

SERMON XXVI.

BY THE REV. JOHN JACKSON, A.M.,

OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

HOW SHALL THOSE MERCHANTS KEEP UP THE LIFE OF RELIGION,
WHO, WHILE AT HOME, ENJOYED ALL GOSPEL-ORDINANCES,
AND, WHEN ABROAD, ARE NOT ONLY DESTITUTE OF THEM, BUT
EXPOSED TO PERSECUTION ?

Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar !

—Psalm cxx. 5.

THIS Psalm is the first of those fifteen which are called "Songs of Degrees," concerning which the conjectures of interpreters are various and uncertain; either because they were sung by the Jews at their several stages, in their return from the Babylonish captivity, or by the Levites on the fifteen steps or stairs, whereby they went up to the house of the Lord; or because they raised up their voices to a high strain in singing them; or because they are psalms of greatest use and excellency.

The psalm is generally thought to be composed upon occasion of David's flying from Saul, and Doeg's false accusation of him; (1 Sam. xxii. 23;) and it consists of three general parts:—

1. David's carriage towards God in the time of his distress: "In my distress I cried unto the Lord, and he heard me. Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue." (Psalm cxx. 1, 2.)

2. David's denouncing of judgment against his slanderous, false-tongued enemy: "What shall be given?" intimating that he expected some great reward for his malice against David; but, saith the Psalmist, he shall have "sharp arrows of the Almighty, with coals of juniper;" (verses 3, 4;) as if he had said, "Whatever reward he have from men, this shall be his reward from God."

3. David's bewailing his present condition. (Verses 5—7.) The words of the text are a branch of the third general part of the psalm; wherein we have David sadly breathing forth the sorrow of his heart for his absence from the tabernacle and the company of good men, and his dwelling among, and converse with, evil and wicked men: "Woe is me," &c.

By "sojourning," I suppose, is implied his absence from some desired habitation, namely, Jerusalem, and the tabernacle; for no man is said to sojourn at home, and when he is where he would be. (Psalm xxxix. 12; cv. 23; Heb. xi. 9.)

The word "Mesech" is taken by expositors, either, 1. For a place, as our translation carries it from the Chaldee paraphrase, which is the first of the ancient versions that so understand it; or, 2. For an expression of the prolonging of his sojourning; for so the word מֵשֶׁךְ signifies "to

draw forth or to prolong ;” * and thus the Septuagint render this place, Ἡ παροιμία μου ἐμακρυνθή† whom the Arabic, Syriac, and Vulgar Latin versions follow, with some others ; and the next verse seems to favour this sense : “ My soul hath long dwelt,” &c. (Psalm cxx. 6.) But either way gives us the same ground of complaint ; only the first sense doubles the ground of the Psalmist’s trouble, and the other suggests the circumstance of the long continuance of his sojourning.

By “ Kedar” is understood part of Arabia ; the inhabitants whereof are called σκηνίται, or, “ dwellers in tents,” because they had no fixed and settled habitation, but were robbers, and lived upon the prey.‡

Now, we are not to suppose that David did really sojourn and dwell among these barbarous people ; but he speaks this of his wandering about from place to place without any settled habitation ; and to set forth the cruelty and inhumanity of those among whom he dwelt, he doth express it thus : “ Woe is me, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar !” as if one living among professed Christians, who deal with him more like savages than Christians, should say, “ Woe is me, that I sojourn among Turks and Saracens !” And thus you see David’s present condition which he bewails, is his absence from Jerusalem and the tabernacle, or place of God’s solemn worship, and his converse with wicked and ungodly men : and then these two truths lie plain before us in the words :—

DOCTRINES.

I. *It is oftentimes the lot and portion of good men to be deprived of the society of the godly, and of opportunities of public serving God, and to dwell among, and converse with, wicked and ungodly persons.*

II. *It is a real ground of trouble and sorrow to a good man to be thus deprived, &c.*

It was that which here made David proclaim himself in a state of woe and misery ; it was that which the apostle tells us did vex the righteous soul of Lot, (2 Peter ii. 7, 8,) and which made the holy prophet Elijah even weary of his life. (1 Kings xix. 4.) You may easily imagine what a sad heart a poor lamb might well have, if it be driven from the green pastures and still waters, and forced to lodge among wolves and foxes, where it must feed upon carrion or starve, and be continually in danger of being lodged in the bellies of its cruel and bloody companions, unless some secret over-ruling hand do restrain their rage, and feed it with wholesome food. And truly such is the condition of those that follow the Lamb of God in holy, lamb-like qualities, when deprived of green pastures and still waters of gospel-ordinances, and forced to converse with wicked and ungodly men.

In handling of this point I shall *first* lay before you the grounds of it, and *then* adjoin such practical application as may be useful and profitable.

* מִשְׁכָּנִי עָמַד אֶמְצָא, Isai. xlii. 22. *Dies ejus non trahentur ;* that is, *non prorogabuntur.*—BOCHARTI *Geographia Sacra*, pars i. lib. iii. c. xii. p. 209. “ *Meshek* signifies ‘ to draw out, to prolong ;’ and it is thus rendered in Isai. xlii. 22 : ‘ And her days shall not be prolonged ;’ that is, shall not be deferred or protracted.” —EDIT. † “ Alas for me, that my sojourning has been prolonged !” —EDIT.

‡ BOCHARTUS, *ut supra*.

The GROUNDS of this truth do partly refer to God, partly to wicked men, and partly to the godly themselves; if in such a condition a believing soul either look upwards, or outwards, or inwards, he will see much cause of grief and trouble.

1. *With reference unto God*; and that upon a double account:—

(1.) *It is a real ground of sorrow to a believing soul to be deprived of occasions of solemn blessing and praising God.*—The soul that is full of the sense of the goodness of God, that knows how many thousand ways the Lord is continually obliging it to love and bless him, cannot but be afflicted in spirit to be kept from making its public acknowledgments of divine goodness. The Psalmist tells us, that “praise waiteth for God in Sion;” (Psalm lxxv. 1;) that is, in the public assemblies of the church; and truly it is a grief to a believing soul, not to wait there with his thank-offerings, not to pay his “vows unto the Lord in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the Lord’s house,” &c.; (Psalm cxvi. 18, 19;) not to declare to all that fear God what he hath done for their souls. (Psalm lxxvi. 16.)

(2.) *It is a real ground of sorrow to live among those that are continually reproaching and blaspheming the name of God.*—To see sinners despise the goodness of God, and trample upon his grace and mercy, and scorn his love and kindness, and kick at his bowels, and spit in his face, and stab at his heart, who is our God, our Father, our Friend, our good and gracious Lord and King;—this must needs make the believing soul cry out, “Woe is me, that I live among such!”

Let us suppose a person that hath been hugely obliged by a prince to love him, and that indeed loves him as his life; if this prince should be driven from his throne, and an usurper get into his place, would it not be a great affliction, and saddening to the spirit of such a person, to live among those who every day revile, reproach, scorn, and abuse his gracious prince? Why, sirs, if you and I be true believers, we know that the Lord is our sovereign King and Prince; such a one who hath infinitely more obliged us to love him, than it is possible for any prince to oblige a subject; and we do love the Lord as our lives, nay, better than our lives, or else we love him not at all; and must it not then be matter of grief to hear ungodly sinners, who have driven God away from their hearts and souls, where his throne should be set up, and who have let that grand usurper the devil set up his throne within them, and among them, and who daily say unto God, as those wicked ones, “Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;” (Job xxi. 14;) to hear such curse and swear and blaspheme God, and in their lives by wicked, ungodly courses do him all the despite and dishonour that they can; bring his name to the tavern, to the stews, upon the stage, and there soot and defile the great and glorious name of God with the worst of pollutions? Certainly, sirs, he cannot account God his Friend, his Father, his good and gracious Prince, whose eye doth not run down with rivers of tears to see men so far from keeping God’s law.

2. *It is a trouble to good men to sojourn, &c., with reference to those wicked, ungodly persons among whom they live.*—It grieves their souls to

see sinners "run into all excess of riot," eagerly pursuing hell and damnation, greedily guzzling down full draughts of the venom of asps, and the poison of dragons. It pities them to see sinners stab themselves to the heart, and laughing at their own plague-sores, jesting away God, and heaven, and eternal happiness. If any of us should see a company of men so far besotted and distracted, as that one should reud and burn the evidences of a great inheritance, which others labour to deprive him of, another should cast inestimable pearls and jewels into the sea, another eagerly drinking down that which you knew to be the juice of toads and spiders, or hugging a viper and scorpion in his bosom, another stabbing himself in the breast, another laughing at and licking his own plague-sores; and all of them reviling, cursing, striking, spitting in the face, and stabbing at the heart, of those that any ways endeavour to hinder them from destroying themselves, or that will not do as they do, and be as mad as themselves; should we not pity them, and with grief of heart say, "Woe is me, that I live among such?"

Why, sirs, he that hath had any serious thoughts of eternity, that hath soberly considered the worth of an immortal soul, that believes the holiness, justice, and power of God, that understands the evil of sin, what a plague, what a venom, what a dagger at the sinner's own heart sin is,—he cannot but see and know that every ungodly, profane sinner is much more an object of highest compassion than any I have now mentioned, and therefore cannot but cry out, "Woe is me," &c.

3. *It is a trouble to good men to sojourn, &c., with reference to themselves, and their own concernments.*—Because they are sensible that such a condition lays them open to a great deal of danger; and that,

(1.) *In regard of their graces.*—For, the want of the society of good men, and the ordinances of the gospel, is like the want of dew and rain to the grass, or food to the body; and therefore those who have tasted of the sweetness and fatness, and know what a blessedness it is to be satisfied with the goodness of God's house, (Psalm xxxvi. 8; lxx. 4,) cannot but mourn over the want of gospel-ordinances; as the presence of the sun-beams makes the flowers to be fresh and beautiful, and yield a fragrant smell; whereas the want thereof makes them look pale and wan, and hang the head; even so the enjoyment of good society and gospel-ordinances makes the graces of a believer amiable and lovely, and give forth their pleasant smell; the want of which makes them very much to droop and languish.

And then, on the other side, the society of wicked men, the venom and poison of an evil example, the alluring flatteries of the world on one hand, and its frowns and threatenings on the other hand, are of great force to nip and blast, to dead and dull, the graces of good men.

And therefore he who knows the worth and value of true grace, that accounts it his riches, his treasure, his jewel, his life, (Luke xii. 21,) and is sensible how much depends upon the life and vigour of grace and religion in his soul, and understands how destructive the want of gospel-ordinances and the company of evil men are to his graces, may well cry out, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech," &c.

(2.) *In regard of their persons, and the concernments of this life.*—The enmity that is in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman, doth not only put forth itself in endeavours to ruin or weaken their graces, but also to destroy their persons. Wicked men's malice against that spiritual life of grace in good men which themselves do not partake of, doth soon improve into malice also against that natural, human life which themselves are also partakers of. Their desires to suck the blood, as I may so say, of good men's souls and graces makes them delight to suck the blood of their bodies. Witness Cain, the first that learnt this bloody trade by killing his brother, for no other cause but "because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." (1 John iii. 12.) Witness also Ahab and Jezebel, Manasseh, &c. But the foul-mouthed witness to this black and sad truth is the scarlet, bloody whore of Babylon, who is "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus;" (Rev. xvii. 6;) and therefore, in God's due time, she shall have blood to drink. Those, therefore, who understand what a hellish fire of rage is in the hearts of wicked men, how great their malice is against goodness and good men, and what combustible matter our life and the comforts of this life be, so far as they value these mercies, have reason, with David, to cry out, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech," &c.

And now the woful condition of those that are deprived of gospel-ordinances, and sojourn where heavenly manna doth not fall, and who dwell among and converse with wicked and ungodly men, as it calls upon us to bless God when it is not so with us, and to pity and pray for those who have reason to take up such a complaint, as David here doth; so also to bethink ourselves what we ought to do if the case were ours: for, you know, the life of a Christian is very oft, and very fitly, in scripture compared to a warfare; and surely he is but a mean soldier, and never like to come off with victory and triumph, who doth not prepare himself for all kind of assaults, and doth not labour to fortify every passage whereat he may be stormed; and therefore it is good for us to make the condition of others our own; so that this question, or practical case of conscience, will offer itself to our consideration:—

How shall those merchants and others keep up the life of religion, who, while they were at home, enjoyed all gospel-ordinances, but, being abroad, are not only deprived of them, but liable to the Inquisition, and other ways of persecution for their religion?

Before I answer the case, I shall a little open it, and lay down some preparatory propositions for the right understanding of it, and then direct our practice.

By *religion* we do not understand any outward way or form, any pomp and gaieties in worshipping God; but such a due sense of our dependence upon a good and gracious, almighty, holy God for our being and well-being, both in time and to eternity, as doth powerfully engage the soul heartily to love God, and sincerely to serve him, in obeying his good and holy commands made known to us.

By *the life of religion* we may understand, either, 1. The truth and reality of it in the soul, in opposition to a soul dead in sin; or, 2. The

vigour, activity, and liveliness of religion, in opposition to a dead, dull, languid principle; and both may be well included in the question; for as we are all concerned to endeavour, by all fit and lawful means, not only to have our bodies kept from rotting and putrefying by "the salt of a living soul,"* but to have them active and vigorous, fit for the employments of a natural life, and not stupified with lethargies and benumbing palsies; even so we ought to endeavour, not only that our souls may be quickened with a true principle of religion, but that we may have such a lively, vigorous, and influencing sense of divine goodness upon them, that our religion may not be a dull, languid, lethargic principle, but may render us fit and prompt for all the actions of a spiritual life. And now, this life of religion the case supposeth the person to have who needs advice; and then you will quickly perceive that there be two things in danger:—

1. The life of religion in a religious person.

2. The life of a religious person; and so the case doth resolve itself into these two queries:—

I. *What should believing Christians do to support the life and vigour of religion in their souls, when they want the ordinary means of public ordinances, and are endangered by the leavening society of wicked men?*

II. *How should they preserve their lives among persecuting enemies without hazarding the life of their religion?*

For the clearing of and directing in this case, I shall now premise some propositions fit to be taken notice of.

PROPOSITION 1. *It cannot be expected, that any rule should be given, according to scripture, whereby both the one and the other life may be certainly secured.*—For many times God's providence brings us into such circumstances, that, if we are resolved that, come what will, we will keep our religion, we must lose our lives; and if we are resolved to keep our lives, though with the hazard or shipwreck of our religion, we must then part with our religion, and perhaps our lives too.

PROP. II. *There can be no certain and infallible course propounded whereby the life of the body may be secured with the loss of religion.*—Though [the] devil and [the] world bid fair, and promise we shall live and do well if we will part with our religion; yet they are not able, if willing, to make good their promise, so long as there be so many thousand ways to death beside martyrdom; and this is the purport of that threatening expression: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it," (Matt. xvi. 25,) not only that eternal life which is the only true life, but even this temporal life: as many relations tell us.

PROP. III. *The life of religion in the soul is that which, by God's blessing and our spiritual care and industry, may be infallibly secured in any place, among any persons, in any condition.*—I do not say, *the outward exercise of religion*, but that which is *the life and principle of religion in the soul*, may be preserved. Force and violence may deprive those that are religious of opportunities to meet together, and pour forth their common prayers and supplications to God, and publicly sing forth the praises of God, and hear the great truths of the gospel preached

* *Salillum animæ.*—PLAUTI *Trinummus*, actus ii. scen. iv. 91.

unto them; nay, they may be hindered from speaking with their mouths, either to God or for God; as many of the martyrs have been gagged. But all the force and violence in the world cannot take away that which is the principle and life of religion, (unless we ourselves betray and cast it from us,) nor can they hinder the prime and principal acts and exercises of religion. All the world cannot hinder you or me from having good thoughts of God; from sanctifying the Lord God in our hearts; from trusting in, hoping in, rejoicing in, the goodness and mercy of God through Jesus Christ; from making holy melody in our hearts, and such music as shall be heard beyond the spheres, though he that stands at our elbow knows not a word we speak: so that true religion, both in the principle and prime exercises of it, may be infallibly secured; insomuch that he who can rend the heart out of the body cannot tear religion out of the soul.

PROP. IV. *His soul cannot be quickened with the life of the religion of the Gospel, who is not in heart persuaded, that the securing of the life of religion in his soul is hugely more his concernment than the preserving of the life of the body.*—Yea, his religion is built on a sandy foundation, who hath not seriously considered, that, for aught he knows, his religion may cost him his life; and hath not brought his soul to an humble resolution to lay down his life, rather than let go his religion: thus much is clearly imported in that passage: “Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost?” &c. (Luke xiv. 28, &c.)

PROP. V. *The society of good men, and enjoyment of gospel-ordinances, are of special use to preserve, quicken, and enliven the principle of religion in the soul.*—They are to religion in the soul, what food is to the natural life of the body; and therefore the ordinances in the church are compared to “breasts of consolation.” (Isai. lxvi. 11.) The great design of God in appointing gospel-ordinances is, that, by the help and assistance of those gifts and graces which he bestows upon his ministers, the souls of those who are estranged from him should be brought home to the owning and acknowledging of the truth; and that those who have returned to the Lord should be more and more affected with a sense of divine goodness, and their dependence on the Lord for all they have and hope for; and, indeed, if preaching, and reading, and praying, and every other ordinance, both in public and in private, do not aim at and intend this great end,—the begetting or actuating and stirring up the life of religion in our souls, then are they, what some would fain persuade us, vain, useless, troublesome things. If thy coming to church to hear a prayer, or a sermon, be not by thee designed, and do not in the event tend, to make thee better, to love God more, loath sin more, and value the world less, and resolve more heartily to obey the gospel, thou hadst as good have been in thy bed or shop as in the church; and if, in preaching and praying, we that are God’s mouth to you, and your mouth to God, have any other design than to stir up in your souls good thoughts of God, affectionate workings of heart towards a loving, tender-hearted Father, zealous and hungering desires to do the will of God, and express our love by obeying his commandments, I seriously profess I should think myself much better employed to be working in a cobbler’s stall, or raking in the

kennel, or filling a dung-cart, than preaching or praying in a pulpit. And let those who do not intend these great ends know, that, ere long, they will find they had better have been employed in the most debasing drudgery, than in the outward work of God with sinister and unworthy ends.

These things premised, the case resolves itself into these particular questions:—

I. *What should believing Christians do to support the life of religion in their souls, when they want the ordinary food of public gospel-ordinances?*

II. *What should such do to preserve their outward concernments among persecuting enemies, without hazarding their religion?*

QUESTION I.

In answer to the first question take these directions:—

1. *Let such humbly reflect upon their former slighting, despising, and abusing the means of grace which now they want.*—It is the usual method of God to teach us the worth of mercies, either temporal or spiritual, by the want of them, and to bring us to want those mercies which we abuse. If the child play with or throw about his meat, he may well think a wise and loving father will make him feel the want of it, and thereby know the worth of it; and certainly we have as much reason to fear the fulfilling of those threatenings which the ministers of the gospel have for many years sounded in our ears, for our abuse of the means of grace; and certainly, if God's providence should call the most of us into Spain, or some other Popish country, where we should have "a famine of hearing the word of the Lord," might we not sadly reflect upon our despising, yea, and loathing, the heavenly manna of God's word? I speak not of the profane, ungodly wretches, who scarce ever had any serious thoughts of eternity, nor ever soberly considered whether they were at all beholden unto God or no, that never knew how to value a Bible above a play-book, or the sacrament above a drunken meeting; whose religion is to scoff and mock at godliness and godly men, and who scarce ever knew any other end in coming to church but to mock or carp at the preacher; who may with trembling read their doom, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. But I speak of the professors of religion; how have they, either by reason of new-fangled opinions, slighted and despised gospel-ordinances!—or else, by reason of fulness of spiritual food, have loathed and trampled upon the means of grace! to whom the Lord seems to speak, as to those, Ezek. xxxiv. 18, 19: "Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet? And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet?"—or else, having enjoyed them, and made use of them, have been little the better by them; have not lived and practised the sermons they have heard, and the prayers they have made! O let such be sure, in the first place, to give glory to God, when he deprives them of such means, by acknowledging his justice in taking away what hath been

so much abused, or at best so little improved; then let them, with broken and bleeding hearts, reflect upon those full banquets of spiritual dainties, the fragments of which in a time of want they would be glad of.

2. *Heartily resolve, if ever the Lord bring you again to enjoy gospel-ordinances, you will more value, prize, and improve them.*—And, indeed, that alone which can make our repentings and sad reflections upon former miscarriages not to be mockings of God, and cozening ourselves, must be a hearty resolution against what we profess to be sorry for; and, therefore, that our resolution in such a case may be the more fixed, it would be good to record it in our note-books, that so it may be a continual monitor on all occasions, minding us of our duty, and checking us, if afterwards we prove like the Israelites, who soon forgot the Lord. (Psalm cvi. 13.) And the truth is, a Christian's note-book is usually a more faithful register than his heart; and it is easier for the devil to blot a good resolution out of our minds than out of our books.

3. *Labour to know, and understand well, and often remember, wherein consists the life of true and real religion.*—There be so many things in the world that pretend to be religion, and less deserve that name than the picture of a man deserves the name of a man, that it is an easy mistake to nourish an enemy to religion instead of religion, unless we be serious and wary, and more apt to regard the characters which the scriptures give of real religion, than hasty to take up the forms and fancies of men instead of religion. I have read of a young French lady, who, observing the glorious pomp and splendour of a Popish procession, cried out, "How fine a religion is ours in comparison of the Huguenots!" a speech suiting her age and quality; but, indeed, if religion did consist in such things, the question I have in hand would fall to the ground; for there could then be no exercise of religion among those who would not admit of such pompous solemnities. Let us therefore be often remembering, that the religion of the gospel consists in "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" (Rom. xiv. 17;) in "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts," and living "soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," and so "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;" (Titus ii. 12, 13;) in "visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keeping ourselves unspotted from the world." (James i. 27.) He that hath a precious jewel which he would secure, must be able to distinguish it well from a counterfeit stone; lest he neglect his jewel, and spend his care and pains upon a glittering glass foisted into the room of it.

4. *In all your actions, be often fixing your eye upon your great end.*—Be often asking yourselves, "What is the work and business for which God sent me into the world?" which lies in three words: (1.) Honour God. (2.) Save your souls. (3.) Do good to others. Be often minding yourselves, that you have a better trade to drive than for the corruptible riches of this world, even for the "pearl of great price," the eternal happiness of your souls. Religion is the way to heaven; and he that doth not often eye his journey's end, and consider whether the way he takes do lead unto his end, is never like to keep long in the right way. But now he that often with seriousness considers with himself, that the

God who made him expects to be honoured by him ; that the securing his soul's welfare is his grand concernment ; and that to save the soul of one sinner is a greater good than to save a country from drowning, or a city from burning ; and therefore on all occasions asks himself, "How may I manage such a business so as to honour God, and promote the good of mine own and other men's souls? How may I prosecute such an affair without prejudicing the grand design of my life?" this man is like to secure religion in his soul.

5. *Live up to the professed principles of your religion.*—And believe it to be a greater glory to God, honour to your religion, and security to your own souls, to live according to, than to argue and dispute for, your religion ; for most certain it is that self-love, worldly interest, pride, passion, &c., may urge men to argue eagerly for the Christian or Protestant religion ; whereas nothing but love to God, and care of our own souls, and charity to the souls of others, can make a man live according to the principles of that religion. And as it is with the principle of natural life, it is not made more lively, active, and vigorous by arguing and disputing wherein it doth consist, and what are the proper acts of it, but by putting it forth in the due acts and exercises of that life ; even so the principle of spiritual life in the soul gets no strength by zealous and hot disputing, *what and which is the true religion? and which be true and proper acts of religion?* but by humble practice of what we know to be religion : not but that it is both lawful and commendable to be able to understand and defend the grounds and principles of our religion, and all the holy exercises of it ; but I only caution against letting that sap run out in unfruitful suckers, which should nourish the fruit-bearing branches.

6. *Be the more careful to observe and close with the inward stirrings of God's Spirit in your hearts, moving you to prayer, meditation, &c.*—When you are in "a valley of vision," you will have many calls and motions from without to hear the word, and pray, and receive the sacrament ; but when you are abroad in "a land of darkness," God must not only be your best, but your only, Friend, by his Spirit, to jog and stir you up to holy duties ; and therefore it doth more than ordinarily concern us, at such a time, not to send away God's Spirit grieved with our backwardness to that which is our own concernment.

7. *Observe and keep a register or diary of God's mercies and your own sins.*—That you may be often minded what God hath been to you, and what you have been to him ; with how many thousand kindnesses he hath obliged you, and with how many thousand sins you have disobliged him. When we enjoy public ordinances, we may there be often minded both of God's goodness to us and our sinfulness against him ; and so may have our hearts stirred up to have very good thoughts of God, and very low thoughts of ourselves. But when we want public ordinances, we should labour to supply that want by a more strict observation and recording both [of] the one and the other, that, by reviewing our register, we may be enabled to affect our souls suitably, either to praise the Lord, or abase ourselves.

8. *Lay a charge upon yourselves to sleep and awake with the thoughts*

of God and eternity upon your souls.—And indeed though this is exceeding useful for all men, yet most of all for those who are deprived of ordinances. It is sure that the same truths which at first work upon the soul to the begetting [of] grace, are of force afterwards to quicken grace, and make it lively and vigorous in the soul. And certainly the belief of what God is in himself and to us, and the thoughts of eternity, have a great force to persuade careless sinners to sober and serious consideration, the necessary instrument by which grace and a spirit of true and real religion are begotten in the soul; and therefore when we want those public ordinances which might be often presenting these great truths to our souls, it will be of great use to charge ourselves more severely with the daily serious thoughts of them.

9. *Take heed (as for your life) of indulging any secret sin.*—For that will keep down the life of religion in the midst of all ordinances, and therefore much more in the want of them. A secret disease in the body which spends upon the stock of the radical moisture, will keep a man from being lively and vigorous, though he have plenty of very good nourishing food; much more will it endanger one in a famine: even so a secret sin lodged within, and indulged, will weaken and enervate the principle of religion in the soul amidst the fullest provision of gospel-ordinances, much more when there is a famine or scarcity of the bread of life. A tradesman that hath some secret vent, where his estate runs waste, may prove a beggar in the midst of daily incomes by a good trade; much more if he spends upon a dead stock: and so a man who spends the strength of his soul in some close and secret sin, may prove a spiritual beggar in the fullest trade of gospel-ordinances, and though he have daily incomes of convictions, informations, reproofs, counsels, solicitations, &c., from public ordinances, much more in the want of them; and therefore they who value the life of religion, or the life of their souls, must take heed of indulging secret sins.

10. *Be the more careful often to feel the pulse of thine own soul.*—We use to say, “Every man at a competent age is either a fool or a physician;” and though he be a fool indeed who, when he needs and may have wiser physicians, will trust to himself; yet when he cannot have others, a man should the more study himself, and the oftener try his own pulse: and truly he is but a babe in spiritual things that is not something of a physician to himself; and though we should not trust our own skill or experience, where we need and may have the help of others, yet when we are deprived of them, we should the more diligently converse with our own souls, and be the oftener trying how our pulse beats towards God, and heaven, and the things of another life.

11. *Be so much the more in private secret prayer, reading, and meditation.*—When we want the showers of public ordinances, we should the more diligently use the watering pot, and water our souls “with our foot,” as the phrase is concerning Egypt. (Deut. xi. 10.) If our lot should be cast where there be no public markets where corn might be bought, every one would plough and sow, reap and thrash, in his own grounds: even so, if we should live where there be no public gospel-ordinances, where the truths of the gospel are not publicly to be had, where we cannot partake of the

labours of the gospel-ministry, then it would concern us to be the more diligent in ploughing and sowing, in reaping and thrashing, by our own private endeavours; and I think it would be fit for us in such a condition to spend that time at least in private duties, which others spend in superstitious or idolatrous services: let not us think much to give God and our souls that time which others give to their own superstitious fancies.

12. *In the use of all private helps, act faith in God, as being able to supply the want of outward means by the gracious influence of his good and Holy Spirit.*—When there was no rain from heaven, God could cause a mist to arise and water the earth; (Gen. ii. 6;) even so, if the Lord should bring us where there be no showers of public ordinances, he can stir up in our souls those holy and heavenly meditations, which shall again drop down like a heavenly dew upon the face of our souls, and keep up a holy verdure and freshness upon the face of our souls. Egypt is said to have no rain;* but God makes it fruitful by the overflowing of its own river Nilus. And truly if God bring any true believer into a spiritual Egypt, where the rain of public-ordinances doth not fall, he can cause such a flow of holy and heavenly thoughts and meditations as shall make the soul very fruitful in a good and a holy life; and therefore we should oft, in such a condition, believably remember, that if we do our endeavour, by private prayer, meditation, reading, and such like, God is able, and will, in the want of public ordinances, preserve the life of religion in our souls, by private helps.

QUESTION II.

We proceed now to the question contained in the general case; namely,—

II. *What should believing Christians do to preserve their outward concernments among persecuting enemies, without hazarding their religion?*

Now, this question will resolve itself into two particular queries:—

(I.) *What should such do to secure themselves from suffering?*

(II.) *What should they do to encourage themselves against and support in suffering?*

(I.) The sum of what may be said to the first query, I suppose to be comprised in that counsel of our Lord Jesus, who was Wisdom itself, and Innocency itself: “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” (Matt. x. 16.) The serpent’s wisdom joined with the dove’s innocency is the true Christian’s best security: to each of which I shall speak something.

1. *Get spiritual prudence and wisdom to secure from suffering, where we have not a clear and sufficient call.*—The Heathens hinted wisdom as well as strength to be needful for a soldier, when they appointed the warlike goddess Pallas to be the patroness of wisdom. A soldier may and ought to guard himself, and, by winding and turning his body, avoid the enemies’ blow, so long as he doth not turn his back, forsake the field, or betray his trust. In like manner may a good soldier of Jesus Christ, by any lawful means, guard himself from suffering; and by any just compliance, or stepping aside, or giving back, avoid a blow or make a fair retreat,

* *Terra non indiga Jovis.* “A country which never requires rain.”—EDIT.

so long as he keeps the field, and doth not turn his back upon nor give up a good and a just cause for fear of suffering. Hence the apostle adviseth: "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without;" (Col. iv. 5;) that is, walk as those that have wisely fixed upon a good end, and do use the most proper and likely means to attain that end. Now, this general direction will branch itself forth into these particulars:—

(1.) *Do not rashly and unnecessarily provoke those that have power to do you a mischief.*—It is not wisdom to stir in a wasp's nest, nor by bloody colours to provoke a wild bull; and certainly our life, and the comforts and relations in this world, are such real and great blessings, that they are not to be sacrificed to a humour, nor cast away, but upon the most serious consideration and real necessity; and certainly, when our Lord Jesus directed his disciples, if persecuted in one city, to flee to another, he never intended they should throw themselves into the jaws of roaring lions, nor provoke bears and tigers to tear them in pieces, nor leave the quiet habitation of Sion to seek persecution, and court a martyrdom among Pagans and Infidels. The holy apostle Paul, who was as willing to die for the name of Christ as any, and was therefore by his love and zeal urged to go into the theatre at Ephesus; yet he took the prudent counsel and advice of his friends, not to venture himself, nor by his presence provoke the enraged multitude; and afterward he made use of his kinsman's help to secure his life from those who had bound themselves with an oath to kill him; and at last appeals to Cæsar, to avoid the mischief designed against him by the Jews. (Acts xxi. 13; xix. 31; xxiii. 16; xxv. 10.) This piece of spiritual prudence caused the primitive Christians to abstain from profaning the temples of the Heathen, and reviling their gods; and therefore they chose to discover to them the vanity of their idolatries from the writings and records of their own prophets, and with the greatest love and sweetness that could be. Yea, this was so evident in Paul himself, that the town clerk of Ephesus was able to be his and his fellow-Christians' compurgator in this matter: "Ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches," (or, as the original, *ιεροσυλους*, "sacrilegious persons,") "nor yet blasphemers of your goddess;" (Acts xix. 37;) and therefore, that which Josephus accounts one of Moses's laws, "that none should blaspheme the religion of another," though it be not a general duty, as appears by Elijah's mocking and scoffing at the God and religion of Baal's priests, (1 Kings xviii. 27,) yet it holds good here as a rule of prudence, to avoid needless provoking of those that are without. And in this case I take this to be a sure rule:—"Whatever act of ours hath rationally a greater likelihood to provoke, harden, and enrage the hearts of men, rather than to convince and convert, is a fruit of indiscretion, not of Christian prudence; a piece of folly, not a part of our duty." It was certainly a favour from God when he inclined the heart of Trajan to order his proconsul Plinius Secundus, desiring to know his pleasure in the case, that "when any were brought before him, and accused to be Christians, he should punish them according to law, but should not industriously search them out."* If

* *Conquirendi non sunt: si deferantur et arguantur, puniendi sunt.*—PLINIUS SECUNDUS, lib. x. epist. 98.

now any should have rushed into the judge's presence, and taken the devil's work out of his hand, (who is the "accuser of the brethren,") it would surely have been a sinful undervaluing the favour of God in that relaxation of their persecution. But now this advice must be bounded with a word of caution; for as we should take heed lest our zeal degenerate into ambition, and foolish vain-glory in suffering; so, on the other side, lest our prudence and Christian wisdom turn to sinful craft and policy, while, to avoid the stroke of persecution, we take up the devil's buckler of unlawful practices. The apostle Peter was not bound to go into the high priest's hall, and proclaim himself a disciple of Jesus; but he was obliged not to deny and forswear it when challenged with it: and so, though I am not always bound to proclaim my faith and religion, yet am I engaged never to disown it; and therefore we must take heed of that which Elihu charged Job with, the choosing iniquity rather than affliction; (Job xxxvi. 21;) and therefore, when fear or covetousness would urge us to sin, rather than suffer, let us remember, against our fears, that it is a more fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, than dying men; (Isai. li. 12;) and, against our earthly desires, let us remember, that if we gain the whole world, and lose our own souls, we shall be incomparable losers by the bargain. (Matt. xvi. 26.) On the other side, when ambition, vain-glory, or humour would urge us to unnecessary sufferings, let us remember, that God, who is Wisdom itself, "hath no pleasure in fools," (Eccles. v. 4,) nor delights in those sacrifices which are not presented to him by prudent consideration and sober resolution, but by the folly of a precipitate zeal; and however, where the heart is right and full of love, God may accept of the love, and pardon the weakness, yet he no way delights in the sufferings which men bring upon themselves unnecessarily, by [a] rash, imprudent carriage, whereby they betray their lives and liberties to the lusts and rage of men, and draw on their enemies to blood and cruelty, and upbraid the wisdom of those who are not so rash, as being less real to God and Christ, and make others have hard thoughts of that religion which cannot consist with prudence and wisdom.

(2.) *Be much in the exercise of those acts of true religion which are beautiful in the eyes of all, even the worst of men.*—The apostle Peter intimates the security of an evidently good and holy life: "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" (1 Peter iii. 13.) The chief pieces of Christian religion are such as Papists, Turks, and Infidels must needs acknowledge to be good: "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction;" to "wrong no man;" to "do to others whatever we would that others should do to us." Now, when we cannot without danger exercise some other, perhaps more questionable, parts of Christian religion, then it is good to be so much the more in the practice of these undoubted pieces of a Christian life; and zeal in these things will force those without to approve: whereas zeal in arguing for or in practising other things may cause them to hate and persecute us: zeal in arguing and disputing brings on evil words and evil actions; but zeal in the practice of unquestionable duties produceth good deeds in ourselves, and forceth good thoughts and good words, if not good deeds, from others. In a word, hot disputing and

cold living, or zeal in *smaller* and lukewarmness in *greater* matters, is the ruin of grace in ourselves, the confirming of sin in others, and the needless hazarding our outward concerns, and betraying them rashly to the violence of wicked and ungodly men.

(3.) *In your converse with those who are without, choose mostly to insist upon common and acknowledged principles, rather than controverted points.*—If I were to live among, and converse with, Papists, I would choose much rather to urge them to abstain from lying, drunkenness, malice, &c., and to have good thoughts of God, to have a continual sense of their dependence upon him, and therefore continually to recommend themselves unto him by holy prayer, to be meek and patient, and charitable; rather than to dispute how many sacraments there be, or how the bread and the wine are the body and blood of Christ: for good counsel and sober exhortations speak love to men's souls; whereas disputes and arguings are usually thought to proceed only from love to our own notions, and a desire to oppose others; and, indeed, if men did not place too much of their religion in opposing others, they might much more safely, and much more profitably, converse with those of different opinions, yea, of different religions.

(4.) *When you do touch upon controverted points, rather inquire and propound, than positively assert and violently oppose.*—Though I judge the mass of Rome, as by them used, to be a piece of as gross idolatry as the world can show, yet were I to converse among Papists, I would not fall foul upon them as the grossest idolaters; but, as more desiring truth should be honoured than they reproached, I would calmly and meekly propound my reasons as grounds of doubting, rather than clear demonstrations: for, sure it is, that a sudden and violent assault will cause an adversary to gather up his strength, as violently to oppose; whereas a calm propounding of reasons or doubts may work him to a serious consideration, which is the first step to the discovery of error and acknowledging of truth; for the one kindles a desire of knowing, the other a desire of opposing, yea, of persecuting.

(5.) *When you think yourselves bound to reprove the sins of others, let it be done with a due consideration of the circumstances of time, place, and persons.*—And, indeed, there is scarce any part of a Christian's converse with others that more requires prudence and wisdom than that of reproofing others; and great care is to be had that a reproof may at the least be well taken, if not hearkened to, and that it may do the reprover no hurt, if it do the reprovèd no good.

(6.) *On all occasions express a willingness to do for the best; to believe as others believe, and to do as others do, if you could see sufficient ground and reason for it.*—And, indeed, this may be a great help and security; for obstinacy is usually made one essential part of a heretic; and then he that is heartily willing to close with every revealed truth may be in an error, but cannot be an heretic; and therefore every expression of a mind not obstinately bent upon its taken-up notions, nor doting upon its own conceptions, but enriched with an ingenuous freedom to acknowledge its mistakes, and own truth when once clearly discovered, though formerly disowned, is like so much water upon the fire of rage kindled in the

hearts of persecuting enemies, to quench or abate it. For to the reason of any that will but consider, it cannot but appear most unreasonable to urge a person to believe what he cannot see any ground for, or to do what we would be willing to do if it were not sin, that is, a provoking [of] God, and hazarding his own eternal welfare.

(7.) *Be sure to use no means to secure from persecution or procure the enjoyment of public ordinances, but such as are well-pleasing to a good and a holy God.*—It is not long since it was the peculiar honour of the popish faction to depose or murder kings, blow up parliaments, subvert states and kingdoms, to procure their liberty, or secure themselves from suffering; and if any others have ventured upon such practices, I hope God hath taught them by his providence, what they would not learn from his word, that affliction is rather to be chosen than sin, and that it is better to wait upon Him in the way of his judgments, (that is, in a way of duty,) than to out-run God, and think to secure ourselves by sinful and unjustifiable courses. Let those, therefore, who profess to believe that their God is a God hearing prayer, and that bottles up the tears of his people, and is able to do what he pleaseth,—let them account prayers and tears their best arms, seeing they call-in that God whose power extends as far as his will.

(8.) *Arm yourselves with a severe patience and a steady resolution to bear lesser affronts and injuries.*—Those Christians were in such a condition as we are now speaking of, whom the apostle minds that they had “need of patience.” (Heb. x. 36.) Let it be our wisdom, therefore, to get a stock of that which will be so needful for us. Patience is always a part of our duty; but in this case it is also an instance of our prudence; for he is a fool that will hazard the beating out of his brains, rather than bear a fillip.

(9.) *Be much in prayer to that God who alone can secure from suffering, fit for suffering, strengthen under [it], and infinitely reward after we have suffered.*

2. *Let the serpent's wisdom be seconded with the dove's harmlessness and innocency.*—Walk so honestly and inoffensively, that wicked men may be put hard to it to find an occasion to quarrel or wrong you. This was remarkable in Daniel, as you may see, Dan. vi. 4. This was the apostle's direction: “Walk honestly toward them that are without;” (1 Thes. iv. 12;) and it was according to his practice: “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.” (Acts xxiv. 16.) Now, this Christian innocency or simplicity ought to be like a thread, to run through the whole course of our converse with others: we should neither injure the person, good name, estate, friend, nor any thing which another may call his: if the lamb among wolves and foxes begin to butt and contend, no wonder if these soon bite and devour. We should be so honest and plain-hearted in our promises, contracts, covenants, and dealings with others, that they may reverence our religion as teaching us to do the best things, and suffer the worst; and not hate our religion, as being only a design to make us the better able to deceive and injure others. It would be no small part of our security, if our carriage towards others might speak for us, that which the poet makes Achilles speak concerning himself and his

tutor Chiron: "Jesus Christ is my teacher; and he hath learned me to use simplicity and honesty in all my manners." But now, if neither of these two will secure us from suffering, but God's providence doth call us to a public owning of Him, and the religion of the gospel, we must then join the lion's courage to the wisdom of the serpent and the innocency of the dove, that we may be emboldened to look the greatest danger in the face, rather than turn our back upon God and Christ, and the religion of the gospel. And this brings me to the second branch of the latter part of the case:—

(II.) *How should believers encourage themselves against sufferings?*

In answer to which take these brief directions:—

1. *Be often remembering how infinitely more worth the soul is than the body.*—Be often weighing in the scales of sober and serious consideration a *precious* "soul" against a *vile* body;" (Matt. xvi. 26; Phil. iii. 21;) and then mind thyself, that the worst which persecuting enemies can do is to destroy a corruptible body; but the worst which God can do is to destroy thine immortal soul. Christ arms his disciples against fear of suffering by this consideration: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matt. x. 28.)

2. *Think, how inconsiderable time is, compared with eternity.*—Spend your thoughts upon the difference, vast and inconceivable, between those two. The apostle tells us, that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Rom. viii. 18.) The apostle compares himself to one that hath been casting-up an account, where on one side he meets with nothing but ciphers, or small petty sums, but on the other side finds thousands and millions; and then cries out, "Alas! the one is not to be compared with the other." Thus the apostle finds "light and momentary afflictions" on the one side, and "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" on the other side; as we find him expressing himself, 2 Cor. iv. 17.

3. *Remember, that the welfare of the body doth depend upon the welfare of the soul.*—Not; indeed, in this world; for here *his* body may be well, and in good plight, fat and flourishing, well-fed and clothed, *whose* soul is poor and naked, sick and wounded, in a sad and deplorable condition; and, on the other side, a poor, beggarly, sick Lazarus may have a soul fed with royal and heavenly dainties, and clothed with better robes than purple and ermine. But then the eternal welfare of the body depends upon the eternal welfare of the soul; it is bound up in the life and welfare of the soul, as Jacob's life is said to be bound up in Benjamin's; (Gen. xlv. 30;) and therefore you cannot secure the welfare of the outward man by betraying and casting away that which is the life and welfare of the inward man.

4. *Remember, that you can suffer nothing in this world, but Jesus Christ hath suffered the same, or worse.*—The Lord Jesus arms his disciples against sufferings by this consideration; (John xv. 20;) and the apostle Paul, having experienced it himself, adviseth the believing Hebrews to it: "Looking unto Jesus," &c. (Heb. xii. 1—3.) Now this consideration will suggest to us,

(1.) *That the worst sufferings are no dishonour to us, seeing Christ Jesus, the King of kings, hath borne them.*

(2.) *That the greatest sufferings do not speak us the greatest sinners.*—Christ's sufferings assure us that the purest and whitest innocency may be dyed red in its own blood.

(3.) *That the greatest sufferings make us never the less amiable in the eyes of God.*—For then Christ Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God, in whom he was always well pleased, would not have suffered.

(4.) *We can suffer nothing but what our God, our Friend, our Father, knows we suffer, and knows that a suffering condition is the best for us.*—When poor Christians are kept by the bloody Inquisition in dark holes and caves from the eyes of all the world, they cannot be kept from the eye of God. "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." (Rev. ii. 13.) This was the encouragement which Christ gave his persecuted church of Pergamos: thy condition is known to that God whose heart is as tender as his eye [is] piercing, and whose arm can reach as far as his eye, and whose wisdom knows how to direct the sufferings of every believer for his own, his church's, and that believer's real good.

(5.) *Be often comparing God and creatures together; that great God who suffers in and with his suffering people, and those little, small things called devils and men, that bring sufferings upon them.*—Make thy soul to know and understand the difference between the little, trifling bubble-promises of the world, and the great, precious, solid, and massy promises of God; and let faith tell thee, that the threatenings of a raging devil, a storming Nebuchadnezzar, or a furious multitude, are but the noise of a pot-gun, if compared with the thunder of God's dreadful threatenings. Remember what God saith to his afflicted church: "Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker?" &c. (Isai. li. 12, 13.) In a word, think thus with thyself: "Man cannot do all that he seems able to do, nor all that he resolves and boasts that he will do; but God can do all that he hath said he will do, and he will do for his suffering servants more than they can hope or think." Let us heartily believe that God can easily recompense us for whatever we may lose for him; but all the creatures in the world are not able to make amends for that which apostasy from God will deprive us of. O, sirs! could we but heartily believe this, what a sorry temptation would persecution be! If this faith were strong, persecution would be exceeding weak; if faith could see men and devils able to do nothing, and God able to do all things, then persecution would be able to do nothing; and such a faith would be able to do and to suffer all things.

And thus I have spoken to both the parts of this practical case of conscience; and shall now close up all with a word of exhortation,—

That if it be such a real ground of trouble, &c., then let us make it our earnest prayer to God, that our land may still be a "Goshen," and a "valley of vision," and not an "Egypt," or the "valley of the shadow of death;" that we may still enjoy the ordinances of the gospel, and the company and society of good men; that our lot may never fall among Ezekiel's

scorpions, or pricking briars, and grieving thorns. (Ezek. ii. 6 ; xxviii. 24.) Let us heartily pray for that blessedness mentioned Psalm lxxv. 4 : " That the Lord may choose us, and cause us to approach unto him, that we may dwell in his courts, and be satisfied with the goodness of his house."

SERMON XXVII.

BY THE REV. ANDREW BROMHALL.

HOW IS HYPOCRISY DISCOVERABLE AND CURABLE ?

First of all, beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.
—Luke xii. 1.

WHEN our Lord and Saviour had finished his heavenly, soul-searching sermon in the chapter foregoing, he came so close in the application to the scribes and Pharisees, a proud, hypocritical people, that they, not able to endure their pride and hypocrisy should be so soundly convinced and openly detected, combined and contrived, by urging, and watching, and catching words, to accuse him, and stop his mouth at least, if not his breath. (Luke xi. 53, 54.) These contrivances and practices of theirs were not unknown to Him that knew all things ; (John xxi. 17 ;) and what effect it wrought in Christ, you find in this verse of the text : he preacheth the same things, and in the same manner and sharpness of style at the next opportunity.

In the mean time, εν οϊς, saith the Greek : *in those, or in which* times that they were thus plotting and contriving, Christ is boldly preaching the same doctrine that they were persecuting, was as bold for the truth as they were politic against it.

And in those very days, and in the midst of these contrivements against his preaching, the people as much loved the doctrine that the Pharisees persecuted : an innumerable multitude were gathered together to see and to hear him. A myriad (too many thousands to be easily numbered !) flocked and thronged so to him, that they even " trod one upon another ; " and then he began to say to his disciples, (they were nearest to him, but so as the people heard it,) and he taught them ; and that was his intent, as you may see, Luke xii. 40, 42.

First of all, beware of.—For the adverb is not to be joined to the verb " taught," but to the word " beware," that is, *πρωτον*, " first of all " is not used distributively, but eminently ; as much as to say, " chiefly, especially, beware," &c. So it is used by the apostle : " First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all," (that is, chiefly,) " that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." (Rom. i. 8.)

Beware and avoid this *leaven* of hypocrisy wherewith the Pharisees' doctrine and conversation is so leavened ; take heed, beware especially, chiefly, of *hypocrisy*.