

sprinkles many nations. Seek then to be sprinkled and sanctified by the gospel, and preaching of the word, for by the word, the virtue of the blood and Spirit comes.

7. "That which they had not heard shall they consider."—We see, that where the gospel is powerfully preached, and fruitfully heard, men get their eyes open, to see the thing they never saw the like of it, and wisdom to consider the thing they never took up. If then the glory and wisdom of Christ shine in thy eyes, it is a token thou hast seen, heard, and considered what thou knew not before.

8. "Stop their mouths, for they shall see."—This lets us see, that a man cannot submit to Christ, believe in him, adhere to him, nor wonder at his wisdom, power, and goodness, till first he see and consider. Beg open eyes to see the Lord's suffering for you.

SERMON IV.

ON THE MONDAY FOR DIRECTION.

ISAIAH XLI. 14, 15.

"14. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

"15. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp thrashing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thrash the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff."

GOD has threatened the overthrow of idolaters in the former part of the chapter. Now, in this part of the chapter, he promises to do for his true worshippers: that he shall uphold them, deliver them,

comfort them, and make them victorious over all their enemies, whom here he comprises under the name of adversaries great and small, the angels that lay about them.

The encouragement given to them in the former verses, is repeated and insisted on by a promise of help (verse 14), and of strength and victory over their enemies (verses 15, 16); and if need be, a drink of comfort is promised in their conflict, or time of sore trouble (verse 17). It is very fit ye should hear this, because ye are called to war; ye must fight, before ye can win to heaven. There is more ado, than to say your prayers, come to the kirk, and haunt communions; for ye must run, strike, fight, and endure sore bickerings, before the crown be gotten: there is no coming to heaven with ease; but as Christ came to heaven, so must all his, through many tribulations and conflicts. But this generation has neither will to work nor fight. Their hearts faint, their feeble knees bow, and their hands refuse to work: men sleep over in security, and dream of the fool's paradise. They come to the communion to be cleansed, and fall over again, as swine in the mire; as if the coming to the communion, were like the confessions made to the Papist priests, and their absolutions. But the truth must be told. Now ye have a fight, a task-work, ere ye get the treasure; a hell to go past, ere ye win to heaven. As ye have reconciliation to seek with God, so ye have the devil and the world to encounter with; therefore ye have need to guard yourselves upon all hands.

After that here a Redeemer is promised to Jacob, he is encouraged to go in the battle: "Fear not, thou worm Jacob." As if he said, I know thee; thou

hast a great turn to do, and thou art but a feeble and feeble thing, in the sense of thy own weakness ; yet, fear not, for I will help thee ; I thy Redeemer have said it. Oh, but what shall I do with my strong and mighty adversaries, that are like mountains and hills, says Jacob ? The Lord answers, Thou shalt thrash them like a sheaf of corn, and winnow them like chaff. I shall make thee like a new-shod flail with iron, or like a cast wheel shod with iron nails, that takes the corn off the straw ; so that albeit thy great enemies be as mountains, and thy smaller enemies as hills, yet I shall cause thee beat them as a sheaf of corn, that lies still before thee, and stirs not, till thou be tired of thrashing, and then casts it by thee, and when it is thrashen, is letten through the wind ; and thy enemies shall be carried away, as chaff, that is carried out of the gate with the wind. Now, because Jacob might think this an easy victory over his enemies, therefore he tells them in the next words, that for all this, he will be put to a sore pinch, before this victory be gotten in his sense ; for it is a victory that is given to faith, and faith will count no more of all enemies, the devil, the world, and the man's own corruptions, than a thrasher will count of a corn-sheaf, when it looks to the Lord's strength. But before sense get the victory, there will be a strange warsling,* sweating, and breathing, and such a weariness in the conflict, that there must needs be a drink of consolation. Therefore the Lord says, "When the poor and needy want water, and their tongue fails them for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, and will not forsake them." I know, that for all the notable victory I have promised, Jacob will

* Wrestling.

faint; but when Jacob is so forfoughten,* that he cannot cry to me for a drink, yet I will hear him when his tongue cannot speak, when he cannot pray for swooning. I will hear him, and not forsake him. This for the meaning of the words: let us now make our use of them.

1. "Fear not."—When God is speaking to Jacob and all his redeemed people, he says, "Fear not;" which lets us see, that God knows that his people are very feeble and weak in the time of trouble, trial, and tentation, and how much we are taken up with the sight of impediments, when we meet them in a strait. We are all stout enough till we be assayed, but when we have adversaries to meet with, and see their strength, then our hearts fall into the dust. We are like Peter, who minted to his Master on the water; but when the wind blows, and he is like to sink, he cries, "Help, Master, I perish!" I grant, it is no wonder the godly be feeble, they carry about with them so great misbelief and manifold corruptions; yet let them know, that know their fears.

2. "Fear not, saith the Lord."—We see there is no remedy for this fear, but the voice and word of the Lord: only his encouragement can hold us up in the conflict, and no created power will bear us up in the strait; his voice and word give boldness and courage. Thou who art afraid to win through thy sins, and get impediments overcome, take the Lord's word, the staff of his promise, to strengthen; let this word dwell plentifully in thee. Take the sword of the Spirit, the leg-harness of resolution, the helmet of hope, spoken of in Ephesians vi., and guard thyself with the word on all quarters.

* Over-fought, exhausted with fighting.

3. In the 10th verse he forbids Jacob to fear, and here he repeats it. It lets us see, that as nothing is more comfortable to a feeble or fleyed* soul, than the word, so the Lord is not sparing of it, but large in his promises; he repeats, inculcates, and strengthens in the battle. So that look how feared we are, and what need we have of encouragements, as ready is the Lord to lay them to our hand, both to rebuke our fear, and strengthen our doubtings: the same he does to Joshua, to Jeremiah, and here, to Jacob.

4. "Thou worm Jacob."—Jacob a worm, 1. For weakness; for what is all flesh but grass, when it is to stand out against the fight of sin, the devil, and the wrath of God? 2. A worm, for unworthiness; for of all the unworthy things that can be, a piece of sinful flesh is the unworthiest, for sin disgraces the substance wherein it is. 3. A worm, for afflictions and dejection in the mire of trouble; therefore in the twenty-second Psalm, "I am a worm, and no man;" for it is a worm's place to be trodden in the dirt; so was Jacob, an offcast for reproach and affliction. 4. A worm, because of the sense of his own naughtiness; a worm in his own estimation, because of his present estate: he was so cast down and discouraged in himself, that he cannot lift up himself: as David, "I am a beast before thee;" (Psalm lxxiii.), I have not the understanding of a man. Here then God, by calling Jacob a worm, recounts all his objections which might mar his faith; as if he said, Jacob, I know well enough that thy weakness, unworthiness, thy afflictions, and estimation thou hast of thyself, make thee fear; yet fear not for all that. It lets us see that the consciousness of these, which is in man, makes him to fear, and breaks

* Frightened.

his courage. Try what makes thee fear that thou shalt not win to heaven. I speak to thee who art yoked in the battle, and not to lazy sluggards that love to loiter and sleep, and will not wrestle against sin, Satan, and their own corruptions; but to the striver I speak. What makes thee afraid? I am weak, sayest thou? and I have many strong enemies and adversaries, sins, and God's hand is upon me day and night, both upon body and soul; I am unworthy to stand upon God's earth; I am sensible of my own naughtiness, and see reasons anew within me. I answer, All is true that thou sayest; but God who knows all this, saith, "Fear not, thou worm." Therefore seeing God knows thy weakness, unworthiness, and every evil that troubles thee, and meets them with, "Fear not," take heart—strive on!

5. "Fear not, thou worm."—Jacob, I know thou art a worm, and what are the causes of thy fear; and yet, that hinders me not to make unto thee a promise of help against all thy enemies. It lets us see, seeing our weakness, unworthiness, troubles, and sense of want, hinder not God to make a promise, neither should they hinder us to embrace the promise. If we find ourselves unworthy worms, and God saying, Fear not, then we should answer God and say, Albeit, Lord, I be a weak unworthy worm, and my foes many and strong, yet seeing thou forbiddest me to fear, I will not look to my own dead body; but having thy promises, as Abraham did, I will give glory to thee in believing, whatever unlikelihood be in the performance of the promise: I will not look to these, but to thee who promisest.

Seeing God knows the fears, and passes them by, let us pass them by also; for he makes not a promise

for any thing in us, but for his own love and grace's sake. Therefore let us not, because of our unworthiness, refuse the promise. If it were for our deservings, it were not grace. Labour indeed to be sensible of thy weakness and unworthiness, that thou may the better take the promise. But, alas! the most part are not sensible of their weakness and unworthiness, but bolster up themselves with some one conceit or other; as those who say to Christ, Hast thou not taught in our streets? have we not eaten and drunken at thy table? have we not preached in thy name? And yet, never have their hearts been brought low in the sense of their own vileness and unworthiness; never have they searched the reason of their fears or doubts. To whom, I say, it is very needful that they should search the causes of fear and doubting to work humiliation: for fault of this, sin is not repented, God's anger not laid to heart; Hell is not seen gaping for them, but rather a covenant is made with hell, and an agreement with death. I grant, we should not doubt nor fear, yet we should dispute about the causes of fear and doubting; and if any dispute not, let them beware, lest they presume. Therefore hear the reasons of the doubts of thy conscience; and if thy conscience say thou hast reason to fear and doubt, because thou art a rotten hypocrite, thou hast never pannelled thyself before God's tribunal for sin; thou hast never tane pains to know if thou art reconciled to God; thou hast never been loathsome in thine own eyes; and for thy prayers, hearing, reading, communicating, they have been but counterfeit. When the conscience thus accuses, thou hast reason to dispute the matter; thou must either grant or deny, when thou art challenged on true

grounds ; and if after dispute and trial, all be found true that is said, hast thou not reason to be humbled, and to fall down, and mourn in the sense of thy own vileness ? And yet, I would not that in this estate thou should quit the promise, but keep the promise fast in thy hand, and mournfully cry to God with thy mouth for pardon. Jacob, thou seest he is a worm, weak and unworthy in his own sense ; and therefore if thou be unhumbled, proud, and beastly, thou hast cause to fear and doubt. If thou hast never doubted, beware lest thou never believed. Yet I condemn not doubting, but I speir, How came thou to that strength of faith, that never staggered, or felt thy own weakness ? Beware thou be not circumvented by the devil's delusions ! Therefore rest not without impregnable grounds : labour first for a sense of unworthiness and wretchedness, and grip the promise of not fearing. Here I have digressed a little ; but men's sluggishness and customary slighting of God's service, makes me fear, that many a one is not prepared for the consolation that here is offered to such as are become worms, as Jacob, in their own estimation. However, the point I had in hand is this, that unworthiness should not hinder to take the promise, seeing it hinders not God to make it.

6. "Worm Jacob, I will help thee."—Wherefore will God help Jacob ? because Jacob is a worm, and cannot help himself. It lets us see, that our weakness and unworthiness are so far from hindering God to make the promise, that it is the very fit disposition in us to stir him up to make a promise to help us. And therefore the feeling of our weakness and unworthiness should be so far from hindering us to believe the promise, as it should further us to it, for now

we are in the disposition fittest to receive God's help ; our sense of the need of help, should make us take it ; the sense of our weakness and wants should make us apply the comforts. This is a notable mean to overcome Satan and all our doubts. When Satan says, Thou art vile, weak, and unworthy, therefore thou cannot lay hold on God's promise ; retort his argument and say, that by the contrair, because thou art so, thou shouldst lay hold. If he say, Will such a feckless weak wretch as thou stand out against principalities and powers ; or will such a worm as thou bear out the godliness thou aimest at ? thou mayest answer, Because God has letten me see my weakness, worthlessness, and sinfulness, and in sense of it has laid me low, flat along upon the earth, as a worm, therefore I know he will help and regard me in this low estate.

7. We see, albeit Jacob be a worm, he must neither misken himself, nor refuse God's offer of help ; but his disposition must be such, as he must both be abased in himself, and confident in God ; for these two stand well together. Take it for a proof of faith, when thou findest both ; and of presumption, when these two are parted. If thou believe in God, and see not thyself a worm, thou but presumest ; but if the sense of thy vileness make thee tremble to draw near to God, and yet thou comest, then art thou confident. Let this then be the trial of thy faith : Art thou vile, wretched, and unworthy in thyself, and at the same time believest in God ?—thou hast found faith, for the composition of the sanctuary is in the ointment. Now, to deny thyself, is to be a worm ; and to lean on Christ is to believe in him. That this may be done, hold the glass of the law still before thine

eyes, to shew thy vileness, and so be humble ; and Christ shining in the mirror of the gospel, his goodness and pity to make thee believe : look on both, and thou shalt be borne through.

8. "I will help thee,"—the reason why Jacob should not fear : it lets us see, that having God on our side, we should not fear. If God be with us, who can be against us ? Follow God at the back, and in his name pray, work ; then, fear not, for he will be with thee in all thy ways, to guide thee, and has given his angels charge over thee, that thou should not dash thy foot against a stone. Hold thyself in God's ways, and at his back, and fear nothing.

9. While God says he will help Jacob, it imports, that he will join himself with Jacob in the turn ; for He sayeth not simply, I will do the turn, but, I will help thee to it. It is true, God doeth the turn ; but he doeth it by Jacob. It lets us see, that God so works his work in all his own, as that they are not idle, but are employed in the work. This reproves those who will lay over the matter upon God, and go idle themselves. It is true, all we can do is nought ; yet by us as instruments, God will work. It reproves those who say, It is bootless for me to mint for repentance, till God please to give me it ; and so they will follow the devil's service merrily : and if God will fetch them from the devil's back, it is well ; if he will not, they cannot help it. But I tell these men, they tempt God never to give them repentance. If they will have mastery of their sinful corruptions, they must put to their own hand to the fight, and they must bear some bulk with God. Albeit they can neither fight nor work, when God bids them put out their hand to do any thing, they must assay to put it, albeit

it be lame and sick, and so, God shall furnish strength to do the work ; for God, and any thing with him, are strong enough against all our foes, spiritual and bodily.

10. "Says the Lord, and thy Redeemer."—He puts three styles to the promise, or shews his great name in three titles, that Jacob may know who is the promise-maker ; for it is a matter of singular worth, to know what he is who makes a promise, and the promise takes worth from him who makes it ; and so, we see the Lord sets to his name to the promise, and subscribes it. See here God's willingness to make his kirk believe his promises : he not only makes promises, but subscribes, and would have us to read his written subscription at the end of the promise. He is not like the false flatterers in the world, that will make many fair promises, and when it comes to the subscribing or sealing, will draw back. But God both promises, and subscribes it in all his three styles ; the LORD, thy REDEEMER, the HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL. In all God's promises, read God's stamp and subscription, and when thou perceivest the promise to be his, distrust not : say not it will never be, call not his obligation in question, controul not his truth ; for that would crab* an honest man, far more the God of truth.

11. These three styles, are God's name in three titles, which lets us see the distinct persons of the Trinity ; for here both the works of creation, redemption, and sanctification are clearly shewn ; whereby He lets us see, there is a consent given to this promise by all the three persons of the Trinity, and God is content that his great styles lie in pawn, till he per-

* Offend.

form the promise he has made, that as he would give honour in these three styles, so shall he get it, in performing of this promise. Therefore when God lays his crown royal in pawn, his name Jehovah, having being of himself, and giving being unto all ; his name in redeeming us his people, his name of sanctifying them ; he intimates, that as he loves to be honoured in one and all of these styles, so shall he surely perform his promise ; and he will no more quit his being of himself, redeeming and sanctifying of his people, than he will quit the performance of his promise. Neither yet think, that there is a division among the persons of the Godhead, when a promise is made ; for when the Lord says it, it is the Redeemer says it, and the Holy One says it ; for He promises not that the Son knows not of ; for both their promises are one, their word and works are one to us.

Verse 15. " Behold I will make thee a new thrashing instrument." Here the Lord's promise to make them strong against their adversaries. As a sheaf of corn is unable to resist the thrashing instrument, so shall their adversaries spiritual and temporal, compared to mountains and hills, be unable to resist them.

1. It lets us see, that the victory of God's people over their enemies, looking to God their helper, is as easy, as the thrashing of a sheaf of corn. I say, it is easy to faith, albeit not to the flesh ; for the apostle Paul, when he looks to his flesh in his conflict, he says, " O miserable man that I am ! who shall deliver me ?" But when it comes to faith, he says, " I am persuaded that neither height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

There he thrashes all his enemies, sin, Satan, the world, and all that can be against him. And in the 118th Psalm, "They ran about me like bees, but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them all." For temptations come about him, like bees swarming upon all hands, and no place to fly to : but in the name of the Lord, that is, his faith looking to God, he will destroy them all. He only stands, and sees the salvation of the Lord ; holds on the whole armour of God, resists the devil, and he flies from him ; yea, no enemy, great or small, but faith in God makes them all fly.

2. "Thou shalt fan them."—We see Jacob's adversaries who were great like mountains, being thrashed and put to the wind : they seem strong and terrible, and he like a weak worm ; but from once they be holden to the wind of God's promise, they are blown away as chaff. It lets us see, that the godly seem weak, and their adversaries strong, before God put to his hand : but then, the godly seem strong, and their adversaries weak ; for when the devil's strength is compared to God's, it is but like chaff to the wind, or the forces of kings and potentates. Therefore the prophet says, "What art thou, who art afraid of man whose breath is in his nostrils, and forgettest the Lord his Maker ?" And David says, "I will not fear what flesh can do to me." This is after fainting. Therefore winnow all the doubts which arise from the strength of thy adversaries, and thine own weakness ; but see that thou winnow them at God's barn-door, in the sanctuary, as David in the 73d Psalm. When he had almost fallen at the sight of the prosperity of the wicked, he went to the sanctuary, and there he saw, they were set on slippery places, and horribly consumed in a moment.

3. “Thou shalt beat small”—and “the wind shall carry them.” They are something before God put to his hand—mountains and hills—and Jacob nothing: but from once God put to his hand, Jacob is strong and they are weak. So it is at this day with the kirk and her adversaries: that which was something is nothing, and nothing is by God’s hand become something. For who would have said, that the King of Sweden,* when he came from home with six thousand men, when his enemies were six hundred thousand, should have done that which is done, but through God’s putting to of his hand. He has done great things.

4. We see, in God’s promises, it matters not what strength they have or want, to whom the promise is made, for the whole strength stands in the promise. And when God threatens, it matters not what strength be in the party threatened; for albeit they were as mountains, yet he who threatens, can make a worm thrash them; God’s flail can ding them all in dust. Look never how weak or how strong those are to whom God speaks, for the weak shall be strong, and the strong shall become weak.

“And thou shalt rejoice in the Lord.”—Jacob’s part of the battle is won, and now, God must have his victory. We see it is a part of the Lord’s honour, and our thankfulness, to rejoice in the Lord, when we have gotten victory. Has God promised that he will be our God, and renewed covenant with us, and communicated himself in the sacrament, and has done it? it is our part to rejoice, in testimony of our thankfulness.

2. He says, that worm Jacob shall rejoice, which

* Gustavus Adolphus.

lets us see, that we may be a worm in our own sense, and yet rejoice in the Lord, and in him, triumph over all his enemies. These two stand well together, for we are bidden rejoice in trembling.

3. Rejoice, is for the time bygone and present, and glory is for the time to come; which lets us see, that the fruit or right use-making of our delivery past, is to make us rejoice for the present, and glory for the time to come. And indeed, the godly, if they will not look to themselves but to God, may rejoice for time bygone, and glory for time to come: they may boast themselves in God all the day long; they may not glory in their own strength or wisdom, but let him that glories, glory in the Lord: through him, they do valiantly. Albeit they have many strong foes, and great adversaries, yet God shall tramp them under foot, and rule over them with a rod of iron.

Verse 17. "When the poor and needy seek water." —This victory formerly promised, is yet not very easy to sense; for albeit faith may lay hold on this victory, yet flesh and sense will flag and fail, and be more worm-like and naughty before the battle be ended. Therefore a promise is here subjoined to such as in their own sense are weak in the conflict, that they shall get a drink of consolation. We see, whatever promise be made to God's children of victory over their foes, yet they may not think but to find great pain to the flesh, and sore and uncouth skirmishes; albeit faith get the victory easily, yet it is hard victory to the flesh. Wonder not to find it so that ye be like Elisha at Jordan, crying, Where is now the God of Elias? I am like to be overcome. In such straits as these, think not that God will fail in his promise.

Question. But how far may victory of faith be kept under in the flesh? *Answer.* Till one become poor and needy, fainting, forfoughten,* and fallen by, and their tongue so failing, that they cannot seek a drink, yea, no water or drink of consolation at all, but debarred the sight of all comfort in the conflict; so deprived of all comfort, that their tongue is so far sealed, that they dare not say, God help me! or pant unto God. Think it no wonder when thou art thus borne down, and thy face thus rolled in the dust: know it is but thy flesh and thy pride that God is abasing; he is but making thee nought to thy own sense. It is true, all will grant in their words that they are nought, but it is mickle to get acknowledgment of our own naughtiness from experience; therefore that we may win to this, God yokes us with a hard party, and so empties us in ourselves, that being closely contemned of ourselves, we may seek help in Him. Therefore, at the hardest pinch, look up to God, for there is adversity betwixt faith's estate and flesh's estate. Think not that faith is failed when flesh fails, for David says, "My heart and flesh fail, but God fails me never." God and his word cannot fail, whatever we feel or fear.

Question. What will God do, when we are brought thus low? *Answer.* I the Lord will hear and help. This is a strange kind of hearing, to hear one whose tongue is sealed, so as he cannot speak. 1. We see that the consolation of the godly may be so long delayed, till their strength be found to be spent, and they neither able to help themselves, nor seek help, their tongues sealed with thirst. 2. It lets us see,

* Over-fought, exhausted with conflict.

that their impotency and weakness in the trial shall do them no prejudice; for the dumb silence of their pressed soul is a loud speech, and an earnest prayer in the ears of God, which he will both hear and answer. When their tongues are tacked, and speak nothing—so straitly frozen, that they cannot stir, no more than a frozen worm in the clay—even then they have a loud cry to God. Know then, that when thou art forfoughten, like one gasping in the water ready to give up the ghost, and cannot cry, “Help me!” this gasping dumbness speaks to the on-lookers, to haste to help, so thy estate hastes the Lord to help thee.

“I the God of Israel will not forsake them.”—1. Jacob, who before was called a worm, is now called Israel. It lets us see, albeit God call his children worms, yet he keeps his estimation of them as Israelites: whatever styles of baseness he gives for our humiliation, yet he has the same estimation of us, as when he gives us highest styles. Learn we then so to be base in our own eyes, that we quit not our prerogatives; for God counts of us at the worst, as he doth when we are at the best—as the woman of Canaan was called a dog at the one word, but a woman of great faith at the other word. God counts nothing less of a humble soul, than at another time. Therefore humble thyself under the mighty hand of God, and know, that God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble; yet quit not thy privileges in thy low estate.

2. This name of Israel is a glorious style, a word of estimation, and imports a duty. He was called Jacob, a supplanter, because of a trick which he

played to his brother, in stealing his birthright ; but he is called Israel, because he wrestled, and prevailed with God. And his glorious style puts him, and all Israelites in mind of a duty. Every worm Jacob must be an Israel ; every true Israelite must be a wrestler with God, in the time of his deepest dejections. Wilt thou then, a pressed worm with sore troubles, make thee for wrestling, as a worm that is trampled in the clay ?—at the one end it will sprawl, and stir at the other end. So must thou : whatever part is loose or free of thee, stir that. If thou cannot pray, meditate, hear, or confer ;—yet sigh, bow thy knees, lift up thy eyes, and stir whatever is loose.

3. “ I the God of Israel will not forsake.”—That is, because I am become your God in covenant with you, I will not forsake you. It lets us see, that those whom God has tane by the hand to be of Israel, whatever be their straits, for his covenant’s sake he will not forsake them. Our heart, flesh, and courage may fail, but God neither fails nor forsakes. Forsake not Him, but fight out the spiritual combat as good soldiers, so shall your glorious God be with you. To that God be all praise for now and ever : Amen.