

## SERMON XV.

BY THE REV. ELIAS PLEDGER, A. M.

OF THE CAUSE OF INWARD TROUBLE ; AND HOW A CHRISTIAN SHOULD BEHAVE HIMSELF WHEN INWARD AND OUTWARD TROUBLES MEET.

*And they said one to another, Yea, but we are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear ; therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child ; and ye would not hear ? therefore, behold, also his blood is required.—Genesis xlii. 21, 22.*

IN this chapter we have the description of our fathers, the patriarchs ; their first journey into Egypt for corn, to relieve their famine in Canaan. Herein is considerable,—

1. Their entertainment there : it was harsh, with much trouble, more danger : the great Lord-Treasurer of Egypt would not know them, but treats them roughly ; (verse 7 ; ) takes them for spies ; (verse 9 ; ) rejects their defence ; (verse 12 ; ) renews, and out of their own mouths re-enforceth, his charge and suspicion of them ; (verse 14 ; ) threatens to commit them ; (verses 15, 16 ; ) commits them ; (verse 17 ; ) puts bonds upon one of them, till the rest should quit and clear themselves and him of suspicion. (Verses 19, 20.) This is their cold and sad welcome and entertainment.

2. The consequent of this their hard and distressful usage and entreatment ; and that is trouble of mind, horror and perplexity of spirit : “ And they said one to another,” &c.

The words, then, are the Holy Ghost’s report of the case of the sons of Jacob, their being spiritually troubled, by way of conviction, or judgment in their own (which also is the Lord’s) court of conscience.

Wherein we observe,

1. *The actors themselves* : [being] the registers, accusers, witnesses, judge, [and] tormentors.

2. *Process in judging themselves* : wherein,

(1.) Self-accusation of the cause of their trouble, their sin, with the utmost aggravations ; namely,

(i.) In general : “ We are guilty.”

(ii.) In particular : Of envy, wrong against a brother ; whom in bitterness we saw without pity, and were deaf to his entreaties ; obstinate to the admonition of Reuben, and abiding therein.

(2.) In self-condemnation : “ Therefore is this distress come ; ” and his blood required.

3. *Execution* : wherein,

(1.) The smart, by inward terror and consternation; their heart, mis-giving them, is deeply affected, and that makes them very abrupt: "Yea, verily," that is, Alas! what shall we do?

(2.) The circumstance of the time when; couched in, "and."

(i.) In general: many years after the offence was done.

(ii.) In special: now that they were outwardly in an afflicted condition.

DOCTRINES. I. Every man hath a conscience within himself.

II. The guilt of sin turns a man's conscience, that is, himself, against himself.

III. Conscience is apt to be very sensible, when it is awakened, not only of sin, but particular sins, and the particular circumstances and degrees thereof to the utmost; and charge all upon a man's self, not upon God's decrees or providence, nor upon the devil or evil company, &c.

IV. Envy, unnatural affection, cruelty, deafness to the entreaties of the distressed, obstinacy against warning and admonition, continuance in sin without repentance, &c., are very heinous and dangerous.

V. The accusations and condemnations of conscience are terrible, or cause terror beyond all expression.

VI. There is a time when God will call over sins that are past, and charge them upon the conscience.

VII. Inward trouble of mind sometimes (yea, usually) comes upon the people of God, when they are outwardly in some distress.

I shall speak of the two last, and in them something of all the other, saving the fourth, containing the particular matter of fact; namely, cruelty and blood, which I shall not meddle withal.

These are then the two

#### DOCTRINES.

I. *There is a time when God will call over past sins with horror, &c.*

II. *This time of inward horror falls in with outward trouble.*

#### DOCTRINE I.

*There is a time when God will call over sins that are past, without repentance, and charge them upon the conscience with horror.*

Here is the case: The sons of Jacob had formerly trespassed against God in the matter of their brother, "And they said," &c.: now, and not till now that we read of, are the guilt and horror of it reflected upon their consciences. In sin, the *act* passes, the *guilt and consequent* remain.

Sin is like some poison, which may be taken at one time, and work at another, it may be seven years after. It was now more than seven and seven years, that the poison of this sin began to work.

It is true of family sins; (Hosea i. 4;) of national sins; (Ezek. iv. 4, 5; Lam. v. 7;) and of personal sins, as here. And that is the case,

1. Not only of the wicked, as in the case of Cain: "If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door," (Gen. iv. 7,) to shut out mercies, and let in judgments; and that as a fell mastiff, or a sleeping lion, ready to take thee by the throat, whenever the Lord awakens guilt in the conscience.

2. But also of the godly : "Thou makest me to possess the sins of my youth." (Psalm xix. 12 ; xxv. 7 ; Job xiii. 26.)

## REASONS.

REASON I. *From God.*

1. *God remembers all* : "The Lord hath sworn, Surely I will never forget any of their works." (Amos viii. 7.) "I remember that which Amalek did," &c. (1 Sam. xv. 2.) God hath three books :

(1.) *Of pre-science* ; wherein he writes down our names, and his purposes concerning us. The Arminians deny that book.

(2.) *Of providence* ; wherein he writes down our names, and all his care over us. The epicure and atheist deny this, as also the former.

(3.) *Of post-science or remembrance* ; wherein he writes down our names, and all the particulars of our carriage towards him :—

(i.) Whether they be *good*.—No act of piety or charity, not a cup of cold water from the spring of love, not a drop of tears from the spring of godly sorrow, not a sigh from the bottom of a broken heart, but it is taken notice of, bottled, recorded. (Mal. iii. 16.)

(ii.) Or *bad*.—Not a wicked thought, a malicious scoff, or wicked action, word, motion, but God marks it, and sets it down in the book of his remembrance. (Psalm l. 21.)

2. *God need not reflect, or look back* ; for he hath all things present before him, that ever were, are, or are to come ; namely, (1.) *In speculo decreti*. (2.) *In causis particularibus*.\*

God's knowledge (called fore-knowledge, and remembrance, in respect of us, and the things known) is as his being, altogether in *puncto æternitatis* ["in the point of eternity"]. There is not in God *first* and *second* of time, and cause ; no *was* and *is to come*, but all *is*. There is not with God beginning, succession, and end ; but his name is I AM ; and so is [his] knowledge as himself, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." (Heb. xiii. 8 ; 2 Peter iii. 8.) The knowledge of men is as of one standing on the shore, where some ships are past, and out of sight one way ; others to come, and out of sight another way ; others in sight right over against him ; but the knowledge of God is [as] of one on the top of an high mountain, where with one view all things are present. (Heb. iv. 13.)

3. *God also seals up our iniquities as in a bag*. (Job xiv. 17.) As the clerk of the assizes seals up the indictments for the next circuit ; nay, God himself will bag them, and seal them up with his own hand and signet. God, speaking of the provocations of his people, saith : "Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed among my treasures?" (Deut. xxxii. 34.) So strict and earnest is God for security, as we say, "*Sure bind, sure find*." What more sure and safe than that which God himself lays up in bag and cabinet, and seals among his jewels ? As when God makes up his jewels of mercy, he will remember them ; (Mal. iii. 17 ; ) so when he casts up his treasures of wrath, he will remember them.

4. *God's truth engages him in this case*.—His word cannot pass away, now he hath said it. He will by no means acquit the guilty ; (Exod. xxxiv. 7 ; ) that is, unless the blood of sprinkling for repentance and remis-

\* "1. In the glass of the decree. 2. In the particular causes."—EDIT.

sion be applied. It is said, again: "God shall wound the head;" (Psalm lxxviii. 21;) and again: "The sinner an hundred years old shall be accursed!" (Isai. lxx. 20.)

Now, as the godly look to have God as good as his word for good: so the wicked must look to have God as good as his word for evil: "Did not my words take hold of your fathers?" (Zech. i. 6.)

5. *No time can remit God's anger.*—If you offend a man, and he be angry, you may get out of the way, and time will wear off the memory of the offence, or at least assuage his passion; but it is not so with God; for if he be once angry, he is for ever angry, the same cause, which is sin unrepented, remaining. "God is angry with the wicked every day," (Psalm vii. 11,) for the sins he commits one day; the anger of the Lord, unless he works a change in us, abides upon us, burning to the bottom of hell. O, as his fear is, so is his wrath, (Psalm xc. 11,) and a thousand times more.

6. *Lastly: The sinner is as much under the power of God at one time as at another.*—Forty, a hundred, a thousand, years after a sin is committed, as when the sin was first done.

As the people of God are borne up with that word, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that he cannot save;" (Isai. lix. 1;) so the wicked sink under the terror of that word, "Can thy heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it." (Ezek. xxii. 14.)

This is the first reason from God.

REASON II. *From sin.*—In a twofold consideration of every sin, wherein there are two things which make sin, unrepented, sure to be called back:—

1. *There is in every sin a breach of the eternal rule of righteousness.* (1 John iii. 4.)—Now, the breach of an eternal law must needs be eternal, unless he which is eternal make it up, that is, Christ in giving repentance and remission. Make a breach in a stone-wall, you may come many years after, and find it as you left it; and it must hold as long as the wall holds, if it be not made up: even so it is in this case. Let one come from the dead and warn us, those poor cursed cast-aways are still, and must be still and ever, crying out under the wrath of God. What is the reason, I pray? Verily, not only because they sinned out of an affection and spring to sin for ever, but also because every sin is objectively infinite and eternal, being against the infinite, eternal law of the eternal God. Now, the law, being wronged by the sinner, demands and solicits the justice and vengeance of God against him, till it be satisfied to the utmost farthing; therefore, till then (that is, for ever) must the wrath of God abide upon him; and if time wears not out the breach of the eternal law in hell, much less doth it make any alteration therein here, while thou doublest and treblest thy sin, by going on with an impenitent heart.

2. *There is also in every sin, a spot, stain, or brand, whereby the sinner is marked out for judgment and condemnation.* (Deut. xxxii. 5; Jer. xiii. 23; xvii. 1.)—As we say of a murderer as to man, so we may say of every sin (which is hatred, and so murder of the blessed God) as to God: There is always some mark or token whereby he is known; and that is the

*macula* ["spot"] which sin doth impress upon him. Now this also is an indelible character, as the former of guilt was, save only when upon the penitent, heart-changing application of the blood of sprinkling, there is made an alteration of the case. It is plain, "it is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond:" (Jer. xvii. 1 :) "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God." (Jer. ii. 22.) David cries out so: "O wash me, purge me," &c. (Psalm li. 2. 7.) This is the second reason from sin.

REASON III. The third is *from the sinner himself*; that is, from his own conscience.

There is in every rational creature a certain thing called "conscience;" upon the account of which also, sin must needs be kept upon the file for a back-blow. Know here, that there are divers acts of conscience, and all of them unavoidable.

1. *Directive*, as to that which is to be done: it being the law written in the heart, it points to all the duties and sins, whereby that law is kept or broken; warning from the one, and putting on to the other. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. xxxix. 9.) "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." (Psalm cxix. 59.) Thus conscience is a monitor.

2. *Reflexive*, both gratulatory and reprehensive as to all that which is doing or done.

(1.) Considering, observing, and recording, whether it be done or no; the matter of fact simply, with the natural circumstances of action, negative and positive, both in the point of omission and commission:—*Item*, "This is done, or not done."

(2.) Taking notice, and recording the quality of the fact in a comparative act; comparing it with the rule, together with the moral circumstances thereof. Thus conscience is a surveyor, witness, register:—*Item*, "In the doing or omitting of this and this, the law is broken, and the forfeiture and penalty is incurred."

(3.) It applies this, and sets it home upon the sinner. "Thou art the man." "This thou hast done, verily thou art guilty," &c. Thus conscience is a judge also, and gives sentence touching both the sin and sinner, *pro* or *con*, as the case is.

(4.) It never leaves, nor gives-over these acts of warning, observing, recording, witnessing, and judging, till judgment take place, and the law and sentence be fulfilled upon the sinner. "Verily, I am guilty," &c. Thus conscience is tormentor and executioner also, executing its own sentence, by affecting the heart and moving the affections, as of joy and boldness, if the case be good; so of horror and fear, shame and sorrow, if the case be bad, &c.

Now these acts of conscience, though haply for a time suspended, as it were, are unavoidable, upon a double account: and conscience cannot be bribed:—

1. *Because of that relation that conscience hath to God.*—It ever takes God's part, and God its; it is God's deputy and viceroy; and so its voice and judgment is the very voice and judgment of God himself, who

can and will maintain it in its office, till he brings forth judgment unto victory.

2. *Because of its relation to a man's self.*—It is, *Sensus et præjudicium judicii Divini*.\* Nothing so intimate to a man, and inseparable from life, as this bosom-judge, and God's court within a man: it is a part of a man's soul and self, as subordinate to God and his judgment; so that if a man can run away from God or himself, then he may escape the reflection of his sin upon him; but if not, then know, it must be an evil and bitter thing that thou hast departed from God in any known sin, either to thy penitent amendment, or penal condemnation and confusion; and that upon all accounts: (1.) In respect of God. (2.) Of sin. (3.) Of the sinner himself: "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee." (Jer. ii. 19.) All the time thou abidest in sin, thou art gathering either hemlock to poison thee, or wormwood to make thy life bitter.

## USES.

1. *Instruction.*

(1.) See, then, the malignity and danger of sin. "Fools make a mock of sin."

(2.) See the vanity, sinfulness, and desperate danger of presuming upon any bottom of peace and satisfaction, or security, whilst sin remains. Of a truth, thy peace and hope thereof shall be as a spider's web, and as the giving up of the ghost; and thy presumption must end in despair. Bribe thou thyself with a persuasion of peace, presuming and leaning,

(i.) Upon God's patience? Remember, forbearance is no payment or forgiveness, nor sign thereof.

(ii.) Upon outward privileges? God knows thee not, whilst thou art a worker of iniquity. (Matt. vii. 21—23.)

(iii.) Upon the mercy of God? He is holy, and therefore must be just; and because just, angry; and because angry, ever angry; unless Christ be thy peace, upon faith and a thorough change.

(iv.) The blood of Christ? Though it be an ocean, yet not a drop of it can do thee good, unless it turn thee from all thine iniquity. (Acts iii. 26.) All this is but physic in thy pocket.

(v.) The promises of the gospel? They are sweet, but poison to the impenitent: as bread to a dying man.

(vi.) Upon thy faith in all this? Whilst impenitent, all is but notional and imaginary; and so thy peace and happiness is but a notion.

2. *Therefore be exhorted to get thy sin off.*

I shall here do two things: I. Give you some directions how to put you in the way to escape this doom. II. To awaken myself and you to the serious use of them by some motives.

I. Then if you ask, "How?" I answer,

**DIRECTION 1.** *Attend to, and comply with, the word and Spirit therein, in summoning thyself to God's and thine own bar of conscience.*—Suffer thyself to be stopped, as a loose and skulking malefactor; seize and sequester thyself to hearken to the call and treaty of the word about

\* "The perception and feeling formed within a man prior to the final judgment of God."

thy condition ; the *hue and cry* of the word is after thee to apprehend thee.

DIREC. II. *Let inquisition and diligent search be made into the matters between God and thy soul.*—This is the way : “ Let us search and try our ways, and turn,” &c. : (Lam. iii. 40 :) this is the miscarriage : “ No man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done ? ” (Jer. viii. 6.) The first step to peace with God is inquiry : “ If ye will inquire, inquire ye : return, come.” (Isai. xxi. 12.)

DIREC. III. *Declare against thyself.*—Turn God’s faithful pleader against thy own soul ; accuse thyself in free and particular confession, whereof thou art guilty, with all the killing circumstances thou canst find out. This will prevent the “ accuser of the brethren.”

DIREC. IV. *Condemn thyself.*—Charge thyself with fault, guilt, punishment ; so shalt thou prevent the condemnation of the Lord. (Lev. xxvi. 40, &c.) Though thou canst not satisfy the justice of God in the least, yet thou must glorify it to the utmost thou canst. (1 Cor. xi. 31.)

DIREC. V. *Be thorough and to purpose, and constant herein.*—For if thy sense of thy condition be not real, thy cure will not be real : there will be no more reality in the application of the word for the one, than there is for the other. To no more purpose wilt thou apply the word to thyself, than thou appliest thyself to the word : therefore give thyself to it, to dwell upon thy case ; hold the object close to the faculty, till it make some impression, and thy heart yield.

DIREC. VI. *Fly to the Lord Jesus, and the mercy-seat in his blood.*—(i.) For repentance. (ii.) For remission. He is exalted to give both. (Acts v. 31.) None can take up the quarrel between God and thee, save only Christ alone ; he, he is the way ; (1 Sam. ii. 25 ;) God’s way to thee for grace and mercy, and thy way to God for faith. “ Lord, I am a guilty, helpless creature ; but thou hast laid help upon One that is mighty to save from the utmost to the utmost.”

DIREC. VII. *In him therefore cry to God for mercy and grace with thy whole heart.*—“ O mercy, mercy, Lord ! I have wronged thee, Lord, forgive me ! I have defiled my soul, Lord, wash me ! I have wounded and cast away my soul, Lord, heal me ! Lord, save me ! ” &c. (Psalm li.)

DIREC. VIII. *Cry for mercy, till God have mercy upon thee.* (Psalm cxliii. 2, 3.)—Take heed thou be not temporary for a fit ; but set thyself in an habitual tenor, restless after [an] interest in Christ, and the great work, till it be done.

DIREC. IX. *Accept of Christ upon the terms of the gospel.*—Not thine own, or picking and choosing ; but as he in Acts ix. 6, “ Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ? ” Consent and resign thyself, stooping to his articles of peace ; to deny thyself of the dearest, bear the heaviest, do the strictest, as he shall call. Not that thou canst do any thing, but upon these terms :—If he will receive thee, and furnish thee with grace, thou wilt follow, and cleave to him with full purpose of heart.

DIREC. X. *Cashier and discharge, in thy purpose and endeavour, in dependence on this Christ in the promise, whatever thou knowest offends in heart and life, whatever belongs to a carnal mind, which is enmity to*

God; and addict thyself to the pleasure of God in all known commands, and whatever savours of the Spirit, and the kingdom of God.

DIREC. XI. Upon these terms, consenting to embrace Christ in the offer of grace, rest upon Christ; who is assuredly thine, and will never be otherwise.

## II. The motives.

MOTIVE I. *The comfort of this way.*—Now then “there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ,” &c.; (Rom. viii. 1;) their iniquities shall never be remembered. God sees no iniquity in Jacob; there is no fury in God. O “blessed is the man to whom God imputes not his sin,” &c. (Psalm xxxii. 2.) Now, Christ is Jehovah thy righteousness. Thy Judge is thy Advocate, thy God reconciled. Thy Comforter is come to apply Christ, in all that he is for thee, to thee, and shall abide for ever with thee. He is thy seal unto the purchased possession. The law is satisfied, the curse is removed, all the promises are thine, and the Spirit of promise to confirm thy title thine, the stain or mark of sin washed off quite as to justification and present acceptation; and in part begun as to sanctification and purity of heart and life. Thy conscience is pacified with “the blood of sprinkling,” as to what the word declares concerning thee, though not as to what thou feelest; and where the judge acquits, there conscience, which is the serjeant, cannot condemn; but that it is not always set right according to the word.

MOTIVE II. *The terror of being yet, and going on, in sin.*—But O, the terror of having sin upon the file against us! And dost thou remain in sin unrepented? Dost thou go on to add sin to sin, not caring how many sins thou loadeest thy conscience withal, as if there were no time of reckoning? “Be sure your sin will find you out.” (Num. xxxii. 23.)

Do not say, “Hast thou found me, O my enemy?” Or, as the wicked one, “Art thou come to torment us before our time?” But as thou lovest thy soul, take all I say in good part; for God knows, I speak out of tender respect to your eternal good.\* Consider, then,

1. *The innumerable number of sins thou standest guilty of.*—“Who can understand his errors?” (Psalm xix. 12.) Methinks there is no sad sight in the world but the sinner in his sins.

Suppose you had seen Herod covered over with worms; alas! what is this to one worm of conscience?

Suppose you had seen every member in the senate run upon Cæsar to give him a stab; would not you have given him over for dead a thousand times? Brethren, every sin you commit is an envenomed knife to stab you at your very heart.

Suppose, again, you should see a malefactor at the bar for a capital crime, the evidence clear; “O,” you will say, “it will go hard with him!” But when you see another, and another, and many other indictments sworn home against him, and every one touching his life, will you not say?—“There is no hope; he is a dead man; and all the world cannot

\* *Sic mihi semper contingat tractare et bears amicos, non dulcibus verbis sed sanis terroribus.*—BERNARDUS. “May it ever be my part thus to conduct myself toward my friends, in promoting their blessedness, not by smooth and sweet verbiage, but by the application of salutary terrors.”—EDIT.



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save him!" Remember, this is thy case, and it will be certainly called  
over.

If one poison be enough to dispatch a man, without an antidote, what  
doth that man mean that drinks off a thousand poisons, and refuses the  
antidote of the blood of Christ?

If one sin be as a thousand mill-stones to sink all the world into the  
bottom of hell, what dost thou mean to tie so many thousand mill-stones  
about thy own neck?

2. *Old debts vex most.*—The delay of payment increases them by use  
upon use; and the return of them being unexpected, a person is least  
provided for them. We count old sores, breaking forth, incurable.  
Augustus wondered at a person's sleeping quietly that was very much in  
debt, and sent for his pillow, saying, "Surely, there is some strange vir-  
tue in it, that makes him rest so secure." My brethren, if one debt unto  
God's law be more than the whole creation can satisfy, what do any of us  
mean to rest secure with so vast a burden upon our consciences and  
account? O take heed thou beest not surprised and arrested with  
old debts! "O remember not against us former iniquities." (Psalm  
lxxix. 8.)

3. *God will call over and charge thy sins upon thee, when all the sweet  
is gone.*—Thou makest a shift to swallow the hook with pleasure, when  
it is covered with the sweet bait; O, but when that is digested or dis-  
gorged, and the naked hook piercing and raking thy heart, what wilt  
thou do then? O how bitter is the pill when all the sugar is melted off!  
Now this will be thy case; Job found but a taste of it, and O, how he  
cries out!—"Thou writest bitter things against me;" that is, "bitter-  
nesses." (Job xiii. 26.)

4. *With old sins must come old wrath.*—"Thinkest thou, O man, that  
thou shalt escape the judgment of God? or despisest thou the riches of  
his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the  
goodness of God" doth not only give thee a space of, but "leadeth thee to  
repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasure" (tun-  
nest) "up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath," &c. (Rom.  
ii. 3—5.)

There be three sorts and degrees of wrath [which] will come with old  
sins:—

(1.) Wrath for old sins. (2.) Wrath for the forbearance of that  
wrath. (3.) Wrath for the abuse of that forbearance. O what wilt  
thou do in the day of thy visitation?

5. *The former admonitions, &c., nips of conscience, will come again:  
and they with the present will be unsufferable, beyond all that can be  
expressed.*—This is their terror here: say they, "He besought us, and  
we would not hear;" and saith Reuben, "Said I not to you, did I not  
tell you, warn you what it would come to, and ye would not hear?"  
O, he who hardens his neck to reproof shall surely be destroyed. O,  
timely and fair checks and warnings, obstinately rejected, are the racks  
of conscience, the sharp sting and teeth of the worm thereof!

6. *And what will now become of thee? As the Lord lives, thou wilt  
come to thy distracting, misgiving thoughts.*—"Yea, but, and verily

we are guilty," &c. "Methinks," saith Luther, "every cloud is loined \* with thunder against me." Thou wilt take every visitation from God as a messenger of death; nay, that God himself sets-in against thy life. Suppose you saw two desperate enemies grappling, closing-in upon each other: "O," say you, "they are armed with some instruments of death; they owe each other a deadly grudge; there is of old a mortal feud between them; they will take this opportunity to vent their malice to the utmost! O, one of them will fall and die for it." My brethren, God and the sinner in his sins are, according to the tenor of this book, enemies, hated of and hating one another; and when God visits sin upon him, he falls upon him, and deals with him, as I may say, hand to hand; and now one of them must go to the walls; God or the sinner must fall. Take it in God's own challenge, Ezek. xxii. 14: in verse 13, God complains [that] the sinner had given him a blow; but then, saith God, "Canst thou indeed make thy part good, when I shall be in good earnest with thee? Can thy heart hold out? Can thine hands be strong in the day that I shall deal with thee?" O consider and tremble at it, how God will thus deal with thee, and how infinitely thou, being a guilty worm, art over-matched by Omnipotency, whose wrath will one day wax hot against thee, even to the utmost! O, saith David, "When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty," even all his hopes and desires, "to consume away as a moth," &c. (Psalm xxxix. 11.)

Sad was the case of the children of Benjamin, of whom we read in Judges xx. They had fought against their brethren twice, and prevailed. They ventured out the third time; but then the battle went against them, the ambuscadoes cut them off, and others fired the town behind them. O the horror and amazement they were struck withal, when they could not stand before the face of the tribes which were before them, and they saw their city all on a flame behind them! O, said they, "Now is evil come upon us;" and they were trodden down as dirt. Thou wretch, who art still in thy sins, hast fought against God many and many times, and seemed to carry the day; but when God shall come upon thee in his strength, and thou shalt see all the refuge of creature-comforts in despairing case, as on fire behind thee, what reprobate astonishment will then take hold on thee! Now come thy distracting, misgiving, despairing thoughts!—"Now evil is befallen me! Now is God come upon me, and will make an end of me at once! Now come the floods of my ungodliness in amain, and the flood-gates of God's wrath are opened upon me! Now 'the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me!' (Job vi. 4.) And as the church: Now hath God summoned and mustered, as in a solemn day of battle between him and my poor soul, my terrors round about me!" (Lam. ii. 22.) O, you that have been twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years, even ever since you were born, a provocation, and yet also forget God, "consider this," before he fall upon you, and "tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver;" (Psalm l. 22;) for, assure yourselves, there is a

\* The first edition has the correct and forcible word *loined*; the others have gradually softened it down to *lyned* and *lined*.—EDIT.

time when God will call over sins past, and charge them home upon the conscience.

QUESTION. But you will ask, "What is the sign, and when shall these things be?"

ANSWER. I answer: The God of spirits can at any time, and will in his own time, certainly fall upon thy spirit with horror and confusion; (Deut. xxxii. 25;) especially and usually at these particular instants:—

1. *After a certain term of patience abused and expired.*—God is patient toward all men; and this patience is as the banks which keep-in his wrath, that it breaks not in upon thee. But it will not be always so: these banks have their bounds; and as thy sin abides, it rises with thee; and as God's wrath abides on thee, it rises with God, till at last it swells up to the bank of his patience; and then it is a thousand times more dreadful than the sea to overwhelm thee.\* God's patience, and thy respite, hath [each] its date; (Gen. vi. 3;) one hundred and twenty years to them, and then—So it may be so many years, or months, or weeks, or days to thee, and then—*Læsa patientia fit furor*; † and as lead, the colder when cold, the hotter when hot.

2. *When the sinner is secure.*—The less fear, the more danger; the more thou putteth the evil day from thee, the nearer it is to thee. (Amos vi. 3.) God shall cut thee off in an hour when thou art not aware; when thou sayest, "My lord delayeth his coming;" (Matt. xxiv. 48—50;) as the flood came upon the old world, as some say, in the spring or summer, ‡ when they would least have dreamed of it. God deals with a sinner, as Samuel with Agag: when he said, "Surely the bitterness of death is past," then comes the messenger of death from the Lord to cut him in pieces. (1 Sam. xv. 32, 33.) When the wicked cry, "Peace, peace," (nothing but peace,) "then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." (1 Thess. v. 3.) Dost thou bless thyself in thy sins, as if thy condition were good, or thy account far off? (Deut. xxix. 19.) "As the Lord liveth, there is but a step between thee and death." [1 Sam. xx. 3.]

3. *After the commission of some great sin.*—This [is] like some great blow, which awakens the conscience to see the whole account; as in Cain, Judas, &c. God deals with the sinner, as Solomon with Shimei: he reviled his father David; but David seems to forget it; and so did his son Solomon; only he is bound by an oath not to go out of Jerusalem. He breaks his oath, and goes out; Solomon, upon this, comes upon him for the breach of his covenant and oath; and also for former rebellions: "And I remember," saith he, "what thou didst to my father David." (1 Kings ii. 44.)

4. *On thy death-bed, (not to speak of judgment, when we must account for every particular, 2 Cor. v. 10.)*—God comes to the sinner, as to Adam in the cool of the day, (Gen. iii. 8,) in his cold sweat, when his sun is setting, and he is going to make his bed in the dark; his life and soul sits on his pale, trembling lips, ready to take her flight into eternity: and whereas

\* *Tarditatem vindictæ compensat gravitate supplicii.* "He counterbalances the slowness of his vengeance by the severe aggravation of the punishment inflicted."—EDIT.

† "When once patience is tired out and wounded, it becomes perfect fury."—EDIT.

‡ MUSCULUS in Gen.

thou wert before as the "deaf adder," or the "wild ass snuffing up the wind," or the "dromedary traversing his way," without all regard of any check, now, taken in thy month: [Jer. ii. 24:] "O my contempt of the means of grace! O my profaning sabbaths, sacraments! O my breaking bonds of oaths, covenants, promises, and casting away cords of discipline and government! O my malice against God's people! O my hardening my heart against the word and the rod!" &c., as the rankling thorn in the flesh pains most when thou goest to bed.

5. *Before this, in a time of outward calamity and distress.*—And this is the second DOCTRINE, from the special circumstance, when they were troubled: "And now."

## DOCTRINE II.

*This inward horror and trouble of mind falls-in (even to God's people) with outward trouble.*

This is the case here: the patriarchs, the children of the promise, are in distress and danger, by their brother Joseph's seeming severity toward them. "And they said one to another, We are verily guilty," &c.: with the pressure on the outward man, comes a snare upon the conscience.

If any find it otherwise, (as there are some, with whom, when there is a storm without, there is a calm within; and when a storm within, there is a calm without,) let them bless God. But in the experience of God's people, it is often found, that when their outward condition is troubled, their inward state and frame is full of perplexities and fears.

David found it so: "The sorrows of death compassed me, and" then also "the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow;" (Psalm cxvi. 3;) that is, very much perplexity, both inward and outward at once. So again: Then "I said in my haste," (that is, when I was flying for my life before the face of Saul, and hard put to it, 1 Sam. xxiii. 26,) "I am cut off from before thine eyes." (Psalm xxxi. 22; xlii. 7.) Thus it was with Jonah: in the depth of his distress, saith he, "I am cast out of thy sight." (Jonah ii. 4.) Sad conclusions! touching not only God's providential care over them, but his love towards them. Thus with Paul: "Without were fightings, within were fears;" that is, spiritual conflicts. (2 Cor. vii. 5.)

We find the whole church, in the Lamentations, at the same pass: "Thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity. And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord." (Lam. iii. 17, 18.) Alike sad is that swoon of Israel's faith, when they were in the captivity. (Ezek. xxxvii. 11.)

## REASONS.

You will ask what the reason and cause of this should be.

1. *It ariseth from their ignorance.*—Especially in the fundamental points of religion, as touching our disease, and the remedy, and way of cure, the tenor of the covenant of grace, according to which God exactly proceeds in all his dealings with us, and we should ever carry it towards God. If a man be taken with a fit of sickness; knows not what he ails,

nor what to take, nor how to apply that which is prescribed, nor how to order himself; is unsatisfied touching the way, skill, and faithfulness of his physician; by his ignorance he is put to a sad plunge, and at his wits' ends, ready to sink and welter: thus it is in our spiritual condition. David is dangerously tossed in his spirit upon waves of temptations, and much staggered about his condition; his "feet were almost gone," he almost wrecked, and cast away. See the reason: "So foolish was I, and ignorant:" (Psalm lxxiii. 2, 16, 22:) ignorance is darkness: it will either find fears, or make them.

2. *This ariseth from the ill and imprudent carnal management of a more prosperous state.*—It is rare to receive much of this world, and not, as the prodigal, to go afar off. (Luke xv. 12, 13.) It is hard to keep close to God in prosperity, when we have much of this world to live upon and content ourselves with; to live upon God, and make him our content and stay, as if we had no other life nor livelihood but in him. We are very apt, in such a case, to contract a carnal frame, let go our hold of God, disaccustom ourselves to the exercise of faith, abate and estrange our affections from God. See how it was with David: "I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved. Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong." "I solaced myself in these outward accommodations, as if I needed no other support, strength, or content, and there were no fear of a change; no care now to make God my constant joy and stay, and reckon upon God only for my portion, and that I must follow him with a cross, and be conformed to my Saviour in being crucified to the world." What comes of this? "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled;" (Psalm xxx. 6, 7;) namely, because he had too much indulged a life of sense. Children that are held up by their nurse's hand, and mind not to feel their feet and ground, when the nurse lets them go, they fall as if they had no feet or ground to stand upon. Or thus: we are like children, who, playing in the golden sunshine, and following their sport, stray so far from their father's house, that, night coming upon them ere they are aware, they are as it were lost, and full of fears, not knowing how to recover home. The world steals away our hearts from God, gives so few opportunities for the exercise of the life of faith, and such advantages to a life of sense, wears off the sense of our dependence on God and need thereof; so that when we are put to by affliction, we are ready to miscarry, ere we can recover our weapon or hold. Faith is our cordial. Now, if it be not at hand, (as in health, when we have no need of it, it uses to be,) we may faint ere we recover the use of it. (Psalm xxvii. 13.)

3. *It ariseth from the shortness and dimness of our spiritual evidences.*—Our evidences, you know, are great matters in point of estate and livelihood; and in affliction we are put to prove them; at which time, if they be either not clear or not at hand, we are at a great loss and plunge. A good man makes always conscience of "making his calling and election sure;" but he is especially put upon this work in affliction. Then he considers, then searches more than in his ordinary course. Afflictions are as sharp, searching winter-weather; [they] will search whether your house be tight or no: those garments, walls, and windows

that will serve in [the] summer of prosperity, will be found defective in [the] winter of adversity. "Then how stands the case between God and me? What ground of my confidence, what evidence that I am in Christ?" &c. Though the least degree of faith will save the house from falling, yet it will be a poor, cold, uncomfortable dwelling in winter, unless you mend the cracks and flaws, to defend you against driving, piercing winds and storms.

4. *It ariseth, as it did here, from the remembrance of some sin unmortified, and therefore it may be, for aught we know, unpardoned.*—Affliction puts upon the remembrance of sin with more circumstances and aggravations, and to more purpose, than ordinarily; even the best (which make most conscience hereof) attend to it in time of freedom: "If they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction; then he showeth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded." (Job xxxvi. 8, 9.) "Art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, in slaying?" (afflicting me with the loss of) "my son?" (1 Kings xvii. 18.)

In stormy change of weather, when clouds gather black over us, and it begins to drop, then we feel it in our bones, what bruises or aches we have gotten. When a man is arrested by one creditor, all his debts come in upon him. Even so when a man is arrested with sickness, or some other outward distress, then come in upon him the debts wherein he is bound over unto the divine law: when all is well with us, we can easily cast these debts on the score of Christ; but now it is hot work. Affliction is the glass of sin, and the opening and awakening the conscience to see it; and thence comes the trouble upon the spirit. It is not all the stormy winds upon the face of the earth, but some generated in the bowels thereof, which make the earth shake.

5. *It ariseth from Satan.*—When the eye of conscience is most open, he is most busy to present either that which may close it, or that which may trouble it: when the heart is most tender, he is most ready to bruise and wound it. In affliction, he would make breaches between God and us, us and God, and us and ourselves, if we must needs be sensible of them; gulfs out of which there is no redemption. He tempts us *unto* sin in prosperity, and then *for* sin in adversity; as we find in Job's case: even in those who he knows are out of his reach, where [he has] least strength and ground to do any thing, there he is most malicious; as it appears in his bold attempts upon our Lord. If he cannot run thee upon a rock, yet he will disquiet thee with a tempest; if he cannot rob thee of thy grace, yet he will of thy peace and comfort.

6. *It ariseth from the weakness of faith, and strength of sense.*—Apprehending God in affliction as our enemy; especially if there be some willing correspondence between us and any thing which God hates, God is a terror to us. Thus sense wrought in Job: "Behold, he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy." (Job xxxiii. 10. [See] also chap. xvi. 12—14.) And in the church: "He hath bent his bow like an enemy," &c. (Lam. ii. 4, 5.) O, if thou comest to that of Jacob: "Surely 'all these things are against me;' (Gen. xlii. 36;) and in them God against me;" it is sad with thee. This is the triumph of

faith: "If God be with us, who can be against us?" This the shriek of thy fainting: "God is against me! and then who can be for me?"

7. *It ariseth from God's withdrawing.*—Thus with Christ; when God would make his condition sad, and his burden heavy indeed, the Father and his own Divinity withdraw, and withhold their comfortable influential presence from the apprehension of the human nature; and when was he thus spiritually afflicted, but when most outward trouble came upon him, when his murderers and the traitor were upon him, and his life drew near to the grave? As it was prefigured in David, when the sorrows or dangers of death compassed him about, then the terrors of hell took hold upon him; (Psalm cxvi. 3;) that is, terrors arising from this,—the withdrawing of the divine love and countenance. Now come his astonishing, dismaying fears and sorrows, pressing even to death, making him as it were to shrink from the great work of his own mercy. (Mark xiv. 34.) Now he cries out, as his type: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Psalm xxii. 1; Matt. xxvii. 46;) the perpetual shriek of them who are cast away. When we can, with David, encourage ourselves in our relations to and interest in God, (1 Sam. xxx. 6,) then every, even the heaviest, burden, even death itself, is light; and we can in Christ's strength shake it off, or run away with it, as Samson [did] with the gates of the city. But, as when the sun is down or eclipsed, the flowers fold up and droop; or, when the face before the glass turns away, the face in it vanisheth; even so, when God hides his face, and we doubt of our title and interest, we are troubled; and then we are as Samson when his covenant [was] broken, and his locks, the sign thereof, cut: we are as other men, our strength is gone; any cord will bind us, any burden sink us. (Isai. lxiv. 7.)

8. I might add, *it may arise from our disacquaintedness with afflictions, as to our expectation and resolution.*

#### USES.

But for use:—

USE 1. *A word to them which are yet in their sins, out of Christ: and it is, 1. Of conviction. 2. Counsel.*

1. *Conviction and terror to them who are out of Christ.*—If God's people be liable to inward and outward trouble at once, wherein yet there is not a drop of wrath; what shall the visitation of the rest be, wherein there is not a drop of saving pity? If they may be so hardly put to it who yet are ever secretly and mightily supported, what shall they do that have no strength but their own to bear up under the mighty hand of God? Surely, if they smart sevenfold, the wicked must be avenged seventy times sevenfold. If the cup of affliction, by reason of the bitter ingredient of inward perplexity, be so bitter to them; what becomes of them for whom the dregs of that cup are reserved? The godly may stand condemned at their own bar; but the wicked at God's too; and nothing remains to them but a certain expectation of execution, without a change. O, if Jacob halt, sure Esau's back and bones must be broken; if the righteous be, by reason of sharp afflictions within and without, "scarcely saved," (to whom yet all afflictions are through grace ever

sufferable, short, and sanctified,) "where shall the sinner appear" when his sins and sorrows shall meet together? There be three days wherein thou shalt never be able to hold up thy head, and yet thou must appear: First, A day of extreme calamity: Secondly, Of death: Thirdly, Of judgment. O remember how sad it goes with the godly in a day of outward calamity, because of inward trouble joining with it, through gradual want of knowledge, faith, and evidence, the venom of sin un-mortified, malice of Satan not yet quite trodden under their feet, and the withdrawing of God's grace and countenance in part! And consider how thou wilt speed, who hast no saving knowledge, no faith, no interest, art under the reign of sin and Satan, whom the holy and jealous God cannot endure to behold but with revenge and execration. David had fainted in his affliction, had he not believed, &c. (Psalm xxvii. 13.) Surely, then, thou must utterly faint, because thou hast not obtained an heart to understand and believe to this day. The children of God, notwithstanding all their inward and outward pressures, can say, as Paul sighs for them all: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed," so as there is no way to escape or bear up; "we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not" quite "destroyed." (2 Cor. iv. 8, 9.) But if thou lookest not to it betimes, such a day will come upon thee, wherein thou shalt be so beset with trouble, that thou wilt be absolutely concluded and shut out from all relief; so "perplexed," that thou wilt despair; so pursued by the avengers of blood, that thou wilt be quite "forsaken" of heaven and earth; so "cast down," that thou wilt be utterly "destroyed" and dashed in pieces. O if trouble, such trouble, may seize on God's dear ones, what reprobate fear and astonishment shall take hold on thee that art a stranger, a slave, an enemy, and yet secure and presumptuous in that condition!

2. *It is a word of counsel to thee, as to be an alarm to thy security, so an antidote to thy presumption and censoriousness in reference to the godly.*—The men of the world can easily pass over the beams of raging wickedness in themselves and their own; but they maliciously and proudly aggravate the motes of infirmity in the godly. If they carry themselves unbecomingly by any impatience under the hand of God, now they are hypocrites presently, now they sink, notwithstanding they would seem to have special interest in, and acquaintance with, God to bear them up. Thus was Job censured, even by his friends; for which God censures them, and that with wrath. (Job xlii. 7.) Thus God's people serve themselves, but especially they have this measure from the men of the world: they see them droop and walk heavily under some outward burden, which they think is but ordinary; they see them faint, having drunk of the cup of affliction which is common: but, alas! they consider not what may be the weight of their burden within, what bitter ingredients may be in their cup, as to their inward man. Now, the spirit is the man, the mind is the strength; and they are not aware how tender the love of God hath made that, and how grieved and broken that may be upon some spiritual account between God and them. Job reproves David for mourning so excessively for Absalom; and at first sight we may think it strange that so eminent a saint as David



should so take-on for an outward loss, more, as it seems, than for the loss of God's favour and grace. But Joab did not know and consider what visitation there might be within David, while God stood over him with that outward rod; how God might set-on that outward blow with some inward smart and rebuke upon his spirit, in such an intimation as this: "O David, thou that wert so obliged to me, more than thousands! I will make thee know it is an evil and bitter thing to provoke me, and dishonour my name, as thou hast done. Thy child is dead, Absalom is gone with a curse, and Adonijah shall follow; and now, what hast thou gotten by hearkening to temptations, and pleasing thyself in the enticements of thy naughty heart?" No question but there were some such workings of God's displeasure within him; and therefore no wonder he took-on so heavily, as in Psalm xxxix. 11. Therefore, do not pass sentence upon the godly in their extremities, till thou canst hear and see all the bitterness of their condition.

USE II. *The second word is to the godly.*—1. They who are not, but may be, beset with this double perplexity. 2. They who are.

1. *Art thou in a state of freedom and exemption?*—Bless God; thy lot is very comfortable; but be not secure, indulge not thyself with a persuasion that it will always last. For,

(1.) *Thou hast married Christ with his cross, or not at all.*—Thou art delivered from *the curse* indeed; but thou art appointed to *the cross*, and canst not with integrity except against any part thereof, that without or that within.

(2.) *Outward afflictions and troubles may be many and heavy:*—One upon the neck of another; and by reason of them, though they come single, thou mayest endure an hard brunt, and have enough to exercise thy whole strength of faith and patience.

(3.) *Inward affliction may come:*—And that is far more heavy and grievous. The soul is infinitely more tender than the body; and yet scalding water upon the eye can very hardly be endured. O, then, a wounded spirit—who can bear that?

(4.) *It is not improbable, nor unusual, that both these rods may come upon thee at once.*—And then thy affliction is as a load upon a broken back; now thou wilt have thy hands full indeed, and very hardly be saved; now thou wilt need not only all the strength which thou hast, but all which thou mightest have had.

You will say, "Sirs, what shall we do?"

I answer, as in natural distempers, (i.) You must take some preparatives and prophylactics, to prevent the disease, if it may be, or at least to break the strength of it, if it doth come, that we may not sink under it.

(ii.) Some cordials, restoratives, and therapeutics for the cure of the malady when it is come. I shall endeavour, by the grace of God, to help you in these two cases, and conclude.

#### DIRECTIONS.

I. Then for direction *by way of preparation.*

DIREC. I. *Labour to be well-seen in points of saving knowledge, especially fundamentals.*—Ignorance, I told you, was the cause of soul-

distress ; and it is so, the impregnable impediment of comfort most-what in the godly ; they are not thoroughly informed, they do not understand themselves well in the matter of the covenant of grace ; the doctrine, way, benefit, terms of it, and the mistakes about it. If they were clear in these things, they would have a fairer way to comfort, and more easily go to the wells of salvation to draw water of life at any (even the darkest) time. Our Saviour prescribes this receipt in John xvi. 33 : "These things I have spoken unto you," &c. ; (namely, the great things of the gospel, such as those in verse 28 : that "I came forth from the Father," that is, to purchase all, "and go to the Father," that is, to procure and apply all ;) "These things," say the disciples, "thou hast spoken plainly ; thou hast given us clear evidence and full information of these, &c., points of knowledge." And what advantage did Christ's teaching and their learning and understanding of these great matters tend to ? "That in me ye might have peace ;" when "in the world ye shall have tribulation." Christ had promised he would not leave them comfortless ; (John xiv. 18 ;) and this is the course he takes, and the way he puts the disciples into, to prevent or prepare for tribulation, that it might not spoil them of their inward peace ; namely, instruction and knowledge. O, the Lord give you with utmost diligence to follow on to know, and to work-in what you know into your hearts ! So shall you have that within you, which, in dependence on Christ in the many points well understood, will be of singular use and advantage, to quiet and compose your spirits in all your troubles and languishments : grounds of knowledge are grounds of support and comfort.

**DIREC. II.** In order to the forenamed second cause of this distemper, *be sure you be close with, and often taking hold on, God by renewed acts of faith.*—My brethren, faith is not to be acted only at first, for our entrance into the state of grace ; but it is our duty and wisdom to carry on the exercise of faith for our continuance and progress in that state, and passage through all those temptations, difficulties, oppositions, discouragements, we are to meet withal therein. Faith and prayer must be as the breathing of our souls in and out, to keep the heart in life : "The just shall live" (that is, every part, degree, and act of life) "by his faith." This, again, is the order the great Physician of our souls prescribes : "Let not your heart be troubled ;" (John xiv. 1 ;) why, how shall they prevent or help it ? "Believe !" they were believers already. O but they must still [believe] in reference to every change and condition, or occasion of life, especially in order to this, that they may not be troubled in trouble, that the storm get not into their hearts, to shake and shatter them within, they must believe, that is, they must be much in the acting and exercising of faith, upon the grounds thereof. It is sad that I shall now say : We come to some Christians in their dumps and despondencies. Show them the promise, Christ in it, the way to it : they are so to seek that they scarce know what we mean ; "we are as barbarians to them ;" they are ready to faint under our hand, before we can, as it were, stanch their bleeding, or apply any plaster or cordial, or make them understand their way and ground of support and comfort : and all this for want of use and exercise of faith. The acting of any

faculty (where life is not come to the declining state, as it never fares with the life of grace) strengthens that faculty; and that person can readily, even in the dark, go to his rest or cordial, where he uses himself to be. Therefore, take a Christian, who makes conscience to bear his weight on the ground and object of faith, (Christ in the promise of free grace,) to a sensible, lost, undone sinner; let [the] world and [the] devil conspire to trouble him, and God try him; saith he, "I know not what to do; but I will try my old way: it is good for me to draw near still; (Psalm lxxiii. 28;) I will do so still as I use to do, I will cast myself down\* upon the free grace of Christ in the promise; I will lay the weight of my sinking spirit there; I will renew my hold, life, expectation there: this is my old path; I will never be turned or beaten out here." This Christian in his strength may challenge all the gates of hell. (Isai. xxvi. 3.) This was David's course: "Thou art my trust from my youth," &c. (Psalm lxxi. 5.) Thence was it that he could say in Psalm lvi. 3: "At what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." His shield and sword was always in his hand; therefore, he could make use of it when fear and inward trouble offered themselves. *Afraid*, alas! who is not? But what course will you take then? Even what course you use to take; that is, believe; use faith always, and have it now.

DIREC. III. In reference to the third and seventh cause of trouble of mind, (coming in conjunction with trouble in outward things,) namely, short and dim evidence, "*give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall;*" (2 Peter i. 10;) that is, under the power of sin and wrath, which make up the spiritual burden; but "so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom," &c.; that is, you shall have a safe and secure, peaceable, quiet, comfortable, well-assured passage through all the straits and storms we can meet withal on this side the kingdom, even death itself. Rest upon Christ always by faith of adherence on gospel-terms, and you are safe; but rest not, sit not down with this faith; for it is not enough *to comfort* you in an evil day, though *to support* it is.

OBJECTION. "O, but I have laboured and waited, and yet cannot obtain."

ANSWER. But go on, and thou canst not miss it; for it is promised; (Isai. xxxii. 17; lvii. 19; Rom. viii. 16, &c. ;) and thou shalt have assurance in thy greatest need. Better affliction find thee in this work and pursuit, than put thee upon it, as for certain it will to thy cost. When affliction comes, then first for a man to begin to put the question, "Am I in Christ? am I in the state of grace, favour of God," &c.; O thou wilt find it hard to get above thy fears; but "God is a very present help in trouble;" (Psalm xlvi. 1;) that is, for assurance in a darksome state, when thou canst make no shift without it. Do thou very much seek God for it in thy freedom, and thou shalt be sure of it in thy need: he will be "very much found" (Hebrew) as before; give all diligence to *make*, and thou *art sure*.

\* *And away*, are here added, in the first edition.—EDIT.

**DIREC. IV.** *Add hereunto, in order to the promoting of a well-grounded evidence and assurance, a prudent observation of, and careful attendance to, the doubts which arise, upon occasion, about your condition.* There is no Christian [who] attains to that degree of assurance, but is sometimes troubled with doubts; namely, such as these:—

“(1.) I was never humbled enough. My sore was never searched to the bottom: can my cure be done with so little pain?”

“(2.) I never knew the beginning or manner of my conversion: can grace, like dew, come without noise, in insensible degrees? Surely I am at best but a refined moralist.

“(3.) I can be heartily and excessively afflicted for outward losses, &c.; but sin, as sin, is not such a burden to me; and the loss of God’s favour goes not so near me.

“(4.) I can pour out my heart in vain delights; but have little liveliness of affection for spiritual things.

“(5.) I grow heavier and heavier in duties; and I think, were it not for shame, I should be ready to lay them aside, and tread them under foot; so little joy do I take in them, so little good do I get by them;” and the like.

Now, what dost thou? [Dost thou] shift off and let pass these and other like doubts, without endeavouring, by what means thou canst, to salve and assolt them with some resolution and satisfaction? \* This will be of ill consequence: I will tell thee what will come of it: they will return upon thee, and be as motes in thy eyes, gravel and thorns in thy feet, when the hand of God is upon thee; whereas, if they were well weighed, there would scarce a scruple be found in them.

**DIREC. V.** To meet with the fourth cause of the disease, which is some sin returning, &c., *cast up thy spiritual accounts, and set them even every day.*—Observe thy particular sins, offences, breaches, which we are ever making between God and us. Humble thyself in a heart-breaking, soul-grieving particular acknowledgment of them; and strengthen thyself, and set thyself aright, by a particular application of Christ in the grace of the promise, in reference to these particular offences, so acknowledged. Sins that through negligence escape thy observation, will return to make cracks and flaws in thy evidence, which affliction will find out to thy terror and disquietment; but if thou takest this course, the word is for thee: “If we confess,” &c. (1 John i. 9; Psalm xxxii. 5; Lev. xxvi. 40;) and now if this or that sin return, what mayest thou say?—“Truth, Lord, I am guilty, and my guilt thou dost justly suffer to be awakened in this evil day, and hour of temptation. But, Lord, thou knowest this; and this sin in particular hath been my burden, under which I have poured out my heart in groans and complaints, imploring and applying Christ in the promised grace of pardon, and power in reference to it; and thou hast heard it and known it.” In this case, though afflictions seem to search out iniquity, yet it shall not be found; but when affliction starts some sin, which thou didst wink at or slightly pass over, then thou wilt find trouble and sorrow indeed.

\* The fourth edition has, very properly, an interrogation at the close of this sentence.—  
EDIT.

**DIREC. VI.** Because there is much malignity in this distemper, let me here also add, in reference to the same cause, and the sixth, this preventive: *Follow on the work of mortification close.*—There is a combat between flesh and spirit: be sure you take the right side. If sin be it which embitters thy life, and gives a sting to every affliction, disarm affliction, and kill that which will kill thee. (Isai. xxvii. 9.) The design of the Lord in affliction is mortification: now, if thou joineest thy hand in the same work, God is ever with thee in the same way, and not against thee. But in case thou connivest at, hidest, shelterest, some known corruption, then thou canst hardly apprehend God but as thine enemy coming against thee.

As it was with the city of Abel, they were terrified at the approach of Joab and David's army: "O!" saith the woman upon the wall, "Art thou come to destroy the inheritance of the Lord?" "No," saith Joab; "but there is a traitor, Sheba, harboured here," &c. It is he that put the city into fear and danger, and made Joab seem their enemy. When his head was delivered, all was quiet. (2 Sam. xx. 14—22.) Now, when thou insistest on the business of mortification, thou wilt joy when thou fallest into tribulation; as it was with Jael: having done execution upon Sisera, "Come," saith she to Barak, &c., "welcome, my lords: I know whom you pursue: here he is, dead at your feet. Behold the nail in his temples!" (Judges iv. 22.) "O," saith one, visited with the stroke of death, "I have been long getting down this body of death, and now God will do all my work at once." Be not slack in this work, and afflictions will be more joyous than grievous.

**DIREC. VII.** Yet, again, to come to the root of this malignity, and in order to the advancing of the work of mortification, *endeavour after mortified affections to the world.*—These are the suckers that draw away thy strength from God, and the fuel and foment and strength of all that corruption that must be mortified. Aversion from God, with an immoderate clinging and cleaving to the creature, is the whole corruption of nature. Affliction is the reducing thee to God, and the ungluing, disengaging, and divorcing thee from a carnal, worldly interest: therefore, *minus gaudebis, minus dolebis*, "the less thou joyest, the less thou ruest;" the less thou layest a world-interest near thy heart, the less that affliction which is the parting work will go to thy heart; therefore let all creature-comforts and advantages be loose about thee as thy clothes, which thou mayest easily lay aside; and not as thy skin, which cannot be pulled off without great torture. Affliction endangers nothing but that which is outward; therefore let not thy excessive respect to that which is without thee make thy affliction an inward terror. If thou countest the world of no value, thou wilt be able, without inward perplexity and fear, to pass through all places of danger and plunder; as the traveller, when he carries but a small matter, which, he knows, if he loses it, will not at all undo him. Besides, "if thou lovest the world, the love of the Father is not in thee;" and this will be a desperate venomous sting to thy soul in thy affliction. If thou wouldest not have the world thy plague and thy poison in the enjoying, thy rack and thy terror in the losing, comply with the word and Spirit of grace, in the application of a Christ crucified

for the crucifying and mortifying of thy affections unto every earthly interest.

**DIRC. VIII.** In reference to the eighth cause, (unacquaintedness with affliction,) *live in the meditation and expectation of the cross.*—Be much in the knowledge of the necessity, nature, and design of afflictions.

(1.) *Necessity.*—If need be, you must be in heaviness for a time. (1 Peter i. 6.) In respect of the terms of the covenant, which lie in this, “Deny yourself, and take up your cross,” &c. ; and in respect of our disposition, we cannot be without them to wean us from the world, to embitter the creature to us, to conform us to a crucified Saviour, and make us partakers of his holiness.

(2.) *The nature and design of afflictions.*—They are fire, not to consume our gold, but to purge away our dross ; they are not revenging judgments, but fatherly medicinal corrections ; not judicial poison, but remedial physic, &c. Therefore “think it not strange,” be not strangers, as the word imports, to the fiery and greatest trial ; (1 Peter iv. 12 ; ) and thou wilt not be dismayed when it comes. Even poison may be habituated and made innocent. If a stranger come in unexpected into our house, grim, and armed with instruments of mischief, we know not whence he is, nor what he comes for ; it will startle and appale\* us : but if we be acquainted with him and his design, and expect him, we are quiet, and composed to entertain him. So when affliction comes, we can say, “This is the cup my Father gives me, who, I am sure, means me no hurt : this is but what I looked for every day,” &c. Inure we, therefore, ourselves to the cross, and make it familiar, conversing with it in our meditation and expectation. Seest thou one afflicted with the loss of a wife, another of a husband, another of a child, another of estate, another begging bread in prison or distress, &c. ? bear part of his burden in sympathy and pity, and readiness to succour him, and put thyself in his or her case ; supposing thou wert so and so, (it will do thee no hurt,) what shouldst thou do ? And so God will make thy burden light. (Psalm xli. 1.) So thou wilt be prepared to entertain and meet the burden, and it shall not fall upon thee and upon thy spirit, to crush and sink thee, &c. Think often, and think not amiss, (have no hard conceits,) of affliction ; and it shall not be hard upon thee. Take this course ; and then, as for the malice of Satan, in accusing and tormenting, and the seeming severity of the Lord, in withholding and withdrawing, thou shalt not need to trouble thyself ; for Satan is a restrained and conquered enemy, and cannot hurt thee ; and God is reconciled, and will not hurt thee. He may try thee, by intercepting the sweetness of fruition ; he will never curse thee, by intermitting or breaking the firmness of the union ; and if he hide his face for a moment, lament after him, and he will visit thee with the everlasting kindness of his compassion, which changes not, though there may be a change as to what thou feelest.

\* This was the original orthography of our modern word *appal*, and continued in common use till near the time of the abdication of James II. It conveys an accurate impression of the *pallor* or “paleness” which is produced by such a sudden fright as that which is described in the text.—EDIT.

Thus much for the preventives, to prepare for double afflictions upon the inward and outward man before they come.

II. Now, secondly, *what shall they do that are already under them?*

DIREC. I. NEGATIVE. 1. *Do not go about to settle thy mind by diversion, or turning thy thoughts another way, nor think that time will wear off this trouble.*—For this will but increase thy disquiet in itself, or in the causes of it, and wear off the sense of thy condition, which is occasional and preparative to thy well-grounded peace and settlement.

2. *Design not a little ease.*—The sore that is but skinned over will break out again and be more dangerous: put-in, therefore, for a cure, and that not partial, but thorough.

DIREC. II. POSITIVELY. *Take this course upon the sense of thy condition, and the actual knowledge of the fundamental matters of the covenant of grace.*—First, and immediately come, at least look, unto Christ for faith, and then, by faith looking to him as the author of faith, believe; that is, consent with all thy heart to receive him, and rest on him, on the terms of the gospel, to be saved by him only in his own way, at his own rate. This is the course [which] David, Jonah, the church, in the places aforementioned, took; this is the course the Lord prescribes: “Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant? let” this child of light, (and such thou art, if thou takest this course, fearest to sin against God, and hearkenest to this word I now speak,) “walking in darkness, and having no light,” (there is the depth of trouble of mind,) “trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” (Isai. l. 10.) His name is “the Lord God, gracious,” &c.; (Exod. xxxiv. 6;) Emmanuel, a Saviour, spreading his arms all the day long, (any time before the night of death close thy eyes and Christ’s bowels,) even to the disobedient, and will in no wise cast out or lose any that come to him upon all his own terms. Thou dear troubled heart, how wilt thou heal and settle thyself? What wilt thou do? Wilt thou first make satisfaction by thy mourning, humiliation, reformation, purpose of amendment, and so commend and ingratiate thyself to Christ? Thou nestlest upon a false bottom, and thy heart deceives thee; sound rest and peace is not to be had this way, if it be thy first, principal, or only way.

On the other hand, are you willing to let Christ let you into heaven, and not lead you his own way, that is, under his government in all things? Then you run away from Christ, and cannot be saved by him as such. But dost thou freely and willingly consent, upon the sense of thy lost condition, to take Christ for all purposes, for grace and glory? Thou art welcome to him; and let this be thy rest, in coming to him burdened and weary, willing to take his yoke upon thee: (Matt. xi. 28:) he saves thee to the utmost, only upon coming. Let this be satisfaction and settlement in thy trouble, from whatever cause it comes. O how clear is this way according to the contents of the covenant of grace! which is thus: Christ stands always ready to receive any that is willing to come to him upon his terms, and will never cast them off.

OBJECTION. “O, but if he were my God and my Christ, I would come to him and believe in him.”

**SOLUTION.** Your coming thus to him upon his own terms makes him yours ; gives the interest, and shall give the true rest.

**OBJECTION.** "O, but I have long stood out against his invitations, and rejected his importunities ; Christ hath called graciously, and I have heard ; his Spirit hath knocked, and my conscience hath pressed me to believe and come, and yet I have stood out ; and now I may expect he will throw me away with indignation ; I have denied mercy so many times, and mercy will surely now deny me : " and here comes-in thy trouble.

**SOLUTION.** No ; he will not in any wise cast thee out, if thou art willing to come. He knew that all that belong to his grace, till they are effectually called and quickened, and drawn to close with mercy in the offer, will serve him thus ; and therefore he waits still, and still, till they can be gotten to be willing to accept and close with him, and then for certain he closeth with them.

**OBJECTION.** "O, but I have made my address, and seemed to come to him, and have made profession, and been taken for a believer many years ; but I have falsified with him. I am a studied hypocrite, and have compassed God with lies : surely, then, there is no mercy for me."

**SOLUTION.** All this ariseth from thy ignorance of the tenor of the covenant of grace, which calls thee to believe upon the sense of this also. Suppose all this, (though these sad workings of thy doubts and troubles are no bad signs, being but part of thy combat,) yield all against thyself, if there be no other way ; (and it may be there is no better way in this juncture ;) yet now be willing on gospel-terms, and it is done, and thou mayest be at rest, as if all thy former work had been true. And, it may be, it was true ; but, however one or the other, thy way is immediately to come : and that shall be cleared up afterward ; and if thou hast doubled with God, thou wilt the rather be afraid to do so still.

**OBJECTION.** "O, but *now* come ? This would be only self and slavish fear ; my necessity compels me now ; I can make no other shift : there is no ingenuity [ingenuousness] in such a faith as I am like to put forth in this my extremity."

**SOLUTION.** Thou must yet be willing, &c., and all is well. The occasion of believing is always extremity and necessity ; for none ever came to Christ as long as they could make any shift without him ; but the cause, if thou comest, is the mighty power of God to make thee unfeignedly willing upon all the terms ; and thou art no less acceptable to God, because thou art constrained by grace, upon the pinch of thy necessity, to come. (Rom. xi. 32 ; Hosea v. 15.) God puts thee to this pinch, that he might hear of thee : in that latter place, it is as if God had said, "Well, I have called again and again, and used variety of means with this people, but all in vain : I will take another course, I will leave them, go to my place, hide myself, that trouble, and horror, and anguish shall take hold on them." And what then ? Shall it be unseasonable and too late to come ? No. "Then they will and shall seek me early." See how welcome a sinner is in this case to Christ. The prodigal,—he runs his course, spends all in riot and luxury, and was reduced to utter extremity ; and then he bethinks himself of coming home : "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I



perish with hunger!’ There be ‘many mansions in my father’s house.’ ‘I will arise and go to my father,’” &c. (Luke xv. 17, 18.) Being, upon this knowledge of his father’s fulness, drawn, and upon sense of his own lostness, driven, he comes; and what salutation do you think his father *might* give him? “What! are you come indeed? In good time! You, that have all this while taken your swing in all wickedness, as long as you could live, my house was not good enough for you; and now, that you have laid me under the reproach of your lewdness, and fulfilling your lusts, as long as you had a penny in your purse, or a rag to your back! do you now come to me? There is no duty or affection to me that sways you hither; but you are compelled by the extremity you have brought yourself to! Get you gone with a sorrow, and never look me in the face more!” Thus we would have thought; but it is quite otherwise: his father, when he did but say he would come, meets him afar off, falls on his neck, kisses him, brings him home, provides the best room, the best robe, the best kid, all the best, and there is great joy. His father doth not question what draws, or what drives; whether he comes out of compelling necessity, or out of ingenuity and dutiful affection: but he is come, that is enough. “This my son was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found;” and there is all done that possibly may make him welcome. Apply it for your encouragement to believe, and settlement in your undoubted interest by faith. Though you seem to come late, and out of necessity, yet God’s thoughts are not your thoughts. Yours may be thoughts of wrath, &c.; but God’s are of pity, love, acceptance upon your coming. Thus, you see, your way is immediately to come and cast yourselves upon Christ, on the terms of the gospel, and your great trouble shall be removed. Make not a judgment of your condition from what you feel, but from what you hear from the word of grace, which now gives sentence on your side.

**DIREC. III.** Then, having this for your support, *search, look back to experiences.*—Look into yourselves, what marks you can find of the truth of your faith; and in this, be sure you take hold on the promise that lies nearest to you, that is, is most suitable to your present condition, as in point of fear to sin; (Isai. l. 10;) lostness; (Matt. xviii. 11;) poverty of spirit, longing and thirsting after righteousness, &c.; (Matt. v. 3, 4, 6;) and so one grace and promise will draw-in all.

**DIREC. IV.** *In dependence on Christ in the promise, wait till he speaks peace and assurance:*—Ever fearing to offend God, especially by casting off duty, distrusting of him, charging him with folly, limiting him to time or means; knowing and assuring yourselves, that you cannot so please God in any thing as in resolved faith to cleave to him, and to follow him fully in the patient expectation of the promise of grace and glory.

Thus accepting Christ in the covenant, in the strength of the grace thereof, give up thy whole self to Christ in a covenant of willing, universal, unreserved obedience; and say with David, “I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints;” that, by the power thereof, they “turn not again to folly.” (Psalm lxxxv. 8.)