

TWO SERMONS,

CONTAINING ARGUMENTS AND DIRECTIONS

For hearing the VOICE of GOD's Threatening Rod.

SERMON I.

MICAH vi. 9. *The Lord's voice crying unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.*

IT is a question that is hard to determine, whether the greatness of God, or the condescendency of God, be the greatest mystery? But O! when both these are put together, they make up a matchless mystery. What is more dreadful than power which cannot be resisted? And what is more terrible than wisdom from whom nothing can be hid? And yet what is more sweet, than the love wherewith he hath loved us, and the unchangeableness thereof, which doth cut off all suspicion? I would only say this unto you, God hath been speaking to you divers ways, and by different things; and, as the apostle speaketh, 'There are many voices in the world, and every voice hath its own signification.' So I may say, there is not a voice by which God speaketh to you, that needs to be a 'barbarian speaking in an unknown tongue.'

I confess it is sad, that when God condescends to speak unto us so many different ways, that there should be so many which should stop their ears: are there not some to whom Christ hath piped, and they have not danced? And now he is beginning to mourn to you, and O! will ye not lament? I would say this unto you, the day may be approaching, when Glasgow's rods shall be preachers, and its crosses teachers from the Lord. Yea, God is beginning to preach that word to you, that is in Jer. ii. 31. 'O generation, see the word of the Lord, &c.' If ye will not hearken to God, in the voice and mouth of his preachers, he will send a more severe preacher unto you, and ye shall be forced to hear his voice. I say, look that the contempt of Christ in his rods, in his ordinances, and in his offers, make not this place an Aceldama, a field of blood, and a Golgotha, the place of dead men's skulls. I say to you, the day may be approaching, when ye shall meet with these six silent things from God. *First, When*

ye shall meet with silent rods, when he shall not know nor understand the language of them, when they shall speak to you in a strange and profound language, which ye shall not understand. *Secondly*, When ye shall meet with a silent God, when ye shall cry to him, and he shall not hear you. *Thirdly*, When ye shall meet with silent and dumb ordinances, which shall not speak unto you. *Fourthly*, When ye shall meet with silent mercies, that all the good things he doth unto you, ye shall not know the language of them. *Fifthly*, When ye shall meet with the sad lot of a silent conscience, when ye shall not be reproved by it when ye sin, but God shall give you leave to fall and depart, and not to return. And, *lastly*, When ye shall meet with silent commands, with silent threatenings, and with silent promises; that is, ye shall never know what the promises call for, what the threatenings call for, nor what the commands call for, when he shall chastise you in the dark, and there shall be none to deliver you, and when there shall be none to plead your cause, but a sin-revenging God entering the list with you: when he shall say to them that are left, 'Do not pray for this people, nor intercede for them, for they are the people upon whom I will have no mercy.' I may say, by all appearance, our judgment will speak this, he hath spoken unto us in the still voice of the gospel, and he hath spoken unto us in the whirlwind, and yet he is in none of them: but what know ye, but God may the next time speak to you closing himself in a circle of fire: I have some times spoken that word to you, 'Awake, awake, O sleepers, and call upon your God.'

But to come to the words, in this chapter the prophet hath been leading a sad process against this people, for the neglect of duties which were lying at the door; and now we have in this verse the conclusion of it, and the scope whereof is this, shewing the people that the Lord would send a more sharp message, if they will not obey. And in it there are four things considerable.

First, We have an excellent exhortation given to hear the rod, and by it is not only meant, to take up what the rod speaks, but also, 'Who hath appointed it.'

Secondly, There is that excellent consideration to press them unto it, 'It is the Lord's voice:' we may say that of the rod, which was said of Herod in another sense, 'It is the voice of God, and not of man.'

Thirdly, We have the people to whom the exhortation is given, and it is, 'unto the city;' that is, to Samaria, and to the bordering towns thereabout. Now the reason why the Lord's voice crieth unto the city, rather than to the country, the reason of it is either this, the city ordinarily hath most eminent

tokens of the mercies and respects of God, which being abused, makes God especially to contend with them; or else because of this, ordinarily most profanity is broached within the city, and doth vent itself thence into the country; according to that word which is spoken of Jerusalem, 'That from it profanity goeth out into the country, or whole land.'

The *fourth* thing in the words is, the person that will hear the voice of the rod, 'the Lord's voice,' and it is, 'the man of wisdom shall see thy name;' or, as the word may be rendered, 'the man of substance,' or 'of substantial wisdom.' Which speaks, that it is one of the greatest follies that is imaginable, not to hear the voice of the Lord, and his threatening rod.

The *last* thing in the words is, the way how the man of wisdom wins to the right use-making and understanding of the voice of the rod, and it is, 'by seeing his name.' Now, by the name of God, may be either understood, the seeing of the authority of God in his threatenings; or by the name of God, may be understood, his wisdom, his peace, his power, his justice, his sovereignty, and his holiness, the man of wisdom shall see these five excellent attributes of God shining in the rod, and in every sad dispensation which he meets with; and the reason of using that expression, 'He shall see,' is to point out these certain and distinct discoveries which the man of wisdom shall have by such a cross.

Now having thus made plain the words unto you, there are three things which we shall speak a little unto from the scope, before we come to the first thing in the words.

The *First* thing which we shall take notice of from the scope, is this, that the slighting of known duties, is the forerunner of some sad and lamentable stroke from the Lord, upon a person or people; these things which they know to be duties, and yet they slight and disobey them. I say, it is the forerunner of some sad and eminent act of the displeasure of God to a person or people: this is clear, Luke xii. 37, "That servant which knoweth his Lord's will, and prepareth not himself, neither doth according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." And that word in Jer. v. 5. "I will get me unto the great men, and I will speak unto them, for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgments of their God, &c." Yet it is said of these, "they have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds." And what follows? ver. 6. "Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them." Rom. i. 21, 26. wherethey professed themselves to know, and yet they glorify him not as God.' This is given as a reason, that he gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do things not convenient.' It is probable, the impiety and profanity of people, is

come to a wonderful height, when they can sin against light and knowledge. Now, in speaking to this more fully, I shall speak to some aggravations of the sin of slighting known duties.

The *First* aggravation is, when a person slights duty, after the sinfulness of that sin hath been discovered unto him, and engraven on his conscience, O! that is a mighty aggravation of that of sin; this is clear, Hosea v. 2. "And the revolvers are profound to make slaughter, though I have been a rebuker of them all, Neh. ix. 29. And have testified against them, yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not to thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments." I confess, sinning against convictions of conscience, (especially when they are sharp) is a greater sin, than to sin against light; this is indeed to sin with a lifted up hand, and not to blush, nor be ashamed, nor yet to be afraid to commit iniquity. Know now therefore, there are many here that slight known duties, notwithstanding of light, and the convictions of conscience, which they have had for doing so. I would only say to that person, be afraid, and stand in awe, lest the day be approaching, when God shall cease to be a reprover unto you, and the reins shall be laid on your own neck, and you shall be 'as a wild ass snuffing up the wind.'

The *Second* aggravation of slighting known duties is, when a person slights known duties, after God hath been discovering discontent with another person for that sin; when we see the justice of God overtaking another person for slighting of a known duty, and yet the person which stands beside, is not afraid to persist in the same sin; this is clear, Jer. iii. 8. 'And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery, I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce: yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.' As if he had said, "Though Judah hath beheld "what I have done to Israel for her whorish carriage, yet notwithstanding of this, she went and played the harlot also." I confess, this is a greater aggravation than the former, and it speaks that such a sinner (in a manner) hath given a defiance to the justice of God, and hath cried out, (in a manner) "I care not what God will do, I will take my pleasure."

The *third* aggravation of the sin of slighting known duties is, when persons slight down duties, after God hath begun to contend with them for so doing. This is a mighty aggravation of sin, as is clear in Isa. lvii. 17. "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." A froward sinner hath had the rod shaken over his head, and hath drunk something of the justice of God, for slighting such a duty: yet to

persist in it, O! that is a scarlet and mighty transgression, and yet are there not many here who are such?

The *fourth* aggravation of the sin of slighting known duties is, when a person slights known duties upon very small temptations; is not this certain, a word of a temptation, the half of a word, yea, the very nod of a temptation, will put us from the doing of known duties? Yea, sometimes we will be glad of a temptation to divert us from the exercise of duties; yea, sometimes it is known when temptations are not present to divert us from the exercise of known duties, we will go forth and seek a temptation. I confess, the devil needs not to be at much pains in these days, there are many which give the devil work and employment; yea, and if he seek not them, they will seek him.

The *Fifth* aggravation of the sin of slighting known duties is, when persons do not so much as set about the well doing of them, that is a great aggravation; this is clear, Luke xii. 47. 'He that knows his master's will, and doth it not, neither doth prepare himself to do it, is worthy of double stripes.' He will not take pains to prepare his heart for duties, that is a mighty aggravation. Some are content to be under their fetters, as though they were bound of God: some are content to live under their convictions, as though it were impossible for them to answer them, and they say, 'There is no hope.'

The *sixth* aggravation of the sin of slighting known duties is, when a person slights known duties, after God hath commended the beauty and excellency of such duties; that is, no doubt, a great aggravation: as when God doth commend prayer, and discovers the beauty thereof to a Christian, O then it is a sad and lamentable thing for that person to sit down and slight his duty; this is, as it were, to slight prayer, when it hath on all its ornaments.

The *seventh* aggravation of the sin of slighting known duties is, when persons slight duties, after they have been convinced of the advantage which waits upon the doing of them. Are there not some that slight prayer, notwithstanding they have been convinced that prayer hath been to them a mount Tabor, in which they have seen Christ transfigured? Some will slight prayer after they have been convinced that prayer hath been a tristing place betwixt Christ and them; and after they have been convinced that prayer hath been as the top of mount Pisgah, on which they have gotten a view of the promised land; O! that is a notable aggravation of the slighting of known duties, when the person hath this to say, Now I am slighting my own advantages.

There is this *last* aggravation, when a person slights known

duties, yet with very little resentment and grief of heart: are there not many persons that have slighted their morning prayers here to-day, and yet have not convictions thereof? and are there not many persons here to-day, that oftentimes go to bed without saying their prayers, and yet have as much peace of conscience as if they had done it? I think a person hath gone a great length in hardness of heart, when he can slight known duties, and yet not be grieved; yea, it is a token that they have not only to do with a hardened conscience, but with a hardened will. Are there not many persons, that notwithstanding of the slighting of known duties, yet never had a broken heart therefore? Doth not the misbeliever slight the commandment of faith, and yet not weep for it? Doth not the secure Christian slight the commandment of prayer, and yet not be grieved therefore? Doth not the presumptuous sinner slight self-examination, and yet is not much grieved? And doth not the dissolute sinner, that is under the power of his idols, slight the commandment of mortification, and yet not have a sore heart for it?

Now the *second* thing to which I shall speak from the scope is, I shall propose some considerations to press you to the exercise of all known duties.

The *first* consideration is, it is the Christian which practiseth, and not the Christian which knoweth, to whom the promises are made: would ye know the Christian who hath a right to the promises? It is not the Christian which knoweth his duty, but it is the Christian who doth his duty; this is clear, Matth. vii. 21. 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.' I think, if the promises had been annexed to the knowledge of duties, then doubtless Balaam had been in heaven. It is not the knowing Christian, but it is the practising Christian, to whom the promises are made.

The *second* consideration to press you to the exercise of known duties is, it is the Christian that is taken up in practising, and not the knowing Christian that is blessed: would ye know the blessed Christian? It is not he that knows his duty only, but it is he which knoweth his duty and doth it; according to that word, John xiii. 17. 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.' Where ye may see happiness is annexed to doing, and not to knowing. I confess, if ye could speak your duty like an angel, and if ye know the smallest command in scripture to be a command lying at your door, yet if ye do it not, ye shall never be blessed. O! know it, there are many knowing persons in hell to-day.

The *third* consideration to press you to practise is, it is the

practising Christian, and not the knowing Christian, that is approved and commended of God; this is clear, Song vii. i. 'How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter!' &c. Christ takes first notice of the bride's feet, which is her practice, and commends her for that. Believe it, Christ commends a Christian's feet, more than his eyes: that is, his practice more than his knowledge: it is the practising Christian which shall have that word spoken to him in the day of the Lord, 'Well done, good and faithful servant;' it is not said, well known, good and faithful servant; but it is said, *Well done*: for if ye knew never so much, and yet not practise it, Christ shall never commend you.

The *fourth* consideration to press you to the doing of known duties is, it is not the knowledge, but the practice of duties, which will give peace to a Christian's conscience: if ye would know all the commandments in the Bible, and yet never do one of them, it is nothing: it is not your knowledge that will give your conscience peace. I say this to you, many their knowing, and their slighting of duty in one day, will make their conscience roar like a lion, and they have nothing to answer it. I say unto you, O Christians! if ye would have peace of conscience in the great and terrible day of the Lord, then practise what ye know, and desire to know what ye ought to practise.

The *fifth* consideration is, it is the practice of your duty, and not the knowledge of your duty, by which ye rise up in conformity with God. It is the practising of what ye know, and not the knowledge of what ye should do, that raises you up in conformity with him: if ye knew all that ye should do, and do it not, ye may be strangers to God in respect of conformity with him, as if ye were merely ignorant. I wish there were in these days less knowledge, and more practice; or rather I wish, there were more knowledge and practice both together. I think, the Christians of this time, they sin against a witness in heaven, and a witness against their own conscience. I think, there are some (but few amongst us) in these days, that sinneth out of ignorance: but I would say this, the person that sins out of knowledge, condemns himself; but the person that sins out of ignorance, the law condemns him.

There is this *thirdly*, That I would say to you from the scope, I would have you observing these six things concerning known duties.

And *first*, Many persons are more desirous to know what they should do, than to do what they know; some persons cry out, 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?' And the Lord may answer them with this, 'Have not I shewed thee, O man?'

There is this *second* thing which I would have you knowing, the question which shall be proposed to you in the great and notable day of the Lord, it shall not be, 'O man, what knowest thou?' but it shall be, 'O man, what didst thou?' This shall be the question which Christ shall put home to you in that day, 'What didst thou in thy lifetime?' And not, 'What knewest thou in thy lifetime.'

Thirdly, I would say this, believe it, a grain weight of sincerity and practice, is worth a talent of knowledge. It is better to practise as the weakest Christian, than to know as the most excellent angel, not practising what we know. Christ weighs not our graces by quantity, but by quality; not by degrees, but by the truth and reality of them: I say, if thou knew never so much, a grain-weight of sincerity and practice in God's sight, is more worth than it all. If thou wert as eloquent as Apollos, and as wise as Solomon, and could speak with as many tongues as Paul, and if ye knew and understood all mysteries, yet if ye do not practise your duties, it is all to no purpose.

Fourthly, I would say this, the slighting of known duties hath many sad disadvantages waiting upon them; and I shall name these four unto you. *First*, The slighting of duties, it is that which makes Christians weary in duties: is there any person here that slights duties at such and such a time? I prophesy this to thee, thou shalt weary of duties ere long; this is clear, Isa. xliii. 22. 'But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.' I say, slighting of duties, and wearying in duties, they will not be long asunder. *Secondly*, Slighting of known duties brings on much hardness and stupidity of heart, according to that word in Neh. ix. 16. where disobedience and hardness of heart are knit together. Would ye know the reason why so many persons are under so much deadness, and under so many bonds? It is because they slight known duties. *Thirdly*, The slighting of known duties, doth these three things to our conscience, it either mars the peace of conscience, or else it hardens the conscience. Or, *thirdly*, it lulls our conscience asleep. I wonder how any of us can call ourselves tender, since there is so much slighting of that we ought to do. Are there not many Christians, which may soon tell all their private prayers that they make to God? There is a *fourth* disadvantage, which waits on the slighting of known duties, and it is this, the Christian who slights duty sometimes, that duty which a Christian doth, it is exceeding formal: there are some Christians which slight prayer one day, and the second day, and it is one to a hundred the third day, when that person prays, it is but mere formality. O! what makes Christians pray so weakly? It is, be-

cause they teach their hearts the art of praying formally, by slighting of duty.

Fifthly, I would say this to you, the slighting of known duty is the first step of the sin against the Holy Ghost: this is clear in Heb. xii. 26. 'For if we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.' I will tell you what is betwixt the sin of slighting known duties, and the sin against the Holy Ghost, there is no more betwixt them both, but that word *wilfulness*; and what knowest thou, but thy slighting of duties may come to wilfulness ere long? Ye would know this, that under the law, there were sacrifices for sins of ignorance, and likewise for sins of infirmities, but there was no sacrifice for presumptuous sins. Now, if this be the first step towards the sin against the Holy Ghost, I am sure there are some here which have gone this length; yea, and I fear a little further: now, will ye take home this conviction, and I will say this, let the person which is not guilty of this offence amongst us, take up the first stone and cast at us. I suppose our conscience might accuse us, and we might steal out one by one. O! the dreadful disadvantages which attend that person who slights known duties. This is a strange thing, our consciences are no more moved at what one can speak of that which is our sin indeed, than though it did not concern us. I suppose there is not one here, but they may write this on their foreheads, *Guilty, guilty*.

Now there is this, *lastly*, which I would say unto you, the day is coming, when the slights of known duties shall be forced to cry out, Oh! that I had been an idiot, and had never known my duty. I confess, the slighting of known duties, and the sinning against light, shall be a mighty aggravation of our sin. O what terror was it to Judas' conscience, when he came to think of this, "I have sold my Master, and I know I have sinned in so doing?" And O! what terror likewise will it be to you, when ye shall be convinced of this, "My conscience told me, that this was my duty, and I would not do it?"

Now the next thing which we shall speak to from the words in general is, that God (in the depth of his condescendency) hath many various ways in making known duties unto a person or people; this is clear from the words, where God having pressed duties upon his people by the voice of his ministers, now he sends a more sad and terrible preacher to them, 'even a threatening rod.' Now this is clear, that God hath many ways in pressing people to their duties; Isa. v. 4. 'What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?' &c. This is also eminently clear in Song v. 2. 'Open to me, my sister, my spouse.' And if that will not lie, he will knock at the door, and say, It is

'the voice of my beloved that knocketh.' And if this will not do it, he will use arguments to persuade her, 'Open to me, my sister:' is not that an argument! Yea, he will give her another, 'For my head is filled with dew, and my hair with the drops of the night.' And if all these will not do it, Christ 'will put in his hand at the hole of the door:' which speaks this, "That Christ, in the depths of his condescendency, leaves nothing unassayed to press people to their duty;" this is also clear, Deut. ix. 26, 27. where 'he sets life and death, blessings and cursings' before them, to press them to their duty. I confess, there are many in heaven to-day, that Christ never took the half of the pains on them, as he hath taken on some of us. And there are many in hell to-day, upon whom Christ took never half so much pains, as he hath done on some of us; and is it not then a wonder, that we are not sent away to hell likewise? Now I will tell you six great voices or means wherewith God presseth people to their duty.

The *First* voice is, the voice of threatenings; all the threatenings which are in the scripture, this is the voice of them all, O give obedience to your duty. This is remarkably clear, from that choice and remarkable place, Jer. xxxvi. 3, 6, 7. 'Therefore go thou and read the roll which thou hast written from my mouth,' &c. Baruch is commanded to read all the threatenings of God to his people; and what is the precious end he hath before him? 'It may be they will present their supplications before the Lord, and will return every one from his evil way,' &c. This is the very end and scope of God's threatenings, that persons may present their prayers before him, and he will shake the rod over our heads for this end. Therefore, I say, give the threatenings of God (which are his messengers) that which they require, and it is, to put the rod by the door.

The *second* great voice whereby God sometimes presseth home duties upon folk is, by the voice and rod of these sad afflicting dispensations which we meet with. This is indeed the end of them, that persons would give obedience to this command of God; this is clear in the very scope, where he presseth them 'to hear the voice of the rod, that they might give obedience to their duty. And it is also clear from that sweet and excellent promise, Ezek. xx. 37. 'And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant.' I say, the very great end and design of God, in sending rods is, that persons may be engaged to their duty.

The *third* voice wherewith God presseth people to their duty is, by the voice of the promises; what is the great voice of the covenant of promises? It is, give obedience to commanded duties; this is clear in Ezek. xi. 19, 20. 'And I will give them one

heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them an heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them,' &c. As it were, all the great promises of the covenant have this promise, 'Obey, and ye shall live;' it is obedience that leadeth us to the possession of the promises.

The *fourth* voice whereby God presseth people to the doing of known duties is, by the voice of all the mercies which we meet with, I say, the voice of them all is this, 'O! give obedience to his commandments;' yea, this is the very language of mercies. All the great things which God hath done to you, what is the scope and end of them all? It is, 'O! will ye come and obey?'

Fifthly, Doth not the great voice of our consciences, and of all the convictions which God rooves upon them, do they not say, O! give obedience, and obey him with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength?

There is this *last* voice whereby God presseth people to the doing of known duties, and it is by the voice of all the public ordinances; what is the great voice of all those preachings, which we daily preach unto you, but this, O! give obedience to the commands?

Now I would say this unto you, O people of Glasgow, O! hath not God spoken to you by all these voices? Hath he not spoken unto you by mercies? Hath he not spoken unto you by threatenings? By the voice of the promises? By the voice of the rod? By the voice of our consciences? And by the voice of public ordinances? Oh! look that in the twenty-sixth chapter of Leviticus, be not Glasgow's plagues. Lord keep this place from gospel-condemnation; 'For it is a fearful and dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God;' yet seven times more, I fear, be your plague. O! what can God do more to us than he hath done? Have we not pressed this duty upon you, that ye would embrace Christ, and that this duty might be your delight? If Christ cannot allure us to give our hearts away to him, in a manner, he will force us to give our hearts to him. I confess, it is sad to slight and disobey the voice of the rod; God hath two times fearfully shaken the threatening rod of his wrath over the city of Glasgow, in a few years, look that so many menacings of God's rods be not the forerunner of some sad stroke from the Lord. Now this is your duty, to be hearkening to his voice. This is Christ's first word, and his last word, and it is his best word. O then, take him, and embrace him. I think there be seven steps of judgment, which are like to overtake us, if we hearken not to his voice. I say, God hath spoken much, and what can he speak more? And what can he do more? And

what can we do less to him? I say, all the slightings of these threatenings of God to you, they are the forerunner of these seven remarkable steps of judgment.

The *first* step of judgment, which ordinarily doth befall slighers and disobeyers of God's voice is, God shall slight their voice when they cry unto him; and Oh! is it any wonder that God stops his ears at all our prayers, because it is known that we stop our ears to his precious invitation and cry, which Christ hath to us, O! take me? Therefore, I say, O! give Christ your hearts, and then he will hear your voice.

There is a *second* step of judgment, which ordinarily befalls these, who slight these great and precious voices, by which he is speaking to us, and it is this, be afraid, that at last thou come not to this, that thou shalt have no answer from God, that God shall speak no more unto thee; yea, that thou come not to this, that God shall speak his last words unto thee, and have no more to say. I confess, when God goeth from preaching to rods, it is an evidence that we are hard to be persuaded. It is said, 'When he makes the rods our teachers, that we will not be taught by them;' though I think, that that were a blessed cross, that should make us come to Christ. I think, Christ must do to us, as Absalom did to Joab, he sent to Joab to come to him, and he came not; Absalom then set his corn-fields on fire, so that at last he might come. So I think, Christ sets our corn-fields on fire, that we may be constrained to come to him.

There is a *third* step of our judgment, and it is this, I fear that sad and lamentable word is like to befall us, if we continue to slight this gospel, Ezek. v. 2. 'That all flesh may know, that I the Lord have drawn forth my sword out of his sheath, it shall not return any more.' Yea, God hath begun to draw the sword of his justice out of his sheath, and who knows when he will put it up again? Is there any person who hath confidence or persuasion, that God will quickly sheath the sword which he hath drawn against us?

The *fourth* step of judgment, which lights down upon those that slight the voice of God's threatening rod is, that which I think is more sad, Ezek. xxi. 10, 11. 'The sword is sharpened and furbished, that it may glitter, and that it may make a sore slaughter, that it may be given into the hand of the slayer.' And what know ye, but your disobedience to all these voices, by which God hath been speaking to you, hath made him to draw his sword, and he is to deliver into the hand of the slayer? And oh! who shall be the slayer, into whose hand the sword shall be delivered?

There is this, *fifthly*, which shall be a step of our judgment,

if we continue to slight all these voices, by which God doth speak to us, and it is that word, Ezek. xx. 31. 'As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be enquired of by you.' I will cease now to have correspondence with you any more.

There is this *sixth* step of judgment, which may and shall befall us, if we go thus on to slight all the voices of the Lord to us, and it is that word in Ezek. xxiv. 13. 'I would have purged thee, and thou wouldst not be purged, thou shalt not be purged any more, till my fury,' &c.

There is this *last* step of our judgment, which I think is the cape-stone of all the rest, if we continue in all our slights of the voices by which God speaks to us. By all appearance there shall be one of these two decrees past in heaven against us: *First*, Either that in Hos. iv. 7. 'Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone;' or, *secondly*, that decree in Rev. xxii. 11. 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still,' &c. *I say*, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the day of provocation: Glasgow is yet within speaking terms to God. O! who knows how long it shall be so? Now, if ye will not hear him in the still voice of the gospel, O! will ye hear him especially in the whirlwind? There is nothing that will befall us, which will be the cape-stone of our misery so much as that, when Christ shall come and take his farewell. I think there are few of us who are here, who are within the sight of Christ; but I am sure there are many here who are within speaking terms to Christ.

Now, what doth he require and call for at your hands? Doth not all the promises in the covenant say, 'O come and take him?' Doth not all the rods and sad dispensations which we meet with say, 'O come and take him?' Doth not all the threatenings in the law say unto you, 'O come and take him?' And doth not all your convictions of conscience, whereby your need of Christ is discovered, say this unto you, 'O come and take him?' Are ye not surrounded about with many voices, that cry out this unto the city, 'O come and take him?' Therefore, O harden not your hearts to this pleasant voice. I have only these seven words to speak to you, and I shall close.

And, *First*, God hath a threefold rod, whereby he maketh himself known to a people. 1. He hath the rod of his mouth, whereby he makes known his word to us. 2. There is the rod of his hand, and that is, affliction and crosses. 3. There is the iron-rod of destruction, when God doth utterly destroy, that destruction shall not rise up the second time. Now God hath been long speaking to you by the rod of his mouth, and by the rod of his afflictions and crosses; and O! now beware, lest he come and

Speak to you by the iron rod of destruction: look that the treaty which is betwixt Christ and you be not broken. O! be persuaded to lay hold upon your time, while it is with you.

Secondly, I would say this word unto you, I think the slighting of the sad and lamentable threatenings of God, which he hath threatened and denounced against you, is a sad forerunner of some sad strokes from the Lord. Are there not many persons which slight threatenings through the want of faith? They believe not that such a threatening is true, and therefore I think it is like, that God will preach to your senses, before you believe what he now preaches to your ear. I say, the day is coming, that before the threatenings of God be believed by some of you, he must preach to your sense, and make you to feel that which ye would not believe. And are there not many that will not make use of the threatenings, because they believe the threatenings are not to them? And therefore they make not particular application of the threatenings to themselves. I confess, I think it were good for every one of us, to take home the threatenings to our own bosom.

Thirdly, Some will not take and make use of the threatenings, because they mistake what is their meaning. There are some, that let Christ threaten them what he will, they are still in the dark, and cry out, O! what doth Christ mean by his threatenings? That is clear from the practice of the Jews, John vii. 33, 34. compared with the 35th and 36th verses, Christ threatens them with this, 'Yet a little while I am with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.' Now, what hinders them to make application of this threatening? It is in verses 35, 36, 'What manner of saying is this that he saith, ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, thither ye cannot come? Will he go to the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?' So they knew not the meaning of the threatening, and that hinders them to apply it.

The *fourth* reason why many persons make not application of the threatenings, is this, ignorance of their own condition. Some persons will be living under such a sin, and yet when that sin is threatened, they will not apply it, because they know not their sin. Are there not some persons, that will not take with threatenings for their worldly-mindedness, because they call their worldly-mindedness frugality? Are there not some persons, that when a minister threatens against presumption, they will not take with it, because they think their presumption faith and confidence? And are there not many things threatened against hypocrisy, and few of them applied? And this is, because we think our hypocrisy, sincerity.

Fifthly, This mars the application of threatenings to many, because God hath a mind to destroy them; therefore they do not apply threatenings. That is a terrible word which is spoken of the sons of Eli, in 2 Sam. ii. 25. 'Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them.' Some God hath a mind to destroy, and therefore they do not apply threatenings.

There is this *sixth* ground why persons will not make application of threatenings, and it is, because ordinarily some persons are possessed with high thoughts of themselves, and too much of self-love. There is nothing mars the application of threatenings so much as self-love; we have no will to believe any sad things against ourselves.

Lastly, There is this which mars the application of threatenings, and it is, our not knowing what a sad and sinful thing it is to slight, and not apply threatenings. I confess, I think it is a question that is hard to determine, whether the slighting of promises, or the slighting of commands, or the slighting of threatenings, be greatest sin? But I am sure of this, our slighting of threatenings is the rise of our slighting of promises, and likewise the rise of our slighting of commands. Now, I shall say no more, O! that ye were persuaded to hearken to God, that Christ might not be provoked to depart from you, and take his farewell. And to him who is able to help you to hold him, 'till the breaking of the day,' we desire to give praise.

SERMON I.

MICAH vi. 9. *The Lord's voice crying unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.*

IT is not much though a Christian be put in a furnace, hot seven times more than ordinary, if one in the form and likeness of the Son of man walk up and down with him in the furnace. Is it not Christ's presence, which makes a wilderness like the garden of the Lord? Is it not Christ's presence, which makes afflictions pleasant? Is it not Christ's presence, which makes a crown of thorns, a crown of joy? Is it not Christ's presence, which makes heaven pleasant? And must it not be Christ's presence, that must make the earth pleasant also? I confess, desertion under the cross, is one of the most sad and afflicting dispensations which a Christian can meet with; but, however, ere long there will be a blessed exchange of cups, that instead of the cup of bitterness which is presented to a Christian to drink, while

he is here below) he shall have a cup of eternal consolations that is above, presented unto him from the hand of the Lord.

I think a Christian may be poor in possession, but rich in hope. I think a Christian may not have much as to his sensible enjoyments, but may not he cast up his eyes unto the eternal inheritance, and cry out, yonder is my portion, in that land are my lines cast? There are these four things that I would say unto you before I come to the words.

The *first* thing that I would have you taking notice of, is this, there are three things which a Christian may meet with which are unspeakable. 1. Sometimes a Christian may meet with an unspeakable sorrow, so that he cannot make language of it, because of the anxiety of his heart, but is forced to cry out, 'My stroke is heavier than my groaning.' 2. A Christian may meet with unspeakable mercy, he may meet with such a mercy and token of love from the hand of the Lord, that if he were put to it, he could not make language of it; he would say no more to the commendation of his mercy, but this, 'What shall I say more?' He hath spoken it, and himself hath done it.' 3. A Christian may meet with an unspeakable joy, he may be brought to that case and condition, that he cannot make language of his joy; according to that word, 1. Pet. i. 8. 'Believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.'

Secondly, I would have you taking notice of this, that is exceeding much of the concernment of a Christian, to believe and close with this truth, that there is not a grain weight of affliction in this cup, which infinite wisdom doth not think fit should be there, and which infinite love did not put there: to know and rest upon this, that infinite wisdom and love was at the mixing of the cup, (and his tender heart will carve no more out to us than we are able to bear) this is an help to patience.

Thirdly, I would have you taking notice of this, I think there are some Christians that are forced to bless God more for their crosses, than their mercy; and that they have been forced, in their darkest nights, to cry out, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted.'

There is this, *fourthly*, which I would have you taking notice of, that the cross of a Christian, it hath two faces, an outward face, and an inward face; and the outward face of the cross often-times seems the most unpleasant: but O! if a Christian could win to see the inside of his cross, he might sit down by the rivers of Babel, and there pen songs of praise to God, even praise for this, 'that he hath been afflicted. O! it is comfortable to the Christian, that Christ hath gone to heaven by the way of the cross; that his blessed feet have trodden that way, and that his precious lips have drunk of that up.

But to come to the words, we told you, that there were five things in the words to be considered: *First*, That there was an excellent exhortation given to the people of Israel and Samaria, which in short is this, 'Hear ye the voice of the rod, and who hath appointed it.' And from this exhortation ye may take notice of five things: *First*, That every cross and sad dispensation, which a Christian meets with, it hath a voice and language in it; therefore, saith he, 'Hear ye the voice of the rod.' As if he had said, "Take notice what the rod says, and what it calls for from *"you."* The *second* thing to take notice of from this command and exhortation, is this, that it is the duty of a Christian to observe and give obedience unto what the rod speaks, and calls for; therefore is the command given forth, 'Hear ye the voice of the rod.' The *third* thing that we take notice of from this command is, that there is a great unwillingness in persons to hear what the rod speaks; and therefore the command is put home, 'Hear ye the voice of the rod.' *Fourthly*, Take notice of this, that the voice of the rod, and the voice of him that hath appointed it, are one and the same very thing; therefore these two are knit together, 'Hear ye the voice of the rod, and him that hath appointed it.' There is this, *lastly*, which we would have you taking notice of from this command and exhortation, it is a great point of spiritual wisdom for a Christian, to take up and hear the voice of the rod; therefore it is said, 'The man of wisdom shall see thy name.' It is not every man that can take up what the rod speaks; it is only the man that is endued with much heavenly wisdom from God.

Now, as for the *first* thing that we speak to from the words, viz. that every rod which a Christian meets with, it hath a voice in it. Before I speak to this, I would have you to take along these considerations.

First, It is a singular and most remarkable step of the goodwill of God, when he doth manifest the meaning of a rod to a person or people, Job xxxiii. 10. 'He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction.' Which is brought in as a singular favour from God; that is, he makes them to know what the rod speaks. Elihu puts such a note of mercy upon this, that he thinks it a step of delivery from the rod, 'He delivers the poor from affliction.' How is this, that he opens their ears, and seals their instruction? It is, when God makes a person to take up the meaning of the rod: for when he makes them to understand the voice of the rod, it is a half delivery from the rod. Do you not know this, that when the cause of a disease is known, it is half healed? So when the end that God hath in sending rods is known and taken up, we may say it is half removed.

Secondly, The Christians of old have taken much pains to know the voice of the rods that they met with; as is clear from 2 Sam. xxi. 1. where the land of Israel being three years under famine, David went and enquired of the cause of that rod. And it is likewise clear from Job vii. 20. where Job is exceeding desirous to know, why God set him up as a mark to his arrow, and that he was become a burden to himself.

Thirdly, We would have you to take notice of this, that it is exceeding anxious for a tender Christian to be under a silent rod, to be under such a dispensation that he knows not the language of it; this is clear in Job iii. 23. where Job makes this the cape-stone of his sorrow, that his way was hid; that is, he knew not what was the reason of God's contending with him after such a way: as likewise it is clear in Job x. 2. where Job is put to propose that question to God, 'Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me?'

The *fourth* consideration that we would have you taking along with you, is this, it is exceeding hard for a Christian to profit by a rod, till once he take up the meaning of it; and I shall give you these three grounds, why it is so hard for a Christian to profit by a rod, till he know the voice and meaning of it. 1. Because it is hard for a Christian to win to submission to the rod, till he know the voice of it; it is the knowledge of the meaning of the rod that makes a Christian to cry out, 'I was dumb, and opened not my mouth.' 2. Because as long as the meaning of the rod is hid from a Christian, he knoweth not what remedy to go about to deliver himself from that rod; but when he knoweth the reason of God's contending with him, he hath a clear way before him how to win out from the cross. 3. This is the reason why a Christian cannot profit by the rod, till he know the voice and meaning of it, he cannot win to a solid closing with this truth, that God is in the rod, till he win to the knowledge of the voice of the rod in some measure; there is nothing more will help a Christian to cry out, 'God is in the rod,' than this, his knowing the reason of God's contending with him.

There is this *fifth* consideration that we would propose, a Christian may be long under a rod, before he know the voice and language of it: we conceive, this is clear in 2 Sam. xxi. 1. where the land of Israel is under three years famine, before David could take up the reason of God's contending with him. It is not to be supposed, but David had made frequent supplications to God, for understanding the meaning of that rod, and yet there are three years interveening before he can know it.

The *last* consideration that we would propose unto you is, when a Christian wins to take up the voice and language of the

rod he ought not to delay, but presently to go about and answer it; this is clear in the practice of David, when he knew the reason of God's contending with him, he immediately sets about to remove it. I confess, it is a fault amongst many, they are more desirous to have their crosses removed, than to have their crosses sanctified unto them; some pray to have the bitterness out of the cross, more than to have the bitterness of sin removed out of the cross.

Now, in speaking to the *first* thing in the words, *viz.* that every rod and dispensation of God hath a voice and language in it, I shall speak a little¹ to these four things: *First*, How a Christian may win to take up the meaning of the rod in particular afflictions. *Secondly*, I would speak a little to some mistakes, in taking up the voice and language of such a rod and afflicting dispensation. *Thirdly*, I would speak to this, how a Christian may be helped to give obedience to the voice of the rod. *Fourthly*, I shall speak a little to eight or nine special voices which the rod oftentimes hath: as for the *first* of these, *viz.* how a Christian may win to take up the meaning of the rod and sad dispensation, I shall prescribe unto you these six ways.

First, By making serious application to the throne of grace, that God would give you light concerning such a rod; this is remarkably clear in that instance, in Gen. xxv. 22. where Rebecca, being under such a particular rod, and she knew not God's way in it, therefore she went and enquired of the Lord, and she received a particular and distinct answer to her case. And it is also clear in the practice of David, 2. Sam. xxi. 1. Israel being under a great rod of famine, David went and enquired of the Lord concerning the meaning of it, and he met with a distinct answer. And this is likewise clear in Job x. 2. where Job, being in the dark concerning the meaning of the rod, he desires 'that God would shew him wherefore he contends with him.' I would tell you seven sad cases which a Christian may be put to which Christ hath exceeding good skill to resolve, and it is this, Song i. 7. "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flocks rest at noon? &c." When a Christian knoweth where Christ is feeding, to go to him, he will sweetly resolve that question: for ye may know this, a Christian may be brought to these two steps of desertion: 1. Christ may be gone. And 2. Ye know not in all the world where to find him; as in John xx. 13. as that instance of Mary; and in Job xxiii. 3. Job hath not only lost God, but also he knoweth not where to find him.

The *second* case which Christ hath exceeding good skill to resolve, is this, 'who is the Lord, that I may believe on him? That

case or question which the blind man was put to, John ix. 36. O! will not Christ sweetly resolve that question? Is there any person that hath this question, 'Who is Christ, that I may believe him?' The *third* case or question which Christ hath exceeding good skill to resolve, is this, 'Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' Is there any here that is put to that question? Go to Christ, and he can sweetly resolve it to you. The *fourth* question which Christ can best resolve, is that question which Paul had, 'What wilt thou have me to do?' The *fifth* case in which it is best to go to Christ to get resolved is, when a person is brought to this strait, 'I know not the mind of the Lord; go to God, and humbly ask, 'O! why am I thus?' There is this *sixth* case, and it is, Job vii. 20. "I have sinned, and what shall I do to thee, O thou preserver of men? When thou art put to this case, Christ can answer sweetly thus, 'Only acknowledge thine iniquity.' The *last* case which Christ can sweetly resolve, is in the words before the text, 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?' If thou be put to this question, no answer can be given to it but this, 'The sacrifice of the Lord are a broken and contrite heart. Now this is the *first* way how a Christian may win to know the voice and meaning of the rod, even to make serious application to God, that he would make known to them his name.

There is this *second* way by which a Christian may win to know the voice and meaning of the rod, if the rod was timed to thee, when thy heart was under much distance from God, that probably is the meaning of the rod, 'It is good for thee to draw near to God.' Or, if the rod be timed to a Christian, 'when he is much taken up in the pursuit after the things of the world;' and if thy rod triest thee, when thou art under much formality in going about duties, then, by all appearance, that is the voice of the rod to thee, 'to stir up thyself to take hold on God. So if a Christian would win to know the meaning of the rod, let him compare his present frame with the timing of the rod unto him.

The *third* way how a Christian may win to know the voice and meaning of the rod is, by reflecting on the manner and circumstances of the rod. For this is certain, the sins of a people or person may be engraven on the rod in very legible letters, 'so that he that runs may read them.' There are sometimes that the rod doth preach our sins so plainly, that we need not to interpret it; this is clear, Judges i. 6. 7. there is such a relation between Adonibezek's judgment and his sin that he might read his judgment, as he did his sins, in his stroke: saith he, "Threescore and ten kings having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table, as I have done, so God hath requited me, &c." For now was he taken prisoner,

and his thumbs and great toes cut off. And it is clear from that word Solomon hath, Prov. xxi. 23. "He that stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he shall cry, and God shall not hear him. Zech. vii. 13. Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts." Where ye may see a divine proportion and analogy betwixt the rod and the sin.

The *fourth* way how a Christian may win to know the voice and meaning of the rod, and it is, by observing what hath been the mind of the Lord, and what he calleth for from his people in scripture, when they were put under such a rod and anxious dispensation: search what was God's mind to the godly in scripture under such a rod, and by all appearance, it is yet his mind in the same cross; according to that general rule, Röm. xv. 4. "For whatsoever things are written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope."

The *fifth* way for a Christian to win to know the meaning of the rod, is to be much in observing the circumstances of the rod; there may be circumstances in a rod by which a Christian may win to exceeding much light concerning what is the Lord's mind by such a rod: it is known, the observing of the circumstances of a rod will help a Christian to these three things: 1. That such a rod is from the hand of the Lord. 2. That God, in the midst of wrath, remembereth mercy. 3. It will help a Christian to know the voice and language of the rod; sometimes in the cross itself, a Christian cannot read love, and yet in the circumstances of the cross, he may win to read very much love.

There is this *sixth* and *last* way, how a Christian may win to the knowledge of the voice and meaning of the rod, and it is, to be considering, that all the rods and dispensations which a Christian meets with, hath one of these three ends: *First*, The rod is either sent to a Christian, that he may mortify his predominant idols. Or, *Secondly*, For exercise of his predominant grace. Or else, *Thirdly*, That he may be put to the exercise of that, which ought to be his predominant duty.

These are voices and languages of the cross, which a Christian meets with: and I would only, by the way, say these two things to you: *First*, It is easier to bear a rod patiently, which is for the trial and exercise of our predominant grace, than to bear a rod patiently, which is for the mortifying of our predominant idol. There is no rod which a Christian can bear worse, than the rod which strikes at the root of his predominant idols: so a proud man, he can bear any cross better than reproach; and a worldly-minded man, can bear any cross better than poverty;

so the cross which stands in direct opposition to our predominant idols, we have great difficulty to bring our hearts to patient submission under it: are there not many, that when their idols are stricken, they cry out with that man in Judges, Judges xvi. 24. 'They have taken away my gods, and what have I more?' Is it not certain, that when God strikes sometimes at the root of our predominant idols, we cry out with Jonah, 'That it is better for me to die than to live?' Though I may say, the cross which we have least will to meet with, is ordinarily best for us. For (if so we may speak) our will and well are seldom or never knit together; but precious Christ, his will and our well are oftentimes knit together. *Secondly*, I would say this by the way, there are ordinarily some analogy betwixt our crosses and our sins: if the Egyptians did kill all the male-children of the Israelites, by casting them into the river; God doth likewise kill all the first-born in the land of Egypt; and if Nadab and Abihu offer strange fire from heaven; and if the Sodomites be taken up with the fire of lust, God will bring down fire from heaven and consume them.

Now the *second* thing which we promised to speak a little unto, was to some mistakes which Christians have concerning the meaning of the rod.

And *first*, Many think, indeed, the cross speaks wrath, when it speaks love; and some, when they cannot read love in the hand of God, they think it is impossible to read love in his heart: some think, that love and the rod cannot be together at all. I say, God may never love a person more, than when he is correcting him. But, *first*, I would say to a person under that mistake, we never know by any of those things, whether love or hatred belongs to the person that is afflicted; 'For all things happen alike to all; as it happens to the fool, so it happens to the wise man; to the righteous, even as to the wicked.' *Secondly*, I would say this to the believer that is under this mistake, he reads wrong, that reads wrath only upon the cross; for it is certain, love is written in dark characters upon it, and the spiritual man may read them; hence it is, Heb. xii. 5. 6. we are commanded to remember the exhortation that speaks unto us, as unto sons, 'My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.'

The *second* mistake concerning the meaning of the cross is, some think that God can never answer their prayers, so long as he is plaguing them; according to that strange divinity, Job ix. 16. 'If I had called, and he had answered me; yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice.' So this is the mistake, all the answers of their prayers are nothing, if God be contending with them.

The *third* great mistake concerning the meaning of the rod is, when persons begin to dispute their interest, when they meet with such a rod and sad dispensation, and when they do not (indeed) see what is the reason of God's contending with them; when he puts them into the furnace, presently to sit down, and reject their confidence, and cast away their hope; this is certainly a great mistake of the meaning of the rod.

The *fourth* great mistake of the voice and language of God's threatening rod is, for a person to think religion but vanity, and an empty thing under the cross. A Christian may be brought to this, 'Now I would not give a plack for godliness, it is not worth at all;' as is clear from Psalm lxxiii. 13, 14. where he takes notice, 'He was plagued every morning, and the wicked was in prosperity about him;' he cries out, 'Verily, I have washed my hands in innocency, and cleansed my heart in vain:' yea, it is hard for a person not to cast off religion, when God is contending with him. O! it is hard to have a great respect unto the ways of godliness under the cross.

There is this *fifth* mistake under the cross, and it is, to dispute the fellowship a Christian hath with God; according to that word of Gideon, Judges vi. 13. 'If the Lord be with us, how then is all this evil come upon us?' The Christian will cry out, I cannot reconcile God's heart and his hand, I cannot reconcile love in God, and his being with me, and this cross and rod.

Now, *Thirdly*, I would speak a little to this, how a Christian may be helped to obey the voice of the rod; and we conceive, if ye will take along these things with you, ye may be helped to obey what the rod calls for at your hand.

And *First* then, if the rod call for the mortifying of such a particular lust and idol, it is incumbent for you presently to sit down and bring up your hearts to a spiritual detestation of such an idol, that if God be punishing you for your idols, ye must subscribe a bill of divorce to them, and cry out, 'What have I any more to do with idols?' And say to them, get you hence, and cast them away to the moles and bats.

There is a *second* way to help, how a Christian may win to the obedience of the voice of the rod, and it is, if the voice of the rod be for the mortifying of such an idol. I intreat you presently sit down, and study the disadvantage of such an idol; study always what hazard there is by keeping thy soul constantly knit to it, that when the voice of the rod is to thee, O quit such an idol, or such a Delila, thou must then study to know what it is to thy disadvantage to keep such an idol, and what it is to thy advantage to quit it. I confess there are some, that their idols are mortified to their light, before they are mortified to

their affections; yea, there are some they have constrained mortification, their idols are mortified, and die with them, before they be mortified to their idols.

Thirdly, If the voice of the rod be this, stir up such a grace, and be much in the exercise and practice of it; then, I say, study to know that there is as much spiritual advantage in the real and spiritual exercise of such a grace, as ye can lose by all the rods ye can meet with. Is it not certain, that Job gained as much spiritual advantages by the exercise of his faith, and of his patience; yea, much more than in losing all the things that he lost? If a Christian once knew that his riches consisted in the exercise of his grace, there would not be a rod sent for the trial and exercise of his grace, but he would take it cheerfully in his own arms.

The *fourth* way, how a Christian may be helped to win to obey the voice of the rod, and it is, if the voice of the rod be for the trial of thy predominant grace, and for the exercise of it; then, I say, consider this, that the trial and exercise of thy predominant grace, by the rod, it shall have (if it be sanctified) a glorious and excellent issue and peace; it is the rod that hath most noble advantages, that is immediately erected for the trial of thy predominant grace.

The *sixth* way, how a Christian may win to obey the voice of the rod, and it is, if the voice of the rod be, that thou should set about the exercise of such a duty, then endeavour seriously that all impediments and lets to that duty be laid aside; as if the cross calls for the exercise of faith, or if the cross calls for the exercise of prayer; then, I say, remove all things that may be impediments to hinder thee from the exercise thereof, or from the exercise of faith; leave, as it were, thy servants and thy asses at the foot of the mountain, and go thou up and sacrifice all thy idols and lusts.

The *seventh* and *last* way, how a Christian may be helped to win to obey the voice of the rod is, if the voice of the rod be, to be much in the exercise of such a duty, then study to have the lustre of duty, and the beauty thereof commended unto thee. O! prayer is a thing which doth much good unto us. I think, this is the reason why God hath contended with many, that he would make duties sweet to them, and that he would make sin bitter.

Now the *fourth* thing that I shall speak a little unto is, what ought to be a Christian's duty, while he is walking under a silent rod, and knoweth not the voice of it; and I would give you these five directions, how a Christian should carry himself under a silent rod.

First, He would know God to be just, though he knoweth not for what he contends with him.

Secondly, He would be serious in making supplications to God, to know the distinct meaning of such a rod; I confess, sometimes we take the rod to be silent, because we cannot hear the voice of it; but oftentimes the silence of the rod is from this, that we know not the voice of it, and we hear it not, though he speak to us in an audible language: but if a Christian be under a silent rod, it becomes him then to go to God with this, 'I have sinned, I will do so no more, show me wherein I have offended.'

There is this *third* direction which I would give to a Christian under a silent rod, he would be serious to know what is the reason of God's keeping up his mind from him in such a rod. I say, when the rod is dark, and the cross silent, it is suitable then for thee to say, what is the reason of this, that God doth not let me understand the voice and language of the rod? I confess, there may be sad things hinted at, when God puts a Christian under dark and dumb crosses; however, although it be so, I think it is good for us to be walking submissively in the dark: for he will lead the blind in the way they know not: sometimes it is better for us to have dumb and silent crosses, than to have a speaking cross.

The *fourth* direction is, the Christian would study to bring his heart to a tender and spiritual frame: for sometimes our not understanding the voice of the rod, is this, because we are not spiritual.

Lastly, I would give this direction to the Christian, who is under a dark and silent cross, study at that time to have thy heart most united to Christ, for at that time thou art most ready to fall. O! that is a time when the devil fishes most, because that is the Christian's drumly water, so to speak. O! it is known the devil never gets any advantage over a Christian so much, as when he knows not the meaning of the cross, I confess the devil will tell you a false meaning of a cross: he can interpret the language of a cross after another way than God doth interpret it.

Now being to close our discourse, I shall name these eight or nine observations concerning the cross, which I would have you taking notice of.

First, When a Christian doth first meet with a cross, he may be patient and submissive under it; and yet if the thread of the affliction be spun out to any length, he may turn impatient. I confess, it is not much the first day that the cross meets with us to be patient; but let the cross lie on us, then we will cry out, 'Why is it that God deals thus with me?' This is clear in the

practice of Job, when first he met with the cross, he could take it in his arms, and cry out, 'The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be his name.' But let the cross lie a little while on Job, then he will cry out, 'I choose strangling and death rather than life.' A green wound is half whole, (as we use to speak) but let once our wound begin to fester, then we will be impatient.

The *second* observation which we would have you to take notice of concerning the cross is, there are five sorts of blasphemy, which one that is under a cross may fall into: *First*, He may fall into that blasphemy of calling God unjust; according to that word, Ezek. xviii. 5. 'Yet ye say the way of the Lord is not equal, &c.' The *second* sort of blasphemy is, when we call God unfaithful; according to that strange word, Jer. xv. 18. 'Wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?' O! do we not think, that God is not half so good as his word under the cross? The *third* sort of blasphemy is, when we call God weak; there are sometimes we are brought to that, 'Is there no balm in Gilead? And is there no physician there? My stroke is grievous, and my wound is incurable.' Sometimes, when we are under the cross, we think it is above God's power to set us free from it. The *fourth* sort of blasphemy, which a man may have under the cross, and that is, when he chargeth God with changeableness. I think Christians under the cross, are like men first going to sea, when they go first out from the haven, or by a rock, they think that they are standing still, but the land beside them is moving and stirring; so when first we come under the cross, we think God is changeable, but we are still the same. The *fifth* sort of blasphemy, which one may have under the cross, and this is, when he chargeth God with forgetfulness. you know that forgetfulness is the property of an ungrateful man; and O! if you call God ungrateful or unthankful, you may call him any thing. I confess, I think Christ forgets nothing of a Christian but his wrongs.

The *third* observation concerning the cross, is this, it is a speaking evidence of the want of a son-like frame; if the cross do hinder us in the exercise of duties. I confess, little profiting under the cross, speaks this much, that either we are not sons, or have not a son-like frame; for those who are the Lord's children, when folly is bound for them, the rod of correction drives it away: there are many of us in our afflictions, we are of Ahaz's frame, we sin more and more in our afflictions.

The *fourth* observation that I would give you concerning the cross, is this, there are four things which a Christian would take up concerning his cross: *First*, He would take up unspeakable

wisdom in his cross. *Secondly*, He would take up unspeakable love therein. *Thirdly*, He would take up unspeakable justice and holiness in his cross. And, *fourthly*, he would take up these great advantages that flow to him from the spiritual use-making of his cross. Some Christians they can read wisdom, justice, and holiness on a cross, before they can read love upon it: but, however, it is good to take up all these four in the crosses and sad dispensations which you meet with.

There is this, *fifthly*, which I would say concerning the cross, there is not a cross and sad dispensation which a Christian meets with, but is a gift and royal donation sent by the hand of Christ to him: there are some, they look upon the promises as gifts; but I say to thee, thou must look upon thy crosses as gifts also, Philip. i. 29. 'For unto you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake' And there are some likewise, that look upon their sensible enjoyments, but not on their crosses as gifts. I say, if once a Christian win to know that the cross is a gift, he would likewise win to patience under the cross.

The *sixth* observation concerning the cross is, there are some peaceable fruits of righteousness that redound to a Christian, which is rightly exercised under the cross, Heb. xii. 11. 'Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby.' I say sometimes the rod of a Christian is like Aaron's rod, it buds and blossoms in a night, and brings forth pleasant fruit.

The *seventh* observation is, the most rare enjoyments of a Christian, are trusted to the time of his being under the cross; when was it that Jacob saw the angels of God descending and ascending upon that ladder? Was it not when he was forced to lie in the open fields? When was it that these three children saw Christ in the likeness of the Son of man? Was it not when they were in a furnace, when it was hot seven times more than ordinary? When was it that John got such a vision of God? Was it not when he was in the isle of Patmos, for the testimony of Christ? When was it that Ezekiel saw the visions of God? Was it not when he was sitting by the river Chebar, in the land of his captivity? And when was it that Stephen saw the heavens open, and Christ standing at the right hand of God? was it not when they were stoning him to death, for the testimony of Jesus Christ? I say, the most remarkable enjoyments of a Christian are trusted under the cross, according to that word of the Psalmist, 'To the righteous there ariseth light in darkness.'

The *eighth* observation that we would propose concerning the

cross is, oftentimes God trists joy to a Christian under the cross, when a Christian is beginning to lose his hope, and all things, as it were, growing dark about him, then doth light arise unto him, according to that wonderful and strange expression, Zech. xiv. 7. "At the evening time it shall be light, when there is more appearance of a darkness coming on." Yet even at that time it shall be light. Is it not certain, a Christian hath been sitting down at the midnight of his afflictions, crying out, 'My hope and my strength is perished from the Lord;' and yet the Lord hath said to him, even by his dispensations, 'Thou art a liar?' Have we not sometimes been casting away our hope, and the Lord hath loosed our bonds, and we have been as Peter, when he was loosed from his prison, we have been as though we had seen a vision?

Lastly, I would say this to commend the cross, there are strange expressions in the scripture, that may make out to a Christian, that the cross is not such a thing as many take it to be. The *First* expression is in that word, James i. 2. 'My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.' There are two things in that expression, which may make it strange: *1st*, A Christian should count it all joy: it had not been so strange, if he had said, count it joy, or rejoice when ye are afflicted; but, O! that is strange, 'Count it all joy when ye are afflicted.' That, *2dly*, makes it strange, 'Count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations; that is, rejoice ay more and more, when ye meet with many crosses. Then there is this *Second* expression, which may commend the cross, and it is in that word, Job. v. 15. 'Happy is the man whom God correcteth,' &c. There is very much happiness in such a lot and dispensation. Some of us think, there are no people so cursed as those who are afflicted. But, I say, a Christian's afflictions are no small mercies and blessings. The *Third* strange expression, which may commend the cross, is in that word, Job v. 22. 'At destruction and famine shalt thou laugh,' &c. Not to have a sad look, as it were, for all the crosses and afflictions that may come. The *fourth* strange expression, which may commend the cross, is in that word, Rom. v. 3. 'We glory in tribulation,' &c. The *last* strange expression, which may commend the cross, is this, the glorious ends that was upon these persons, who are exercised under the cross; according to that word, James i. 12. 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life.' I say, let a Christian comfort himself in this, 'That in six evils he will deliver him, and in seven no evil shall come near him.' Let a Christian be put to never so much affliction, let him comfort himself with this, 'That his Saviour was put to walk up and down on the earth, and had not whereon to lay his head. And

let him likewise comfort himself with this, 'that the day is coming, when he shall enter into those glorious and excellent habitations.' What is the cross of a Christian? is there not much in heaven to comfort them against their crosses? I shall not say much to press Christian submission under the cross; I think it is more suitable to be enquiring after duty under the cross, than to be enquiring how to escape out from under it. It is good to put all in Christ's hand concerning the cross, the manner of it, and the lengthening of it, and also the outgate from under it. Now to him, who is able to make all thing works together for the best, even affliction, unto his people, we desire to give praise.

THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE.

SERMON I.

ROM. vii. 24. *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

WHEN the sword of the justice of God was coming down upon us, then our blessed Lord Jesus, in the infinite depth of his unsearchable love and compassion to self-destroying sinners, cried out, with a loud voice, that justice might hold the hand. And as that ram sacrificed for Isaac, so was he willingly content to be 'caught in a thicket,' and to become a spotless and everlasting sacrifice for sinners. He was content to be bruised, that so we might pass free, and his Father's hand might be turned upon the little ones; but notwithstanding 'he had died for our sins, and risen for our righteousness;' yet he hath given to all his followers a spiritual warfare to accomplish, so that they should be continually taken up in contending 'against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places;' or, as the words may be rendered by some, we conceive more appositely, 'In heavenly things. And certainly, there is no discharge in this war, neither any interruption, while we are on this side of eternity. We confess, God might easily have served an inhibition on all our spiritual enemies, that they should no more oppose themselves against a believer after justification. He, in the depth of his unsearchable wisdom, and we may say likewise, infinite love towards his own, hath so contrived their way to heaven, that through many afflictions and tribulations in our spiritual warfare, we must enter there. It is much indeed for a Christian to die a victor after war, though not a triumph;