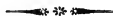


SERMON XXII.*

The Fearfulness, which will hereafter surprise Sinners in Zion, represented and improved.



ISAIAH xxxiii. 14.

THE SINNERS IN ZION ARE AFRAID ; FEARFULNESS HATH SURPRISED THE HYPOCRITES : WHO AMONG US SHALL DWELL WITH THE DEVOURING FIRE ? WHO AMONGST US SHALL DWELL WITH EVERLASTING BURNINGS ?

THERE are two kinds of persons among God's professing people ; the one is those who are truly godly, who are spoken of in the verse following the text ; " He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly," &c. The other kind consists of sinners in Zion, or hypocrites. It is to be observed, that the prophet in this chapter speaks interchangeably, first to the one, and then to the other of these characters of men ; awfully threatening and denouncing the wrath of God against the one, and comforting the other with gracious promises. Thus you may observe, in the 5th and 6th verses, there are comfortable promises to the godly ; then in the eight following verses, awful judgments are threatened against the

* Dated December, 1749.

sinner in Zion. Again, in the two next verses are blessed promises to the sincerely godly, and in the former part of verse 17. And then in the latter part of verse 17, and in verses 18, and 19, are terrible threatenings to sinners in Zion : Then in the verses that follow are gracious promises to the godly.

Our text is part of what is said in this chapter to sinners in Zion. In verse 10, it is said, "Now will I rise, saith the Lord ; now will I be exalted, now will I lift up myself." i. e. Now will I arise to execute wrath upon the ungodly ; I will not let them alone any longer. They shall see that I am not asleep, and that I am not regardless of mine own honor. "Now will I be exalted." Though they have cast contempt upon me, yet I will vindicate the honor of my own majesty : I will exalt myself, and show my greatness, and my awful majesty in their destruction. "Now will I lift up myself ;" now I will no longer have mine honor to be trampled in the dust by them : But my glory shall be manifested in their misery.

In verse 11, the prophet proceeds, "Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble:" i. e. Ye shall pursue happiness in ways of wickedness, but you shall not obtain it ; you are as ground which brings forth no fruit, as if only chaff were sowed in it ; it brings forth nothing but stubble, which is fit for nothing but to be burned.

It seems to have been the manner in that land where the corn grew very rank, when they had reaped the wheat, and gathered it off from the ground, to set fire to the stubble ; which is alluded to here ; and therefore it is added, "Your breath, as fire, shall devour you:" i. e. Your own wicked speeches, your wickedness that you commit with your breath, or with your tongues, shall set fire to the stubble and devour it.

Then it follows in verse 12. "And the people shall be as the burnings of lime." As they are wont to burn lime in a great and exceeding fierce fire, till stones, and bones, and other things are burnt to lime ; so shall the wicked be burnt in the fire of God's wrath. "As thorns cut up shall they be

burnt in the fire :” As briers and thorns are the incumbrance and curse of the ground where they grow, and are wont to be burnt ; so shall it be with the wicked that are among God’s people and grow in God’s field. Heb. vi. 7, 8. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God : But that which beareth thorns and briers, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing ; whose end is to be burned.”

Then it follows in verse 13. “Hear ye that are afar off, what I have done ; and ye that are near, acknowledge my might.” This implies that God will, by the destruction of ungodly men, manifest his glory very publicly, even in the sight of the whole world, both in the sight of those that are near, and of those that are afar off.” “Acknowledge my might.” Which implies that God will execute wrath upon ungodly men, in such a manner as extraordinarily to show forth his great and mighty power. The destruction and misery of the wicked will be so dreadful that it will be a dreadful manifestation of the omnipotent power of God, that he can execute so dreadful misery ; agreeably to Rom. ix. 22. “What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction.”

Next follow the words of the text : “The sinners in Zion are afraid : Fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites : Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire ? Who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burnings ?” The sense of the text is, That the time will come when fearfulness will surprise the sinners in Zion ; because they will know, that they are about to be cast into a devouring fire, which they must suffer for ever and ever, and which none can endure. This I shall make the subject of my present discourse ; and shall particularly speak upon the subject,

1. By inquiring, who are sinners in Zion ?

2. By showing how fearfulness will hereafter surprise them.

3. By insisting on those reasons of this fear and surprise; which are mentioned in the text.

4. By showing why sinners IN ZION will be especially surprised with fear.

I. It may be inquired, who are the sinners in Zion?..... I answer, That they are those who are in a natural condition among the visible people of God. Zion, or the city of David of old, was a type of the church; and the church of God in scripture is perhaps more frequently called by the name of Zion than by any other name. And commonly by Zion is meant the true church of Christ, or the invisible church of true saints. But sometimes by this name is meant the visible church, consisting of those who are outwardly, by profession and external privileges, the people of God. This is intended by Zion in this text.

The greater part of the world are sinners: Christ's flock is, and ever hath been but a little flock. And the sinners of the world are of two sorts: There are those that are visibly of Satan's kingdom, who are without the pale of the visible church. Such are all who do not profess the true religion, nor attend the external ordinances of it. Beside these there are the sinners in Zion. Both are objects of the displeasure and wrath of God; but his wrath is more especially manifested in scripture against the latter. Sinners in Zion will have by far the lowest place in hell. They are exalted nearest to heaven in this world, and they will be lowest in hell in another. The same is meant in the text, by hypocrites, as sinners in Zion. Sinners in Zion are all hypocrites; for they make a profession of the true religion; they attend God's ordinances, and make a show of being the worshippers of God; but all is in hypocrisy.....I now hasten as was proposed,

II. To show how fearfulness will hereafter surprise sinners in Zion.

1. They will hereafter be afraid. Now many of them seem to have little or no fear. They are quiet and secure.

Nothing will awaken them : The most awful threatenings and the loudest warnings do not much move them. They are not so much moved with them, but that they can eat, and drink, and sleep, and go about their worldly concerns without much disturbance. But the time will come, when the hardest and most stupid wretches will be awakened. Though now preaching will not awaken them, and the death of others will not make them afraid ; though seeing others awakened and converted will not much affect them ; though they can stand all that is to be heard and seen in a time of general outpouring of the Spirit of God, without being much moved ; yet the time will come, when they will be awakened, and fear will take hold of them. They will be afraid of the wrath of God : However senseless they be now, they will hereafter be sensible of the awful greatness of God, and that it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands.

2. They will be surprised with fear. This seems to imply two things ; viz. the greatness of their fear, and the suddenness of it.

(1.) The greatness of their fear. Surprise argues an high degree of fear. Their fears will be to the degree of astonishment. Some of the sinners in Zion are somewhat afraid now : They now and then have some degree of fear. They are not indeed convinced that there is such a place as hell ; but they are afraid there is. They are not thoroughly awakened ; neither are they quite easy. They have at certain times inward molestations from their consciences ; but they have no such degrees of fear, as to put them upon any thorough endeavors to escape future wrath.

However, hercafter they will have fear enough, as much, and a great deal more than they will be able to stand under. Their fear will be to the degree of horror ; they will be horribly afraid ; and terrors will take hold on them as waters. Thus we read of "their fear coming as a desolation, and of distress and anguish coming upon them ;" Prov. i. 27. It is also very emphatically said of the wicked, that "trouble and

anguish shall prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle." Job xv. 24.

The stoutest heart of them all will then melt with fear. The hearts of those who are of a sturdy spirit, and perhaps scorn to own themselves afraid of any man, and are even ashamed to own themselves afraid of the wrath of God, will then become as weak as water, as weak as the heart of a little child. And the most reserved of them will not be able to hide his fears. Their faces will turn pale ; they will appear with amazement in their countenances ; every joint in them will tremble ; all their bones will shake ; and their knees will smite one against another ; nor will they be able to refrain from crying out with fear and rending the air with the most dismal shrieks.

(2.) They will be suddenly seized with fear. The sinners in Zion often remain secure, till they are surprised, as with a cry at midnight. They will be, as it were, awakened out of their secure sleep in a dismal fright. They will see an unexpected calamity coming upon them ; far more dreadful than they were aware of, and coming at an unexpected season.

With respect to the time when the wicked shall be thus surprised with fear ;

1. It is often so on a death bed. Many things pass in their life time, which one would think might well strike terror into their souls ; as when they see others die, who are as young as they, and of like condition and circumstances with themselves, whereby they may see how uncertain their lives are, and how unsafe their souls. It may well surprise many sinners, to consider how old they are grown, and are yet in a Christless state ; how much of their opportunity to get an interest in Christ is irrecoverably gone, and how little remains ; also how much greater their disadvantages now are, than they have been. But these things do not terrify them : As age increases, so do the hardness and stupidity of their hearts grow upon them.

But when death comes, then the sinner is often filled with astonishment. It may be, when he is first taken sick, he has

great hope that he shall recover ; as men are ready to flatter themselves with hopes, that things will be as they fain would have them. But when the distemper comes to prevail much upon him, and he sees that he is going into eternity ; when he sees that all the medicines of physicians are in vain, that all the care and endeavors of friends are to no purpose, that nothing seems to help him, that his strength is gone, that his friends weep over him, and look upon his case as desperate ; when he sees, by the countenance and behavior of the physician, that he looks upon his case as past hope, and perhaps overhears a whispering in the room, wherein his friends signify one to another, that they look upon it that he is struck with death, or wherein they tell one another, that his extreme parts grow cold, that his countenance and manner of breathing, and his pulse, show death, and that he begins to be in a cold death sweat ; and when perhaps, by and by, some one thinks himself bound in duty and faithfulness to let him know the worst, and therefore comes and asks him whether or no he be sensible that he is a dying.....Then how doth fearfulness surprise the sinner in Zion ! How doth his heart melt with fear ! This is the thing which he feared ever since he was taken sick ; but till now he had hope that he should recover. The physician did not speak ; or if he despaired, he spoke of such and such medicines as being very proper ; and he hoped that they would be effectual ; and when these failed, he changed his medicines, and applied something new : Then the sinner hoped that that would be effectual. Thus, although he constantly grew worse and worse, still he hoped to recover.

At the same time he cried to God to spare him, and made promises how he would live, if God would spare him ; and he hoped that God would hear him. He observed also that his friends, and perhaps the minister, seemed to pray earnestly for him ; and he could not but hope that those prayers would be answered, and he should be restored. But now how doth his heart sink and die within him ! How doth he look about with a frightened countenance ! How quick is the motion of his

eye, through inward fear ! And how quick and sudden are all his motions ! What a frightful hurry doth he seem to be in ! How doth every thing look to him when he sees pale grim death staring him in the face, and a vast eternity within a few hours or minutes of him !

It may be, he still struggles for a little hope ; he is loth to believe what is told him ; he tells those who tell him that he is a dying, that he hopes not ; he hopes that they are more affrighted than they need be ; he hopes that those symptoms arise from some other cause ; and, like a poor drowning man, he catches at slender and brittle twigs, and clinches his hands about whatever he sees within his reach.

But as death creeps more and more on him, he sees his twigs break, all his hopes of life fail, and he sees he must die. O ! there is nothing but death before him ! He hath been hoping ; but his hopes are all dashed ; he sees this world, and all that belongs to it, are gone. Now come the thoughts of hell into his mind with amazement. O ! how shall he go out of the world ? He knows he hath no interest in Christ ; his sins stare him in the face. O the dreadful gulf of eternity ! He had been crying to God, perhaps since he was sick, to save him ; and he had some hope, if it were his last sickness, that yet God would pity him, and give him pardoning grace before he should die. He begged and pleaded, and he hoped that God would have pity on his poor soul. At the same time he asked others to pray for him, and he had been looking day after day for some light to shine into his soul. But, alas ! now he is a dying, and his friends ask him, how death appears to him ? Whether any light appear ? Whether God have not given him some token of his favor ? And he answers, No, with a poor, faltering, trembling voice, if he be able to speak at all : Or if his friends ask a signal of hope, he can give none.

Now death comes on him more and more, and he is just on the brink of eternity. Who can express the fear, the misgivings, the hangings back, and the horrible fright and amazement, that his soul is the subject of ? Some who, in such cir-

cumstances, have been able to speak, have been known to cry out, *O eternity ! eternity !* And some, *O ! a thousand worlds for an inch of time ! O if they might but live a little while longer !* But it must not be ; go they must. They feel the frame of nature dissolving, and perceive the soul is just a going ; for sometimes the exercise of reason seems to hold to the last.

What, in such a case, is felt in the soul, in those last moments, when it is just breaking its bands with the body, about to fetch its leap, and is on the edge of eternity, and the very brink of hell, without any Saviour, or the least testimony of divine mercy : I say, what is sometimes felt by Christless souls in these moments, none can tell ; nor is it within the compass of our conception.

2. The misery of the departed soul of a sinner, besides what it now feels, consists in a great part in amazing fears of what is yet to come. When the union of the soul and body is actually broken, and the body has fetched its last gasp, the soul forsakes its old habitation, and then falls into the hands of devils, who fly upon it, and seize it more violently than ever hungry lions flew upon their prey. And with what horror will it fall into those cruel hands !

If we imagine to ourselves the dreadful fear with which a lamb or kid falls into the paws of a wolf, which lays hold of it with open mouth ; or if we imagine to ourselves the feeling of a little child, that hath been pursued by a lion, when it is taken hold of, and sees the terrible creature open his devouring jaws to tear it in pieces ; or the feeling of those two and forty children, who were cursed by Elisha, when they fell into the paws of the bears that tear them in pieces : I say, if we could have a perfect idea of that terror and astonishment which a little child has in such a case, yet we should have but a faint idea of what is felt in the departing soul of a sinner, when it falls into the hands of those cruel devils, those roaring lions, which then lay hold of it !

And when the poor soul is carried to hell, and there is tormented, and suffers the wrath of the Almighty, and is overwhelmed and crushed with it, it will also be amazed with the

apprehensions of what shall yet remain. To think of an eternity of this torment remaining, O how will it fill, and overbear, and sink down the poor soul ! How will the thought of the duration of this torment without end cause the heart to melt like wax ! How will the thought of it sink the soul into the bottomless pit of darkness and gloominess ! Even those proud and sturdy spirits, the devils, do tremble at the thoughts of that greater torment which they are to suffer at the day of judgment. So will the poor damned souls of men. They will already have vastly more than they will be able to bear : How then will they tremble at the thought of having their misery so vastly augmented !

Persons sometimes in this world are afraid of the day of judgment. If there be an earthquake, or if there be more than common thunder and lightning, or if there be some unusual sight in the heavens, their hearts are ready to tremble for fear that the day of judgment is at hand. O how then do the poor souls in hell fear it, who know so much more about it, who know by what they feel already, and know certainly, that whenever it comes they shall stand on the left hand of the Judge, to receive the dreadful sentence ; and that then they, in both soul and body, must enter into those everlasting burnings which are prepared for the devil and his angels, and who probably know that their misery is to be an hundred fold greater than it is now.

3. Fearfulness will surprise them at the last judgment. When Christ shall appear in the clouds of heaven, and the last trumpet shall sound, then will the hearts of wicked men be surprised with fearfulness. The poor damned soul, in expectation of it, trembles every day and every hour from the time of its departure from the body. It knows not, indeed, when it is to be, but it knows it *is* to be. But when the alarm is given in hell, that the day is come, it will be a dreadful alarm indeed. It will, as it were, fill the caverns of hell with shrieks ; and when the souls of the damned shall enter into their bodies, it will be with amazing horror of what is coming. And when they shall lift up their heads out of their graves,

and shall see the Judge, it will be a most terrible sight. Gladly would they return into their graves again, and hide themselves there, if that might be ; and gladly would they return into hell, their former state of misery, to hide themselves from this awful sight, if that would excuse them.

So those sinners in Zion, who shall then be found alive on the earth, when they shall see this sight, will be surprised with fearfulness. The fear and horror which many poor sinners feel when they are dying, is great, and beyond all that we can have any idea of ; but that is nothing to the horror that will seize them when they shall come to see this sight.

There will not be a wicked man upon earth who will be able to bear it, let him be who he will, let him be rich or poor, old or young, male or female, servant or master, king or subject, learned or unlearned, let him be ever so proud, ever so courageous, and ever so sturdy. There is not one who will be able at all to support himself ; when he shall see this sight, it will immediately sink his spirit ; it will loose the joints of his loins ; it will make his countenance more ghastly than death. The rich captains, and valiant generals and princes, who now scorn to show any fear at the face of any enemy, who scorn to tremble at the roaring of cannon, will tremble and shriek when they shall hear the last trumpet, and see the majesty of their Judge : It will make their teeth to chatter, and make them cry out, and fly to hide themselves in the caves and rocks of mountains, crying to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and cover them from the wrath of the Judge.

Fearfulness will surprise them when they shall be dragged before the judgment seat. The wicked hang back when they are about to meet death ; but in no measure as they will hang back when they come to meet their great Judge. And when they come to stand before the Judge, and are put on his left hand, fearfulness and amazement will surprise them. The majesty of the Judge will be intolerable to them. His pure and holy eye, which will behold and search them, and pierce them through, will be more terrible to their souls a

thousand times than flashes of lightning piercing their hearts. There will they stand in a trembling expectation, that by and by they shall hear the words of that dreadful sentence proceed out of the mouth of Christ : They will have an horrible expectation of that sentence ; and what shall they do, whither shall they fly, so as to be out of the hearing of it ? They cannot shut their ears, so as not to hear it.

Fearfulness will surprise them when the sentence shall come to be pronounced. At the close of the judgment, that dreadful doom will be uttered by the Judge , and it will be the most terrible voice that ever was heard. The sound of the last trumpet, that shall call men to judgment, will be a more terrible sound to wicked men than ever they shall have heard till that time. But the sound of the last sentence will be much more terrible than that. There will not be one of all those millions at the left hand, whether high or low, king or subject, who will be able to support himself at all under the sound of that sentence ; but they will all sink under it.

Lastly, Fearfulness will surprise them, when they shall come to see the fire kindle upon the world, in which they are to be tormented forever. When the sentence shall have been pronounced, Christ, with his blessed saints and glorious angels, will leave this lower world, and ascend into heaven. Then will the flames begin to kindle, and fire will probably be seen coming down from heaven ; and soon will the fire lay hold of that accursed multitude. Then will their hearts be surprised with fearfulness ; that fire will appear a dreadful fire indeed. O what chatterings of teeth, what shakings of loins, what distortions of body, will there be at that time, when they shall see, and begin to feel, the fierceness of the flames ! What shall they do, whither shall they go, to avoid those flames ? Where shall they hide themselves ? If they creep into holes, or creep into caves of the earth, yea if they could creep down to the centre of the earth, it will be in vain ; for it will set on fire the bottoms of the mountains, and burn to the lowest hell. They will see no place to fly to, no place to hide themselves.

Then their hearts will be filled with fearfulness, and will utterly sink in despair. Thus it shall hereafter be with every one that shall then be found to be a sinner, and especially with sinners in Zion....I come now,

III. To consider those reasons spoken of in the text, why sinners in Zion will hereafter be thus surprised with fear.

1. Fearfulness will surprise them, because they will know that they are to be cast into devouring fire. There is nothing which seems to give one a more terrible idea of torment and misery, than to think of being cast alive into a fire ; especially if we conceive of the senses remaining quick, and not benumbed by the fire. The wicked will hereafter have that to make them afraid, that they are not only to be cast into a fire, but into devouring fire ; which implies, that it will be a fire of extraordinary fierceness of heat, and before which nothing can stand.

The fire into which men are to be cast is called a *furnace of fire*. Furnaces are contrived for an extreme degree of heat, this being necessary for the purposes for which they are designed, as the running and refining of metals, and the melting of things into glass. The fire of such earthly furnaces may be called *devouring fire*, as the heat of some of them is such, that in them even stones will presently be dissolved. Now, if a person should be brought to the mouth of such a furnace, and there should see how the fire glows, so as presently to make every thing cast into it, all over white and bright with fire, and at the same time should know that he was immediately to be cast into this furnace, would not fearfulness surprise him ?

In some Heathen countries, the manner of disposing of dead bodies is to dig a great pit, to put in it a great quantity of fuel, to put the dead bodies on the pile, and to set it on fire. This is some image of the burning of dead souls in the pit of hell. Now, if a person were brought to the edge of such a pit, all filled with glowing flames, to be immediately cast into it, would it not surprise the heart with fearfulness ?

The flames of a very great fire, as when an house is all on fire, give one some idea of the fierceness of the wrath of God : Such is the rage of the flames. And we see that the greater a fire is, the fiercer is its heat in every part ; and the reason is, because one part heats another. The heat in a particular place, besides the heat which proceeds out of the fuel in that place, is increased by the additional heat of the fire all around it. Hence we may conceive something of what fierceness that fire will be, when this visible world shall be turned into one great furnace. That will be devouring fire indeed. Such will be the heat of it, that, as the apostle says, “ the elements shall melt with fervent heat,” 2 Pet. iii. 10.

Men can artificially raise such a degree of heat with burning glasses, as will quickly melt the very stones and sand. And it is probable that the heat of that great fire which will burn the world, will be such as to melt the rocks, and the very ground, and turn them into a kind of liquid fire : So that the whole world will probably be converted into a great lake, or liquid globe of fire, a vast ocean of fire, in which the wicked shall be overwhelmed. It will be an ocean of fire, which will always be in a tempest, in which the wicked shall be tossed to and fro, having no rest day nor night, vast waves or billows of fire continually rolling over their heads.

But all this will be only an image of that dreadful fire of the wrath of God, which the wicked shall at the same time suffer in their souls. We read in Rev. xix. 15, of “ the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.” This is an extraordinary expression, carrying a terrible idea of the future misery of the wicked. If it had been only said the wrath of God, that would have expressed what is dreadful. If the wrath of a king be as the roaring of a lion, what is the wrath of God ? But it is not only said the wrath of God, but *the fierceness and wrath of God*, or the rage of his wrath ; and not only so, but the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. O what is that ! The fierceness and rage or fury of Omnipotence ! Of a Being of infinite strength ! What an idea doth that give of the state of those worms that suffer the fierceness and wrath of such an

Almighty Being ! And is it any wonder that fearfulness surprises their hearts, when they see this about to be executed upon them ?

2. Another reason given in the text, why fearfulness will hereafter surprise sinners, is, that they will be sensible that this devouring fire will be everlasting. If a man were brought to the mouth of a great furnace, to be cast into the midst of it, if at the same time he knew he should suffer the torment of it but for one minute, yet that minute would be so terrible to him, that fearfulness would surprise and astonish him. How much more, if he were to be cast into a fire so much fiercer, as the fire in which wicked men are hereafter to be tormented ! How much more terrible would the minute's suffering be !

But if the thought of suffering this devouring fire for one minute would be enough to fill one with such surprising fearfulness, what fearfulness will seize them, when they shall know that they are to bear it, not for one minute, nor for one day, nor for one year, nor for one age, nor for two ages, nor for an hundred ages, nor for ten thousand or million ages, one after another, but for ever and ever, without any end at all, and never, never be delivered !

They shall know, that the fire itself will be everlasting fire, fire that shall never be quenched. Mark ix. 43, 44. "To go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched ; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." And they shall know that their torment in that fire never will have an end, Rev. xiv. 10, 11. They shall know that they shall for ever be full of quick sense within and without ; their heads, their eyes, their tongues, their hands, their feet, their loins, and their vitals, shall for ever be full of glowing, melting fire, fierce enough to melt the very rocks and elements ; and also that they shall eternally be full of the most quick and lively sense to feel the torment.

They shall know that they shall never cease restlessly to plunge and roll in that mighty ocean of fire. They shall know that those billows of fire, which are greater than the greatest

mountains, will never cease to roll over them, are following one another for ever and ever.

At the same time they will have a more lively sense of eternity than we ever can have here. We can have but a little sense of what an eternal duration is ; and indeed none can comprehend it ; it swallows up all thought and imagination : If we set ourselves to think upon it, we are presently lost. But they will have another and far clearer sense of it than we have. O how vast will eternity appear to them, when they think of spending it in such burnings ! This is another reason that fearfulness will surprise them. The thoughts of eternity will always amaze them, and will sink and depress them to a bottomless depth of despair.

3. The third reason given in the text, why fearfulness will surprise them at the apprehension of this punishment, is, that they will know that they shall not be able to bear it. When they shall see themselves going into that devouring fire, they will know that they are not able to bear it. They will know that they are not able to grapple with the fierceness and rage of those flames ; for they will see the fierceness of the wrath of God in them ; they will see an awful manifestation of Omnipotence in the fury of that glowing furnace. And in those views their hearts will utterly fail them ; their hands will not be strong, nor their hearts endure. They will see that their strength is weakness ; they will know that they will not be able to grapple with such torments, and that they can do nothing in such a conflict.

When they shall have come to the edge of the pit, and of the burning lake, and shall look into the furnace, then they will cry out with exclamations like these : O ! what shall I do ? How shall I bear the torments of this fire ? How can I endure them ? Who can endure ? Where is the man so stout-hearted, where is the giant of such strength and such courage, that he can bear this ? O ! what shall I do ? Must I be cast in thither ? I cannot bear it ; I can never endure it. O that I could return to my first nothing ! How can I endure it one moment ? How much less can I endure it for ever and

ever? And must I bear it forever? What! Forever and ever, without any end, and never find any refuge, never be suffered to return to my first nothing, and be no nearer to the end of these sufferings after millions of ages? O what dismal shrieks, and shaking of loins, and gnashing of teeth, will there be then! No wonder that fearfulness will then surprise the wicked.

I come now,

IV. To show, why it will be especially thus with the sinners in Zion, or sinners that dwell among God's visible people, who sit under the preaching of the gospel, and have the offers of a Saviour, and yet accept not of him, but remain in an unconverted state.

There will hereafter be a very great difference between them and other sinners; a great difference between the most painted hypocrite of them all, and the drunkards, the adulterers, the Sodomites, the thieves, and murderers among the Heathen, who sin against only the light of nature. The fearfulness which will surprise them, although it will be very dreadful, yet will be in no measure so amazing and horrible, as that which will seize the sinners in Zion. That fierceness and wrath of Almighty God, which they will suffer, will be mild and moderate in comparison with that which the sinners in Zion will suffer.

The wrath of God is in his word manifested against the wicked Heathens; but it is ten times as much manifested against those sinners who make the profession and enjoy the privileges of the people of God; and yet remain enemies to God. Both the Old Testament and the New are full of terrible denunciations against such. Read the books of Moses, and read the prophets, and you will find them full of dreadful threatenings against such. Read over the history of Christ's life, and the speeches which he made when upon earth; there you will see what woes and curses he frequently denounced against such. How often did he say, that it should be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment,

than for the cities in which most of his mighty works were done ! Read over the history of the Acts of the Apostles, and their epistles ; there you will find the same. It is the sinners in Zion, or hypocrites, that are always in scripture spoken of as the people of God's wrath : Isa. x. 6. " I will send him against an hypocritical nation, against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil."

Now, the reasons of this are chiefly these :

1. That they sin against so much greater light. This is often spoken of in scripture, as an aggravation to the sin and wickedness of sinners in Zion. He that knows not his Lord's will, and doeth it not, is declared not to be worthy of so many stripes, as he who, being informed of his Lord's will, is in like manner disobedient. If men be blind, they have comparatively no sin ; but when they see, when they have light to know their duty, and to know their obligation, then their sin is great, John ix. 41. When the light that is in a man is darkness, how great is that darkness ! And when men live in wickedness, in the midst of great light, that light is like to be the blackness of darkness indeed.

2. That they sin against such professions and vows. The Heathens never pretended to be the worshippers of the true God. They never pretended to be Christ's disciples ; they never came under any covenant obligations to be such. But this is not the case with sinners in Zion. Now, God highly resents falsehood and treachery. Judas, who betrayed Christ with a kiss, was a greater sinner, and much more the object of God's wrath, than Pilate, who condemned him to be crucified, and was his murderer.

3. That they sin against so much greater mercy. They have the infinite mercy of God, in giving his own Son, often set before them : They have the dying love of Christ represented to them : They have this mercy, this glorious Saviour, his blood and righteousness, often offered to them : They have a blessed opportunity to obtain salvation for their souls ; a great price is put into their hands to this end : They have

that precious treasure, the holy scriptures, and enjoy Sabbaths, and sacraments, and the various means of grace : But all these means and advantages, these opportunities, offers, mercies, and invitations, they abuse, neglect, despise, and reject.

But there is no wrath like that which arises from mercy abused and rejected. When mercy is in this way turned into wrath, this is the fiercest wrath ; in comparison with this, other wrath is cool.

Sinners in Zion, beside their fall by the first Adam, have a fall also by the second : He is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, at which they stumble and fall ; and there is no fall like this ; the fall by the first Adam is light in comparison with it.

On these accounts, whenever we see the day of judgment, as every one of us shall see it, we shall easily distinguish between the sinners in Zion and other sinners, by their shriller cries, their louder, more bitter, and dolorous shrieks, the greater amazement of their countenances, and the more dismal shaking of their limbs, and contortions of their bodies.

I shall conclude with an earnest EXHORTATION to sinners in Zion, now to fly from the devouring fire and everlasting burnings.

You sinners who are here present, you are the very persons spoken of in the text ; you are the sinners in Zion. How many of these people of God's wrath are there sitting here and there in the seats of this house at this time ? You have often been exhorted to fly from the wrath to come. This devouring fire, these everlasting burnings, of which we have been speaking, are the wrath to come. You hear to day of this fire, of these burnings, and of that fearfulness which will seize and surprise sinners in Zion hereafter ; and O what reason have you of thankfulness that you only hear of them, that you do not as yet feel them, and that they have not already taken hold of you ! They are, as it were, following you, and coming nearer and nearer every day. Those fierce flames are, as it were, already kindled in the wrath of God ; yea, the

fierceness and wrath of Almighty God burn against you ; it is ready for you : That pit is prepared for you, with fire and much wood, and the wrath of the Lord, as a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.

Lot was with great urgency hastened out of Sodom, and commanded to make haste, and fly for his life, and escape to the mountains, lest he should be consumed in those flames which burned up Sodom and Gomorrah. But that burning was a mere spark to that devouring fire, and those everlasting burnings, of which you are in danger. Therefore improve the present opportunity.

Now, God is pleased again to pour out his spirit upon us ; and he is doing great things among us. God is indeed come again, the same great God who so wonderfully appeared among us some years ago, and who hath since, for our sins, departed from us, left us so long in so dull and dead a state, and hath let sinners alone in their sins ; so that there have been scarcely any signs to be seen of any such work as conversion : That same God is now come again ; he is really come in like manner, and begins, as he did before, gloriously to manifest his mighty power, and the riches of his grace. He brings sinners out of darkness into marvellous light. He rescues poor captive souls out of the hands of Satan ; he saves persons from the devouring fire ; he plucks one and another as brands out of the burnings ; he opens the prison doors, and knocks off their chains, and brings out poor prisoners ; he is now working salvation among us from this very destruction of which you have now heard.

Now, now, then, is the time, now is the blessed opportunity to escape those everlasting burnings. Now God hath again set open the same fountain among us, and gives one more happy opportunity for souls to escape. Now he hath set open a wide door, and he stands in the door way, calling and begging with a loud voice to the sinners of Zion : Come, saith he to me, come, fly from the wrath to come ; here is a refuge for you ; fly hither for refuge ; lay hold on the hope set before you.

A little while ago, it was uncertain whether we should ever see such an opportunity again. If it had always continued as it hath been for five or six years past, almost all of you would surely have gone to hell ; in a little time fearfulness would have surprised you, and you would have been cast into that devouring fire, and those everlasting burnings. But in infinite mercy God gives another opportunity ; and blessed are your eyes, that they see it, if you did but know your own opportunity.

You have had your life spared through these six years past, to this very time, to another outpouring of the Spirit. What would you have done, if you had died before it came ? How doleful would your case have been ! But you have reason to bless God that it was not so, and that you are yet alive, and now again see a blessed day of grace. And will you not improve it ! Have you not so much love to your poor souls, as to improve such an opportunity as this ?

Some, there is reason to think, have lately fled for refuge to Christ ; and will you be willing to stay behind still, poor miserable captives, condemned to suffer for ever in the lake of fire ? Hereafter you will see those of your neighbors and acquaintance, who are converted, mounting up as with wings, with songs of joy, to meet their Lord ; and if you remain unconverted, you at the same time will be surprised with fear, and horror will take hold of you, because of the devouring fire, and the everlasting burnings.

It is an awful thing to think of, that there are now some persons in this very congregation, here and there, in one seat and another, who will be the subjects of that very misery of which we have now heard, although it be so dreadful, although it be so intolerable, and although it be eternal ! There are probably some now hearing this sermon, whom the rest of the congregation will, at the day of judgment, see among the devils, at the left hand of the Judge. They will see their frightened ghastly countenances ; they will see them wring their hands, and gnash their teeth, shrieking and crying out.

Now we know not their names, we know not what seats they sit in, nor where to look for them, nor whom to pitch upon. But God knoweth their names, and now seeth and knoweth what they think, and how much they regard the warnings which are given them this day. We have not the least reason to suppose any other than that some of you will hereafter see others entering into glory with Christ, and saints, and angels, while you, with dreadful horror, shall see the fire begin to kindle about you. It may be, that the persons are now blessing themselves in their own hearts, and each one saying with himself, Well, I do not intend it shall be I. Every one here hopes to go to heaven ; none would by any means miss of it. If any thought they should miss of it, they would be greatly amazed. But all will not go thither : it will undoubtedly be the portion of some to toss and tumble for ever among the fiery billows of God's wrath.

It is not to be supposed, but that there are some here who will not be in earnest ; let them have ever so good an opportunity to obtain heaven, they will not thoroughly improve it. Tell them of hell as often as you will, and set it out in as lively colors as you will, they will be sick and slothful ; and they will never be likely to obtain heaven, while they are sleeping, and dreaming, and intending, and hoping. The wrath of God, which pursues them, will take them by the heels ; hell, that follows after, will overtake them ; fearfulness will surprise them, and a tempest will steal them away.

Nor is it to be supposed, that all who are now seeking will hold out ; some will backslide ; they will be unsteady. If now they seem to be pretty much engaged, it will not hold. Times will probably alter by and by, and they, having not obtained grace, there will be many temptations to backsliding, with which they will comply. The hearts of men are very unsteady ; they are not to be trusted. Men cannot tell how to have patience to wait upon God ; they are soon discouraged. Some that are now under convictions may lose them. Perhaps they will not leave off seeking salvation at once ; but they will come to it by degrees. After a while, they will be-

gin to hearken to excuses, not to be quite so constant in duty ; they will begin to think that they need not be quite so strict ; they will say to themselves, they see no hurt in such and such things ; they see not but they may practise them without any, or to be sure, great guilt. Thus giving way to temptations, and hearkening to excuses, they will by degrees lose their convictions, and become secure in sin.

There were some who were guilty of backsliding, the last time of the revival of religion among us. While the talk upon religious subjects was generally kept alive, they continued to seek ; but when this began to abate, and they saw others less zealous than they had been, and especially when they saw some miscarriages of professors, they began to grow more careless, to seek less earnestly, and to plead these things as an excuse. And they are left behind still ; they are to this day in a miserable condemned state, in danger of the devouring fire, and of everlasting burnings ; in twice so dangerous a state as they were in before they were awakened ; and God only knows what will become of them. And as it was then, so we dread it will be now.

Some who are now here present in a natural condition, are doubtless near death ; they have not long to live in the world ; and if they seek in a dull way, or if after they have sought for a while, they are guilty of backsliding, death will come upon them long enough before there will come such another opportunity. When they leave off seeking, it will not be without a design of seeking again some time or other ; but death will be too quick for them. It is not the manner of death to wait upon men, while they take time to indulge their sloth, and gratify their lusts. When his appointed time comes, he will do his work. Will you put off in hopes of seeing another such time seven years hence ? Alas ! how many of those who are now in a natural condition may be in hell before another seven years shall have elapsed !

Therefore now let every one look to himself. It is for your own soul's salvation. If you be foolish, and will not hearken to counsel, will not improve the opportunity when it

is given you, and will not enter into such an open door, you alone must bear it. If you shall miss this opportunity, and quench your convictions now, and there shall come another time of the outpouring of the Spirit, you will be far less likely to have any profit by it; as we see now God chiefly moves on the hearts of those who are very young, who are brought forward upon the stage of action since the last outpouring of the Spirit, who were not then come to years of so much understanding, and consequently not so much in the way of the influences of the Spirit. As to those who were grown up, and had convictions then, and quenched them, the most of these are abundantly more hardened, and seem to be more passed over. So it will probably be with you hereafter, if you miss this opportunity, and quench the convictions of the Spirit which you have now.

As to you who had awakenings the last time of the outpouring of the Spirit, and have quenched them, and remain to this day in a natural condition, let me call upon you also now that God is giving you one more such opportunity. If passing in impenitence through one such opportunity hath so hardened you, and hath been such a great disadvantage to you, how sad will your case be, if you shall now miss another! Will you not now thoroughly awake out of sleep, bestir yourselves for your salvation, and resolve now to begin again, and never leave off more? Many fled for refuge from the devouring fire before, and you were left behind. Others have fled for refuge now, and still you are left behind; and will you always remain behind? Consider, can you dwell with devouring fire? Can you dwell with everlasting burnings? Shall children, babes and sucklings, go into the kingdom of God before you?

How will you hereafter bear to see them coming and sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, when yourselves are thrust out, and are surprised with fearfulness at the sight of that devouring fire, and those everlasting burnings, into which you are about to be cast? Take heed lest a like threatening be fulfilled upon you with that which we have in Numb. xiv. 22, 23. "Because all those

men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice ; surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers ; neither shall any of them that provoked me see it." Together with verse 31. " But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised."