick clay, loss and dung, riches falsely so called ; they bring you peace, and comfort, and happiness, of which otherwise there is nothing but a dream or a shadow in the world, and over and above they work for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 2 Cor. iv.

And therefore it is unquestionably true, and past all doubt to those who pass a true judgment of things, that to improve afflictions for the purging of iniquity is incomparably better than deliverance from afflictions. And therefore if the day of deliverance be so much desired, much more should you desire and endeavour to comply with the Lord's end in judging and afflicting, so as hereby your iniquity may be purged, since this is far better, and incomparably more to be desired than what you so much desire.

Let me in the next place lay down some rules and directions, the observance of which may be helpful to promote the Lord's end in judging and afflicting, so as by this iniquity may be purged.

1. Set yourselves against all sin, not against this or that particular evil, which conscience, or the word, or providence may more directly point at, but against every sin. For though afflictions may help you more against one than another, yet they are not less improved* unless they help you more or less against all sin. The words in the text are general, and so laid down as they may reach all sin and iniquity. The fruit of affliction should be the purging iniquity, the taking away of sin without exception. *Et ubi lex non*

* Qu. 'not rightly improved'?—Ed.

distinguit, non est distinguendum : where the law makes no exception, we must make none. We must overlook no sin if we would comply with the rule before us. And that we may not be partial, let me instance in some that we are too apt to overlook.

(1.) Set yourselves not only against sin of life and practice, but against the corruption of your natures, that which is all sin in one, the nursery, the spawn of all ; that in which all particulars do as it were live, and move, and have their being, Mat. xv. 18, 19. Out of the corruption of the heart, as from a fountain, flows all the impurity of words and actions. You may stop up one current of sin, and another, but to little purpose, while the fountain still runs freely. It will overflow or bear down the dams you make to stop it, or find another passage when you have done all you can. If you do nothing to dry up the spring in the heart, to divert or dam up this or that passage in your practice will be to little purpose : Mat. xii. 33-35, while the tree, while the heart is evil, the fruit will be so. The evil treasure in the heart must be exhausted, else the product thereof will be evil things ; that which is in the life will be dross while the heart is not refined.

The avoiding of some particular evils is but to pare the nails, which will grow again ; but the mortifying of thy natural corruption is to go about to cut off the arm. This is to make sure work, that once cut off, can grow no more.

(2.) Set yourselves against a sinful temper of heart, not only against sinful acts. For such a temper is worse, more provoking, more dangerous, though it be less sensible than many evil acts ; as a constant sickly temper is worse than a fit of the toothache, yea, than fits of the stone or gout, though the pain there be more acute and afflictive. A worldly, carnal, selfish, slothful, or lukewarm temper of heart, is far worse than some particular acts of worldliness, selfishness, sensuality, or lukewarmness. For the temper is fixed, and is a continued sin ; the acts are transient. The temper is fruitful, being a pregnant disposedness to more and more acts suitable to it. The acts have no such pernicious pregnancy, and the Lord judges of us more by the bent of the heart than by some particular acts. He, the bent of whose heart is towards the world, the riches, pleasures, dignities of it, will be a worldling in the account of God, rather than he who sometimes by the force of temptation is hurried into a sordid act. And so of the rest, he whose heart is bent to please the flesh, &c., and the temper being less sensible, and not so much taken notice of, is the more dangerous, because the less watched and opposed, and the cure of it less minded and endeavoured.

Accordingly, the Lord proceeds severely against churches and persons, not only for wicked acts, but for a sinful temper, which is very apparent in what he threatens Laodicea, Rev. iii. 15, 16. It is a lukewarm temper that he so thunders against, it being so loathsome to him that for it he threatens to ease himself of her, as that which he nauseates and abhors, as we do that which we are sick of. This might be ruin to some in whom it was predominant ; and in those whom he loves, and where it was not so prevalent, it could not escape without rebukes and chastenings, ver. 19. And the end thereof was not a desisting from this or that act only, but the change of their temper. 'Be zealous therefore and repent,' i. e. bewail, abhor that odious temper, and get it turned into one quite contrary. And thus must you do if you would comply with God's end in rebukes and chastenings, not only quit your old practices, but your former sinful temper. Instead of a worldly temper, get one that is heavenly, so that the bent of your hearts

may be for the things above, that heavenly treasure; instead of a selfish temper, get one that is self-denying, that which will incline you to seek and mind the things of Christ, not your own things, and to resign up yourselves entirely to the serving of Christ's interest; instead of a carnal, sensual temper, that which is spiritual; instead of a slothful temper, that which will make you active and industrious, and laborious for Christ, for your souls and heavenly interest; instead of a lukewarm temper, that which will be zealous for God, and against sin, though you suffer for it; ardent in love and desires to Christ, fervent in spirit in serving him.

(3.) Against those sins, not only which you know at present, but against those which you shall know, and ought to take notice of as sins, though they have escaped your notice hitherto. Not only against those which you are convinced of to be sins, and your sins, but these also, for which you have sufficient means of conviction, though they have not been, or are not effectual. The rod has a voice. One thing that the Lord principally calls a people to, by judgments and afflictions, is to search and try their ways, to find out what evil is in them; and when afflictions and sufferings are continued, and drawn to a great length, notwithstanding prayer, and some other means used for the removal of them, their continuance is sometimes because the evils for which God is angry are not reformed, sometimes because they are not discovered and discerned. Those who suffer by them, do not take notice of them, are not or will not be convinced of them; and therefore those who think their fears, pressures, or sufferings of any kind, tedious and continued beyond their expectation, and are apt to cry out, 'How long, Lord,' &c., have a clear call, and are highly concerned, in answer to it, to search diligently, to search and try, to search again and again, whether there be any evil, any provocation in their hearts or ways which they have not observed, or not sufficiently taken notice of. They are not to content themselves with a superficial view, that which first offers itself; nor with former inquiries, though there have been some diligence in them; nor with common apprehensions of themselves or others concerning the ground of God's controversy. They may suspect they have not been inquisitive enough, or have been partial, or suffered false love, or the reputation or multitude of those who have concurred with them, or something or other, to hinder them from discerning some evil for which God is angry, and so ought to make a more impartial and stricter inquiry after it, and to give all diligence in the use of all appointed means to make a further discovery.

If this be our case, this is the course we ought to take. If, after all the means which have been used for freedom from what afflicts us publicly or personally, we find the Lord's anger is not yet turned away, but his hand is stretched out still; if our hopes have deceived us, and our expectations have been frustrate; if after some little reviving in our troubles, fears are renewed, and the clouds still return after the rain: we have hereupon some ground to suspect, that the cursed thing which troubles is not yet discovered, and that we do not yet discern the cause why the Lord is contending with us; and therefore are highly concerned to make a more strict and diligent search after it, and to resist and avoid whatever may have hindered us from conviction.

And great reason we have to engage ourselves thoroughly in such a course, if we consider but this only, that the Lord has proceeded against a people, yea, and destroyed them, for sins which they have not discovered, which they have not been convinced of (only sufficient means being offered for their conviction). Many have been ruined for their sins, which they have not known, being not willing, or not careful enough to know them.

We may see this in the ten tribes, and the account given of their ruin, 2 Kings xvii. 9. Secretly ; *Hebr.*, They hid, or covered, or cloaked what they did. There were some specious and plausible pretences, wherewith what they did was covered ; so that the sin and the sinfulness of it did not appear. Hereby it came to pass, that their sin was a secret to themselves. The act was open, public, visible (their high places, their images, their worship, which are the particulars immediately mentioned) ; but the sinfulness thereof was a secret. The excuses and pleas wherewith it was cloaked kept them from discerning it ; they seem to have been ignorant or unconvinced of that sin, and yet they were ruined for it, ver. 28.

Wrath came also upon the other two tribes, upon the like account, for sins which they were not convinced of, the sinfulness of which they did not know or believe. That which principally hastened their ruin, was false worship, Jer. xlv. 21, 22 ; and yet even after the desolation of temple, city, and country, hereby we find them so far from being convinced, that this was their sin, that they ascribe what good they met with to the practice of it, and what mischiefs befell them to the forbearance of it, ver. 15, 17, 18, 19, where it is expressed by what they confirmed themselves against conviction : the approbation of their betters, the authority of the ancients, the example and concurrence of their rulers in all their cities, and the measures they took of the providence of God, in dispensing to them good or evil.

Yea, that which was the utter ruin of God's ancient people the Jews, their crucifying of Christ, was not known to be a sin by many of those who concurred to it. Therefore the apostle says, They did it ignorantly, Acts iii. 14, 15, 17 ; they were not thoroughly convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, though there was evidence enough to convince them, because they did not duly search into and observe it, so they sinned ignorantly, not knowing it was a sin, or such a sin. That was the condition of most of them, and yet for this that people was utterly rejected, and wrath came upon them to the utmost.

So that the Lord may proceed against a people, and often does it, for sins that they know not to be sins, and of the sinfulness of which they are not convinced. The ground of his controversy with them (when he is ready to destroy them), may be that which they little think of. They may be extremely endangered by that wherein they do not imagine their danger lies ; that sin may be the great provocation, which they discern not to be their sin.

And therefore if you would comply with God's end in judging and afflicting, it may not be enough to put away the sin that you know, but you must search after those you yet do not know, and attend to the means which he offers for your conviction, and be careful to avoid whatsoever might hide a yet not observed sin from your eye, or might turn your eye from it, or might make you stiff against conviction. Use all means which may help you to a further discovery ; you are called to it in a special manner. If you have reformed what is discovered, and yet the Lord's anger is not turned away, search your hearts and ways, even those that you have not suspected. Make use of the words as your light ; hearken to conscience ; observe your afflictions, what they seem to point at. Commune with your friends, with those that are disinterested ; neglect not the charges of those that differ from you, no, not the reproaches of enemies, especially be importunate with God.

I have the longer insisted on this, because all things considered, it is to be feared, that the ground of the Lord's controversy with his people at this day, is either not fully discerned, or at least not removed.

(4.) Set yourselves not only against the outward acts of sin, but against the inward motions; not only against complete sin, but the embryos of sin; against it in its inward formation, when it is but breeding, or you find it first stirring, before it be brought forth, and be exposed to open view. Oppose it as soon as God sees it to be sin, before it appear in the sight of the world. A man may live so as the world can charge him with no sin; and yet there may be a world of sin in his heart, &c. An inward act or motion may be sinful, though it never appear outwardly; but there are many outward acts, which, without some inward sinful motion, would be neither good nor bad, but indifferent. Hezekiah's shewing his state and riches to the ambassadors of Babylon, might have been, as to the outward act, inoffensive, if some inward motion of pride or the like evil had not tainted it; but thereby it was rendered so sinful, as the Lord dreadfully threatens it, Isa. xxxix. 5, 6, 7; and so David's numbering the people, 2 Sam. xxiv. Nay, the best outward acts, those that are most holy, most eminent and exemplary, most extraordinary and heroical, by some inward irregular act and motion, may be quite spoiled and turned into sin. So was Jehu his reformation perverted; and so may the giving of all our goods to the poor, or the giving of our bodies to be burned, if the inward motions of the heart be not right in such outwardly glorious actings or sufferings, be quite depraved and sullied in the sight of God.

The sinfulness of outward acts is derived from inward and unlawful motions, Mat. xii. 35. Cleanse the heart, or else even the avoiding of outward sinful acts will be unclean; hence verses 33, 34, Luke vi. 48.

(5.) Set yourselves not only against sins that you are tempted to at present, but against those that you may be tempted to, though now you do not find them stirring, nor in motion, 2 Kings viii. 13. You should oppose yourselves where there is danger; now, we are many times in more danger of sin when we find it not stirring, and observe it not tempting us, than when we are aware of a temptation. It is found by experience, sin often gives the most dangerous and deadly assaults, after some cessation, after it has lain still and quiet, as though it would stir and tempt no more, as though it were subdued, and the heart and power of it broken.

(6.) Set yourselves not only against your own, but against your other-men's, sins. If you could avoid sin in your own persons, yet you may sin by others. If it were so, that you should never act sin personally, yet you may be guilty of others' sins, guilty either as principals or as accessories; and when you are but accessories, you sin, though not equally as when you act it.

You may be guilty of the sin when others are the actors of it, by commanding and ordering: so Saul of Doeg's, 1 Sam. xxii. 19; David of Joab's, 2 Sam. xii. 19. When you incense or provoke, as Jezebel did Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. 7; when you allure or entice, as the harlot, Prov. vii. 21, and those, Prov. i. 10, 11; when you counsel or advise, plot or contrive, as Jonadab of Amnon's, 2 Sam. xiii. 6; when you consent or approve, as Ahab to Jezebel, 1 Kings xxi. 19, Rom. i. 31; when praise or commend, Isa. v. 20, excuse or defend, Prov. xxiv. 24; when empower or capacitate, as 1 Tim. v. 22; though without any intention or suspicion that they will so employ their power.

So negatively, by not hindering it; so Pilate, Mark xv. 15. By not informing, declaring that it is sin, as false prophets, false worship. By not dissuading, reproving, correcting; so Eli, 1 Sam. iii. 18. By not removing the occasions; this was the blot in the character of the good kings of Judah, they take not away high places, 2 Kings xii. 8. By not mourning for others'

sins; so Ezek. ix. 4, 6, only the mourners were to be delivered; those that mourned not, though they were not actors of those abominations, were to fall by the destroyer. By this it is evident, that not only your own, but your other-men's sins, may expose you to afflictions, yea, to destructive calamities. And Eli is a pregnant and dreadful instance of it; upon him and his family such judgments were poured down, as made the ears of those who heard thereof to tingle. And this not for the sins which himself acted; but for those which he restrained not, when he might and ought to have hindered the actors. So that we comply not with the Lord's end in afflicting and judging us, though our own sin be taken away, if we do anything to promote sin in others, nay, if we do not what we ought, and all that in us lies, to hinder others from sinning; if we do not reform, not only ourselves, but our families, our relations, and all over whom we have any power or any influence; and if we do not mourn and humble ourselves, and afflict our souls for what we have not power to reform.

(7.) Set yourselves against sin, not when it appears in its own colours, but when it puts on a disguise. If we would answer the Lord's end in chastening, we must not only put away sin when it shews its native face, which is so ugly and odious as it will affright an awakened conscience, but when it puts on a mask, and hides its ugliness with fair colours. When there is danger that sin may have no more entertainment, it will borrow a better habit, that it may procure a new admission. Sin is like the devil its father; he would not appear to our first parents in his own likeness, but in a serpent, which was then a harmless and sociable creature. So after, he would not offer himself to Saul in his own shape, but in the habit of Samuel. So sin uses not to appear in its own colours; for then, where there is anything of an enlightened conscience, men would not dare to meddle with it. Satan clothes it in another habit; and when one is worn out, or the Lord enables us to see through it, it takes another, and turns itself into any shape rather than it will be quite excluded. If you would have this to be the fruit of afflictions, the taking away of your sin, you must reject it in every appearance and habit; not only when it is apparently a work of darkness, but when it is transformed into an appearance of light.

It may be you are afraid of worldliness, as it is declared in Scripture to be no better than whoredom, drunkenness, or idolatry. Oh but take heed of it, when it puts on the fair colours of diligence in a lawful calling, or necessary providing for family and posterity!

It may be you abhor false worship when it appears, as it is, to be an invading of God's prerogative and an advancing of man's will and wisdom before that of Christ. Oh but take heed of it, when masked with the pretences of order, decency, reverence, and submission to our betters!

It may be want of love to the brethren is dreadful, when branded as a damning sin, and a sign of an unregenerate state. Oh but take heed of it, when coloured with zeal for the truth, or for a way we count best; and they, as dissenters or opposers, fancied to be unworthy of our love, and the acts and expressions of it!

To find our own pleasure on the Lord's day, and to neglect duties of religion in private or families, you may count, as it is, a great profaneness; but take heed of this profaneness in another garb, beware of being less conscientious under a pretence of gospel liberty.

You know to despise Christ's messengers is to despise Christ; you will be afraid of this. But take heed of despising them under other disguises, as legal teachers, or ministers of the letter, or men of low ordinary gifts, or under any other mask which Satan may help you to.

Jeroboam would not bring in idolatry in an Egyptian dress, to imitate them, as in the wilderness, that was too gross, too coarse; but masked with reason of state, necessity, and conveniency, 1 Kings xii. 26-28.

2. Set yourselves against some sins more especially. As afflictions and judgments should help us against all more or less, so, if we duly improve them, we must make use of them to help us against some sins especially, viz. those that are most dangerous; those that we are in most danger of, and those that we are judged or corrected for. To instance in some particulars; if you would comply with God's end in afflictions and calamities, so as by these your iniquity may be purged,

(1.) Set yourselves especially against mother sins, those which are most pregnant, which give life, strength, and motion to many others. If you would have all sin taken away, if you would have this to be the fruit, &c., be careful to take away those that maintain all. Besides natural corruption, the root and body of all (of which before), there are some main branches, some cardinal evils observable, upon which the rest of our sins are but as it were dependents, are but sprigs shooting out of the main arms of this tree of sin and death. Now, the principals being suppressed, the other, if they fall not of themselves, will with more ease be quelled.

These are as it were the vital parts of the body of sin, which, wounded and mortified, the rest would quickly expire. These are Satan's strongest holds, which command all about them; demolish these forts, and the rest will easily be brought under. The other are but ministering sins, the servants of these. Now, as when the dragon was cast down his angels were cast out with him, so cast down the master sins, and the rest, the retainers, will fall with him.

Unbelief. That is the root in a manner of all sins; that which supports, conveys sap and life to them; that which cumpers the ground, hinders anything from thriving near it, that might hinder the growth of sin. Labour to pluck up this root of bitterness, and the branches will wither; but lesser sins will never die, though they may be restrained, till unbelief be plucked up.

Besides this, the principal mother sins are those mentioned by the apostle: 1 John ii. 16, 'The lust of the flesh,' sensuality, the affecting to gratify the flesh, our bodies with ease and pleasure. 'The lust of the eye,' i. e. covetousness, the affecting of riches, worldly profits and advantages. 'The pride of life,' the affection of a carnal and selfish excellency. Set yourselves principally against these three, and the overthrow of them will be the ruin of that army of lusts which war against your souls; for the rest are maintained, have their strength, support, and activeness from them.

Intemperance, incontinence, slothfulness, an immoderate affecting of ease, sleep, pastime, and the numerous evils that have their rise and dependence hereupon, are removed, when sensuality, the lust of the flesh, is taken away.

Then for covetousness or worldliness, called the lust of the eye, what a multitude of sins doth this breed, and nourish, and set a-work! Injustice, oppression, unfaithfulness in words or oaths, fraud, deceit, simulation, dissimulation, neglect of soul and heavenly interest, omission, or slight performance of holy duties, perplexing cares, mercenariness: all these, and many more, issue out of this one cursed womb. Now by killing the dam you starve the young, this loathsome brood will languish; kill this master-sin, and its numerous retinue and dependents will be undone.

So for pride; this is a radical sin, the branches of it are self-dependence, self-conceit, carnal confidence, presumptuous curiosity, self-seeking, ambition, hypocrisy, contempt of others, self-magnifying, ostentation in words,

actions, fashions, entertainments ; discontent, contention, disdain, detraction. Pluck but up this one root of pride, and all these, and many more, will die and wither. Reformation of some particular evils is but like Samson's shaving his locks, which in time did grow again. If Delilah would have made sure work, and prevented the recovery of his strength, she should have plucked it out by the roots. Indeed, the mortifying of these capital evils, unbelief, sensuality, worldliness, and pride, is as the cutting off the head. There is little danger of the growing of these lesser evils, which are but as the hair, when that is done. You untile the house in other attempts ; but by bending your main force against these supporters of the rest, you pull down the pillars of it.

(2.) Set yourselves especially against those sins which you are most subject to. You may judge of it by these severals, which I will but name.

Observe what evil your constitution or complexion most inclines to, what your calling or course of life, your employment, or want of employment, most exposes you to ; what has formerly most commanded your affections, your love, delight, desire, zeal, &c. ; or what custom has most riveted you in ; or what you are fastened to by your interest, credit, or profit, or ease, or safety. This sin you may look upon as the champion of the rest, that which gives them heart and strength, which encourages and sets them on. If this fall, the victory over the rest will be easier ; even as when Goliath was slain, the Philistines fled.

The king of Syria knew of what consequence Ahab's death would be to the obtaining of the victory ; Jehoshaphat and the men of Judah were but his dependents, and would follow, and be involved in his success, good or bad ; and therefore he adviseth, 2 Chron. xviii. 30. Many other sins are dependents on these ; it leads, acts, employs, enforceth them ; let these be taken away, and the rest will scarce stand out against you.

(3.) Set yourselves especially against the sins of the times. There is no complying with God's end, if you do not utterly abandon these. They are so visible, I need not mention them. Atheism, apostasy, perjury, unfaithfulness to God and men, advancing mens' advices before divine appointments, profaning his day, name, worship, all that is truly holy ; uncleanness, intemperance, violence, contempt of the gospel, rebellion against, putting away the word of life ; abuse of his messengers ; and others, which may be discerned without any troublesome search. For this people declare their sin as Sodom, and it is heightened with impudence, universality, incorrigibility. Oh keep at the greatest distance from these, touch not with them in any degree. Avoid not only these abominations, but the appearance of them ; be neither actors nor partakers herein, if you have any regard of complying with the Lord's end in judging us.

(4.) Set yourselves against those sins especially, which are less disgraceful amongst professors ; such as custom and opinion has made less reproachful, whatever they be in themselves, and in the sight of God, than the gross pollutions of the world. Let me instance in some : eagerness after the world ; indifferency towards holiness, the growth, power, and life of it ; superficialness in holy duties ; unfruitfulness under the means of grace ; unteachableness under the rod ; unserviceableness in their places ; an unbridled tongue ; loose, careless, unwatchful walking ; passionateness, pride, selfishness, unpeaceableness, envy, strife, debate, malice, revenge, evil-speaking, detraction, and many others, too rife amongst professors.

Some of these are as heinous in themselves, as great sins in God's account, and as much branded in Scripture, as those which are counted the spots of

the wicked, swearing, uncleanness, drunkenness; and the special aggravations which burden all the sins of sons and daughters, make them all grievous provocations.

But because they are too common amongst professors, we are too apt to make light of them; we give them more allowance, and count them less reproachful; and so are in danger to overlook them, when God is calling us to purge them out, and dealing with us by his providence to take them away.

If you would comply with God's end, take special care that these be abandoned; judge of them, not according to common opinion, but as the Lord judges of them, and think yourselves as much concerned to free heart and life from these, as you think others concerned to abandon idolatry, whoredom, or drunkenness.

(5.) Set yourselves especially against those evils for which the Lord judges and afflicts; these, above all, should be regarded by those who would answer the Lord's end, &c. If all others should be put away, and these only retained, the Lord's end would not be answered; though he would have all iniquity purged, yet his hand is more particularly against these, and so should ours.

Now that we may comply with the Lord's design against these sins, it is necessary that we should discern them, and endeavour to make a discovery of them. In order hereto, observe in general, that there may be, and ordinarily is, a concurrence of many sins to the bringing of common judgments, or sharp and long afflictions, though some sins may contribute more than others hereto. We may be long a-ripening for his judgments and severe dispensations. A continued evil course, made up of divers sins, is ordinarily precedent to this; though, when we are ripe for it, some particular act or acts may occasion the Lord to put in the sickle, and forbear no longer. And those particular provocations, upon which judgment breaks out, and affliction seizes on us, as they are sometimes more, so they may be sometimes less, heinous than those, or some of those, that prepared and disposed us at some distance for such severity.

As a child may somehow, by several faults, provoke his father to correct him, before he will take the rod, though upon some particular offence he may resolve to bear no longer, but scourge him presently, though that offence be not always the greatest; he may mind him, while he is correcting him, of others which made way for that severity, and designs the reforming of others, as well as of that particular, upon which immediately he made use of the rod.

And, therefore, when we would discover evils, for which the Lord is judging or correcting us, we should not look only at this or that particular, which might have the next hand in bringing an evil day upon us, but at those also that have been preparing and ripening us for it at some distance; for the influence of these may be as great, though more remote, in procuring the evils that afflict us; and the Lord's designs in dealing severely will not be answered, unless both these and the other be taken away. And, accordingly, I would have you make use of the directions I shall give, to help you in the discovery of those sins and iniquities, for which the Lord has been judging and afflicting us; and therein I design principally a discovery of those evils amongst professors, which have had these woful effects upon us.

If you would discern what the sins are, for which the Lord hath been, and is, contending with us, the observance of these particulars may be helpful.

1. Search for them. If you would make a discovery, you must make a

search, and pursue it personally, diligently, thoroughly. The church, in her lamentable condition, thought herself much concerned to take this course, Lam. iii. 40.

Personally, our ways. There is something of the accursed thing hid in every of our tents. Each of us is, more or less have been, an Achan to ourselves, and the place where we live. We may say, I, and I have troubled. Each of us should search our own tent, our own hearts and ways, and not put off this duty to others, as more guilty than ourselves. We should not be smiting others with the charge of this and that guilt; but every one smite upon his own thigh, and say not, Oh what evil has such and such a person or party done? But what evil have I done? The Lord's judiciary or correcting hand has reached us all one way or other, and found us all guilty, and so we should find ourselves, if we would have a stop of severe proceedings.

Diligently. Thoroughly, every corner of our souls, the most secret recesses of our hearts; all the parts of our lives, all our designs, all our actings, all our ways, even those that we have not suspected, those that have passed for innocent, or better than innocent. That which seems to be best in the vessel may raise the storm; even in a Jonah may more cause of it be found than in the heathen mariners. That which threatens the wreck of all, may be there where we little imagine it to be, and may be that which we have no suspicious thought of, and which, it may be, we have thought it a crime to suspect. Who, before the discovery, would not have thought it a sin to have suspected Jonah as the malefactor rather than the profane mariners? Search, therefore, everywhere, everything; that which we count best may have a provocation in it.

2. Beware of those things which may hinder you from discerning those sins, and being convinced of them; which may shut your eye or divert it; which may make you unwilling to see, willing to overlook, resolve not to be convinced, or loath to yield to conviction. There are many things of this nature and tendency, which you are to avoid and resist, which you are to observe, and be watchful that they do you not this disservice.

(1.) *Self-love*. That blinds the eye, keeps it close shut, will not let it see that which is odious and loathsome in himself, that which disparages and is a just occasion of ill reflections upon himself; makes him loath to see what should make him vile in his own sight; unwilling to see that which would trouble, disquiet, affright him; or to take notice of what might be a just cause to judge, condemn, pass sentence against himself as a common incendiary, a troubler of the community where he lives; makes him readier to see a mote in another's eye than a beam in his own, and to censure and condemn any rather than himself. Self-love will see all ruined rather than see itself the cause of it; and fancy the ground of it anywhere rather than where it is, when it is at home. Self-love will be blind where you are concerned to be most quick-sighted: this must be suppressed, mortified, and what remains of it not at all consulted with or hearkened to, if you would discover the evil.

(2.) *Subtlety*. To find out pretences and arguments for the hiding and covering of sin, and to manage them so as to stave off conviction, and to answer or evade whatever tends to fasten it. Naturally there is such a subtlety in us, and we are prone to make use of it; and many times art is added to nature, and joins fig-leaves together so artificially, as the nakedness of sin is covered, and the shame of it hid from our eyes. Thus the Israelites, those of the ten tribes, so cloaked and covered their sin that it was a secret to them, they discerned it not to be a sin, 2 Kings xvii. 9; *Hebr.*, they covered or

cloaked what they did. They had such pleas and arguments for their false worship, it was so cloaked and disguised thereby, that it did not appear to them to be a sin: the sinfulness of it was a secret.

Saul was a notable artist this way. The prophet had much to do to convince him that a plain act of disobedience was a sin, 1 Sam. xv. 3. There is the command. Saul and the people destroy all the persons, but only Agag, and all the cattle that were vile and refuse, ver. 9. Hereupon he is confident he had not sinned, ver. 13. And when Samuel tells him, that the bleating and lowing of the cattle was sufficient to confute him; for God had commanded to destroy all, and he had spared some, ver. 14; he shifts off this very speciously and plausibly, ver. 15. The best only are spared; and these not for our own use, but for the honour and service of God, to sacrifice to him, and express our thankfulness for so great a victory. And if this were a fault, the people did it, not I. Upon this he confidently justifies himself, and persists in it, after Samuel had said much for his conviction, ver. 20; and when he could no longer hold out in justifying the act wholly, yet he has something to allege, which might excuse and extenuate it, ver. 24.

We need not wonder, when men are still as subtle to deceive themselves, and have the advantage of much more art than the world had of old, that arguments are mustered up, to make good and justify so many sins; and that it is so exceeding hard, in many cases and circumstances, to convince persons of their sin.

If you would discover the sins for which God judges and afflicts us, you must get a willingness to be convinced, and not seek evasions, nor catch at fair pretences, nor study arguments tending to prove your sin is no sin; nor accept of them from the invention of others.

(3.) *Pride*. A good conceit of themselves, an over-weaning opinion of their own holiness, uprightness, or innocency. This makes men very backward to believe that they are guilty of such evils as provoke the Lord to severe proceedings, and apt to think, conclude, the cause of such severity is in others rather than themselves.

This blinded the pharisees. Of all the sects among the Jews in Christ's time, they had the reputation of greatest holiness. They thought themselves, and were thought by others, to be the most eminent for piety and righteousness; and this made them stiff against whatever was urged, by Christ himself, for their conviction.

And this hindered Laodicea from the sight of that for which Christ had a controversy with her, Rev. iii. 17. She made account she was rich, &c., and this hindered her from the knowledge, from the sight of that which was her sin and misery. 'And knowest not,' &c.

And this hindered the Jews of old from discerning their sin and sinfulness, when the prophet set it before their eyes; they thought themselves better than any people in the world, the only people of God, honoured and privileged by him above all others; and they had ocular demonstrations of it, the temple of God amongst them; and with this they answer (though it was but a lying, a deceiving allegation) all that the prophet made use of for their conviction, Jer. vii. 4. And hence it came to pass, that all which the prophet alleged for the discovery of their sin was to no purpose, ver. 13.

(4.) *Interest*. There is nothing more conceals sin; nothing so much hinders men from discerning and being convinced of their sin, than interest. When such a way helps him to riches and dignity, and supports him in such a state; or when it ministers pleasure to him, and is the solace of his life; or when it secures him, keeps him safe; and if he should leave it, himself and outward concerns would be evidently exposed and endangered. Oh,

he will see anything rather than see this to be his sin. He will use all shifts, find out a hundred evasions, rather than yield to conviction here. And any plea for it will seem of more force than the most cogent argument against it.

The world has one instance of the power of interest for this purpose, which is so pregnant, as I need add no more.

It is as evident, as can be expected in anything of that nature, that there is a horrible degeneracy in church-government, worship, and discipline, amongst the Romanists, and those who follow them. It is palpably quite another thing than that which was primitive and apostolical; there are other ordinances, other officers, other administrations of worship and discipline, than what were appointed in Scripture. The apostasy of latter times herein is so great and so plain, as it may seem matter of astonishment that any should in the least doubt of it. And yet there are multitudes who plead, and argue, and dispute, and fill whole volumes with defences of such a degeneracy, and revile and persecute all that will not yield to them, *i.e.* those that will not be persuaded that midnight is noon-day. Now, what is it that does thus blind and infatuate them, but interest? They, by their new officers and administrations, gain riches, and honours, and power hereby. This furnishes them with arguments, this helps them to answers and evasions, as to whatever is brought from Scripture for their conviction. And this makes them resolute to believe (say what you will to the contrary) that darkness is light; and so continues the Christian world in such a dreadful apostasy, from generation to generation. Oh the fatal, the stupendous, the pernicious power of interest! That one argument of Demetrius, Acts xix. 25, 'Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth,' was of more force with those of his temper than all the reasonings of the apostle Paul, himself to the contrary. Oh how hard was it to let them see idolatry in a practice so much for their interest!

Those that would discover the sin, for which the Lord judges and afflicts, must be disengaged from the power of worldly and carnal interest. This makes conviction always difficult, sometimes impossible.

(5.) *The judgment or example of those whom we reverence*, and have an high esteem of. It will not be easy to believe that to be a sin in us, which is countenanced by the judgment or example of those who are got high in our opinion; by their antiquity, or by their authority, or by the greatness of their parts and accomplishments, or by their exemplary holiness, or by their known conscientiousness in other things. And yet it is possible that the Lord may proceed against us for some evil, that has most of these, or all of these, to countenance it, and to secure it from being thought what indeed it is, a provocation in the sight of God. It may be you may have the judgment and practice of many of the ancients, of the best of your ancestors, for it. You may have the approbation of your rulers, of your betters, of your greatest, or of your dearest relatives, of your teachers for it. It may be the judgment of some of the greatest parts, learning, and other accomplishments; such as you may think best able to discern betwixt things that differ, and to judge what is good and what evil. It may be the practice of some that are really holy, and truly conscientious in other particulars; and yet for all this, it may be a sin, and a ground of God's controversy with you. But how hard will it be to believe it, and to be convinced that it is so, against such a stream, so powerful to bear down all before it which tends to conviction!

The Jews' provocation was great, and brought dreadful evils upon them; and yet they would see no evil in it, notwithstanding all that the Lord, by the prophet, said to discover it; because they had the judgment and prac-

tice of those whom they did most reverence to defend it, Jer. xlv. 17, 19, their ancestors, and rulers, and husbands. How many sinful mistakes, in opinion and practice, are defended to this day by the authority of the ancients, those who were learned and holy, besides the plea of their antiquity.

The Pharisees, by such means, shut their own eyes and the eyes of others, so as they could not see sin in the grossest unbelief, John vii. 48; as if they had said, Can that be a sin which neither those of greatest authority, nor those of greatest reputation amongst us for wisdom, learning, and holiness (such were the pharisees in those days) judge to be a sin, nay, which they judge to be a duty? Or can that be a duty which persons of such eminency every way do judge to be a sin?

The difficulty will be greater, and it will be more hard to believe that to be our sin, when multitudes of those whom we count most conscientious concur with us therein. And yet so it may be; possibly the Lord may contend with us for something, wherein we have the concurrence of many who are truly conscientious. And therefore if we would discover the evils for which the Lord afflicts, we must follow no other rule in judging thereof but what he has prescribed. To the law and to the testimony; examine hearts and ways by that, not by the judgment or example either of the greatest or of the best; for these may deceive, yea, it may be, blind and delude us, and instead of being a light, may shut us up in darkness, and hinder us from discovering what we are so much concerned to discover.

(6.) *Dissension.* When a people are divided, and split into parties, and the differences pursued with heat and animosity, they are apt to transfer the guilt, each party from itself, to those from whom they are rent, and to have their eyes so intent and fixed upon the guilt of those whom they affect not, as to overlook their own. In this case Ephraim is against Manasseh, and Manasseh against Ephraim, and both against Judah. Each party will charge the other, and both will be ready to charge a third, but no one to take the guilt to itself. And so the end of afflictions and calamities is in danger to be lost amongst them: whiles, though all suffer, yet none will cry Guilty as to himself; but though they smite one another, and God is smiting them all, yet none smites upon his thigh, and says, 'What evil have I done, to bring this evil day upon us?' Whereas the Lord's judging and process against them all argues all to be guilty, and the guilt to lie amongst them all, in each party some of it. And the way to know the total of God's charge against us is to observe the particulars wherein each party is guilty, and to put them all together, inquiring after them, and yielding to conviction in the severals, without partiality.

If you would pursue this concernment successfully, passionately,* take heed of addicting yourselves to a party. Besides other mischievous consequences of it, it tends much to hinder you from discerning your sin, and the sin of those you give up yourselves to, when the Lord for it is proceeding against you jointly. Those that give up themselves to a party are under a strong temptation to be, as in other cases, partial, so also in finding out their guilt. For what self-love does to a person, that such a love, a little further extended, doth to a party: blinds the eye, and will not suffer it to see its guilt, nor take an impartial view of it, nor pass a true judgment upon it, or a just sentence against it.

Oh take heed you be not so keen against others as to have no edge left against the evils that are your own, or those of your own way and persuasion.

(7.) *Prejudice* against those who are ready to tell us of our sin. The

* Qu. 'dispassionately'?—Ed.

truest information, the most faithful discovery will be lost on us if we be prejudiced against those that offer it. This will hinder us from believing it, make us misinterpret it, tempt us to reject it. Ahab's soul was closed against all conviction from Micaiah, when he declares that he hated him, 1 Kings xxii. 8. And the Jews were hardened against all Jeremiah's endeavours to make known their sin, and convince them of it, when they had received this prejudice against him, that he sided with the Chaldeans.

If you would know your sin, look upon him as a friend, whatever he be otherwise, that will make it known to you, Ps. cxli. 5.

(8.) *The exceeding vileness of others* may hinder us from taking notice of our own sinful distempers or miscarriages. When gross and horrid wickedness exceedingly abounds in the place and times where we live, we may be apt to think that there is no other cause of the judgments there executed, and so professors may be tempted to overlook the more refined evils that are amongst themselves, and consequently may take little notice of that which is in great part the ground of God's controversy. The sins of sons and daughters, though not in their own nature so horrid and grievous as the wickedness of the debauched world, may, by reason of special aggravations, whereof the sins of others are not capable, be great provocations in the sight of God. Though they pass not for crying sins, yet may they cry aloud in God's ear. He may resent them as abominations, though we make light of them, and may proceed severely against professors for them, as those whom he abhors, Deut. xxxii. 19, Amos. iii. 2. He had chosen them, above all on earth, to be his peculiar people, and admitted them into a covenant with himself singularly gracious, and therefore the sins which he passed by in others, he would punish most severely in them. And therefore we have little reason to be so severe against the sins of others, as to let our own escape a severe inquisition and censure.

These are some of the impediments which may hinder us from finding out the sins for which the Lord hath been judging and afflicting us. If we would discover them, these must be removed, avoided, rested.* We must take notice of them, as evils like to obstruct us in our course of complying with the Lord's end, and must be watchful against them.

8. Listen unto conscience. It has light and power to make you know your sin. It is God's officer, his deputy; he has placed it in your breasts for this purpose, to discover sin.

Conscience hath the light of a rule. The *νομοὶ ἑνὸς*, common notions of good and evil are planted in it. Hence that of the apostle, Rom. ii. 14, 15. The Gentiles, which had not the law of Moses, yet in that they had a conscience, they had a law discovering what is good and what evil. And where this implanted law is obscure or defective (the tables of it being much broken by the fall), it may be repaired, and the defects of it supplied by the written word. So that there is a light in it to discover what is sin, what is evil.

Also it hath the office of a witness, and brings in evidence for or against a person, according as he hath demeaned himself towards the rule, Rom. ii. 15. And it is called *συνιδήσις*, which is a man's knowing that he hath done, or not done, what the rule requires; and so is a witness for or against him, either pleading for him as not guilty, or accusing him as a transgressor. Now the way to know your crime is to inquire of your accuser; if you would have a discovery, and want evidence, hearken to the witness, that which God has appointed to perform this office within you.

* Qu. 'resisted' ? or 'arrested' ?—Ed.

It hath also the authority of a judge, and passeth sentence according to evidence, 1 John iii. 20, 21, *οἷσιν διακονήσῃεν*, *Naz.*

The whole process of conscience, in the execution of its several offices, for the discovery of sin, you may discern in such a syllogism. Whosoever doth thus and thus, sins against God (this it manifests as a law or rule); but thou hast done thus and thus (this evidence it brings in as a witness), therefore thou hast sinned against God. (There is its sentence as a judge.)

You see conscience is every way furnished to help you to the discovery of sin; make use of it accordingly. Get it more and more enlightened, that it may give true and full direction. Beware it be not corrupted with false principles, that the rule be not made crooked, and bended to favour you in any evil. And order it so as it may prove a true and faithful witness; let it not be bribed, nor overawed, nor out short; hear it out, give it liberty and encouragement to speak the whole truth. Let it not be baffled, as modest witnesses are sometimes by wrangling advocates. Observe its first reports, take them in their genuine sense, before they be perverted, darkened, eluded by the arts and sophistry, the shifts, cavils, evasions of corrupt and deceitful hearts, which would deal with the plain witness of conscience, as cunning lawyers are wont to do with the evidence that makes against them.

This is the way to have conscience help you to a true judgment concerning the sins for which you are afflicted.

4. Harken to others. Neglect not the help of any who may be serviceable for this discovery; and there are many who may contribute to it, friends, strangers, different parties, yea, your enemies; but especially those who are called to the guidance of your souls. *Plus vident oculi, quam oculus.* The more eyes, the better and the fuller discovery. That which escapes your sight may be obvious to another; he may have a more discerning faculty, and better advantages, and may be freer from those impediments which hinder your prospect.

There is a special obligation upon friends to be helpful to one another herein. The laws of friendship require a discovery of that which endangers one another. You would count him unworthy the name of a friend, who knowing a thief or an incendiary to lurk in your family, with a design to kill, or rob, or burn your house, would conceal it from you, and not acquaint you with it on his own accord. There is no such thief, murderer, incendiary, as sin: it more endangers us, and those concerns that are more precious than goods, or house, or life; and that most endangers us, by which the Lord's anger is already kindled against us. Silence or concealment in this case is treachery. He is the most faithful friend, and worthy of most esteem and affection, that deals most plainly with us, in reference to the discovery of our sin. He that is reserved in this case is but a false friend, a mere pretender to love, whereas, indeed, he hates his brother in his heart, Lev. xix. 17.

And because this act of love, though most to be valued, is too unacceptable to our perverse natures, we should provoke and encourage one another to this office; when we are together, this we should commune of, especially in a day of affliction. This should be one of our principal questions and inquiries, Oh wherefore is the Lord's anger gone out against us? What is the cause that it is not yet turned away? We should get every one to declare, and mark every one's opinion concerning it.

Harken to strangers. Their judgments are more to be regarded, because they are not concerned in our interests, or in our differences, or in our sufferings. And those that are disinterested may pass the truest judgment; they

have less bias to mislead them; and therefore, if we have opportunity to know it, their opinion should not be neglected concerning the cause of our calamities or afflictions.

Hearken to those who differ from us. They may be less partial to us than we to ourselves, and are under less temptation to spare us than we to spare ourselves. If the evils were observed, with which the differing parties amongst us do charge each other, and the sum of each charge put together, out of the whole might be made a better collection of the ground of God's controversy with us all, than each party will make for itself. Those that differ from us may, and will see that in us that we cannot or will not see in ourselves. Therefore, the way to understand fully why the Lord contends with us, is to take notice, not only of what we see ourselves, but what others may see for us, and charge us with, examining impartially how far their charge is just.

The accusations of enemies are not to be neglected. You may have heard of one who, intending to wound his enemy, lanced an imposthume, which otherwise might have been mortal to him. We are prejudiced against what comes from an enemy, as being the issue of hatred and malice; but even malice sometimes speaks a truth when it will serve a turn; when it tends to the disgrace and disparagement of the accused, and may render them odious; and that which discovers our sin, though it tend to our shame, serves our turn as well as theirs. We are not so much to regard whether they charge us maliciously, as whether they charge us truly; and so far as their suggestion is true, from what mind soever it proceeds, and whatever design they have in it, let us make use of it for our conviction, and so turn the poison into a medicine.

When Judah and Israel were in the field, ready to join in battle one against the other, Abijah, the king of Judah, declares to Jeroboam and his followers, the sin which they took no notice of, 2 Chron. xiii. 8, 9. If Jeroboam had made right use of this discovery, though it was the accusation of an enemy, it would have done him far better service than his army of eight hundred thousand mighty men.

5. Reform what evils you know already, if you would have a discovery of those you know not. Proceed against them effectually, till they be mortified in the heart, and cut off from the life. A good improvement of what light we have is the way to have more. That promise is of large extent, and may reach this case: Mat. xxv. 29, Mark iv. 25, 'Him that hath,' i. e. who duly uses and improves what he hath, 'more shall be given.' And as in truths, the practice of what we know, is the way to know more, according to that of Christ, John vii. 17, so in reference to sin, he that purges out that which he discovers, shall not want discovery of what the Lord would have purged out by afflictions; but if you tolerate any sins which you know, this may provoke the Lord to deny you the knowledge of what you suffer for. Such abuse and non-improvement of light may justly be punished with darkness. Those who make themselves like idols in one respect, so as to have hands and act not against the sin which they see, may be left to be like idols in another respect, so as to have eyes, yet not to see the sin which they smart for.

6. Observe carefully the judgments and afflictions which are upon you, or upon the place where you live. There is sometimes such a similitude betwixt the judgment and the sin, that he that knows the one may know the other. A strict observance of the calamity may help us to discern the sin which brought it. There is often a proportion between the sin and the punishment, either in the substance thereof, or some remarkable circum-

stance ; particularly, this is observable, 1. Sometimes in the things wherein we suffer. Babylon made herself drunk with the blood of the saints, and she must have blood to drink, Rev. xvii. 6, and xvi. 6. King Asa puts the seer into prison, and the stocks (see the same word, Jer. xx. 2, and xxix. 26), and he is struck with a disease in his feet, 2 Chron. xvi. 10, 12 ; Adonibezek cut off the thumbs and great toes of others, and he himself had his thumbs and toes cut off, and by the likeness of his sufferings is led to the sight of his sin, Judges i. 6, 7.

Sometimes in the parties or instruments by which we suffer. David sins in his indulgence and inordinate affection to Absalom, and Absalom is made the instrument to afflict him.

Sometimes in the time. When Belshazzar is drinking in the vessels of the temple, and praising his gods of gold, &c., and at the same hour appears the sentence for his ruin, Dan. v. 4, 5.

Sometimes in the measure. The rich sensualist affords not Lazarus the crumbs of his table, and he himself is denied drops of water, Luke xvi.

Sometimes in the manner. Jacob comes, as the elder, to Isaac, and deludes him ; and Leah comes, as the younger, to Jacob, and so he himself is deluded.

7. Make use of the word. Nothing comparable to that, for its virtue and power to discover sin, and convince you of it. It is a clear, a searching, a convincing, an undeceiving light. Your own hearts and consciences may delude you ; others may abuse you, and be too favourable or too severe, may represent you better or worse than you are ; but the word will not deceive you ; nor, if you make due use of it, will it suffer you to be deceived. It will help you to discern that which yourselves or others will not, or cannot, otherwise see : Heb. iv. 12, 13, ' mind and spirit.' It will discover a difference betwixt those things which are most hard to be distinguished, the mind and spirit. It will help you to discern those things that are best, *ἀγαθὰ*, the nerves, the least parts, and those things that are most secret, and have most to fence them from our sight : the marrow, that which is within, not only the skin and the flesh, but the bones. It will not only discover your actions, but your thoughts and imaginations ; the most secret plots and contrivances, the most retired motions and workings of mind and spirit, *καρτερὸς ἐνθυμήσεων καὶ ἐνοσιῶν*. It is a critic in discerning these. It will help you to an exact and accurate judgment of the most obscure and subtle devices of your hearts ; and, ver. 18, there is nothing so small, so secret, so disguised, so concealed, but this will bring it to light, and make it manifest. ' All are naked and open to the eyes of that' *πρὸς ὃν ἡμεῖς ὁ λογὸς*, ' of which we are speaking.' As all the secrets, the entrails, the inwards of a sacrifice were exposed to the eye of the priest, when he had flayed it, and cut it down the back, and laid it all open, *τετραχηλισμένα*, &c. It will flay off all coverings and pretences, which hinder you from discerning your sin, or being convinced of it, 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. These are his sins, even the secrets of his heart, made manifest to himself by the convincing power of the word.

There are three parts of the word especially useful for this purpose.

(1.) The commands or injunctions. Observe what it requires, what it forbids. In this respect it is a rule ; and that is *index sui et obliqui*, discovers both your duty and your sin. If you would discern the crookedness of a thing, you bring it to the rule. Bring your hearts, the motions, the designs, the temper of them, to this rule, if you would see what crookedness the Lord is correcting in you. What was the temper of your hearts before affliction seized on you ? What was the bent, the designs, the contrivances,

the language, the posture, the motions of it? Whither did the stream of it run? Upon what was the face of it set? Compare these with the rule; you may thereby see what was wrong there, and what called for the rod, and what occasion the Lord had to make use of it.

Bring your lives, your actions, your ways to the rule; call to mind how they were ordered before trouble came. The word may, and will, if duly observed, point at that which is your troubler, Rom. vii. 12. It is 'holy, just, good.' And that which is so helps you to discern what is not so in the sight of God, and consequently what he is angry at, and why he expresses his anger in afflictions and chastenings.

The word is compared to a glass, James i. 23-25. If you would see what spots the Lord would have washed off, what defilement and pollution he would have purged, look into the glass, view your hearts and lives there, and do it, according to the import of the word there. Content not yourselves with a glance, a transient view, but *κατακύψαι*, bend down to it, as one that would take pains to see, and has a mind to take all the advantages this glass will afford for a full self-discovery.

(2.) The threatenings. These may contribute very much to the discovery of the sins by which we suffer. In order hereto, observe what is threatened in the word of God, and for what; what calamities or judgments are denounced, and for what sins. If the judgments or afflictions be upon us that we find threatened, and the sins be amongst us for which they are threatened, this will be a good ground to conclude that those are the sins for which we are judged and afflicted. To instance in two or three, which may lead us to the sight of some sins, for which in all probability the Lord hath proceeded against us.

2 Thes. ii. 10, 11. Here some are threatened to be given up to strong delusions; and the sin for which this terrible judgment is threatened, is not receiving of the truth in the love of it, and taking pleasure in unrighteousness; i. e. in false and unrighteous conceits and opinions, such as are not according to truth and godliness.

Now what a spirit of delusion has seized upon many, even multitudes of professors, is too evident. That it has intoxicated them, and made them reel from one thing to another, as drunken men; and that many are fallen by it, fallen foully from the ways of truth and holiness, and from sober and wholesome principles. And the delusion is strong, and continues on them to this day; all means and dispensations have not been effectual to break the bonds of it, and to bring them to themselves. That this judgment is inflicted, and abides so, is visible; and it is one of those we should most tremble at, as being both a dreadful judgment and a high provocation. And hence we may come to the discovery and conviction of the sin for which it is inflicted. The truth has not been received in the love of it. The truths of the gospel, leading to holiness and mortification, have not been cordially and affectionately received, have not been admitted in the power and efficacy, have not been practically entertained nor rooted in the heart. That seems to be one sin for which the Lord has a controversy with us, and which he has been pleading severely in the way forementioned, by sending strong delusions.

Another threatening, Mat. xiii. 12, Mark iv. 25, Luke xix, 26, where those that have not (i. e. who improve not what they have, as appears by the following verses) are threatened to have it taken away. We had opportunities for the beating down of sin, promoting of holiness, advancing of Christ's interest; large opportunities for the winning of souls, defeating of Satan, enlarging the kingdom of our Lord Jesus. We had advantages for reforming what was amiss in worship, discipline, practice, for the rooting out

every plant, &c., for the conforming of all according to the pattern in the mount.

Have we lost these opportunities for our own or others' souls, wholly or in part, or are in danger of it? Are we bereaved of those blessed advantages we had for reformation? What sin is it that has bereaved us? What is the cause the Lord has taken, or is taking from us that which we have? Why, what can we pitch on with more probability than the sin for which this is threatened? We did not faithfully improve what the Lord entrusted us with while we had it. Here is another chief ground of the Lord's controversy; it seems to be.

Further, the Lord threatens that who are not faithful shall be deprived of the means of fruitfulness, Isa. v. 1-7; and that the gospel of the kingdom shall be taken from those who bring not forth the fruits of it, Mat. xxi. 48; and elsewhere the unfruitful are threatened to be cut down, Mat. iii. 7, 8, 10, Mat. vii. 19; and more fully in a parable, Luke xiii. 6, 10.

Now, have we been in danger to be cut down by one destroying judgment after another? Have many been cut down round about us? Has the rain been withheld in its season? a restraint upon that which should make our souls fruitful? Does the Lord by his providence threaten to take away the hedge, and break down the wall that has secured us, and so leave us to be eaten up and trodden down? Are we in danger to be laid waste, left as a wilderness not pruned nor digged? Has the Lord seemed to lay hold on the gospel of the kingdom, and been moving and removing it, as though he would take it away? What is the cause of all this? We need not be to seek if we will observe these threatenings. We see that which brings such a calamity is unfruitfulness, and it is observable.

(8.) Scripture relations; the account we have there of the course of providence, and the Lord's proceedings with others. If, in several dispensations, he has dealt with us as he dealt with others in like circumstances, probably it is upon like grounds; if we suffer in some proportion as others have suffered, probably we have sinned as they sinned. To give but one instance, which possibly may lead us to the sight of a great provocation, and that which had a great hand in procuring and prolonging our troubles and afflictions.

Has the Lord proceeded with us as he did with Israel in the wilderness? When we were almost in the sight of Canaan, are we brought back again to so great a distance from it, as we may seem nearer Egypt than the land of promise?

Let us inquire, then, if our sins have not been somewhat like theirs. Have we not been unthankful for great deliverances, great mercies? have we not undervalued them, and made no answerable returns for them? have we not given way to discontents in the midst of all occasions of thankfulness? have we not murmured and repined when we had manna enough, and all provisions and advantages for our souls without restraint? have we not quarrelled with our condition, if not with the providences of God, because they have not suited with some particular humour or interest? Oh the horrid unthankfulness of this generation! Because we wanted something we desired, or some interest was not gratified, or some instruments liked us not, we fell into distempers much like theirs in the wilderness, and suffered ourselves to be transported with ungrateful and unreasonable discontents, so far as all we enjoyed were sacrificed thereto. Oh how justly may the Lord swear in his wrath that we shall never enter into his rest; that our carcasses shall fall in the wilderness; that our eyes shall never more see what we would take no thankful notice of!

Oh how did we undervalue mercies, and such as obliged us to higher degrees of love and thankfulness than any people in the world were obliged to! The greater the mercies, the more intolerable the contempt of them. So it was in Israel, and so expressed, Ps. cvi. 18-16, 21-27. Oh what was it that we despised not?

8. Apply yourselves by prayer to God for the discovery of those sins, for which he judges and corrects. Beg of him light, direction, and conviction; all other means will signify nothing without his concurrence and assistance. He makes the discovery by means; they will discover nothing to purpose without him. The sufficiency and efficacy of means is from him; your due use of them, and success in using them, depends on him. You can do nothing by them, they will do nothing for you without him. Acknowledge his all-sufficiency in this, as in other things; and the insufficiency of whatever else you may be apt to depend on. Make it appear that you use the means in obedience to him; yet your dependence is only on him; your expectation of success alone from him.

Seek him accordingly. 'Cause me to understand, O Lord, wherein I have erred'; 'make me to know my transgression and my sin,' as Job xiii. 28. Search me, and try me; enable me to search and try myself, impartially, diligently, narrowly. Help me against whatsoever might blind my eye, or divert it, or contract it. Enlighten conscience, and awaken it; as it is thy officer, let it be thy voice, and represent faithfully thy charge against me. Direct others; bless the word, that it may be a searching, convincing light. Order all and concur with them, that I may understand wherefore thou contendest with me, and with thy people, and with these nations.

Be importunate, as apprehensive of the great importance thereof. How much you are concerned to have the Achan, the accursed thing discovered; and how dangerous it is to have that escape your notice which is the ground of this controversy. Give him no rest till he make known to you, both what ripened and disposed you at some distance for this severity; as also what had a nearer hand in bringing those evils upon you; both what prepared the rod, and what provoked him more immediately to make use of it; both what raised the clouds, and dissolved them into showers of displeasure, and still continues the storm; both what moved the Lord to anger, and to express his anger so many ways, and to draw out the expressions of it to such a length; wherefore it is that his anger is not yet turned away.

Pray fervently for this, and pray in faith. You have great encouragement to come to the throne of grace for this with confidence, 1 John v. 14. Now that is according to his will, which he has made your duty—to seek the knowledge of your sin, these sins especially. And he has promised, those that seek shall find. Seek this with a sincere and fixed resolution to put away every sin you shall discover; and there is no doubt but he will help you to the discovery. That is according to his will which he is willing you should do; but he is willing you should know the sins for which he judges and corrects. Whether he proceeds as a father or as a judge, you may be confident of it, he is willing you should understand wherefore he proceeds against you. What judge will conceal from a delinquent the crime for which he is arraigned, sentenced, and penalty inflicted? What father is unwilling to make known to his child the faults for which he chastises him? So he may lose his end in correcting him. That which he aims at is the reforming of what has offended him; but the child is not like to reform it if he do not know it. And so it is here, the end why the Lord afflicts is to take away your iniquity; but how shall you put it away if you do not know it? As sure as the Lord is willing to have his end in chastening you, so sure is

he willing to let you know why he chastises. And therefore you may beg the knowledge of it in faith, and with confidence that he will not deny it, since there is so much ground to believe that he is willing to grant this request.

And, 2, You may apply yourselves to Christ with as much confidence also; for it is his office, as he is the great prophet, to instruct his people in their great concerns. And are they not greatly concerned to know wherefore the Lord is angry with them? Is it not of great importance to them to answer the Lord's end in smiting them; and so understand that without the knowledge of which they cannot answer it? It is Christ's office, as he is prophet, to make known his Father's will, whether signified by his word, or by his rod; and you may be confident he is willing to perform his office.

And, 3, You may address yourselves to the Spirit of God, with the like exercise of faith; for he is sent for this purpose, to convince of sin, John xvi. 8, *ἐλπίξει*. He will convince the world of the great sin for which he has a controversy with it; and make it evident that unbelief is the sin for which he judges them; and he will not be wanting to his people in that which he performs to the world. It is his office to convince them of the sin for which God contends, to make their sin evident; so as *πασαν ἀπελογίαν ἐκκόπτει*, to leave no defence, no covering to hide it from them.

Encourage your faith hereby, and exercise it in prayer. So may you prevail with God to bless the use of the other means specified; so as thereby you may discern, and be convinced of those sins personal or national, for which the Lord hath been judging and afflicting.

And so much for this great inquiry, so necessary to be insisted on; that we may comply with the Lord's end in proceeding against us. Let me proceed to some other directions which may be helpful to this purpose.

9. Make use of judgments and afflictions, to engage your souls thoroughly against sin; whatever in them is troublesome, afflictive, grievous; whatever is hateful, dreadful, terrible, make account it is from sin; charge it all upon sin's account. Whatever is of this nature in the world, it is from sin; if it be so in itself, sin made it so, and it had never been so to you, were it not for sin. And *quod efficit tale, est magis tale*. Are you bereaved of dear relatives? Weep you for children, and the loss of other endeared friends, because they are not? Why it is sin that killed them; this was the death of them all. This is the grand murderer, and has been so from the beginning. Distempers, diseases, to which we ascribe their death, are innocent in comparison; there had been no such thing in our bodies, in any of our families, or in any part of the world, but for sin. This bred them, brought them, employed them; they had never done any execution but for sin. This alone made diseases, and made them mortal. If their death be grievous and bitter to you, let the bitterness of their death be upon sin.

Are you impoverished? Sin has bereaved you. Are you laid low? Sin has tumbled you down. You charge the fire, you cry out against incendiaries; but this is the fire that has consumed so much of our riches and glory; this is the great incendiary. Had it not been for sin, no instruments would have attempted it; no matter have been receptive of it. This kindled it; this blew it up into those dreadful flames; this carried them on with rage, fury, so as they despised all opposition. To this we owe our ruins, our desolation; the sight, the report of which, has struck those that saw, yea, those that heard thereof, with horror and astonishment.

Oh! if poverty, if the loss of estate, the ruin of families, be grievous to us; what is sin? whose hand is in all this, whose hand has done all this, and without which it could never have been done.

Is a plague dreadful, such a one that sweeps away thousands in a week ? Oh ! but there had been no plague in the world but for the infection of sin ; and sin is more pestilent, more contagious, more destructive. No plague like that of the heart. Where the other has destroyed its thousands, this has destroyed its ten thousands ; this has infected the whole world ; and all that perish die of this plague.

Is persecution grievous ? Why, this is it that makes men persecutors ; yea, this is it which made him a devil, who acts and inspires them. Of an angel of light, this made him a fiend of darkness ; and it is by the mediation of sin that he engages his instruments in hellish designs, to extinguish the light.

Had it not been for sin there had been no plagues, no judgments, no calamities, no afflictions, no distempers in our souls, no diseases in our bodies, no complainings in our streets, no lamentings in our families. There had been nothing afflictive, nothing troublesome ; no, nor fear of any such. This, this is the Achan, the troubler, &c. This is the burden and grievance, this is the sting and poison of all. Take an account of all that afflicts you or others, cast it up exactly ; and then discharging all other things as innocent, charge all upon sin. Make such use of troubles and afflictions to engage your souls against sin, so you will be disposed effectually to purge out your iniquity, and put away your sin, and so comply with the Lord's end in judging.

10. Content not yourselves with any opposition of sin, unless it be universal. If you would comply with God's end in what has befallen you, or is approaching you, so as to have iniquity effectually purged and taken away, the opposition you make against it for this purpose must be universal, not only in respect of the object ; you must not only set yourselves against all sin, of which before ; but in respect of the subject, oppose it with all your faculties. All that is within you must be set against it. The opposition must be in and from every part ; not only in the conscience, but in the will and affections ; not only in some part of the mind, but in the whole heart, the whole soul, and in every power thereof. Rest not till you find a party against sin in every part, till you feel each faculty of your souls like Tamar's womb, twins struggling.

11. Think it not enough to avoid or oppose sin, unless you get it mortified. The purging of iniquity, and the taking away of sin, imports no less than the death and burial of sin ; the putting it to death, and the burying it out of your sight. Unless you endeavour this, you answer not his call by afflictions, you come not up to what he designs therein.

When he puts his people into the furnace, he would have their dross not only loosened, or a little parted from them, but thoroughly wrought out and purged, and so wasted and consumed. If it be not wrought out and wasted, it may mix with the better metal again in the cooling, and so the fire and furnace will be to little purpose.

The Lord would have your iniquity purged, so as you should return no more to your vomit ; and sin taken away, so as it should no more be found, as formerly, in heart or life ; but this will not be ; you are not secure from it, unless sin is mortified, and iniquity subdued.

The Philistines did not continually invade the Israelites, they were not always making inroads upon them ; yet because they are not quite subdued, Israel was always in danger ; often miserably foiled, and their land wasted. Content not yourselves to force this enemy to yield to a cessation, but make it your design to break its power ; be still labouring for a fuller

conquest, that it may not only be still and quiet, but may have no power left to be otherwise.

The heathen could oppose some gross sins; and abstain from the acts of them: the Spartans from drunkenness; Socrates from passion; Alexander from incontinency; the Romans, many of them, from perfidiousness. But notwithstanding, their iniquity was not purged, their sin not taken away, because they were not mortified; but 'those that are Christ's have crucified,' &c., Gal. v. 24, Col. iii. 5. This is it that he calls for, by his word and by his rod. This is it he principally aims at in calamities and afflictions; not only some avoiding of sin, but the purging of it out, the taking it away, i. e. the mortifying of it. Whatever you do against sin less than this, you comply not with God's design; by this alone, and by nothing without this, will you answer his end. And therefore on this we shall insist a little, and shew how it may be effected.

If you would subdue your iniquity, and mortify your sin,

(1.) Get mortifying apprehensions of it. Labour to possess your minds and judgments with full and effectual persuasions that sin is such a thing as is not fit, as is not worthy, to live; that you are highly concerned not to suffer it to have a being in heart or life; that you should not in any reason, that you cannot with any safety, tolerate it or endure it should have life or being; that it is most worthy, of all things in the whole creation, to be utterly ruined and exterminated. That this may be the vote of your judgment, Away with such a thing from the earth! Away with it out of my heart, life, out of the world, for it is not fit that it should live! As they, Acts xxi. 22.

The Spirit of God in Scripture leads you to such apprehensions of sin, and lays down clear grounds to raise them, and to fix them, and to carry them on to full and powerful persuasions, such as should thoroughly engage us to mortify them. It represents sin to be such a thing as should be in all reason put to death, and denied a subsistence, and proceeded against with that severity, Deut. xiii. 8-10, which was to be used against the seducer.

It is declared to be an enemy, a mortal enemy, to your souls, and all your dear concerns; an enemy in arms, in actual, in continual war against you, 1 Peter ii. 11, James iv. 1. It is not only so to you, but an enemy to God, to mankind, to the whole creation; a public, a desperate, an irreconcilable, a cruel, deadly enemy. And should not such an enemy be persecuted to death?

It is a monster eminently, ἀνύδερμα τῆς φύσεως, the most ugly peccancy, horrid exorbitancy of nature. Nay, that which transforms every soul and spirit that gives it entertainment, into monsters; so it has dealt with the fallen angels, it has turned them into monstrous fiends; so it has dealt with the souls of men, they come into the world without eyes, or feet, or hands, or hearts for God, monstrously defective. It has perverted and misplaced all the parts and faculties, as if head were lowest and feet highest; a monstrous dislocation! If the effects of it be so prodigious, how monstrous is sin itself! And should such a monster be suffered to live? Oh if it were but seen in its own shape and colours, how would the children of men run upon it, to root it out of the earth!

It is a robber. It robbed our first parents, and in them all mankind, of the image of God, of all the heavenly treasure they were possessed of, of the inheritance they were born to. It left nothing but sorrow and misery; fathers and children, all mankind, were hereby quite beggared and utterly undone. And when the Lord had taken a course to repair all this, yet still it is attempting to rob us of all that is precious to us; of grace, of the means of grace; to rob us of our peace, our comforts, our hopes of glory. It would

leave us nothing but beggary and misery here, and hell hereafter. Should such a robber live?

It is a traitor to Christ, to his crown and dignity. It would overturn his throne, throw down his sceptre, trample on the ensigns of his sovereignty. It will not have him to rule over us; and should not such a traitor die the death, which suggests and acts treasonable things against Christ?

It is a ravisher of souls; draws away conjugal affections from Christ; gets into the marriage-bed; forces them to commit folly in the sight and presence of Christ, without any regard of the eyes of his jealousy; prostitutes them commonly, openly to the world; yea, to Satan himself, 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3, James iv. 4.

It is a witch. Indeed, the mistress of witchcrafts; a sorceress, as the expression is, Nahum iii. 4. It practised sorcery upon the Galatians, chap. iii. 1. It was by means, through the mediation of sin, that they were bewitched so as to take error for truth, and truth for error. And others are practically bewitched thereby, so as to call evil good and light darkness, to count that their glory which is their shame, that their refreshment which is poison, that gain which undoes them, that their happiness which ruins them. So they conceive of things, so they act, as those that are bewitched; as such who are under the power of sorcery, which is *illusio sensuum*, an abusing of the discerning faculty, so as things appear to be contrary, or quite otherwise, to what they are. Now, Exod. xxii. 18, a witch was not to be suffered to live.

It is a murderer; it sheds the blood of souls. Satan, who is called 'a murderer from the beginning, John viii. 44, has murdered none, from the beginning to this day, but by this instrument. This kills every way, temporally, spiritually, eternally. This has been the death of all that have died any of these ways from the foundation of the world to this moment, and will continue this more bloody practice while it continues. And should not such a murderer be executed? Should it not die without mercy?

In the text, when the Lord would have iniquity purged, it refers either to purging by fire or physic. If the former, it implies that sin is dross, that which debased the soul, once of the finest and purest metal, and makes the Lord look upon it as vile and refuse, to reject it as reprobate silver; such as will never pass with him unless it be refined, such as he will never accept on any account until it be purged. And should you endure such an embasement of your souls, and of such dangerous consequence?

If to physic, it insinuates that sin is a malignant humour, a disease, that which breeds and continues all the soul's maladies; which, unless it be purged, the soul can never have health. It will still keep it under pains, weaknesses, languishments; and will, in fine, make it sick unto death. And should this have a being, a quiet abode, within you? It is desperate folly to forbear it.

And when the Lord would have sin taken away, that denotes it as a filthiness, not to be endured in our sight; like those garments, to be taken away, Zech. iii. 3, 4. Those filthy garments were his iniquity; and in the original it is excrementitious garments. Iniquity is to God, and should be to us, as the filthiest excrements, as the mire wherein a sow wallows, as the vomit of a dog, as the stench of an open sepulchre, as the putrefied matter of an ulcer. And is not such a thing to be removed far from your sight, far from all your senses? You have no patience, you will be restless, until it be done.

The Scripture thus sets forth sin to us, that hereby such apprehensions of it might be formed in us as of that which is not to be endured, not to be

suffered to have life or being. We should make such use of them; and when our minds are effectually possessed with such apprehensions of sin, then is it mortified in our minds. This is the way whereby the judgment purges iniquity, and puts away sin. And this will contribute much to the mortifying of it in all other parts; for the judgment is the *primum mobile* in the soul, the wheel that first moves, and sets the rest on motion. According as your apprehensions and persuasions concerning sin are, such will the motions in your hearts and lives be against it.

(2.) Get mortifying resolutions. Get your hearts resolved against sin; to prosecute it to the death; to engage all the strength you have, and can procure, in such a prosecution of it; resolve not to spare it; not to forbear it in the least; not to tolerate it, nor suffer it to have any quiet abode in any part of heart or life; not to enter into a parley or treaty with it; not to yield to any cessation, much less to make any peace with it, no more than the Israelites with those whom the Lord had devoted to destruction, Deut. xiii. 6. Resolve to ruin it, to expel it out of your hearts, and cut it off from your lives. Make use of the mortifying apprehensions forementioned to raise you to such resolutions; let them be full and effectual, fixed and unwavering resolutions.

Full. That the main strength of the will may be in them. Not such as leave the heart in suspense, or in an indifferent posture, or a little inclinable, but carrying it down, as it were, with full weight, into such determinations against sin. Rest not until you find this the bent of your hearts, and that which is prevalent and predominant in them.

Effectual. Not some faint, powerless tendencies of the will, which excite not the other faculties, put them not upon actions and endeavours; but such as will engage them in the use of all means for the effecting of what is resolved on. Get your hearts wound up to such resolutions, that may be as a spring, setting and keeping all in motion, Ps. cxix. 106, 48. That which he has resolved on, he vigorously pursued.

Fixed. Not wavering; not off and on; not by fits only, when some sermon, or some affliction, or special occurrence has made some impression; not like Ephraim, of whom the Lord complains, Hos. vi. 4. But this should be the settled temper of the heart: the face of it should be constantly against sin; and when you find them varying or declining, all care and diligence should be used to renew and reinforce them, to raise them again, and keep them up in their full force and vigour.

Make use of judgments and afflictions (according to a former direction), of the grievousness or bitterness of them, to draw your hearts to such resolves for the ruin of sin; make use of what you have found most effectual heretofore for this purpose; or, if those you have used prove less powerful, try others; leave nothing unattempted that the Lord affords for this end. Look upon it as your interest to have sin ruined; as that wherein your safety, your comfort, your happiness, yea, the life of your souls, is wholly concerned. If you destroy not sin, it will ruin you; if you kill it not, it will certainly be your death. And when will a man be resolute, if not in such a case, when he must either kill or be killed? It is according to what was said to Ahab, 1 Kings xx. 42: 'Thus saith the Lord, If thou let go out of thy hand the sin which he has appointed to utter destruction, thy life shall go for its life.' Oh then, if thou intendest thy soul shall live, resolve to prosecute sin to the death, and be peremptory in the resolution.

When the will is thus resolved against sin for the death of it, sin is already mortified in the will, the sentence of death is passed against it; it is **נִכְרְזָה** condemned to die; and the will having the command of the other facul-

ties and the whole man, it will be brought to execution. The work of mortification is in a fair way to be carried on universally ; and though it be not fully executed at present, yet the Lord, who judges of us by the bent of our hearts, and the prevailing tendency of our wills, will judge one so resolved against sin to be so far a mortified person. This is the way whereby the will purges iniquity, and puts away sin ; and that which contributes most to the purging and putting it away everywhere from the soul and from the life.

(8.) Get mortifying affections ; such are the affections of aversation, which carry the heart from sin, or set it against sin : *e. g.* anger, indignation, revenge, fear, shame, sorrow, hatred ; whereby the soul moves from or against sin, as the most offensive, the most provoking, the most dangerous, the most shameful, the most hateful evil. These affections should be bred, and nourished, and strengthened ; you must kindle them, blow them up into a flame, and keep them flaming. You should not bear with yourselves in the want, or in the weakness, or in the declining or decay of them. These affections, thus upheld, will be the death of sin ; it cannot live in a heart where these are kept up in life, and strength, and action : these will distress it, wound it, starve it ; these will be crucifying it ; these will drag it towards the cross, and be as so many nails, to fasten the body and members of it to the cross. Particularly,

[1.] Anger. Let sin be the object, the chief object of your anger, Eph. iv. 26. Then, to be sure, you are angry and sin not, when you are angry at sin, when that is the cause and the object of your anger. Our Lord Jesus, the spotless pattern of meekness, was angry at sin, Mark iii. 5. Those kinds or degrees of anger which are vicious or culpable towards other objects, or upon other occasions, are your duties and excellencies in reference to sin. You may be, you must be, soon angry, *εγγίλοι* ; and much angry, *πικροί* ; and long angry, *χαλίστοι*.

First, Anger should kindle at the first appearance of sin. We should not think of it without something of this passion. The best men are *ἔνυχτοι*, soon angry, and easily provoked against sin. That which is a weakness in other cases, is a perfection or a degree of it here. We should be slow to anger at that which offends us only, but not slow to anger at that which offends God. Our souls should be as tinder, and take fire at every spark of sin. He that is soon angry in his own cause, for his own petty concerns, dealeth foolishly, Prov. xiv. 17 ; such anger resteth in the bosom of fools, Eccles. vii. 9 ; but he that is not hasty in his spirit to anger against sin exalteth folly. The more quick your anger is against sin, the more speedy will be the execution, the mortifying of it. Get a spirit apt to be angry at sin, and use means to provoke it.

Secondly, Be much angry at sin, and not content yourselves with a low degree of anger ; get it raised into wrath and indignation. There is no such danger of transgressing the bounds of moderation here as in other cases ; that is immoderate anger which is more than the cause requires or deserves ; but the fiercest wrath and the highest indignation of God is not more than sin deserves ; and does it not then require and deserve all ours ? Let it be against sin purely, against our own sins principally, or against the sins of others, not their persons. And then, if it be great wrath, it is not too much. Moses, a person meek above all men on earth, was kindled into wrath by the sight of sin, Exod. xxxii. 19, his anger waxed hot at first sight of sin. A little anger will not do much against sin ; the heart that purges it out must be wroth with it, it should be taken away with indignation.

Thirdly. Be long angry. Even for ever ; angry so as never to be appeased. It is no sin to be implacable here, nay, it is your duty. The sun must go

down, and rise, and go down all thy days upon thy wrath against sin. Such an anger will not serve the turn as is *ἰσως ὀργή*; when it is a mortifying affection, it is *ἀνίατος*, an unappeasable anger. Anger at other things must be allayed, suppressed, extinguished; but against sin it must be nourished, heightened, settled, digested into malice. For though it be a wickedness in other cases, yet malice against sin is a virtue, a duty; you cannot be too malicious against sin, you cannot bear it too much ill will.

There is an holy anger, a sanctified malice, which is singularly useful for the expelling of iniquity and mortifying of sin. Turn all your anger, wrath, malice, into this stream against this object. Whatever is apt to provoke you elsewhere, you may see it all in sin; nothing so offensive, nothing so injurious, nothing more affronts you, nothing so much wrongs you in your dearest concerns. When you are apt to be angry at other things or persons,—Such a one has thus and thus abused, wronged, affronted, vexed, troubled me; so causelessly, so disingenuously, so continually,—turn your eyes, your thoughts, from that, and look upon sin, and say, Oh, how much more has sin done against me, yea, against God? How much more cause have I to be angry at sin? Oh, I do well to be angry at it, even to death. So you may make it a mortifying affection.

[2.] Fear. We are willing to be rid of that which we fear, and ready to use all means, take all occasions to put that far from us which we are afraid of. And the more dreadful and terrible it is, the more dangerous it appears, the more forward we are to get it removed, and the more eager to have it at the greatest distance from us. If you would have sin purged out and put away, get your souls possessed with a fear of it, and so represent it to your souls as you may see cause to fear it more and more. You will not suffer that to have a quiet abode in your hearts which you are greatly afraid of. Look then upon sin as the most dreadful, the most formidable evil in the whole creation. So it is in itself, so it is declared to be. You have the word of God for it; believe the report of God concerning it; believe all the experience of the world, which has found it so; believe that which you have all reason to believe.

That is most dreadful, most the object of our fear, which is most dangerous. Now sin is transcendently so; so dangerous, as nothing else in the world deserves to be thought or called so in comparison. This is the root from which all dangers grow. One thing may be dangerous to our health, another to our estates, relations, liberty, life. Oh, but sin endangers all. Nothing is safe where sin has place. This hazards our temporal, our spiritual, our eternal concerns; this strikes at all. Nothing could hurt us; nor men, nor devils; nothing could endanger us, if sin did not open their way. If sin did not expose us, our enjoyments, our liberties, our comforts, our hopes, were all safe, we need not fear what man could do unto us. The foot of pride could not come near us, the hand of the violent could not remove us, nay, could not shake us. But what is the wrath of men, poor inconsiderable worms like ourselves? This, and this alone, exposes us to the wrath of the great God; this, and this only, can cast both body and soul into hell. We fear where no fear is in comparison; we fear a prison, but what is that to hell! We fear the loss of estate, of relations, of liberty, of life, but what is the loss of God's favour, of heaven, of soul and body for ever? It is sin only that brings us in danger of such a loss.

In fine, whatsoever is dangerous, whatever is dreadful to us, sin made it so. It had not been so in itself, or not so to us, but for sin; and therefore sin is more to be feared than all we fear. There had been, there would be, no cause of fear if sin had not been, or if it were once put away.

Is it fearful to have your souls dwell amongst lions? Why, but it is sin that transforms men into such creatures, it is sin that gives them the fierceness of lions. Take away this, and they are tame and harmless creatures; a lamb may play with them without danger; you may put your hand into the mouth of a tame lion without fear, you might lie down by them securely were it not for sin.

Are afflictions, losses, sufferings, calamities dreadful? It is sin that first let these into the world; it is sin that still exposes you to them; it is sin that embitters them and makes them grievous; it is sin that withholds those comforts which would quite drown the afflictive sense of any outward suffering. And what would there be in it to be feared, if the afflictiveness of it were gone? When sin is taken away, the bitterness of these is past.

Is death terrible to you? Why, but 'the sting of death is sin,' 1 Cor. xv. 56. You would not fear to have a bee fly into your bosom if the sting were gone; it would hurt no more than an innocent fly.

Is hell dreadful to you? Oh, but it was sin that made hell; this digged the bottomless pit, this bred the worm that never dies, this kindled that fire that never goes out; this feeds those flames, those burnings, and makes them intolerable, and makes them everlasting; but put away sin, and there is no fear of hell to you.

Is the wrath of God terrible to you? Oh, but no part of the creation had ever known any such thing as wrath in God had it not been for sin, Eph. v. 6, Rom. i. 18, Col. iii. 6.

You see nothing is to be feared but for sin; so this is to be feared above all, nothing else in comparison. This, this is the one thing to be feared, without which nothing else is dreadful. Believe but this effectually, and according to the evidence you have of it, and you will be as active to purge iniquity, to put away sin, as you would be to rid yourselves of all your fears, and of all that is fearful.

[8.] Shame. This is another affection which will contribute much to the mortifying of sin; that which we are truly, greatly ashamed of, we are not only content to be rid of it, but active to get it removed, and put away far from us.

Look upon your sin as your shame, your greatest, your only shame in comparison, as that which is the shame of the whole creation, the most shameful thing in the world.

Are you ashamed of a filthy garment, of a loathsome defilement, of a monstrous deformity? Why, sin is more so in the sight of God than any of these, than all these together are in our eyes. It is a greater shame to you than if you were all besmeared with excrements, than if you were over-spread with scabs and leprosy, than if you had no sound, no straight, no comely part in your whole body, but all crooked, or ulcerated, or monstrously misplaced and dislocated. Thy soul, as sin has used it, is a more shameful sight in the eye of God.

Are you ashamed of such weakness or folly as would render you ridiculous or despised by all you converse with? Oh, but sin is the most shameful weakness, the most absurd folly, in the account of God, of angels, and of men too, that are truly judicious, and so it is branded by the Spirit of God in Scripture.

Are you ashamed of that which all the world would cry shame of: of betraying those that trust you, dealing unfaithfully with those that rely on you, of being ungrateful to those who shew you greatest kindness, of abusing and wronging those who deserve best of you, of dealing disingenuously with those who most oblige you, of being sordidly penurious where you

should be most bountiful, of cheating and defrauding those who refer themselves to you? Do your hearts rise against such unworthy practices? Would you blush to be charged with any of them, even though you were innocent? Oh, but there is no man deals so unworthily, so shamefully with another, as you deal with God in sinning against him. All the treachery and unfaithfulness, all the fraud and injustice, all the ingratitude, all the disingenuousness, all the baseness and sordidness which you cry shame of in the world, is to be found in sin; you are guilty of it all, towards God when you sin against him. Any one of these is shameful alone; but all these meet together in sin, and whatever else calls for shame. Believe this, and work it upon your hearts, till you find them rising against sin as the most shameful evil. This will make you willing to have it crucified, forward to do execution on it yourselves, when you are sensible that the purging your iniquity is the purging of your shame, and the taking away of sin the taking away your reproach.

[4.] Grief and sorrow for sin. This is another mortifying affection which will hasten the death of sin. We seek redress of that which is a grievance to us, and will take pains to be eased of it. Oh, if sin were the grief, the sorrow, the affliction of your souls, you would count the purging of it out, the taking of it away, a great, a merciful deliverance. No less than it would have been to the Israelites to have had those nations driven out before them, which were as pricks in their eyes, and thorns in their sides, and a continual vexation to them in the land where they dwelt, Josh. xxiii. 18, Num. xxxiii. 55. The Lord thought the foresight of this might be enough to quicken them to drive them out in all haste; but when they felt what was foretold, they ran all the hazards of war to drive them out and be delivered from them.

Oh, if sin were such a grief and sorrow to your souls, such a vexation to your hearts, as it should be, and as it gives you occasion enough to find it, you would count no outward deliverance comparable to a deliverance from sin. You would freely engage your whole strength in a war against it for to drive it out; you would be restless till these pricks were pulled out of your eye, and these thorns plucked out of your sides, till that were taken away which is your grief and vexation.

And should not sin be such a grievance to you? It is so to God. It grieves him at the heart, Gen. vi. 6, Ps. xcv. 10, Amos ii. 18; it was so to Christ, Mark iii. 5, Isa. liii. 8, 4; it is so to the Spirit of God, Eph. iii. 4; it is so to men who have a sense of what is grievous, 2 Peter ii. 7, 8; it is so to the whole creation, Rom. viii. 21, 22. Is it so to all? And shall those who should be most sensible of it be only void of sense? Whatsoever is a grievance to us is either pain or loss, *pœna damni* or *sensus*; either the loss and want of some comfort, or some sharp suffering. For sufferings, this brings them all, this sharpens them all; for losses and wants, this bereaves us of what we lose, and this intercepts the supplies of what we want; and this makes holes in the cisterns, and lets our comforts run out, and then stops the pipes, that no more can run in; this lays an obstruction at the spring head, Isa. lix. 1, 2.

If sin were not grievous, because it is a grief to God, a Father of such love and indulgence; because it is so grievous to him who bore our griefs; because it is such a grief to the Spirit our Comforter; yet since it is the cause of all the grievances that befall us, we have cause enough on this account to resent it as the most grievous evil, that which should above all things raise our grief and command our sorrow. Believe it to be so, and so work up your heart as you may find it to be the grief and affliction of your

souls indeed ; and then you will be forward and active to be eased of it, you will think it your happiness to have it purged out and taken away ; you will see cause to make it the business of your lives to get it mortified.

[5.] Hatred. This of all other affections has the most powerful and effectual tendency to the mortifying of sin. This will not suffer you to be satisfied with anything less than the death of it. That is the nature of hatred, as the philosopher shews, when he is declaring the difference betwixt anger and hatred, *Rhet. lib. ii. cap. ix.*, *ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἀντιπάθει βούλεται ὃ ὀργίζῃται, ὁ δὲ μὴ εἶναι*, he that is angry would have him utterly ruined, would leave him neither life nor being. And again, *ὁ μὲν πολλῶν ἂν γινομένων ἐλεῇ, ὁ δ' οὐδέποτε*, he that is angry may relent after the inflicting of some severities, but he that hates has no mercy. This hatred will have sin die without mercy. Get but your hearts possessed with hatred of sin, and then it is dead already in the heart, and this will pursue it to the death everywhere.

To excite this affection, look upon it as that which is truly hateful, as that which has all in it that is hateful, as that which has nothing in it but what is hateful.

It is truly hateful, as being wholly and perfectly evil ; a direct contrariety to the chief good ; opposite to his nature, to his will, and so hated of God, *Ps. xlv. 7*. He hates sin infinitely, cannot endure to see it ; and he hates it only, nothing but sin, or nothing but for sin. He hates it irreconcilably ; he may be reconciled to the sinner, but never to the sin, nor to the sinner neither, unless he leave sin. That must be extremely hateful, which God, who is love, cannot but hate.

Sin has all in it that is hateful. We hate that which is ugly, though it be not hurtful ; we hate that which is mischievous, though it be not ugly ; but sin is both ugly and mischievous ; nothing more, nothing so much in the whole creation.

It has nothing in it but what is hateful. It is a mere compound of ugliness and mischievousness, without the least alloy or mixture of anything comely or commodious. A toad, though the hatefullest of creeping things, has something in it, which separated from the poison, is of physical use, but sin is nothing at all but poison. The devil himself, how hateful soever, yet as he is the workmanship of God, is so far good, but sin has nothing in it of God's workmanship, nothing in it in any sense good ; it is the spawn of the devil, and of him, not as he is a creature, but as he is a devil, and so has nothing in it but what is purely evil, and absolutely hateful. It has not the least touch of comeliness, not anything that may pass with excuse, not anything that is tolerably evil, nothing but what is, to be utterly abhorred, *Rom. xii. 9*.

Get your hearts so affected towards sin, as that which is so hateful, and to be abhorred ; get a true, an active hatred of sin. And that will be the death of sin, will lead you readily to purge it out, and so to comply with the Lord's end, &c. Nourish in your hearts this hatred of sin by a frequent view of the hatefulness of it ; keep up this affection lively and active, and sin will have much ado to live by it.

[6.] Revenge. This, though severely forbidden and condemned in other cases, is called out by the Spirit of God against sin, and commended where it appears against it, *2 Cor. vii. 11*. There was in the Corinthians, in reference to the sin amongst them, not only sorrow, fear, indignation, but also revenge. And such an affection there should be in us, inclining our hearts, and making us eager to come even with sin, to render it evil for evil ; to deal with it according as it has dealt, or would deal, with us ; to be avenged of it for the mischief it is continually plotting and acting against us ;

to starve it, as it would starve our souls ; to weaken it, as it wasted us ; to wound it, as it has wounded us ; to ruin it, as it would destroy us ; to be the death of that which would bereave our souls of life ; to leave it no provisions, no supports, no hopes, as it would have made our condition helpless, and comfortless, and hopeless ; to spare it no more than it has spared our souls ; to persecute it as restlessly, as unweariedly, as it pursues us. Such an affectation,* you see, is the highway to have sin mortified, to purge it out as it would have had the Lord to have rejected us, and to turn it away as it would have provoked God to have put us away.

(4.) Get mortifying graces, three especially, love to God, and faith in him, and fear of him. These exercised will have a powerful influence upon heart and life for the mortifying of sin, will carry you on effectually to compliance with the Lord's end in afflicting, will help you mightily to purge it out, and take it away.

[1.] Love to God : Ps. xcvi. 10, 'Those that love the Lord will hate evil.' And the more they love him, the more they will hate it ; and the more degrees of hatred, the more degrees of mortification. The more it is abhorred, the more, and the sooner it will be mortified. This will turn the wheel upon sin with a quick motion. When love prevails, it will not let you drive on heavily in a course of mortification ; it will make you diligent, active, and unwearied in the use of means for this purpose. It will not suffer you to think the labour and pains requisite hereto grievous. You see the power of love in Jacob : says he to Laban, Gen. xxxi. 40, 41 ; all this hardship he endured, and for many years together, yet love to Rachel made him think the hard measures easy, and the tedious years as a few days, Gen. xxix. 20.

[2.] Faith. If these devils be not cast out, it is because of our unbelief, Mat. xvii. 19, 20. Other means cannot, the principal cause will not, without faith, Mat. ix. 22, Acts iii. 10.

[3.] Fear of God. There is an inconsistency betwixt the fear of God and sin, they cannot dwell together. Where sin reigns, it leaves no place for the fear of God ; and where the fear of God prevails, it will leave no place for sin : Prov. iii. 7, 'Fear the Lord, and depart from evil.' 'The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom ;' and wherein that wisdom consists, the wise man tells us : Prov. xiv. 16, 'A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil ;' depart from it as far, and as fast as they can, as from that which is hateful to them, Prov. viii. 18. It is visible in Job's character, that this is the proper effect of the fear of God, Job i. 1.

Labour for this fear of God, to get it implanted, strengthened, and exercised, so as you may go out against sin continually under the influence of it. Not a fear of aversation. which makes one shun what he fears, such as was in our first parents, Gen. iii. 8, 10, and in the Israelites, Deut. v. 24, 25. They were afraid, and durst not come near to God, but wanted the due fear of his majesty, ver. 29, the virtue of which is to keep us from departing from God, Jer. xxxii. 40. That is the fear of God which tends to the mortifying of sin ; an obsequious fear, a fear to dishonour what we reverence, to offend what we love, to lose what we highly value, and to suffer by what we would enjoy.

If you fear this dishonouring of God, this will lead you to mortify sin, as that which alone is a dishonour to him, and robs him of his glory, and lays him low in the minds, hearts, and ways of the children of men.

If you fear offending God, this will lead you to purge sin, which alone displeases and provokes him ; this alone he dislikes and is distasteful ; this

Qu. 'affectation' ?—ED.

alone he hates and abhors. Sin it is that affronts him, slights his authority, thwarts his designs, crosses his will, breaks his law, makes nothing of his commands or threatenings.

If you fear the withdrawing of his presence or the sense of his favour, this will lead you to mortify sin. For it is sin that makes him depart and leave you; it is sin makes him hide his face, and frown on you, Isa. lix. 2.

If you fear, lest he should not only be, but shew himself displeased, by threatenings or executions, this will lead you to mortify sin; for this is it alone which he threatens. This is it for which he afflicts you, in inward or outward concerns; this withholds those influences upon which the life, strength, growth, fruitfulness, and activeness of your souls depends; this draws out his hand to inflict public calamities and personal chastisements. Your sufferings past, and fears of what is approaching, you owe to sin. Judgments and afflictions should make you fear him: he is a strange child who will not fear his father more, when he has smarted by his displeasure. And if you fear his displeasure, this will quicken your proceedings against sin as the cause of it.

If you fear further severity (and such a fear may be filial; for if a servant may fear wrath in a master, much more should a child fear the wrath of his father), this should lead you to mortify sin. 'Sin no more, lest a worse thing come,' John v. 14. Sin, that has brought already that which is so dreadful to us, will bring something yet worse if it be not mortified. That which is past is but a spark in comparison of the flame that it will kindle hereafter, Heb. xii. 29. If we let sin pass unpurged, unmortified, as others do, he will be 'a consuming fire' to us, as well as to others. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, let us be persuaded to purge out iniquity, and put away sin.

Now to raise this fear. There is scarce anything in God, but a serious view and consideration of it tends to possess the soul with such a fear of him, as may engage it to mortify sin, and to get it purged out. Let me touch some particulars briefly.

The glory and excellency of God. When Isaiah had a vision of the Lord in his glory, Isa. vi. 1-3, this made him look upon his sin as intolerable; he cries out of it, as one undone by it, ver. 5. He is restless till it was removed, and taken away, and purged, ver. 6, 7. The Lord is an infinite glory, and sin is the thing that provokes the eyes of his glory, Isa. iii. 8, Deut. xxviii. 58. Get due apprehensions of the glory of his majesty, and you will judge it intolerable to have that continue in your hearts or lives, which is such a provocation in his most glorious eye. It will quicken you to get such provoking uncleanness purged out, and quite taken away; you will be afraid to have it found about you. That glory will strike you with a fear of affronting it, by that which is so insufferable, so utterly opposite, so provokingly contrary to it.

The almighty power of God. That should strike our souls with a great fear of him, *καὶ φόβο;* τὰν δυναμένων ἐν ποιῆσαι, Arist. Rhet. lib. ii. cap. x. We fear those that are potent, powerful to do us good or hurt, though they be but men like ourselves; how much more should we dread the mighty God, before whom the united powers of all creatures are but as the might of ants or worms to us? The power of God is laid down in Scripture as a ground of fear, Jer. v. 22. Those that will not fear such a power are hardened rebels, ver. 23, or senseless wretches, ver. 21; Ps. lxxvi. 4-7. Will you provoke such a power to anger, before whom, provoked, no creature, how mighty soever, can stand? Why, if sin be not mortified, if it be not purged and taken away, you retain that which incenses him; you offer that

to the sight of the great and mighty God continually, which is such a provocation to him.

The holiness and purity of God. He is 'glorious in holiness,' Exod. xv. 11. This was one of those glories, Isa. vi., which struck the prophet with such a fear, and gave him such a sense of the impurity of sin, and his uncleanness by reason of it, that he thought it unsufferable for him to stand before God, and himself incapable of being employed by him, till his iniquity was purged and taken away. Hab. i. 18, his holiness is such he cannot endure the sight of sin, Rev. iii. 15. You keep that in his sight which is intolerable for him to see; while you do not purge it out, and get it taken away. If you do not mortify it, you keep that alive in his eye which he loathes and abhors to see. The fear of God, where it is, will not suffer this; and due apprehensions of his glorious holiness will excite in you such a fear.

The omniscience of God, Ps. cxxxix. 1, 2, 8, &c. This duly considered, will strike you with an holy dread of the divine majesty, such as will hasten the death of sin. If there be something very offensive, to one whom you otherwise stand in awe of, yet so long as you can hide it out of his sight, you fear not. Oh but there is nothing hid from God, nor can be. The secrets of your hearts are no secrets to him; they are as plain and open to him as the highway is to you. That which no other sees, or can see, is as visible and conspicuous to him as if it were writ with a sunbeam; every secret evil is an open wickedness to his eye. That which you act or think in most secret retirement, is no more concealed from him than that which is openly proclaimed. All is manifest in his sight, all are naked and open to his eyes, Rev. ii. 23, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. You can take no course with sin, but you will be an offence and provocation to God unless you mortify it. There is no hiding of it, no hopes of concealment, no way to avoid this, but by purging it out, &c. This you will do if you fear God; and due apprehensions of his all-seeing eye will make you fear him. God is *ὁπθαλμος*, all eye; and such an eye as sees all things.

The immensity of God. His is everywhere, Ps. cxxxix. 7-13. He that stands in some awe of one when he is present, may less regard him when he is absent; and sometimes absent he will be, and so the fear abated and remitted. But God is never absent, nor can be; he is always as present with thee as thou art with thyself. He is as much with thee in secret as when thou art in public; as much with thee in thy closet as in the street; as much present in thy heart as he is in heaven (though in another manner). He possesseth the reins; he is always as near thee as thy heart; as intrinsic to thee, as much within thee, as thy very soul is.

So that if sin be not mortified, if it be not purged out and taken away, take what course thou wilt with it, act it where thou wilt, imagine it but never so secretly, it will always be in God's presence. Thou wilt always provoke him; as that servant would provoke thee who would still lay some dunghill or some carrion in thy bedchamber, or in thy closet, or some loathsome thing or other always in thy way. If thou fearest God, thou wilt not use him thus; this will put thee upon purging out sin, and if thou believest his immensity, thou canst not but fear him.

His dominion over us. He has full and absolute propriety in us, and power over us. We are his, not our own, as much as any work of our hands is ours. He may dispose of us as he pleases. Shall I not do with my own as I will? We are in his hands, as clay in the hands of the potter; he may form us for his use, or he may break us; and none can say unto him, What dost thou? Now this is a just ground of fear, *ποσειθε* *αὐτόν*

ἰσχυρὸν τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ ἄλλω ἵσται. He that is in the power of another is fearful of him. We are nothing so much in the power of any other, and therefore should fear nothing like him, Mat. x. 28. It is perfect madness, such as speaks the absence of fear and wit, to retain that which will be a continual offence and provocation to him, who may do with us what he list; but this you will do, this you will retain, if sin be not mortified, &c. The fear of God, where it is, will not suffer this; and there will be fear, where there is a sense of his absolute dominion over us.

His righteousness. That is another ground of fear, Job xxxvii. 23, 24. He will not afflict without just cause, but he will afflict where there is such cause. He renders to every one according to his works. The rule by which he proceeds is his law, and his proceeding according to that law is his righteousness. He is able, as we shewed before, and he is willing. His righteousness makes him willing to express his displeasure, when he has just occasion; and occasion he will ever have till sin be mortified. So that the neglect of this will lay you continually under imminent danger, *ὁπλον γὰρ ἐστὶ βούλωνται εἰ καὶ δύνανται ὥστε εἰ ἐγγὺς ἴσται τοῦ ποιῆναι*, Arist. *ibid.* That which any are willing and able to do, is ready to be done; so that God's displeasure is always *in præcinctu*, always ready to break out against you; yea, more and more of it, than has yet seized on you, while sin is unmortified. If there be any fear of God, or his displeasure, it will quicken you to the mortifying of it. And where there is a due sense of his righteousness and justice, there will be this fear.

The goodness of God also should excite this fear, and gives it a most advantageous rise in any ingenuous temper, Hosea iii. 5. Those that have tasted how gracious the Lord is, and have had experience of his infinite goodness, will be afraid to dishonour, offend, or provoke him, else they are of a base, disingenuous spirit. The highest expressions of goodness and mercy should raise this fear of offending to the height, Ps. cxxx. 4; even common favours oblige the soul to such a fear, Jer. v. 24, Ps. lxxii. 5, and iv. Has the Lord forgiven those injuries and affronts, against which his just indignation might have flamed forth for ever? And shall I harbour that which will again affront and provoke him? An ingenuous spirit recoils from this as a thing frightful and shameful. Does he withhold no good thing from me? And would he have me but to part with sin, to put away this one thing for his sake, as that which his soul hates? And shall I not get this put away? This is fearful disingenuousness. The goodness, the forgiveness, yea, the common bounty of God, is apt and proper to beget, in those who are acted by the free Spirit of Christ, such a fear as will be the death of sin.

The judgments of God. These, indeed, are not the first, nor the principal grounds of the fear of God; but yet, in their place and order, even those should teach us that fear of the Lord which hastens on the work of mortification; and if we learn it not thereby, those judgments are not duly improved by us, Ps. cxix. 118-120, and Eph. iii. 5, 7; and that none may suspect it to be a legal temper, Rev. xv. 8. This should be the effect of judgments upon others; much more, when they are amongst and on ourselves, and we involved in them, according to that, Luke xxiii. 40. It is the voice of severe proceedings to every of us; wilt thou not set thyself against sin, when it has brought thee into the same condemnation? When God is smiting sin with the sword of justice, he teaches us, and, as it were, guides our hands to wound it with the weapons of mortification. Shall we dare to spare it or harbour it, when we see God himself severely prosecuting it? If we fear God, we will not dare to do it; and when will we fear, if not when he appears terrible? We should learn righteousness by his judgments, Isa.

xvi. 9; and mortifying of sin is the first part of this lesson, without which the other can never be learned to purpose.

Make use both of those other perfections of God and also of his judgments, to possess you with awful apprehensions of God; and walk under the sense and power of such apprehensions, so as they may influence you in your actings and endeavours against sin, for the purging of it out, and getting of it taken away. The fear of God is destructive of sin; it will not suffer you to think yourselves safe, unless sin be mortified.

(5.) Mortifying means, those which the Lord has appointed for this end. Make use of those weapons wherewith the Scriptures furnish you; use them daily, carefully, conscientiously, diligently; let it be the business and design of your lives. Look upon it as part of your work every day, and make account you have not done the work which God calls you to, and employs you in every day, if you have not done something against sin. Every day should help on the work of mortification, but especially days of affliction; then, if ever, the work should go on apace, otherwise they will be days of blackness indeed.

Let this be your chief care, as being your great concernment. Make conscience of it, as that which you are highly obliged to; and what you do against sin, do it with all your might, with all diligence. Imitate the apostle, 1 Cor. ix. 26. Paul did not use such weapons as were only for exercise, such as they call *luseria*; he did not make a flourish, and only beat the air, with an intent only to shew his skill, not to hurt his adversary; he did not *ventilare*, but *pugnare*; he did fight in good earnest, as for life and death; his weapons were such whereby he might kill sin, and get it quite subdued, ver. 27.

More particularly, [1.] make use of the word. That is a most powerful engine for the overthrowing of sin; it is called 'the sword of the Spirit,' and the Lord has put it into your hands on purpose to do execution upon sin. It is one of those weapons which are 'not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of sin's strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ,' 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

Every part of the word is powerful, and should be made use of for this purpose.

First, Commands; such as that, Isa. i. 16; and that, Col. iii. 5. There is authority in such commands, engaging us to fight when we would draw back, or loiter, or spare ourselves; and so sin is cut off from the advantages it might here gain upon us.

And there is encouragement in them. They are like the voice of a general, calling on his troops to charge; this rouses their courage and spirits, especially when they know he will second them, and is never wont to come off without victory.

And there is a virtue goes along with the commands, to a heart that will comply therewith, empowering to do what is commanded. It is not a bare, empty word; but a word of power and efficacy, through the concurrence and assistance of the Spirit enabling to do what it enjoins: 'He said, Let there be light, and there was light,' his word effected what he said; 'He sent out his word, and healed them,' Ps. cvii. 2; 'He commanded, and it was done,' Ps. xxxiii. 9. His commands to us will be as effectual, through the working of his Spirit and power, when we make due use of them.

Let the command be often in your minds; lay your hearts and consciences under the authority of it; comply with it, as if you heard his voice, and had

it from his own mouth ; as though you heard him thereby calling on you to charge, as though you saw him ready to second you, and make you assuredly victorious by his successful conduct. Remember, it is he that calls upon you, who will stand by you, and make you more than conquerors, if you finish not, and betray not yourselves.

Secondly, The threatenings. These are as a sacrificing knife at the throat of sin, as corrosives, threatenings against sin. These shew it is condemned to die ; they are the sentence of death passed by the Lord upon it ; and hence you may be assured he is ready to assist you in the execution. Threatenings against those who do not mortify it : Rom. viii. 13, if you do not die to the flesh, you shall die. A threatening believed and applied close to the heart, and kept there by serious and severe thoughts of it, deadens the heart to sin. It quells inclinations to it ; quashes thoughts of harbouring or sparing it ; confutes all the promises and flattering pretences of sin, by which it pleads for life and further entertainment ; makes them appear to be lies and delusions ; and shews, that not what sin offers or makes fair show of, but the quite contrary, will come to pass, and must be expected ; and so cuts off all hopes and expectations of any true pleasure, or real advantage, or anything else desirable, to be had by sin ; by which hopes it maintains itself, and is kept alive in deluded souls. And when these expectations are given up, and these hopes expire, the heart of sin is broken, and the heart of the sinner dies to it ; and so far as the heart dies to it, so far sin is mortified, for its life is bound up therein. There is enough in the threatening so to embitter sin as no delight can be taken in it ; it holds forth the wrath and displeasure of God as that which will be the issue of sin, instead of any advantage which it deceitfully offers, and so leaves you not the sight of anything for which sin should be suffered to live ; but shews all reason why it should die, presses the soul against it, enforces and hastens to the execution of it. Even in the heat of temptation, a threatening duly apprehended and thought on would be as water to a kindling fire ; it checks it, damps it at first, and continuing to pour it on, in fine, will extinguish it.

Believe but the threatening, and you will not believe, you will not regard what sin pleads for its life. The reason why it escapes and is forborne, is because we believe sin rather than God ; the threatening, if mixed with faith, would lead sin to execution, without delay, without mercy.

Thirdly, The promises. These contribute much to the mortifying of sin, 2 Peter i. 4, 2 Cor. vii. 1. The promises have not only the force of an argument, but a real efficacy to this purpose ; they have a powerful influence upon the children of promise, in their engagements against sin. These raise their spirits, heighten their courage, inspire them with resolution ; and how much courage and resolution will prevail, even in those who are overpowered with strength and numbers, the world is full of experiments. These give them full assurance of divine assistance, of present relief when they are distressed, of all refreshment when they are ready to faint, and of a glorious issue of the conflict in victory and triumph. Here they may have a vision of the Lord of hosts engaging with them ; of the Captain of their salvation, Jesus, ever victorious, leading them on ; and of his Spirit teaching their hands to war and their fingers to fight the Lord's battles ; such as are so unquestionably. In them you may hear the voice of God himself, speaking to you comfortable and encouraging words indeed, Isa. xli. 10-16.

Here is ground enough of confidence that we shall overcome, if we endeavour it. And then what glorious things they are assured of who overcome ! Rev. ii. 7, 17 and iii. 5, 12, 21. Here is enough, considered and believed,

to strengthen the weak hands and the feeble knees, and to raise the faintest to such a height of courage as will bear down all opposition.

And further, the promises out-bid what sin would bribe us with to spare it; and shews that in comparison there is nothing it tempts us with but trifles, shadows, and vain empty shows; that it would defeat us of the inestimable treasures in the mines of the great and precious promises, and put us off with a feather or a bauble; and so they engage us to proceed against it, as an unparalleled cheat and a pernicious deceiver.

[2.] Cut off the provisions of sin. Those by which it is nourished and maintained, kept in life and strength, and enabled to hold out against you. When an enemy is strongly seated, so as there is no storming nor undermining him, the way to subdue him is to fire his stores, cut off his water, intercept his convoys and provisions. Such a course should you take against sin; if you would subdue it, you must starve it, Rom. xiii. 14. Observe what it is that kindles lust, maintains sensuality, upholds worldliness, nourishes pride, or any other evil that you are subject to, and let these be removed. Gratify not your corruptions herein, and you take the course to starve them. Take away the fuel, and the fire will go out.

Use 2. For information. From hence we may give an account why troubles and afflictions befall the people of God. This is it which has much amazed both those that were acquainted with God, and the heathen too; that those who are best meet with hard measures in this life. But considering that those who are best are not perfect, and that there is a mixture of evil in those that are good, and that afflictions are the means to free them from that evil, it need be no wonder that the best are afflicted. The providence of God is not hereby impeached, but rendered more glorious; the wisdom and goodness of it is herein conspicuous. It is not because the Lord regards not human affairs, or cares not what befalls his creatures, but because he has a special care of his people, and sees it needful, considering what the complexion of their souls is by reason of sin, to exercise them with afflictions. He does it not without cause, he has a design therein suitable to his infinite wisdom. This end is expressed in the text; it is to purge their iniquity, &c. Sin is as rust upon their spirits, it must be filed off, and this cannot be done ordinarily without sharp tools. There is chaff mixed with the wheat, corruption with their graces; there needs a rough wind to separate them. There is dross in the best metal, there needs a furnace or a refining pot to work it out. There are distempers in their souls, which impair their health, and endanger spiritual life; there is need of physic to purge them out. Afflictions are such physic, administered by the great physician of souls for this end, that hereby their iniquity may be purged.

2. And from hence we may give an account why their afflictions are their ordinary fare; so that it is the complaint of some, which was the Psalmist's, lxxiii. 14, 'All the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.' Sickly tempers must have a physical diet; to purge spring and fall will scarce secure some from the malignity of their distempers. The Lord knows our frame, and sees what is usually needful for every temper; and when he afflicts most frequently, he does no more than needs must, than he sees requisite for the purging of sin.

3. We may see also from hence why the troubles of the righteous are many, and why they are grievous. It is because less is not enough to attain the end. A gentle purge will not move every body, and that which works not may do more hurt than good. A wise physician will give that which will work, though it make his patient sick at heart in working. Is it not better he should do it than let him die? A father that will not have his

child undone will give many stripes, when fewer will not serve the turn. When a slower fire will not serve the refiner's end, he heats the furnace hotter and hotter. The people of God are not 'in heaviness through manifold temptations,' but 'if need be;' as the apostle expresses it, 1 Peter i. 6. And need there is, if fewer and easier will not purge our iniquity.

4. We may learn also from hence why troubles and afflictions are continued, and drawn out to a great length, why means for removing them are ineffectual, and hopes of deliverance is blasted. Why is the metal kept long in the fire, but because it is not soon refined? The Lord 'afflicts not willingly, nor grieves the children of men;' he delights not to protract our troubles; it is we that prolong them, because we continue unpurged, unrefined, unmortified. He shews us the way to shorten, and put an end to them quickly. Let us but comply with his design, and get our iniquity purged, &c., and deliverance will come speedily. The God of our salvation will come, and will not tarry. It is we that make him slow, and obstruct the way of deliverance; and if we should still delay, if he should cause our carcasses to fall in the wilderness, if he should cause us to consume our days in troubles, it is because, Jer. vi. 29, 'the bellows are burnt, the lead is consumed by the fire,' but we are not purged.

Use 8. For instruction. If the end of afflictions be the purging of iniquity, this teaches,

1. *Patience and contentment under afflictions.* No reason to murmur or repine, or to give way to any sallies of impatience, or expressions of discontent, whatever our troubles be, how many, how sharp, how long soever. Will you not be content the Lord should cure you, and proceed in that method which his wisdom sees best and most effectual for that purpose? While you are under afflictions, you are under cure; and is it not better to be under cure, though the method seem displeasing, than to be left languishing under soul distempers without remedy? Such lancing is painful. Oh, but what is the end of it? It is not to let out your blood, but to let out your corruption. Should you not be content to submit to any course of physic to free you from desperate distempers, when infinite wisdom prescribes it too? 'The cup that my Father gives me,' &c., John xviii. 11. What though it be a cup of trembling, and flesh and blood shrinks at it? Yet it is a Father that mingled it. Though the ingredients be bitter, they are wholesome. It is to free you from the danger of deadly poison; such poison is that iniquity which the Lord hereby is purging out. He is hereby whipping out of you that folly which is bound up in your hearts. Oh, that is a foolish child indeed, of no understanding, who had rather have his folly than the rod, that had rather be ruined than smart a little.

2. *Cheerfulness under afflictions.* Let not your spirits sink under them, though they may be heavy and tedious. Bear up cheerfully; faint not when you are rebuked, fall not into despondency. Look to the Lord's end in all severe proceedings; though affliction in itself be grievous, yet the end thereof is not so, that is matter of joy rather, 2 Cor. iv. 16. What though the receipt be bitter, it is to make me well; it is to heal my languishing and diseased soul; it is to purge out that which is my greatest misery.

3. *Thankfulness.* If the Lord should correct us merely for his pleasure, we ought to be contented; but since he chastens us for our profit, we ought to be thankful. Oh what cause is there of thankfulness, when we are assured that we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world; that he chastens us that we may be thereby freed from that corruption for which the world will be condemned, and which would be our condemnation also if it were not purged out; to chasten us, to make us

smart a little ; thereby to free us from the greatest, the most dreadful, the most deadly evil ; to free us from sin, an evil incomparably worse than the extremity of all outward sufferings ; and to free us from condemnation, in comparison of which all the calamities of this life are but as the prick of a pin. Oh, who would not be thankful for such a cure in such a way ! The most afflicted condition on earth, ordered for the purging of sin, is incomparably a greater mercy than the most prosperous and flourishing condition in the world with an unpurged soul. Oh bless the Lord for those wounds, how deep soever they pierce into your estates, health, liberty ; if they let out the corruption of your hearts, if they take away your sin, you will see cause to bless the Lord for them to eternity.

4. To love the Lord. Even his chastening of us should provoke to love him ; for he afflicts us not to satisfy his anger, but to do us good ; to purge our iniquity, *i. e.* to free us from the very worst of evils. So that he afflicts us not as an enemy, but as a father ; not because he hates us, and would be revenged of us, but because he loves us, and would render us capable of more and greater expressions of his love, by freeing us from that which renders us unlovely, and abstracts the current of his loving-kindness. Herein are those affectionate expressions verified, 'As many as I love,' &c. So infinite is his love, that it breaks forth where we could least expect it, even in judgment he remembers mercy ; even when we think him most angry, when he makes us smart, he is expressing love ; he is taking away our sin, and therewith our misery. Now, love calls for love again : 'We love him, because he loved us first.' We are obliged to love him, wherever he shews love to us. If we love not him that we find loves us, we are worse than publicans ; for they, the worst of sinners, do so.

Oh let us love him, not only because he spares us, because he showers down mercies on us, because he sent his Son to die and suffer for us, but because he makes us suffer, because he afflicts out of so much love as to take away our sin. Oh he has not such a love for the world, as he has for his children, when he seems most severe in afflicting them.

5. To trust him. He has declared that by this our iniquity shall be purged, that this is his end and design in afflicting. Let us then believe that this is his end, and that it shall be accomplished ; let us believe that it shall be to his afflicted people according to his word, that by this our iniquity shall be purged, that 'this shall be the fruit to take away our sin.' A soul that duly values so great a mercy, as the subduing of his iniquity, and the mortifying of his sins, will be ready to say, Oh, if I were but sure that this would be the issue of my sufferings and afflictions, I should not only be patient and contented with them, but would be cheerful under them, and thankful for them, and love the Lord for inflicting them. But this is my fear, they will not have this effect upon me. Why, but what assurance can you desire to encourage your faith, and to secure you from this distrustful fear, more than is here given you ? You have for it the word of him who is truth itself, on his part ; heaven and earth shall perish, rather than one tittle of it shall fail of performance, if you be not wanting to yourselves ; if you walk in the way laid open to you, and use the means I have given an account of ; if you wait on the Lord, and keep his way, assuredly his word will be made good, 'By this shall your iniquity be purged ; and this shall be the fruit, to take away your sin.'