

WRITINGS OF DAVID DICKSON.

EXPOSITION OF THE TENTH CHAPTER OF JOB.

TEXT.

- Verse 1. " My soul is weary of my life ; I will leave my complaint upon myself ; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.
2. I will say unto God, Do not condemn me ; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.
 3. Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress, that thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands, and shine upon the counsel of the wicked ?"

Verse 1. " My soul is weary of my life." Job even now resolved to keep silence, yet incontinent he breaks forth into complaint in this chapter : as David ; while the fire burned, he brake forth. Ye will say, How doth this agree with Job's resolution ? Certainly it shews, that a poor afflicted man is not master of his own resolution, passion, or affections, but when he has resolved to be silent and patient, he breaks out, being borne down ; when he resolves silence, he is forced to scream.

Therefore learn to construe aright your own, or other folks' out-breakings, whereunto ye are driven, and know, that albeit faith would close your mouth from expressing of your grief, yet force of tentation,

and weight of sorrow and grief, will press out cries when ye purpose no such thing. In such a case, comfort yourselves with this, that the saints have done so before you, and stouter than ye have been forced to express their grief: not that I justify such things, but to furnish a salve for such a sore, that pardoned saints have done so before you.

2. "My soul is weary of my life." We see, albeit Job resolved silence, yet he seeks ease, by uttering of his grief by way of complaint unto God. It lets us see, that the only ease of a troubled and bursten soul, is to pour out complaints unto God. It will be ease to the mind, to open up the grief to any, but far more to open it up to God; for complaints are a kind of ease to a distressed soul.

3. What is Job's complaint here?—Nothing else, but the laying forth of his present burden; what he felt and what he feared; even the wrestling of his faith and sense brought forth before God, in such words, as he feels the battle within. It lets us see, that the complaints of the godly are only the explanations of their battle before God—the battle betwixt sense and reason or suggestion on the one hand, faith and God's Spirit on the other hand. The wrestling of these two makes up a complaint. This laid for a ground, Job's mind shall be easily portrayed by his words, and they shall paint him out as on a board.

4. Now let us follow out this battle of sense, faith, and reason, and see who are the parties:—

1. "My soul is weary of my life,"—this is sense's part: it says, that it is best to be dead, and out of pain; whilk lets us see that in the day of sore trouble and grief, sense will cry out, "God if I were dead!"

But this is the voice of nature, and of Satan tempting, and not God's voice. Ken whose voice it is when ye are tempted; and when ye are tempted to wish to be out of the world, know, that that voice is from the flesh and Satan, who would have you going from under God's trial. It is as if gold should essay to loup* out of the melting cruise into the fire, and not stay till it be melted.

2. "I will leave my complaint upon myself,"—here is faith's part. It forbids him to complain, but to leave it on himself; that is, take his venture of his present skaith, and all the consequents of it. Faith bids be lowne† and quiet; nature says, I must lay it out ere I burst; come of it what will, out must it go! Faith says, Be quiet, and only lay it out before God, whatever sense says for its own discharge,—and so, lets out the complaint in such terms as it trows shall not offend God. Thus Job draws the conclusion, and gives vent to his bursting mind before God.

3. "I will speak in the bitterness of my soul,"—here again sense says that his present case is bitter; and faith lays out this bitter case before God. And here also, beside the voice of sense and faith, infirmity kythes,‡ and utters a voice; so that in all these speeches, a good God and a merciful is seen, and a weak man under a heavy burden. That Job's infirmity kythes here, we see, that in the day of battle and tentation infirmity will kythe. Thus we would have thought him a sinless man, because of the great commendation God gives him, and of that exceeding great holiness in him spoken of in chapter 30. But here, in a tentation, his infirmity and sinfulness kythe and break out, as fire from flint by a hard match;

* Leap.

† Tranquil.

‡ Appears.

for in the bitterness of his soul he desires death. Therefore, in the day of tentation, gather up these sparks whilk fly out in the conflict, and they shall shew you faults, infirmities, and blindness of mind, and let the sight of this humble you, and make you ken what rottenness is in you.

Verse 2. "I will say unto God." Faith takes him up again, and bids him speak of his complaint to God; complain *to* him, and not *of* him. This avowing of his liberty to complain, and taking his venture in it, in the former verse, and speaking here to God, lets us see that complaining to God, and pouring out of his grief into His bosom, is not in itself disallowable: in straits we may complain to God, but not of God. Therefore, say not to others, God hath dealt thus and thus with me; but go to himself, for thou wilt be warmliest heard of himself: when thou art to complain of thy Father, vent all in his own bosom. If any bring an evil tale to thee of thy friend, if thou should tell it to another, thou doest him wrong, for thou shouldst first have told it to thy friend. So, if Satan or thy misbelieving heart make lies of God, thou should come and tell Him, so shall he count thee his friend. Here is a way to vent all tentations: go to God himself, and vent them: say to him, There is something in me whilk would make me trow that thou hatest me, and that thou wilt not hear my prayer. And be sure this shall both give ease, and make God to say, that he is thy salvation; that he will neither leave thee, nor forsake thee; and bid thee call on him in the day of thy trouble, and he shall hear thee.

2. "Do not condemn me." Here again the voice of sense: for in the day of sore affliction, sense will say, that a man is condemned and hated of God,

especially when suggestion is joined with it. What Job's friends said, sense and the devil say the same, that God is executing his wrath. But here also the voice of faith, "Do not condemn me." The voice of sense and suggestion is, that I am condemned; but faith says, Lord, thou wilt not condemn me, but absolve me; which also shews, that faith do^w* not abide to be condemned, or separated from God. Finding in thyself in the day of trial the voice of condemnation, take it for the voice of sense, and turn in to God, and say, Lord, there is no condemnation for them that are in Christ; for so says faith, Come to God in Christ, and be absolved. Thus sense says one thing, and faith another: sense, his friends and Satan cry, He is condemned! and faith says, God will pardon and have mercy; and God comes and reds† the plea.

3. "Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me." Sense says, God is his adversary entered in a plea with him, and purposed to overthrow him; but faith says, he kens no cause why, because his sins are daily repented of, and sins repented of are forgiven, and forgiven sins are not brought to account again; and if sin be forgiven, God cannot be his foe: therefore faith may speir‡ why God contends with him. We see, albeit sense and Satan by suggestion would say that God contends, and that God is turned an enemy, yet faith will not admit it: as before, faith would not admit condemnation, so here it will not admit a judicial process: albeit sense say, that God has put the man on the pannel, and is entered in a contest, and will condemn us, yet faith says, that he is neither condemned,

* Can.

† Settles.

‡ Question.

nor yet entered in a process to condemn, because he kens no cause why, being a daily penitent.

4. That he speirs a cause why God contends, it lets us see, that in the time of strait and trouble, it is very possible that the godly ken not the cause why they are afflicted; that it may be to them a trial; for they having daily repented their sins, and finding God come on with his rods, as if they had not repented, kenning no sin unconfessed, and having walked as circumspectly as a poor sinful man can do, in which walking there must also be allowance of mercy, when he finds hard straits, he may speir, How stands this with mercy, seeing I am penitent? Thus the cause of affliction being hid, confusion and indigest challenges follow upon it. Let this of Job's furnish you with light in the like challenge.

“Shew me.”—We see, albeit faith cannot see a reason why it is thus handled, yet it will not yield to sense, carnal reason, nor suggestion, nor to men's words, nor to appearances of God's anger: albeit it cannot particularly refute all challenges, yet it yields not, but speirs at God, how it can be? and rests not, till it finds satisfaction. When thou findest not the cause of wrath, being a penitent, God allows that thou should not yield, albeit thou cannot particularly clear thyself. Such a case as this, is not weill kened in the day of prosperity; but when sin, Satan, affliction, death, set on, ye will ken better what was Job's disposition: that ye may the better ken it then, look upon it now.

Verse 3, “Is it good to thee that thou shouldest oppress me?” The battle holds on yet betwixt sense and faith, and still grows thicker: sense speaks hard things against God, and calls all his proceedings in

question; it calls his nature, his providence, and manner of dealing in question, and vents thoughts of atheism;—which shews the malice of the devil, who casts in bitter thoughts about God and his providence in the minds of the godly, in the day of their affliction, and will make them vent hard speeches of God, and many discern it not: as these here, What means the Lord to oppress or despise the work of his own hand? Will he not be pacified? Thus was it suggested to Job, that God, for all his righteousness, would throw him over the brae,* and whatever pains he had taken before to make him holy, he would undo all.

2. Job says, Can this be? which shews, that he was set on and tempted to think so. Bitterest thoughts, which are not to be made words of, will be suggested; yea, blasphemous thoughts against the God of heaven will be whispered in the ear by Satan: for what gars† many a one despair, but the believing of Satan's voice? He gars them trow, that God is angry at them, that their prayers fash‡ him, and that he will not hear them. But learn ye not to believe such hard speeches of God; whether he speak smoothly or in loud speeches, believe him not. Rather follow Job's example. Go to God, and tell him all: say to him, Thinkest thou it good to oppress me? or art thou like a man who this day makes a fast covenant, and will change or disannul the morn?§ whilk shews that faith will not conceal any thing from God that is suggested, but goes to God, and tells him. So let us do when Satan suggests any evil of God. Go speir at God if it be true, and he will send us back to his word, to see if it speaks so of him. And because the

* Hill.

† Causes.

‡ Trouble.

§ To-morrow.

suggestion is not concealed, the Lord will ease and uphold, till dispute and trial be at an end.

3. Sense says to Job, that for all his righteousness, God will cast him off, oppress and despise him; that it is but bootless to reckon rights or wrongs with God, for he is risen in anger against him. But the voice of faith says, God will not oppress, despise, or cast off; for his interrogation proves it: his speiring if it can be, imports a denial that it can be. It lets us see, whatever sense say against God, faith says the clean contrair. If sense say that God will not hear prayer, faith says the contrair. If sense say, Shall God be cumbered with thee? he will shute* thee away; faith will say, He who has begun the good work of grace in me, will perfect it. When Satan borrows sense to speak one thing, let faith borrow scripture to speak the contrair: when he borrows sense, to say, God will despise the work of his hand, let faith borrow scripture, to say, he will not break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax; he will not despise the smallest beginning; for he says by Zechariah, "Who is he that despises the day of small things?" Know, therefore, albeit that little whilk thou hast seem to die out, yet God will not put it out.

4. "Or shine upon the counsel of the wicked."—Sense says, that the wicked who serve not God, are in better case than Job: for they are in health and wealth, thou art sick, and sore, and miserable; they are blythe and cheerful, thou, in grief and woe; therefore better be wicked than godly. The same said sense unto David (Psalm lxxiii.) when he was heart-broken, and chastised every morning: "The wicked's eyes stand out with fatness." They had the world at

* Thrust.

their will; but when he went to the sanctuary, he saw they were set in sliddery* places, and couped† over the brae into the pit. So is it yet; for sense and Satan would gar men trow, that God countenances wicked men and their ways, when his curse is on them: yet it is not so; but when they have abused his patience, he will cut off in the end. But faith says, albeit God seem to countenance the wicked, by giving them prosperity, yet he doeth it not; but by the contrair, will shine on the godly and countenance them, and gloom or frown on the wicked.

TEXT.

- Verse 4. "Hast thou eyes of flesh? or seest thou as man seeth?
 5. Are thy days as the days of a man? are thy years as a man's days?
 6. That thou inquirest after mine iniquity, and searchest after my sin?
 7. Thou knowest that I am not wicked; and there is none that can deliver out of thy hand."

There is here a strong battle in Job's breast: the pain of his body was great with burning boils, but the dolours of his heart are far greater: the dolours of death were dealing with him, and the sorrow of hell gripped him, while his friends and Satan were about to gar him despair. Sense said one thing to him, suggestion and his friends said the same, and he had only the grip of faith to stick by. And now, here he sticks by faith, and will not quit his grips; and therefore he speaks thus: "Hast thou eyes of flesh, or seest thou as man?" As if he said, Good Lord, countest thou of me as my friends? kens thou

* Slippery.

† Tumbled.

me no better than they? They only see my outside, but thou seest my inside: thou needest not put me on the rack-stock, as men put a malefactor, to extort a confession of my faults, for thou kens me well enough; therefore I need not to trust what sense, friends, or suggestion say. Thy years and days are not like man's, but thou art from eternity, and kens me well enough before-hand, yea, the case of every soul. Thus he appeals to God, as one who kens that he is not wicked.

Verse 4. "Hast thou eyes of flesh?"—Sense and suggestion seem to say to Job, that God miskens man's endeavours, and looks only to his deeds whilk he attains to; as if sense had said, All that thou art won to, a wicked man may win as far; thy friends have seen thy outside, and God judges of thee as thy friends; there is nothing seen in thee, but as much may be seen in the wicked. And so it is indeed, if the outer man be looked to. There is nothing in the godly, but the same may appear to be in a hypocrite—courtesy, meekness, lowliness, pity, humanity, liberality, chastity, temperance; so that the hypocrite will be excellent in his naturals, and in his outward carriage as tight as any—even in Pagans, admirable virtues to look upon, if a Pagan's outward life be well lusted;* much more where a man's mind and understanding are lightened by the word of God, and the outward part of religion is attained unto; as the Pharisees, who walked blamelessly, and were so devout according to their rules, that none could spy a fault in them—such as Paul was, being a Pharisee—and yet were not hypocrites of intention, but in substance (for there are many hypocrites who mind not

* Surveyed.

so to be). Only he is sound, who labours to reform his heart; but the hypocrite takes no pains on the heart, if so be he can get his outward carriage lustred. Upon which grounds, Job's friends, sense, suggestion, and misbelief in him do build. But Job's faith will hearken to none of these, and therefore he turns him to God, and says, "Hast thou eyes of flesh?" that is, Lord, I ken thou lookest not as man, but to the inward part. It lets us see, albeit sense say, that God looks not to man's endeavours but deeds; yet faith says, he looks to the heart and affections; to man's endeavours, and that whilk he aims at.

Therefore, look thou what are thy aims and designs, if thou would know God's censure of thy estate. What pains takest thou to find out thy sin and misery? What pains about sound repentance, and to have thy heart made conform to that image of God, in righteousness and true holiness, whilk thou hast lost; to have the graces of the Spirit planted in thee, faith, repentance, love, fear of God, care of well-doing? If thy aim and endeavour to have these be nought, thy religion is nought. If thou be not aiming at an inward reformation, thou art but a painted sepulchre and rotten tomb, stinking before God, and stinking in thy own nose, when God shall disclose thy estate. Labour then to be Christians in spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is of God and not of men; and this shall ye be, if your endeavours be to approve your hearts to God, as Job here: "Hast thou eyes of flesh?" that is, I know thou sees and kens my heart, and therefore I need no more to defend myself against my friends, senses, and suggestion, but appeal to thy knowledge of my heart.

Verses 5, 6. "Are thy days as the days of man?"—

Sense and suggestion seem to say to Job, Seeing God is begun to try him, he will gar him take better with his wickedness, before he win out of his hand; and the same said his friends before. Sense says, God's wrath in him shall extort that whilk he denies; the sins whilk he hoards and hides, God shall bring to light. Therefore in thir words, Job says, Needs God a rack-stock to force me to confess my faults? Kens he not my faults, except he extort them, as man must do to bring out his wickedness? Is God ignorant of what I have done, that he needs to hold me in pain, till I confess my faults? No, surely, but he kenned me long since: his days are not like man's days; he knew me long syne.

1. We see here, that when God is about to try a man, sense and suggestion will say, that God doeth as man, who takes all the help he can, to search out faults whilk otherwise he would not ken; and uses sore rods and tortures, to gar a sinner tak with* his faults.

2. But faith says, that God is not like man, to live so short a while in the world as a man, that he has need of engines and tortures to search out a man's faults. Job's interrogation here has the force of a denial, that it can be as sense and suggestion would say; and it lets us see, that God needs not trouble himself to use means to bring hid things to a trial, because he is eternal, and kens all things beforehand. His days and years are not like man's, that he needs to inquire after iniquity, or search man's sin; for he kens the follies of a man's bairn-age, youth, middle-age; what vanities his mind has been hunting after, what wickedness and mischief he plots upon his bed,

* Be conscious of.

and will remember a man of time, place, and person, with whom he sinned, even that whilk none knew. If not in this life, yet on death-bed, or at the day of iudgment, when all registers shall be cast open, and the secrets of all hearts disclosed, then shall it be kenned that He marked all that is both said, and done, and thought. Know then that God is upon all your secrets. He kens what ye are plotting and devising; and if ye see it, and say, This is folly and vanity that I am plotting, he will pass it; but if ye follow out your own vain mind and wicked conceits, he will mark them, and count you for sinners. Here is the odds betwixt the godly and the wicked: both their minds are after mischief; but the godly censures before it come to consent or action, and strikes the wicked desire dead there; but the wicked hatches, vents, and practises the devices of his mind. But let the eyes of God be considered, kenning that he marks all secrets, that so ye may make conscience of all ye are plotting and thinking; and where ye are overtane, ask mercy, and seek reformation.

3. Out of this questioning, we learn, that the man who has learned God's nature and properties, will be better furnished with matter of dispute in his temptation about God's providence; for all this dispute and questioning whilk Job has, is grounded upon his knowledge of God. For if he had not known God and his nature, he had been overcome in the dispute; but he had learned God's attributes so tightly, as from them he could dispute his matter accurately, and from these affirm that it could not be as his friends alleged. Job has been a tight divine; for compare his light with the light of the gospel; there can be nothing liker, and we cannot win by him a jot, but the

same whilk is now said, was said by him. Albeit he lived when the Bible was not written, yet he has so studied the means whilk then were, even the word whilk was conveyed from hand to hand, and had so deeply drunken in the grounds of religion about God's attributes, that here he makes notable use of his knowledge. It lets us see, that the man who has not provided for weapons before-hand in the day of battle, will not ken what to do or say. Therefore, provide yourselves in time with the knowledge of God, that in the day of trial ye may make use of it. If one day ye must come to judgment, remember your Creator in the days of your youth; set yourself to ken him now, who one day will gar you ken him. Ken his properties to make use of them, both for faith and repentance, that ye may stand in awe to sin, and may not be drawn from use-making of his mercy. When ye would seek unto Him, ye shall find no such profit by any labour or study, as the study of the knowledge of God and his scriptures; for ye shall be made to understand his ways, and how to find help in deepest straits.

4. This communing of Job's with God, and his standing by him when he is tempted to go away, tells that he had good skill in the covenant of grace; and of the difference betwixt the man in whom sin is, and the man who is wicked. And therefore, to deal with God, we must know the covenant of grace well, and reason with him from the grounds of it; for if a man only ken the first covenant, he will be dung all in sticks* when he comes to deal with God; he cannot deal with Him in terms of mercy, but only in terms of justice. But the man who knows the cove-

* Knocked all to pieces—utterly discomfited.

nant of grace made in the Mediator, as Job, who hereafter called the Mediator his kinsman, will reason with God according to the grounds of it ; yea, all from Adam to this day, are saved by the covenant of grace, for there is one way of salvation unto all. Therefore, study diligently the covenant of grace made betwixt God and us in the Mediator, for that only will bear us out in the dispute, in the time of temptation. Albeit we be sinful, yet it will furnish an answer ; it will give ease, vent, relenting, and a refuge to the soul to fly, as it were, into Abraham's bosom.

“That thou inquirest after mine iniquity.”—Job speirs at God, if he needs to put him on a rack-stock, or torture him, to find out his faults which He kens not ; for sense, suggestion, and his friends said this, but his faith denied it : for God puts not man on a rack-stock, to gar him tell what he kens not ; but God sends affliction, that a man may try and examine himself, and may understand of himself what he kened not before. Job is put to a torture, not that God may ken, but that himself may ken, that if there be any wickedness in him, it may be found out. But after search, he cannot find that he has been a hater of God, or a follower of his own ways, but rather, a studier to serve God in that whilk was right.

1. It lets us see, that albeit God kens our sins well enough, yet we ourselves oftentimes are ignorant of them ; for the heart of man is deceitful above all things. Who can know it ? Only the Lord searches the heart, and tries the reins. If none but God kens the wickedness of our hearts, let us suspect ourselves, and watch over our foolish minds and hearts, and try them narrowly ; for albeit God put not a torture, that

himself may ken, yet, that we may search and try our own sins.

2. We see, to help us to try. God sends afflictions, that we may both come to the knowledge of ourselves, and may acknowledge, whilk otherwise we would not; for man in trouble, will find himself either better or worse than he thought he had been: both grace and infirmity will kythe better. When God lays his hand upon you, look and discern what stuff ye are; for the end of exercise is, to acquaint you with yourself. Examine yourself when affliction comes, yea, before affliction come, so shall ye prevent the rod; and if the rod find you in the way of righteousness, the greater is your comfort under it. Commune with your own hearts, upon your own bed, (Psalm iv. 4). Search yourself, O nation not worthy to be beloved! If ye find not your own faults, God shall extort them by rods; and thou who hast found out thy evils, thou hast no more ado, but solidly acknowledge them before God, and ask mercy, and be sure to find it. But thou who art careless to search, God shall reckon with thee. It were better that thou should judge thyself, than that God should judge thee. Therefore thou who art young in health, strength, and peace, put thyself now to pains to search thy sins, that thou may be saved from greater pains hereafter. Examine thy heart and ways; try if thou be reconciled to God; what way thy endeavours, show, aim, and purpose are. Try if thou hast repented indeed or not, or whether thou hast faith, or fearest God indeed; or if thou hast only yet a love to the world, thy own credit, lusts, or pleasures; and if thou find that after trial, matters are far wrong, judge thyself in time, and thou shalt not be judged.

For what fairer quarters would thou have, than to put thy own hand to thy own bosom, and bring out thy sins, and give out sentence against them, and thou shalt be free? What malefactor would crave more, than to say to him, Confess, and go free? Put thyself on the pannel, and say as thou should, and be sure to be set free. But if thou will not take with thy faults, be sure there are rack-stocks and tortures even in God's house, to force you to confess. David says, while he hid his sins, his bones consumed, and that he roared all the day: then he said, "I will confess my sins, and thou put my sins out of thy sight." God pressed him sore, till his bones were burnt as in a kiln, and forced him to confess. So must ye have a hot fever, some one heavy plague or other, to confess your faults. It were better ye should be wise in time, and do it with less pains to yourselves: if not, be sure ye shall be forced to do it.

Verse 7. "Thou knowest that I am not wicked." Before, he said, that God had not eyes of flesh, to see as man sees. Now, here again, he appeals to God's own knowledge, if he be the wicked man that sense, suggestion, and his friends call him. As if he said, Lord, Satan, sense, and my friends are against me, and call me wicked; but I fly to thee, Searcher of hearts: judge thou if I be wicked. I know and confess that I am sinful; I deny not sin; yet I deny that I am wicked, that is, that I am set to do evil. Albeit I was wicked by nature, yet thou hast made a change, so that now I am not what I was by nature, but now am set to love and practise righteousness, albeit I cannot win to the perfection. Thou knowest I am not wicked. I put the matter upon thy knowledge (so imports the word in the original);

I put thy tongue, thy decision or determination. I am content thou give out sentence whether I be wicked or not. Likewise thou knowest, that I acknowledge thy sovereignty, that none is able to deliver out of thy hand.

1. When sense, suggestion, and his friends call him wicked, he appeals to God, affirming that he is not wicked. We see it is no wisdom to take with a fault we are not guilty of. There are many who, in the confession of sins, use complimenting words with God: "I am the most wretched sinner, unworthy whom the earth should bear, or the heavens cover," and confess more than their conscience will subscribe; and yet, when they have advised a little, when they fall in comparison with others, they will find twenty worse than themselves. Thus they justify themselves at the one word, and condemn themselves at the next word: but God loves no iniquity, that a man should call himself either better or worse than he is. That modest confession of the publican, who said, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" is far better than the toom* swelling words of many. To say, Surely there is much sin in me, is better than large words of confession. Others again, who are meek in the exercise of faith, when Satan says to them that they never had grace, were never renewed, but are yet in their hypocrisy; they are ready to grant that it is so, and so would begin of new to seek reconciliation with God. Let such know, that they will never win to peace that way; for God will not have his begun work in them miscalled nor denied; he will not allow that any should make a lie of themselves, albeit it were by way of humiliation; he will have

* Empty.

none to bear false witness against themselves. Therefore, when Satan would make you trow, that God has never begun to work any sound work in you, appeal to God, who is more righteous than he, or the world, or thy own deluded conscience. If thy face be turned in any other airt* than before, and thy endeavour be to do that which may please God, nature has never wrought that change. Therefore stand out against all who would slander the work of God in thee, and yield not in the dispute. Acknowledge things that are true indeed, and say neither less nor more than thy conscience, being well informed, will subscribe to; and if thou be humble and true, thou shalt get a true meeting.

2. We see, albeit sin be in the regenerate, yet neither are they wicked, nor so to be accounted of.

3. We see, a renewed man may know a change in himself, the begun work of God in himself, albeit it be not clear at all times, but will oftentimes be overclouded with tentations, and be so put in the mist, as he wots not what to say; but when he gets liberty to look about him, he may pronounce of God's work in him, and (as Job here) appeal to God, and say that he is not wicked.

Seeing the renewed work of God may be discerned and known, take notice of it, and strengthen the little that it die not. But herein there is a mistaking in many; for many men trow they be renewed, when they are not. For let a man be brought in to the school of Gamaliel, to be made a Pharisee, he shall see a change wrought; or let a vicious man be brought in to Socrates' school, a change will be seen. For Socrates will teach him temperance, modesty, chas-

* Direction.

tity, liberality, magnanimity, and to contemn the worthless estimation of the world ; and for this cause, the first course he took with his scholars, he caused them walk through the streets with a piece of bacon on their shoulder, thereby to train them up to despise all that could be said or thought of them, and if they misregarded not scorn and contempt, they could not be his disciples. Thus a change is wrought in the scholars both of Gamaliel and Socrates. Gamaliel teaches, that the law be fulfilled, and that a man may walk blamelessly, and an acceptation that may please God. And this Paul said of himself, while he was a Pharisee, that concerning the law, he was blameless before he was converted ; but he did not admit concupiscence to be a fault, nor malcontentment, nor unquietness for his lot. But when he was converted, and his eyes were opened to see the spiritual meaning of the law taught in Christ's school, he saw, that concupiscence was a cause of condemnation ; then sin revived in him, and he died. Before, he thought sin had been dead, for he served God in all good conscience ; but when Christ's light came in, he is forced to think far otherwise ; that in his natural estate he was altogether loathsome and abominable ; that out of the unclean fountain of his heart, nothing could be brought out that was clean ; and that the law was spiritual, and he was carnal, sold under sin ; that in his flesh there dwelt no good thing ; and that there was a law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, bringing him captive to the law of sin, so that he is forced to cry out, " O miserable man ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? " Thus, he saw in Christ's school, what he could not see in Gamaliel's or Socrates' school ; for they

only taught him to reform the outward man, and not that revenge or hatred inward was a fault. But he never knew the depth of sin, till he came to Christ's school; but then the Spirit's light dang* him down in the dust, so that he walked humbly before the Lord his God, and was forced to cry out, that he had no power to do good; and that to will was present with him, but how to perform that which was good he knew not; and in this conflict with sin in him, he found no ease, till he came to this, "I thank God through Jesus Christ." This only gave him ease,—that albeit he saw sin so strong in him, yet there is no condemnation for them that are in Christ.

For this cause, I would have you all to try, of what sort your change is; for a change from filthiness and lasciviousness, to modesty and temperance, may be in Socrates' scholar; and a prodigal may turn niggard, and thrifty to the world, a vain light person may turn sage and solid. Therefore this change may not content you; yea, albeit ye were come on as far as a Pharisee, that is, to have a love to God's law, and a study to keep it; a care to get light in thy mind, and in thy heart to love virtue, and to win to an outwardly tight life; all this change is nought, while as yet thou hast a pair of dry eyes that cannot shed a tear for sin, and wantest a bruised and grieved heart for sin, and art not yet won in to know the mystery of thy natural misery and iniquity; which thou wilt never win to, till the Spirit of God come. Therefore, see if such a change be wrought, as makes thee cry, Alas for my ignorance and want of light in the spiritual meaning of the word! oh, how blind am I!—then, having gotten some light, mayest be

* Threw.

driven to say with thyself, Either must I have a Mediator to deal with me, or I am lost. If such a change as this be wrought, that thou art fled in to Christ, a mournful sinner disclaiming thy own wit, will, and strength, and resolvest to live by a new dependance upon Christ, so that, with Paul, thou can say with him also, "When I am weakest, then I am strongest," because Christ keeps the box of thy furniture and strength; and can say, "It is not in him that wills or runs, but in God who shews mercy;" and that God "gives both to will and to do of his own good will and pleasure;" and dost indeed acknowledge, that not only he is the beginner of the work, but has his hand at every act of thy will, and draws it to the extent to be what it is,—I say, if thou find this change, that thou art become vile and loathsome in thy own eyes, and seeking the covenant of Christ's righteousness; if poor and empty in thyself, and hungering for Christ; stand to this change, and quit it not. But if this change be not, thou art yet short, and not come to the right length: thou art but like Paul, who while he was a Pharisee, had a whole head, till the spiritual light of the law came; but when that came, he desired to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness which is by the law, but that which is by faith in Christ. As Paul had no will of his own righteousness, but of a righteousness imputed or put on him, so must it be with thee; for when all thy best things are to thee as a filthy clout, then indeed a change is wrought, and God has looked on thee, and given thee spiritual light. When thou findest such a change, quit it not, but stand to it, as Job doth here: and if thou findest not thus far, but only a loathing, or thinking worse of thyself, and

a love to Christ, quit not this ; albeit thy reformation be only in a wish or hearty desire, yet quit it not, for it is dear-bought by Christ, therefore stand to it. Because Christ will not quench the smoking flax, put not thou it out, but rather tender it, as he doth ; so shall thy little spunk* be augmented, and grow to a flame or lowe† at last, to the glory of God, and thy salvation in Christ.

TEXT.

- Verse 3. “ Thine hands have made me, and fashioned me together round about, yet thou dost destroy me.
9. Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay ; and wilt thou bring me into dust again ?
10. Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and turned me to curds like cheese ?
11. Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews.”

Here is no small battle ; a pressed heart uttering pithy and pregnant words. Satan, suggestion, Job's friends, sore strokes, and his own unbelief cry against him, Thou art wicked, and hated of God. But faith, against them all, takes God to witness that he is not wicked : “ Thou knowest I am not wicked ;” that is, I grant there is sin in me ; but I am not wicked, or set to commit sin, but set to seek and serve thee : my sinning is of frailty, and against my will. I am set against sin, and will be against it. I appeal to thy knowledge if it be not so, yea, it lieth upon thy knowledge.

1. We see here, that uprightness and a good con-

* Spark.

† Blaze.

science have boldness with God, and will get leave with confidence to lift up the face before him, and get his testimony and approbation. An honest sincere man will be bold with God. An honest man is not a sinless man; but one who, as he shall answer to God, strives against all known sin in private and in public; and when he is overcome in sin, is never at rest, till he be sure that God is pacified, and has assurance of a remission granted. He tells God whatever he feels or fears, puts God on all his counsels, goes to him in all his distresses; counts God so merciful and good, that he will go to him; so constant, that he will not, nor cannot change; and still justifies God, to be what he has spoken of himself in his word. Such a man will get liberty to tell all his mind to God, and God will not mistake him, or captiously snack* at his words, but expone them favourably. As he construes God according to His mind, so God construes him according to his aim and desire. Therefore, be honest before God, for there is no beguiling of him. Those who promise to repent the morn,† beguile themselves, and not Him. It were better that such persons should timcously take with their faults, and seek into his mercy then when He seemed angriest, yea, count him their best friend; or when he curbs them most; for there are not passions in God. When any come into Him, and make supplication to him, he can neither loosen his love from them, nor yet strike them in anger. Therefore study plain dealing with God. If there be great wickedness in your heart, tell Him of it. Tell Him, that it is stiff, stubborn, and backward; or that it is borne down with naughty

* Check, snap.

† To-morrow.

burdens, and will not take on a better burden. Let God be thy secretary* in all, and whatever thou would have close kept, commit that to Him.

2. "And there is none that can deliver out of thy hand:"—that is, I am not miskenning thy sovereignty, for I see thou art dealing with me, searching me, causing me to examine myself. I acknowledge my sin, but I do not confess that I am a hater of thee, or a worker of iniquity. I see thou would have me to acknowledge thy sovereignty, and I am doing it; for I know none can rid me out of thy hand, therefore I yield to thee as most mighty. We see that the end of God's rods and afflictions is, to make men know themselves, and their own perverseness and his sovereignty; for these two ordinarily does the impenitent misken, he miskens both God and himself. And the secure godly man, albeit he have the habit of repentance, being fallen off the act of it, he is turned into the way of sinners, and miskens God; therefore rods are sent, to make him know himself, and acknowledge God his judge.

When the hand of God is on thee, know that it is to make thee know thy sin; to make thee more humble, and to acknowledge God in his sovereignty to be exalted; for when God is put high enough, and thou low enough, the correction has gotten the end wherefore it came. But in some, the one work is done, and not the other; for some will acknowledge their own baseness, and yet run away from God. But submitters turn in to him, acknowledging that they are dust and ashes: these give answer to God's messenger. Take with your faults then; hasten to know God; humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and

* Confidant.

he shall lift you up: be not paughty,* for God fights against none but rebellers, and it is his pleasure to pity all prostrate souls. If they be low, whence shall they fall? If they humble themselves to hell, what lower can God put them? If they have pronounced the sentence of justice, what shall God do?

Oh that men were thus canny to deal with God, and prevenc† the sentence of judgment! Glad would God be, to see his deputy in man do justice, that he may shew mercy: but when the conscience, which is his deputy, doth not the duty, he must execute judgment himself. Be wise, then, and seek unto God, for he is the most favourable party. Blessed are they who know his nature, and turn unto him; who acknowledge that the Most High bears rule in heaven; for albeit a man were high as Nebuchadnezzar, He shall force him to acknowledge his sovereignty, for all knees shall bow to him. The most stubborn shall be forced to receive their condemnation upon their knees, when no mediator or supplication will be heard, but the voice of judgment. Only “consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and none be able to deliver out of his hand.” While his hand is stretched out, make peace with him.

3. In Job’s acknowledgment of his own sinfulness and God’s sovereignty, when the rod is on him, we see that God, by affliction, will enforce a man to acknowledge both what God, and what himself is.

4. Upon this acknowledgment, Job concludes with himself that all shall go right. “Thou knowest that I am not wicked, and none can deliver out of thy hand.” As if he said, Lord, I yield to thee; I will strive no more what thou art seeking: I grant

* Haughty.

† Anticipate.

unto thee thou challengest me for sin, and I take with it: my friends challenge me of wickedness, but I deny that. Thou tellest me that I am feeble, and I grant it; that thou art Omnipotent, and I acknowledge it. Therefore now thou must shew me favour, yea, I cannot want it; for seeing I have acknowledged what I am, and what thou art, it is impossible that thou can keep wrath any more. It lets us see, how a man, albeit forced to acknowledge God and himself, he may plead for mercy. Here a notable vantage whilk thrawn crops* have, when they are dung with judgments, albeit they stood long out pingling† with God, and now are forced to take with their faults when they cannot mend themselves. If their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, God will remember his covenant, and have mercy. Being sore chastened of God, thou mayest come to God, and say, Lord, thou hast overcome me, prevailed over me; thou are higher than I. Behold, I yield to thee, and now, I treat for mercy; let me have it, albeit I have neglected it before.

And ye who have not yielded to God's correcting hand, be wise at last; and ye who trow ye shall not be accepted, albeit ye would yield, but fear that God is seeking to destroy you, hearken not to the suggestion, but rather believe the word of God, who has said, If yet thy uncircumcised heart be humbled, God will look upon a stubborn worm, because of Christ. Therefore, take with your faults, and make peace with God, else, be sure his fury shall break out on all those who come in to him. Come to Him, and be sure to get a kingdom, and your bodies shall be made glorious as the stars of heaven. Who would

* Stubborn stomachs.

† Contending.

lose such a fair venture offered, when it might be had ?

“Remember that thou hast made me ?”—Now Job begins to plea God with reasons and arguments ; and as his first, he takes hold of God by the far end of the band of creation, and by that, draws strength to himself, and confidence to look for mercy. He lays out before the Lord his own work, his laidly* legs and arms covered with sores, and says, These are the arms and legs which sometimes thou formed, as a pretty piece of clay, albeit now they seem turned to destruction. The force of this reasoning is thus : Good God, who sometimes made and fashioned me in comeliness, wilt thou let me rot above the earth ? Hast thou forgot what pains thou took in fashioning me ? Is it thy pleasure to turn me to nothing again ? I cannot think that thou wilt so misregard the work of thy hands.

1. We see, sense speaks to Job of destruction, and that God had a mind to cut him off ; and so doth it oftentimes to others. When God afflicts, sense will say, that God afflicts to destroy. This, said sense to Hezekiah ; “Day unto night wilt thou make an end of me ?”—for affliction has commonly the fear of farther joined with it. Even Christ himself feared, albeit he knew certainly of an out-gate, for he did not inhibit his holy nature to have its own affections ; and it is a natural affection, when evil is on, to fear worse. Sense and nature read a number of sad lessons in any one straik,† and write bitter things to come. Wonder not to fear worse when ye are stricken, but know that ye have company enow. Christ himself was assaulted with fear beyond any

* Loathly or loathsome.

† Stroke.

thing that came on him ; therefore it is said, he was saved from that which he feared : then it is clear, that fears will be of that which will not come ; this the curse of the law imported. When destruction is sounded in affliction, and it is borne in that God will cut off, take it for the voice of sense and suggestion.

2. Job, for supporting of himself against the voice of sense, draws an argument from God's making of him ; and it lets us see, when sense says, God will destroy, faith says, Wilt thou destroy ? His speiring has the force of a denial that it can be. Thus faith stops sense when it speaks contrair to it : sense speaks with faith in the day of consolation ; and whiles it is silent, and whiles against faith. When sense is against faith, let faith hearken what God says, and not what sense says. Let faith say, " I will hearken what the Lord will say, for the Lord will speak peace to his people ; but let them not turn again to folly." He makes of God's creating of him, to help him in to God as his redeemer. We see it a good mean to those who cannot win to God as a saviour at the first step, to take a grip of him as a creator, and from that, fix in themselves to him as a redeemer. " Thou drew me out of the womb, and caused me to hope upon the breast," (Psalm xxii. 9). Thus David claims kindness to God, because he is his workmanship, that he may draw nearer to him, to clasp him as a redeemer. The most tempted and accursed-like soul cannot deny but it is God's creature ; and those who are most hardly exercised, and doubt if ever Christ minded to save them, and will disclaim him as a redeemer, yet will they not disclaim him as a creator. If then, in the time of sore tentation, thou wilt grant that thou art his creature,

are there not some bands betwixt thee and God? Is there not some hameliness* betwixt the work and the workman? Will he not love it better than another man's work? If the work had sense, it might say to the workman, Thou made me; and now, seeing I am put wrong, thou must right me again. So may thou say to God, Put me right, because I am thy work. Claim to God as thy creator, to get farther kindness; by this mean a door is open to win in to God's outer court, and from that, to the inner court also. If thou win to God as creator, thou may also speir where is the redeemer, for justice and mercies sent are so near other, that thou may speak from the one to the other. There are bands betwixt God, and any who will claim to him, more than betwixt their father and them. A child will go to his offended father; but thou art sibber† to the Creator, than a child to his father or mother; for the father or mother furnishes little to the child's making, by that which God does; for the shape, and all the endowments are of God. Therefore claim kindness of God as creator, and farther favour shall be shown.

“And fashioned me together round about.”—He both shews the work of God, and the fitness of the work; which lets us see, that the work of man's creation, both of matter and shape, is worthy of consideration, and the wisdom of the Creator is to be seen in it. And He is to be praised for it, that a piece of clay being the matter whereof man is made, should be so comelily formed; that man's body should be shapen out of clay, with a pair of eyes in his head, as two watches, to look out and behold the works of God; two ears to hear; a mind within him to sit, as

* Home-feeling, fellow-feeling.

† Nearer of kin.

in a castle, to command and direct ; a soul, with all the faculties of it, to keep counsel and deliberation, and give out directions ; and the senses, as so many officers, to execute these directions ; the hands ready to work, the feet to go. Here is indeed a curious piece of workmanship, more curious than any watch ; so many parts concurring, that it would busy the wisest head to search it ; yea, it is an unsearchable deep, as all the works of God are. Therefore let us praise Him, who has made us of so feckless* a matter, and in such a comely proportion, as there is no lack in our shape ; all done exceeding notably ; and let us claim some kindred to Him who so curiously has framed all, and taken such pains to make us. For as a workman's work is taken pains upon, so is a price put upon the work. If the work be curious, the work is the dearer ; if it be artificially graven or indented, cut or carved, he who has wrought it, sets the dearer price upon it. So says Job to God, Put a price on me, thy piece of work, according to the curious art kythed in fashioning of me : seeing thou hast made such a pretty piece of work, I pray thee destroy it not. When man begins to dip in, and see what God has done for him, and begins at the work of creation common with the beasts, from it he may draw some arguments of confidence, that God will shew mercy to him, if he seek unto Him : but many men miskening this, make themselves inferior to beasts. Therefore, examine and study what God has done for you, so shall ye draw to nearer acquaintance with him ; and suffer not Satan so to blind your mind, as not to think what God has done for you.

“ Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made

* Powerless.

me as clay."—Here as he remembers that he is God's workmanship, so also he remembers his own frailty; and yet he claims to Him who cares for clay, because he has waired such work on him, to frame him out of the clay. It lets us see, if we can find, the care that God has shown about us already in our creation. We may gather from this, that yet more care shall be taken of us, and that he minds to do better to us than to destroy us, especially when we come in to him, as to our Creator. David says, "Thou madest me hope, when I was upon the breast; and now, when grey hairs are on me, thou wilt not forsake me." As if he said, Wilt thou tyne* me at last, when thou hast had so much care of me hitherto? Learn then to draw along God's care of thee in the creation, to expect his care of providence; and seeing he has had a care to bring thee up from a child, from that, expect yet more good. The more thou can prove God has been good to thee, thou may prove by that, that he shall yet do more good. Therefore father kindness upon him from byganes,† that thou may find kindness for time to come. It is a very evil argument to prevail with man, because he has given much, to crave yet more; but a good argument to prevail with God. For thou may say to him, Thou hast been gracious to me, and must be gracious to me. To tell Him what good he has done, is a band to urge him to do more; yea, it is a point of wisdom in thee, and a point of thankfulness to him.

"Wilt thou bring me to dust again?"—Sense said to him, that for all his prayer, God would destroy him; therefore, as before, he said, Dost thou destroy me? so here, "Wilt thou bring me to dust?" We

* Lose.

† Things past.

see then, God is dealing sharply with his creature. Sense will say that He has forgot, or will destroy the work of his hand ; but faith will not admit this, especially when it is conscious of the begun work of regeneration. Therefore as oft as sense speaks thus, let faith have the hindmost word : if sense speak thus, let faith speak thus once after. Job turns him not to sense, and speaks thus, but to God ; for sense, natural reason, and suggestion, are not always to be answered to ; but what we would speak to sense, suggestion, or misbelief, speak to God. He that speaks to a stone, looks not for an answer, and he who speaks to a foe, looks not for a friendly answer ; but turn to God, and be sure of a good answer, when neither Satan nor sense will give it.

Verse 10. “Hast thou poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese ?”—He compares the work of his conception in his mother’s womb, to the making of cheese of yearned milk. Albeit this seem a base-like comparison, yet the Spirit of God borrows it. As if he said, Lord, what am I in my conception, but as a little curdled milk ? How is it that I am brought to be something, who was of such a small-like substance ? Thou, by putting to thy hand to me, hast wrought me to some solidity, as when one with his hand gathers thickened milk. And yet, it is but a mean comparison ; for when God puts his hand to the work of man’s framing, oh, what curious draughts, smaller than the smallest thread of a worm-web ! When He lays the portrait of the veins of the body, and of the arteries, and of the sinews, so woven as no eye can discern it, nor take it up ; and when they are brought to the uttermost, the tightest physician who has studied anatomy best, cannot reach to the uptak-

ing of all the veins in the body! They can reach to many hundred veins, but yet they tyne of the count, when they come to the cutting of the veins that are on the eye-bree;* for there, their anatomising knife is grosser than the thing that is to be cut; for there are such small veins on the surface of the eye-bree, by which blood is conveyed, as they cannot be discerned; yea, it is a thing unsearchable, to count or find out all the veins in the body. No anatomist under heaven can do it: so curious is the Lord's work, that no human skill can anatomise one eye, nor tell the tunicles and veins of it. They can show no more in a living man, than they have found out in a dead man: but in a dead man, all cannot be found, because the blood being run from the veins to the heart, at death, then, the veins cannot be discerned. So curious is the Lord's work in the creation, that it is unsearchable, and therefore none need speir about the work of creation, or about the resurrection, seeing there is a daily new creation of man and beast; it is as easy for God to raise again, as to make of nothing. Let the framing of any one member of man's body be meditated upon, and he shall be forced to wonder at it, and to give it over as unsearchable. Always we see, that the framing of man in his conception, is the work of the Lord's own immediate hand.

2. He makes his conception in the womb, God's work, as a thing to humble man, so also to exalt God, both as wise, loving, merciful, careful; and a powerful God, and a humble God, that he works clay with his own hand, and stays upon the framing of it, as if it were a thing something worth, for the space

* Eye-brow.

of three quarters of a year; and millions made daily, yet all done at leisure, and His majesty nothing troubled with the making of them. And when He has brought out a man, he says to all, What sayest thou to my piece of work? All the on-lookers must grant, that He is a powerful, wise, and good Lord that made him; yet commonly they that are most acquaint with his work, are blindest in observation.

“Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh,” &c. We see the meditation of our making has many branches, and every one of them worthy to be weighed and considered; and, therefore, when we are about to study the work of God, we would not take a general glance, but go to particulars, giving to every particular its own meditation. Job reckons out four here; the bones, sinews, flesh, and skin, every one of them severally and jointly to be considered. The bones, made of the softest substance, and that yet grow to greatest hardness; for what softer than the marrow, and harder than the bone? yet the one is made of the other, and fostered by the other. Man is made of bones within, as the solidest substance for bearing of a burden, so that the bones are the pillars whereon the body stands. If he had been made all of flesh, he could not stand upright, work, nor bear a burden; therefore he is strengthened with bones, like growing steel, and these bones fenced upon their ends with gristle, which will wear better than steel. For if the ends of the bones were shod with steel, they would wear thin by continual moving to and fro; but now, being shod with gristle, they slide to and fro, and wear not. If they were shod with steel, by motion they would heat and fire; but gristle conceives no heat, and in the joint there is a sort of oil that keeps

it from heating; and if the joints be violently pressed beside their ordinar, the heat that is gathered, is evaporate by sweat through the skin. The coldest and softest part of the body is the brain; yet out of that soft, cold, and clotty matter, are all the sinews of the head drawn, like a number of cords, which go along to couple and bind the body together, bone unto bone, and from it comes the marrow; and the bones being thus coupled with sinews, then, for safety of them, they are bolstered with flesh; and because the flesh is tender, it is covered with a skin; and without the skin, a little thin skin, like a scabbard of dead hide, lest the sensible part should be hurt by rubbing upon it; and this outer scabbard is close joined to the other. But the outer skin has no feeling, but only as it is joined with the inner skin; and guards it, as a ply of lining cloth laid about it. To branch out all were longsome; but let us consider what wisdom and providence is here: for worthy is the least work of our meditation; and greater comfort should we find, if we studied his works more and more: light should be shewn in them. "Thy works," says the Psalmist, "are honourable; sought out of all them that have pleasure in them: who is so wise to observe these things, shall mark the loving-kindness of the Lord." If men were set to mark God's works, he would let them see more; as if one brought into a shop of curious work or wares, should roose* all that he saw, it were a mean to make the owner take pleasure to feed the on-looker's admiration more. If wondering at a craftsman's work will move him to shew more of it, much more God: he shall shew more of his works, and still more, till he bring them to shew them a palace, where the

* Praise.

praises of his works shall dwell for ever. There He shall say, Man, thou could not get leisure on earth to see all my works; but now, view all at leisure, and enjoy for ever full felicity, in the beholding of me and my works. Oh, how great is our atheism!—the Lord rub it off! Let us meditate on our making, that we may fall in love with our Maker, so shall he shew us greater things; as Christ to Nathaniel, “believest thou for this? thou shalt see greater things.”

TEXT.

- Verse 12. “Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit.
 13. And these things hast thou hid in thine heart: I know that this is with me.
 14. If I sin, thou markest me; and thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity.
 15. If I be wicked, woe unto me; and if I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head. I am full of confusion; therefore see thou mine affliction.”

“Thou hast granted me life and favour.”—Job has been reckoning the pains that God took upon him, in his conception in his mother’s womb; how he drew the draughts of all his body, and pencilled all the wants of it, till he brought him to a perfect man. He follows forth all from his very first original, till he came out complete in all his parts: and now, in this verse, being made and perfected in all his parts after a very comely fashion, he says, that God has granted him life and favour. That is, when He had fashioned him, he let him not lie there where he made him; he made not his mother’s womb his grave, but gave him life, that is birth, or a new life, because he was brought forth of his mother’s womb by God’s hand, who pre-

served him from danger in the birth. And after that he is brought forth, he says, that the Lord's visitation preserved his spirit ; that is, day and night He watched over him, to hold in his life. And while he thus speaks of God's visitation, he borrows a comparison from a father or mother, that wakens and rises in the night to see how the young bairn lieth, and that the nurse or mother that gives it suck overlay it not. As if he said, After I was born and brought out into the world, I would have died, except thou had guided their arms, or in their turning in their sleep, held them off me. God's watchfulness that he should not be smooored,* was the preserving of his spirit.

Here we see very deep reasoning used, that Job may strengthen himself in the favour of God ; for faith is a great disputer, and a deep logician, and can fetch strong arguments from afar, for its own support and relief. It is like a man plunging in the water, that stretches far to get a grip of any thing that may pull him out of the water. Faith lays hold on common benefits, but misbelief doth not make use of chief arguments. Misbelief, albeit it had been comforted yesterday, counts nothing of it ; daily renewed benefits it makes no use of them : but faith draws favour out of everything ; out of corrections, sparings ; giving, taking ; draws arguments of love, and makes use of the most common argument, even the bringing out of the womb.

To strengthen faith, take all arguments. Reason for thy own standing anv way, for a thread is enough to hale one home. The least appearing of God's working in us or about us, is enough to help faith ; for albeit the argument in itself be weak, yet the dispu-

* Smothered.

ter's mind is strong, and looks more to that he would be at, than to the force of his argument, and accepts his reasoning whatever it be, when he would be homeward. For albeit his arguments be weak, yea, null, if they were strictly examined, yet seeing he honestly uses such as he has, he is as an advocate, when he is about to plead a cause. If he bring out the best he has, and faithfully plead the cause, albeit his arguments be slender, yet he is allowed, and is rewarded for his pleading. So a believer, when he is honestly set to testify for God, against Satan, and his own wicked heart, he is accepted, albeit his arguments be weak; for a weak argument is as strong to fetch home to God, as a strong, because it proves the conclusion in God's acceptation, as well as the strong. And albeit the argument be weak in the general, yet it is strong enough in the disputer's hand, who would be in at God, and there at kindness with him; for he has said, those that come unto him, he will in no wise cast out.

Let none then be so witless, as to cast away grounds that may uphold them; and say not, what have I gotten, but the reprobate has had as much? I answer, are thy eyes the worse, that a reprobate has a pair of eyes also? What would thou think, to make thee blind when the wicked sees? Or if thou count of prosperity because the wicked has it, what would thou think, for that cause to be steeped in misery? Or when the wicked has two legs or ears, that thou should have but one? Wilt thou cast off or misregard God's benefits, because the wicked have them? What is a benefit the worse, that an unworthy getter of it abuse it? Is thy answer of grace and peace to thy prayer, or any other spiritual benefit the worse, that the like is given to some

temporary believer? No, certainly, and yet this is the best argument that uses to be brought, when God's liberal dealing is lightlied* by any. But wealth makes wit waver. It were well bestowed we had scant allowance, and were dealt with as tarrowing† bairns, to make the meat they refused to be the first they get; and seeing they except against God's dealing, to make them see the fruit of their folly, by a more sharp dealing. But those who count much of every thing, and by all arguments reason homeward, shall find God more bountiful; and if they laud the bounty of God, they shall get more cause to laud it; they shall overcome him by lauding, but he shall overcome them by his bounty.

2. We see Job makes the putting in, and holding in of his life, a special benefit, and a token of God's favour. It lets us see, that beside the framing of our body, the putting in of life or a reasonable soul in our body, is to be reckoned as a special benefit; and that so much the more excellent, as the soul is above the body. God would be acknowledged for this benefit, as a token of his care, respect, and indulgence above other creatures. To see God take a piece of clay, and plaster it over with so comely a fashion; place holes for eyes, buckle them in with strings, cover them about with a case of bone; and frame so all the members of the body, and then put in it a reasonable soul, to hold all living; and to join that soul with the body, and that soul never to die, albeit the body die, and again the soul to be joined to the body, when it is raised again; is not this abundant matter of God's praise, and an argument sufficient to draw in to God,

* Lightly esteemed.

† Loathing from being pampered.

and claim acquaintance to him, that he has given the similitude of himself, by putting into man an everlasting spirit, understanding, will, even the image of himself; a reasonable soul, which he has not given to the beasts? But many men turn souls into devils, because God will not resign his throne to them, and do their will, when they should do his. Such is the pride of man's desperate nature. But learn ye to count your bodies a benefit, and the putting of a soul into your body another benefit.

3. "Thou hast granted me life and favour." By life and favour, he means not the shaping of him, and his making men shew favour to him, and women to keep all duty to him in the time of his birth; but also, he counts it God's special favour, that he was born in the company of those who cared for him, when he could not care for himself. We see, that faith counts every thing a favour, even conception, and care in forth-bringing. Faith takes not only conception, but every thing that it gets, as favours and tokens of God's love and good-will. Count every thing received of God a favour, so nothing shall make thee impatient as to storm when he gives or takes; for if he take, it is the loosing of some burden off us; if he strike, it is but the chirurgian's lancet; if he gives a bitter cup, it is physical;* whether it be sweet or sour, it is to procure our health, and that in a seeming manner, but it is so indeed. Therefore expone God in the best part, for that is faith's part, and the part of one who is reconciled. A friend expones a hard turn done by a friend, friendly; and the more love there be, the better is any thing that is done construed. So those who construe all that God doeth, to be out of love, are

* Medicinal, healing.

God's friends ; and if any will threap* love upon God, they shall not be disappointed.

OBJECTION. Every one gets favour of God. ANSWER. But every one makes not use of the benefit received. To get benefits is common, but it is not common to make use of them ; therefore let the wicked man have the benefit as thou, but make thou the use of it. There were ten lepers cleansed, but only one of them gave thanks ; and albeit the rest were cleansed as he, yet he gat a farther benefit ; the spiritual leprosy of his soul was cleansed also. Then see that there be as great difference betwixt the wicked and thee, as betwixt the nine lepers and the tenth. Bless thou God for every thing thou gettest. Oh, that God's children could be persuaded to be thus wise ; even ye who daily whirne and chirme,† to whose pleasure God cannot work ; who will not give his Spirit leave to dwell with you for channering,‡ barking, and misconstructing of his works ! I wish you this rest, that if God should grind you to powder, ye should judge him to do all out of love, for all things work together for the weal of them that love God ; for these always expone God in the best part, and are loath to lay any imputation on him. If ye would still stand to the maintenance of his glory, ye would still love him, and hear no evil tales of him, nor misconstruct any thing that he doeth. Ever hold this ground, to judge of God according to his word, for he still works according to it. If ye would do so, ye should dwell under the shadow of the Almighty ; your life, albeit it seem miserable, should be sugared ; ye should find the loving kindness of the Lord, and should be the meekest

* Insist, urge.

† Fret and murmur.

‡ Peevish blaming.

under his hand that can be; while as now, impatience is for lending an ear to Satan. But let God deal as he pleases, and let Satan calumniate His work as he pleases, yet ye should never admit that God hates you, albeit God himself would say it from heaven. Albeit God say that he is angry, yet ye may say, I believe he loves me, when he has cause to be angry. Oh but the godly who know exercise of conscience, have need of this!

4. "Thy visitation preserves me." It lets us see, that the holding in of common life, is the fruit of God's on-looking or visitation; for God having made a man, keeps a watchful eye over him for his sustentation, and thereby maintains him. The influence of life is from God: where God's eye is, there doth the Spirit quicken; when he draws back the Spirit, the body goeth to the dust. Know that God keeps life in thee, by looking on thee, as the sun looking upon the creatures beneath keeps them warm; for when the sun shines not on a stone, it grows cold. Such is the working of the Sun of Righteousness. He gives light and life; he holds the blood warm, and keeps it from clotting in the veins, that it should not choak. Therefore let thy life, lent to thee, be an evidence of God's upholding and looking on thee. And what I say of the bodily, the same I say of the spiritual life. His visitation is the cause that thou despairest not; that thou hast not shaken off his yoke yet, nor run away from him, but art yet bauchling* on as thou may; therefore let him have the glory of it.

Verse 13. "And these things hast thou hid in thy heart." That is, Albeit now, Lord, thou seemest to be wroth, and about to destroy me, and to forget all

* Shuffling, as in walking in worn-out slippers.

the pains thou hast taken in forming of me, yet I believe thou hast some love to me, which thou had when thou formed me. Thou made me once a comely body, but now it is leprous and filthy ; my skin, that sometimes was tight, is now eaten up with vermin : I am like one living in his lungs, and rotting in the grave, having only some spunk of life to keep together the rotten body in this estate. No love to me doth kythe ; and yet, I believe that the love which thou had in making me, and adorning me after so comely a manner, is yet to the fore ; albeit now thou hide it, yet I know that same care thou had in fashioning of me continues ; albeit thou seem to destroy me, yet love is hid in thy breast. Thus, Job's faith has strong reasoning, that it creeps through God's hands into his breast, and through his anger and wrath to his purpose. Oh, how piercing is the virtue of faith !

1. We see that God will sometimes hide his love and favour from his own, and make show as if he minded no favour : whiles he will give fewer, whiles more tokens of respect ; and when he gives fewer, he is said to hide, or when he gives evidences of his displeasure ; as he is said to shew his face, when he gives favour. Learn to distinguish betwixt the hiding and manifesting of God's love : wisely observe both, and make use of both.

2. Job is put to a trial when God hides. It lets us see, that the time of God's hiding of his love, is the proper time of faith's trial : such as believe not God for his word, but only for his work, will not believe when he hides. This is not good in many, that they will not let it light,* that God loves them, except when he claps † their head ; therefore the Lord

* Allow it to pass.

† Pats, caresses.

lays upon such with his rods, to warn them how they limit his kindness by the daunting* of his doylt† children. When God hides, give thou a proof of thy believing in him; for herein many are not aware, when God hides himself, that Satan says, God loves them not; and they hearken to Satan, and not to God. But learn ye to amend this, else ye shall be worse dealt with, if ye give not better proof of believing, when God hides his love.

3. See here the piercing look of Job's faith! It passeth in by God's hand to his heart; which lets us see, that faith looks more to God's word than to his work, and more to his heart than to his hand, and to that which is hid, than to that which is seen. It looks more to His affection than to his handling; for albeit God's hand be rough, yet faith says, there is love in his heart; and if his work seem contrair to his word, faith speaks according to his word. All things work together for the weal of them that love God; and so, the hardest straiks, that seem to cut off, work for their weal. Make use of this—whatever God do expone him by his saying, and not by his doing, whatever sign he give, yet look aye to his affection; for if thou wilt look in to God's heart, thou shalt find thy name written upon it: for the Spouse says, "Set me as a seal upon thy arm, and as a signet on thy heart." Thus learn to pass through all disappearance outward.

"If I sin, then thou markest me."—After that Job has thus threaped kindness on God, here he falls into reasoning what these straiks can mean. So will it be with all those who think there is love in God's heart to them. They will be borne out in the dis-

* Petting.

† Silly, stupid.

pute, and so furnished with arguments, that their mouth will not be closed; but still matter of dispute will be furnished against misbelief, even when they seem to be confounded. Let us see how Job draws his breath, and followeth the dispute yet farther with God. He falls into reasoning with himself after this manner: What is this that God is doing, by chastising me after this manner? Either I am dealt with as a wicked man and impenitent, or else, I am exercised as a righteous man, for my humiliation; or I am dealt with in this exercise, as an impenitent righteous man. If this be, then God is pointing by these straits at my faults, to cause me repent. If He be dealing with me as a wicked man, then these straits are a part of hotter woe and destruction that abides me. But I will not let that light; but if He be humbling me as a righteous man by these straits, behold, I am already before him, (ver. 14, 15). Then, in the end, he knows not what to do or determine, and confesses his confusion, and turns him to prayer; for his thoughts are so involved, while he is seeking to know what God is doing, for he cannot rest on one thought; therefore his confusion kythes, as if he said, I wot not what to think: my wits are all through other: I cannot find an out-get, when I look to my pained and perplexed body, (ver. 15).

That Job is put to search himself in his afflictions, 1. We see that afflictions are sent, that we may be put to a search what the matter can mean. My heart made diligent search, (Psalm lxxvii). Examine yourselves upon your bed, (Psalm iv). Search yourselves, O nation not worthy to be beloved! When God corrects, search what he means; as Paul, when he was stricken from his horse, said,

“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” And He will tell thee, as he did Paul : he will tell thee, that he would have thy heart loosed from such a thing, he would have thee stirred up to such a duty ; and if thou had rather sin, than part with such a thing, whether it be thy goods, estimation, children, the affliction has not done the turn. If thou wilt rather stick by these things, and sin, better never thou had seen them ; and if thou cannot find the cause of affliction by search, crave of God that he would shew it.

2. We see, that in the search, we may rank God’s dealing with us in ranks, and say, God is either dealing with me after conversion, or before conversion, or in conversion : I am either dealt with as a man guilty of sins unrepented, or a righteous, tried, and humble man. If I will bow to God, he will heal me ; if I bow not, he will break me : if I come home, he will receive me ; if I run away, he will follow me with judgments. Search, and rank matters right ; for such as know God’s ways, will readily search the manner of his working in the word : and examine yourselves by it ; so shall ye win to the bottom of matters, and find out all sorts of your estate.

3. While he says, God marks his sin, we see, when a man is dealt with as guilty of unrepented sin, then God’s correction or visitation is the marking of his sin, and a declaration that God hates his sin ; for we have oft seen, that God has written men’s faults upon their punishment, so that the on-looker may read the name of the fault, by the correction : but it was not so with Job. But an intemperate man’s sin will be written on his face ; or the man that dotes after worldly things, the Lord will put bitterness on them, and make him find thorniness and vexation. If thou

inhaunch* or follow after any perishing thing in thy mind, and God meets thee with some rod, know thou hast reached thy mind beyond that which is allowed. And yet thou hast a vantage; thy fault is pointed at. Therefore point thou at it also, and take with it. When God says, Man, there thy fault; read it in thy chastisement! answer thou, Lord, I take both with my fault and chastisement. Then be sure, if thy un-circumcised heart be humbled, he will remember his covenant, as he says to Israel. It is not the taking with the fault that makes God lay on another straik; therefore, when thou art stricken, submit thyself, take with thy fault, and say, Lord, I thank thee that has told me my fault, that I may mend it.

4. "And thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity." It is best to read this by way of interrogation, Wilt thou not acquit me from mine iniquity? and so, the speiring has the force of a denial that it can be—which lets us see, when our God corrects for a fault, he is minded to forgive the fault, and to take it away; for the word *correction*, imports the righting or mending of a thing. Therefore where God chops† at a fault, he is minded to make that same person the better, and to pardon that sin. Therefore, when thou art corrected, discourage not; for it is only as the chirurgian's pointing at the sore, and saying, I will lance it, or fire it, and so heal it. If God correct thee for too much love of children, goods, or the world, or credit, by removing these, he is pointing with his lancet, shewing that he is about to mend such a fault.

"If I be wicked, woe unto me."—If God deal with a man as wicked, woe to that man; for if he remain wicked, that dealing is but the beginning of sorrow.

* Embrace.

† Strikes.

“ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts,” (Isa. lv. 7). If thou find that thou hast not turned in to God before now, humble thyself, and be no more wicked ; yield, and acknowledge thy iniquity ; then no woe shall be to thee : but if thou humble not, then woe, woe still abides thee !

“ And if I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head.” We see, if God deal with man as righteous, it is to humble him, and to hide pride from his eyes, that he be not puffed up because of his righteousness. A righteous man may be corrected, albeit he be accepted of God, have repented his sins, and is not secure, but still seeking God ; yet the rod bides not away, for he needs it. If then a rod being come, and thou art put to search, and finds thyself in the way of righteousness (for rods come on righteous and unrighteous ;) know that the rod is to hide pride from thine eyes ; for when men are absolved of God, and have the conscience of remission of sins, readily they are puffed up : as a man who is high in court, it is hard to make him keep a low sail, so man is readily puffed up, who is persuaded of God’s favour. To prevent this uplifting, God lays on a rod ; therefore aim at submission. Beware to lift up thy head, but creep in the dust. When God absolves, rejoice in trembling. Remember what thou art. Albeit the Sun of Righteousness has shined on thee, dust and ashes, yet remember thou art but dust and ashes still !

SERMON.

Verse 16. "For it increaseth : thou huntest me as a fierce lion, and again thou shewest thyself marvellous upon me."

THE Lord has put Job to a search, what the matter means in this his hard exercise ; and Job lays his count that this hard handling is one of the three—either the correction of a secure man, or the punishment of a wicked man, or the trial of a righteous man. As for the first, he has spoken in the 14th verse ; and the meaning of his word is, If this be the correction of a secure man, then I need not look for pardon, till I take with my fault, and humble myself ; and this I am contented to do, if God will point out to me the sin that he marks. If it be the punishment of a wicked man, then woe's me ; woe, and double woe to me ! If so be then, I am far mistaken, for I cannot tell what it is to turn in to God, if I have not turned already. Therefore he casts by this, and will not yield to it that he is wicked, being conscious to himself of the contrair. As if he said, If I have not the comfort of not being wicked, then woe to me, for my friends have win the cause, and I am undone. But in this, my comfort abides, that I am not wicked. If I be righteous, yet will I not lift mine head ;—that is, if the Lord be trying me as a righteous man, I know it is but to humble me, and I am content it be so ; for albeit I were righteous, that is, conscious to myself of no wickedness or unrepented sin, yet would I not lift up my head before God, or stand out stiffly to justify myself.

1. Out of this last, we see albeit a man be righteous, yet is he not freed from correction,—and here stands the dispute between Job and his friends. For Job affirms, that a man indeed may be righteous, and yet hardly handled by God's afflicting hand; but they, not having seen the like in their experience, hold the contrair; yet Job's ground holds fast. Therefore, let those who walk before God in all good consciences, beware to condemn themselves as guilty of that which suggestion would say; but rather know, albeit ye walk before God in all well-pleasing, yet will ye not be freed from the exercise of God's children; so that by outward things, a man may neither know love nor hatred. It reproves the rash judgment of many, who say, if they were not wicked, God would not strike them so; and yet, all the straiks they have gotten are so gentle, that the dearest of God's servants have not been freed from the like straiks. Therefore, reprove this rash censure, which smells of giving too much credit to Satan, and too little to the testimony of God's Spirit and the scriptures, which say, that those who are justified by faith, may be as hardly handled as others.

2. "If I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head;" that is, I know thou would have me humbled, and not to lift up my head; for thy affliction says so. Thou would not have me to think of my righteousness, as one that has found honey, not to eat too much of it; so should I not search out the matter of my own praise, or count too highly of my own righteousness. It lets us see, when the righteous are exercised by troubles, it is that they may be humbled, abashed, and pride hid from their eyes, kenning that they are subject to sin and misery, albeit God pardon them; and it is good that the righteous be exercised with

chastisements, lest they be hurt with the rotting sweetness of earthly things. When God corrects thee, know it is to humble thee, and that thou should not be proud of thy own righteousness. Say with thyself, when correction comes, God is either humbling me or trying me; for this shalt thou not miss in the general, albeit thou cannot find out the particular cause: albeit possibly he be switching thee for thy impenitency, yet he is humbling. Be sure ye cannot be mistaken in one of these two,—that God is either humbling or trying. Therefore, resolve to strive to give a proof of thy faith and humiliation. Many, when they find not a stepping-stone whereon to set their foot in trouble, are like to sink over the ears, and drown. But here are two stepping-stones whereon they may stand, and by these two they may be kept up from drowning. Presuppose God by troubles were correcting for security, and so stirring up to repentance; yet, if the party corrected will fasten his faith, and be humbled, it shall bear him out, and serve for a load-star in the dark night, to guide him through to heaven.

3. Job says not here simply, *If I be righteous, thou art humbling me*; but he says, “I will not lift up my head;” that is, I am well content to be humbled, and so, will not strive; and so also will look for an out-gate: this thy marking of my sin, and not acquitting of my iniquity, tells, thou would have me to take with it, and, behold, I do it; and if I were righteous, yet thou would have me humbled, and I am about to be humbled, and therefore thou and I are agreed. And so, when I am humbled, an out-gate must be. I lift not up my head, therefore thou must raise me up, who am humble. It lets us see, that a humble soul under exercise, may look for an out-gate: he that lifts

not up his head in pride, God will lift up his head in consolation ; if he abase himself, God shall exalt him Here a clear ground of encouragement to the humble, and there are sundry promises to back it. God resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble. If, then, under sore affliction, thou can find nothing to uphold thee, but that thou art humbled, this one stepping-stone is enough to hold both thy feet, yea, a rock to rest upon : albeit there were a great deep round about thee, yet thou may be sure not to drown, but to be comforted and relieved. Therefore, haste to humiliation, ye who would be comforted in trouble: haste to take with your sin and unworthiness, if ye would have Christ to be your physician and your consolation.

“ I am full of confusion.”—For all Job’s search and humbling of himself, yet dolour bides on him ; albeit his faith have gotten an out-gate, yet his sense cannot see it. Therefore he says, that he is full of confusion : as if he said, Surely, I cannot rest ; I am ashamed of my reckoning ; I stick fast in the briars, and cannot win out ; therefore, O Lord, see thou my afflictions.

1. We see it is possible for a man who has searched his own heart, and lighted right on his estate as it is, and has seen an out-gate by faith, that yet he cannot win to rest in his mind. This is the draught of God for keeping low those who are humble, to hold them restless ; for willingness to be humble is not enough, albeit it be a condescending in the mind, except there be a real humility ; for it requires actual humbling, and that which may be a press is requisite ; and therefore, the Lord will both humble, and keep on a weight upon the mind, to make men really submit, as voluntarily they submit in their mind, that there may

be an experimental humiliation, after the mind has condescended.

Wonder nothing then, that after search ye rest unsatisfied, but remain in confusion; for albeit ye have resolved to be humble, yet God may make your mind restless, so as ye may be weary of the burden of it. Albeit the matter be not worth a shilling, yet such vexation may remain, as ye get no rest; but as a mote in the eye makes still restless till it be taken out, so God can hold you in a business in a little thing, and that to work that humiliation which ye are content to have, and to make you thoroughly submissive in everything. Think not that God hath not heard you, because ye cannot get rest, for herein ye are mistaken, seeing Job, accepted of God, and humbled before him, is yet restless in his mind, that he may be experimentally humbled, and patient till the delivery come. Though thou be restless, yet know thou may be accepted of God; yea, humble and restless in thy mind, forgiven of thy sins, and restless in thy mind; and that for good reasons, to mortify thy sins yet more. Therefore mistake not, albeit thou be restless; but ease thy restless mind by laying it over upon God, and ease thy wearying mind by drawing in under his wings.

2. Because he cannot get rest, therefore he is confused and ashamed in himself: he looks like one baized* and come short of his hope; he blushes like a man disappointed. This sense bears in upon him, as if he were disappointed, so that neither by search, repentance, or humbling of himself, can he find an out-gate. It lets us see, that a restless mind, when it cannot find satisfaction in the exercise it is under,

* Confounded.

will grow confounded ; and this is a new exercise, and a new affliction. As a horse that has run long about in the tether, and has fanked* himself, is forced to stand still, not knowing what to do, so the restless mind, except it sit still, by its own restlessness will run about, and grow dizzy. That which is casten, will be taken up again, and that which is taken, casten down again ; and thus, with changes of this and that, the mind grows dizzy, and all seems to run about with him, so that he cannot tell whether the earth stands or goes about ; and yet, it is but the poor silly head which, by turning, is grown confused.

Seeing this is the exercise of the godly, from restlessness to be confused also ; and ye are fallen in confusion, so as ye cannot know whether ye sit, or stand, or lie, be not discouraged, seeing it is an exercise suitable to Christians : rather sit down, as a dussie† body, at God's feet, so shall thy head be settled, and thy confusion shall go. It is your rest to sit still, says the Scripture ; but if ye will stir and flichter,‡ like a bird in a cage, afraid of some ravenous beast, which by flichtering from side to side falls into the beast's claws, while as by sitting still in the midst of the cage, it would have been safe ; so the restless soul by fleeing of danger, puts itself nearer hand ; it gets a scratched skin, wounds, and sores, which by quiet sitting still it would have eschewed. If thou cannot take rest till thou have drawn on confusion, and art become so giddy, as thou knows not what to do, then cower down at God's feet, and lay over thy perplexed mind upon him, so shall he give his beloved rest, sleep, and contentment.

3. What doeth Job in this case ? He turns him to

* Entangled.

† Docile.

‡ Flutter.

God by prayer, and says, Lord, see my afflictions. It lets us see, that the only out-gate in confusion is prayer. Therefore, go speak to God, albeit thou hast no skill what to say, for there is not another out-gate for a perplexed mind. "Ye people, pour out your heart to God at all times; he is a very present help in the time of trouble." If ye will do this with any eye to the goodness and mercy of God, ye shall find ease and out-gate, or at least, ye shall go away better from prayer than ye came; your girths shall be somewhat slacked. Therefore follow this practice of the saints, and ride this ford which many have ridden before you. "I called upon the Lord, and he heard me," (Psalm xxxiv. 4). Read also the 107th Psalm, and ye shall see how many perplexities the kirk is driven to, that they may call upon God; and when they call, they are heard. It is said, they wandered in the wilderness, and cried, and were heard: they were bound in the prison, and the iron went into their soul, and they cried, and were heard: they forgot to eat their meat, loathed their meat; they are in trouble, as tossed by the sea; they stagger and reel like drunken men, whiles lifted up to heaven, whiles cast down in the deeps; and when they cry, the Lord hears.

Let the afflicted use prayer before they be confused, or at least, after confusion; and if ye find that prayer and wrestling ease the mind, follow prayer the faster, and use it the oftter; and leave not off the exercise of prayer, seeing ye win your meat by this craft of begging. Give it not over; but when ye would have comfort, out-gate, or success, go always to God, for all his strait dealing is to drive you to him—as superiors deal with their vassals; cast fangs,

to catch them, and bring them in their reverence to nurture them; and if they yield and come in, they handle them courteously; but if they remain still unreasonable, hold still a cavil in their teeth, till they fall and yield, and then shew courtesy. Now there is no more generous and noble-minded superior than God. When any seek to him, he seeks no vantage of them, but he will bridle and bind, to force them to acknowledge him; and if they seek in to him, he will pity, for it is his nature to pity poor afflicted and confused souls, when they seek in to him. Be not thou like the horse or mule, whose mouth must be holden by bridle and bitt, else God shall bind and bridle foot and hand, and lay on, till ye be forced to stand. Therefore in time make your prayer to him while he may be found, and surely, in the flood of great waters it shall not come near you.

4. "See thou my affliction."—He speaks as if God looked not. It lets us see, that those in affliction cannot see God pitying or looking on them, for if they knew that he saw, they would also know his helpful and pitiful eye; for when God looks to his own, it is aye in pity. Albeit thy sense say, that God looks not, yet know by the rule of faith, that God looks on thy affliction. Labour to overcome sense, and prove that God looks on, when ye get grace to hold out your sores to him; and if ye be persuaded that he sees and looks upon your trouble, ye may also be persuaded that there is pity in him; and if ye be persuaded that he looks with pity, ye may also be persuaded that he is preparing a remedy.

Verse 16. "For it increaseth;"—that is, trouble grows more. This conference with his friends, has diverted his mind from his present trouble, and made

his thoughts run a little in another channel, and not to think on his dolour as he did. It shews, that diverting of the mind in sharpest troubles, is a mean to mitigate a little; for were the mind never so troubled, let it be diverted, and ease comes, which hindereth the seething of the mind. Job's dispute with his friends makes, that his mind is not thoroughly dipped in into all his dolours, but that they are slackened; yet now they increase, and turn back upon him, when he finds no out-gate; and it teaches us, that as in a sickness or fever, the bodily pain will relent and increase again by fits, so, in the fever of the mind, there will be a relenting and a growing of the trouble, as if trouble were, and came back again, or is more sharply apprehended: which is all one as when the sea is flowing, the waves come on the shore a great deal, and incontinent run back; and yet, at the next dash it flows an ell farther, as if it were fetching a race to come farther: so are the troubles of the mind. Therefore David compares troubles to waters, while he says, "All thy waves have gone over me." Let this be one ease to thee, to see thy perplexed case painted out in Job's person, and so know thou art not marrowless* in thy exercise, but that the dearest children of God have seemed to themselves overflowed in the same flood-gate, and to have sunken in deep waters.

2. "Thou huntest me as a fierce lion."—This is not by way of complaint, but the expression of his sense: for he being now slaked, is like a bruised lamb win out of the lion's paws, that seems to be eased, because it is win out of grips; and when it is pursued again, by reason of the bruised bones, is not able to

* Companionless.

fly. So counts Job himself before God, as a bruised lamb that is win away, and ere it be aware, is again hinted* up in his claws, and is sorer bruised than it was before; so thinks Job of himself. As if he said, Lord, albeit I know well thou art my merciful father, yet thou seems to handle me, as a lion doth a silly tender prey, that takes it and toys with it; lets it go, and takes it again, and grips it harder. It lets us see, albeit the Lord be a meek and merciful father to his own, yet in trouble and inward exercise he seems terrible like a lion. Oh, what terror, when God is any way apprehended! albeit he come as a father with a little rod, how fearful is he! What need then have we to walk circumspectly? If God be so fearful and terrible in his mercy, how terrible must he be in his wrath, when he seems to devour the godly? What is the case of the desperate persons? Doubtless they apprehended such terror in God, that heaven glowms,† the earth seems to swallow them up; they think they are going to the pit, and are like to be swallowed up. His anger apprehended is more terrible than hell. Those who know but a little of God's terror, know this to be true. Paul says, "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;" and Hezekiah in his complaint says, "Thou runnest upon me like a fierce lion, to break all my bones: from day unto night wilt thou make an end of me?" When thou art thus dealt with, be not overfleyed;‡ conclude not as sense says, for the Lord can both break and bind up, bring down to death and bring back again; he can bruise, as a lion doth the prey, and send whole away again.

"And again thou shewest thyself marvellous."

* Snatched.

† Frowns.

‡ Too much afraid.

Albeit the Lord seems to him terrible as a lion, yet still he talks on to him, to teach us, when God seems to us a lion, yet still to talk on to him, count him not a foe but a friend ; commune on with him, for under communing he will devour none. The way to keep off ruin is, to keep conference with God, tell him what we fear and what we feel, and what sense says, so shall we not give up the ghost, nor despair.

While he says that God shews himself marvellous, he lets us see two things :

1. That he could not apprehend the deep of dolour ere it came, for when it came, he wondered at it, as a thing surpassing his fore-apprehension ; for men use not to wonder, except it out-reach their conception or fore-apprehension. We see when God exercises, we will be otherwise handled than we trow, more strictly exercised than ever we fore-conceived ; it will be marvellous in comparison with that which we apprehended. What is the reason of many men's plunges and perplexities, but because they see not what God means, and the exercise of sense is sharper than their fore-apprehension ; and that is now set before their eyes, and sensibly felt by them, which they never foresaw or fore-thought.

2. We see God is marvellous in afflicting those on whom he is pleased to shew his power, as a judge, according to his wisdom, devises exquisite tortures to torment those whose life he would have kept in. Yet the wisest man's wit is short to devise tortures, but God is marvellous ; for he can by touching one of the veins, make a marvellous torment ; or by a little stone in the kidneys, or by some humour in the joints, or by a fever, or by a megrim in the head, or by a fester in the foot, he can make a torment inexpressible. And

if God can do so by way of fatherly chastisement, what shall it be, when he exercises his wits to torment the damned in hell? Fools trow, that the torment of the damned in hell-fire shall be nothing as it is said because, say they, there is no material fire in hell, and fire cannot affect the mind, and so, no torment. But the Scripture has not told all; but as never eye saw, nor ears heard, nor ever entered in the heart of man to conceive what God has prepared for them that love him; so eye never saw, nor ears heard, nor heart conceived, what God has prepared for them that hate him. What God has prepared for haters of him, who are set to work their own will, and misknow God, never mind could think upon the thousandth part of their torment. For if by the ague in the tooth there be such torment, what shall it be when torment is on all the body, and the body is made durable and strong to bear it; upholden without meat, to bear all, and the torment of the mind more than of their body; the soul and body cursing each other, that ever they knew each other? Therefore, while ye are in the way, agree with your adversary. And consider this, ye who forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you; for here shall ye feel the lion's paw, that rends into so many parts, and so, multiplies your pain. Consider it, that in time ye may seek reconciliation. God persuade you, lest this advertisement make your punishment more.

SERMON.

Verse 17, "Thou renewest thy witnesses against me, and increasest thine indignation upon me; changes and war are against me.

18. Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb? Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me!"

JOB is fallen again into complaint, and here he seeks out of sense; and being under temptation, gives vent to suggestions, and lets sense speak instead of faith. His sense says, that God by his sore strokes seems to confirm his advisers, as if he were leading witness against him in anger, and said that Job was the man his friends called him.

"Thou renewest thy witness"—as if he said, When I deny wickedness, thy renewing of witnesses to prove that I am not in love with thee, but highly displeased, and that thy indignation grows, and that still thou speakest bitter things against me (verse 17). Then he breaks forth in a fit of impatience and bitter passion, his fleshly part having prevailed over him; as if he said, I am sorry that ever I was born, that my mother brought me forth, or that I lived longer than I was born, that so I might have been as if I had not been (verses 18, 19).

1. "Thou renewest thy witness,"—He calls the continuance and renewing of his dolour and grief, a leading of witness against him; which shews, that when faith would fain comfort itself by the word and covenant, sense uses to lead witness to disprove faith, taking arguments from present disposition. This is a very hard conflict of faith with sense. When faith

not only wants sense, but has contrary sense to that while it believes, then it is a hard strait; as when faith says, God loves; and sense says, Strokes prove the contrary, and that the believer's case is not such, as he holds himself in hand.

Be prepared for the like exercise, and to stand out in the like battle; and trust not sense in the day of trial. But when trial is sent to sift, sense brings out all the forces, and says all that can be said; and when sense has said what it can, and faith stands out, then faith is made more precious than fine gold. Therefore, ye who are racked with your daily running issues of sin, when ye would believe in God, be not driven from him, knowing that ye have liberty to come in to Christ, when ye are like to be holden in the law's grips; and if any be welcome, it is the soul labouring under the sense of sin; yea, the secure and the proud may not bide away from Christ, but must go to him, for they have an errand to him to take away their security, and to make them humble, and more light to see themselves. But especially those who are handled hotly by the law, and feel the wickedness of their own heart, to be led as witness to prove them unhallowed, let them cleave fast unto Christ, and go not from him for all the tentations; for sense is juggled and embittered by tentation. Therefore, trow not the voice of a liar, but the voice of the word, which says, that those who are fled for refuge to Christ, shall have strong consolation.

2. Let us see what are the witnesses that sense leads against faith. The strongest witnesses are rods. Checks and challenge of conscience, estimation of others who called him a hypocrite,—yet all are false witnesses;—the chiefest witnesses are rods. They

say, That man is wicked, and God corrects in indignation. These specially seem to speak from God, because the Scripture says, "Is there any evil in the city that the Lord has not done?" Rods speak most plainly for misbelief, and against faith. Know then, that when crosses, tortures, miseries, and vexations worldly, come to militate as an host of men against you, and say, that God has no pleasure in you, whom he so vexes, hearken not to such witnesses, because God has told us, that whom he loves, he rebukes and chastises. And so, if the rod speak for God, it must speak love. He loves you, and has no will that ye should perish, and therefore must use rods to mortify your corruptions; and the rods, when they come, say only, We are the Lord's visitation, to testify, that God is come to see what ye are doing; and from the time he sees evil in you, ordains that we should scourge it off you. Ye are in danger, and growing secure, and we are the Lord's messengers to sharpen your prayer, to put by an evil hour, and to make you spend the time better than otherwise you would do. Thus are rods messengers of God, come from him for good. But when men hearken not to this, but to suggestions, then Satan speaks what the rod seems to say, and not what it says in substance. Therefore, take the testimony from the word, else thou shalt be deceived: and whatever false witness would loosen faith, hearken not to it, but know, that sense can be juggled and depone falsely, and trow it no more than the deposition of a hard rod. And whatever sense, Satan, the rod, or on-lookers say, trow them not; for if God liked to let out his wrath, he might at a clap shut you in the pit. Therefore for strokes let never a living man complain, for as long as life is kept in,

strokes are only to draw in to God, and to fly wrath that is coming.

3. Another point of the witnesses deposition is, that the rod seems to say, it is wrath or indignation. We see strokes are heavy, but nothing so heavy as wrath or indignation, when it is apprehended. A soul reconciled to God, cares not for straits, if wrath be away; but if it see wrath with the straits, then it is heavy. It can abide anything but wrath. Therefore David says, "Correct me not in thy wrath;" for that ate up his bones, dried up his moisture as the drouth of summer. It is a sharp-pointed rod, when there is fear of indignation; and those under the sense of wrath are specially to be pitied. Ye who fear and find wrath, albeit God speak not to you, but strike, yet speak ye to him, as Job here tells God, that he fears his indignation be increased.

4. "Changes and wars are upon me."—He had diversity of onsets, hosts of adversaries and powers, that concur to beat him down; and therefore, by a comparison he expresses yet more his anguishes, having apprehended his estate to be, as when new and fresh onsets are made in battle, by fresh soldiers against a beaten party. And this lets us see, that exercised minds have a battle wherein they are contrary parties, faith sustaining and holding out, and troubles and tentations making the onset. The party, defender, thinks that his overthrow is sought, and the matter of contest is about his life. The fits of war are, Satan with one onset, the world with another, God with rods on the third hand—and these all use variety of changes and assays, whiles one way, whiles another; and yet, God having in all a supporting hand of the party defender, when he is laying on with his other hand.

Albeit the party stricken marks only the striking hand of God, yet he has also a supporting hand which he sees not; but if he considered with himself, he would say, How is it that I have so many strong and powerful enemies, and such hard onsets, and yet am supported to bear out? If he saw this, doubtless, albeit God seem my party, yet his supporting hand bears up. But he is like a fleyed* body, who marks not this, but only the strokes.

5. In all these onsets he had changes, whilst their evils set on; whiles one or other, whiles all set on together. He was like one wading a water on an uneven ground: he goes in, and finds it deep, and up again; and he finds a bank of sand, and then a new deep again. So up and down wades he on in this affliction, this tentation setting on now, and then that. Wonder not to find changes, for they are kindly.

6. "Wars and hosts."—A part of his exercise was, to have his parties mustered before him at once: God, the world, his friends, sense of indignation, and sins bypast which he thought were forgiven, all fly in his throat together. Here is the peril of giving over, when the whole host is against him. For a soul to stand out at such a time, is a special point of faith's strength, when nothing but the bare letter of the scripture is for it, and all parties as an host against it. In such a case, remember that stronger is He that is in you, than he who is in the world. Stick fast by the bare letter of the scripture, when God, Satan, men are against you, and hold fast this word of scripture, "All things work together for the weal of them that love God;" or any other place that makes for you; so shall ye stand solid, as on a rock, albeit the blast be sore.

* Frightened.

If possibly the godly stagger at such a thick shower of hail, or when all their enemies come about them like bees, thicker than the motty sun, and tentations fly thick as midges, what wonder if ye be set aback?

7. But what is Job's help in this sore onset?—that he is speaking to God, and telling him his case: for he says to him, “Thou renewest thy witnesses against me, and increasest thine indignation upon me; changes and war are against me.” It lets us see, albeit our exercise were never so hard, and parties never so strong, yet let faith ever have recourse to God, for there is no refuge but to him. Tell him the deposition of the witness, that he may refute all; and beware to leave speaking to God, for that is Job's wreck, as the next words show.

Verse 18. “Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb? Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me!”—From once his eye falls off God, incontinent he falls in a passion and fit of impatience; for looking on the host against him, he turns his back upon God, and utters unbecoming words, and asks, why God made him thus miserable. And yet, this is but an agony and fever that will have a cool; and yet it is not to be excused. “Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me!” Oh that when my mother bore me, I had expired, or been tane from her womb to the grave; then had mine eyes been hid from all trouble! Job speaks never one right word here, but all his words are like his ravings in a fever, and the voice of his corrupt sense. And now has he gotten such a wound by his adversaries, that he is once driven into the mire, and breaks out in that which became him not—and no wonder, when his body was running with boils, scabs, vermin; liv-

ing and yet rotting ; tossed in his soul, like to be shot* from God, and all by-gones turned in a contrair. Yet this excuses not his sin.

1. See here the force of dolour and pain. It so takes up his mind, that it lets him think on nothing beside. And ye who have the experience of pain, know that it will transport the mind in the time of it, that ye can only think upon pain, pain, and more pain; pain involving itself as a flame of fire, returning back upon itself, so that the party under pain can think of no other thing. Therefore, spend the time of health and ease well. In your best wit, health, strength, peace, prosperity, put over the work of repentance, and settle it before pain come on; for when pain comes, there is no leisure to repent ; yea, no mind of sin, God, heaven or hell will be, but still mind of pain. Repentance requires a whole young man in his finest wit, health, strength, ease, prosperity, for repentance will take up the whole man within and without ; and therefore they who think to repent when they grow sick or sore, Satan has deceived them, that they should not repent at all. Repent when ye may, else ye shall not get leave to repent when ye would. In pain, fix your eye on God, and cry for faith and patience to bear out. Hold your mind off your pain as far as ye may, and on God, lest your passion break out.

2. See here what frailty is in the strongest ! Job has long foughten mightily ; yet now, being cowed and overset, he becomes weak in the conflict, and staggers, and falls. It lets us see man's frailty by the continuance of sorrow. Therefore let never man lean to his own strength, albeit he had never so many experiences ; for if there be not new strength and furni-

* Thrust.

ture, there will be no out-bearing. But lippen* to Him who quickens the dead, and calls things that are not, as if they were; lippen to God only, and not on any other strength. And when thou seest others pained and perplexed, and callest them abject, cease, and rather pity them, for thou would rather do worse thyself than better, if thou were not supported: learn compassion on the sick and pained, and suspect yourself. And I bid you not put down your own faith, but put down your own courage and strength natural, and say with yourself, If God support not, I shall be also weak as any. And from the experience of others' weakness, give over confidence in your own strength; then, your weakness being renounced, it is God's time to supply.

3. In Job also, mark here the power of tentation and unmortified corruption. Corruption and sinfulness kythe in holiest Job. Was it not a foolish speech in Job, to say, Wherefore hast thou brought me forth? seeing God might have answered, Not for thy ease and satisfaction of thy humours, Job, but for another end: not to give thee thine own will, but for my own glory; and if I get glory, I will not spare to pain thee yet more. Therefore this was a wild tale of raving in Job; and yet, it is but the voice of his sense—Job's speech in his old man; not all Job, but Job in part only, and the words of his corrupt sense. Know then, that in the holiest are corruption and blemishes, that all flesh may become guilty before God. If the press had been taken off Job before his venom was squeezed out of him, we might have thought of him as a sinless man, especially when he had gotten such a testimony of God, that he was

* Trust.

a righteous man, and upright, and none like him on the face of the earth. If this had not kythed, we might have thought Job a man fully renewed : and yet we see Job is but renewed in part ; and that a hard press will kythe corruption, and a pressure of God's thumb will cause rottenness come out. It lets us also see, that never a man from the beginning was saved by his own righteousness or holiness, for Job was not so saved ; for here was a cause sufficient to have caused God cast the bargain of works. But because the covenant of grace could not be broken, therefore this fault is forgiven in Job ; and Job has here ado with a merciful father, who took him not at the shoot, or in his passion, but after this, brought him to himself, and made him to know with whom he had ado. When thou seemest all the holiest, know there is much rotten stuff in thee ; and ye who think that ye are meek and patient, and can bear trouble well, know ye were never yet afraid to the yondmost.* A little press would make your rottenness kythe, an ounce weight more would make you stagger ; yea, the least thing may make you that ye can neither read, pray, nor confer, but fret and fume in your discontentment, and break out in mad passions : and suppose your passions kythe not, yet know that they are.

4. Consider what guiltiness is in this passion and reasonless speech of Job's : " Wherefore brought thou me forth ? " It is a limiting of God's work, a reproving of God's work, a denying to God the glory of his work ; a finding fault with God's providence, a casting down of all that God had done to him or by him ; for many get good of Job's life, and good

* Uttermost.

by Job's trouble, yet he casts all down here. This sin, if it were followed, would drive him to hell; but because it is a passion, and beyond his purpose, which he blames, therefore we follow it not. Always mark ye from it how deeply a passion will involve a man in guiltiness, when once it does break forth but a little. Therefore beware of passion; and excuse not yourself, that because ye are naturally passionate, therefore ye take liberty to break out against God, or your neighbour; for ye may as well say, "I am naturally a devil's limb;" the one may be your challenge as well as the other, and so, not an excuse, for that excuse blackens yet more. If any should say, "I have it by nature, or in fashion, or custom," then I say, it is so much the worse; for that which is customary, daily, and ordinary, is worse than that which breaks out but now and then. Therefore, if thou find thyself passionate, love thyself so much the worse; loathe thyself, and seek to have that furious devil casten out that makes thee bite all that are about thee, and pray to be free of the slavery of that furious beast which will not quit thee. Albeit possibly thou would not be a slave to it, yet it gets many a borrowed darg* of thee.

5. See how reasonless and witless Job's passion is: "Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb?" He speirs at God whereto he made him thus, as if all the end of God's creating of him had been to cocker him, and hold him up, like an egg on a cake. It shews that passion is reasonless; and if any will crave a reason of passion, they crave a reason of that which is reasonless.

6. We see Job can draw no comfort to himself from

* Labour, task.

any thing that is befallen him in this life, or from any good that he has done, nor from any thing God has done to him ; so doth passion blind men, in all that God has done to them, or by them. We see that in the day of trial, from bygone experiences, we may find no comfort. Experience is good when use can be had of it, but an assay may be such, as all former experience may be swallowed up ; yea, so hot a chase, that we can make no use of wit, nor draw comfort from former experiences. Lean no weight upon experience : let it help, but lean not to it ; for ye will tyne the book of register, and will be so tane up with pain, that ye cannot read one line of it, but the book of experience will be a closed book. But lean on this only, “The Lord has spoken ;” and with David, “Take never thy word out of my mouth.” Old bygones help whiles, but not always. It must be fresh furniture that will do thy turn : that thou may have it, depend upon God at all times, and in every case.

7. Out of Job’s error, learn we, whatever comes on us, rue we never that we are in life. No dolour should make us repent our being in life, or make us seek to die, else our sin is so much the greater, as we contravene God’s command. Rather make use of our life. Cast not away God’s gifts, but seek to make use of them. Say not, it is better never to have had children or riches, than to have had them, and then to be taken away, for God has wise reasons both for giving and taking. Be not so foolish as to misinterpret any past work or gift of God.

Verse 20. “Are not my days few ? cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little.”—Here Job falls from passion, and takes up himself, and begins to pray, and exercise his faith, and speak

in other terms. As if he said, Lord, my days are short, let me draw my end; lend me yet life a little; give me comfort ere I die, that I may speak to thee in terms. And thus the passion and braid* is past by. It lets us see, that the passions of the godly last not, for there is a spirit in them that draws that up: if they break out, they go not on. In this, they differ from the wicked, that that which is the wicked's daily life, they do it in a fit, or in a passion. The wicked are daily departers from God, strangers from the womb; but the godly consider their ways, and turn their feet into the way of God's commandments. The wicked's evil is in habit, the godly's in passion. The wicked are not in their cold blood, what the godly are in their distemper.

1. Such as see the godly fall in a passion, and from that would excuse their own daily wickedness, because the godly are overtaken, know they are far mistaken; for the lecherous man is so in resolution, the drunkard and brawler are so in resolution, but the godly is stolen off his feet only in a passion or fit. Now, there is great odds betwixt a fit and a resolution; betwixt falling, and dabbling and wallowing in the mire. The godly may fall into an act of filthiness, injustice, or other offences, and rise again; but the other falls, wallows, and rises not.

2. We see that the spirit and grace which is in God's children, suffers them not to lie or go away with the tentation, but reclaim them. The seed of God is in them, therefore they continue not in sin. If they be overheyed,† they are turned hame at once. Job has done a great fault, yet when he is wrong, he runs not away, but bides, and prays, and in substance

* Assault.

† Called back.

acknowledges his wrong, and retreats his saying : seeing he has failed in loathing of his life, now he craves his life again, that he may speak advisedly before he go to the pit of death.

“ Before I go whence I shall not return.”—He describes here the grave, for he knew his soul would go to heaven ; as hereafter he says, that with his eyes he shall see his Redeemer. But here he means of his body, for he knew his body would rot. As if he said, Before my body go to the worms, and my ears and eyes be closed, lend me yet a little the use of them, that I may praise and honour Thee, and then lay them down ; for the ugly devouring grave will neither let me pray, repent, nor teach others, nor praise thee : lend me time, to shew what I should be, and may not be as I am in this my last passion.

1. We see, a short ease in a sharp trouble is a great benefit. When we have so great ease, where is our acknowledgment of it ? Not only do the most part not make use of their ease, but by the contrair, employ their ease and prosperity in serving of Satan and their lusts. But they who want health, and find pain, would count ease or relenting a great benefit.

2. We see that God gives ease in this life, because it is short and troublesome ; he mixes pain with ease, so that the gout, gravel, throb but whiles, not always, that they may get leave to cry to God. The pains of a woman’s birth come in showers, that the silly creature may draw the breath when ease is given, and not tync* her wits by constant growing pain. Employ the time of ease well, which is given as a breathing time in pain, for ease when it comes, makes pain more tolerable.

* Lose.

3. "To the land of darkness."—See what death is in itself, when it is looked on by itself. It is a land of darkness; for man lieth in the earth, and his bowels are filled with worms, his bones turn into dust, his flesh into slime, and so death is a comfortless estate in itself.

4. Therefore death is not to be looked on by itself, but with the seasoning of it, and in Christ the through-get* of it; for the grave is ugly when it is not looked on in Christ. Look to it in Christ, that as he came through death, so may we; and be acquaint with death not as a foe, but as a friend.

Now ye have heard Job's exercise and weakness, to teach you to wrestle and handle your weapons, and when ye break out, shortly to gather yourself; for the shorter way ye go afield, ye will win the sooner hame.

* Thoroughfare.