

## SERMON XXIX.

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HOW MAY A GRACIOUS PERSON, FROM WHOM GOD HIDES HIS  
FACE, TRUST IN THE LORD AS HIS GOD.

*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted  
within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who  
is the health of my countenance, and my God.*—Psalm xlii. 11.

1. UPON the proposal of this case to me, I rather chose this text than that in Isaiah l. 10; because I thought God and ourselves were both to be considered, in the just resolution of the case before us. For we must as well look *within* as *above* ourselves: and accordingly here we see, that David's first look was *into* himself; and then his next look was *toward* his God. So that I thought this text most suited to the case.

2. When and upon what occasion this Psalm was penned, I will not now inquire into: but whenever it was, David was then under black dispensations of Divine Providence, and under dreadful consternations of spirit, and put very severely to it how to encourage and support himself.

3. The text may be considered. I. AS A HISTORY, (1.) Of David's troubles and afflictions. (2.) David's sense and temper of spirit under them, and concerning them. (3.) Of the course he took to help himself. II. AS A DOCTRINE, to teach God's saints and servants, (1.) To what they are liable. (2.) And by what and how they are to be relieved and supported. III. AS A DIRECTORY.

4. In the text then we have observable: (1.) David's self-arraignment for immoderate despondencies and dejections under the present hand of God upon him: "Why cast down? and why disquieted within me?" (2.) His self-encouragement and instruction: "Hope thou in God."

5. So that you see, David, (1.) Cites himself to his own court, to account for his own disquietments and dejection; and here his scrutiny is severe and close: (2.) He offers some things to himself as a fit course and expedient for self-redress: "Hope thou in God:" and, (3.) The remedying proposal is closely argued and urged: "'For I shall yet praise him,' &c. I shall have cause, a heart, and an opportunity to praise God. Times and things will be better with me than

\* One of the excellences ascribed to Mr. Sylvester is that of having been an admirable textuary; of which the reader will find ample proofs in this sermon. I have quoted many of the passages in full, to which he merely referred; as they are generally needful for understanding his course of argument. This has likewise been done in some of the paragraphs toward the close of the preceding sermon.—EDIT.

now they are. I shall have cause to praise God; for He is 'the health of my countenance.' I shall have a heart to do it, for He is 'my God;' and I accordingly now avouch him to be such: I value him, and confide in him, as such. And I do hence infer, that I shall have opportunity and a call for to 'praise' (acknowledge and adore) him, in the solemnities of his own house."

I. First. Let me then consider these words as they relate unto David; and give us THE HISTORY of David's exercise and self-relief. And here,

1. *The patient or afflicted person was holy David.*—A man after God's own heart, enamoured on God, devoted to him, delighted in him, constant and cheerful in his attendances on God, exceeding sensible and observant of all divine approaches to him and withdrawals and retreats from him, thirsting and panting greatly after the solaces and entertainments of God's house and altars, and bitterly lamenting the loss and absence of those solemnities wherein he formerly had so copiously and frequently pleased himself, afflicted mightily with those derisions and reproaches which reflected so severely upon God through him. Though nothing could lower or abate his adoring and delightful thoughts of God; yet it struck him to the heart to hear men always saying, "Where is thy God?" Add hereunto, that David was a king, a prophet, a type of Christ, a man of vast experiences and improvements, and such a peculiar favourite to God as that he was encouraged to more than ordinary expectations from him, of which he had great seals and earnest; and yet, we see, he could not be excused from great storms, and agonies, and anxieties of spirit.

2. *That which this good man underwent was a great dejection and disquietment in his own spirit, by reason of some great afflictions that befell him.*—God's providence touched him in his dearest and most valuable mercies: for he was an exile from God's altars. God's great enemies touched him in that which lay nearest to his heart; for they reproached him with his God, and, consequently, with and for all his religious hopes and duties;—thus striking at his God through him. All this afflicted him the more, in that hereby great jealousies and suspicions were arising of God's deserting him, and dismal fears and thoughts of God's having hid his face from him. And he saw no likelihood, in the posture and presages of second causes, that ever it would be better with him. And hence his spirit יִדְּוֹתַי בְּתוֹכִי\* was "bowed down," and לְבַיִתִּי בְּתוֹכִי† "disquieted within" him;

\* *Περὶ λυκος, ταπεινωσα. Consterneris.*—Vet. edit. *Conturbabis.*—Chald. Paraph. *Contristas me.*—Syriac. *Dejicis te.*—Arab. *Et in versu 6.* "In this passage, as well as in verse 6, the Greek translators have rendered the words 'greatly dejected, much depressed;' an old Latin version, 'Why art thou filled with consternation?' the Chaldee Paraphrast, 'Why art thou thus disturbed?' the Syriac version, 'Why dost thou make me sad and sorrowful?' the Arabic, 'Why dost thou render me dejected?'—EDIT. † That is, "Disquieted within me." *Συνταρασσεις με*;—LXX. *Tumultueris adversum me?*—Targum. *Conturbas me?*—Syriac. *Et in versu 6.* *Stupilus es, et personas in me ut alii.*—Arab. "In this verse, and in the sixth, the Seventy render the clause, 'Why dost thou perturb or terrify me?' the Targum, 'Why dost thou tumultuate, or raise a disturbance, against me?' the Syriac version, 'Why dost thou disquiet or disturb me?' the Arabic, 'Why art thou so unfeeling, and loudly raillest against me, like others?'"—EDIT.

he was as [if] stripped of all composures, strength, and comforts. His passions,—they were apt to mutiny; his confidences, to decay and wither; and the serenity of his spirit, to decline. Sorrows encompassed him, like a cloud; pressed him down, like a great burden; bound him down, like a chain; came in upon him, like a flood; and rushed in on him, like a dissolute and surprising host: and very difficult he found it, to keep up his religion in its just reputation with himself, whilst thus afflicted in it and upbraided with it.

3. *The course he takes to help himself is this.*—(1.) He surveys his troubles, and takes the exact dimensions of them, observing what impressions and effects they had upon his own spirit; and, (2.) He takes his soul to task about them, as being, (i.) Fittest to resolve the case: (ii.) Every way responsible and accountable for his resentments and deportment, and for the impressions and effects of troubles: (iii.) Most capable of self-correction, instruction, and encouragement, and, consequently, of self-redress, and most concerned therein: and, (iv.) As that which must be active too. David was confident of help from God: and this his confidence is quickened and kept-up by arguments and pleas. He knew no help could be expected any where but in and from God; and he concludes and argues, that God could work and give it, because he was “the God;” and that he would consider him in mercy, because he was “his God.” And these things must be remembered, argued, and revived upon his own soul, and were so.

4. *And with his own considerate and religious soul this matter is debated here.*—What! David’s soul? “My soul.” *A soul*, and therefore great in its original, capacity, and end. *A gracious soul*, and therefore near and dear to God, encouraged by his promises and providence to trust him, serve him, and to cleave to him. What! David’s soul, fitted for God, and for self-management, converses, and improvements? Why should this soul be thus disquieted and cast down? He was not so vain and idle as to expect relief from heaven, by so engaging God for him as to neglect himself; inward as well as other work must be performed.

5. *Observe the manner of his discoursing with himself.*—It is expostulatory. He cites and challenges, searches and chides himself; and hints these things unto himself: that, (1.) Something was attended to that should not. (2.) Something was not attended to that should. (3.) That therefore all ought to be set and kept right, as to his inward thoughts and sentiments, with reference to his present case and cure. (4.) And that because mistakes and rashness, in such important matters, are dangerous and sinful in their tendency, consequences, and effects. Hence then, (i.) He observes his pressures, and the temper and behaviour of his spirit under them; and he finds some trucklings of spirit which he dislikes and wonders at. (ii.) He is solicitous to know the most that can be found, alleged, and urged, to countenance and justify these disquietments and dejections. (iii.) All this he searches after, in order to a fair and impartial trial; and in this trial he concludes, that nothing objected

can hold weight. (iv.) He is aware of other things that are to be produced for the suppression and rebuke of his dejectedness, and for the revival and encouragement of his soul, through hope in God. (v.) These things he is ready and willing to produce and urge, and so to adjust the whole concern. (vi.) And hereupon he drives the thing up to its utmost height, and turns a faithful and impartial self-censurer and instructor; that so he may not be buffeted in the dark, and prove a sinful instrument in his own dejections and distress, nor be baffled by these his sorrows.

6. His self-arraignment and discourses being finished thus, *he now proceeds to self-instruction and encouragement.*—Grace in the heart and God in the eye, when saints have dealt faithfully and closely with themselves, afford them no small relief under their pressures and discouragements from what they feel. Here then observe, (1.) *What David advises himself unto*: “Hope thou in God.” (2.) *How he argues and enforces this his counsel upon himself*: “For I shall yet praise him.”

(1.) *The counsel which he offers to himself is this, namely, to hope in God.*—He would not look upon his case as desperate: but, (i.) Commit his case and soul to God, and leave them wholly with him. (ii.) And so expect protection and redress from God in doing thus. And what is hope, but a desirous expectation of those mercies and reliefs from God which present exigencies and concerns may need and call for, whereas God’s name and promises are our encouragements thereto? This David proposes to and urges upon himself, in his dejected frame of spirit, as his best succour and support, and as his choicest refuge and remedy; and he was very apprehensive of this, that his soul must be active herein, if he would be benefited hereby. And hence he suffered not his spirit to be idle, nor to be guilty of any culpable application and improvement of that great (but oft-times much-abused) truth: “We can do nothing of ourselves; it is God alone must help us.” But he turns counsellor and commander, and becomes a strict inquisitor and most impartial judge to his own soul: and by the meek exercise of all just providence and authority toward his own spirit, he works himself up to his “Hope in God,” by an eye fixed there; and thence and thus expects his help. And though he was deeply sensible of his own doleful state at present, and very prone to aggravate his own calamity, and apt to give-up all for lost; yet he resolves upon all fit inquiries after help; and, with authority and great force of argument, he here commands and so prevails upon himself to “hope in God.” Such work requires good consideration, great resolution, and the just exercise of all authority over ourselves.

(2.) *His arguments and motives hereunto are impregnated with very great sense and strength, and urged upon himself at the just rate thereof.*—“Hope thou in God: for he is, (i.) God. (ii.) Thy God. (iii.) The health of thy countenance.” (iv.) And one whom thou shalt (“certainly and for ever”\*) praise as such. (v.) And do it yet; namely, as lamentable and hopeless as thy case appears at

\* SYMMACHUS.

present, through seeming difficulties or unlikelihoods. God, and ourselves, well understood, deeply considered, and skilfully urged and improved, give gracious hearts the best encouragements and supports under the severest accidents of time; and they will very strangely animate our hopes in God, under our sorest troubles and dejections.

(i.) David had confidence in God. (ii.) And reasons for it. (iii.) And skill and a heart to urge them. When he reviewed himself, he saw that his soul was gracious; and so he knew God valued it. It was bent for praising God; and so he knew that he should have an opportunity and cause to do it, through some signal favours from him. He had an interest in God; and he would neither lose it, nor neglect it. And he had great experience of God's former mercies; and he would not forget them. And when he thinks on God, then praise must be thought on too, and every thing relating to it; and all the divine perfections, within the circumference of his knowledge, must have their fresh remembrances and powerful sense revived upon his own heart. For he concludes, that, (i.) God is eminent and infinite in all perfection. (ii.) That his eminence shall be evident and conspicuous in the salvation and relief of now-dejected David. (iii.) And that most suitably to all the circumstances and pressures of his afflicted state. (iv.) And that rather much beyond, than any way beneath, his present hope. And hence he calls God, "the health of" his "countenance."

His thoughts and hopes are in their highest flights and vigour. He looks upon God as his Saviour, hope, and God; and judges God resolved and propense to appear and act accordingly on his behalf. He looks for such illustrious signals of God's favour and respects, as shall, (i.) Embolden him undauntedly to face his enemies, without any marks of a dejected and disturbed soul upon his face. (ii.) Such as shall shame his enemies, and humble their contemptuous and proud looks; and shame those insolencies whereby they had upbraided him with his God; and make them readily acknowledge that there is no rock like David's God, and that his hope and refuge were not vainly fixed there. (iii.) Such as should redeem his holy hopes and courses from contempt and scorn, and make his embittered enemies to wish themselves even in despised David's case. For David here expects salvation, as something visible, speedy, and complete, even in the land of the living. Well therefore might he say, "Hope thou in God;" thereby to redress and check his own despondent spirit.

7. *And here, the state and temper of David's spirit is remarkable.*—For it was, (1.) Sensible of God's hand and man's upon it. (2.) Observant of its own resentments and deportment under its grievances. (3.) Therefore much conversant with itself. (4.) Desirous of some redress, but yet from God alone; and not only desirous, but also, (5.) Duly provident and industrious to obtain it; looking *within*, to see its maladies; and *above*, to get relief and succour. For, having grace to act it, and God to help it, and a covenant of promises to encourage and support it, it was resolved, and at work, to act most like its considerate and gracious self, and to make its best of God.

II. Secondly. Let us now consider these words, as they contain WHAT IS DOCTRINAL TO US.—As giving us some notices of our present state and duty; of what we are liable unto, namely, to be “cast down” and “disquieted;” and of what we are to do when exercised thus; namely, 1. To discourse ourselves: 2. And to urge our hope in God upon ourselves, and to press upon ourselves what may enforce it and encourage it. For,

1. We find that all passages of sacred writ are upon record for our instruction and advantage: “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.” (Rom. xv. 4.) “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.) And why not this amongst the rest?

2. We are exhorted to take the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. (James v. 10.) And such [a prophet] was David. (Acts ii. 30.)

3. And in this great and exemplary prophet, we have this fourfold mirror: (1.) A mirror of *the calamities*, whereto the best of men may be exposed; namely, to be cast down and disquieted. Dreadful afflictions, and dismal apprehensions and constructions arising from them, and deep resentments \* of them, are incident to the holiest and best men. “I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly. I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. Thy arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.” (Psalm xxxviii. 2, 6, 8.) I need not tell you what pressures were upon the spirit of the Lord Christ, and how they were resented by him. (2.) A mirror of *that peculiar work at home* which gracious souls in their afflictions are to mind: “I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search. I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old.” (Psalm lxxvii. 6, 11.) “Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.” (Psalm iv.

\* To prevent any misapprehension of the meaning of this word, and of *resented* in the next sentence, arising from modern usage, I here repeat the explanatory note which was inserted in the first volume of “the Morning Exercises,” p. 483: “*To resent*, from the Latin *sentio*, ‘to feel,’ and the intensive particle *re*, was, in all its forms, almost uniformly used by our old writers, down to the age of James II. in the signification of *feeling intensely* either in the mind, or through any one of the bodily senses. Our modern usage of the word *resentment*, in the bad sense of ‘strong anger on account of some affront or injury received,’ is but confining what was formerly a general term to a more restricted meaning. The reflex French verb *se ressentir*, from which it is derived, still retains this meaning of a reciprocation of feeling, either of kindness or unkindness, between the agent and patient. This interchange of good or bad *sentiment*, (a perverted word of the same origin,) is determined by the character of the feeling which is communicated by the agent, and which is to be accordingly *well* or *ill* taken and reciprocated by the patient. In this correct acceptation it is employed by an eminent religious poet, about the middle of the last century, in a hymn addressed to our Saviour:—

‘My inmost bowels shall *resent*  
The yearnings of thy dying love.’—EDIT.

4.) They must search into and commune with themselves, about what lies upon them, and how it is borne and taken by them. (3.) A mirror of *that redress and remedy* whereunto they must repair when thus exercised and afflicted: "In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul." (Psalm xciv. 19.) "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." (Psalm lvi. 3.) "Let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee." (Psalm xxv. 20.) None but God, and nothing but hope in him, can give relief unto the troubled soul. And then, (4.) A mirror of *that grace and wisdom* which prompts and fits men to discourse themselves, and to hope in God. "Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him," &c. "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee." (Psalm xxv. 21.) Here you may see the holy poise and bent of gracious souls. Sufferings, though never so manifold and mighty and continuing, will never bring the graceless soul home to itself or God. Only great thoughts of God, and a due sense of his relations and promises to us, and of his interest in us, can make us bear up our despondent and afflicted spirits by fixed hope in God, and bring us to discourse ourselves to purpose. The power and tendency of holy principles and of gracious dispositions are here conspicuous and legible in my text; take then the sense thereof in this comprehensive proposition following:—

## DOCTRINE.

*When gracious souls are cast down and disquieted within themselves, they should discourse themselves, and revive those thoughts, and such a sense of God upon themselves, as may encourage and enforce their hopes and confidence in God.* (Psalm lxxvii. 6, 10.)

Holy David,—he is here a pattern to us all.

1. For here you see, that, in the greatest agonies and conflicts of his spirit with what attempted thus to bear and keep it down, David here *makes a right and amiable representation of God to himself*.—He "sets him always before him;" (Psalm xvi. 8;) as the Lord Jesus did; (Acts ii. 25;) and that, (1.) As God. (2.) As his God. (3.) As the health of his countenance. (4.) As one that he should praise; and therefore he expected the glorious appearances of this God for him. (5.) As one who, in his great and gracious appearances for his relief, would master all those difficulties which any ways might threaten to obstruct the passages of his desired and expected succours to him. "For I shall yet" (that is, let things be as they will at present) "praise him."

2. *He thence expects great things*.—Such as are matters of high praises and acknowledgments to his God: כִּי עוֹד אֲהַלֵּל \* ["For I shall yet praise him;"] and infers them from these cheering considerations of his God.

3. *He improves what he discovers and infers, for the fixing of his hope in God.*

\* *Laudabo*.—Targum. ["I will praise him."] *Confitebor ei*.—Latin Vulg. ["I will make my confession to him."]

4. *And all this is to rebuke and moderate his (otherwise too extravagant) dejections and disturbances, arising from excessive sorrows, fears, and cares.*—So that you see, that no sorrows or dejections must banish or divorce us from ourselves and God, and from just hopes in him. No calamities should lay gracious persons prostrate at their feet. But they must conflict and argue with themselves; and bring their sorrows to the impartial test and scrutinies, lest they promote their own distresses by sinful negligences and inadvertencies, and make themselves to be the less receptive of those encouragements and supports which they might otherwise derive with ease from Him who is their God, and under strong propensions and engagements to act and to approve himself accordingly for their good.

Good men are too propense and apt to make their cups more bitter than ever God intended they should be, whilst they attend more unto the resentments\* of their afflicted—than to the hopes, advantages, and principles of their gracious—selves. We wrest God's dealings with us, and then we censure him for what we bring upon ourselves. But grace directs to better things, and prompts men first to self-discourses and debates about what is so very hard upon them; that so, the malady with its impressions and effects upon them being well understood, the remedy may the better be considered and improved by them: for as we can do nothing without God, so *he* mistakes the proper state and methods of divine redresses and reliefs, *that* looks for any thing from God whilst he neglects himself.

But let me show you the reach and purport of this doctrine, in these few following

#### PROPOSITIONS.

PROPOSITION I. *No man so great or good in this world, but he may fall under pressing and uncomfortable circumstances.*—“They all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed.” (Heb. i. 11, 12.) “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.” (Psalm xxxiv. 19.) “The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in *battle* array against me.” (Job vi. 4.) We have here neither a continuing city nor resting-place: the troubles of the patriarchs, saints, and martyrs, yea, and of Jesus Christ himself, are a full proof of this truth.

PROP. II. *Though men be great and good, yet may their souls be cast down and disquieted within them.*—“My soul refused to be comforted, my spirit was overwhelmed within me. I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed.” (Psalm cxliii. 4; lxxvii. 2, 3.) It is hard and rare for the best men to keep their spirits composed and equal, when troubles urge them closely. The time would fail me, and the limits of this discourse would be transgressed, should I but show you, from sacred writ, what passionate escapes might be observed from God's worthies there.

\* See the preceding note in p. 83.—EDIT.



PROP. III. *Good men should therefore well discern and weigh what troubles and anxieties are upon them, and not increase their loads and sorrows by being strangers to themselves.*—"I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search." (Psalm lxxvii. 6.) "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. x. 13.) "In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him." (Eccles. vii. 14.) "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. And the Lord said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Cor. xii. 7, 9.) "My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word." (Psalm cxix. 28.) And they should well distinguish, too, betwixt what God inflicts upon them, and what they cause unto and lay upon themselves; and sift their troubles to the bottom. They must observe what it is that troubles them, and so survey their sufferings, and not subject themselves to strange confusions and amazements.\* (Lam. iii. 20.) For it is not what we think of what afflicts us, but what God really inflicts upon us, that we must mind. And they must carefully observe, in all their sorrows, what ministers to grief, and what to shame, and what to their awakening and refining, and what serves to prevent a greater mischief to them, (1 Cor. xi. 30—32,) and to what use God may put their sufferings, as to the church and world, and to the unseen state; and then resolve it with themselves: For what, how far, and why, they are, or ought to be, dejected and disquieted.

PROP. IV. *What troubles and resentments by gracious persons are observed, should be discoursed by them with their own souls.*—They are to ask themselves how these evils came upon them. (Psalm iv. 4.) "Is it the immediate hand of God that lays them on? If so, what have I done against the Lord my God? Have I neglected or negligently managed any parts of public or private worship? as prayer, praise, thanks, hearing, sacraments, or sanctification of the Lord's day. Have I dishonoured God, by misrepresenting him to others or to myself? Have I reflected any dishonour upon my Christian calling? Have I neglected the exciting and improving of the grace of God in me, in

\* This word was written by the author *amusements*. Modern usage forbids its application in composition to the meaning in which it is here employed. But in an earlier age *amuse* and *amaze* were considered to be synonymous words, the derivation of each of them being very similar. For whatever excites wonder and astonishment, throws the mind into a *maze* or a *muse*; both of these primitive words possessing the proper and figurative significations of a *labyrinth*, *perplexity*, or *confusion of thought*, the constituent materials from which are formed wonder and amazement.—EDIT.

any of its principles or functions? Or have I behaved myself unworthily or indecently toward others or myself? Or is it by the tongues or hands of men that God afflicts me? If so, what instances of injuriousness, negligence, indiscretion, or immoderate passion, can I or others charge upon myself? What undue heats or ferments have they discerned in my spirit, by rash or wrathful words or actions? If any failures have been on my part, where, when, and how? and why were they committed by me? If none of these are, have been, or can be, charged upon me, what do I undergo from God or man that God's great favourites have not undergone before me? And why may not I repair unto the same encouragements and consolations, which have relieved and supported them when they have been exercised as I am? What! cannot I pledge the best men in the most bitter cups, but I must presently entertain dismal and undue thoughts of God, and make censoriously the worst constructions of what he lays upon me? For to think or say, that God deals unfaithfully or unkindly with me, is to conclude and utter what neither the name nor love of God, nor the experiences of his best and wisest servants, will allow of." Therefore our calm and close debatings of these matters with ourselves put us into a fair way to obtain composures and relief.

PROP. V. *Good men, when most disquieted and dejected, are then to discourse their gracious selves.*—And to consider what is within them, as well as what is laid upon them. "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." (Heb. xii. 5.) "All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant." (Psalm xlv. 17.) They should remember whose, who, and what they are by grace; and so repress the tumults and despondencies of their own spirits: for they that are sanctified can never be forsaken of their God.

PROP. VI. *A revived sense of God, of their interest in him, and of their expectations from him, affords great succours and supports to gracious souls, and ought to be pleaded and urged upon them by themselves, when all things look dreadfully toward them both within and about them.*—"Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." (Hab. iii. 17, 18.) Impatience and despondency [thus] are best rebuked. Hereby a sense of God must be revived; for as we think of God, so shall we value our relation to him, and fix and keep our confidence in him, and proportionate our expectations from him; and it is to this end that we have such glorious and great accounts of God in sacred writ, as to his attributes of power, wisdom, patience, grace, &c. Riches and honour are with him; all kingdom, [dominion,] glory, and power are ascribed unto him; and it is with him how things shall go with us, and in all the parts of his creation. It is peace or war *with us*,

serenity or disturbance *in* us, and good or evil *toward* us, as God himself determineth concerning us. "When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only." (Job xxxiv. 29.) And he that "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," (Eph. i. 11,) is to be concluded and believed to be as good and gracious as he is either wise or great; for as power is his majesty, and holiness is his glory, so mercy is his riches; and to him it is a pleasure to be kind and bountiful, and a name of praise and joy to be abundant in compassions and remissions: "But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." (Jer. ix. 24.) "And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it." (Jer. xxxiii. 8, 9.) "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy." (Micah vii. 18.)

And yet this is not all: but our relation to and interest in him must be revived, in the remembrances thereof upon our own hearts. "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places." (Deut. xxxiii. 29.) "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." (Isai. xli. 10.) "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth? Will he reserve his anger for ever? will he keep it to the end? Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldst." (Jer. iii. 4, 5.) "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." (Heb. xi. 16.) "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." (Hab. iii. 18.) Every relation is for relative purposes and designs, and so affords us great encouragements: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." (Psalm xxiii. 1, 6.) "My God!" "Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me?" (Psalm xlii. 8, 9.) "O my Strength! unto thee will I sing; for God is my defence, and the God

of my mercy." (Psalm lix. 17.) "He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death." (Psalm lxxviii. 20.) Thus "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." (1 Sam. xxx. 6.) And here the foundation of our liveliest hopes is fixed; for as God's infinite perfection assures us that he can do all things, so his relation to us, and our interest in him, assure us that he will be gracious to us. And hereto may we safely trust, and in the sense hereof may we address to God by prayer and hope: "Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray. For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield." (Psalm v. 2, 12.) "Help me, O Lord my God: O save me according to thy mercy." (Psalm cix. 26.) "Thou art my hiding-place and my shield: I hope in thy word." (Psalm cxix. 114.) And then the sense and value of what we are to look for is to be lively, too, upon our heart. Slighty and contemptible thoughts and estimations of what we look for, will never considerably stem the tide, nor stop the fluxes, of our sorrows and discouragements.

God's favour is a valuable blessing, and as the root of all the rest. His face is glorious and delightful when indeed it shines upon the soul. The rays and beams which this God's blessed face diffuses and transmits, are *supplies of grace for all the duties of a dark and stormy season*: "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Cor. xii. 7, 9.) *Supports of spirit under troubles*: "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." (2 Cor. i. 5.) "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." (Col. i. 11, 12.) *Deliverance from them, when most of God may be discovered, and most good brought to pass, thereby*: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." (Psalm xxxiv. 19.) *And great advantages to souls by such exercises, whilst they abide upon them*: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." (James i. 2, 12.) "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." (Rom. v. 3—5.) "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is

but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen : for the things which are seen are temporal ; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Cor. iv. 16—18.) "For I reckon 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.) *And so a consequent emboldening of the heart and face toward God, others, and themselves :* "O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me ; give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid. Show me a token for good ; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed : because thou, Lord, hast holpen me, and comforted me." (Psalm lxxxvi. 16, 17.) "Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even thy salvation, according to thy word. So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me : for I trust in thy word." (Psalm cxix. 41, 42.) "I became also a reproach unto them : when they looked upon me they shook their heads. Help me, O Lord my God : O save me according to thy mercy : that they may know that this is thy hand ; that thou, Lord, hast done it." (Psalm cix. 25—27.)

PROP. VII. *Good men can never settle and compose their own disturbed spirits, till they proceed to actual solid hope in God.*—"Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God. The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind : the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down : the Lord loveth the righteous." (Psalm cxlvi. 5, 8.) "Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb : he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief ; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God ; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform." (Rom. iv. 18—21.) Here is the soul's only anchor and repose, from the great God alone : there it must expect great things. For nothing can be too great for him to give or do, if once he be resolved upon it. From their God they may look for special and peculiar favours and reliefs, in just and full agreements with all his covenant-relations to them and engagements for them. "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty ; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy ; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." (Zeph. iii. 17.) "Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains : truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel." (Jer. iii. 23.) "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. Happy art thou, O Israel : who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency ! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee ; and thou shalt tread upon their high places." (Deut. xxxiii. 26, 29.) "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God ; we

have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." (Isai. xxv. 9. See also Psalm lxxviii. 20.)

And what have good men to keep their spirits up, but hope in such a God? It is only his omnipotence can weigh against the difficulties, his faithfulness against the improbabilities, and his grace and promises against the jealousies and disheartenings, that arise from the delays of their defined and expected mercies: all other expectations and encouragements are but vain. These "hopes in God" have their sure footing: "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." (Heb. vi. 17—20.) "And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee." (Psalm ix. 10.) "Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear. Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even thy salvation, according to thy word." (Psalm cxix. 38, 41.) "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." (Psalm xxiii. 4.)

*Their Hope*, as he is God, is all-sufficient: As he is *their* God, he tenderly and compassionately careth for them; and he thinks himself concerned both to fulfil and justify their hopes. And as he is thus theirs by covenant, he will both seasonably and effectually make their cheerful looks to testify the absolute satisfactions of their hearts in their experienced accomplishments of all his gracious promises to them. And as he is "the health of their countenance," so they account the sanctuary and spiritual unveilings and returns of his face to be the glory and salvation which they are most concerned and carried out to look for and to glory in: "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? who can show forth all his praise? Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance." (Psalm cvi. 2, 4, 5.)

Here therefore *they* may safely trust and rest themselves, *who* otherwise cannot but be as restless as Noah's dove whilst from the ark, and as discontented and distracted as wandering Cain under the execution of God's dismal doom and curse upon him. He only that is confident that God is trusty, and that so commits himself and all to God *as such*; and this under great expectations, that God will keep and answer all his hopes and trust; and that here stays and rests his thoughts and soul in this,—that God is certainly his Friend and God, and will accordingly befriend him in the best season, and to the

highest purpose and advantage :—he, I say, only can thus still the tumults of his own spirit.

PROP. VIII. *Good men's hope in God should never be discouraged by any difficulties or unlikelihoods in the way.* (Rom. iv. 18, 22.)—Seeing the patron of their expectations is so great as *God*, so near as *their God* ; and so much in their eye of, 1. Expectation, as “the health of their countenance :” and, 2. Of their resolution and design, as to make him the object of their praises, and the avouched and adored Author and Giver of their mercies : and, 3. Of their affection and delight, as no ways thinking of such joyful work as praise till he appear ;—nothing can justify dejections, where God concerns himself to help : “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee : he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.” (Psalm lv. 22.) It is no great matter how things appear within us, before us, or about us, whilst God stands well-affected toward us, and can be truly called our praise and God : “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” (Heb. x. 35, 37.) “Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself ; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.” (Isai. viii. 13.) “I, even I, am he that comforteth you : 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, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth ; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy ? and where is the fury of the oppressor ?” (Isai. li. 12, 13.) Nothing can change or hinder Him ; and why should any thing discourage *his*, whom grace hath brought to trust in him ? “What shall we then say to these things ? If God be for us, who can be against us ? For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. viii. 31, 38, 39.)

PROP. IX. *Whatever gracious souls expect from God, they still determine and refer all to his praise and service.*—“To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant ; the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.” (Luke i. 72—75.) “I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments. Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.” (Psalm cxix. 7, 17.) “Return unto thy rest, O my soul ; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.” (Psalm cxvi. 7, 9.) They neither desire, expect, nor use, any salvation or supports ultimately for themselves : “And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast

punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this ; should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations ? wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping ?” (Ezra ix. 13, 14.) “Thy vows are upon me, O God : I will render praises unto thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death : wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living ?” (Psalm lvi. 12, 13.) God’s excellence is observed in all, and his glory is designed and pursued by all, and indeed God is the end and sweetness of all, mercies : “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things : to whom be glory for ever. Amen.” (Rom. xi. 36.)

And this was resolved upon by holy David, as both his sanctuary-honour, his house-enrichment, and his heart’s delight. The health of his countenance must be the inhabitant of his praises.

III. Thirdly. Let us now consider this text AS A DIRECTORY to guide us to and in the resolution of this case before us. The case is this :

*How may a gracious person, from whom God hides his face, trust in the Lord as his God ?*

Now if you compare the case and text together, you will find them parallel in these particulars :

1. *In the persons.*—David, that holy person, was concerned in the text ; and a gracious person is here concerned in the case. That David was a gracious person, none can doubt, that read and mind his holy breathings in the Psalms. Nay, they must conclude him to be greatly such : for what raptures, fervours, and appeals, what holy agonies and flights of spirit, what glorious accounts of God and providence, and what instances of holy confidence in God, may you discern !

2. *In their cases.*—The one is cast down and disquieted, and God’s face is hidden from the other. Now God’s hiding of his face insinuates, mostly, some distaste taken ; and thus it hints the cause to be something neglected or committed, or not well managed and performed ; which therefore God cannot approve of in any of his favourites. For God dislikes all nonconformity to his will, either in the matter, manner, principle, means, or end of any instance of deportment toward God, ourselves, or others ; though sometimes this hiding of God’s face may be for other purposes, not now to be insisted on. The soul is “cast down, and disquieted,” saith the text : and thus we have the terrible impressions and effects of this eclipsed face of God upon the spirit of a gracious person. The case is doleful, though God’s design therein be wise and merciful ; for the sensible tokens of God’s gracious face or presence may be and are often-times removed or withheld, to try the soul ; to awaken dormant principles and graces to their most seasonable and advantageous exercises ; to prevent some greater mischiefs, which would arise from divine consolations unseasonably or unfitly placed ; to make and to



expose to public view some monuments of signal deliverances, salvations, and supports ; and to form some glorious mirrors and examples of signal patience and submissions to the will of God :—And all this may be done to serve more glorious purposes than any man in flesh can be aware of ; and to do the church and world, and the concerns of God's own name, more service than we can yet discern.

3. *In their course for remedy and redress.*—David here, after his self-inquiry and arraignment, applies himself to “hope in God ;” to which he argues and confines himself, by the revival of a due sense of God upon his own spirit, and a clear representation of God to himself as his salvation, praise, and God : this for *the text*. Let us now compare *the case* therewith : and here the gracious soul is supposed to be upon the inquiry and search what to do, (when God hath hid his face therefrom,) that he may trust in the Lord as his God. Now *hope* and *trust* are oft synonymous, and taken in holy scripture as expressive of the same thing ; and sure I am, that though they may be distinguished, yet they cannot be divided each from other. No man can trust but he must hope, nor hope but he must trust, in God. Lay then the case and text together ; and these things will be evident : (1.) That the gracious person is concerned in both. (2.) That God, some way or other, hides his face from both. (3.) That God is yet the God of both, and therefore to be eyed and owned as such by both. (4.) That hope or trust in God gives the best relief to both, when thus afflicted, if fixed in God as their God. (5.) That this may be done, and must. (6.) The great inquiry and concern of both is, how they may be done. Let me here premise these things :—

First. *A gracious person is one that is changed and actuated by the grace of God.*—And so prevailingly bent and set for him. (Psalm xiv. 3.) One formed and framed after that gracious pattern from the gospel-mount : “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” (Titus ii. 11—14.) “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind ; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” (Eph. iv. 23, 24.) A man of holy, gracious principles, dispositions, conversation, and designs ; a man radically after God's own heart, and formed to fulfil all God's will relating to him in his sphere and province.

1. He is (as David in the text) one that *well observes and much converses with his own soul.*—In all varieties and stages of conditions here, he makes his own soul his continual care and study, and strictly minds how all things go at home ; you see here David is a strict inquirer into the temper, case, and cure of his own soul.

2. He is one that *still looks higher than himself, in all that happens to or lies upon him.*—He knows, his hopes and business are not con-

finéd within himself: for he takes himself to be concerned with God, as well as with his own soul.

3. He is one *that is restless, and sensibly uneasy in himself, till he look up to God, and till his spirit turn toward him.*—He runs not to debauching recreations and diversions to turn away his troubles, nor to the blandishments and protections or supports of the world or flesh. For these, he knows, will rather cheat and stupify, than refresh, compose, or heal, his wounded spirit. But he repairs to God, as to the most delightful and sure sabbatism and satisfaction of his inner man.

4. He is one *who therefore hath the highest thoughts of God, and thinks it best and safest for him to place his confidence in God as in the Rock of ages.*—His case, he thinks, cannot be desperate, though never so intricate and frightful, whilst God may be engaged by him to be his Friend and God.

5. He is one *that in his hopes and exercises still keeps his eye upon the praise and service of his God.*—For all the reliefs and mercies which he desires, requests, and hopes for, have both their meet and cheerful references to God's praise; and when he hath cause and opportunity, he hath a heart, to praise his God; and it is his greatest aim, and pleasure, and ambition.

6. He is one *that deals impartially with himself about his troubles.*—But dares not challenge God about them, nor arraign him about even the severest of his providential dispensations.

Secondly. *God may be called the God of such a gracious person.*—As he is,

1. *That God to whom he is devoted, and resolved to serve and please.*—“Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God.” (Psalm l. 5, 23.) “Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice.” (Deut. xxvi. 17.)

2. And as he is *that God in whom he places all his felicity and satisfaction.*—“Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever,” (Psalm lxxiii. 25, 26,) “and the health of my countenance;” “my portion;” (Lam. iii. 24;) “the gladness of my joy.” (Psalm xliiii. 4.)

3. And as he is *that God who hath by covenant engaged himself to be his God.*—“For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel to be a people unto thee for ever: and thou, Lord, art become their God.” (2 Sam. vii. 24.) For he hath given his heart and hand so to be the God of such an one as never utterly to neglect them here: “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.” (1 Peter iii. 12.) “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the

called according to his purpose." (Rom. viii. 28. See also verses 31, 38, 39.) Nor to reject their souls hereafter: "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." (Heb. xi. 16.) See Isai. xli. 10; Heb. vi. 17—20; Rom. ii. 10; 2 Cor. vii. 1—9.

Thirdly. *God's hiding of his face from a gracious person must be considered as to, 1. The phrase; 2. The thing:—*

1. *As to the phrase:*

(1.) *It is scriptural.*—"When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only." (Job xxxiv. 29.) "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." (Isai. liv. 8; lix. 2.) And it frequently occurs in sacred scriptures.

(2.) *It is metaphorical and allusive unto men.*—Who are said to hide or turn away their faces, when they will not be seen, or spoken to, or conversed with, in any amicable or serviceable ways; whether in design and policy, or through distaste. Strictly, God hath no face, and so cannot be said to hide it. And if you take God's face for his presence or his appearance, manifested by several instances, and symbols, and tokens thereof; then, in some respects, God's face is never hid: for both his works and providences declare the universality and nearness of it; and, in some respects again, it may be, hath been, and is hidden continually from some or other.

2. *As to the thing:* Therefore we are to understand by *the hiding of God's face*, his removing or withholding of all or any of those notices and tokens whereby his merciful and delightful presence with us, his gracious acceptance of us to his favour, and his providential regards to us, are usually testified, even sensibly, to us. "And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities." (Isai. lxiv. 7. See also Jer. xviii. 17.) "I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not amongst us? And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought." (Deut. xxxi. 17, 18.) And now this is done in several ways and senses; as,

(1.) *By banishing gracious persons from his sanctuary-presence.*—"O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." (Psalm lxxiii. 1, 2.) "Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's

sake." (Dan. ix. 17.) And this was David's case, and a sore affliction to his spirit; and may be something of, but not the main thing as to, the case in hand.

(2.) *By the intermission or suspension of God's providence, care, and mercies, as to those instances and effects which would make our lives and courses here more sweet and easy to us.*—"Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake." (Psalm xlv. 22, 26.) "Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?" (Psalm x. 1.) "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" (Psalm xiii. 1, 2.) Thus is God said to "hide his face from the house of Jacob." (Isai. viii. 17.) And thus when Providence treats and uses us in this world, and most or all [of] our outward comforts and concerns are so perplexed, embittered, and removed, as if our God would hereby tell us, that he regards and minds us not, and will not be concerned for our outward peace and welfare; then is it that God may be said to "hide his face." Yet neither is this the thing that is principally intended in my case.

(3.) *By God's denying and withholding all probabilities and presages of relief from either men or things, and all sensible intimations of his own purpose to befriend us.*—"We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long. Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck it out of thy bosom." (Psalm lxxiv. 9, 11.) "I will show them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity." (Jer. xviii. 17.) And, "Because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword." (Ezek. xxxix. 23.) Thus when God withers every helpful arm, defeats all enterprises toward deliverance and supports, and shuts up every door of hope, and, by the whole visible frame and posture of second causes, looks toward us and upon us as an angry, frowning God; then is he said to "hide his face:" but this is not what the case principally respects; and therefore,

(4.) *God mainly hides his face when he withholds those inward sensible tokens of respects, which his Spirit usually affords to holy souls.*—"Lord, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me?" (Psalm lxxviii. 14.) When he deals with us as if our souls were utterly or very much despised and neglected by him: thus God tells us, that "he will no more hide his face from" his people; because he had "poured out his Spirit upon the house of Israel." (Ezek. xxxix. 29.) This is the face of God indeed, when his Spirit fills our souls with all its joys and graces; and his face is hid indeed, when we have no sensible refreshments and recruits from that Comforter the Holy Ghost, by whom all correspondencies must be maintained betwixt our God and us: and this our case mainly intends.

We find a man recorded for his patience, crying out, "Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?" (Job xiii. 24.) And when looks God more like an enemy, than when he denies all sensible illapses and recruits of inward light, and life, and joys? Is it not dreadful to have our sanctuary-clusters to relish of no blessing in them? The dews of heaven are oft, in holy services and doctrines, distilled upon us; and our addresses thither have been oft repeated and renewed: but where is the blessing and success we look for? Our souls we find, in our own apprehensions, to be contracted, degraded, and benumbed; corruptions rage, and make their rude resistances to all our sentiments and convictions. Conscience oft quarrels with us; and when God's rods are on us, we sensibly discern great discomposures in our thoughts, strange mutinies and tumults in our passions, uneasiness in our spirits, and damp upon our hopes, sadness on our hearts, and a strange readiness to resist all that God speaks and doth. And how can we imagine that God's heart and face stand toward us?

Fourthly. *Trusting in the Lord as "his God," in such a case as this, takes-in abundance, and amounts to much.*—And these things it offers to the first observant and considerate glance: 1. That the object be trusty: and no otherwise can he be, who is God the Lord. 2. That the act be answerable to the object: for trust is to run parallel with trustiness. And, 3. That this trusty object gives us allowance to put trust in him. For every one that is able, and that would be faithful upon his promise and engagement, will not engage to be responsible for what might otherwise be committed to him; and hence this passage is inserted here, "The Lord his God." 4. That he be a person qualified and acceptable, who here attempts to place his trust in the Lord as *his God*, and therefore here he is styled in the case "a gracious person."

Trust, then, seems to be "a compound of faith and hope; and it is that repose and rest which both afford, until desire and expectation be accomplished by that God on whom this trust is terminated:" so that in trust there are,

1. *A belief and sense of God's existence and of his gracious nature.*—"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. xi. 6.) See also Jer. ix. 24; Micah vii. 18. For I must believe that there is a God, and that he is kind and gracious, ere I can trust in him.

2. *Credit given unto his word and promises, as things clear, sure, and great.*—"And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?" (Heb. iii. 2, 5, 6, 17, 18.)

For these are both the ground and test of steady and successful trust in God: "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." (2 Sam. xxiii. 5.) "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." (Psalm cxix. 49.) What is God's ability and faithfulness to me, unless he countenance my trusting in him, and encourage me thereto?

3. *A consequent expectation of those things from him which he engages to perform and give.*—Things suitable to exigences and concerns as far as they agree with God's promises and designs. "Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant." (Psalm cxix. 76.) See also Rom. iv. 18, 20, 21, and 1 John v. 14, 15. For all that God promises, and would have us to expect, is still with reference to our welfare in its subordination to his glory and the public good; and all other hopes are but extravagant and presumptuous, if not reduced and conformed to this test and standard.

4. *An acquiescence and repose of spirit in the thus fixing of this expectation.*—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength:" (Isai. xxvi. 3, 4:) for confident trust breeds satisfaction, and makes souls patient and serene, till the thing hoped for and desired be brought to pass. "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." (Rom. viii. 24, 25.) For all these inward tumults, which arise within from pressing jealousies, griefs, cares, and fears, are hereby stilled; and all vain shifts and props rejected; and all committed to and left with God. "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death." (Phil. i. 19, 20.) "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." (1 Peter iv. 19.) "Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." (2 Tim. i. 11, 12.) For here no reservations must be made; nor any jealousies, bad surmises, or suspicions be any way cherished or indulged.

The case, explained and summed up, is plainly this:—

*How may a gracious person, (one sanctified and inprincipled by grace,) from whom God hides his face, (gives him but little or no inward sense, or outward sensible notices of his wonted acceptance and regards,) trust in the Lord, (quiet and satisfy himself with expecta-*

tions of God's gracious acceptance of him, complacency in him, and regards toward him,) *as his God?* (that God to whom he hath committed all, and is devoted to, and who will certainly regard and bless him, as his true favourite, and as one by grace in covenant with him;) *and how may he do it so as to abandon all disturbing shifts and cares elsewhere?*

## DIRECTIONS.

**DIRECTION I.** *Let him retire into himself, and there compose his thoughts for close and serious work;* (Psalm iv. 4; lxxvii. 6;) *for here he will find a full and truly great employment for every faculty and thought.*—More here is requisite to self-redress, than mere reading, complaints, or prayer. Here is work *within* him and *above* him. God and himself must now take up his closest, deepest, and most serious thoughts and pauses. Much here must be inquired into, remembered, considered, and debated; and the distracted, wandering, careless, inconsiderate soul, that is broken and scattered into wild and incoherent thoughts, is no ways fit for this employment; nor can it, without due recollection of itself, proceed to argue down what lies upon it as its load and burden. He that knows nothing of himself as to his state and temper, and as to those urgent circumstances under which he lies, cannot know much of God; nor well discern what fit and pertinent improvement may be made of God's refreshing name and promises. And he that through his negligence converses little with himself, must know too little of his own affairs and straits to make right applications of God's promises and memorials unto himself, so as to derive therefrom what is fit to cherish and support him. All must be set aside that may distract, and summoned-in that may assist, and thought upon that may relieve, him in his strait. "Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom." (Prov. xviii. 1.)

**DIRECT. II.** *When thus retired and composed, let him discourse and mind his gracious self.*—"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. ii. 10.) "Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us." (Isai. xxvi. 12.) Grace in the heart is a great pledge and earnest, and gives us huge assurances, of good things to come: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." (2 Thess. ii. 16, 17.) God hath set gracious souls apart for his own self; (Psalm iv. 3;) and to the highest purposes and endowments are they wrought and framed: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (1 Peter ii. 9.) "And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory." (Rom. ix. 23.) "Now he that hath wrought us for

the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." (2 Cor. v. 5.) What clearer dawnings of a glorious day, and what more hopeful token and presage of special favour and respects from God to us can we imagine, than the participation of a Divine Nature, that never can be pleased but when aspiring toward God, and that is insatiable till it get up to him? What, a soul created after God, and formed to his praise, and bearing such impresses of the Holy One, and yet determined to dereliction and destruction? O how can these things be? Read but those characters of God upon thy spirit. Mind the propensions and ascents of heaven-born principles. See but what wonders grace hath wrought already. Hath God essayed to tear thy soul from Satan's paw? Hath he transformed thy spirit, and made it so much a resemblance of his own holiness and wisdom? Hath he advanced thine esteem of holiness and heaven? Hath he cast out thy rubbish, and raised in thee a habitation for his own holy name? And will he demolish and disrespect a monument and structure to his own praise? Why did God thus illuminate thine eyes, inflame thy heart with holy fervours, and so invigorate thy active powers, as to enable thee to move toward him, but that thou mightest attain to and possess his highest favours and endearments? Hath it been ever thus with thee, that nothing can satisfy thine heart but holiness, God, and heaven? Why then hath God thus cast his mantle over thee, but to attract and draw thy soul to him? And hath God put these principles, instincts, and propensions into thee, only to torment thee by the unsatisfied engagements of a holy thirst? Is grace so beautiful in another? and is it the less valuable and observable, because God hath implanted it in thy own self? Art thou made restless and dissatisfied every where, but under the influences and sensible smiles of God's most gracious countenance? And doth thy God impose upon thee, and only trifle with thee? Grace is a principle and design so truly heavenly and exalting, as that its tendency proves its extraction, and manifests God's purposes to do thee good for ever.

Let this thy experience be observed; for who can think it likely that God should draw such parallel lines upon thy soul to his own holy will, and make thee such an epistle so manifestly written by his own Spirit, and yet not allow thee to peruse thyself, and to form what is wrought within thee, into such pertinent encouragements and supports as thy respective agonies and distresses may require? And how can this be done, if no survey be made, no inventory taken and considered, of thine inward worth and riches? "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." (Eph. i. 17—20.) "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light,



and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." (Acts xxvi. 18.) And certainly, from what God works within a gracious soul, may it infer great things determined to it, and reserved for it: for who can think that God would rear an habitation for himself, and not inhabit it? or raise a temple, so magnificent and sumptuous as the holy soul, and not fill it with his glory? "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph. ii. 22.) "For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (2 Cor. vi. 16.) Had God designed to forsake thee utterly, would he not have delivered and resigned thee up to a stupid and polluted spirit? Then hadst thou been so inapprehensive of the sinfulness of sin, the beauty of holiness, the pleasure of a well-ordered mind and life, and of invisible realities, as that thou wouldest have easily received and borne the image of the devil and the world upon thee. The thoughts and prospects of an eternal state would never have reconciled thee to the severities and courses of true godliness, nor have made thee so ambitiously solicitous for divine acceptance, and the satisfactions and fruitions of that state where God is all in all, as now they have done. Surely, the soul that is visited with "the Day-Spring from on high, guiding its feet into the way of peace," and all this "by the tender mercy of its God," ought not so easily to give up all for lost, as to despair of light and help, because of present darkness, and of "the valley of the shadow of death." This "white stone," with such "a new name in it," is no small earnest, nor an obscure sign, of everlasting mercies and endearments. God that hath sanctified the soul, hath thereby signified his gracious purpose to do it good at last, and never so to forsake it as to return no more. See, then, what holy principles, favours, aims, and actions, God hath brought thee to; and thence encourage and fix thy trust in God.

**DIRECT. III.** *Let him then well observe how far the face of God is hid from him indeed.*—Lest otherwise his own condition, and God's aspects and deportment toward him, should be mistaken by him. "But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." (Isai. xlix. 14—16; Psalm lxxvii. 6, 10.) How oft do souls mistake God, and form or fancy great discouragements and eclipses, which rather rise and issue from themselves, than him! What, if the brain or body should be indisposed? What, if some bold and wanton expectations or desires, irregularly formed and cherished, come to nothing? Suppose some melancholic Christians (such have I known, and have rather pitied and reprov'd, than cherished and commended them) should desire, expect, and pray for some miraculous illapses of strength and comforts on them, or beg of God some such deliverances and salvations as suit not the ordinary, stated methods of God's pro-

vidence, or make their requests to God for some ecstatic transports and enlargements in a duty, or covet unfit degrees of gifts, or abilities for duties, taking that to be *grace* which may be a gift consistent with a lost condition; and suppose these things never acquiesced [obtained] by them: must it thence follow, that the face of God is hid from them? O what a pass must God be at with these men's souls, when they must take him for their enemy, or for a discontented and distasted friend, unless he will (to humour them) transgress the stated methods of his dealing with men's souls! If their natural strength and fervour do but decay through age or sickness, or other accidental weaknesses; or if God touch them in their darlings here, as interests, relations, possessions; or cast them upon unwelcome straits, though for their good; O then they think him gone from them in deep distaste and wrath, whenas these things rather insinuate demonstrations and assurances of God's faithfulness and favour to them, than any hard thoughts of or bad designs upon them. See then that you be sure that God hides his face from you indeed, before you proceed to infer discouragements, or any ways to countenance your own despondencies, and any jealousies or hard thoughts of God.

But yet it is to be acknowledged, that God sometimes doth hide his face indeed; (Isai. lxiv. 7;) and that either, 1. *Totally*, as to the damned in hell, so as never to show it more to them again. But this is nothing to our present case: Or else, 2. *Partially*, as to those on earth, who are either, (1.) *Unconverted*, or, (2.) *Converted persons*. The former are not here concerned, but the latter. And as to converted persons, such as are truly gracious, God is said to hide his face from them, when he removes his candlestick from them: (Rev. ii. 5 :) Or when they rather only see, than really feel and are bettered by, the light; and are scarce sensible of either savour or power in God's ordinances, or of any improvement in or of themselves thereby: Or when they have not any free intercourses with God in holy duties, but ever find themselves to be deadened and straitened in the addresses of their spirits to God in his holy ordinances; of which their jealousies are increased, by their being conscious to themselves of much barrenness, wantonness, and ingratitude under their sanctuary-privileges: Or when they are terrified with storms and tempests in their own breasts, through pressing fears and multiplied distractions. But here let them consult God's word and providences, and their own consciences, together: and thus debate this matter with themselves:—"What makes thee think, O my soul, that God now hides his face from thee? Is it what is and hath been common either to mankind, or to the 'generation of the just?' or something peculiar to myself, and unusual to others? Is it any thing that can make it evident, that I either yet was never truly gracious, or that God's grace is now extinct in me? Have I a heart for God? and hath he none for me? Is any thing inflicted on me inconsistent with God's saving love to me? Have my afflictions deadened me to God and holiness, or cut off the entail of his covenant-favours upon me? Are there no cases and instances of God's eclipsed face parallel to or much beyond my own,

to be discerned in Abraham, David, Job, Lot, Christ, or others?" See James v. 10; Heb. v. 7, 9. Job's friends got nothing but reproofs from God, for their inferring God's contempt of him from what God laid on him.

It is much to be observed, that God's dearest favourites have had the sharpest exercises, and great darkness and disconsolateness on their spirits, at some times or other; for the sensible comforts and refreshments of religion are seldom found the daily fare of the exactest walkers with God under heaven. And yet how often are these eclipses greatedened by their fancies or follies! And then by their misrepresentations of God to themselves, how oft and much is he dishonoured by them! But let these things be well considered by gracious souls:

1. God doth not always, nor ever, totally hide his face from them whom he hath changed and transformed through grace.

2. That when at any time it is hid from them, it is not hidden in so much wrath, but that mercy shall prevail at last.

3. Nor can it ever be so dark with them, but that some remedies and refreshments may be had, from the Name, the Son, and the covenant: and from that of God within themselves which they ought not to undervalue, overlook, or to deny, or to quit the acknowledgments and comforts of.

Nay, I may boldly say it, that, at the worst, more of God's face doth or may appear to them, and shine upon them, than is at any time hidden from them. I mean, more of that face which is discernible here on earth; for, otherwise, it is but very little of God's face that the best men see at most in this world, if compared with what is to be manifested in eternity unto the heirs of glory. And therefore is it yet a shameful thing, both to be pitied and blamed in gracious persons, that every intermission or retreat of sensible joys and favours shall so enrage their fears and sorrows, as that God's tenderness and faithfulness shall presently be arraigned; and his most gentle discipline, heavily censured, strangely aggravated, extravagantly resented,\* and most immoderately bemoaned by them! yea, and that before they have well understood what ails them, and unto what degrees their so bemoaned eclipse hath reached! Come then, my soul, deal fairly with thyself and God, and tell me, What is it that God hath now denied thee? How far hath God denied it? What of God is it that thou once hast seen, but canst not now? What hinders the present sight or the recovery of what before hath been thy strength and joy? Do not mistake God's looks and heart; nor, in a pet, charge God with what he is not guilty of; nor say too hastily, "Why better with me formerly than now?"

**DIRECT. IV.** *Let him remove and shun all that provokes God thus to hide his face.*—"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." (Isai. lix. 1, 2.)

\* See the meaning of this old word in page 85 of this volume.—EDIT.

“Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.” (Lam. iii. 39, 40.) No counsel nor encouragement will or can avail that soul for trust or conduct, which neglects its stated work and watch, which God enjoins it to and expects from it. The spots and negligences of God’s own people are displeasing to him: and he will turn his face away from what he loathes and hates. Many a dreadful frown and glance from God had David, when he had defiled his soul and body with lust and blood. The matter of Uriah left that blot and sting upon him, and to his family, which made it evident how unsafe it is for even gracious souls to play the wantons. Complaints and prayers can neither expiate nor commute for those miscarriages and neglects which God forbids and hates. Nor will it be found sufficient, that we make some inquiries after God, or pathetic and mournful declamations against ourselves, if any sins lie near our hearts, and prove predominant in our conversations. The crimes whereby we have disgusted God must be repented of, detested, and rejected. He that would trust in God, and gain the views and comforts of his face, should thoroughly hate, deeply resent, and carefully watch against what God can take no pleasure in, but hath entered his protest against. “Repent and do thy first works,” was grave and sober counsel. (Rev. ii. 5.) Begin then with thyself, and end with God; and work thyself up to his will, and thou shalt see his face with joy. Sin will raise clouds and storms, and cause no small eclipses of God’s face, wherever it enters, is countenanced, and prevails. A heavenly mind and life must be recovered, exercised, and preserved; and practical resolutions must be renewed and kept in their inviolable vigour, whether God sensibly smile or not upon us. Whoever mourns not over, and watches not against, what God abhors, will find his seeing God’s face with joy to be too strange and great a miracle to be expected from him. He that contemns the ways and will of God, can look for nothing but to be contemned by him. “For them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” (1 Sam. ii. 30.) The laws of peace and favour must be kept; sins must be broken off by righteousness and repentance; or else God’s face is to be seen no more.

*DIRECT. v. Let him consider well how far God is unchangeably the God of gracious souls.*—“If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.” (Psalm lxxxix. 30—34.) “If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land. The land also shall be left of them, and

shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them : and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity : because, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred my statutes. And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them : for I am the Lord their God. But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the Heathen, that I might be their God : I am the Lord." (Lev. xxvi. 40, 42—45.) The tenor of God's covenant is to be studied thoroughly and well understood, to prevent extravagant or defective trust. It is true God's promises are large, and his relation fixed. (Psalm lxxxiv. 11 ; Isai. xli. 10.) God will be so far always theirs, as to be ever mindful of them and of his covenant with them ; to be duly provident for their good, so as to prevent all that may truly harm and ruin their resigned souls and persons ; (Rom. viii. 28 ; 1 Cor. xvi. 9 ;) to be truly, though wisely, compassionate toward them in all their dejections and temptations. (1 Cor. x. 13 ; Micah vii. 18 ; Isai. xxx. 19 ; xli. 17.) He will neither overburden them, overwork them, nor overlook them ; and he will be always so far theirs, as to exemplify the power and riches of his all-sufficient grace and goodness in them. (Rom. ix. 23 ; 2 Thess. i. 10, 12.) God will refine and save their souls, renew their strength, and clothe them with his righteousness and salvations, and give them such encouragements and supports as may be needful for their present state and work. "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run, and not be weary ; and they shall walk, and not faint." (Isai. xl. 31.) "For which cause we faint not ; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen : for the things which are seen are temporal ; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Cor. iv. 16—18.) "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness ; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." (Col. i. 11, 12.) "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly : and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." (1 Thess. v. 23, 24.) Let them but act like gracious persons, and all grace shall abound toward them ; and he will see that their integrity and uprightness preserve them, whilst therein they wait on him. Pardoned sins, refined souls, accepted services, prayers, and persons, with great victories, triumphs, and salvations at the last ; God's Spirit in them, his presence with them, and his eternal glory for them when time is folded up and reckoned for : all these shall joyfully convince them in what respects and to what purposes God is immutably,

and will be, their God. (Rom. viii. 31—39.) But if they look or hope that God should be so far theirs, as to keep them from afflictions and the fiery trial, or to feast them continually with sensible consolations and clear views of heaven and of his glorious face, or immediately to give them what they ask, at their discretion, or to prevent all manner of perturbation in their souls, and all distempers in their bodies, brains, and fancies, or to redress miraculously what may be cured and relieved otherwise; they have no promise for this. For where hath God engaged that grace must do the work that is consigned to natural means, or that miracles must effect what an established course of ordinary means may bring men to? Even in the sealing age, when miracles were so multiplied, we find that ordinary means were used in their just extent. Moses must send for Jethro. Cornelius must send for Peter. Philip must turn instructor and interpreter to the eunuch. Manna must only be continued until the Israelites could plough and sow. Why then should any one conclude, that God hath hid his face, unless unreasonable and extraordinary expectations be accomplished? If parts be weak, if gifts be mean, if memory be frail through disadvantages of age or weakness, if passionate fervours be abated through those declensions which are entailed on mortals by a settled decree; must we infer from hence that God hath hid his face from us, and holds us for his enemies, unless he change the ordinary course of nature? And as to soul-concerns and exercises: what, if our spirits be disquieted through the force or expectation of sharp trials and distresses? What, if Satan bluster in our souls? What, if strange suggestions, like fiery darts, be cast into us? What, if we be strongly urged to such imaginations as God himself knows to be odious and ungrateful to us? Must we from hence suspect or think that God disclaims us, and renounces all his merciful relations and regards to us? Hath God engaged any where, that our war with Satan shall end before we die? Can militant Christians be discharged from this warfare before they have finished their course? Whilst you resolve and strive, you conquer; and God abides your God, till you give up the cause, and fall in love with what your God abhors and slights. See Heb. iv. 14—16: "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Was not the great Jehovah as much the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the extremities of his agonies and conflicts, as either before or after them? But he never was so much his God as to excuse him from his bitter cup, and his contest with the devil and this world. The same I may also say of Paul. (2 Cor. xii. 7—9.) God's covenant, and not your thoughts or hopes, must tell how far.

**DIRECT. VI.** *Let him consider and improve what God affords to help and quicken trust in him.*—"Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave

me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation." (Psalm xxvii. 9.) "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." (Rom. xv. 4, 13.) God hath his part, and man hath his, to do; not that God needs him, but because he hath laid him under law unto himself, and suited his remedying duties to his faculties and circumstances. Trust is a compounded act and duty, made up of assent, consent, and reliance; and it respects veracity, goodness, and fidelity in the object trusted-in. Let then the gracious soul look upon God as fit and willing to be trusted-in; as actually engaged and concerned for him, when he is his God, and as faithful, when thus related and engaged. For God both can and will effect all that he undertakes; yet he expects that gracious souls shall fix their deepest thoughts upon what he hath given them to fix and raise their trust upon. Idleness doeth no good. The thinking and industrious and resolved soul thrives much; whilst mere complainers cheat and dispirit themselves and trouble others, dishonour God, and scandalize and dishearten men. It is here as it is in nature: God feeds us, he clothes and keeps us; and we trust in him to do so for us. But if we be not provident and diligent in the well-ordering and improvement of the helps, and benefits, and instructions which God affords us in and by second causes; and so expect that manna come not only down from heaven, but that it also fall into our mouths; we may easily turn this trust into presumption, and starve ourselves in the midst of manna round about us. So, he that expects God should miraculously inspire trust into him, without the intervenient use of his own faculties in the improvement of those helps which God affords, will find such hopes and trust fitter to be rebuked and frustrated, than to be gratified and fulfilled. He that would trust in the Lord as his God, is to consider, 1. *Whom he is to trust in.*—The Lord. 2. *For what he is to trust in him.*—That he may either see his face again, or be supported and preserved under the eclipses of it. 3. *Why he is to trust in him.*—Because of his own necessities, and God's power and fidelity to help him, and the encouragements God gives him.

1. *Think then, O gracious soul, what a God thou hast to trust in.*—God all-sufficient. (Gen. xv. 1; xvii. 1.) Now God's all-sufficiency lies (as far as we can know it yet) in the vast reaches of his infinite wisdom; in the unboundedness of his power, for it is omnipotent; and in the riches of his goodness, which knows no bounds in the expressions and efforts thereof but the inviolable harmony of his own blessed name and nature, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," and the capacities of his favourites. (Eph. i. 11.)

(1.) God hath *a heart to do thee good.*—For he is love, and goodness is his nature and delight. "But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the

earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." (Jer. ix. 24.) "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." (1 John iv. 16.) Now love is communicative and diffusive of itself in all such instances and expressions as the case and circumstances of the beloved object may require. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." (Jer. xxxi. 3.) "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord." (Hosea ii. 19, 20.) Hence you may see God's paraphrase upon this attribute; and his most copious explication of it, in Exodus xxiv. 6, 7: "The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." Love pities favourites in their miseries and self-bemoanings. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." (Jer. xxxi. 18—20.) Love helps them in their straits: "For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." (Isai. lxiii. 8, 9.) Love supplies them in their wants: "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Phil. iv. 19.) Love hears their cries: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Phil. iv. 6, 7.) "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." (1 Peter iii. 12.) Love emboldens, delivers, and preserves them, and commands all within its reach and empire to befriend and serve them, to all these purposes, and in all these ways, that are most suitable to itself and them: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim



the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified." (Isai. lxi. 1—3.) Canst thou not therefore trust in him, who, without any violence or repugnancy to himself, is so propense to do thee good? Let then the love and goodness of thy God come into thy fresh remembrances and most lively thoughts, that so thy trust in him may be encouraged and spirited hereby. How greatly are we reconciled and quickened to place our confidence, where love is most predominate and natural! "For thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God. Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble" (Hebrew, "weariness") "seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day," saith Nehemiah. (Chap. ix. 31, 32.)

(2.) And as God hath a heart to do thee good, so he hath *wisdom to contrive and manage the means and methods of his purposed and free goodness.* (Eph. i. 8.)—"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." (Jude 24, 25.) See also 1 Tim. i. 17. God guided the wandering Israelites under the wilderness-eclipses of his face "by the skilfulness of his hands." (Psalm lxxviii. 72.) God best knows when to show his face, to what degrees, and how. He sees what ails and what will help thee. He is no stranger to thy gloominess and droopings. He understands wherein, how far, and upon what accounts thou so lamentest his withdrawments from thee; and what these manifestations of himself are, which will afford the best relief to thee. He cannot overlook the proper article of time, wherein those friendly aspects and appearances which thou covetest so much will most befriend and serve thee. The best men have a complication of soul-distempers in them; and those divine discoveries which might relieve them in their droopings may, when desired by them, (were they but then afforded,) possibly make them proud or careless. However, possibly God hath not sufficiently served those purposes to which thy doleful present exercise is directed; and so the birth might prove too hasty to be perfect, were it produced when desired by thee. Job little knew, and all his confident, pressing friends as little, what God was doing by those so rigid usages whereto that holy, patient person was exposed. God hath more souls and things to mind than one; and he will make every part and instance of his grace and goodness to harmonize each with other: and is it not more desirable to every soul resigned to God, to abide in this darkness for a while,

than to have the course and methods of God's orderly proceedings disordered and disturbed, for the mere pleasing of some precipitant desires? Let God alone; and turn not a censurer of his dealings, till thou canst comprehend his whole design upon his whole creation, his family, and on thyself; and let it suffice thee, that Infinite Wisdom is concerned and engaged for thee: and trust him more; for thou mayest safely do it, because he is infinitely wiser than thyself; and knows best when to hide, and when to show, his face.

(3.) God hath *ability and authority*, as well as a heart and wisdom, *to relieve and favour thee*. (Jude 24.)—"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." (2 Cor. ix. 8.) "He shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand." (Rom. xiv. 4.) He is the God of power: "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee." (Job xlii. 2.) He can revive or damp thy spirit at his pleasure: (Job xxxiv. 29 :) so that there can be no suspicion of impotence or inability with him. He that made heaven and earth can succour drooping hearts; and he that revives this sense of God upon him, will find his trust in God more sweet and easy.

2. *Think also what thou art now allowed to trust him with and for.*—Even with thy whole self; and with all that can concern the church, the world, and thee: Wisdom for conduct; power for due deliverances, and protections, and salvations; and grace and comforts to bear thee up under burdens and temptations, and to furnish thee to every good word and work, and to carry thee safe to everlasting rest: and for the wise and happy issue of every duty, burden, and temptation, mayest thou firmly trust in God. "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." (1 Peter iv. 19.) But be sure to trust to him for nothing, as far as thou canst learn or know it, that is unworthy of God to give, and unfit for thee to ask or have. But this you may trust him for: That he hide nothing of that face from thee without which thou canst not be a holy and a happy person; and that he lay nothing on thee unto the prejudice of thy best affairs; and that he never be defective in ministering those supplies to thee, which his own glory, the credit of religion, the public good, and the great duties of thy place and station do require; and that he never call thee out to any thing beyond thy strength and furniture; but that he suit thy strength and spirit unto the work and burdens of thy place and day. (1 Cor. x. 13.) God will not be offended at thee for such trust as this; supposing thy devotedness, and thy due diligence and prudence in the choice and using of all meet subordinate means and helps, and thy fervent cries to him.

3. *Think upon those encouragements which God hath given to this trust.* (Isai. xxvi. 3, 4; Psalm cxii. 7.)—Thou hast God's promises and engagements. "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the know-

ledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Peter i. 3, 4.) "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised; and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." (Heb. x. 23, 24.) "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me. Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant." (Psalm cxix. 75, 76.) And these are certain, suitable, large, and precious; and the genuine product of infinite, generous, and resolved love. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." (Heb. vi. 17, 18.) Thou hast those near and dear relations which God hath assumed and owns to thee,—a Husband, Father, King, &c. "For thy Maker is thine Husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." (Isai. liv. 5, 10.) "And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. vi. 18.) "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." (Rev. xxi. 7.) Thou hast the exhibition of his own Son Jesus Christ. (Heb. x. 19, 23; iv. 14, 16; ii. 17, 18; Rom. viii. 32, 35.) "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." (John vi. 39, 40.) "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Who by him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God." (1 Peter i. 3, 21.) Thou hast the earnest of the indwelling Spirit. "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." (Eph. i. 13, 14.) "Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." (2 Cor. v. 5.) And of that new nature which he hath formed and cherished in thee; as in 2 Tim. i. 7; Rom. viii. 15, 23, 28. Thou hast a sealed covenant with sacramental con-

firmations, and experiences of prosperous trust both in others and thyself. (Psalm ix. 10; Rom. xv. 4; Dan. iii. 28; Heb. xi.)

Do then as David did: infer from known experience all that may strengthen regular confidence; for thus did he: "Thou art my hiding-place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." (Psalm xxxii. 7, 10.) And thus did Paul: "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." (2 Cor. i. 8—10.) "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped." (Psalm xxviii. 7.) And thou hast the glory of thy God concerned in the prosperousness of thy trust. "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." (Eph. i. 12.) "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." (Rom. iv. 20.)

And now, to close up all: Why such manifold encouragements to trust in God, if they were either vain or needless? And how can any keep up their trust in God, without their deep and sober thoughts about, and their intent and most deliberate pauses on, these weighty things upon record, which God hath left, to justify and encourage your trusting in him? It is both strange and sad to see many Christians come to their ministers with complaints, or put up bills for prayers in congregations, and to desire solemn days to be set apart for them, whilst they rest only here, as if they looked to be comforted and supported by some charm or miracle. They look to be healed by a word, and they neglect their own work; they do not search into themselves, that they may know whether or no the grace of God hath made them capable of trusting in the Lord as their God. They bring not their calamities and dejections to the test, that they may clearly know under what hand of God they are cast; and how far God hath hid his face from them, and how far not. God enters not into their close and serious thoughts, that they may plainly see and know what there is in him, to draw their spirits forth to trust in him: nor will they studiously revive that sense of God upon themselves, whereby their trust in him may be engaged, established, and emboldened: and yet they cry, "What shall we do to trust in the Lord as our God?" Why, sirs, I will tell you what to do:—

1. *See that your interest in God be cleared up.*—This you may know by the prevalency of your desires, pursuits, and satisfactions, and by the practical resignments of yourselves to him.

2. *See what this interest in God infers.*—Namely, nothing is desperately lost at present, and all will be well at last; and that all lies safe that can concern you. See Psalm xxiii. 1, 4. The truth is, all that can be grateful, great, and sure, may be inferred from hence.

3. *Accommodate and apply what you infer, as skilfully and faithfully as you can, to your distressing and discouraging cases and circumstances.*—There are histories, to tell us what God hath done; and there are doctrines, to tell us what God is and can do; and there are precepts and instructions, to direct us what we are to do; in what cases, upon what grounds and reasons, and to what ends and purposes, we may trust in God. And God hath given us marks, to know what interest we have in him: and a directory and helps to get it, if we have it not; and he hath showed us fully and plainly what it is, and what at last it will amount to, to want or have this interest in himself; and whenas we have gotten it, he hath taught us how to apply it fitly, and how to bear our spirits up in hope and trust thereby; and, after all this and much more, shall we be negligent and lazy, and cry out like fools and drones?—"We know not how to trust in God, nor whether he be ours or not!" Let us not thus abuse ourselves.

4. *Think on those means and helps whereby we may attain to an ability and faculty of trusting in God.*—And let them be most faithfully improved; such as the word, sacraments, sabbaths, conferences, meditation upon the word and works of God. But these need no enlargements on them; and my limits are transgressed already.

Reader, expect not accuracy here; I am very sensible of many imperfections in this sermon; I am separated from my helps, having my Bible only, and my God, to help me in my wandering solitudes and retirements. These things are what I have discoursed with my own heart; and if some censure them, others, I hope, will pity and pray for me. And the God of heaven accept and prosper these (though weak) endeavours!

#### INFERENCES.

I had some INFERENCES prepared: but, because I would not be too tedious, I forbear to add them, so as to enlarge upon them. I will but mention these.

INFERENCE I. Hence it follows, *that human souls are excellent and capacious principles and beings.*

INFER. II. *Graceless sinners are under dark and dreadful circumstances, when God afflicts and hides his face from them.*—They need not say, "Why cast down so much?" but rather, "Why not more?"

INFER. III. *Excellent is the temper and condition that grace puts men's souls into.*—In that they are enabled, prompted, and directed to such ways, to know and help themselves.

INFER. IV. *Right and due thoughts of God do mighty service to the gracious soul, in all the eclipses and distresses that do or can befall it.* (Psalm xlii. 11.)

INFERENCE I. *Man's soul is a noble and capacious being.*—"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark viii. 36, 37.) It is called by Solomon, "the lamp, or candle

of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly." (Prov. xx. 27.) It is the great treasure that ought to be kept, and used well; "for out of it are the issues of life." (Prov. iv. 23.) Its joys and bitternesses lie deep within itself; and they are not to be intermeddled with by strangers. (Prov. xiv. 10.) The countenance of a man is but the index of his spirit. It is in the soul that joys and sorrows centre and seat themselves: "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken." (Prov. xv. 13.) Many infirmities or distresses may easily be undergone by a sound heart; but if the spirit itself be wounded, how dreadful are its wounds! (Prov. xviii. 14.) The spirit of man is God's vicegerent, and a great mirror of himself; and as it accuses and condemns when it well understands and minds itself, so it is the veil and representative of its God unto itself, in Rom. ii. 15, and 1 John iii. 19, 21. It can (you see) both summon-in, and search itself. It can both challenge and discourse itself. It can command, reprove, exhort, encourage, enlarge, restrain, itself; it can arraign its temper, principles, purposes, actions, sufferings, and designs; and make itself inquisitor, judge, jury, witness, and executioner, to itself. It can look every way; and make both heaven and earth, good things and bad, some way or other serviceable to its own concern; and turn all the memorials and notices of its God to self-improvements and relief. It is capable of moral government, and of full joys and sorrows, congenial with its contracted principles, temper, and behaviour, here. It is capable of converse and communion with its God; of grace and comfort, heaven or hell. It can perceive its own distresses and concerns, enjoy the best things, and improve the worst; and so consider all things as to accept, refuse, approve, condemn; and so resolve upon or wave a matter, as it sees to be most fit. Nor needs it to truckle under any thing but guilt and wrath, when plunged thereinto by its own folly and neglect. The text here shows you what the soul of man can do; and if it be replied, that "David's soul,—it was gracious;" and that "grace only brought it thus to be disciplined and tutored by itself;" it is answered, that grace can have no such effects on stones and brutes, which grace and diligent care might make good use of; and all souls might do thus with and by themselves, did they not by sin degrade themselves. For all souls have imperative, directive, and active powers.

*INFER. II. Graceless sinners are under dreadful circumstances when troubles come upon them.*—"But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile." (Rom. ii. 8, 9.) "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow." (Isai. i. 11.) "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." (Isai. lvii. 20, 21.) "And

what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory?" (Isai. x. 3.) "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isai. xxxiii. 14.) For when their miseries surprise and overthrow them, should they then say, "Why so disquieted and cast down?" they have that within them which will rather say, "O, why disquieted no more," seeing there is so little ground of hope from God? "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." (1 Thess. v. 3.) All is so vile and foul within them, and all so frightful and amazing to them, whether they look within them, about them, or above them, as that the greatest wonder is, how they escape distractions. Souls so neglected and degraded, and every way devoted to the will and service of the devil! such manifold and mighty sins abounding in and from them! and such great wrath to be inflicted on them! such clear and numerous presages of fearful storms approaching toward them! such an inhabitant and tyrant as Satan, to make them do, be, lose, and slight even any thing but what they should! a God so much incensed against them, and every way so resolved and engaged to ensnare and ruin them! and their own spirits, amidst all this, so much estranged from, uneasy in, so frightful to, and so much at variance with themselves, so as that they never can be reconciled to themselves again! Why should not these souls be "disquieted and cast down," when troubles come upon them, like messengers with these heavy tidings from the God of heaven, that they shall see his face no more? What succour, hope, or refuge, hath the dejected soul, but God? What sanctuary is there for it, in its storms and chases, but the all-sufficient Jehovah? And how can mercy and redresses be expected from Him, whom they can no way comfortably call *their* God, whilst as yet unconverted persons? They have neither encouragement nor a heart to seek him acceptably and successfully. "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." (Prov. i. 24—31.) Their present troubles are but the harbingers and foretastes of eternal and unmixed wrath to come. Providence serves the writ, and gives the summons. Conscience confounds, and holds the prisoner fast, under the seizures of God's providence. Justice draws up the bill against them; and

vengeance fixes them to their racks; and they have nothing left them but their fearful expectations and reproaches. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. x. 26, 31.) "And he shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted, which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink-offerings? let them rise up and help you, and be your protection." (Deut. xxxii. 37, 38.) Let these men read Job xviii. 7, 21; xxvii. 8, 9.

INFER. III. *Excellent is the case and temper of gracious souls in 2 Cor. i. 12; Phil. i. 20; Isai. xli. 10, 17.*—"For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death." "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." A good heart within them, a clear way before them, a good God for them, a good understanding of their case and state, and such encouraging refreshments and supports, so ready for them at their call, when truly needful to them!—what greater requisites than these can we mention and propose unto ourselves, to render our condition easy, safe, and happy here? What need we more, to calm and cheer up our disturbed spirits with? (Rom. viii. 31—39; 2 Cor. xii. 7, 9.) *The God! My God!* "The health of my countenance!" and One that yet is to be praised by me! and therefore One that I must fully and may safely hope in! Why may not these things bear a gracious spirit up, and quicken and embolden it to bid defiance to all attempts which earth or hell can make to ruin and unhinge it? The gracious soul, as such, is fit for any thing; and it is entitled to the greatest blessings from its God, and in due season shall possess them. What God by grace hath made and brought it to, renders it fit for God's great blessings and supports; and what God promises, it may safely trust to, and confidently rely upon. The text here shows you what the gracious soul can do. It can restrain itself from its immoderate sorrows, by its faithful dealing with itself, and by making a right judgment upon whatever doth at any time befall it: and as there is something in it apt to raise storms, and vexatious resentments of its pressures and afflictions, so are there certain principles, and a seed of God, within them; and *that* in God above them, and before them, *which* will not always suffer their sorrows and dejections to transgress their stated bounds and rules; because the composed and still soul is fittest for communion with God, hope in him, service to him, and consolation



from him. See here how narrowly David observed himself, how skilfully he discoursed himself, how powerfully he restrained himself, and how readily he could and did enlarge, encourage, and exalt himself! You may discern in him, that grace will not admit of nor countenance any unfit reflections upon God. It will not fall heavily with its censorious carpings upon his providence, nor in an angry pet of frowardness and impatience fall out with him. It threatens no revenge to evil men. It will not flee to sinful shifts and refuges: neither is any thing chidden, cited, or arraigned, but the "disquieted and disturbed spirit;" and yet even here, it is not so much clamorous and impatient, as it is inquisitive after and resolved upon its regular self-redress. If any thing ail it or afflict it, it minds the grounds, the measures, and the effects thereof upon itself. Stupid, indeed, it is not; for it feels God's hand upon it. Immoderate or careless in its griefs it will not be; for it will call its sorrows and itself unto the test and bar, and there impartially examine all its pressures, its sense of them, and its behaviour under them. Nor will it sullenly be neglectful of itself in troubles; for it will urge itself to all just observations and improvements of its best helps and remedies; and when it finds that only "hope in God" must bear it up and succour it, O then how copiously and closely is the name of God considered by it! "I shall yet praise Him; the health of my countenance, and my God." If it be forced abroad (as holy David now was) to sorrowful wanderings, solitudes, and retirements, its very privacies shall be spent in pertinent soliloquies, and so be improved to its own best advantage, and consequently be made to turn to very good account at last. It is and will be provident for soul-good, wherever it is, and whatever it is called to undergo. And when, upon impartial search, it finds (as it will quickly do) that no relief can be expected but from and by "hope in God," how prevalent are its gracious principles and instincts, in carrying it to look much higher than itself for help! Nor will it ever look upon its case as desperate and lost remedilessly, whilst there is room and ground for hope in God to help it. Yet is it orderly and calm in its procedures; for it first talks with itself, and then looks up to God; and though it be difficult to disperse and quell its griefs and sorrows when they are gathered to a head, yet "duty is duty, hot or cold;" and it is not difficulty that can divorce the gracious soul therefrom. It can find work in storms and trials for all its faculties, principles, and graces; and they must vigorously perform their functions, to serve those weighty turns and purposes which so much concern the exercised soul. And it well knows, and doth consider it as wisely, that storms and tumults of this nature are never truly laid, nor the afflicted soul refreshed, either by transient and hasty or by hard thoughts of God; and it is its happiness and support, that it hath a God to flee to, a heart to hope in him and to praise him, and an interest in God, and a covenant of promises from God, to encourage hope in God.

INFER. IV. *O what refreshments do a due sense and lovely thoughts of God afford to gracious souls under their troubles and disquiet-*

ments!—"And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (2 Tim. iv. 18.) O let those passages be read considerably, in Lam. iii. 21—36. It is in God's gracious name (so solemnly proclaimed in Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7) that gracious souls may act themselves, when all things shake and fail about them, and their hearts tremble in them: "The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel." (Joel iii. 16.) Here is that anchor which must stay the soul, and hold its hope, when all the seas of its concerns and thoughts are most severely pressed and broken by storms, and tempests in it and about it. Good thoughts of God will make us cheerfully to endure afflictions, and to improve the worst condition. "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life." (Psalm xlii. 7, 8.) "Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. For thou art the God of my strength." (Psalm xliii. 1, 2.) David here found relief when all things else proved miserable comforters to him. "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul." And what was his encouragement? "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful." (Psalm cxvi. 3—5.) And they that would cherish "hope in God" should not so much resort to Sinai as to Sion; and rather go to Gerizim than to Ebal, if they would have such thoughts of God as shall and will encourage hope in him. God here was represented by David to himself as his God, as "the health of his countenance," and as that God whom he should surely praise, whatever other face and aspect were at present upon things; and by these things did he resolve upon, awaken, and refresh his "hope in God." If God be only set before our eyes, as clothed with vengeance, as an inexorable and severe Judge, and as upon the throne of judgment, our hopes will quickly turn to desperation: and who can possibly hope in Him, that takes Him for his enemy? But he that remembers and minds God, as Love itself, as ready to commiserate the cases of his afflicted servants, and as one waiting to be gracious, and ready to forgive, hear, heal, and save; this man gets presently upon the wing, and freely throws himself as at the feet of mercy, and can more easily part with his life, than with his hope in God. (Job xiii. 15.)

## EXHORTATIONS.

And now, to give no check to your patience by my prolixity, let me close all, and drive the matter home, if possibly I may, and exhort you to these things:—

EXHORTATION I. *Keep up all amiable and attracting thoughts of*

*God, in all your troubles and disquietments.* (Micah vii. 18, 20.)— Thus did this gracious person in my text : “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness : according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.” (Psalm li. 1.) “I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me. Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.” (Psalm cxix. 75, 76.) Nothing can stint or bound God’s mercies, nor check the efforts and sensible explications and productions of God’s most gracious name, but the culpable unfitness of your souls to be receptive of his royal favours. “I will hear what God the Lord will speak : for he will speak peace unto his people and to his saints.” (Psalm lxxxv. 8.) “Rejoice the soul of thy servant : for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive ; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul ; and have not set thee before them. But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth. O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me ; give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid.” (Psalm lxxxvi. 4, 5, 14—16.) The gracious soul can never justify its own despondencies : for, take it under its severest pressures from evil men and things, let it but act still like itself, and it hath more causes for consolation than for dejectedness. “In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses ; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing ; as poor, yet making many rich ; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” (2 Cor. vi. 4, 10.) Think not that God forgets or hates thee, because thy bitter cups are not to be dispensed with. “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed ; perplexed, but not in despair ; persecuted, but not forsaken ; cast down, but not destroyed ; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.” (2 Cor. iv. 8—10.) “Sing *therefore* unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks to the memorial of his holiness. For his anger endureth but a moment ; in his favour is life : weeping may endure for a night ; but joy cometh in the morning.” (Psalm xxx. 4, 5.) And “He that is our God is the God of salvation.” (Psalm lxxviii. 20.) Think on him therefore as infinitely amiable, trusty, and compassionate. For were not his fidelity inviolable, his mercy and grace exceeding rich, and his compassionate bowels deep, how could these characters of excellence, which he imprints upon the gracious soul, be called “his image ?” It is blasphemy against the grace and goodness of your God, and a flat contradiction to all the endearing accounts which he hath given you of his grace and clemency, for you to think him careless or cruel, inaccessible and inexorable, or false.

EXHORT. II. *Bless God for Jesus Christ, by whom we are brought to this relief, and our hope in God.*—“Blessed be the God and

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (1 Peter i. 3, 4, 9.) For Christ brought-in this "better hope," by which we thus "draw nigh to God." (Heb. vii. 19.) By Christ "we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing" what excellent fruits they are now made productive of. (Rom. v. 2—5.) See Eph. i. 11; and let those two chapters engage your deepest and most serious thoughts. I cannot now stand to open them, lest I should grow too large.

When sin had torn us from our God, and set his face against us, how dismally did all things look about and toward us then! The face of God was terrible; the thoughts of God were frightful and amazing; the way to God was blocked up from us; and the majesty of God was nowhere visible, but in the presages and effects of dreadful jealousies and revenges; till Christ arose, "a Prince and Saviour," sent from God, to give a glorious resurrection to our dead and buried hopes. There was enough to cast and keep our spirits down, and to disquiet us for ever:—infinite Wisdom, to contrive our snares and miseries; insuperable Power, to bind and keep us to our torturing racks; inflexible and inexorable Justice (as to us) incensed and prompted by deep and keen resentments of our degeneracies and defections, to call for rigid satisfaction, and to demand the absolute resignation of our all unto divine revenges; and the concerns and glory of God's disturbed government rendering it needful, that God's violated laws by us be fully executed on us, to cut off all relief and hope from us; and nothing in ourselves to be discerned but what must justify divine severities and revenges on us, and fit us for and vex us in that sea of wrath and fury which we expected, and over which we hung. Surely such things as these could not but make us every way hopeless, helpless, and disconsolate, and rack our spirits to the utmost with disquietudes and dejections. But our hope dawned when Christ was promised and prefigured; and made its advances, by gradual discoveries, toward the glorious shining of that more perfect day, wherein "the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in his wings." (Mal. iv. 2; with Isai. l. 10.) And when the Lord-Redeemer came, our hope and trust in God were taught by his doctrine, enjoined and regulated by his laws, sanctified and illustrated by his practice, purchased by his blood, ingenerated and cherished by his Spirit, confirmed by his exhibited and sealed covenant and all his federal relations to us, enforced and encouraged by his intercession with the Father for us; and its accomplishment undertaken and secured to the full by his most glorious resurrection and ascension. (1 Peter i. 21.) And its success is to be visibly and completely full at his appearance and his kingdom; and hence Christ is called "the blessed hope." (Titus ii. 13.) So that with most triumphant thank-

fulness and joy may we cry out: "If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who is he that condemneth? seeing it is God that justifieth; and Christ that died; yea rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us. Who," or what, "shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." (Rom. viii. 31, 32, 34, 35, 37.) And what acknowledgments to God can bear proportion to so great a gift as this, whereby our hope and trust in God is thus revived and exalted? (Col. i. 21, 27.) View but the face of God in Christ; and let that name of CHRIST be studied by you, in Isaiah ix. 6, 7; and then see what can any way discourage you from hope or trust in God. The smiles of majesty, and the supplies of grace, which we expect and covet, are all from God in Jesus Christ. (Phil. iv. 19; Eph. iii. 19—21.) Christ is himself "our hope," and the great anchor of it. (1 Tim. i. 1; Heb. vi. 18, 20.) And it is by him that God so reconciles us to himself, as to encourage and accept our hope and trust in him. (2 Cor. v. 18, 21.) Both Comforter and comforts are through him. (John xvi. 7, 22.) And he is the Patron and Exemplar of our hope in God.

**EXHORT. III.** *Look to yourselves, lest any way your hope or trust in God be starved, or stifled, or trodden down by you.* (Judges xx. 21; 2 Peter iii. 11—14; 1 John iii. 3; Phil. ii. 12, 13.)—If God make great provisions to countenance, sustain, and raise this hope and trust in him, must it not be our care and work to bear our spirits up in the liveliest exercise thereof? Let then my text be viewed again; and see therein how your work lies before you; see that you mind your souls, and be more conversant therewith than ever. See what you have to trust to,—your God, and the salvations of his face or presence. See that your hope and trust be suited to the grounds and object thereof. Observe the timings of your duty: then most repair to this your hope and trust, when troubles and discouragements press most severely on you; and let your spirits be argued and urged hereto, by a due sense of God, and by motives drawn from him.