

## AGGRAVATIONS OF SINNING AGAINST MERCY.

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*Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.—ROM. II. 4, 5.*

THIS is the last and most weighty aggravation which the apostle puts into the measure of the Gentiles' sinfulness (which in the former chapter he had, verse 29, pronounced full before), to make it fuller yet. Their sinning against mercies, and despising the riches of God's goodness, patience, and forbearance, the hateful evil and iniquity whereof can be better no way set off and illustrated unto men's consciences, than by a display of the riches of that goodness which men sin against.

My purpose therefore is to unlock and carry you into that more common treasury of outward mercies, and lead you through the several rooms thereof, all which do continually lead you unto repentance; that then, reflecting upon our ungrateful waste and abuse of so many mercies in sinning, thereby our sins, every sin, the least, may yet appear more sinful unto us, 'who are less than the least of all mercies.' Know then, that besides that peculiar treasure of 'unsearchable riches of grace laid up in Christ,' Eph. ii. 7, the offer of which neglected and despised adds yet to all that sinfulness, a guilt as far exceeding all that which shall be spoken of, as heaven exceeds the earth, there is another untold mine of riches the earth is full of, as the Psalmist tells us, Ps. civ. 24, and the apostle here, which these Gentiles only heard of, and which we partake of all as much as they. As there are riches of grace offered to you which can never be exhausted, so there are riches of patience spent upon you which you will have spent out in the end, the expense of which cast up, will alone amount to an immense treasure, both of guilt in you and of wrath in God, as these words inform us.

To help you in this account, I will,

1. In general, shew what goodness or bounty, patience, and longsuffering are in God.

2. That there are riches of these spent upon all the sons of men.

3. That these all lead men to repentance. And then,

4. I will expostulate with you and aggravate your sinfulness in going on to despise all these by unrepentance, as the apostle here doth.

1. First, In that God is said here to be (1.) good or bountiful; (2.) patient or forbearing; (3.) longsuffering; they seem to note out three degrees of his common mercies unto men.

(1.) First, He is a good or a bountiful God; for so as goodness is here used, I exegetically expound it. For though it be true that goodness and bounty may differ, yet when riches of goodness are said to be communicated, it imports the same, and is all one with bounty. And such is God. And all those noble and royal qualifications and properties which concur to make one truly good and bountiful, do meet and abound in him, in all those good things which he doth bestow, and are found truly in none but in him, so that it may be truly said, that there is none good but God, as Christ says of him.

Now bounty in the general, which is in God, may be thus described.

It is a free, willing, and a large giving of what is merely his own, looking for no recompence again.

To explain this, that you may see that all these conditions are required to true goodness, and all of them to be found in God only.

[1.] He that is bountiful, he must be a giver and bestower of good things; and all he bestows it must be by way of gift, not by way of recompence unto, or by desert from the party he bestows all on. Therefore Christ says, Luke vi. 33, that to do good to those who have done or do good to us, is not thankworthy, nor is it bounty. But God is therefore truly good, because he simply, merely, and absolutely gives away all which he bestows. For he was not, nor can any way become, beholden to any of his creatures, nor had formerly received anything from them which might move him hereunto; so Rom. xi. 35, 'Who hath first given him, that he may recompense him again?' Nay, until he gave us a being, we were not capable of so much as receiving any good thing from him.

[2.] He who is truly termed good or bountiful, all that he gives away must be his own; and so all which God bestows it is his own. So Ps. xxiv. 1, 'The earth is the Lord's,' the ground we tread on, the place we dwell in; he is our landlord. But is that all? For the house may be the landlord's when the furniture is the tenant's. Therefore he further adds, 'And the fulness of it' is his also; that is, all the things that fill the world, all the furniture and provision of it both, all the moveables. So Ps. l. 11, 12, 'The cattle and the fowls upon a thousand hills are mine,' says he; and also all the standing goods, 'the corn and oil' which you set and plant, 'are mine,' Hos. ii. 9; yea, and the Psalmist, in the 24th Psalm, adds further, that 'they who dwell therein' are his also; not the house and furniture only, but the inhabitants themselves. And this by the most sure and most sovereign title that can be, better than that of purchase or inheritance of and from another; for he hath made them. 'All is thine, because all comes of thee,' says the same David, 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12. And all things are not only *of him*, but *through him*, Rom. xi. 36; that is, they cannot stand nor subsist without him. Even kings, the greatest and most bountiful of men, their bounty is but as that of the clouds, which though they shower down plentifully, yet they first received all from the earth below them.

[3.] He must give largely, it is not bounty else. Now God is therefore said to be rich in goodness, because he is abundant in it. So we find it, comparing Ps. xxxiii. 5, with Ps. civ. 24, in which it is said, that 'the

earth is full of his goodness,' and 'his riches;' which we may judge of, by what he says in the 27th verse of that 104th Psalm, of what an house he keeps, and what multitudes he feeds; 'All these,' saith the Psalmist, 'wait on thee, that thou mayest give them meat; and thou openest thy hand, and they are filled with good.' King Ahasuerus, to shew his bounty, made a feast to his chief subjects, but it was but for half a year, and not to all; some few half years more would well nigh have beggared him; but God doth thus continually. The greatest and most bountiful of men, when they would express the largest of their bounty, speak but of giving 'half of their kingdoms;' so Herod and he did but talk so too; but God bestows whole worlds and kingdoms, as Daniel speaks, Dan. iv. 32, and gives them to whom he please.

[4.] He that is bountiful must give all he gives freely, and willingly. Which, though I put together, yet may imply two distinct things. As, *first*, that he that gives must be a free agent in it, who is at his choice, whether he would give anything away or no. The sun doth much good to the world, it affords a large light, and even half the world at once is full of its glory, yea, and all this light is its own, not borrowed, as that of the moon and stars is; yet this sun cannot be called good or bountiful, because it sends forth this light necessarily and naturally, and cannot choose but do so, nor can it draw in its beams. But God is a free giver, he was at his choice whether he would have made the world or no, and can yet when he pleaseth withdraw his Spirit and face, and then they all perish, Ps. civ. 29. *Secondly*, It must be willingly also; that is, no way constrained, nor by extraction wrung from him who is to be called bountiful. A willing mind in matter of bounty, is more accepted than the thing, 2 Cor. viii. 12. Now of God it is said, Dan. iv. 32, that he gives the kingdoms of the world to whom he will, and none sways him, or can stay his hand, ver. 35, yea, he gives all away with delight. So Ps. civ. 31, having spoken of feeding every living thing, and of other the like works of his goodness throughout that Psalm, he concludes with this, 'God rejoiceth in all his works;' that is, doth all the good he doth to his creatures with delight. It doth him good (as it were) to see the poor creatures feed.

[5.] Last of all, looking for no recompence for the time to come. This is another requisite in bounty. Says Christ, Luke vi. 34, 'If you give to receive again, as sinners do, this is not thankworthy;' but ver. 25, so doth not your heavenly Father. For, says he, 'Do good, and hope for nothing again; so shall you be like your Father,' and then you shall shew yourselves true children of the Most High. In which word he insinuates a reason why God gives all thus; because he is so great and so high a God, as nothing we do can reach him, as David speaks, Ps. xvi. 2, 'My goodness extends not unto thee;' he is too high to receive any benefit by what we do. And even that thankfulness he exacts, he requires it but as an acknowledgment of our duty, and for our good, Dent. x. 12.

(2.) And so much for the first, namely, what goodness and bounty is; and how God is truly good, and he only so. But this attribute of his, and the effects of it, he exerciseth towards all our fellow-creatures, and did to Adam in paradise. But now to us ward (as the apostle speaks), namely, the sons of men, now fallen, he extendeth and manifests a further riches, namely, of patience and long-suffering, which the devils partake not of, the good angels and other creatures that sinned not, are incapable of. For as Christ says, Luke vi. 35, in what he bestows on us, he is kind to such as are evil and unthankful. Mercy is more than goodness, for mercy always doth

respect misery ; and because all the creatures are subject to a misery, Rom. viii. 20-22, of 'bondage and vanity,' therefore 'his tender mercies are over all his works.' But yet patience is a further thing than mercy (as mercy is than goodness), being exercised, not towards miserable creatures only, but towards sinners, and includes in it more three things further towards them.

[1.] Not only that those persons he doth good unto do offend and injure him, but that himself also is exceeding sensible of all those wrongs, and moved by them, and also provoked to wrath thereby ; it is not patience else. So in 2 Peter iii. 9, it is not slackness, says he there, 'God is not slack,' that is, he sits not in heaven as one of the idol gods, that regarded not what acts were kept here below, or took not to heart men's carriages towards him ; but is longsuffering, or patient, that is, he apprehends himself wronged, is fully sensible of it, 'is angry with the wicked every day,' Ps. vii. 11, he hath much ado to forbear ; even when he doth forbear and letteth them alone, he exerciseth an attribute, a virtue towards them, namely, patience, in keeping in of his anger, which is as to keep fire in one's bosom.

[2.] But, secondly, this is not all. He doth not simply forbear and restrain his anger, but vouchsafeth that time he forbears them in, that they might repent in it, and his mercies as means leading to repentance. So it follows in that, 2 Pet. iii. 9, 'But God is longsuffering to us-ward,' and his longsuffering hath this in it, 'not willing that any should perish, but come unto repentance.' So also Rev. ii. 21, it is called 'space to repent.' And all the blessings he vouchsafeth, he gives them as means and guides to 'lead them to repentance,' as here. And Mat. xviii. 29, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all ;' that is, give me a longer day and space to pay the debt in, and be willing to accept it when I bring it, and let me lie out of prison that I may be enabled to pay it.

[3.] Thirdly, There is yet further thing in his patience, namely, a waiting and expectation that men would come in and repent. So Luke xiii. 7, 'These three years have I come seeking fruit, but have found none.' There was an expectation, a longing, a desire it would bring forth fruit. 'Oh, when shall it once be ?' says God, Jer. xiii. 27.

(3.) In the last place, that other attribute of longsuffering, which is the third, is but as a further degree of patience, but patience lengthened out farther ; that is, when God hath been thus patient, hath forborne and waited for their coming in, and that not for three years, but haply thirty, forty years, and still they turn not, his patience then begins, as we would think, to be as it were worn out, and his anger begins to arise, as if he could forbear no longer, as it was towards that tree, 'Why cumbereth it the ground ? cut it down ;' yet he goes on to spare a man another year, and many more years still after that, and 'endureth with much longsuffering (as Rom. ix. 22) the vessels of wrath,' endures to wonderment, above measure, beyond all expectation, all patience, as it were ; this is longsuffering.

2. The second general head is, that there are *riches* of this his goodness, &c., expended on us.

It is rich goodness, patience, and longsuffering : (1.) rich in themselves, in regard of their abundance, as they came from him ; and (2.) rich also in regard of their precious usefulness unto us, as they may be improved by us.

(1.) *First*, In themselves they are rich. [1.] If we consider what is expended all that while he lays out, not simply his power to sustain and uphold all things and to maintain us freely, so to do is nothing to him. For whilst

he doth but so, nothing goes out of purse, or is detracted from him ; as I may so speak, he feels not the expense either of power, providence, &c. All this cost him but words. For he ‘upholds all, creates all by the word of his power’, Heb. i. 3. And thus to maintain the angels, and to have maintained all mankind before they fell, had been no more. But, my brethren, when now he maintains us sinners, not simply power goes forth from him, but his glory is expended and taken from him, and for the while wasted, detracted from. He loseth at present every day infinitely by us, and he is sensible of it ; every sin takes glory from him, robs him, as he himself complains : that he who made the world upholds it, keeps it together as the hoops do the barrel—it would fall to pieces else, to nothing—‘in whom all live,’ as fishes in the sea, yea, upon whom all live ; that he should live unknown, unthought of, unserved, yea, disgraced, dishonoured in the world, and have this world lost to him as it were, and sin, the devil, wicked men, to have all the glory from him, to be exalted, to carry the whole world afore them : this spends upon him, he had need of riches to do this.

[2.] *Secondly*, Consider the multitude of sinners that thus spend and live upon these riches, no less than all the world. He had need of multitudes of patience in him ; he forbears not one, but all and every one. We look upon one man, and seeing him very wicked, we wonder God cuts him not off ; we wonder at ourselves that God did not cut us off before this, when once our eyes are opened ; nay, then, cast your eyes over all the world, and stand amazed at God’s forbearance towards it. Take the richest man that ever was, to have millions of men in his debt, it would undo him soon. All the world are in God’s debt, and run still in debt every day more and more, and yet he breaks not, nay, breaks not them.

[3.] Nay, *thirdly*, to manifest this abundance yet more, consider not only the multitude he forbears, but the time he hath done it, to forbear much and to forbear it long. He hath forborne and been out of purse from the beginning of the world, since men were upon the face of the earth, five thousand years and a half already, and how long it is yet to the day of judgment we know not. And yet ye see, he is as patient and as bountiful now in the latter days of the world as he was at the first. Did that greatest convert that ever was, that had not lived past thirty years in his sinful estate (for he was young when he held the stoners’ clothes that stoned Stephen), and yet was ‘the chiefest of sinners,’ did he yet, as himself says, think himself a pattern of longsuffering, 1 Tim. i. 16, thought it a great matter God should forbear so long ? What is the whole world then ? If he, being but one small, poor vessel, was so richly laden with the riches of God’s patience, how is this great bark of the world then fraught that hath gone over so vast a gulf of time ? How much of these his riches have been laden in it ?

[4.] And then, *fourthly*, add to this the expensive prodigality of all these sinners in all ages ; every sinner spends something, and how lavish are men of oaths ? ‘All the thoughts of men’s hearts from their youth up, they are evil, and only evil, and continually ;’ and how much then hath every man spent him ? Every sin is a debt.

(2.) In the second place, this is a rich goodness and patience in regard of the preciousness and usefulness.

[1.] *First*, Precious, in regard of what all these manifestations of his goodness and forbearance cost, even the blood of his Son, who as a Lord hath bought and purchased all wicked men, their lives and their reprimand, all that

time that here they live ; and all the blessings and dispensations of goodness, which here they do enjoy. Christ's mediation so far prevails with God for all the world, that it puts a stop to the present proceedings of justice, which otherwise had said of all, 'That day thou sinnest, thou diest.' So that as Christ may be called the wisdom and the power of God, so also the patience and the long-suffering of God. For, for his sake and through his means it is exercised. God would not shew a drop of mercy but for his Son. Which, I take, strongly and clearly intimated, in that dealing of his with the Jews, *Exod. xxiii. 20*, compared with *Exod. xxxiii. 2, 3, 4, &c.* Immediately after God had given the law, by the rules and threatenings whereof God the Father in his government was to proceed, and after they had transgressed it, he there declares that he could not go with them. For, according to the rules of his government, he 'should destroy them ; but his angel he would send with them,' even Christ, he might shew them mercy, for he was the purchaser of it ; and that he was that angel appears in that God tells them, *ver. 21*, 'that his name was in him,' who also would destroy them, if they turned not and repented, according to the rules of his law, the gospel.

[2.] And precious, secondly, to us, in regard of the usefulness, this goodness and longsuffering tend and serve unto. This makes this stock of time afforded you, by God's goodness, to be riches indeed, that it is 'space to repent,' *Rev. ii. 21* ; not a time of reprimand only, but to get a pardon in ; and this makes all the good things we enjoy to be precious indeed, that they are means leading us by the hand to repentance. Rich it is, because if your time be laid out as it ought, you may obtain those far surpassing riches of glory reserved for hereafter ; win and gain Christ by it, and all his unsearchable riches. All things receive their worth and valuation from what they tend to, and from what depends upon them, and the use they might be put to. A bond, a man's will, which in itself, as it is a piece of parchment, is not worth one shilling, yet an estate of many thousands may lie and depend upon them. And so time is not simply precious in itself, but in regard of the opportunities of it. And accordingly, in those ordinary passages of our lives do we more or less estimate and count time precious, as the business allotted to it is of more or less consequence. When a matter falls out that concerns us, and requires despatch, and we are cast into straits of time about it, we count every minute precious ; so this time of ours, which is the chief and principal of that stock put into our hands by God's patience, being space to repent in, to gain and trade for heaven with, in this respect every minute of it is as much as heaven is worth, and one hour of it may be as much as all the time you are to spend for ever, after this life ended, every minute hath an influence into eternity. And however you may account it, yet the balance of the sanctuary thus estimates your time, calls it your money : 'Why lay you out your money for what is not,' &c., *Isa. lv. ii.* ; that is, this precious day of grace, and the thoughts, cares, and endeavours which are brought forth and minted in this time allotted, these are your money you might purchase heaven by. And thus it hath been esteemed by holy and godly men, who yet had less need to value it, having done the main business it was allotted for. David, in the 39th Psalm, *ver. 13*, being brought very low, 'Oh spare me a little, that I may recover my strength, before I go hence, and be seen no more.' So Hezekiah, *Isa. xxxviii.*, how did he sue for, and when he had obtained fifteen years, how did he bless God ? *ver. 20*. Or if by this you judge not so, think with thyself, what at the day of death thou wouldst account of an

hour, of a month, a year? What others, who have lain gasping, would have given a world for time again, as I have heard one crying day and night, 'Call time again;' or if not then, Oh what in hell!

3. The third thing I am to shew is, that all this goodness, patience, and forbearance is afforded towards you as a means, and helps to bring you to repentance. Acts xvii. 28, God (says the apostle there) hath allotted to men both their times to live, and also their places of abode and habitations, all richly furnished with blessings to uphold their lives and beings. And to what end are both these thus afforded? That they 'might seek the Lord, if by groping after him,' even as men in the dark, 'they might haply find him.' But men being in the dark, and destitute of guides to bring them unto God, may yet be as far off finding him as ever. Therefore add but the words of my text to what the apostle says there, and we see that this goodness of God takes us by the hand, and 'leads us to repentance,' to turn from sin unto God, and so to find him. And thus led are you unto God by the help of these several guides, which each after other sweetly lead you and point you out to this.

*First*, All this goodness bears witness to your hearts of a gracious hand that extends itself in all these; therefore in that 17th of the Acts, he subjoins, 'God is not far off any of us.' That there is a good God bestows all things on you, is a thought lies at next door of all his blessings not far off. Yea, 'they all,' says the apostle to the same Gentiles, Acts xiv. 16, 'do bear witness of him,' though they went on in their own ways, 'yet,' says he there, 'God left not himself without witness;' that is, an impression on their hearts that his good hand bestowed all on them when he 'filled their hearts with food and gladness.'

*Secondly*, His goodness having brought thus God to men's thoughts, then your own consciences take you, and lead you down into yourselves, and bear witness that you by walking in your own ways do nothing but provoke and offend this good God. So Rom. ii. 15.

And then, *thirdly*, there is an indelible principle common to all men to love those who love them; which after the two former have brought you hitherto, point you to repentance as the conclusion. Shall we go on to sin against this good, so good? return evil for good? Is not this a natural, necessary consequent out of these, to say as they, 'Let us therefore fear the Lord, who giveth us the early and the latter rain,' as it is, Jer. v. 24. And though men are said not to know this in the text, yet the meaning is, they do not thoroughly and effectually consider thus much, so as thereby to be brought to repentance; yet, however, there is such a witness of all this in all men's hearts, and thus are they led on unto repentance, would they see their way and follow their guide.

The use shall be an use of expostulation, as here the apostle carries it, with men sinful and impenitent, for going on to sin against all this mercy, together with an aggravation of their sinfulness hereby. Men, if young, do usually take the advantage of this their precious time, which of so much longsuffering is vouchsafed them, and of all those precious opportunities and blessings they enjoy, to improve them only in reaping and gathering in to themselves the pleasures of sins, making the time of youth their harvest of sinning, and yet think to escape by repenting afterwards; and then when old, after they have already enjoyed a long and a fair sunshine day to turn to God in, and to have sown much seed to the Spirit, the comfort whereof they might now have reaped, yet, as they have altogether neglected so to do all their youth, so they go on to do so still, whilst they see they have

any day left, he it never so near the setting, and do choose rather desperately to venture their estate in the world to come upon the riches of his mercy pardoning, though without all care and endeavour to change their hearts or lives, upon the experience they have had of the riches of his mercy forbearing them in this world, thinking to find him the same in both. With all such, let me reason a little, and from the riches of God's goodness, patience, &c., spent upon them, at once expostulate with them, for their impenitency, and aggravate to them their sinfulness, and also, if possible, prevail with them to go on to despise it thus no longer. And if there be any principle of common ingenuity, any spark (I do not say of grace, but of goodness of nature) left unextinguished, methinks it should affect you, and do some good on you ere I have done.

And to that end, consider a little, and compare together God's loving-kindnesses towards you, and your unkind dealings towards him.

To begin at the beginning of thy being. How much riches of goodness were there laid and buried in thy foundation? when the first corner stone was laid, when thou wert made a man (besides the cost which hath been spent upon this building since), and, cursed as thou art, even that very foundation was laid in bloody iniquities, in which thou wert conceived; and the very materials of soul and body thou consistest of, being tempered with sin, 'like the stone in the wall, and beam out of the timber,' Hab. ii. 10, 11, cry out every moment to God against thee, as Edom did, 'Raze it, raze it, even to the very ground,' Ps. cxxxvii. 7.

Consider how but the other day thou wert mere nothing, and when an infinite number that never were nor shall be were in as great a possibility of being as thou; for when he made this world, he could have laid it aside wholly, and created millions of other worlds, yet he chose thee to have a room in this but one world, for he means to make no more; and this world could have stood without thee, and did before thou wert, and shall do when thou art gone; yet he called thee forth out of nothing, and by his almighty power bade thee stand forth when there was no need of thee. I say, he chose thee to have a being; for as there is an election of things that are to salvation, so out of things that were not unto being. And, wretch that thou art, if thou repentest not, thou destroyest what God hath made, and hadst better have kept nothing still, and never have peeped out, or else to skulk into thy first nothing again, for thou art lost, better never to have been born.

Secondly, Consider yet more goodness. Thou mightest have been admitted into the lowest form of creatures, have been a worm, a flea, a fly, which we men filp and crush to death at pleasure; but to be made a man, created one of the states, barons, lords of the world the first hour, admitted into the highest order, crowned a king in the womb, as David says of man, Ps. viii. 5, 'made a little lower than the angels, but crowned with glory and honour,' made to 'have dominion over all the works of his hands.' The one half of thee is more worth than a whole world, thy soul, as Christ says, that went to the price of souls; upon which God hath bestowed an eternity of being, and made it the picture of his face, his image, when other creatures do wear but his footsteps. And the body, the other piece, and indeed but the case, the sheath (as Daniel's phrase and the Chaldee hath it, Dan. vii. 15), of thee, what a curious workmanship is it! 'wonderfully and fearfully made,' as David says, Ps. cxxxix. 15, 'curiously wrought in the lower parts of the earth.' So there he calls the womb; because as curious workmen, when they have some choice piece in hand, perfect it in private, and



then bring it forth to light for men to gaze at, so God out of a tear, a drop, he hath limned out the epitome of the whole world, the index of all the creatures. Sun, moon, stars, are to be found in thee, Ecces. xii. 2. And yet, wretch as thou art, thou art withal the epitome of hell, and broughtest into the world with thee the seeds and principles of all the villanies that have been acted in the world ; and if thou repentest not, thou hadst better have been a toad or serpent, the hatefulest of creatures, and wouldst change thy condition with them one day.

Thirdly, Being a man, hast thou all thy members that belong unto a man ? It is because ' he wrote them all in his book,' Ps. cxxxix. 16, if he had left out an eye in his commonplace book, thou hadst wanted it ; is not that a mercy ? Ask the blind. If thou hadst wanted those windows to look out at, thy body would have been a dungeon, the world a prison ; if a tongue, which is thy glory, or an ear, thou hadst lived among men, as a beast among men. And yet when God gave thee all these, what did he but put weapons into an enemy's hand. For hast thou not used all these as ' weapons of unrighteousness ?' Rom. vi. 13, insomuch as the tongue, but one member, is called ' a world of iniquity ' by the apostle ; and if thou repentest not, thou hadst better, as Christ says, have entered into the world without an eye, an ear, a tongue, than with these go for ever into hell.

Fourthly, When thou wert taken out of the womb (where thou didst remain, but whilst thou wert a-framing), what a stately palace hath he brought thee into, the world, which thou findest prepared and ready furnished with all things for thy maintenance, as Canaan was to the children of Israel ; a stately house thou buildest not, trees thou plantedst not, a rich canopy spangled, spread as a curtain over thy head ; he sets up a taper for thee to work by, the sun, till thou art weary, Ps. civ. 23, and then it goes down without thy bidding, for it ' knows its going down,' ver. 19 ; then he draws a curtain over half the world, that men may go to rest, ' Thou causest darkness, and it is night,' ver. 20. An house this world is, so curiously contrived, that to every room of it, even to every poor village, springs do come as pipes to find thee water. So Ps. civ. 10, 11. The pavement of which house thou treadest on, brings forth thy food, ver. 14. ' Bread for strength, wine to cheer thy heart, oil to make thy face to shine,' ver. 15. Which three are there synecdochically put for all things needful to strength, ornament, and delight. The very chambers of that house (as David calls them), ' drop fatness,' and water the earth, ver. 13. He wheels the heavens about, and so spins out time for thee, every moment of which time brings forth some blessing or other, and no one is barren. Therefore, Ps. lxxv. 11, the year is said to be ' crowned with goodness,' a diadem of goodness encircles it round ; and yet thou hast filled this world thou thus art brought into, with nothing but rebellions, as he hath done with blessings, and hast piled up sins to heaven, and thou hast pressed all these armies of blessing thou findest the world filled with, to fight against their Maker, under the devil's banner, whom thy wickedness sets up as ' the god of this world.' And as the year is crowned with goodness, so thy years with wickedness, and no moment is barren ; but all thy imaginations are evil continually. Yea, thou hast sinned against heaven and earth, and subjected the whole creation unto vanity, laden the earth, and filled it so with wickedness, that it groans, the axle-tree of it is even ready to crack under thee, and the ground thou treadest on to spew thee out.

Fifthly, Since thou camest into the world, what a long time hath God suffered thee to live in it ; he hath not spared thee three years only (as he

did the fig-tree), but thirty, forty. And when thou first madest bold to thrust forth thy traitorous head into the world, death (which thy sin brought into the world with it) might have arrested thee, and told thee this world was no place for thee, for hell is only our own place, Acts i. 25, thou shouldst have been executed the first day. And is not so much time of ease from punishment infinite mercy? Cast but your thoughts upon the angels that fell, that have been in hell from the moment of their sinning; do but think with yourselves what they would give to have so much time cut out of that eternity they are to run through, and to have it set apart for ease, and to be void of torment. If the rich man in hell made it such a great suit, and counted it so great a favour to have but one drop of water, which could but for a little while, scarce more than a moment, have cooled and eased, not his whole body, but the tip of his tongue only, how much more would he have thought it mercy, to have lived so many years again as he had done free from torment! What is it then for thee to live so many years free from the falling of the least drop of that wrath, whereof the full vials should have been poured out many years ago! The same law was out against us which was out against the angels, 'That day thou eatest, thou shalt die the death;' what put the difference? The apostle tells us, 'his longsuffering to usward,' 2 Pet. iii. 9; not to them, for in chap. ii. ver. 4, he had told us that 'he spared not the angels which fell,' but posted and threw them into hell as soon as they had sinned.

Sixthly, But further, in the sixth place, is this all? Hath it been barely a time of ease given thee, a time of reprimand? No, it hath been more, 'space to repent,' and so to obtain thy pardon in, Rev. ii. 21. And as it hath been more than ease of torment unto thee, so also consider it hath been more than slackness in him that hath afforded it to thee, as the apostle there doth tell us. It is not that he hath took no notice of thy offending him, but he is sensible of every idle thought, of every oath, vain word, and as the Scripture tells us, Gen. vi. 6, 7, 'he is pained at the very heart,' inasmuch as 'he repents' that ever he made thee. He is 'angry with thee every day' thou risest, every time he looks on thee; whenever he meets thee going into the tavern to be drunk, the whorehouse to be unclean; when he meets thee reeling in the streets, he hath much ado to forbear killing thee, as he had to forbear Moses when he met him in the inn. He is ready to have a blow at thee, and it should not need be any great stroke or fetching his arm about; if he did but blow on thee, thou wert consumed. To suffer thee to live, doth therefore cost him much riches of patience, but to cut thee off need cost him nothing; he can do that with ease. But further, all is joined with a willingness that thou shouldst repent and not perish, as that place tells thee.

It were much mercy for a traitor to be reprimanded, to have a lease of his life for twenty years, though there were no hope nor means of obtaining his final pardon after that time spent, and this also, though but for one treason, and though all that time of his reprimand he carries and behaves himself never so obediently. But unto thee, this time hath been more than a longer day of life, and putting off the execution, which for the guilt of that first rebellion should have been acted on thee in the womb; it hath been time to repent in. And yet hath not this time of thy reprimand made thee so much the more rebellious? And hast not thou spent all this time in making up the measure of thine iniquity full? And hath it been willingness only in God that thou shouldst not perish? Yea more, joined with waiting also, when it should once be, thinking the time long, as longing

and desiring that thou wouldst repent, that he might pardon thee. Thus, Jer. xiii. 27, God expresseth himself, 'When shall it once be?' Yea, and consider how many days of payment have been set, and how many promises made and broken all by thee, and yet still he waiteth unto wonderment. Thou receivedst press-money at thy baptism, when thou didst promise to forsake the devil and all his works, and to begin to serve him, when thou shouldst begin to discern between good and evil. But no sooner did the light of knowledge dawn in thy heart, but thou beganst to fight against him, and thy first thoughts to this day have been only and continually evil. And then, haply, in thy younger years, before thou hadst tasted of the pleasures of sin, he gave thee an inkling, by means of thy education, of his goodness towards thee, and of that happiness to be had in him, and thou hadst the first offer of him, ere thy tender years were poisoned by the world, and he hath dealt with thee again and again, both by his word and spirit, not waited only, but wooed thee, and hath been a suitor to thy heart long; and I appeal to your hearts how many promises you have made him, of turning from all your rebellions to him, after such a sermon, which was brought powerfully home: in such a sickness, and in such a strait, thy conscience knows full well. And still God hath made trial of thee and given thee longer day; and though thou hast broke with him again and again, yet he hath forborne thee again and again, and hath waited this twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty years, when thou shouldst come in and be as good as thy word, and still thou hast failed him. And yet behold and wonder, and stand confounded at the riches of his longsuffering, that after so many years' expense and promises broken by thee, expectations failed in him, and many mockeries of him, after all this he is yet willing to accept of the remainder, if thou wouldst 'spend the rest of the time left thee in the flesh according to his will,' as the apostle speaks, 1 Pet. vi. 2, even to lose principle, use, and all, for what is past, and requires but the same composition was propounded the first day; yea, and not only so, but with promise to become a debtor unto thee, to bestow further riches on thee than ever yet thou sawest or art able to conceive; yea, and all this when he could have his pennyworths out of thee another way, and lose not one farthing by thee, but by punishing thee in hell, recover all 'to the utmost.'

Neither, seventhly, hath it been barely and simply an act of patience and forbearance, though joined with this willingness thou shouldst not perish, or merely a permissive act of suffering thee to live. But God shews forth yet more riches of goodness joined with this longsuffering. 'In him ye live, and move, and have your being;' and dost thou live in him only? Nay, thou livest on him also, upon his costs and charges; 'I have hung upon thee,' says David, 'from my mother's womb.' And consider what thy life is, that of so small a bottom he should spin out so long a thread! Had he not drawn it out of his own power, as the spider doth her web out of her own bowels, it had been at an end the second minute; to maintain that radical moisture, that oil that feeds the lamp and light of thy life, that *radicale balsamum*, this is as great a miracle as the maintaining the oil in the cruse of the poor famished widow. And further yet, hath he maintained thee only? Nay more, hath he not defended thee, took thy part, protected thee, took thee under his wing as the hen doth her chickens, to shelter from those many dangers thy life hath been exposed unto? Otherwise, how many ways, ere this, hadst thou been snatched away out of the land of the living? Is thy case the case of the fig-tree

only, which before we mentioned, that when God cried, 'Cut it down,' another cried, 'Spare it?' But there have been many have cried, 'Cut thee down,' and God hath cried, 'Spare thee:' there is never a minute but the devil would have had a blow at thy life, as he longed to have had at Job's. That thou, a poor lump of flesh, shouldst walk through, and in the midst of such an host of fierce and cruel enemies, whose hearts are swelled with malice at thee, and God should say to them all concerning thee, as he did to Laban concerning Jacob, 'Touch not this man.' And yet if thou wert not liable to their malice and power, yet consider how many dangers and casualties, besides, thou hast been kept in and from; as falls, drowning, killing many ways, how often have the arrows of death come whisking by thee, took away those next thee (haply of thy kindred, brother, sister, yoke-fellow, of the same house, family with thyself), and yet have missed thee? And if we look no farther than these days of mortality we have lived in, two great plagues in this kingdom, how have the most of us all here survived, and now the third is increasing and growing upon us! To have our lives in such dear years of time, when to have our life for a prey is mercy enough, as Jeremiah told Baruch! That these arrows should fly round about us, over our heads, and miss us; that God's arrests should seize upon men, walking, talking with us, and spare us! How often, many other ways, hath thy neck been upon the block, and the axe held over, and yet hath fallen besides! To go no farther than thy own body, the humours thereof, if God should not restrain them, would overflow and drown it, as the waters would the earth, if God should not say to them, 'Stay your proud waves.' And when in a sickness they have been let out, yet God hath kept a sluice, that so much should break forth, and no more, which should purge and wash the body, and make it more healthful, as the overflowing of Nilus doth. And when then thy body hath been brought low and weak, and like a crasy, rotten ship in a storm, taking in water on all sides, so that all the physicians in the world could not have stopped those leaks, he hath rebuked wind and sea, hath careened, mended thee, and launched thee into the world again, as whole, as sound, and strong as ever; and God hath said, as Job xxxiii., that thou shouldst not die. In a word, if thou consider but what thy life is, and the dangers it is subject to, thou wilt acknowledge it is as great a wonder to preserve it, as to see a glass that hath been in continual use, gone through many hands, and hath had many knocks and falls, to be kept for forty, fifty, sixty years whole and unbroken. God hath carried thy life in his hand, as it were a candle in a paper lanthorn in a strong windy night, and kept it from being extinct, whenas we often see in many, that a little cold comes but in at a little cranny, and 'blows their candle out,' as Job speaks.

And, eighthly, how have these years and hours of thy time been filled up with goodness? and with how many comforts? For a traitor to live, though but upon bread and water all his days, what favour is it! And so hadst thou lived all this time, never so miserably, though 'all thy days thou hadst eaten thy bread in darkness, and hadst had much sorrow with thy sickness,' as Solomon speaks, Eccles. v. 17. Some there are who, as Job speaks, 'die in the bitterness of their souls, and never eat with pleasure,' Job xxi. 25, scarce seeing a good day; and if this had been thy case, yet this is infinite mercy. Even whatsoever is on this side hell is mercy. Lam. iii. 22, say they in the worst estate the church was ever on earth, 'It is thy mercies,' not mercy only, but multitude of mercies are shewn us, 'that we are not consumed, because his mercies are renewed every morn-

ing.' If at the brink of hell, and not in, it is mercy. But hath he not all this while 'filled thy heart with food and gladness,' as the apostle speaks? Acts xiv. 17. It were infinite to go over the particular kinds of common comforts which God vouchsafes men here; not half the riches of his goodness is yet told, it would require an age to make an inventory of them. Hast a house in the world to hide thy head in, and keep thee from the injuries of the weather (which was more than Christ had)? God he is thy landlord (though it may be thou payest him no rent); 'he it is that builds the house,' Ps. cxxvii. 1. Hast a bed to lie upon? He makes it, especially in thy sickness, Ps. xli. 3. Hast thou sleep (which is the nurse of nature, the parenthesis of all thy cares and griefs)? He rocks thee asleep every night; and as he gives thee a house, so he gives thee rest, Ps. cxxvii. 2. It is God keeps off those gnats of distracting cares, and griefs, and thoughts, and terrors of conscience, would buz about a man, and keep one continually waking. And when thou sleepest, is thy sleep pleasant to thee? God makes it so, Jer. xxxi. 26. Hast thou clothes to cover thy nakedness? Read old Jacob's indentures, Gen. xxviii. 20, and thou shalt see by them whose finding they are at: if 'thou wilt give me raiment,' that is one of his conditions mentioned. Yea, do thy clothes 'keep thee warm?' Even this is attributed to him, Job xxxvii. 17. He fills thee, feeds thee, spreads thy table, serves thee, fills thy cup, as David describes his goodness, Ps. xxiii. 5, and gives thee thy meat in due season; and hath not failed thee a meal's meat, but thou hast had it at thy appointed time, as Job speaks. And hast thou health (which is the salt to all these blessings, without which thou wouldst say thou hadst no pleasure in them)? He is 'the God of thy health,' and keeps off diseases, Exod. xv. 26. 'I will put none of those diseases on thee; I am the Lord who healeth thee;' that is, preserve thee from them which else would seize on thee. And these mercies he vouchsafeth unto you that are the poorest, and 'loadeth you with these and the like benefits every day.'

But hast thou riches added to these, and abundance? 'The blessing of God maketh rich,' Prov. x. 22. Though thou hadst them by birth, yet he made those friends and parents of thine but feoffees in trust for thee; they were no more, it was God who bequeathed them, Ecces. ii. 26. Or whether thou hast got them since by thine own industry, it is he 'gives thee power to get wealth, Deut. viii. 18; Prov. xii. 24; and out of 'a small estate maketh men great,' Job viii. 8. It is he by his providence hath stopped the secret issues and drains of expense, at which other men's estates run out; hath stopped 'that hole in the bottom of the bag,' as the prophet speaks. And with these riches hath he given thee a heart to use them? This, as it is a farther mercy, Ecces. v. 19, and chap. vi. 2, so also from him, as it is noted there.

Or hast thou credit, which is better than riches? So says Solomon, Prov. xxii. 1. It is God who gives it, not thy wisdom, parts, or worth. Ecces. ix. 11, 'Favour is not always to men of skill,' that is, not acceptance of what they do, without a farther blessing from God. Therefore, besides the gift of wisdom, he gave a further promise of honour also unto Solomon, 2 Chron. i. 11. It is God who fashions men's opinions. The apostle prays to God his service might be accepted of the saints, though no service was like to be more acceptable, for it was the gathering and bringing in of alms and relief to them. It is he rules men's tongues, bids men bless, as well as he bade Shimei curse; and he hath kept thee from such gross sins, which as flies would have putrefied the ointment of thy good name, who also

conceals those thou hast committed, and 'hides thee from the strife of tongues,' Job v. 21.

Hast thou friends, or do any love thee, wherein much of the comfort of our lives consist? And therefore David says of Jonathan, 2 Sam. i. 26, 'Thou wert pleasant to me.' It is God who gives favour in men's eyes. So he did Joseph, Gen. xxxix. 21. If any man or creature doth thee a kindness, he toucheth their hearts, as it is said of the men who clave to Saul, and visits for thee. He made the Egyptians, beyond all reason, the Israelites' friends, gave them favour in their eyes, as the text tells us. And hence, Gen. xxxiii. 10, Jacob says, 'He saw the face of God' in reconciled Esau's face, for God's favour appeared in his look. He put you into your callings, ranks, and stations, gives you all your skill, success in them. The meanest of trades, to sow, and plough, and thresh, they are 'from the Lord, who is wonderful in working,' Isa. xxviii. from the 23d to the end, even as well as the skill of the most curious engraver, limner, or embroiderer; as of Bezaleel, the Scripture says God was his master, taught him. Hast thou enlarged parts and gifts for higher employments? It is not thy birth or age hath acquired them unto thee. Job xxxii. 8, 9, 'Great men are not always wise;' therefore, it goes not by birth. 'Nor have the aged always understanding.' It goes not only by experience, but it is the inspiration of the Almighty. And hast a calling answerable to thy parts, to be a scholar, and have thy mind enriched and ennobled with the best and choicest jewel the world hath, wisdom and knowledge, whereby the mind is elevated as much above other men's as they are above beasts? God hath been thy great tutor. 'The mind of man is God's candle,' and he maketh wiser than a man's teachers, as he did Moses in Egyptian learning, Daniel, David.

To conclude, Hast thou comfort in all these, in riches, learning, credit, wife, children, meat, drink, &c.? He puts in all the sugar, delight, and pleasure; that especially depends on him, even to fashion the heart to all these. As air lights not without the sun, nor wood heats not without fire, so neither doth thy condition comfort thee without God. And therefore, Acts xiv. 17, it is said, 'He filled their hearts, as with food, so with gladness.'

And besides all these, consider the many peculiar passages and turnings of his providence towards thee for thy good, the working of things together ever and anon to do thee a good turn, the packing and plotting all for thee, better than thou couldst have plotted for thyself, as thy relief in many straits, success in many businesses. 'He works all our works in us and or us,' as Isaiah speaks, Isa. xxvi. 12. Hath he not taken such special care and providence of thee, as if he had regarded no man else in the world?

And now, when thou hast considered all, bethink thyself withal a little of thy dealings towards him; what have been the effects and fruits of all this goodness? Hold up thy head, man; look God in the face. It is well yet that shame begins to cover thee. How hath that, his patience and longsuffering, vouchsafing thee space to repent, wrought with thee? How nigh to repentance hath it brought thee? Such is the perverseness of man's nature, as Solomon tells us, Eccles. viii. 11, that 'because sentence against an evil work is not presently executed, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set to do evil.' Because God defers punishing, they defer repenting. Thou thinkest to spend the most precious of thy time and strength in sinning, and give God the dregs, the bottom, the last sands, thy dotage, which thy very self and friends are weary of; and all these blessings and comforts which God hath vouchsafed thee, how hast thou used them

against him? This oil, which should have been fuel to thy thankfulness, hath increased the fire of thy lusts, and thy 'lusts have consumed them all,' James iv. 3. The riches he hath given, thou hast made idols of, and sacrificed thy dearest, morning, daily thoughts and affections unto, as God complains, Ezek. xvi. from the 15th, and so on. His meat, as at the 19th verse he calls it, thou sacrificedst to thy belly, which thou hast made thy God; thy strength to women; the wealth he hath given you, you have made use of but to live at a high rate of sinning, and to procure the sweetest bits, the daintiest and most costly sins. The edge of that sword of power God hath put into thy hand thou hast turned against him and his, haply both his children and ministers; so that God, by giving thee all these, hath but made thee more able to offend him, and hath strengthened an enemy, and by sparing thee thus long hath but made thee more bold to do it; all his mercies have but fortified thy heart against him; 'Do ye requite the Lord thus, ye foolish people and unkind?' as Moses expostulates the ease, Deut. xxxii. 6. As Christ said to the Jews, 'For which of all my good works do ye stone me?' So say I to you, For which of all his mercies is it ye sin against him? What, to fight against him with his own weapons? to betray all he gives you into the devils, his enemies' hands? What iniquity did you ever find in him, thus to deal? God will one day thus expostulate his cause with you, and 'heap coals of fire upon all your heads,' if that you turn not, because you have rendered him evil for good; and all these mercies thus abused will be as so many coals to make hell fire the hotter. And to reason this point yet further with you out of the text, and what arguments it will afford to work upon you,

Consider, first, what it is thou doest. Whilst thus thou goest on thou art a despiser of the riches of his goodness: that which is opposite to goodness must needs be transcendently evil. What, 'art thou evil because God is good?' and so much the more evil by how much more he is good? Surely there must needs be an unexhausted treasure of wickedness in thee, which will also cause in the end a treasure of wrath in him. What? and sin against merey, patience, longsuffering, added to goodness? of all attributes the richest to the most glorious, for it is that he glorifies in—in the abusing of which therefore he thinks himself most debased—of all attributes the tenderest. What, kick against his bowels? So are his mereies called. Canst hit him nowhere else but there? To despise a man's wisdom, power, learning, is not so much as to despise his love. What canst thou imagine will become of thee when thou comest to die? What is it thou wilt then come to plead and cry for? O merey, merey! Why, wretch that thou art, it is merey thou hast sinned against. Riches of merey and patience abused turns into fury. I may allude to that speech, 1 Sam. ii. 25, 'If a man sin against his brother, the judge shall judge him; but if against God, who shall plead for him?' So, hadst thou sinned against any other attribute, merey might have pleaded for thee; but if against merey itself, who shall?

Well, if thou goest on thus to do so still, thou hast a hard heart; it argues the greatest hardness of all other; that is the second. You use not, however it comes to pass, to deal thus with the worst of men, sinners like to yourselves; but to them that love you you tender love again, Luke vi. 32. And will you deal so with God? 'Is it a small thing to weary men, but you must weary God also?' says Isaiah, vii. 13. He thought it infinitely less to abuse men than God; but you carry yourselves as men to men, but as devils towards God: herein ye have not the hearts of men in you, not principles of common humanity, whereby ye differ from beasts.

The 'cords of love' are called 'the cords of a man,' Hos. xi. 4. The spirit of man breaks, melts under kindness; beasts indeed ye use to prick with goads, but the cords of a man are the cords of love, no principle being more deeply engraven in men's hearts than this, 'to do good to those who do good to you,' Mat. v. 46. Nay, would ye had herein yet the hearts of beasts, 'The ox knows his owner, the ass his master's crib, but my people have rebelled against me.' A sin so much against nature that he calls upon those creatures who have no more than mere nature in them, viz., the heavens, to stand astonished at it, Isa. i. 2. But as nature elevated by grace riseth higher than itself, so, being poisoned with sin, it is cast below itself, sins against itself, and the principles which are begotten in and with itself. If it were not so, how were it possible thou shouldst hate him who never did thee hurt? and go on to wound him who weepeth over thee? and despise that in him most which seeks to save thee? and load him with sins, Amos. ii. 13, who loads thee daily with his mercies? Ps. lxxviii. 19.

There is a third consideration the text suggests, to shew the fearfulness of thy sin in this respect; and that is, that thou goest on every minute sinning and in impenitency, by despising his goodness, to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath. To sin against mercy, of all other increaseth wrath; thou must pay treasures for treasures spent. As thou lavishly spendest riches of mercy, so God will recover riches of glory out of thee. God will not lose by thee, but will reckon with thee in wrath for every offer of patience spent; for every sand of longsuffering that runs out he drops in a drop of wrath into his vials, and it will prove a treasure, such a treasure as shall bring in an eternal revenue of glory unto God, of all his glory lost and riches spent, with advantage; such a treasure as will ask an eternity of time to be spent upon thee, and yet be never emptied or made less; and the longer thou goest on, the greater heap it will swell unto. And dost thou know and consider how fast this treasure fills, and how much the longer thou goest on to add to it, still the more thou addest, still the last year more than all the years before? every minute's impenitency adding to this heap and sum, as new figures added in a sum use to do; the first is but one, the second makes it ten, the third an hundred, the fourth a thousand; and what a sum will this grow to?

Ay, but thou wilt say, Tush, I am in prosperity, in health, wealth, and ease, and to-day shall be as to-morrow, and much more abundant, Isa. lvi. 12. Well, but fourthly, consider out of the text, that there will come a day at last, the morrow whereof will be a day of wrath. It is treasuring up now, but is not brought forth till the day of wrath, till which day thou mayest go on and prosper, as Job, giving us the reason why wicked men prosper here, says, chap. xxi. 30, they are 'reserved to the day of wraths,' in the plural, because treasures are laid up against them; thou art yet spared because thy sins are not yet full, and that treasure is not full, as the sins of the Amorites were not, and all this thy present prosperity fits thee but for hell. So Rom. ix. 22, they are said to be 'vessels fitted for destruction,' by longsuffering. And so Nahum tells us, they are but as stubble laid out in the sun a-drying, till it be 'fully dry,' Nahum i. 10, that it may burn the better; and like grapes that are let to hang in the sunshine till they be ripe, Rev. xix. 15, and so thou for the 'winepress of God's wrath.'

But thy senseless heart may hap to say, I see no such thing, and these are but threats, I think so; therefore it is said in the text, that it is a treasure, which, as treasures use to be, is hid till that day comes, and then



revealed, as the words have it. For though thou seest not this day a-coming, yet God, who sits in heaven, sees thy day a-coming, as David says, Ps. xxxvii. 13, who is therefore said to see it, because himself sees it not; and it is coming faster than thou art aware of it. 2 Pet. ii. 3, 'Damnation slumbereth not,' though thou dreamest not of it, 'lingereth not:' as a hue and cry it is sent out, and is on its course, and will in the end overtake thee, and that when thou least thinkest of it, 'as a thief in the night,' when thou art asleep, yet dreamest not of it, 2 Thess. v.; when thou art least prepared for it, as in the old world, when they were eating and drinking. As God watcheth when his child is at the best and ripest, and then takes him; so he will watch thee to take thee for thy neglect at the worst, and give thee haply no time to prepare; they go down to hell in a moment, Ps. lxxiii. 19.