EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE BOOK OF

J O B.

This book of Job stands by itself, is not connected with any other, and is therefore to be considered alone. Many copies of the Hebrew Bible place it after the book of Psalms, and some after the Proverbs, which perhaps has given occasion to some learned men to imagine it to be written by Isaiah, or some of the later prophets. But, as the subject appears to have been much more ancient, so we have no reason to think but that the composition of the book was, and that therefore it is most fitly placed first in this collection of divine morals: also, being doctrinal, it is proper to precede, and introduce, the book of Psalms, which is devotional, and the book of Proverbs, which is practical; for how shall we worship or obey a God whom we know not?

As to this book,

I. We are sure that it is given by institution of God, though we are not certain who was the penman of it. The Jews, though no friends to Job, because he was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, yet, as faithful conservators of the oracles of God committed to them, always retained this book in their sacred canon. The history is referred to by one apostle; (James, v. 11.) and one passage (ch. v. 13.) is quoted by another apostle, with the usual form of quoting scripture, It is written, I Cor. iii. 19. It is the opinion of many of the ancients, that this history was written by Moses himself in Midian, and delivered to his suffering brethren in Egypt, for their support and comfort under their burthens, and the encouragement of their hope that God would, in due time, deliver and enrich them, as he did this patient sufferer. Some conjecture that it was written originally in Arabic, and afterward translated into Hebrew, for the use of the Jewish church, by Solomon, (so Monsieur Jurieu,) or some other inspired writer. It seems most probable to me, that Elihu was the penman of it, at least of the discourses, because (ch. xxxii. 15, 16.) he mingles the words of an historian with those of a disputant: but Moses perhaps wrote the two first chapters and the last, to give light to the discourses; for in them God is frequently called Jehovah, but not once in all the discoursee, except ch. xii. 9. That name was but little known to the patriarchs before Moses, Exod. vi. 3. If Job wrote it himself, some of the Jewish writers themselves own him a prophet among the Gentiles; if Elihu, we find he had a spirit of prophecy which filled him with matter, and constrained him, ch. xxxii. 18.

II. We are sure that it is, for the substance of it, a true history, and not a romance, though the dialogues are hoetical. No doubt there was such a man as Job; the prophet Ezekiel names him with Noah and Daniel, Ezek. xiv. 14. The narrative we have here of his prosperity and piety, his strange afflictions and exemplary patience, the substance of his conferences with his friends, and God's discourse with him out of the whirlwind, with his return, at length, to a very prosperous condition, no doubt, is exactly true, though the inspired penman is allowed the usual liberty of putting the matter of which Job and

his friends discoursed, into his own words.

III. We are sure that it is very ancient, though we cannot fix the precise time either when Job lived, or when the book was written. So many, so evident, are its hoary hairs, the marks of its antiquity, that we have reason to think it of equal date with the book of Genesis itself, and that holy Job was contemporary with Isaac and Jacob; though not co-heir with them of the promise of the earthly Canaan, yet a joint-expectant with them of the better country, that is, the heavenly. Probably, he was of the posterity of Nahor, Abraham's brother, whose first-born was U., (Gen. xxii. 21.) and in whose family religion was, for some ages, kept up, as appears, Gen. xxxi. 53. where God is called, not only the God of Abraham, but the God of Nahor. He lived before the age of man was shortened to 70 or 80, as it was in Moses's time; before sacrifices were confined to one altar; before the general apostasy of the nations from the knowledge and worship of the true God; and while yet there was no other idolatry known than the worship of the sun and moon, and that punished by the Judges, ch. xxxi. 26, 28. He lived while God was known by the name of God Almighty, more than by the name of Jehovah; for he is Vol. III.—B

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called Shaddai-the Almighty, above thirty times in this book: he lived while divine knowledge was conveyed, not by writing, but by tradition; for to that appeals are here made, ch: viii. 8.—xxi. 29.—xv 18.—v. 1. And we have therefore reason to think that he lived before Moses, because here is no mention at all of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, or the giving of the law. There is indeed one passage which might be made to allude to the drowning of Pharaoh, (ch. xxvi. 12.) He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smitch through Rahab; which name Egypt is very frequently called by in scripture, as Ps. lxxxvii. 4.—lxxxix. 10. Isa. li. 9. But that may as well refer to the proud waves of the sea. We conclude therefore that we are here got back to the patriarchal age,

and, beside its authority, we receive this book with veneration for its antiquity.

IV. We are sure that it is of great use to the church, and to every good Christian, though there are many fussages in it dark and hard to be understood. We cannot perhaps be confident of the true meaning of every Arabic word and phrase we meet with in it. It is a book that finds a great deal of work for the critics; but enough is plain to make the whole profitable, and it was all written for our This noble poem presents to us, in very clear and lively characters, these five things among

others:-

1. A monument of primitive theology. The first and great principles of the light of nature, on which natural religion is founded, are here, in a warm, and long, and learned, dispute, not only taken for granted on all sides, and not the least doubt made of them, but by common consent plainly laid down as eternal truths, illustrated and urged as affecting commanding truths. Were ever the being of God, his glorious attributes and perfections, his unsearchable wisdom, his irresistible power, his inconceivable glory, his inflexible justice, and his incontestable sovereignty, discoursed of with more clearness, fulness, reverence, and divine eloquence, than in this book? The creation of the world, and the government of it, are here admirably described, not as matters of nice speculation, but as laying most powerful obligations upon us to fear and serve, to submit to, and trust in, our Creator, Owner, Lord, and Ruler. Moral good and evil, virtue and vice, were never drawn more to the life, (the beauty of the one and the deformity of the other,) than in this book; nor the inviolable rule of God's judgment more plainly laid down, That happy are the righteous, it shall be well with them; and wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with These are not questions of the schools, to keep the learned world in action, nor engines of state, to keep the unlearned world in awe; no, it appears by this book that they are sacred truths of undoubted certainty, and which all the wise and sober part of mankind have in every age subscribed and submitted to.

2. It presents us with a specimen of Gentile fiety. This great saint descended, not from Abraham, but Nahor; or, if from Abraham, not from Isaac, but from one of the sons of the concubines that were sent into the east country; (Gen. xxv. 6.) or, if from Isaac, yet not from Jacob, but Esau; so that he was out of the pale of the covenant of peculiarity, no Israelite, no proselyte, and yet none like him for religion, nor such a favourite of heaven upon this earth. It was a truth, therefore, before St. Peter perceived it, that, in every nation, he that fears God, and works righteousness, is accepted of him, Acts

x. 35. There were children of God scattered abroad, (John xi. 52.) beside the incorporated children of the kingdom, Matth. viii. 11, 12.

3. It presents us with an exposition of the book of Providence, and a clear and satisfactory solution of many of the difficult and obscure passages of it. The prosperity of the wicked, and the afflictions of the righteous, have always been reckoned two as hard chapters as any in that book; but they are here expounded, and reconciled with the divine wisdom, purity, and goodness, by the end of these things.

4. It presents us with a great example of patience, and close adherence to God, in the midst of the sorest cal imities. Sir Richard Blackmore's most ingenious pen, in his excellent preface to his paraphrase on this book, makes Job a hero proper for an epic poem; for, (says he,) "He appears brave in distress, and valiant in affliction, maintains his virtue, and with that his character, under the most exasperating provocations that the malice of hell could invent, and thereby gives a most noble example of passive fortitude, a character no way inferior to that of the active hero," &c.

5. It presents us with an illustrious type of Christ, the particulars of which we shall endeavour to take notice of as we go along. In general, Job was a great sufferer, was emptied and humbled, but in order to his greater glory. So Christ abased himself, that we might be exalted. The learned Bishop Patrick quotes St. Jerom more than once speaking of Job as a type of Christ, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, who was persecuted for a time by men and devils, and seemed forsaken of God too, but was raised up to be an intercessor even for his friends that had added affliction to his miscry. When the apostle speaks of the patience of Job, he immediately takes notice of the end of the Lord, that is, of the Lord Jesus, (as some understand it,) typified by Job, James v. 11.

In this book we have, (1.) The history of Job's sufferings, and his patience under them, (ch. i, ii.) not without a mixture of human frailty, ch. iii. (2.) A dispute between him and his friends upon them, in which, [1.] The opponents were Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. [2.] The respondent was Job. [3.] The moderators were, First, Elihu, ch. xxxii. xxxvii. Secondly, God himself, ch. xxxviii. xli. (3.) The issue of all in Job's honour and prosperity, ch. xlii. Upon the whole, we learn, that many are the afflictions of the righteous, but that, when the Lord delivers them out of all, the trial of their faith will be found to praise, and honour, and clow.

will be found to praise, and honour, and glory.

CHAP. 1.

The history of Job begins here, with an account, I. Of his great piety in general, (v. l.) and in a particular instance, v. 5. II. Of his great prosperity, v. 2..4. III. Of the malice of Satan against him, and the permission he obtained to try his constancy, v. 6..12. IV. Of the surprising troubles that befell him; the ruin of his estate, 13..17.) and the death of his children, v. 18, 19. V. Of his exemplary patience and piety under these troubles, v. 20. . 22. In all which, he is set forth for an example of suffering affliction, from which no prosperity can secure us, but through which integrity and uprightness will préserve us.

1. THERE was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. 3. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.

Concerning Job, we are here told,

I. That he was a man; therefore subject to like passions as we are. He was Ish, a worthy man, a man of note and eminency, a magistrate, a man in authority. The country he lived in was the land of Uz, in the eastern part of Arabia, which lay toward Chaldea, near Euphrates, probably not far from Ur of the Chaldees, whence Abraham was called. When God called one good man out of that country, yet he left not himself without witness, but raised up another in it to be a preacher of righteousness. God has his remnant in all places, sealed ones out of every nation, as well as out of every tribe of Israel, Rev. vii. 9. It was the privilege of the land of Uz to have so good a man as Job in it; now it was Arabia the Happy indeed: and it was the praise of Joh, that he was eminently good in so bad a place; the worse others were round about him, the better he was.

His name Job, or Jjob, (some say,) signifies one hated, and counted as an enemy; others make it to signify one that grieves, or groans; thus the sorrow he carried in his name might be a check to his joy in his prosperity. Dr. Cave derives it from Jaab, to love, or desire, intimating how welcome his birth was to his parents, and how much he was the desire of their eyes; and yet there was a time when he cursed the day of his birth. Who can tell what the day may prove, which yet begins with a bright

II. That he was a very good man, eminently pious, and better than his neighbours. He was perfect and upright. This is intended to show us, not only what reputation he had among men, (that he was generally taken for an honest man,) but what was really his character; for it is the judgment of God concerning him, and we are sure that is according to truth. 1. Job was a religious man, one that feared God, that is, worshipped him according to his will, and governed himself by the rules of the divine law in every thing. 2. He was sincere in his religion; he was perfect, not sinless; he himself owns, (ch. ix. 20.) If I say I am perfect, I shall be proved perverse. But, having a respect to all God's commandments, aiming at perfection, he was really as good as he seemed to be, and did not dissemble in his profession of piety; his heart was sound, and his eye single. Sincerity is gospel-perfection; I know no religion without it. 3. He was

upright in his dealings both with God and man; was faithful to his promises, steady in his counsels, true to every trust reposed in him, and made conscience of all he said and did. See Isa. xxxiii. 15. Though he was not of Israel, he was indeed an Israelite without guile. 4. The fear of God reigning in his hear: was the principle that governed his whole conversation. That made him perfect and upright, inward and entire for God, universal and uniform in religion; that kept him close and constant to his duty. He feared God, had a reverence for his majesty, a regard to his authority, and a dread of his wrath. 5. He dreaded the thought of doing what was wrong; with the utmost abhorrence and detestation, and, with a constant care and watchfulness, he eschewed evil, avoided all appearances of sin and approaches to it, and this, because of the fear of God, Neh. v. 15. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; (Prov. viii. 13.) and then, by the fear of the Lord men depart from

evil, Prov. xvi. 6.

III. That he was a man who prospered greatly in this world, and made a considerable figure in his country. He was prosperous, and yet pious. Though it is hard and rare, it is not impossible, for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven: with God, even this is possible, and by his grace the temptations of worldly wealth are not insuperable. He was pious, and his piety was a friend to his prosperity; for godliness has the promise of the life that now is. He was prosperous, and his prosperity put a lustre upon his piety, and gave him, who was so good, so much greater opportunity of doing good. The acts of his piety were grateful returns to God for the instances of his prosperity; and, in the abundance of the good things God gave him, he served

God the more cheerfully.

1. He had a numerous family; he was eminent for religion, and yet not a hermit; not a recluse, but the father and master of a family. It is an instance of his prosperity, that his house was filled with children, which are a heritage of the Lord, and his reward, Ps. cxxvii. 3. He had seven sons and three daughters, v. 2. Some of each sex, and more of the more noble sex, in which the family is built up. Children must be looked upon as blessings, for so they are, especially to good people, that will give them good instructions, and set them good examples, and put up good prayers for them. had many children, and vet he was neither oppressed nor uncharitable, but very liberal to the poor, ch. xxxi. 17, &c. Those that have great families to provide for ought to consider, that what is prudently given in alms is set out to the best interest, and put into the best fund for their children's benefit.

2. He had a good estate for the support of his family; his substance was considerable, v. 3. Riches are called substance, in conformity to the common form of speaking; otherwise, to the soul and another world, they are but shadows, things that are not, Prov. xxiii. 5. It is only in heavenly wisdom that we inherit substance, Prov. viii. 21. In those days, when the earth was not fully peopled, it was, as now, in some of the plantations, men might have land enough upon easy terms, if they had but wherewithal to stock it; and therefore Job's substance : described, not by the acres of land he was lord of,

(1.) By his cattle; sheep and camels, oxen and The numbers of each are here set down, probably not the exact number, but thereabout, a very few under or over. The sheep are put first, because of most use in the family, as Solomon observes, (Prov. xxvii. 23, 26, 27.) Lambs for the clothing, and milk for the food of thy household. Job, it is likely, had silver and gold, as well as Abraham; (Gen. xiii. 2.) but then men valued their own and their neighbours' estates by that which was

for service and present use, more than by that | which was for show and state, and fit only to be hoarded. As soon as God had made man, and provided for his maintenance by the herbs and fruits, he made him rich and great by giving him dominion over the creatures, Gen. i. 28. That, therefore, being still continued to man, notwithstanding his defection, (Gen. ix. 2.) is still to be reckoned one of the most considerable instances of men's wealth, honour, and power, Ps. viii. 6. (2.) By his servants; he had a very good house-

hold or husbandry, many that were employed for him and maintained by him; and thus he both had honour and did good; yet thus he was involved in a great deal of care, and put to a great deal of charge. See the vanity of this world; as goods are increased, they must be increased that tend them and occupy them, and they will be increased that eat them; and what good has the owner thereof, save the beholding

of them with his eyes? Eccles. v. 11.

In a word, Job was the greatest of all the men of the east; and they were the richest in the world: those were rich indeed who were replenished more than the east, Isa. ii. 6. margin. Job's wealth, with his wisdom, entitled him to the honour and power he had in his country, which he describes, ch. xxix. and made him sit chief. Job was upright and honest, and yet grew rich, nay, therefore grew rich; for honesty is the best policy, and piety and charity are ordinarily the surest ways of thriving. He had a great household and much business, and yet kept up the fear and worship of God; and he and his house served the Lord. The account of Job's piety and prosperity comes before the history of his great afflictions, to show that neither will secure us from the common, no, nor from the uncommon, calamities of human life. Piety will not secure us, as Job's mistaken friends thought, for all things come alike to all; prosperity will not, as a careless world thinks; (Isa. xlvii. 8.) I sit as a queen, and therefore shall see no sorrow.

4. And his sons went and feasted in their houses every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters, to eat and to drink with them. 5. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burntofferings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.

We have here a further account of Job's prospe-

rity and his piety.

I. His great comfort in his children is taken notice of as an instance of his prosperity; for our temporal comforts are borrowed, depend upon others, and are as those about us are. Job himself mentions it as one of the greatest joys of his prosperous estate, that his children were about him, ch. xxix. 5. They kept a circular feast at some certain times; (v. 4.) they went and feasted in their houses. It was a comfort to this good man, 1. To see his children grown up and settled in the world; all his sons were in houses of their own, probably married; and to each of them he had given a competent portion to set up with. They that had been olive-plants round his table, were removed to tables of their own. 2. To see them thrive in their affairs, and able to feast one another, as well as to feed t'iemselves. Good parents desire, promote, and

3. To see them in health, no sickas their own. ness in their houses; for that would have spoiled their feasting, and turned it into mourning. 4. Especially to see them live in love and unity, and mutual good affection; no jars or quarrels among them, no strangeness, no shyness one of another, no straithandedness; but, though every one knew his own. they lived with as much freedom as if they had had all in common. It is comfortable to the hearts of parents, and comely in the eyes of all, to see brethren thus knit together; Behold, how good and how pleasant it is! Ps. cxxxiii. 1. 5. It added to the comfort, to see the brothers so kind to their sisters, that they sent for them to feast with them; who were so modest, that they would not have gone, if they had not been sent for. Those brothers that slight their sisters, care not for their company, and have no concern for their comfort, are ill-bred and illnatured, and very unlike Job's sons. It seems their feast was so sober and decent, that their sisters were good company for them at it. 6. They feasted in their own houses, not in public houses, where they would be more exposed to temptations, and which were not so creditable.

We do not find that Job himself feasted with them; doubtless they invited him, and he would have been the most welcome guest at any of their tables; nor was it from any sourness or moroseness of temper, or for want of natural affection, that he kept away, but he was old and dead to those things, like Barzillai, (2 Sam. xix. 35.) and considered that the young people would be more free and pleasant, if there were none but themselves. Yet he would not restrain his children from that diversion which he denied himself. Young people may be allowed a youthful liberty, provided they flee youthful lusts.

II. His great care about his children is taken notice of as an instance of his piety: for that we are really, which we are relatively. Those that are good will be good to their children, and especially do what they can for the good of their souls. Observe, (v. 5.) Job's pious concern for the spiritual welfare of his children.

1. He was jealous over them with a godly jealousy: and so we ought to be over ourselves and those that are dearest to us, as far as is necessary to our care and endeavour for their good. Job had given his children a good education, had comfort in them, and good hope concerning them; and yet he said, "It may be my sons have sinned in the days of their feasting, more than at other times; have been too merry, have taken too great a liberty in eating and drinking, and have cursed God in their hearts," that is, "have entertained atheistical, profane, thoughts in their minds, unworthy notions of God and his providence, and the exercises of religion." When they were full, they were ready to deny God, and to say, Who is the Lord? ready (Prov. xxx. 9.) to forget God, and to say, The now-er of our hand has gotten us this wealth, Dent. viii. 12, &c. Nothing alienates the mind more from God than the indulgence of the flesh.

2. As soon as the days of their feasting were over, he called them to the solemn exercises of religion: not while their feasting lasted; (Let them take their time for that; there is a time for all things;) but, when it was over, their good father reminded them that they must know when to take up, and not think to fare sumptuously every day; though they had their days of feasting the week round, they must not think to have them the year round; they had something else to do. Note, Those that are merry must

find a time to be serious.

3. He sent to them to prepare for solemn ordinances, sent and sanctified them; ordered them to examine their own consciences, and repent of what rejoice in, their children's wealth and prosperity, I they had done amiss in their feasting; to lay aside

their vanity, and compose themselves for religious exercises. Thus he kept his authority over them for their good, and they submitted to it, though they were got into houses of their own. Still he was the priest of the family, and at his altar they all attended, valuing their share in his prayers more than their share in his estate. Parents cannot give grace to their children, (it is God that sanctifies,) but they ought, by seasonable admonitions and counsels, to further their sanctification. In their baptism they were sanctified to God; let it be our desire and endeavour that they may be sanctified for him.

4. He offered sacrifice for them, both to atone for the sins he feared they had been guilty of in the days of their feasting, and to implore for them mercy to pardon, and grace to prevent, the debauching of their minds, and corrupting of their manners, by the liberty they had taken, and to preserve their

piety and purity.

For he, with mournful eyes, had often spy'd, Scatter'd on Pleasure's smooth but treach'rous tide, The spoils of virtue overpower'd by sense, And floating wrecks of ruin'd innocence. Sir R. BLACKMORE.

Job, like Abraham, had an altar for his family, on which, it is likely, he offered sacrifice daily; but, on this extraordinary occasion, he offered more sacrifices than usual, and with more solemnity, according to the number of them all, one for each child. Parents should be particular in their addresses to God for the several branches of their family; "For this child I prayed, according to its particular temper, genius, and condition;" to which the prayers, as well as the endeavours, must be accommodated.

When these sacrifices were to be offered, (1.) He rose early, as one in care that his children might not lie long under guilt, and as one whose heart was upon his work, and his desire towards it. (2.) He required his children to attend the sacrifice, that they might join with him in the prayers he offered with the sacrifice, that the sight of the killing of the sacrifice might humble them much for their sins, for which they deserved to die, and the sight of the offering of it up might lead them to a Mediator. This serious work would help to make them seri-

ous again, after the days of their gaiety.

Lastly, Thus he did continually; not only whenever an occasion of this kind recurred, for he that is washed, needs to wash his feet: (John, xiii. 10.) the acts of repentance and faith must be often renewed, because we often repeat our transgressions; but, all days, every day, he offered up his sacrifices, was constant to his devotions, and did not omit them any day. The occasional exercises of religion will not excuse us from those that are stated. He that serves God uprightly will serve him continually.

6. Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among 7. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. 8. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? 9. Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? 10. a child of the Devil, and yet be found in the assem

Hast not thou made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land: 11. But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. 12. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thy hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

Job was not only so rich and great, but withal so wise and good, and had such an interest both in heaven and earth, that one would think the mountain of his prosperity stood so strong, that it could not be moved; but here we have a thick cloud gathering over his head, pregnant with a horrible tempest. We must never think ourselves secure from storms, while we are in this lower region.

Before we are told how his troubles surprised and seized him here in this visible world, we are here told how they were concerted in the world of spirits; that the Devil having a great enmity to Job for his eminent piety, begged and obtained leave to tor-ment him. It does not at all derogate from the credibility of Job's story in general, to allow that this discourse between God and Satan, in these verses, is parabolical, like that of Micaiah, (1 Kings xxii. 19, &c.) and an allegory designed to represent the malice of the Devil against good men, and the divine check and restraint that malice is under. Only thus much further is intimated, that the affairs of this earth are very much the subject of the counsels of the unseen world. That world is dark to us, but we lie very open to it.

Now here we have,

I. Satan among the sons of God, (v. 6.) an adversary (so Satan signifies) to God, to men, to all He thrust himself into an assembly of the sons of God, that came to present themselves before the Lord. This means, either, 1. A meeting of the saints on earth. Professors of religion, in the patriarchal age, were called sons of God; (Gen. vi. 2.) they had then their religious assemblies, and stated times for them. The king came in to see his guests; the eye of God was on all present: but there was a serpent in paradise, a Satan among the sons of God; when they come together, he is among them to distract and disturb them, stands at their right hand to resist them; the Lord rebuke thee, Satan! Or, 2. A meeting of the angels in heaven; they are the sons of God, ch. xxxviii. 7. They came to give an account of their negociations on earth, and to receive new instructions. Satan was one of them originally; but how art thou fallen, O Lucifer! He shall no more stand in that congregation; yet he is here represented as coming among them, either summoned to appear as a criminal, or connived at, for the present, though an intruder.

II. His examination, how he came thither; (v. 7.) The Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? He knew very well whence he came, and with what design he came thither; that, as the good angels came to do good, he came for a permission to do hurt; but he would, by calling him to an account, show him that he was under check and control. Whence comest thou? He asks this, 1. As wondering what brought him thither. Saul among the prophets? Satan among the sons of God? Yes, for he transforms himself into an angel of light, (2 Cor. xi. 13, 14.) and would seem one of them. Note, It is possible that a man may be

blies of the sons of God in this world, and there | may pass undiscovered by men, and yet be challenged by the all-seeing God; Friend, how camest thou in hither? Or, 2. As inquiring what he had been doing before he came thither: the same question was perhaps put to the rest of them that presented themselves before the Lord, "Whence came you?" We are accountable to God for all our

haunts, and all the ways we traverse.

III. The account he gives of himself, and the tour he had made. I come (says he) from going to and fro on the earth. 1. He could not pretend he had been doing any good, could give no such account of himself as the sons of God could, who firesented themselves before the Lord, who came from executing his orders, serving the interest of his kingdom, and ministering to the heirs of salvation. 2. He would not own he had been doing any hurt; that he had been drawing men from their allegiance to God, deceiving and destroying souls; no, I have done no wickedness, Prov. xxx. 20. Thy servant went no whither. In saying that he had walked to and fro through the earth, he intimates that he had kept himself within the bounds allotted him, and had not transgressed his tether; for the dragon is cast out into the earth, (Rev. xii. 9.) and not yet confined to his place of torment. While we are on this earth, we are within his reach; and with so much subtlety, swiftness, and industry, does he penetrate into all the corners of it, that we cannot be in any place secure from his temptations. 3. He yet seems to give some representation of his own character. (1.) Perhaps it is spoken proudly, and with an air of haughtiness, as if he were indeed the prince of this world, as if the kingdoms of the world, as if the kingdoms of the world the character his I would be all the character his I would be seen to the memory his I will be in the character of the memory his I will be in the character of the memory his I will be in the memory his in the memory his I will be in th world and the glory of them were his, (Luke iv. 6.) and he had now been walking in circuit through his own territories. (2.) Perhaps it is spoken fretfully, and with discontent; he had been walking to and fro, and could find no rest, but was as much a fugitive and a vagabond as Cain in the land of Nod. (3.) Perhaps it is spoken carefully; "I have been hard at work, going to and fro," or (as some read it) "searching about in the earth;" really in quest of an opportunity to do mischief. He walks about seeking whom he may devour. It concerns us therefore to be sober and vigilant.

IV. The question God puts to him concerning Job, (v. 8.) Hast thou considered my servant Job? As when we meet with one that has been in a distant place, where we have a friend we dearly love, we are ready to ask, "You have been in such a place; pray did you see my friend there?" Observe,

1. How honourably God speaks of Job; he is my servant. Good men are God's servants, and he is pleased to reckon himself honoured in their services, and that they are to him for a name and a firaise, (Jer. xiii. 11.) and a crown of glory, Isa. lxxxii. 3. "Yonder is my servant Job; there is none like him, none I value like him; of all the princes and potentates of the earth, one such saint as he is worth them all: none like him for uprightness and serious piety; many do well, but he excelleth them all; there is not to be found such great faith, no not in Israel." Thus Christ, long after held up the centurion and the woman of Canaan, who were both of them, like Job, strangers to that commonwealth. The saints glory in God; Who is like thee among the gods? And he is pleased to glory in them; Who is like Israel among the feeple? So here, none like Job, none in the earth, that state of imperfection; those in heaven do indeed far outshine him; those who are least in that kingdom are greater than he; but on earth there is none his like. There is none like him in that land: so some good men are the glory of their country.

racter of Job, Hast thou set thy heart on my ser vant Job? Designing hereby, (1.) To aggravate the apostasy and misery of that wicked spirit; "How unlike him art thou!" Note, The holiness and happiness of the saints are the shame and torment of the Devil and the Devil's children. (2.) To answer the Devil's seeming boast of the interest he had in this earth; "I have been walking to and fro in it," says he, "and it is all my own; all flesh have corrupted their way; they all sit still, and are at rest in their sins," Zech. i. 10, 11. "Nay hold," saith God, "Job is my faithful servant." Satan may boast, but he shall not triumph. (3.) To anticipate his accusations, as if he had said, "Satan, I know thine errand, thou art come to inform against Job; but hast thou considered him? Does not his unquestionable character give thee the lie?" Note, God knows all the malice of the Devil and his instruments against his servants; and we have an Advocate ready to appear for us, even before we

are accused.

V. The Devil's base insinuation against Job, in answer to God's encomium of him. He cannot deny but that Job feared God, but suggests that he was mercenary in his religion, and therefore a hypocrite, (v. 9.) Doth Job fear God for naught? Observe, 1. How impatient the Devil was of hearing Job praised, though it was God himself that praised him. Those are like the Devil, who cannot endure that any body should be praised but themselves, but grudge at the just share of reputation others have, as Saul, (1 Sam. xviii. 5, &c.) and the Pharisees, Matth. xxi. 15. 2. How much at a loss he was for something to object against him; he could not accuse him of any thing that was bad, and therefore charges him with by-ends in doing good. Had the one half of that been true, which his angry friends, in the heat of dispute, charged him with, (ch. xv. 4.—xxii. 5.) Satan would, no doubt, have brought it against him now; but no such thing could be alleged, and therefore, 3. See how slily he censures him as a hypocrite; not asserting that he was so, but only asking, "Is he not so?" This is the common way of slanderers, to suggest that, by way of query, which yet they have no reason to think is true; whisperers, backbiters! Note, It is not strange if those that are approved and accepted of God, be unjustly censured by the Devil and his instruments; if they are otherwise unexceptionable, it is easy to charge them with hypocrisy, as Satan charged Job, and they have no way to clear themselves, but patiently to wait for the judgment of God. As there is nothing we should dread more than being hypocrites, so there is nothing we need dread less than being called and counted so without cause. 4. How unjustly he accuses him as mercenary, to prove him a hypocrite. It was a great truth that Job did not fear God for naught; he got well by it, for godliness is great gain: but it was a falsehood that he would not have feared God if he had not got this by it, as the event proved. Job's friends charged him with hypocrisy, because he was greatly afflicted; Satan, because he greatly prospered. It is no hard matter for those to calumniate that seek an occasion. It is not mercenary to look at the eternal recompense, in our obedience; but to aim at temporal advantages in our religion, and to make it subservient to that, is spiritual idolatry, worshipping the creature more than the Creator, and is likely to end in a fatal apostasy; men cannot long serve God and mam-

VI. The complaint Satan made of Job's prosperity, v. 10. Observe, 1. What God had done for Job. He had protected him, made a hedge about him, for the defence of his person, his family, and 2. How closely he gives to Satan this good cha- all his possessions. Note, God's peculiar people

are taken under his special protection, they and all that belong to them; divine grace makes a hedge about their spiritual life, and divine providence about their natural life, so they are safe and easy. He had prospered him, not in idleness or injustice, (the Devil could not accuse him of them,) but in the way of honest diligence; Thou hast blessed the work of his hands; without that blessing, be the hands ever so strong, ever so skilful, the work will not prosper; but with that, his substance is wonderfully increased in the land: the blessing of the Lord makes rich; Satan himself owns it. 2. What notice the Devil took of it, and how he improved it against him. The Devil speaks of it with vexation; I see thou hast made a hedge about him, round about; as if he had walked it round, to see if he could spy ever a gap in it, for him to enter in at, to do him a mischief; but he was disappointed; it was a complete hedge. The wicked one saw it, and was grieved, and argued against Job, that the only reason why he served God was, because God prospered him. "No thanks to him to be true to the government that prefers him, and to serve a Master that pays him so well."

VII. The proof Satan undertakes to give of the hypocrisy and mercenariness of Job's religion, if he might but have leave to strip him of his wealth. "Let it be put to this issue," says he, v. 11. "make him poor, frown upon him, turn thine hand against him, and then see where his religion will be; touch what he has, and it will appear what he is. curse thee not to thy face, let me never be believed, but posted for a false accuser. Let me perish, if he curse thee not." So some supply the imprecation, which the Devil himself modestly concealed; but the profane swearers of our age impudently and daringly speak out. Observe, 1. How slightly he speaks of the affliction he desired that Job might be tried with; "Do but touch all that he has, do but begin with him, do but threaten to make him poor; a little cross will change his tone." 2. How spitefully he speaks of the impression it would make upon Job. "He will not only let fall his devotion, but turn it into an open defiance; not only think hardly of thee, but even curse thee to thy face." The word translated curse is barac, the same that ordinarily and originally signifies to bless; but cursing God is so impious a thing, that the holy language would not admit the name: but that, where the sense requires it, it must be so understood, is plain from 1 Kings xxi. 10..13. where the word is used concerning the crime charged on Naboth, that he did blaspheme God and the king.

Now, (1.) It is likely that Satan did think that Job, if impoverished, would renounce his religion, and so disprove his profession, and if so, (as a learned gentleman has observed in his Mount of Shirits,) Satan had made out his own universal empire among the children of men. God declared Job the best man then living: now, if Satan can prove him a hypocrite, it will follow that God had not one faithful servant among men, and that there was no such thing as true and sincere piety in the world, but religion was all a sham, and Satan was king de facto—in fact, over all mankind. But it appeared that the Lord knows them that are his, and is not deceived in any. (2.) However, if Job should retain his religion, Satan would have the satisfaction to see him sorely afflicted: he hates good men, and delights in their griefs, as God has pleasure in their

wilderned to Satan to afflict the house and they allowed him to do it, (v. 12.) "All that he has it in thy hand; make the trial as sharp as thou canst, do thy worst at him." Now, (1.) It is mat-

ter of wonder that God should give Satan such a permission as this, should deliver the soul of his turtle-dove into the hand of the adversary, such a lamb to such a lion; but he did it for his own glory, the honour of Job, the explanation of Providence, and the encouragement of his afflicted people in all ages; to make a case, which, being adjudged, might be a useful precedent. He suffered Job to be tried, as he suffered Peter to be sifted; but took care that his faith should not fail, (Luke xxii. 32.) and then the trial of it was found unto praise, and honour, and glory, 1 Pet. i. 7. But, (2.) It is matter of comfort that God has the Devil in a chain, Rev. xx. 1. He could not afflict Job without leave from God first asked and obtained, and then no further than he had leave; "Only upon himself put not forth thine hand; meddle not with his body, but only with his estate." It is a limited power that the Devil has; he has no power to debauch men, but what is given him from above.

men, but what is given him from above.

Lastly, Satan's departure from this meeting of the sons of God. Before they broke up, Satan went forth (as Cain, Gen. iv. 16.) from the presence of the Lord; no longer detained before him (as Doeg was, 1 Sam. xxi. 7.) than until he had accomplished his malicious purpose. He went forth, 1. Glad that he had gained his point; proud of the permission he had to do mischief to a good man; and, 2. Resolved to lose no time, but speedily to put his project in execution: he went forth now, not to go to and fro, rambling through the earth, but, with a direct course, to fall upon poor Job, who is carefully going on the way of his duty, and knows nothing of the matter. What passes between good and bad spirits concerning us, we are not aware.

13. And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them; 15. And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 16. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burnt up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 18. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: 19. And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

We have here a particular account of Job's troubles:

I. Satan brought them upon him on the very day that his children began their course of feasting, at their eldest brother's house, (v. 13.) where, he having (we may suppose) the double portion, the entertainment was the richest and most plentiful. The whole family, no doubt, was in perfect repose, and all were easy, and under no apprehension of trouble, now when they revived this custom; and this time Satan chose, that the trouble, coming now, might be the more grievous; The night of my pleasure has he turned into fear, Isa. xxi. 4.

II. They all come upon him at once; while one messenger of evil tidings was speaking, another came; and, before he had told his story, a third, and a fourth, followed immediately. Thus Satan, by the divine permission, ordered it, 1. That there might appear a more than ordinary displeasure of God against him in his troubles, and by that he might be exasperated against Divine Providence, as if it were resolved, right or wrong, to ruin him, and not give him time to speak for himself. 2. That he might not have leisure to consider and recollect himself, and reason himself into a gracious submission, but might be overwhelmed and overpowered by a complication of calamities. If he have not room to pause a little, he will be apt to speak in haste, and then, if ever, he will curse his God. Note, The children of God are often in heaviness, through manifold temptations: deep calls to deep, waves and billows, one upon the neck of another. Let one affliction therefore quicken and help us to prepare for another; for how deep soever we have drunk of the bitter cup, as long as we are in this world, we cannot be sure that we have drunk our share, and that it will finally pass from us. 3. They took from him all that he had, and made a full end of his enjoyments. The detail of his losses answers to the foregoing inventory of his possessions.

(1.) He had 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 she-asses, and a competent number of servants to attend them; and all those he lost at once, v. 14, 15. The account he has of this, lets him know, [1.] That it was not through any carelessness of his servants, for then his resentment might have spent itself upon them: the oxen were ploughing, not playing, and the asses not suffered to stray, and so taken up as waifs, * but feeding beside them, under the servants' eye, each in their place; and they that passed by, we may suppose, blessed them, and said, God speed the plough. Note, All our prudence, care, and diligence, cannot secure us from affliction, no not from those afflictions which are commonly owing to imprudence and negligence. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman, though ever so wakeful, wakes but in vain; yet it is some comfort under a trouble, if it found us in the way of our duty, and not in any by-path. [2.] That it was through the wickedness of his neighbours the Sabeans, a sort of robbers, perhaps, that lived by spoil and plunder; they carried off the oxen and asses, and slew the servants that faithfully and bravely did their best to defend them, and one only escaped, not in kindness to him or his master, but that Job might have the certain intelligence of it by an eye-witness, before he heard it by a flying report, which would have brought it upon him gra-We have no reason to suspect that either dually. Job or his servants had given any provocation to these Sabeans to make this inroad; but Satan put it into their hearts to do it, to do it now, and so gained a double point, for he made both Job to suffer, and them to sin. Note, When Satan has God's permission to do mischief, he will not want mischievous men to be his instruments in doing it,

for he is a spirit that works in the children of dis obedience.

(2.) He had seven thousand sheep, and shepherds that kept them; and all those he lost at the same time by lightning, v. 16. Job was perhaps, in his own mind, ready to reproach the Sabeans, and fly out against them for their injustice and cruelty, when the next news immediately directs him to look upward; The fire of God is fallen from heaven. As thunder is his voice, so lightning is his fire: but this was such an extraordinary lightning, and levelled so directly against Job, that all his sheep and shepherds were not only killed, but consumed, by it at once, and one shepherd only left alive to carry the news to poor Job. The Devil, aiming to make him curse God and renounce his religion, managed this part of the trial very artfully, in order thereunto. [1.] His sheep, with which especially he used to honour God in sacrifice, were all taken from him, as if God were angry at his offerings, and would punish him in those very things which he had employed in his service. Having misrepresented Job to God as a false servant, in pursuance of his old design to set Heaven and earth at variance, he here misrepresented God to Job as a hard Master, who would not protect those flocks out of which he had so many burntofferings: this would tempt Job to say, It is in vain to serve God. [2.] The messenger called the lightning the fire of God, (and innocently enough,) but perhaps Satan thereby designed to strike into his mind this thought, that God was turned to be his enemy, and fought against him, which was much more grievous to him than all the insults of the Sabeans. He owns, (ch. xxxi. 23.) that destruction from God was a terror to him. How terrible then were the tidings of this destruction, which came immediately from the hand of God! Had the fire from heaven consumed the sheep upon the altar, he might have construed it into a token of God's favour; but the fire consuming them in the pasture, he could not but look upon it as a token of God's displeasure: there had not been the like since Sodom was burned.

(3.) He had three thousand camels, and servants tending them; and he lost them all at the same time by the Chaldeans, who came in three bands, and drove them away, and slew the servants, v. 17. If the fire of God, which fell upon Job's honest servants, who were in the way of their duty, had fallen upon the Sabean and Chaldean robbers who were doing mischief, God's judgments therein would have been, like the great mountains, evident and conspicuous; but when the way of the wicked prospers, and they carry off their booty, when just and good men are suddenly cut off, God's righteousness is like the great deep, the bottom of which

we cannot find, Ps. xxxvi. 6.

(4.) His dearest and most valuable possessions were his ten children; and to conclude the tragedy, news is brought him, at the same time, that they were killed, and buried in the ruins of the house in which they were feasting, and all the servants that waited on them, except one that came express with the tidings of it, v. 18, 19. This was the greatest of Job's losses, and which could not but go nearest him; and therefore the Devil reserved it for the last, that, if the other provocations failed, this might make him curse God. Our children are pieces of ourselves; it is very hard to part with them, and touches a good man in as tender a part as any other. But to part with them all at once, and for them to be all cut off in a moment, who had been so many years his cares and hopes, went to the quick indeed. [1.] They all died together, and not one of them was left alive. David, though a wise and good man, was very much discomposed

by the death of one son; how hard then did it bear upon poor Job, who lost them all, and, in one monient, was written childless! [2.] They died suddenly: had they been taken away by some lingering disease, he had had notice to expect their death, and prepare for the breach; but this came upon him without giving him any warning. [3.] They died when they were feasting and making merry: had they died suddenly, when they were praying, he might the better, have borne it; he would have hoped that death had found them in a good frame, if their blood had been mingled with their sacrifices; but to have it mingled with their feast, where he himself used to be jealous of them, that they had sinned, and cursed God in their hearts—to have that day come upon them at unawares, like a thief in the night, when perhaps their heads were overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness; this could not but add much to his grief, considering what a tender concern he always had for his children's souls, and that they were now out of the reach of the sacrifices he used to offer, according to the number of them all. See how all things came alike to all. Job's children were constantly prayed for by their father, and lived in love one with another, and yet came to this untimely end. [4.] They died by a wind of the Devil's raising, who is the prince of the power of the air; (Eph. ii. 2.) but it was looked upon to be an immediate hand of God, and a token of his wrath. So Bildad construed it; (ch. viii. 4.) Thy children have sinned against him, and he has cast them away in their transgressions. [5.] They were taken away when he had most need of them to comfort him under all his other losses. Such miserable comforters are all creatures; in God only we have a present help at all times.

20. Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, 21. And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. 22. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

The Devil had done all he desired leave to do against Job, to provoke him to curse God; he had touched all he had, touched it with a witness; he whom the rising sun saw the richest of all the men in the east, before night was poor to a proverb. If his riches had been, as Satan insinuated, the only principle of his religion, now that he had lost his riches, he had certainly lost his religion; but the account we have, in these verses, of his pious deportment under his affliction, sufficiently proved the Devil a liar, and Job an honest man.

I. He conducted himself like a man, under his afflictions; not stupid and senseless, like a stock or stone, not unnatural and unaffected at the death of his children and servants; no, (v. 20.) he arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, which were the usual expressions of great sorrow, to show that he was sensible of the hand of the Lord that was gone out against him; yet he did not break out into any indecencies, nor discover any extravagant passion; he did not faint away, but arose, as a champion to the combat; he did not, in a heat, throw off his clothes, but very gravely, in conformity to the custom of the country, rent his mantle, his cloke, or outer garment; he did not passionately tear his hair, but deliberately shaved his head; by all which it appeared that he kept his temper, and bravely maintained the possession and repose of his

own soul, in the midst of all these provocations. The time when he began to show his feelings is observable; it was not till he heard of the death of his children, and then he arose, then he rent his mantle. A worldly unbelieving heart would have said, "Now that the meat is gone, it is well that the mouths are gone too; now that there are no portions, it is well that there are no children;" but Job knew better, and would have been thankful if Providence had spared his children, though he had had little or nothing for them, for Jehovah-jirch, the Lord will provide. Some expositors, remembering that it was usual with the Jews to rend their clothes when they heard blasphemy, conjecture that Job rent his clothes in a holy indignation at the blasphemous thoughts which Satan now cast into his mind, tempting him to curse God.

II. He conducted himself like a wise and good

II. He conducted himself like a wise and good man, under his affliction, like a ferfect and upright man, and one that feared God, and eschewed the evil of sin more than that of outward troubje.

1. He humbled himself under the hand of God, and accommodated himself to the providences he was under, as one that knew how to want as well as how to abound. When God called to weeping and mourning, he wept and mourned, rent his mantle, and shaved his head; and, as one that abased himself even to the dust before God, he feel down upon the ground, in a penitent sense of sin, and a patient submission to the will of God, accepting the punishment of his iniquity. Hereby he showed his sincerity; for hypocrites cry not when God binds them, Job xxxvi. 13. Hereby he prepared himself to get good by the affliction; for how can we improve the grief which we will not feel?

2. He composed himself with quieting considerations, that he might not be disturbed, and put cut of the possession of his own soul by these events: he reasons from the common state of human life, which he describes with application to himself; Naked came I (as others do) out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither, into the lap of our common mother, the earth; as the child, when it is sick or weary, lays its head in its mother's bosom. Dust we were in our original, and to dust we return in our exit, (Gen. iii. 19.) to the earth as we were; (Eccl. xii. 7.) naked shall we return thither, whence we were taken, namely, to the clay, Job xxxiii. 6. St. Paul refers to this of Job, (1 Tim. vi. 7.) We brought nothing of this world's goods into the world, but have them from others; and it is certain that we can carry nothing out, but must leave them to others. We come into the world naked; not only unarmed, but unclothed, helpless, shiftless, not so well covered and fenced as other creatures. The sin we are born in, makes us naked to our shame, in the eyes of the holy God. We go out of the world naked; the body does, though the sanctified soul goes clothed, 2 Cor. v. 3. Death strips us of all our enjoyments; clothing can neither warm nor adorn a dead body. This consideration silenced Job under all his losses. (1.) He is but where he was at first; he looks upon himself only as naked, not maimed, not wounded; he was himself still his own man, when nothing else was his own, and therefore but reduced to his first condition. Nemo tam fiaufier fiotest esse quam natus est—No one can be so foor as he was when born. Min. Felix. If we are impoverished, we are not wronged, nor much hurt, for we are but as we were born. (2.) He is but where he must have been at last, and is only unclothed, or unloaded rather, a little sooner than he expected. If we put off our clothes before we go to bed, it is some inconvenience, but it may be the better borne when it is near bed-time.

3. He gave glory to God, and expressed himself

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apon this occasion with a great veneration for the Divine Providence, and an awful submission to its disposals; we may well rejoice to find Job in this good frame, because this was the very thing upon which the trial of his integrity was put, though he did not know it. The Devil said that he would, under his affliction, curse God; but he blessed him,

and so proved himself an honest man.

(1.) He acknowledged the hand of God both in the mercies he had formerly enjoyed, and in the afflictions he was now exercised with: The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. We must own the Divine Providence, [1.] In all our comforts. God gave us our being, made us, and not we ourselves, gave us our wealth; it was not our own ingenuity or industry that enriched us, but God's blessing on our cares and endeavours; he gave us power to get wealth; not only made the creatures for us, but bestowed upon us our share. [2.] In all our crosses. The same that gave, hath taken away; and may he not do what he will with his own? See how he looks above instruments, and keeps his eye upon the First Cause; he does not say, "The Lord gave, and the Sabeans and Chaldeans have taken away; God made me rich, and the Devil has made me poor;" but, "He that gave, has taken;" and, for that reason, he is dumb, and has nothing to say, because God did it: He that gave all, may take which and when, how and how much, he pleases. Seneca could argue thus, Abstulit, sed et dedit—He took away, but he also gave; and Epictetus excellently, (cap. 15.) "When thou art deprived of any comfort, suppose a child taken away by death, or a part of thy estate lost, say not επώλεσα αυτε—I have lost it; but, àπέδωκ2-I have restored it to the right owner. thou wilt object, (says he) κακος ὁ ὑφελομενος—He is a bad man, that has robbed me; to which he an-Swers, Ti H To 1 Miss What is it to thee, by what hand he that gives remands what he gave?

(2.) He adores God in both. When all was gone, he fell down and worshipped. Note, Afflictions must not divert us from, but quicken us to, the exercise of religion. Weeping must not hinder sowing, nor hinder worshipping. He eyed not only the hand of God, but the name of God, in his afflictions, and gave glory to that, Blessed be the name of the Lord. He has still the same great and good thoughts of God that ever he had, and is as forward as ever to speak them forth to his praise; and can find in his heart to bless God, even when he takes away, as well as when he gives. Thus must we sing both of mercy and judgment, Ps. ci. 1. [1.] He blesses God for what was given, though now it was taken tway. When our comforts are removed from us, we must thank God that ever we had them, and bad them so much longer than we deserved. Nay, [2.] He adores God, even in taking away, and gives him honour by a willing submission; nay, he gives him thanks for good designed him by his afflictions, for gracious supports under his afflictions, and the believing hopes he had of a happy issue at

last

Lastly, Here is the honourable testimony which the Holy Ghost gives to Job's constancy and good conduct under his afflictions. He passed his trials with applause, v. 22. In all this, Job did not act uniss, for he did not attribute folly to God, nor in the least reflect upon his wisdom in what he had done. Discontent and impatience do, in effect, charge God with folly. Against the workings of these, therefore, Job carefully watched; and so must we, acknowledging, that as God has done right, but we have done wickedly, so God has done wisely, but we have done foolishly, very foolishly. They who not only keep their temper under crosses and provocations, but keep up good thoughts of God and sweet communion with him, whether their

praise be of men or no, it will be of God, as Job here was.

CHAP. II.

We left Job honourably acquitted, upon a fair trial be tween God and Satan concerning him. Satan bad leave to touch, to touch and take, all he had, and was confident that he would then curse God to his face; but, or the contrary, he blessed him, and so he was proved an honest man, and Satan a false accuser. Now, one would have thought, this had been conclusive, and that Job should never have had his reputation called in question again: but Job is known to be armonr of proof, and therefore is here set up for a mark, and brought upon his trial, a second time. I. Satan moved for another trial which should touch his bone and his flesh, v. 1. . 5. II. God, for holy ends, permits it, v. 6. III. Satan smites him with a very painful and loathsome disease, v. 7, 8. IV. His wife tempts him to curse God, but he resists the temptation, v. 9, 10. V. His friends come to condole with him, and to comfort him, v. 11..13. And in this that good man is set forth for an example of suffering affliction and of patience.

A GAIN there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD. 2. And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. 3. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. 4. And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin; yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life: 5. But put forth thy hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. 6. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thy hand; but save his

Satan, that sworn enemy to God and all good men, is here pushing forward his malicious prose-cution of Job, whom he hated because God loved him, and did all he could to separate between him and his God, to sow discord, and make mischief, between them, urging God to afflict him, and then urging him to blaspheme God. One would have thought that he had enough of his former attempt upon Job, in which he was so shamefully baffled and disappointed; but malice is restless, the Devil and his instruments are so. They that calumniate good people, and accuse them falsely, will have their saying, though the evidence to the contrary be ever so plain and full, and they have been cast in the issue which they themselves have put it upon. Satan will have Job's cause called over again. The malicious, unreasonable, importunity of that great persecutor of the saints is represented, (Rev. xii. 10.) by his accusing them before our God day and night, still repeating and urging that against them which has been many a time answered: so did Satan here accuse Job day after day. Here is,

They who not only keep their temper under crosses and provocations, but keep up good thoughts of God and sweet communion with him, whether their 6, 7. The angels attended God's throne, and Satan

among them. One would have expected him to natured. Thus are the ways and people of God come and confess his malice against Job, and his mistake concerning him; to cry, Peccavi-I have done wrong, for belying one whom God spake well of, and to beg pardon; but, instead of that, he comes with a further design against Job. He is asked the same question as before, Whence comest thou? And answers as before, From going to and fro in the curth; as if he had been doing no harm, though he

had been abusing that good man.

II. The Judge himself of counsel for the accused, and pleading for him; (v. 3.) "Hast thou considered my servant Job better than thou didst, and art thou now at length convinced that he is a faithful servant of mine, a perfect and an upright man; for thou seest he still holds fust his integray?" This is now added to his character as a further achievement; instead of tetting go his religion, and cursing God, he holds it faster than ever, as that which he has now more than ordinary occasion for; he is the same in adversity that he was in prosperity, and rather better, and more hearty and lively in blessing God than ever he was, and takes root the faster for being thus shaken. See, 1. How Satan is condemned for his allegations against Job; Thou movedst me against him, as an accuser, to destroy him without cause. Or, "Thou in vam movedst me to destroy him, for I will never do that." Good men, when they are cast down, are not destroyed, 2 Cor. iv. 9. How well is it for us, that neither men nor devils are to be our judges, for perhaps they would destroy us, right or wrong; but our judgment proceeds from the Lord, whose judgment never errs, or is biassed. 2. How Job is commended for his constancy, notwithstanding the attacks made upon him; "Still he holds fast his integrity, as his weapon, and thou canst not disarm him; as his treasure, and thou canst not rob him of that; nay, thine endeavours to do it make him hold it the faster; instead of *losing* ground by the temptation, he *gets* ground." God speaks of it with wonder, and pleasure, and something of triumph in the power of his own grace; Still he holds fast his integrity. Thus the trial of Job's faith was found to his praise and honour, 1 Pet. i. 7. Constancy crowns integrity.

III. The accusation further prosecuted, v. 4. What excuse can Satan make for the failure of his former attempt? What can be say to palliate it, when he had been so very confident that he should gain his point? Why, truly, he has this to say, . Skin for skin, and all that a man has, will he give for his life. Something of truth there is in this, that self-love and self-preservation are very powerful commanding principles in the hearts of men. Men love themselves better than their nearest relations, even their children, that are pieces of themselves; will not only venture, but give, their estates to save their lives. All account life sweet and precious, and while they are themselves in health and at ease, they can keep trouble from their hearts, whatever they lose. We ought to make a good use of this consideration, and while God continues to us our life and health, and the use of our limbs and senses, we should the more patiently bear the loss of other

comforts. See Matth. vi. 25.

But Satan grounds upon this an accusation of Job, slily representing him, 1. As unnatural to those about him, and one that laid not to heart the death of his children and servants, nor cared how many of them had their skins (as I may say) stripped over their ears, so long as he slept in a whole skin himself. As if he that was so tender of his children's souls, could be careless of their bodies, and, like the ostrich, hardened against his young ones, as though they were not his. 2. As wholly selfish, and minding nothing but his own ease and safety, as

often misrepresented by the Devil and his agents.

IV. A challenge given to make a further trial of Job's integrity; (v. 5.) "Put forth thine hand now, (for I find my hand too short to reach him, and too weak to hurt him,) and touch his bone and his flesh, (that is with him the only tender part, make him sick with smiting him, Mic. vi. 13.) and then, I dare say, he will curse thee to thy face, and let go his integrity." Satan knew it, and we find it by experience, that nothing is more likely to ruffle the thoughts, and put the mind into disorder, than acute pain and distemper of body. There is no disputing against sense. St. Paul himself had much ado to bear a thorn in the flesh, nor could he have borne it

without special grace from Christ, 2 Cor. xii. 7, 9. V. A permission granted to Satan to make this trial, v. 6. Satan would have had God put forth his hand and do it; but he afflicts not willingly, ner takes any pleasure in grieving the children of men, much less his own children; (Lam. iii. 33.) and therefore, if it must be done, let Satan do it, who delights in such work: He is in thine hand, do thy worst with him; (but with a proviso and limitation;) only save his life, or his soul. Afflict him, but not to death. Satan hunted for the precious life, would have taken that if he might, in hopes that dying agonies would have forced Job to curse his God; but God had mercy in store for Job after this trial, and therefore he must survive it, and, however he is afflicted, must have his life given him for a prey. If God did not chain up the roaring lion, how soon would he devour us! As far as he permits the wrath of Satan and wicked men to proceed against his people, he will make it turn to his praise and their's, and the remainder thereof he will restrain, Ps. lxxvi. 10. "Save his soul," that is, "his reason;" (so some;) "preserve to him the use of that, for, otherwise, it will be no fair trial; if, in his delirium, he should curse God, that will be no disproof of his integrity. It would be the language not of his heart, but of his distemper."

Joh, in being thus maligned by Satan, was a type of Christ, the first prophecy of whom was, that Satan should bruise his heel, (Gen. iii. 15.) and so he was foiled, as in Job's case. Satan tempted him to let go his integrity, his adoption; (Matth. iv. 6.) If thou be the Son of God. He entered into the heart of Judas who betrayed Christ, and (some think) with his terrors put Christ into his agony in the garden. He had permission to touch his bone and his flesh, without exception of his life, because by dying he was to do that which Job could not do; destroy him that had the power of death, that is the

So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils, from the sole of his foot unto his crown. And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes. 9. Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die. 10. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.

The Devil, having got leave to tear and worry poor Job, presently fell to work with him, as a tormentor first, and then a tempter. His own children he tempts first, and draws them to sin, and afterof his religion made him sour, and morose, and ill- | ward torments, when thereby he has brought them JOB, 11.

to ruin; but this child of God he tormented with affliction, and then tempted to make a bad use of his affliction. That which he aimed at, was, to make Job curse God; now here we are told what course he took both to move him to it, and move it to him; both to give him the provocation, else it would be to no purpose to urge him to it, and to give him the information, else he would not have thought of it: thus artfully is the temptation managed with all the subtilty of the old serpent, who is here playing the same game against Job that he played against our first parents; (Gen. 3.) aiming to seduce him from his allegiance to his God, and to rob him of his integrity.

I. He provokes him to curse God, by smiting him with sore boils, and so making him a burthen to himself, v. 7, 8. The former attack was extremely violent, but Job kept his ground, bravely made good the pass, and carried the day: yet he is still but girding on the hamess, there is worse behind; the clouds return after the rain; Satan, by the divine permission, follows his blow, and now deep

calls unto deep.

1. The disease was very grievous with which Job was seized; Satan smote him with boils, sore boils, all over him, from head to foot; with an evil inflammation, so some render it; an erysipelas, perhaps, in a higher degree. One boil, when it is gathering, is torment enough, and gives a man abundance of pain and uneasiness. What a condition was Job then in, that had boils all over him, and no part free, and those of as raging a heat as the Devil could make them, and, as it were, set on fire of hell! The small-pox is a very grievous and painful disease, and would be much more terrible than it is, but that we know the extremity of it ordinarily lasts but a few days; how grievous then was Job's disease, who was smitten all over with sore boils or grievous ulcers, which make him sick at heart, put him to exquisite torture, and to spread themselves over him, that he could lay himself no way for any ease. If at any time we be exercised with sore and grievous distempers, let us not think ourselves dealt with any otherwise than as God has sometimes dealt with the best of his saints and servants. We know not how much Satan may have a hand (by divine permission) in the diseases with which the children of men, and especially the children of God, are afflicted; what infections that prince of the air may spread, what inflammations may come from that fiery serpent. We read of one whom Satan had bound many vears, Luke xiii. 16. Should God suffer that roaring lion to have his will against any of us, how miserable would be soon make us!

2. His management of himself, in this distemper,

was very strange, 71. 8.

(1.) Instead of healing salves he took a potsherd, a piece of a broken pitcher, to scrape himself withal; a very sad pass this poor man was come to. When a man is sick and sore, he may bear it the better, if he be well tended and carefully looked after: many rich people have, with a soft and tender hand, charitably ministered to the poor in such a condition as this; even Lazarus had some ease from the tongues of the dogs that came and licked his sores; but poor Job has no help afforded him. [1.] Nothing is done to his sores but what he does himself, with his own hands. His children and servants are all dead, his wife unkind, ch. xix. 17. He has not wherewithal to fee a physician, or surgeon; and, which is most sad of all, none of those he had formerly been kind to had so much sense of honour and gratitude as to minister to him in his distress, and lend him a hand to dress or wipe his running sores, either because the disease was loathsome and noisome, or because they apprehended it to be infectious. Thus it was in the former days, as it

will be in the last days; men were i vers of their own selves, unthankful, and without natural affection. [2.] All that he does to his sores is, to scrupe them; they are not bound up with soft rags, nor mollified with ointment, not washed or kept clean; no healing plasters laid on them, no opiates, no anodynes, ministered to the poor patient, to alleviate the pain, and compose him to rest, nor any cordials to support his spirits; all the operation is the scraping of the ulcers, which, when they were come to a head, and began to die, made his body all over like a scurf, as is usual in the end of the small-pox. It would have been an endless thing to dress his boils one by one, he therefore resches thus to do it by wholesale; a remedy which the would think as bad as the disease. [3.] He h s nothing to do this with but a potsherd, no surgeou's instrument proper for the purpose, but that which would rather rake into his wounds, and add to his pain, than give him any ease. People that are sick and sore, have need to be under the discipline and direction of others, for they are often but bad managers of themselves.

(2.) Instead of reposing himself in a soft and warm bed, he sat down among the ashes. Probably he had a bed left him; (for, though his fields were stripped, we do not find that his house was burnt or plundered;) but he chose to sit in the ashes, either because he was weary of his bed, or because he would put himself into the place and posture of a penitent, who, in token of his self-abhorrence, lay in dust and ashes, ch. xlii. 6. Isa. lviii. 5. Jon. iii. 6. Thus did he humble himself under the mighty hand of God, and bring his mind to the meanness and poverty of his condition. He complains, (ch. vii. 5.) that his flesh was clothed with worms, and clods dust; and therefore dust to dust, ashes to ashes. If God lay him among the ashes, there he will contentedly sit down: a low spirit becomes low circumstances, and will help to reconcile us to them. The Septuagint reads it, He sat down upon a dunghill without the city; (which is commonly said, in mentioning this story;) but the original says no more than that he sat in the midst of the ashes, which he might do in his own house.

II. He urges him, by the persuasions of his own wife, to curse God, v. 9. The Jews (who covet much to be wise above what is written) say that Job's wife was Dinah, Jacob's daughter: so the Chaldee paraphrase. It is not likely that she was; but, whoever it was, she was to him like Michal to David, a scoffer at his piety. She was spared to him, when the rest of his comforts were taken away, for this purpose, to be a troubler and tempter If Satan leaves any thing that he has permission to take away, it is with a design of mischief. It is policy to send his temptations by the hand of those that are dear to us, as he tempted Adam by Eve, and Christ by Peter. We must therefore carefully watch, that we be not drawn to say or do a wrong thing by the influence, interest, or entreaty, of any, no net those for whose epinion and favour we have ever so great a value. Observe how strong this temptation was,

I. She banters Job for his constancy in his religion; "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Art thou so very obstinate in thy religion, that nothing will cure thee of it? So tame and sheepish, as thus to truckle to a God, who is so far from rewarding thy services with marks of his favour, that he seems to take a pleasure in making thee miserable, strips thee, and scourges thee, without any provo-

cation given? Is this a God to be still loved, and blessed, and served?"

Dost thou not see that thy devotion's vaiu? What have thy prayers procur'd, but wee and pain? Hast thou not yet thine int'rest moderstood? Perversely righteous, and absurdly good? JOB, II

Those painful sores, and all thy losses, show How Heaven regards the footish saints below. Lecorrigibly pious! Can't thy God Reform thy stupid virtue with his rod?

Sir R. BLACKMORE

Thus Satan still endeavours to draw men from God, as he did our first parents, by suggesting hard thoughts of him, as one that envies the happiness, and delights in the misery, of his creatures, than which nothing is more false. Another artifice he uses, is, to drive men from their religion, by loading them with scoffs and reproaches for their adherence to it: we have reason to expect it, but we are fools if we heed it: our Master himself has undergone it, we shall be abundantly recompensed for it, and with much more reason may we recort it upon the scoffers, "Are you such fools as still to retain your impiety, when you might bless God, and live?"

2. She urges him to renounce his religion, to blaspheme God, set him at defiance, and dare him to do his worst; "Curse God, and die; live no longer in dependence upon God, wait not for relief from him, but be thine own deliverer, by being thine own executioner, end thy troubles by ending thy life, better die once than be always dying thus; thou mayest now despair of having any help from thy God, even curse him, and hang thyself." These are two of the blackest and most horrid of all Sitan's temptations, and yet such as good men have sometimes been violently assaulted with: nothing is more contrary to natural conscience than blaspheming God, nor to natural sense than self-murder; therefore the suggestion of either of these may well be suspected to come immediately from Satan. Lord, lead us not into temptation, not into such, not into any, temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

III. He bravely resists and overcomes the temptation, v. 10. He soon gave her an answer, (for Satan spared him the use of his tongue, in hopes he would curse God with it,) which showed his constant resolution to cleave to God, to keep his good thoughts of him, and not to let go his inte-

1. How he resented the temptations; he was indignant at having such a thing mentioned to him; "What! Curse God? I abhor the thought of it; get thee behind me, Satan." In other cases, Job reasoned with his wife with a great deal of mildness, even when she was unkind to him; (ch. xix. 17.) I entreated her for the children's sake of my own body. But when she persuaded him to curse God, he was much displeased; Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. He does not call her a fool, and an atheist, nor does he break out into any indecent expressions of his displeasure, as those who are sick and sore are apt to do, and think they may be excused; but he shows her the evil of what she said, that she spake the language of the infidels and idolaters, who, when they are hardly bestead, fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, Isa viii. 21. We have reason to suppose, that, in such a pious household as Job had, his wife was one that had been well-affected to religion, but that now, when all their estate and comfort were gone, she could not bear the loss with that temper of mind that Job had; but that she should go about to infect his mind with her wretched distemper, was a great provocation to him, and he could not forbear thus showing his resentment. Note, (1.) Those are angry and sin not, who are angry only at sin, and take a temptation as the greatest affront; who cannot bear them that are evil, Rev. ii. 2. When Peter was a Satan to Christ, he told him plainly, Thou art an offence to me. (2.) If those whom we think wise and good, at any time speak that which is foolish and bad, we ought to re-

prove them faithfully for it, and show them the evil of what they say, that we suffer not sin upon them. (3.) Temptations to curse God ought to be rejected with the greatest abhorrence, and not so much as to be parleyed with: whoever persuades us to that, must be looked upon as our enemy, to whom if we yield it is at our peril. Job did not curse God, and then think to come off with Adam's excuse, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she persuaded me to it, (Gen. iii. 12.) which had in it a tacit reflection on God, his ordinance, and providence; no, if theu scornest, if thou cursest, thou alone shalt bear it.

2. How he reasoned against the temptation; Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil also? Those whom we reprove, we must endeavour to convince; and it is no hard matter to give a reason why we should still hold fast our integrity, even when we are stripped of every thing else. He considers that though good and evil are contraries, yet they do not come from contrary causes, but both from the hand of God; (Isa. xlv. 7. Lam. iii. 38.) and therefore that in both we must have our eye up unto him, with chankfulness for the good he sends, and without fretfulness at the

evil. Observe the force of his argument,

(1.) What he argues for; not only the bearing, but the receiving, of evil; Shall we not receive evil? that is, [1.] "Shall we not expect to receive it? If God give us so many good things, shall we be surprised, or think it strange, if he sometimes afflict us, when he has told us that prosperity and adversity are set the one over-against the other?" 1 Pet. iv. 12. [2.] "Shall we not set ourselves to receive it aright?" The word signifies to receive as a gift, and denotes a pious affection and disposition of soul under our afflictions, neither despising them nor fainting under them, accounting them gifts; (Phil. i. 29.) accepting them as punishments of our iniquity; (Lev. xxvi. 41.) acquiescing in the will of God in them; ("Let him do with me as seemeth him good;") and accommodating ourselves to them, as those that know how to want as well as how to abound, Phil. iv. 12. When the heart is humbled, and weaned, by humbling weaning providences, then we receive correction, (Zech. iii. 2.) and take up our cross.

(2.) What he argues from; "Shall we receive so much good as has come to us from the hand of God, during all those years of peace and presperity that we have lived; and shall we not now receive evil, when God thinks fit to lay it on us?" Note, The consideration of the mercies we receive from God, both past and present, should make us receive our afflictions with a suitable disposition of spirit. we receive our share of the common good in the seven years of plenty, shall we not receive our share of the common evil in the years of famine? Qui sensit commodum, sentire debet et onus—He who feels the privilege, should prepare for the privation. If we have so much that pleases us, why should we not be content with that which pleases God? If we receive so many comforts, shall we not receive some afflictions, which will serve as feils to our comforts, to make them the more valuable; (we are taught the worth of mercies, by being made to want them sometimes;) and as allays to our comforts, to make them the less dangerous, to keep the balance even, and to prevent our being lifted up above measure? 2 Cor. xii. 7. If we receive so much good for the body, shall we not receive some good for the soul; that is, some afflictions, by which we partake of God's holiness; (Heb. xii. 10.) something which, by saddening the countenance, makes the heart better? Let murmuring, therefore, as well as boasting, be for ever excluded.

IV. Thus, in a good measure, Job still held fast

his integrity; and Satan's design against him was [defeated. In all this did not Job sin with his lips; he not only said this well, but all he said, at this time, was under the government of religion and right reason: in the midst of all these grievances, he did not speak a word amiss; and we have no reason to think but that he also preserved a good temper of mind, so that though there might be some stirrings and risings of corruption in his heart, yet grace got the upper hand, and he took care that the root of bitterness might not spring up to trouble him, Heb. xii. 15. The abundance of his heart was for God, produced good things, and suppressed the evil that was there, which was out-voted by the better side. If he did think any evil, yet he laid his hand upon his mouth, (Prov. xxx. 32.) stifled the evil thought, and let it go no further; by which it appeared, not only that he had true grace, but that it was strong, and victorious; in short, that he had not forfeited the character of a perfect and upright man; for so he appears to be, who, in the undst of such temptation, offends not in word, Jam. iii. 2. Ps. xvii. 3.

11. Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him, and to comfort him. 12. And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. 13. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.

We have here an account of the kind visit which Job's three friends made him in his affliction. The news of his extraordinary troubles spread into all parts; he being an eminent man, both for greatness and goodness, and the circumstances of his troubles being very uncommon. Some, who were his enemies, triumphed in his calamities; (ch. xvi. 10.xix. 18.—xxx, 1, &c.) perhaps they made ballads on him: but his friends concerned themselves for him, and endeavoured to comfort him; a friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. Three of them are here named, (v. 11.) Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. We shall meet with a fourth after, who, it should seem, was present at the whole conference, namely, Elihu; whether he came as a friend of Job, or only as an auditor, does not appear: these three are said to be his friends, his intimate acquaintances, as David and Solomon had each of them one in their court, that was called the king's friend. These three were eminently wise and good men, as appears by their discourses; they were old men, very old, they had a great reputation for knowledge, and much deference was paid to their judgment, ch. xxxii. 6. It is probable that they were men of figure in their country-princes, or heads of houses. Now observe,

I. That Job, in his prosperity, had contracted a friendship with them: if they were his equals, yet he had not that jealousy of them; if his inferiors, yet he had not that disdain of them, which was any hinderance to an intimate converse and correspon-

dence with them. To have such friends, added more to his happiness in the day of his prosperity, than all the heads of cattle he was master of. Much of the comfort of this life lies in acquaintance and friendship with those that are prudent and virtuous; and he that has a few such friends, ought to value them highly. Job's three friends are sup posed to be all of them of the posterity of Abra ham, which, for some descents, even in the families that were shut out from the covenant of peculiarity, retained some good fruits of that pious education which the father of the faithful gave to these under his charge. Eliphaz descended from Temun, the grandson of Esan; (Gen. xxxvi. 11.) Bildad (it is probable) from Shuah, Abraham's son by Keturah, Gen. xxv. 2. Zephar is thought by some to be the same with Zepho, a descendant from Esau, Gen. xxxvi. 11. The preserving of so much wisdom and piety among those that were strangers to the covenants of promise, was a happy presage of God's grace to the Gentiles, when the partition wall should, in the latter days, be taken down. Esau was rejected; yet many that came from him inherited some of the best blessings.

11. That they continued their friendship with Job in his adversity, when most of his friends had forsaken him, *ch.* xix. 14. Two ways they showed

their friendship,

1. By the kind visit they made him in his affliction, to mourn with him, and to comfort him, v. 11. Probably, they had been wont to visit him in his prosperity, not to hunt or hawk with him, not to dance or play at cards with him, but to entertain and edify themselves with his learned and pieus converse; and now, that he was in adversity, they came to share with him in his griefs, as formerly they had come to share with him in his comforts. These were wise men, whose heart was in the house of mourning, Eccl. vii. 4. Visiting the afflict ed, sick or sore, fatherless or childless, in their sorrow, is made a branch of pure religion and undefiled; (Jam. i. 27.) and, if done from a good principle, will be abundantly recompensed shortly, Matth. xxv. 36. By visiting the sons and daughters of affliction, we may contribute to the improvement, (1.) Of our own graces; for many a good lesson is to be learned from the troubles of others; we may look upon them, and receive instruction, and be made wise and serious. (2.) Of their comforts; by putting a respect upon them, we encourage them, and some good word may be spoken to them, which may help to make them easy. Job's friends came, not to satisfy their curiosity with an account of his troubles, and the strangeness of the circumstances of them; much less, as David's false friends, to make invidious remarks upon him, (Ps. xli. 6.8.) but to mourn with him, to mingle their tears with his, and so to comfort him. It is much more pleasant to visit those in affliction, to whom comfort belongs, than those to whom we must first speak conviction.

Concerning these visitants, observe, [1.] That they were not sent for, but came of their own accord; (ch. vi. 22.) whence Mr. Caryl observes, that it is good manners to be an unbidden guest at the house of mourning, and, in comforting our friends, to prevent their invitations. [2.] That they made an appointment to come. Note, Good people should make appointments among themselves for doing good, so exciting and obliging one another to it, and assisting and encouraging one another in it. For the carrying on of any picus design, let hand join in hand. [3.] That they came with a design (and we have reason to think it was a sincere design) to comfort him, and yet proved miserable comforters, through their unskilful management of his case. Many that aim well, by mistake, come short of

their aim.

2. By their tender sympathy with him and concern i'r him in his affliction; when they saw him at some distance, he was so disfigured and deformed with his sories, that they knew him not, v. 12. His face was forl with weefing, (ch. xvi. 16.) like Jerus Jeru's Naza ites, that had been ruddy as the rubies, but were now blacker than a coal, Lam. iv. 7, 8. What a change will a sorie disease, or, without that, oppressing care and grief, make in the countenance, in a little time! Is this Naomi? Ruth i. 19. So, Is this Job? How art thou fallen! How is thy glory stained and sullied, and all thine honour laid in the dust! God fit us for such changes!

Observing him thus miserably altered, they did not leave him, in a fright or loathing, but expressed

so much the more tenderness toward him.

(1.) Coming to mourn with him, they vented their undissembled grief in all the then usual expressions of that passion; they wept aloud; the sight of them, (as is usual,) revived Job's grief, and set him a-weeping afresh, which fetched floods of tears from their eyes. They rent their clothes, and sprinkled dust upon their heads, as men that would strip themselves, and abase themselves, with their friend that

was stripped and abased.

(2.) Coming to comfort him, they sat down with nim upon the ground, for so he received visits; and they, not in compliment to him, but in true compassion, put themselves into the same humble and uneasy place and posture. They had many a time, it is likely, sitten with him on his couches, and at his table, in his prosperity, and were therefore willing to share with him in his grief and poverty, because they had shared with him in his joy and plenty. It was not a modish short visit that they made him, just to look upon him and be gone; but, as those that could have no enjoyment of themselves, if they had returned to their place, while their friend was in so much misery, they resolved to stay with him till they saw him mend or end, and therefore took lodgings near him, though he was not now able to entertain them as he had done, and they must therefore bear their own charges. Every day, for seven days together, at the hours in which he admitted company, they came and sat with him, as his companions in tribulation, and exceptions from that rule, Nullus ad admissas ibit amicus ones—They who have lost their wealth, are not to expect the visits of their friends.

They sat with him, but none spake a word to

They sat with him, but none spake a word to him, only they all attended to the particular narratives he gave of his troubles. They were silent, as men astonished and amazed; Curæleves loquuntur, ingentes stuhent—Our lighter griefs have a voice; those which are more oppressive, are mute; or, ac-

cording to Sir R. Blackmore,

So long a time they held their peace, to show A reverence due to such prodigious woe.

They spake not a word to him, whatever they said one to another, by way of instruction, for the improvement of the present providence. They said nothing to that purport to which afterward they said much—nothing to grieve him; (ch. iv. 2.) because they saw his grief was very great already, and they were loath at first to add affliction to the afflicted. There is a time to keep silence, when either the wicked is before us, and by speaking we may harden them, (Ps. xxxix. 1.) or when by speaking we may offend the generation of God's children, Ps. lxxiii. 15. Their not entering upon the following solemn discourses till the seventh day, may perhaps intimate that it was the sabbath-day, which, doubtless, was observed in the patriarchal age, and to that day they adjourned the intended conference, because, probably, then company resorted, as usual, to Job's house, to join with him in his devotions, who might be edified by the discourse. Or rather.

by their silence so long, they would intimate, that what they afterwards said was well considered and digested, and the result of many thoughts. The heart of the wise studies to answer. We should think twice before we speak once, especially in such a case as this, think long, and we shall be the better able to speak short and to the purpose.

CHAP. III.

Ye have heard of the patience of Job, says the apostle, Janev. 11. So we have, and of his impatience too. We wondered that a man should be so patient as he was; (ch. i. and ii.) but we wondered also, that a good man should be so impatient as he is here in this chapter, where we find him cursing his day, and, in passion, l. Complaining that he was born, v. 1-10. II. Complaining that he did not die as soon as he was born, v. 11-19. III. Complaining that his life was now continued when he was in misery, v. 20-26. In this, it must be owned that Job sinned with his lips, and it is written, not for our imitation, but our admonition, that he who thinks he stands, may take heed lest he fall.

FTER this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day. 2. And Job spake, and said, 3. Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived. 4. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it. 5. Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify 6. As for that night, let darkness seize upon it; let it not be joined unto the days of the year; let it not come into the number of the months. 7. Lo, let that night be solitary; let no joyful voice come therein. 8. Let them curse it that curse the day, who are ready to raise up their mourning. Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark; let it look for light, but have none; neither let it see the dawning of the day: 10. Because it shut not up the doors of my mother's womb, nor hid sorrow from mine eyes.

Long was Job's heart hot within him; while he was musing, the fire burned, and the more for being stifled and suppressed; at length, he spake with his tongue, but not such a good word as David spake after a long pause, Lord, make me to know my end, Ps. xxxix. 3, 4. Seven days the prophet Ezekiel sat down astonished with the captives, and then (probably on the sabbath-day) the word of the Lord came to him, Ezek. iii. 15, 16. So long Job and his friends sat thinking, but said nothing; they were afraid of speaking what they thought, lest they should grieve him, and he durst not give vent to his thoughts, lest he should offend them. They came to comfort him, but, finding his afflictions very extraordinary, they began to think comfort did not belong to him, suspecting him to be a hypocrite, and therefore they said nothing. But losers think they may have leave to speak, and therefore Job gives vent first to his thoughts. Unless they had been better, it had been well if he had kept them to himself.

In short, he cursed his day, the day of his birth, to that day they adjourned the intended conference, because, probably, then company resorted, as usual, to Job's house, to join with him in his devotions, who might be edified by the discourse. Or rather,

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the unhappiest day of the year, because the unhappiest of his life, being the inlet into all his woe.

Now

I. This was bad enough. The extremity of his trouble and the discomposure of his spirits may excuse it in part, but he can by no means be justified Now he has forgotten the good he was born in it. to, the lean kine have caten up the fat ones, and he is filled with thoughts of the evil only, and wishes he had never been born. The prophet Jeremiah himself expressed his resentment of his calamities, in language not much unlike this, Hoe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me! (Jer. xv. 10.) Cursed be the day wherein I was born, Jer. xx. 14, We may suppose that Job, in his prosperity, had many a time blessed God for the day of his birth, and reckoned it a happy day; yet now he brands it with all possible marks of infamy. When we consider the iniquity in which we were conceived and born, we have reason enough to reflect with sorrow and shame upon the day of our birth, and to say that the day of our death, by which we are freed from sin, (Rom. vi. 7.) is far better, Eccl. vii. 1. But to curse the day of our birth, because then we entered upon the calamitous scene of life, is to quarrel with the God of nature, to despise the dignity of our being, and to indulge a passion which our own calm and sober thoughts will make us ashamed of. Certainly there is no condition of life a man can be in in this world, but he may, in it, (if it be not his own fault,) so honour God, and work out his own salvation, and make sure a happiness for himself in a better world, that he will have no reason at all to wish he had never been born, but a great deal of reason to say that he had his being to good purpose. Yet it must be owned, if there were not another life after this, and divine consolations to support us in the prospects of it, so many are the sorrows and troubles of this, that we might sometimes be tempted to say that we were made in vain, (Ps. lxxxix. 47.) and to wish we had never been. There are those in hell, who, with good reason, wish they had never been born, as Judas, Matth. xxvi. 24. But, on this side hell, there can be no reason for so vain and ungrateful a wish. It was Job's folly and weakness to curse his day; we must say of it, This was his infirmity; but good men have sometimes failed in the exercise of those graces which they have been most eminent for, that we may understand, that, when they are said to be *perfect*, it is meant that they were upright, not that they were sinless. Lastly, Let us observe it, to the honour of the spiritual life above the natural, that, though many have cursed the day of their first birth, never any cursed the day of their new birth, nor wished they never had had grace, and the spirit of grace given them; those are the most excellent gifts, above life and being itself, and which will never be a burthen.

II. Yet it was not so bad as Satan promised himself: Job cursed his day, but he did not curse his God; was weary of his life, and would gladly have parted with that, but not weary of his religion; he resolutely cleaves to that, and will never let it go. The dispute between God and Satan concerning Job, was not whether Job had his infirmities, and whether he was subject to like passions as we are; (that was granted;) but whether he was a hypocrite, and secretly hated God, and, if he were provoked, would show it: upon trial, it proved that he was no such man. Nay, all this may consist with his being a pattern of patience; for though he did thus speak unadvisedly with his lips, yet, both before and after, he expressed great submission and resignation to the holy will of God, and repented of his impatience; he condemned himself for it, and therefore God did not condemn him; nor must we,

but watch the more carefully over ourselves, lest we sin after the similitude of this transgression.

The particular expressions which Job used, in cursing his day, are full of poetical fancy, flame, and rapture; and create as much difficulty to the critics as the thing itself does to the divines; we need not be particular in our observations upon them.
When he would express his p..ssionate wish that

he had never been, he falls foul upon the day; and,

1. He wished that earth might forget it; Let it perish, v. 3. Let it not be joined to the days of the year, v. 6. "Let it be not only not inserted in the calendar in red letters, as the day of the king's nativity useth to be," (and Job was a king, ch. xxix. ult.) "but let it be rased and blotted out, and buried in oblivion. Let not the world know that ever such a man as I was born into it, and lived in it,

who am made such a spectacle of misery. 2. That Heaven might frown upon it; Let not God regard it from above, v. 4. "Every thing is indeed as it is with God; that day is honourable on which he puts honour, and which he distinguishes and crowns with his favour and blessing, as he did the seventh day of the week; but let my birth-day never be so honoured, let it be nigro carbone notandus-marked as with a black coal, for an evil day, by him that determines the times before appointed. The Father and Fountain of light appointed the greater light to rule the day, and lesser lights to rule the night; but let that want the benefit of both." (1.) Let that day be darkness; (v. 4.) and if the light of the day be darkness, how great is that durkness! It is terrible, because then we look for light. Let the gloominess of the day represent Job's condition, whose sun went down at noon. (2.) As for that night too, let it want the benefit of moon and stars, and let darkness seize upon it, thick darkness, darkness that may be felt, which will not befriend the repose of the night by its silence, but

rather disturb it with its terrors.

3. That all joy might forsake it; "Let it be a melancholy night, solitary, and not a merry night of music or dancing; let no joyful voice come therein;" (v. 7.) "let it be a long night, and not see the eye-lids of the morning," (v. 9.) "which bring joy

with them."

4. That all curses might follow it; (v. 8.) "Let none ever desire to see it, or bid it welcome when it comes, but, on the contrary, let them curse it that curse the day. Whatever day any are tempted to curse, let them at the same time bestow one curse upon my birth-day; particularly those that make it their trade to raise up mourning at funerals with their ditties of lamentation. Let them that curse the day of the death of others, in the same breath curse the day of my birth." Or, these who are so fierce and daring as to be ready to raise up the Leviathan, for that is the word here; who, being about to strike the whale or crocodile, curse it with the bitterest curse they can invent, hoping by these incantations to weaken it, and so to make themselves masters of it. Probably some such custom might there be used, to which cur divine poet at-Let it be as odious as the day wherrin men bewail the greatest misfortune, or the time wherein they see the most dreadful apparition: so Bishep Patrick, I suppose, taking the Levisthan here to signify the Devil, as others do, who understand it of the curses used by conjurers and magicians in raising the Devil, or when they have raised a devil that they cannot lay.

But what is the ground of Job's quarrel with the day and night of his birth? It is because it shut not ufi the doors of his mother's womb, v. 10. See the folly and madness of a passionate discontent, and how absurdly and extravagantly it taiks, when the reins are laid on the neck of it. Is this Job, who

men gave ear, and kept silence at his counsel, and ufter his words they spake not again? ch. xxix. 21, 22. Surely his wisdom failed him, (1.) When he took so much pains to express his desire that he had never been born, which, at the best, was a vain wish, for it is impossible to make that which has been, not to have been. (2.) When he was so liberal of his curses upon a day and a night, that could not be hurt, or made ever the worse for his curses. (3.) When he wished a thing so very barbarous to his own mother, as that she might not have brought him forth, when her full time was come; which must inevitably have been her death, and a miserable death. (4.) When he despised the goodness of God to him, (in giving him a being, such a being, so noble and excellent a life, such a life, so far above that of any other creature in this lower world,) and undervalued the gift, as not worth the acceptance, only because transit cum onere—it was clogged with a provise of trouble, which now, at length, came upon him, after many years' enjoy-ment of its pleasures. What a foolish thing it was to wish that his eyes had never seen the light, that so they might not have seen sorrow, which yet he might hope to see through, and beyond which he might see joy! Did Job believe and hope that he should in his flesh see God at the latter day; (ch. xix. 26.) and yet would he wish he never had had a being capable of such a bliss, only because, for the present, he had sorrow in the flesh? God, by his grace, arm us against this foolish and hurtful lust of impatience!

11. Why died I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly ! 12. Why did the knees prevent me? or why the breasts that I should suck! 13. For now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept: then had I been at rest, 14. With kings and counsellors of the earth, which built desolate places for themselves; 15. Or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver: 16. Or as a hidden untimely birth I had not been; as infants which never saw light. 17. There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. 18. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master.

Job, perhaps reflecting upon himself for his folly in wishing he had never been born, follows it, and thinks to mend it, with another, little better, that he had died as soon as he was born, which he enlarges upon in these verses. When our Saviour would set forth a very calamitous state of things, he seems to allow such a saying as this, Blessad are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the halfs which never gave suck; (Luke xxiii. 29.) but blessing the barren womb is one thing, and cursing the fruitful womb is another! It is good to make the nest of afflictions, but it is not good to make the worst of mercies. Our rule is, Bless, and curse not.

Life is often put for all good, and death for all evil; yet Job here very absurdly complains of life and its supports, as a curse and plague to him, and covets death and the grave, as the greatest and most desirable bliss. Surely Satan was deceived in Job, when he applied that maxim to him, All that a man

was so much admired for his wisdom, that unto him hath will he give for his life; for never any man men gave ear, and kent silence at his counsel, and valued life at a lower rate than he did.

1. He ungratefully quarrels with life, and is angry that it was not taken from him as soon as 't was given him; (v. 11, 12.) Why died not I from the womb? See here, 1. What a weak and helpless creature man is when he comes into the world, and how slender the thread of life is, when it is first We are ready to die from the womb, and to breathe our last, as soon as we begin to breathe at all. We can do nothing for ourselves, as other creatures can, but should drop into the grave, if the knees did not prevent us; and the lamp of life, when first lighted, would go out of itself, if the breasts given us, that we should suck, did not supply it with fresh oil. 2 What a merciful and tender care Divine Providence took of us, at our entrance into the world. It was owing to this, that we died not from the womb, and did not give up the ghost when we came out of the belly. Why were we not cut off as soon as we were born? Not because we did not deserve it; justly might such weeds have been plucked up as soon as they appeared, justly might such cockatrices have been crushed in the egg: not because we did, or could, take any care of ourselves and our own safety; no creature comes into the world so shiftless as man. It was not our might, or the power of our hand, that preserved us these beings; but God's power and providence upheld our frail lives, and his pity and patience spared our forfeited lives. It was owing to this that the knees prevented us. Natural affection is put into parents' hearts by the hand of the God of nature: and hence it was, that the blessings of the breast attended those of the womb. 3. What a great deal of vanity and vexation of spirit attends human life. If we had not a God to serve in this world, and better things to hope for in another world, considering the faculties we are endued with, and the troubles we are surrounded with, we should be strongly tempted to wish that we had died from the womb, which had prevented a great deal both of sin and misery.

He that is born to-day, and dies to-morrow, Loses some hours of joy, but months of sorrow.

4. The evil of impatience, fretfulness, and discontent; when they thus prevail, they are unreasonable and absurd, impious and ungrateful; they are a slighting and undervaluing of God's favour. How much soever life is imbittered, we must say, was of the Lord's mercies that we died not from the womb, that we were not consumed." Hatred of life is a contradiction to the common sense and sentiments of mankind, and our own at another time. Let discontented people declaim ever so much against life, they will be loath to part with it when it comes to the point. When the old man in the fable, being tired with his burthen, threw it down with discontent, and called for death, and death came to him, and asked him what he would have with him, he then answered, "Nothing, but help me up with my burthen."

II. He pessionately applauds death and the grave, and seems quite in love with them. To desire to die, that we may be with Christ, that we may be free from sin, and that we may be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, is the effect and evidence of grace; but to desire to die, only that we may be quiet in the grave, and delivered from the troubles of this life, savours of corruption. Joh's considerations here may be of good use to reconcile us to death when it comes, and to make us easy under the arrest of it; but they ought not to be made use of as a pretence to quarrel with life while it is continued, or to make us uncasy under the burthens of it. It is our wisdom and duty to make the

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Lest of that which is, be it living or dying, and so to live to the Lord, and die to the Lord, and to be his in both, Rom. xiv. 8.

Job here frets himself with thinking, that, if he had but died as soon as he was born, and been car-

ried from the womb to the grave,

1. His condition would have been as good as that of the best. I should have been (says he, v. 14.) with kings and counsellors of the earth, whose pomp, power, and policy, cannot set them out of the reach of death, nor secure them from the grave, nor distinguish their's from common dust in the grave. Even princes, who had gold in abundance, could not, with it, bribe death to overlook them when he came with commission; and though they filled their houses with silver, yet they were forced to leave it all behind them, no more to return to it. Some, by the desolate places which the kings and counsellors are here said to build for themselves, understand the sepulchres or monuments they prepured for themselves in their life-time; as Shebna (Is . xxii. 16.) hewed him out a sepulchre; and by the gold which the princes had, and the silver with which they filled their houses, they understand the treasures which, they say, it was usual to deposit in the graves of great men. Such arts have been used to preserve their dignity, if possible, on the other side death, and to keep themselves from lying even with those of inferior rank; but it will not do; death is, and will be, an irresistible leveller; Mors scriptra ligonibus æquat—Death mingles sceptres with spades. Rich and poor meet together in the grave; and there, a hidden untimely birth, (v. 16.) a child that either never saw light, or but just opened its eyes, and peeped into the world, and, not liking it, closed them again, and hastened out of it, lies as soft and easy, lies as high and safe, as kings, and counsellors, and princes that had gold; "And therefore," says Job, "would I had lain there in the dust, rather than live to lie here in the ashes!

2. His condition would have been much better than now it was, v. 13. "Then should I have lain still and been quiet, which now I cannot do, I cannot be, but am still tossing and unquiet; then I should have slept, whereas now sleep departeth from mine eyes; then had I been at rest, whereas now I am restless." Now that life and immortality are brought to a much clearer light by the gospel than before they were placed in, good Christians can give a better account than this of the gain of death; "Then should I have been present with the Lord, then should I have seen his glory face to face, and no longer through a glass darkly;" but all that poor Job dreamed of, was rest and quietness in the grave, cut of the fear of evil tidings, and out of the feeling of sore boils. Then should I have been quiet; and had he kept his temper, his even easy temper still, which he was in, in the two foregoing chapters, entirely resigned to the holy will of God, and acquiescing in it, he might have been quiet now; his soul,. at least, might have dwelt at ease, even when his

body lay in pain, Ps. xxv. 13.

Observe how finely he describes the repose of the grave; which (provided the soul also be at rest in

God) may much assist our triumph over it.

(1.) Those that now are troubled, will there be out of the reach of trouble; (v. 17.) There the wicked cease from troubling: when persecutors die, they can no longer persecute, their hatred and envy are now herished. Herod had vexed the church, but when he became a prey for worms, he ceased from troubling. When the persecuted die, they are out of the danger of being any further troubled. Had Job been at rest in his grave, he had had no disturbance from the Sabeans and Chaldeans, none of all nis enemies had created him any trouble.

(2.) These that are now toiled, will there see the

period of their toils; there the weary are at rest heaven is more than a rest to the souls of the saints, but the grave is a rest to their bodies; their pilgrimage is a weary pilgrimage; sin and the world they are weary of; their services, sufferings, and expectations, they are wearied with; but in the grave they rest from all their labours, Rev. xi. 13. Isa. lvii. 2. They are easy there, and make no complaints; there believers sleep in Jesus.

(3.) Those that were here enslaved, are there at liberty: death is the prisoner's discharge, the reli f of the oppressed, and the servant's manunissien, \(\tau\).

8. There the prisoners, though they walk net; t large, yet they rest together, and are not put to work, to grind in that prison-house. They are no more insulted and trampled upon, menaced as d terrified, by their cruel task-my sters; 'hey hear not the voice of the oppressor. They that were here doomed to perpetual servitude, that could call nothing their own, no not their own by dies, are there no longer under command or control; there the servant is free from his master; which is a good reason why those that have power should use it mederately, and those that are in subjection should bear it patiently, yet a little while.

(4.) Those that were at a vast distance from all others, there are upon a level, v. 19. The small and great are there, there the same, there all one, all alike free among the dead. The tedious pomp and state, which attend the great, are at an end there; all the inconveniences of a poor and lew condition are likewise over; death and the grave know

no difference.

Levell'd by death, the conqueror and the slave, The wise and foolish, cowards and the brave, Lie mix'd and undistinguished in the grave. Sir R. Blackmore.

20. Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul; 21. Which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures; 22. Which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they can find the grave? 23. Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in? 24. For my sighing cometh before I eat, and my roarings are poured out like the waters. 25. For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me. 26. I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came.

Job, finding it to no purpose to wish either that he had not been born, or had died as soon as he was born, here complains that his life was now continued, and not cut off. When men are set on quarrelling, there is no end of it; the corrupt heart will carry on the humour: having cursed the day of his birth, here he courts the day of his death. The beginning of this strife and impatience is as the let-

ting forth of water.

1. He thinks it hard, in general, that miserable lives should be prolonged; (v. 20..22.) Wherefore is light in life given to them that are bitter in soul? Bitterness of soul, through spiritual grievances, makes life itself bitter. Why doth he give light? So it is in the original: he means God, yet does not name him, though the Devil had said, "He will curse thee to thy face;" but he tacitly reflects on the Divine Providence as unjust and unkind, in continuing life, when the comforts of life are removed.

Life is called light, because pleasant and serviceable for walking and working; it is candle-light, the longer it burns, the shorter, and the nearer to the socket, it grows. This light is said to be given us; for if it were not daily renewed to us by a fresh gift, it would be lost. But Job reckons, that, to those who are in misery, it is despoi adapoi — gift and no gift, a gift that they had better be without, while the light only serves them to see their own misery by. Such is the vanity of human life, that it sometimes becomes a vexation of spirit; and so alterable is the property of death, that, though dreadful to nature, it may become even desirable to nature itself. He speaks of those here, (1.) Who iong for death, when they have out-lived their comforts and usefulness, are burthened with age and infirmities, with pain or sickness, poverty or disgrace, and yet it comes not; while, at the same time, it comes to many who dread it, and would put it far The continuance and period of life from them. must be according to God's will, not according to our's. It is not fit that we should be consulted how long we would live, and when we would die; our times are in a better hand than our own. (2.) Who dig for it as for hid treasures; that is, would give any thing for a fair dismission out of this world, which supposes that then the thought of men's being their own executioners was not so much as entertained or suggested, else those who longed for it needed not take much pains for it, they might soon come at it, (as Seneca tells them,) if they pleased. (3.) Who bid it welcome, and are glad when they can find the grave, and see themselves stepping into it. If the miseries of this life can prevail, contrary to nature, to make death itself desirable, shall not much more the hopes and prospects of a better life, to which death is our passage, make it so, and set us quite above the fear of it? It may be a sin to long for death, but I am sure it is no sin to long for heaven.

2. He thinks himself, in particular, hardly dealt with, that he might not be eased of his pain and misery by death, when he could not get ease any other way. To be thus impatient of life, for the sake of the troubles we meet with, is not only unnatural in itself, but ungrateful to the Giver of life, and argues a sinful indulgence of our own passion, and a sinful inconsideration of our future state. Let it be our great and constant care to get ready for another world, and then let us leave it to God to order the circumstances of our removal thither as he thinks fit; "Lord, when and how thou pleasest;" and this with such an indifferency, that if he should refer it to us, we would refer it to him again. Grace teaches us, in the midst of life's greatest comforts, to be willing to die, and, in the midst of its greatest

Job, to excuse himself in this earnest desire which he had to die, pleads the little comfort and satis-

faction he had in life.

crosses, to be willing to live.

(1.) In his present afflicted state, troubles were continually felt, and were likely to be so. He thought he had cause enough to be weary of living, for, [1.] He had no comfort of his life; My sighing comes before I eat, v. 24. The sorrows of life , comes before I eat, v. 24. prevented and anticipated the supports of life; nay, they took away his appetite for his necessary food. His griefs returned as duly as his meals, and afflic-tion was his daily bread. Nay, so great was the extremity of his pain and anguish, that he did not only sigh, but roar, and his roarings were poured out like the waters in a full and constant stream. Our Master was acquainted with grief, and we must expect to be so too. [2.] He had no prospect of bettering his condition, his way was hid, and God had hedged him in, v. 23. He saw no way open of deliverance, nor knew he what course !!

to take; his way was hedged up with thorns, that he could not find his path. See ch. xxiii. 8. Lam

(2.) Even in his former prosperous, state troubles were continually feared; so that *then* he was never easy, v. 25, 26. He knew so much of the vanity of the world, and the troubles to which, of course he was born, that he was not in safety, neither had he rest then. That which made his grief now the more grievous, was, that he was not conscious to himself of any great degree either of negligence or security in the day of his prosperity, which might provoke God thus to chastise him. [1.] He had not been negligent and unmindful of his affairs, but kept up such a fear of trouble as was necessary to the maintaining of his guard: he was afraid for his children, when they were feasting, lest they should offend God; (ch. i. 5.) afraid for his servants, lest they should offend his neighbours; he took all the care he could of his own health, and managed himself and his affairs with all possible precaution; yet all would not do. [2.] He had not been secure, nor indulged himself in ease and softness, had not trusted in his wealth, nor flattered himself with the hopes of the perpetuity of his mirth; yet trouble came, to convince and remind him of the vanity of the world, which yet he had not forgotten when he lived at ease. Thus his way was hid, for he knew not wherefore God contended with him. Now this consideration, instead of aggravating his grief, might rather serve to alleviate it: nothing will make trouble easy so much as the testimony of our consciences for us, that, in some measure, we did our day in a day of prosperity: and an expectation of trouble will make it sit the lighter when it comes. The less it is a surprise, the less it is a terror.

CHAP. IV.

Job having warmly given vent to his passion, and so bro-ken the ice, his friends here come gravely to give vent to their judgment upon his case; which perhaps they had communicated to one another apart, compared notes upon it, and talked it over among themselves, and found they were all agreed in their verdict, that Job's afflictions certainly proved him to have been a hypocrite; but they did not attack Job with this high charge, till by the expressions of his discontent and impatience, in which they thought he reflected on God himself, he had confirmed them in the bad opinion they had before conceived of him and his character. Now they set upon him with great fear. The dispute begins, and it soon him with great fear. The dispute begins, and it soon becomes fierce. The opponents are Job's three friends, Job himself is respondent, Elihu appears, first, as moderator, and, at length, God himself gives judgment upon the controversy, and the management of it. The question in dispute, is, whether Job was an honest man or The same question that was in dispute between God and Satan in the two first chapters. yielded it, and durst not pretend that his cursing of his day was a constructive cursing of his God; no, he can-Job's friends will needs have it, that, if Job were an honest man, he would not have been thus sorely and thus tediously afflicted, and therefore urge him to confess himself a hypocrite in the profession he had made of religion: "No," says Job, "that I will never do; I have offended God, but my heart, notwithstanding, has been upright with him;" and still he holds fast the comfort of his integrity. Eliphaz, who, it is likely, was the senior, or of the best quality, begins with him in this charter, in which I He heaves? chapter; in which, I. He bespeaks a patient hearing, v. 2. II. He compliments Job with an acknowledgment of the eminency and usefulness of the profession he had made of religion, v. 3, 4. III. He charges him with hypoerisy in his profession, grounding his charge upon his present troubles, and his conduct under them, v. 5, 6. IV. To make good the inference, he maintains, that man's wickedness is that which always brings God's judgments, v. 7. 11. V. He corroborates his assertion by a vision which he had, in which he was reminded of the incontestable purity and justice of God, and the meanness, weakness, and sinfulness, of man, v. 12...21.

By all this he aims to bring down Job's spirit, and to | make him both penitent and patient under his afflic-

1. THEN Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, 2. If we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved? But who can withhold himself from speaking? 3. Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. 4. Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. 5. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled. 6. Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, the uprightness of thy ways, and thy hope?

In these verses,

I. Eliphaz excuses the trouble he is now about to give to Job by his discourse; (v. 2.) "If we assay a word with thee, offer a word of reproof and counsel, wilt thou be grieved, and take it ill? We have reason to fear thou wilt: but there is no remedy; Who can refrain from words?" Observe, 1. With what modesty he speaks of himself and his own attempt. He will not undertake the management of the cause alone, but very humbly joins his friends with him; "We will commune with thee:" they that plead God's cause, must be glad of help, lest it suffer through their weakness. He will not promise much, but begs leave to assay or attempt, and try if he could propose any thing that might be pertinent, and suit Job's case. In difficult matters, it becomes us to pretend no further, but only to try what may be said or done. Many excellent discourses have gone under the modest title of Essays. 2. With what tenderness he speaks of Job, and his present afflicted condition; "If we tell thee our mind, wilt thou be grieved? Wilt thou take it ill? Wilt thou lay it to thine own heart as thine afflic-tion, or to our charge as our fault? Shall we be reckoned unkind and cruel, if we deal plainly and futhfully with thee? We desire we may not, we hope we shall not, and should be sorry if that should be ill resented which is well intended." Note, We ought to be afraid of grieving any, especially those that are already in grief, lest we add affliction to the afflicted, as David's enemies, Ps. lxix. 26. We should show ourselves backward to say that which we foresee will be grievous, though ever so necessary. God himself, though he afflicts justly, yet he does not afflict willingly, Lam. iii. 33. 3. With what assurance he speaks of the truth and pertinency of what he was about to say; Who can withhold himself from speaking? Surely it was a pious zeal for God's honour, and the spiritual welfare of Job, that laid him under this necessity of speaking; "Who can forbear speaking in vindication of God's honour, which we hear reproved, in love to thy soul, which we see endangered?" Note, It is foolish pity not to reprove our friends, even our friends in affliction, for what they say or do amiss, only for fear of offending them. Whether men take it well or ill, we must with wisdom and meekness do our duty, and discharge a good conscience.

II. He exhibits a twofold charge against Job. 1. As to his particular conduct under this affliction; he charges him with weakness and faintheartedness; this article of his charge there was too much ground for, v. 3..5. And here,

(1.) He takes notice of Job's former serviceableness to the comfort of others. He owns that Job had instructed many, not only his own children and | it touches thee, thou faintest, thou art troubled'

servants, but many others, his neighbours and friends, as many as fell within the sphere of his activity. He did not only encourage those who were teachers by office and countenance them, and pay for the teaching of those who were poor, but he did himself instruct many: though a great man, he did not think it below him. King Solomon was a preacher: though a man of business, he found time to do it, went among his neighbours, talked to them about their souls, and gave them good counsel. O that this example of Job were imitated by our great men! If he met with those who were ready to fall into sin, or sink under their troubles, his words upheld them: a wonderful dexterity he had in offering that which was proper to fortify persons against temptations, to support them under their burthens, and to comfort affli ted consciences. He had, and used, the tongue of the learned, knew how to speak a word in season to them that were weary, and employed himself much in that good With suitable counsels and comforts he strengthened the weak hands for work and service and the spiritual warfare, and the feeble knees for bearing up the man in his journey and under his load. It is not our duty only to lift up our own hands, that hang down, by quickening and encouraging ourselves in the way of duty, (Heb. xii. 12.) but we must also strengthen the weak hands of others, as there is occasion, and do what we can that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, Isa. xxxv. 3, 4. The expressions seem to be borrowed thence. Note, They who have abundance of spiritual riches, should abound in spiritual charity. A good word, well and wisely spoken, may do more good than perhaps we think of.

But why does Eliphaz mention this here? [1.] Perhaps he praises him thus for the good he had done, that he might make the intended reproof the more passable with him. Just commendation is a good preface to a just reprehension, will help to remove prejudices, and will show that the reproof comes not from ill-will. Paul praised the Cerinthians before he chid them, 1 Cor. zi. 2. [2.] He remembers how Job had comforted others as a reason why he might justly expect to be himself comforted; and yet, if conviction was necessary in order to comfort, they must be excused if they applied themselves to that first: the Comforter shall reprove, John xvi. 8. [3.] He speaks this, perhaps, in a way of pity, lamenting, that, through the extremity of his affliction, he could not apply those comforts to himself which he had formerly administered to others. It is easier to give good counsel than to take it; to preach meekness and patience than to practise them. Facile omnes, cum valemus, rectum concilium ægrotis damus-We all find it easy, when in health, to give good advice to the sick. Terent. [4.] Most think that he mentions it as an aggravation of his present discontent, upbraiding him with his knowledge, and the good offices he had done for others, as if he had said, "Thou that hast taught others, why dest not thou teach thyself? Is not this an evidence of thine hypocrisy, that thou hast prescribed that medicine to others which thou wilt not now take thyself, and so contradictest thyself, and actest against thine own known principles? Then that teachest another not to faint, dost thou faint? Rcm. ii. 21. Physician, heal thyself." They who have rebuked others, must expect to hear of it, if they themselves become obnoxious to rebuke.

(2.) He upbraids him with his present low-spiritedness, v. 5. "Now that it is come upon thee, now that it is thy turn to be afflicted, and the bitter cup, that goes round, is put into thy hand, now that Here, [1.] He makes too light of Job's afflictions; "It touches thee." The very word that Satan h.mself had used, ch. i. 11.—ii. 5. Had Eliphaz felt but the one half of Job's afflictions, he would have said, "It smites me, it wounds me;" but, speaking of Job's afflictions, he makes a mere trifle of it; "It touches thee, and thou canst not bear to be to tched;" Noti me tangere—Touch me not. [2.] He makes too much of Job's resentments, and aggravates them; "Thou faintest, or thou art beside thyself; thou ravest, and knowest not what thou sayest." Men in deep distress must have grains of alfowance, and a favourable construction put upon what they say; when we make the worst of every word, we do not as we would be done by.

2. As to his general character before this affliction, he charges him with wickedness and falseheartedness; that article of his charge was utterly groundless and unjust. How unkindly does he banter him, and upbraid him with the great profession of religion he had made, as if it were all now come to nothing, and proved a sham; (v. 6.) "Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways? Does it not all appear now to be a mere pretence? For, hadst thou been sincere in it, God would not thus have afflicted thee, nor wouldest thou have behaved thus under the affliction." This was the very thing Satan aimed at, to prove Job a hypocrite, and disprove the character God had given of him: when he could not himself do this to God, but He still saw and said, Job is perfect and upright, then he endeavoured, by his friends, to do it to Job himself, and to persuade him to confess himself a hypocrite: could he have gained that point, he would have triumphed, Habes confitentem reum—Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee. But, by the grace of God, Job was enabled to hold fast his integrity, and would not bear false witness against himself. Note, Those that pass rash and uncharitable censures upon their brethren, and condemn them for hypocrites, do Satan's work, and serve his interest, more than they are aware of. I know not how it comes to pass that this verse is differently read in several editions of our common English Bibles; the original, and all the ancient versions, put thy hope before the uprightness of thy ways. So does the Geneva and most of the editions of the last translation; but I find one of the first, in 1612, has it, Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, the uprightness of thy ways, and thy hope? Both the Assembly's Annotations, and Mr. Poole's, have that reading; and an edition in 1660 reads it, "Is not thy fear thy confidence, and the uprightness of thy ways thy hope? Does it not appear now, that all the religion, both of thy devotion, and of thy conversation, was only in hope and confidence that the u shouldest grow rich by it? Was it not all mercenary." The very thing that Satan suggested. Is not thy religion thy hope, and thy right ways thy confidence? So Mr. Broughton. Or, "Was it not? Didst thou not think that that would have been thy protection? But thou art deceived." Or, "Would it not have been so? If it had been sincere, would it not have kept thee from this despair?" It is true, if thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength, thy grace, is small; (Prov. xxiv. 10.) but it does not therefore follow that thou hast no grace, no strength at all. man's character is not to be taken from a single act.

Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off? 8. Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness; reap the same. 9. By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed. 10. The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of the young lions, are broken. 11. The old lion perisheth for lack of prey, and the stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad.

Eliphaz here advances another argument to prove Job a hypocrite, and will have not only his impatience under his afflictions to be evidence against him, but even his afflictions themselves, being so very great and extraordinary, and there being no prospect at all of his deliverance out of them.

To strengthen this argument, he here lays down

these two principles, which seem plausible enough.

I. That good men were never thus ruined: for the proof of this, he appeals to Job's own observation; (v. 7.) "Remember, I pray thee; recollect all that thou hast seen, heard, or read, and give me an instance of any one that was innocent and righteous, and yet perished as thou dost, and was cut off as thou art." If we understand it of a final and eternal destruction, his principle is true. None that are innocent and righteous, perish for ever: it is only a man of sin that is a son of herdition, 2 Thess. ii. 3. But then it is ill applied to Job; he did not thus perish, nor was he cut off: a man is never undone till he is in hell. But, if we understand it of any temporal calamity, his principle is not true. The righteous perish; (Isa. lvii. 1.) There is one event both to the righteous and to the wicked, (Eccl. ix. 2.) both in life and death; the great and certain difference is after death. Even before Job's time, (as early as it was,) there were instances sufficient to contradict this principle, Did not righteous Abel perish being innocent; and was not he cut off in the beginning of his days? Was not righteous Lot burnt out of house and harbour, and forced to retire to a melancholy cave? Was not righteous Jacob, a Syrian, ready to perish? Deut. xxvi. 5. Similar instances, no doubt, there were, which are not on record.

II. That wicked men were often thus ruined: for the proof of this, he vouches his own observation; (v. 8.) "Even as I have seen, many a time, They that hlough iniquity, and sow wickedness, by the blast of God they perish, v. 9. We have daily in-stances of that; and therefore, since thou dost thus perish, and art consumed, we have reason to think that, whatever profession of religion theu hast made, thou hast but ploughed iniquity, and sown wickedness. Even as I have seen in others, so do I see in thee.

I. He speaks of sinners in general, politic busy sinners, that take pains in sin, for they plough iniquity; and expect gain by sin, for they sow wickedness: they that plough, plough in hope; but what is the issue? They reap the same: they shall, of the flesh, reap corruption and ruin, Gal. vi. 7, 8. The harvest will be a heap in the day of grief and destances. perate sorrow, Isa. xvii. 11. He shall reap the same, that is, the proper product of that seedness that which the sinner sows, he sows not that body that shall be, but God will give it a body, a body of death, the end of those things, Rom. vi. 21. Some by iniquity and wickedness, understand wrong and injury done to others; they who plough and sow them, shall reap the same, that is, they shall be paid in their own coin. They who are trouble-some, shall be troubled, 2 Thess. i. 6. Jesh. vii. 25. The spoilers shall be spoiled; Isa. xxxiii. 1. (and they that led captive, shall go captive,) Rev. xiii. 10.

He further describes their destruction; (v. 9.)By the blast of God they perish. The projects they take so much pains in, are defeated; God cuts in sunder the cords of those ploughers, Ps. exxix. 3, 4. They themselves are destroyed, which is the just punishment of their iniquity. They perish, that is, they are destroyed utterly; they are consumed, that is, they are destroyed gradually; and this, by the blast and breath of God, that is, (1.) By his wrath; his anger is the ruin of sinners, who are therefore called wessels of wrath, and his breath is said to kindle Tophet, Isa. xxx. 33. Who knows the power of his anger? Ps. xc. 11. (2.) By his word; he speaks, and it is done, easily and effectually. The Spirit of God, in the word, consumes sinners; with that he slays them, Hos. vi. 5. Saying and doing are not two things with God. The man of sin is said to be consumed with the breath of Christ's mouth, 2 Thess. ii. 8. Compare Isa. xi. 4. Rev. xix. 21. Some think that in attributing the destruction of sinners to the blast of God, and the breath of his nostrils, he refers to the wind which blew the house down upon Job's children, as if they were therefore sinners above all men, because they suffered such things, Luke xiii. 2.

cause they suffered such things, Luke xiii. 2.
2. He speaks particularly of tyrants and cruel oppressors, under the similitude of lions, v. 10, 11. Observe, (1.) How he describes their cruelty and oppression. The Hebrew tongue has five several names for lions, and they are all here used to set forth the terrible tearing power, fierceness, and cruelty, of proud oppressors; they roar, and rend, and prey, upon all about them, and bring up their voung ones to do so too, Ezek. xix. 3. The Devil is a roaring lion; and they partake of his nature, and do his lusts. They are strong as lions, and subtle; (Ps. x. 9.—xvii. 12.) and, as far as they prevail, lay all desolate about them. (2.) How he describes their destruction; the destruction both of their power and of their persons; they shall be restrained from doing further hurt, and reckoned with for the hurt they have done. An effectual course shall be taken, [1.] That they shall not terrify; the voice of their roaring shall be stopped. [2.] That they shall not tear; God will disarm them, will take away their power to do hurt, the teeth of the young lions are broken, Ps. iii. 7. Thus shall the remainder of wrath be restrained. [3.] That they shall not enrich themselves with the spoil of their neighbours. Even the old lion is famished, and perishes for lack of prey: they that have surfeited on spoil and rapine, are perhaps reduced to such straits as to die of hunger at last. [4.] That they shall not, as they promise themselves, leave a succession; the stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad, to seek for food themselves, which the old ones used to bring in for them, Nah. ii. 12. The lion did tear in pieces for his whelps, but now they must shift for them-selves. Perhaps Eliphaz intended, in this, to retlect upon Job, as if he, being the greatest of all the men of the east, had got his estate by spoil, and used his power in oppressing his neighbours; but now, his power and estate were gone, and his family scattered: if so, it was pity that a man whom God praised, should be thus abused.

2. Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. 13. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, 14. Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. 15. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stead up: 16. It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof; an image was before mine eyes; there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying, 17. Shall mortal

man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his Maker! 18. Behola, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: 19. How much less on them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth! 20. They are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish for ever, without any regarding it. 21. Doth not their excellency which is in them go away? they die, even without wisdom.

Eliphaz, having undertaken to convince Job of the sin and folly of his discontent and impatience, here vouches a vision he had been favoured with, which he relates to Job for his conviction. What comes immediately from God, all men will pay a particular deference to, and Job, no doubt, as much as any. Some think Eliphaz had this vision now lately, since he came to Job, putting words into his mouth wherewith to reason with him; and it had been well if he had kept to the purport of this vision, which would serve for a ground on which to reprove Job for his murmuring, but not to condemn him for a hypocrite. Others think he had it formerly; for God did in this way often communicate himself to the children of men in those first ages of the world, ch. xxxiii. 15. Probably, God had sent Eliphaz this messenger and message some time or other, when he was himself in an unquiet discontented frame, to calm and pacify him. Note, As we should comfort others with that wherewith we have been comforted, (2 Cor. i. 4.) so we should endeavour to convince others with that which has been powerful to convince us.

The people of God had not then any written word to quote, and therefore God sometimes notified to them even common truths, by the extraordinary ways of revelation. We that have Bibles, have there (thanks be to God) a more sure word to depend upon than even visions and voices, 2 Pet. i. 19.

I. The manner in which this message was sent to Eliphaz, and the circumstances of the conveyance of it to him. 1. It was brought him secretly, or by stealth; some of the sweetest communion gracious souls have with God, is in secret, where he only, who is all eye, can perceive. God has ways of bringing conviction, counsel, and comfort, to his people, unobserved by the world, by private whis-pers, as powerfully and effectually as by the public ministry. His secret is with them, Ps. xxv. 14. As the evil spirit often steals good words out of the heart, (Matth. xiii. 19.) so the good Spirit some-times steals good words into the heart, or ever we are aware. 2. He received a little thereof, v. 12. And it is but little of divine knowledge that the best receive in this world: we know little, in comparison with what is to be known, and with what we shall know when we come to heaven. How little a portion is heard of God! ch. xxvi. 14. We know but in part, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. See his humility and modesty. He pretends not to have understood it fully, but something of it he perceived. 3. It was brought him in the visions of the night; (v, 13.) when he was retired from the world and the hurry of it, and all about him was composed and quiet. Note, The more we are withdrawn from the world and the things of it, the fitter we are for communion with God. When we are communing with our own hearts, and are still, (Ps. iv. 4.) then is a proper time for the Holy Spirit to commune with us. When others were asleep, Eliphaz was ready to receive this vision from Heaven, and probably, like David, was meditating upon God in the night

watches; in the midst of those good thoughts, this is most impious and absurd to think either others thing was brought to him. We should hear more or ourselves more just and pure than God. Those from God, if we thought more of him; yet some are surprised with convictions in the night, ch. xxxiii. 14, 15. 4. It was prefaced with terrors; Fear came upon him, and trembling, v. 14. It should seem, before he either heard or saw any thing, he was seized with this trembling, which shook his bones, and perhaps the bed under him. A holy awe and reverence of God and his majesty being struck upon his spirit, he was thereby prepared for a divine visit. Whom God intends to honour, he first humbles and lays low, and will have us all to serve him with holy fear, and to rejoice with trembling.

II. The messenger by whom it was sent; a spirit, one of the good angels, who are employed not only as the ministers of God's providence, but sometimes as the ministers of his word. Concerning this apparition which Eliphaz saw, we are here told, (v. 15, 16.) 1. That it was real, and not a dream, not a fancy; an image was before his eyes, he plainly saw it; at first, it passed and repassed before his face, moved up and down, but, at length, it stood still to speak to him. If some have been so knavish as to impose false visions on others, and some so foolish as to be themselves imposed upon, it does not, therefore, follow that there have been no apparitions of spirits, both good and bad. 2. That it was indistinct, and somewhat confused. He could not discern the form thereof, so as to frame any exact idea of it in his own mind, much less to give a description of it. His conscience was to be awakened and informed, not his curiosity gratified. We know little of spirits, we are not capable of knowing much of them, nor is it fit we should; all in good time; we must shortly remove to the world of spirits, and shall then be better acquainted with them. 3. That it put him into a great consternation, so that his hair stood on end. Ever since man sinned, it has been terrible to him to receive an express from Heaven, as conscious to himself that he can expect no good tidings thence; apparitions, therefore, even of good spirits, have always made deep impressions of fear, even upon good men. How well is it for us, that God sends us his messages, not by spirits, but by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid! See Dan. vii. 28.-x. 8, 9.

III. The message itself; before it was delivered. there was silence, profound silence, v. 16. When we are to speak either from God, or to him, it becomes us to address ourselves to it with a solemn pause, and so to set bounds about the mount on which God is to come down, and not be hasty to utter any thing. It was in a still small voice that the message was delivered, and this was it, (v. 17.)"Shall mortal man be more just than God, the immortal God? Shall a man be thought to be, or pre-tend to be, more fiure than his Maker? Away with such a thought!" 1. Some think that Eliphaz aims hereby to prove that Job's great afflictions were a certain evidence of his being a wicked man; a mortal man would be thought unjust and very impure, if he should thus correct and punish a servant or subject, unless he had been guilty of some very great crime. "If, therefore, these were not some great crimes for which God thus punishes thee, man would be more just than God, which is not to be imagined." 2. I rather think it is only a reproof of Job's murmuring and discontent; "Shall a man pretend to be more just and pure than God? More truly to understand, and more strictly to observe, the rules and laws of equity, than God? Shall Enosh, mortal, miserable, man, be so insolent; nay, shall Geber, the strongest and most eminent manman at his best estate, pretend to compare with God, or stand in competition with him?" Note, It

that quarrel and find fault with the directions of the divine law, the dispensations of the divine grace, or the disposals of the divine providence, make themselves more just and pure than God; and they who thus reprove God, let them answer it. What! sinful man! (for he had not been mortal, if he had not been sinful!) short-sighted man! Shall he pretend to be more just, more pure, than God, who, being his Maker, is his Lord and Owner? Shall the clay contend with the potter? What justice and purity there is in man, God is the Author of it, and therefore is himself more just and pure. See Ps. xciv.

IV. The comment which Eliphaz makes upon this, for so it seems to be; yet some take all the following verses to be spoken in vision. It comes

all to one.

1. He shows how little the angels themselves are in comparison with God, v. 18. Angels are God's servants, waiting servants, working servants, they are his ministers; (Ps. civ. 4.) bright and blessed things they are; but God neither needs them, nor is benefitted by them, and is himself infinitely above them; and therefore, (1.) He put no trust in them, did not repose a confidence in them, as we do in those we cannot live without; there is no service in which he employs them, but, if he pleased, he could have it done as well without them. He never made them his confidents, or of his cabinet-council. Matth. xxiv. 36. He does not leave his business wholly to them, but his own eyes run to and fro through the earth, 2 Chron. xvi. 9. See this phrase, ch. xxxix. 11. Some give this sense of it, "So mutable is even the angelical nature, that God would not trust angels with their own integrity; if he had, they would all have done, as some did, left their first estate; but he saw it necessary to give them supernatural grace to confirm them. (2.) He charges them with folly, vanity, weakness, infirmity, and imperfection, in comparison with God. If the world were left to the government of the an gels, and they were trusted with the sole management of affairs, they would take false steps, and every thing would not be done for the best, as now it is. Angels are intelligences, but finite ones. Though not chargeable with iniquity, yet with imprudence. This last clause is variously rendered by the critics. I think it would bear this reading, repeating the negation, which is very common. He will put no trust in his saints. In angelis suis non ponet gloriationem—Nor will he glory in his angels, or make his boast of them, as if their praises or services added any thing to him: it is his glory, that he is infinitely happy without them.
2. Thence he infers how much less man is, how

much less to be trusted in, or gloried in: if there is such distance between God and angels, what is there between God and man! See how man is re-

presented here in his meanness.

(1.) Look upon man in his life, and he is very Take man in his best estate, and he mean, τ. 19. is a very despicable creature in comparison with the holy angels; though honourable, if compared with the brutes. It is true, angels are spirits, and the souls of men are spirits; but, [1.] Angels are pure spirits, the souls of men dwell in houses of clay, such the bodies of men are. Angels are free, human souls are housed, and the body is a cloud, a clog, to it, it is its cage, it is its prison. It is a house of clay, mean and mouldering; an earthen vessel. soon broken, as it was first formed, according to the good pleasure of the potter. It is a cottage, not a house of cedar, or a house of ivory, but of clay. which would soon be in ruins, if not kept in constant Note, It repair. [2.] Angels are fixed; but the very foun

dation of that house of clay in which man dwells, is in the dust. A house of clay, if built upon a rock, might stand long; but, if founded in the dust, the uncertainty of the foundation will hasten its fall, and it will sink with its own weight. As man was made out of the earth, so he is maintained and supported by that which comes out of the earth. Take away that, and his brdy returns to its earth. stand but upon the dust; some have a higher heap of dust to stand upon than others, but still it is the earth that stays us up, and will shortly swallow us [3.] Angels are immortal, but man is soon ciushed, the earthly house of his tabernacle is dissolved, he dies and wastes away, is crushed like a moth between one's fingers, as easily, as quickly; one may almost as soon kill a man as kill a moth. little thing will do it; he is crushed before the face of the moth, so the word is. If some lingering distemper, which consumes like a moth, be commissioned to destroy him, he can no more resist it than he can resist an acute distemper, which comes roaring upon him like a lion. See Hos. v. 12, 14. Is such a creature as this to be trusted in, or can any service be expected from him, by that God who

puts no trust in angels themselves? (2.) Look upon him in his death, and he appears yet more despicable, and unfit to be trusted. are mortal, and dying, v. 20, 21. [1.] In death, they are destroyed, and perish for ever, as to this world; it is the final period of their lives, and all their employments and enjoyments here; their place will know them no more. [2.] They are dying daily, and continually wasting; destroyed from morning to evening; death is still working in us, like a mole digging our grave at each remove, and we so continually lie exposed, that we are killed all the day long. [3.] Their life is short, and in a little time they are cut off; it lasts perhaps but from morning to evening. It is but a day; (so some understand it;) their birth and death are but the sun-rise and sun-set of the same day. [4.] In death, all their excellency passes away; beauty, strength, learning, not only cannot secure them from death, but die with them; nor shall their pomp, their wealth, or power, descend after them.
[5.] Their wisdom cannot save them from death; they die without wisdom, die for want of wisdom, by their own foolish management of themselves, digging their graves with their own teeth. [6.] It is so common a thing that no body heeds it, or takes any notice of it; they perish without any regarding it, or laying it to heart. The deaths of others are much the subject of common talk, but little the

Some think the eternal damnation of sinners is here spoken of, as well as their temporal death. They are destroyed, or broken to pieces, by death, from morning to evening; and if they repent not, they perish for ever, so some read it, v. 20. They perish for ever, because they regard not God and their duty, they consider not their latter end, Lam. i. 9. They have no excellency but that which death takes away, and they die, they die the second death, for want of wisdom to lay hold on eternal life. Shall such a mean, weak, foolish, sinful, dying, creature as this, pretend to be more just than God, and more pure than his Maker? No, instead of quarrelling with his afflictions, let him wonder than he is out of hell.

subject of serious thought.

CHAP. V.

Eliphaz, in the foregoing chapter, for the making good of his charge against Job, had vouched a word from Heaven, sent him in a vision. In this chapter, he appeals to those that bear record on earth, to the saints, the faithful witnesses of God's truths, in all ages, v. 1. They will testify, I. That the sin of sinners is their ruin, v. 2..5. II. That yet affliction is the common lot of mankind, v.

6, 7. III. That when we are in affliction, it is our wisdom and duty to apply ourselves to God, for he is able and ready to help us, v. 8.. 16. IV. That the afflictions which are borne well will end well: and Job particularly if he would come to a better temper, might assure himself that God had great mercy in store for him, v. 17.. 27. So that he concludes his discourse in somewhat a better humour than he began it.

1. CALL now, if there be any that will answer thee; and to which of the saints wilt thou turn? 2. For wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one. 3. I have seen the foolish taking root: but suddenly I cursed his habitation. 4. His children are far from safety, and they are crushed in the gate, neither is there any to deliver them. 5. Whose harvest the hungry eateth up, and taketh it even out of the thorns, and the robber swalloweth up their substance.

A very warm dispute being begun between Job and his friends, Eliphaz here makes a fair motion to put the matter to a reference; in all debates, perhaps, the sooner that is done the better, if the contenders cannot end it between themselves. So well assured is Eliphaz of the goodness of his own cause, that he moves Job himself to choose the arbitrators; (v. 1.) Call now, if there be any that will answer thee; that is, 1. "If there be any that suffer as thou sufferest: canst thou produce an instance of any one, that was really a saint, that was reduced to such extremity as thou art now reduced to? God never dealt with any that love his name so as he deals with thee, and therefore surely thou art none of them." 2. "If there be any that say as thou sayest: did ever any good man curse his day as thou dost? Or, will any of the saints justify thee in these heats or passions, or say that these are the spots of God's children? Thou wilt find none of the saints that will be either thine advocates, or mine antagonists. To which of the saints will thou turn? Turn to which thou wilt, and thou wilt find they are all of my mind; I have the communis sensus fideliumthe unanimous vote of all the saints on my side; they will all subscribe to what I am going to say." Observe, (1.) Good people are called saints, even in the Old Testament; and therefore I know net why we should, in common speaking, (unless because we must loqui cum vulgo-speak as our neighbours,) appropriate the title to those of the New Testament, and net say St. Abraham, St. Moses, and St. Isaiah, as well as St. Matthew, and St. Mark; and St. David the psalmist, as well as St. David the British Bishop. Aaron is expressly called the saint of the Lord. (2.) All that are themselves saints, will turn to those that are so; will choose them for their friends, and converse with them; will choose them for their judges, and consult with them. See Ps. exix. 79. The saints shall judge the world, 1 Cor. vi. 1, 2. Walk in the way of good men, (Prov. ii. 20.) the old way, the footsteps of the flock. Every one chooses some sort of people or other to whom he studies to recommend himself, and whose sentiments are to him the test of honour and dishonour: now all true saints endeavour to recommend themselves to those that are such, and to stand right in their opinion. (3.) There are some truths so plain, and so universally known and believed, that one may venture to appeal to any of the saints concerning them. However there are some things, about which they unhappily differ, there are many more, and more considerable, in

which they are agreed; as the evil of sin, the vanity of the world, the worth of the soul, the necessity of a holy life, and the like. Though they do not all live up, as they should, to their belief of these truths, yet they are all ready to bear their testimony to them.

Now there are two things which Eliphaz here maintains, and in which he doubts not but all the

saints concur with him.

I. That the sin of sinners directly tends to their own ruin; (v. 2.) Wrath kills the foolish man, his own wrath, and therefore he is foolish for indulging it; it is a fire in his bones, in his blood, enough to put him into a fever; envy is the rottenness of the bones, and so slays the silly one that frets himself with it. "So it is with thee;" says Eliphaz; "while thou quarrellest with God, thou doest thyself the greatest mischief; thine anger at thine own trou-bles, and thine envy at our prosperity, do but add to thy pain and misery: turn to the saints, and thou wilt find they understand themselves better." Job had told his wife she spake as the foolish women, now Eliphaz tells him he acted as the foolish men, the silly ones. Or, it may be meant thus: "If men are ruined and undone, it is always their own folly that ruins and undoes them. They kill themselves by some lust or other; therefore, no doubt, Job, thou hast done some foolish thing, by which thou hast brought thyself into this calamitous condition." Many understand it of God's wrath and jealousy. Job needed not be uneasy at the prosperity of the wicked, for the world's smiles can never shelter them from God's frowns; they are foolish and silly, if they think they will. God's anger will be the death, the eternal death, of those on whom it fastens. What is hell, but God's anger without mixture or period?

II. That their prosperity is short, and their destruction certain, v. 3..5. He seems here to parallel Job's case with that which is commonly the case

of wicked people.

1. Job had prospered for a time, seemed confirmed, and was secure in his prosperity; and it is common for foolish wicked men to do so. I have seen them taking root, planted, and, in their own and other's apprehension, fixed, and likely to continue. See Jer. xii. 2. Ps. xxxvii. 35, 36. We see worldly men taking root in the earth; on earthly things they fix the standing of their hopes, and from them they draw the sap of their comforts. The outward estate may be flourishing, but the soul cannot prosper that takes root in the earth.

2. Job's prosperity was now at an end, and so has the prosperity of other wicked people quickly

been.

(1.) Eliphaz foresaw their ruin with an eye of faith. They who looked only at present things, blessed their habitation, and thought them happy, blessed it long, and wished themselves in their condition. But Eliphaz cursed it, suddenly cursed it, as soon as he saw them begin to take root, that is, he plainly foresaw and foretold their ruin; not that he prayed for it, (I have not desired the weeful day,) but he prognosticated it. He went into the sanctuary, and there understood their end, and heard their doom read, (Ps. lxxiii. 17, 18.) That the prosperity of fools will destroy them, Prov. i. 32. They who believe the word of God, can see a curse in the house of the wicked, (Prov. iii. 33.) though it be ever so finely and firmly built, and ever so full of all good things; and can foresee that it will, in time, infallibly consume it, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof, Zech. v. 4.

(2.) He saw, at length, what he had foreseen: he was not disappointed in his expectation concerning him, the event answered it; his family was undone, and his estate ruined. In these particulars,

he plainly and very invidiously reflects on Job's calamities. [1.] His children were crushed, v. 4. They thought themselves safe in their eldest brother's house, but were far from safety, for they were crushed in the gate; perhaps the door or gate of the house was highest built, and fell heaviest upon them, and there was none to deliver them from perishing in the ruins. This is commonly understood of the destruction of the families of wicked men, by the execution of justice upon them to oblige them to restore what they have 1.1-They leave it to their children; but the descent shall not bar the entry of the rightful owners, who will crush their children, and cast them by due course of law, (and there shall be none to help them,) or perhaps by oppression, Ps. cix. 9, &c. [2.] His estate was plundered, v. 5. Job's was so; the hungry robbers, the Sabeans and Chaldeans, ran away with it, and swallowed it; and this, says he, I have often observed in others. has been got by spoil and rapine, has been lost the same way. The careful owner hedged it about with thorns, and then thought it safe; but the fence proved insignificant against the greediness of the spoilers, (if hunger will break through stone-walls, much more through thorn-hedges,) and against the divine curse, which will go through the thorns and briers, and burn them together, Isa. xxvii. 4.

6. Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground, 7. Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward. 8. 1 would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause; 9. Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number: 10. Who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields: 11. To set up on high those that be low; that those which mourn may be exalted to safety. 12. He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. 13. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness; and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong. 14. They meet with darkness in the day-time, and grope in the noon-day as in the night. 15. But he saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty. 16. So the poor hath hope, and iniquity stoppeth her mouth.

Eliphaz, having touched Job in a very tender part, in mentioning both the loss of his estate and the death of his children, as the just punishment of his sin, that he might not drive him to despair, here begins to encourage him, and puts him in a way to make himself easy. Now he very much changes his voice, (Gal. iv. 20.) and accosts Job gently, as if he would atone for the hard words he had given him.

I. He reminds him, that no affliction comes by

1. He reminds him, that no affliction comes by chance, nor is to be attributed to second causes. It doth not come forth of the dust, nor spring out of the ground, as the grass doth, v. 6. It doth not come of course, at certain seasons of the year, as natural productions do, by a chain of second causes. The proportion between prosperity and adversity

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is not so exactly observed by Providence, as that I between day and night, summer and winter, but according to the will and counsel of God, when and as he thinks fit. Some read it, Sin comes not forth of the dust, nor iniquity out of the ground. If men the climate, or the stars, but on themselves. If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it. We must not attribute our afflictions to fortune, for they are from God, nor our sins to fate, for they are from ourselves; so that, whatever trouble we are in, we must own that God sends it upon us, and we procure it to ourselves; the former is a reason why we should be very patient, the latter why we should

be very penitent, when we are afflicted.

II. He reminds him, that trouble and affliction are what we have all reason to expect in this world. Man is born to trouble; (v. 7.) not as man, (had he kept his innocency, he had been born to pleasure,) but as sinful man, as born of a woman, (ch. xiv. 1.) who was in the transgression. Man is born in sin, and therefore born to trouble. Even those that are born to honour and estate, yet are born to trouble in the flesh. In our fallen state, it is become natural to us to sin, and the natural consequence of that, is affliction. Rom. v. 12. There is nothing in this world we are born to, and can truly call our own, but sin and trouble; both are as the sparks that fly upward. Actual transgressions are the sparks that fly out of the furnace of original corruption; and, being called transgressors from the womb, no wonder that we deal very treacherously, Isa. xlviii. 8. Such too is the frailty of our bodies, and the vanity of all our enjoyments, that our troubles also thence arise as naturally as the sparks fly upward; so many are they, so thick and so fast does one follow another. Why then should we be surprised at our afflictions as strange, or quarrel with them as hard, when they are but what we are born to? Man is born to labour, so it is in the margin, is sentenced to eat his bread in the sweat of his face, which should inure him to hardness, and make him bear his afflictions the better.

III. He directs him how to behave himself under his affliction; (v. 8.) I would seek unto God; surely I would: so it is in the original. Here is, 1. A tacit reproof to Job for not seeking to God, but quarrelling with Him; "Job, if I had been in thy case, I would not have been so peevish and passionate as thou art, I would have acquiesced in the will of God." It is easy to say what we would do, if we were in such a one's case; but, when it comes to the trial, perhaps it will be found not so easy to do as we say. 2. Very good and seasonable advice to him, which Eliphaz transfers to himself in a figure; "For my part, the best way I should think I could take, if I were in thy condition, would be to apply myself to God." Note, We should give our friends no other counsel than what we would take ourselves if we were in their case, that we may be easy under our afflictions, may get good by them, and may see a good issue of them. (1.) We must by prayer fetch in mercy and grace from God; seek to him as a Father and Friend, though he contend with us, as one who is alone able to support and succour us. His favour we must seek, when we have lost all we have in the world; to him we must address ourselves, as the Fountain and Father of all good, all consolation. Is any afflicted? Let him firay. It is heart's-ease, a salve for every sore. (2.) We must by patience refer ourselves and our cause to him. "To God would I commit my cause: having spread it before him, I would leave it with him; having laid it at his feet, I would lodge it in his hand; Here I am, let the Lord do with me as seemeth him good." If our cause be indeed a good cause, we need not fear committing it to God, for he is | ii. 1, 2. Thirdly, God easily can, and (as far as is

both just and kind. They that would seek so as to speed, must refer themselves to God.

IV. He encourages him thus to seek to God, and commit his cause to him. It will not be in vain to do so, for he is one in whom we shall find effectual help. He recommends to his consideration God's

almighty power and sovereign dominion. 1. In general, he doeth great things; (v. 9.) great indeed, for he can do any thing; he doth do every thing; and all according to the counsel of his own will: great indeed, for the operations of his power are, (1.) Unsearchable, and such as can never be fathomed, can never be found out from the begin-ning to the end, Eccl. iii. 11. The works of nature are mysteries; the most curious searches come for short of full discoveries, and the wisest philosophers have owned themselves at a loss. The designs of Providence are much more deep and unaccountable, Rom. xi. 33. (2.) Numerous, and such as never can be reckoned up. He doeth great things without number; his power is never exhausted, nor will all his purposes ever be fulfilled till the end of time. (3.) They are marvellous, and such as never can be sufficiently admired; eternity itself will be short enough to be spent in the admiration of them. Now, by the consideration of this, Eliphaz intends, [1.] To convince Job of his fault and folly in quarrelling with God. We must not pretend to pass a judgment upon his works, for they are unsearchable and above our inquiries; nor must we strive with our Maker, for he will certainly be too hard for us, and is able to crush us in a moment. [2.] To encourage Job to seek unto God, and to refer himself to him What more encouraging than to see that he is one to whom power belongs? He can do great things and marvellous for our relief, when we are brought

ever so low. 2. He gives some instances of God's dominion

and power. (1.) God doeth great things in the kingdom of nature: he gives rain upon the earth, (v. 10.) put here for all the gifts of common providence, all the fruitful seasons, by which he filleth our hearts with food and gladness, Acts xiv. 17. Observe, When he would show what great things God doeth, he speaks of his giving rain, which, because it is a common thing, we are apt to look upon as a little thing; but if we duly consider both how it is produced, and what is produced by it, we shall see it to be a great work, both of power and goodness.

(2.) He doeth great things in the affairs of the children of men: not only enriches the poor, and comforts the needy, by the rain he sends, (v. 10.) but, in order to the advancing of those that are low, he disappoints the devices of the crafty; for v. 11. is to be joined to v. 12. and compared with Luke i. 51...53. He hath scattered the firoud in the imagination of their hearts, and so bath exalted them of low degree, and filled the hungry with good

See, [1.] How he frustrates the counsels of the firond and holitic, v. 12.14. There is a supreme power that manages and overrules men who think themselves free and absolute, and fulfils its own purposes in despite of their projects. Observe, First, The froward, that walk contrary to God and the interest of his kingdom, are often very crafty, for they are the seed of the old serpent, that was noted for subtilty. They think themselves wise, but, at the end, will be fools. *Secondly*, The froward enemies of God's kingdom have their devices, their enterprises, and their counsels, against it, and against the loyal faithful subjects of it. They are restless and unwearied in their designs, close in their consultations, high in their hopes, deep in their politics, and fast linked in their confederacies, Ps.

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for his glory) certainly will, blast and defeat all the designs of his and his people's enemies. How were the plots of Ahithophel, Sanballat, and Haman, baffled! The confederates of Syria and Ephraim against Judah, of Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek, against God's Israel, the kings of the earth, and the princes, against the Lord and against his anointed, broken! The hands that have been stretched out against God, and his church, have not performed their enterprise, nor have the weapons formed against Zion prospered. Fourthly, That which enemies have designed for the ruin of the church, has often turned to their own ruin; (v. 13.) He takes the wise in their own raftiness, and snares them in the work of their own hands, Ps. vii. 15, 16.—ix. 15, 16. This is quoted by the apostle, (1 Cor. iii. 19.) to show how the learned men of the heathen were befooled by their own vain philosophy. Fifthly, When God infatuates men, they are perplexed, and at a loss, even in those things that seem most plain and easy; (v. 14.) They meet with darkness even in the day-time; nay, as it is in the margin, They run themselves into darkness by the violence and precipitation of their own counsels. See ch. xii. 20, 24, 25.

[2.] How he favours the cause of the poor and

humble, and espouses that.

First, He exalts the humble, v. 11. Those whom proud men contrive to crush, he raises from under their feet, and sets them in safety, Ps. xii. 5. The lowly in heart, and those that mourn, he advances, comforts, and makes to dwell on high, in the munitions of rocks, Isa. xxxiii. 16. Zion's mourners are the sealed ones, murked for safety, Ezek, ix. 4.

Secondly, He delivers the oppressed, v. 15. The designs of the crafty are to ruin the poor: tongue, and hand, and sword, and all, are at work in order to this; but God takes under his special protection those who, being poor, and unable to help themselves, being his poor, and devoted to his praise, have committed themselves to him. He saves them from the mouth that speaks hard things against them, and the hand that does hard things against them; for he can, when he pleases, tie the tongue,

and wither the hand.

The effect of this is, (v. 16.) 1. That weak and timorous saints are comforted: so the poor, that began to despair, has hope. The experiences of some are encouragements to others to hope the best in the worst of times; for it is the glory of God to send help to the helpless, and hope to the hopeless. 2. That daring threatening sinners are confounded; iniquity stops her mouth, being surprised at the strangeness of the deliverance, ashamed of its enmity against those who appear to be the favourites of Heaven, mortified at the disappointment, and compelled to acknowledge the justice of God's proceedings, having nothing to object against them. Those that domineered over God's poor, that frightened them, menaced them, and falsely accused them, will not have a word to say against them when God appears for them. See Ps. lxxvi. 8, 9. Isa. xxvi. 11. Mic. vii. 16.

17. Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: 13. For he maketh sore, and bindeth up; he woundeth, and his hands make whole. 19. He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. 20. In famine he shall redeem thee from death; and in war from the power of the sword. 21. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue;

neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction 22. At destruction and when it cometh. famine thou shalt laugh: neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth. 23. For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field; and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee. 24. And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace; and thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin. 25. Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great, and thine offspring as the grass of the earth. 26. Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season. 27. Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good.

Eliphaz, in this concluding paragraph of his discourse, gives Job (what he himself knew not how to take) a comfortable prospect of the issue of his afflictions, if he did but recover his temper, and accommodate himself to them.

Observe,

I. The seasonable word of caution and exhortation that he gives him; (v. 17.) "Despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty. Call it a chastening, which comes from the father's love, and is designed for the child's good. Call it the chastening of the Almighty, with whom it is madness to contend, to whom it is wisdom and duty to submit, and who will be a God all-sufficient" (for so the word signifies) "to all those that trust in him. Do not despise it;" it is a copious word in the original. 1. "Be not averse to it. Let grace conquer the antipathy which nature has to suffering, and reconcile thyself to the will of God in it." We need the rod, and we deserve it; and therefore we ought not to think it either strange or hard if we feel the smart of it. Let not the heart rise against a bitter pill or potion, when it is prescribed us for our good. 2. "Do not think ill of it, do not put it from thee, (as that which is either hurtful, or, at least, not useful, which there is no occasion for, nor advantage by,) only because, for the present, it is not joyous, but grievous." We must never scorn to stoop to God, nor think it a thing below us to come under his discipline, but reckon, on the contrary, that God really magnifies man, when he thus visits and tries him, ch. vii. 17, 18. 3. "Do not overlook and disregard it, as if it were only a chance, and the production of second causes, but take great notice of it as the voice of God, and a messenger from Heaven." More is implied than is expressed: "Reverence the chastening of the Lord; have an humble, awful, regard to his correcting hand, and tremble when the lion roars, Amos iii. 8. Submit to the chastening, and study to answer the call, to answer the end of it, and then thou reverencest it." When God, by an affliction, draws upon us for some of the effects he has intrusted us with, we must honour his bill by accepting it, and subscribing it, resigning him his own when he calls for it.

II. The comfortable words of encouragement which he gives him, thus to accommodate himself to his condition, and (as he himself had expressed it) to receive evil from the hand of God, and not despise it as a gift not worth the accepting. If his

affliction was thus borne,

1. The nature and property of it would be altered: though it looked like a man's misery, it would really be his bliss. Happy is the man whom God correcteth, if he make but a due improvement of the correction. A good man is happy, though he

be afflicted; for, whatever he has lost, he has not lost his enjoyment of God, nor his title to heaven; nay, he is happy, because he is afflicted; correction is an evidence of his sonship, and a means of his sanctification; it mortifies his corruptions, weans his heart from the world, draws him nearer to God, brings him to his Bible, brings him to his knees, works him for, and so is working for him, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; Hapby therefore is the man whom God correcteth, Jam. i. 12.

2. The issue and consequence of it would be very good, v. 18. (1.) Though he makes sore the body with sore boils, the mind with sad thoughts, yet he binds up at the same time; as the skilful tender surgeon binds up the wounds he had occasion to make with his incision-knife. When God makes sores by the rebukes of his providence, he binds up by the consolations of his Spirit, which oftentimes abound, as most afflictions do abound, and balance them, to the unspeakable satisfaction of the patient sufferers. (2.) Though he wounds, yet his hands make whole in due time: as he supports his people, and makes them easy under their afflictions, so in due time he delivers them, and makes a way for them to escape. All is well again; and he comforts them according to the time wherein he afflicted them. God's usual method is first to wound, and then to heal, first to convince, and then to comfort, first to humble, and then to exalt; and (as Mr. Caryl observes) he never makes a wound too great, too deep, for his own cure. Una eademque manus vulnus opemque tulit—The hand that inflicts the wound, applies the cure. God tears the wicked, and goes away, let them heal that will, if they can; (Hos. v. 14.) but the humble and penitent may say, He has torn, and he will heal us, Hos. vi. 1.

.This is general; but in the following verses he applies himself directly to Job, and gives him many precious promises of great and kind things which God would do for him, if he did but humble himself under his hand. Though then they had no Bibles that we know of, yet Eliphaz had sufficient warrant to give Job these assurances, from the general discoveries God had made of his good will to his people. And though, in every thing which Job's friends said, they were not directed by the Spirit of God, (for they spake both of God and Job some things that were not right,) yet the general doctrines they laid down spake the pious sense of the patriarchal age; and as St. Paul quoted, v. 13. for canonical scripture, and as the command, v. 17. is, no doubt, binding on us, so these promises here may be, and must be, received and applied as divine promises, and we may, through patience and comfort of this part of scripture, have hope.

Let us therefore give diligence to make sure our interest in these promises, and then view the particulars of them, and take the comfort of them.

[1.] It is here promised, that as afflictions and troubles do recur, supports and deliverances shall be graciously repeated, be it never so often. In six troubles, he shall be ready to deliver thee; yea, and in seven. This intimates, that, as long as we are here in this world, we must expect a succession of troubles, that the clouds will return after the rain; after six troubles may come a seventh. many, look for more; but out of them all will God deliver those that are his. 2 Tim. iii. 11. Ps. xxxiv. 19. Former deliverances are earnests of, not, as among men, excuses from, further deliverances, Prov. xix. 19.

[2.] That, whatever troubles good men may be in, there shall no evil touch them, they shall do them no real harm; the malignity of them, the sting, shall be taken out; they may hiss, they cannot hurt, Ps xci. 10. The evil one toucheth not

God's children, 1 John v. 18. Being kept from sin, they are kept from the evil of every trouble.

[3.] That, when desolating judgments are abroad, they shall be taken under special protection, v. 20. Do many perish about them, for want of the necessary supports of life? They shall be supplied. "In famine he shall redeem thee from death: whatever becomes of others, thou shalt be kept alive, Ps. xxxiii. 19. Verily thou shalt be fed, nay, even m the days of famine thou shalt be satisfied, Ps. xxxvii. 3, 19. In time of war, when thousands fall on thy right and left hand, he shall redeem thee from the power of the sword. If God pleases, it shall not touch thee; or, if it wound thee, if it kill thee, it shall not hurt thee; it can but kill the body, nor has it power to do that, unless it be given from

[4.] That whatever is maliciously said against them, it shall not affect them, to do them any hurt, v. 21. "Thou shall not only be protected from the killing sword of war, but shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue, which, like a scourge, is vexing and painful, though not mortal." The best men, and the most inoffensive, cannot, even with their innocency, secure themselves from calumny, reproach, and false accusation. From these a man cannot hide himself, but God can hide him, so that the most malicious slanders shall be so little heeded by him, as not to disturb his peace; and so little heeded by others, as not to blemish his reputation: and the remainder of his wrath God can and does restrain, for it is owing to the hold he has of the consciences of bad men, that the scourge of the tongue is not the ruin of all the comforts of good

men in this world.

[5.] That they shall have a holy security and serenity of mind, arising from their hope and confi dence in God, even in the worst of times. When dangers are most threatening, they shall be easy, believing themselves safe; and shall not be afraid of destruction, no, not when they see it coming, (v. 21.) nor the beasts of the field, when they set upon them, nor of men as cruel as beasts; nay, at destruction and famine thou shalt laugh, (v. 22.) not so as to despise any of God's chastenings, or make a jest of his judgments, but so as to triumph in God, and his power and goodness, and therein to triumph over the world and all its grievances; to be not only easy, but cheerful and joyful, in tribulation. Blessed Paul laughed at destruction, when he said, O death, where is thy sting? When, in the name of all the saints, he defied all the calamities of this present time to separate from the love of God, con-

cluding, In all these things we are more than conquerors, Rom. viii. 37, &c. See Isa. xxxvii. 22.

[6.] That, being at peace with God, there shall be a covenant of friendship between them and the whole creation, v. 23. "When thou walkest thy grounds thou chall not read to fear sturbling for grounds, thou shalt not need to fear stumbling, for thou shalt be at league with the stones of the field, not to dash thy foot against any of them; nor shalt thou be in danger from the beasts of the field, for they all shall be at heace with thee;" compare Hos. ii. 18, I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field. This implies, that while man is at enmity with his Maker, the inferior creatures are at war with him; but Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia—A reconciled God reconciles all things. Our covenant with God is a covenant with all the creatures, that they shall do us no hurt, but be ready to serve us, and do us good.

[7.] That their houses and families shall be comfortable to them, v. 24. Peace and piety in the family will make it so. "Thou shalt know and be assured that thy tabernacle is, and shall be, in peace; thou mayest be confident both of its present and its future prosperity." That fleace is thy ta

bernacle, so the word is. Peace is the house in which | they dwell, who dwell in God, and are at home in him; "Thou shalt visit," that is, "inquire into, the affairs of thy habitation, and take a review of them, and shalt not sin." First, God will provide a settlement for his people, mean, perhaps, and moveable, a cottage, a tabernacle, but a fixed and quiet habitation. "Thou shalt not sin," or wander, that is, as some understand it, "thou shalt not be a fugitive and a vagabond," (Cain's curse,) "but shalt dwell in the land, and verily, not uncertainly as vagrants, shalt thou be fed." Secondly, Their families shall be taken under the special protection of the Divine Providence, and shall prosper as far as is for their good. Thirdly, They shall be assured of peace, and of the continuance and entail of it; "Thou shalt know, to thine unspeakable satisfaction, that peace is sure to thee and thine, having the word of God for it." Providence may change, but the promise cannot. *Fourthly*, They shall have wisdom to govern their families aright, to order their affairs with discretion, and to look well to the ways of their household, which is here called visiting their habitation; masters of families must not be strangers at home, but have a watchful eye over what they have, and what their servants do. Fifthly, They shall have grace to manage the concerns of their families after a godly sort, and not to sin in the management of them. They shall call their servants to account without passion, pride, covetousness, worldliness, or the like; they shall look into their affairs without discontent at what is, or distrust of what shall be. Family piety crowns family peace and prosperity. The greatest blessing, both in our employments, and in our enjoyments, is, to be kept from sin in them. When we are abroad, it is comfortable to hear that our tabernacle is in peace; and when we return home to visit our habitation, with satisfaction in our success, that we have not failed in our business, and with a good conscience, that we have not offended God.

[8.] That their posterity should be numerous and prosperous. Job had lost all his children; "But," says Eliphaz, "if thou return to God, he will again build up thy family, and thy seed shall be many, and as great as ever, and thine offspring increasing and flourishing as the grass of the earth," (v. 25.) "and thou shalt know it." God has blessings in store for the seed of the faithful, which they shall have, if they do not stand in their own light, and forfeit them by their folly. It is a comfort to parents to see the prosperity, especially the spiritual prosperity, of their children; if they are truly good, they are truly great, how small a figure soever they

make in the world.

[9.] That their death shall be seasonable, and they shall finish their course, at length, with joy and honour, v. 26. It is a great mercy, First, To live to a full age, and not to have the number of our months cut off in the midst. If the providence of God do not give us long life, if the grace of God give us to be satisfied with the time allotted us, we may be said to come to a full age. That man lives long enough that has done his work, and is fit for another world. Secondly, To be willing to die, to come cheerfully to the grave, and not to be forced thither, as he whose soul was required of him. Thirdly, To die seasonably, as the corn is cut and housed when it is full ripe; not till then, but then not suffered to stand a day longer, lest it shed. Our times are in God's hand; it is well they are so, for he will take care that those who are his die in the best time: however their death may seem to us untimely, it will be found not unseasonable.

In the last verse, he recommends those promises

ed, and so it is. We have indeed received these things by tradition from our fathers, but we have not taken them upon trust, we have carefully searched them, have compared spiritual things with spiritual, have diligently studied them, and been confirmed in our belief of them, from our own observation and experience; and we are all of a mind that so it is." Truth is a treasure that is well worth digging for, diving for; and then we shall know both how to value it ourselves, and how to communicate it to others, when we have taken pains in searching for it. 2. As well worthy of all acceptation, which he might improve to his great advantage! "Hear it, and know thou it for thy good." It is not enough to hear and know the truth, but we must improve it, and be made wiser and better by it, receive the impressions of it, and submit to the commanding power of it. Know it for thyself, so the word is; with application to thyself, and thy own case; not only This is true, but This is true concerning me. That which we thus hear and know for ourselves, we hear and know for our good, as we are nourished by the meat which we digest. That is, indeed, a good sermon, which does us good.

CHAP. VI.

Eliphaz concluded his discourse with an air of assurance; very confident he was that what he had said was so plain and so pertinent, that nothing could be objected in answer to it. But though he that is first in his own cause, seems just, yet his neighbour comes and searches him. Job is not convinced by all he had said, but still justifies himnot convinced by all he had said, but still justifies himself in his complaints, and condemns him for the weakness of his arguing. I. He shows that he had just cause to complain as he did of his troubles, and so it would appear to any impartial judge, v. 2. 7. II. He continues his passionate wish, that he might speedily be cut off by the stroke of death, and so be eased of all his miseries, v. 8. 13. III. He reproves his friends for their uncharitable censures of him, and their unkind treatment, v. 14. 30. It must be owned that Job, in all this, spake much that was reasonable, but with a mixture of passion much that was reasonable, but with a mixture of passion and human infirmity. And in this contest, as indeed in most contests, there was fault on both sides.

1. PUT Job answered and said, 2. Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! 3. For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea: therefore my words are swallowed up. 4. For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me. 5. Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass? or loweth the ox over his fodder? 6. Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg? 7. The things that my soul refused to touch are as my sorrowful meat.

Eliphaz, in the beginning of his discourse, had been very sharp upon Job, and yet it does not appear that Job gave him any interruption, but heard him patiently, till he had said all he had to say: they that would make an impartial judgment of a discourse, must hear it out, and take it entire. But when he had concluded, he makes his reply, in which he speaks very feelingly.

I. He represents his calamity, in general, as much heavier than either he had expressed it, or they had apprehended it, v. 2, 3. He could not to Job, 1. As faithful sayings, which he might be fully describe it, they would not fully apprehend it, confident of the truth of: "Lo, this we have search or, at least, not own that they did; and therefore he

would gladly appeal to a third person, who had just weights and just balances with which to weigh his grief and calamity, and would do it with an impartial hand; he wished that they would set his grief in one scale, and all the expressions of it; his calamity in the other, and all the particulars of it; and (though he would not altogether justify him-self in his grief, yet) they would find (as he says, ch. xxiii. 2.) that his stroke was heavier than his groaning; for, whatever his grief was, his calamity was heavier than the sand of the sea; it was complicated, it was aggravated, every grievance weighty, and all together numerous as the sand: Therefore says he) my words are swallowed up; that is, "Therefore you must excuse both the brokenness and the bitterness of my expressions; do not think it strange if my speech be not so fine and polite as that of an eloquent orator, or so grave and regular as that of a morose philosopher: no, in these circumstances I can pretend neither to the one nor to the other; my words are, as I am, quite swallowed

Now, 1. He hereby complains of it as his unhappiness, that his friends undertook to administer spiritual physic to him, before they thoroughly understood his case, and knew the worst of it. seldom that those who are at ease themselves, rightly weigh the afflictions of the afflicted; every one feels most from his own burthen, few feel from other people's. 2. He excuses the passionate expressions he had used when he cursed his day. Though he could not himself justify all he had said, yet he thought his friends should not thus violently condemn it, for really the case was extraordinary; and that might be connived at in such a man of sorrows as he now was, which, in any common grief, would by no means be allowed of. 3. He bespeaks the charitable and compassionate sympathy of his friends with him, and hopes, by representing the greatness of his calamity, to bring them to a better temper toward him. To those that are pain-

ed, it is some ease to be pitied.

II. He complains of the trouble and terror of mind he was in, as the sorest part of his calamity, v. 4. Herein he was a type of Christ, who, in his sufferings, complained most of the sufferings of his soul; Now is my soul troubled, John xii. 27. My soul is exceeding sorrowful, Matth. xxvi. 37, 38. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Matth. xxvii. 46. Poor Job sadly complains here, 1. Of what he felt: The arrows of the Almighty are within me. It was not so much the troubles themselves he was under that put him into this confusion, his poverty, disgrace, and bodily pain; that which cut him to the heart, and put him into this agitation, was, to think that the God he loved, and served, had brought all this upon him, and laid him under these marks of his displea-sure. Note, Trouble of mind is the sorest trou-ble: a wounded shirit who can bear? Whatever burthen of affliction, in body or estate, God is pleased to lav upon us, we may well afford to submit to it as long as he continues to us the use of our reason, and the peace of our consciences; but if, in either of these, we be disturbed, our case is sad indeed, and very pitiable. The way to prevent God's fiery darts of trouble, is, with the shield of faith, to quench Satan's fiery darts of temptation. serve, He calls them the arrows of the Almighty; for it is an instance of the power of God above that ef any man, that he can with his arrows reach the soul. He that made it can make his sword to approach to it. The poison or heat of these arrows is said to drink up his spirit, because it disturbed his reason, shook his resolution, exhausted his vigour, and threatened his life; and therefore his justified, yet might be excused. 2. Of what he feared. He saw himself charged by the terrors of God, as by an army set in batde-array, and surrounded by them. God, by his terrors, fought against him: as he had no comfort when he retired inward into his own bosom, so he had none when he looked upward toward Heaven. He that used to be encouraged with the consolations of God, not only wanted those, but was amazed with the terrors of God.

III. He reflects upon his friends for their severe censures of his complaints, and their unskilful management of his case. 1. Their reproofs were causeless. He complained, it is true, now that he was in this affliction, but he never used to complain, as those do who are of a fretful unquiet spirit, when he was in prosperity: he did not bray when he had grass, nor low over his fodder, v. 5. But now, that he was utterly deprived of all his comforts, he must be a stock or a stone, and not have the sense of an ox or a wild ass, if he did not give some vent to his grief. He was forced to eat unsavoury meats, and was so poor, that he had not a grain of salt, wherewith to relish them, nor to give a little taste to the white of an egg, which was now the choicest dish he had at his table, v. 6. Even that food which once he would have scorned to touch, now he was glad of, and it was his sorrowful meat, v. 7. Note, It is wisdom not to use ourselves or our children to be nice and dainty about meat and drink, because we know not how we or they may be reduced, nor how that which we now disdain may be made acceptable by necessity. 2. Their comforts were sapless and insipid; so some understand, v. 6, 7. He complains he had nothing now offered him for his relief, that was proper for him; no cordial, nothing to revive and cheer his spirits; what they had afforded, was in itself as tasteless as the white of an egg, and, when applied to him, as loathsome and burthensome as the most sorrowful meat. I am sorry he should say thus of what Eliphaz had excellently well said, ch. v. 8, &c. But peevish spirits are too apt thus to abuse their comforters.

8. Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for; 9. Even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off! 10. Then should I yet have comfort; yea, I would harden myself in sorrow: let him not spare; for I have not concealed the words of the Holy One. 11. What is my strength, that I should hope? and what is mine end, that I should prolong my life? 12. Is my strength the strength of stones? or is my flesh of brass? 13. Is not my help in me? and is wisdom driven quite from me?

Ungoverned passion often grows more violent when it meets with some rebuke and check: the troubled sea rages most when it dashes against a rock. Job had been courting death, as that which would be the happy period of his miseries, ch. iii. For this, Eliphaz had gravely reproved him: but he, instead of unsaying it, says it here again with more vehemence than before; it is as ill said as almost any thing we meet with in all his discourses, and is recorded for our admonition, not our imitation.

his reason, shook his resolution, exhausted his vigour, and threatened his life; and therefore his after the first threatened his life; and therefore his after the should ever see good passionate expressions, though they could not be days again in this world, or that, by the exercise of

grace and devotion, he might make even these days a his controversy; for when he judgeth, he will overof affliction good days: he could see no end of his trouble but death, and had not patience to wait the time appointed for that. He has a request to make, there is a thing he longs for: (v. 8.) and what is that? One would think it should be, That it would filease God to deliver me, and restore me to my prosperity again; no, That it would filease God to destroy me, v. 9. "As once he let loose his hand to make me poor, and then to make me sick, let him loose it once more to put an end to my life. Let him give the fatal stroke; it shall be to me the couh de grace—the stroke of favour," as, in France, they call the last blow which despatches them that are broken on the wheel. There was a time when destruction from the Almighty was a terror to Job; (ch. xxxi. 23.) yet now he courts the destruction of the flesh, but in hopes that the spirit should be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Observe, Though Job was extremely desirous of death, and very angry at its delays, yet he did not offer to destroy himself, nor to take away his own life; only he begged that it would please God to destroy him. Seneca's morals, which recommend self-murder as the lawful redress of insupportable grievances, were not then known, nor will ever be entertained by any that have the least regard to the law of God and nature. How uneasy soever the soul's confinement in the body may be, it must by no means break prison, but wait for a fair dis-

charge.

II. He puts this desire into a prayer, that God would grant him this request, that it would please God to do this for him. It was his sin, so passionately to desire the hastening of his own death, and offering up that desire to God made it no better; nay, what looked ill in his wish, looked worse in his prayer; for we ought not to ask any thing of God but what we can ask in faith, and we cannot ask any thing in faith, but what is agreeable to the will of God. Passionate prayers are the worst of passionate expressions; for we should lift up pure hands without wrath.

III. He promises himself effectual relief, and the redress of all his grievances, by the stroke of death; (v. 10.) "Then should I yet have comfort, which now I have not, nor ever expect till then." See, 1. The vanity of human life; so uncertain a good is it, that it often proves men's greatest burthen, and nothing is so desirable as to get clear of it. Let grace make us willing to part with it, whenever God calls; for it may so happen, that even sense may make us desirous to part with it before 2. The hope which the righteous have in their death. If Job had not had a good conscience, he could not have spoken with this assurance of comfort on the other side death, that circumstance which made all the difference between the rich man and Lazarus; Now he is comforted, and

thou art tormented.

IV. He challenges death to do its worst. could not die without the dreadful prefaces of bitter pains and agonies, and strong convulsions; if he must be racked before he be executed, yet, in prospect of dying at last, he would make nothing of dying pangs. "I would harden myself in sorrow, would open my breast to receive death's darts, and not shrink from them; let him not spare; I desire no mitigation of that pain which will put a happy period to all my pains. Rather than not die, let me die so as to feel myself die." These are passionate words, which might better have been spared. We should soften ourselves in sorrow, that we may receive the good impressions of it, and, by the sadness of the countenance, our hearts, being made tender, may be made better; but, if we

come. It is great presumption to dare the Almighty, and to say, Let him not spare: for, Are we stronger than he? 1 Cor. x. 22. We are much indebted to sparing mercy; it is bad indeed with us when we are weary of that. Let us rather say, with David, O spare me a little.

V. He grounds his comfort upon the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had been faithful and firm to his profession of religion, and in some degrees useful and serviceable to the glory of God in his generation; I have not conceuled the words of the Holy One. Observe, 1. Job had the words of the Holy One committed to him. The people of God were, at that time, blessed with divine revelation. 2. It was his comfort, that he had not concealed them, had not received the grace of God therein in vain. (1.) He had not kept them from himself, but had given them full scope to operate upon him, and in every thing to guide and govern him. He had not stifled his convictions, imprisonea the truth in unrighteousness, nor done any thing to hinder the digestion of this spiritual food, and the operation of this spiritual physic. Let us never conceal God's word from ourselves, but always receive it in the light of it. (2.) He had not kept them to himself, but had been ready, on all occasions, to communicate his knowledge for the good of others; was never ashamed or afraid to own the word of God to be his rule, nor remiss in his endeavours to bring others into an acquaintance with it. Note, Those, and those only, may promise themselves comfort in death, who are good, and do

good, while they live.

VI. He justifies himself in this extreme desire of death, from the deplorable condition he was now in, v. 11, 12. Eliphaz, in the close of his discourse, had put him in hopes that he should yet see a good issue of his troubles; but poor Job puts these cordials away from him, refuses to be comforted, abandons himself to despair, and very ingeniously, yet perversely, argues against the encouragements that were given him. Disconsolate spirits will reason strangely against themselves. In answer to the pleasing prospects Eliphaz had flattered him with, he here intimates, 1. That he had no reason to expect any such thing: "What is my strength, that I should hope? You see how I am weakened and brought low, how unable I am to grapple with my distempers; and therefore what re son have I to hope that I should outlive them, and see better days? Is my strength the strength of stones? Are my muscles brass, and sinews steel? No, they are not, and therefore I cannot hold out always in this pain and misery, but must needs sink under the load. Had I strength to grapple with my distemper, I might hope to look through it; but, alas! I have not;" the weakening of my strength in the way will certainly be the shortening of my days, Ps. cii. 23. Note, All things considered, we have no reason to count upon the long continuance of life in this world. What is our strength? It is depending strength; we have no more strength than God gives us, for in him we live and move: it is decaying strength; we are daily spending the stock, and by degrees it will be exhausted. It is disproportionable to the encounters we may meet with; what is our strength to be depended upon, when two or three days' sickness will make us weak as water? Instead of expecting a long life, we have reason to wonder that we have lived hitherto, and to feel that we are hastening off apace. 2. That he had no reason to desire any such thing; " What is my end, that I should desire to firolong my life? What comfort can I promise myself in life, comparable to the comfort I promise myself in death?" harden ourselves, we provoke God to proceed in || Note, Those who, through grace, are ready for an

other world, cannot see much to invite their stay in | withholds compassion from his friend, forsakes the this world, or to make them fond of it. That, if it be God's will, we may do him more service, and may get to be fitter and ripe for heaven, is an end for which we may wish the prolonging of life, in subserviency to our chief end; but, otherwise, what can we propose to ourselves in desiring to tarry here? The longer life is, the more grievous will its burthens be, (Eccl. xii. 1.) and the longer life is, the less pleasant will be its delights, 2 Sam. xix. 34, 35. We have already seen the best of this world, but we are not sure that we have seen the worst of it.

VII. He obviates the suspicion of his being delirious; (v. 13.) Is not my help in me? that is, "Have I not the use of my reason, with which, I thank God, I can help myself, though you do not help me? Do you think wisdom is driven quite from me, and that I am gone distracted? No, I am not mad, most noble Eliphaz, but speak the words of truth and soberness." Note, Those who have grace in them, who have the evidence of it, and have it in exercise, have wisdom in them, which will be their help in the worst of times.

Sat lucis intus-They have light within.

14. To him that is afflicted pity should be showed from his friend; but he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty. 15. My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away; 16. Which are blackish by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow is hid: 17. What time they wax warm they vanish: when it is hot, they are consumed out of their place. 18. The paths of their way are turned aside; they go to nothing, and perish. The troops of Tema looked, the companies 20. They were of Sheba waited for them. confounded because they had hoped; they came thither, and were ashamed. 21. For now ye are nothing; ye see my casting down, and are afraid.

Eliphaz had been very severe in his censures of Job; and his companions, though as yet they had said little, yet had intimated their concurrence with him: their unkindness therein poor Job here complains of, as an aggravation of his calamity, and a further excuse of his desire to die; for what satisfaction could he ever expect in this world, when those that should be his comforters, thus

proved his tormentors?

I. He shows what reason he had to expect kindness from them. His expectation was grounded npon the common principles of humanity; (v. 14.) "To him that is afflicted, and that is wasting and melting under his affliction, pity should be showed from his friend; and he that does not show that pity, forsakes the fear of the Almighty." Note, 1. Compassion is a debt owing to those that are in affliction. The least which those that are at ease can do for those that are pained and in anguish, is, to pity them, to manifest the sincerity of a tender concern for them, and to sympathize with them; to take cognizance of their case, inquire into their grievances, hear their complaints, and mingle tears with theirs; to comfort them, and do all we can to help and relieve them: this well becomes the members of the same body, who should feel for the grievances of their fellow-members, not knowing how soon the same may be their own. Inhumanity is impiety and irreligion. He that I the creature, will find it fail them then when it

fear of the Almighty. So the Chaldee. How dwells the love of God in that man? 1 John iii. 17. Surely those have no fear of the rod of God upon themselves, who have no compassion for those that feel the smart of it. See Jam. i. 27. 3. Troubles are the trials of friendship. When a man is afflicted, he will see who are his friends indeed, and who are but pretenders; for a brother is born for adversity, Prov. xvii. 17.—xviii. 24.

II. He shows how wretchedly he was disappoint-

ed in his expectations from them; (v. 15.) "My brethren, who should have helped me, have dealt deceitfully as a brook." They came by appointment, with a great deal of ceremony, to mourn with him, and to comfort him; (ch. ii. 11.) and some extraordinary things were expected from such great men, such good men, such wise, learned, knowing men, and Job's particular friends; none questioned but that the drift of their discourses would be to comfort Job with the remembrance of his former piety, the assurance of God's favour to him, and the prospect of a glorious issue; but, instead of this, they most barbarously fall upon him with their reproaches and censures, condemn him as a hypocrite, insult over his calamities, and pour vinegar, instead of oil, into his wounds, and thus they dealt deceitfully with him. Note, 1. It is fraud and deceit not only to violate our engagements to our friends, but to frustrate their just expectations from us, especially the expectations we have raised. It is our wisdom to cease from man; we cannot expect too little from the creature, nor too much from the Creator. It is no new thing even for brethren to deal deceitfully; (Jer. ix. 4, 5. Mic. vii. 5.) let us therefore put our confidence in the Rock of ages, not in broken reeds; in the Fountain of life, not in broken cisterns. God will outdo our hopes as much as men come short of them.

This disappointment which he met with, he here

illustrates by the failing of brooks in summer.
(1.) The similitude is very elegant, v. 15..20.
[1.] Their pretensions are fitly compared to the great show which the brooks make, when they are swelled with the waters of a land-flood, by the melting of the ice and snow, which makes them blackish or muddy, v. 16. [2.] His expectations from them, which their coming so solemnly to comfort him had raised, he compares to the expectation which the weary thirsty travellers have of finding water in the summer there, where they have often seen it in great abundance in the winter, v. 19. The troops of Tema and Sheba, the caravans of the merchants of those countries, whose road lay through the deserts of Arabia, looked and waited for a supply of water from those brocks: "Hard by here," says one, "A little further," says another, "when I last travelled this way, there was water enough, we shall have that to re-fresh us." Where we have met with relief and comfort, we are apt to expect it again; and yet it does not follow: for, [3.] The disappointment of his expectation is here compared to the confusion which seizes the poor travellers, when they find heaps of sand where they expected floods of water. In the winter, when they were not thirsty, there was water enough; every one will applaud and ad mire those that are full and in prosperity: but, in the heat of summer, when they needed water, then it failed them, it was consumed, (v. 17.) it was turned aside, v. 18. When those who are rich and high, are sunk and impoverished, and stand it need of comfort, then those who before gathered about them, stand aloof from them, who before commended them, are forward to run them down: thus they who raise their expectations high from should help them; whereas they who make God their confidence have help in the time of need, Heb. iv. 16. They who make gold their hope, sooner or later will be ashamed of it, and of their confidence in it; (Ezek. vii. 19.) and the greater their confidence was, the greater their shame will be; They were confounded because they had hoped, v. 20. We prepare confusion for ourselves by our vain hopes: the reeds break under us, because we lean upon them. If we build a house upon the sand, we shall certainly be confounded, for it will fall in the storm, and we must thank ourselves for being such fools to expect it would stand. We are not deceived unless we deceive ourselves.

(2.) The application is very close; (v. 21.) For now ye are nothing. They seemed to be somewhat, but in conference they added nothing to him. Allude to Gal. ii. 6. He was never the wiser, never the better, for the visit they made him. Note, Whatever complacency we may take, or whatever confidence we may put, in creatures, how great soever they may seem, and how dear soever they may be, to us, one time or other we shall say of them, Now ye are nothing. When Job was in prosperity, his friends were something to him, he took complacency in them and their society; but "Now ye are nothing, now I can find no comfort but in God." It were well for us, if we had always such convictions of the vanity of the creature, and its insufficiency to make us happy, as we have sometimes had, or shall have, on a sick-bed, a death-bed, or in trouble of conscience; "Now ye are nothing. You are not what you have been, what you should be, what you pretend to be, what I thought you would have been; for you see my casting down, and are a fraid. When you saw me in my elevation, you caressed me; but, now that you see me in my dejection, you are shy of me, are afraid of showing yourselves kind, lest I should take boldness thence, to beg something of you, or to borrow;" (compare v. 22.) "you are afraid, lest, if you own me, you should be obliged to keep me." Perhaps they were afraid of catching his distemper, or of coming within smell of the noisomeness of it. It is not good, either out of pride or niceness, for love of our purses, or of our bodies, to be shy of those in distress, and afraid of coming near them. Their case may soon be our own.

22. Did I say, Bring unto me? or, Give a reward for me of your substance? 23. Or, Deliver me from the enemies' hand? or, Redeem me from the hand of the mighty? 24. Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; and cause me to understand wherein I have erred. 25. How forcible are right words! but what doth your arguing reprove? Do ye imagine to reprove words, and the speeches of one that is desperate, which are as wind? 27. Yea, ye overwhelm the fatherless, and ye dig a pit for your friend. 28. Now, therefore, be content: look upon me: for it is evident unto you if I lie. Return, I pray you, let it not be iniquity; yea, return again, my righteousness is in it. 30. Is there iniquity in my tongue? Cannot my taste discern perverse things?

Poor Job goes on here to upbraid his friends with their unkindness, and the hard usage they gave him. He here appeals to themselves concerning several things which tended both to justify him and

condemn them. If they would but think impartially, and speak as they thought, they could not but own.

41

I. That though he was necessitous, yet he was not craving, nor burthensome to his friends. Those that are so, whose troubles serve them to beg by, are commonly less pitied than the silent poor. Job would be glad to see his friends, but he did not say, Bring unto me, (v. 22.) or, Deliver me, v. 23. He did not desire to put them to any expense; did not urge his friends, either, 1. To make a collection for him, to set him up again in the world, though he could plead that his losses came upon him by the hand of God, and not by any fault or folly of his own; that he was utterly ruined and impoverished; that he had lived in good condition, and that, when he had wherewithal, he was charitable, and ready to help those that were in distress; that his friends were rich, and able to help him; yet he did not say, Give me of your substance. Note, A good man, when troubled himself, is afraid of being troublesome to his friends. Or, 2. To raise the country for him, to help him to recover his cattle out of the hands of the Sabeans and Chaldeans, or to make reprisals upon them; "Did I send for you to deliver me out of the hand of the mighty? No, I never expected you should either expose yourselves to any danger, or put yourselves to any charge, upon my account; I will rather sit down content under my affliction, and make the best of it, than spunge upon my friends." St. Paul worked with his hands, that he might not be burthensome to any. Job's not asking their help, did not excuse them from offering it when he needed it, and it was in the power of their hands to give it; but it much aggravated their unkindness, when he desired no more from them than a good look, and a good word, and yet could not obtain them. It often happens that from man, even when we expect little, we have less, but from God, even when we expect much, we have more, Eph. iii. 20.

II. That though he differed in opinion from them, yet he was not obstinate, but ready to yield to conviction, and to strike sail to truth, as soon as ever it was made to appear to him that he was in an error; (v. 24, 25.) "If, instead of invidious reflections and uncharitable insinuations, you will give me plain instructions and solid arguments, which shall carry their own evidence along with them, I am ready to acknowledge my error, and own myself in a fault; Teach me, and I will hold my tongue, for I have often found, with pleasure and wonder, how forcible right words are: but the method you take will never make proselytes; what doth your arguing reprove? Your hypothesis is false, your surmises are groundless, your management weak, and your application peevish and un-charitable." Note, 1. Fair reasoning has a commanding power, and it is a wonder if men are not conquered by it; but railing and foul language is impotent and foolish, and it is no wonder if men are exasperated and hardened by it. 2. It is the undoubted character of every honest man, that he is truly desirous to have his mistakes rectified, and to be made to understand wherein he has erred. and that right words, when they appear to him to be so, though contrary to his former sentiments, are both forcible and acceptable.

III. That though he had been indeed in a fult, yet they ought not to have given him such hard usage; (v. 26, 27.) "Do you imagine, or contrive with a great deal of art," (for so the word signifies,) "to reprove words, some passionate expressions of mine in this desperate condition, as if they were certain indications of reigning impiety and atheism? A little candour and charity would have served to excuse them, and to put a better con-

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struction upon them. Shall a man's spiritual state | be judged of by some rash and hasty words, which a surprising trouble extorts from him? Is it fair, Is it kind, Is it just, to criticise in such a case? Would you yourselves be served thus?" Two things aggrava.ed their unkind treatment of him. 1. That they took advantage of his weakness, and the helpless condition he was in; Ye overwhelm the fatherless, a proverbial expression, bespeaking that which is most barbarous and inhuman. "The fatherless cannot secure themselves from insults; which imbodens men of base and sordid spirits to insult them and trample upon them; and you do so by me." Job, being a childless father, thought himself as much exposed to injury as a fatherless child, (Ps. cxxvii. 5.) and had reason to take it ill at those who, therefore, triumphed over him. Let those, who overwhelm and overpower them that upon any account may be looked upon as fatherless, know that therein they not only put off the compassions of man, but fight against the compassions of God, who is, and will be, a Father of the fatherless, and a Helper of the helpless. 2. That they made pretence of kindness; "You dig a pit for your friend; not only you are unkind to me, who am your friend, but, under colour of friend-ship, you insnare me." When they came to see and sit with him, he thought he might speak his mind freely to them, and that the more bitter his complaints to them were, the more they would have endeavoured to comfort him. This made him take a greater liberty than otherwise he would have done. David, though he smothered his resentments when the wicked were before him, it is likely, would have given vent to them, if none had been by but friends, Ps. xxxix. 1. But this freedom of speech, which their professions of concern for him made him use, had exposed him to their censures, and so they might be said to dig a pit for him. Thus, when our hearts are hot within us, what is ill done we are apt to misrepresent, as if done designedly.

IV. That though he had let fall some passionate expressions, yet, in the main, he was in the right, and that his afflictions, though very extraordinary, did not prove him to be a hypocrite, or a wicked man. His righteousness he holds fast, and will not let

For the evincing of it, he here appeals,

1. To what they saw in him; (v. 28.) "Be content, and look upon me; what do you see in me, that bespeaks me either a mad man, or a wicked man? Nay, look in my face, and you may discern there the indications of a patient and submissive spirit, for all this. Let the show of my countenance witness for me, that the ugh I have cursed my day, I do not curse my God." Or rather, "Look upon my ulcers and sore boils, and by them it will be e ident to you that I do not lie;" that is, "that I do not complain without cause. Let your own eyes convince you that my condition is very sad, and that I do not quarrel with God, by making it worse than it is."

2. To what they heard from him; (v. 30.) "You

hear what I have to say; Is there iniquity in my tongue? That iniquity that you charge me with? Have I blasphemed God, or renounced him? Are not my present arguings right? Do not you perceive, by what I say, that I can discern perverse things? I can discover your fallacies and mistakes, and if I were myself in an error, I could perceive it. Whatever you think of me, I know what I say.

3. To their own second and sober thoughts; (v. 29.) "Return, I fray you, consider the thing over again, without prejudice and partiality, and let not the result be iniquity, let it not be an unrighteis in it," that is, "I am in the right in this matter; and though I cannot keep my temper as I should, I keep my integrity, and have not said, or done, or suffered, any thing which will prove me other than an honest man." A just cause desires nothing more than a just hearing, and, if need be, a re-hearing.

CHAP. VII.

Job, in this chapter, goes on to express the bitter sense he had of his calamities, and to justify himself in his desire of death. I. He complains to himself and his friends of his troubles, and the constant agitation he was in, v. 1..6. Il. He turns to God, and expostulates with him, v. 7. to the end. In which, I. He pleads the final period which death puts to our present state, v. 7..10. 2. He passionately complains of the miscrable condition he was now in, v. 11..16.3. He wonders that God will thus contend with him, and begs for the pardou of his sins, and a speedy release out of his miscries, v. 17..21. It is hard to methodise the speeches of one who owned himself almost desperate, ch. vi. 26.

1. IS there not an appointed time to man upon earth! are not his days also like the days of a hireling? 2. As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and as a hireling looketh for the reward of his work; 3. So am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me. 4. When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? and I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day. 5. My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken, and become loathsome. 6. My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope.

Job is here excusing what he could not justify, even his inordinate desire of death. Why should he not wish for the period of life, which would be the period of his miseries? To enforce this reason,

he argues,

I. From the general condition of man upon earth; (v. 1.) "He is of few days, and full of trouble. Every man must die shortly, and every man has some reason (more or less) to desire to die shortly; and, therefore, why should you impute it to me as so heinous a crime, that I wish to die shortly?" Or thus; "Pray mistake not my desires of death, as if I thought the time appointed of God could be anti-cipated; no, I know very well that that is fixed; only in such language as this, I take the liberty to express my present uneasmess. Is there not an afthointed time (a warfare, so the word is) to man upon earth? And are not his days here like the days

of a hireling?" Observe,

1. Man's present place: he is upon earth, which God has given to the children of men, Ps. exv. 16. This bespeaks man's meanness and inferiority: how much below the inhabitants of yonder elevated and refined regions is he situated! It also bespeaks God's mercy to him: he is yet upon the earth, not under it; on earth, not in hell. Our time on earth is limited and short, according to the narrow bounds of this earth; but heaven cannot be measured, nor the days of heaven numbered.

2. His continuance in that place: is there not a time appointed for his abode here? Yes, certainly there is, and it is easy to say by whom the appointment is made, even by Him that made us and set us here. We are not to be on this earth always, nor long, but for a certain time, which is determined by Him in whose hand our times are. We ous sentence; and you will find my righteousness | are not to think that we are governed by the blind

fate of the Stoics, or by the blind fortune of the Epicureans, but by the wise, holy, and sovereign, counsel of God.

3. His condition during that continuance: man's life is a warfare, and as the days of a hireling. We are every one of us to look upon ourselves in this world, (1.) As soldiers, exposed to hardship, and in the midst of enemies; we must serve and be under command; and, when our warfare is accomplished, we must be disbanded, dismissed with either shame or honour, according to what we have one in the body. (2.) As day-labourers, that have the work of the day to do in its day, and must make

up their account at night. 11. From his own condition at this time. He had as much reason, he thought, to wish for death, as a poor servant or hireling, that is tired with his work, has to wish for the shadows of the evening, when he shall receive his penny, and go to rest, v. The darkness of the night is as welcome to the labourer, as the light of the morning is to the watchman, Ps. cxxx. 6. The God of nature has provided for the repose of labourers, and no wonder that they desire it. The sleep of the labouring man is sweet, Eccl. v. 12. No pleasure more grateful, more relishing, to the luxurious, than rest to the labourers; nor can any rich man take so much satisfaction in the return of his rent-days, as the hireling in his day's wages. The comparison is plain, the application is concise, and somewhat obscure; but we must supply a word or two, and then it is easy: exactness of language is not to be expected from one in Job's condition. "As a servant earnestly desires the shadow, so, and for the same reason, I earnestly desire death, for I am made to possess," &c. Hear his complaint:

1. His days were useless, and had been so a great while; he was wholly taken off from business, and utterly unfit for it. Every day was a burthen to him, because he was in no capacity of doing good, or of spending it to any purpose. Et vitæ partem non attigit ullam—He could not fill up his time with any thing that would turn to account; this he calls possessing months of vanity, v. 3. It very much increases the affliction of sickness and age, to a good man, that he is thereby forced from his usefulness. He insists not so much upon it, that they are days in which he does no good; on that account, they are menths of vanity: but when we are disabled to work for God, if we will but sit still quitted.

etly for him, it is all one; we shall be accepted.

2. His nights were restless, v. 3, 4. The night relieves the toil and fatigue of the day, not only to the labourers, but to the sufferers: if a sick man can but get a little sleep in the night, it helps nature, and it is hoped that he will do well, John xi. 12. However, be the trouble what it will, sleep gives some intermission to the cares, and pains, and griefs, that afflict us: it is the parenthesis of our sorrows: but poor Job could not gain this relief.

(1.) His nights were wearisome, and, instead of taking any rest, he did but tire himself more with tossing to and fro until morning. Those that are in great uneasiness, through pain of body, or anguish of mind, think, by changing sides, changing places, changing postures, to get some ease; but, while the cause is the same within, it is all to no purpose; it is but a resemblance of a fretful discontented spirit, that is ever shifting, but never easy. This made him dread the night as much as the servant desires it, and, when he lay down, to say, When will the night be gone? (2.) These wearisome nights were appointed to him; God, who determines the times before appointed, had allotted him such nights as tl ese. Whatever is, at any time, grievous to us, it is good to see it appointed for us, that we may ac-

quiesce in the event, not only as unavoidable, because appointed, but as, therefore, designed for some holy end. When we have comfortable nights, we must see them also appointed to us, and be thankful for them; many better than we have wearisome nights.

3. His body was noisome, v. 5. His sores bred worms, the scabs were like clods of dust, and his skin was broken; so evil was the disease which cleaved fast to him. See what vile bodies we have, and what little reason we have to pamper them, or be proud of them; they have in themselves the principles of their own corruption: as fond as we are of them now, the time may come, when we may loathe them, and long to get rid of them.

may loathe them, and long to get rid of them.

4. His life was hastening apace towards a period, v. 6. He thought he had no reason to expect a long life, for he found himself declining fast; (v. 6.) My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, that is, "My time is now but short, and there are but a few sands more in my glass, which will speedily run out." Natural motions are more swift near the centre; Job thought his days ran swiftly, because he thought he should soon be at his journey's end; he looked upon them as good as spent already, and he was therefore without hope of being restored to his former prosperity. It is applicable to man's life in general; our days are like a weaver's shuttle, thrown from one side of the web to the other, in the twinkling of an eye, and then back again, to and fro, until, at length, it is quite exhausted of the thread it carried; and then we cut off, like a weaver, our life, Isa. xxxviii. 12. Time hastens on apace, the motion of it cannot be stopped, and, when it is past, it cannot be recalled. While we are living, we re sowing, (Gal. vi. 8.) so we are wearing; every day, like the shuttle, leaves a thread behind it; many weave the spider's web, which will fail them, ch. viii. 14. If we are weaving to ourselves holy garments and robes of righteousness, we shall have the benefit of them when our work comes to be reviewed, and every man shall reap as he sowed, and wear as he wove.

7. O remember that my life is wind: mine eye shall no more see good. 8. The eve of him that hath seen me shall see me no more: thine eyes are upon me, and I am 9. As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away; so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. 10. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more. 11. Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. 12. Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me? 13. When I say, My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint; 14. Then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through 15. So that my soul chooseth visions: strangling, and death rather than my life. 16. I loathe it: I would not live always: let me alone; for my days are vanity.

it, and, when he lay down, to say, When will the night be gone? (2.) These wearisome nights were appointed to him; God, who determines the times before appointed, had allotted him such nights as the see. Whatever is, at any time, grievous to us, it is good to see it appointed for us, that we may ac-

Job here, to learn how to speak to God, for, it must be confessed, there is a great mixture of passion and corruption in what he here says: but if God be not extreme to mark what his people say amiss, let us also make the best of it. Job is here begging of God either to ease him or end him.

He here represents himself to God,

I. As a dying man, surely and speedily dying. It is good for us, when we are sick, to think and speak of death, for sickness is sent on purpose to put us in mind of it; and if we be duly mindful of it ourselves, we may, in faith, put God in mind of it, as Job does here; (v. 7.) O remember that my life is wind. He recommends himself to God as an object of his pity and compassion, with this consideration, that he was a very weak, frail, creature, his abode in this world short and uncertain, his removal out of it sure and speedy, and his return to it again impossible, and never to be expected; that his life was wind, as the lives of all men are, noisy perhaps, and blustering, like the wind, but vain and empty, soon gone, and, when gone, past recall. God had compassion on Israel, remembering that they were but flesh, a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again, Ps. 1xxviii. 38, 39.

1. The pious reflections Job makes upon his own Such plain truths as these conlife and death. cerning the shortness and vanity of life, the unavoidableness and irrecoverableness of death, then do us good, when we think and speak of them with application to ourselves. Let us consider, then,

(1.) That we must shortly take our leave of all the things that are seen, that are temporal. eve of the body must be closed, and shall no more see good, the good which most men set their hearts upon, for their cry is, Who will make us to see good? Ps. iv. 6. If we be such fools as to place our happiness in visible good things, what will become of us when they shall be for ever hid from our eyes, and we shall no more see good? Let us, therefore, live by that faith which is the substance and evidence of things not seen.

(2.) That we must then remove to an invisible world: the eye of him that hath here seen me, shall see me no more there. It is 'A Ins -an unseen state, v. 8. Death removes our lovers and friends into darkness, (Ps. lxxxviii. 18.) and will shortly remove us out of their sight; when we go hence we shall be seen no more, (Ps. xxxix. 13.) but go to converse with the things that are not seen, that are

(3.) That God can easily, and in a moment, put an end to our lives, and send us to another world; (v. 8.) "Thine eyes are upon me, and I am not: thou canst look me into eternity, frown me into the grave, when thou pleasest."

Should'st thou, displeas'd, give me a frowning look, I sink, I die, as if with lightning struck. Sir R. BLACKMORE.

He takes away our breath, and we die; nay, he but looks on the earth, and it trembles, Ps. civ.

29, 32.

(4.) That when we are once removed to another world, we must never return to this. There is constant passing from this world to the other, but Vestigia nulla retrorsum—There is no repassing. "Therefore, Lord, show me kindness while I am here, for I shall return no more to receive kindness in this world." Or, "Therefore, Lord, kindly case me by death, for that will be a perpetual ease, i shall return no more to the calamities of this life." When we are dead, we are gone, to return no more, [1.] From our house under ground, v. 9. He that goeth down to the grave, shall come up no |

his ear heavy. Yet we must not go to school to || more, until the general resurrection, shall come up no more to his place in this world. Dying is work that is to be done but once, and therefore it had need be well done: an error there is past retrieve. This is illustrated by the blotting out and scattering of a cloud. It is consumed, and vanisheth away, is resolved into air, and never knits again: other clouds arise, but the same cloud never returns; so a new generation of the children of men is raised up, but the former generation is quite consumed, and vanishes away. When we see a cloud which looks great, as if it would eclipse the sun and drown the earth, of a sudden dispersed and disappearing, let us say, "Just such a thing is the life of man; it is a vapour that appears for a little while, and then vanishes away." [2.] To return no more to our house above ground, v. 10. He shall return no more to his house, to the possession and enjoyment of it, to the business and delights of it: others will take possession, and keep it till they also resign to another generation. The rich man in hell desired Lazarus might be sent to his house, knowing it was to no purpose to ask that he might have leave to go himself. Glorified saints shall return no more to the cares, and burthens, and sorrows, of their house; nor damned sinners to the galeties and pleasures of their house. Their place shall no more know them, no more own them, have no more acquaintance with them, nor be any more under their influence. It concerns us to secure a better place when we die, for this will no more

2. The passionate inference he draws from it. From these premises he might have drawn a better conclusion than this, (v. 11.) Therefore I will not refrain my mouth, I will speak, I will compilain. Holy David, when he had been meditating on the frailty of human life, made a contrary use of it; (Ps. xxxix. 9.) I was dumb, and opened not my mouth: but Job, finding himself near expiring, hastens as much to make his complaint, as if he had been to make his last will and testament, or as if he could not die in peace until he had given vent to his passion. When we have but a few breaths to draw, we should spend them in the holy, gracious, breathings of faith and prayer, not in the noisome, noxious, breathings of sin and corruption. Better die praving and praising, than die complain-

ing and quarrelling.

II. As a distempered man, sorely and grievously distempered, both in body and mind. In this part of his representation, he is very peevish, as if God dealt hardly with him, and hid upon him more than was meet. Am I a sea, or a whale? v. 12. "A raging sea, that must be kept within bounds, to check its proud waves, or an unruly whale, that must be restrained by force from devouring all the fishes of the sea? Am I so strong, that there needs so much ado to hold me? So boisterous, that 10 less than all these mighty bonds of affliction will serve to tame me, and keep me within compass?" We are very apt, when we are in affliction, to complain of God and his providence, as if he had more restraint upon us than there is occasion for; whereas we are never in heaviness but when there is need, or beyond the just measure.

1. He complains that he could not rest in his bed, v. 13, 14. There we promise curselves some repose, when we are fatigued with labour, pain, or travel; My bed shall comfort me, and my couch shall ease my complaint; sleep will, for a time, give me some relief; it does so; it is appointed for that end; many a time it has eased us, and we have awaked refreshed, and with new vigour. When it is so, we have great reason to be thankful; but it was not so with poor Job; his hed, instead of comforting him, terrified him; and his couch, instead of easing his complaint, added to it; for if he dropped asleep, he was disturbed with his frightful dreams, and when those awaked him, still he was hannted with dreadful apparitions. This was it, that made the night so unwelcome and wearisome to him as it was; (v. 4.) When shall I arise? Note, God can, when he pleases, meet us with terror there, where we promise ourselves ease and repose; nay, he can make us a terror to ourselves, and, as we have often contracted guilt, by the rovings of an unsanctified fancy, he can likewise, by the power of our own imagination, create as much grief, and so make that our punishment which has often been our sin. In Job's dreams, though they might partly arise from his distemper, (in fevers, or small-pox, when the body is all over sore, it is common for the sleep to be unquiet,) yet we have reason to think Satan had a hand in them; Satan, who delights to terrify those whom it is out of his reach to destroy; but Job looked up to God, who permitted Satan to do this, (Thou scarest me,) and mistook Satan's representations for the terrors of God setting themselves in array against him. We have reason to pray to God that our dreams may neither defile nor disquiet us, neither tempt us to sin, nor torment us with fear; that He who keeps Israel, and neither slumbers nor sleeps, may keep us when we slumber and sleep; that the Devil may not then do us a mischief, either as an insinuating serpent, or as a roaring lion; and to bless God if we lie down and our sleep is sweet, and we are not thus scared.

2. He covets to rest in his grave, that bed where there are no tossings to and fro, nor any frightful dreams, v. 15, 16. (1.) He was sick of life, and hated the thoughts of it; "I loathe it, I have had enough of it, I would not live alway: not only not live alway in this condition, in pain and misery, but not live alway in the most easy and prosperous condition, to be continually in danger of being thus reduced: my days are vanity at the best, empty of solid comfort, exposed to real griefs; and I would not be for ever tied to such uncertainty." Note, A good man would not (if he might) live always in this world, no, not though it smile upon him, because it is a world of sin and temptation, and he has a better world in prospect. (2.) He was fond of death, and pleased himself with the thoughts of it: his soul (his judgment, he thought, but really it was his passion) chose strangling and death rather; any death rather than such a life as this. less, this was Job's infirmity; for though a good man would not wish to live alway in this world, and would choose strangling and death rather than sin, as the martyrs did, yet he will be content to live as long as pleases God, not choose them rather than life, because life is our opportunity of glorifying God, and getting ready for heaven.

17. What is man that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thy heart upon him? 18. And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment? 19. How long wilt thou not depart from me, nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle? 20. I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou Preserver of men? why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, so that I am a burden to myself? 21. And why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity? for now shall I sleep in the

dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be.

Job here reasons with God.

I. Concerning his dealings with man in general; (v. 17, 18.) What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? This may be looked upon either, 1. As a passionate reflection upon the proceedings of divine justice; as if the great God did diminish and disparage himself, in contending with man. Great men think it below them to take cognizance of those who are much their inferiors, so far as to reprove and correct their follies and indecencies; why then does God magnify man, by visiting him, and trying him, and making so much ado about him? Why will he thus pour all his forces upon one that is such an unequal match for him? Why will he visit him with afflictions, which, like a quotidian ague, return as duly and constantly as the morning-light, and try, every moment, what he can bear? We mistake God, and the nature of his providence, if we think it any lessening to him, to take notice of the meanest of his creatures. ()r, 2. As a pious admiration of the condescensions of divine grace, like that, Ps. viii. 4.—cxliv. 3. owns God's favour to man in general, even then when he complains of his own particular troubles. "What is man, miserable man, a poor, mean, weak creature, that Thou, the great and glorious God, shouldest deal with him as thou dost? What is man," (1.) "That thou shouldest put such honour upon him; shouldest magnify him, by taking him into covenant and communion with thyself?" (2.) "That thou shouldest concern thyself so much about him, shouldest set thy heart upon him, as dear to thee, and one thou hast a kindness for?" (3.) "That thou shouldest visit him with thy compassions every morning, as we daily visit a particular friend, or as the physician visits his patients every morning, to help them?" (4.) "That thou shouldest try him, shouldest feel his pulse, and observe his looks, every moment, as in care about him, and jealous over him?" That such a worm of the earth as man is, should be the darling and favourite of Heaven, is what we have reason for ever to admire.

II. Concerning his dealings with him in particu-

lar. Observe,

1. The complaint he makes of his afflictions,

1. The complaint he makes of his afflictions,

1. The complaint he makes of his afflictions, which he here aggravates, and (as we are all too apt to do) makes the worst of, in three expressions. (1.) That he was the butt to God's arrows; "Thou hast set me as a mark against thee," v. 20. "My case is singular, and none is shot at so as I am." (2.) That he was a burthen to himself, ready to sink under the load of his own life. How much delight soever we take in ourselves, God can, when comfort can we take in ourselves, if God appear against us as an Enemy, and we have not comfort in him? (3.) That he had no intermission of his griefs; (v. 19.) "How long will it be ere thou cause thy rod to depart from me, or abate the rigour of the correction, at least, for so long as that I may swallow down my spittle?" It should seem, Job's distemper lay much in his throat, and almost choked him, so that he could not swallow his spittle. He complains, (ch. xxx. 18.) that it bound him about like the collar of his coat. "Lord," says he, "wilt not thou give me some respite, some breathing time?" ch. ix. 18.

2. The concern he is in about his sins. The best men have sin to complain of, and the better they are, the more they will complain of it.

(1.) He ingenuously owns himself guilty before God; I have sinned. God had said of him, that he

was a fierfect and an unright man; yet he says of himself, I have sinned. Those may be upright who yet are not sinless; and those who are sincerely penitent are accepted, through a Mediator, as evangelically perfect. Job maintained, against his friends, that he was not a hypocrite, not a wicked man; and yet owns to his God, that he had sinned. If we have been kept from gross acts of sin, it does not, therefore, follow that we are innocent. The best must acknowledge, before God, that they have sinned. His calling God the *Observer*, or *Preserver*, of men, may be looked upon as designed for an aggravation of his sin; "Though God has had his eye upon me, his eye upon me for good, yet I have sinned against him." When we are in affliction, it is seasonable to confess sin, as the procuring cause of our affliction. Penitent confessions would drown and silence passionate complaints.

(2.) He seriously inquires how he might make his peace with God; "What shall I do unto thee, having done so much against thee?" Are we convinced that we have sinned, and are we brought to own it? We cannot but conclude that something must be done, to prevent the fatal consequences of it. The matter must not rest as it is, but some course must be taken, to undo what has been ill done. And, if we are truly sensible of the danger we have run ourselves into, we shall be willing to do any thing; to take a pardon upon any terms; and therefore shall be inquisitive as to what we shall do, (Mic. vi. 6, 7.) what we shall do to God, not to satisfy the demands of his justice, (that is done only by the Mediator,) but to qualify ourselves for the tokens of his favour, according to the tenor of the gospel covenant. In making this inquiry, it is good to eye God as the Preserver or Saviour of men, not the Destroyer. In our repentance, we must keep up good thoughts of God, as one that delights not in the ruin of his creatures, but would rather they should return and live. "Thou art the Saviour of men; be my Saviour, for I cast my-self upon thy mercy."

(3.) He earnestly begs for the forgiveness of his sins, v. 21. The heat of his spirit, as, on the one hand, it made his complaints the more bitter, so, on the other hand, it made his prayers the more lively and importunate; as here, "Why dost thou not hardon my transgression? Art not thou a God of infinite mercy, that art ready to forgive? Hast not thou wrought repentance in me? Why then dost thou not give me the pardon of my sin, and make me to hear the voice of that joy and gladness?" Surely he means more than barely the removing of his outward trouble, and is herein earnest for the return of God's favour, which he complained of the want of, ch. vi. 4. "Lord. pardon my sins, and give me the comfort of that pardon, and then I can easily bear my afflictions," Matth. ix. 2. Isa. xxxiii. 24. When the mercy of God pardons the transgression that is committed by us, the grace of God takes away the iniquity that reigns in us. Wherever God removes the guilt of sin, he breaks the power of sin.

(4.) To enforce his prayer for pardon, he pleads the prospect he had of dving quickly; For now shall I sleep in the dust; death will lay us in the dust, will lay us to sleep there, and perhaps now in a Job had been complaining of restless nights, and that sleep departed from his eyes; (v. 3, 4, 13, 14.) but those who cannot sleep in a bed of down, will shortly sleep in a bed of dust, and not be scared with dreams, nor tossed to and fro. "Thou shalt seek me in the morning, to show me Evour, but I shall not be, it will be too late then. If my sins be not pardoned while I live, I am lost not he he an advocate for and undone for ever." Note, The consideration accuser of his brethren?

of this, that we must shortly die, and perhaps may die suddenly, should make us all very solicitous to get our sins pardened, and our iniquity taken away.

CHAP. VIII.

Job's friends are like Job's messengers; those followed one another close with evil tidings, these with barsh consures: both, unawares, served Satan's design; these to drive him from his integrity, these to drive him from the comfort of it. Eliphaz did not reply to what Job had said in answer to him, but left it to Bildad, whom he knew to be of the same mind with himself in this affair Those are not the wisest of the company, but the weak est rather, who covet to have all the talk. Let others speak in their turn, and let the first keep silence, I Cor. xiv. 30, 31. Eliphaz had undertaken to show, that, because Job was sorely afflicted, he was certainly a wicked man; Bildad is much of the same mind, and will conclude Job a wicked man, unless God do speedily appear for his relief. In this chapter, he endeavours to convince Job, I. That he had spoken too passionately, v. 2. II. That he and his children had suffered justly, v. 3, 4. III. That, if he were a true penitent, God would soon turn his eaptivity, v. 5..7. IV. That it was a usual thing for Providence to extinguish the joys and hopes of wicked men, as his were extinguished; and therefore that they had reason to suspect him for a hypocrite, v. 8. 19. V. That they should be abundantly confirmed in their suspicion, unless God did speedily appear for his relief, v. 20. .22.

1. THEN answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said, 2. How long wilt thou speak these things? and how long shall the words of thy mouth be like a strong wind? 3. Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice? 4. If thy children have sinned against him, and he have cast them away for their transgression; 5. If thou wouldest seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplication to the Almighty: 6. If thou wert pure and upright; surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous. 7. Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase.

I. Bildad reproves Job for what he had said; (v. 2.) checks his passion, but perhaps, (as is too common,) with greater passion. We thought Job spake a great deal of good sense, and much to the purpose, and that he had reason and right on his side; but Bildad, like an eager angry disput int, turns it all off with this, How long will thou speak these things? taking it for granted that Eliphaz had said enough to silence him, and that therefore all he said was impertment. Thus (as Caryl observes) reproofs are often grounded upon mistakes. Men's meaning is not taken aright, and then they are gravely rebuked, as if they were evil-doers. Bildad compares Job's discourse to a strong wind. Job had excused himself with this, that his speeches were but as wind, (ch. vi. 26.) and therefore they should not make such ado about them; "Yea, but" (says Bildad) "they are as a strong wind, bluster ing and threatening, boisterous and dangerous, and therefore we are concerned to fence against them.'

II. He justifies God in what he had done. This he had no occasion to do at this time, for Job did not condemn God, as he would have it thought he did: and this he might have done, without reflect ing upon Job's children, as he does here. Could not be he an advocate for God, but he must be an

1. He is right in general, that God doth not pervert judgment, nor ever go contrary to any settled rule of justice, v. 3. Far be it from him that he should, and from us that we should suspect him. He never oppresses the innocent, nor lays more load on the guilty than they deserve. He is God, the Judge and shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Gen. xviii. 25. If there should be unrighteousness with God, how shall he judge the world? Rom. iii. 5, 6. He is Almighty, Shaddai, All-sufficient. Men pervert justice, sometimes, for fear of the power of others; but God is Almighty, and sands in awe of none. Men have respect to the favour of others; but God is all-sufficient, and cannot be benefited by the favour of any. It is man's weakness and impotency, that he often is unjust; it is God's omnipotence, that he cannot be so.

2 Yet he is not fair and candid in the application: he takes it for granted that Job's children (the death of whom was one of the greatest of his afflictions) had been guilty of some notorious wickedness, and that the unhappy circumstances of their death were sufficient evidence that they were sinners above all the children of the east, v. 4. Job readily owned that God did not pervert judgment; and yet it did not therefore follow either that his children were cast-aways, or that they died for some great transgression. It is true that we and our children have sinned against God, and we ought to justify him in all he brings upon us and ours; but extraordinary afflictions are not always the punishment of extraordinary sins, but sometimes the trial of extraordinary graces; and, in our judgment of another's case, (unless the contrary appears,) we ought to take the more favourable side, as our Sayiour directs, Luke xiii. 2, 4. Here Bildad missed it.

III. He puts Job in hope, that, if he were indeed upright, as he said he was, he should yet see a good issue of his present troubles; "Although thy children have sinned against him, and are cast away in their transgression, they have died in their own sin, yet, if thou be pure and upright thyself, and, as an evidence of that, wilt now seek unto God, and submit to him, all shall be well yet," v. 5..7. This

may be taken two ways: either,

1. As designed to prove Job a hypocrite, and a wicked man, though not by the greatness, yet by the continuance, of his afflictions. "When thou wast impoverished, and thy children killed, if thou hadst been pure and upright, and approved thyself so in the trial, God would, before new, have returned in niercy to thee, and comforted thee according to the time of thine affliction; but because he does not so, we have reason to conclude thou art not so pure and upright as thou pretendest to be. If thou hadst conducted thyself well under the former affliction, thou hadst not been struck with the latter." Herein Bildad was not in the right; for a good man may be afflicted for his trial, not only very sorely, but very long, and yet, if for life, it is, in comparison with eternity, but for a moment. But, since Bildad put it to this issue, God was pleased to join issue with him, and proved his servant Job an honest man, by Bildad's own argument; for, soon after, he blessed his latter end more than his beginning. Or,

2. As designed to direct and encourage Job, that he might not thus run himself into despair, and give up all for gone; yet there might be hope, if he would take the right course. I am apt to think Bildad here intended to condemn Job, yet would be thought to counsel and comfort him. (1.) He gives him good counsel, yet perhaps not expecting he would take it; the same that Eliphaz had given him, (ch. v. 8.) to seek unto God, and that betimes, that is, speedily and seriously, and not to be dilatory and trifling in his return and repentance. He advises

him not to complain, but to petition, and to make his supplication to the Almighty with humility and faith; and to see that there was (what he feared had hithertobeen wanting) sincerity in his heart, "Thou must be pure and upright;" and honesty in his house, "That must be the habitation of thy righteousness, and not filled with ill-gotten goods; else God will not hear thy prayers," Ps. lxvi. 18. It is only the prayer of the upright that is the acceptable and prevailing prayer, Prov. xv. 8. (2.) He gives him good hopes that he should yet again see good days, secretly suspecting, however, that he was not qualified to see them. He assures him, That if he would be early in seeking God, God would awake for his relief, would remember him, and return to him, though now he seened to forget him and forsake him; That if his habitation were righteous it should be presperous; for honesty is the best policy, and inward piety a sure friend to outward prosperity. When we return to God in a way of duty, we have reason to hope that he will return to us in a way of mercy. Lct not Job object that he had so little left to begin the world with again, that it was impossible he should ever prosper as he had done; no, "Though thy beginning should be ever so small, a little meal in the barrel, and a little oil in the cruse, God's blessing shall multiply that to a great increase." This is God's way of enriching the souls of his people with graces and comforts, not *per saltum—as by a bound*, but *per gradum—step by step*. The beginning is small, but the progress is to perfection. Dawning light grows to noon-day; a grain of mustard-seed to a great tree. Let us not therefore despise the day of small things, but hope for the day of great things.

8. For inquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers; 9. (For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow:) 10. Shall not they teach thee, and tell thee, and utter words out of their heart? 11. Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow without water? 12. Whilst it is yet in his greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. 13. So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish: 14. Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web. 15. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand: he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure. 16. He *is* green before the sun, and his branch shooteth forth in his garden. 17. His roots are wrapped about the heap, and seeth the place of stones. 18. If he destroy him from his place, then it shall deny him, saying, I have not seen thee. 19. Behold, this is the joy of his way, and out of the earth shall others grow.

Bildad here discourses well of the sad catastrophe of hypocrites and evil-doers, and the fatal period of all their hopes and joys. He will not be so bold as to say, with Eliphaz, that none that were righteous were ever cut off thus; (ch. iv. 7.) yet he takes it for granted that God, in the course of his providence, does ordinarily bring wicked men, who seemed pious, and were prosperous, to shame and ruin in this world; and that, by making their presperity short, he discovers their piety to be counterfeit. Whether this will certainly prove that all

who are thus ruined must be concluded to have ' been hypocrites, he will not say, but ratner suspects

, nd thinks the application is easy.

I. He proves this truth, of the certain destruction of all the hopes and joys of hypocrites, by an appeal to antiquity, and the concurring sentiment and observation of all wise and good men. It is an undoubted truth, if we take in the other world, that, if not in this life, yet in the life to come, hypocrites will be deprived of all their trusts and all their triumphs. Whether Bildad so meant or no, we must so take it.

Let us observe the method of his proof, v. 8..10. 1. He insists not on his own judgment, and that of his companions; We are but of yesterday, and know nothing, v. 9. He perceived that Job had no opinion of their abilities, but thought they knew little; "We will own," says Bildad, "that we know nothing, are as ready to confess our ignorance as thou art to condemn it; for we are but as yesterday in comparison, and our days upon earth are short and transient, and hastening away as a shadow. And therefore," (1.) "We are not so near the fountain-head of divine revelation" (which then, for aught that appears, was conveyed by tradition) "as the former age was; and therefore we must inquire what they said, and recount what we have been told of their sentiments." Blessed be God, now that we have the word of God in writing, and are directed to search that, we need not inquire of the former age, nor prepare ourselves to the search of their fathers; for, though we ourselves are but of yesterday, the word of God in the scripture is as nigh us as them; (Rom. x. 8.) and it is the most sure word of prophecy, to which we must take heed. If we study and keep God's precepts, we may by them understand more than the ancients, Ps. cxix. 99, 100. (2.) "We do not live so long as they of the former age did, to make observations upon the methods of Divine Providence, and therefore cannot be such competent judges as they, in a cause of this nature." Note, The shortness of our lives is a great hindrance to the improvement of our knowledge; and so is the frailty and weakness of our bodies. Vita brevis, ars longa—Life is short, the progress of art boundless.

2. He refers himself to the testimony of the ancients, and to the knowledge which Job himself had of their sentiments. "Do thou inquire of the former age, and let them tell thee, not only their own judgment in this matter, but the judgment also of their fathers; (v. 8.) they will teach thee, and inform thee, (v. 10.) that, all along, in their time, the judgments of God followed wicked men. they will utter of their hearts, that is, as that which they firmly believe themselves, which they are greatly affected with, and desirous to acquaint and affect others with." Note, (1.) For the right understanding of Divine Providence, and the unfolding of the difficulties of it, it will be of use to compare the observations and experiences of former ages with the events of our own day; and, in order thereunto, to consult history, especially the sacred history, which is the most ancient, infallibly true, and written designedly for our learning. (2.) They that would fetch knowledge from the former ages, must search diligently, prepare for the search, and take pains in the search. (3.) Those words are most likely to reach to the hearts of the learners, that come from the hearts of the teachers. shall teach thee best, that utter words out of their heart, that speak by experience, and not by rote,

of spiritual and divine things.

The learned Bishop Patrick suggests, that Bildad, being a Shuhite, descended from Shuah, one of Abraham's sons by Keturah, Gen. xxv. 2. In this appeal which he makes to history, he has a particular respect to the rewards which the bless-

ings of God secured to the posterity of faithful Abraham, who hitherto, and long after, continued in his religion; he refers also to the judicial extirpation of those eastern people, neighbours to Job, (in whose country they were settled,) for their wickedness: whence he infers, that it is God's usual way to prosper the just, and root out the wicked, though for a while they may flourish.

II. He illustrates this truth by some similitudes. 1. The hopes and joys of the hypocrites are here compared to a rush or flag, v. 11...13. (1.) It grows up out of the mire and water. The hypocrite cannot gain his hope without some fa'se rotten ground or other, out of which to raise it, and with which to support it and keep it alive, any more than the rush can grow without mire. He grounds it on his worldly prosperity, the plausible profession he makes of religion, the good opinion of his neighbours, and his own good conceit of himself, which are no solid foundation on which to build his cenfidence. It is all but mire and water; and the hope that grows out of it, is but rush and flag. (2.) It may look green and gay for a while, (the rush outgrows the grass,) but it is light, and hollow, and empty, and good for nothing. It is green for show, but of no use. (3.) It withers presently, before any other herb, v. 12. Even while it is in its greenness, it is dried away, and gone in a little time. Note, The best state of hypocrites and evil-doers borders upon withering; even when it is green, it is going. The grass is cut down, and withers, (Ps. xc. 6.) but the rush is not cut down, and yet withers, withers afore it grows up; (Ps. cxxix. 6.) as it has no use, so it has no continuance. So are the paths of all that forget God; (v. 13.) they take the same way that the rush does, for the hupocrite's hopes shall fierish. Note, [1.] Forgetfulness of God is at the bottom of men's hypocrisy, and of the vain hopes with which they flatter and deceive themselves in their hypocrisy. Men would not be hypocrites, if they did not forget that the God with whom they have to do searches the heart, and requires truth there; that he is a Spirit, and has his eye on our spirits. Hypocrites could have no hope, if they did not forget that God is righteous, and will not be mocked with the torn and the lame. The hope of hypocrites is a great cheat upon themselves, and though it may flourish a while, it will certainly perish at last, and they with it.

2. They are here compared to a spider's web, or a spider's house, as it is in the margin; a cob-web, v. 14, 15. The hope of the hypocrite, (1.) Is weven out of his own bowels; it is the creature of his own fancy, and arises merely from a conceit of his own merit and sufficiency. There is a great deal of difference between the work of the bee and that of the spider; a diligent Christian, like the laborious bee, fetches in all his comfort from the heavenly dews of God's word; but the hypocrite, like the subtle spider, weaves his out of a false hypothesis of his own, concerning God, as if he were altogether such a one as himself. (2.) He is very fond of it, as the spider of her web; pleases himself with it, wraps himself in it, calls it his house, leans upon it, and holds it fast. It is said of the spider, that she takes hold with her hands, and is in king's palaces, Prov xxx. 28. So does a carnal worldling hug himself in the fulness and firmness of his outward prosperity; he prides himself in that house as his palace, and fortifies himself in it as his castle, and makes use of it as the spider of her web, to insnare those he has a mind to prey upon. So does a formal professor; he flatters himself in his own eyes, doubts not of his salvation, is secure of heaven and cheats the world with his vain confidences. (3.) It will easily and certainly be swept away, as the cob-web with the besom, when God shall come to purge his house.

The prosperity of worldly people will fail them, when they expect to find safety and happiness in it. They seek to hold fast their estates, but God is plucking them out of their hands; and whose shall those things be which they have provided? or what the better will they be for them? The confidences of hypocrates will fail them; I tell you, I know you The house built on the sand will fall in the st am, when the builder most needs it, and had When a wicked promised himself the benefit of it. The ground of man dies, his expectation perishes. his h pes will prove false; he will be disappointed of the thing he hoped for, and his foolish hope, with which he buoyed himself up, will be turned into endless despair; and thus his hope will be cut off, h.s web, that refuge of lies, swept away, and he crushed in it.

3. They are here compared to a flourishing and well-rooted tree, which, though it do not wither of itself, yet will easily be cut down, and its place know it no more. The secure and prosperous sinner may think himself wronged when he is compared to a rush and a flag, he thinks he has a better root; "We will allow him his conceit," (says Bildad,) "and give him all the advantage he can desire, and yet bring him in suddenly cut off." He is here represented, as Nebuchadnezzar was in his

own dream, (Dan. iv. 10.) by a great tree.

(1.) See this tree fair and flourishing, (v. 16.) like a green bay-tree, (Ps. xxxvii. 35.) green before the sun, that keeps its greenness in defiance of the scorching sun-beams, and his branch shoots forth under the protection of his garden-wall, and with the benefit of his garden-soil: see it fixed, and taking deep root, never likely to be overthrown by stormy winds, for his roots are interwoven with the stones; (v. 17.) it grows in firm ground, not as the rush, in mire and water. Thus does a wicked man, when he prospers in the world, think himself secure; his wealth is a high wall in his own conceit.

(2.) See this tree felled and forgotten notwithstanding; destroyed from his place, (v. 18.) and so entirely extirpated, that there shall remain no sign or token where it grew; the very place shall say, I have not seen thee; and the standers by shall say the same, I sought him, but he could not be found, Ps. xxxvii. 36. He made a great show and a great noise for a time, but he is gone of a sudden, and neither root nor branch left him, Mal. iv. 1. is the joy, that is, this is the end and conclusion, of the wicked man's way, (v. 19.) this is that which all his joy comes to—The way of the ungodly shall herish, Ps. i. 6. His hope, he thought, would, in the issue, be turned into joy, but this is the issue, this is the joy, The harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow, Isa. xvii. 11. This is the best of it; and what then is the worst of it? But shall he not leave a family behind him to enjoy what he has? No, out of the earth, (not out of his roots,) shall others grow, that are nothing akin to him, and shall fill up his place, and rule over that for which he laboured. Others, namely, of the same spirit and disposition, shall grow up in his place, and be as secure as ever he was, not warned by his fail. The way of wordlings is their folly, and yet there is a race of them that approve their sayings, Ps. xlix. 13.

20. Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evildoers; 21. Till he fill thy mouth with laughing, and thy lips with rejoicing. 22. They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame; and the dwelling-place of the wicked shall come to nought.

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Bildad here, in the close of his discourse, sums up what he had to say, in a few words, setting before Job life and death, the blessing and the curse; assuring him, that as he was, so he should fare, and therefore they might conclude, that as he fared, so he was.

1. On the other hand, if he were a perfect upright man, God would not cast him away, v. 20. Though now he seemed forsaken of God, he would yet return to him, and, by degrees, would turn his mourning into dancing, (Ps. xxx. 11.) and comforts should should be filled with laughing, v. 21. So affecting should the happy change be, Ps. cxxvi. 2. They that loved him, would rejoice with him; but they that hated him, and had triumphed in his fall, would be ashamed of their insolence, when they see him restored to his former prosperity. will not cast away an upright man; he may be cast down for a time, but he shall not be cast away for ever; it is true, that, if not in this world, yet in another, the mouth of the righteous shall be filled with rejoicing. Though their sun should sit under with rejoicing. Though their sun should sit under a cloud, yet it shall rise again clear, never more to be clouded; though they go mourning to the grave, that shall not hinder their entrance into the joy of their Lord. It is true, that the enemies of the saints will be clothed with shame, when they see them crowned with honour. But it does not there fore follow, that, if Job were not perfectly restored to his former prosperity, he forfeited the character of a perfect man.

2. On the other hand, if he were a wicked man, and an evil doer, God would not help him, but leave him to perish in his present distresses; (v. 20.) and his dwelling-place should come to naught, 22. And here, also, it is true that God will not help the evil-doers; they throw themselves out of his protection, and forfeit his favour; he will not take the ungodly by the hand, so it is in the margin, will not have fellowship and communion with them; for what communion between light and darkness? He will not lend them his hand to pull them out of the miseries, the eternal miseries, into which they have plunged themselves; they will then stretch out their hand to him for help, but it is too late, he will not take them by the hand: Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed. It is true, that the dwelling-place of the wicked, sooner or later, will come to naught. Those only who make God their dwelling-place, are safe for ever, Ps. xc. 1.—xci. 1.
They who make other things their refuge, will be disappointed. Sin brings ruin on persons and families. Yet to argue, (as Bildad, I doubt, slily does,) that because Job's family was sunk, and he himself, at present, seemed helpless, therefore he certainly was an ungodly wicked man, was neither just nor charitable, as long as there appeared no other evidence of his wickedness and ungodliness. Let us judge nothing before the time, but wait till the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest; and the present difficulties of Providence be solved, to universal and everlasting satisfaction, when the mystery of God shall be finished.

CHAP. IX.

In this, and the following chapter, we have Job's answer to Bildad's discourse, wherein he speaks honourably of God, humbly of himself, and feelingly of his troubles; but not one word by way of reflection upon his friends, or their unkindness to him, nor in direct reply to what Bildad had said. He wisely keeps to the merits of the cause, and makes no remarks upon the person that managed it, nor seeks occasion against him. In this chapter, we have, I. The doctrine of God's justice laid down, v. 2. 11. The proof of it, from his wisdom, and power, and sovereign dominion, v. 3...13. III. The application of it, in which, 1. He condemns himself, as

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not able to contend with God, either in law or battle, v. 14..21, 2. He maintains his point, that we cannot judge of men's character by their outward condition, v. 22...24. 3. He complains of the greatness of his troubles, the confusion he was in, and the loss he was at what to say or do, v. 25...35.

1. THEN Job answered and said, know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God? 3. If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand. 4. He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered! 5. Which remove th the mountains, and they know not; which overturneth them in his anger; 6. Which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble; 7. Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not, and sealeth up the stars; 8. Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea; 9. Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south; 10. Which doeth great things past finding out, yea, and wonders without number. 11. Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not; he passeth on also, but I perceive him not. 12. Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? Who will say unto him, What doest thou? 13. If God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers do stoop under him.

Bildad began with a rebuke to Job for talking so much, ch. viii. 2. Job makes no answer to that, though it had been easy enough to retort it upon himself; but what he next lays down as his principle, that God never perverts judgment, Job agrees with him in, I know it is so of a truth, v. 2. Note, We should be ready to own how far we agree with those with whom we dispute, and we should not slight, much less resist, a truth, though produced by an adversary, and urged against us, but receive it in the light and love of it, though it have been misapplied. "It is so of a truth, that wickedness brings men to ruin, and the godly are taken under God's special protection. These are truths which I subscribe to; but how can any man make good his part with God?" In his sight shall no flesh living be justified, Ps. cxliii. 2. How should man be just with God? Some understand this as a passionate complaint of God's strictness and severity, that he is a God whom there is no dealing with: and it cannot be denied that there are, in this chapter, some peevish expressions, which seem to speak such language as that. But I take this rather as a pious confession of man's sinfulness, and his own in particular, that if God should deal with any of us according to the desert of our iniquities, we were certainly undone.

I. He lays this down for a truth, that man is an unequal match for his Maker, either in dispute or

1. In dispute; (v. 3.) If he will contend with him, either at law or at an argument, he cannot answer him one of a thousand. (1.) God can ask a thousand puzzling questions, which those that quarrel with him, and arraign his proceedings, cannot give an answer to. When God spake to Job out of the whirlwind, he asked him a great many questions; Dost thou know this? Canst thou do that? I mon track, but invert the order, and change the

To none of which Job could give an answer, ch. xxxviii. and xxxix. God can easily man.fest the folly of the greatest pretenders to wisdom. (2.) God can Ly to our charge a thousand offences, can draw up against us a thousand articles of impeachment, and we cannot answer him so as to acquit ourselves from the imputation of any of them, but must, by silence, give consent that they are all true; we cannot set aside one as foreign, another as frivolous, and another as false; we cannot, as to one, deny the fact, and plead not guilty, and, as to another, deny the fault, confess, and justify; no, we are not able to answer him, but must lay our hand upon our mouth, as Job did, (ch. xl. 4, 5.) and cry, Guilty, Guilty.

2. In combat; (v. 4.) Who hath hardened himself agamst him, and hath prospered? The answer is very easy; You cannot produce any instance, from the beginning of the world to this day, of any during sinner, who has hardened himself against God, has obstinately persisted in rebellion against him, who did not find God too hard for him, and pay dear for this folly. They have not prospered or had peace; they have had no comfort in it nor success. What they have had no comfort in it nor success. did ever man get by trials of skill, or trials of titles, with his Maker? All the opposition given to God, is but setting briers and thorns before a consuming fire; so foolish, so fruitless, so destructive, is the attempt, Isa. xxvii. 4. 1 Cor. x. 22. Apostate angels hardened themselves against God, but did not prosper, 2 Pet. ii. 4. The dragon fights, but is cast out, Rev. xii. 8. Wicked men harden themselves against God, dispute his wisdom, disober his laws, are impenitent for their sins, and incorrigible, under their afflictions; they reject the offers of his grace, and resist the strivings of his Spirit; they make nothing of his threatenings, and make head against his interest in the world; but have they prospered? Can they prosper? No, they are but treasuring up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath. They that roll this stone, will find it

return upon them. II. He proves it by showing what a God he is, with whom we have to do: He is wise in heart, and therefore we cannot answer him at law; he is mighty m strength, and therefore we cannot fight it out with him. It is the greatest madness that can be, to think to contend with a God of infinite wisdom and power, who knows every thing, and can do every thing; who can be neither outwitted nor over-powered. The Devil promised himself that Job, in the day of his affliction, would curse God, and speak ill of him, but, instead of that, he sets himself to honour God, and to speak highly of him. As much pained as he is, and as much taken up with his own miseries, when he has occasion to mention the wisdom and power of God, he forgets his complaints, dwells with delight, and expatiates with a flood of eloquence, upon that noble useful subject.

Evidences of the wisdom and power of God he

fetches,

1. From the kingdom of nature, in which the God of nature acts with an uncontrollable power, and does what he pleases; for all the orders and all the powers of nature are derived from him, and depend upon him.

(1.) When he pleases, he alters the course of nature, and turns back its streams, v. 5..7. By the common law of nature, the mountains are settled, and are therefore called everlasting mountains; the earth is established, and cannot be removed, (Ps. xciii. 1.) and the pillars thereof are immoveably fixed, the sun rises in its season, and the stars shed their influences on this lower world; but, when God pleases, he can not only drive out of the com

law, of nature. [1.] Nothing more firm than the | mountains: when we speak of removing mountains, we mean that which is impossible; yet the divine power can make them change their seat; he removes them, and they know not; removes them whether they will or no; he can make them lower their heads; he can level them, and overturn them in his anger; he can spread the mountains as easily as the high, and large, and rocky. Men have much ado to pass over them; but God, when he pleases, can make them pass away. He made Sinai shake, Ps. lxviii. 8. The hills skipped, Ps. cxiv. 4. The everlasting mountains were scattered, Hab. iii. 6. [2.] Nothing more fixed than the earth on its axletree; yet God can, when he pleases, shake that out of its place, heave it off its centre, and make even its pillars to tremble; what seemed to support it, will itself need support, when God gives it a shock. See how much we are indebted to God's patience; God has power enough to shake the earth from under that guilty race of mankind, which makes it groan under the burthen of sin, and so to shake the wicked out of it; (ch. xxxviii. 13.) yet he continues the earth, and man upon it, and makes it not still, as once, to swallow up the rebels. [3.] Nothing more constant than the rising sun, it never misses its appointed time; yet God, when he pleases, can suspend it. He that at first commanded it to rise, can countermand it. Once the sun was bid to stand, and another time to retreat, to show that it is still under the check of its great Creator. Thus great is God's power; and how great then is his goodness, which causes his sun to shine even upon the evil and unthankful, though he could withhold it! He that made the stars also, can, if he pleases, seal them up, and hide them from our eyes. By earthquakes, and subterraneous fires, mountains have sometimes been removed, and the earth shaken: in very dark and cloudy days and nights, it seems to us as if the sun were forbidden to rise, and the stars were sealed up, Acts xxvii. 20. It is sufficient to say, that Job here speaks of what God can do; but if we must understand it of what he has done in fact, all these verses may perhaps be applied to Noah's flood, when the mountains of the earth were shaken, and the sun and stars were darkened. world that now is, we believe to be reserved for that fire which will consume the mountains, and melt the earth with its fervent heat, and which will turn the sun into darkness.

(2.) As long as he pleases, he preserves the settled course and order of nature; and this is a continued creation. He himself alone, by his own power, and without the assistance of any other, [1.] Spreads out the heaven; (v. 8.) not only did spread them out at first, but still spreads them out, that is, keeps them spread out; for otherwise they would of themselves roll together like a scroll of parchment. [2.] He treads upon the waves of the sea; that is, he suppresses them and keeps them under, that they return not to deluge the earth; (Ps. civ. 9.) which is given as a reason why we should all fear God, and stand in awe of him, Jer. v. 22. He is mightier than the proud waves, Ps. xciii. 4.—lxv. 7. [3.] He makes the constellations; three are named for all the rest (n) the rest, (v. 9.) Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and, in general, the chambers of the south: the stars of which these are composed, he made at first, and put into that order, and he still makes them, preserves them in being, and guides their motions; he makes them to be what they are to man, and inclines the hearts of men to observe them, which the beasts are not capable of doing. Not only those stars which we see and give names to, but those also in the other hemisphere, about the antarctic pole, which never

south, are under the divine direction and dominion.

How wise is he then, and how mighty!

Evidences are here fetched from the kingdom of Providence, that special Providence which is conversant about the affairs of the children of men. Consider what God does in the government of the world, and you will say, He is wise in heart, and

mighty in strength.

(1.) He does many things and great, many and great to admiration, v. 10. Job here says the same that Eliphaz had said; (ch. v. 9.) and, in the original content of the content of th nal, in the very same words, not declining to speak after him, though now his antagonist. God is a great God, and doeth great things, a wonder-working God; his works of wonder are so many that we cannot number them, and so mysterious that we cannot find them out. O the depth of his counsels!

(2.) He acts invisibly and undiscerned, v. 11. He goes by me in his operations, and I see him not, I perceive him not; his way is in the sea, Ps. Ixxvii. 19. The operations of second causes are commonly obvious to sense, but God doeth all about us, and yet we see him not, Acts xvii. 23. Our finite understandings cannot fathom his counsels, apprehend his motions, or comprehend the measures he takes. We are *therefore* incompetent judges of God's proceedings, because we know not what he doeth, or what he designeth. The arcana imperii—secrets of government, are things above us, which therefore we must not pretend to expound, or comment upon.

(3.) He acts with an incontestable sovereignty, v. 12. He takes away our creature-comforts and confidences, when and as he pleases, takes away health, estate, relations, friends, takes away life itself; whatever goes, it is he that takes it; by what hand soever it is removed, his hand must be acknowledged in it; the Lord takes away, and who can hinder him? Who can turn him away? Marg. Who shall make him restore? So some. Who can dissuade him, or alter his counsels? Who can resist him, or oppose his operations? Who can con-Who can retrol him, or call him to an account for it? What action can be brought against him? Or who will say unto him, What dost thou? Or, Why dost thou so? Dan. iv. 35. God is not obliged to give us a reason of what he doeth. The meaning of his proceedings we know not now; it will be time enough to know hereafter, when it will appear that what seemed now to be done by prerogative, was done in infinite wisdom, and for the best.

(4.) He acts with an irresistible power, which no creature can resist, v. 13. If God will not withdraw his anger, (which he can do when he pleases, for he is Lord of his anger, lets it out, or calls it in, according to his will,) the firoud helpers do stoop under him; that is, He certainly breaks and crushes those that proudly help one another against him; proud men set themselves against God and his proceedings; in this opposition they join hand in hand. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, to throw off his yoke, to run down his truths, and to persecute his people; Men of Israel, help, Acts xxi. 28. Ps. lxxxiii. 8. If one enemy of God's kingdom fall under his judgment, the rest come proudly to help that, and think to deliver that out of his hand: but in vain; unless he pleases to withdraw his anger, (which he often does, for it is the day of his patience,) the proud helpers stoop under him, and fall with those whom they designed to help. Who knows the power of God's anger? They who think they have strength enough to help others, will not be able to help them-

14. How much less shall I answer him, and choose out my words to reason with him? come in our sight, called here the chambers of the 115. Whom, though I were righteous, yet

selves against it.

would I not answer, but I would make sup- # no worth or worthiness at all, to which to ascribe plication to my Judge. 16. If I had called, and he had answered me: yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice. 17. For he breaketh me with a tempest, and multiplieth my wounds without cause. 18. He will not suffer me to take my breath, but filleth me with bitterness. 19. If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong: and if of judgment, who shall set me a time to plead? 20. If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. 21. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul: I would despise my life.

What Job had said of man's utter inability to contend with God, he here applies to himself, and, in effect, despairs of gaining his favour; which (some think) arises from the hard thoughts he had of God, as one who, having set himself against him, right or wrong, would be too hard for him. I rather think it arises from the sense he had of the imperfection of his own righteousness, and the dark and cloudy apprehensions which, at present, he had of God's

displeasure against him.

I. He dares not dispute with God; (v. 14.) "If the proud helpers do stoop under him, how much less shall I, a poor weak creature, (so far from being a helper, that I am very helpless,) how shall I answer him? What can I say against that which God doeth? If I go about to reason with him, he will certainly be too hard for me." If the potter make the clay into a vessel of dishonour, or break in pieces the vessel he has made, shall the clay or the broken vessel reason with him? So absurd is the man who replies against God, or thinks to talk it out with him. No, let all flesh be silent before him.

II. He dares not insist upon his own justification before God. Though he vindicated his own integrity to his friends, and would not yield that he was a hypocrite and a wicked man, as they suggested, yet he would never plead it as his righteousness before God. I will never venture upon the covenant of innocency, nor think to come off by virtue of that.

Job knew so much of God, and knew so much of himself, that he durst not insist upon his own justi-

fication before God.

1. He knew so much of God, that he durst not stand a trial with him, v. 15. 19. He knew how to make his part good with his friends, and thought himself able to deal with them; but, though his cause had been better than it was, he knew it was

to no purpose to debate it with God.

(1.) God knew him better than he knew himself; and therefore, (v. 15.) "Though I were righteous in my own apprehension, and my own heart did not condemn me, yet God is greater than my heart, and knows those secret faults and errors of mine which I do not, and cannot, understand, and is able to charge me with them, and therefore I will not answer." St. Paul speaks to the same purport; I know nothing by myself, am not conscious to myself of any reigning wickedness, and yet I am not hereby justified, 1 Cor. iv. 4. "I dure not put myself upon that issue, lest God charge that upon me which I did not discover in myself." Job will therefore waive that plea, and make supplication to his Judge; that is, will cast himself upon God's mercy, and not think to come off by his own merit.

(2.) He had no reason to think that there was any thing in his prayers to recommend them to the divine acceptance, or to fetch in an answer of peace; myself, and to plead a righteousness of my own, my

their success; but it must be attributed purely to the grace and compassion of God, who answers before we call, and not because we call, and gives gracio, s answers to our prayers, but not for our prayers, v. 16. "If I had called, and he had answered, had given the thing I called to him for, yet, so weak and defective are my best prayers, that I would not believe he had therein hearkened to my voice; I could not say that he had saved with his right hand, and answered me," (Ps. lx. 5.) "but that he did it purely for his own name's sake." Bishop Patrick expounds it thus; "If I had made supply ation, and he had granted my desire, I would not think my prayer had done the business." Not for your sakes be it known to you.

(3.) His present miseries, which God had brought him into, notwithstanding his integrity, gave him too sensible a conviction, that, in the ordering and disposing of men's outward condition in the world, God acts by sovereignty, and though he never doth wrong to any, yet he doth not ever give full right to all; that is, the best do not always fare best, ner the worst fare worst, in this life, because he reserves the full and exact distribution of rewards and punishments for the future state. Job was not c nscious to himself of any extraordinary guilt, and vet fellunder extraordinary afflictions, v. 17, 18. Every man must expect the wind to blow upon him, and ruffle him, but Job was broken with a tempest; every man, in the midst of these therns and briers, must expect to be scratched, but Job was wounded, and his wounds multiplied. Every man must expect a cross daily, and to taste sometimes of the bitter cup; but poor Job's troubles come so thick upon him, that he had no breathing time, he was filled with bitterness; and he presumes to say that all this was without cause, without any great provocation given. We have made the best of what Job said hitherto, though contrary to the judgment of many good interpreters; but here, no doubt, he spake unadvisedly with his lips; he reflected on God's goodness, in saying that he was not suffered to take his breath, while yet he had such good use of his reason and speech to be able to talk thus; and on his justice, in saying that it was without cause. Yet it is true, that, as, on the one hand, there are many who are chargeable with more sin than the common infirmities of the human nature, and yet feel no more sorrow than that of the common calanities of human life; so, on the other hand, there are many who feel more than the common calamities of human life, and yet are conscious to themselves of no more than the common infirmities of human

(4.) He was in no capacity at all to make his part good with God, v. 19. [1.] Not by force of arms; "I dare not enter the lists of the Almighty; for, if I speak of strength, and think to come off by that, lo, he is strong; stronger than I, and will certainly overpower me." There is no disputing (said one once to Cæsar) with him that commands legions; much less with him that has legions of angels at command. Can thine heart endure, (thy courage and presence of mind,) or can thine hands be strong to defend thyself, in the days that I shall deal with thee? Ezek, xxii. 14. [2.] Not by force of arguments: "I dare not try the merits of the cause; if I speak of judgment, and insist upon my right, who will set me a time to filead? There is no higher power to which I may appeal, no superior court to appoint a hearing of the cause, for He is supreme, and from Him every man's judgment proceeds, which he must abide by."

2. He knew so much of himself, that he durst not stand a trial, v. 20, 21. "If I go about to justify

defence will be my offence; and mine own mouth 8th.ll condeniu me, even when it goes about to acquit me." A good man, who knows the deceitfulness of his own heart, and is jealous over it with a god v je do sy, and has often discovered that amiss there, which had long lain undiscovered, is suspicious of more evil in himself than he is really conscious of, and therefore will by no means think of justifying himself before God. If we say, "We have no sin," we not only deceive ourselves, but we aff out God, for we sin in saying so, and give the lie to the scripture, which has concluded all under sin. "If I say, I am perfect, I am sinless, God has nothing to lay to my charge, my very saying so shall prove me perverse, proud, ignorant, and presumptu us. Nay, though I were perfect, though God should pronounce me just, yet would I not know my soul; I would not be in care about the prolonging of my life, while it is loaded with all these miseries." Or, "Though I were free from gross sin, though my conscience should not charge me with any enormous crime, yet would I not believe my own heart so far as to insist upon my innocency, nor think my life worth striving for with God." In short, it is folly to contend with God, and our wisdom, as well as duty, to submit to him, and throw ourselves at his feet.

22. This is one thing, therefore I said it, He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked. 23. If the scourge slay suddenly, he will laugh at the trial of the innocent. 24. The earth is given into the hand of the wicked: he covereth the faces of the judges thereof; if not, where, and who is he ?

Here Job touches briefly upon the main point now in dispute between him and his friends. They maintained that those who are righteous and good always prosper in this world, and none but the wicked are in misery and distress; he asserted, on the contrary, that it is a common thing for the wicked to prosper, and the righteous to be greatly afflicted: this is the one thing, the chief thing, wherein he and his friends differed; and they had not proved their assertion; therefore he abides by his; "I said it, and say it again, that all things come alike to all."

Now it must be owned, 1. That there is very much truth in what Job here means; that temporal judgments, when they are set abroad, fall both upon good and bad, and the destroying angel seldom distinguishes (though once he did) between the houses of the Israelites

and the houses of the Egyptians.

In the judgment of Sodom, indeed, which is called the vengeance of eternal fire, (Jude vii.) far be it from God to slay the righteous with the wicked. and that the righteous should be as the wicked; (Gen. xviii. 25.) but in judgments merely temporal the righteous have their share, and sometimes the greatest share. The sword devours one as well as another, Josiah as well as Ahab. Thus God destroug the perfect and the wicked, involves them both in the same common ruin; good and bad were sent together into Babylon, Jer. xxiv. 5, 9. If the scourge slay suddenly, and sweep down all before it, God will be well pleased to see how the same scourge, which is the perdition of the wicked, is the trial of the innocent, and of their faith, which will be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, 1 Pet. 1. 7. t's. lxvi. 10.

> Against the just th' Almighty's arrows fly, For he delights the innocent to try; To show their constant and their God-like mind, To show their constant and their cook and Not by afflictions broken, but refin'd.
>
> Sir R. Blackmore

bles; they are but trials, designed for their honour and benefit; and, if God be pleased with them, let not them be displeased; if he laugh at the trial of the innocent, knowing how glorious the issue of it will be, at destruction and famine let them also laugh, (ch. v. 22.) and triumph over them, saying, O death, where is thy sting! On the other hand, the wicked are so far from

Let this reconcile God's children to their trou-

being made the marks of God's judgments, that the earth is given into their hand, v. 24. They enjoy large possessions and great power, have what they will, and do what they will. Into the hand of the wicked one: in the original, it is singular; the Devil, that wicked one, is called the god of this world, and boasts that into his hands it is delivered, Luke iv. 6. Or, into the hand of a wicked man, meaning (as Bishop Patrick and the Assembly's Annotations conjecture) some noted tyrant then living in those parts, whose great wickedness and great prosperity were well known both to Job and his friends. The wicked have the earth given them, but the righteous have heaven given them; and which is betterheaven without earth, or earth without heaven? God, in his providence, advances wicked men, while he covers the faces of those who are fit to be judges, who are wise and good, and qualified for government, and buries them alive in obscurity; perhaps suffers them to be run down and condemned, and to have their faces covered as criminals, by those wicked ones into whose hand the earth is given. We daily see this is done; if it be not God that doeth it, where and who is he that doeth it? To whom can it be ascribed but to Him that rules in the kingdoms of men, and gives them to whom he will? Dan. iv. 32.

2. Yet it must be owned that there is too much passion in what Job here says. The manner of expression is peevish: when he meant that God afflicts, he ought not to have said, He destroys both the perfect and the wicked: when he meant that God pleases himself with the trial of the innocent, he ought not to have said, *He laughs at it*, for he doth not afflict willingly. When the spirit is heated, either with dispute or with discontent, we have need to set a watch before the door of our lips, that we may observe decorum in speaking of divine

things.

25. Now my days are swifter than a post: they flee away, they see no good. 26. They are passed away as the swift ships; as the eagle that hasteth to the prey. 27. If I say, I will forget my complaint, I will leave off my heaviness, and comfort myself; 28. I am afraid of all my sorrows, I know that thou wilt not hold me innocent. 29. If I be wicked, why then labour ${f I}$ in vain? ${f I}$ If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean; 31. Yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. 32. For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judg-33. Neither is there any days-man betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both. 34. Let him take his rod away from me, and let not his fear terrify me; 35. Then would I speak, and not fear him: but it is not so with me.

Job here grows more and more querulous, and

does not conclude this chapter with such awful expressions of God's wisdom and justice as he began with. They that indulge a complaining humour, know not to what indecencies, nay to what imple-ties, it will hurry them. The beginning of that strife with God is as the letting forth of water; therefore leave it off, before it be meddled with. When we are in trouble, we are allowed to com-plain to God, as the Psalmist, often, but must by

no means complain of God, as Job here. I. His complaint here of the passing away of the days of his prosperity is proper; (v. 25, 26.) "My days, that is, all my good days, are gone, never to return; gone of a sudden, gone ere I was aware: never did any courier that went express," (like Cushi and Ahimaaz,) "with good tidings, make such haste as all my comforts did from me; never d:d ship sail to its port, never did eagle fly upon his prey, with such incredible swiftness; nor does there iemain any traces of my prosperity, any more than there does of an eagle in the air, or a ship in the sea," Prov. xxx. 19. See here, 1. How swift the motion of time is; it is always upon the wing, hestening to its period; it stays for no man. What little need have we of pastimes, and what great need to redeem time, when time runs out, runs on so fast towards eternity, which comes as time goes! 2. How vain the enjoyments of time are, which we may be quite deprived of while yet time continues! Our day may be lon er than the sun-shine of our prosperity; and when that is gone, it is as if it had not been. The remembrance of having done our duty will be pleasing afterward; so will not the remembrance of our having got a great deal of worldly wealth, when it is all lest and gone. They flee away, past recall; they see no good, and leave none behind them.

II. His complaint of his present uneasiness is excusable, v. 27, 28. 1. It should seem he did his endeavour to quiet and compose himself, as his friends advised him. That was the good he would do: he would fain forget his complaints and praise God, would leave off his heaviness and comfort himself, that he might be fit for converse both with God and man; but, 2. He found he could not do it; "I am afraid of all my sorrows; then when I strive most against my trouble, it prevails most over me, and proves too hard for me!" It is easier, in such a case, to know what we should do than to do it; to know what temper we should be in than to get into that temper, and keep in it. It is easy to preach patience to those that are in trouble, and to tell them they must forget their complaints, and comfort themselves; but it is not so soon done as said. and sorrow are tyrannizing things, not easily brought into the subjection they ought to be kept in to religion and right reason.

III. But his complaint of God, as implacable and inexorable, was by no means to be excused. It was the language of his corruption. He knew better things, and, at another time, would have been far from harbouring any such hard thoughts of God as now broke in upon his spirit, and broke out in these passionate complaints. Good men do not always speak like themselves; but God considers their frame, and the strength of their temptations; gives them leave afterward to unsay it by repentance,

and will not lay it to their charge.

Job seems to speak here,

1. As if he despaired of obtaining from God any relief or redress of his grievances, though he should produce ever so good proofs of his integrity; "I know thou wilt not hold me innocent; my afflictions have continued so long upon me, and increased so fast, that I do not expect thou wilt ever clear up my innocency by delivering me out of them, and restoring me to a prosperous condition. Right or | ! rought to so clear a light as it is now by the gos-

wrong, I must be treated as a wicked man; my friends will continue to think so of me, and God will continue upon me the afflictions which give them occasion to think so; why then do I labour in vain to clear myself, and maintain my own integrity?" v. 29. It is to no purpose to speak in a cause that is already pre-judged. With men it is often labour in vain for the most innocent to go about to clear themselves; they must be adjudged guilty, though the evidence be ever so plain for them: but it is not so in our dealings with God, who is the Patron of oppressed innocency, and to whom it was never in

vain to commit a righteeus cause. Nay, he not only despairs of relief, but expects that his endeavour to clear himself would render him yet more obnoxicus; (v. 30, 31.) " If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my integrity ever so evident, it will be all to no purpose, judgment must go against me, thou shall flunge ine in the ditch," (the pit of destruction, so some, or rather the filthy kennel, or sewer,) "which will make me so offensive in the nestrils of all about me, that my own clethes shall abhor me, and I-shall even loathe to touch myself." He saw his afflictions coming from God, those were the things that blackened him in the eye of his friends, and, upon that score, he complained of them, and of the continuance of them, as the ruin, not only of his comfort, but of his reputation. Yet these words are capable of a good construction. If we be ever so industricus to justify ourselves before men, and to preserve cur credit with them, if we keep our hands ever so clean from the pollutions of gross sin, which fall under the eye of the world; yet God; who knows our hearts, can charge us with so much secret sin as will for ever take off all our pretensions to purity and innocency, and make us see ourselves odicus in the sight of the holy God. Paul, while a Pharisce, made his hands very clean; but when the commandment came, and discovered to him his heartsins, made him know lust, that filunged him in the

2. As if he despaired to have so much as a fair hearing with God, and that were hard indeed.

(1.) He complains that he was not upon even terms with God; (v. 32.) "He is not a man, as I am. I could venture to dispute with a man like myself, (the potsherds may strive with the potsherds of the earth,) but he is infinitely above me, and therefore I dare not enter the lists with him, I shall certainly be cast off if I contend with him." Note, [1.] God is not a man as we are. Of the greatest princes we may say, "They are men as we are," but not of the great God. His thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours, and we must not measure him by ourselves. Man is foolish and weak, frail and fickle, but God is not. We are depending, dying, creatures; he the independent and immortal Crea-[2.] The consideration of this should keep us very low, and very silent, before God. Let us not make ourselves equal with God, but always eye him as infinitely above us.

(2.) That there was no arbitrator or umpire to adjust the differences between him and God, and to determine the controversy; (v. 33.) Neither is there any daysman. This complaint that there was not, is, in effect, a wish that there were, and so the LXX read it; O that there were a mediator between us! Jeb would gladly refer the matter, but no creature was capable of being a referee, and therefore he must even refer it still to God himself, and resolve to acquiesce in his judgment. Our Lord Jesus is the blessed Daysman, who has mediated between Heaven and carth, has laid his hand upon us both; to him the Father has committed all judg ment, and we must: but this matter was not then

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pel, which leaves no room for such a complaint as |

(3.) That the terrors of God, which set themselves in array against him, put him into such confusion, that he knew not how to address himself to God with the confidence with which he was formerly wont to approach him; (v. 34, 35.) "Beside the distance which I am kept at by his infinite transcendency, his present dealings with me are very discouraging. Let him take his rod away from me:" he means not so much his outward afflictions, as the load which lay upon his spirit from the apprehensions of God's wrath; that was his fear which terrified him: "Let that be removed, let me recover the sight of his mercy, and not be amazed with the sight of nothing but his terrors, and then I would speak, and order my cause before him. But it is not so with me, the cloud does not at all scatter, the wrath of God still fastens upon me, and preys on my spirits, as much as ever; and what to do I know not."

From all this let us take occasion, [1.] To stand m awe of God, and to fear the power of his wrath. If good men have been put into such consternation by it, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? [2.] To pity those that are wounded in spirit, and pray earnestly for them, because in that condition they know not how to pray for themselves. [3.] Carefully to keep up good thoughts of God in our ininds, for hard thoughts of him are the inlets of much mischief. [4.] To bless God that we are not in such a disconsolate condition as poor Job was here in, but that we walk in the light of the Lord; let us rejoice therein, but rejoice with trembling.

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Job owns here that he was full of confusion; (v. 15.) and as he was, so was his discourse: he knew not what to say, and perhaps sometimes scarcely knew what he said. say, and perhaps sometimes scarcety knew what he said. In this chapter, I. He complains of the hardships he was under; (v. 1...7.) and then comforts himself with this, that he was in the hand of the God that made him, and pleads that, v. 8...13. II. He complains again of the severity of God's dealings with him, (v. 14...17.) and then coniforts himself with this, that death would put an and the intention of the second to the stoucher with the second to the seco end to his troubles, v. 18..22.

1. NY soul is weary of my life: I will leave my complaint upon myself; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. 2. I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; show me wherefore thou contendest with 3. Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress, that thou shouldest despise the work of thy hands, and shine upon the counsel of the wicked? 4. Hast thou eyes of flesh? or seest thou as man seeth? 5. Are thy days as the days of man? are thy years as man's days? 6. That thou inquirest after mine iniquity, and searchest after my sin? 7. Thou knowest that I am not wicked; and there is none that can deliver out of thy hand.

Here is,

I. A passionate resolution to persist in his complaint, v. 1. Being daunted with the dread of God's majesty, so that he could not plead his cause with him, he resolves to give himself some ease by giving vent to his resentments. He begins with vehement language, "My soul is weary of my life, weary of this body, and impatient to get clear of it, fallen out with life, and displeased at it, sick of it, and longing for death." Through the weakness of grace, he

went contrary to the dictates even of nature itself We should act more like men, did we act more like saints: faith and patience would keep us from being weary of our lives, (and cruel to them, as some read it,) even then when Providence has made them most wearisome to us; for that is to be weary of God's correction. Job, being weary of his life, and having ease no other way, resolves to complain, resolves to speak: he will not give vent to his soul by violent hands, but he will give vent to the bitterness of his soul by violent words. Losers think they may have leave to speak; and unbridled passions, as well as unbridled appetites, are apt to think it an excuse for their excursions, that they cannot help it; but what have we wisdom and grace for, but to keep the mouth as with a bridle? Job's corruption speaks here, yet grace puts in a word:

1. He will complain, but he will leave his complaint upon himself: he would not impeach God, nor charge him with unrighteousness or unkindness; but, though he knew not particularly the ground of God's controversy with him, and the cause of action, yet, in the general, he would suppose it to be in himself, and willingly bear all the blame. 2. He will speak, but it shall be the bitterness of his sour that he will express, not his settled judgment. If I speak amiss, it is not I, but sin that dwells in mc. not my soul, but its bitterness.

II. A humble petition to God. He will speak, but the first word shall be a prayer, and, as I am willing to understand it, it is a good prayer, v. 2. That he might be delivered from the sting of his afflictions, which is sin; "Do not condemn me, do not separate me for ever from thee. Though I lie under the cross, let me not lie under the curse; though I smart by the rod of a Father, let me not be cut off by the sword of a Judge. Thou dost correct me, I will bear that as well as I can, but O do not condemn me!" It is the comfort of those who are in Christ Jesus, that, though they are in afflic-

tion, there is no condemnation to them, Rom. viii.

Nay, they are chastened of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world, 1 Cor. xi.

This, therefore, we should deprecate above any thing else, when we are in affliction; "However thou art pleased to deal with me, Lord, do not condemn me; my friends condemn me, but do not thou." 2. That he might be made acquainted with the true cause of his afflictions, and that is sin too; Lord, show me wherefore thou contendest with me. When God afflicts us, he contends with us; when he contends with us, there is always a reason. He is never angry without a cause, though we are, and it is desirable to know what the reason is, that we may repent of, mortify, and forsake, the sin for which God has a controversy with us: in inquiring it out, let conscience have leave to do its office, and to deal faithfully with us, as Gen. xlii. 21.

III. A peevish expostulation with God concerning his dealings with him. Now he speaks in the bitterness of his soul indeed, not without some illnatured reflections upon the righteousness of his

1. He thinks it unbecoming the goodness of God, and the mercifulness of his nature, to deal so hardly with his creature, as to lay upon him more than he can bear; (v. 3.) Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress? No, certainly it is not; what he approves not in men, (Lam. iii. 34..36.) he will not do himself. "Lord, in dealing with me, thou seemest to oppress thy subject, to despise thy workmanship, and to countenance thine enemies. Lord, what is the meaning of this? Such is thy nature, that this cannot be a pleasure to thee; and such is thy name, that it cannot be an honour to thee; why then dealest thou thus with me? What her fit is there in my blood?" Far be it from Job to

think that God did him wrong, but he is quite at a | loss how to reconcile his providences with his justice, as good men have often been, and must wait until the day shall declare it. Let us, therefore, now harbour no hard thoughts of Gcd, because we shall then see there was no cause for them.

2. He thinks it unbecoming the infinite knowledge of God to put a prisoner thus upon the rack, as it were, by torture, to extort a confession from

him, v. 4..6.

(1.) He is sure that God does not discover things, nor judge of them, as men do; he has not eyes of flesh, (v. 4.) for he is a Spirit. Eyes of flesh cannot see in the dark, but darkness hides not from God. Eyes of flesh are but in one place at a time, and can see but a little way; but the eyes of the Lord are in every filace, and run to and fro through the whole earth. Many things are hid from eyes of flesh, the most curious and piercing; there is a fath which even the vulture's eye hath not seen: but nothing is, or can be, hid from the eye of God, to which all things are naked and open. Eyes of flesh see the outward appearance only, and may be imposed upon, a deceptio visus—an illusion of the senses; but God sees every thing truly; his sight cannot be deceived, for he tries the heart, and is a Witness to the thoughts and intents of that. Eves of flesh discover things gradually, and when we gain the sight of one thing, we lose the sight of another, but God sees every thing at one view. Eyes of flesh are soon tired, must be closed every night, that they may be refreshed, and will shortly be darkened by age, and shut up by death, but the Keeper of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps, nor does his sight ever decay. God sees not as man sees; that is, he does not judge as man judges, at the best secundum allegata et probata—according to what is alleged and proved, as the thing appears, rather than as it is, and too often according to the bias of the affections, passions, prejudices, and interest; but we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, and that he knows truth, not by information, but by his own inspection. Men discover secret things by search, and examination of witnesses, comparing evidence and giving conjectures upon it, wheedling or forcing the parties concerned to confess. But God needs not any of these ways of discovery, he sees not as man sees.

(2.) He is sure that, as God is not short-sighted, like man, so he is not short-lived; (v. 5.) "Are thy days as the days of man, few and evil? Do they roll on in succession, or are they subject to change, like the days of man? No, by no means." Men grow wiser by experience, and more knowing by daily observation; with them, truth is the daughter of time, and therefore they must take time for their searches, and, if one experiment fail, must try another; but it is not so with God, to him nothing is past, nothing future, but every thing present. The days of time, by which the life of man is measured, are nothing to the years of eternity, in which

the life of God is wrapt up.

(3.) He therefore thinks it strange that God should thus prolong his torture, and continue him under the confinement of this affliction, and neither bring him to a trial, nor grant him a release: as if he must take time to inquire after his iniquity, and use means to search after his sin, v. 6. Not as if Job thought that God did thus torment him, that he might find occasion against him; but his dealings with him had such an aspect, which was dishonourable to God, and would tempt men to think him a hard master. "Now, Lord, if theu wilt not consult my comfort, consult thine own honour; do something for thy great name, and do not disgrace the throne of thy glory," Jer. xiv. 21.

3. He thinks it looked like an abuse of his omni-

potence, to keep a poor prisoner in custody, whom he knew to be innocent, only because there was none that could deliver him out of his hand; (v. 7.) Thou knowest that I am not wicked. He had already owned himself a sinner, and guilty before God, but he here stands to it, that he was not wicked, not devoted to sin, not an enemy to God, not a dissembler in his religion, that he had not wickedly departed from his God, Ps. xviii. 21. "But there is none that can deliver out of thy hand, and therefore there is no remedy; I must be content to lie there, waiting thy time, and throwing myself on thy mercy, in submission to thy sovereign will." Here see, (1.) What ought to quiet us under our troubles; that it is to no purpose to contend with Omnipotence. (2.) What will abundantly comfort us, if we are able to appeal to God, as Job here, "Lord, thou knowest that I am not wicked. I cannot say that I am not wanting, or I am not weak; but, through grace, I can say, I am not wicked: thou knowest I am not, for thou knowest I love thee."

8. Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me together round about; yet thou dost destroy me. 9. Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay; and wilt thou bring me into dust again? 10. Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese? 11. Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews. Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit. 13. And these things hast thou hid in thy heart: I know that this is with thee.

In these verses, we may observe,

1. How Job eyes God as his Creator and Preserver, and describes his dependence upon him as the Author and Upholder of his being. This is one of the first things we are all concerned to know and

consider.

(1.) That God made us: he, and not our parents, who were only the instruments of his power and providence in our production. He made us, and not we ourselves. His hands have made and fashioned these bodies of ours, and every part of them; (v. 8.) and they are fearfully and wonderfully made. The soul also, which animates the body, is his gift. He takes notice of both here. [1.] The body is made as the clay, (v. 9.) cast into shape, into this shape, as the clay is formed into a vessel, according to the skill and will of the potter. We are ing to the skill and will of the potter. earthen vessels: mean in our original, and soon broken in pieces, made as the clay; let not, therefore, the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? We must not be proud of our bodies, because the matter is from the earth, yet not dishonour our bodies, because the mould and shape are from the Divine Wisdom. The formation of human bodies in the womb is described by an elegant similitude, (v. 10.) Thou hast poured me out like milk, which is coagulated into cheese; and by an induction of some particulars, (v. 11.) Though we come into the world naked, yet the body is itself both clothed and armed; the skin and flesh are its clothing; the bones and sinews are its armour, not offensive, but defensive. The vital parts, the heart and lungs, are thus clothed, not to be seen; thus fenced, not to be hurt. The admirable structure of human bodies is an illustrious instance of the wisdom, power, and goodness, of the Creator. What pity is it that these

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bodies should be instruments of unrighteousness, which are capable of being temples of the Holy Ghost! [2.] The soul is the life, the soul is the man, and this is the gift of God; Thou hast granted me life, breathed into me the breath of life, without which the body would be but a worth-God is the Father of spirits: he made us living souls, and endued us with the powers of reason; he gave us life and favour; and life is a favour, a great favour, more than meat, more than raiment; a distinguishing favour, a favour that puts us into a capacity of receiving other favour. Now Job was in a better mind that he was when he quarrelled with life as a burthen, and asked, Why died I not from the womb? Or, by life and favour may be meant life and all the comforts of life, re-ferring to his former prosperity. Time was, when he walked in the light of the divine favour, and thought, as David, that through that favour his mountain stood strong.

(2.) That God maintains us: having lighted the lamp of life, he does not leave it to burn upon its own stock, but continually supplies it with fresh oil; "Thy visitation has preserved my spirit, kept me alive, protected me from the adversaries of life, the death we are in the midst of, and the dangers we are continually exposed to; and blessed me with all the necessary supports of life, and the daily sup-

plies it needs and craves."

2. How he pleads this with God, and what use he makes of it. He reminds God of it; (v. 9.) Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me. What then?

(1.) "Thou hast made me, and therefore thou nast a perfect knowledge of me, (Ps. cxxxix. 1..13.) and needest not to examine me by scourging, nor to put me upon the rack for the discovering of what is within me."
(2.) "Thou hast made me, as the clay, by an act

of sovereignty; and wilt thou, by a like act of sovereignty, unmake me again? If so, I must submit."
(3.) "Wilt thou destroy the work of thine own

hands?" It is a plea the saints have often used in prayer; We are the clay, and thou our potter, Isa. lxiv. 8. Thy hands have made me and fashioned me, Ps. cxix. 73. So here, Thou madest me; and wilt thou destroy me? v. 8. Wilt thou bring me into dust again?" v. 9. "Wilt thou not pity me? Wilt thou not spare and help me, and stand by the work of thine own hands? Ps. cxxxviii. 8. Thou madest me, and knowest my strength; wilt thou then suffer me to be pressed above measure? Was I made to be made miserable? Was I preserved only to endure these calamities?" If we plead this with ourselves as an inducement to duty, "God made me and maintains me, and therefore I will serve him and submit to him," we may plead it with God as an argument for mercy, Thou hast made me, new make me; I am thine, save me. Job knew not how to reconcile God's former favours and his present frowns, but concludes, (v. 13.) "T' ese things hast thou hid in thine heart; both are according to the counsel of thine own will, and, therefore, undoubtedly consistent, however they seem." When God thus strangely changes his way, though we cannot account for it, we are bound to believe there are good reasons for it hid in his heart, which will be manifested shortly. It is not with us, or in our reach, to assign the cause, but I know that this is with thee. Known unto God are all

14. If I sin, then thou markest me, and thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity. 15. If I be wicked, wo unto me; and if I

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I am full of confusion; therefore see thou mine affliction; 16. For it increaseth. Thou huntest me as a fierce lion; and again thou showest thyself marvellous upon me. 17. Thou renewest thy witnesses against me, and increasest thine indignation upon me; changes and war ave against me. 18. Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb? Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me! 19. I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave. 20. Are not my days few ? cease then, and let me alone. that I may take comfort a little, 21. Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death; 22. A land of darkness, as darkness itself: and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness. Here we have,

I. Job's passionate complaints. On that harsh and unpleasant string he harps much, in which, though he cannot be justified, he may be excused. He complained not for nothing, as the murmuring Israelites, but had cause to complain. If we think it looks ill in him, let it be a warning to us to keep

our temper better.

1. He complains of the strictness of God's judgment, and the rigour of his proceedings against him, and is ready to call it Summum jus-Justice hini, and is ready to can't communa fus—sustant bordering on severity. (1.) That he took all ad vantages against him; "If I sin, then thou markest me; (v. 14.) if I do but take one false step, misplace a word, or cast a look awiy, I shall be sure to hear of it. Conscience, thy deputy, will be sure to upbraid me with it, and to tell me, that this gripe, this twitch of pain, is to punish me for that." It God should thus mark iniquities, we are undone; but he does not thus mark them; though we sin, God does not deal in extremity with us. (2.) That he prosecuted those advantages to the utmost; Thou wilt not acquit me from nine iniquity. While his troubles continued, he could not take the comfort of his pardon, nor hear that voice of joy and gladness; so hard is it to see love in God's heart, when we see frowns in his face, and a rod in his hand. (3.) That, whatever was his character, h's case, at present, was very uncomfortable, v. 15. [1.] If he be wicked, he is certainly undone in the other world: If I be wicked, woe to me. Note, A sinful state is a woeful state. This we should each of us believe, as Job here, with application to ourselves; "If I be wicked, though prosperous, and living in pleasure, yet woe to me." Some cspecially have reason to dread double woes if they be wicked; "I that have knowledge, that have made a great profession of religion, that have been so often under strong convictions, and have made so many fair promises; I that was born of such good parents, blessed with a good education, that have lived in good families, and long enjoyed the means of grace, If I be wicked, woe, and a thousand woes, to me."

[2.] If he be righteous, yet he dares not lift up his head; dares not answer as before, ch. ix. 15. He is so oppressed and overwhelmed with his troubles, that he cannot look up with any comfort or confidence. Without were fightings, within were fears; so that, between both, he was full of confusion: not only confusion of face, for the disgrace he was be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head. | brought down to, and the censures of his friends,

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but confusion of spirit; his mind was in a constant hurry, and he was almost distracted, Ps. lxxxviii.

2. He complains of the severity of the execution. God (he thought) did not only punish him for every failure, but punish him in a high degree, v. 16, 17. His affliction was, (1.) Grievous, very grievous, marvellous, exceeding marvellous. God hunted him as a lion, as a fierce lion hunts and runs down his prey. God was not only strange to him, but showed himself marvellous upon him, by bringing him into uncommon troubles, and so making him a prodigy, a wonder unto many. All wondered that God would inflict, and that Job could bear, so much. That which made his afflictions most grievous, was, that he felt God's indignation in them; that was it that made them taste so bitter, and lie so heavy. They were God's witnesses against him, tokens of his displeasure; this made the sores of his body wounds in his spirit. (2.) It was growing, still growing, worse and worse. This he insists much upon; when he hoped the tide would turn, and begin to ebb, still it flowed higher and higher. His affliction increased, and God's indignation in the iffliction; he found himself no way better; these witnesses were renewed against him, that, if one did not reach to convict him, another might. Changes and war were against him. If there was any change with him, it was not for the better; still he was kept in a state of war. As long as we are here in this world, we must expect that the clouds will return after the rain, and perhaps the sorest and sharpest trials may be reserved for the God was at war with him, and it was a great change. He did not use to be so, which aggravated the trouble, and made it truly marvellous. usually shows himself kind to his people; if at any time he shows himself otherwise, it is his strange work, his strange act, and he doth in it show himself marvellous.

3. He complains of his life, and that ever he was born to all this trouble and misery; (v. 18, 19.) "If this was designed for my lot, why was I brought out of the womb, and not smothered there, or stifled in the birth?" This was the language of his passion, and it was a relapse into the sin he fell into before. He had just now called life a favour, (v. 12.) yet now he calls it a burthen, and quarrels with God for giving it, or rather laying it upon him. Mr. Caryl gives this a good turn in favour of Job. "We may charitably suppose," (says he,) "that that which troubled Job was, that he was in a condition of life which (as he conceived) hindered the main end of as life, which was the glorifying God. His harp was hung on the willow-trees, and he was quite out of tune for praising God. Nay, he feared lest his troubles should reflect dishonour upon God, and give occasion to his enemies to blaspheme; and, therefore, he wishes, O that I had given up the ghost! A godly man reckons that he lives to no purpose, if he do not live to the praise and glory of God." But, if that had been his meaning, it was grounded on a mistake, for we may glorify the Lord in the fires. But this use we may make of it, not to be over-fond of life, since the case has been such, sometimes, even with wise and good men, that they have complained of it. Why should we dread giving up the ghost, or covet to be seen of men, since the time may come, when we may be ready to wish we had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen us? Why should we inordinately lament the death of our children in their infancy. that are as if they had not been, and are carried from the womb to the grave, when perhaps we ourselves may sometimes wish it had been our own lot?

II Job's humble requests. He prays,

I That God would see t is affliction, (v. 15.) take

cognizance of his case, and take it into his compassionate consideration. Thus David prays, (I's. xxv. 18.) Look upon mine afflictions and my pain. Thus we should, in our troubles, refer ourselves to God, and may comfort ourselves with this, that he knows our souls in adversity.

2. That God would grant him some ease. If he could not prevail for the removal of his troubles, yet might he not have some intermission? "Lord, let me not be always upon the rack, always in extremity; O let me alone, that I may take comfort a little! v. 20. Grant me some respite, some breathing time, some little enjoyment of myself." This he would reckon a great favour. Those that are not duly thankful for constant ease, should think how welcome one hour's ease would be, if they were in constant pain. Two things he pleads;

(1.) That life and its light were very short; "Are not my days few? v. 20. Yes, certainly, they are very few; Lord, let them not be all miserable, all in the extremity of misery. I have but a little time to live, let me have some comfort of life while it does last." This plea fastens on the goodness of God's nature, the consideration of which is very comfortable to an afflicted spirit. And if we would use this as a plea with God for mercy, "Are not my days few? Lord, pity me;" we should use it as a plea with ourselves, to quicken us to duty. "Are not my days few? Then it concerns me to redeem time, to improve opportunities; what my hand finds to do, to do it with all my might, that I may be ready for the days of eternity, which shall be many."

(2.) That death and its darkness were very near, and would be very long; (v. 21, 22.) "Lord, give me some ease before I die," that is, "lest I die, of my pain." Thus David pleads, (Ps. xiii. 3.) "Lest I sleep the sleep of death, and then it will be too late to expect relief; for, Wilt thou show wonders to the dead? (Ps. lxxxviii. 10.) Let me have a little comfort before I die, that I may take leave of this world calmly, and not in such confusion as I am now in." Thus earnest should we be for grace, and thus should we plead; "Lord, renew me in the inward man; Lord, sanctify me before I die, for then it will never be done."

See how he speaks here of the state of the dead.
[1.] It is a fixed state, whence we shall not return ever again to live such a life as we now live, ch. vii. 10. At death, we must bid a final farewell to this world. The body must then be laid where it will lie long, and the soul adjudged to that state in which it must be for ever. That had need be well done, which is to be done but once, and done

for eternity.

[2.] It is a very melancholy state; so it appears to us. Holy souls, at death, remove to a land of light, where there is no death; but their bodies they leave to a land of darkness, and the shadow of death. He heaps up expressions here of the same import, to show that he has as dreadful apprehensions of death and the grave as other men naturally have, so that it was only the extreme misery he was in, that made him wish for it. Come and let us look a little into the grave, and we shall find, First, That there is no order there; it is without any order; perpetual night, and no succession of day. All there lie on the same level, and there is no distinction between prince and peasant, but the servant is there free from his master, ch. iii. 19. No order is observed in bringing people to the grave, not the eldest first, not the richest. not the poorest, and yet every one in his own order, the order appointed by the God of life. Secondly, That there is no light there. In the grave there is thick darkness, darkness that cannot be felt indeed, vet cannot but be feared by those that enjoy the

light of life. In the grave there is no knowledge, no comfort, no joy, no praising God, no working out our salvation, and therefore no light. Job was so much ashamed that others should see his sores, and so much afraid to see them himself, that the darkness of the grave, which would hide them and huddle them up, would, upon that account, be welcome to him. Darkness comes upon us, and therefore let us walk and work while we have the light The grave being a land of darkness, it is with us. well we are carried thither with our eyes closed, and then it is all one. The grave is a land of darkness to man; our friends that are gone thither, we reckon removed into darkness, Ps. lxxxviii. 18. But that it is not so to God, will appear by this, that the dust of the bodies of the saints, though scattered, though mingled with other dust, will none of it be lost, for God's eye is upon every grain of it, and it shall be forthcoming in the great day.

CHAP. XI.

Poor Job's wounds were yet bleeding, his sore still runs oor Job's wornes were yet bleeding, his sore still runs and ceases not, but none of his friends bring him any oil, any balm; Zophar, the third, pours into them as much vinegar as the two former had done. I. He exhibits a very high charge against Job, as proud and false in justifying himself, v. 1. 4. II. He appeals to God for his conviction, and begs that God would take him to task, (v. 5.) and that Job might be made sensible, 1. Of God's unerring wisdom, and his inviolable justice, v. 6. 2. Of his unsearchable perfections, v. 7..9. 3. Of his incontestable sovereignty, and uncontrollable power, v. 10. 4. Of the cognizance he takes of the children of men, v. 11, 12. III. He assures him, that, upon his repentance and reformation, (v. 13, 14.) God would restore him to his former prosperity and safety; (v. 15.. 19.) but that if he were wicked, it was in vain to expect it, v. 20.

1. THEN answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said, 2. Should not the multitude of words be answered? and should a man full of talk be justified? Should thy lies make men hold their peace? and when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed? 4. For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes. 5. But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee; 6. And that he would show thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! Know, therefore, that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.

It is sad to see what intemperate passions even wise and good men are sometimes betrayed into by the heat of disputation; of which Zophar here is an instance. Eliphaz began with a very modest preface, ch. iv. 2. Bildad was a little more rough upon Job, ch. viii. 2. But Zophar falls upon him without mercy, and gives him very bad language; Should a man full of talk be justified? And should thy lies make men hold their peace? Is this the way to comfort Job? No, nor to convince him neither. Does this become one that appears as an advocate for God and his justice? Tantane animis calestibus iræ?—In heavenly breasts can such resentments dwell? They that engage in controversy will find it very hard to keep their temper. All the wisdom, caution, and resolution, they have, will be little enough to prevent their breaking out into such indecencies as we here find Zophar guilty of.

1. He represents Job otherwise than what he was; (v. 2, 3.) he would have him thought idle and impertinent in his discourse, and one that loved to hear himself talk; he gives him the lie, and calls him a as a piece of justice to chastise him. Those that have a mind to fall out with their brethren, and to fall foul upon them, find it necessary to put the worst colours they can upon them and their performances, and, right or wrong, to make them odious. We have read and considered Job's discourses in the foregoing chapters, and have found them full of good sense, and much to the purpose; that his principles are right, his reasonings strong, many of his expressions weighty and very considerable, and that what there is in them of heat and passion, a little candour and charity will excuse and overlook; yet Zophar here invidiously represents him,

(1.) As a man that never considered what he said, but uttered what came uppermost, only to make a noise with the multitude of words, hoping by that means to carry his cause, and run down his Should not the multitude of words be Truly, sometimes it is no great matter reprovers. answered? whether it be or no; silence perhaps is the best confutation of impertinence, and puts the greatest contempt upon it; Answer not a fool according to his folly. But, if it be answered, let reason and grace have the answering of it, not pride and passion. Should a man full of talk (Marg. a man of lips, that is, all tongue, vox et præterea nihil—mere voice,) be justified? Should he be justified in his loquacity, as, in effect, he is, if he be not reproved for it? No, for in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin. Should he be justified by it? Shall many words pass for valid pleas? Shall he carry the day with the flourishes of language? No, he shall not be accepted with God, or any wise men, for his much speaking, Matth. vi. 7.

(2.) As a man that made no conscience of what he said, a liar, and one that hoped, by the impudence of lies, to silence his adversaries; (Should thy lies make men hold their peace?) a mocker, one that bantered all mankind, and knew how to put false colours upon any thing, and was not ashamed to impose upon every one that talked with him. When thou mockest, shall no man make thee asham-Is it not time to speak, to stem such a violent tide as this? Job was not mad, but spake the words of truth and soberness, and yet is thus misrepre-Eliphaz and Bildad had answered him, and said what they could to make him ashamed; it was, therefore, no instance of Zophar's generosity, to set upon a man so violently, who was already thus harassed: here were three matched against

2. He charges Job with saying that which he had not said; (v. 4.) Thou hast said, My dectrine is fure. And what if he had said so? It is true that Job was sound in the faith, and orthodox in his judgment, and spake better of God than his friends did. If he had expressed himself unwarily, yet it did not therefore follow but that his doctrine was true; but he charges him with saying, I am clean in thine eyes. Job had not said so: he had, indeed, said, Thou knowest that I am not wicked; (ch. x. 7.) but he had also said, I have sinned, and never pretended to a spotless perfection. He had, indeed, maintained that he was not a hypecrite, as they charged him; but to infer thence that he would not own himself a sinner, was an unfair insinuation. We ought to put the best construction on the words and actions of our brethren that they will bear; but contenders are tempted to put the worst.

3. He appeals to God, and wishes him to appear against Job. So very confident is he that Job is in the wrong, that nothing will serve him but that God must immediately appear to silence and condemn him. We are commonly ready with too much assurance to interest God in our quarrels, and to conclude that if he would but speak, he would mocker; and all this, that it might be looked upon | take our part, and speak for us; as Zophar here, O that God would speak, for he would certainly often his lifts against thee; whereas, when God did speak, he opened his lips for Job against his three friends. We ought indeed to leave all controversies to be determined by the judgment of God, which we are sure is according to truth; but they are not always in the right, who are most forward to appeal to that judgment, and prejudge it against their antagonists.

Zophar despairs to convince Job himself, and therefore desires God would convince him of two things, which it is good for every one of us duly to consider, and under all our afflictions, cheerfully

to confess.

(1.) The unsearchable depth of God's counsels. Zophar cannot pretend to do it, but he desires that God himself would show Job so much of the secrets of the divine wisdom, as might convince him that they are, at least, double to that which is, v. 6. Note, [1.] There are secrets in the divine wisdom; arcana imperii-state secrets. God's way is in the sea; clouds and darkness are round about him; he has reasons of state which we cannot fathom, and must not pry into. [2.] What we know of God, is nothing to what we cannot know. What is hid, is nothing to what we cannot know. What is hid, is more than double to what appears, Eph. iii. 9. [3.] By employing ourselves in adoring the depth of those divine counsels of which we cannot find the bottom, we shall very much tranquillize our minds under the afflicting hand of God. [4.] God knows a great deal more evil of us than we do of ourselves; so some understand it. When God gave David a sight and sense of sin, he said that he had in the hidden part made him to know wisdom, Ps. li. 6.

(2.) The unexceptionable justice of his proceedings; "Know, therefore, that how sore soever the correction is, that thou art under, God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserves:" or, as some read it, "He remits thee hart of thine iniquity, and does not deal with thee according to the full demerit of it." Note, [1.] When the debt of duty is not paid, it is justice to insist upon the debt of punishment. [2.] Whatever punishment is inflicted upon us in this world, we must own that it is less than our iniquities deserve, and therefore, instead of complaining of our troubles, we must be thankful that we are out of hell, Lam. iii. 39. Ps. ciii. 10.

7. Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? 8. It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? 9. The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. 10. If he cut off, and shut up, or gather together, then who can hinder him? 11. For he knoweth vain men: he seeth wickedness also: will he not then consider it? 12. For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt.

Zophar here speaks very good things concerning God and his greatness and glory, concerning man and his vanity and folly: these two compared together, and duly considered, will have a powerful influence upon our submission to all the dispensations of the Divine Providence.

I. See here what God is, and let him be adored.

1. He is an incomprehensible Being, infinite and immense, whose nature and perfection, our finite understandings cannot possibly form any adequate conceptions of, and whose counsels and actings we cannot therefore, without the greatest presumption,

pass a judgment upon. We, that are so little acquainted with the divine nature, are incompetent judges of the Divine Providence; and, when we censure the dispensations of it, we talk of things that we do not understand. We cannot find cut God; how dare we then find fault with him? Zophar here shows,

(1) That God's nature infinitely exceeds the capacities of our understandings; "Canst thou find out God: find him out to perfection? No, What canst thou do? What canst thou know? v. 7, 8. Thou, a poor, weak, short-sighted creature, a worm of the earth, that art but of yesterday? Thou, though ever so inquisitive after him, ever so desirous and industrious to find him out, yet darest thou attempt the search, or canst thou hope to speed in it?" We may by searching find God, (Acts xvii. 27.) but we cannot find him out in any thing he is pleased to conceal; we may a/prehend him, but cannot comprehend him; we may know that he is, but cannot know what he is; the eye can see the ocean, but not see over it; we may, by a humble, diligent, and believing search, find out something of God, but cannot find him out to perfection; we may know, but cannot know fully, what God is, nor find out his work from the beginning to the end, Eccl. iii. 11. Note, God is unsearchable. The ages of his eternity cannot be numbered, nor the spaces of his immensity measured: the depths of his wisdom cannot be fathomed, nor the reaches of his power bounded: the brightness of his glory can never be described, nor an inventory be made of the treasures of his goodness. This is a good reason why we should always speak of God with humility and caution, and never prescribe to him or quarrel with him; why we should be thankful for what he has revealed of himself, and long to be there where we shall see him as he is, 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10.

(2.) That it infinitely exceeds the limits of the whole creation; It is higher than heaven, (so some read it,) deeper than hell, the great abyss, longer than the earth, and broader than the sea, many parts of which are, to this day, undiscovered, and more were then. It is quite out of our reach to comprehend God's nature; such knowledge is too wonderful for us, Ps. exxxix. 6. We cannot fathom God's designs, nor find out the reasons of his proceedings; his judgments are a great deep. St. Paul attributes such immeasurable dimensions to the divine love, as Zophar here attributes to the divine wisdom, and yet recommends it to our acquaintance, (Eph. iii. 18.) That ye may know the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of the

love of Christ.

2. God is a sovereign Lord; (v. 10.) If he cut off by death, (Marg. If he make a change, for death is a change; if he make a change in nations, in families, in the posture of our affairs,) if he shut up in prison, or in the net of affliction; (Ps. lxvi. 11.) if he seize any creature as a hunter his prey, he will gather it, (so Bishop Patrick,) and who shall force him to restore? Or, if he gather together, as tares for the fire, or, if he yather to himself man's shirit and breath, (ch. xxxiv. 14.) then who can hinder him? Who can either arrest the sentence, or oppose the execution? Who can control his power, or arraign his wisdom and justice? If he that made all out of nothing, think fit to reduce all to nothing, or to their first chaos again; if he that separated between light and darkness, dry land and sea, at first, please to gather them together again; if he that made, unmakes, who can turn him away, alter his mind, stay his hand, impede or impeach his proceedings?

3. God is a strict and just observer of the children of men; (v. 11.) He knows vain men. We know little of him, but he knows us perfectly; he

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sees wickedness also, not to approve it, (Hab. i. 13.) but to animadvert upon it. (1.) He observes vain men; (such all are, every man, at his best estate, is altogether vanity;) and he considers it in his dealings with them. He knows what the projects and hopes of vain men are, and can blast and defeat them, the workings of their foolish fancies; he sits in heaven, and laughs at them. He takes knowledge of the vanity of men, that is, their little sins, so some; their vain thoughts and vain words, and unsteadiness in that which is good. (2.) He observes bad men; he sees gross wickedness also, though acted ever so secretly, and ever so artfully palliated and disguised. All the wickedness of the wicked is naked and open before the all-seeing eye of God; will he not then consider it? Yes, certainly he will, and will reckon for it, though for a time he seems to keep silence.

II. See here what man is; and let him be humbled; (v. 12.) God sees this concerning vain man, that he would be wise, would be thought so, though he is born like a wild ass's colt, so sottish and foolish, unteachable and untameable. See what man is: 1. He is a vain creature; empty; so the word is: God made him full, but he emptied himself, impoverished himself, and now he is raca, a creature that has nothing in him. 2. He is a foolish creature, become like the beasts that perish, (Ps. xlix. 20.—lxxiii. 22.) an idiot, born like an ass, the most stupid animal, an ass's colt, not yet brought to any service. If ever he come to be good for any thing, it is owing to the grace of Christ, who once, in the day of his triumph, served himself of an ass's colt. 3. He is a wilful ungovernable creature. An ass's colt may be made good for something, but the wild ass's colt will never be reclaimed, nor regards the crying of the driver. See Job xxxix. 5..7. Man thinks himself as much at liberty, and his own master, as the wild ass's colt does, that is used to the wilderness, (Jer. ii. 24.) eager to gratify his own appetites and passions.
4. Yet he is a proud reature and self-conceited. He would be wise, would be thought so, values himself upon the honour of wisdom, though he will not submit himself to the laws of wisdom. He would be wise, that is, he reaches after forbidden wisdom, and, like his first parents, aiming to be wise above what is writ-ten, loses the tree of life for the tree of knowledge. Now, is such a creature as this fit to contend with God, or call him to an account? Did we but better know God and ourselves, we should better know how to conduct ourselves toward God.

13. If thou prepare thy heart, and stretch out thy hands toward him; 14. If iniquity be in thy hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles. For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear: 16. Because thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away: 17. And thine age shall be clearer than the noon-day; thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning. And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope; yea, thou shalt dig about thee, and thou shalt take thy rest in safety. 19. Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid; yea, many shall make suit unto thee. 20. But the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost.

Zophar, as the other two, here encourages Job to hope for better times, if he would but come to a better temper.

I. He gives him good counsel, (v. 13, 14.) as El phaz did, (ch. v. 8.) and Bildad, ch. viii. 5. He would have him repent, and return to God. Ob-

serve the steps of that return;

1. He must look within, and get his mind changed, and the tree made good. He must prepare his heart; there the work of conversion and reforma-tion must begin. The heart that wandered from God must be reduced; that was defiled with sin and put into disorder, must be cleansed and put in order again; that was wavering and unfixed, must be settled and established: so the word here signifies. The heart is then prepared to seek God, when it is determined and fully resolved to make a business of it, and to go through with it.

2. He must look up, and stretch out his hand toward God, that is, must stir up himself to take hold on God; must pray to him with earnestness and importunity, striving in prayer, and with expectation to receive mercy and grace from him. To give the hand to the Lord, signifies to yield ourselves to him and to covenant with him, 2 Chron. xxx. 8. This Job must do, and, for the doing of it, must prepare his heart. Job had prayed, but Zophar would have him to pray in a better manner, not as an appellant, but as a petitioner and humble

supplicant.

3. He must amend what was amiss in his own conversation, else his prayers would be ineffectual; (v. 14.) If iniquity be in thy hand, that is, "If there be any sin, which thou dost yet live in the practice of, put it far away, forsake it with detestation and a holy indignation, steadfastly resolving not to return to it, nor ever to have any thing more to do with it, Ezek, xviii. 31. Hos. xiv. 9. Isa. xxx. 22. If any of the gains of iniquity, any goods gotten by fraud or oppression, be in thine hand, make restitution of it," (as Zaccheus, Luke xix. 8.) "and shake thy hands from holding it." Isa. xxxiii. 15. The guilt of sin is not removed, if the gain of sin be not restored.

4. He must do his utmost to reform his family too; "Let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles; let not thy house harbour or shelter any wicked persons, any wicked practices, or any wealth gotten by wickedness." He suspected that Joh's great household had been ill governed, and that where there were many, there were many wicked, and the ruin of his family was the punishment of the wickedness of it; and therefore, if he expected God should return to him, he must reform what was amiss there, and, though wickedness might come into his tabernacles, he must not suffer it to dwell

there, Ps. cx. 3, &c.

II. He assures him of comfort if he took this counsel, v. 15, &c. If he would repent and reform, he should, without doubt, be easy and happy, and all would be well. Perhaps Zophar might insinuate, that, unless God did speedily make such a change as this in his condition, he and his friends would be confirmed in their opinion of him as a hypocrite and a dissembler with God: a great truth, however, is conveyed, That the work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever, Isa. xxxii. 17.

Those that sincerely turn to God, may expect,

1. A holy confidence toward God; "Then shalt thou lift up thy face toward heaven without spot; thou mayest come boldly to the throne of grace, and not with that terror and amazement expressed, ch. ix. 34. If our hearts condemn us not for hypocrisy and impenitency, then have we confidence in our approaches to God and expectations from him, 1 John iii. 21. If we are looked upon in the face

of the Anointed, our faces, that were dejected, may | be lifted up; that were polluted, being washed with the blood of Christ, may be lifted up without spot. We may draw near in full assurance of faith, when we are sprinkled from an evil conscience, Heb. x. 22. Some understand this of the clearing up of his credit before men, Ps. xxxvii. 6. If we make our peace with God, we may with cheerfulness look our friends in the face.

2. A holy composedness in themselves; Thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear, not be afraid of evil tidings, thy heart being fixed, Ps. cxii. 7. Job was now full of confusion, (ch. x. 15.) while he looked upon God as his Enemy, and quarrelled with him; but Zophar assures him, that, if he would submit and humble himself, his mind would be stayed, and he would be freed from those frightful apprehensions he had of God, which put him into such an agitation. The less we are frightened, the more we are fixed; and, consequently, the more fit we

are for our services and for our sufferings.

3. A comfortable reflection upon their past troubles; (v. 16.) "Thou shalt forget thy misery; (as the mother forgets her travaling pains, for joy that the child is born;) thou shalt be perfectly freed from the impressions it makes upon thee, and thou shalt remember it as waters that pass away, or are poured out of a vessel, which leave no taste or tincture behind them, as other liquors do. The wounds of thy present affliction shall be perfectly healed, not only without a remaining scar, but without a remaining pain." Job had endeavoured to forget his complaint, (ch. ix. 27.) but found he could not; his soul had still in remembrance the wormwood and the gall: but here Zophar puts him in a way to forget it: let him by faith and prayer bring his griefs and cares to God, and leave them with him, and then he shall forget them. Where sinsits heavily, affliction sits lightly. If we duly remember our sins, we shall, in comparison with them, forget our misery; much more if we obtain the comfort of He whose inia sealed pardon and a sealed peace. quity is forgiven shall not say, I am sick, but forget that, Isa. xxxiii. 24.

4. A comfortable prospect of their future peace. This Zophar here thinks to please Job with, in answer to the many despairing expressions he had used, as if it were to no purpose for him to hope ever to see good days again in this world; "Yea, but thou mayest," (says Zophar,) "and good nights too."

A blessed change he here puts him in hopes of.

(1.) That though now his light was eclipsed, it should shine out again, and brighter than ever, v. That even his setting sun should out-shine his noon-day sun, and his evening be fair and clear as the morning, in respect both of honour and pleasure; that his light should shine out of obscurity; (Isa. lviii. 10.) and the thick and dark cloud, from behind which his sun should break forth, would serve as a foil to its lustre. That it should shine even in old age, and those evil days should be good days to him. Note, They that truly turn to God then begin to shine forth; their path is as the shining light which increases, the period of their day will be the perfection of it, and their evening to this world their morning to a better.

(2.) That though now he was in a continual fear and terror, he should live in a holy rest and security, and find himself continually safe and easy; (v. 18.) Thou shalt be secure, because there is hope. Note, Those who have a good hope, through grace, in God, and of heaven, are certainly safe, and have reason to be secure, how difficult soever the times are through which they pass in this world. He that walks uprightly may thus walk surely, because, though there are trouble and danger, yet

there is hope that all will be well at last. Hope is an anchor of the soul, Heb. vi. 19. dig about thee," that is, "Thou shalt be as safe as an army in its intrenchments." They that submi themselves to God's government shall be taken under his protection, and then they are safe both day and night. [1.] By day, when they employ them-selves abroad; "Thou shalt dig in safety, thou and thy servants for thee, and not be again set upon by the plunderers, who fell upon thy servants at plough," ch. i. 14. It is no part of the premised prosperity, that he should live in idleness, but that he should have a calling and follow it, and, when he was about the business of it, should be under the divine protection; Thou shalt dig and be safe, not rob and be safe; the way of duty is the way of safety. [2.] By night, when they repose themselves at home; Thou shalt take thy rest (and the sleep of the labouring man is sweet) in safety, notwithstand-ing the dangers of the darkness. The pillar of cloud by day shall be a pillar of fire by night; "Thou shalt lie down, (v. 19.) not forced to wander where there is no place to lay thy head on, not forced to watch and sit up in expectation of assaults; but thou shalt go to bed at bed-time, and not only shall none hurt thee, but none shall make thee afraid, or so much as give thee an alarm." Note, It is a great mercy to have quiet nights and undisturbed sleeps; these say so that are within the hearing of the noise of war. And the way to be quiet, is, to seek unto God, and keep ourselves in his love. Nothing needs make those afraid, who return to God as their rest, and take him for their habitation.
(3.) That though now he was slighted, yet he

should be courted; "Many shall make suit to thee, and think it their interest to secure thy friendship. Suit is made to those that are eminently wise or reputed to be so, that are very rich, or in power. phar knew Job so well, that he foresaw, how low soever this present ebb was, if once the tide turned, it would flow as high as ever, and he would be again the darling of his country. They that rightly make suit to God, will probably see the day when others will make suit to them, as the foolish virgins to the

wise, Give us of your oil.

Lastly, Zophar concludes with a brief account of the doom of wicked people; (v. 20.) But the eyes of the wicked shall fail. It should seem, he suspected that Job would not take his counsel, and here tells him what would then come of it, setting death as well as life before him. See what will come of those who persist in their wickedness, and will not be reformed.

1. They shall not reach the good they flatter themselves with the hopes of, in this world and in the other. Disappointments will be their doom, their shame, their endless torment. Their eyes their shame, their endless torment. shall fail with expecting that which will never come. When a wicked man dieth, his expectation perishes, Prov. xi. 7. Their hope shall be as a fruff of breath, (Marg.) vanished and gone, past recall: or their hope will perish and expire as a man does when he gives up the ghost; it will fail them when they have most need of it, and when they expected the accomplishment of it; it will die away, and leave them in utter confusion.

2. They shall not avoid the evil which sometimes they frighten themselves with the apprehension of; they shall not escape the execution of the sentence past upon them; can neither out-brave it, nor outrun it. Those that will not fly to God, will find it

in vain to think of flying from him.

CHAP. XII.

In this and the two following chapters, we have Job's answer to Zophar's discourse. In which, as before, he first reasons with his friends, (see ch. 13. 19.) and then turns

to his God, and directs his expostulations to him, from to his God, and directs his expostulations to him, from thence to the end of his discourse. In this chapter, he addresses himself to his friends, and, I. He condemns what they had said of him, and the judgment they had given of his character, v. 1. . 5. II. He contradicts and confronts what they had said of the destruction of wicked people in this world, showing that they often prosper, v. 6. . 11. III. He consents to what they had said of the wisdom, reverse and expressions of God and the dominion of his providence over the children of men and all their affairs; he confirms this, and enlarges upon it, v. 12...25.

1. A ND JOD answered and wisdoubt but ye are the people, and wis2 Rut I have un-ND Job answered and said, 2. No dom shall die with you. 3. But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these ! 4. I am as one mocked of his neighbour, who calleth upon God, and he answereth him: the just upright man is laughed to scorn. 5. He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.

The reproofs Job here gives to his friends, whether they were just or no, were very sharp, and may serve for a rebuke to all that are proud and scornful, and an exposing of their folly.

I. He upbraids them with their conceitedness of themselves, and the good opinion they seemed to have of their own wisdom in comparison with him; than which nothing is more weak and unbecoming, nor better deserves to be ridiculed, as it is here.

1. He represents them as claiming the monopoly of wisdom, v. 2. He speaks ironically, "No doubt, you are the people; you think yourselves fit to dictate and give law to all mankind, and your own judgment to be the standard by which every man's opinion must be measured and tried; as if nobody could discern between truth and falsehood, good and evil, but you only; and therefore every top-sail must lower to you, and, right or wrong, we must all say as you say, and you three must be the people, the majority, to have the casting vote." Note, It is a very foolish sinful thing for any to think themselves wiser than all mankind besides, or to speak and act confidently and imperiously, as if they thought so. Nay, he goes further; "You not only think there are none, but that there will be none, as wise as you, and therefore that wisdom must die with you, and all the world must be fools when you are gone, and in the dark when your sun is set." Note, It is folly for us to think that there will be any great irreparable loss of us when we are gone, or that we can be ill-spared, since God has the residue of the Spirit, and can raise up others more fit than we are, to do his work. When wise men and good men die, it is a comfort to think that wisdom and goodness shall not die with them. Some think Job here reflects upon Zophar's comparing him (as he thought) and others to the wild ass's colt, ch. xi. 12. "Yes," says he, "we must be asses, you are the only men."

2. He does himself the justice to put in his claim as a sharer in the gifts of wisdom; (v. 3.) "But I have understanding, a heart, as well as you; nay, I fall not lower than you;" (as it is in the margin;) "I am as well able to judge of the methods and meanings of the Divine Providence, and to construe the hard chapters of it, as you are." He says not this, to magnify himself; it was no great applause of himself to say, I have understanding as well as you; no, nor to say, "I understand this matter as well as you;" for what reason had either he or they to be proud of understanding that which was obvious and level to the capacity of the meanest; "Yea,

you have said, that are true, are plain truths, and common themes, which there are many that can talk as excellently of as either you or I:" but he says it, to humble them, and check the value they had for themselves as doctors of the chair. Note, (1.) It may justly keep us from being proud of our knowledge, to consider how many there are that know as much as we do, and perhaps much more, and to better purpose. (2.) When we are tempted to be harsh in our censures of those we differ from and dispute with, we ought to consider that they also have understandings as well as we, a capacity of judging, and a right of judging, for themselves; nay, perhaps they are not inferior to us, but superior, and it is possible that they may be in the right, and we in the wrong; and therefore we ought not to judge or despise them, (Rom. xiv. 3.) nor pretend to be masters, (Jam. iii. 1.) while all we are brethren, Matth. xxiii. 8. It is a very reasonable allowance to be made to all we converse with, all we contend with, that they are rational creatures as well as we.

II. He complains of the great contempt with which they had treated him. Those that are haughty and think too well of themselves, are commonly scornful, and ready to trample upon all about them: Job found it so, at least he thought he did; (v. 4.) I am as one mocked. I cannot say there was cause for this charge; we will not think Job's friends designed him any abuse, nor aimed at any thing but to con-vince him, and so, in the right method, to comfort him; yet he cries out, I am as one mocked. Note. We are apt to call reproofs reproaches, and to think ourselves mocked when we are but advised and admonished; this peevishness is our folly, and a great wrong to ourselves and to our friends. Yet we cannot but say there was a colour for this charge; they came to comfort him, but they vexed him; gave him counsels and encouragements, but with no great opinion that either the one or the other would take effect; and therefore he thought they mocked him, and it added much to his grief. Nothing is more grievous to those that are fallen from the height of prosperity into the depth of adversity, than to be trodden on, and insulted over, when they are down; and on this head they are too apt to be suspicious.

Observe, 1. What aggravated this grievance to m. Two things: (1.) That they were his neighbours, his friends, his companions, so the word signifies; and the scoffs of such are often most spitefully given, and always most indignantly received; (Ps. lv. 12, 13.) It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have slighted it, and so borne it; but it was thou, a man mine equal. (2.) That they were professors of religion, such as called upon God. and said that he answered them; for some understand that of the persons mocking; "They are such as have a regard to Heaven, and an interest in Heaven, whose prayers I would therefore be glad of and thankful for, and whose good opinion I cannot but covet, and therefore whose censures are the more grievous." Note, It is sad that any who call upon God should mock their brethren; (Jam. iii. 9, 10.) and it cannot but lie heavily on a good man to be thought ill of by those whom he thinks well of; yet this is no new thing.

2. What supported him under it. (1.) That he had a God to go to, with whom he could lodge his appeal; for some understand those words of the person mocked, that he calls upon God, and he answers him; and so it agrees with ch. xvi. 20. My friends scorn me, but mine eye houreth out tears to God. If our friends be deaf to our complaints, God is not; if they condemn us, God knows our integri ty; if they make the worst of us, he will make the best of us; if they give us cross answers, he will give us kind ones. (2.) That his case was not sinwho knows not such things as these? What things | gular, but very common: The just upright man is

laughed to scorn; by many he is laughed at even [for his justice and his uprightness, his honesty toward men, and his piety toward God; these are derided as foolish things, which silly people needless-ly hamper themselves with: as if religion were a jest, and therefore to be made a jest of. By most he is laughed at for any little infirmity or weakness, notwithstanding his justice and uprightness, without any consideration had of that which is so much his honour. Note, It was of old the lot of honest good people to be despised and derided; we are not therefore to think it strange, (1 Pet. iv. 12.) no nor to think it hard, if it be our lot; so persecuted they not only the prophets, but even the saints of the patriarchal age, Matth. v. 12. And can we expect to fare better than they?

3. What he suspected to be the true cause of it, and that was, in short, this; they were themselves rich and at ease, and therefore they despised him who was fallen into poverty. It is the way of the world, we see instances of it daily; they that prosper are praised, but of them that are going down it is said, "Down with them." He that is ready to slift with his feet, and fall into trouble, though he has formerly shone as a lamp, is then looked upon as a lamp going out, like the snuff of a candle, which we throw to the ground, and tread upon, and is accordingly despised in the thought of him that is at ease, v. 5. Even the just upright man, that is in his generation as a burning and shining light, if he enter into temptation, (Ps. lxxiii. 2.) or come under a cloud, is looked upon with contempt. See here, (1.) What is the common fault of those that live in prosperity; being full and easy and merry themselves, they look scornfully upon those that are in want, pain, and sorrow; they overlook them, take no notice of them, and study to forget them. See Ps. cxxiii. 4.) The chief butler drinks wine in bowls, but makes nothing of the afflictions of Joseph. Wealth without grace often makes men thus haughty, thus careless of their poor neighbours. (2.) What is the common fate of those that fall into adversity. Poverty serves to eclipse all their lustre; though they are lamps, yet, if taken out of golden candlesticks, and put, like Gideon's, into earthen pitchers, nobody values them as formerly, but they that live at ease despise them.

6. The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly. ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: 8. Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea 9. Who knoweth shall declare unto thee. not in all these, that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this? 10. In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind. 11. Doth not the ear try words? and the mouth taste his meat?

Job's friends, all of them, went upon this principle, that wicked people cannot prosper long in this world, but some remarkable judgment or other will suddenly light on them: Zophar had concluded with it, that *the eyes of the wicked shall fail, ch.* xi. 20. This principle Job here opposes, and maintains, that God, in disposing men's outward affairs, acts as a Sovereign, reserving the exact distribution of rewards and punishments for the future state.

I. He asserts it as an undoubted truth, that wicked people may, and often do, prosper long in this

prosperity. Observe, 1. How he describes the sin ners; they are robbers, and such as provoke God, the worst kind of sinners, blasphemers and persecutors; perhaps he refers to the Sabeans and Chaldeans, who had robbed him, and had always lived by spoil and rapine, and yet they prospered; all the world saw they did, and there is no disputing against sense; one observation built upon matter of fact is worth twenty notions framed by an hypothesis. more generally, All proud oppressors are robbers and pirates. It is supposed that what is injurious to men, is provoking to God, the Patron of right, and the Protector of mankind. It is not strange, if those that violate the bonds of justice, break through the obligations of all religion, bid defiance even to God himself, and make nothing of provoking him. How he describes their prosperity: it is very great; for, (1.) Even their tabernacles prosper, these that live with them, and those that come after them, and descend from them. It seems as if a blessing were entailed upon their families; and that is preserved sometimes to succeeding generations, which was got by fraud. (2.) They are secure, and not only feel no hurt, but fear none, are under no apprehensions of danger, either from threatening providences, or an awakened conscience. But those that provoke God are never the more safe for their being secure. (3.) Into their hand God brings abundantly. They have more than heart could wish, Ps. 1xxiii. 7. They have, not for necessity only, but for delight; not for themselves only, but for others; not for the present only, but for hereafter; and this from the hand of Providence too. God brings plentifully to them; we cannot therefore judge of men's piety by their plenty, nor of what they have in their heart by what they have in their hand.

II. He appeals even to the inferior creatures for the proof of this—the beasts, and fowls, and trees, and even the earth itself; consult these, and they shall tell thee; (v. 7, 8.) many a good lesson we may learn from them; but what are they here to

1. We may learn from them that the tabernacles of robbers prosper; so some. For, (1.) Even among the brute creatures, the greater devour the lesser, and the stronger prey upon the weaker, and men are as the fishes of the sea, Hab. i. 14. If sin had are as the fishes of the sea, Hab. i. 14. not entered, we may suppose there had been no such disorder among the creatures, but the wolf and the lamb had lain down together. (2.) These creatures are serviceable to wicked men, and so they declare their prosperity. Ask the herds and the flocks, to whom they belong, and they will tell you that such a robber, such an oppressor, is their owner: the fishes and fowls will tell you that they are served up to the tables, and feed the luxury, of proud sinners: the earth brings forth her fruits to them, (ch. ix. 24.) and the whole creation groans under the burthen of their tyranny, Rom. viii. 20, 22. Note, All the creatures which wicked men abuse, by making them the food and fuel of their lusts, will witness against them, another day. Jam. v. 3, 4.

2. We may from them learn the wisdom, power. and goodness, of God, and that sovereign domin on of his, into which plain and self-evident truth all these difficult dispensations must be resolved. Zophar had made a vast mystery of ii, ch. xi. 7. "So far from that," (says Job.) "that what we are concerned to know, we may learn even from the inferior creatures; for who knows not from all these? Any one may easily gather from the book of the creatures, that the hand of the Lord has wrought this," (v. 9.) that is, "that there is a wise providence which guides and governs all these things by rules which we are neither acquainted world, v. 6. Even great sinners may enjoy great | with, nor are competent judges of." Note. From God's sovereign dominion over the inferior creatures, we should learn to acquiesce in all his disposals of the affairs of the children of men, though

contrary to our measures.

III. He resolves all into the absolute propriety which God has in all the creatures; (v. 10.) In whose hand is the soul of every living thing. All the creatures, and mankind particularly, derive their being from him, owe their being to him, depend upon him for the support of it, lie at his mercy, are under his direction and dominion, and entirely at his disposal, and at his summons must resign their lives. All souls are his; and may he not do what he will with his own? The name Jehovah is used here, (v. 9.) and it is the only time that we meet with it in all the discourses between Job and his friends; for God was, in that age, more known by the name of Shaddai, the Almighty.

Those words, (v. 11.) Doth not the ear try words, as the mouth tastes meat? may be taken either as the conclusion to the foregoing discourse, or the preface to what follows. The mind of man has as good a faculty of discerning between truth and error, when duly stated, as the palate has of discerning between what is sweet and what is bitter. He therefore demands from his friends a liberty to judge for himself of what they had said; and desires them to use the same liberty in judging of what he had said; nay, he seems to appeal to any man's impartial judgment in this controversy; let the ear try the words on both sides, and it would be found that he was in the right. Note, The ear must try words before it receives them so as to subscribe to them. As by the taste we judge what food is wholesome to the body, and what not, so by the spirit of discerning we must judge what doctrine is sound, and savoury, and wholesome, and what not, 1 Cor. x. 15,—xi, 13.

12. With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding. 13. With him is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding. 14. Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again; he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening. 15. Behold, he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up; also he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth. 16. With him is strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver are 17. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools. 18. He looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle. 19. He leadeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty. 20. He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged. 21. He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty. 22. He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death. He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again. 24. He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way.

They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man.

This is a noble discourse of Job's concerning the wisdom, power, and sovereignty, of God, in ordering and disposing of all the affairs of the children of men, according to the counsel of his own will, which none dares gainsay, or can resist. Take both him and them out of the controversy in which they were so warmly engaged, and they all spake admirably well; but in that, we sometimes scarcely know what to make of them. It were well if wise and good men, that differ in their apprehensions about lesser things, would see it to be for their honour and comfort, and the edification of others, to dwell most upon those great things in which they are agreed. On this subject, Job speaks like himself; here are no passionate complaints, no peevish reflections, but every thing masculine and great.

I. He asserts the unsearchable wisdom, and irresistible power, of God. It is allowed that among men there is wisdom and understanding, v. 12. But it is to be found only with some few, with the ancient, and those who are blessed with length of days, who get it by long experience and constant experience; and, when they have got the wisdom, they have lost their strength, and are unable to execute the results of their wisdom: but now with God there are both wisdom and strength, wisdom to design the best, and strength to accomplish what is designed; he does not get counsel and understanding, as we do, by observation, but he has it essentially and eternally in himself, v. 13. What is the wisdom of ancient men compared with the wisdom of the Ancient of days! It is but little that we know, and less that we can do; but God can do every thing, and no thought can be withholden from him. Happy they who have this God for their God, for they have infinite wisdom and strength engaged for them! Foolish and fruitless are all the attempts of men against him, v. 14. He breaketh down, and it cannot be built again. Note, There is no contending with the Divine Providence, nor breaking the measures of it. As he had said before; (ch. ix. 12.) He takes away, and who can hinder him? So he says again, What God says, cannot be gainsayed, nor what he does, undone. There is no rebuilding what God will have to lie in ruins; witness the tower of Babel, which the undertakers could not go on with; and the desolations of Sodom and Gomorrah, which could never be repaired. See Isa. xxv. 2. Ezek. xxvi. 15. Rev. xviii. 21. There is no releasing of those whom God has condemned to a perpetual imprisonment; if he shut up a man by sickness, reduce him to straits, and embarrass him in his affairs, there can be no opening. He shuts up in the grave, and none can break open those sealed doors; shuts up in hell, in chains of darkness, and none can pass that great gulf fixed.

II. He gives an instance, for the proof of it, in nature, v. 15. He has the command of the waters, binds them as in a garment, (Prov. xxx. 4.) holds them in the hollow of his hand; (Isa. xl. 12.) and he can punish the children of men either by the defect, or by the excess of them: as men break the laws of virtue by extremes on each hand, both defects and excesses, while virtue is in the mean, so God corrects them by extremes, and denies them the mercy which is in the mean. 1. Great droughts are sometimes great judgments; he withholds the waters, and they dry up; if the heaven be as brass, the earth is as iron; if the rain be denied, fountains dry up, and their streams are wanted, fields are parched, and their fruits are wanted, Amos iv. 7. 2. Great wet is sometimes a great judgment; he

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:aises the waters, and overturns the earth, the productions of it, the buildings upon it. A sweeping rain is said to leave no food, Prov. xxviii. 3. See how many ways God has of contending with a sinful people, and taking from them abused, forfeited, mercies; and how utterly unable we are to contend with him! If we might invert the order, this verse would fitly refer to Noah's flood, that ever-memorable instance of the divine power. God then, in wrath, sent the waters out, and they overturned the earth; but, in mercy, he withheld them, shut the windows of heaven, and the fountains of the great deep, and then, in a little time, they dried up.

III. He gives many instances of it in God's powerful management of the children of men, crossing their purposes, and serving his own by them and upon them, overruling all their counsels, overpowering all their attempts, and overcoming all their oppositions. What changes does God make with men, what turns does he give to them; how easily,

how surprisingly!

In general, (v. 16.) With him is strength and reason, so some translate it; strength and consistency with himself: it is an elegant word in the original. With him are the very quintessence and extract of wisdom. With him are power and all that is, so some read it. He is what he is himself, and by him, and in him, all things subsist. Having this strength and wisdom, he knows how to make use, not only of those who are wise and good, who willingly and designedly serve him, but even of those who are foolish and bad, who, one would think, could be made no way serviceable to the designs of his providence: the deceived and the deceiver are his; the simplest men that are deceived, are not below his notice, the subtlest men that deceive, cannot, with all their subtilty, escape his cognizance. The world is full of deceit, the one half of mankind cheats the other, and God suffers it, and from both will, at last, bring glory to himself. The deceivers make tools of the deceived, but the great God makes tools of them both, wherewith he works, and none can let him. He has wisdom and might enough to manage all the fools and knaves in the world, and knows how to serve his own purposes by them, notwithstanding the weakness of the one, and the wickedness of the other. Jacob by a fraud got the blessing, the design of God's grace was served; when Ahab was drawn by a false prophecy into an expedition that was his ruin, the design of God's justice was served; and in both the deceived and the deceiver were at his disposal. See Ezek. xiv. 9. God would not suffer the sin of the deceiver, nor the misery of the deceived, if he knew not how to set bounds to both, and bring glory to himself out of both. Hallelujah, the Lord God omnihotent thus reigns; and it is well he does, for otherwise there is so little wisdom, and so little honesty, in the world, that it had all been in confusion and ruin long ago.

He next descends to the particular instances of the wisdom and power of God in the revolutions of states and kingdoms: for thence he fetches his proofs, rather than from the like operations of Providence concerning private persons and families; because the more high and public the station is, in which men are placed, the more the changes that befall them are taken notice of, and, consequently, the more illustriously does Providence shine forth in them. And it is easy to argue, If God can thus turn and toss the great ones of the earth, like a ball in a large place, (as the prophet speaks, Isa. xxii. 18.) much more the little ones; and with him, to whom states and kingdoms must submit, it is surely the greatest madness for us to contend. Some think that Job here refers to the extirpation of those

powerful nations, the Rephaim, the Zuzim, the Emim, and the Horites, (mentioned Gen. xiv 5, 6. Deut. ii. 10. 20.) in which, perhaps, it was particularly noticed, how strangely they were infatuated and enfeebled; if so, it is designed to show, that, whenever the like is done in the affairs of nations, it is God that doeth it, and we must therein observe his sovereign dominion, even over those that think themselves most powerful, politic, and absolute. Compare this with that of Eliphaz, ch. v. 12, &c. Let us gather up the particular changes here

specified, which God makes upon persons, either for the destruction of nations, and the planting of others in their room, or for the turning out of a particular government and ministry, and the elevation of another in its room, which may be a blessing to the kingdom; witness the glorious Revolution in our own land twenty years ago, in which we saw as happy an exposition as ever was given of this

discourse of Job's.

1. Those that were wise, are sometimes strangely infatuated; and in that the hand of God must be acknowledged; (v. 17.) He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, as trophies of his victory over them, spoiled of all the honour and wealth they have got by their policy, nay, spoiled of the wisdom itself for which they have been celebrated, and the success they promised themselves in their projects: his counsels stand, while all their devices are brought to nought, and their designs baffled, and so they are spoiled both of the satisfaction and the reputation of their wisdom. He maketh the judges fools: by a work on their minds he deprives them of their qualifications for business, and so they become really fools; and by his disposal of their affairs he makes the issue and event of their projects to be quite contrary to what they themselves intended, and so he makes them look like fools. The counsel of Ahithophel, one in whom this scripture was remarkably fulfilled, became foolishness, and he, according to his name, the brother of a fool. See Isa. xix. 13, The firinces of Zoan are become fools, they have seduced Egypt, even they that are the stay of the tribes thereof. Let not the wise man, therefore, glory in his wisdom, nor the ablest counsellors and judges be proud of their station, but humbly depend upon God for the continuance of their abilities. Even the aged, who seem to hold their wisdom by prescription, and think they have got it by their own industry, and therefore have an indefeisible title to it, may yet be deprived of it, and often are, by the infirmities of age, which make them twice children; he taketh away the understanding of the aged, v. 20. The aged, who were most depended on for advice, fail those that de-pended on them. We read of an old and yet foolish king, Eccl. iv. 13.

2. Those that were high and in authority, are strangely brought down, impoverished, and enslaved; and it is God that humbles them; (v. 18.) He looseth the bond of kings, and taketh from them the power wherewith they ruled their subjects, perhaps enslaved them, and ruled them with rigour; strips them of all the ensigns of their honour and authority, and all the supports of their tyranny; unbuckles their belts, so that the sword drops from their side, and then no marvel if the crown quickly drops from their heads; on which, immediately follows the girding of their loins with a girdle, a badge of servitude, for servants went with their loins girt. Thus he leads great princes away spoiled of all their power and wealth, and that in which they pleased and prided themselves, v. 19. Note, Kings are not exempt from God's jurisdiction. To us are not exempt from God's jurisdiction. they are gods, but men to him, and subject to more

than the common changes of human life.

3. Those that were strong, are strangely weak-

ened; and it is God that weakens them, (v. 21.) and overthrows the mighty, v. 19. Strong bodies are weakened by age and sickness, powerful armies moulder and come to nothing, and their strength will not secure them from a fatal overthrow. No force can stand before Omnipotence, no not that of

4. Those that were famed for eloquence, and entrusted with public business, are strangely silenced, and have nothing to say; (v. 20.) He removeth away the speech of the trusty, so that they cannot speak as they intended, and as they used to do, with freedom and clearness, but blunder and falter, and make nothing of it. Or, they cannot speak what they intended, but the contrary, as Balaam, who blessed those whom he was called to curse. Let not the orator therefore be proud of his rhetoric, nor use it to any bad purposes, lest God take

it away, who made man's mouth.
5. Those that were honoured and admired, strangely fall into disgrace; (v. 21.) He houreth contempt whon firinces. He leaves them to themselves to do mean things, or alters the opinions of men concerning them. If princes themselves dishonour G id, and despise him, if they do indignities to the people of God, and trample upon them, they shall be lightly esteemed, and God will pour con-tempt upon them. See Ps. cvii. 40. Commonly, none more abject in themselves, nor more abused by others when they are down, than those who were haughty and insolent when they were in power.

6. That which was secret, and lay hid, is strangely brought to light, and laid open; (v. 22.) He discovers deep things out of darkness. Plots closely laid are discovered and defeated; wickedness closely committed, and artfully concealed, is discovered, and the guilty brought to condign punishment; secret treasons, (Eccl. x. 20.) secret murders, secret whoredoms. The cabinet-councils of princes

are before God's eye, 2 Kings vi. 11.
7. Kingdoms have their ebbings and flowings, their waxings and wanings; and both are from God; (v. 23.) He sometimes increases their numbers, and enlarges their bounds, so that they make a figure among the nations, and become formidable; but, after a while, by some undiscerned cause, perhaps, they are destroyed and straitened, made few and poor, cut short, and many of them cut off, and so they are rendered despicable among their neighbours; and they that were the head, become the tail, of the nations. See Ps. cvii. 38, 39.

8. They that were bold and courageous, and made nothing of dangers, are strangely cowed and dispirited; and this also is the Lord's doing; (v. 24.) He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people, that were their leaders and commanders, and were most famed for their martial fire and great achievements; when any thing was to be done, they were heartless, and ready to flee at the shaking of a leaf. Ps. 1xxvi. 5.

9. They that were driving on their projects with full speed, are strangely bewildered and at a loss; they know not where they are, nor what they do, are unsteady in their counsels, and uncertain in wandering like men in a desert, (v. 24.) groping like men in the dark, and staggering like men in drink, v. 25. Isa. lix. 10. Note, God can soon non-plus the deepest politicians, and bring the greatest wits to their wit's end; to show that wherein they deal proudly, he is above them in they deal proudly, he is above them.

Thus are the revolutions of kingdoms wonder-

fully brought about by an overruling Providence. Heaven and earth are shaken, but the Lord sits King for ever, and with him we look for a kingdom

that cannot be shaken.

CHAP. XIII.

Job here comes to make application of what he had said in the foregoing chapter; and now we have him not in so good a temper as he was in then; for, I. He is very bold with his friends, comparing himself with them, notwithstanding the mortifications he was under, v. 1, 2. Condemning them for their falsehood, their forwardness to judge, their partiality and descritulness, under colour of pleading God's cause, (v. 4..8) and threatening them with the judgments of God for their so doing, (v. 9.. 12.) desiring them to be silent, (v. 5, 13, 17.) And, turning from them to God, v. 3. II. He is very bold with his God. I. In some expressions, his faith is very with his God. 1. In some expressions, his jaun is very bold, yet that is not more bold than welcome, v. 15, 16, 18. But, 2. In other expressions, his passion is rather too bold in expostulations with God concerning the deplorable condition he was in, (v. 14, 19, &c.) complaining of the confusion he was in, (v. 20...22.) and the loss he was at to find out the sin that provoked God thus to afflict him; and, in short, of the rigour of God's proceedings against him, v. 23...28.

1. I O, mine eye hath seen all *this*, mine ear hath heard and understood it. 2. What ye know, the same do I know also: I am not inferior unto you. 3. Surely I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God. 4. But ye are forgers of lies, ye are all physicians of no value. 5. Oh that you would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom. 6. Hear now my reasoning, and hearken to the pleadings of my lips. 7. Will you speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for him? 8. Will ye accept his person? will ye contend for God? 9. Is it good that he should search you out? or, as one man mocketh another, do ye so mock him? He will surely reprove you, if ye do secretly accept persons. 11. Shall not his excellency make you afraid? and his dread fall upon you? 12. Your remembrances are like unto ashes, your bodies to bodies of clay.

Job here warmly expresses his resentments of the unkindness of his friends.

I. He comes up with them as one that understood the matter in dispute as well as they, and did not need to be taught by them, v. 1, 2. They compelled him, as the Corinthians did Paul, to commend himself and his own knowledge, yet not in a way of self-applause, but of self-justification. All he had said before, his eye had seen confirmed by many instances, and his ear had heard seconded by many authorities, and he well understood it, and what use to make of it. Happy they, who do not only see and hear, but understand, the greatness, glory, and sovereignty, of God. This, he thought, would justify what he had said before, (ch. xii. 3.) which he repeats here; (v. 2.) "What ye know, the same do I know also, so that I need not come to you to be taught; I am not inferior unto you in wisdom." Note, Those who enter into disputation, enter into temptation to magnify themselves, and vilify their brethren, more than is fit, and therefore ought to watch and pray against the workings of

II. He turns from them to God; (v. 3.) Surely 1 would speak to the Almighty; as if he had said, "I can promise myself no satisfaction in talking to you: O that I might have liberty to reason with He would not be so hard upon me as you The prince himself will perhaps give au-God!

dience to a poor petitioner with more mildness, patience, and condescension, than the servants will. Job would rather argue with God himself than with his See here, 1. What confidence they have toward God, whose hearts condemn them not of reigning hypocrisy: they can, with humble boldness, appear before him and appeal to him. What comfort they have in God, whose neighbours unjustly condemn them: if they may not speak to them with any hopes of a fair hearing, yet they

may speak to the Almighty, they have easy access to him, and shall find acceptance with him.

III. He condemns them for their unjust and uncharitable treatment of him, v. 4. 1. They falsely accused him, and that was unjust; Ye are forgers of lies. They framed a wrong hypothesis concerning the Divine Providence, and misrepresented it, as if it did never remarkably afflict any but wicked men in this world; and from thence they drew a false judgment concerning Job, that he was certainly a hypocrite. For this gross mistake, both in doctrine and application, he thinks an indictment of forgery lies against them. To speak lies is bad enough, though but at second hand, but to forge them with contrivance and deliberation is much worse: yet against this wrong neither innocency nor excellency will be a fence. 2. They basely deceived him, and that was unkind. They undertook his cure, and pretended to be his physicians, but they were all physicians of no value; "idolphysicians, who can do me no more good than an idol can." They were worthless physicians, who neither understood his case, nor knew how to prescribe to him; mere empirics, who pretended to great things, but in conference added nothing to him—he was never the wiser for all they said. Thus, to broken hearts and wounded consciences, all creatures, without Christ, are physicians of no value, on which one may spend all, and be never the better, but rather grow worse, Mark v. 26.

IV. He begs they would be silent, and give him a patient hearing, v. 5, 6. 1. He thinks it would be a credit to themselves, if they would say no more, having said too much already; "Hold your heace, and it shall be your wisdom, for thereby you will conceal your ignorance and ill-nature, which now appear in all you say." They pleaded that they could not forbear speaking; (ch. iv. 2.—xi. 2, 3.) but he tells them that they had more consulted their own reputation, if they had enjoined themselves silence. Better say nothing than nothing to the purpose, or that which tends to the dishonour of God, and the grief of our brethren. Even a fool, when he holds his peace, is counted wise, because nothing appears to the contrary, Prov. xvii. 28. And as silence is an evidence of wisdom, so it is a means of it, as it gives time to think and hear. 2. He thinks it would be a piece of justice to him, to hear what he had to say; Hear now my reasoning. Perhaps, though they did not interrupt him in his discourse, yet they seemed careless, and did not much heed what he said; he therefore begs they would not only hear, but hearken. Note, We should be very willing and glad to hear what those have to say for themselves, whom, upon any account, we are tempted to have hard thoughts of Many a man, if he could but be fairly heard, would be fairly acquitted, even in the consciences of those that run him down.

V. He endeavours to convince them of the wrong they did to God's honour, while they pretended to plead for him, v. 7, 2. They valued themselves upon it, that they spake for God, were advocates for him, and had undertaken to justify him and his proceedings against Job. And being (as they thought) of counsel for the Sovereign, they expected not only the ear of the court, and the last with your censures of me, though under colour of

word, but judgment on their side. But Job tells them plainly, 1. That God and his cause did not need such advocates; "Will you think to contend for God, as if his justice were clouded, and wanted to be cleared up, or as if he were at a loss what to say, and wanted you to speak for him? Will you, who are so weak and passionate, put in for the honour of pleading God's cause?" Good work ought not to be put into bad hands. Will you accept his herson? If those who have not right on their side, carry their cause, it is by the partiality of the judge in favour of their persons; but God's cause is so just, that it needs no such methods for the support of it. He is a God, and can plead for himself; (Judg. vi. 31.) and if you were for ever silent, the heavens would declare his righteousness. 2. That God's cause suffered by such management. Under pretence of justifying God in afflicting Job, they magisterially condemn him as a hypocrite and a bad man. "This" (says he) "is speaking wickedly," (for uncharitableness and censoriousness are wickedness, great wickedness; it is an offence to God to wrong our brethren,) "it is talking deceitfully, for you condemn one whom yet perhaps your own consciences, at the same time, cannot but acquit. Your principles are false, and your arguings fallacious; and will it excuse you, to say, It is for God?" No, for a good intention will not justify, much less will it sanctify, a bad word or action. God's truth needs not our lie, nor God's cause either our sinful policies or our sinful passions. The wrath of man works not the righteousness of God, nor may we do evil, that good may come, Rom. iii. 7, 8. Pious frauds (as they call them) are impious cheats; and deveut persecutions horrid profanations of the name of God, as theirs who hated their brethren, and cast them out, saying, Let the Lord be glorified, Isa. lxvi. 5. John xvi. 2.

VI. He endeavours to possess them with a fear

of God's judgment, and so to bring them to a better temper. Let them not think to impose upon God as they might upon a man like themselves, nor expect to gain his countenance in their bad practices, by pretending a zeal for him and his honour. one man mocks another by flattering him, do you think so to mock him and deceive him?" Assuredly, those who think to put a cheat upon God, will prove to have put a cheat upon themselves; Be not deceived, God is not mocked.

That they might not think thus to jest with God, and affront him, he would have them to consider both God and themselves, and then they would find themselves unable to enter into judgment with him.

1. Let them consider what a God he is, into whose service they had thus thrust themselves, and to whom they really did so much disservice, and inquire whether they could give him a good account

of what they did.

Consider, (1.) The strictness of his scrutiny and inquiries concerning them; (v. 9.) "Is it good that he should search you out?" Can you bear to have the principles looked into, which you go upon in your censures, and to have the bottom of the matter found out?" Note, It concerns us all seriously to consider whether it will be to our advantage or no, that God searches the heart. It is good to an upright man, who means honestly, that God should search him, therefore he prays for it; Search me, O God, and know my heart. God's omniscience is a witness of his sincerity; but it is bad to him who looks one way and rows another, that God should search him out, and lay him open to his confusion.

(2.) The severity of his rebukes and displeasure against them; (v. 10.) If ye do accept persons, though but secretly and in heart, he will surely ve prove you; he will be so far from being pleased

provocation, as any prince or great man would, if a base action were done under the sanction of his name, and under the colour of advancing his interest." Note, What we do amiss, we shall certainly be reproved for, one way or other, one time or

other, though it be done ever so secretly.
(3.) The terror of his majesty, which, if they would duly stand in awe of, they would not do that which would make them obnoxious to his wrath; (v. 11.) "Shall not his excellency make you afraid? You that have great knowledge of God, and profess religion and a fear of him, how dare you talk at this rate, and give yoursel es so great a liberty of Ought ye not to walk and talk in the fear speech? of God? Neh. v. 9. Should not his dread fall upon you, and give check to your passions?" Methinks, Job speaks this as one that did himself know the terror of the Lord, and lived in a holy fear of him, whatever his friends suggested to the contrary. Note, [1.] There is in God a dreadful excellency. He is the most excellent Being, has all excellencies in himself, and in each infinitely excels any creature. His excellencies in themselves are amiable and lovely. He is the most beautiful Being; but, considering man's distance from God by nature, and his defection and degeneracy by sin, his excellencies are dreadful. His power, holiness, justice, yea, and his goodness too, are dreadful excellencies. They shall fear the Lord and his goodness. [2.] A holy awe of this dreadful excellency should fall upon us, and make us afraid. This would awaken impenitent sinners, and bring them to repentance, and would influence all to be careful to please him, and afraid of offending him.

2. Let them consider themselves, and what an unequal match they were for this great God; (v. 12.) "Your remembrances (all that in you for which you hope to be remembered when you are gone) are like unto ashes, worthless and weak, and easily trampled on and blown away; your bodies are like bodies of clay, mouldering and coming to nothing; your memories, you think, will survive your bodies; but, alas! they are like ashes which will be shovelled up with your dust." Note, The consideration of our own meanness and mortality should make us afraid of offending God, and is a good reason why we should not despise and trample upon our brethren. Bishop Patrick gives another sense of this verse: "Your remonstrances on God's behalf are no better than dust, and the arguments you accumulate, but like so many heaps of dirt."

13. Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak, and let come on me what 14. Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in my hand? 15. Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before 16. He also shall be my salvation: for a hypocrite shall not come before him. 17. Hear diligently my speech and my declaration with your ears. 18. Behold now, I have ordered my cause; I know that I shall be justified. 19. Who is he that will plead with me? for now, if I hold my tongue, I shall give up the ghost. 20. Only do not two things unto me; then will I not hide myself from thee. 21. Withdraw thy hand far from me; and let not thy dread

vindicating him, that he will resent them as a great | will answer; or let me speak, and answer thou me.

> Job here takes hold, fast hold, of his integrity, as one that was resolved not to let it go, nor suffer it to be wrested from him: his firmness in this matter is commendable, and his warmness excusable.

> I. He entreats his friends and all the company to let him alone, and not interrupt him in what he was about to say, (v. 13.) but diligently to hearken to it, v. 17. He would have his own protestation to be decisive, for none but God and himself knew his heart; "Be silent, therefore, and let me hear no more of you, but hearken diligently to what I say, and let my own oath for confirmation be an end of

the strife.

II. He resolves to adhere to the testimony his own conscience gave of his integrity; and though his friends called it obstinacy, that should not shake his constancy; "I will speak in my own defence, and let come on me what will, v. 13. Let my friends put what construction they please upon it, and think the worse of me for it, I hope God will not make my necessary defence to be my offence, as you do: he will justify me, (v. 18.) and then nothing can come amiss to me." Note, Those that are upright, and have the assurance of their uprightness, may cheerfully welcome every event. Come what will, bene præparatum pectus—they are ready for it. He resolves (v. 15.) that he will maintain his own ways; he will never part with the satisfaction he had in having walked uprightly with Ged; but, though he could not justify every word he had spoken, yet, in the general, his ways were good, and he would maintain it; and why should he not, since that was his great support under his present exercises, as it was Hezekiah's, Now, Lord, remember how I have walked before thee! Nay, he would not only not betray his own cause, or give it up, but he would openly avow his sincerity, fer, (v. 19.) "If I hold my tongue, and do not speak for myself, my silence now will for ever silence me, for I shall certainly give up the ghost," v. 19. "If I cannot be cleared, yet let me be eased by what I

say," as Elihu, ch. xxxii. 17, 20.

III. He complains of the extremity of pain and misery he was in; (v. 14.) Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth? That is, 1. "Why do I suffer such agonies? I cannot but wonder that God should lay so much upon me, when he knows I am not a wicked man." He was ready, not only to rend his clothes, but even to tear his flesh, through the greatness of his affliction, and saw himself at the brink of death, and his life in his hand, yet his friends could not charge him with any enormous crime, nor could he himself discover any; no marvel then that he was in such confusion. 2. "Why do I stifle and smother the protestations of my in-nocency?" When a man with great difficulty keeps in what he would say, he bites his lips: "Now, says he, "why may not I take liberty to speak, since I do but vex myself, add to my torment, and endanger my life, by refraining?" Note, It would vex the most patient man, when he has lost every thing else, to be denied the comfort (if he deserves

it) of a good conscience and a good name.

IV. He comforts himself in God, and still keeps

hold of his confidence in him. Observe here,

1. What he depends upto God for: Justification and Salvation, the two good through Christ. (1.) Justified ion; (v. 18.) I have ordered my cause, and, upon the whole matter, I know that I shall be justified. This he knew, because know that he be the bedeenver lived or vive 2. cause he knew that his Redeemer lived, ch. xix. 25. They whose hearts are upright with God, in walkmake me afraid: 22. Then call thou, and I ing not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, may be

sure that through Christ there shall be no condemnation to them, but that, whoever lays any thing to their charge, they shall be justified. (2.) Salvation; (v. 16.) He also shall be my salvation. He means it not of temporal salvation, he had little expectation of that, but, concerning his eternal salvation, he was very confident that God would not only be his Saviour to make him happy, but his Salvation, in the vision and fruition of whom he should be happy. And the reason why he depended on God for salvation, is, Because a hypocrite shall not come before him. He knew himself not to be a hypocrite, and that none but hypocrites are rejected of God, and therefore concluded he should not be rejected. Sincerity is our evangelical perfection, nothing will ruin us but the want of that.

2. With what constancy he depends upon him;

Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him, v. 15. This is a high expression of faith, and what we should all labour to come up to; to trust in God, though he slay us. That is, we must be well pleased with God as a Friend, even then when he seems to come forth against us as an Enemy, ch. xxiii. 8..10. We must believe that all shall work for good to us, even then when all seems to make against us, Jer. xxiv. 5. We must proceed and persevere in the way of our duty, though it costs us all that is dear to us in this world, even life itself, Heb. xi. 35. We must depend upon the performance of the promise, when all the ways leading to it are shut up, Rom. iv. 18. We must rejoice in have nothing else to rejoice in, God, when we have nothing else to rejoice in, and cleave to him, yea, though we cannot for the present find comfort in him. In a dying hour, we must derive from him living comforts; and this is

to trust in him, though he slay us.

V. He wishes to argue the case even with God himself, if he might but have leave to settle the preliminaries of the treaty, v. 20. 22. He had desired (v. 3.) to reason with God, and is still of the same mind; he will not hide himself, that is, he will not decline the trial, nor dread the issue of it, but under two provisos, 1. That his body might not be tortured with this exquisite pain; "Withdraw thine hand far from me; for, while I am in this extremity, I am fit for nothing. I can make a shift to talk with my friends, but I know not how to address myself to thee." When we are to converse with God, we have need to be composed, and as free as possible from every thing that may make us uneasy. 2. That his mind might not be terrified with the tremendous majesty of God; "Let not thy dread make me afraid; either let the manifes-ations of thy presence be familiar, or let me be enabled to bear them without disorder and disturbance." Moses himself trembled before God, so dd Isaiah and Habakkuk: O God, thou art terrible even in thy holy flaces. "Lord," says Job, "let me not be put into such a consternation of spirit, together with this bodily affliction, for then I must certainly drop the cause, and shall make nothing of it." See what a folly it is for men to put off their repentance and conversion to a sick-bed, and a death-bed! How can even a good man, much less a bad man, reason with God, so as to be justified before him, when he is upon the rack of pain, and under the terror of the arrests of death? At such a time, it is very bad to have the great work to do, but very comfortable to have it done, as it was to Joh, who, if he might but have a little breathing time, was ready either, (1) To hear God speaking to him by his word and return an answer; Call thou, and I will answer; or, (2.) To speak to him by prayer, and expect an answer; Let me speak, and answer thou me, v. 22. Compare this with ch. ix. 34, 35. where he speaks to the same purport. In short, the badness of his case was at present such || better than life, Prov. xviii. 14. A wounded shru

a damp upon him, as he could not get over; other wise he was well assured of the goodness of his cause, and doubted not but to have the comfort of it at last, when the present cloud was over. With such holy boldness may the upright come to the throne of grace, not doubting but to find mercy

23. How many are mine iniquities and sins! make me to know my transgression and my sin. 24. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy? 25. Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? and wilt thou pursue the dry stubble? 26. For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth. 27. Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks, and lookest narrowly unto all my paths; thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet. 28. And he, as a rotten thing, consumeth, as a garment that is motheaten.

Here,

I. Job inquires after his sins, and begs to have them discovered to him: he looks up to God, and asks him what was the number of them; How many are mine iniquities, and what the particulars of them? Make me to know my transgressions, v. 23. His friends were ready enough to tell him how nu "But, Lord," says he, "Let me know them from Thee, for thy judgment is according to truth, theirs is not." This may be taken, either, 1. As a passionate complaint of hard usage, that he was punished for his faults, and yet was not told what his faults were. Or, 2. As a prudent appeal to God from the censures of his friends; he desired that all his sins might be brought to light, as knowing they would then appear not so many, nor so mighty, as his friends suspected him to be guilty of. Or, 3. As a pious request, to the same purport with that which Elihu directed him to; ch. xxxiv. 32, That which I see not, teach thou me. Note, A true penitent is willing to know the worst of himself; and we should all desire to know what our transgressions are, that we may be particular in the confession of them, and on our guard against them for the future.

II. He bitterly complains of God's withdrawings from him; (v. 24.) Wherefore hidest thou thy face? This must be meant of something more than his outward afflictions; for the loss of estate, children, health, might well consist with God's love; when that was all, he blessed the name of the Lord; but his soul was also sore vexed, and that is it which he here laments. 1. That the favours of the Almighty were suspended; God hid his face as one strange to him, displeased with him, shy and regardless of him. 2. That the terrors of the Almighty were inflicted and impressed upon him; God held him for his Enemy; shot his arrows at him, (ch. vi. 4.) and set him as a mark, ch. vii. 20. Note, The holy God sometimes denies his favours, and discovers his terrors, to the best and dearest of his saints and servants in this world. This case occurs, not only in the production, but sometimes in the progress, of the divine life; evidences for heaven are eclipsed, sensible communions interrupted, dread of divine wrath impressed, and the returns of comfort, for the present, despaired of, Ps. lxxvii. 7..9.—lxxxviii. 7.15, 16. These are grievous burthens to a gracious soul, that values God's loving-kindness as

was can bear? Job, by asking here, Why hidest | thou thy face? teaches us, that when, at any time. we are under the sense of God's withdrawings, we are concerned to inquire into the reason of them; what is the sm for which he corrects us; and what the good he designs us. Job's sufferings were ty-pical of the sufferings of Christ, from whom not only men hid their faces, (Isa. lin. 3.) but God hid Witness the darkness which surrounded him on the cross, when he cried out, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? If this were done to these green trees, what shall be done to the dry?

They will for ever be forsaken.

III. He humbly pleads with God his own utter inability to stand before him: (v. 25.) "Wilt thou break a leaf, nursue the dry stubble? Lord, is it for thine honour to trample upon one that is down already? Or to crush one that neither has, nor pretends to, any power to resist thee?" Note, We ought to have such an apprehension of the goodness and compassion of God, as to believe that he will not break the bruised reed, Matth. xii. 20.

IV. He sadly complains of God's severe dealings with him: he owns it was for his sins that God thus

contended with him, but thinks it hard,

1. That his former sins, long since committed, should now be remembered against him, and he should be reckoned with for the old scores; (v. 26.) Thou writest bitter things against me. Afflictions are bitter things; writing of them denotes deliberation and determination, written as a warrant for execution; it denotes also the continuance of his affliction, for that which is written remains, and, "Herein thou makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth," that is, "thou punishest me for them, and thereby puttest me in mind of them, and obligest me to renew my repentance for them." Note, (1.) God sometimes writes very bitter things against the best and dearest of his saints and servants, both in outward afflictions and inward disquiet; trouble in body and trouble in mind, that he may humble them and prove them, and do them good in their latter end. (2.) That the sins of youth are often the smart of age, both in respect of sorrow within, (Jer. xxxi. 18, 19.) and suffering without, ch. xx. 11. Time does not wear out the guilt of sin. (3.) That when God writes bitter things against us, his design therein is, to make us possess our iniquities, to bring forgotten sins to mind, and so to bring us to remorse for them, as to break us off from them. This is all the fruit, to take away our sin.

2. That his present mistakes and miscarriages should be so strictly taken notice of, and so severely an madverted upon; (v. 27.) "Thou futtest my feet also in the stocks, not only to afflict me, and expose me to shame, not only to keep me from escaping the strokes of thy wrath, but that thou nayest critically remark all my motions, and look narrowly to all my paths, to correct me for every false step, nay, for but a look awry, or a word misapplied; nay, thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet, scorest down every thing I do amiss, to reckon for it; or, no sooner have I trodden wrong, though ever so little, than immediately I smart for it; the punishment treads upon the very heels of the sin. Guilt, both of the oldest and of the freshest date, is put together, to make up the cause of my calamity." Now, (1.) It was not true that God did thus seek advantages against him; he is not thus extreme to mark what we do amiss; if he were, there were no abiding for us, Ps. cxxx. 3. But he is so far from this, that he deals not with us according to the desert, no not of our manifest sins which are not found by secret search, Jer. ii. 34. This therefore was the language of Job's melancholy; his sober thoughts never represented God thus as a hard Master. (2.) But we should keep such a strict and jealous eye as this upon ourselves and our own steps, both for the discovery of sin past, and the prevention of it for the future. It is good

for us all to *pronder the path of our feet*.

V. He finds himself wasting away apace under the heavy hand of God, v. 28. He, that is, man, as a rotten thing, the principle of whose putrefaction is in itself, consumes, even like a moth-eaten garment. which becomes continually worse and worse. Or, He, that is, God, like rottenness, and like a moth, consumes me. Compare this with Hos. v. 12. I will be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness: and see Ps. xxxix. 11. Note, Man, at the best, wears fast; but, under God's rebukes especially, he is soon gone. While there is so little soundness in the soul, no marvel there is so little soundness in the flesh, Ps. xxxviii. 3.

CHAP. XIV.

Job had turned from speaking to his friends, finding it to no purpose to reason with them, and here goes on to speak to God and himself. He had reminded his friends of their frailty and mortality; (ch. xiii. 12.) here he reminds himself of his own, and pleads it with God for some mitigation of his miseries. We have here an account, I. Of man's life, that it is, 1. Short, v. 1. 2. Sorrowful, v. 2. 3. Sinful, v. 4. 4. Stinted, v. 5, 14. II. Of man's death, that it puts a final period to our present life, to which we shall not again return, v. 7. . 12. That it hides us from the calamities of life; (v. 13.) destroys the hopes of life; (v. 18, 19.) sends us away from the busihopes of life; (v. 18, 19.) sends us away from the business of life; (v. 20.) and keeps us in the dark concernness of life; (v. 20.) and keeps us in the dark concerning our relations in this life, how much soever we have formerly been in care about them, v. 21, 22. III. The use Job makes of all this. 1. He pleads it with God, who, he thought, was too strict and severe with him; (v. 16, 17.) begging that, in consideration of his frailty, he would not contend with him; (v. 3.) but grant him some respite, v. 6. 2. He engages himself to prepare for death, (v. 14.) and encourages himself to hope that it would be comfortable to him, v. 15. This chapter is proper for funeral solemnities; and serious meditations on it will help us both to get good by the death of others, and to get ready for our own. and to get ready for our own.

1. AN that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. 2. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down : he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. 3. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such a one, and bringest me into judgment with thee? 4. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one. 5. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee; thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass: 6. Turn from him that he may rest, till he shall accomplish, as a hireling, his day.

We are here led to think,

I. Of the original of human life; God is indeed its great Original, for he breathed into man the breath of life, and in him we live; but we date it from our birth, and thence we must date both its from our birth, and thence we must date both its frailty and its pollution. I Its frailty; Man, that is born of a woman, fore of few days, v. 1. It may refer to the the who was called Eve, because she was the pollution of all living: of her, who, being deceive the tempter, was first in the transgression, we all born, and consequently derive from her that she and arruption which both shorten our days and sadden them. Or it may reshorten our days and sadden them. shorten our days, and sadden them. Or it may refer to every man's immediate mother. The woman is the weaker vessel, and we know that Partus sequitur ventrem-The child takes after the mother.

Let not the strong man therefore glory in his strength, or in the strength of his father, but remember that he is born of a woman, and that, when God pleases, the mighty men become as women, Jer. li. 30. 2. Its pollution; (v. 4.) Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? If man be born of a woman that is a sinner, how can it be otherwise than that he should be a sinner? See ch. xxv. 4, How can he be clean that is born of a woman? Clean children cannot come from unclean parents, any more than pure streams from an impure spring, or grapes from thorns. Our habitual corruption is derived, with our nature, from our parents, and is therefore bred in the bone: our blood is not only attainted by a legal conviction, but tainted with an hereditary disease. Our Lord Jesus, being made sin for us, is said to be made of a woman, Gal. iv. 4.

II. Of the nature of human life; it is a flower, it is a shadow, ν . 2. The flower is fading, and all its beauty soon withers and is gone. The shadow is fleeting, and its very being will soon be lost and drowned in the shadows of the night: of neither do we make any account, in neither do we put any

confidence.

III. Of the shortness and uncertainty of human life; man is of few days. Life is computed, not by months or years, but by days, for we cannot be sure of any day but that it may be our last. These days are few, fewer than we think of; few, at the most, in comparison with the days of the first patriarchs, much more, in comparison with the days of eternity; but much fewer to most, who come short of what we call the age of man. Man sometimes no sooner comes forth, than he is cut down, comes forth out of the world, than he dies in the cradle, comes forth into the world and enters into the business of it, than he is hurried away as soon as he has laid his hand to the plough. If not cut down immediately, yet it flees as a shadow, and never continues in one stay, in one shape, but the fashion of it passes away: so does this world and our life in it, 1 Cor. vii. 31.

1 Cor. vii. 31.

IV. Of the calamitous state of human life; man, as he is short-lived, so he is sad-lived. Though he had but a few days to spend here, yet if he might rejoice in those few, it were well; (a short life and a merry, is the boast of some;) but it is not so; during these few days, he is full of trouble, not only troubled, but full of trouble, either toiling or fretting, grieving or fearing; no day passes without some vexation, some hurry, some disorder or other. They that are fond of the world, shall have enough of it. He is satur tremore—full of commotion. The fewness of his days creates him a continual trouble and uneasiness in expectation of the period of them, and he always hangs in doubt of his life. Yet since man's days are so full of trouble, it is well that they are few, that the soul's imprisonment in the body, and banishment from the Lord, are not perpetual, are not long. When we come to heaven, our days will be many, and perfectly free from trouble, and, in the mean time, faith, hope, and

love, balance the present grievances.

V. Of the sinfulness of human life, arising from the sinfulness of the human nature. So some understand that question; (v. 4.) Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? A clean performance from an unclean principle of the performance which is therefore called original sin, because it is the original of all our sins. This holy Job here laments, as all that are sanctified do, running up the streams to the fourtain [P. 1], 5.) and some think he intends it as a plea with God for compassion; "Lord, be not extreme to mark my sins of human frailty and infirmity, for thou knowest my weak-

paraphrase has an observable reading of this verse; Who can make a man clean, that is polluted with sin? Cannot one? that is, God. Or who but God, who is one, and will spare him? God, by his almighty grace, can change the skin of the Ethiopian, the skin of Job, though clothed with worms.

VI. Of the settled period of human life, v. 5. We are here assured, 1. That our life will come to an end; our days upon earth are not numberless, are not endless, no, they are numbered, and will soon be finished, Dan. v. 26. 2. That it is deter we shall live, and when we shall die. The number of our months is with God, at the disposal of his power which cannot be controlled, and under the view of his omniscience which cannot be deceived. It is certain that God's providence has the ordering of the period of our lives, our times are in his hand, the powers of nature depend upon him, and act under him; in him we live and move, diseases are his servants, he kills and makes alive, nothing comes to pass by chance, no not the execution done by a bow drawn at a venture; it is therefore certain that God's prescience has determined it before, for known unto God are all his works. Whatever he does, he determined, yet with a regard partly to the settled course of nature, (the end and the means are determined together,) and to the settled rules of moral government, punishing evil, and rewardthe Stoic's blind fate than by the Epicurean's blind fortune.

3. That the bounds God has fixed, we cannot pass, for his counsels are unalterable, his foresight being infallible.

These considerations Job here urges as reasons, (1.) Why God should not be so strict in taking cognizance of him, and of his slips, and failings; (v. 3.) "Since I have such a corrupt nature within, and am liable to so much trouble, which is a constant temptation from without, dost thou open thine eyes and fasten them upon such a one, extremely to mark what I do amiss? ch. xiii. 27. And dost thou bring me, such a worthless worm as I am, into judgment with thee who art so quick-sighted to discover the least failing, so holy to hate it, so just to condemn it, and so mighty to punish it?" The consideration of our own inability to contend with God, of our own sinfulness and weakness, should engage us to pray, Lord, enter not into judg-

ment with thu servant.

(2.) Why he should not be so severe in his dealings with him; "Lord, I have but a little time to live, I must certainly and shortly go hence, and the few days I have to spend here are, at the best, full of trouble. O let me have a little respite, v. 6. Turn from afflicting a poor creature thus, and let him rest a while; allow him some breathing time, until he shall accomplish, as a hireling, his day. It is appointed to me once to die, let that one day suffice me, and let me not thus be continually dying, dving a thousand deaths. Let it suffice that my life, at best, is as the day of a hireling, a day of toil and labour; I am content to accomplish that, and will make the best of the common hardships of human life, the burthen and heat of the day; but let me not feel those uncommon tortures, let not my life be as the day of a malefactor, all execution-day," Thus may we find some relief under great troubles by recommending ourselves to the compassion of that God who knows our frame, will consider it, and our being out of frame too.

streams to the fourthing (P.S. li. 5.) and some think he intends it as a plea with God for compassion: "Lord, be not extreme to mark my sins of human frailty and infirmity, for thou knowest my weakness; O remember that I am flesh." The Chaldee Though the root thereof wax old in the

earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; 9. Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. 10. But man dieth, and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? 11. As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up; 12. So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. 13. Oh that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! 14. If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. 15. Thon shalt call; and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands.

We have seen what Job has to say concerning life, let us now see what he has to say concerning death, which his thoughts were very much conversant with, now that he was sick and sore. It is not unseasonable, when we are in health, to think of dying; but it is an inexcusable incogitancy, if, when we are already taken into the custody of death's messengers, we look upon it as a thing at a distance. Job had already showed that death will come, and that its hour is already fixed. Now here he shows,

1. That death is a removal for ever out of this world. This he had spoken of before, (ch. vii. 9, 10.) and now he mentions it again: for though it be a truth that needs not be proved, yet it needs to be much considered, that it may be duly improved.

1. A man cut down by death, will not revive again, as a tree cut down will. What hope there is of a tree, he shows very elegantly, v. 7..9. If the body of the tree be cut down, and only the stem or stump left in the ground, though it seem dead and dry, yet it will shoot out young boughs again, as if it were but newly planted. The moisture of the earth and the rain of heaven are, as it were, scented and perceived by the stump of a tree, and they have an influence upon it to revive it: but the dead body of a man would not perceive them, nor be in the least affected by them. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, when his being deprived of the use of his reason was signified by the cutting down of a tree, his return to it again was signified by the leaving of the stump in the earth, with a band of iron and brass, to be wet with the dew of heaven. Dan, iv. 15. But man has no such prospect of a return to life. The vegetable life is a cheap and easy thing, the scent of water will recover it; the animal life, in some insects and fowls, is so, the heat of the sun retrieves it; but the rational soul, when once retired, is too great, too noble, a thing to be recalled by any of the powers of nature; it is out of the reach of sun or rain, and cannot be restored but by the immediate operations of Omnipotence itself; for, (v. 10.) Man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? Two words are here used for man. Geber, a mighty man, though mighty, dies; Adam, a man of the earth, because earthy, gives up the ghost. Note, Man is a dying creature; he is here described by what occurs, (1.) *Before* death; he wastes away, he is continually wasting, dying daily, spending upon the quick stock of life; sickness and old age are wasting things to the flesh, the strength, the beauty. (2.) In death; he gives up the ghost, the soul leaves was remembered in the ark, (Gen. viii. 1.) where Vol. III—K

the body, and returns to God who gave it, the Father of spirits. (3.) After death; Where is he? He is not where he was, his place knows him no more; but, Is he nowhere? So some read it. he is somewhere; and it is a very awful consideration to think where they are that have given up the ghost, and where we shall be, when we give it up. It is gone to the world of spirits, gone into eternity, gone to return no more to this world.

2. A man laid down in the grave will not rise up again, v. 11, 12. Every night, we lie down to sleep, and in the morning, we awake and rise again; but, at death, we must lie down in the grave, not to awake or rise again to such a world, such a state, as we are now in, never to awake or arise until the heavens, the faithful measures of time, shall be no more, and, consequently, time itself shall come to an end, and be swallowed up in eternity; so that the life of man may fitly be compared to the waters of a land-flood, which spread far and make a great show, but they are shallow, and, when they are cut off from the sea or river, the swelling and overflowing of which was the cause of them, they soon decay and dry up, and their place knows them no The waters of life are soon exhaled, and disappear; the body, like some of those waters, sinks and soaks into the earth, and is buried there; the soul, like others of them, is drawn upward, to mingle with the waters above the firmament. The learned Sir Richard Blackmore makes this also to be a dissimilitude; if the waters decay and be dried up in the summer, yet they will return again in the winter; but it is not so with the life of man. Take part of his paraphrase in his own words:

A flowing river, or a standing lake, May their dry banks and naked shores forsake; Their waters may exhale and upward move, Their channel leave to roll in clouds above; But the returning winter will restore But the summer they had lost before:
But if, O man, thy vital streams desert
Their purple channels, and defraud the heart,
With fresh recruits they ne'er will be supply'd,
Nor feel their leaping life's returning tide.

II. That yet there will be a return of man to life again in another world, at the end of time, when the heavens are no more. Then they shall awake, and be raised out of their sleep. The resurrection of the dead was, doubtless, an article of Job's creed, as appears, ch. xix. 26. and to that, it should seem, he has an eye here; where, in the belief of that, we have three things:

1. An humble petition for a hiding-place in the grave, v. 13. It was not only in a passionate weariness of this life, that he wished to die, but in a pious assurance of a better life, to which, at length, he should arise. O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave! The grave is not only a resting-place, but a hiding-place, to the people of God. God has the key of the grave, to let in now, and to let out at the resurrection. He hides men in the grave, as we hide our treasure in a place of secrecy and safety; and he who hides will find, and nothing shall be "O that thou wouldest hide me, not only from the storms and troubles of this life, but for the bliss and glory of a better life; let me lie in the grave, reserved for immortality, in secret from all the world, but not from thee, not from those eyes which saw my substance when first curicusly wrought in the lowest harts of the earth," Ps. cxxxix. 15, 16. There let me lie, (1) Until thy wrath be hast. As long as the bodies of the saints lie in the grave, so long they are some realities of that wrath which they were by he are children of, so long they are under some of the effects of sin; but when the body is raised it is wholly post death the last one. body is raised, it is wholly past; death, the last enemy, will then be totally destroyed. (2.) Until the set time comes for my being remembered, as Noah

God not only hid him from the destruction of the II old world, but reserved him for the reparation of a new world. The bodies of the saints shall not be forgotten in the grave; there is a time appointed, a time set, for their being inquired after. We cannot be sure that we shall look through the darkness of our present troubles, and see good days after them in this world; but if we can but get well to the grave, we may with an eye of faith look through the darkness of that, as Job here, and see better days on the other side it, in a better world.

2. A holy resolution patiently to attend the will of God both in his death and in his resurrection; (v. 14.) If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait until my change come. Job's friends proving miserable comforters, he set himself to be the more his own comforter; his case was now bad, but he pleases himself with the expectation of a change. I think it cannot be meant of his return to a prosperous condition in this world. His friends indeed flattered him with the hopes of that, but he himself all along despaired of it. Comforts founded upon uncertainties, at best. must needs be uncertain comforts; and therefore, no doubt, it is something more sure than that which he here bears up himself with the expectation of. The change he waits for must, therefore, be understood, either, (1.) Of the change of the resurrection, when the vile body shall be changed, (Phil. iii. 21.) and a great and glorious change it will be; and then that question, If a man die, shall he live again?
must be taken by way of admiration. "Strange!
Shall these dry bones live! If so, all the time appointed for the continuance of the separation between soul and body, my separate soul shall wait until that change comes, when it shall be united again to the body, and my flesh also shall rest in hope," Ps. xvi. 9. Or, (2.) Of the change at death. "If a man die, shall he live again? No, not such a life as he now lives; and therefore I will patiently wait until that change comes, which will put a period to my calamities, and not impatiently wish for the anticipation of it, as I have done." Observe here, [1.] That it is a serious thing to die, it is a work by itself. It is a change; there is a visible change in the body, its appearance altered, its actions brought to an end, but a greater change with the soul, which quits the body, and removes to the world of spirits, finishes its state of probation, and enters upon that of retribution. This change will come, and it will be a final change, not like the transmutations of the elements, which return to their former state. No, we must die, not thus to live again. It is but once to die, and that had need be well done that is to be done but once. An error here is fatal, conclusive, and not again to be rectified. [2.] That therefore it is the duty of every one of us to wait for that change, and to continue waiting all the days of our appointed time. time of life is an appointed time; that time is to be reckoned by days, and those days are to be spent in waiting for our change. That is, First, We must expect that it will come, and think much of it. Secondly, We must desire that it would come, as those that long to be with Christ. Thirdly, We must be willing to tarry until it does come, as those that believe God's time to be the best. Fourthly,

We must give diligent to get ready against it comes, that it may be obesse ichange to us.

3. A joyful experiment of bis and satisfaction in this; (v. 15.) The total and all, and I will another the company of the com 3. A joyful expertation this; (v. 15.) The taswer thee. November or such a cloud, that he could not, he decomforted himself with this, that he could not, he d there would come a time when God would call, and he should answer; then, that is, (1.) At the resurpeople, but he is not severe in reckoning with us, rection; "Thou shalt call me out of the grave, by nor is the law ever stretched against us, but we are

the voice of the archangel, and I will answer, and come at the call." The body is the work of God's hands, and he will have a desire to that, having prepared a glory for it. Or, (2.) At death; "Thou shalt call my body to the grave, and my soul to thyself, and I will answer, Ready, Lord, ready, coming, coming; here I am." Gracious souls can cheerfully answer death's summons, and appear to his writ. Their spirits are not forcibly required from them, (as Luke xii. 20.) but willingly resigned by them, and the earthly tabernacle not violently pulled down, but voluntarily laid down; with this assurance, "Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands; thou hast mercy in store for me, not only as made by thy providence, but new-made by thy grace; otherwise he that made them will not save them. Note, Grace in the soul is the work of God's own hands, and therefore he will not forsake it in this world, (Ps. cxxxviii. 8.) but will have a desire to it, to perfect it in the other, and to crown it with endless glory.

For now thou numberest my steps, dost thou not watch over my sin? 17. My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and thou sewest up mine iniquity. 18. And surely the mountain falling cometh to nought, and the rock is removed out of his place. The waters wear the stones: thou washest. away the things which grow out of the dust of the earth; and thou destroyest the hope of man. 20. Thou prevailest for ever against him; and he passeth: thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away. His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them. 22. But his flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn.

Job here returns to his complaints; and though he is not without hope of future bliss, he finds it very

hard to get over his present grievances.

I. He complains of the particular hardships he apprehended himself under from the strictness of God's justice, v. 16, 17. Therefore he longed to go hence to that world where God's wrath will be past, because now he was under the continual tokens of it, as a child, under the severe discipline of the rod, longs to be of age. "When shall my change come? For now thou seemest to me to number my steps, and watch over my sin, and seal it up in a bag, as bills of indictment are kept safe, to be produced against the prisoner." See Deut. xxxii. 34. "Thou takest all advantages against me, old scores are called over, every infirmity is animadverted upon, and no sooner is a false step taken, than I am beaten for it." Now, 1. Job does right to the divine justice, in owning that he smart-ed for his sins and transgressions, that he had done enough to deserve all that was laid upon him; for there was sin in all his steps, and he was guilty of transgression enough to bring all this ruin upon him, if it were strictly inquired into: he is far from saying that he perishes being innocent. But, 2. He does wrong to the divine goodness, in suggesting that God was extreme to mark what he did amiss, and made the worst of every thing: he spake to this purport, ch. xiii. 27. It was unadvisedly said, and therefore we will not dwell too much upon it. Ged does indeed see all our sins, he sees sin in his own punished less than our iniquities deserve. does indeed seal and sow up, against the day of wrath, the transgression of the impenitent, but the

sins of his people he blots out as a cloud.

II. He complains of the wasting condition of man-kind in general: we live in a dying world; who knows the power of God's anger, by which we are consumed and troubled, and in which all our days are fiassed away? See Ps. xc. 7...9, 11. And who can bear up against his rebukes? Ps. xxxix. 11.

1. We see the decays of the earth itself. (1.) Of the strongest parts of it, v. 18. Nothing will last always, for we see even mountains moulder and come to nought, they wither and fall as a leaf, rocks wax old and pass away by the continual beating of the sea against them. The waters wear the stones with constant dropping, non vi, sed sape cadendonot by the violence, but by the constancy, with which they fall. On this earth every thing is the worse for the wearing; Tempas edax rerum—Time de-vours all things. It is not so with the heavenly bodies. (2.) Of the natural products of it: the things which grow out of the earth, and seem to be firmly rooted in it, are sometimes, by an excess of rain, washed away, v. 19. Some think he pleads this for relief: "Lord, my patience will not hold out always, even rocks and mountains will fail at last; therefore cease the controversy."

2. No marvel, then, if we see the decays of man upon the earth, for he is of the earth, earthy. Job begins to think his case is not singular, and therefore he ought to reconcile himself to the common lot.

We perceive by many instances,

(1.) How vain it is to expect much from the enjoyments of life; "Thou destroyest the hope of man," that is, "puttest an end to all the projects he had framed, and all the prospects of satisfaction he had flattered himself with." Death will be the destruction of all those hopes which are built upon worldly confidences, and confined to worldly comforts. Hope in Christ, and hope in heaven, death will consummate, and not destroy.

(2.) How vain it is to struggle against the assaults of death; (v. 20.) Thou firevailest for ever against him. Note, [1.] Man is an unequal match for God; whom God contends with, he will certainly prevail against, prevail for ever against, so that they shall never be able to make head again. [2.] The stroke of death is irresistible; it is to no purpose to dispute its summons; God prevails against man, and he passes away, and, lo, he is not. Look

upon a dying man, and see,

First, How his looks are altered. Thou changest his countenance, two ways. 1. By the disease of his body. When a man has been a few days sick, what a change is there in his countenance! How much more when he has been a few minutes dead! The countenance which was majestic and awful, becomes mean and despicable; that which was lovely and amiable, becomes ghastly and frightful: Bury my dead out of my sight. Where then is the admired beauty? Death changes the countenance, and then sends us away out of this world, gives us one dismission hence, never to return. 2. By the discomposure of his mind. Note, The approach of death will make the strongest and stoutest to change countenance; it will make the most merry smiling countenance to look grave and serious, and the most bold daring countenance to look pale and

Secondly, How little he is concerned in the affairs of his family, which once lay so near his heart. When he is in the hands of the harbingers of death, suppose struck with a palsy or apoplexy, or delirious in a fever, or in conflict with death, tell him then the most agreeable, news, or the most painful, con-

God \parallel he perceives it not, v. 21. He is going to that world where he will be a perfect stranger to all those things which here filled and affected him. The consideration of this should moderate our cares concerning our children and families. God will know what comes of them when we are gone, to him therefore let us commit them, with him let us leave them, and not burthen ourselves with needless, fruitless, cares concerning them.

Thirdly, How dreadful the agonies of death are; (v. 22.) While his flesh is upon him, (so it may be read,) that is, the body he is so loath to lay down, it shall have pain; and while his soul is within him, that is, the spirit he is so loath to resign, it shall mourn. Note, Dying work is hard work; dying pangs are, commonly, sore pangs. It is folly, therefore, for men to defer their repentance to a deathbed, and to have that to de, which is the one thing needful, when they are really unfit to do any thing: but it is true wisdom, by making our peace with God in Christ, and keeping a good conscience, to treasure up comforts which will support and relieve us against the pains and sorrows of a dying hour.

CHAP. XV.

Perhaps Job was so clear, and so well satisfied, in the goodness of his own cause, that he thought if he had not convinced, yet he had, at least, silenced, all his three friends; but, it seems, he had not; in this chapter, they begin a second attack upon him, each of them charging him afresh, with as much vehemence as before. It is natural to us to be found of our own sentiments, and therefore to afresh, with as much vehemence as before. It is natural to us to be fond of our own sentiments, and therefore to be firm to them, and with difficulty to be brought to recede from them. Eliphaz here keeps close to the principles upon which he had condemned Job, and, I. He reproves him for justifying himself, and fathers on him many evil things which are unfairly inferred from thence, v. 2.·13. II. He persuades him to humble himself before God, and to take shame to himself, v. 14.·16. III. He reads him a long lecture concerning the woeful estate of wicked people, who harden their hearts against God and the judgments which are prepared for them, v. God and the judgments which are prepared for them, v. 17..35. A good use may be made both of his reproofs, (for they are plain,) and of his doctrine, (for it is sound,) though both the one and the other are misapplied to Job.

1. THEN answered Eliphaz the Temanite, and said, 2. Should a wise man utter vain knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind? 3. Should he reason with unprofitable talk? or with speeches wherewith he can do no good? thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God. 5. For thy mouth uttereth thine iniquity, and thou choosest the tongue of the crafty. 6. Thine own mouth con demneth thee, and not I; yea, thine own lips testify against thee. 7. Art thou the first man that was born? or wast thou made before the hills? 8. Hast thou heard the secret of God? and dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself? 9. What knowest thou, that we know not? what understandest thou, which is not in us? 10. With us are both the gray-headed and very aged men, much elder than the father. 11. Are the consolations of God small with thee? is there any secret thing with hee? 12. Why doth thy heart carry thee away? and what do thine eyes wink at, 13. That thou turnest thy spirit against God, and lettest cerning his children, it is all alike, he knows it not, | such words go out of thy mouth? 14. What

28 man, that he should be clean? and he be uttered, but they restrain it, and, in both, baffle which is born of a woman, that he should their convictions. Those who either omit prayer, which is born of a woman, that he should 15. Behold, he putteth no be righteous? trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight: 16. How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?

Eliphaz here falls very foul upon Job, because he contradicted what he and his colleagues had said, and did not acquiesce in it, and appliaud it, as they expected. Proud people are apt thus to take it very much amiss, if they may not have leave to dictate and give law to all about them, and to censure those as ignorant and obstinate, and all that is naught, who cannot, in every thing, say as they say.

Several great crimes Eliphaz here charges Job with, only because he would not own himself a

hypocrite.

I. He charges him with folly and absurdity; (v. 2, 3.) That whereas he had been reputed a wise man, he had now quite forfeited his reputation; any one would say that his wisdom was departed from him, he talked so extravagantly, and so little to the purpose. Bildad began thus, (ch. viii. 2.) and Zophar, ch. xi. 2, 3. It is common for angry disputants thus to represent one another's reasonings as impertinent and ridiculous, more than there is cause, forgetting the doom of him that calls his brother Raca, and Thou Fool. It is true, 1. That there is in the world a great deal of vain knowledge, science falsely so called, that is useless, and therefore worthless. 2. That this is the knowledge that puffs up, with which men swell in a fond conceit of their own accomplishments.

3. That whatever vain knowledge a man may have in his head, if he would be thought a wise man, he must not utter it, but let it die with himself, as it deserves. profitable talk is evil talk: we must give an account, in the great day, not only for wicked words, but for idle words. Speeches, therefore, which do no good, which do no service either to God or our neighbour, or no justice to ourselves, which are no way to the use of edifying, were better unspoken. words which are as wind, light and empty, especially which are as the east wind, hurtful and pernicious, it will be wrong to fill either ourselves or others with, for they will pass very ill in the ac-count. 5. Vain knowledge and unprofitable talk ought to be reproved and checked, especially in a wise man, whom it worst becomes, and who does most hurt by the bad example of it.

II. He charges him with impiety and irreligion; (v. 4.) "Thou castest off fear," that is, "the fear of God, and that regard to him which thou shouldest have; and then thou restrainest prayer." See what religion is summed up in-fearing God, and praying to him; the former the most needful principle, the latter the most needful practice. Where no fear of God is, no good is to be expected; and those who live without prayer, certainly live without God in the world. Those who restrain prayer, prove that they cast off fear. Surely those have no reverence of God's majesty, no dread of his wrath, and are in no care about their souls and eternity, who make no applications to God for his grace. Those who no applications to God for his grace. are prayerless, are fearless and graceless. When the fear of God is cast of all sin is let in, and a door open to all manner of profaneness. It is espe-cially bad with these who have had some fear of God, but have now cast it off, have been frequent in prayer, but now restrain it. How are they fallen! How is their first love lost! It denotes a kind of force put upon themselves. The fear of God would cleave to them, but they throw it off; prayer would || courses; (v. 6.) Thine own mouth condemns thee,

or straiten and abridge themselves in it, quenching the spirit of adoption, and denying themselves the liberty they might take in the duty, restrain prayer: this is bad enough, but it is worse to restrain others from prayer, to prohibit and discourage prayer, as Darius, Dan. vi. 7.

Now Eliphaz charges this upon Job, either, 1. As that which was his own practice. He thought that Job talked of God with such liberty as if he had been his equal, and that he charged him se vehemently with hard usage of him, and challenged him so often to a fair trial, that he had quite thrown off all religious regard to him. This charge was utterly false, and yet wanted not some colour. We ought not only to take care that we keep up prayer and the fear of God, but that we never drop any unwary expressions, which may give occasion to those who seek occasion to question our sincerity and constancy in religion. Or, 2. As that which others would infer from the doctrine he maintained. "If this be true," (thinks Eliphaz,) "which Job says, that a man may be thus sorely afflicted, and yet be a good man, then farewell all religion, farewell prayer and the fear of God. If all things come alike to all, and the best men may have the worst treatment in this world, every one will be ready to say, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it to keeft his ordinances? (Mal. iii. 14.) Verily 14.) Who will be honest, if the tabernacles of robbers prosper? (ch. xii. 6.) If there be no forgiveness with God, (ch. xii. 6.) If there be no forgiveness with God, (ch. xii. 21.) who will fear him? (Ps. exxx. 4.) If he laugh at the trial of the innocest (ch. ii. 22.) if he had at the trial of the innocest. cent, (ch. ix. 23.) if he be so difficult of access, (ch. ix. 32.) who will pray to him?" Note, It is a piece of injustice, which even wise and good men are too often guilty of, in the heat of disputation, to charge upon their adversaries those consequences of their opinions, which are not fairly drawn from them, and which really they abhor. This is not doing as we would be done by

Upon this strained invendo Eliphaz grounds that high charge of impiety; (v. 5.) Thy mouth utters thine iniquity, teaches it, so the word is. "Thou teachest others to have the same hard thoughts of God and religion that thou thyself hast." It is bad to break even the least of the commandments, but worse to teach men so, Matth. v. 19. If we ever thought evil, let us lay our hand upon our mouth to suppress the evil thought, (Prov. xxx. 32.) and let us by no means utter it, that is putting an imprimatur to it, publishing it with allowance, to the dishonour of God, and the damage of others. Observe, When men have cast off fear and prayer, their mouths utter iniquity. They that cease to do good, mouths utter iniquity. They that cease to do good, soon learn to do evil. What can we expect but all manner of iniquity from those that arm not themselves with the grace of God against it? But, thou choosest the tongue of the crafty, that is, "Theu utterest thine iniquity with some show and pretence of picty, mixing some good words with the bad, as tradesmen do with their wares to help them off." The mouth of iniquity could not do so much mis chief as it does, without the tongue of the crafty The serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilt, Rom. xvi. 18. The tongue of the crafty speaks with design and deliberation; and therefore they that use it may be said to choose it, as that which will serve their purpose better than the tongue of the upright: but it will be found, at last, that ho nesty is the best policy.

Eliphaz, in his first discourse, had proceeded against Job upon mere surmise; (ch. iv. 6, 7.) but now he has got proof against him from his own dis-

and not I. But he should have considered that he | and his fellows had provoked him to say that which now they took advantage of, and that was not fair. Those are most effectually condemned, that are condemned by themselves, Tit. iii. 11. Luke xix. 22. Many a man needs no more to sink

him, than for his own tongue to fall upon him. III. He charges him with intolerable arrogancy and self-conceitedness. It was a just, and reasonable, and modest, demand that Job had made; (ch. xii. 3.) Allow that I have understanding as well as you; but see how they seek occasion against him; that is misconstrued, as if he pretended to be wiser than any man. Because he will not grant to them, they will have it thought that he claims to himself, the monopoly of wisdom, v. 7..9. As if he thought he had the advantage of all mankind, 1. In length of acquaintance with the world, which furnishes men with so much the more experience; "Art thou the first man that was born, and, consequently, senior to us, and better able to give the sense of antiquity, and the judgment of the first and earliest, the wisest and purest, ages? Art thou prior to Adam?" (So it may be read.) "Did not he suffer for sin; and yet wilt not thou, who art so great a suf-ferer, own thyself a sinner? Wast thou made before the hills, as Wisdom herself was? (Prov. viii. 23, &c.) Must God's counsels, which are as the great mountains, (Ps. xxxvi. 6.) and immoveable as the everlasting hills, be subject to thy notions, and bow to them? Dost thou know more of the world than any of us do? No, thou art but of yesterday, even as we are," ch. vii. 9. Or, 2. In intimacy of acquaintance with God; (v. 8.) "Hast thou heard the secret of God? Dost thou pretend to be of the cabinet-council of Heaven, that thou canst give better reasons than others can for God's proceedings?" There are secret things of God, which belong not to us, and which, therefore, we must not pretend to account for: those are daringly presumptuous who do. He also represents him, (1.) As assuming to himself such knowledge as none else had; "Dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself, as if none were wise besides?" Job had said, (ch. xiii. 2.) What ye know, the same do I know also; and now they return upon him, according to the usage of eager disputants, who think they have a privilege to commend themselves; What knowest thou that we know not? How natural are such replies as these, in the heat of argument! But how simple do they look afterward, upon the review! (2.) As opposing the stream of antiquity, a venerable name, under the shade of which all contending parties strive to shelter themselves; "With us are the gray-headed, and very aged men, v. 10. We have the fathers on our side; all the ancient doctors of the church are of our opinion." A thing soon said, but not so soon proved; and, when proved, truth is not so soon discovered and proved by it, as most people imagine. David preferred right scripture-knowledge before that of antiquity; (Ps. cxix. 100.) I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts. Or perhaps one or more, if not all three, of these friends of Job, were elder than he, (ch. xxxii. 6.) and therefore they thought he was bound to acknowledge them to be in the right. This also serves contenders to make a noise with, to very little purpose. If they are elder than their adversaries, and can say they knew such a thing before they were born, it will serve to make them arrogant and overbearing; whereas the eldest are not always the wisest, ch. xxxii. 9.

IV. He charges him with a contempt of the counsels and comforts that were given him by his friends; (v. 11.) Are the consolations of God small with thee? 1. Eliphaz takes it ill that Job did not value the comforts, which he and his friends admi- | be righteous? Note, 1. Righteousness is cleanness;

nistered to him, more than it seems he did, and did not welcome every word they said as true and important. It is true, they had said some very good things, but, in their application to Job, they were miserable comforters. Note, We are apt to think that great and considerable, which we ourselves say, when others perhaps, with good reason, think it small and trifling. Paul found that those who seemed to be somewhat, yet, in conference, added nothing to him, Gal. ii. 6. 2. He represents this as a slight put upon divine consolations in general, as if they were of small account with him, whereas really they were not: if he had not highly valued them, he could not have borne up as he did under his sufferings. Note, (1.) The consolations of God are not in themselves small. Divine comforts are great things, that is, the comfort which is from God, especially the comfort which is in God. (2.) The consolations of God not being small in themselves, it is very bad if they be small with us. is a great affront to God, and an evidence of a degenerate, aepraved, mind, to disesteem and undervalue spiritual delights, and despise the pleasant land. "What!" (says Eliphaz,) "is there any secret thing with thee? Hast thou some cordial to support thyself with, that is a Proprium, an Arcanum, that no body else can pretend to, or knows any thing of?" Or, "Is there some secret sin harboured and indulged in thy bosom, which hinders the operation of divine comforts?" None disesteem divine comforts but those that secretly affect the world and the flesh.

V. He charges him with opposition to God himself, and to religion; (v. 12, 13.) "Why doth thine heart carry thee away into such indecent, irreli-gious, expressions?" Note, Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, Jam. i. 14. If we fly off from God and our duty, or fly out into any thing amiss, it is our own heart that carries us away. If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it. There is a violence, an ungovernable impetus, in the turnings of the soul; the corrupt heart carries men away, as it were, by force, against their convictions. "What is it that thine eyes wink at? Why so careless and mindless of what is said to thee, hearing it as if thou wert half asleep? Why so scornful, disdaining what we say, as if it were below thee to take notice of it? What have we said, that deserves to be thus slighted? Nay, that thou turnest thy spirit against God?" It was bad that his heart was carried away from God, but much worse that it was turned against God. But they that forsake God will soon break out in open enmity to him. But how did this appear? "Theu lettest such words go out of thy mouth, reflecting on God, and his justice and goodness." It is the character of the wicked, that they set their mouth against the heavens, (Ps. lxxiii. 9.) which is a certain indication that the spirit is turned against God. He thought Job's spirit was soured against God, and so turned from what it had been, and exasperated at his dealings with him. Eliphaz wanted candour and charity, else he would not have put such a harsh construction upon the speeches of one that had such a settled reputation for piety, and was now in temptation. This was, in effect to give the cause on Satan's side, and to own that Job had done as Satan said he would, had cursed God to his

VI. He charges him with justifying himself to that degree as even to deny his share in the common corruption and pollution of the human nature. What is man, that he should be clean? that is, that he should pretend to be so, or that any should expect to find him so. What is he, that is born of a woman, a sinful woman, that he should it makes us acceptable to God, and easy to ourselves, Ps. xviii. 24. 2. Man, in his fallen state, cannot pretend to be clean and righteous before God, either to acquit himself to God's justice, or recommend himself to his favour. 3. He is therefore to be adjudged unclean and unrighteous, because born of a woman, from whom he derives a corrupt nature, which is both his guilt and his pol-lution. With these plain truths Eliphaz thinks to convince Job, whereas he had just now said the same; (ch. xiv. 4.) Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? But does it therefore follow that Job is a hypocrite, and a wicked man, which is all that he denied? By no means. Though man, as born of a woman, is not clean, yet, as born again of the Spirit, he is.

Further to evince this, he here shows,

(1.) That the brightest creatures are imperfect and impure before God, v. 15. God places no confidence in saints and angels; he employs both, but trusts neither with his service, without giving them fresh supplies of strength and wisdom for it, as knowing they are not sufficient of themselves, neither more nor better than his grace makes them. He takes no complacency in the heavens them-selves. How pure soever they seem to us, in his eye they have many a speck and many a flaw; The heavens are not clean in his sight. If the stars (says Mr. Caryl) have no light in the sight of the sun, what light has the sun in the sight of God? See Isa. xxiv. 23.

(2.) That man is much more so; (v. 16.) How much more abominable and filthy is man! If saints are not to be trusted, much less sinners. If the heavens are not pure, which are as God made them, much less man, who is degenerated. Nay, he is abominable and filthy in the sight of God, and, if ever he repent, he is so in his own sight, and therefore he abhors himself. Sin is an odious thing, it makes men hateful. The body of sin is so, and is therefore called a dead body, a loathsome thing. Such is the filthiness of man, that he drinks iniquity (that abominable thing which the Lord hates) as greedily, and with as much pleasure, as a man drinks water when he is thirsty. It is his constant drink; it is natural to sinners to commit iniquity. It gratifies, but does not satisfy, the appetites of the old man. It is like water to a man in a dropsy. The more men sin, the more they would sin.

17. I will show thee, hear me; and that which I have seen I will declare; 18. Which wise men have told from their fathers, and have not hid it: 19. Unto whom alone the earth was given, and no stranger passed among them. 20. The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days, and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor. 21. A dreadful sound is in his ears: in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him. 22. He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness, and he is waited for of the sword. 23. He wandereth abroad for bread, saying, Where is it? he knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand. 24. Trouble and anguish shall make him afraid; they shall prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle. For he stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty. 26. He runneth upon him, even

on his neck, upon the thick bosses of his bucklers: 27. Because he covereth his face with his fatness, and maketh collops of fat on his flanks. 28. And he dwelleth in desolate cities, and in houses which no man inhabiteth, which are ready to become heaps. 29. He shall not be rich, neither shall his substance continue, neither shall he prolong the perfection thereof upon the earth. 30. He shall not depart out of darkness: the flame shall dry up his branches, and by the breath of his mouth shall he go away. 31. Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity; for vanity shall be his recompense. 32. It shall be accomplished before his time, and his branch shall not be green. 33. He shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine, and shall cast off his flower as the olive. 34. For the congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery. 35. They conceive mischief, and bring forth vanity, and their belly prepareth deceit.

Eliphaz, having reproved Job for his answers, here comes to maintain his own thesis, upon which he built his censure of Job. His opinion is, That those who are wicked are certainly miserable; whence he would infer, that those who are miserable are certainly wicked, and that therefore Job

was so. Observe,
I. His solemn preface to this discourse, in which
he bespeaks Job's attention, which he had little reason to expect, he having given so little heed to, and put so little value upon, what Job had said; (v. 17.) "I will show thee that which is worth hearing, and not reason, as thou dost, with unpro-fitable talk." Thus apt are men, when they condemn the reasonings of others, to commend their own. He promises to teach him, 1. From his own experience and observation; "That which I have myself seen in divers instances, I will declare." It is of good use to take notice of the providences of God concerning the children of men, from which many a good lesson may be learned. What good observations we have made, and have found benefit by ourselves, we should be ready to communicate for the benefit of others: and we may then speak boldly, when we declare what we have seen. 2. From the wisdom of the ancients, (v. 18.) which wise men have told from their fathers. Note, The wisdom and learning of the moderns are very much derived from that of the ancients. Good children will learn a good deal from their good parents: and what we have learned from our ancestors we must transmit to our posterity, and not hide from the generations to come. See Ps. lxxviii. 3..6. If the thread of the knowledge of many ages be cut off by the carelessness of one, and nothing be done to pre serve it pure and entire, all that succeed, fare the worse. The authorities Eliphaz vouched, were authorities indeed, men of rank and figure, (v. 19.)unto whom alone the earth was given, and therefore you may suppose them favourites of Heaven, and best capable of making observations concerning the affairs of this earth. The dictates of wisdom come with advantage from those who are in places wisdom which none of the princes of this world knew, 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8.

II. The discourse itself. He here aims to show

1. That those who are wise and good do ordinarily prosper in this world. This he only hints at, v. 19. That those of whose mind he was, were such as had the earth given to them, and to them only; they enjoyed it entirely and peaceably, and no stranger passed among them, either to share with them, or to give disturbance to them. Job had said, The earth is given into the hand of the wicked, ch. ix. 24. "No," says Eliphaz, "it is given into the hands of the saints, and runs along with the faith committed unto them. And they are not robbed and plundered by strangers and enemies making inroads upon them, as thou art by the Sabeans and Chaldeans." But because many of God's people have remarkably prospered in this world, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it does not therefore follow, that those who are crossed and impoverished, as

Job, are not God's people.
2. That wicked people, and particularly oppressors, and tyrannizing rulers, are subject to continual terrors, live very uncomfortably, and perish very miserably. On this head he enlarges, showing that even they who impiously dare God's judgments, yet cannot but dread them, and will feel them at last. He speaks in the singular number, the wicked man, meaning, as some think, Nimrod, or perhaps Che-dorlaomer, or some such mighty hunter before the Lord. I fear he meant Job himself, whom he expressly charges both with the tyranny, and with the timorousness, here described, ch. xxii. 9, 10. Here he thinks the application easy, and that Job might, in this description, as in a glass, see his own face. Now,

(1.) Let us see how he describes the sinner who lives thus miserably. He does not begin with that, but brings it in as a reason of his doom, v. 25.28. It is no ordinary sinner, but one of the first rate, an oppressor, (v. 20.) a blasphemer, and a persecutor,

one that neither fears God, nor regards man.

[1.] He bids defiance to God, and to his authority and power, v. 25. Tell him of the divine law, and its obligations; he breaks those bonds asunder, and will not have, no not him that made him, to restrain him or rule over him. Tell him of the divine wrath, and its terrors; he bids the Almighty do his worst, he will have his will, he will have his way, in spite of him, and will not be controlled by law, or conscience, or the notices of a judgment to come. He stretches out his hand against God, in defiance of him, and of the power of his wrath. God is indeed out of his reach, but he stretches out his hand against him, to show, that, if it were in his power,

he would ungod him.

This applies to the audacious impiety of some sinners, who are really haters of God, (Rom. i. 30.) and whose carnal mind is not only an enemy to him, but enmity itself, Rom. viii. 7. But, alas! the sinner's malice is as impotent as it is impudent; what can he do? He strengthens himself (he would be valiant, so some read it) against the Almighty; he thinks with his exorbitant despotic power to change times and laws, (Dan. vii. 25.) and, in spite of Providence, to carry the day for rapine and wrong, clear of the check of conscience. Note, It is the prodigious madness of presumptuous sinners, that they enter the lists with Omnipotence. Woe unto him that strives with his Maker. That is generally taken for a further description of the sinner's daring presumption; (v. 26.) He rans upon him, upon God himself, in a direct opposition to him, to his precepts and providences, even upon his neck, as a desperate combatant, wher he finds himself an unequal match for his adversary, flies in his face, though, at the same time, he falls on his sword's point, or the sharp spike of his buckler. Sinners, in general, run from God; but the presumptuous sinfights against him, and bids defiance to him; and it is easy to foretell what will be the issue.

2.] He wraps himself up in security and sensuality; (v. 27.) He covers his face with his futness. This signifies both the pampering of his flesh with daily delicious fare, and the hardening of his heart thereby against the judgments of God. gratifying of the appetites of the body, feeding and feasting that to the full, often turns to the damage of the soul and its interests. Why is God forgotten and slighted, but because the belly is made a god of, and happiness placed in the delights of sense? They that fill themselves with wine and strong drink, abandon all that is serious, and flatter themselves with hopes that to-morrow shall be as this day, Isa. lvi. 12. Woe to them that are thus at ease in Zion, Amos vi. 1, 3, 4. Luke xii. 19. The fat that covers his face, makes him look bold and haughty. and that which covers his flanks, makes him lie easy and soft, and feel little; but this will prove poor shelter against the darts of God's wrath.

[3.] He enriches himself with the spoils of all about him, v. 28. He dwells in cities which he himself has made desolate by expelling the inhabitants out of them, that he might be placed alone in them, Isa. v. 8. Proud and cruel men take a strange pleasure in ruins, when they are of their own making; in destroying cities, (Ps. ix. 6.) and triumphing in the destruction, since they cannot make them their own, but by making them ready to become heaps, and frightening the inhabitants out of them. Note, Those that aim to engross the world to themselves, and grasp at all, lose the comfort of all, and make themselves miserable in the midst of all. How does this tyrant gain his point, and make himself master of cities that have all the marks of antiquity upon them? We are told, (v. 35.) he does it by malice and falsehood, the two chief ingredients of his wickedness, who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning; they conceive mischief, and then they effect it by preparing deceit, pretending to protect those whom they design to subdue, and making leagues of peace, the more effectually to carry on the operations of war. From such wicked men God deliver all good men.

(2.) Let us see now what is the miserable condition of this wicked man, both in spiritual and tem-

poral judgments.
[1.] His inward peace is continually disturbed. He seems to those about him to be easy, who, therefore, envy him, and wish themselves in his condition, but He who knows what is in men, tells us that a wicked man has so little comfort and satisfaction in his own breast, that he is rather to be pitied than envied.

First, His own conscience accuses him, and, with the pangs and throes of that, he travaileth in hain all his days, v. 20. He is continually uneasy at the thought of the cruelties he has been guilty of, and the blood in which he has imbued his hands; his sins stare him in the face at every turn. Diri conscia facti mens habet attonitos—Conscious guilt astonishes and confounds.

Secondly, He is vexed at the uncertainty of the continuance of his wealth and power; the number of years is hidden to the oppressor. He knows, whatever he pretends, that it will not last always, and has reason to fear that it will not last long, and

this he frets at.

Thirdly, He is under a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation, (Heb. x. 27.) which puts him into, and keeps him in, a continual terror and consternation, so that he dwells with Cain in the land of Nod, or commotion, (Gen. iv. 16.) and is made like Pashur, Magor-missabib—A terror round about, Jer. xx. 3, 4. A dreadful sound ner, who sins with a high hand, runs upon him, is in his ears, v. 21. He knows that both Heaven

and earth are incensed against him, that God is | angry with him, and that all the world hates him; he has done nothing to make his peace with either, and therefore he thinks that every one who meets him will slay him, Gen. iv. 14. Or, like a man absconding for debt, who thinks every man a bailiff. Fear came in, at first, with sin, (Gen. iii. 10.) and still attends it. Even in prosperity, he is apprehensive that the destroyer will come upon him, either some destroying angel sent of God to avenge his quarrel, or some of his injured subjects who will be their own avengers. Those who are the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, usually go down slain to the hit, (Ezek. xxxii. 25.) the expectation of which makes them a terror to them-This is further set forth, v. 22. that he is, m his own apprehension, waited for of the sword; for he knows that he who killeth with the sword, must be killed with the sword, Rev. xiii. 10. A guilty conscience represents to the sinner a flaming sword turning every way, (Gen. iii. 24.) and himself inevitably running on it. Again, (v. 23.) He knows that the day of darkness, (or the night of darkness rather) is ready at his hand, that it is appointed to him, and cannot be put by, that it is hastening on apace, and cannot be put off. This day of darkness is something beyond death; it is that day of the Lord which, to all wicked people, will be darkness and not light, and in which they will be doomed to utter, endless, darkness. Note, Some wicked people, though they seem secure, have already received the sentence of death, eternal death, within themselves, and plainly see hell gaping for them. No marvel that it follows, (v. 24.) Trouble and anguish (that inward tribulation and anguish of soul spoken of, Rom. ii. 8, 9. which is the effect of God's indignation and wrath fastening upon the conscience) shall make him afraid of worse to come. What is the hell before him, if this be the hell with*in* him? And though he would fain shake off his fears, drink them away, and jest them away, it will not do; they shall prevail against him, and overpower him, as a king ready to the battle, with forces too strong to be resisted. He that would keep his peace, let him keep a good conscience.

Fourthly, If at any time he be in trouble, he despairs of getting out; (v. 22.) He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness, but he gives himself up for gone and lost in an endless night. Good men expect light at evening time, light out of darkness; but what reason have they to expect that they shall return out of the darkness of trouble, who would not return from the darkness of sin, but went on in it? Ps. lxxxii. 5. It is the misery of damned sinners, that they know they shall never return out of that utter darkness, nor pass the gulf there fixed.

Fifthlu, He perplexes himself with continual care, especially if Providence ever so little frown upon him, v. 23. Such a dread he has of poverty, and such a waste does he discern upon his estate, that he is already, in his own imagination, wandering abroad for bread, going a-begging for a meal's meat, and saying, Where is it? The rich man, in his abundance, cried out, What shall I do? Luke xii. 17. Perhaps he pretends fear of wanting, as an excuse of his covetous practices; justly may he be brought to this extremity at last. We read of those who were full, but have hired out themselves for bread, (1 Sum. ii. 5.) which this sinner will not do; he cannot dig, he is too fat, (v. 27.) but to beg he may well be ashamed. See Ps. cix. 10. David never saw the righteous so far forsaken as to beg their bread, for, verily, they shall be fed by the charitable, unasked, Ps. xxxvii. 3, 25. But the wicked want it, and cannot expect it should be readily given them. How should they find mercy, who never showed mercy?

[2.] His outward prosperity will soon come to an end, and all his confidence, and all his comfort, will come to an end with it. How can he prosper, when God runs upon him? So some understand that, v. 26. Whom God runs upon, he will certainly run down; for when he judges, he will overcome. See how the judgments of God cross this worldly wicked man in all his cares, desires, and projects, and so complete his misery.

First, He is in care to get, but he shall not be rich, v. 29. His own covetous mind keeps him from being truly rich. He is not rich, that has not enough; and he has not enough, that does not think he has. It is contentment only that is great gain. Providence remarkably keeps some from being rich, defeating their enterprises, breaking their measures, and keeping them always behind-hand. Many that get much by fraud and injustice, yet do not grow rich; it goes as it comes, it is got by one sin, and

spent upon another. Secondly, He is in care to keep what he has got but in vain, his substance shall not continue; it will dwindle and come to nothing, God blasts it, and what came up in a night, perishes in a night. Wealth, gotten by vanity, will certainly be diminished. Some have themselves lived to see the ruin of those estates which have been raised by oppression; it goes, however, with a curse to those who succeed. De male quæsitis vix gaudet tertius hæres—Ill-gotten property will scarcely be enjoyed by the third generation. He purchases estates to him and his heirs for ever; but to what purpose? He shall not prolong the perfection thereof upon the earth; neither the credit nor the comfort of his riches shall be prolonged; and, when those are gone, where is the perfection of them? How indeed can we expect the perfection of any thing to be prolonged upon the earth, where every thing is transitory, and we soon see the end of all perfection?

Thirdly, He is in care to leave what he has got and kept, to his children after him; but in this he is crossed, the branches of his family shall perish, in whom he hoped to have lived and flourished, and to have had the reputation of making them all great men. They shall not be green, v. 32. The flame shall dry them up, v. 30. He shall shake them off as blossoms that never knit, or as the unripe grape, v. 33. They shall die in the beginning of their days, and never come to maturity. Many a man's family

ly is ruined by his iniquity.

Fourthly, He is in care to enjoy it a great while himself; but in that also he is crossed. 1. He may perhaps be taken from it; (v. 30.) By the breath of God's mouth—(that is, by his wrath, which, like a stream of brimstone, kindles the fire that devours him, Isa. xxx. 33. Or, by his word; he speaks, and it is done immediately)—shall he go away, and leave his wealth to others. This night, thy soul shall be required of thee; and so the wicked is driven away in his wickedness, the worldling in his worldliness. 2. It may perhaps be taken from him, and fly away like an eagle toward heaven: It shall be accomplished (or cut off) before his time, (v. 32.) that is, He shall survive his prosperity, and see himself stripped of it.

Fifthly, He is in care, when he is in trouble, how to get out of it; (not how to get good by it;) but in this also he is crossed; (v. 30.) He shall not depart out of darkness; when he begins to fall, like Haman, down with him. It was said of him, (v. 22.) He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness; he frightened himself with the perpetuity of his calamity, and God also shall choose his delusions, and bring his fears upon him, (Isa. Ixvi. 4.) as be did upon Israel, Numb. xiv. 28. God says, Amen.

to his distrust and despair.

Sixthly, He is in care to secure his partners, and

them; but that is in vain too, v. 34, 35. The congregation of them, the whole confederacy, they, and all their tabernacles, shall be desolate, and consumed with fire. Hypocrisy and bribery are here charged upon them; that is, deceitful dealing both with God and man: God affronted, under colour of religion, man wronged, under colour of justice. It is impossible that these should end well. Though hand join in hand for the support of these perfidious practices, yet shall not the wicked go unfunished.
(3.) The use and application of all this. Will the

(3.) The use and application of all this. prosperity of presumptuous sinners end thus miserably? Then, (v. 31.) Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity. Let the mischiefs which befall others be our warnings, and let not us rest on that broken reed which always failed those who leaned [1.] Those who trust to their sinful ways of getting wealth, trust in vanity, and vanity will be their recompense, for they shall not get what they expected. Their arts will deceive them, and perhaps ruin them in this world. [2.] Those who trust to their wealth when they have gotten it, especially to the wealth they have gotten dishonestly, trust in vanity, for it will yield them no satisfaction. The guilt that cleaves to it, will ruin the joy of it. They sow the wind, and will reap the whirlwind, and will own, at length, with the utmost confusion, that a deceived heart turned them aside, and that they cheated themselves with a lie in their right

CHAP. XVI.

This chapter begins Job's reply to that discourse of Eliphaz which we had in the foregoing chapter; it is but the se-cond part of the same song of lamentation with which he had before bemoaned himself, and set to the same mehad before bemoaned himsell, and set to the same melancholy tune. I. He upbraids his friends with their unkind usage of him, v. 1..5. II. He represents his own case as very deplorable upon all accounts, v. 6.. 16. III. He still holds fast his integrity, concerning which he appeals to God's righteous judgment, from the unrighteous censures of his friends, v. 17.. 22.

1. THEN Job answered and said, 2. I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all. 3. Shall vain words have an end? or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest? 4. I also could speak as ye do: if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake my head at you. 5. ButI would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief.

Both Job and his friends took the same way that disputants commonly take, which is, to undervalue one another's sense, and wisdom, and management. The longer the saw of contention is drawn, the hotter it grows; and the beginning of this sort of strife is as the letting forth of water, therefore leave it off before it be meddled with. Eliphaz had represented Job's discourses as idle and unprofitable, and nothing to the purpose; and Job here gives his the same character. Those who are free in passing such censures, must expect to have them retorted; it is easy, it is endless: but Cui bono?—What good does it do? It will stir up men's passions, but will never convince their judgments, nor set truth in a clear light.

Job here reproves Eliphaz,

1 For needless repetitions; (v. 2.) "I have heard many such things. You tell me nothing but what I knew before; nothing but what you yourselves have before said; you offer nothing new, it is

hopes to secure himself by his partnership with || the same thing over and over again;" which Job thinks as great a trial of his patience as almost any of his troubles. The inculcating of the same things thus by an adversary, is indeed provoking and nauseous, but by a teacher it is often necessary, and must not be grievous to the learner, to whom hrecept must be upon precept, and line upon line. Many things we have heard, which it is good for us to hear again, that we may understand and remember them better, and be more affected with them, and influenced by them.

2. For unskilful applications. They came with a design to comfort him, but they went about it very awkwardly, and, when they touched Job's case, quite mistook it; "Miserable comforters are ye all, who, instead of offering any thing to alleviate the affliction, add affliction to it, and make it yet more grievous." The patient's case is sad indeed, when his medicines are poisons, and his physicians his worst disease. What Job says here of his friends, is true of all creatures, in comparison with God, and, one time or other, we shall be made to see it and own it, that miserable comforters are they all. When we are under convictions of sin, terrors of conscience, and the arrests of death, it is only the blessed Spirit that can comfort effectually; all others, without him, do it miserably, and sing songs to a heavy heart, to no purpose.

3. For endless impertinence. Job wishes that vain words might have an end, v. 3. If vain, it were well that they were never begun, and the sooner they are ended the better. Those who are so wise as to speak to the purpose, will be so wise as to know when they have said enough of a thing,

and when it is time to break off.

4. For causeless obstinacy. What emboldeneth thee, that thou answerest? It is very rash and unjust confidence, with Eliphaz, to charge men with those crimes which we cannot prove upon them, to pass a judgment on men's spiritual state, upon the view of their outward condition, and to re-advance those objections which have been again and again answered.

5. For the violation of the sacred laws of friendship; doing by his brother as he would not have been done by, and as his brother would not have done by him. This is a cutting reproof, and very

affecting, v. 4, 5.

(1.) He desires his friends, in imagination, for a little while, to change conditions with him, to put their souls in his soul's stead; to suppose themselves in misery like him, and him at ease like them. This was no absurd or foreign supposition, but what might quickly become true in fact; so strange, so sudden, frequently, are the vicissitudes of human affairs, and such the turns of the wheel, that the spokes soon change places. Whatever our brethren's sorrows are, we ought by sympathy to make them our own, because we know not how soon they may be so.

(2.) He represents the unkindness of their conduct toward him, by showing what he could do to them, if they were in his condition. I could speak as ye do. It is an easy thing to trample upon those that are down, and to find fault with what those say that are in extremity of pain and affliction. "I could heap up words against you, as you do against me; and how would you like it? How would you bear it?"

(3.) He shows them what they should do, by telling them what, in that case, he would do; (v. 5.) "I would strengthen you, and say all I could to assuage your grief, but nothing to aggravate it." It is natural to sufferers to think what they would do, if the tables were turned; but perhaps our hearts may deceive us; we know not what we should do. We find it easier to discern the reason

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ableness and importance of a command, when we ! have occasion to claim the benefit of it, than when we have occasion to do the duty of it. See what is the duty we owe to our brethren in affliction. [1.] We should say and do all we can to strengthen them, suggesting to them such considerations as are proper to encourage their confidence in God, and to support their sinking spirits. Faith and patience are the strength of the afflicted; what helps these graces, confirms the feeble knees. [2.] To assuage their grief, the causes of their grief, if possible, or, however, their resentment of those causes. Good words cost nothing; but they may be of good service to those that are in sorrow, not only as it is some comfort to them to see their friends concerned for them, but as they may be so reminded of that which, through the prevalency of grief, was forgotten. Though hard words (we say) break no bones, yet kind words may help to make broken bones rejoice; and those have the tongue of the 'earned, that know how to speak a word in season to the weary.

6. Though I speak, my grief is not assuaged; and though I forbear, what am I eased? 7. But now he hath made me weary: thou hast made desolate all my company. 8. And thou hast filled me with wrinkles, which is a witness against me: and my learness rising up in me beareth witness to my face. 9. He teareth me in his wrath who hateth me: he gnasheth upon me with his teeth; mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me. 10. They have gaped upon me with their mouth; they have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully; they have gathered themselves together against me. 11. God hath delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over into the hands of the wicked. 12. I was at ease, but he hath broken me asunder: he hath also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for his mark. 13. His archers compass me round about; he cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare; he poureth out my gall upon the ground. 14. He breaketh me with breach upon breach; he runneth upon me like a giant. 15. I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin, and defiled my horn in the dust. 16. My face is foul with weeping, and on mine eyelids is the shadow of death;

Job's complaint is here as bitter as any where in all his discourses, and he is at a stand whether to smother it or to give it vent. Sometimes the one, and sometimes the other, is a relief to the afflicted, according as the temper or the circumstances are; but Job found help by neither, v. 6. (1.) Sometimes giving vent to grief gives ease; but, "Though I sheak," (says Job,) "my grief is not assuaged, my spirit is never the lighter for the pouring out of my complaint; nay, what I speak is so misconstrued as to be turned to the aggravation of my grief." (2.) At other times, keeping silence makes the (says Job) though I forbear, I am never the nearer; what am I eased? If he complained, he was censured as passionate; if not, as sullen. If he main- smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek,

tained his integrity, that was his crime; if he made no answer to their accusations, his silence was taken for a confession of his guilt.

Here is a doleful representation of Job's grie-

vances. O what reason have we to bless God, that we are not making such complaints! He complains, 1. That his family was scattered; (v. 7.) "He hath made me weary, weary of speaking, weary of forbearing, weary of my friends, weary of life itself; my journey through the world proves so very uncomfortable, that I am quite tired with it:" this made it as tiresome as any thing, that all his company was made desolate; his children and servants being killed, and the poor remains of his great household dispersed. The company of good peo-ple, that used to meet at his house for religious worship, was now scattered, and he spent his sabbaths in silence and solitude. He had company indeed, but such as he would rather have been without, for they seemed to triumph in his desolation. If lovers and friends are put far from us, we must see and own God's hand in it, making our company desolate.

2. That his body was worn away with diseases and pains, so that he was become a perfect skele-ton, nothing but skin and bones, v. 8. His face was furrowed, not with age, but sickness; Thou hast filled me with wrinkles. His flesh was wasted with the running of his sore boils, so that his leanness rose up in him, that is, his bones, that were not seen, stuck out, ch. xxxiii. 21. These are called witnesses against him, witnesses of God's displea-sure against him, and such witnesses as his friends produced against him to prove him a wicked man. Or, "They are witnesses for me, that my complaint is not causeless," or, "witnesses to me, that

I am a dying man, and must be gone shortly."

3. That his enemy was a terror to him, threatened him, frightened him, looked stern upon him, and gave all the indications of rage against him; (v)9.) He tears me in his wrath. But who is this enemy? Either, (1.) Eliphaz; who showed himself very nuch exasperated against him, and perhaps had expressed himself with such marks of indignation as are here mentioned: at least, what he said tore Job's good name, and thundered nothing but terror to him; his eyes were sharpened to spy out matter of reproach against Job, and very barbarously both be and the rest of them used him. Or, (2.) Satan; he was his enemy, that hated him, and perhaps, by the divine permission, terrified him with apparitions, as (some think) he terrified our Saviour, which put him into his agonies in the garden; and thus he aimed to make him curse God. It is not improbable that this is the enemy he means. (3.) God himself: if we understand it of him, the expressions are indeed as rash as any he used. God hates none of his creatures; but Job's melancholy did thus represent to him the terrors of the Almighty: and nothing can be more grievous to a good man, than to apprehend God to be his enemy. If the wrath of a king be as messengers of death, what is the wrath of the King of kings!

 That all about him were abusive to him; (ν.
 They came upon him with open mouth to deyour him, as if they would swallow him alive, so terrible were their threats, and so scornful was their conduct to him. They offered him all the indignities they could invent, and even smote him on the cheek; and herein many were confederate, they gathered themselves together against him, ever the abjects, Ps. xxxv. 15. Herein Job was a type of Christ, as many of the ancients make him: these very expressions are used in the predictions of his sufferings; (Ps. xxii. 13.) They gaped upon me with their mouths; and (Mic. v. 1.) They shall which was literally fulfilled, Matth. xxvi. 67. How were they increased that troubled him!

5. That God, instead of delivering him out of their hands, as he hoped, delivered him into their hands; (v. 11.) He hath turned me over into the hands of the wicked. They could have had no power against him, if it had not been given them from above; he therefore looks beyond them to God, who gave them their commission, as David did when Shimei cursed him; but he thinks it strange, and almost thinks it hard, that those should have power against him, who were God's enemies as much as his. God sometimes makes use of wicked men as his sword to one another, (Ps. xvii. 13.) and his rod to his own children, Isa. x. 5. Herein also Job was a type of Christ, who was delivered into wicked hands, to be crucified and slain, by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of

God, Acts ii. 23.6. That God not only delivered him into the hands of the wicked, but took him into his own hands too, into which it is a fearful thing to fall; (v. 12.) "I was at ease, in the comfortable enjoyment of the gifts of God's bounty, not fretting and uneasy, as some are in the midst of their prosperity, who thereby provoke God to strip them; yet he has broken me asunder, put me upon the rack of pain, and torn me limb from limb." God, in afflicting him, had seemed, (1.) As if he were furious: though fury is not in God, he thought it was, when he took him by the neck, (as a strong man in a passion would take a child,) and shook him to pieces, triumphing in the irresistible power he had to do what he would with him. (2.) As if he were partial: "He has distinguished me from the rest of mankind by this hard usage of me; he has set me up for his mark, the butt at which he is pleased to let fly all his arrows: at me they are directed, and they come not by chance; against me they are levelled, as if I were the greatest sinner of all the men of the east, or were singled out to be made an example." When God set him up for a mark, his archers presently compassed him round. God has archers at command, who will be sure to hit the mark that he sets up. Whoever are our enemies, we must look upon them as God's archers, and see him directing the arrow. It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good. (3.) As if he were cruel, and his wrath as relentless as his power was resist-As if he contrived to touch him in the tenderest part, cleaving his reins asunder with acute pains, perhaps they were nephritic pains, those of the stone, which lie in the region of the kidneys. As if he had no mercy in reserve for him, he does not spare, nor abate any thing of the extremity. And, as if he aimed at nothing but his death, and his death in the midst of the most grievous tortures, he fours out my gall upon the ground. As when men have taken a wild beast, and killed it, they open it, and pour out the gall with a loathing of it. He thought his blood was poured out, as if it were not only not precious, but nauseous. (4.) As if he were unreasonable and insatiable in his executions; (v. 14.) "He breaketh me with breach upon breach, follows me with one wound after another." So his troubles came at first; while one messenger of evil tidings was speaking, another came; and so it was still, new boils were rising every day, so that he had no prospect of the end of his troubles. Thus he thought that God ran upon him like a giant, whom he could not possibly stand before or confront; as the giants of old ran down all their poor neighbours, and were too hard for them. Note, Even good men, when they are in great and extraordinary troubles, have much ado not to entertain hard thoughts of God.

7. That he had divested himself of all his honour,

and all his comfort, in compliance with the afflicting providences that surrounded him. Some can lessen their own troubles by concealing them, holding their heads as high, and putting as good a face upon them, as ever; but Job could not do so; he received the impressions of them, and, as one truly penitent, and truly patient, he humbled himself under the mighty hand of God, v. 15, 16. (1.) He now laid aside all his ornaments and soft clothing, consulted not either his ease or finery in his dress, but sewed sackcloth upon his skin; that clothing he thought good enough for such a defiled distempered body as he had. Silks upon sores, such sores, he thought, would be unsuitable, sackcloth would be more becoming. Those are fond indeed of gay clothing, that will not be weaned from it by sickness and old age, and, as Job was, (v. 8.) by wrinkles and leanness. He not only fut on sackcloth, but sewed it on, as one that resolved to continue his humiliation as long as the affliction continued. He insisted not upon any points of honour, but humbled himself under humbling providences; he defiled his horn in the dust, and refused the respect that used to be paid to his dignity, power, and emi-nency. Note, When God brings down our condition, that should bring down our spirits. Better lay the horn in the dust, than lift it up in contradiction to the designs of Providence, and have it broken at last. Eliphaz had represented Job as high and haughty, and unhumbled under his affliction; "No," haughty, and unnumbed under his ametion, 100, says Job, "I know better things; the dust is now the fittest place for he." (3.) He banished mirth as utterly unseasonable, and set himself to sow in tears; (v. 16.) "My face is foul with weeping so constantly for my sins, for God's displeasure against me, and for my friends' unkindness; this has brought a shadow of death upon my eye-lids." He had not only wept away all his beauty, but almost wept his eyes out. In this also, he was a type of Christ, who was a man of sorrows, and much in tears, and pronounced those blessed that mourn, for they shall be

17. Not for *any* injustice in my hands: also my prayer *is* pure. 18. O earth, cover not thou my blood, and let my cry have no place. 19. Also now, behold, my witness *is* in heaven, and my record *is* on high. 20. My friends scorn me; *but* mine eye poureth out *tears* unto God. 21. Oh that one might plead for a man with God, as a man *pleadeth* for his neighbour! 22. When a few years are come, then I shall go the way *whence* I shall not return.

Job's condition was very deplorable; but had he nothing to support him, nothing to comfort him? Yes, and he here tells us what it was.

I. He had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had walked uprightly, and had never allowed himself in any gross sin. None was ever more ready than he to acknowledge his sins of infirmity; but, upon search, he could not charge himself with any enormous crime, for which he should be made more miserable than other men, v. 17. He had kept a conscience void of offence, 1. Toward men. "Not for any injustice in my hands, any wealth that I have unjustly got or kept." Eliphaz had represented him as a tyrant and an oppressor; "No," says he, "I never did any wrong to any man, but always despised the gain of oppression." 2. Toward God. Also my hrayer is fure; but prayer cannot be pure, as long as there is injustice in our hands, Isa. i. 15. Eliphaz had charged him with hypocrisy in reli

gion, but he specifies prayer, the great act of reli- | plead) for man with God, even the Son of man, for gion, and professes that in that he was pure, though | his friend, or neighbour. Those who pour out tears not from all infirmity, yet from reigning and allowed guile: it was not like the prayers of the Pharisees, who looked no further than to be seen of men, and

to serve a turn.

This assertion of his own integrity he backs with a solemn imprecation of shame and confusion to himself, if it were not true, v. 18. (1.) If there were any injustice in his hands, he wishes it might not be concealed, O earth, cover not thou my blood, that is, "the innocent blood of others, which I am suspected to have shed." Murder will out; and "Let it," says Job, "if I have ever been guilty of it," Gen. iv. 10, 11. The day is coming when the earth shall disclose her blood; (Isa. xxvi. 21.) and a good man is far from dreading that day. (2.) If there were any impurity in his prayers, he wishes they might not be accepted, Let my cry have no place. He was willing to be judged by that rule, If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me, Ps. lxvi. 18. There is another probable sense of these words, that he does hereby, as it were, lay his death upon his friends, who broke his heart with their harsh censures, and charges the guilt of his blood upon them, begging of God to avenge it, and that the cry of his blood night have no place in which to lie hid, but might come up to heaven, and be heard by him that makes inquisition for blood.

II. He could appeal to God's omniscience concerning his integrity, v. 19. The witness in our own bosoms for us will stand us in little stead, if we have not a witness in heaven for us too, for God is greater than our hearts, and we are not to be our own judges; this, therefore, is Job's triumph, My Witness is in heaven. Note, It is an unspeakable comfort to a good man, when he lies under the censure of his brethren, that there is a God in heaven, who knows his integrity, and will clear it up sooner or later. See John v. 31, 37. This one Witness

is instead of a thousand.

III. He had a God to go to, before whom he might unbosom himself, v. 20, 21. See here, 1. How the case stood between him and his friends; he knew not how to be free with them, nor could he expect either a fair hearing with them, or fair dealing from them; "My friends (so they call themselves) scorn me; they set themselves not only to resist me, but to expose me; they are of counsel against me, and use all their art and eloquence," (so the word signifies,) "to run me down." scorns of friends are more cutting than those of enemies; but we must expect them, and provide accordingly. 2. How it stood between him and God. He doubted not but that, (1.) God did now take cognizance of his sorrows, Mine eye pours out tears to God. He had said, (v. 16.) that he wept much; here he tells us in what channel his tears ran, and which way they were directed: his sorrow was not that of the world, but he sorrowed after a godly sort, wept before the Lord, and offered to him the sacrifice of a broken heart. Note, Even tears, when sanctified to God, give ease to troubled spirits; and, if men slight our grief, this may comfort us, that God regards them. (2.) That he would in due time clear up his innocency; (v. 21.) O that one might plead for a man with God! If he could but now have the same freedom at God's bar, that men commonly have at the bar of the civil magistrate, he doubted not but to carry his cause, for the Judge himself was a witness to his The language of this wish is, that (Isa. 1. 7, 8.) I know that I shall not be ashamed, for he is near that justifies me. Some give a gospel-sense of this verse, and the original will very well bear it: and he will flead (that is, there is one that will | now in, which he describes, to aggravate the great

before God, though they cannot plead for themselves, by reason of their distance and defects, have a Friend to plead for them, even the Son of man, and on this we must bottom all our hopes of accept-

ance with God.

IV. He had a prospect of death, which would put a period to all his troubles: such confidence had he toward God, that he could take pleasure in thinking of the approach of death, when he should be determined to his everlasting state, as one that doubted not but it would be well with him then: When a few years are come, (the years of number which are determined and appointed to me,) then I shall go the way whence I shall not return. Note, 1. To die is to go the way whence we shall not return; it is to go a journey, a long journey, a journey for good and all; to remove from this to another country, from the world of sense to the world of spirits; it is a journey to our long home; there will be no coming back to our state in this world, nor any change of our state in the other world. 2. We must all of us, very certainly, and very shortly, go this journey; and it is comfortable to those who keep a good conscience, to think of it, for it is the crown of their integrity.

CHAP. XVII.

In this chapter, I. Job reflects upon the harsh censures which his friends had passed upon him, and, looking upon himself as a dying man, (v. 1.) he appeals to God, upon himself as a dying man, (v. 1.) he appeals to God, and begs of him speedly to appear for him, and right him, because they had wronged him, and he knew not how to right himself, v. 2..7. But he hopes, that, though it should be a surprise, it will be no stumbling-block, to good people, to see him thus abused, v. 8, 9. II. He reflects upon the vain hopes they had fed him with, that he should yet see good days; showing that his days were just at an end, and with his body all his hopes would be buried in the dust, v. 10..16. His friends becoming strange to him, which greatly grieved him, he makes death and the grave familiar to him, which yielded him some comfort.

1. MY breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the graves are ready for me. 2. Are there not mockers with me? and doth not mine eye continue in their provocation? 3. Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee; who is he that will strike hands with me? 4. For thou hast hid their heart from understanding: therefore shalt thou not exalt them. 5. He that speaketh flattery to his friends, even the eyes of his children shall fail. 6. He hath made me also a by-word of the people, and aforetime I was as a tabret. 7. Mine eye also is dim by reason of sorrow, and all my members are as a shadow. 8. Upright men shall be astonished at this, and the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite. 9. The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.

Job's discourse | ere is somewhat broken and interrupted, and he passes suddenly from one thing to another, as is usual with men in trouble: but we may reduce what is said here to three heads.

I. The deplorable condition which poor Job was

unkindness of his friends to him, and to justify his own complaints. Let us see what his case was,

1. He was a dying man, v. 1. He had said, (ch. xvi. 22.) "When a few years are come, I shall go that long journey." But here he corrects himself, "Why do I talk of years to come? Alas! I am just setting out on that journey, am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; my breath is already corrupt, or broken off, my spirits are spent, I am a gone man." It is good for every one of us thus to look upon ourselves as dying, and especially to think of it when we are sick. We are dying, that is, (1.) Our life is going, for the breath of life is going. It is continually going forth, it is in of life is going. It is continually going forth, it is in our nostrils, (Isa. ii. 22.) the door at which it entered; (Gen. ii. 7.) there it is upon the threshold, ready to depart. Perhaps, Job's distemper obstructed his breathing, and short breath will, after a while, be no breath. Let the Anointed of the Lord be the breath of our nostrils, and let us get spiritual life breathed into us, and that breath will never be corrupted. (2.) Our time is ending; My days are extinct, are fut out, as a candle, which, from the first lighting, is continually wasting and burning down, and will by degrees burn out of itself, but may by a thousand accidents be extinguished. Such is life. It concerns us, therefore, carefully to redeem the days of time, and to spend them in getting ready for the days of eternity, which will never be extinct. (3.) We are expected in our long home; The graves are ready for me. But would not one grave serve? Yes, but he speaks of the sepulchres of his fathers, to which he must be gathered: "The graves where they are laid, are ready for me also," graves in consort, the congregation of the dead. Wherever we go, there is but a step between us and the grave. Whatever is unready, that is ready; it is a bed soon made. If the graves be ready for us. it concerns us to be ready for the graves. The graves for me, so it runs; denoting not only his expectation of death, but his desire of it; "I have done with the world, and have nothing now to wish for but a grave."

2. He was a despised man; (v. 6.) "He," (that is, Eliphaz, so some, or rather God, whom he all along acknowledges to be the Author of his calamities) "has made me a by-word of the people, the talk of the country, a laughing-stock to many, a gazing-stock to all; and aforetime, or, to men's faces, publicly, I was as a tabret, that whoever chose might play upon;" they made ballads of him; his name became a proverb; it is so still, As hoor as Job. He has now made me a by-word, a reproach of men, whereas, aforetime, in my prosperity, I was as a tabret, Deliciæ humani generis—The darling of the human race, whom they were all pleased with. It is common for those who were honoured in their wealth, to be despised in their poverty.

3. He was a man of sorrows, v. 7. He wept so much, that he had almost lost his sight; Mine eye is dim by reason of sorrow, ch. xvi. 16. The sorrow of the world thus works darkness and death. He vexed so much, that he had fretted all the flesh away, and was become a perfect skeleton; nothing but skin and bones; "All my members are as a shadow. I am grown so poor and thin, that I am not to be called a man, but the shadow of a man.

II. The ill use which his friends made of his miseries; they trampled upon him, and insulted over him, and condemned him as a hypocrite, because he was thus grievously afflicted. Hard usage! Now observe,

1. How Job describes it, and what construction he puts upon their discourses with him. He looks upon himself as basely abused by them. (1.) They abused him with their foul censures, condemning

to contempt, v. 2. "They are mockers, who deride my calamities, and insult over me, because I am thus brought low. They are so with me, abusing me to my face, pretending friendship in their visit, but intending mischief. I cannot get clear of them; they are continually tearing me, and they will not be wrought upon, either by reason or pity, to let fall the prosecution." (2.) They abused him too with their fair promises, for in them they did but banter him. He reckons them (v. 5.) among those that speak flattery to their friends. They all came to mourn with him; Eliphaz began with a commendation of him, ch. iv. 3. They had all promised him that he would be happy, if he would take their advice. Now all this he looked upon as flattery, and as designed to vex him so much the more. All this he calls their provocation, v. 2. They did what they could to provoke him, and then condemned him for his resentment of it; but he thinks himself excusable when his eye continued thus in their firovocation; it never ceased, and he could never look off it. Note, The unkindness of those that trample upon their friends in affliction, that banter and abuse them then, is enough to try, if not to tire, the patience even of Job himself.

2. How he condemns it. (1.) It was a sign that God had hid their heart from understanding, (v. 4.) and that in this matter they were infatuated, and their wonted wisdom was departed from them. Wisdom is a gift of God, which he grants to some, and withholds from others, grants at some times, and withholds at other times. Those that are void of compassion, are so far void of understanding. Where there is not the tenderness of a man, one may question whether there be the understanding of a man. (2.) It would be a lasting reproach and diminution to them; Therefore shall thou not exalt Those are certainly kept back from honour, whose hearts are hid from understanding. God infatuates men, he will abase them. Surely they who discover so little acquaintance with the methods of Providence, shall not have the honour of deciding this controversy! That is reserved for a man of better sense, and better temper, such an one as Elihu afterward appeared to be. (3.) It would entail a curse upon their families. He that thus violates the sacred laws of friendship, forfeits the benefit of it, not only for himself, but for his posterity. "Even the eyes of his children shall fail, and when they look for succour and comfort from their own and their father's friends, they shall look in vain, as I have done, and be as much disappointed as I am in you." Note, Those that wrong their neighbours, may, in the end, wrong their own children more than they are aware of.

3. How he appeals from them to God; (v. 3.) Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee, that is, "Let me be assured that God will take the hearing and determining of the cause into his own hands, and I desire no more. Let some one engage for God to bring on this matter." Thus they whose hearts condemn them not, have confidence toward God, and can, with humble and believing boldness, beg of him to search and try them. Some make Job here to glance at the mediation of Christ, for he speaks of a Surety with God, without whom he durst not appear before God, nor try his cause at his bar; for though his friends' accusations of him were utterly false, yet he could not justify himself before God but in a Mediator. Our English anno tations give this reading of the verse, "Appoint, I pray thee, my Surety with thee, namely, Christ, who is with thee in heaven, and has undertaken to be my Surety: let him plead my cause, and stand up for me; and who is he then that will strike upon mine hand?" that is, "Who dares then contend

him as a bad man, justly reduced thus, and exposed with me? Who shall lay any thing to my charge,

if Christ be an advocate for me?" Rom. viii. 32, 33. Christ is the Surety of the better testament, (Heb. vii. 22.) a Surety of God's appointing; and if he undertake for us, we need not fear what can be done against us.

III. The good use which the righteous should

make of Job's afflictions from God, from his ene-

mies, and from his friends, v. 8, 9. Observe here, 1. How the saints are described. (1.) They are upright men, honest, and sincere, and that act from a steady principle, with a single eye. This was Job's own character; (ch. i. 1.) and, probably, he speaks of such upright men especially as had been his intimates and associates. (2.) They are the innocent; not perfectly so, but it is what they aim at, and press toward. Sincerity is evangelical innocency, and they that are upright are said to be innocent from the great transgression, Ps. xix. 13. (3.) They are the righteous, who walk in the way of righteousness. (4.) They have clean hands, kept clean from the gross pollutions of sin, and, when spotted with infirmities, washed with inno-

cency, Ps. xxvi. 6.

2. How they should be affected with the account of Job's troubles. Great inquiry, no doubt, would be made concerning him, and every one would speak of him and his case; and what use will good

people make of it?

(1.) It will amaze them; Uhright men shall be astonished at this; they will wonder to hear that so good a man as Job should be so grievously afflicted in body, name, and estate; that God should lay his hand so heavy upon him, and that his friends, who ought to have comforted him, should add to his grief; that such a remarkable saint should be such a remarkable sufferer, and so useful a man laid aside in the midst of his usefulness; what shall we say to these things? Upright men, though satisfied, in general, that God is wise and holy in all he does, yet cannot but be astonished at such dispensations of Providence; paradoxes which will not be unfolded till the mystery of God shall be finished.

(2.) It will animate them. Instead of being deterred from, and discouraged in, the service of God, by the hard usage which this faithful servant of God met with, they shall be so much the more imboldened to proceed and persevere in it. That which was St. Paul's care, (1 Thess. iii. 3.) was Job's, that no good man should be moved either from his holiness, or his comfort, by these afflictions, that none should, for the sake hereof, think the worse of the ways or work of God. And that which was St. Paul's comfort, was his too, that the brethren of the Lord would wax confident by his bonds, Philip i. 14. They would hereby be his bonds, Philip i. 14.

[1.] To oppose sin, and to confront the corrupt and pernicious inferences which evil men would draw from Joh's sufferings, as, That God has for-saken the earth, That it is in vain to serve him; and the like; The innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite, will not bear to hear this, (Rev. ii. 2.) but will withstand him to his face; will stir up himself to search into the meaning of such providences, and study these hard chapters, that he may read them readily; will stir up himself to maintain religion's just, but injured, cause against all its opposers. Note, The boldness of the attacks which profane people make upon religion, should sharpen the courage and resolution of its friends and advocates. It is time to stir, when proclamation is made In the gate of the camp, Who is on the Lord's side? When vice is daring, it is no time for virtue, through fear, to hide itself.

[2.] To persevere in religion. The righteous, instead of drawing back, or so much as starting

deliberate whether he should proceed or no. (allude to 2 Sam. ii. 23.) shall, with so much the more constancy and resolution, hold on his way, and press forward. Though, in me, he foresees that bonds and afflictions abide him, yet none of those things shall move him, Acts xx. 24. Those who keep their eye upon heaven as their end, will keep their feet in the paths of religion as their way, whatever difficulties and discouragements they meet with in it.

[3.] In order thereunto, to grow in grace. He will not only hold on his way notwithstanding, but will grow stronger and stronger, and, by the sight of other good men's trials, and the experience of his own, he will be made more vigorous and lively in his duty, more warm and affectionate, more resolute and undaunted: the worse others are, the better he will be; that which dismays others, im-boldens him. The blustering wind makes the traweller gather his cloak the closer about him, and gird it the faster. They that are truly wise and good, will be continually growing wiser and better. Proficiency in religion is a good sign of sincerity

10. But as for you all, do you return, and come now: for I cannot find one wise man among you. 11. My days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart. 12. They change the night into day: the light is short because of darkness. 13. If I wait, the grave is my house: I have made my bed in the darkness. I have said to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister. 15. And where is now my hope? as for my hope, who shall see it? 16. They shall go down to the bars of the pit, when our rest together is in the dust.

Job's friends had pretended to comfort him with the hopes of his return to a prosperous estate again;

now he here shows,

I. That it was their folly to talk so; (v. 10.) "Return, and come now, be convinced that you are in an error, and let me persuade you to be of my mind; for I cannot find any wise man among you, that knows how to explain the difficulties of God's providence, or how to apply the consolations of his promises." Those do not go wisely about the work of comforting the afflicted, who fetch their comforts from the possibility of their recovery and enlargement in this world; though that is not to be despaired of, it is, at the best, uncertain, and if it should fail, as perhaps it may, the comfort built upon it will fail too. It is therefore our wisdom to comfort ourselves, and others, in distress, with that which will not fail, the promise of God, his love and grace, and a well-grounded hope of eternal

II. That it would be much more his folly to

heed them; for,

1. All his measures were already broken, and he was full of confusion, υ. 11, 12. He owns he had, in his prosperity, often pleased himself both with projects of what he should do, and prospects of what he should enjoy; but now that he looked upon his days as past, and drawing towards a period, all those purposes were broken off, and those expectations dashed. He had had thoughts about enlarging his border, increasing his stock, and settling his children, and many pious thoughts, it is likely, of promoting religion in his country, reback, at this frightful spectacle, or standing still to | dressing grievances, reforming the profane, relieving the poor, and raising funds, perhaps, for charitable uses; but all these thoughts of his heart were now at an end, and he would never have the satisfaction of seeing his designs effected. Note, The period of our days will be the period of all our contrivances and hopes for this world; but if with full purpose of heart we cleave to the Lord, death will

not break off that purpose.

Job, being thus put upon new counsels, was under a constant uneasmess; (v. 12.) The thoughts of his heart being broken, they changed the night into day, and shortened the light. Some, in their vanity and riot, turn night into day and day into night; but Job did so, through trouble and anguish of spirit, which was a hinderance, (1.) To the repose of the night; keeping his eyes waking, so that the night was as wearisome to him as the day, and the tosses of the night tired him as much as the toils of the day. (2.) To the entertainments of the day. "The light of the morning is welcome, but, by reason of this inward darkness, the comfort of it is soon gone, and the day is to me as dismal as the black and dark night," Deut. xxviii. 67. See what reason we have to be thankful for the health and ease which enable us to welcome both the shadows of the evening and the light of the morning.

2. All his expectations from this world would very shortly be buried in the grave with him; so that it was a jest for him to think of such mighty things as they had flattered him with the hopes of; (ch. v. 19.—viii. 21.—xi. 17.) "Alas, you do but make a fool of me."

(1.) He saw himself just dropping into the grave. A convenient house, an easy bed, and agreeable relations, are some of those things which we take satisfaction in in this world: Job expected not any of these above ground; all he felt, and all he had in view, was unpleasing and disagreeable, but under

ground he expected them.

[1.] He counted upon no house but the grave; (v. 13.) "If I wait, if there be any place where I shall ever be easy again, it must be in the grave. I should deceive myself, if I should count upon any outlet from my trouble but what death will give me. Nothing is so sure as that." Note, In all our prosperity, it is good to keep death in prospect. Whatever we expect, let us be sure to expect that; for that may prevent other things which we expect, but nothing will prevent that. But see how he endeavours not only to reconcile himself to the grave, but to recommend it to himself: "It is my house." The grave is a house; to the wicked it is a prisonhouse; (ch. xxiv. 19, 20.) to the godly it is Bethabara, a passage-house in their way home. "It is my house, mine by descent, I am born to it; it is my father's house; mine by purchase, I have made myself obnoxious to it." We must every one of us shortly remove to this house, and it is our wisdom to provide accordingly; let us think of removing, and send before to our long home.

[2.] He counted upon no quiet bed but in the darkness; "There," says he, "I have made my bed. It is made, for it is ready, and I am just going to it." The grave is a bed, for we shall rest in it the evening of our day on earth, and rise from it in the evening of our day on earth, and rise from it in the morning of our everlasting day, Isa. lvii. 2. Let this make good people willing to die; it is but going to bed, they are weary and sleepy, and it is time that they were in their beds; why should they not go willingly, when their Father calls? "Nay, I have made my bed, by preparation for it; have endeavoured to make it easy, by keeping conscience pure, by seeing Christ lying in this bed,

and so turning it into a bed of spices, and by looking beyond it to the resurrection."

[3.] He counted upon no agrecable relations but what he had in the grave; (v. 14.) I have cried to | place?

corruption, that is, to the grave, where the body will corrupt, Thou art my father, for our bodies were formed out of the earth, and to the worms there, Ye are my mother and my sister, to whom I am allied, for man is a worm, and with whom I must be conversant, for the worms shall cover us, ch. xxi. 26. Job complained that his kindred were estranged from him, (ch. xix. 13, 14.) therefore here he claims acquaintance with other relations, that would cleave to him, when those disowned him. Note, First, We are all of us near akin to corruption and the worms. Secondly, It is, therefore, good to make ourselves familiar with them, by conversing much with them in our thoughts and meditations, which would very much help us above the inordinate love of life and fear of death.

(2.) He saw all his hopes from this world dropping into the grave with him; (v. 15, 16.) "Seeing I must shortly leave the world, where is now my hope? How can I expect to prosper, who do not expect to live?" He is not hopeless, but his hope is not there where they would have it be. If in this life only he had hope, he were of all men most miserable: "No, as for my hope, that hope which I comfort and support myself with, who shall see it? It is something out of sight that I hope for, not things that are seen, that are temporal, but things not seen, that are eternal." What is his hope, he will tell us, ch. xix. 25. Non est mortale quod opto, immortale heto—I seek not for that which herishes, but for that which abides for ever. "But as for the hopes you would buoy me up with, they shall go down with me to the bars of the pit; you are dying men, and cannot make good your promises, I am a dying man, and cannot enjoy the good you promise. Since, therefore, our rest will be together in the dust, let us all lay aside the thoughts of this world, and set our hearts upon another." We must shortly be in the dust, for dust we are, dust and ashes in the pit, under the bars of the pit, held fast there, never to loose the bands of death till the general resurrection. But we shall rest there, we shall rest together there. Job and his friends could not agree now, but they will both be quiet in the grave; the dust of that will shortly stop their mouths, and put an end to the controversy. Let the foresight of this cool the heat of all contenders, and moderate the disputers of this world.

CHAP. XVIII.

In this chapter, Bildad makes a second assault upon Job. In his first discourse (ch. viii.) he had given him encouragement to hope that all should yet be well with him. But here, there is not a word of that; he is grown more peevish, and is so far from being convinced by Job's reasonings, that he is but more exasperated. I. He sharply reproves Job, as haughty and passionate, and obstinate in his opinion, v. 1. 4. II. He enlarges upon the doctrine he had before maintained, concerning the misery of wicked people, and the ruin that attends them, v. 5. . 21. In which he seems, all along, to have an eye to Job's complaints of the miserable condition he was in, that he was in the dark, bewildered, ensnared, terrified, and hastening out of the world. "This," says Bildad, "is the condition of a wicked man; and, therefore, thou art one."

1. THEN answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said, 2. How long will it be ere you make an end of words ? mark, and afterwards we will speak. 3. Wherefore are we counted as beasts, and reputed vile in your sight? 4. He teareth himself in his anger: shall the earth be forsaken for thee? and shall the rock be removed out of his Bildad here shoots his arrows, even bitter words, against poor Job, little thinking, that, though he was a wise and good man, in this instance he was serving Satan's design, in adding to his affliction.

1. He charges him with idle, endless, talk, as Eliphaz had done; (ch. xv. 2, 3.) How long will it be ere ye make an end of words? v. 2. Here he reflects, not only upon Job himself, but either upon all the managers of the conference, (thinking, perhaps, that Eliphaz and Zophar did not speak so close to the purpose as they might have done,) or upon some that were present, who, possibly, took part with Job, and put in a word now and then in his favour, though it be not recorded. Bildad was weary of hearing others speak, and impatient till it came to his turn; which cannot be observed to any man's praise, for we ought to be swift to hear, and slow to speak. It is common for contenders to monopolize the reputation of wisdom, and then to insist upon it as their privilege to be dictators. How unbecoming that is in others, every one can see; but few that are guilty of it can see it in themselves. Time was, when Job had the last word in all debates; (ch. xxix. 22.) After my words they spake not again. Then he was in power and prosperity; but now that he was impoverished and brought low, he could scarcely be allowed to speak at all, and every thing he said was as much vilified as formerly it had been magnified. Wisdom, therefore, (as the world goes) is good with an inheritance; (Eccl. vii. 11.) for the poor man's wisdom is despised, and, because he is poor, his words are not heard, Eccl. ix. 16.

2. With a regardlessness of what was said to him, intimated in that, Mark, and afterwards we will sheak. And it is to no purpose to speak, though what is said be ever so much to the purpose, if those to whom it is spoken will not mark and observe it. Let the ear be oftened to hear as the warned, and then the tongues of the learned will do good service, (Isa. l. 4.) and not otherwise. It is an encouragement to those that speak of the things

of God, to see the hearers attentive.

3. With a haughty contempt and disdain of his friends, and of that which they offered; (v. 3.) Wherefore are we counted as beasts? This was invidious: Job had indeed called them mockers, had represented them both as unwise and as unkind, wanting both in the reason and tenderness of men, but he did not count them beasts; yet Bildad so represents it, (1.) Because his high spirit resented what Job had said, as if it had been the greatest affront imaginable. Proud men are apt to think themselves slighted more than really they are. (2.) Because his hot spirit was willing to find a pretence to be hard upon Job. Those that incline to be severe upon others, will have it thought that they have first been so upon them.

4. With outrageous passion; He teareth himself in his anger, v. 4. Herein he seems to reflect upon what Job had said, (ch. xiii. 14.) Wherefore do I take mu flesh in my teeth? "It is thine own fault," says Bildad; or he reflected upon what he said, (ch. xvi. 9.) where he seemed to charge it upon God; or, as some think, upon Eliphaz; He teareth me in his wrath. "No," says Bildad, "thou alone shalt bear it." He teareth himself in his anger. Note, Anger is a sin that is its own punishment. Fretful, passionate, people tear and torment themselves. He teareth his soul, so the word is; every sin wounds the soul, tears th it, wrongs that, (Prov. viii. 36.) unbridled passions particularly.

5. With a proud and arrogant expectation to give law even to Providence itself; "Shall the earth be forsaken for thee?" Surely not; there is no reason for that, that the course of nature should be changed, and the settled rules of government violated, to gra-

tify the humour of one man. Job, dost thou think the world cannot stand without thee; but that, if thou art ruined, all the world is ruined and forsaken with thee?" Some make it a reproof of Job's justification of himself, falsely insinuating, that either Job was a wicked man, or we must deny a Providence, and suppose that God has forsaken the earth, and the Rock of ages is removed. It is rather a just reproof of his passionate complaints; when we quarrel with the events of Providence, we forget, that, whatever befalls us, it is, (1.) According to the eternal purpose and counsel of God. (2.) Ac-cording to the written word. Thus it is written, that in the world we must have tribulation, that since we sin daily, we must expect to smart for it; and, (3.) According to the usual way and custom, the track of Providence, nothing but what is common to men: and to expect that God's counsels should change, his method alter, and his word fail, to please us, is as absurd and unreasonable as to think that the earth should be forsaken for us, and the rock removed out of its place.

5. Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine. 6. The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his candle shall be put out with him. 7. The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down. 8. For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walketh upon a snare. 9. The gin shall take him by the heel, and the robber shall prevail against him. 10. The snare is laid for him in the ground, and a trap for him in the way.

The rest of Bildad's discourse is entirely taken up in an elegant description of the miscrable condition of a wicked man, in which there is a great deal of certain truth, and which will be of excellent use, if duly considered, that a sinful condition is a sad condition, and that iniquity will be men's ruin, if they do not repent of it. But, 1. It is not true that all wicked people are visibly and openly made thus miserable in this world; nor, 2. That all who are brought into great distress and trouble in this world, are therefore to be deemed and adjudged wicked men, though no other proof appears against them; and therefore, though Bildad thought the application of it to Job was easy, yet it was not safe nor just. In these verses we have,

(1.) The destruction of the wicked foreseen and foretold, under the similitude of darkness; (v. 5, 6.) Yea, the light of the wicked shall be fut out. Even his light, the best and brightest part of him, shall be put out; even that which he rejoiced in, shall fail him. Or, the yea may refer to Job's complaints of the great distress he was in, and the darkness he should shortly make his bed in. "Yea," says Bildad, "so it is, thou art clouded, and straitened, and made miserable, and no better could be expected; for the light of the wicked shall be fut out, and therefore thine shall." Observe here, [1.] The wicked may have some light for a while, some pleasure, some joy, some hope, without. But his light is but a spark, (v. 5.) a little thing, and soon extinguished. It is but a candle, (v. 6.) wasting and burning down, and easily blown out. It is not the light of the Lord, (that is, sun-light,) but the light of his oven fire, and sparks of his own kindling, Isa. 1. 11. [2.] Light will certainly be put out at length, quite put out, so that not the least spark of

It shall remain, with which to kindle another fire. Even while he is in his tabernacle, while he is in the body, which is the tabernacle of the soul, (2 Cor. v. I.) the light shall be dark, he shall have no true solid comfort, no joy that is satisfying, no hope that is supporting; even the light that is in him is darkness; and how great is that darkness! But, when he is put out of this tabernacle by death, his candle shall be fut out with him. The period of his life will be the final period of all his days, and will turn all his hopes into endless despair. When a wicked man dies, his expectation shall perish, Prov. xi. 7. He shall lie down in sorrow.

(2.) The preparatives for that destruction represented under the similitude of a beast or bird caught in a snare, or a malefactor arrested and taken into custody, in order to his punishment, v. 7..10.

[1.] Stan is preparing for his destruction. He is the robber that shall prevail against him; (v. 9.) for as he was a murderer, so he was a robber, from the beginning. He, as the tempter, lays snares for sinners in the way, wherever they go, and he shall prevail. If he make them sinful like himself, he will make them miserable like himself. He hunts for the precious life.

for the firectious life.

[2.] He is himself preparing for his own destruction, by going on in sin, and so treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. God gives him up, as he deserves and desires, to his own counsels, and then his own counsels cast him down, v. 7. His sinful projects and pursuits bring him into mischief. He is cast into a net by his own feet, (v. 8.) runs upon his own destruction, is snared in the work of his own hands, (Ps. ix. 16.) his own tongue falls upon him, Ps. lxiv. 8. In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare.

[3.] God is preparing for his destruction. The sinner by his sin is preparing the fuel, and then God by his wrath is preparing the fire. See here, First, How the sinner is infatuated, to run himself into the snare; whom God will destroy, he infatuates. Secondly, How he is embarrassed; the steps of his strength, his mighty designs and efforts, shall be straitened, so that he shall not compass what he intended; and the more he strives to extricate himself, the more will he be entangled. Evil men wax worse and worse. Thirdly, How he is secured and kept from outrunning the judgments of God that are in pursuit of him; the gin shall take him by the heel. He can no more escape the divine wrath that is in pursuit of him, than a man, so held, can flee from the pursuer. God knows how to reserve the wicked for the day of judgment, 2 Pet. ii. 9.

11. Terrors shall make him afraid on every side, and shall drive him to his feet. 12. His strength shall be hunger-bitten, and destruction shall be ready at his side. 13. It shall devour the strength of his skin: even the first-born of death shall devour his strength. 14. His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle; and it shall bring him to the king of terrors. 15. It shall dwell in his tabernacle, because it is none of his: brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation. 16. His roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut 17. His remembrance shall perish from the earth, and he shall have no name in the street. 18. He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world. 19. He shall neither have son nor

nephew among his people, nor any remaining in his dwellings. 20. They that come after him shall be astonished at his day, as they that went before were affrighted. 21 Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the place of him that knoweth not God.

Bildad here describes the descruction itself which wicked people are reserved for in the other world, and which, in some degree, often seizes them in this world. Come, and see what a miserable condition the sinner is in, when his day comes to fall.

I. See him disheartened and weakened by continual terrors, arising from the sense of his own guilt and the dread of God's wrath; (v. 11, 12.) Terror shall make him afraid on every side: the terrors of his own conscience shall haunt him, so that he shall never be easy; wherever he goes, these shall follow him, which way soever he looks, these shall stare him in the face. It will make him tremble to see himself fought against by the whole creation, to see Heaven frowning on him, hell gaping for him, and earth sick of him. He that carries his own accuser, and his own tormentors, always in his bosom, can-not but be afraid on every side. This will drive him to his feet, like the malefactor, who, being conscious of his guilt, flees when none fursues, Prov. xxviii. 1. But his feet will do him no service, they are fast in the snare, v. 9. The sinner may as soon overpower the divine omnipotence, as overrun the

divine omniscience, Amos ix. 2, 3.

No marvel that the sinner is dispirited, and distracted with fear, for, 1. He sees his ruin approaching; destruction shall be ready at his side, to seize him whenever justice gives the word, so that he is brought into desolation in a moment, Ps. lxxiii.

19. 2. He feels himself utterly unable to grapple with it, either to escape it, or to bear up under it. That which he relied upon as his strength, (his wealth, power, pomp, friends, and the hardiness of his own spirit,) shall fail him in the time of need, and be hunger-bitten, that is, it shall do him no more service than a famished man, pining away for hunger, would do in work or war. The case being thus with him, no marvel that he is a terror to himself. Note, The way of sin is a way of fear, and leads to everlasting confusion, of which the present terrors of an impure and unpacified conscience are earnests, as they were to Cain and Judas.

II. See him devoured and swallowed up by a miserable death; and miserable indeed a wicked man's death is, how secure and jovial soever his life was.

1. See him dying, arrested by the first born of death, some disease, or some stroke that has in it a more than ordinary resemblance of death itself; so great a death, as it is called, (2 Cor. i. 10.) a messenger of death, that has in it an uncommon strength and terror: the harbingers of death devour the strength of his skin, they bring rottenness into his bones, and consume them. His confidence shall then be rooted out of his tabernacle; (v. 14.) that is, all that he trusts to, for his support, shall be taken from him, and he shall have nothing to rely upon, no not his own tabernacle. His own soul was his confidence, but that shall be rooted out of the tabernacle of the body, as a tree that cumbered the ground. Thy soul shall be required of thee.

2. See him dead, and see his case then with an eye of faith. (1.) He is then brought to the king of terrors. He was surrounded with terrors while he lived, (v. 11.) and death was the king of all those terrors; they fought against the sinner in death's name, for it is by reason of death that sin-

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ners are, all their lifetime, subject to bondage, (Heb. ii. 15.) and, at length, they will be brought to that which they so long feared, as a captive to the conqueror. Death is terrible to nature; our Saviour himself prayed, Father, save me from this hour; but to the wicked it is, in a special manner, the king of terrors, both as it is a period to that life in which they placed their happiness, and a passage to that life where they will find their endless misery. How happy then are the saints, and how much indebted to the Lord Jesus, by whom death is so far abolished, and the property of it altered, that this king of terrors is become a friend and servant! (2.) He is then driven from light into darkness; (v. 18.) from the light of this world, and his prosperous condition in it, into darkness, the darkness of the grave, the darkness of hell, into utter darkness, never to see light, (Ps. xlix. 19.) not the least gleam, nor any hopes of it. (3.) He is then chased out of the world. hurried and dragged away by the messengers of death, sore against his will; chased as Adam out of paradise, for the world is his paradise. It intimates that he would fain stay here, he is loath to depart, but go he must; all the world is weary of him, and therefore chases him out, as glad to be rid of him. This is death to a wicked man.

III. See his family sunk and cut off, v. 15. wrath and curse of God light and lie, not only upon his head and heart, but upon his house too, to consume it, with the timber and stones thereof, Zech. v. 4. Death itself shall dwell in his tabernacle, and, having expelled him, shall take possession of his house, to the terror and destruction of all that he leaves behind; even the dwelling shall be ruined for the sake of its owner, brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation, rained upon it as upon Sodom, to the destruction of which this seems to have reference. Some think he here upbraids Job with the burning of his sheep and servants with fire from heaven. The reason is here given why his tabernacle is thus marked for ruin, because it is none of his; that is, it was unjustly got, and kept from the rightful owner, and therefore let him not expect either the comfort or the continuance of it.

His children shall perish, either with him or after him, v. 16. So that his roots being in his own person dried up beneath, above, his branch, every child of his family, shall be cut off. Thus the houses of Jeroboam, Baasha, and Ahab were cut off; none that descended from them were left alive. They who take root in the earth, may expect it will thus be dried up; but if we be rooted in Christ, even our leaf shall not wither, much less shall our branch be cut off. Those who consult the true honour of their family, and the welfare of its branches, will be afraid of withering it by sin. The extirpation of the sinner's family is mentioned again; (v. 19.) He shall nei-ther have son nor nephew, child nor grandchild, to enjoy his estate, and bear up his name, nor shall there be any remaining in his dwelling akin to him. Sin entails a curse upon posterity, and the iniquity of the fathers is often visited upon the children. Herein, also, it is probable that Bildad reflects upon the death of Job's children and servants, as a further proof of his being a wicked man; whereas all that are written childless, are not thereby written graceless; there is a name better than that of sons and daughters.

IV. See his memory buried with him, or made odious; he shall either be forgotten or spoken of with dishonour; (v. 17.) His remembrance shall herish from the earth; and if it perish from thence, it perishes wholly, for it was never written in heaven, as the names of the saints are, Luke x. 20. All his honour shall be laid and lost in the dust, or stained with perpetual infamy, so that he shall have

Thus the judgments of God follow him, after death, in this world, as an indication of the misery his soul is in after death, and an earnest of that everlasting shame and contempt to which he shall rise in the great day. The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot, Prov. x. 7.

V. See a universal amazement at his fall, v. 20. They that see it are affrighted, so sudden is the change, so dreadful the execution, so threatening to all about him; and they that come after, and hear the report of it, are astonished at it; their ears are made to tingle, and their hearts to tremble, and they cry out, Lord, how terrible art thou in thy judgments! A place or person, utterly ruined, is said to be made an astonishment, Deut. xxviii. 37. 2 Chron. vii. 21. Jer. xxv. 9, 18. Horrible sins

bring strange punishments.

Lastly, See all this averred as the unanimous knowledger of God, and their many observations of his providence; (v. 21.) Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the filuce, this the condition, of him that knows not God! See here what is the beginning, and what is the end, of the wickedness of this wicked world. 1. The beginning of it is ignorance of God, and it is a wilful ignorance, for there is that to be known of him which is sufficient to leave them for ever inexcusable. know not God, and then they commit all sin; Pharaoh knows not the Lord, and therefore will not obey his voice. 2. The end of it, and that is utter destruction. Such, so miserable, are the dwellings of the wicked. Vengeance will be taken of those that know not God, 2 Thess. i. 8. For those whom he has not honour from, he will get him honour upon. Let us therefore stand in awe and not sin, for it will certainly be bitterness in the latter end.

CHAP. XIX.

This chapter is Job's answer to Bildad's discourse in the foregoing chapter. Though his spirit was grieved and much heated, and Bildad was very peevish, yet he gave him leave to say all he designed to say, and did not break in upon him in the midst of his argument; but, when he had done, he gave him a fair answer; in which, I. He complains of unkind usage. And very unkindly he takes it, 1. That his comforters added to his affliction, v. 2. 7. 2. That his God was the Author of his affliction. tion, v. 8..12. 3. That his relations and friends were strange to him, and shy of him, in his affliction, v. 13. 4. That he had no compassion shown him in his affliction, v. 20..22. II. He comforts himself with the believing v. 20...22. II. He comforts himself with the believing hopes of happiness in the other world, though he had so little comfort in this, making a very solemn confession of his faith, with a desire that it might be recorded as an evidence of his sincerity, v. 23...27. III. He concludes with a caution to his friends not to persist in their hard censures of him, v. 28, 29. If the remonstrance Job here makes of his grievances may serve sometimes to justify our compaliates yet his cheefful views of the fujustify our complaints, yet his cheerful views of the future state, at the same time, may shame us Christians, and may serve to silence our complaints, or, at least, to balance them.

THEN Job answered and said, 2. How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words? 3. These ten times have ye reproached me: you are not ashamed that you make yourselves strange to me. 4. And be it indeed that I have erred, mine error remaineth with myself. 5. If indeed ye will magnify yourselves against me, and plead against me my reproach; 6. Know now that God hath overthrown me, and hath compassed me no name in the street, departing without being de- with his net. 7. Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard: I cry aloud, but there too much, seldom think they have said enough; is no judgment.

Job's friends had passed a very severe censure upon him as a wicked man, because he was so grievously afflicted; now here he tells them how ill he took it to be so censured. Bildad had twice begun with a How long; (ch. xviii. 2.) and therefore Job, being now to answer him particularly, begins with a How long too, v. 2. What is not liked, is commonly thought long; but Job had more reason to think them long who assaulted him, than they had to think him long, who only vindicated himself. Better cause may be shown for defending ourselves, if we have right on our side, than for offending our brethren, though we have right on our side. Now

observe here. I. How he describes their unkindness to him, and what account he gives of it. 1. They vexed his soul, and that is more grievous than the vexation of the bones, Ps. vi. 2, 3. They were his friends, they came to comfort him, pretended to counsel him for the best; but, with a great deal of gravity, and affectation of wisdom and piety, they set themselves to rob him of the only comfort he had now left him in a good God, a good conscience, and a good name; and this vexed him to the heart. 2. They brake him in pieces with words, and those were surely hard and very cruel words that would break a man to pieces: they grieved him, and so brake him; and therefore there will be a reckoning hereafter for all the hard speeches spoken against Christ and his people, Jude 15. 3. They reproached him, (v. 3.) gave him a bad character, and laid to his charge things that he knew not. To an ingenuous mind reproach is a cutting thing. 4. They made themselves strange to him, were shy of him, now that he was in his troubles; they did not know him, (ch. ii. 12.) were not free with him, as they used to be when he was in his prosperity. Those are governed by the spirit of the world, and not by any principles of true honour or love, who make themselves strange to their friends, or God's friends, when they are in trouble: a friend loves at all times. 5. They not only estranged themselves from him, but magnified themselves against him; (v. 5.) not only looked shy of him, but looked big upon him, and insulted over him, magnifying themselves, to depress him. It is a mean thing, it is a base thing, thus to trample upon those that are down. 6. They fileaded against him his reproach, that is, they made use of his affliction as an argument against him to prove him a wicked man. They should have pleaded for him his integrity, and helped him to take the comfort of that under his affliction, and so have pleaded that against his reproach, as St. Paul; (2 Cor. i. 12.) but, instead of that, they pleaded his reproach against his integrity, which was not only unkind, but very unjust; for where shall we find an nonest man, if reproach may be admitted for a plea against him?

II. How he aggravates their unkindness. 1. They had thus abused him often; (v. 3.) These ten times ye have reproached me, that is, very often, as Gen. xxxi. 7. Numb. xiv. 22. Five times they had spoken, and every speech was a double reproach. He spake as if he had kept a particular account of their reproaches, and could tell just how many they were: it is but a peevish and unfriendly thing to do so, and looks like a design of retaliation and revenge: we better befriend our own peace by forgetting injuries and unkindnesses, than by remembering them and scoring them up. 2. They continued still to do it, and seemed resolved to persist in it; "How long will ye do it?" v. 2, 5. "I see you will magnify yourselves against me, notwithstanding all I have said in mine own justification." Those that speak

too much, seldom think they have said enough; and, when the mouth is opened in passion, the ear is shut to reason. 3. They were not ashamed of what they did, v. 3. They had reason to be ashamed of their hard-heartedness, so ill becoming men, and their uncharitableness, so ill becoming good men, and their deceitfulness, so ill becoming friends; but were they ashamed? No, though they were told of it again and again, yet they could not blush.

III. How he answers their harsh censures, by showing them that what they condemned was capable of excuse, which they ought to have considered.

1. The errors of his judgment were excusable; (v. 4.) "Be it indeed that I have erred, that I am in the wrong through ignorance or mistake," which may well be supposed concerning men, concerning good men; Humanum est errare—Error cleaves to humanity; and we must be willing to suppose it concerning ourselves. It is folly to think ourselves infallible. "But be it so," said Job, "mine error remaineth with myself," that is, "I speak according to the best of my judgment, with all sincerity, and not from a spirit of contradiction." Or, "If I be in an error, I keep it to myself, and do not impose it upon others as you do. I only prove myself and my own work by it, I meddle not with other people, either to teach them or to judge them." Men's errors are the more excusable, if they keep them to themselves, and do not disturb others with them. Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself. Some give this sense of these words; "If I be in an error, it is I that must smart for it; and therefore you need not concern yourselves; nay, it is I that do smart, and smart severely, for it; and therefore you need not add to my misery by your reproaches."

2. The breakings out of his passion, though not

justifiable, yet were excusable, considering the vastness of his grief, and the extremity of his misery. "If you will go on to cavil at every complaining word I speak, will make the worst of it, and improve it against me, yet take the cause of the complaint along with you, and weigh that, before you pass a judgment upon the complaint, and turn it to my reproach: know then that God has overcome my reproach: know then that God has overcome me." v. 6. Three things he would have them consider, (1.) That his trouble was very great. He was overthrown, and could not help himself, enclosed as in a net, and could not get out. (2.) That God was the Author of it, and that in it he fought against him: "It was his hand that overthrew me, it is in his net that I am enlosed; and therefore you it is in his net that I am enclosed; and therefore you need not appear against me thus; I have enough to do to grapple with God's displeasure, let me not have yours also. Let God's controversy with me be ended, before you begin yours." It is barbarous to persecute him whom God hath smitten, and to talk to the grief of one whom he hath wounded, Ps. lxix. 26. (3.) That he could not obtain any hope of the redress of his grievances, v. 7. He complained of his pain, but got no ease; begged to know the cause of his afflictions, but could not discover it; appealed to God's tribunal for the clearing of his innocency, but could not obtain a hearing, much less a judgment, upon his appeal; I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard. God, for a time, may seem to turn away his ear from his people, to be angry at their prayers, and overlook their appeals to him, and they must be excused if, in that case, they complain bitterly. Woe unto us if God be against us!

8. He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass, and he hath set darkness in my paths. 9. He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown *from* my head. 10. He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone: and my hope hath he removed

wrath against me, and he counteth me unto him as one of his enemies. 12. His troops come together, and raise up their way against me, and encomp round about my tabernacle. 13. He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me. 14. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. 15. They that dwell in my house, and my maids, count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight. called my servant, and he gave me no answer: I entreated him with my mouth. 17. My breath is strange to my wife, though I entreated for the children's sake of mine own body. 18. Yea, young children despised me; I arose, and they spake against me. 19. All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me. 20. My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh, and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth. 21. Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me. 22. Why do ye persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh?

Bildad had very disingenuously perverted Job's complaints, by making them the description of the miserable condition of a wicked man; and yet he repeats them here, to move their pity, and to work upon their good nature, if they had any left in them.

I. He complains of the tokens of God's displeasure which he was under, and which infused the wormwood and gall into the affliction and misery. How doleful are the accents of his complaints; (v. 11.) "He hath kindled his wrath against me, which flames and terrifies me, which burns and pains me." What is the fire of hell but the wrath of God? Seared consciences will feel it hereafter, but do not fear it now. Enlightened consciences fear it now, but shall not feel it hereafter. Job's present apprehension was, that God counted him as one of his enemies; and yet, at the same time, God loved him, and gloried in him, as his faithful friend. It is a gress mistake, but a very common one, to think that whom God afflicts, he treats as his enemies; whereas, on the contrary, as many as he loves, he rebukes and chastens; it is the discipline of his sons. Which way soever Job looked, he thought he saw

the tokens of God's displeasure against him. 1. Did he look back upon his former prosperity? He saw God's hand putting an end to that; (v. 9.) "He has stripped me of my glory, my wealth, honour, power, and all the opportunity I had of doing good; my children were my glory, but I have lost them; and whatever was a crown to my head, he has taken it from me, and has laid all mine honour in the dust." See the vanity of worldly glory, it is what we may be soon stripped of; and whatever strips us, we must see and own God's hand in it, and comply with his design.

2. Did he look down upon his present troubles? He saw God giving them their commission, and their orders to attack him. They are his troops, that act by his direction, which encamp against me, v. 12. It did not so much trouble him, that his

like a tree. 11. He hath also kindled his | were God's troops, in whom it seemed as if God fought against him, and intended his destruction. God's troops encamped round his taternacie, as soldiers lay siege to a strong city, cutting off all provisions from being brought into it, and battering it continually; thus was Job's tabernacle besieged Time was when God's hosts encamped round him for safety; Hast thou not made a hedge about him! Now, on the contrary, they surrounded him, to his terror, and destroyed him on every side, v. 10.

3. Did he look forward for deliverance? He saw the hand of God cutting off all hopes of that; (v. 8.) "He hath fenced up my way, that I cannot pass; I have now no way left to help myself, either to extricate myself out of my troubles, or to ease myself under them. Would I make any motion, take any steps, toward deliverance? I find my way hedged up; I cannot do what I would; nay, if I would please myself with the prospect of a deliverance hereafter, I cannot do it; it is not only out of my reach, but out of my sight; God hath set darkness in my haths, and there is none to tell me how long," Ps. lxxiv.

9. He concludes; (v. 10.) "I am gone, quite lest and undone for this world; my hope hath he removed like a tree, cut down, or plucked up by the roots, which will never grow again." Hope in this life is a perishing thing, but the hope of good men, when it

is cut off from this world, is but removed like a tree, transplanted from this nursery to the garden of the Lord. We shall have no reason to complain, if God thus remove our hopes from the sand to the

rock, from things temporal to things eternal.

II. He complains of the unkindness of his relations, and of all his old acquaintance. In this also he owns the hand of God; (v. 13.) He has fut my brethren far from me, that is, "He has laid those afflictions upon me, which frighten them from me, and make them stand aloof from my sores." As it was their cin God was not the Author of it; is not the Author of it. was their sin, God was not the Author of it; it s Satan that alienates men's minds from their brethren in affliction; but as it was Job's trouble, God ordered it for the completing of his trial. As we must eye the hand of God in all the injuries we receive from our enemies, (the Lord bade Shimci curse David,) so also in all the slights and unkindnesses we receive from our friends, which will help us to bear them the more patiently. Every creature is that to us, (kind or unkind, comfortable or uncomfortable,) which God makes it to be: yet this does not excuse Job's relations and friends from the guilt of horrid ingratitude and injustice to him, which he had reason to complain of; few could have borne it so well as he did. He takes notice of the unkindness,

1. Of his kindred and acquaintance, his neighbors, and such as he had formerly been familiar with. who were bound by all the laws of friendship and civility to concern themselves for him, to visit him, and inquire after him, and to be ready to do him ali the good offices that lay in their power; yet these were estranged from him, (v. 13.) they took no more care about him than if he had been a stranger whom they never knew. His kinsfolk, who claimed relation to him when he was in prosperity, now failed him; they came short of their former professions of friendship to him, and his present expectations of kindness from them. Even his familiar friends, whom he was mindful of, had now f rgotten him, had forgotten both his former friendliness to them and his present miseries: they had heard of his troubles, and designed him a visit; but truly they forgot it, so little affected were they with it.

Nay, his inward friends, the men of his secret, whom he was most intimate with, and laid in his bosom, not only forgot him, but abhorred him, kept as far off him as they could, because he was poor, and could not entertain them as he used to do, and miseries came upon him in troops, as that they | because he was sore, and a loathsome spectacle

Those whom he loved, and who therefore were worse than publicans if they did not love him now that he was in distress, not only turned from him, but were turned against him, and did all they could to make him odious, so to justify themselves in being so strange to him, v. 19. So uncertain is the friendship of men; but, if God be our Friend, he will not fail us in a time of need. But let none that pretend either to humanity or Christianity, ever use their friends as Job's friends used him: adversity is the proof of friendship.

2. Of his domestics and family-relations. Sometimes, indeed, we find that, beyond our expectation, there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother; but, at least, the muster of a family expects to be attended on, and taken care of, by those of his family, even then when, through weakness of body or mind, he is become despicable to others. But poor Job was misused by his own family, and some of his worst foes were those of his own house. He mentions not his children, they were all dead, and we may suppose that the unkindness of his surviving relations made him lament the death of his children so much the more: "If they had been alive," (would he think,) "I should have had comfort in them." As for those that were now about him,

(1.) His own servants slighted him: his maids did not attend him in his illness, but counted him for a stranger and an alien, v. 15. His other servants never heeded him; if he called to them they would not come at his call, but pretended that they did not hear him. It he asked them a question, they would not vouchsafe to give him an answer, v. 16. Job had been a good master to them, and did not despise their cause when they pleaded with him, (ch. xxxi. 13.) and yet they were rude to him now, and despised his cause when he pleaded with them. We must not think it strange if we receive evil at the hand of those from whom we have deserved Though he was now sickly, yet he was not cross with his servants, and imperious, as is too common, but he entreated his servants with his mouth, when he had authority to command: and yet they would not be civil to him, neither kind nor just. Note, Those that are sick and in sorrow are apt to take things ill, and be jealous of a slight, and to lay to heart the least unkindness done to them: when Job was in affliction, even his servants' neglect of him troubled him.

(2.) But, one would think, when all forsook him, the wife of his bosom should have been tender of him: no, because he would not curse God and die, as she persuaded him, his breath was strange to her too, she did not care for coming near him, nor took any notice of what he said, v. 17. Though he spake to her, not with the authority, but with the tenderness, of a husband, did not command, but entreated her by that conjugal love which their children were the pledges of, yet she regarded him not. Some read it, "Though I lamented, or bemoaned myself, for the children," that is, "for the death of the children of my own body;" an affliction in which she was equally concerned with him. Now, it appeared, the Devil spared her to him, not only to be his tempter, but to be his tormentor. By what she said to him at first, Curse God and die, it appeared that she had little religion in her; and what can one expect that is kind and good from those that have not the fear of God before their eyes, and are not governed by conscience?

(3.) Even the little children who were born in his house, the children of his own servants, who were his servants by birth, despised him, and spake against him; (v. 18.) though he arose in civility to speak friendly to them, or with authority to check them, they let him know, that they neither feared him, nor loved him.

the beauty and strength of that were gene. When those about him slighted him, if he had been in health, and at ease, he might have enjoyed himself. But he could take as little pleasure in himself as others took in him; (v. 20.) My bone cleaves now to my skin, as formerly it did to my flesh; this was it that filled him with wrinkles; (ch. xvi. 8.) he was a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones. Nay, his skin too was almost gone, little remained unbroken but the skin of his teeth, his gums, and perhaps his lips, all the rest was fetched off by his sore boils. See what little reason we have to indulge the body, which, after all our care, may be thus consumed by the diseases which it has in itself the seeds of.

Lastly, Upon all these accounts, he recommends himself to the compassion of his friends, and justly blames their harshness with him. From this representation of his deplorable case, it was easy to infer

infer,

1. That they ought to *pity him*, v. 21. This he begs in the most moving, melting, language that could be, enough (one would think) to break a heart of stone: "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; if ye will do nothing else for me, be sorry for me, and show some concern for me; have pity upon me, for the hand of God hath touched me; my case is sad indeed, for I am fallen into the hands of the living God, my spirit is touched with the sense of his wrath, a calamity of all other the most piteous." Note, It becomes friends to pity one another when they are in any trouble, and not to shut up the bowels of compassion.

2. That, however, they ought not to persecute him: if they would not ease his affliction by their pity, yet they must not be so barbarous as to add to it by their censures and reproaches; (v. 22.) "Why do ye persecute me as God? Surely his rebukes are enough for one man to bear, you need not add your wormwood and gall to the cup of affliction he puts into my hand, it is bitter enough without that: Ged has a sovereign power over me, and may do what he pleases with me; but do you think that you may do so too?" No, we must aim to be like the Most Holy and the Most Merciful, but not like the Most High and Most Mighty. God gives not account of any of his matters, but we must. If they did delight in his calamity, let them be satisfied with his flesh, which was wasted and gone, but let them not, as if that were too little, wound his spirit, and ruin Great tenderness is owing to those his good name. that are in affliction, especially to those that are troubled in mind.

23. Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! ${f T}$ hat they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! 25. For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: 26. And though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: 27. Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me. 28. But ye should say, Why persecute we him? seeing the root of the matter is found in me. 29. Be ye afraid of the sword: for wrath bringeth the punishments of the sword, that ye may know there is a judgment.

In all the conferences between Job and his friends, we do not find any more weighty and considerable

lines than these; would one have expected it? Here is much both of Christ and heaven in these verses: and he that said such things as these, declared plainly that he sought the better country; that is, the heavenly; as the patri rchs of that age did, Heb. xi. 14. We have here Job's creed, or confession of faith: his belief in God the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth, and the principles of natural religion, he had often professed; but here we find him no stranger to revealed religion. Though the him no stranger to revealed religion. revelation of the Promised Sced, and the promised inheritance, was then discerned only like the dawning of the day, yet Job was taught of God to believe in a living Redeemer, and to look for the resurrec-tion of the dead, and the life of the world to come, for of these, doubtless, he must be understood to speak: these were the things he comforted himself with the expectation of, and not a deliverance from his trouble, or revival of his happiness, in this world, as some would understand him. For, beside that the expressions he here uses, of the Redeemer's standing at the latter day upon the earth, of his seeing God, and seeing him for himself are wretchedly forced, if they be understood of any temporal deliverance, it is very plain that he had no expectation at all of his return to a prosperous condition in this world. He had just now said, that his way was fenced up, (v. 8.) and his hope removed like a tree, v. 10. Nay, and after this, he expressed his despair of any comfort in this life, ch. xxiii. 8, 9.—xxx. 23. So that we must necessarily understand him of the redemption of his soul from the power of the grave, and his reception to glory, which is spoken of, Ps. xlix. 15. We have reason to think that Job was just now under an extraordinary impulse of the blessed Spirit, which raised him above himself, gave him light, and gave him utterance, even to his own surprise. And some observe, that, after this, we do not find in Job's discourses such passionate, peevish, unbecoming, complaints of God and his providence, as we have before met with: this hope quieted his spirit, stilled the storm, and, having here cast anchor within the veil, his mind was kept steady from this time forward. Let us observe,

I. To what intent Job makes this confession of his faith here; never did any thing come in more pertinently, or to better purpose. 1. Job was now accused, and this was his appeal. His friends reproached him as a hypocrite, and contemned him as a wicked man; but he appeals to his creed, to his faith, to his hope, and to his own conscience; which not only acquitted him from reigning sin, but comforted him with the expectation of a blessed resurrection: these are not the words of him that has a devil. He appeals to the coming of the Redeemer, from this wrangle at the bar to the judgment of the bench, even to Him to whom all judgment is committed, who, he knew, would right him. The consideration of God's day coming, will make it a very The consmall thing with us to be judged of man's judgment, 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4. How easily may we bear the unjust calumnies and reproaches of men, while we expect the glorious appearance of our Redeemer, and his redeemed, at the last day; and that there will then he a resurrection of names as well as bodies! Job was now afflicted, and this was his cordial; when he was pressed above measure, this kept him from fainting; he believed that he should see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living; not in this world, for that is the land of the dying.

II. With what a solemn preface he introduces it, v. 23, 24. He breaks off his complaints abruptly, to triumph in his comforts; which he does, not only for his own satisfaction, but for the edification of others. Those now about him, he feared, would little regard what he said, and so it proved; he therefore wished it might be recorded for the gene- and, where it is known, it may be triumphed in, as

rations to come. O that my words were now written the words I am now about to say! As if he had said, "I own I have spoken many unadvised words, which I could wish might be forgotten, for they will neither do me credit, nor do others good. But I am now going to speak deliberately, and that which I desire may be published to all the world, and preserved for the generations to come, in perpetuam rei memoriam-for an abiding memorial, and therefore that it may be written plain, drawn out in large and legible characters, so that he that runs may read it; and that it may not be left in loose papers, but put into a book; or, if that should perish, that it may be engraven like an inscription upon a monument, with an iron pen, in lead, or in the stone; let the engraver use all his art to make it a durable appeal to posterity." That which Job here somewhat passionately wished for, God graciously granted him; his words are written, they are printed in God's book; so that wherever that book is read. there shall this be told for a memorial concerning Job, He believed, therefore he spake.

III. What his confession itself is; what are the words which he would have to be written. We here have them written, v. 25..27. Let us observe

them.

1. He believes the glory of the Redeemer, and his own interest in him; (v. 25.) I know that my Redeemer liveth; that he is in being, and is my Life, and that he shall stand at last, or stand the last, or at the latter day, upon (or above) the earth. He shall be raised up, or, He shall be (at the latter day, that is, in the fulness of time; the gospel-day is called the last time, because that is the last dispensation) upon the earth: so it points at his incar nation; or, He shall be lifted up from the earth; (so it points at his crucifixion;) or, raised up out of the earth; so it is applicable to his resurrection; or, as we commonly understand it, At the end of time, he shall appear over the earth, for he shall come in the clouds, and every eye shall see him, so close shall he come to this earth. He shall stand upon the dust, so the word is; upon all his enemies, which shall be put as dust under his feet; and he shall tread upon them and triumph over them.

Observe here, (1.) That there is a Redeemer provided for fallen man, and Jesus Christ is that Re-The word is Goel, which is used for the next of kin, to whom, by the law of Moses, the right of redeeming a mortgaged estate did belong. Lev. xxv. 25. Our heavenly inheritance was mortgaged by sin, we are ourselves utterly unable to redeem it. Christ is near of kin to us, the next Kinsman that is able to redeem; he has paid our debt, satisfied God's justice for sin, and so has taken off the mortgage, and made a new settlement of the inheritance! Our persons also want a Redeemer, we are sold for sin, and sold under sin; our Lord Jesus has wrought out a redemption for us, and proclaims redemption to us, and so he is truly the Redeemer. (2.) He is a living Redeemer: as we are made by a living God, so we are saved by a living Redeemer, who is both almighty and eternal, and is Of him is therefore able to save to the uttermost. is witnessed that he liveth; Heb. vii. 8. Rev. i. 18 We are dying, but he liveth, and hath assured us. that because he lives, we shall live also, John xiv. 19. (3.) There are those that, through grace, have ar interest in this Redeemer, and can, upon good grounds, call him theirs. When Job had lost all his wealth, and all his friends, yet he was not separated from Christ, nor cut off from his relation to him. "Still he is my Redeemer." That next Kinsman adhered to him when all his other kindred forsook him, and he had the comfort of it. (4.) Our inte rest in the Redeemer is a thing that may be known, sufficient to balance all our griefs; I know. Observe with what an air of assurance he speaks it, as one confident of this very thing; I know that my Re-deemer lives. His friends had often charged him with ignorance or vain knowledge; but he knows enough, and knows to good purpose, who knows Christ to be his Redeemer. (5.) There will be a latter day, a last day, a day when time shall be no more, Rev. x. 6. That is a day we are concerned to think of every day. (6.) Our Redeemer will, at that day, stand upon the earth, or over the earth, to summon the dead out of their graves, and determine them to an unchangeable state, for to him all judgment is committed. He shall stand, at the last, on the dust to which this earth will be reduced by the conflagration.

2. He believes the happiness of the redeemed, and his own title to that happiness, that, at Christ's second coming, believers shall be raised up in glory, and so made perfectly blessed in the vision and fruition of God; and this he believes with application

to himself.

(1.) He counts upon the corrupting of his body in the grave, and speaks of it with a holy carelessness and unconcernedness; Though, after my skin (which is already wasted and gone, none of it remaining but the skin of my teeth, v. 20.) they destroy (they that are appointed to destroy it, the grave, and the worms in it, of whom he had spoken, ch. xvii. 14.) this body. The word body is added: "Though they destroy this, this skeleton, this shadow, (ch. xvii. 7.) this that I lay my hand upon," or (pointing perhaps to his weak and withered limbs) "this that you see, call it what you will, I expect that shortly it will be a feast for the worms." Christ's body saw not corruption, but ours must! And Job mentions this, that the glory of the resurrection he believed and hoped for might shine the more bright. Note, It is good for us often to think, not only of the approaching death of our bodies, but of their destruction and dissolution in the grave; yet let not that discourage our hope of their resurrection, for the same power that made man's body at first, out of common dust, can raise it out of its own dust. This body, which we now take such care about, and make such provision for, will, in a little time, be destroyed; Even my reins (says Job) shall be consumed within me; (v. 27.) the innermost part of the body, which perhaps putrifies first.

(2.) He comforts himself with the hopes of happiness on the other side death and the grave; After I shall awake, (so the margin reads it,) though this body be destroyed, yet out of my flesh shall I see God.

[1.] Soul and body shall come together again. That body which must be destroyed in the grave, shall be raised again, a glorious body; Yet in my flesh I shall see God. The separate soul has eves wherewith to see God, eyes of the mind; but Job speaks of seeing him with eyes of flesh, in my flesh, with mine eyes; the same body that died shall rise again, a true body, but a glorified body, fit for the employments and entertainments of that world; and therefore a shiritual body, 1 Cor. xv. 44. Let us therefore glorify God with our bodies, because there is such a glory designed for them.

[2.] Job and God shall come together again; In my flesh shall I see God, that is, the glorified Redeemer, who is God. I shall see God in my flesh, so some read it; the Son of God clothed with a body which will be visible even to eyes of flesh. Though the body, in the grave, seem despicable and miserible, yet it shall be dignified and made happy in the vision of God. Job now complained that he could not get a sight of God, (ch. xxiii. 8, 9.) but hopes to see him shortly, never more to lose the sight of him, and that sight of him will be the more welcome after the present darkness and distance.

Note, It is the blessedness of the blessed that they shall see God, shall see him as he is, see him face to face, and no longer through a glass darkly. with what pleasure holy Job enlarges upon this; (v. 27.) "Whom I shall see for myself," that is, "see and enjoy, see to my own unspeakable comfort and satisfaction. I shall see him as mine, as mine with an appropriating sight," Rev. xxi. 3. God himself shall be with them, and be their God, they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is, that is, seeing for themselves, 1 John iii. 2. Mine eyes shall behold him, and not another. First, "He, and not another for him, shall be seen, not a type or figure of him, but he himself." Glorified saints are perfectly sure that they are not imposed upon, it is no deceptio visus-illusion of the senses. Secondly, "I, and not another for me, shall see him. Though my flesh and body be consumed, yet I shall not need a proxy, I shall see him with my own eyes." This was what Job hoped for, and what he earnestly desired; which, some think, is the meaning of the last clause, Mu reins are spent in my bosom, that is, "All my desires are summed up and concluded in this; this will crown and complete them all; let me have this, and I shall have nothing more to desire; it is enough, it is all." With this the prayers of David, the son of Jesse. are ended.

IV. The application of this to his friends. His creed spake comfort to himself, but warning and terror to them that set themselves against him.

1. It was a word of caution to them, not to proceed and persist in their unkind usage of him, v. He had reproved them for what they had said, and now tells them what they should say for the reducing of themselves and one another to a bet-ter temper. "Why persecute we him thus? Why do we grieve him and vex him, by censuring and condemning him, seeing the root of the matter, or the root of the word, is found in him?" Let this direct us, (1.) In our care concerning ourselves. We are all concerned to see to it, that the root of the matter be found in us. A living, quickening, commanding, principle of grace in the heart, is the root of the matter, as necessary to our religion as the root to the tree, to which it owes both its fixedness and its fruitfulness: love to God and our brethren, faith in Christ, hatred of sinthese are the root of the matter, other things are but leaves in comparison with this; serious godliness is the one thing needful. (2.) In our conduct We are to believe that toward our brethren. many have the root of the matter in them, who are not in every thing of our mind, who have their follies, and weaknesses, and mistakes: and, to conclude, it is at our peril if we persecute any such. Woe be to him that offends one of those little ones! God will resent and revenge it. Job and his friends differed in some notions concerning the methods of Providence, but they agreed in the root of the matter, the belief of another world, and therefore should not persecute one another for these differences.

2. It was a word of terror to them. Christ's second coming will be very dreadful to those that are found smiting their fellow servants; (Matth. xxiv. 49.) and therefore, (v. 29.) "Be ye afraid of the sword, the flaming sword of God's justice, which turns every way; fear lest you make yourselves obnoxious to it." Good men need to be frightened from sin by the terrors of the Almighty, particularly from the sin of rashly judging their brethren, Matth. vii. 1. Jam. iii. 1. Those that are peevish and passionate with their brethren, censorious of them, and malicious toward them, should know, not only that their wrath, whatever it pretends, works not the righteousness of God, but, (1.) They may expect to smart for it in this world; it brings

the funishments of the sword: wrath leads to such | crimes as expose men to the sword of the magistrate; however, God often takes vengeance for it, and those that showed no mercy, shall find no mercy. (2.) If they repent not, that will be an earnest of worse. By these you may know there is a judgment, not only a present government, but a future judgment, in which hard speeches must be accounted for

CHAP, XX.

One would have thought that such an excellent confession of faith as Job made in the close of the foregoing chapter, should have satisfied his friends, or, at least, have nollified them; but they do not seem to have taken any notice of it, and therefore Zophar here takes his turn, enters the lists with Joh, and attacks him with as much vehemence as before. I. His preface is short, but hot, venemence as before. 1. It is preface is short, but not, v. 2, 3. II. His discourse is long, and all upon one subject, the very same that Bildad was large upon, (ch. xviii.) the certain misery of wieked people, and the ruin that awaits them. 1. He asserts in general, that the prosperit of middle asserts is chost and his ruin sure v. perity of a wicked person is short, and his ruin sure, v. 4..9. 2. He proves the misery of his condition by many instances—That he should have a diseased body, a troubled conscience, a ruined estate, a beggared family, an infamous name, and that he himself shall perish under the weight of divine wrath. All this is most euriously described here in lofty expressions and lively similitudes; and it often proves true in this world, and always in another, without repentance, v. 10...29. But the great mistake was, and (as Bishop Patrick expresses it) all the flaw in his discourse, (which was common to him with the year) that he in-mistal Calendar and Calendar with the rest,) that he imagined God never varied from this method, and therefore Job was, without doubt, a very bad man, though it did not appear he was, any other way than by his infelicity.

1. THEN answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said, 2. Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer, and for this I make haste. 3. I have heard the check of my reproach, and the spirit of my understanding causeth me to answer. 4. Knowest thou not this of old, since man was placed upon earth, 5. That the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment? 6. Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds: Yet he shall perish for ever like his own dung: they which have seen him shall say, Where is he? 8. He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found; yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night. 9. The eye also which saw him shall see him no more; neither shall his place any more behold him.

I. Zophar begins very passionately, and seems to be in a great heat at what Job had said. Being resolved to condemn Job for a bad man, he was much displeased that he talked so like a good man, and, as it should seem, brake in upon him, and begin abruptly; (v. 2.) Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer. He takes no notice of what Job had said, to move their pity, or to evidence his own integrity, but fastens upon the reproof he gave them in the close of his discourse, counts that a reproach, and thinks himself therefore obliged to answer, because Job had bidden them be afraid of the sword, that he might not seem to be frightened by his menaces. The best counsel is too often ill taken from an antagonist, and therefore usually I tified, and made miserable.

may be well spared. Zophar seemed more in haste to speak than became a wise man; but he excuses it with two things. 1. That Job had given him a strong provocation; (v. 3.) "I have heard the check of my reproach, and cannot bear to hear it any longer." Job's friends, I doubt, had spirits too high to deal with a man in his low condition; and high spirits are impatient of contradiction, and think themselves affronted, if all about them do not say as they say: they cannot bear a check, but they call it the check of their reproach, and then they are bound in honour to return it, if not to draw upon him that gave it. 2. That his own heart gave him a strong instigation. His thoughts caused him to answer, (v. 2.) for out of the abundance of the hear the mouth speaks; but he fathers it (v. 3.) upon the spirit of his understanding: that indeed should cause us to answer, we should rightly apprehend a thing, and duly consider it, before we speak to it; but whether it did so here or no, is a question: men often mistake the dictates of their passion for the dictates of their reason, and therefore think they do well to be angry.

II. Zophar proceeds very plainly to show the ruin and destruction of wicked people, insinuating that because Job was destroyed and ruined, he was

certainly a wicked man, and a hypocrite.

Observe, 1. How this doctrine is introduced; (v. 4.) where he appeals, (1.) To Job's own knowledge and conviction; "Knowest thou not this? Canst thou be ignorant of a truth so plain? Or canst thou doubt of a truth which has been confirmed by the suffrage of all mankind?" Those know little, who do not know that the wages of sin is death. (2.) To the experience of all ages. It was known of old, since man was placed upon the earth, that is, ever since man was made, he has had this truth written in his heart, that the sin of sinners will be their ruin; and ever since there were instances of wickedness, (which there were soon after man was placed on the earth,) there were instances of the punishments of it, witness the exclusions of Adam and Cain. When sin entered into the world, death entered with it: all the world knows that evil pursues sinners, whom vengeance suffers not to live, (Acts xxviii. 4.) and subscribes to that, (Isa. iii. 11.) Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him, sooner or later.

2. How it is laid down; (v. 5.) The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment. Observe, (1.) He asserts the misery, not only of those who are openly wicked and profane, but of hypocrites, who secretly practise wickedness under a show and profession of religion, because such a wicked man he looked upon Job to be; and it is true that a form of godliness, if it be made use of for a cloak of maliciousness, does but make bad worse; dissembled piety is double iniquity, and the ruin that attends it will be accordingly. The hottest place in hell will be the portion of hypocrites, as our Saviour intimates, Matth xxiv. 51. (2.) He grants that wicked men may, for a time, prosper, may be secure and easy, and very merry; you may see them in triumph and joy, triumphing and rejoicing in their wealth and power. their grandeur and success, triumphing and rejoicing over their poor honest neighbours whem they vex and oppress: they feel no evil, they fear none. Job's friends were loath to own, at first, that wicked people might prosper at all, (ch. iv. 9.) until Job proved it plainly; (ch. ix. 24.—xii. 6.) and now Zophar yields it: but, (3.) He lays it down for a certain truth, that they will not prosper long. Their joy is but for a moment, and will quickly end in endless sorrow; though he be ever so great,

and rich, and jovial, he will be humbled, and mor

3. How it is illustrated, v. 6, &c.

(1.) He supposes his prosperity to be very high, as high as you can imagine, v. 6. It is not his wisdom and virtue, but his worldly wealth and greatness, that he accounts his excellency, and values himself upon: we will suppose those to mount up to the heavens, and, since his spirit always rises with his condition, you may suppose that with it his head reaches to the clouds. He is every way ad-vanced, the world has done the utmost it can for him, he looks down upon all about him with disdain, while they look up to him with admiration, envy, or fear; we will suppose him to bid fair for a universal monarchy. And though he cannot but have made himself many enemies before he arrived to this pitch of prosperity, yet he thinks himself as much out of the reach of their darts as if he were in the clouds.

(2.) He is confident that his ruin will, accordingly, be very great, and his fall the more dreadful for his having risen so high; He shall perish for ever, v. 7. His pride and security were the certain presages of his misery. This will certainly be true of all impenitent sinners in the other world, they shall be undone, for ever undone; but Zophar means his ruin in this world: and indeed sometimes notorious sinners are remarkably cut off by present judgments, they have reason enough to fear what Zophar here threatens even the triumphant sinner with. [1.] A shameful destruction. He shall perish like his own dung or dunghill, so loathsome is he to God and all good men, and so willing will the world be to part with him, Ps. cxix. 119. Isa. lxvi. 24. [2.] A surprising destruction. He will be brought into desolation in a moment, (Ps. lxxiii. 19.) so that those about him, that saw him but just now, will ask, "Where is he? Could he that made so great a figure vanish and expire so suddenly?"
[3.] A swift destruction, v. 8. He shall fly away upon the wings of his own terrors, and be chased away by the just imprecations of all about him, who would gladly be rid of him. [4] An utter destruction. It will be total; he shall go away like a dream, or vision of the night, which was a mere phantasm, and, whatever in it pleased the fancy, it is quite gone, and nothing of it remains, but what serves us to laugh at the folly of. It will be final, v. 9. The eye that saw him, and was ready to adore him, shall see him no more, and the place he filled shall no more behold him, having given him an eternal farewell when he went to his own place, as Judas, Acts i. 25.

10. His children shall seek to please the poor, and his hands shall restore their goods. 11. His bones are full of the sin of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust. 12. Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue; 13. Though he spare it, and forsake it not, but keep it still within his mouth; 14. Yet his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him. 15. He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again: God shall cast them out of his 16. He shall suck the poison of asps: the viper's tongue shall slay him. 17. He shall not see the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter. 18. That which he laboured for shall he restore, and shall not swallow it down: according to his substance shall the restitution be, and he

shall not rejoice therein. 19. Because he hath oppressed and hath forsaken the poor. because he hath violently taken away a house which he builded not; 20. Surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly, he shall not save of that which he desired. 21. There shall none of his meat be left; therefore shall no man look for his goods. In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits: every hand of the wicked shall come upon him.

The instances here given of the miserable condition of the wicked man in this world, are expressed with a great fulness and fluency of language, and the same thing returned to again, and repeated in other words. Let us therefore reduce the particulars to their proper heads; and observe,

I. What his wickedness is, for which he is pu

1. The lusts of the flesh, here called the sins of his youth; (v. 11.) for those are the sins which, at that age, people are most tempted to. The forbidden pleasures of sense are said to be sweet in his mouth; (v. 12.) he indulges himself in all the gratifications of the carnal appetite, and takes an inordinate complacency in them, as yielding the most agreeable delights. That is the satisfaction which he hides under his tongue, and rolls there, as the most dainty delicate thing that can be: he keeps it still within his mouth; (v. 13.) let him have that, and he desires no more; he will never part with that for the spiritual and divine p'easures of religion, which he has no relish of, nor affection for. His keeping it still in his mouth, denotes both his obstinate persisting in his sin, (he spares it when he should kill and mortify it, and forsakes it not, but holds it fast, and goes on frowardly in it,) and also his re-acting of his sin, by revolving it, and remembering it with pleasure, as that adulterous woman, (Ezek. xxiii. 19.) who multiplied her whoredoms by calling to remembrance the days of her youth; so does this wicked man here. Or, his hiding it and keeping it under his tongue denotes his industrious concealment of his beloved lust: being a hypocrite, that he may save the credit of his profession, he has secret haunts of sin; but he who knows what is in the heart, knows what is under the tongue too, and will discover it shortly.

2. The love of the world and the wealth of it; that is it in which he places his happiness, and which therefore he sets his heart upon. See here, (1.) How greedy he is of it, v. 15. He has swallowed down riches, as eagerly as ever a hungry man swallowed down meat; and is still crying, "Give, give." It is that which he desired: (v. 20.) it was, in his eye, the best gift, and that which he coveted earnestly. (2.) What pains he takes for it; it is that which he laboured for, (v. 18.) not by honest diligence in a lawful calling, but by an unwearied prosecution of all ways and methods, her must labour, not to be rich, (Prov. xxiii. 4.) but to be charitable, that we may have to give, (Eph. iv. 28.) not to spend. (3.) What great things he promises himself from it, intimated in the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter; (v. 17.) his being disappointed of them supposes that he had flattered himself with the hopes of them: he ex-

pected rivers of sensual delights.

3. Violence, and oppression, and injustice, to his This was the sin of the poor neighbours, v. 19. giants of the old world, and a sin that, as much as any other, brings God's judgments upon nations and

f milies. It is charged upon this wicked man, (1.) That he has forsaken the poor, taken no care of them, showed no kindness to them, nor made any provision for them. At first, perhaps, for a pre-tence, he gave alms like the Pharisees, to gain a reputation; but, when he had served his turn with it, he left it off, and forsook the poor, whom before he seemed to be concerned for. Those who do good, but not from a good principle, though they may abound in it, will not abide in it. (2.) That he has oppressed them, crushed them, taken all advantages against them to do them a mischief: to enrich himself, he has made the poor poorer. That he has violently taken away their houses, which he had no right to, as Ahab took Naboth's vineyard, not by secret fraud, by forgery, perjury, or some trick in law, but avowedly, and by open violence.

II. What his punishment is, for this wickedness. 1. He shall be disappointed in his expectations, and shall not find that satisfaction in his worldly wealth which he vainly promised himself; (v. 17.) He shall never see the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter, with which he hoped to glut himself. The world is not that to those who love it, and court it, and admire it, which they fancy it will be. The enjoyment sinks far below the raised

2. He shall be diseased and distempered in his body; and how little comfort a man has in riches, if he has not health! Sickness and pain, especially if they be in extremity, imbitter all his enjoyments. This wicked man has all the delights of sense wound up to the height of pleasurableness; but what real happiness can he enjoy, when his bones are full of the sins of his youth, (v. 11.) that is, of the effects of those sins? By his drunkenness and gluttony, his uncleanness and wantonness, when he was young, he contracted those diseases which are painful to him long after, and, perhaps, make his life very miserable, and, as Solomon speaks, consume his flesh and his body, Prov. v. 11. Perhaps he was given to fight when he was young, and then made nothing of a cut or a bruise in a fray; but he feels it in his bones long after. But can he get no ease, no relief? No, he is likely to carry his pains and diseases with him to the grave, or rather, they are likely to carry him thither, and so the sins of his youth shall lie down with him in the dust: the very putrifying of his body in the grave is to him the effect of sin; (ch. xxiv. 19.) so that his iniquity is upon his bones there, Ezek. xxxii. 27. The sin of sinners follows them to the other side death:

3. He shall be disquieted and troubled in his mind; Surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly, v. 20. He has not that ease in his own mind that pe ple think he has, but is in continual agitation. The ill-gotten wealth which he has swallowed down, makes him sick, and, like undigested meat, is always upbraiding him. Let none expect to enjoy that comfortably which they have gotten unjustly. The unquietness of his mind arises, (1.) From his conscience looking back, and filling him with the fear of the wrath of God against him, for his wickedness. Even that wickedness which was sweet in the commission, and was rolled under the tongue as a delicate morsel, becomes bitter in the reflection, and, when it is reviewed, fills him with horror and vexation. In his bowels, it is turned, (v. 14.) like John's book; in his mouth as sweet as honey, but, when he had eaten it, his belly was bitter, Rev. x. 10. Such a thing is sin; it is turned into the gall of asps, than which nothing is more bitter, the poison of asps, (v. 16.) than which nothing more fatal, tend so it will be to him; what he sucked so sweetly, and with so much pleasure, will prove to him the poison of asps; so will all unlawful gains be. 1. woing tongue will prove the viper's tongue. All | reduced to the last extremity.

the charming graces that are thought to be in sin, when conscience is awakened, will turn into so many raging furies. (2.) From his cares looking forward, v. 22. In the fulness of his sufficiency, when he thinks himself most happy, and most sure of the continuance of his happiness, he shall be in straits, that is, he shall think himself so, through the anxieties and perplexities of his own mind, as that rich man who, when his ground brought forth plentifully, cried out, what shall I do? Luke xii. 17.

4. He shall be dispossessed of his estate; that shall sink and dwindle away to nothing, so that he shall not rejoice therein, v. 18. He shall not only never rejoice truly, but not long rejoice at all.

(1.) What he has unjustly swallowed, he shall be compelled to disgorge; (v. 15.) He swallowed down riches, and then thought himself sure of them, and that they were as much his own as the meat he has eaten, but he is deceived, he shall vomit them up again; his own conscience perhaps may make him so uneasy in the keeping of what he has gotten, that, for the quiet of his own mind, he shall make restitution, and that not with the pleasure of a virtue, but the pain of a vomit, and with the utmost reluctancy. Or, if he do not himself refund what he has violently taken away, God shall, by his providence, force him to it, and bring it about, one way or other, that ill-gotten goods shall return to the right owners. God shall east them out of his belly, while yet the love of the sin is not cast out of his heart. So loud shall the clamours of the poor, whom he has impoverished, be against him, that he shall be forced to send his children to them, to sooth them, and beg their pardon; (v. 10.) His children shall seek to please the poor, while his own hands shall restore them their goods with shame, v. 18. That which he laboured for, by all the arts of oppression, shall he restore, and shall not se swallow it down as to digest it; it shall not stay with him, but according to his sham'e shall the restitution be; having gotten a great deal unjustly, he shall restore a great deal, so that when every one has his own, he will have but a little left for himself. To be made to restore what was unjustly gotten, by the sanctifying grace of God, as Zaccheus was, is a great mercy; he voluntarily and cheerfully restored four-fold, and yet had a great deal left to give to the hoor, Luke xix. 8. But to be forced to restore, as Judas was, merely by the horrors of a despairing conscience, has none of that benefit and comfort attending it, for he threw down the pieces of silver, and went and hanged himself.

(2.) He shall be stripped of all he has, and become a beggar. He that spoiled others, shall himself be spoiled; (Isa. xxxiii. 1.) for every hand of the wicked shall be upon him. The innocent, whom he has wronged, sit down by their loss, saving, as David, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked, but my hand shall not be upon him, 1 Sam. xxiv. 13. But though they have forgiven him, though they will make no reprisals, divine justice will, and often makes the wicked to avenge the quarrel of the righteous, and squeezes and crushes one bad man by the hand of another upon him. Thus when he is plucked on all sides, he shall not save of that which he desired; (v. 20.) not only he shall not save it all, but he shall save nothing of it. There shall none of his meat (which he coveted so much, and fed upon with so much pleasure) be left, v. 21. All his neighbours and relations shall look upon him to be in such bad circumstances, that, when he is dead, no man shall look for his goods, none of his bindred shall expect to be a penny the better for him, nor he willing to take out letters of administration for what he leaves behind him. In " this Zophar reflects upon Job, who had lost all, a " was

23. When no is about to fill his belly, $God \parallel$ shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him, and shall rain it upon him while he is eating. 24. He shall flee from the iron weapon, and the bow of steel shall strike him through. 25. It is drawn, and cometh out of the body; yea, the glittering sword cometh out of his gall: terrors are upon him. 26. All darkness shall be hid in his secret places; a fire not blown out shall consume him; it shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle. 27. The heaven shall reveal his iniquity; and the earth shall rise up against him. 28. The increase of his house shall depart, and his goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath. 29. This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God.

Zophar, having described the many embarrassments and vexations which commonly attend the wicked practices of oppressors and cruel men, here comes to show their utter ruin at last.

1. Their ruin will take its rise from God's wrath and vengeance, v. 23. The hand of the wicked was upon him; (v. 22.) every hand of the wicked. His hand was against every one, and therefore every man's hand will be against him-yet, in grappling with these, he might go near to make his part' good; but his he art cannot endure, nor his hands be strong, when God shall deal with him, (Ezek. xxii. 14.) when God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him, and rain it upon him. Every word here speaks terror. It is not only the justice of God, that is engaged against him, but his wrath, the deep resentment of provocations given to himself: it is the fury of his wrath, incensed to the highest degree; it is cast upon him with force and fierceness; it is rained upon him in abundance; it comes on his head like the fire and brimstone upon Sodom, to which the ps limist also refers, (Ps. xi. 6.) On the wicked God shall rain fire and brimstone. There is no fence against this, but in Christ, who is the only Covert from the storm and tempest, Isa. xxxii.
2. This writh shall be cast upon him, when he is about to fill his belly, just going to glut himself with what he has gotten, and promising himself abundant satisfaction in it. Then, when he is eating, shall this tempest surprise him, when he is secure and easy, and in apprehension of no danger; as the ruin of the old world and Sodom came, when they were in the depth of their security, and the height of their sensuality, as Christ observes, Luke xvii. 26, &c. Perhaps Zophar here reflects on the death of Job's children, when they were eating and drinking.

2. Their ruin will be inevitable, and there will be no possibility of escaping it; (v. 24.) He shall flee from the iron weapon. Flight argues guilt: he will not humble himself under the judgments of God, nor seek means to make his peace with him; all his care is to escape the vengeance that pursues him, but in vain: if he escape the sword, yet the bow of steel shall strike him through. God has weapons of all sorts, he has both whet his sword, and bent his bow; (Ps. vii. 12, 13.) he can deal with his enemies cominus or eminus—at hand or afar off. He has a sword for those that think to fight it out with him by their strength, and a bow for those that think to avoid him by their craft. See Isaiah xxiv. 17, 18. Jer. xlviii. 43, 44. He that is marked for ruin, though he may escape one judgment,

will find another ready for him.

3. It will be a total, terrible, ruin. When the dart that has struck him through, (for when God shoots, he is sure to hit his mark, when he strikes, he strikes home,) comes to be drawn out of his body, when the glittering sword, (the *lightning*, so the word is,) the flaming sword, the sword that is bathed in heaven, (Isa. xxxiv. 5.) when this comes out of his gall, O what terrors are upon him! How strong are the convulsions, how violent are the dying agonies! How terrible are the arrests of death to a wicked man!

4. Sometimes it is a ruin that comes upon him insensibly, v. 26. (1.) The darkness he is wrapped up in, is a hidden darkness: it is all darkness, utter darkness, without the least mixture of light, and it is hid in his secret place, whither he is retreated, and where he hopes to shelter himself; he never retires into his own conscience, but he finds himself in the dark, and utterly at a loss. (2.) The fire he is consumed by is a fire not blown, kindled without noise, a consumption which every body sees the effect of, but nobody sees the cause of; it is plain that the gourd is withered, but the worm at the root, that causes it to wither, is out of sight. He is wasted by a soft gentle fire; surely, but very slowly. When the fuel is very combustible, the fire needs no blowing, and that is his case; he is ripe for ruin; the proud, and they that do wickedly, shall be stubble, Mal. iv. 1. An unquenchable fire shall consume him, so some read it; and that is cer-

tainly true of hell-fire. 5. It is a ruin, not only to himself, but to his fa-

mily; It shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle, for the curse shall reach him, and he shall be cut off perhaps by the same grievous disease; there is an entail of wrath upon the family, which will destroy both his heirs and his inheritance, v. 28. (1.) His posterity will be rooted out. The increase of his house shall depart; shall either be cut off by untimely deaths, or forced to run their Numerous and growing families, if wicked and vile, are soon reduced, dispersed, and extir-pated, by the judgments of God. (2.) His estate will be sunk. His goods shall flow away from his family as fast as ever they flowed in to it, when the

day of God's wrath comes, for which, all the while

his estate was in the getting by fraud and oppression, he was treasuring up wrath.

6. It is a ruin which will manifestly appear to be just and righteous, and what he has brought upon himself by his own wickedness; for, (v. 27.)the heaven shall reveal his iniquity, that is, the God of heaven, who sees all the secret wickedness of the wicked, will, by some means or other, let all the world know what a base man he has been, that they may own the justice of God in all that is brought upon him. The earth also shall rise up against him, both to discover his wickedness, and to avenge it. The earth shall disclose her blood, Isa. xxvi. 21. The earth rises up against him, (as the stomach rises against that which is loathsome,) and will no longer keep him: the Heaven reveals his iniquity, and therefore will not receive him: whither then must be go but to hell? If the God of heaven and earth be his enemy, neither heaven nor earth will show him any kindness, but all the hosts of both are, and will be, at war with him.

Lastly, Zophar concludes like an orator; (v. 29.) This is the portion of a wicked man from God; it is allotted him, it is designed him as his portion. He will have it at last, as a child has his portion, and he will have it for a perpetuity, it is what he must abide by: this is the heritage of his decree from God; it is the settled rule of his judgment, and fair warning is given of it. O wicked man, thou shalt surely die! Ezek. xxxiii. 8. Though impenitent sinners do not always fall under such temporal judgments

as are here described, (therein Zophar was mistaken,) yet the wrath of God abides upon them, and they are made miserable by spiritual judgments, which are much worse, their consciences being either, on the one hand, a terror to them, and then they are in continual amazement, or, on the other hand, seared and silenced, and then they are given up to a reprobate sense, and bound over to eternal ruin. Never was any doctrine better explained, or worse applied, than this by Zophar, who intended by all this to prove Job a hypocrite. Let us receive the good explication, and make a better application, for warning to ourselves, to stand in awe, and not to sin.

CHAP. XXI.

This is Job's reply to Zophar's discourse; in which he complains less of his own miseries than he had done in his former discourses, (finding that his friends were not moved by his complaints, to pity him in the least,) and comes closer to the general question that was in dispute betwixt him and them, Whether outward prosperity, and the continuance of it, were a mark of the true church, and the true members of it, so that the ruin of a man's prosperity is sufficient to prove him a hypocrite, though prosperity is sufficient to prove nim a hypocrite, undign no other evidence appear against him: this they asserted, but Job denied. I. His preface here is designed for the moving of their affections, that he might gain their attention, v. 1...6. II. His discourse is designed for the convincing of their judgments, and the rectifying of their mistakes. He owns that God does sometimes hang up a wicked man as it were in chains, in terrorem—as a weare to the relative to the results of the remarks the indement in terror to others, by some visible remarkable judgment in this life, but denies that he always does so; nay, he maintains that commonly he does otherwise, suffering even the worst of sinners to live all their days in pros-perity, and to go out of the world without any visible mark of his wrath upon them. 1. He describes the great prosperity of wicked people, v. 7.-13. 2. He shows their great impiety, in which they are hardened by their prosperity, v. 14.-16. 3. He foretells their ruin, at length, but after a long reprieve, v. 17.-21. 4. He observes a very great variety in the ways of God's providence toward men, even toward bad men, v. 22..26. He overthrows the ground of their severe censures of him, by showing that destruction is reserved for the other world, and that the wicked often escape to the last in this world, v. 27. to the end. In this, Job was clearly in the right.

1. BUT Job answered and said, 2. Hear diligently my speech; and let this be your consolations. 3. Suffer me that I may speak; and after that I have spoken, mock on. 4. As for me, is my complaint to man? and if it were so, why should not my spirit be troubled? 5. Mark me, and be astonished, and lay your hard upon your mouth. 6. Even when I remember I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold on my

Job here recommends himself, both his case and his discourse, both what he suffered, and what he said, to the compassionate consideration of his

friends.

1. That which he entreats of them is very fair, that they would suffer him to speak, (v. 3.) and not hreak in upon him, as Zophar had done, in the midst of his discourse. Losers, of all men, may have leave to speak; and if those that are accused and censured may not speak for themselves, they are wronged without remedy, and have no way to come at their right. He entreats that they would hear diligently his speech, (v. 2.) as those that were willing to understand him, and, if they were under a mistake, to have it rectified; and that they would mark him; (v. 5.) for we may as well not hear as not heed and observe what we hear.

? That which he urges for this is very reason-

able. (1.) They came to comfort him; "Now," says he, "let this be your consolations; (v. 2. , :f you have no other coinforts to administer to a.c. yet deny me not this; be so kind, so just, as to give me a patient hearing, and that shall pass for your consolations." Nay, they could not know how to comfort him, if they would not give him leave to open his case, and tell his own story. Or, "It will be a consolation to yourselves, in the reflection, to have dealt tenderly with your afflicted friend, and not harshly.'

(2.) He would hear them speak, when it came to their turn. "After I have spoken, you may go on with what you have to say, and I will not hinder you, though you go on to mock me." Those that engage in controversy, must count upon having hard words given them, and resolve to bear it patiently; for, generally, they that mock, will mock on, what-

ever is said to them.

(3.) He hoped to convince them; "If you will but give me a fair hearing, mock on if you can, but I believe I shall say that which will change your note,

and make you pity me, rather than mock me."

(4.) They were not his judges; (v. 4.) "Is my complaint to man? No, if it were, I see it would be to little purpose to complain. But my complaint is to God, and to him do I appeal. Let him be Judge between you and me! Before him we stand upon even terms, and therefore I have the pricilege of being heard as well as you. If my complaint were to men, my spirit would be troubled, for they would not regard me, nor rightly understand me; but my complaint is to God, who will suffer me to speak, though you will not." It would be sad if God should deal as unkindly with us as our friends)

(5.) There was that in his case, which was very surprising and astonishing, and therefore both needed and deserved their most serious consideration. It was not a common case, but a very extraordinary

[1.] He himself was amazed at it, at the troubles God had laid upon him, and the censures of his friends concerning him; (v. 6.) " When I remember that terrible day, in which I was on a sudden stripped of all my comforts, that day in which I was stricken with sore boils; when I remember all the hard speeches with which you have grieved me, I confess I am afraid, and trembling takes hold of my flesh, especially when I compare this with the prosperous condition of many wicked people, and the applauses of their neighbours, with which they pass through the world." Note, The providences of God, in the government of the world, are sometimes very astonishing, even to wise and good men, and bring them to their wit's end.

[2.] He would have them wonder at it; (v. 5.) "Mark me, and be astonished. Instead of expounding my troubles, you should awfully adore the unsearchable mysteries of Providence in afflicting one thus, of whom you know no evil; you should there fore lay your hand upon your mouth; silently wait the issue, and judge nothing before the time." God's way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters. When we cannot account for what he des, in suffering the wicked to prosper, and the godly to be afflicted, nor fathom the depth of those proceedings, it becomes us to sit down and admire them. Upright men shall be astonished at this, ch xvii. 8. Be you so.

Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? 8. Their seed is established in their sight with them. and their offspring before their eves. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is

the rod of God upon them. 10. Their bull || and they meet with no disappointment in them; not gendereth, and faileth not; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf. 11. They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. 12. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the or-13. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. 14. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. 15. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him? 16. Lo. their good is not in their hand: the counsel of the wicked is far from me.

All Job's three friends, in their last discourses, had been very large in describing the miserable condition of a wicked man in this world; "It is true," says Job, "remarkable judgments are sometimes brought upon notorious sinners, but not always; for we have many instances of the great and long prosperity of those that are openly and avowed v wicked; though they are hardened in their wickedness by their prosperity, yet they are still suffered to prosper."

I. He here describes their prosperity, to the height, and breadth, and length, of it. "If this be true, as you say, pray tell me wherefore do the wick-ed live?" v. 7. The matter of fact is taken for granted, for we see instances of it every day. 1. They live, and are not suddenly cut off by the strokes of divine vengeance. They yet speak, who have set their mouths against the heavens. They yet act, who have stretched out their hands against God. Not only they live, that is, they are reprieved, but they live in pros-perity. 1 Sam. xxv. 6. Nay, 2. They become old, they have the honour, satisfaction, and advantage, of living long, time enough to raise their families and estates. We read of a sinner a hundred years old, Isa. lxv. 20. But this is not all. 3. They are mighty in power, are preferred to places of authority and trust, and not only make a great figure, but he ir a great sway. Vivit imo, et in senatum venit—He not only lives, but walks into the senatehouse. Now wherefore is it so? Note, It is worth wh le to inquire into the reasons of the outward prosperity of wicked people. It is not because God has firstken the earth, because he does not see, or does not hate, or cannot punish, their wickedness; but it s because the measure of their iniquities is not full. This is the day of God's patience, and in some w v or other he makes use of them, and their prosperity, to serve his own counsels, while it ripens them for ruin; but the chief reason is, because he will make it to appear there is another world, which is the world of retribution, and not this.

The prosperity of the wicked is here described

to be.

(1.) Complete and consummate. [1.] They are multiplied, and their family is built up, and they have the satisfaction of seeing it; (v. 8.) Their seed is extablished in their sight. This is put first, as that which gives both a pleasant enjoyment, and a pleasing prospect. [2.] They are easy and quiet, v. 9. Whereas Zophar had spoken of their continual frights and terrors, Job says, Their houses are safe, both from danger and from the fear of it; (v. 9.) and so for are they from the killing wounds of God's sword or arrows, that they do not feel the smart of so much as the rod of God upon them. [3.] They are rich, and thrive in their estates; of this he gives only one instance, v. 10. Their cattle increase,

so much as a cow casts her calf, and then their much must needs grow more. This is promised, Exod. xxiii. 26. Deut. vii. 14. [4.] They are merry, and live a jovial life; (v. 11, 12.) They send forth their little ones abroad among their neigh bours, like a flock, in great numbers, to sport them selves. They have their balls and music-meetings, at which their children dance; and dancing is fittest for children, who know not better how to spend their time, and whose innocency guards them against the mischiefs that commonly attend it. Though the parents are not so very youthful and frolicsome as to dance themselves, yet they take the timbrel and harp; they pipe, and their children dance after their pipe, and they know no grief to put their instruments out of tune, or to withhold their hearts from any joy. Some observe that this is an instance of their vanity, as well as of their prosperity. Here is none of that care taken of the r children, which Abraham took of his, to teach them the way of the Lord, Gen. xviii. 19. Their children do not pray, or say their catechism, but dance, and sing, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. Sensual pleasures are all the delights of carnal people; and as men are themselves, so they breed their children.

(2.) Continuing and constant; (v. 13.) They spend their days, all their days, in wealth, and never know what it is to want; in mirth, and never know what sadness means; and at last, without any previous alarms to frighten them, without any anguish, or agony, in a moment they go down to the grave, and there are no bands in their death. If there were not another life after this, it were nest desirable to die by the quickest, shortest strekes of death. Since we must go down to the grave, it that were the furthest of our journey, we would wish to go down in a moment, to swallow the bar-

ter pill, and not chew it.

II. He shows how they abuse their prosperity, and are confirmed and hardened by it in their impiety, v. 14, 15. Their gold and silver serve to steel them, to make them more insolent, and mere impudent, in their wickedness. Now he mentions this, either, 1. To increase the difficulty. It is strange that any wicked people should prosper thus, but especially that those should prosper, who are arrived at such a pitch of wickedness as openly to bid defiance to God himself, and tell him to his face that they care not for him; nay, and that their prosperity should be continued, though they bear up themselves upon that, in their opposition to God; with that weapon they fight against him, and yet are not disarmed. Or, 2. To lessen the difficulty. God suffers them to prosper; but let us not wonder at it, for the prosperity of fools destroys them, by hardening them in sin, Prov. i. 32. Ps. Ixxiii. 7..9.

See how light these prospering sinners make of God and religion, as if, because they have so much of this world, they had no need to look after an-

(1.) See how ill affected they are to God and religion; they abandon them, and cast off the thoughts of them. [1.] They dread the presence of God, they say unto him, "Depart from us, let us never be troubled with the apprehension of our being under God's eye, nor be restrained by the fear of him." Or, They bid him depart, as one they do not need, nor have any occasion to make use cf. The world is the portion they have chosen, and take up with, and think themselves happy in; while they have that, they can live without God. Justly will God say to them, *Depart*, (Matth. xxv. 41.) who have bid him depart; justly does he now take them at their word. [2.] They dread the knowledge of God, and of his will, and of their duty to him; We desire not the knowledge of thy ways. They that are resolved not to walk in God's ways, desire not to know them, because their knowledge will be a continual reproach to their disobedience,

(2.) See how they argue against God and religion; (v. 15.) What is the Almighty? Strange, that ever creatures should speak so insolently, that ever reasonable creatures should speak so absurdly and unreasonably. The two great bonds by which we are drawn and held to religion, are those of duty and interest; now they here endeavour to break both these bonds asunder. [1.] They will not believe it is their duty to be religious. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? Like Pharaoh, (Exod. v. 2.) Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? Observe how slightly they speak of God; What is the Almighty? As if he were a mere name, a mere cypher, or one they have nothing to do with, and that has nothing to do with them. How hardly they speak of religion! They call it a service, and mean a hard service. Is it not enough, they think, to keep up a fair correspondence with the Almighty, but they must serve him, which they look upon as a task and drudgery. Observe also how highly they speak of themselves; "That we should serve him: we, who are rich and mighty in power, shall we be subject and accountable to him? No, we are Lords," Jer. ii. 31. [2.] They will not believe it is their interest to be religious; What profit shall we have if we pray unto him? All the world are for what they can get, and therefore wisdom's merchandise is neglected, because they think there is nothing to be got by it; It is vain to serve God, Mal. iii. 13, 14. Praying will not pay debts, nor portion children; nay, perhaps serious godliness may hinder a man's preferment, and expose him to losses; and what then? Is nothing to be called gain but the wealth and honour of this world? If we obtain the favour of God, and spiritual and eternal blessings, we have no reason to complain of losing by our religion. But if we have not profit by prayer, it is our own fault, (Isa. lviii. 3, 4.) it is because we ask amiss, Jam. iv. 3. Religion itself is not a vain thing; if it be so to us, we may thank ourselves for resting in the outside of it, Jam. i. 26.

III. He shows their folly herein, and utterly disclaims all concurrence with them; (v. 19.) Lo, their good is not in their hand, that is, They did not get it without God, and therefore they are very ungrateful to slight him thus: it was not their might, nor the power of their hand, that got them this wealth, and therefore they ought to remember God who gave it them. Nor can they keep it without God, and therefore they are very unwise to lose their interest in him, and bid him to depart from them. Some give this sense of it; "Their good is in their barns and their bags, hoarded up there; it s not in their hand, to do good to others with it; and then, what good does it do them?" "Theresays Job, "the counsel of the wicked is far from me. Far be it from me that I should be of their mind, say as they say, do as they do, and take my measures from them. Their posterity aff-prove their sayings, though their way be their folly; (Ps. xlix. 13.) but I know better things than to walk in their counsel."

17. How oft is the candle of the wicked put out? and how oft cometh their destruction upon them! God distributeth sorrows in his anger. 18. They are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away. 19. God layeth up his iniquity for his children: he rewardeth him, | Compare Ps. xi. 6. with Rev. xiv. 10. The misery

and he shall know it. 20. His eyes shall see his destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty. 21. For what pleasure hath he in his house after him, when the number of his months is cut off in the midst? 22. Shall any teach God knowledge? seeing he judgeth those that are high. 23. One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet: 24. His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow. 25. And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure. 26. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them.

Job had largely described the prosperity of wick.

ed people; now, in these verses,

I. He opposes this to what his friends had main tained concerning their certain ruin in this life. "Tell me how often do you see the candle of the wicked put out. Do you not as often see it burn down to the socket, until it goes out of itself? v. 17. How often do you see their destruction come upon them, or God distributing sorrows in his anger among them? Do you not as often see their nurth and prosperity continuing to the last?" Perhaps there are as many instances of notorious sinners ending their days in pomp, as ending them in misery; which observation is sufficient to invalidate their arguments against Job, and to show that no certain judgment can be made of men's character by their outward condition.

II. He reconciles this to the holiness and justice of God; though wicked people presper thus all their days, yet we are not therefore to think that God will let their wickedness always go unpunish-

ed. No,

1. Even while they prosper thus, they are as stubble and chaff before the stormy wind, v. 18. They are light and worthless, and of no account either with God, or with wise and good men. They are fitted to destruction, and continually lie exposed to it; and, in the height of their pomp and power,

there is but a step between them and ruin.

2. Though they spend all their days in wealth, God is laying up their iniquity for their children, (v. 19.) and he will visit it upon their posterity when they are gone. The oppressor lays up his goods for his children, to make them gentlemen, but God lays up his iniquity for them, to make them beggars: he keeps an exact account of the fathers' sins; seals them up among his treasures, (Deut. xxxii. 34.) and will justly punish the children, while the riches, to which the curse cleaves,

are found as assets in their hands.

3. Though they prosper in this world, yet they shall be reckoned with in another world. God rewards him according to his deeds at last, (v. 19.)though the sentence passed against his evil works be not executed speedily. Perhaps he may not now be made to fear the wrath to come, but he may flatter himself with hopes that he shall have peace, though he go on; but he shall be made to feel it it. the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. He shall know it; (v. 19.) His eyes shall see his destruction, which he would not be persuaded to believe. They will not see, but they shall see, Isa. xxvi. 11. The eyes that have been wilfully shut against the grace of God, shall be opened to see his destruction. He shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty; that shall be the portion of his cup. of damned sinners is here set forth in a few words, but they are very terrible ones: they lie under the wrath of an Almighty God, who, in their destruction, both shows his wrath, and makes known his

power.

If this will be his condition in the other world, what good will his prosperity in this world do him? (v. 21.) What pleasure has he in his house after him? Our Saviour has let us know how little pleasure the rich man in hell had in his house after him, when the remembrance of the good things he had received in his life-time, would not cool his tongue, but added much to his misery, as did also the sorrow he was in, lest his five brethren, whom he left in his house after him, should follow him to that place of torment, Luke xvi. 25.28. So little will the gain of the world profit him that has lost his soul.

III. He resolves this difference, which Providence makes between one wicked man and another, into the wisdom and sovereignty of God; (v. 22.) Shall any tretend to teach God knowledge? Dare we arraign God's proceedings, or blame his conduct? Shall we take upon us to tell God how he should govern the world, what sinner he should spare, and what he should punish? He has both authority and ability to judge those that are high. Angels in heaven, princes and magistrates on earth, are accountable to God, and must receive their doom from him; he manages them, and makes what use he pleases of them: shall he then be accountable to us, or receive advice from us? He is the Judge of all the earth, and therefore, no doubt, he shall do right, (Gen. xviii. 25. Rom. iii. 6.) and those preceedings of his providence which seem to contradict one another, he can make, not only mutually to agree, but jointly to serve his own purposes.

The little difference there is between one wicked man's dying impenitent in peace and pomp, and another wicked man's dying so in pain and misery, when both will, at last, meet in hell, he illustrates by the little difference there is between one man's dying suddenly and another's dying slowly, when they will both meet shortly in the grave. So vast is the disproportion between time and eternity, that, if hell be the lot of every sinner at last, it makes little difference, if one goes singing thither, and

another sighing. See,

1. How various the circumstances of people's dying are. There is one way into the world, we say, but many cut; yet, as some are born by quick and easy labour, others by that which is hard and lingering, so dying is to some much more terrible than to others; and, since the death of the body is the birth of the soul into another world, death-bed agonies may not unfitly be compared to child-bed

throes. Observe the difference.

(1.) One dies suddenly, in his full strength, not weakened by age or sickness, (v. 23.) being wholly at ease and quiet, under no apprehension at all of the approach of death, nor in any fear of it; but, on the contrary, because his breasts are full of milk, and his bones moistened with marrow, (v. 24.) that is, he is healthful and vigorous, and of a good constitution, (like a milch-cow that is fat and in good liking,) he counts upon nothing but to live many years in mirth and pleasure. Thus fair does he bid for life, and yet he is cut off in a moment by the stroke of death. Note, It is a common thing for persons to be taken away by death when they are in their full strength, in the highest degree of health, when they least expect death, and think themselves best armed against it, and are ready not only to set death at a distance, but to set it at defiance. Let us therefore never be secure; for we have known many well and dead in the same week, the same day, the same hour, nay, perhaps, the same minute, Let us therefore be always ready

(2.) Another dies slowly, and with a great deal of previous pain and misery, (v. 25.) in the bitterness of his soul, such as poor Job was himself now in, and never eats with pleasure, has no appetite to his food, nor any relish of it, through sickness, or age, or sorrow of mind. What great reason have those to be thankful, that are in health, and always eat with pleasure! And what little reason have they to complain, who sometimes do not eat thus when they hear of many that never do!

2. How undiscernible this difference is in the

2. How undiscernine this difference is in the grave: as rich and poor, so healthful and unhealthful, meet there; (v. 26.) They shall lie down alize in the dust, and the worms shall cover them, and feed sweetly on them. Thus, if one wicked man die in a palace, and another in a dangeon, they will meet in the congregation of the dead and damned, and the worm that dies not, and the fire that is not quenched, will be the same to them, which makes those differences inconsiderable, and not worth per-

plexing ourselves about.

27. Behold, I know your thoughts, and the devices which ye wrongfully imagine against me. 28. For ye say, Where is the house of the prince? and where are the dwelling-places of the wicked? 29. Have ye not asked them that go by the way? and do ye not know their tokens, 30. That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath. 31. Who shall declare his way to his face? and who shall repay him what he hath done? 32. Yet shall he be brought to the grave, and shall remain in the tomb. 33. The clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him, and every man shall draw after him, as there are innumerable before him. 34. How then comfort ye me in vain, seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood?

In these verses,

I. Job opposes the opinion of his friends, which he saw they still adhered to, That the wicked are sure to full into such visible and remarkable ruin, as Job was now fallen into, and none but the wicked; upon which principle, they condemned Job as a wicked man. "I know your thoughts," says Job, (v. 27.) "I know you will not agree with me; for your judgments are tinctured and biassed by your piques and prejudices against me, and the devices which you wrongfully imagine against my comfort and honour: and how can such men be convinced?"

Job's friends were ready to say, in answer to his discourse concerning the prosperity of the wicked, "Where is the house of the prince? (v. 28.) Where is Job's house, or the house of his eldest son, in which his children were feasting: inquire into the circumstances of Job's house and family, and then ask, Where are the dwelling-places of the wicked? and compare them together, and you will soon see that Job's house is in the same predicament with the houses of tyrants and oppressors, and may therefore conclude that doubtless he was such a one."

II. He lays down his own judgment to the contrary, and, for proof of it, appeals to the sentiments and observations of all mankind. So confident is he that he is in the right, that he is willing to refer the cause to the next man that comes by; (v. 29.) "Have ye not asked them that go by the way—any

indifferent person, any that will answer you? I say red to in the foregoing phrase of watching in the not, as Eliphaz, (ch. v. 1.) To which of the Saints —I ask, To which of the children of men, will you turn? Turn to which you will, you will find them all of my mind; that the punishment of sinners is designed more for the other world than for this, according to the prophecy of Enoch, the seventh from Adam, Jude 14. Do you not know the tokens of this truth, which all that have made any observations upon the providences of God concerning mankind in this world, can furnish you with?

Now what is it that Job here asserts? Two

things,

1. That impenitent sinners will certainly be punished in the other world, and, usually, their

punishment is put off until then.

2. That therefore we are not to think it strange if they prosper greatly in this world, and fall under no visible token of God's wrath. Therefore they are spared now, because they are to be punished then; therefore the workers of iniquity flourish, that they may be destroyed for ever, Ps. xcii. 7. The sinner is here supposed

(1.) To live in a great deal of power, so as to be not only the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, (Ezek. xxxii. 27.) but the terror of the wise and good too, whom he keeps in such awe, that none dares declare his way to his face, v. 31. None will take the liberty to reprove him, to tell him of the wickedness of his way, and what will him of the wickedness of this way, be in the end thereof; so that he sins securely, and how either shame or fear. The prosperity of fools destroys them, by setting them (in their own conceit) above reproofs, by which they might be brought to that repentance which alone will prevent their ruin. Those are marked for destruction that are let alone in sin, Hos. iv. 17. And if none dares declare his way to his face, much less dare any repay him what he has done, and make him refund there where he has done wrong. He is one of those great flies which break through the cobwebs of the law, that hold only the little ones: this imboldens sinners in their sinful ways, that they can brow-beat justice, and make it afraid to meddle with them. But there is a day coming when those shall be told of their faults, who now would not bear to hear of them; shall have their sins set in order before them, and their way declared to their face, to their everlasting confusion, who would not have it done here, to their conviction; when those who would not repay the wrongs they had done, shall have them repaid to them.

(2.) To die, and be buried in a great deal of imp and magnificence, v. 32, 33. There is no pomp and magnificence, v. 32, 33. remedy; he must die; that is the lot of all men; but every thing you can think of shall be done to take off the reproach of death. [1.] He shall have a splendid funeral; a poor thing for any man to be proud of the prospect of; yet with some it passes for a mighty thing: well, he shall be brought unto the grave in state, surrounded with all the honours of the Heralds' office, and all the respect his friends can then pay to his remains: the rich man died, and was buried, but no mention is made of the poor man's burial, Luke xvi. 22. [2.] He shall have a stately monument erected over him, he shall remain in the tomb with a *Hic jacet—Here lies*, over him, and a large encomium. Perhaps it is meant of the embalming of his body, to preserve it, which was a piece of honour anciently done by the Egyptians to their great men. He shall watch in the tomb, so the word is, shall abide solitary and quiet there, as a watchman in his tower. [3.] The clods of the valley shall be sweet to him; there shall be as much done as can be with rich odours, to take off the noisomeness of the grave, as by lamps to set aside the durkness of it, which perhaps was refer- | Debtor, let him prove this debt, and he shall be

tomb: but it is all a jest; what is the light, or what the perfume, to a man that is dead? [4.] It shall be alleged, for the lessening of the disgrace of death, that it is the common lot; he has only yielded to fate, and every man shall draw after him, as there are innumerable before him. Note, Death is the way of all the earth: when we are to cross that darksome val-ley, we must consider, First, That there are innumerable before us, it is a tracked road; which may help to take off the terror of it. To die is ire ad filures—to go to the great majority. Secondly, That every man shall draw after us: as there is a plain track before, so there is a long train behind; we are neither the first, nor the last, that pass through that dark entry. Every one must go in his own order, the order appointed of God.

Lastly, From all this Job infers the impertinency of their discourses, v. 34. 1. Their foundation is rotten, and they went upon a wrong hypothesis; "In your answers there remaineth falsehood; what you have said, stands not only unproved but dis proved, and lies under such an imputation of false hood as you cannot clear it from." 2. Their building was therefore weak and tottering: "You com fort me in vain. All you have said, gives me no relief; you tell me that I shall prosper again, if I turn to God, but you go upon this presumption, that piety shall certainly be crowned with prosperity, which is false; and therefore how can your inference from it yield me any comfort?" Note, Where there is not truth, there is little comfort to

be expected.

CHAP. XXII.

Eliphaz here leads on a third attack upon poor Job, in which Bildad followed him, but Zophar drew back, and quitted the field. It was one of the unhappinesses of Job, as it is of many an honest man, to be misunderstood by his friends. He had spoken of the prosperity of wicked men in this world as a mystery of Providence, but they took it for a reflection upon Providence, as countenancing their wickedness; and they reproached him accordingly. In this chapter, I. Eliphaz checks him for his complain's of God, and of his dealings with him, as if he thought God had done him wrong, v.2. 4. II. He charges him with many high crimes and misdemeanors, for which he supposes God was now punishing him. 1. Oppression and injustice, v.5..11. 2. Atheism and infidelity, v. 12..14. III. He compared his case to that of the old world, v. 15..20. IV. He gives him very good counsel, assuring him that, if he would take it, God would return in mercy to him, and he should return quitted the field. It was one of the unhappinesses of Job, God would return in mercy to him, and he should return to his former prosperity, v. 21...30.

1. THEN Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, 2. Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? 3. Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect? 4. Will he reprove thee for fear of thee? will be enter with thee into judgment?

Eliphaz here insinuates that, because Job complained so much of his afflictions, he thought God was unjust in afflicting him; but it was a strained innuendo, Job was far from thinking so. What Eliphaz says here, is therefore unjustly applied to

Job, but in itself it is very true and good;

1. That when God does us good, it is not because he is indebted to us; if he were, there might be some colour to say, when he afflicts us, "He does not deal fairly with us:" but whoever pretends that he has by any meritorious action made God his sure not to lose it; (Rom. xi. 35.) Who has given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? But Eliphaz here shows that the righteousness and perfection of the best man in the world are no real benefit or advantage to God, and therefore cannot

be thought to merit any thing from him.

(1.) Man's piety is no profit to God, no gain, v.
1, 2. If we could by any thing merit from God, it would be by our piety, our being righteous, and making our way perfect. If that will not merit, surely nothing else will: if a man cannot make God his debtor by his godliness, and honesty, and obedience to his laws, much less can he by his wit, and learning, and worldly policy. Now Eliphaz here asks, whether any man can possibly be profitable to God? It is certain that man cannot. means: he that is wise may be profitable to himself. Note, Our wisdom and piety are that by which we ourselves are, and are likely to be, great gainers. Wisdom is profitable to direct, Eccl. x. 10. liness is profitable to all things, 1 Tim. iv. 8. If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself, Prov. The gains of religion are infinitely greater than the losses of it, and so it will appear when they are balanced. But can a man be thus profitable to God? No, for such is the perfection of God, that he cannot receive any benefit or advantage by men; what can be added to that which is infinite? And such is the weakness and imperfection of man, that he cannot offer any benefit or advantage to God. Can the light of a candle be profitable to the sun, or the drop of the bucket to the ocean? He that is wise, is profitable to himself, for his own direction and defence, his own credit and comfort; he can with his wisdom entertain himself, and enrich himself; but can he so be profitable to God? No; God needs not us or our services. We are undone, for ever undone, without him; but he is happy, for ever happy, without us. Is it any gain to him, any real addition to his glory or wealth, if we make our way perfect? Suppose it were absolutely perfect, yet what is God the better? Much less when it is so far short of being perfect.

(2.) It is no pleasure to him. God has indeed expressed himself in his word well pleased with the righteous; his countenance beholds them, and his delight is in them and their prayers; but all that adds nothing to the infinite satisfaction and complacency which the Eternal Mind has in itself. God can enjoy himself without us, though we could have but little enjoyment of curselves without our friends. This magnifies his condescension, in that, though our services be no real profit or pleasure to him yet he invites encourages and accepts them

him, vet he invites, encourages, and accepts, them.
2. That, when God restrains or rebukes us, it is not because he is in danger from us, or jealous of us; (v. 4.) "Will he reprove thee for fear of thee, and take thee down from thy prosperity, lest thou shouldest grow too great for him; as princes sometimes have thought it a piece of policy to curb the growing greatness of a subject, lest he should become formidable?" Satan indeed suggested to our first parents, that God forbade them the tree of knowledge, for fear of them, lest they should be as gods, and so become rivals with him; but it was a base insinuation. God rebukes the good because he loves them, but he never rebukes the great because he fears them. He does not enter into judgment with men, that is, pick a quarrel with them, and seek occasion against them, through fear they should eclipse his honour, or endanger his interest. Magistrates punish offenders for fear of them; Pharaoh oppressed Israel because he feared them; it was for fear that Herod slew the children of Bethlehem; that the Jews persecuted Christ and his apostles. But God does not, as they did, pervert justice for fear of any. See ch. xxxvi. 5..8.

5. Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite? 6. For thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought, and stripped the naked of their clothing. 7. Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry. 8. But as for the mighty man, he had the earth; and the honourable man dwelt in it. 9. Thou hast sent widows away empty; and the arms of the fatherless have been broken: 10. Therefore snares are round about thee, and sudden fear troubleth thee; 11. Or darkness, that thou canst not see; and abundance of waters cover thee. 12. Is not God in the height of heaven? and, behold, the height of the stars, how high they are! 13. And thou sayest, How doth God know? can he judge through the dark cloud? 14. Thick-clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not; and he walketh in the circuit of heaven.

Eliphaz and his companions had condemned Job, in general, as a wicked man and a hypocrite; but none of them had descended to particulars, nor drawn up any articles of impeachment against him, until Eliphaz did it here, where he positively and expressly charges him with many high crimes and misdemeanors, which if he had really been guilty of, they might well have justified themselves in their harsh censures of him. "Come," (says Eliphaz,) "we have been too tender of Job, and afraid of grieving him, which has but confirmed him in his self-justification; it is high time to deal plainly with him; we have condemned him by parables, but that does not answer the end; he is not prevailed with to condemn himself; we must therefore plainly tell him, "Thou art the man, the tyrant, the oppressor, the atheist, we have been speaking of all this while. Is not thy wickedness great? Certainly it is, or else thy troubles would not be so great. I appeal to thyself, and thy own conscience; are not thine iniquities infinite, both in number and heinousness?" Strictly taken, nothing is infinite but God: but he means this, that his sins were more than could be counted; and more heinous than could be conceived. Sin, being committed against Infinite Majesty, has in it a kind of infinite malignity. But when Eliphaz charges Job thus high, and ventures to descend to particulars too, laying to his charge that which he knew not, we may take occasion hence, 1. To be angry at those who unjustly censure and condemn their brethren. For aught I know, Eliphaz, in accusing Job falsely, as he does here, was guilty of as great a sin, and as great a wrong to Job, as the Sabeans and Chaldeans that robbed him; for a man's good name is more precious and valuable than his wealth. It is against all the laws of justice, charity, and friendship, either to raise, or receive, calumnies, jealousies, and evil surmises, concerning others; and it is the more base and disingenuous, if we thus vex those that are in distress, and add to their affliction. Eliphaz could produce no instances of Job's guilt in any of the particulars that follow here, but seems resolved to calumniate boldly, and throw all the reproach he could on Job, not doubting but that some would cleave to him. 2. To pity those who are thus censured and condemned. Innocency itself will be no security against a false and foul tongue. Job, whom God himself praised as the best man in the world,

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is here represented by one of his friends, and him a | wise and good man too, as one of the greatest villains in nature. Let us not think it strange, if at any time we be thus blackened, but learn how to pass by evil report as well as good, and commit our cause, as Job did, to him that judgeth righteously.

Let us see the particular articles of this charge. I. He charges him with oppression and injustice; that, when he was in prosperity, he not only did no good with his wealth and power, but did a great deal of hurt with it. This was utterly false, as ap-pears by the account Job gives of himself, (ch. xxix. 12, &c.) and the character God gave of him,

And yet,

1. Eliphaz branches out this charge into divers particulars, with as much assurance as if he could call witnesses to prove upon oath every article of it. He tells him, (1.) That he had been cruel and unmerciful to the poor. As a magistrate, he ought to have protected them, and seen them provided for; but Eliphaz suspects that he never did them any kindness, but all the mischief his power enabled him to do; that, for an inconsiderable debt, he demanded, and carried away by violence, a pawn of great value, even from his brother, whose honesty and sufficiency he could not but know; (v. 6.) Thou hast taken a fledge from thy brother for naught; or, as the LXX read it, Thou hast taken thy brethren for filedges, and that for naught; imprisoned them, enslaved them, because they had nothing to pay; that he had taken the very clothes of his insolvent tenants and debtors, so that he had stripped them naked, and left them so: the law of Moses forbade this; (Exod. xxii. 26. Deut. xxiv. 13.) that he had not been charitable to the poor, no not to poor travellers, and poor widows. "Thou hast not given so much as a cup of cold water, (which would have cost thee nothing,) to the weary to drink, when he begged for it, (v. 7.) and was ready to perish for want of it: nay, thou hast withholden bread from the hungry in their extremity, hast not only not given it, but hast forbidden the giving of it; which is withholding good from those to whom it is really due, Prov. iii. 27. Poor widows, who, while their husbands were living, troubled nobody, but now were forced to seek relief, thou hast sent away empty from thy doors with a sad heart, v. 9. Those who came to thee for justice, thou didst send away unheard, unhelped; nay, though they came to thee full, thou didst squeeze them, and send them away empty; and, worst of all, the arms of the fatherless have been broken; those that could help themthe selves but little, thou hast quite disabled to help themselves." This, which is the blackest part of the charge, is but insinuated; The arms of the fatherless have been broken; he does not say, "Thou hast broken them," but he would have it understood so; and, if they be broken, and those who have returned a not relieve them, they are chargeable power do not relieve them, they are chargeable "They have been broken by those under with it. thee, and thou hast connived at it, which brings thee under the guilt." (2.) That he had been partial to the rich and great; (v. 8.) "As for the mighty man, if he was guilty of any crime, he was never questioned for it; he had the earth, he dwelt in it: if he brought an action ever so unjustly, or if an action were ever so justly brought against him, The poor were not fed at thy door, while the rich were feasting at thy table." Contrary to this is Christ's rule for hospitality; (Luke xiv. 12..14.) and Solomon says, He that gives to the rich shall come to poverty.

2. He attributes all his present troubles to these supposed sins; (v. 10, 11.) "Those that are guilty of such practices as these, commonly bring them

and therefore we conclude thou hast been thus guilty." (1.) "It is the manner of God to cross and embarrass such; and snares are, accordingly, round about thee, so that, which way soever thou steppest or lookest, thou findest thyself in distress: and others are as hard upon thee as thou hast been upon the poor." (2.) "Their own consciences may be expected to terrify and accuse them: no sin makes a louder cry there than unmercifulness: and, accordingly, sudden fear troubles thee; and, though thou wilt not own it, it is guilt of this kind that creates thee all this terror." Zophar had insinuated this, ch. xx. 19, 20. (3.) "They are brought to their wits' end, so amazed and bewildered, that they know not what to do, and that also is thy case; for thou art in darkness, that thou canst not see wherefore God contends with thee, nor what is the best course for thee to take; for abundance of waters cover thee," that is, "thou art in a mist, in the midst of dark waters, in the thick clouds of the sky." Note, Those that have not showed mercy may justly be denied the comfortable hope that they shall find mercy; and then what can they expect but snares, and darkness, and continual fear?

II. He charges him with atheism, infidelity, and gross impiety; and thought this was at the bottom of his injustice and oppressiveness: he that did not fear God did not regard man. He would have it thought that Job was an Epicurean, who did indeed own the being of God, but denied his providence, and fancied that he confined himself to the entertainments of the upper world, and never concerned himself in the inhabitants and affairs of this.

1. Eliphaz observes a good truth, which, he thought, if Job would duly consider, he would not be so passionate in his complaints, nor so bold in justifying himself; (v. 12.) Is not God in the height of heaven? Yes, no doubt he is: no heaven so high but God is there; and in the highest heavens, the heavens of the blessed, the residence of his glory, he is, in a special manner; there he is pleased to manifest himself in a way peculiar to the upper world, and thence he is pleased to manifest himself in a way suited to this lower world. There is his throne; there is his court: he is called *the Heavens*, Dan. iv. 26. Thus Eliphaz proves that a man cannot be profitable to God, (v. 2.) that he ought not to contend with God; (it is his folly if he does;) and that we ought always to address ourselves to God with very great reverence; for when we behold the height of the stars, how high they are, we might, at the same time, also consider the transcendent majesty of God, who is above the stars, and how

high he is.

2. He charges it upon Job, that he made a bad use of this doctrine, which he might have made so good a use of; (v. 13.) "This is holding the truth in unrighteousness, fighting against religion with its own weapons, and turning its own artillery upon itself: Thou art willing to own that God is in the height of heaven, but thence thou inferrest, How doth God know?" Bad men expel the fear of God out of their hearts, by banishing the eye of God out of the world; (Ezek. viii. 12.) and care not what they do, if they can but persuade themselves that God does not know. Fliphaz suspects that Job had such a notion of God as this, that, because he is in the height of heaven, (1.) It is therefore impossible for him to see and hear what is done at so great a distance as this earth: especially since there is a dark cloud, (v. 13.) many thick clouds, (v. 14.) that come between him and us, and are a covering to him, so that he cannot see, much less can he judge of, the affairs of this lower world; as if God had eyes of flesh, ch. x. 4. The interposing firmament is to him as transparent crystal, Ezek. i. 22. Distance of selves into just such a condition as thou art now in; | place creates no difficulty to him who is immense, any

more than distance of time to him who is eternal. [Or, (2.) That it is therefore below him, and a diminution to his glory, to take cognizance of this inferior part of the creation: he walks in the circuit of heaven, and has enough to do, to enjoy himself and his own perfections and glory, in that bright and quiet world; why should he trouble himself about us? This is gross absurdity, as well as gross impiety, which Eliphaz here fathers upon Job; for it supposes that the administration of government is a burthen and disparagement to the Supreme Governor; and the acts of justice and mercy were a toil to a mind infinitely wise, holy, and good. the sun, a creature, and inanimate, can with his light and influence reach this earth, and every part of it, (Ps. xix. 6.) even from that vast height of the visible heavens in which he is, and in the circuit of which he walks, and through many a thick and dark cloud, shall we question it concerning the

15. Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden; 16. Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflown with a flood; 17. Which said unto God, Depart from us: and what 13. Yet can the Almighty do for them? he filled their houses with good things: but the counsel of the wicked is far from me. 19. The righteous see it, and are glad; and the innocent laugh them to scorn. Whereas our substance is not cut down: but the remnant of them the fire consumeth.

Eliphaz, having endeavoured to convict Job, by setting his sins (as he thought) in order before him, here endeavours to awaken him to a sight and sense of his misery and danger, by reason of sin; and this he does, by comparing his case with that of the sinners of the old world; as if he had said, "Thy condition is bad now, but, unless thou repent, it will be worse, as theirs was; theirs who were overflown with a flood, as the old world, (v. 16.) and theirs the remnant of whom the fire consumed," (v. 20.) namely the Sodomites, who, in comparison of the old world, were but a remnant. And these two instances of the wrath of God against sin and sinners, are more than once put together, for warning to a careless world: as by our Saviour, Luke xvii. 26, &c. and the apostle, 2 Pet. ii. 5, 6. Eliphaz would have Job to mark the old way which wicked men have trodden, (v. 15.) and see what came of it, what the end of their way was. Note, There is an old way which wicked men have trodden. Religion had but newly entered, when sin immediately followed it: but though it is an old way, a broad way, a tracked way, it is a dangerous way, and it leads to destruction; and it is good for us to mark it, that we may not dare to walk in it.

Eliphaz here puts Job in mind of it, perhaps in opposition to what he had said of the prosperity of the wicked; as if he had said, "Thou canst find out here and there a single instance, it may be, of a wicked man ending his days in peace; but what is that to those two great instances of the final perdition of ungodly men—the drowning of the whole world, and the burning of Sodom?" Destructions by wholesale, in which he thinks Job may, as in a

glass, see his own face.
Observe, 1. The ruin of those sinners; (v. 16.) They were cut down out of time; that is, they were cut off in the midst of their days, when, as man's time then went, many of them might, in the course of nature, have lived some hundreds of years longer, || or point gained, but to see God glorified, the word

which made their immature extirpation the more grievous. They were cut down out of time, to be hurried into eternity. And their foundation, the earth on which they built themselves, and all their hopes, was overflown with a flood, the flood which was brought in upon the world of the ungodly, 2 Pet. ii. 5. Note, Those who build upon the sand, choose a foundation which will be overflown, when the rains descend, and the floods come; (Matth. vii. 27.) and then their building must needs fall, and they perish in the ruins of it, and repent of their folly when it is too late.

2. The sin of those sinners, which brought that ruin; (v. 17.) They said unto God, Depart from us. Job had spoken of some who said so, and yet prospered, ch. xxi. 14. But these did not; (says Eliphaz;) they found, to their costs, what it was to set God at defiance. Those who were resolved to lay the reins on the neck of their appetites and passions, began with this; they said unto God, Depart; they abandoned all religion, hated the thoughts of it, and desired to live without God in the world; they shunned his word, and silenced conscience, his deputy! And what can the Almighty do for them? Some make this to denote the justness of their punishment. They said to God, Depart from us; and then what could the Almighty do with them, but cut them of? Those who will not submit to God's golden sceptre, must expect to be broken to pieces with his iron rod. Others make it to denote the injustice of their sin; But, what hath the Almighty done against them? What iniquity have they found in him? or, Wherein has he wearied them? Mic. vi. 3. Jer. ii. 5. Others make it to denote the reason of their sin; They say unto God, Depart, asking what the Almighty can do to them? "What has he done to oblige us? What can he do, in a way of wrath, to make us miserable, or, in a way of favour, to make us happy?" As they argue, (Zeph. i. 12.) The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil. Eliphaz shows the absurdity of this in one word, and that is, calling God The Almighty; for, if he be so, what cannot he do? But it is not strange if those cast off all religion, who neither dread God's wrath, nor desire his favour.

3. The aggravation of this sin; Yet he had filled their houses with good things, v. 18. Both those of the old world, and those of Sodom, had great plenty of all the delights of sense; for they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, &c. (Luke xvii. 27.) so that they had no reason to ask what the Almighty could do for them? for they lived upon his bounty; no reason to bid him depart from them, who had been so kind to them. Many have their houses full of goods, but their hearts empty of grace, and

thereby are marked for ruin.

4. The protestation which Eliphaz makes against the principles and practices of those wicked people; But the counsel of the wicked is far from me. Job had said so, (ch. xxi. 16.) and Eliphaz will not be behind with him. If they cannot agree in their own principles concerning God, yet they agree in renouncing the principles of those that live without God in the world. Note, Those that differ from each other in some matters of religion, and are engaged in disputes about them, yet ought unanimously and vigorously to appear against atheism and irreligion, and to take great care that their disputes do not hinder either their vigour or unanimity, in that common cause of God, that righteous cause.

The pleasure and satisfaction which the righteons shall have in this. (1.) In seeing the wicked destroyed, v. 19. They shall see it, that is, observe it, and take notice of it; (Hos. xiv. 9.) and they shall be glad, not to see their fellow-creatures miserable, or any secular turn of their own served,

of God fulfilled, the power of oppressors broken, and thereby the oppressed relieved; to see sin s ia...ed, atheists and infidels confounded, and fair warning given to all others to shun such wicked courses. Nay, they shall laugh them to scorn, that is, they justly might do it; they shall do it, as God does it, in a holy manner, Ps. ii. 4. Prov. i. 26. They shall take occasion thence to expose the folly of sinners, and show how ridiculous their principles are, though they call themselves wits. Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, and see what comes of it, Ps. lii. 7. Some understand this of righteous Noah and his family, who beheld the destruction of the old world, and rejoiced in it, as he had grieved for their impiety. Lot, who saw the ruin of Sodom, had the same reason to rejoice, 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8. (2.) In seeing themselves distinguished; (v. 20.) "Whereas our substance is not cut down, as theirs was, and as thine is, we continue to prosper, which is a sign that we are the favourites of Heaven, and in the right." The same rule that served him to condemn Job by, served him to magnify himself and his companions by. substance is cut down, therefore he is a wicked man; ours is not, therefore we are righteous. But it is a deceitful rule to judge by; for none knows love or hatred by all that is before him. If others be consumed, if the very remnant of them be consumed, and we be not, instead of censuring them, and lifting up ourselves, as Eliphaz does here, we ought to be thankful to God, and take it for a warning to ourselves to prepare for the like calamities.

21. Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee. 22. Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thy heart. 23. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles. 24. Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks. 25. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver. 26. For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God. 27. Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy yows. 28. Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee; and the light shall shine upon thy ways. 29. When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up; and he shall save the humble person. 30. He shall deliver the island of the innocent; and it is delivered by the pureness of thy hands.

Methinks I can almost forgive Eliphaz his hard censures of Job, which we had in the beginning of the chapter, though they were very unjust and unkind, for this good counsel and encouragement which he gives him in these verses with which he closes his discourse, and than which nothing could be bet-ter said, or more to the purpose. Though he thought him a bad man, yet he saw reasons to have hope concerning him, that, for all this, he would be both pious and prosperous. But it is strange, that out of the same mouth, and almost in the same breath, both sweet waters and bitter should proceed. Good men, though they may perhaps be put into a heat, || God for the ending of the controversy; Receive that.

yet sometimes will talk themselves into a better temper, and, it may be, sooner than another could talk them into it.

Eliphaz had laid before Job the miserable condition of a wicked man, that he might frighten him into repentance. Here, on the other hand, he shows him the happiness which those may be sure of, that do repent, that he might allure and encourage him to it. Ministers must try both ways in dealing with people, must speak to them from mount Sinai by the terrors of the law, and from mount Zion by the comforts of the gospel, must set before them both life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse. Now here observe,

I. The good counsel which Eliphaz gives to Job; and good counsel it is to us all, though, as to Job, it was built upon a false supposition that he was a wicked man, and now a stranger and enemy to God.

1. Acquaint now thyself with God. Acquiesce in God; so some. It is our duty, at all times, especially when we are in affliction, to accommodate ourselves to, and quiet ourselves in, all the disposals of the Divine Providence. Join thyself to him; so some; Fall in with his interests, and act no longer in opposition to him. Our translators render it well; "Acquaint thyself with him; be not such a stranger to him as thou hast made thyself by casting off the fear of him, and restraining prayer before him."
It is the duty and interest of every one of us, to acquaint ourselves with God. We must get the knowledge of him, fix our affections on him, join ourselves to him in a covenant of friendship, and then set up, and keep up, a constant correspondence with him in the ways he has appointed. It is our honour, that we are made capable of this acquaintance; our misery, that by sin we have lost it; our privilege, that through Christ we are invited to return to it; and it will be our unspeakable happiness to contract and cultivate this acquaintance.

2. "Be at peace; at peace with thyself, not fretful, uneasy, and in confusion; let not thy heart be troubled, but be quiet and calm, and well composed. Be at peace with thy God; be reconciled to him. Do not carry on this unholy war. Thou complainest that God is thine Enemy; be thou his friend. the great concern of every one of us to make our peace with God, and it is necessary in order to our comfortable acquaintance with him; for can two walk together, except they be agreed? Amos iii. 3. This we must do quickly; now, before it be too late. Agree with thine adversary, while thou art in the way. This we are earnestly urged to do. Some read it, "Acquaint thyself, I pray thee, with him, and be at peace." God himself beseeches us, ministers in Christ's stead, pray us, to be reconciled.

Can we gains y such entreaties? 3. Receive the law from his mouth; (v. 22.) "Having made thy peace with God, submit to his government, and resolve to be ruled by him, that thou mayest keep thyself in his love." We receive our being and maintenance from God. From him we hope to receive our bliss, and from him we must receive law; Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Acts ix. 6. Which way soever we receive the intimations of his will, we must have our eye to him; whether he speaks by scripture, ministers, conscience, or providence, we must take the word as from his mouth, and bow our souls to it. Though, in Job's time, we do not know that there was any written word, yet there was a revelation of God's will to be received. Eliphaz looked upon Job as a wicked man; and was pressing him to repent and reform. Herein consists the conversion of a sinner -his receiving the law from God's mouth, and no longer from the world and the flesh. Eliphaz, being now in contest with Job, appeals to the word of

and be determined by it. To the law and to the tes-

timony.

4. Lay up his word in thine heart. It is not enough to receive it, but we must retain it, Prov. iii. 18. We must lay it up as a thing of great value, that it may be safe: and we must lay it up in our hearts, as a thing of great use, that it may be ready to us when there is occasion, and we may neither lose it wholly, nor be at a loss for it in a time of need.

5. Return to the Almighty; (v. 23.) "Do not only turn from sin, but turn to God and thy duty. Do not only turn toward the Almighty in some good inclinations and good beginnings, but return to him; eturn home to him, quite to him, so as to reach to the Almighty, by a universal reformation, an effectual thorough change of thy heart and life, and a firm resolution to cleave to him;" so Mr. Poole.

6. Put away iniquity far from thy tabernacle. This was the advice Zophar gave him; (ch. xi. 14.) "Let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacle. iniquity far off, the farther the better, not only from thy heart and hand, but from thy house. must not only not be wicked thyself, but reprove and restrain sin in those that are under thy charge." Note, Family reformation is needful reformation;

we and our house must serve the Lord

II. The good encouragement which Eliphaz gives Job, that he should be very happy, if he would but take this good counsel. In general, "Thereby good shall come unto thee; (v. 21.) the good that is now departed from thee; all the good thy heart can desire, temporal, spiritual, eternal, good shall come to thee. God shall come to thee, into covenant and communion with thee; and he brings all good with him, all good in him. Thou art now ruined and brought down, but if thou return to God, thou shalt be built up again, and thy present ruins shall be re-paired. Thy family shall be built up in children, thy estate in wealth, and thy soul in holiness and comfort.

The promises which Eliphaz here encourages Job

with, are reducible to three heads;

1. That his estate should prosper, and temporal blessings should be bestowed abundantly upon him; for godliness has the promise of the life that now is.

It is promised,
(1.) That he shall be very rich, (v. 24.) "Thou shalt lay up gold as dust, in such great abundance, and shalt have plenty of silver; (v. 25.) whereas now thou art poor and stripped of all." Job had been rich; Eliphaz suspected he got his riches by fraud and oppression, and therefore they were taken from him; but if he would return to God and duty, [1.] He should have more wealth than ever he had; not only thousands of sheep and oxen, the wealth of farmers, but thousands of gold and silver, the wealth of princes, ch. iii. 15. Abundantly more riches, true riches, are to be got by the service of God than by the service of the world. [2.] He should have it more sure to him; Thou shalt lay it up in good hands, and hold that which is got by thy piety, by a surer tenure than that which thou didst get by thine iniquity." Thou shalt have silver of strength, (for so the word is,) which, being honestly got, will wear well; silver like steel. [3.] He should, by the grace of God, be kept from setting his heart so much upon it, as Eliphaz thought he liad done. Then wealth is a blessing indeed, when we are not insnared with the love of it. Thou shalt lay up gold; but how? Not as thy treasure and portion, but as dust, and as the stones of the brooks. So little shalt thou value it or expect from it, that thou shalt lay it at thy feet, (Acts iv. 35.) not in thy bosom.

(2.) That yet he shall be very safe; whereas men's riches usually expose them to danger, and he had owned that in his prosperity he was not in safe-

ty, (ch. iii. 26.) now he might be secure; for the Almighty shall be thy Defender; nay, he shall be thy Defence, v. 25. He shall be thy gold; so it is in the margin, and it is the same word that is used (v. 24.) for gold, but it signifies also a strong hold, because money is a defence, Eccl. vii. 12. Worldlings make gold their god, saints make God their gold; and they that are enriched with his favour and grace, may truly be said to have abundance of the best gold, and best laid up. We understand it, "He shall be thy Defence against the incursions of neighbouring spoilers: thy wealth shall not then lie exposed as it did to Sabeans and Chaldeans;" which, some think, is the meaning of that, Thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacle; taking it as a promise. "The iniquity or wrong designed against thee shall be put off, and shall not reach thee." Note, Those must needs be safe, that have Omnipotence itself for their defence, Ps. xci. 1..3.

2. That his soul should prosper, and he should be enriched with spiritual blessings, which are the best

blessings

(1.) That he should live a life of complacency in God; (v. 26.) "For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty; and thus the Almighty comes to be thy gold, by thy delighting in him, as worldly people delight in their money. He shall be thy Wealth, thy Defence, thy Dignity; for he shall be thy Delight." The way to have our heart's desire, is to make God our heart's Delight, Ps. xxxvii. 4. If God give us himself to be our Joy, he will deny us nothing that is good for us. "Now, God is a Terror to thee, he is so, by thine own confession; (ch. vi. 4.-xvi. 9.-xix. 11.) but if thou wilt return to him, then, not till then, he will be thy Delight; and it shall be as much a pleasure to thee to think of him, as ever it was a pain." No delight is comparable to the delight which gracious souls have in the Almighty; and those that acquaint themselves with him, and submit themselves entirely to him, shall find his favour to be, not only their strength, but their song.

(2.) That he should have a humble, holy, confidence toward God; such as they are said to have, whose hearts condemn them not; 1 John iii. 21. "Then shalt thou lift up thy face to God with boldness, and not be afraid, as thou now art, to draw near to him. Thy countenance is now fallen, and thou lookest dejected; but when thou hast made thy peace with God, thou shalt blush no more, tremble no more, and hang thy head no more, as thou dost now, but shalt cheerfully, and with a gracious assurance, show thyself to him, pray before him, and

expect blessings from him."

(3.) That he should maintain a constant communion with God; "The correspondence, once settled, shall be kept up to thine unspeakable satisfaction. Letters shall be both statedly and occasionally interchanged between thee and Heaven," v. 27. "Thou shalt by prayer send letters to God; Thou shalt make thy prayer" (the word is, Thou shalt multiply thy prayers) "unto him, and he will not think thy letters troublesome, though many and long. The oftener we come to the throne of grace, the more welcome. Under all thy burthens, in all thy wants, cares, and fears, thou shalt send to heaven for guidance and strength, wisdom, comfort, and good success." [2.] "He shall, by his providence and grace, answer those letters, and give thee what thou askest of him, either in kind or kindness; he shall hear thee, and make it to appear he does so, by what he does for thee and in thee." "Then thou shalt by thy praises reply to the gracious answers which he sent thee: thou shalt pay thy vows, and that shall be acceptable to him, and fetch in further mercy." Note, When God performs that which in our distress we prayed for, we

must make conscience of performing that which we I then promised, else we do not deal honestly. we promised nothing else, we promised to be hankful, and that is enough, for it includes all, Ps.

cxvi. 14.

(4.) That he should have inward satisfaction in the management of all his outward affairs; (v. 28.) Thou shalt decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee," that is, "Thou shalt frame all thy projects and purposes with so much wisdom and grace, and resignation to the will of God, that the issue of them shall be to thy heart's content, just as thou wouldest have it to be. Thou shalt commit thy works unto the Lord by faith and prayer, and then thy thoughts shall be established; thou shalt be easy and pleased, whatsoever occurs, Prov. xvi. 3. This the grace of God shall work in thee; nay, sometimes the providence of God shall give thee the very thing thou didst desire and pray for, and give it thee in thine own way, and manner, and time; be it unto thee, even as thou wilt." When, at any time, an affair succeeds just according to the scheme we laid, and our measures are in nothing broken, nor are we put upon new counsels, then we must own the performance of this promise, Thou shalt de-cree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee. "Whereas now thou complainest of darkness round about thee, then the light shall shine on thy ways;" that is, "God shall guide and direct thee, and then it will follow, of course, that he shall prosper and succeed thee in all thine undertakings. God's wisdom shall be thy guide, his favour thy comfort, and thy ways shall be so under both those lights, that thou shalt have a comfortable enjoyment of what is present, and a comfortable prospect of what is future," Ps. xc. 17.

(5.) That, even in times of common calamity and danger, he should have abundance of joy and hope; (v. 29.) "When men are cast down round about thee, cast down in their affairs, cast down in their spirits, sinking, desponding, and ready to despair, then shalt thou say, There is lifting up. Thou shalt find that in thyself, which will not only bear thee up under thy troubles, and keep thee from fainting, but lift thee up above thy troubles, and easile thee to rejoice evermore. When men's hearts fail them for fear, then shall Christ's disciples lift up their heads for joy, Luke xxi. 26.28. Thus are they made to ride upon the high places of the earth; (Isa. lviii. 14.) and that which will lift them up, is, the belief of this, that God will save the humble person. They that humble themselves shall be ex-

alted, not only in honour, but in comfort.

3. That he should be a blessing to his country, and an instrument of good to many; (v. 30.) God shall, in answer to thy prayers, deliver the island of the innocent, and have a regard therein to the flureness of thy hands, which is necessary to the acceptableness of our prayers, 1 Tim. ii. 8. But, because we may suppose the innocent not to need deliverance, (it was guilty Sodom that wanted the benefit of Abraham's intercession,) I incline to the marginal reading, *The innocent shall deliver the island*, by their advice, (Eccl. ix. 14, 15.) and by their prayers, and their interest in heaven, Acts xxvii. 24. Or, He shall deliver those that are not innocent, and they are delivered by the fureness of thy hands; so it may be read, and most probably. Note, A good man is a public good. Sinners fare the better for saints, whether they are aware of it or no. If Eliphaz intended hereby, (as some think be did,) to insinuate that Job's prayers were not prevailing, nor his hands pure, (for then he would have relieved others, much more himself,) he was afterward made to see his error, when it appeared enst Job had a better interest in heaven than he nad; for he and his three friends, who, in this mat-

ter, were not innocent, were delivered by the hure ness of Job's hands, ch. xlii. 8.

CHAP. XXIII.

This chapter begins Job's reply to Eliphaz; in this reply he takes no notice of his friends; either because he saw it was to no purpose, or because he liked the good counsel Eliphaz gave him in the close of his discourse so well, that he would make no answer to the peevish reflections he began with; but he appeals to God; begs to have his cause heard, and doubts not but to make it good, having the testimony of his own conscience concerning his integrity. Here seems to be a struggle between flesh and spirit, fear and faith, throughout this chapter. I. He complains of his calamitous condition, and especially of complains of his calamitous condition, and especially of God's withdrawings from him, so that he could not get his appeal heard, (v. 2...5.) nor discern the meaning of God's dealings with him, (v. 8, 9.) nor gain any hope of relief, v. 13, 14. This made deep impressions of trouble and terror upon him, v. 15...17. But, II. In the midst of these complaints, he comforts himself with the assurance of God's clemency, (v. 6, 7.) and his own integrity, which God himself was a Witness to, v. 10...12. Thus was the light of his day like that spoken of, (Zech. viv. 6...7) neither perfectly clear nor perfectly dark hut. xiv. 6, 7.) neither perfectly clear nor perfectly dark, but at evening time it was light

1. THEN Job answered and said, 2. Even to-day is my complaint hittor. Even to-day is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning. Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! 4. I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. 5. I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me. 6. Will be plead against me with his great power? no; but he would put strength in me. 7. There the righteous might dispute with him; so should I be delivered for ever from my judge.

Job is confident that he has wrong done him by his friends, and therefore, ill as he is, he will not give up the cause, nor let them have the last word.

Here

I. He justifies his own resentments and representations of his trouble; (v. 2.) Even to-day, I own, my complaint is bitter; for the affliction, the cause of the complaint, is so. There are wormwood and gall in the affliction and misery, my soul has them still in remembrance, and is imbittered by them, Lam. iii. 19, 20. Even to-day is my comfilaint counted rebellion; so some read it; his friends construed the innocent expressions of his grief into reflections upon God and his providence, and called them rebellion. "But," says he, "I do not complain more than there is cause, for my stroke is heavier than my groaning. Even to-day, after all you have said to convince and comfort me, still the pains of my body, and the wounds of my spirit, are such, that I have reason enough for my complaints, if they were more bitter than they are." We wrong God, if our groaning be heavier than our stroke; like froward children, who, when they cry for nothing, have justly something given them to cry for; but we do not wrong ourselves, though our stroke be heavier than our groaning, for little said is soon amended.

II. He appeals from the censures of his friends to the just judgment of God; and this he thought was an evidence for him that he was not a hypocrite, for then he durst not have made such an appeal as this. St. Paul comforts himself in this, that he that judged him was the Lord, and therefore he valued not man's judgment, (1 Cor. iv. 3 4 but he was willing to wait till the appointed day of decision comes; where is Job is impatient, and passionately wishes to have the judgment-day anticipated, and to have his cause tried quickly, as it were, by a special commission. The apostle found it necessary to press it much upon suffering Christians patiently to expect the Judge's coming, James v. 7..9.

ry to press it much upon suffering Christians patiently to expect the Judge's coming, James v. 7..9.

1. He is so sure of the equity of God's tribunal, that he longs to appear before it; (v. 3.) Oh that I knew where I might find him! This may properly express the pious breathings of a soul convinced that it has, by sin, lost God, and is undone for ever if it recover not its interest in his favour. that I knew how I might recover his favour! How I might come into covenant and communion with him!" Mic. vi. 6, 7. It is the cry of a poor deserted soul, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? Oh that I knew where I might find him! Oh that he who has laid open the way to him, would direct me into it, and lead me in it!" But Job here seems to speak it too boldly, that his friends wronged him, and he knew not which way to apply himself to God, to have justice done him, else he would go even to his seat, to demand it. A patient waiting for death and judgment is our wisdom and duty; and, if we duly consider things, that cannot be without a holy fear and trembling; but a passionate wishing for death or judgment, without any such fear and trembling, is our sin and folly, and ill becomes us. Do we know what death and judgment are, and are we so very ready for them, that we need not time to get readier? Woe to them that, thus in a heat, desire the day of the Lord, Amos v. 18.

2. He is so sure of the goodness of his own cause, that he longs to be opening it at God's bar, (v. 4.) "I would order my cause before him, and set it in a true light; I would produce the evidences of my sincerity in a proper method, and would fill my mouth with arguments to prove it." We may apply this to the duty of prayer, in which we have boldness to enter into the holiest, and to come even to the footstool of the throne of grace. We have not only liberty of access, but liberty of speech. We have leave, (1.) To be particular in our requests, to order our cause before God, to speak the whole matter, to lay before him all our grievances, in what method we think most proper; we durst not be so free with earthly princes, as an humble holy soul may be with God. (2.) To be importunate in our requests. We are allowed, not only to pray, but to plead; not only to ask, but to argue; nay, to fill our mouths with arguments: not to move God, (he is perfectly apprized of the merits of the cause without our showing,) but to move ourselves, to excite our fervency, and encourage our faith, in

3. He is so sure of a sentence in favour of him, that he even longed to hear it; (v. 5.) "I would know the words which he would answer me," that is, "I would gladly hear what God will say to this matter in dispute between you and me; and will entirely acquiesce in his judgment." This becomes us, in all controversies; let the word of God determine them; let us know what he answers, and understand what he says. Job knew well enough what his friends would answer him; they would condemn him, and run him down; "But," (says he,) "I would fain know what God would answer me; for I am sure his judgment is according to truth, which theirs is not. I cannot understand them, they talk so little to the purpose; but what he says I should understand, and therefore be fully satisfied in."

III. He comforts himself with the hope that God would deal favourably with him in this matter, v. 6, 7. Note, It is of great use to us, in every thing wherein we have to do with God, to keep up good thoughts of him. He believes,

1. That God would not overpower him; that he would not deal with him either by absolute sovereignty, or in strict justice; not with a high hand, not with a strong hand: Will he filead against me with his great hower? No, Job's friends pleaded against him with all the power they had; but will God do so? No, his power is all just and holy, whatever men's is: against those that are obstinate in their unbelief and impenitency, God will filead with his great hower, their destruction will come from the glory of his hower; but with his own people, that love him and trust in him, he will deal in tender compassion.

tender compassion.

2. That, on the contrary, he would empower him to plead his own cause before God; "He would put strength in me, to support me and hear me up, in maintaining mine integrity." Note, The same power that is engaged against proud sinners, is engaged for humble saints, who prevail with God by strength derived from him, as Jacob did, Hos. xii. 3. See Ps.

lxviii. 35.

That the issue would certainly be comfortable; (v. 7.) There, in the court of heaven, when the final sentence is to be given, the righteous might dispute with him, and come off in his righteousness. Now, even the upright are often chastened of the Lord, and they cannot dispute against it; integrity itself is no fence either against calamity or calumny; but in that day, they shall not be condemned with the world, though God may afflict by prerogative. Then you shall discern between the righteous and the wicked, Mal. iii. 18. So vast will be the difference between them in their everlasting state; whereas now we can scarcely distinguish them, so little is the difference between them as to their outward condition, for all things come alike to all. Then, when the final doom is given, "I shall be delivered for ever from my Judge," that is, "I shall be saved from the unjust censures of my friends, and from that divine sentence which is now so much a terror to me." Those that are delivered up to God as their Owner and Ruler shall be for ever delivered from him as their Judge and Avenger: and there is no flying from his justice, but by flying to his mercy.

8. Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: 9. On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: 10. But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. 11. My foot hath held his steps: his way have I kept, and not declined. 12. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

Here.

I. Job complains that he cannot understand the meaning of God's providences concerning him, but was quite at a loss about them; (v. 8, 9.) I go forward, but he is not there, &c. Eliphaz had bid him acquaint himself with God; "So I would, with all my heart," says Job, "if I knew how to get acquainted with him." He had himself a great desire to appear before God, and get a hearing of his case, but the Judge was not to be found; look which way he would, he could see no sign of God's appearing for him to clear up his innocency. Job, no doubt, believed that God is everywhere present; but three

things he seems to complain of here, 1. That he ! could not fix his thoughts, nor form any clear judgment of things in his own mind: his mind was so hurried and discomposed with his troubles, that he was like a man in a fright, or at his wit's end, who runs this way, and that way, but, being in confusion, brings nothing to a head. By reason of the disorder and tumult his spirit was in, he could not fasten upon that which he knew to be in God, and which, if he could but have mixed faith with it, and dwelt upon it in his thoughts, would have been a support to him. It is the common complaint of those who are sick or melancholy, that, when they would think of that which is good, they can make nothing of it. 2. That he could not find out the cause of his troubles, nor the sin which provoked God to contend with him: he took a view of his whole conversation, turned to every side of it, and could not perceive wherein he had sinned more than others, for which he should thus be punished more than others; nor could he discern what other end God should aim at in afflicting him thus. 3. That he could not foresee what would be in the end hereof. whether God would deliver him at all, nor, if he did, when, or which way: he saw not his signs, nor was there any to tell him how long; as the church complains, Ps. lxxiv. 9. He was quite at a loss to know what God designed to do with him; and whatever conjecture he advanced, still something or

other appeared against it.

II. He satisfies himself with this, that God himself was a Witness to his integrity, and therefore did not doubt but the issue would be good. After Job had almost lost himself in the labyrinth of the divine counsels, how contentedly does he sit down, at length, with this thought, "Though I know not the way that he takes, (for his way is in the sea, and his hath in the great waters, his thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours, and it would be presumption in us to pretend to judge of them,) yet he knows the way that I take," v. 10. That is, 1. He is acquainted with it. His friends judged of that which they did not know, and therefore charged him with that which he was never guilty of; but God, who knows every step he had taken, would not do so, Ps. exxxix. 3. Note, It is a great comfort to those who mean honestly, that God understands their meaning, though men do not, cannot, or will not.

2. He approves of it: "He knows that however I may sometimes have taken a false step, yet I have still taken a good way; have chosen the way of truth, and therefore he knows it," that is, He accepts it, and is well pleased with it, as he is said to know the way of the righteous, Ps. i. 6. This comforted the prophet; (Jer. xii. 3.) Thou hast tried my heart toward thee. From this Job infers, When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. They that keep the way of the Lord, may comfort themselves, when they are in affliction, with these three things, (1.) That they are but tried; it is not intended for their hurt, but for their honour and benefit; it is the trial of their faith, 1 Pet. i. 7. (2.) That, when they are sufficiently tried, they shall come forth out of the furnace, and not be left to consume in it as dross or reprobate silver. The trial will have an end; God will not contend for ever. (3.) That they shall come forth as gold, pure in itself, and precious to the refiner: they shall come forth as gold approved and improved; found to be good, and made to be better. Afflictions are to us, as we are; those that go gold into the furnace, will come

Now that which encouraged Job to hope that his present troubles would thus end well, was, the tes-timony of his conscience for him, that he had lived

a good life in the fear of God.

(v. 11.) "My foot hath held his steps," that is, "held to them, held close to them; the steps he takes. I have endeavoured to conform myself to his example." Good people are followers of God: or, "I have accommodated myself to his providence, and endeavoured to answer all the intentions of that; to follow Providence step by step." Or, "His steps are the steps he has appointed me to take; the way of religion and serious godlinessthat way I have kept, and have not declined from it; not only not turned back from it by a total apostasy, but not turned aside out of it by any wilful transgression." His holding God's steps, and keeping his way, intimate that the tempter had used all his arts by fraud and force to draw him aside; but, with care and resolution, he had, by the grace of God hitherto persevered, and those that will do so, must hold and keep, hold with resolution, and keep with watchfulness.

[2.] That God's word was the rule he walked by; (v. 12.) he governed himself by the command-ment of God's lips, and would not go back from that, but go forward according to it. Whatever difficulties we may meet with in the way of God's commandments, though they lead us through a wilderness, yet we must never think of going back, but must press on toward the mark; Job kept close to the law of God in his conversation, for both his judgment and his affection led him to it. I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my ne-cessary food; that is, He looked upon it as his ne-cessary food; he could as well have lived without his daily bread as without the word of God. I have laid it up; so the word is, as those that lay up provision for a siege, or as Joseph laid up corn before the famine. Eliphaz had bid him lay up God's words in his heart, ch. xxii. 22. "I do," says he, "and always did, that I might not sin against him, and that, like the good householder, I might bring forth for the good of others." Note, The word of God is to our souls as our necessary food is to our bodies; it sustains the spiritual life, and strengthens us for the actions of life; it is that which we cannot subsist without, and which nothing else can make up the want of: and we ought therefore so to esteem it, to take pains for it, hunger after it, feed upon it with delight, and nourish our souls with it; and this will be our rejoicing in the day of evil, as it was Job's here.

13. But he is in one mind, and who car turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth. 14. For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him. 15. Therefore am I troubled at his presence; when I consider, I am afraid of him. 16. For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me: 17. Because I was not cut off before the darkness, neither hath he covered the darkness from my face.

Some make Job to complain here, that Ged dealt unjustly and unfairly with him, in proceeding to punish him without the least relenting or relaxation, though he had such incontestable evidences to produce of his innocency. I am loath to think holy Job would charge the holy God with iniquity; but his complaint is indeed bitter and peevish, and he reasons himself into a sort of a patience per force, which he cannot do without reflecting upon God, rs dealing hardly with him: but he must bear it, because he cannot help it; the worst he says, is, that [1.] That God's way was the way he walked in; || God deals unaccountably with him.

of a good improvement, v. 13, 14.

(1.) That God's counsels are immutable; He is in one mind, and who can turn him? He is one. So some read it, or in one; he has no counsellors by whose interest he might be prevailed with to alter his purpose: he is one with himself, and never alters his mind, never alters his measures. Prayer has prevailed to change God's way and his provi-dence, but never was his will or purpose changed; for known unto God are all his works.

(2.) That his power is irresistible; What his soul desires or designs, even that he does, and nothing can stand in his way, or put him upon new counsels. Men desire many things, which either they may not do, or cannot do, or dare not do; but God has an incontestable sovereignty; his will is so perfectly pure and right, that it is highly fit he should pursue all its determinations; and he has an uncontrollable power; none can stay his hand. Whatever the Lord pleased, that did he, (Ps. cxxxv. 6.) and

always will, for it is always best.

(3.) That all he does, is according to the counsel of his will; (v. 14.) He performs the thing that is appointed for me; whatever happens to us, it is God that performs it; (Ps. lvii. 2.) and an admirable performance the whole will appear to be, when the mystery of God shall be finished. He performs all that, and that only, which was appointed, and in the appointed time and method; this may silence us, for what is appointed cannot be altered. But to consider, that, when God was appointing us to eternal life and glory as our end, he was appointing to this condition, this affliction, whatever it is, in our way, this may do more than silence us, it may satisfy us that it is all for the best; though what he does we know not now, we shall know hereafter.

(4.) That all he does, is according to the custom of his providence; Many such things are with him, that is, He does many things in the course of his providence, which we can give no account of, but must resolve into his absolute sovereignty. ever trouble we are in, others have been in the like; our case is not singular, the same afflictions are accomplished in our brethren, 1 Pet. v. 9. Are we sick or sore, impoverished and stripped, children removed by death, or friends unkind? This is what God has appointed for us, and many such things are with him. Shall the earth be forsaken for us.

2. He makes but a bad use of these good truths; had he duly considered them, he might have said, "Therefore am I easy and pleased, and well reconciled to the way of my God concerning me; therefore will I rejoice, in hope that my troubles will issue well at last." But he said, Therefore am I troubled at his presence, v. 15. Those are indeed of troubled spirits, who are troubled at the presence of God; as the psalmist, who remembered God, and was troubled, Ps. lxxvii. 3. See what confusion poor Job was now in, for he contradicted himself: just now, he was troubled for God's absence; (v. 8, 9.) now he is troubled at his presence; When I consider, I am afraid of him. What he now felt, made him fear worse: there is indeed that which, if we consider it, will show that we have cause to be afraid of God-his infinite justice and purity, compared with our own sinfulness and vileness; but if, withal, we consider his grace in a Redeemer, and our compliance with that grace, the fears will vanish, and we shall see cause to hope in him.

See what impressions were made upon him by the wounds of his spirit. (1.) He was very fearful;

1. He lays down good truths, which were capable | heart was tender, and trembled at the word of God; this is meant of a grievous softness, which apprehends every thing that is present to be pressing, and every thing future to be threatening. (2.) He was very fretful, peevish indeed, for he quarrels with God, v. 17. [1.] Because he did not die before his troubles, that he might never have seen them; (Because I was not cut off before the darkness;) and yet if in the height of his prosperity he had received a summons to the grave, he would have thought it hard. This may help to reconcile us to death whenever it comes, that we do not know what evil we may be taken away from. But when trouble is come, it is folly to wish we had not lived to see it, and it is better to make the best of it. [2.] Because he was left to live so long in his troubles, and the darkness was not covered from his face by his being hid in the grave. We should bear the darkness better than this if we would but remember, that to the upright there sometimes arises a marvellous light in the darkness; however, there is reserved for them a more marvellous light after it.

CHAP. XXIV.

Job, having, by his complaints in the foregoing chapter, given vent to his passion, and thereby gained some ease, breaks them off abruptly, and now applies himself to a further discussion of the doctrinal controversy between him and his friends, concerning the prosperity of wicked people. That many live at ease, who yet are ungodly people. That many live at ease, who yet are ungodly and profane, and despise all the exercises of devotion, he had showed, ch. 21. Now here he goes further, and shows that many who are mischievous to mankind, and live in open defiance to all the laws of justice and common honesty, yet thrive and succeed in their unrighteous practices; and we do not see them reckoned with in this world. What he had said before, (ch. xii. 6.) The tahernacles of rabbers prosper, he here enlarges upon. He bernacles of robbers prosper, he here enlarges upon. He lays down his general proposition, (v. 1.) That the punishment of wicked people is not so visible and apparent as his friends supposed; and then proves it by an induction of particulars. I. Those that openly do wrong to their people is not really and the proving the province of particulars. to their poor neighbours, are not reckoned with, nor the injured righted, (v. 2...12.) though the former are very barbarous, v. 21, 22. II. Those that secretly practise mischief, often go undiscovered and unpunished, v. 13...17. III. That God punishes such by secret judgments, and reserves them for future judgments, v. 18..20. and v. 23..25. So that, upon the whole matter, we can-not say, that all who are in trouble are wicked; for it is certain, that all who are in prosperity are not righteous.

THY, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know him not see his days? 2. Some remove the land-marks; they violently take away flocks, and feed thereof; 3. They drive away the ass of the fatherless; they take the widow's ox for a pledge; 4. They turn the needy out of the way: the poor of the earth hide themselves together. $\,$ 5. Behold, as wild asses in the desert, go they forth to their work, rising betimes for a prey: the wilderness *yieldeth* food for them *and* for their children. 6. They reap every one his corn in the field, and they gather the vintage of the wicked; 7. They cause the naked to lodge without clothing, that they have no covering in the cold; 8. They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for want of a shelter; 9. They (v. 16.) The Almighty troubled him, and so made his heart soft, that is, utterly unable to bear any thing, and afraid of every thing that stirred. There is a gracious softness, like that of Josiah, whose Vol. III.—P

take away the sheaf from the hungry; 11. Which make oil within their walls, and tread their wine-presses, and suffer thirst.

12. Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out; yet God layeth not folly to them.

Job's friends had been very positive in it, that they should soon see the fall of wicked people, how much soever they might prosper for a while. no means, says Job, though times are not hidden from the Almighty, yet they that know him do not presently see his day, v. 1. 1. He takes it for granted, that times are not hid from the Almighty: past times are not hid from his judgment, (Eccl. iii. 15.) present times are not hid from his providence, (Matth. x. 29.) future times are not hid from his prescience, Acts xv. 18. God governs the world, and therefore we may be sure he takes cognizance of it: bad times are not hid from him, though the bad men, that make the times bad, say one to another that he has forsaken the earth, Ps. xciv. 6, 7. Every man's times are in his hand and under his eye, and therefore it is in his power to make the times of wicked men in this world miserable; he foresees the time of every man's death, and therefore, if wicked men die before they are punished for their wickedness, we cannot say, "They es-caped him by surprise;" he foresaw it, nay, he ordered it. Before Job will inquire into the reasons of the prosperity of wicked men, he asserts God's omniscience, as one prophet, in a like case, asserts his righteousness, (Jer. xii. 1.) another his holiness, (Hab. i. 13.) another his goodness to his own people, Ps. lxxiii. 1. General truths must be held fast, though we may find it difficult to reconcile them to particular events. 2. He yet asserts, that they who know him, that is, wise and good people who are acquainted with him, and with whom his secret is, do not see his days, not the day of his judging for them; this was the thing he complained of in his own case, (ch. xxiii. 8.) That he could not see God appearing on his behalf to plead his cause; nor the day of his judging against open and notorious sinners, that is called his day, Ps. xxxvii. 13. We believe that day will come, but we do not see it, because it is future, and its presages secret. 3. Though this is a mystery of Providence, yet there is a reason for it, and we shall shortly know why the judgment is deferred; even the wisest, and those who know God best, do not yet see it. God will exercise their faith and patience, and excite their prayers for the coming of his kingdom, for which they are to cry day and night to him, Luke xviii. 7

For the proof of this, that wicked people prosper, he specifies two sorts of unrighteous ones, whom all

the world saw thriving in their iniquity.

I. Tyrants, and those that do wrong under pretence if I w and authority. It is a melancholy sight, which has often been seen under the sun, wickedness in the place of judgment, Eccl. iii. 16. The unregarded tears of the oppressed, while on the side of the oppressors there was power, Eccl. iv. 1. The violent perverting of justice and judgment, Eccl. v. 8.

1. They disseize their neighbours of their real estates, which came to them by descent from their ancestors. They remove the land-marks, under 1 retence that they were misplaced; (v. 2.) and so they encroach upon their neighbours' rights, and think they effectually secure that to their posterity, which they have got wrongfully, by making that to be an evidence for then, which should have been an evidence for the rightful owner. This was forbidden by the law of Moses, (Deut. xix. 14.) under

a curse, Deut. xxvii. 17. Forging or destroying deeds is now a crime equivalent to this

deeds is now a crime equivalent to this.

2. They dispossess them of their personal estates, under colour of justice; they violently take away flocks, pretending they are forfeited, and feed thereof; as the rich man took the poor man's ewe lamb, 2 Sam. xii. 4. If a poor fatherless child has but an ass of his own to get a little money with, they find some colour or other to take it away, because the owner is not able to contest with them. all one if a widow has but an ox for what little husbandry she has; under pretence of distraining for some small debt, or arrears of rent, this ox shall be taken for a pledge, though perhaps it is the widow's all. God has taken it among the titles of his honour to be a Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows; and therefore those will not be reckoned his friends, that do not do their utmost to protect and help them; but those he will certainly reckon with as his enemies, that vex and oppress them.

3. They take all occasions to offer personal abuses to them, v. 4. They will mislead them if they can, when they meet them on the highway, so that the poor and needy are forced to hide themselves from them; having no other way to secure themselves from them. They love in their hearts to banter people, and to make fools of them, and do them a mischief if they can, especially to triumph over a poor person, whom they turn out of the way of getting relief, threaten to punish them as vagabonds, and so force them to abscond, and laugh at them when they

have done.

Some understand those barbarous actions (v. 9, 10.) to be done by those oppressors that pretend law for what they do. They fluck the fatherless from the breast; that is, having made poor infants fatherless, they make them mother'ess too; having taken away the father's life, they break the mother's heart, and so starve the children, and leave them to perish. Pharaoh and Herod plucked the children from the breast to the sword; and we read of children brought forth to the murderers, Hos. ix. 13. Those are inhuman murderers indeed that can with so much pleasure suck innocent blood. They take a filedge of the foor; nay, they take the poor themselves for a pledge, as some read it, and, probably, it was under this pretence that they flucked the fatherless from the breast, distraining them for slaves, as Nch. v. 5. Cruelty to the poor is great wickedness, and cries aloud for vengeance. Those

shall themselves have judgment without mercy. Another instance of their barbarous treatment of those they have advantage against, is, that they take from them even their necessary food and raiment: they squeeze them so with their extortion, that they make them go naked without clothing, (v. 10.) and so catch their death. And, if a poor hungry family has gleaned a sheaf of corn, to make a little cake of, that they may eat it and die, even that they take away from them, being well pleased to see them perish for want, while they themselves are fed to the full.

who show no mercy to them that lie at their mercy,

4. They are very oppressive to the labourers they employ in their service; they not only give them no wages, though the labourer is worthy of his hire; (and this is a crying sin, Jam. v. 4.) but they will not so much as give them meat and drink: those that carry their sheaves are hungry; so some read it, (v. 10.) and it agrees with v. 11. that those who make oil within their walls, and with a great deal of toil labour at the wine-presses, yet suffer thirst, which was worse than muzzling the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn. Those masters forget that they have a Master in heaven, who will not allow the necessary supports of life to their servants and labourers, not caring whether they can live by their labour or no.

5. It is not only among the poor country people, but in the cities also, that we see the tears of the oppressed, (v. 12.) men groan from out of the city, where the rich merchants and traders are as cruel with their poor debtors, as the landlords in the country are with their poor tenants. In cities, such cruel actions as these are more observed than in obscure corners of the country, and the wronged have easier access to justice to right themselves; and yet the oppressors there fear neither the restraints of the law, nor the just censures of their neighbours, but the oppressed groan and cry out like wounded men, and can no more ease and help themselves, for the oppressors are inexorable, and

deaf to their groans. II. He speaks of robbers, and those that do wrong by downright force, as the bands of the Sabeans and Chaldeans, which had lately plundered him; he does not mention them particularly, lest he should seem partial to his own cause, and to judge of men (as we are apt to do) by what they are to us; but among the Arabians, the children of the east, (Job's country,) there were those that lived by spoil and rapine, making incursions upon their neighbours, and robbing travellers. See how they are described here, and what mischief they do, v. 1. Their character is, that they are as wild asses in the desert, untamed, untractable, unreasonable, Ishmael's character; (Gen. xvi. 12.) fierce and furious, and under no restraint of law or government, Jer. ii. 23, 24. They choose the deserts for their dwelling, that they may be lawless and unsociable, and that they may have opportunity of doing the more mischief. The desert is indeed the fittest place for such wild people, ch. xxxix. 6. But no desert can set men out of the reach of God's eye and hand. 2. Their trade is to steal, and to make a prey of all about them. They have chosen it as their trade; it is their work, because there is more to be got by it, and it is got more easily than by an honest calling. They follow it as their trade, they follow it closely; they go forth to it as their work, as man goes forth to his labour, Ps. civ. 23. They are diligent, and take pains at it; they rise petimes for a prey; if a traveller be out early, they will be out as soon to rob him; they live by it as a man lives by his trade; the wilderness (not the grounds there, but the roads there) yieldeth food for them and for their children; they maintain themselves and their families by robbing on the highway, and bless themselves in it without any remorse of compassion or conscience, and with as much security as if it were honestly got; as Ephraim, Hos. xii. 7, 8. 3. See the mischief they do to the country. They not only rob travellers, but they make incursions upon their neighbours, and reaft every one his corn in the field, (v. 6.) that is, They enter upon other people's ground, cut their corn, and carry it away as freely as if it were their own: even the wicked gather the vintage, and it is their wickedness; or, as we read it, They gather the vintage of the wicked; and so one wicked man is made a scourge to another. What the wicked got by extortion, (which is their way of stealing,) these robbers get from them in their way of stealing; thus oftentimes are the spoilers spoiled, Isa. xxxiii. 1.
4. The misery of those that fall into their hands; (v. 7, 8.) They cause the naked, whom they have stripped, not leaving them the clothes to their backs, to lodge, in the cold nights, without clothing, so that they are wet with the showers of the mounains, and, for want of a better shelter, embrace the rock, and are glad of a cave or den in it to preserve them from the injuries of the weather. Eliphaz had charged Job with such inhumanity as this, concluding that Providence would not thus have striptheir clothing, ch. xxii. 6. Job here tells him, there were those that were really guilty of those crimes with which he was unjustly charged, and yet prospered and had success in their villanies; the curse they laid themselves under working invisibly: and Job thinks it more just to argue, as he did, from an open notorious course of wickedness to a secret and future punishment, than to argue, as Eliphaz did, from nothing but present trouble, to a course of past secret iniquity.

The impunity of these oppressors and speilers is expressed in one word; (v. 12.) Yet God layeth not folly to them, that is, he does not immediately presecute them with his judgments for these crimes, nor make them examples, and so evince their folly to all the world. He that gets riches, and not by right, at his end shall be a fool, Jer. xvii. 11. But while he prospers he passes for a wise man, and God lays not folly to him until he saith, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, Lake xii. 20.

13. They are of those that rebel against the light; they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof. 14. The murderer, rising with the light, killeth the poor and needy, and in the night is as a thief. 15. The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me; and disguiseth his face. 16. In the dark they dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the daytime: they know not the light. 17. For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death: if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.

These verses describe another sort of sinners, who therefore go unpunished, because they go undiscovered. They rebel against the light, v. 13. Some understand it figuratively: they sin against the light of nature, the light of God's law, and that of their own consciences; they profess to know God, but they rebel against the knowledge they have of him, and will not be guided and governed, commanded and controlled, by it. Others understand it literally: they have the day-light, and choose the night as the most advantageous season for their wickedness. Sinful works are therefore called works of darkness, because he that does evil, hates the light, (John iii. 20.) knows not the ways thereof, that is, keeps out of the way of it, or, if he happen to be seen, abides not where he thinks he is known. So that he here describes the worst of sinners, 1. That sin wilfully, and against the convictions of their own consciences, whereby they add rebellion to their sin. 2. That sin deliberately, and with a great deal of plot and contrivance, using a thousand arts to conceal their villanies, fondly imagining, that, if they can but hide them from the eye of men, they are safe, but forgetting that there is no darkness, or shadow of death, in which the workers of iniquity can hide themselves from God's eye, ch. xxxiv. 22.

He specifies three sorts of sinners, that shun the light.

so that they are wet with the showers of the mountains, and, for want of a better shelter, embrace the cock, and are glad of a cave or den in it to preserve them from the injuries of the weather. Eliphaz had charged Job with such inhumanity as this, concluding that Providence would not thus have stripped the naked of leading to be called poor and needy, who with much ado get a sorry livelihood by their marketings, yet, the

get it, the murderer will both take his neighbour's life and venture his own; will rather play at such small game than not play at all; nay, he kills for silling sake, thirsting more for blood than booty. See what care and pains wicked men take to compass their wicked designs, and let it shame us out of our negligence and slothfulness in doing good.

> Ut jugulent homines, surgunt de nocte latrones Tuque ut te serves non expergisceris?——— Rogues nightly rise to murder men for pelf: Will you not rouse you to preserve yourself?

(2.) Adulterers; the eyes that are full of adultery, (2 Pet. ii. 14.) the unclean and wanton eyes, wait for the twilight, v. 15. The eye of the adulteress did so, Prov. vii. 9. Adultery hides its head for shame: the sinners themselves, even the most impudent, do what they can to hide it: si non caste, tamen caute-if not chastely, yet cautiously, and after all the wretched endeavours of the factors for hell to take away the reproach of it, it is and ever will be a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret, Eph. v. 12. It hides its head also for fear, knowing that jealousy is the rage of a husband, who will not spare in the day of vengeance, Prov. vi. 34, 35. See what pains those take that make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lust of it; pains to compass, and then to conceal, that provision, which, after all, will be death and hell at last! Less pains would serve to mortify and crucify the flesh, and would be life and heaven at last. Let the sinner change his heart, and then he needs not disguise his face, but may lift it up without spot.

(3.) House-breakers, v. 16. These mark houses

in the day-time, mark the avenues of a house, and on which side they can most easily force their entrance, and then, in the night, dig through them, either to kill, or steal, or commit adultery. night favours the assault, and makes the defence the more difficult; for the good man of the house knows not what hour the thief will come, and therefore is asleep, (Luke xii. 39.) and he and his lie exposed. For this reason, our law makes burglary, which is the breaking and entering of a dwelling-house in the night-time with a felonious intent, to be felony without benefit of clergy.

And lastly, Job observes, (and perhaps observes it as part of the present, though secret, punishment of such sinners as these,) that they are in a continual terror for fear of being discovered; (v. 17.) The morning is to them even as the shadow of death. The light of the day, which is welcome to honest people, is a terror to bad people. They curse the sun, not as the Moors, because it scorches them, but because it discovers them. If one know them, their consciences fly in their faces, and they are ready to become their own accusers; for they are m the terrors of the shadow of death. Shame came in with sin, and everlasting shame is at the end of it. the misery of sinners, they are exposed to continual frights; and yet see their folly, they are afraid of coming under the eye of men, but have no dread of God's eye, which is always upon them: they are not afraid of doing that which yet they are so terribly afraid of being known to do.

18. He is swift as the waters; their portion is cursed in the earth: he beholdeth not the way of the vineyards. 19. Drought and heat consume the snow-waters; so doth the grave those which have sinned. womb shall forget him; the worm shall feed sweetly on him: he shall be no more remembered; and wickedness shall be broken as a tree 21 He evil entreateth the barren | ficient to warrant all their violences: because sentence

that beareth not, and doeth not good to the widow. 22. He draweth also the mighty with his power: he riseth up, and no man is sure of life. 23. Though it be given him to be in safety, whereon he resteth; yet his eyes are upon their ways. 24. They are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low; they are taken out of the way as all other, and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn. 25. And if it be not so now, who will make me a liar, and make my speech nothing worth?

Job here, in the conclusion of his discourse,

 Gives some further instances of the wickedness of these cruel bloody men. 1. Some are pirates and robbers at sea. To this many learned interpreters apply those difficult expressions; (v. 18.) He is swift upon the waters. Privateers choose those ships that are the best sailers: in these swift ships, they cruise from one channel to another, to pick up prizes; and this brings them in so much wealth, that their portion is cursed in the earth, and they behold not the way of the vincyards, that is, as Bishop Patrick explains it, They despise the employment of those who till the ground, and plant vineyards, as poor and unprofitable. But others make this a further description of the conduct of those sinners that are afraid of the light: if they be discovered, they get away as fast as they can, and choose to look, not in the vineyards, for fear of being discovered, but in some cursed portion, a lonely desolate place, which nobody looks after. 2. Some are abusive to those that are in trouble, and add affliction to the afflicted. Barrenness was looked upon as a great reproach, and those that fall under that affliction they upbraid with it, as Penninah did Hannah, on purpose to vex them and make them to fret, which is a barbarous thing; this is evil entreating the barren that beareth not, (v. 21.) or those that are childless, and so want the arrows others have in their quiver, which enable them to deal with their enemy in the gate, Ps. cxxvii. 5. He takes that advantage against, and is oppressive to, them: as the fatherless, so the childless, are in some degree help-For the same reason, it is a cruel thing to hurt the widow, to whom he ought to do good; and not doing good, when it is in our power, is doing hurt. There are those who, by inuring themselves to cruelty, come, at last, to be so exceeding boisterous, that they are the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, v. 22. He draws the mighty into a snare with his power; even the greatest are not able to stand before him when he is in his mad fits: he rises up in his passion, and lays about him with so much fury, that no man is sure of his life; nor can he at the same time be sure of his own, for his hand is against every man, and every man's hand against him, Gen. xvi. 12. One would wonder how any man can take pleasure in making all about him afraid of him, yet there are those that do.

II. He shows that these daring sinners prosper, and are at ease for a while, nay, and often end their days in peace, as Ishmael, who, though he was a man of such a character as is here given, yet both lived and died in the presence of all his brethren, as we are told, Gen. xvi. 12.—xxv. 18. Of these sinners here it is said, 1. That it is given them to be in safety, v. 23. They seem to be under the specia protection of the Divine Providence, and one would wonder how they escape with life through so many dangers as they run themselves into. 2. That they rest upon this, that is, they rely upon this, as suf-

against their evil works is not executed speedily, they think that there is no great evil in them, and that God is not displeased with them, nor will ever call them to an account. Their prosperity is their security. 3. That they are exalted for a while; they seem to be the favourites of Heaven, and value themselves as making the best figure on earth. They are set up in honour, set up (as they think) out of the reach of danger, and lifted up in the pride of their own spirits. 4. That, at length, they are carried out of the world very silently and gently, and without any remarkable disgrace or terror. "They go down to the grave as easily as snow-water sinks into the dry ground, when it is melted by the sun." So Bishop Patrick explains, v. 19. To the same purport he paraphrases v. 20, The womb shall forget him, &c. "God sets no such mark of his displeasure upon him, but that his mother may soon forget him: the hand of justice does not hang him on a gibbet for the birds to feed on; but he is carried to his grave like other men, to be the sweet food of worms: there he lies quietly, and neither he nor his wickedness is any more remembered than a tree which is broken to shivers." And, v. 24, They are taken out of the way as all other, that is, "They are shut up in their graves like all other men; nay, they die as easily (without those tedious pains which some endure) as an ear of corn is cropped with your hand." Compare this with Solomon's observation; (Eccl. viii. 10.) I saw the wicked buried who had come and gone from the place of the holy,

and they were forgotten. III. He foresees their fall, however, and that their death, though they die in ease and honour, will be their ruin. God's eyes are upon their ways; (v. 23.) Though he keep silence, and seem to connive at them, yet he takes notice, and keeps account, of all their wickedness, and will make it to appear shortly, that their most secret sins, which they thought no eye should see, (v. 15.) were under his eve, and will be called over again. Here is no mention of the punishment of these sinners in the other world, but it is intimated in the particular notice taken of the consequences of his death. 1. The consumption of the body in the grave, though common to all, yet to him is in the nature of a punishment for his sin. The grave shall consume those that have sinned; that land of darkness will be the lot of those that love darkness rather than light. The bodies they pampered shall be a feast for worms, which shall feed as sweetly on them as ever they fed on the pleasures and gains of their sins. 2. Though they thought to make themselves a great name by their wealth, and power, and mighty achievements, yet their memorial is herished with them, Ps. ix. 6. He that made himself so much talked of, when he is dead, shall be no more remembered with honour; his name shall rot, Prov. x. 7. They that durst not give him his due character while he lived, shall not spare him when he is dead; so that the womb that bare him, his own mother, shall forget him, that is, shall avoid making mention of him, and shall think that the greatest kindness she can do him, since no good can be said of him. That honour which is got by sin will soon turn into 3. The wickedness they thought to establish in their families, shall be broken as a tree; all their wicked projects shall be blasted, and all their wicked hopes dashed and buried with them. 4. Their pride shall be brought down, and laid in the dust; (v. 24.) and, in mercy to the world, they shall be taken out of the way, and all their power and prosperity shall be cut off; you may seek him, and he shall not be found. Job owns that wicked people will be miserable at last, miserable on the other side death, but utterly denies what his friends asserted, that they are, usually, miserable in this life.

Lastly, He concludes with a bold challenge to all that were present, to disprove what he had said, if they could; (v. 25.) "If it be not so now, as I have declared, and if it do not thence follow that I am unjustly condemned and censured, let them that can, undertake to prove that my discourse is either,

1. False in itself, and then they prove me a liar; (1),

2. Foreign, and nothing to the purpose, and then they prove my speech frivolous and nothing worth." That, indeed, which is false, is nothing worth; where there is not truth, how can there be goodness? But they that speak the words of truth and soberness, need not fear having what they say brought to the test, but can cheerfully submit it to a fair examination, as Job does here.

CHAP. XXV.

Bildad here makes a very short reply to Job's last discourse, as one that began to be tired of the cause. He drops the main question concerning the prosperity of wicked men, as being unable to answer the proofs Job had produced in the foregoing chapter: but, because he thought Job had made too bold with the Divine Majesty in his appeals to the divine tribunal, (ch. xxiii.) he, in a few words, shows the infinite distance there is between God and man, teaching us, I. To think highly and honourably of God, v. 2, 3, 5. II. To think meanly of ourselves; (v. 4, 6.) which, however misapplied to Job, are two good lessons for us all to learn.

1. THEN answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said. 2. Dominion and fear. with him; he maketh peace in his high places. 3. Is there any number of his armies? and upon whom doth not his light arise? 4. How then can man be justified with God? or how can be be clean that is born of a woman? 5. Behold, even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight: 6. How much less man, that is a worm, and the son of man, which is a worm?

Bildad is to be commended here for two things: 1. For speaking no more on the subject about which Job and he differed. Perhaps he began to think Job was in the right, and then it was justice to say no more concerning it, as one that contended for truth, not for victory; and therefore, for the finding of truth, would be content to lose the victory: or if he still thought himself in the right, yet he knew when he had said enough, and would not wrangle endlessly for the last word. Perhaps, indeed, one reason why he and the rest of them let fall this debate, was because they perceived that Job and they did not differ so much in opinion as they thought: they owned that wicked people might prosper a while, and Job owned that they would be destroyed at last; how little then was the difference! If disputants would understand one another better, perhaps they would find themselves nearer one another than they imagined. 2. For speaking so well on the matter about which Job and he were agreed. If we would al get our hearts filled with awful thoughts of God, and humble thoughts of ourselves, we should not be so apt as we are to fall out about matters of doubtful disputation, which are trifling or intricate.

Two ways Bildad takes here to exalt God and

abase man.

I. He shows how glorious God is, and thence infers how guilty and impure man is before him, v. 2. 4. Let us see then,

1. What great things are here said of God, designed to possess Job with a reverence of him, and to check his reflections upon him, and upon his dealings with him.

him is terrible majesty. Dominion and fear are with him, v. 2. He that gave being, has an incontestable authority to give laws, and can enforce the laws he gives. He that made all, has a right to dispose of all according to his own will, with an absolute sovereignty. Whatever he will do, he does, and may do; and none can say unto him, What doest thou? or Why doest thou so? Dan. iv. 35. His having dominion (or being Dominus—Lord) bespeaks him both Owner and Ruler of all the crea-They are all his, and they are all under his direction, and at his disposal. Hence it follows that he is to be feared, that is, reverenced and obeyed, and that he is feared by all that know him; the serophims cover their faces before him; it follows too, that, first or last, all will be made to fear him. Men's dominion is often despicable, often despised, but God is always terrible.

(2.) The glorious inhabitants of the upper world are all perfectly observent of him, and entirely acquiesce in his will. He maketh peace in his high hlaces. He enjoys himself in a perfect tranquillity: the holy angels never quarrel with him, nor with one another, but entirely acquiesce in his will, and unanimously execute it, without murmuring or disputing: thus the will of God is done in heaven; and thus we pray it may be done by us and others on earth. The sun, moon, and stars, keep their courses, and never clash with one another: nay, even in this lower region, which is often disturbed with storms and tempests, yet, when God pleases, he commands peace, by making the storm a calm, Ps. cvii. 29.—lxv. 7. Observe, The high places are his high places; for the heavens, even the heavens, are the Lord's in a peculiar manner: peace is God's work; where it is made, it is he that makes it, Isa. lvii. 19. In heaven there is perfect peace; for there is perfect holiness, and there is God, who is love.

(3.) He is a God of irresistible power; Is there any number of his armies? v. 3. The greatness and power of princes is judged of by their armies. God is not only himself almighty, but he has numberless numbers of armies at his beck and disposal; standing armies that are never disbanded; regular troops, and well disciplined, that are never at a loss, that never mutiny; veteran troops, that have been long in his service; victorious troops, that never failed of success, nor were ever foiled. All the creatures are his hosts, angels especially. He is Lord of all, Lord of hosts. He has numberless armies, and yet makes peace; he could make war upon us, but is willing to be at peace with us; and even the heavenly hosts were sent to proclaim feace on earth and good will toward men, Luke ii. 14.

(4.) His providence extends itself to all; Upon whom does not his light arise? The light of the oun is communicated to all parts of the world, and, take the year round, to all equally. See Ps. xix. 6. That is a faint resemblance of the universal cognizance and care God takes of the whole creation, Matth. v. 45. All are under the light of his knowledge, and are naked and open before him. All partake of the light of his goodness: it seems especially to be meant of that. He is good to all; the earth is full of his goodness. He is Deus Optimus -God, the best of beings, as well as maximus—the

greatest: he has power to destroy; but his pleasure is, to show mercy. All the creatures live upon his bounty.

2. What low things are here said of man, and very truly and justly; (v. 4.) How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean? Man is not only mean, but vile, not only earthy, but filthy: he cannot be justified, he cannot be clean, (1.) In comparison with God. Man's righteousness and holiness, at the best, are nothing to God's, Ps. | and no man, Ps. xxii. 6.

(1.) God is the sovereign Lord of all, and with || lxxxix. 6. (2.) In debate with God. He that will quarrel with the word and providence of God, must unavoidably go by the worst. God will be justified, and then man will be condenined, Ps. li. 4. Rom. iii. 4. There is no error in God's judgment, and therefore there lies no exception against it, nor appeal from it. (3.) In the sight of God. If God is so great and glorious, how can man, who is guilty and impure, appear before him? Note, [1.] Man, by reason of his actual transgressions, is obnoxious to God's justice, and cannot in himself be justified before him: he can neither plead Not guilty, nor plead any merit of his own to balance or extenuate his guilt. The scripture has concluded all under sin. [2.] Man, by reason of his original corruption, as he is born of a woman, is odious to God's holiness, and cannot be clean in his sight. God sees his impurity, and it is certain that by it he is rendered utterly unfit for communion and fellowship with God in grace here, and for the vision and fruition of him in glory hereafter. We have need, therefore, to be born again of water and of the Holy Ghost, and to be bathed again and again in the blood of Christ, that fountain opened.

II. He shows how dark and defective even the heavenly bodies are, in the sight of God, and in comparison with him; and thence infers how little,

and mean, and worthless, man is.

1. The lights of heaven, though beauteous creatures, are before God as clods of earth; (v. 5.) Behold even to the moon, walking in brightness, and the stars, those glorious lamps of heaven, which the heathen were so charmed with the lustre of, that they worshipped them-yet, in God's sight, in comparison with him, they shine not, they are not pure; they have no glory, by reason of the glory which excelleth. As a candle, though it burn, yet does not shine when it is set in the clear light of the sun. The glory of God, shining in his providences, eclipses the glory of the brightest creatures; (Ísa. xxiv. 23.) The moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in mount Zion. The heavenly bodies are often clouded; we plainly see spots in the moon, and, with the help of glasses, may sometimes discern spots upon the sun too; but God sees spots in them, that we do not see. How durst Job then so confidently appeal to God, who would dis cover that amiss in him, which he was not aware of in himself?

2. The children of men, though noble creatures, are before God but as worms of the earth; (v. 6.) How much less does man shine in honour, how much less is he pure in righteousness, that is a worm, and the son of man, whoever he be, that is a worm! A vermin, so some; not only mean and despicable, but noxious and detestable. A mite, so others; the smallest animal, which cannot be discerned with the naked eye, but through a magnifying glass: such a thing is man. (1.) So mean, and little, and inconsiderable, in comparison with God, and with the holy angels: so worthless and despicable, having his original in corruption, and hastening to corruption. What little reason has man then to be proud, and what great reason to be humble! (2.) So weak and impotent, and so easily crushed, and therefore a very unequal match for Almighty God. Shall man be such a fool to contend with his Maker, who can tread him to pieces more easily than we can a worm? (3.) So sordid and filthy. Man is not pure, for he is a worm, hatched in putrefaction, and therefore odious to God. Let us therefore wonder a God's condescension, in taking such worms as we are into covenant and communion with himself, especially at the condescension of the Son of God, in emptying himself so far as to say, I am a worm,

CHAP. XXVI.

This is Job's short reply to Bildad's short discourse, in which he is so far from contradicting him, that he confirms what he had said, and outdoes him in magnifying God, and setting forth his power, to show what reason he had still to say as he did, (ch. xiii. 2.) What ye know, the same do I know also. I. He shows that Bildad's discoursing of: though very true and good, yet not to the purpose, v. 2. 4. II. That it was needless to the person he was discoursing with; for he knew it, and believed it, and could speak of it as well as he, and better, and could add to the proofs which he had produced of God's power and greatness, which he does in the rest of his discourse, (v. 5...13.) concluding, that, when they had both said what they could, all came short of the merit of the subject, and it was still far from being exhausted, v. 14.

1. BUT Job answered and said, 2. How hast thou helped him that is without power? how savest thou the arm that hath no strength? 3. How hast thou counselled him that hath no wisdom? and how hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is? 4. To whom hast thou uttered words? and whose spirit came from thee?

One would not have thought that Job, now that he was in so much pain and misery, could have bantered his friend as he does here, and made himself merry with the impertinency of his discourse. Bildad thought that he had made a fine speech, that the matter was so weighty, and the language so fine, that he had gained the reputation both of an oracle and of an orator; but Job peevishly enough shows that his performance was not so valuable as he thought it, and ridicules him for it. He shows,

1. That there was no great matter to be found in

it; (v. 3.) How hast thou filentifully declared the thing as it is? This is spoken ironically, upbraiding Bildad with the good conceit he himself had of what he had said. (1.) He thought he had spoken very clearly, had declared the thing as it is. He was very fond (as we are all apt to be) of his own notions, and thought they only were right, and true, and intelligible, and all other notions of the thing were false, mistaken, and confused; whereas, when we speak of the glory of God, we cannot declare the thing as it is; for we see it through a glass darkly, or but by reflection, and shall not see him as he is, till we come to heaven. Here we cannot order our speech concerning him, ch. xxxvii. 19. (2.) He thought he had sp ken very fully, though in few words, that he had plentifully declared it; and, alas! it was but poorly and scantily that he declared it, in comparison with the vast compass and copiousness of the

2. That there was no great use to be made of it; Cui bono—What good hast thou done by all that thou hast said? (v. 2.) How hast thou, with all this mighty flourish, helped him that is without power? (v. 3.) How hast thou, with thy grave dictates, counselled him that has no wisdom? Job would convince him, (1.) That he had done God no service by it, nor made him in the least beholden to him. It is indeed our duty, and will be our honour, to speak on God's behalf; but we must not think that he needs our service, or is indebted to us for it, nor will he accept it, if it come from a spirit of contention and contradiction, and not from a sincere regard to God's glory. (2.) That he had done his cause no service by it. He thought his friends were mightily beholden to him, for helping them, at a dead lift, to make their part good against Job, when they were quite at a loss, and had no strength, no wisdom. Even weak dismutants, when warm, are ant to think truth more

beholden to them than really it is. (3.) That he had done him no service by it. He pretended to convince, instruct, and comfort, Job; but, alas! what he had said was so little to the purpose, that it would not avail to rectify any mistakes, nor to assist him either in bearing his afflictions, or in getting good by them; (v. 4.) "To whom hast thou uttered Was it to me that thou didst direct thy discourse? And dost thou take me for such a child as to need these instructions? Or dost thou think them proper for one in my condition?" Every thing that is true and good is not suitable and seasonable. one that was humbled, and broken, and grieved in spirit, as Job was, he ought to have preached of the grace and mercy of God, rather than of his greatness and majesty, to have laid before him the consolations, rather than the terrors, of the Almighty. Christ knows how to speak what is proper for the weary; (Isa. I. 4.) and his ministers should learn rightly to divide the word of truth, and not make those sad, whom God would not have made sad; as Bildad did: and therefore Job asks him, Whose spirit came from thee? that is, "Whattroubled soul would ever be revived and relieved, and brought to itself, by such discourses as these?" Thus are we often disappointed in our expectations from our friends who should comfort us, but the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, never mistakes in his operations. nor misses of his end.

5. Dead *things* are formed from under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof. 6. Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering. 7. He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. 8. He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under them. 9. He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it. 10. He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end. 11. The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof. He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud. 13. By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent. 14. Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?

The truth received a great deal of light from the dispute between Job and his friends, concerning those points about which they differed; but now they are upon a subject in which they were all agreed, the infinite glory and power of God. How does truth triumph, and how bright does it shine, when there appears no other strife between the contenders, than which shall speak most highly and honourably of God, and be most large in showing forth his praise! It were well if all disputes about matters of religion might end thus, in glorifying God as Lord of all, and our Lord, with one mind and one mouth; (Rom. xv. 6.) for to that we have all attained, in that we are all agreed.

I. Many illustrious instances are here given of the wisdom and power of God, in the creation and preservation of the world.

their part good against Job, when they were quite at a loss, and had no strength, no wisdom. Even weak disputants, when warm, are apt to think truth more nipotence, which we may gather out of these verses.

(1.) He hangs the earth upon notning, v. i. The vast terraqueous globe neither rests upon any pillars, nor hangs upon any axle-tree; and yet, by the almighty power of God, is firmly fixed in its place, poised with its own weight. The art of man could not hang a feather upon nothing, yet the Divine Wisdom hangs the whole earth so. It is ponderibus librata suis—poised by its own weight, so says the poet; it is upheld by the word of God's power, so says the apostle. What is hung upon nothing may serve us to set our feet on, and bear the weight of our bodies, but it will never serve us to set our hearts on, nor bear the weight of our souls.

(2.) He sets bounds to the waters of the sea, and compasses them in, (v. 10.) that they may not return to cover the earth; and these bounds shall continue unmoved, unshaken, unworn, till the day and night come to an end, when time shall be no more. Herein appears the dominion which Providence has over the raging waters of the sea, and so it is an instance of his power, Jer. v. 22. We see too the care which Providence takes of the poor sinful inhabitants of the earth, who, though obnoxious to his justice, and lying at his mercy, are thus preserved from being overwhelmed, as they were once, by the waters of a flood, and will continue to be so, because they are reserved unto fire.

(3.) He forms dead things under the waters. Rethain, giants, are formed under the waters, that is, vast creatures, of prodigious bulk, as whales, giantlike creatures, among the innumerable inhabitants

of the water. So Bishop Patrick.

(4.) By mighty storms and tempests he shakes the mountains, which are here called the fillars of heaven, (v. 11.) and even divides the sea, and smites through its proud waves, v. 12. At the presence of the Lord, the sea flies, and the mountains skip, Ps. cxiv. 3, 4. See Hab. iii. 6, &c. A storm furrows the waters, and does, as it were, divide them; and then a calin smites through the waves, and lays them flat again. See Ps. lxxxix. 9, 10. Those who think Job lived at, or after, the time of Moses, apply this to the dividing of the Red sea before the children of Israel, and the drowning of the Egyptians in it. By his understanding he smiteth through Rahab, so the word is, and Rahab is often put for

Egypt; as Ps. lxxxvii. 4. Isa. li. 9.

2. If we consider hell beneath, though it is out of our sight, yet we may conceive the instances of God's power there. By hell and destruction, (v. 6.) we may understand the grave, and those who are buried in it, that they are under the eye of God, though laid out of our sight, which may strengthen our belief of the resurrection of the dead. God knows where to find, and whence to fetch, all the scattered atoms of the consumed body. We may scattered atoms of the consumed body. also consider the grave as the place of the damned, where the separate souls of the wicked are in mi-sery and torment. That is hell and destruction, which are said to be before the Lord, (Prov. xv. 11.) and here to be naked before him, to which it is probable there is an allusion, (Rev. xiv. 10.) where sinners are said to be tormented in the presence of the holy angels, (who attended the Shechinah,) and in the presence of the Lamb. And this may give light to v. 5. which some ancient versions read thus; (and I think more agreeable to the signification of the word Rephaim;) Behold, the giants groan under the waters, and those that dwell with them; and then follows, Hell is naked before him, typified by the drowning of the giants of the old world; so the learned Mr Joseph Mede understands it, and with it illustrates Prov. xxi. 16. where hell is called the congregation of the dead; and it is the same word which is here used, and which he would there have rendered the congregation of the giants, in allusion to the drowning of the sinners of the old world. conclude with t does so? ch. xli.

And is there any thing in which the majesty of God appears more dreadful than in the eternal ruin of the ungodly, and the groans of the inhabitants of the land of darkness? Those that will not with angels fear and worship, shall for ever with devils fear and tremble, and God therein will be glorified.

3. If we look up to heaven above, we shall see

instances of God's sovereignty and power.

(1.) He stretches out the north over the empty flace, v. 7. So he did at first, then he stretched out the heavens like a curtain, (Ps. civ. 2.) and still continues to keep them stretched out, and will do so till the general conflagration, when they shall be rolled together as a scroll, Rev. vi. 14. He mentions the north, because his country (as ours) lay in the northern hemisphere; and the air is the empty place over which it is stretched out. See Ps. lxxxix. 12. What an empty place is this world, in comparison with the other?

(2.) He keeps the waters that are said to be above the firmament from pouring down upon the earth, as once they did; (v. 8.) He binds up the waters in his thick clouds, as if they were tied close in a bag, till there is occasion to use them; and, notwithstanding the vast weight of water so raised and laid up, yet the cloud is not rent under them, for then they would burst, and pour out as a spout; but they do, as it were, distill through the cloud, and so come drop by drop, in mercy to the earth, in small rain, or

great rain, as he pleases.

(3.) He conceals the glory of the upper world, the dazzling lustre of which we poor mortals could not bear; (v. 9.) He holds back the face of his throne, that light in which he dwells, and spreads a cloud upon it, through which he judges, ch. xxii. 13. God will have us to live by faith, not by sense; for this is agreeable to a state of probation. It were not a fair trial, if the face of God's throne were as visible now, as it will be in the great day.

Lest his high throne, above expression bright,
With deadly glory should oppress our sight,
To break the dazzling force, he draws a screen
Of sable shades, and spreads his clouds between.
Sir R. Blackmore.

(4.) The bright ornaments of heaven are the work of his hands; (v. 13.) By his Spirit, the eternal Spirit that moved upon the face of the waters, the breath of his mouth, (Ps. xxxiii. 6.) he has garnished the heavens, not only made them, but beautified them; has curiously bespangled them with stars by night, and painted them with the light of the sun by day. God, having made man to look upward, (Os homini sublime dedit—To man he gave an erect countenance,) has therefore garnished the heavens, to invite him to look upward, that, by pleasing his eye with the dazzling light of the sun, and the sparkling light of the stars, their number, order, and various magnitudes, which, as so many golden studs, beautify the canopy drawn over our heads, he may be led to admire the great Creator, the Father and Fountain of lights, and to say, "If the pavement be so richly inlaid, what must the palace be! If the visible heavens be so glorious, what are those that are out of sight!" From the beauteous garniture of the ante-chamber, we may infer the precious furniture of the presence-chamber. If stars be so bright, what are angels! What is meant here by the crooked serpent which his hands have formed is not certain. Some make it part of the garnishing of the heavens, the milky-way, say some; some particular constellation, so called, say It is the same word that is used for leviathan, (Isa. xxvii. 1.) and, probably, may be meant of the whale or crocodile, in which appears much of the power of the Creator; and why may not Job conclude with that inference, when God himselt

II. He concludes, at last, with an awful et cætera; v. 14.) Lo, these are parts of his ways, the outgoings of his wisdom and power, the ways in which he walks, and by which he makes himself known to the children of men. Here, 1. He acknowledges, with adoration, the discoveries that were made of God. These things which he himself had said, and which Bildad had said, are his ways, and this is heard of him; this is something of God. But, 2. He admires the depth of that which is undiscovered. This that we have said is but part of his ways, a small part. What we know of God, is nothing in comparison with what is in God, and what God is. After all the discoveries which God has made to us, and all the inquiries we have made after God, still we are much in the dark concerning him, and must conclude, Lo, these are but parts of his ways. Something we hear of him by his works and by his word; but, alas, how little a portion is heard of him! heard by us, heard from us! We know but in part, we prophesy but in part. When we have said all we can concerning God, we must even do as St. Paul does; (Rom. xi. 33.) despairing to find the bottom, we must sit down at the brink, and adore the depth: O the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God! It is but a little portion that we hear and know of God in our present state. He is infinite and incomprehensible; our understandings and capacities are weak and shallow, and the full discoveries of the divine glory are reserved for the future state. Even the thunder of his power, that is, his powerful thunder, one of the lowest of his ways here in our own region, we cannot understand. See ch. xxxvii. 4, 5. Much less can we understand the utmost force and extent of his power, the terrible efforts and operations of it, and particularly the power of his anger, Ps. xc. 11. God is great, and we know him not.

CHAP. XXVII.

Job had sometimes complained of his friends, that they were so eager in disputing, that they would searcely let him put in a word; Suffer me that I may speak, and Oh that you would hold your peace! But now, it seems, they were out of breath, and left him room to say what he would: either they were themselves convinced that Job was in the right, or they despaired of convincing him that he was in the wrong; and therefore they threw away their weapons, and gave up the cause. too hard for them, and forced them to quit the field; for great is the truth, and will prevail. What Job had said (ch. xxvi.) was a sufficient answer to Bildad's discourse: and now Job paused a while to see whether Zophar would take his turn again; but he declining it, Job himself went on, and, without any interruption or vexation given him, said all he desired to say in this matter. I. He begins with a solemn protestation of his integrity, and of his resolution to hold it fast, v. 2.. 6. expresses the dread he had of that hypocrisy which they charged bim with, v. 7.. 10. III. He shows the miserable end of wicked people, notwithstanding their long prosperity, and the curse that attends them, and is entailed upon their families, v. 11..23.

1. MOREOVER, Job continued his parable, and said, 2. As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment; and the Almighty, who hath vexed my soul; All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils. 4. My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit. 5. God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. 6. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my

Job's discourse here is called a parable, (mashal,) the title of Solomon's proverbs, because it was grave and weighty, and very instructive; and he spake as one having authority. It comes from a word that signifies to rule, or have dominion; and some think it intimates that Job now triumphed over his opponents, and spake as one that had baffled them. We say of an excellent preacher, that he knows how dominari in concionibus-to command his hearers. Job did so here.

A long strife there had been between Job and his friends; they seemed disposed to have the matter compromised; and therefore, since an oath for confirmation is an end of strife, (Heb. vi. 16.) Job here backs all he had said, in maintenance of his own integrity, with a solemn oath, to silence contradic tion, and take the blame entirely upon himself, if

he prevaricated. Observe,

1. The form of his oath; (v. 2.) As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment. Here, (1.) He speaks highly of God, in calling him the living God, (which means ever-living, the eternal God, that has life in himself,) and in appealing to him as the sole and sovereign Judge. We can swear by no greater, and it is an affront to him to swear by any other. (2.) Yet he speaks hardly of him, and unbecomingly, in saying that he had taken away his judgment, that is, refused to do him justice in this controversy, and to appear in defence of him, and that, by continuing his troubles, on which his friends grounded their censures of him, he had taken from him the opportunity he hoped ere now to have had of clearing himself. Elihu reproved him for this word; (ch. xxxiv. 5.) for God is righteous in all his ways, and takes away no man's judg ment. But see how apt we are to despair of favour if it be not showed us immediately; so poor spirited are we, and so soon weary of waiting God's time. He also charges it upon God, that he had vexed his soul; had not only not appeared for him, but had appeared against him, and, by laying such grievous afflictions upon him, had quite imbittered his life to him, and all the comforts of it. We, by our impatience, vex our own souls, and then complain of God that he has vexed them. Yet see Job's confidence in the goodness both of his cause and of his God; that, though God seemed to be angry with him, and to act against him, for the present, yet he could cheerfully commit his cause to him.

2. The matter of his oath, v. 3, 4. (1.) That he would not speak wickedness, nor utter deceit. That, in general, he would never allow himself in the way of lying; that, as in this debate he had all along spoken as he thought, so he would never wrong his conscience by speaking otherwise: he would never maintain any doctrine, nor assert any matter of fact, but what he believed to be true; nor would he deny the truth, how much soever it might make against him: and, whereas his friends charged him with being a hypocrite, he was ready to answer, upon oath, to all their interrogatories, if called to it. the one hand, he would not, for all the world, deny the charge, if he knew himself guilty, but would declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and take to himself the shame of his hypocrisy: on the other hand, since he was conscious to himself of his integrity, and that he was not such a man as his friends represented him, he would never betray his integrity, nor charge himself with that which he was innocent of; he would not be brought, no not by the rack of their unjust censures, falsely to accuse himself. If we must not bear false witness against our neighbour, then not against ourselves. (2.) That he would adhere to this resolu tion as long as he lived; (v. 3.) All the while my breath is in me. Our resolutions against sin should heart shall not reproach me so long as I live. | be thus constant, resolutions for life: in things

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doubtful and indifferent, it is not safe to be thus | peremptory; we know not what reason we may see to change our mind, God may reveal to us that which we now are not aware of; but in so plain a thing as this, we cannot be too positive, that we will never speak wickedness. Something of a reason for his resolution is here implied—that our breath will not be always in us; we must shortly breathe our last, and therefore, while our breath is in us, we must never breathe wickedness and deceit, nor allow ourselves to say or do any thing which will make against us, when our breath shall depart. The breath in us is called the spirit of God, because he breathed it into us; and that is another reason why we must not speak wickedness. It is God that gives us life and breath, and therefore, while we have breath, we must praise him.

3. The explication of his oath; (v. 5, 6.) "God forbid that I should justify you in your uncharitable censures of me, by owning myself a hypocrite: no, until I die, I will not remove my integrity from me; my righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go." (1.) He would always be an honest man would hold fast his integrity, and not curse God, as Satan, by his wife, urged him to do, ch. ii. 9. Job here thinks of dying, and of getting ready for death, and therefore resolves never to part with his religion, though he had lost all he had in the world. Note, The best preparative for death, is, perseverance to death in our integrity. "Until I die," that is, "though I die by this affliction, I will not thereby be put out of conceit with my God and my religion. Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." (2.) He would always stand to it, that he was an honest man; he would not remove, he would not part with, the conscience, and comfort, and credit, of his integrity; he was resolved to defend it to the last. "God knows, and my own heart knows, that I always meant well, and did not allow myself in the omission of any known duty, or the commission of any known sin. This is my rejoicing, and no man shall rob me of it; I will never lie against my right." It has often been the lot of upright men to be censured and condemned as hypocrites; but it well becomes them to bear up boldly against such censures, and not to be discouraged by them, or think the worse of themselves for them; as the apostle, (Heb. xiii. 18.) We have a good conscience in all things, willing to live honestly.

Hic murus ahencus esto, nil conscire sibi.

Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence, Still to preserve thy conscious innocence.

Job complained much of the reproaches of his friends; But (says he) my heart shall not reproach me; that is, "I will never give my heart cause to reproach me, but will keep a conscience void of offence: and, while I do so, I will not give my heart leave to reproach me." Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justified to The Constitution of the charge of the charge of God's elect? To resolve that our hearts shall not reproach us, when we give them cause to do so, is to affront God, whose deputy conscience is, and to wrong ourselves; for it is a good thing, when a man has sinned, to have a heart within him to smite him for it, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10. But to resolve that our hearts shall not reproach us, while we still hold fast our integrity, is to baffle the designs of the evil spirit, (who tempts good Christians to question their adoption, If thou be the Son of God,) and to concur with the operations of the good Spirit, who witnesses to their adoption.

Let mine enemy be as the wicked, and he that riseth up against me as the unrighteous. 8. For what is the hope of the hypo-

crite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? 9. Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him? 10. Will be delight himself in the Almighty? will be always call upon God?

Job, having solemnly protested the satisfaction he had in his integrity, for the further clearing of himself, here expresses the dread he had of being

found a hypocrite.

I. He tells us how he startled at the thought of it, for he looked upon the condition of a hypocrite and a wicked man, to be certainly the most miserable condition that any man could be in; (v. 7.) Let mine enemy be as the wicked; a proverbial expression, like that, (Dan. iv. 19.) The dream be to them that hate thee. Job was so far from indulging himself in any wicked way, and flattering himself in it, that, if he might have leave to wish the greatest evil he could think of to the worst enemy he had in the world, he would wish him the portion of a wicked man, knowing that worse he could not wish him. Not that we may lawfully wish any man to be wicked, or that any man who is not wicked should be treated as wicked; but we should all choose to be in the condition of a beggar, an outlaw, a galley-slave, any thing, rather than in the condition of the wicked, though in ever so much pomp and outward prosperity.

II. He gives us the reasons of it.

1. Because the hypocrite's hopes will not be crowned; (v. 8.) For what is the hope of the hypocrite? Bildad had condemned it, (ch. viii. 13, 14.) and Zophar, (ch. xi. 20.) Job here concurs with them, and reads the death of the hypocrite's hope with as much assurance as they had done; and this fitly comes in as a reason why he would not remove his integrity, but still hold it fast. Note, The consideration of the miserable condition of wicked people, and especially hypocrites, should engage us to be upright, (for we are undone, for ever undone, if we be not,) and also to get the comfortable evidence of our uprightness; for how can we be easy, if the great concern lie at uncertainties? Job's friends would persuade him that all his hope was but the hope of the hypocrite; (ch. iv. 6.) "Nay," says he, "I would not, for all the world, be so foolish as to build upon such a rotten foundation; for what is the hope of the hypocrite?" See here, (1.) The hypocrite deceived. He has gained, and he has hope; this is his bright side; it is allowed that he has gained by his hypocrisy, has gained the praise and applause of men, and the wealth of this world. Jehu gained a kingdom by his hypocrisy, and the Pharisees many a widow's house. Upon this gain he builds his hope, such as it is; he hopes he is in good circumstances for another world, because he finds he is so for this, and he blesses himself in his own way. (2.) The hypocrite undeceived; he will at last see himself wretchedly cheated: for, [1.] God shall take away his soul, sorely against his will; (Luke xii. 20.) Thy soul shall be required of God, as the Judge, takes it away to be tried and determined to its everlasting state. He shall then fall into the hands of the living God, to be dealt with immediately. [2.] What will his hope be then? It will be vanity and a lie; it will stand him in no stead. The wealth of this world, which he hoped in, he must leave behind him, Ps. xlix.

17. The happiness of the other world, which he hoped for, he will certainly miss of: he hoped to go to heaven, but he will be shamefully disappointed; he will plead his external profession, privileges, and performances, but all his pleas will be overruled as frivolous; Depart from me, I know you not. So that, upon the whole, it is certain, a formal

be miserable in a dying hour.

2. Because the hypocrite's prayer will not be he rd; (v. 9.) Will God hear his cry, when trouble comes upon him? No, he will not, it cannot be expected he should. If true repentance come upon him, God will hear his cry, and accept him; (Isa. i. 18.) but if he continue impenitent and unchanged, let him not think to find favour with God. Observe, (1.) Trouble will come upon him, certainly it will. Troubles in the world often surprise those that are most secure of an uninterrupted prosperity. However, death will come, and trouble with it, when he must leave the world and all his delights in it. The judgment of the great day will come; fearfulness will surprise the hypocrites, Isa. xxxiii. 14. (2.) Then he will cry to God; will pray, and pray earnestly. Those who in prosperity slighted God, either prayed not at all, or were cold and careless in prayer, when trouble comes, will make their application to him, and cry as men in earnest. But, (3.) Will God hear him then? in the troubles of this life? God has told us that he will not hear the prayers of those who regard iniquity in their hearts, (Ps. lxvi. 18.) and set up their idols there, (Ezek. xiv. 4.) nor of those who turn away their ear from hearing the law, Prov. xxviii. 9. Get you to the gods whom ye have served, Judg. x. 14. In the judgment to come, it is certain, God will not hear the cry of those who lived and died in their hypo-crisy. Their doleful lamentations will all be unpitied; I will laugh at your calamity. Their importunate petitions will all be thrown out, and their pleas rejected. Inflexible justice cannot be biassed, nor the preversible sentence revoked. See Matth. vii. 22, 23. Luke xiii. 26, and the case of the foolish virgins, Matth. xxv. 11.

3. Because the hypocrite's religion is neither comfortable nor constant; (v. 10.) Will he delight himself m the Almighty? No, not at any time, (for his delight is in the profits of the world, and the pleasures of the flesh, more than in God,) especially not in the time of trouble. Will he always call upon God? No, in prosperity he will not call upon God, but slight him; in adversity, he will not call upon God, but curse him; he is weary of his religion, when he gets nothing by it, or is in danger of losing. Note, (1.) Those are hypocrites, who, though they profess religion, neither take pleasure in it, nor persevere in it; who reckon their religion a task and a drudgery, a weariness, and snuff at it; who make use of it only to serve a turn, and lay it aside when the turn is served; who will call upon God while it is in fashion, or while the pang of devotion lasts, but leave it off when they fall into other company, or when the hot fit is over. (2.) The reason why hypocrites do not persevere in religion, is, because they have no pleasure in it. They that do not delight themselves in the Almighty, will not always call upon him. The more comfort we find in our religion, the more closely we shall cleave to it. Those who have no delight in God, are easily inveigled by the pleasures of sense, and so drawn away from their religion; and they are easily run down by the crosses of this life, and so driven away from their religion, and will not always call upon God.

11. I will teach you by the hand of God: that which is with the Almighty will I not 12. Behold, all ye yourselves have seen it; why then are ye thus altogether vain? 13. This is the portion of a wicked man with God, and the heritage of oppressors, which they shall receive of the

hypocrite, with all his gains, and all his hopes, will $\parallel it$ is for the sword; and his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread. 15. Those that remain of him shall be buried in death; and his widows shall not weep. 16. Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay; 17. He may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver. 18. He buildeth his house as a moth, and as a booth that the keeper maketh. 19. The rich man shall lie down, but he shall not be gathered. he openeth his eyes, and he is not. Terrors take hold on him as waters, a tempest stealeth him away in the night. The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth; and, as a storm, hurleth him out of his place. 22. For God shall cast upon him, and not spare: he would fain flee out of his hand. 23. *Men* shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place.

> Job's friends had seen a great deal of the misery and destruction that attend wicked people, especially oppressors; and Job, while the heat of disputation lasted, had said as much, and with as much assurance, of their prosperity; but now, that the heat of the battle was nearly over, he was willing to own how far he agreed with them, and where the difference between his opinion and theirs lay. 1. He agreed with them, that wicked people are miserable people; that God will surely recken with cruel oppressors, and, one time or other, one way or other, his justice will make reprisals upon them for all the affronts they have put upon God, and all the wrongs they have done to their neigh-This truth is abundantly confirmed by the bours. entire concurrence even of these angry disputants in it. But, 2. In this they differed. They held that these deserved judgments are presently and visibly brought upon wicked oppressors; that they travail with pain all their days; that in prosperity the destroyer comes upon them; that they shall not be rich, nor their branch green; and that their de-struction shall be accomplished before their time; so Eliphaz; (ch. xv. 20, 21, 29, 32.) that the steps of their strength shall be straitened; that terrors shall make them afraid on every side; so Bildad; (ch. xviii. 7, 11.) that he himself shall vomit up his riches, and that in the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits; so Zophar, ch. xx. 15, 22. Now Job held that, in many cases, judgments do not fall upon them quickly, but are deferred for some time. That vengeance strikes slowly, he had already showed; (ch. xxi. and xxiv.) now he comes to show that it strikes surely and severely, and that reprieves are no pardons.

I. Job here undertakes to set this matter in a true light; (v. 11, 12.) I will teach you. We must not disdain to learn even from those who are sick and poor, yea, and peevish too, if they deliver what is true and good. Observe, 1. What he would teach them; "That which is with the Almighty," that is, "the counsels and purposes of God concerning wicked people, which are hid with him, and which you cannot hastily judge of; and the usual methods of his providence concerning them:" This, says Job, will I not conceal. What God has not concealed from us, we must not conceal from these we are concerned to teach. Things revealed belong to oppressors, which they shall receive of the us and our children. 2. How he would teach them; Almighty. 14. If his children be multiplied, By the hand of God, that is by his strength and

assistance. Those who undertake to teach others | must look to the hand of God to direct them, to open their ear, (Isa. l. 4.) and to open their lips. To se whom God teaches with a strong hand, are best able to teach others, Isa. viii. 11. 3. What reason they had to learn those things which he was about to teach them; (v. 12.) that it was confirmed by their own observation; You yourselves have seen it; (but what we have heard, and seen, and known, we have need to be taught, that we may be perfect in our lesson;) and that it would set them to rights in their judgment concerning him; "Why then are ye thus altogether vain, to condemn me for a wicked man because I am afflicted?" Truth, r ghtly understood and applied, would cure us of that vanity of mind which arises from our mistakes.

That particularly which he offers now to lay before them, is, the portion of a wicked man with God, particularly of oppressors, v. 13. Compare ch. xx. 29. Their portion in the world may be wealth and preferment, but their portion with God is run and misery. They are above the control of any earthly power, it may be, but the Almighty

can deal with them.

II. He does it, by showing that wicked people may, in some instances, prosper, but that ruin follows them in those very instances; and that is their portion, that is their heritage, that is it which they

must abide by.

1. They may prosper in their children, but ruin attends them. His children perhaps are multiplied, (v. 14.) or magnified, so some; they are very numerous, and are raised to honour and great estates. Worldly people are said to be full of children; (Ps. xvii. 14.) and, as it is in the margin there, their children are full. In them the parents hope to live, and in their preferment to be honoured. But the more children they leave, and the greater prosperity they leave them in, the more and the fairer marks do they leave for the arrows of God's judgments to be levelled at: his three sore judgments, sword, famine, and pestilence, 2 Sam. xxiv. 13. (1.) Some of them shall de by the sword, the sword of war, perhaps; they brought them up to live by their sword, as Esau; (Gen. xxvii. 40.) and those that do so, commonly die by the sword, first or last: or by the sword of justice for their crimes, or the sword of the murderer for their estates. (2.) Others of them shall die by famine: (v. 14.) His Others of them shall die by famine; (v. 14.) His offshring shall not be satisfied with bread. He thought he had secured to them large estates, but it may happen that they may be reduced to poverty, so as not to have the necessary supports of life, at least not to live comfortably. They shall be so needy, that they shall not have a competency of necessary food, and so greedy, or so discontented, that what they have they shall not be satisfied with, because not so much, or not so dainty, as what they have been used to. Ye eat, but ye have not enough, Hag. i. 6. (3.) Those that remain shall be buried in death, that is, shall die of the plague, which is called death, (Rev. vi. 8.) and be buried privately and in haste, as soon as they are dead, without any solemnity; buried with the burial of an ass; and even their widows shall not weep; they shall not have wherewithal to put them in mourning. Or it denotes, that these wicked men, as they live undesired, so they die unlamented, and even their widows will think themselves happy that they are got rid of them.

2. They may prosper in their estates, but ruin attends them too, v. $16 \cdot 18$. (1.) We will suppose them to be rich in money and plate, in clothing and furniture; They heap up silver, in abundance as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay; tney have heaps of clothes about them, as plentiful as heaps of clay: or it intimates that they have such abundance of clothes, that they are even a burthen || terrors put him either, [1.] Into a silent and sullen

to them; they lade themselves with thick clay, Hab. ii. 6. See what is the care and business of worldly people—To heap up worldly wealth. Much would have more, until the silver is cankered, and the garments moth-eaten, Jam. v. 2, 3. But what comes of it? He shall never be the better for it himself; death will strip him, death will rob him, if he be not robbed and stripped sooner, Luke xii. 20. Nay, God will so order it, that the just shall wear his raiment, and the innocent shall divide his silver. [1.] They shall have it, and divide it among themselves; some way or other, Providence shall so order it, that good men shall come honestly by that wealth which the wicked man came dishonestly by. The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just, Prov. xiii. 22. God disposes of men's estates as he pleases, and often makes their wills, against their will. The just, whom he hated and persecuted, shall have rule over all his labour, and, in due time, recover with interest what was violently taken from him. The Egyptians' jewels were ly taken from him. The Egyptians' jewels were the Israelites' pay. Solomon observes, (Eccl. ii. 26.) that God makes the sinners drudges to the righteous; for to the sinner he gives travail to gather and heaft up, that he may give to him that is good before God. [2.] They shall do good with it; the innocent shall not hoard the silver, as he did that gathered it, but shall divide it to the poor, shall give a portion to seven, and also to eight, which is laying up the best securities. Money is like manure, good for nothing if it be not spread. God enriches good men, they must remember they are but stewards, and must give an account. bad men bring a curse upon their families with the ill-getting of, good men bring a blessing upon their families with the well-using of. He that by unjust gain increaseth his substance, shall gather it for him that will pity the poor, Prov. xxviii. 8. (2.) We will suppose them to have built them strong and stately houses; but they are like the house which the moth makes for herself in an old garment, out of which she will soon be shaken, v. 18. He is very secure in it, as a moth, and has no apprehension of danger; but it will prove of as short continuance as a booth which the keeper makes, which will quickly be taken down and gone, and his place shall know him no more.

3. Destruction attends their persons, though they lived long in health, and at ease; (v. 19.) The rich man shall lie down to sleep, to repose himself in the abundance of his wealth, Soul, take thine ease; shall lie down in it as his strong city, and seem to others to be very happy and very easy; but he shall not be gathered, that is, he shall not have his mind composed, and settled, and gathered in, to enjoy his wealth. He does not sleep so contentedly as people think he does. He lies down, but his abundance will not suffer him to sleep, at least not so sweetly as the labouring man, Eccl. v. 12. He lies down, but he is full of tossings to and fro till the dawning of the day, and then he opens his eyes, and he is not; he sees himself, and all he has, hastening away, as it were, in the twinkling of an eye. His cares increase his fears, and both together make him uneasy; so that, when we attend him to his bed, we do not find him happy there. But, in the close, we are called to attend his exit, and see how miserable he is *m* death, and after death.

(1.) He is miserable m death. It is to him the king of terrors, v. 20, 21. When some mortal disease seizes him, what a fright is he in! Terrors take hold on him, as waters, as if he were surrounded by the flowing tides. He trembles to think of leaving this world, and much more of removing to another. This mingles sorrow and wrath with his sickness, as Solomon observes, Eccl. v. 17.

despair; and then the tempest of God's wrath, the tempest of death, may be said to steal him away in the night, when no one is aware, or takes any notice of it. Or, [2.] Into an open and clamorous despair; and then he is said to be carried away, and hurled out of his place, as with a storm, and with an east wind, violent, and noisy, and very dreadful. Death, to a godly man, is like a fair gale of wind, to convey him to the heavenly country, but, to a wicked man, it is like an east wind, a storm, a tempest, that hurries him away, in confusion and amazement, to destruction.

(2.) He is miserable after death. [1.] His soul falls under the just indignation of God; and the terror of that puts him into such amazement at the approach of death; (v. 22.) For God shall cast upon him, and not spare. While he lived, he had the benefit of sparing mercy; but now the day of God's patience is over, and he will not spare, but pour out upon him the full vials of his wrath. What God casts down upon a man, there is no flying from, nor bearing up under. We read of his casting down great stones from heaven upon the Canaanites, (Josh. x. 11.) which made terrible execution among them; but what was that to his casting down his anger in its full weight upon the sinner's conscience, like the talent of lead? Zech. v. 7, 8. The damned sinner, seeing the wrath of God break in upon him, would fain flee out of his hand; but he cannot; the gates of hell are locked and barred, and the great gulf fixed, and it will be in vain to call for Those who the shelter of rocks and mountains. will not be persuaded now to fly to the arms of divine grace, which are stretched out to receive them, will not be able to flee from the arms of divine wrath, which will shortly be stretched out to destroy them. [2.] His memory falls under the just indignation of all mankind; (v. 23.) Men shall clap their hands at him, that is, they shall rejoice in the judgments of God, by which he is cut off, and be well pleased in his fall. When the wicked perish, there is shouting, Prov. xi. 10. When God buries him, men shall hiss him out of his place, and leave on his name perpetual marks of infamy. In the same place where he has been caressed and cried up, he shall be laughed at, (Ps. lii. 6.) and his ashes shall be trampled on.

CHAP. XXVIII.

The strain of this chapter is very unlike the rest of this book. Job forgets his sores, and all his sorrows, and talks like a philosopher, or a virtuoso. Here is a great deal both of natural philosophy and moral in this discourse; but the question is, How does it come here? Doubtless, it was not merely for an amusement, or diversion from the controversy; though, if it had been only so, perhaps it had not been much amiss. When disputes grow hot, better lose the question than lose our temper. But this is pertinent, and to the business in hand. Job and his friends had been discoursing about the dispensations of Providence toward the wicked and the righteous. Job had showed that some wicked men live and die in prosperity, while others are presently and openly arrested by the judgments of God. But, if any ask the reason why some are punished in this world, and not others, they must be told it is a question that cannot be resolved. The knowledge of the reasons of state, in God's government of the world, is kept from us, and we must neither pretend to it, nor reach after it. Zophar lad wished that God would show Job the secrets of visdom, ch. xi. 6. No, says Job, secret things belong not to us, but things revealed, Deut. xxix. 29. And here he shows, I. Concerning worldly wealth, how industriously that is sought for, and pursued, by the children of men, what pains they take, what contrivances they have, and what hazards they run, to get it, v. 1..11. II. Concerning wisdom, v. 12. In general, the price of it is very great; it is of inestimable value, v. 15..19. The place of it is very secret, v. 14, 20, 22. In particular, there is a wisdom which is hid in God, (v. 23..27.) and there is a wisdom which is hid in God, (v. 23..27.)

men, v. 28. Our inquiries into the former must be checked, into the latter must be quickened, for that is it which is our concern.

1. QURELY there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold where they fine it. 2. Iron is taken out of the earth. and brass is molten out of the stone. 3. He setteth an end to darkness, and searcheth out all perfection: the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death. 4. The flood breaketh out from the inhabitant; even the waters forgotten of the foot: they are dried up, they are gone away from men. 5. As for the earth, out of it cometh bread; and under it is turned up as it were fire. 6. The stones of it are the place of sapphires; and it hath dust of gold. There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen: 8. The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it. 9. He putteth forth his hand upon the rock; he overturneth the mountains by the roots. 10. He cutteth out rivers among the rocks; and his eye seeth every precious thing. bindeth the floods from overflowing; and the thing that is hid bringeth he forth to

Here Job shows, 1. What a great way the wit of man may go, in diving into the depths of nature, and seizing the riches of it; what a great deal of knowledge and wealth men may, by their ingenious and industrious searches, make themselves masters of. But does it therefore follow that men may, by their wit, comprehend the reasons why some wicked people prosper, and others are punished, why some good people prosper, and others are afflicted? No, by no means. The caverns of the earth may be discovered, but not the counsels of heaven. 2. What a great deal of care and pains worldly men take to get riches. He had observed concerning the wicked man, (ch. xxvii. 16.) that he heaped up silver as the dust; now here he shows whence that silver came, and how it was come by, which he is so fond of, to show what little reason wicked rich men have to be proud of their wealth and pomp. Observe

here, I. The wealth of this world is hid in the earth. Thence the silver and the gold, which afterward they refine, are fetched, v. 1. There it lay mixed with a great deal of dirt and dross, like a worthless thing, of no more account than common earth; and abundance of it will so lie neglected, till the earth and all the works therein shall be burned up. Holy Mr. Herbert, in his poem called Avarice, takes notice of this, to shame men out of the love of money

Money, thou bane of bliss, thou source of woe, Whence com'st thou, that thou art so fresh and fine? I know thy parentage is base and low; Man found thee poor and dirty in a mine.

Surely thou did'st so little contribute
To this great kingdom which thou now hast got,
That he was fain, when thou wast desiltute,
To dig thee out of thy dark cave and grot.

Man calleth thee his wealth, who made thee rich, And while he digs out thee, falls in the ditch.

there is a wisdom which is hid in God, (v. 23..27.) and there is a wisdom which is revealed to the children of metals, are taken out of the earth, (v. 2.) and are

there found in great abundance, which abates their price indeed, but is a great kindness to man, who could much better be without gold than without iron. Nay, out of the earth comes bread, that is, bread-corn, the necessary support of life, v. 5. Thence corn, the necessary support of life, v. 5. man's maintenance is fetched, to remind him of his own original; he is of the earth, and is hastening to the earth. Under it is turned up as it were fire; precious stones, that sparkle as fire; brimstone, that As we have our food, so we have our fuel, cut out of the earth. There the sapphires and other gems are, and thence gold-dust is digged up, v. 6. The wisdom of the Creator has placed these things, 1. Out of our sight, to teach us not to set our eyes upon them, Prov. xxiii. 5. 2. Under our feet, to teach us not to lav them in our bosoms, nor to set our hearts upon them, but to trample upon them, with a holy contempt. See how full the earth is of God's riches, (Ps. civ. 24.) and infer thence, not only how great a God he is, whose the earth is, and the fulness thereof, (Ps. xxiv. 1.) but how full heaven must needs be of God's riches, which is the city of the great King, in comparison with which this earth is a poor country.

II. The wealth that is hid in the earth cannot be come at but with a great deal of difficulty. It is hard to be found out; there is but here and there a vein for the silver, v. 1. The precious stones, though bright themselves, yet, because buried in obscurity and out of sight, are called stones of darkness, and the shadow of death. Men may search long before they light on them; when found out, they are hard to be fetched out; men's wits must be set on work to contrive ways and means to get this hid treasure into their hands; they must, with their lamps, set an end to darkness; and if one expedient miscarry, one method fail, they must try another, till they have searched out all perfection, and turned every stone to effect it, v. 3. They must grapple with subterraneous waters, (v. 4, 10, 11.) and force their way through rocks which are, as it were, the roots of the mountains, v. 9. Now God has made the getting of gold and silver, and precious stones, so difficult, (1.) For the exciting and engaging of industry. Dil laboribus omnia vendunt—Labour is the price which the gods affix to all things. If valuable things were too easily come by, men would never learn to take pains. But the difficulty of gaining the riches of this earth, may suggest to us what violence the kingdom of heaven suffers. (2.) For the checking and restraining of pomp and luxury. What is for necessity is had with a little labour from the surface of the earth; but what is for ornament must be dug with a great deal of pains out of the bowels of it.

To be fed is cheap, but to be fine is chargeable.

III. Though the subterraneous wealth is thus hard to come by, yet men will have it. He that loves silver, is not satisfied with silver, and yet is not satisfied without it; but they that have much must needs have more. See here, 1. What inventions men have to get this wealth. They search out all perfection, v. 3. They have arts and engines to dry up the waters, and carry them off, when they break in upon them in their mines, and threaten to drown the work, v. 4. They have pumps, and pipes, and canals, to clear their way, and, obstacles being removed, they tread the path which no fowl knoweth, (v. 7, 8.) unscen by the vulture's eye, which is piercing and quick-sighted, and untrodden by the lion's whelps, which traverse all the paths of the wilderness. 2. What pains men take, and what vast charge they are at, to get this wealth. They work their way through the rocks, and undermine the mountains, v. 10. 3. What hazards they run. that dig in the mines have their lives in their hands; for they are obliged to bind the floods from overflow-

ing, (v. 11.) and are continually in danger of being suffocated by damps, or crushed or buried alive by the fall of the earth upon them. See how foolish man adds to his own burthen; he is sentenced to eat bread in the sweat of his face. But as if that were not enough, he will get gold and silver at the peril of his life; though the more is gotten, the less valuable it is; for, in Solomon's time, silver was as stones. But, 4. Observe what it is that carries men through all this toil and peril. Their eye sees every frecious thing, v. 10. Silver and gold are precious things with them; and they have them in their eye in all their pursuits; they fancy they see them glittering before their faces, and, in the prospect of laying hold on them, they make nothing of all these difficulties; for they make something of it at last; that which is hid bringeth he forth to light, v. 11. What was hid under ground, is laid upon the bank; the metal that was hid in the ore, is refined from its dross, and brought forth pure out of the furnace; and then he thinks his pains well bestowed. the miners, then, thou sluggard in religion, consider their ways, and be wise. Let their courage, diligence, and constancy in seeking the wealth that perisheth, shame us out of slothfulness and faintheartedness in laboring for the true riches. much better is it to get wisdom than gold! How much easier and safer! Yet gold is sought for, but grace neglected. Will the hopes of frecious things out of the earth, (so they call them, though really they are paltry and perishing,) be such a spur to industry, and shall not the certain prospect of truly precious things in heaven be much more so?

12. But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? 13. Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. 14. The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, *It is* not with me. 15. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed *for* the price thereof. 16. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. 17. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it *shall not be for* jewels of fine gold, 18. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. 19. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold.

Job, having spoken of the wealth of the world. which men put such a value upon, and take so much pains for, here comes to speak of another more valuable jewel, and that is, wisdom and understanding, the knowing and enjoying of God and ourselves. They that found out all those ways and means to enrich themselves, thought themselves very wise; but Job will not own that to be wisdom: he supposes them to gain their point, and to bring to light what they sought for, (v. 11.) and yet asks, Where is wisdom? For it is not here; this their way is their folly. We must therefore seek it somewhere else, and it will be found nowhere but in the principles and practices of religion. There is more true knowledge, satisfaction, and happiness, in sound divinity, which shows us the way to the joys of heaven, than in natural philosophy, or mathematics, which help us to find a way into the bowels of the earth.

Two things cannot be found out concerning this

wisdom.

1. The price of it, for that is inestimable; its

world. Man knows not the price thereof, (v. 13.) that is, 1. Few put a due value upon it. Men know that is, 1. Few put a due value upon it. not the worth of it, its innate excellency, their need of it, and of what unspeakable advantage it will be to them; and therefore, though they have many a price in their hand to get this wisdom, yet they have no heart to it, Prov. xvii. 16. The cock in the fable knew not the value of the precious stone he found in the dunghill, and therefore would rather have lighted on a barley-corn. Men know not the worth of grace, and therefore will take no pains to get it. 2. None can possibly give a valuable consideration for it, with all the wealth this world can furnish them with. This Job is large upon, (v. 15, &c.) where he makes an inventory of the Bona notabilia —The most valuable treasures of this world: gold is five times mentioned, silver comes in also, and then divers precious stones, the onyx and sapphire, pearls and rubies, and the topaz of Ethiopia; these are the things that are highest prized in the world's markets: but if a man would give, not only these, heaps of these, but all the substance of his house, all he is worth in the world, for wisdom, it would utterly be contemned: these may give a man some advantage in seeking wisdom, as they did to Solomon, but there is no purchasing wisdom with these. It is a gift of the Holy Ghost, which cannot be bought with money, Acts viii. 20. As it does not run in the blood, and thus come to us by descent, so it cannot be got for money, nor does it come to us by purchase. Spiritual gifts are conferred without money and without price, because no money can be a price for them. Wisdom is likewise a more valuable gift to him that has it, makes him richer and happier, than gold or precious stones. It is better to get wisdom than gold. Gold is another's, wisdom our own; gold is for the body and time, wisdom is for the soul and eternity. Let that which is most precious in God's account, be so in ours. See Prov. iii. 14, &c.

II. The place of it, for that is undiscoverable.

Where shall wisdom be found? v. 12. He asks this,

1. As one that truly desired to find it. This is a question we should all put; while the most of men are asking, "Where shall money be found?" we should ask, Where may wisdom be found? that we may seek it and find it; not vain philosophy, or carnal policy, but true religion; for that is the only true wisdom, that is it which best improves our faculties, and best secures our spiritual and eternal welfare. This is that which we should cry after, and dig for, Prov. ii. 3, 4.

2. As one that utterly despaired of finding it any where but in God, and any way but by divine revelation. It is not found in this land of the living, v. 13. We cannot attain to a right understanding of God and his will, of ourselves, and our duty, and interest, by reading any books or men, but by reading God's book and the men of God. Such is the degeneracy of human nature, that there is no true wisdom to be found with any but those who are born again, and who, through grace, partake of the divine nature. As for others, even the most ingenious and industrious, they can tell us no tidings of this lost wisdom. (1.) Ask the miners, and by them the defith will say, It is not in me, v. 14. Those who dig into the bowels of the earth, to rifle the treasures there, cannot in these dark recesses find this rare jewel, nor with all their art make themselves masters of it. (2.) Ask the mariners, and by them the sea will say, It is not in me. It can never be got either by trading on the waters, or diving into them; can never be sucked from the abundance of the seas, or the treasures hid in the sand. Where there is a vein for the silver, there is no vein for wisdom, none for grace. Men can more easily break through the difficulties they meet with in getting worldly wealth, | clouds and darkness are round about him. Though

worth is infinitely more than all the riches in this || than through those they meet with in getting heavenly wisdom; and they will take more pains to learn how to live in this world, than how to live forever in a better world. So blind and foolish is man become, that it is in vain to ask him, Where is the place of wisdom, and which is the road that

> 20. Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air. 22. Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears. God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof. 24. For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven; 25. To make the weight for the winds; and he weigheth the waters by measure. 26. When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder; 27. Then did he see it, and declare it; he prepared it, yea, and searched it out. 28. And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom: and to depart from evil is understanding.

The question which he had asked, (v. 12.) he asks again here; for it is too worthy, too weighty, to be let fall, until we speed in the inquiry. Concerning this, we must seek till we find, till we get some sa-tisfactory account of it. By a diligent prosecution of this inquiry, he brings it, at length, to this issue; that there is a twofold wisdom; one hid in God, which is secret, and belongs not to us; the other made known by him, and revealed to man, which

belongs to us and to our children.

I. The knowledge of God's secret will, the will of his providence, is out of our reach, and what God has reserved to himself: it belongs to the Lord our God. To know the particulars of what God will do hereafter, and the reasons of what he is doing

now, is the knowledge he first speaks of.

1. This knowledge is hid from us: it is high, we cannot attain unto it; (v. 21, 22.) It is hid from the eyes of all living, even of philosophers, politicians, and saints; it is kept close from the fowls of the air; though they fly high and in the open firmament of heaven, though they seem somewhat nearer that upper world where the source of this wisdom is, though their eyes behold afar off, (ch. xxxix.29.) yet they cannot penetrate into the counsels of God. No: man is wiser than the fowls of heaven, and yet comes short of this wisdom. Even those who, in their speculations, soar highest, and think themselves, like the fowls of the air, above the heads of other people, vet cannot pretend to this knowledge. Job and his friends had been arguing about the methods and reasons of the dispensations of Providence in the government of the world: "What fools are we" (says Job) "to fight in the dark thus; to dispute about that which we do not understand!" The line and plummet of human reason can never fathom the abyss of the divine counsels. Who can undertake to give the rationale of Providence, or account for the maxims, measure, and methods, of God's government, those arcana imperit—the cabinet counsels of divine wisdom? Let us then be content not to know the future events of Providence, until time discover them, (Acts i. 7.) and not to know the secret reasons of Providence, until eternity discover them. God is now a God that hideth himself; (Isa. xlv. 15.) this wisdom be hid from all living, yet destruction and death say, We have heard the fame of it; though they cannot give an account of it themselves, (for there is no wisdom, nor device, nor knowledge at all in the grave, much less this,) yet there is a world on the other side death and the grave, on which those dark regions border, and to which we must pass through them, and there we shall see clearly what we are now in the dark about. "Have a little patience," says death to the inquisitive soul, "I will fetch thee shortly to a place where even this wisdom will be found." When the mystery of God shall be finished, it will be laid open, and we shall know as we are known; when the veil of flesh is rent, and the interposing clouds are scattered, we shall know what God does, though we know not now,

John xiii. 7.

2. This knowledge is hid in God, as the apostle speaks, (Eph. iii. 9.) Known unto God are all his works, though they are not known to us, Acts xv. 18. There are good reasons for what he does, though we cannot assign them; (v. 23.) God understands the way thereof. Men sometimes do they know not what, but God never does. Men do what they did not design to do; new occurrences put them upon new counsels, and oblige them to take new measures: but God does all according to the purpose which he purposed in himself, and which he never alters. Men sometimes do that which they cannot give a good reason for, but in every will of God there is a counsel: he knows both what he does, and why he does it; the whole series of events, and the order and place of every occurrence. This the order and place of every occurrence. knowledge he has in perfection, but keeps to him-

self.
Two reasons are here given why God must needs

understand his own way, and he only;

(1.) Because all events are now directed by an all-seeing and almighty Providence, v. 24, 25. He that governs the world, is [1.] Omniscient: for he looks to the ends of the earth, both in place and time; distant ages, distant regions, are under his view. We do not understand our own way, much less can we understand God's way, because we are shortsighted; how little do we know of what is doing in the world, much less of what will be done! But the eyes of the Lord are in every place; nay, they run to and fro through the earth: nothing is, or can be, hid from him; and therefore the reasons why some wicked people prosper remarkably, and others are remarkably punished in this world, which are secret to us, are known to him. One day's events, and one man's affairs, have such a reference to, and such a dependence upon, another's, that He only, to whom all events and all affairs are naked and open, and who sees the whole at one entire and certain view, is a competent Judge of every part. [2.] He is omnipotent; he can do every thing, and is very exact in all he does. For proof of this, he mentions the winds and waters, v. 25. What is lighter than the wind? Yet God hath ways of poising it; he knows how to make the weight for the winds, which he brings out of his treasuries, (Ps. exxxv. 7.) keeping a very particular account of what he draws out, as men do of what they pay out of their treasuries, not at random, as men bring out of their trash. Nothing sensible is to us more unaccountable than the wind; we hear the sound of it, yet cannot tell whence it comes, or whither it goes: but God gives it out by weight, wisely ordering both from what point it shall blow, and with what strength. The waters of the sea, and the rain waters, he both weighs and measures; allotting the proportion of every tide and every shower. A great and constant communication there is between clouds and seas, the waters above the firmament and those under it; vapours go up, rains come down, air is condensed into water, || quires of thee, Mic. vi. 8. Unto you, O men. I call.

water rarified into air: but the great God keeps an exact account of all the stock with which this trade is carried on for the public benefit, and sees that none of it be lost. Now if, in these things, Providence be so exact, how much more in dispensing frowns and favours, rewards and punishments, to the children of men, according to the rules of equity!

(2.) Because all events were, from eternity, designed and determined by an infallible prescience, and immutable decree, v. 26, 27. When he settled the course of nature, he foreordained all the ope-

rations of his government.

[1.] He settled the course of nature; for this, he mentions a decree for the rain, and a way for the thunder and lightning: the general manner and methed, and the particular uses and tendencies, of these strange performances, both their causes and their effects, were appointed by the divine purpose; hence he is said to prepare lightnings for the rain, Ps.

cxxxv. 7. Jer. x. 13.
[2.] When he did that, he laid all the measures of his providence, and drew an exact scheme of the whole work from first to last: then, from eternity, did he see in himself, and declare to himself, the plan of his proceedings; then he prepared it, fixed it, and established it, set every thing in readiness for all his works; so that, when any thing was to be done, nothing was to seek, nor could any thing unforeseen occur, to put it either out of its method, or out of its time, for all was ordered as exactly as if he had studied it, and searched it out; so that, what ever he does, nothing can be put to it, or taken from it, and therefore shall be for ever, Eccl. iii. 14. Some make Job to speak of wisdom here as a person, and translate it, Then he saw her, and showed her, &c. and then it is parallel with that of Solomon, concerning the essential Wisdom of the Father, the eternal Word, Prov. viii. 22, &c. Before the earth

was, then was I by him, John i. 1, 2.

II. The knowledge of God's revealed will, the will of his precept, and this is within our reach; it is level to our capacity, and will do us good; (v. 28.)Unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom. Let it not be said, that, when God concealed his counsels from man, and forbade him that tree of knowledge, it was because he grudged him any thing that would contribute to his real bliss and satisfaction; no, he let him know as much as he was concerned to know in order to his duty and happiness: he shall be intrusted with as much of his sovereign mind as was needful and fit for a subject, but he must not think himself fit to be a privy-coun sellor. He said to Adam, so some, to the first man, in the day in which he was created; he told him plainly, it was not for him to amuse himself with over-curious searches into the mysteries of creation. nor to pretend to solve all the phenomena of nature; he would find it neither possible nor profitable to do so. No less wisdom (says Archbishop Tillotson) than that which made the world, can thoroughly understand the philosophy of it. But let him look upon this as his wisdom, To fear the Lord and to depart from evil; let him learn that, and he is learned enough, let this knowledge serve his turn. When God forbade man the tree of knowledge, he allowed him the tree of life, and this is that tree. Prov. iii. 18. We cannot attain true wisdom but by divine revelation; The Lord giveth wisdom, Prov. ii. 6. Now the matter of that, is not the secrets of nature or providence, but the rules of our own practice: unto man he said not, "Go up to heaven, to fetch happiness thence;" or, "Go down to the deep, to draw it up thence." No, the word is nigh thee; (Deut. xxx. 14.) He hath showed thee, O man, not what is great, but what is good, not what the Lord thy God designs to do with thee, but what he rethus minded, thus visited! Behold, mark, take notice, of this; he that has ears, let him hear what the God of heaven says to the children of men; The fear of the Lord, that is the wisdom. Here is, 1. The description of true religion, pure religion, and undefiled; it is to fear the Lord, and depart from evil, which agrees with God's character of Job, ch. The fear of the Lord is the spring and summary of all religion. There is a slavish fear of God, springing from hard thoughts of him, which is contrary to religion, Matth. xxv. 24. There is a selfish fear of God, springing from dreadful thoughts of him, which may be a good step toward religion, Acts ix. 5. But there is a filial fear of God, springing from great and high thoughts of him, which is the life and soul of all religion. And wherever this reigns in the heart, it will appear by a constant care to depart from evil, Prov. xvi. 6. This is essential to religion; we must first cease to do evil, or we shall never learn to do well. Virtus est vitium fugere -E'en in our flight from vice some virtue lies. 2. The commendation of religion; it is wisdom and understanding: to be truly religious, is to be truly wise: as the wisdom of God appears in the institution of it, so the wisdom of man appears in the practice and observance of it; it is understanding, for it is the best knowledge of truth; it is wisdom, for it is the best conduct of our affairs: nothing more surely guides our way, and gains our end, than being religious.

CHAP. XXIX.

After that excellent discourse concerning wisdom in the foregoing chapter, Job sat down and paused a while, not because he had talked himself out of breath, but because he would not, without the leave of the company, engross the talk to himself, but would give room for his friends if they pleased, to make their remarks on what he had said; but they had nothing to say, and therefore, after he had recollected himself a little, he went on with his discourse concerning his own affairs, in this and the two following chapters; in which, I. He describes the height of the prosperity from which he was fallen. And, II. The depth of the adversity into which he was fallen; and this he does, to move the pity of his friends, and to justify, or, at least, excuse, his own complaints. But then, III. To obviate his friends' censures of him, he makes a very ample and particular protestation of his own integrity not-withstanding. In this chapter, he looks back to the days of his prosperity, and shows, I. What comfort and satisfaction he had in his house and family, v. 1..6. 2. What a great deal of honour and power he had in his country, and what respect was paid him by all sorts of people, v. 7..10. 3. What abundance of good he did in his place, as a magistrate, v. 11..17. 4. What a just prospect he had of the continuance of his comfort at home, (v. 18..20.) and of his interest abroad, v. 21..25. All this he enlarges upon, to aggravate his present calamities; like Naomi, I went out full, but am brought home again

MOREOVER, Job continued his parable, and said, 2. Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; 3. When his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light Iwalked through darkness; 4. As I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle; 5. When the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me; 6. When I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil;

Losers may have leave to speak, and there is nothing they speak of more feelingly than of the com- yet expect some moments of darkness: they are Vol. 111.—R

Prov. viii. 4. Lord, what is man that he should be || forts they are stripped of. Their former prosperity is one of the most pleasing subjects of their thoughts and talk. It was so to Job here, who begins with a wish, (v. 2.) Oh that I were as in months fast! So he brings in this account of his prosperity. His wish is, 1. "Oh that I were in as good a state as I was then; that I had as much wealth, honour, and pleasure, as I had then!" This he wishes, from a concern he had, not so much for his ease, as for his reputation, and the glory of his God, which, he thought, was eclipsed by his present sufferings. "Oh that I might be restored to my prosperity, and then the censures and reproaches of my friends would be effectually silenced, even upon their own principles, and for ever rolled away!" If this be our end in desiring life, health, and prosperity, that God may be glorified, and the credit of our holy profession rescued, preserved, and advanced, the desire is not only natural, but spiritual. 2. "Oh that I were in as good a frame of spirit, as I was then!" That which Job complained most of now, was a load upon his spirits, through God's withdrawing from him; and therefore he wishes he had now his spirit as much enlarged and encouraged in the service of God, as he had then, and that he had as much freedom and fellowship with him, as he then thought himself happy in. This was in the days of his youth, (v. 4.) when he was in the prime of his time for the enjoyment of those things, and could relish them with the highest gust. Note, Those that prosper in the days of their youth, know not what black and cloudy days they are yet reserved for.

Two things made the months pass pleasant to

Job;
I. That he had comfort in his God. This was the chief thing he rejoiced in, in his prosperity, as the spring of it and the sweetness of it; that he had the favour of God, and the tokens of that favour. He did not attribute his prosperity to a happy turn of fortune, or to his own might, or to the power of his own hand, but makes the same acknowledgment that David does; (Ps. xxx. 7.) Thou, by thy favour, hast made my mountain stand strong. A gracious soul delights in God's smiles, not in the smiles of this world.

Four things were then very pleasant to holy Job:
1. The confidence he had in the divine protection. They were the days when God preserved me, Even then he saw himself exposed, and did not make his wealth his strong city, nor trusted in the abundance of his riches, but the name of the Lord was his strong tower, and in that only he thought himself safe, and to that he ascribed it that he was then safe, and his comforts were preserved to him. The Devil saw a hedge about him of God's making, (ch. i. 10.) and Job saw it himself, and owned it was God's visitation that preserved his spirit, ch. x. 12. Those only whom God protects are safe, and may be secure; and therefore those who have ever so much of this world, must not

think themselves safe, unless God preserve them.
2. The complacency he had in the divine favour; (v. 3.) God's candle shined upon his head, that is, God lifted up the light of his countenance upon him, gave him the assurances and sweet relishes of his love. The best of the communications of the divine favour to the saints in this world, is but the candle-light, compared with what is reserved for them in the future state. But such abundant satisfaction did Job take in the divine favour, that, by the light of that, he walked through darkness; that guided him in his doubts, comforted him in his griefs, bare him up under his burthens, and helped him through all his difficulties. Those that have the brightest sun-shine of outward prosperity, must

sometimes crossed, sometimes at a loss, sometimes melancholy; but those that are interested in the favour of God, and know how to value it, can, by the light of that, walk cheerfully and comfortably through all the darkness of this vale of tears. That puts gladness into the heart, enough to balance all

he grievances of this present time.

3. The communion he had with the divine word; (v. 4.) The secret of God was upon my tabernacle, that is, When God conversed freely with him, as one bosom friend with another. He knew God's mind, and was not in the dark about it, as, of late, he had been. The secret of the Lord is said to be with them that fear him, for he shows them that in his covenant, which others see not, Ps. xxv. 14. God communicates his favour and grace to his people, and receives the returns of their devotion in a way secret to the world. Some read it, When the society of God was in my tabernacle; which Rabbi Solomon understands of an assembly of God's people, that used to meet at Job's house for religious worship, in which he presided; this he took a great deal of pleasure in, and the scattering of it was a trouble to him. Or, it may be understood of the angels of God pitching their tents about his ha-

4. The assurance he had of the divine presence; (v. 5.) The Almighty was yet with me. Now, he thought God was departed from him, but, in those days, he was with him, and that was all in all to him. God's presence with a man in his house, though it be but a cottage, makes it both a castle and a palace.

II. That he had comfort in his family, every thing was agreeable there: he had both mouths for his meat, and meat for his mouths; the want of either is a great affliction. 1. He had a numerous offspring to enjoy his estate; My children were about me. He had many children, enough to compass him round, and they were observant of him, and obsequious to him; they were about him, to know what he would have, and wherein they might serve him. It is a comfort to tender parents to see their children about them; Job speaks very feelingly of this comfort, now that he was deprived of it. He thought it an in-stance of God's being with him, that his children were about him; and yet we reckon wrong, if, when we have lost our children, we cannot comfort ourselves with this, that we have not lost our God. 2. He had a plentiful estate for the support of this numerous family, v. 6. His dairy abounded to that degree, that he might, if he pleased, wash his steps with butter; and his olive-yards were so fruitful, be-yond expectation, that it seemed as if the rock houred him out rivers of oil. He reckons his wealth, not by his silver and gold, which were for hoarding, but by his butter and oil, which were for use; for what is an estate good for, unless we take the good of it ourselves, and do good with it to others?

7. When I went out to the gate, through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street; 8. The young men saw me, and hid themselves: and the aged arose, and stood up. 9. The princes refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth. 10. The nobles held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth. When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: 12. Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. 13. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came

upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. 14. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. 15. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. 16. I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched out. 17. And I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth.

We have here Job in a post of honour and power; though he had comfort enough in his own house, yet he did not confine himself to that; we are not born for ourselves, but for the public. When any business was to be done in the gate, the place of judgment, Job went out to it through the city, (v. 7.) not in an affectation of pomp, but in an affection to justice. Observe, Judgment was administered in the gate, in the street, in the places of concourse, to which every man might have a free access; that every one who would might be a witness to all that was said and done; and that, when judgment was given against the guilty, others might hear and fear.

Job being a prince, a judge, a magistrate, a man in authority, among the children of the east, we are

here told,

I. What respect was paid him by all sorts of people, not only for the dignity of his place, but for his personal merit, his eminent prudence, integrity, and good management. 1. The people honoured him, and stood in awe of him, v. 8. The gravity and majesty of his looks and mien, and his known strictness in animadverting upon every thing that was evil and indecent, commanded all about him into due decorum. The young men, who could not keep their countenances, or, it may be, were conscious to themselves of something amiss, hid themselves, and got out of his way; and the aged, though they kept their ground, yet would not keep their seats, they arose and stood up to do obeisance to him; they who expected honour from others, gave honour to him. Virtue and piety challenge respect from all, and usually have it; but they that not only are good, but do good, are worthy of double honour. Modesty becomes those that are young and in subjection, as much as majesty becomes those that are aged and in power. Honour and fear are due to magistrates, and must be rendered to them, Rom. xiii. 7. a great and good man was thus reverenced, how is the great and good God to be feared! 2. The princes and nobles paid great deference to him, v. 9, 10. Some think that these were inferior magistrates under him, and that the respect they paid him was due to his place, as their sovereign and supreme; it should rather seem that they were his equals in place, and joined in commission with him, and that the peculiar honour they gave him was gained by his extraordinary abilities and services. It was agreed, that he excelled them all in quickness of apprehension, soundness of judgment, closeness of application, clearness and copiousness of expression; and therefore he was, among his fellows, an oracle of law, and counsel, and justice, and what he said all attended to, and acquiesced in. he came into court, especially when he stood up to speak to any business, the princes refrained talking, the nobles held their peace, that they might the more diligently hearken to what he said, and might be sure to take his meaning. They that had been forward to speak their own thoughts, loved to hear themselves talk, and cared not much what any body else said, when it came to Job's turn to speak, were as desirous to know his thoughts, as ever they had been to yent their own. They that suspected their own judgment were satisfied in his, and admired

with what dexterity he split the hair, and untied the knots which puzzled them, and which they knew not what to make of. When the princes and nobles wrangled among themselves, all agreed to refer the matters in dispute to Job, and to abide by his judgment. Happy the men that are blessed with such eminent gifts as these; they have great opportunities of honouring God, and doing good, but have great need to watch against pride: happy the people that are blessed with such eminent men; it is a token to perish he saved from perishing, relieving them that are blessed with such eminent men; it is a token to be helped. (3.) Those that were ready to perish he saved from perishing, relieving them that are blessed with such eminent men; it is a token to help them, found Job ready to help them, and, if they were in straits, to deliver them. He helped them to make the best of what little they had, helped them to pay what they owed, and to get in what was owing to them, helped them into business, helped them to pay what they owed, and to get in what was owing to them, helped them to pay what they owed, and to get in what was owing to them, helped them to pay what they owed, and to get in what was owing to them, helped them to pay what they owed, and to get in what was owing to them, helped them in it; thus should the tatherless be helped. (3.) Those that were ready to perish he saved from perishing, relieving them.

for good to them.

II. What good he did in his place. He was very serviceable to his country with the power he had; and here we shall see what it was which Job valued himself by in the day of his prosperity. It is natural to men, to have some value for themselves, and we may judge something of our own character, by observing what that is upon which we value ourselves. Job valued himself, not by the honour of his family, the great estate he had, his large income, his full table, the many servants he had at his command, the ensigns of his dignity, his equipage and retinue, the splendid entertainments he gave, and the court that was made to him, but by his usefulness. Goodness is God's glory, and it will be ours; if we be merciful as God is, we are perfect as he is.

1. He valued himself by the interest he had in the esteem, affections, and prayers, of sober people; not by the studied panegyrics of the wits and poets, but the natural praises of all about him. All that heard what he said, and saw what he did, how he laid out himself for the public good with all the authority and tender affection of a father to his country, blessed him, and gave witness to him, v. 11. Many a good word they said of him, and many a good prayer they put up for him: he did not think it an honour to make every body fear him, (Oderint dum metuant—Let them hate, provided they also fear,) nor to be arbitrary, and to have his own will and way, not caring what people said of him; but, like Mordecai, to be accepted of the multitude of his brethren, Est. x. 3. He did not so much value the applauses of those at a distance, as the attestations of those that were the witnesses of his conduct, that constantly attended him, saw him, and heard him, and could speak of their own knowledge; especially theirs who had themselves been the better for him, and could speak by their own experience; such was the blessing of him who was ready to perish, (v. 13.) and who by Job's means was rescued from perishing. Let great men, and men of estates, thus do good, and they shall have praise of the same; and let those who have good done them, look upon it as a just debt they owe to their protectors and benefactors, to bless them and give witness to them; to use their interest on earth for their honour, and in heaven for their comfort, to praise them, and pray for them. Those are ungrateful indeed, who grudge these small returns.

2. He valued himself by the care he took of those that were least able to help themselves, the poor and the needy, the widows and the fatherless, the blind and lame, who could not be supposed either to merit his favour, or ever to be in a capacity to recompense it. (1.) If the poor were injured or oppressed, they might cry to Job, and, if he found the allegations of their petitions true, they had not only his ear and his bowels, but his hand too; he delivered the poor that cried, (v. 12.) and would not suffer them to be trampled upon and run down. Nay, (v. 16.) he was a father to the hoor, not only a judge to protect them, and to see that they were not wronged, but a father to provide for them, and to see that they did not want, to counsel and direct them, and to appear and act for them upon all occasions. It is no disparagement to the son of a prince to be a father to the poor. (2.) The fatherless, that had

and, if they were in straits, to deliver them. helped them to make the best of what little they had, helped them to pay what they owed, and to get in what was owing to them, helped them out into the world, helped them into business, helped them to it, and helped them in it; thus should the fatherless be helped. (3.) Those that were ready to perish he saved from perishing, relieving them that were hungry and ready to perish for want, taking care of them that were sick, that were outcasts, that were falsely accused, or in danger of being turned out of their estates unjustly, or, upon any other account, were ready to perish: the ex tremity of the peril, as it quickened Job to appear the more vigorously for them, so it made his seasonable kindness the more affecting and the more obliging, and brought their blessings the more abundantly upon him. (4.) The widows that were sighing for grief, and trembling for fear, he made to sing for joy; so carefully did he protect them, and previde for them, and so heartily did he espouse their interest; it is a pleasure to a good man, and should be so to a great man, to give those occasion to rejoice, that are most acquainted with grief. (5.) Those that were upon any account at a loss, Job gave suitable and seasonable relief to; (v. 15.) I was eyes to the blind, counselling and advising those for the best, that knew not what to do; and feet to the lame; assisting those with money and friends, that knew what they should do, but knew not how to compass it. Those we best help, whom we help out in that very thing wherein they are defective, and most need help. We may come to be blind or lame ourselves, and therefore should pity and suc-cour those that are so, Isa. xxxv. 3, 4. Heb. xii. 13. 3. He valued himself by the conscience he made

of justice and equity in all his proceedings: his friends had unjustly censured him as an oppressor; "So far from that," (says he,) "that I always made it my business to maintain and support right." (1.) He devoted himself to the administration of justice; (v. 14.) I put on righteousness, and it clothed me, that is, He had an habitual disposition to execute justice, and put on a fixed resolution to do it. It was the girdle of his loins, Isa. xi. 5. It kept him tight and steady in all his motions; he always appeared in it, as in his clothing, and never without it. Righteousness will clothe them that put it on; it will keep them warm, and be comfortable to them; it will keep them safe, and fence them against the in-juries of the season; it will adorn them, and recommend them to the favour both of God and man. (2.) He took pleasure in it, and, as I may say, a holy* pride: he looked upon it as his greatest glory to do justice to all, and injury to none. My judg-ment was a robe and a diadem. Perhaps he did not himself wear a robe and a diadem, he was very indifferent to those ensigns of honour; they were most fond of them who had least intrinsic worth to recommend them; but the settled principles of justice, by which he was governed and did govern, were to him instead of all those ornaments. If a magistrate do the duty of his place, that is an honour to him far beyond his gold or purple, and should be, accordingly, his delight; and truly, if he do not make conscience of his duty, and, in some measure, answer the end of his elevation, his robe and diadem, his gown and cap, his sword and mace, are but a reproach, like the purple robe and crown of thorns with which the Jews studied to ridicule our Saviour: for as clothes on a dead man will never make him warm, so robes on a bad man will never make him honourable. (3.) He took pains in the business ϵ f

no disparagement to the son of a prince to be a that implies it to be in any case allowable. See Gishorne's Sermon and Mrs. More's Structures, vol. I. chap. 11.—ED.

Lis place; (v. 16.) The cause which I knew not I searched out. He diligently inquired into the matters of fact, patiently and impartially heard both sides, set every thing in its true light, and cleared it from false colours; he laid all circumstances together, that he might find out the truth, and the merits of every cause, and then, and not till then, gave judgment upon it; he never answered a matter before he heard it, nor did he judge a man to be righteous, however he seemed, for his being first in

his own cause, Prov. xviii. 17. 4. He valued himself by the check he gave to the violence of proud and evil men; (v. 17.) I brake the jaws of the wicked; he does not say that he brake their necks; he did not take away their lives, but he brake their jaws; he took away their power of doing mischief, he humbled them, mortified them, and curbed their insolence, and so plucked the spoil out of their teeth; delivered the persons and estates of honest men from being made a prey of by them; when they had got the spoil between their teeth, and were greedily swallowing it down, he bravely rescued it, as David did the lamb out of the mouth of the lion, not fearing, though they roared and raged like a lion disappointed of his prey. magistrates must thus be a terror and restraint to evil-doers, and a protection to the innocent, and, in order to this, they have need to arm themselves with zeal and resolution, and an undaunted courage: a judge upon the bench has as much need to be bold and brave, as a commander in the field.

18. Then I said, I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand. My root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch. My glory was fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand. 21. Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel. 22. After my words they spake not again; and my speech dropped upon them. 23. And they waited for me as for the rain; and they opened their mouth wide as for the latter rain. 24. If I laughed on them, they believed it not; and the light of my countenance they cast not down. chose out their way, and sat chief, and dwelt as a king in the army, as one that comforteth the mourners.

That which crowned Job's prosperity, was, the pleasing prospect he had of the continuance of it; though he knew, in general, that he was liable to trouble, and therefore was not secure; (ch. iii. 26.) I was not in safety, neither had I rest, yet he had no particular occasion for fear, but as much reason as ever any man had to count upon the lengthening out of his tenengillity.

of his tranquillity.

I See here what his thoughts were in his prosperity; (v. 18.) Then I said, I shall die in my nest. Having made himself a warm and easy nest, he hoped nothing would disturb him in it, nor move him out of it, till death removed him. He knew he had never stolen any coal from the altar, which might fire his nest: he saw no storm arising to shake down his nest, and therefore concluded, To-morrow shall be as this 'ay; as David; (Ps. xxx. 6.) My mountain stands strong, and shall not be moved. Observe, In the midst of his prosperity, he thought of dying, and the thought was not uneasy to him. He knew that though his nest was high, it did not set im out of the reach of the darts of death. 2. Yet be flattered himself with vain hopes, (1.) That he

should live long, should multiply his days as the sand. He means as the sand on the sea-shore; whereas we should rather reckon our days by the sand in the hour-glass, which will be run out in a little time. See how apt even good people are to think of death as a thing at a distance, and to put far from them that evil day, which will really be to them a good day. (2.) That he should die in the same prosperous state in which he had lived. If such an expectation as this arise from a lively faith in the providence and promise of God, it is well, but if from a conceit of our own wisdom, and the stabil ty of these earthly things, it is ill-grounded, and tarns into sin. We hope Job's confidence was like David's; (Ps. xxvii. 1.) Whom shall I fear? not like the rich fool's, (Luke xii. 19.) Soul, take thine ease.

II. See what was the ground of these thoughts.

1. If he looked at home, he found he had a good foundation. His stock was all his own, and none of all his neighbours had a demand upon him. He found no bodily distemper growing upon him, his estate did not lie under any incumbrance, nor was he sensible of any worm at the root of it. He was getting forward in his affairs, and not going behindhand; he lost no reputation, but gained rather; he knew no rival that threatened either to eclipse his honour, or abridge his power: see how he describes this, v. 19, 20. He was like a tree whose root is not only spread out, which fixes it and keeps it firm, so that it is in no danger of being overturned, but spread out by the waters, which feed it, and make it fruitful and flourishing, so that it is in no danger of withering. And as he thought himself blessed with the fatness of the earth, so also with the kind influences of Heaven too; for the dew lay all night upon his branch. Providence favoured him, and made all his enjoyments comfortable, and all his enterprises successful. Let none think to support their presperity with what they draw from this earth, without that blessing which is derived from above. God's favour being continued to Job, in the virtue of that, his glory was still fresh in him: those about him had still something new to say in his praise, and needed not to repeat the old stories: and it is only by constant goodness that men's glory is thus preserved fresh, and kept from withering and growing stale. His bow also was renewed in his hand, that is, his power to protect himself, and annoy those that assailed him, still increased, so that he thought he had as little reason as any man to fear the insults of the Sabeans and Chaldeans.

2. If he looked abroad, he found he had a good interest and well confirmed. As he had no reason to dread the power of his enemies, so neither had he any reason to distrust the fidelity of his friends: to the last moment of his prosperity they continued their respects to him, and their dependence on him. What had he to fear, who so gave counsel, as, in effect, to give law to all his neighbours? Nothing surely could be done against him, when really no

thing was done without him.

(1.) He was the oracle of his country. He was consulted as an oracle, and his dictates were acquiesced in as oracles, v. 21. When others could not be heard, all men gave ear to him, and kept silence at his counsel, knowing that, as nothing could be said against it, so nothing needed to be added to it. And therefore, after his words they spake not again, v. 22. Why should men meddle with a subject that has already been exhausted?

(2.) He was the darling of his country. All about him were well-pleased with every thing he said and did, as David's people were with him, 2 Sam. iii. 36. He had the hearts and affections of all his neighbours, all his servants, tenants, subjects; never was man so much admired, nor so well beloved. [1.] They

were thought happy to whom he spake, and they thought themselves so: never were the dews of heaven so acceptable to the parched ground, as his wise discourses were to them that attended on them, especially to whom they were particularly accommodated and directed. His speech dropped upon them, and they waited for it as for the rain; (v. 22, 23.) wondering at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, catching at them, laying hold on them, and treasuring them up as apophthegms. His servants, that stood continually before him to hear his wisdom, would not have envied Solomon's. Those are wise, or are likely to be so, that know how to value wise discourse, that wish for it, and wait for it, and drink it in as the earth does the rain that comes often upon it, Heb. vi. 7. And those who have such an interest as Job had in the esteem of others, whose inse dixit-bare assertion goes so far, as they have a great opportunity of loing good, so they must take great care lest they do hurt, for a bad word out of their mouths is very infectious. [2.] Much more happy were they thought on whom he smiled, and they thought themselves so, v. 24. "If I laughed on them, designing thereby to show myself pleased in them, or pleasant with them, it was such a favour, that they believed it not for joy, or because it was so rare a thing to see this grave man smile. Many seek the ruler's favour: Job was a ruler whose favour was courted, and valued at a high rate. He to whom a great prince gave a kiss, was envied by another to whom he only gave a golden cup. Familiarity often breeds con-tempt, but if Job at any time saw fit, for his own diversion, to make himself free with those about him, yet it did not in the least diminish the veneration they had for him: the light of his countenance they cast not down. So wisely did he dispense his f vours, as not to make them cheap, and so wisely did they receive them, as not to make themselves unworthy of them another time.

(3.) He was the sovereign of his country, v. 25. He chose out their way, sat at the helm, and steered for them, all referring themselves to his conduct, and submitting themselves to his command. To this perhaps, in many countries, monarchy owed its rise: such a man as Job, that so far excelled all his neighbours in wisdom and integrity, could not but sit chief, and the fool will, of course, be servant to the wise in heart: and if the wisdom did but for a while run in the blood, the honour and power would certainly attend it, and so by degrees become hereditary. Two things recommended Job to the sovereignty. [1.] That he had the authority of a commander, or general; he dwelt as a king in the army, giving orders which were not to be disputed. Every one that has the spirit of wisdom, has not the spirit of government, but Job had both, and, when there was occasion, could assume state, as the king in the army does, and say, Go, Come, and, Do this, Matth. viii. 9. [2.] That yet he had the tenderness of a comforter. He was as ready to succour those in distress, as if it had been his office to comfort the mourners. Eliphaz himself owned he had been very good in that respect; (ch. iv. 3.) Thou hast strengthened the weak hands. And this he now reflected upon with pleasure, when he was himself a mourner; but we find it easier to comfort others with the comforts wherewith we ourselves have been formerly comforted, than to comfort ourselves with those comforts wherewith we have formerly comforted others.

I know not but we may look upon Job as a type and figure of Christ, in his power and prosperity; our Lord Jesus is such a King as Job was; the poor man's King, who loves righteousness and hates iniquity, and upon whom the blessing of a world ready to perish comes; see Ps, lxxii. 2, &c, To him

therefore let us give ear, and let him sit chief in our hearts.

CHAP. XXX.

It is a melancholy But now, which this chapter begins with. Adversity is here described as much to the life as prosperity was there, and the height of that did but increase the depth of this. God sets the one over-against the other, and so did Job, that his afflictions might appear the more grievous, and, consequently, his case the more pittable. I. He had lived in great honour, but now he had fallen into disgrace, and was as much vilified, even by the meanest, as ever he had been magnified by the greatest; this he misits much on, v. 1.14. II. He had had much inward comfort and delight, but now he was a terror and burthen to himself, (v. 15, 16.) and overwhelmed with sorrow, v. 28. 31. III. He had long enjoyed a good state of health, but now he was sick and in pain, v. 17. .19, 29, 30. IV. Time was, when the secret of God was with him, but now his communication with Heaven was cut off, v. 20. .22. V. He had promised himself a long life, but now he saw death at the door, v. 23. One thing he mentions which aggravated his affliction, that it surprised him when he looked for peace. But two things gave him some relief; 1. That his troubles would not follow him to the grave, v. 24. 2. That his conscience witnessed for him, that, in his prosperity, he had sympathized with those that were in misery, v. 25.

1. BUT now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock. 2. Yea, whereto *might* the strength of their hands *profit* me, in whom old age was perished? 3. For want and famine *they were* solitary; fleeing into the wilderness in former time desolate and waste: 4. Who cut up mallows by the bushes, and juniper-roots for their meat. 5. They were driven forth from among $m\epsilon n$ (they cried after them as after a thief,) 6. To dwell in the cliffs of the valleys, in caves of the earth, and in the rocks. Among the bushes they brayed; under the nettles they were gathered together. 8. $T/\iota\epsilon y$ were children of fools, year, children of base men; they were viler than the earth. 9. And now am I their song, yea, I am their byword. 10. They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face. 11. Because he hath loosed my cord, and afflicted me, they have also let loose the bridle before me. 12. Upon my right hand rise the youth; they push away my feet, and they raise up against me the ways of their destruction. 13. They mar my path, they set forward my calamity, they have no 14. They came upon me as a wide breaking in of waters: in the desolation they rolled themselves upon me.

Here Job makes a very large and sad complaint of the great disgrace he was fallen into, from the height of honour and reputation, which was exceedingly grievous and cutting to such an ingenuous spirit as Job's was. Two things he insists upon as very aggravating.

very aggravating.

I. The meanness of the persons that affronted him. As it added much to his honour, in the day of his prosperity, that princes and nobles showed him respect, and paid a deference to him, so it added no less to his disgrace in his adversity, that he was spurned by the footmen, and trampled upon by those

that were not only every way his inferiors, but were the meanest and most contemptible of all mankind. None can be represented as more base than they are here represented, who insulted Job, upon all accounts.

1. They were young, younger than he; (v. 1.) the youth, (v. 12.) who ought to have behaved themselves respectfully toward him, for his age and gravity. Even the children, in their play, played upon him, as the children of Beth-el upon the prophet, Go un, thou bald-head. Children soon learn to be

scornful, when they see their parents so.

2. They were of a mean extraction; their fathers were so very despicable, that such a man as Job would have disdained to take them into the lowest service about his house, as that of tending his sheep, and attending the shepherds with the dogs of his flock, v. 1. They were so shabby, that they were not fit to be seen among his servants, so silly, that they were not fit to be employed, and so filse, that they were not fit to be trusted in the meanest post. Job here speaks of what he might have done, not of what he did: he was not of such a spirit as to set any of the children of men with the dogs of his flock; he knew the dignity of human nature better than to

3. They and their families were the unprofitable burthens of the earth, and good for nothing; Job himself, with all his prudence and patience, could make nothing of them, v. 2. The young were not fit for labour, they were so lazy, and went about their work so awkwardly; Whereto might the strength of their hands profit me? The old were not to be advised with in the smallest matters; for in them was old age indeed, but their old age was perished, they

were twice children.

4. They were extremely poor; (v. 3.) they were ready to starve, for they would not dig, and to beg they were ashamed. Had they been brought to necessity by the providence of God, their neighbours would have sought them out as proper objects of charity, and would have relieved them; but, being brought into straits by their own slothfulness and wastefulness, nobody was forward to relieve them; hence they were forced to flee into the deserts both tor shelter and sustenance, and were put to sorry shifts indeed, when they cut up mallows by the bushes, and were glad to eat them, for want of food that was fit for them, v. 4. See what hunger will bring men to: one half of the world does not know how the other half lives; yet those that have abundance ought to think sometimes of those whose fare is very coarse, and who are brought to a short allowance of that too; but we must own the righteousness of God, and not think it strange, if slothfulness clothe men with rags, and the idle soul be made to suffer hunger. This beggarly world is full of the Devil's poor.

5. They were very scandalous wicked people, not only the burthens, but the plagues, of the places where they lived, the scum of the country; they were driven forth from among men, v. 5. were such lying, thieving, lurking, mischievous, people, that, the best service the magistrates could do, was, to rid the country of them, while the very mob cried after them, as after a thief, Away with such fellows from the earth, it is not fit they should live. They were lazy and would not work, and therefore they were exclaimed against as thieves, and justly, for they that do not earn their own bread by honest labour, do, in effect, steal the bread out of other people's mouths; an idle fellow is a public nuisance; but it is better to drive such into a work-house, than, as here, into a wilderness, which will punish them indeed, but never reform them. They were forced to d well in caves of the earth, and they braved like asses among the bushes, v. 6, 7. See what is the lot of those that have the cry of the country, the cry of their own conscience, against them; they cannot

but be in a continual terror and confusion; they groan among the trees, (so Broughton,) and smart among the nettles; they are stung and scratched there, where they hoped to be sheltered and protected. See what miseries wicked people bring themselves to in this world; yet this is nothing to

what is in reserve for them in the other world.
6. They were all that is base, v. 8. They had nothing at all in them to recommend them to any man's esteem: they were a vile kind; yea, a kind without fame; people that nobody could give a good word to, nor had a good wish for; they were banished from the earth, as being viler than the earth. One would not think it possible that ever the human nature should sink so low, and degenerate so far, as it did in these people. When we thank God that we are men, we have reason to thank him that we are not such men. But such as these were abusive to Job, (1.) In revenge; because, when he was in prosperity and power, like a good magistrate, he put the laws in execution, which were in force against vagabonds, and rogues, and sturdy beggars, which these base people now remembered against him. (2.) In triumph over him, because they thought he was now become like one of them, Isa. xiv. 10,11. The abjects, men of mean spirits, insult over the miserable, Ps. xxxv. 15.

II. The greatness of the affronts that were given him: it cannot be imagined how abusive they were.

1. They made ballads on him, with which they

made themselves and their companions merry; (v. 9.) Iam their song, and their by-word. Those have a very base spirit, that turn the calamities of their honest neighbours into a jest, and can sport themselves with their griefs.

2. They shunned him as a loathsome spectacle, abhorred him, fled far from him, (v. 10.) as an ugly monster, or as one infected; they that were themselves driven out from among men, would have

driven him out. For,

3. They expressed the greatest scorn and indignation against him. They spit in his face, or were ready to do so; they tripped up his heels, pushed away his feet, (v. 12.) kicked him, either in wrath, because they hated him, or in sport, to make themsclves merry with him, as they did with their com-panions at foot-ball. The best of saints have sometimes received the worst of injuries and indignities, from a spiteful, scornful, wicked, world, and must not think it strange; our Master himself was thus

4. They were very malicious against him, and not only made a jest of him, but made a prey of him; not only affronted him, but set themselves to do him all the real mischief they could devise. They raise up against me the ways of their destruc-tion; or, as some read it, They cast upon me the cause of their woe; that is, "They lay the blame of their being driven out, upon me;" and it is common for criminals to hate the judges and laws by which they are punished. But, under this pretence, (1.) They accused him falsely, and misrepresented his former conversation, which is here called marring his fiath. They reflected upon him as a tyrant and an oppressor, because he had done justice upon them; and perhaps Job's friends grounded their uncharitable censures of him (ch. xxii. 6, &c.) upon the unjust and unreasonable clamours of these sorry people; and it was an instance of their great weakness and inconsideration; for who can be innocent, if the accusations of such persons may be (2.) They not only triumphed in his caheeded? lamity, but set it forward, and did all they could to add to his miseries, and make them more grievous to him. It is a great sin to forward the calamity of any, especially of good people: in this they have no helper, nobody to set them on, or to countenance

them in it; nobody to bear them out, or to protect them, but they do it of their own accord; they are fools in other things, but wise enough to do mischief, and need no help in inventing that. Some read it thus, They hold my heaviness a profit, though they be never the better. Wicked people, though they get nothing by the calamities of others, yet rejoice in them.

5. They that did him all this mischief, were numerous, unanimous, and violent; (v. 14.) They came upon me as a wide breaking in of waters, when the dam is broken; or, "They came as soldiers into a broad breach which they have made in the wall of a besieged city, pouring in upon me with the utmost fury;" and in this they took a pride and a pleasure; they rolled themselves in the des dation, as a man rolls himself in a soft and easy bed; and they rolled themselves upon him with all the weight

of their malice.

Lastly, All this contempt put upon him, was caused by the troubles he was in; (v. 11.) "Because he has loosed my cord; has taken away the honour and power with which I was girded, (ch. xii. 18.) has scattered what I had got together, and untwisted all my affairs, because he has afflicted me, therefore they have let loose the bridle before me," that is, "have given themselves a liberty to say and do what they please against me." They that by Providence are stripped of their honour, may expect to be loaded with contempt by inconsiderate ill-natured people. "Because he hath loosed his cord," (the original has that reading also,) that is, "because he has taken off his bridle of restraint from off their malice, they cast away the bridle from me," that is, "they make no account of my authority, nor stand in any awe of me." It is owing to the hold God has of the consciences even of bad men, and the restraints he lays upon them, that we are not continually thus insulted and abused; and if at any time we meet with such ill treatment, we must acknowledge the hand of God in taking off those restraints; as David did, when Shimei cursed him; So let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him. Now in all this, (1.) We may see the uncertainty

of worldly honour, and particularly of popular applause; how suddenly a man may fall from the height of dignity into the depth of disgrace. What little cause therefore have men to be imbitious or proud of that which may be so easily lost, and what little confidence is to be put in it! They that, to-day, cry, Hosannah, may, to-morrow, cry, Crucify. But there is an honour which comes from God, which, if we secure, we shall find it not thus changeable and loseable. (2.) We may see that it has often been the lot of very wise and good men, to be trampled upon and abused. And, (3.) That those who look only at the things that are seen, despise those whom the world frowns upon, though they are ever so much the favourites of Heaven. Nothing is more grievous in poverty than that it renders men con-temptible: Turba Remi sequitur fortunam, ut semper odit damnatos—The Roman populace, faithful to the turns of fortune, still persecutes the fallen. (4.) We may see in Job a type of Christ, who was thus made a reproach of men, and despised of the people, (Ps. xxii. 6. Is a liii. 3.) and who hid not his face from shame, and spitting, but bore it better than Job did.

15. Terrors are turned upon me: they pursue my soul as the wind; and my welfare passeth away as a cloud. 16. And now my soul is poured out upon me: the days of affliction have taken hold upon me. 17. My bones are pierced in me in the night-

season; and my sinews take no rest. By the great force of my disease is my garment changed: it bindeth me about as the collar of my coat. 19. He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes. 20. I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me: I stand up, and thou reregardest me not. 21. Thou art become cruel to me: with thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me. 22. Thou liftest me up to the wind; thou causest me to ride *upon it*, and dissolvest my substance. 23. For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living. 24. Howbeit he will not stretch out his hand to the grave, though they cry in his destruction. 25. Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? was not my soul grieved for the poor? 26. When I looked for good, then evil came *unto me*; and when I waited for light, there came darkness. 27. My bowels boiled, and rested not; the days of affliction prevented me. $\,$ 28. m I went mourning without the sun: I stood up, and I cried in the congregation. 29. I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls. My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burnt with heat. 31. My harp also is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep.

In this second part of Job's complaint, which is very bitter, and has a great many sorrowful accents in it, we may observe a great deal that he complains of, and some little that he comforts himself with.

I. Here is much that he complains of.

1. In general, it was a day of great affliction and sorrow. (1.) Affliction seized him, and surprised him. It seized him; (v. 16.) The days of affliction have taken hold upon me; have caught me, so some; they have arrested me, as the bailiff arrests the debtor, and by violence secures him. When trouble comes with commission, it will take fast hold, and not lose its hold. It surfirised him; (v. 27.) "The days of affliction prevented me," that is, "they came upon me without giving me any previous warning; I did not expect them, nor made any provision for such an evil day." Observe, He reckons his affliction by days, which will soon be numbered and finished, and are nothing to the ages of eternity, 2 Cor. iv. 17. (2.) He was in great sorrow by reason of it. His bowels boiled with grief, and rested not, v. 27. The sense of his calamities was continually preying upon his spirits, without any intermission: he went mourning from day to day, always sighing, always weeping; and such a cloud was constantly upon his mind, that he went, in effect, without the sun, v. 28. He had nothing that he could take any comfort in; he abandoned himself to perpetual sorrow, as one that, like Jacob, resolved to go to the grave mourning: he walked out of the sun, (so some,) in dark shady places, as melancholy people use to do. If he went into the congregation, to join with them in solemn worship; instead of standing up calmly to desire their prayers, he stood up and cried aloud, through pain of body, or anguish of mind, like one half distracted. If he appeared in public, to receive visits,

himself, nor preserve due decorum, but stood up, and shrieked aloud. Thus he was a brother to dragons and owls, (v. 29.) both in choosing solitude and retirement, as they do, (Isa. xxxiv. 13.) and in making a fearful hideous noise, as they do; his inconsiderate complaints were fitly compared to their inarticulate ones.

2. The terror and trouble that seized his soul, were the sorest part of his calamity, v. 15, 16. (1.) If he looked forward, he saw every thing frightful before him: if he endeavoured to shake off his terrors, they turned furiously upon him: if he endeavoured to escape from them, they pursued his soul as swiftly and violently as the wind. He complained, at first, of the terrors of God setting themselves in array against him, ch. vi. 4. And still, which way soever he looked, they turned upon him; which way soever he fled, they pursued him. My soul.—Heb.
My principal one. My princess; for the soul is
the principal part of the man; it is our glory; it is every way more excellent than the body, and therefore that which pursues the soul, and threatens that, should be most dreaded. (2.) If he looked back, he saw all the good he had formerly enjoyed removed from him, and nothing left him but the bitter remembrance of it; My welfare passeth away, as suddenly, swiftly, and irrecoverably, as a cloud. (3.) If he looked within, he found his spirit quite sunk, and unable to bear his infirmity, not only wounded, but poured out upon him, v. 16. He was not only weak as water, but, in his own apprehension, lost as water spilt upon the ground. Compare Ps. xxii. 14, My heart is melted like wax.

3. His bodily diseases were very grievous; for, (1.) He was full of pain, piercing pain, pain that went to the bore, to all his bones, v. 17. It was a sword in his bones, which pierced him in the night season, when he should have been refreshed with sleep; his nerves were affected with strong convulsions, his sinews took no rest. By reason of his pain, he could take no rest, but sleep departed from his eyes. His bones were burnt with heat; (v. 30.) He was in a constant fever, which dried up the radical moisture, and even consumed the marrow in his bones. See how frail our bodies are, which carry in themselves the seeds of our own disease and death. (2.) He was full of sores. Some, that are pained in their bones, yet sleep in a whole skin, but Satan's commission against Job extending both to his bone and to his flesh, he spared neither. His skin was black upon him, v. 30. The blood settled, and the sores suppurated, which made his skin look black. Even his garment had its colour changed with the continual running of his boils, and the soft clothing he used to wear was now grown so stiff, that all his garments were like his collar, v. 18. It would be noisome to describe what a condition poor Job was in, for want of clean linen and good attendance, and what filthy rags all his clothes were. Some think, that, among other diseases, Joh was ill of a quinsy, or swelling in his throat, and that that was it which bound him about like a stiff collar.

Thus was he cast into the mire, (v. 19.) compared to mire, so some: his body looked more like a heap of dirt than any thing else. Let none be proud of their clothing, nor proud of their cleanness; they know not but some disease or other may change their garments, and even throw them into the mire, and make them noisome both to themselves and others; instead of sweet smell, there shall be a stench, Isa. iii. 24. We are but dust and ashes at the best, and our bodies vile bodies; but we are apt to forget it, till God, by some sore disease, makes us sensibly to feel and own what we are; "I am become already like that dust and ashes into which I omst shortly be resolved: wherever I go, I carry my grave about with me."

4. That which afflicted him most of all, was, that Ged seemed to be his Enemy, and to fight against him. It was he that cast him into the mire, (v. 19.) and seemed to trample on him when he had him there. This cut him to the heart more than any thing else. (1.) That God did not appear for him. He addressed himself to him, but gained no grant; appealed to him, but gained no sentence; he was very importunate in his applications, but in vain; (v. 20.) "I cry unto thee, as one in earnest, I stand up and cry, as one waiting for an answer, but thou hearest not, thou regardest not, for any thing I can perceive." If our most fervent prayers bring not in speedy and sensible returns, we must not think it strange. Though the seed of Jacob did never seek in vain, yet they have often thought that they did, and that God has not only been deaf, but angry, at the prayers of his people, Ps. lxxx. 4. (2.) That God did appear against him, We have here one of the worst words that ever Job spake; (v. 21.) Thou art become cruel to me; far be it from the God of mercy and grace, that he should be cruel to any; his compassions fail not; but especially that he should be so to his own children: Job was unjust and ungrateful, when he said so of him, but harbouring hard thoughts of God was the sin which did, at this time, most easily beset him. Here, [1.] He thought God fought against him, and stirred up his whole strength to ruin him; With thy strong hand thou opposest thyself, or art an Adversary against me. He had better thoughts of God, (ch. xxiii. 6.) when he concluded he would not plead against him with his great power. God has an absolute sovereignty, and an irresistible strength, but he never uses either the one or the other for the crushing or oppressing of any. [2.] He thought he insulted over him; (v. 22.) Thou liftest me up to the wind, as a feather or the chaff which the wind plays with; so unequal a match did Job think himself for Omnipotence, and so unable was he to help himself, when he was made to ride, not in triumph, but in terror, upon the wings of the wind, and the judgments of God did even dissolve his substance, as a cloud is dissolved and dispersed by the wind. Man's substance, take him in his best estate, is nothing

before the power of God, it is soon dissolved. 5. He expected no other now, than that God, by these troubles, would shortly make an end of "If I be made to ride upon the wind, I can count upon no other than to break my neck shortly; and he speaks as if God had no other design upon him than that, in all his dealings with him; "Iknow that thou wilt bring me, with so much the more terror, to death, though I might have been brought thither without all this ado, for it is the house afficiented for all living," v. 23. The grave is a house, a narrow, dark, cold, ill-furnished, house, but it will be our residence, where we shall rest and be safe; it is our long home, our own home, for it is our mother's lap, and in it we are gathered to our fathers. It is a house appointed for us, by him that has appointed us the bounds of all our habitations. It is appointed for all living. It is the common receptacle, where rich and poor meet, it is appointed for the general rendezvous; we must all be brought thither shortly; it is God that brings us, for the keys of death and the grave are in his hand, and we may all know that, sooner or later, he will bring us thither; it would be well for us, if we would duly consider it. The living know that they shall die; let us, each of us, know it with application.

6. There were two things that aggravated his trouble, and made it the less tolerable. (1.) That it was a very great disappointment to his expectation; (v. 26.) "When I looked for good, for more good, or, at least, for the continuance of what I had, then evil came:" such uncertain things are all our

worldly enjoyments, and such a folly is it to feed ourselves with great expectations from them. They that wait for light from the sparks of their creature-comforts, will be wretchedly disappointed, and will make their bed in the darkness. (2.) That it was a very great change in his condition; (v. 31.) "My harp is not only laid by, and hung upon the willow-trees, but it is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep." Job, in his prosperity, had taken the timbrel and harp, and rejoiced at the sound of the organ, ch. xxi. 12. Notwithstanding his gravity and grace, he had found time to be cheerful; but now his tune was altered. Let those, therefore, that rejoice, be as though they rejoiced not, for they know not how soon their laughter will be turned into mourning, and their joy into heaviness. Thus we see how much Job complains of: but,

II. Here is something, in the midst of all, with which he comforts himself, and it is but a little. 1. He foresees, with comfort, that death will be the period of his calamities; (v. 24.) Though God now, with a strong hand, ophosed himself against him, yet, says he, he will not stretch out his hand to the grave. The hand of God's wrath would bring him to death, but would not follow him beyond death; his soul would be safe and happy in the world of spirits, his body safe and easy in the dust. Though men cry in his destruction; though, when they are dying, there is a great deal of agony and outcry, many a sigh, and groan, and complaint, yet in the grave they feel nothing, they fear nothing, but all is quiet there. "Though in hell, which is called destruction, they cry, yet not in the grave; and I being delivered from the second death, the first to me will be an effectual relief." Therefore he wished he might be hid in the grave, ch. xiv. 13. flects with comfort upon the concern he always had for the calamities of others, when he was himself at ease; (v. 25.) Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? Some think he herein complains of God, thinking it very hard, that he, who had showed mercy to others, should not himself find mercy. would rather take it as a quieting consideration to himself; his conscience witnessed for him, that he had always sympathized with persons in misery, and done what he could to help them, and therefore had reason to expect that, at length, both God and his friends would pity him. They who mourn with them that mourn, will bear their own sorrows the better, when it comes to their turn to drink of the bitter cup. Did not my soul burn for the poor? So some read it, comparing it with that of St. Paul, (2 Cor. xi. 29.) Who is offended, and I burn not? As they who have been unmerciful and hard-hearted to others, may expect to hear of it from their own consciences, when they are themselves in trouble, so they who have considered the poer and succoured them, shall have the remembrance of that to make their bed easy in their sickness, Ps. xli. 1, 3.

CHAP. XXXI.

Job had often protested his integrity in general, here he does it in particular instances; not in a way of commen-dation, (for he does not here proclaim his good deeds,) but in his own just and necessary vindication, to clear himself from those crimes with which his friends had fullsely charged him, which is a debt every man owes to his own reputation. Job's friends had been particular in their articles of impeachment against him, and therefore he is so in his protestation, which seems to refer especially to what Eliphaz had accused him of, ch. xxii. 6, &c. They had produced no witnesses against him, reither could they prove the things whereof they now accused him, and therefore he may well be admitted to purge himself upon oath, which he does very solemnly, and with many awful imprecations of God's wrath, if he were guilty of those crimes; this protestation confirms of God, I kept myself from the very first step to-

God's character of him, that there was none like him in the earth; perhaps some of his accusers durst not have joined with him; for he not only acquits himself from those gross sins which lie open to the eye of the world, but from many secret sins, which, though he had been guilty of them, nobody could have charged him with, because he will prove himself no hypocrite. Nor does he only maintain prove nimsell no hypocrite. Not does no only maintain the cleanness of his practices, but shows also that in them he went upon good principles; that the reason of his eschewing evil, was, because he feared God, and his piety was at the bottom of his justice and charity; and this crowns the proof of his sincerity. The sins from which he here acquits himself, are, 1. Wantonness and uncleanness of heart, v. 1. 4. 2. Fraud and injustice in commerce, v. 4. 8. 3. Adultery, v. 9. ... 12. 4. Haughtiness and severity toward his servants, v. 13. 15. 5. Lumer. cifulness to the poor, the widows, and the fatherless, v. 16..23. 6. Confidence in his worldly wealth, v. 24, 25. 7. Idolatry, v. 26...28. 8. Revenge, v. 29...31. 9. Neglect of poor strangers, v. 32. 10. Hypocrisy in concealing his own sins, and cowardice in conniving at the sins of others, v. 33, 34. 11. Oppression, and the violent invasion of other people's rights, v. 38..40. And, toward the close, he appeals to God's judgment concerning his integrity, v. 35..37. Now, in all this, we may see, (1.) The sense of the patriarchal age concerning good and evil, and what was so long ago condemned as sinful, that is, both hateful and hurtful. (2.) A noble pattern of piety and virtue proposed to us for our imitation, which, if our consciences can witness for us that we conform to it, will consciences can witness for us that we conform to it, will be our rejoicing, as it was Job's, in the day of evil.

1. MADE a covenant with a maid? why then should I think upon a maid? MADE a covenant with mine eyes; 2. For what portion of God is there from above? and what inheritance of the Almighty from on high? 3. Is not destruction to the wicked? and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity? 4. Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps? 5. If I have walked with vanity, or if my foot hath hasted to deceit; 6. Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity. 7. If my step hath turned out of the way, and my heart walked after mine eyes, and if any blot hath cleaved to my hands; 8. Then let me sow, and let another eat; yea, let my offspring be rooted out.

The lusts of the flesh, and the love of the world, are the two fatal rocks on which multitudes split; against these Job protests he was always careful to stand upon his guard.

I. Against the lusts of the flesh. He not only kept himself clear from adultery, from defiling his neighbours' wives, (v. 9.) but from all lewdness with any women whatsoever. He kept no concubine, but was inviolably faithful to the marriagebed, though his wife was none of the wisest, best, From the beginning it was so, that a or kindest. man should have but one wife, and cleave to her only; and Job kept close to that institution, and abhorred the thought of transgressing it; for, though his greatness might tempt him to it, his goodness kept him from it. Job was now in pain and sickness of body, and under that affliction it is in a particular manner comfortable, if our conscience can witness for us, that we have been careful to preserve our bedies in chastity, and to possess those vessels in sanctification and honour, pure from the lusts of un-

cleanness. Now observe here,

1. What the resolutions were, which, in this matter, he kept to; (v. 1.) I made a covenant with mine eyes, that is, "I watched against the occasions of the sin; why then should I think upon a maid?" that is, "By that means, through the grace

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wards it." So far was he from wanton dalliances, or any act of lasciviousness, that, (1.) He would not so much as admit a wanton look. He made a covenant with his eyes, made this bargain with them, that he would allow them the pleasure of beholding the light of the sun, and the glory of God shining in the visible creation, provided they would never fasten upon any object that might occasion any impure imaginations, much less any impure desires, in his mind; and, under this penalty, that if they did, they must smart for it in penitential tears. Note, Those that would keep their hearts pure, must guard their eyes, which are both the outlets and inlets of uncleanness. Hence we read of wanton eyes, (Isa. iii. 16.) and eyes full of adultery, 2 Pet. i. 14. The first sin began in the eye, Gen. iii. 6. What we must not meddle with, we must not lust efter; and what we must not last after, we must not look at; not the forbidden wealth, (Prov. xxiii. 5.) not the forbidden wine, (Prov. xxiii. 31.) not the forbidden woman, Matth. v. 28. (2.) He would not so much as allow a wanton thought; "Why then should I think upon a maid, with any unchaste fancy or desire toward her?" Shame and sense of honour might restrain him from soliciting the chastity of a beautiful virgin, but only grace and the fear of God would restrain him from so much as thinking of it. Those are not chaste, that are not so in spirit as well as body, 1 Cor. vii. 34. See how Christ's exposition of the seventh commandment agrees with the ancient sense of it, and how much better Job understood it than the Pharisees, though they sat in Moses's chair.

2. What the reasons were, which, in this matter, he was governed by. It was not for fear of reproach among men, though that is to be considered, (Prov. vi. 33.) but for fear of the wrath and curse of God.

He knew very well,
(1.) That uncleanness is a sin that forfeits all good, and shuts us out from the hope of it; (v. 2.) What portion of God is there from above? What blessing can such impure sinners expect from the bure and holy God, or what token of his favour? What inheritance of the Almighty can they look for from on high? There is no portion, no inheritance, no true happiness, for a soul, but what is in God, in the Almighty, and what comes from above, Those that wallow in uncleanness, from on high. render themselves utterly unfit for communion with God, either in grace here, or in glory hereafter, and become allied to unclean spirits, which are for ever separated from him; and then what portion, what inheritance, can they have with God? No unclean thing shall enter into the New Jerusalem, that

holy city.

(2.) It is a sin that incurs divine vengeance, v. 3. It will certainly be the sinner's ruin, if it be not repented of in time. Is not destruction a swift and sure destruction to those wicked people, and a strange punishment to the workers of this iniquity? Fools make a mock at this sin, make a jest of it, it is with them a peccadillo, a trick of youth; but they deceive themselves with vain words, for, because of these things, how light soever they make of them, the wrath of God, the insupportable wrath of the eternal God, comes upon the children of disobedience, Eph. v. 6. There are some sinners whom God sometimes goes out of the common road of provi-The destrucdence to meet with; such are these. tion of Sodom is a strange punishment. Is there not alienation (so some read it) to the workers of iniquity? This is the sinfulness of the sin, that it alienates the mind from God; (Eph. iv. 18, 19.) and this is the punishment of the sinners, that they shall be eternally set at a distance from him, Rev. xxii. 15.

(3.) It cannot be hid from the all-seeing God. A wanton thought cannot be so close, nor a wanton | may perhaps have a blot come upon their hands,

look so quick, as to escape his cognizance, much less any act of uncleanness so secretly done, as to be out of his sight. If Job was at any time tempted to this sin, he restrained himself from it, and all approaches to it, with this pertinent thought, (v. 4.) Doth not he see my ways? as Joseph did, (Gen. xxxix. 9.) How can I do it, and sin against God? Two things Job had an eye to. [1.] God's omniscience. It is a great truth, that God's eyes are upon all the ways of men; (Prov. v. 20, 21.) but Job here mentions it with application to himself and his own actions; Doth not he see my ways? O God, thou hast search ed me and known me. God sees what rule we walk by, what company we walk with, what end we walk toward, and therefore what ways we walk in. [2.] His observance. "He not only sees, but takes notice; he counts all my steps, all my false steps in the way of duty, all my by-steps into the way of sin." He not only sees our ways in general, but takes cognizance of our particular steps in these ways, every action, every motion. He keeps count of all, because he will call us to account, will bring every work into judgment. God takes a more exact notice of us than we do of ourselves; for who ever counted his own steps? Yet God counts them; let us therefore walk circumspectly.

II. He stood upon his guard against the love of the world, and carefully avoided all sinful indirect means of getting wealth. He dreaded all forbidden profit as much as all forbidden pleasure. Let

What his protestation is: in general, that he had been honest and just in all his dealings, and never, to his knowledge, did any body any wrong. (1.) He never walked with vanity, that is, he never durst tell a lie, to get a good bargain. It was never his way to banter, or equivocate, or make many words, in his dealings. Some men's constant walk is a constant cheat. They either make what they have more than it is, that they may be trusted; or less than it is, that nothing may be expected from But Job was a different man. His wealth was not gotten by vanity, though now diminished, Prov. xiii. 11. (2.) He never hasted to deceit. Those that deceive, must be quick and sharp, but Job's quickness and sharpness were never turned that way. He never made haste to be rich by deceit, but always acted cautiously, lest, through inconsideration, he should do an unjust thing. Note, What we have in the world, may be either used with comfort, or lost with comfort, if it was honestly got. (3.) His steps never turned out of the way, the way of justice and fair dealing; from that he never deviated, v. 7. He not only took care not to walk in a constant course and way of deceit, but he did not so much as take one step out of the way of honesty. In every particular action and affair, we must closely tie ourselves up to the rules of righteousness. (4.) His heart did not walk after his eyes, that is, he did not covet what he saw, that was another's, nor wish it his own. Covetousness is called the *lust of the eye*, 1 John ii. 16. Achan saw, and then took, the accursed thing. That heart must needs wander, that walks after the eyes; for then it looks no further than the things that are seen; whereas it ought to be in heaven, whither the eyes cannot reach: it should follow the dictates of religion and right reason: if it follow the eye, it will be misled to that for which God will bring men into judgment, Eccl. xi. 9. (5.) That no blot had cleavea to his hands, that is, he was not chargeable with getting any thing dishonestly, or keeping that which was another's, whenever it appeared to be so. Injustice is a blot, a blot to the estate, a blot to the owner; it spoils the beauty of both, and therefore is to be dreaded. Those that deal much in the world

but they must wash it off again by repentance and restitution, and not let it cleave to their hands. See

Isa. xxxiii. 15.

2. How he ratifies his protestation. So confident is he of his own honesty, that, (1) He is willing to have his goods searched; (v. 6.) Let me be weighed in an even balance, that is, "Let what I have got be inquired into, and it will be found to weigh well;" a sign that it was not gotten by vanity, for then Tekel had been written on it-weighed in the balance, and found too light. An honest man is so far from dreading a trial, that he desires it rather, being well assured that God knows his integrity, and will approve it, and that the trial of it will be to his praise and honour. (2.) He is willing to forfeit the whole cargo, if there were found any prohibited, contraband, goods, any thing but what he came honestly by; (v. 8.) "Let me sow, and let another eat," which was already agreed to be the doom of oppressors; (ch. v. 5.) "and let my offspring, all the trees that I have planted, be rooted out." This intimates, that he believed the sin did deserve this punishment, that, usually, it is thus punished; but that, though now his estate was ruined, (and at such a time, if ever, his conscience would have brought his sin to his mind,) yet he knew himself innocent, and would venture all the poor remains of his estate upon the issue of the trial.

9. If my heart have been deceived by a woman; or if I have laid wait at my neighbour's door; 10. Then let my wife grind unto another, and let others bow down upon her. 11. For this is a heinous crime; yea, it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges. 12. For it is a fire that consumeth to destruction, and would root out all mine increase. 13. If I did despise the cause of my manservant, or of my maid-servant, when they contended with me; 14. What then shall I do when God riseth up? and, when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? 15. Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?

Two more instances we have here of Job's integ-

itv.

I. That he had a very great abhorrence of the in of adultery. As he did not wrong his own marriage-bed, by keeping a concubine, (he did not so much as think upon a maid, v. 1.) so he was careful not to offer any injury to his neighbour's marriageэed.

Let us see here,

1. How clear he was from this sin, v. 9. He did not so much as covet his neighbour's wife, for even his heart was not deceived by a woman. The beauty of another man's wife did not kindle in him any unchaste desires, nor was he ever moved by the allurements of an adulterous woman, such as is described, Prov. vii. 6, &c. See the original of all the defilements of this life; they come from a deceived heart. Every sin is deceitful, and none more so than the sin of uncleanness. (2.) He never compassed or imagined any unchaste design. He never laid wait at his neighbour's door, to get an opportunity to debauch his wife in his absence, when the good man was not at home, Prov. vii. 19.

See ch. xxiv. 15.
2. What a dread he had of this sin, and what frightful apprehensions he had concerning the malignity of it—That it was a heinous crime, (v. 11.) one of the greatest vilest sins a man can be guilty !

of, highly provoking to God, and destructive to the prosperity of the soul. With respect to the mischievousness of it, and the punishment it deserved, he owns that, if he were guilty of that heinous crime, (1.) His family might justly be made infamous in the highest degree; (v. 10.) Let my wife grind to another. Let her be a slave, so some; a harlot, so others. God often punishes the sins of one with the sin of another, the adultery of the husband with the adultery of the wife, as in David's case, (2 Sam. xii. 11.) which does not in the least excuse the treachery of the adulterous wife; but, how unrighteous soever she is, God is righteous. See Hos. iv. 13, Your shouses shall commit adultery. Note, Those who are not just and faithful to their relations, must not think it strange, if their relations be unjust and unfaithful to them. (2.) He himself might justly be made a public example; For it is an iniquity to be hunished by the judges; yea, though they who are guilty of it are themselves judges, as Job was. Note, Adultery is a crime which the civil magistrate ought to take cognizance of, and punish: so it was adjudged even in the patriarchal age, before the law of Moses made it capital. It is an evil work, to which the sword of justice ought to be a terror. (3.) It might justly become the ruin of his estate; nay, he knew it would be so; (v. 12.) It is a fire. Lust is a fire in the soul: they that indulge it, are said to burn. It consumes all that is good there, (the convictions, the comforts,) and lays the conscience waste. It kindles the fire of God's wrath, which, if not extinguished by the blood of Christ, will burn to the lowest hell. It will consume even to that eternal destruction. It consumes the body, (Prov. v. 11.) it consumes the substance, it roots out all the increase. Burning lusts bring burning judgments. Perhaps it alludes to the burning of Sodom, which was intended for an example to those who should afterward, in like manner, live ungodly.

II. That he had a very great tenderness for his servants, and ruled them with a gentle hand. He had a great household, and he managed it well. By this he evidenced his sincerity, that he had grace to govern his passion as well as his appetite; and he that in these two things has the rule of his own spirit, is better than the mighty, Prov. xvi. 32. Here

observe,

1. What were Job's condescensions to his servants; (v. 13.) He did not despise the cause of his man-servant, no, nor of his maid-servant, when they contended with him; that is, if they contradicted him in any thing, he was willing to hear their reasons. If they had offended him, or were accused to him, he would patiently hear what they had to say for themselves, in their own vindication or excuse. Nay, if they complained of any hardship he put upon them, he did not brow-beat them, and bid them hold their tongues, but gave them leave to tell their story, and redressed their grievances as far as it appeared they had right on their side. He was tender of them, not only when they served him and pleased him, but even when they contended with him. Herein, he was a great example to masters, to give unto their servants that which is just and equal; nay, to do the same things to them, that they expect from them, (Col. iv. 1. Eph. vi. 9.) and not to rule them with rigour, and carry it with a high hand. Many of Job's servants were slain in his service, (ch. i. 15...17.) the rest were unkind and undutiful to him, and despised his cause, though he never despised theirs; (ch. xix. 15, 16.) but he nad this comfort, that in his prosperity he had behaved well toward them. Note, When relations are either removed from us, or embittered to us, the testimony of our consciences, that we have done our duty to them, will be a great support and comfort to us.

2. What were the considerations that moved him

to treat his servants thus kindly; he had, herein, an eye to God, both as his Judge, and their Maker.

(1.) As his Judge; he considered, "If I should be imperious and severe with my servants, what then shall I do when God riseth up?" He considered that he had a Master in heaven, to whom he was accountable, who will rise up, and will visit; and we are concerned to consider what we shall do in the day of his visitation, (Isa. x. 3.) and, considering that we are undone, if God should then be strait and severe with us, we ought to be very mild and gent e towards all with whom we have to do. Consider what would become of us, if God should be extreme to mark what we do amiss, should take all advantages against us, and insist upon all his just demands from us; if he should visit every offence, and take every forfeiture; if he should always chide, and keep his anger for ever. And let not us be rigorous with our inferiors. Consider what will become of us, if we be cruel and unmerciful to our brethren. The cries of the injured will be heard, the sins of the injurious will be punished, they that showed no mercy, shall find none; and what shall

(2.) As his and his servants' Creator; (v. 15.) when he was tempted to be harsh with his servants, to deny them right, and turn a deaf ear to their reasonings, this thought came very seasonably into his mind, "Did not he that made me in the womb, make him? I am a creature as well as he, and my being is derived and depending as well as his. He partakes of the same nature that I do, and is the work of the same hand; have we not all one Father?" Note, Whatever difference there is among men in their outward condition, in their capacity of mind, or strength of body, or place in the world, he that made the one, made the other also; which is a good 1eason why we should not mock at men's natural infirmities, nor trample upon those that are any way our inferiors, but, in every thing, do as we would be done by. It is a rule of justice, Parium par su ratio—Let equals be equally estimated and treated; and therefore since there is so great a parity among men, they being all made of the same mould, by the same power, for the same end, notwithstanding the disparity of our outward condition, we are bound so far to set ourselves upon the level with those we deal with, as to do to them, in all respects, as we would they should do to us.

16. If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; 17. Or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; 18. (For from my youth he was brought up with me, as with a father, and I have guided her from my mother's womb;) 19. If I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; 20. If his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep; 21. If I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate; 22. Then let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone. 23. For destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure.

Eliphaz had particularly charged Job with unmercifulness to the poor; (ch. xxii. 6, &c.) Thou

the naked of their clothing, and sent widows away emfity. One would think he could not have been so very positive and express in his charge, unless there had been some truth in it, some ground for it; and yet it appears, by Job's protestation, that it was utterly false and groundless, he was never guilty of any such thing. See here,

1. The testimony which Job's conscience gave in, concerning his constant behaviour toward the poor. He is most large upon this head, because in this matter he was most particularly accused. He so-

lemnly protests,

1. That he had never been wanting to do good to them, as there was occasion, to the utmost of his ability. He was always compassionate to the poor, and careful of them, especially the widows and fatherless, that were destitute of help. (1.) He was always ready to grant their desires, and answer their expectations, v. 16. If a poor person begged a kindness of him, he was ready to gratify him; if he could but perceive, by the widow's mournful craving look, that she expected an alms from him, though she had not confidence enough to ask it, he had compassion enough to give it, and never caused the eyes of the widow to fail. (2.) He put a respect upon the poor, and did them honour; for he took the fatherless children to eat with him at his own table, they should fare as he fared, and be familiar with him, and he would show himself pleased with their company, as if they had been his own, v. 17. As it is one of the greatest grievances of poverty, that it exposes to contempt, so it is none of the least supports to the poor, to be respected. (3.) He was very tender of them, and had a fatherly concern for them, v. 18. He was a father to the fatherless, took care of orphans, brought them up with him under his own eye, and gave them, not only mainte-nance, but education. He was a guide to the widow, who had lost the guide of her youth; he advised her in her affairs, took cognizance of them, and under-took the management of them. Those that need not our alms, may yet have occasion for our counsel, and it may be a real kindness to them. This Job says he did from his youth, from his mother's womb, that is, he had something of tenderness and compassion woven in his nature; he began betimes to do good, ever since he could remember; he had always some poor widow or fatherless child under his care. His parents taught him betimes to pity and relieve the poor, and brought up orphans with him. (4.) He provided food convenient for them; they are of the same morsels that he did, (v. 17.)not after him, of the crumbs that fell from his table, but with him, of the best dish upon his table. They that have abundance, must not eat their morsels alone, as if they had none but themselves to take care of, nor indulge their appetite with a dainty bit by themselves, but take others to share with them, as David took Mephibosheth. (5.) He took particular care to clothe them that were without covering, which would be more expensive to him than feeding them, (v. 19.) Poor people may perish for want of clothing, as well as for want of food, for want of clothing to lie in by night, or to go abroad in by day. If Job knew of any that were in this distress, he was forward to relieve them, and, instead of giving rich and gaudy liveries to his servants, while the poor were turned off with rags that were ready to be thrown to the dunghill, he had good, warm, strong clothes, made on purpose for them, of the fleece of his sheet, (v. 20.) so that their loins, whenever they girt those garments about them, blessed him; they commended his charity, blessed God for him, and prayed God to bless him. Job's sheep were burned with fire from heaven, but this was his comfort, that, when he had them, he came nast withholden bread from the hungry, stripped | honestly by them, and used them charitably fed

their wool.

2. That he had never been accessary to the wronging of any that were poor. It might be said, perhaps, that he was kind here and there to a poor orphan that was a favourite, but to others he was op-No, he was tender of all, and injurious He never so much as lifted up his hand against the fatherless, (v. 21.) never threatened or frightened them, or offered to strike them; never used his power to crush them that stood in his way, or squeeze what he could out of them; though he saw his help in the gate, that is, though he had interest enough both in the people and in the judges, both to enable him to do it, and to bear him out when he had done it. Those that have it in their power to do a wrong thing, and go through with it, and a prospect of getting by it, and yet do justly, and love mercy, and are firm to both, may afterward reflect upon it with much comfort, as Job does here.

II. The imprecation wherewith he confirms this protestation; (v. 22.) "If I have been oppressive to the poor, let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone," that is, "Let the flesh rot off from the bone, and one bone be disjointed and broken off from another." Had he not been perfectly clear in this matter, he durst not thus have challenged the divine vengeance. And he intimates, that it is a righteous thing with God to break the arm that is lifted up against the fatherless, as he withered Jeroboam's arm that was

stretched out against a prophet.

III. The principles by which Job was restrained from all uncharitableness and unmercifulness. He durst not abuse the poor; for though, with his help in the gate, he could overpower them, yet he could not make his part good against that God who is the Patron of oppressed poverty, and will not let oppressors go unpunished; v. 23. "Destruction from God was a terror to me, whenever I was tempted to this sin, and by reason of his highness I could not endure the thought of making him my Enemy." He stood in awe, 1. Of the majesty of God, as a God above him. He thought of his highness, the infinite distance between him and God, which possessed him with such a reverence of him, as made him very circumspect in his whole conversation. They who oppress the poor, and pervert judgment and justice, forget that he who is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be a higher than they, who is able to deal with them; (Eccl. v. 8.) but Job 2. Of the wrath of God, as a God considered this. that would certainly be against him, if he should wrong the poor. Destruction from God, because it would be a certain and an utter ruin to him, if he were guilty of this sin, was a constant terror to him, to restrain him from it. Note, Good men, even the best, have need to restrain themselves from sin with the fear of destruction from God, and all little This should especially restrain us from all acts of injustice and oppression—that God him-self is the Avenger thereof. Even then when salvation from God is a comfort to us, yet destruction from God should be a terror to us. Adam, in innocency, was awed with a threatening.

24. If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence; 25. If I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because my hand had gotten much; 26. If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness, 27. And my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand: 28. This also were an iniquity to be punish.

the poor with their flesh, and clothed them with 1 ed by the judge: for I should have demed the God that is above. 29. If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him; 30. (Neither have I suffered my mouth to sin, by wishing a curse to his soul;) 31. If the men of my tabernacle said not, Oh that we had of his flesh! we cannot be satisfied. 32. (The stranger did not lodge in the street: but I opened my doors to the traveller;)

Four articles more of Job's protestation we have in these verses, which, as all the rest, not only assure us what he was and did, but teach us what we

should be and do.

I. He protests that he never set his heart upon the wealth of this world, nor took the things of it for his portion and happiness. He had gold, he had fine gold, his wealth was great, and he had gotten much. Our wealth is either advantageous or pernicious to us, according as we stand affected to it. If we make it our rest and our ruler, it will be our ruin; if we make it our servant and an instrument of righteousness, it will be a blessing to us. Job here tells how he stood affected to his worldly wealth, 1. He put no great confidence in it; he did not make gold his hope, v. 24. They are very unwise that do, and enemies to themselves, who depend upon it as sufficient to make them happy, who think themselves safe and honourable, and sure of comfort, in having abundance of this world's goods. Some make it their hope and confidence for another world, as if it were a certain token of God's favourand those who have so much sense as not to think so, yet promise themselves that it will be a portion for them in this life, whereas the things themselves are uncertain, and our satisfaction in them much more so. It is hard to have riches, and not to trust in riches; and that is it which makes it so difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God, Matth. xix. 23. Mark x. 24. 2. He took no great complacency in it; (v. 25.) If I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and boasted that my hand had gotten much. He took no pride in his wealth, as if it added any thing to his real excellency, nor did he think that his might and the power of his hand got it him, Deut, viii. 17. He took no pleasure in it, in comparison with the spiritual things which were the delight of his soul. His joy did not terminate in the gift, but passed through it to the Giver. When he was in the midst of his abundance, he never said, Soul, take thine ease in these things, eat, drink, and be merry, nor blessed himself in his riches. He did not inordinately rejoice in his wealth; and that helped him to bear the loss of it so patiently as he did. The way to ween as though we went not, is, to rejoice as though we rejoiced not. The less pleasure the enjoyment is, the less pain the disappointment will be.

II. He protests that he never gave the worship and glory to the creature, which are due to God only; he was never guilty of idolatry, v. 26.28. We do not find that Job's friends charged him with this. But there were those, it seems, at that time, who were so sottish as to worship the sun and moon, else Job would not have mentioned it. Idolatry is one of the old ways which wicked men have trodden, and the most ancient idolatry was, the worshipping of the sun and moon, to which the temptation was most strong, as appears, (Deut. iv. 19.) where Moses speaks of the danger which the people were in of being driven to worship them. But, as yet, it was practised secretly, and durst not appear in open view, as, afterward, the most abominable idolatries did. Observe,

1. How far Job kept from this sin. He not only | would justly have brought the destruction upon him, never bowed the knee to Baal, (which, some think, was designed to represent the sun,) never fell down, and worshipped the sun, but he kept his eye, his heart, and his lips, clean from this sin. (1.) He never so much as beheld the sun or the moon in their pomp and lustre, with any other admiration of them, than what led him to give all the glory of their brightness and usefulness to their Creator. Against spiritual as well as corporal adultery he made a covenant with his eyes; and this was his covenant, that, whenever he looked at the lights of heaven, he should by faith look through them, and beyond them, to the Father of lights. (2.) He kept his heart with all diligence, that that should not be secretly enticed to think that there is a divine glory in their brightness, or a divine power in their influence, and that therefore divine honours are to be paid to them. Here is the source of idolatry; it begins in the heart; every man is tempted to that, as to other sins, when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed. (3.) He did not so much as put a compliment upon these pretended deities, did not perform the least and lowest act of adoration. His mouth did not kiss his hand, which, it is likely, was a ceremony then commonly used, even by some that yet would not be thought idolaters. It is a long-established piece of civil respect among ourselves, in making a bow, to kiss the hand; a form, it seems, which was anciently used in giving divine honours to the sun and moon; they could not reach to kiss them as the men that sacrificed, kissed the calves; (Hos. xiii. 2. 1 Kings xix. 18.) but, to show their good will, they kissed their hand, reverencing those as their masters, which God has made servants to this lower world, to hold the candle for us: Job never did it.

2. How ill Job thought of this sin, v. 28. (1.) He looked upon it as an affront to the civil magistrate; It were an iniquity to be funished by the judge, as a public nuisance, and hurtful to kings and provinces. Idolatry debauches men's minds, corrupts their manners, takes off the true sense of religion, which is the great bond of societies, and provokes God to give men up to a reprobate sense, and to send judgments upon a nation; and therefore the conservators of the public peace are concerned to restrain it by punish-(2.) He looked upon it as a much greater affront to the God of heaven, and no less than high treason against his crown and dignity; For I should have denied the God that is above, denied his being as God, and his sovereignty as God above. try is, in effect, atheism; hence the Gentiles are said to be without God (atheists) in the world. Note, We should be afraid of every thing that does but implicitly deny the God above, his providence, or

any of his perfections.

111. He protests that he was so far from doing or designing mischief to any, that he neither desired nor delighted in the hurt of the worst enemy he had. The forgiving of those that do us evil, it seems, was Old Testament duty. The Pharisees made the law concerning it of no effect, by teaching, Thou shalt 'ove thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy, Matth. v.

43. Observe here,

1. Job was far from revenge. He did not only not return the injuries that were done him, not only not destroy those who hated him; but, (1.) He did not so much as rejoice when any mischief befell them, v. 29. Many who would not wilfully hurt those who stand in their light, or have done them a diskindness, yet are secretly pleased, and laugh in their sleeve, (as we say,) when hart is done them: but Job was not of that spirit. Though Job was a very good man, yet, it seems, there were those that hated him, but evil found them. He saw their destruction, and was far from rejoicing in it, for that

as it is intimated, Prov. xxiv. 17, 18. (2.) He did not so much as wish in his own mind that evil might befall them, v. 30. He never wished a curse to his soul; (curses to the soul are the worst of curses;) never desired his death; he knew that, if he did, it would turn into sin to him. He was careful not to offend with his tongue, (Ps. xxxix. 1.) he would not suffer his mouth to sin, and therefore durst not imprecate any evil, no not to his worst enemy. If others bear malice to us, that will not justify us in bearing malice to them.

2. He was violently urged to revenge, and yet he kept himself thus clear from it; (v. 31.) The men of his tabernacle, his domestics, his servants, and those about him, were so enraged at Job's enemy who hated him, that they could have eaten him, if Job would but have set them on, or given them leave. "O that we had of his flesh! Our master is satisfied to forgive him, but we cannot be so satisfied." See how much beloved Job was by his family, how heartily they espoused his cause, and what enemies they were to his enemies; but see what a strict hand Job kept upon his passions, that he would not avenge himself, though he had those about him that blew the coals of his resentment. Note, (1.) A good man commonly does not himself lay to heart the affronts that are done him so much as his friends do for him. (2.) Great men have commonly those about them

that stir them up to revenge. David had so, 1 Sam. xxiv. 4.—xxvi. 8. 2 Sam. xvi. 9. But if they keep their temper, notwithstanding the spiteful insinuations of those about them, afterward it shall be no grief of heart to them, but shall turn very much to

IV. He protests that he had never been unkind or inhospitable to strangers; (v. 32.) The stranger lodged not in the street, as angels might lately have done in the street of Sodom, if Lot alone had not entertained them. Perhaps, by that instance, Job was taught (as we are, Heb. xiii. 2.) not to be forgetful to entertain strangers. He that is at home, must consider those that are from home, and put his soul into their soul's stead, and then do as he would be done by. Hospitality is a Christian duty, 1 Pet. iv. 9. Job, in his prosperity, was noted for good house-keeping: He oftened his door to the road; so it may be read; he kept the street door open, that he might see who passed by, and he invited them in, as Abraham, Gen. xviii. 1.

33. If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom; 34. (Did I fear a great multitude, or did the contempt of families terrify me, that I kept silence, and went not out of the door? 35. Oh that one would hear me! behold, my desire is that the Almighty would answer me, and that mine adversary had written a book: 36. Surely I would take it upon my shoulder, and bind it as a crown to me. 37. I would declare unto him the number of my steps; as a prince would I go near unto him.) 38. If my land cry against me, or that the furrows likewise thereof complain; 39. If I have eaten the fruits thereof without money, or have caused the owners thereof to lose their life; 40. Let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley. The words of Job are ended.

We have here Job's protestation against three t more sins, together with his general appeal to God's bar, and his petition for a hearing there, which, it is likely, was intended to conclude his discourse, (and therefore we will consider it last,) but that another particular sin occurred, from which he thought it requisite to acquit himself. He clears

himself from the charge,

I. Of dissimulation and hypocrisy, which was the general crime his friends accused him of-That, under the cloak of a profession of religion, he had kept up secret haunts of sin, and that really he was as pad as other people, but had the art of concealing it. Zophar insimuated (ch. xx. 12.) that he hid his iniquity under his tongue. "No," says Job, "I never did, (v. 33.) I never covered my transgression as Adam, never palliated a sin with frivolous excuses, nor made fig-leaves the shelter of my shame, nor ever hid my iniquity in my bosom, as a fondling, a darling, that I could by no means part with, or as stolen goods which I dreaded the discovery of." It is natural to us to cover our sins; we have it from our first parents; we are loath to confess our faults, willing to extenuate them, and make the best of ourselves, to devolve the blame upon others, as Adam on his wife, not without a tacit reflection upon God himself. But he that thus covers his sins shall not prosper, Prov. xxviii. 13. this protestation, intimates two things, which were certain evidences of his integrity, 1. That he was not guilty of any great transgression or iniquity, inconsistent with sincerity, which he had now industriously concealed. In this protestation, he had dealt fairly, and, while he denies some sins, was not conscious to himself that he allowed himself any. 2. That what transgression and iniquity he had been guilty of, (Who is there that lives, and sins not?) he had always been ready to own it, and, as soon as ever he perceived he had said or done amiss, he was ready to unsay it, and undo it, as far as he could, by repentance, confessing it both to God and man, and forsaking it: this is doing honestly.

II. From the charge of cowardice and base fear. His courage in that which is good, he produces as as evidence of his sincerity in it; (v. 34.) Did I feur a great multitude, that I kept silence? No, all that knew Job, knew him to be a man of undaunted resolution in a good cause, that boldly appeared, spake, and acted, in defence of religion and justice, and did not fear the face of man, nor was ever threatened or brow-beaten out of his duty, but set his face as a flint. Observe, 1. What great conscience Job had made of his duty as a magistrate, or a man of reputation, in the place where he lived. He did not, he durst not, keep silence, when he had a call to speak in an honest cause, or keep within doors, when he had a call to go abroad to do good. The case may be such, that it may be our sin to be silent and retired; as when we are called to reprove sin, and bear our testimony against it, to vindicate the truths and ways of God, to do right to those who are injured or oppressed, or any way to serve the public, or do honour to our religion. 2. What little account Job made of the discouragements he met with in the way of his duty. He valued not the clamours of the mob, feared not a great multitude, nor did he value the menaces of the mighty; the contempt of families never terrified him. He was not deterred by the number or quality, the scorns or insults, of the injurious, from doing justice to the anjured; no, he scorned to be swayed and biassed by any such considerations, nor ever suffered a rightous cause to be run down by a high hand. He teared the great God, not the great multitude, and his curse, not the contempt of families.

and doing wrong to his poor neighbours. And here

1. What his protestation is—That the estate he had, he both got and used honestly, so that his land could not cry out against him, nor the furrows thereof complain, (v. 38.) as they do against those who get the possession of them by fraud and extortion, Hab. ii. 9.11. The whole creation is said to groan under the sin of man; but that which is unjustly gained and held cries out against a man, and accuses him, condemns him, and demands justice against him for the injury. Rather than his oppresston shall go unpunished, the very ground and the furrows of it shall witness against him, and be his prosecutors. Two things he could say safely concerning his estate, (1.) That he never ate the fruits of it without money, v. 39. What he purchased, he paid for, as Abraham for the land he bought, (Gen. xxiii. 16) and David, 2 Sam. xxiv. 24. The labourers that he employed had their wages duly paid them, and if he made use of the fruits of those lands that he let out, he paid his tenants for them, or allowed it in their rent. (2.) That he never caused the owners thereof to lose their life, never got an estate, as Ahab got Naboth's vineyard, killing the heir and seizing the inheritance; never starved those that held lands of him, nor killed them with hard bargains and hard usage. No tenant, no workman, no servant, he had, could complain of him.

2. How he confirms his protestation; he does it, as often before, with a suitable imprecation; (v. 40.)"If I have got my estate unjustly, let thistles grow instead of wheat; the worst of weeds instead of the best of grains." When men get estates unjustly, they are justly deprived of the comfort of them, and disappointed in their expectations from them, they sow their land, but they sow not that body that shall be; God will give it a body; it was sown wheat, but shall come up thistles. What men do not come honestly by, will never do them any good.

Job, toward the close of his protestation, appeals to the judgment-seat of God concerning the truth of it; (v. 35..37.) Oh that he would hear me, even that the Almighty would answer me! This was what he often desired, and often complained that he could not obtain; and now, that he had drawn up his own defence so particularly, he leaves it upon record, in expectation of a hearing, files it, as it were, till

his cause be called.

(1.) A trial is moved for, and the motion earnestly pressed; "Oh that one, any one, would hear me; my cause is so good, and my evidence so clear, that I am willing to refer it to any indifferent person whatsoever; but my desire is, that the Almighty himself would determine it." An upright heart does not dread a scrutiny: he that means honestly, wishes he had a window in his breast, that all men might see the intents of his heart. But an upright heart does particularly desire to be determined in every thing by the judgment of God, which, we are sure, is according to truth. It was holy David's prayer, Search me, O God, and know my heart; and it was blessed Paul's comfort, He that judgeth

me, is the Lord.
(2.) The prosecutor is called, the plaintiff summoned, and ordered to bring in his information, to say what he has to say against the prisoner, for he stands upon his deliverance; "Oh that mine adversary had written a book—That my friends, who charge me with hypocrisy, would draw up their charge in writing, that it might be reduced to a certainty, and that we might the better join issue upon it." Job would be very glad to see the libel, to have a copy of his indictment; he would not hide it under his arm, but take it upon his shoulder, to III. From the charge of oppression and violence, | be seen and read of all men, nay, he would bind is

as a crown to him, would be pleased with it, and if look upon it as his ornament; for, [1.] If it discovered to him any sin he had been guilty of, which he did not yet see, he should be glad to know it, that he might repent of it, and get it pardoned. A good man is willing to know the worst of himself, and will be thankful to those that will faithfully tell him of his faults. [2.] If it charged him with what was false, he doubted not but to disprove the allegations, that his innocency would be cleared up as the light, and he should come off with so much the more honour. But, [3.] He did believe that, when his adversaries came to consider the matter so closely as they must do, if they put the charge in writing, the accusations would be trivial and minute, and every one that saw them would say, "If this was all they had to say against him, it was a shame they had given him so much trouble.'

(3.) The defendant is ready to make his appearance, and to give his accusers all the fair play they

can desire,

He will declare unto them the number of his stens, v. 37. He will let them into the history of his own life, will show them all the stages and scenes of it; he will give them a narrative of his conversation, what would make against him as well as what would make for him, and let them make what use they pleased of it: and so confident he is of his integrity, that, as a prince to be crowned, rather than as a prisoner to be tried, he would go near to him, both to his accuser to hear his charge, and to his judge to hear his doom. Thus the testimony of his conscience was his rejoicing.

> Hic murus aheneus esto, nit conscire sibi. Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence, Still to preserve thy conscious innocence.

Those that have kept their hands without spot from the world, as Job did, may lift up their faces without spot unto God, and may comfort themselves with the prospect of his judgment, when they lie under the unjust censures of men. If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.

Thus the words of Job are ended; that is, he has now said all he would say, in answer to his friends: he afterward said something in a way of self-re-proach and condemnation; (ch. xl. 4, 5.—xlii. 2, &c.) but here ends what he had to say in a way of self-defence and vindication. If this suffice not, he will say no more, he knows when he has said enough, and will submit himself to the judgment of the bench. Some think the manner of expression intimates that he concluded with an air of assurance and triumph. He now keeps the field, and doubts not but to win the field. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies.

CHAP. XXXII.

The stage is clear, for Job and his three friends are set down, and neither he nor they have any thing more to say; it is therefore very seasonable for a moderator to interpose, and Elihu is the man. In this chapter, we have, I. Some account of him, his parentage, his presence at this dispute, and his sentiments concerning it, v. 1.. 5. II. The apology he made for his bold undertaking to speak to a question which had been so largely and learnedly argued by his seniors. He pleads, 1. That though he had not the experience of an old man, yet he had the understanding of a man, v. 6... 10. 2. That he though he had not the experience of an old man, yet he had the understanding of a man, v. 6., 10. 2. That he had patiently heard all they had to say, v. 11...13. 3. That he had something new to offer, v. 14...17. 4. That his mind was full of this matter, and it would be a refreshment to him to give it vent, v. 18...20. 5. That he was resolved to speak impartially, v. 21, 22. And he did speak so well to this matter, that Job made no reply to him, and God gave him no rebuke, when he checked bott. Job himself and his other three friends.

1. QO these three men ceased to answer

own eyes. 2. Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram; against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God. 3. Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemn-4. Now Elihu had waited till Job had spoken, because they were elder than 5. When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, then his wrath was kindled.

Usually young men are the disputants, and old men the moderators; but here, when old men were the disputants, as a rebuke to them for their unbecoming heat, a young man is raised up to be the moderator. Divers of Job's friends were present, that came to visit him, and to receive instruction.

Now here we have,

I. The reason why his three friends were now silent; they ceased to answer him, and let him have his saying, because he was righteous in his own eyes, because, they alleged, it was to no purpose to argue with a man that was so opinionative, v. 1. Those that are self-conceited are indeed hard to be wrought upon; there is more hope of a fool (a fool of God's making) than of them who are fools of their own making, Prov. xxvi. 12. But they did not judge fairly concerning Job: he was really righteous before God, and not righteous only in his own eyes; so that it was only to save their own credit, that they made this the reason of their silence, as peevish disputants commonly do, when they find themselves run a-ground, and are not willing to own themselves unable to make their part

good.
II. The reasons why Elihu, the fourth, now spake. His name Elihu signifies My God is he: they had all tried in vain to convince Job, but My God is he that can and will do it, and did it at last: he only can open the understanding. He is said to be a Buzite, from Buz, Nahor's second son, (Gen. xxii. 21.) and of the kindred of Ram, that is, Aram; so some; (Gen. xxii. 21.) whence the Syrians or Aramites descended and were denominated. the kindred of Abram; so the Chaldee paraphrase; supposing him to be the first called Ram, High, then Abram, a high father, and lastly, Abraham, The high father of a multitude. Elihu was not so well known as the rest, and therefore is more particularly described thus.

1. Elihu spake because he was angry, and thought he had good cause to be so. When he had made his remarks upon the dispute, he did not go away and calumniate the disputants, striking them secretly with a malicious censorious tongue, but what he had to say, he would say before their faces, that they might vindicate themselves, if they could.

(1.) He was angry at Job, because he thought he did not speak so reverently of God as he ought to have done; and that was too true, (v. 2.) He justi fied himself more than God, that is, took more care and pains to clear himself from the imputation of unrighteousness in being thus afflicted, than to clear God from the imputation of unrighteousness in af flicting him, as if he were more concerned for his own honour than for God's; whereas he should, in the first place, have justified God, and cleared his glory, and then he might well enough have left his own reputation to shift for itself. Note, A gracious heart is jealous for the honour of God, and cannot but he angry, when that is neglected or postponed, Job, because he was righteous in his or any injury done it. Nor is it any breach of the

law of meekness, to be angry at our friends when they are offensive to God; Get thee behind me, Satan, says Christ to Simon. Elihu owned Job to be a good man, and yet would not say as he said, when he thought he said amiss: it is too great a compliment to our friends, not to tell them of their faults.

(2.) He was angry at his friends, because he thought they had not been so candid to Job as they ought to have been; (v. 3.) They had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. They had adjudged him to be a hypocrite, a wicked man, and would not recede from that sentence concerning him; and yet they could not prove him so, nor dis-They could not make good the premises, and yet held fast the conclusion. They had no reply to make to his arguments, and yet they would not yield, but, right or wrong, would run him down; this was not fair. Seldom is a quarrel begun, and more seldom is a quarrel carried on to the length that this was, in which there is not a fault on both sides. Elihu, as became a moderator, took part with neither, but was equally displeased with the mistakes and mismanagement of both. Those that in good earnest seek for truth, must thus be impartial in their judgments concerning the contenders, and not reject what is true and good on either side, for the sake of what is amiss, nor approve or defend what is amiss, for the sake of what is true and good, but must learn to separate between the precious and the vile.

2. Elihu spake because he thought that it was time to speak, and that now, at length, it was come to his turn, v. 4, 5. (1.) He had waited on Job's speeches, had patiently heard him out, until the words of Job were ended. (2.) He had waited on his friends' silence; so that, as he would not interrupt him, so he would not prevent them; not because they were wiser than he, but because they were elder than he, and therefore it was expected by the company that they should speak first; and Elihu was very modest, and would by no means offer to abridge them of their privilege. Some certain rules of precedency must be observed, for the keeping of order: though inward real honour will attend true wisdom and worth, yet, because every man will think himself, or his friend, the wisest and worthiest, this consideration can afford no certain rule for the outward ceremonial honour, which therefore must attend seniority either of age or office; and this respect the seniors may the better require, because they paid it when they were juniors, and the juniors may the better pay, because they shall have it when they come to be seniors.

6. And Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, answered and said, I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not show you mine opinion. 7. I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom. 8. But there is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. Great men are not always wise; neither do the aged understand judgment. 10. Therefore I said, Hearken to me; I also will show mine opinion. 11. Behold, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons, whilst you searched out what to say. 12. Yea, I attended unto you; and, behold, there was none of you that convinced Job, or that answered his words: 13. Lest ye should say, || Vol. 111.—T

We have found out wisdom: God thrusteth him down, not man. 14. Now, he hath not directed *his* words against me; neither will I answer him with your speeches.

Elihu here appears to be,

I. A man of great modesty and humility: though a young man, and a man of abilities, yet not pert, and confident, and assuming; his face shone, and, like Moses, he did not know it, which made it shine so much the brighter. Let it be observed by all, especially by young people, as worthy their imita-tion, 1. What a diffidence he had of himself, and of his own judgment; (v. 6.) "I am young, and therefore I was afraid, and durst not show you mine opinion, for fear I should either prove mistaken, or do that which was unbecoming me." He was so observant of all that passed, and applied his mind so closely to what he heard, that he had formed in himself a judgment of it; he neither neglected it as foreign, nor declined it as intricate: but, how clear soever the matter was to himself, he was afraid to deliver himself upon it, because he differed in his sentiments from those that were elder than he. Note, It becomes us to be suspicious of our own judgment in matters of doubtful disputation, to be swift to hear the sentiments of others, and slow to speak our own, especially when we go contrary to the judgment of those whom, upon the score of their learning and piety, we justly have a veneration for. 2. What a deference he paid to his seniors, and what great expectations he had from them; (v. 7.) I said, Days should speak. Note, Age and experience give a man great advantage in judging of things, both as they furnish a man with so much the more matter for his thoughts to work upon, and as they ripen and improve the faculties he is to work with; which is a good reason why old people should take pains both to learn themselves, and to teach others, (else the advantages of their age are a reproach to them,) and why young people should attend on their instructions: it is good lodging with an old disciple, Acts xxi. 16. Tit. ii. 4.

Elihu's modesty appeared in the patient attention he gave to what his seniors said, v. 11, 12. He waited for their words, as one that expected much from them, agreeably to the opinion he had of these grave men. He gave ear to their reasons, that he might take their meaning, and fully understand what was the drift of their discourse, and what the force of their arguments; he attended to them with diligence and care; and this, (1.) Though they were slow, and took up a deal of time in searching out what to say: though they were often to seek for matter and words, paused and hesitated, and were unready at their work, yet he overlooked that, and gave ear to their reasons, which, if really convincing, he would not think the less so for the disadvantages of the delivery of them. (2.) Though they trifled and made nothing of it, though none of them answered Job's words, nor said what was proper to convince him, yet he attended to them, in hopes they would bring it to some head at last. We must often be willing to hear what we do not like, else we cannot prove all things. His patient attendance on their discourses he pleads, [1.] As that which entitled him to a liberty of speech in his turn, and empowered him to require their attention. veniam petimusque damusque vicissim—This liberty we mutually allow and ask. They that have heard may speak, and they that have learned may teach. [2.] As that which enabled him to pass a judgment upon what they had said: he had observed what they aimed at, and therefore knew what to say to it. Let us be thoroughly apprized of the sentiments of our brethren, before we cen-

impertinent and imperious.

II. He appears to have been a man of great sense and courage, and one that knew as well when and how to speak, as when and how to keep silence. Though he had so much respect to his friends, as not to interrupt them with his speaking, yet he had so much regard to truth and justice, (his better friends,) as not to betray them by his silence. He

boldly pleads,

1. That man is a rational creature, and therefore that every man has for himself a judgment of discretion, and ought to be allowed a liberty of speech in his turn. He means the same that Job did, (ch. xii. 3.) But I have understanding as well as you, when he says, (v. 8.) But there is a spirit in man; only he expresses it a little more modestly, that one man has understanding as well as another, and no man can pretend to have the monopoly of reason, or to engross all the trade of it. Had he meant, *I* have revelation as well as you, (as some understand it,) he must have proved it; but if he meant only, I have reason as well as you, they cannot deny it, for it is every man's honour, and it is no presumption to claim it, nor could they gainsay his inference from it; (v. 10.) Therefore hearken to me. Learn here, (1.) That the soul is a spirit, neither material itself, nor dependant upon matter, but capable of conversing with things spiritual, which are not the objects of sense. (2.) It is an understanding spirit. It is able to discover and receive truth, to discourse and reason upon it, and to direct and rule accordingly. (3.) This understanding spirit is in every man; it is the light that lighteth every man, John i. 9. (4.) It is the inspiration of the Almighty, that gives us this understanding spirit; for he is the Father of spirits, and Fountain of understanding. See Gen. ii. 7. Eccl. xii. 7. Zech. xii. 1.

2. That those who are advanced above others in grandeur and gravity, do not always proportionably go beyond them in knowledge and wisdom; (v. 9.)Great men are not always wise: it is pity but they were, for then they would never do huit with their greatness, and would do so much the more good with their wisdom. Men should be preferred for their wisdom, and those that are in honour and power, have most need of wisdom, and have the greatest opportunity of improving in it; and yet it does not follow that great men are always wise, and therefore it is folly to subscribe to the dictates of any with an implicit faith. The aged do not always understand judgment, even they may be mistaken, and therefore must not expect to bring every thought into obedience to them; nay, therefore they must not take it as an affront to be contradicted, but rather take it as a kindness to be instructed, by their juniors: Therefore I said, Hearken to me, v. 10. We must be willing to hear reason from those that are every way inferior to us, and to yield to it. He that has a good eye can see further upon level ground, than he that is purblind can from the top of the highest mountain. Better is a poor and wise child than an old and foolish king, Eccl. iv. 13.

3. That it was requisite for something to be said, for the setting of this controversy in a true light, which, by all that had hitherto been said, was but rendered more intricate and perplexed; (v. 13.) "1 must speak, lest you should say, We have found out wisdom, lest you should think your argument against Job conclusive and irrefragable, and that Job cannot be convinced and humbled by any other argument than this of yours, that God casteth him down, and not man, that it appears by his extraordinary afflictions, that God is his Enemy, and therefore he is ed thus modestly, it is certainly a wicked man; I must show you that this heard and considered.

sure them; for he that answers a matter before he lears it, or when he has heard it only by halves, it without maintaining it." Or, "Lest you should is folly and shame to him, and bespeaks him both think you have found out the wisest way, to reason no more with him, but leave it to God to thrust him down." It is time to speak, when we hear errors advanced and disputed for, especially under pretence of supporting the cause of God with them. It is time to speak, when God's judgments are vouched for the patronizing of men's pride and passion, and their unjust, uncharitable, censures of their brethren; then we must speak on God's behalf.

4. That he had something new to offer, and would endeavour to manage the dispute in a better manner than it had hither to been managed, v. 14. He thinks he may expect a favourable hearing; for, (1.) He will not reply to Job's protestations of his integrity, but allows the truth of them, and therefore does not interpose as his enemy; "He hath not directed his words against me: I have nothing to say against the main of his discourse, nor do I differ from his principles. I have only a gentle reproof to give him for his passionate expressions." (2.) He will not repeat their arguments, nor go upon their principles; "Neither will I answer him with your speeches: not with the same matter; should I only say what has been said, I might justly be silenced as impertinent: nor in the same manner; I will not be guilty of that peevishness toward him myself, which I dislike in you." The controversy that has already been fully handled, a wise man will let alone, unless he can amend and improve what has been done: why should he actum agere-do that which has been done already?

15. They were amazed; they answered no more; they left off speaking. 16. When I had waited, (for they spake not, but stood still, and answered no more,) 17. I said, I will answer also my part; I also will show mine opinion. 13. For I am full of matter; the spirit within me constraineth me. 19. Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles. 20. I will speak, that I may be refreshed: I will open my lips, and answer. 21. Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person ; neither let me give flattering titles unto man. 22. For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my Maker would soon take me away.

Three things here apologize for Elihu's interposing as he does in this controversy, which had al-ready been canvassed by such acute and learned

disputants.

1. That the stage was clear, and he did not break in upon any of the managers on either side; (v. 15.)They were amazed, v. 16. They stood still, and answered no more. They not only left off speaking themselves, but they stood still, to hear if any of the company would speak their minds, so that (as we say) he had room and fair play given him. They seemed not fully satisfied themselves with what they had said, else they would have adjourned the court, and not have stood still, expecting what might further be offered. And therefore I said, (v. 17.) "I will answer also my part. I cannot pretend to give a definitive sentence; no, the judgment is the Lord's, and by him it must be determined who is in the right, and who is in the wrong; but, since you have each of you showed your opinion, I also will show mine, and let it take its fate with the rest. When what is offered, even by the meanest, is offered thus modestly, it is pity but it should be fairly

I see no inconvenience in supposing that Elihu here discovers himself to be the penman of this book; and that he here writes as an historian, relating the matter of fact, that, after he had bespoken their attention in the foregoing verses, they were amazed, they left off whispering among themselves, did not gainsay the liberty of speech he desired, but stood still to hear what he would say, being much surprised at the admirable mixture of boldness and

modesty that appeared in his preface.

2. That he was uneasy, and even in pain, to be delivered of his thoughts upon this matter. must give him leave to speak, for he cannot forbear; while he is musing, the fire burns, (Ps. xxxix. 3.) shut up in his bones, as the prophet speaks, Jer. xx. 9. He longed to deliver his mind concerning Job's case, v. 18. 20. If any of the disputants would have hit that which he thought was the right joint, he would contentedly have been silent; but, when he thought they all missed it, he was eager to be trying his hand at it. He pleads, (1.) That he had a great deal to say; "I am full of matter; having made my remarks upon all that has hitherto been said." When aged men are drawn dry, and have spent their stock, in discoursing of the Divine Providence, God can raise up others, even young men, and fill them with matter, for the edifying of his church, for it is a subject that can never be exhausted, though they that speak to it may. (2.) That he was under a necessity of saying it. "The Spirit within me not only instructs me what to say, but puts me on to say it; so that if I have not vent, (such a ferment are my thoughts in,) I shall burst like bottles of new wine, when it is working," v. 19. See what a great grief it is to a good minister to be silenced, and thrust into a corner; he is full of matter, full of Christ, full of heaven, and would speak of these things for the good of others, but he may not. (3.) That it would be an ease and satisfaction to himself, to deliver his mind; (v. 20.) I will speak, that I may be refreshed; not only that I may be eased of the pain of stifling it, but that I may have the pleasure of endeavouring, according to my place and capacity, to do good. It is a great refreshment to a good man, to have liberty to speak for the glory of God and the edification of others.

3. That he was resolved to speak, with all possible freedom and sincerity, what he thought was true, not what he thought would please; (v. 21, 22.) "Let me not accept any man's person, as partial judges do, that aim to enrich themselves, not to do justice; I am resolved to flatter no man." He would not speak otherwise than he thought, either, (1.) In compassion to Job, because he was poor and in affliction; would not make his case better than he really took it to be, for fear of increasing his grief; "But, let him bear it as he can, he shall be told the truth." Those that are in affliction must not be flattered, but dealt faithfully with: when trouble is upon any, it is foolish pity to suffer sin upon them too, (Lev. xix. 17.) for that is the worst addition that can be to their trouble. Thou shalt not countenance, any more than discountenance, a poor man in his cause, (Exod. xxiii. 3.) nor regard a sad look any more than a big look, so as, for the sake of it, to pervert justice, for that is accepting persons. Or, (2.) In compliment to Job's friends, because they were in prosperity and reputation. "Let him not expect that I shall say as they have said, any further than I am convinced that they have said right, nor applaud their dictates for the sake of their dignities." No, though Elihu is a young man, and upon his preferment, he will not dissemble truth, to court the favour of great men: it is a good resolution he has taken up, "I know not to give flattering titles to men; I never used myself to that language;" and it is a good reason he gives for that resolution; "In so !!

doing my Maker would soon take me away." It is good to keep ourselves in awe with a holy fear of God's judgments: he that made us will take us away in his wrath, if we do not conduct ourselves as we should. He hates all dissimulation and flattery, and will soon fut lying lips to silence, and cut off flattering lips, Ps. xii. 3. The more closely we eye the majesty of God, as our Maker, and the more we dread his wrath and justice, the less danger shall we be in of a sinful fearing, or flattering, of men.

CHAP. XXXIII.

Pompous prefaces, like the teeming mountain, often introduce poor performances: but Elihu's discourse here does not disappoint the expectations which his preface had raised: it is substantial, and lively, and very much to the purpose. He had, in the foregoing chapter, said what he had to say to Job's three friends; and now he comes up close to Job limself, and directs his speech to him. 1. He bespeaks Job's favourable acceptance of what he should say, and desires he would take him for that person whom he had so often wished for, that would plead with him, and receive his plea on God's behalf, v. 1...7. Il. He does, in God's name, bring an action against him, for words, which he had spoken in the heat of disputation, reflecting upon God as dealing hardly with him, v. 8...11 III. He endeavours to convince him of his fault and folly herein, by showing him, 1. God's sovereign dominion over man, v. 12, 13. 2. The care God takes of man, and the various ways and means he uses to do his soul good, which we have reason to think he designs, when he lays bodily afflictions upon him, v. 14. (1.) Job had sometimes complained of unquiet dreams, ch. vii. 14. "God," says Elihu, "sometimes speaks conviction and instruction to men by such dreams," v. 15... 18. (2.) Job had especially complained of his sicknesses and pains; and especially complained of this strangeses and pains, and as to these, he shows largely, that they were so far from being tokens of God's wrath, as Job took them, or evidences of Job's hypocrisy, as his friends took them, that they were really wise and gracious methods, which divine grace took for the increase of his acquaintance with God, to work patience, experience, and hope, v. 19.. 30. And, lastly, he concludes with a request to Job, either to answer him, or give him leave to go on, v. 31..33.

hear my speeches, and hearken to all my words. 2. Behold, now I have opened my mouth, my tongue hath spoken in my mouth. 3. My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart; and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly. 4. The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life. 5. If thou canst answer me, set thy words in order before me, stand up; 6. Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead; I also am formed out of the clay. 7. Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee.

Several arguments Elihu here uses, to persuade Job to give him a patient hearing, to believe that he designed him a good office, and to take it kindly, and be willing to receive the instructions he was now about to give him. Let Job consider,

1. That Elihu does not join with his three friends against him: he has, in the foregoing chapter, declared his dislike of their proceedings, disclaimed their hypothesis, and quite set aside the method they took of healing Job. "Wherefore, Job, I travithee, hear my speech, v. 1. They all spake in the same strain; but I am trying a new way, therefore hearken to all my words, and not to some of them only;" for we cannot judge of a discourse unless we take it entire, and hearken to it all.

2. That he intended to make a solemn busines:

of it, not to put in a word by the by, or give a short repartee, to show his wit; after a long silence, he opened his mouth, (v. 2.) with deliberation and design; upon mature consideration, he had already begun to speak, and was prepared to go on, if Job

would encourage him by his attention.

3. That he was resolved to speak as he thought, and not otherwise; (v. 3.) "My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart, the genuine product of my convictions and sentiments." There was reason to suspect that Job's three friends did not think, in their consciences, that Job was so bad a man as they had, in their discourses, merely for the support of their hypothesis, represented him to be; and that was not fair. It is a base thing to condemn those with our tongues, to serve a turn, whom, at the same time, we cannot but in our consciences think well of: Elihu is an honest man, and scorns to do so.

4. That what he said should be easy, and not dark and hard to be understood; My lifts shall utter knowiedge clearly. Job shall readily take his meaning, and perceive what he aims at. Those that speak of the things of God, should carefully avoid all obscurity and perplexedness, both of notion and ex-pression, and speak as plainly and clearly as they can; for by that it will appear that they do themselves understand what they speak of, that they mean honestly, and design the edification of those

they speak to.
5. That he would, in his discourse, make the best use he could of the reason and understanding God had given him, that life, that rational soul which he received from the Spirit of God and the breath of the Almighty, v. 4. He owns himself unfit to enter into the lists with his seniors, yet he desires they will not despise his youth, for that he is God's workmanship as well as they, made by the same hand, endued with the same noble powers and faculties, and designed for the same great end; and therefore why may not the God that made him, make use of him as an instrument of good to Job? With this consideration also we should quicken ourselves (and perhaps Elihu made that use of it) to do good in our places, according to our capacity; God has made us, and given us life, and therefore we should study to use our life to some good purpose, to spend it in glorifying God, and serving our generation according to his will, that we may answer the end of our creation, and it may not be said that we were made in vain.

6. That he would be very willing to hear what Job could object against what he had to say; (v. 5.) "If thou canst, answer me. If thou hast so much strength and spirit left thee, and art not quite spent with the distemper, set thy words in order, and they shall have their due consideration." Those

that can speak reason, will hear reason.

7. That he had often wished for one that would appear for God, with whom he might freely expostulate, and to whom, as arbitrator, he might refer the matter, and such a one Elihu would be; (v. 6.) I am. according to thy wish, in God's stead. How I am, according to thy wish, in God's stead. How pathetically had Job wished, (ch. xvi. 21.) Oh that one might plead for a man with God! and (ch. xxiii. 3.) Oh that I knew where I might find him! Only he would make it his bargain, that his dread should not make him afraid, ch. xiii. 21. "Now," says Elihu, "look upon me, this once, as in God's stead; I will undertake to plead his cause with thee, and to show thee wherein thou hast affirmted him, and what he has against thee; and what appeals or complaints

thou hast to make to God, make them to me."

8. That he was not an unequal match for him;

"I also am formed out of the clay. I also, as well as the first man, (Gen. ii. 7.) I also as well as thou." Job had urged this with God, as a reason why he should not bear hard upon him; (ch. x. 9.) member that thou hast made me as the clay; "I," says Elihu, "am formed out of the clay, as well as formed of the same clay, so some read it. It is good for us all to consider that we are formed out of the clay; and well for us it is, that those who are to us in God's stead, are so; that he speaks to us by men like ourselves, according to Israel's wish, upon a full trial, Deut. v. 24. God has wisely deposited the treasure in earthen vessels like ourselves. 2 Cor. iv. 7.

Lastly, That he would have no reason to be frightened at the assault he made upon him; (v.7.)"My terror shall not make thee afraid," (1.) "As thy friends have done with their arguings; I will not reproach thee as they have done, nor draw up such a heavy charge against thee. Nor,"(2.)"As God would do, if he should appear to reason with thee. I stand upon the same level with thee, and am made of the same mould, and therefore cannot impress that terror upon thee, which thou mayest justly dread from the appearance of the Divine Majesty." If we would rightly convince men, it must be by reason, not by terror; by fair arguing, not by a heavy hand.

8. Surely thou hast spoken in my hearing, and I have heard the voice of thy words, saying, 9. I am clean without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me. 10. Behold, he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy; 11. He putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths. 12. Behold, in this thou art not just: I will answer thee, that God is greater than man. 13. Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters.

In these verses,

I. Elihu particularly charges Job with some indecent expressions that had dropped from him, reflecting upon the justice and goodness of God in his dealings with him. He does not ground the charge npon report, but was himself an ear-witness of what he here reproves him for; (v. 8.) "Thou hast shoken it in my hearing, and in the hearing of all this company." He had it not at second-hand; if so, he would have hoped it had not been so bad as it was represented. He did not hear it from Job in private conversation, then he would not have been so ill-bred as to repeat it thus publicly; but Job had said it openly, and therefore it was fit he should be openly reproved for it. Them that sin before all, rebuke before all. When we hear any thing said, that tends to God's dishonour, we ought publicly to bear our testimony against it. What is said amiss in our hearing, we are concerned to reprove; for ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, to confront the accuser.

1. Job had represented himself as innocent; (v). 9.) Thou hast said, I am clean without transgressing. sion; Job had not said this totidem verbis-in so many words; nay, he had owned himself to have sinned, and to be impure before God; but he had indeed said, Thou knowest that I am not wicked: My righteousness I hold fast, and the like, on which Elihu might ground this charge. It was true, that Job was a perfect and an upright man, and not such a one as his friends had represented him; but he ought not to have insisted so much upon it, as if God had therefore done him wrong in afflicting him. Yet, it should seem, Elihu did not deal fairly in charging Job with saying that he was clean and innocent from all transgression, when he only plead ed, that he was upright and innocent from the great transgression. But those that speak passionately

and unwarily, must thank themselves if they be || unreasonable to find fault with him, for he is cermisunderstood; they should have taken more

2. He had represented God as severe in marking what he did amiss, and taking all advantages against him, (v. 10, 11.) as if he sought opportunity to pick quarrels with him. He findeth occasions against me; which supposes seeking them; to this purport Job had spoken; (ch. xiv. 16, 17.) Dost thou not watch over my sin? He counteth me for his enemy. So he had expressly said, (ch. xiii. 24.—xix. 11.) "He putteth my feet in the stocks; that, as I cannot contend with him, so I may not be able to flee from him." This he had said, ch. xiii. 27.; where also we meet with these words, Thou lookest narrowly unto all my haths.

II. He endeavours to convince him that he had spoken amiss in speaking thus, and that he ought to humble himself before God for it, and by repentance to unsay it; (v. 12.) Behold, in this thou art not just. Here thou art not in the right, so some read it. See the difference between the charge which Elihu exhibited against Job, and that which was preferred against him by his other friends; they would not own that he was just at all, but Elihu only says, "In this, in saying this, thou art not just." 1. "Thou dost not deal justly with God." To be just, is to render to all their due; now we do not render God his due, nor are we just to him, if we do not acknowledge his equity and kindness in all the dispensations of his providence towards us; that he is righteous in all his ways, and that, how-ever it be, yet he is good. 2. "Thou dost not speak the language of a righteous man; I do not deny but thou art such a one, but in this thou dost not make it to appear." Many that are just, yet, in some particular instances, do not speak and act like themselves; and as, on the one hand, we must not fail to tell even a good man wherein he mistakes and does amiss, nor flatter him in his errors and passions, for in that we are not kind; so, on the other hand, we must not draw men's characters, nor pass a judgment on them, from one instance, or some few misplaced words, for in that we are not just. In many things we all offend, and therefore must be candid in our censures.

Two things Elihu proposes to Job's consideration, to convince him that he had said amiss.

(1.) That God is infinitely above us, and therefore it is madness to contend with him; for if he plead against us with his great power, we cannot stand before him. I will answer thee, says Elihu, in one word, which carries its own evidence along with it, That God is greater than man; no doubt he is infinitely greater. Between God and man there is no proportion. Job had himself said a great deal, and admirably well, concerning the greatness of God, his irresistible power and incontestible sovereignty, his terrible majesty and unsearchable "Now," said Elihu, "do but consider what thou thyself hast said concerning the greatness of God, and apply it to thyself; if he is greater than man, he is greater than thou, and thou wilt see reason enough to repent of these ill-natured, ill-favoured, reflections upon him, and to blush at thy folly, and tremble to think of thine own presumption." Note, There is enough in this one plain unquestionable truth, *That God is greater than man*, if duly improved, for ever to put to silence and to shame all our complaints of his providence, and our exceptions against his dealings with us. He is not only more wise and powerful than we are, and therefore it is to no purpose to contend with him, who will be too hard for us, but more holy, just, and good, for these are the transcendent glories and excellencies of the divine nature; in these, God is tainly in the right.

(2.) That God is not accountable to us; (v. 13.) Why dost thou strive against him? Those that complain of God, strive against him, implead him, impeach him, bring an action against him. And why do they do so? For what cause? To what purpose? Note, It is an unreasonable thing for us, weak, foolish, sinful creatures, to strive with a God of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness. Woe to the clay that strives with the Potter; for he gives no account of any of his matters. He is under no obligation to show us a reason for what he does; neither to tell us what he designs to do, in what method, at what time, by what instruments; nor to tell us why he deals thus with us. He is not bound either to justify his own proceedings, or to satisfy our demands and inquiries; his judgments will certainly justify themselves; if we do not satisfy ourselves in them, it is our own fault. It is therefore daring impiety for us to arraign God at our bar, or challenge him to show cause for what he doeth, to say unto him, What doest thou? or, Why doest thou so? He gives not account of all his matters; so some read it. reveals as much as it is fit for us to know, as follows here, v. 14. But still there are secret things, which belong not to us, which it is not for us to pry into.

14. For God speaketh once, yea, twice yet man perceiveth it not. 15. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed, 16. Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, 17. That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. 18. He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword.

Job had complained, that God kept him wholly in the dark concerning the meaning of his dealings with him; and therefore concluded he dealt with him as his enemy. "No," says Elihu, "he speaks to you, but you do not perceive him; so that the fault is yours, not his; he is designing your real good, even in those dispensations which you put this harsh construction upon. Observe in general, v. 14.

1. What a friend God is to our welfare: He speaketh to us once, yea, twice. It is a token of his fayour, that, notwithstanding the distance and quarrel between us and him, yet he is pleased to speak It is an evidence of his gracious design, that he is pleased to speak to us of our own concerns, to show us what is our duty, what our interest, what he requires of us, and what we may expect from him; to tell us of our faults, and warn us of our danger; to show us the way, and to lead us in it. he does once, yea, twice, that is, again and again; when one warning is neglected, he gives another, not willing that any should perish. Precent must be upon precept, and line upon line; it is so, that sinners may be left inexcusable.

2. What enemies we are to our own welfare; Man perceives it not, that is, he does not heed it or regard it; he does not discern or understand it; is not aware that it is the voice of God, nor does he receive the things revealed, for they are foolishness to him; he stops his ear, stands in his own light, rejects the counsel of God against himself, and so is never the wiser, no not for the dictates of wisdom itself.

God speaks to us by conscience, by providences, and by ministers; of all which Elihu here discourses at large, to show Job that God was both telling him greater than man, and therefore it is absurd and || his mind, and doing him a kindness, even now that he seemed to keep him in the dark, and so treat him as a stranger, and to keep him in distress, and so treat him as an enemy. There was not then, that we know of, any divine revelation in writing, and therefore that is not here mentioned among the ways by which God speaks to men, though now it is the principal way. In these verses, he shows how God teaches and admonishes the children of men

by their own consciences. Observe,

1. The proper season and opportunity for these admonitions; (v. 15.) In a dream, in slumberings upon the bed, when men are retired from the world, and the business and conversation of it; it is a good time for them to retire into their own hearts, and commune with them, when they are upon their beds, solitary and still, Ps. iv. 4. It is the time God takes for dealing personally with men. 1. When he sent angels, extraordinary messengers, on his errands, he commonly chose that time for the delivery of them; when, by deep sleep falling on men, the bodily senses were all locked up, and the mind more free to receive the immediate communications of divine light. Thus he made his mind known to the prophets by visions and dreams; (Numb. xii. 6.) thus he warned Abimelech, (Gen. xx. 3.) Laban, (Gen. xxxi. 24.) Joseph, Matth. i. 20. Thus he made known to Pharaoh, and Nebuchadnezzar, things that should come to pass hereafter. he stirred up conscience, that ordinary deputy of his, in the soul, to do its office, he took that opportunity, either when deep sleep fell on men, for though dreams mostly come from fancy, some may come from conscience: or, in slumberings, when men are between sleeping and waking, reflecting at night upon the business of the foregoing day, or projecting in the morning the business of the ensuing day, then is a proper time for their hearts to reproach them for what they have done ill, and to admonish them what they should do. See Isa.

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II. The power and force with which those admonitions come, v. 16. When God designs men's good, by the convictions and dictates of their own consciences, 1. He gives them admission, and makes them to be heeded; Then he opens the ears of men, which were before shut against the voice of this charmer, Ps. lviii. 5. He opens the heart, as he opened Lydia's, and so opens the ears. He takes away that which stopped the ear, so that the conviction finds, or forces, its way; nay, he works in the soul a submission to the regimen of conscience, and a compliance with its rules, for that follows upon God's opening the ear; (Isa. l. 5.) God has opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious. 2. He gives them a settlement, and makes them to abide; He sealeth their instruction, that is, the instruction that is designed for them, and is suited to them; this he makes their souls to receive the deep and lasting impression of, as the wax of the seal. When the heart is delivered into divine instructions, as

into a mould, then the work is done.

III. The end and design of these admonitions that

are sent.

1. To keep men from sin, and particularly the sin of pride; (v. 17.) That he may withdraw man from his furflose, that is, from his evil purposes; may change the temper of his mind, and the course of his life, his disposition and inclination, or prevent some particular sin he is in danger of falling into: that he may withdraw man from his work; may make him leave off man's work, which is working for the world and the flesh, and may set him to work the work of God. Many a man has been stepped in the full career of a sinful pursuit by the seasonable checks of his own conscience, saying, Do not this abominable thing which the Lord hates. P. rticularly, God dees, by this means, hide pride

from man, that is, hide those things from him which are the matter of his pride, and take his mind off from dwelling upon them, by setting before him what reason he has to be humble. That he may take away pride from man, so some read it; that he may pluck up that root of bitterness which is the cause of so much sin. All those whom God has mercy in store for he will humble, and hide pride from. Pride makes people eager and resolute in the prosecution of their purposes; they will have their way, therefore God withdraws them from their purposes, by mortifying their pride.

2. To keep men from ruin, v. 18. While sinners are pursuing their evil purposes and indulging their pride, their souls are hastening apace to the pit, to the sword, to destruction, both in this world and that to come: but when God, by the admonitions of conscience, withdraws them from sin, he thereby keeps back their souls from the pit, from the bot tomless pit, and saves them from perishing by the sword of divine vengeance, so iniquity shall not be their ruin. That which turns men from sin, saves them from hell, suves a soul from death, James v. 20. See what a mercy it is to be under the restraints of an awakened conscience; faithful are the wounds, and kind are the bonds, of that friend, for the soul is kept from perishing eternally.

19. He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: 20. So that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. 21. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick 22. His soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers. 23. If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness; 24. Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom. 25. His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth: 26. He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him; and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness. 27. He looketh upon men; and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; 28. He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.

God has spoken once to sinners by their own con sciences, to keep them from the paths of the lestroyer, but they perceive it not; they are not aware that the checks their own hearts give them, in a sinful way, are from God, but they are imputed to melancholy, or the preciseness of their education; and therefore God speaks twice; he speaks a second time, and tries another way to convince and reclaim sinners, that is, by providences, afflictive and merciful, (in which he speaks twice,) and by the sea senable instructions of good ministers setting in with Job complained much of his diseases, and judged by them that God was angry with him; his friends did so too: but Elibu shows they were all mistaken, for God often afflicts the body in love, and with gr. cious designs of good to the soul, as appears in the issue which here it is brought to. This part of Elihu's discourse will be of great use to us for the due improvement of sickness, in and by comfort, him, an interpreter to expound the provi which God speaks to men. Here is,

I. The patient described in his extremity. See what work sickness makes, (v. 19, &c.) when God sends it with commission; Do this, and it doeth it.

 The sick man is full of pain all over him; (v.
 He is chastened with pain upon his bed, such pain as confines him to his bed; or, so extreme the pain is, that he can get no ease, no, not on his bed where he would repose himself. Pain and sickness will turn a bed of down into a bed of thorns, on which he that used to sleep now tosses to and fro till the dawning of the day. The case, as here put, is very bad; pain is more hardly borne than sickness, and with that the patient here is chastened; not a dual heavy pain, but strong and acute; and, frequently, the stronger the patient, the stronger the pain, for the more sanguine the complexion is, the more violent, commonly, the disease is. It is not the smarting of the flesh that is complained of, but the aching of the bones. It is an inward rooted pain; and not only the bones of one limb, but the multitude of the bones, are thus chastened See what frail, what vile, bodies we have, which, though receiving no external hurt, may be thus pained from causes within themselves: see what work sin makes, what mischief it does. Pain is the fruit of sin; yet, by the grace of God, the pain of the body is often made a means of good to the soul.

2. He has quite lost his appetite, the common effect of sickness; (v 20.) His tife abhorreth bread, the most necessary food, and dainty meat, which he most delighted in, and formerly relished with a great deal of pleasure. This is a good reason why we should not be desirous of dainties, because they are deceitful meat, Prov. xxiii. 3. We may be soon made as sick of them as we are now fond of them; and those who live in luxury when they are well, if everthey come, by reason of sickness, to loathe dainty meat, may, with grief and shame, read their sin in their punishment. Let us not inordinately love the taste of meat, for the time may come when we may even loathe the sight of meat, Ps. cvii. 18.

3. He is become a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones, v. 21. By sickness, perhaps a few days' sickness, his flesh, which was fat, and fair, is consumed away, that it cannot be seen: it is strangely wasted and gone, and his bones, which were buried in flesh, now stick out; you may count his ribs, may tell all his bones. The soul that is well-nourished with the bread of life, sickness will not make lean, but it soon makes a change in the body.

He who, before, had such a beauteous air,
And, pamper'd with his ease, seem'd plump and fair,
Doth all his friends (amazing change!) surprise,
With pale lean checks, and ghastly hollow eyes;
His bones, a horrid sight, start through his skin,
Which lay before, in flesh and fat, uaseen.
Sir R. Blackmore.

4. He is given up for gone, and his life despaired of; (v. 22.) His soul draws near to the grave, that is, he has all the symptoms of death upon him, and, in the apprehension of all about him, as well as in his own, he is a dying man. The pangs of death, here called the destroyers, are just ready to seize him; they compass him about, Ps. cxvi. 3. Perhaps it intimates the very dreadful apprehensions which those have of death as a destroying thing, when it stares them in the face, who, when it was at a distance, made light of it. All agree, when it comes to the point, whatever they thought of it before, that it is a serious thing to die.

II. The provision made for his instruction, in order to a sanctified use of his affliction, that, when God in that way speaks to man, he may be heard and understood, and not speak in vain, v. 23. He is happy, if there be a messenger with him to attend him in his sickness to governe coursel and

dence, and give him to understand the meaning of it, a man of wisdom that knows the voice of the rod and its interpretation; for, when God speaks by afflictions, we are, frequently, so unversed in the language, that we have need of an interpreter; and it is well if we have such a one. The advice and help of a good minister are as needful and seasonable, and should be as acceptable, in sickness, as of a good physician, especially if he be well-skilled in the art of explaining and improving providences; he is then one of a thousand, and to be valued accordingly: his business, at such a time, is, to show unto man his uprightness, that is, God's uprightness, that in faithfulness he afflicts him, and does him no wrong; which it is necessary to be convinced of, in order to our making a due improvement of the affliction: or rather, it may mean man's uprightness, or rectitude: 1. The uprightness that is. If it appear that the sick person is truly pious, the interpreter will not do as Job's friends had done, make it his business to prove him a hypocrite, because he is afflicted; but, on the contrary, will show him his uprightness, not withstanding his afflictions, that he may take the comfort of it, and be easy, whatever the event is. 2. The uprightness, the reformation, that should be, in order to life and peace. When men are made to see the way of uprightness to be the only way, and a sure way, to salvation, and to choose it, and walk in it accordingly, the work is done.

III. God's gracious acceptance of him, upon his repentance, v. 24. When he sees that the sick person is indeed convinced that sincere repentance, and that uprightness, which is gospel-perfection, are his interest as well as duty, then He that waits to be gracious, and shows mercy, upon the first indication of true repentance, is gracious unto him, and takes him into his favour and thoughts for good. Wherever God finds a gracious heart, he will be found a gracious God: and, 1. He will give a gracious order for his discharge. He says, Deliver him, that is, Let him be delivered from going down to the hit, from that death which is the wages of sin. When afflictions have done their work, they shall be removed. When we return to God in a way of duty, he will return to us in a way of mercy. Those shall be delivered from going down to the pit, who receive God's messengers, and rightly understand his interpreters, so as to subscribe to his uprightness. 2. He will give a gracious reason for this order, I have found a ransom, or propitiation; Jesus Christ is that Ransom, so Elihu calls him, as Job had called him his Redeemer, for he is both the Purchaser and the Price, the Priest and the Sacrifice; so high was the value put upon souls, that nothing less would redeem them, and so great the injury done by sin, that nothing less would atone for it, than the blood of the Son of God, who gave his life a ransom for many. This is a ransom of God's finding, a contrivance of Infinite Wisdom; we could never have found it ourselves, and the angels themselves could never have found it; it is the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom; and such an invention as is, and will be, the ever lasting wonder of those principalities and powers that desire to look into it. Observe how God glories in the invention here, Eugenez, Eugenez-" I have found, I have found, the Ransom, I, even I, am he that has done it."

IV. The recovery of the sick man, hereupon. Take away the cause, and the effect will cease. When the patient becomes a penitent, see what a blessed change follows.

and understood, and not speak in vain, v. 23. He is happy, if there be a messenger with him to attend him in his sickness, to convince, counsel and tance and return to God, but sometimes it is; and

recovery from sickness is then a mercy indeed, when it arises from the remission of sin; then it is in love to the soul, that the body is delivered from the pit of corruption, when God casts our sins be-und his back, Isa. xxxviii. 17. That is the method of a blessed recovery; Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee; and then, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk, Matth. ix. 2, 6. So here, interest him in the Ransom, and then his flesh shall be fresher than a child's, and there shall be no remains of his distemper, but he shall return to the days of his youth, to the beauty and strength which he had then; when the distemper that oppressed nature is removed, how strangely does nature help itself, in which the power and goodness of the God of nature must be thankfully acknowledged! By such merciful providences as these, which afflictions give occasion for, God speaketh once, yea twice, to the children of men, letting them know (if they would but perceive it) their dependence upon him, and his tender compassion of them.

2. His soul recovers in peace, v. 26. (1.) The patient, being a penitent, is a supplicant, and has learned to pray; he knows God will be sought unto for his favours, and therefore he shall pray unto God, pray for pardon, pray for health. Is any afficted, any sick? Let him pray. When he finds himself recovering, he shall not then think that prayer is no longer necessary, for we need the grace of God as much for the sanctifying of a mercy as for the sanctifying of an affliction. (2.) His prayers are accepted, God will be favourable to him, and be well-pleased with him, his anger shall be turned away from him, and the light of God's countenance shall shine upon his soul; and then it follows, (3.) That he has the comfort of communion with God; he shall now see the face of God, which before was hid from him, and he shall see it with joy, for what sight can be more reviving? See Gen. xxxiii. 10, As though I had seen the face of God. All true penitents rejoice more in the returns of God's favour, than in any instance whatsoever of prosperity or pleasure, Ps. iv. 6, 7. (4.) He has a blessed tranquillity of mind, arising from the sense of his justification before God, who will render unto this man his righteousness. He shall receive the atonement, that is, the comfort of it, Rom. v. 11. Righteousness shall be imputed to him, and peace, thereupon, spoken, the joy and gladness of which he shall then be made to hear, though he could not hear it in the day of his affliction. God will now deal with him as a righteous man, with whom it shall be well. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, even righteousness, Ps. xxiv. 5. God shall give him grace to go and sin no more. Perhaps this may bespeak the reformation of his life after his recovery. As he shall pray unto God, whom before he had slighted, so he shall render to man his righteousness, whom before he had wronged, shall make restitution, and for the future do justly.

V. The general rule which God will go by in dealing with the children of men, inferred from this instance, v. 27, 28. As sick people, upon their submission, are recovered, so all others that truly repent of their sins, shall find mercy with God. See here, I. What sin is, and what reason we have not to sin. Would we know the nature of sin, and the malignity of it? It is the perverting of that which is right; it is a most unjust, unreasonable, thing, it is the rebellion of the creature against the Creator, the nsurped dominion of the flesh over the spirit, and a contradiction to the eternal rules and reasons of good and evil. It is herverting the right ways of the Lord; (Acts xiii. 10.) and therefore the ways of sin are called erooked ways, Ps. cxxv. 5. Would we know what is to be got by sin? It profiteth us not. The works of darkness are unfruitful works; when

profit and loss come to be balanced, all the gains of sin, put them all together, will come far short of countervailing the damage. All true penitents are ready to own this; and it is a mortifying consideration, (Rom. vi. 21.) What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? 2. See what repentance is, and what reason we have to repent. Would we approve ourselves true penitents? We must then, with a broken and contrite heart, confess our sins to God, 1 John i. 9. We must confess the fact of sin, (I have sinned,) and not deny the charge, or stand upon our own justification: we must confess the fault of sin, the iniquity, the dishonesty of it; I have perverted that which was right: we must confess the folly of sin; "So foolish have I been and ignorant, for it profited me not; and therefore what have I to do any more with it?" Is there not good reason why we should make such a penitent confession as this? For, (1.) God expects it. He looks upon men, when they have sinned, to see what they will do next, whether they will go on in it, or whether they will bethink themselves, and return. He hearkens and hears whether any say, What have I done? Jer. viii. 6. He looks upon sinners with an eye of compassion, desiring to hear this from them, for he has no pleasure in their ruin. He looks upon them, and, as soon as he perceives these workings of repentance in them, he encourages them, and is ready to accept them, (Ps. xxxii. 5, 6.) as the father went forth to meet the returning prodigal. (2.) It will turn to our unspeakable advantage. The promise is general; If any humble themselves thus, whoever they are, [1.] They shall not come into condemnation, but be saved from the wrath to come; He shall deliver his soul from going into the pit, the pit of hell; iniquity shall not be his ruin. [2.] They shall be happy in everlasting life and joy; his life shall see the light, that is, all good, in the vision and fruition of God. To obtain this bliss, if the prophet had bid us do some great thing, would we not have done it? How much more, when he only says unto us, Wash and be clean; Confess and be pardoned, Repent and be saved?

29. Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, 30. To bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living. 31. Mark well, O Job; hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I will speak. 32. If thou hast any thing to say, answer me: speak; for I desire to justify thee. 33. If not, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom.

We have here the conclusion of this first part of Elihu's discourse, in which,

1. He briefly sums up what he had said, showing that God's great and gracious design, in all the dispensations of his providence toward the children of men, is, to save them from being for ever miserable, and bring them to be for ever happy; v. 29, 30. All these things God is working with the children of men; he deals with them by conscience, by providences, by ministers, by mercies, by afflictions; he makes them sick, and makes them well again; all these are his operations; he has set the one over against the other, (Eccl. vii. 14.) but his hand is in all; it is he that performs all things for us. All providences are to be looked upon as God's workings with man, his strivings with him. He uses a variety of methods to do men good; if one affliction do not do the work, he will try another; if neither do, he will try a mercy; and he will send a messenger to interpret both. He often works such things as these, twice, thrice; so it is in the original, referring to

v. 14. He speaks once, yea twice; if that prevail not, | he works twice, yea thrice; he changes his method, (We have piped, we have mourned,) returns again to the same method, repeats the same applications. Why does he take all this pains with man? it is to bring back his soul from the fit, v. 30. If God did not take more care of us than we do of ourselves, we were miserable; we would destroy ourselves, but he would have us saved, and devises means, by his grace, to undo that by which we were andoing ourselves. The former method, by dream and vision, was, to keep back the soul from the pit, (v. 18.) that is, to prevent sin, that we might not fall into it. This, by sickness and the word, is, to bring back the soul, to recover those that have fallen into sin, that they may not lie still and perish in it. With respect to all that by repentance are brought back from the pit, it is, that they may be enlightened with the light of the living, that they may have present comfort and everlasting happi-Whom God saves from sin and hell, which are darkness, he will bring to heaven, the inheritance of the saints in light; and this he aims at, in all his institutions, and all his dispensations. Lord, what is man, that thou shouldest thus visit him! This should engage us to comply with God's designs, to work with him for our own good, and not to counter-work him. This will render those that perish for ever inexcusable, that so much was done to save them, and they would not be healed.

2. He bespeaks Job's acceptance of what he had offered, and begs of him to mark it well, v. 31. What is intended for our good, challenges our regard. If Job will observe what is said, (1.) He is welcome to make what objections he can against it; (v. 32.) " If thou hast any thing to say for thyself in thine own vindication, answer me; though I am fresh, and thou art spent, I will not run thee down with words; Speak, for I desire to justify thee, and am not as thy other friends, that desired to condemn thee." Elihu contends for truth, not, as they did, for victory. Note, those we reprove, we should desire to justify, and be glad to see them clear themselves from the imputations they lie under, and therefore give them all possible advantage and encouragement to do it. (2.) If he has nothing to say against what is said, Elihu lets him know that he has something more to say, which he desires him patiently to attend to; (v. 33.) Hold thy fieace, and I will teach thee wisdom. Those that would both show wisdom and learn wisdom, must hearken and keep silence, be swift to hear and slow to speak. Jb was wise and good; but those that are so, may yet be wiser and better, and must therefore set themselves to improve by the means of wisdom and grace.

CHAP. XXXIV.

Elihu, it is likely, paused a while, to see if Job had any thing to say against his discourse in the foregoing chapter; but he sitting silent, and, it is likely, intimating his desire that he would go on, he here proceeds. And, I. He bespeaks not only the audience, but the assistance, of the company, v. 2. 4. II. He charges Job with some more indecent expressions that had dropped from him, v. 5..9. III. He undertakes to convince him that he v. 5.. 9. III. He undertakes to convince him that he had spoken amiss, by showing very fully, 1. God's incontestible justice, v. 10.. 12, 17, 19, 23. 2. His sovereign dominion, v. 13.. 15. 3. His almighty power, v. 20, 24. 4. His omniscience, v. 21, 22, 25. 5. His severity against sinners, v. 26.. 28. 6. His over-ruling providence, v. 29, 30 IV. He teaches him what he should say, v. 31, 32. And then, lastly, he leaves the matter to Job's own conscience, and concludes with a sharp reproof of him, for his peevishness and discontent, v. 33.. 37. All this Job not only bore patiently, but took kindly, because he saw that Elihn meant well; and, whereas his other friends had accused him of that from whereas his other friends had accused him of that from Vol. 111.—U

him with that only for which, it is probable, his own heart, now upon the reflection, began to smite him.

1. FURTHERMORE, Elihu answered and said, 2. Hear my words, O ye wise men; and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge: 3. For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat. 4. Let us choose to us judgment: let us know among ourselves what is good. 5. For Job hath said, I am righteous: and God hath taken away my judgment. 6. Should I lie against my right? my wound is incurable without transgression. 7. What man is like Job, who drinketh up scorning like water; 8. Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walketh with wicked men? 9. For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God.

Here,

I. Elihu humbly addresses himself to the auditors, and endeavours, like an orator, to gain their good will, and their favourable attention. 1. He calls them wise men, and men that had knowledge, v. 2. It is comfortable dealing with such as understand sense; I speak as to wise men, who can judge what I say, 1 Cor. x. 15. Elihu differed in opinion from them, and yet he calls them wise and knowing Peevish disputants think all fools that are not of their mind; but it is justice to those who are wise to acknowledge it, though our sentiments do not agree with theirs. 2. He appeals to their judgment, and therefore submits to their trial, v. 3. The ear of the judicious tries words, whether what is said be true or false, right or wrong, and he that speaks must stand the test of the intelligent. As we must prove all things we hear, so we must be willing that what we speak should be proved. 3. He takes them into partnership with him in the examination and discussion of this matter, v. 4. He does not pretend to be sole dietator, nor undertake to say what is just and good, and what is not, but he is willing to join with them in searching it out, and desires a consultation; "Let us agree to lay aside all animosities and feuds, all prejudices and affectation of contradiction, and all stiffness in adhering to the opinion we have once espoused, and let us choose to ourselves judgment; let us fix right principles on which to proceed, and then take right methods for finding out truth; and let us know among ourselves, by comparing notes, and communicating our reasons, what is good and what is otherwise." Note, We are then likely to discern what is right, when we agree to assist one another in searching it out.

II. He warmly accuses Job for some passionate words which he had spoken, that reflected on the divine government, appealing to the house, whether he ought not to be called to the bar, and checked for them.

1. He recites the words which Job had spoken. as near as he can remember. (1.) He had insisted upon his own innocency; Job hath said, I am righteous, (v. 5.) and, when urged to confess his guilt, has stiffly maintained his plea of Not guilty. Should I lie against my right? v. 6. Job had spoken to this purport; (ch. xxvii. 6.) My righteousness I hold fast. (2.) He had charged God with injustice in his dealings with him, that he had wronged him in afflicting him, and had not righted him; God had which his own conscience acquitted him, Elihu charged taken away my judgment; so Job had said, ch.

xxvii. 2. (3.) He had despaired of relief, and concluded that God could not, or would not, help him; My wound is incurable, and likely to be mortal, and yet without transgression; not for any injustice in my hand, ch. xvi. 16, 17. (4.) He had, in effect, said, that there is nothing to be got in the service of God, and that no man will be the better, at last, for his religion; (v. 9.) He hath said that which gives occasion to suspect that he thinks, It profiteth a man nothing, that he shall delight himself with God. It is granted that there is a present pleasure in religion; for what is it but to delight ourselves with God, in communion with him, in concurrence with him, in walking with him as Enoch did; this is a true notion of religion, and bespeaks its ways to be pleasantness. Yet the advantage of it is denied, as if it were vain to serve God, Mal. iii. 14. This Elihu gathers as Job's opinion, by an innuendo from what he said; (ch. ix. 22.) He destroys the perfect and the wicked, which has a truth in it, (for all things come alike to all,) but it was ill-expressed, and gave too much occasion for this imputation, and therefore Job sat down silent under it, and attempted not his own vindication; whence Mr. Caryl well observes, That good men sometimes speak worse than they mean; and that a good man will rather bear more blame than he deserves, than stand to excuse himself when he has deserved any

2. He charges Job very high upon it. In general, What man is like Job? (v. 7.) "Did you ever know such a man as Job, or ever hear a man talk at such an extravagant rate?" He represents him, (1.) As sitting in the seat of the scornful; "He drinketh up scorning like water," that is, "he takes a great deal of liberty to reproach both God and his friends, takes a pleasure in it, and is very liberal in his reflections." Or, "He is very greedy in receiving and hearkening to the scorns and contempts which others cast upon their brethren, is well pleased with them, and extols them." some explain it, "By these foolish expressions of his he makes himself the object of scorn, lays himself very open to reproach, and gives occasion to others to laugh at him; while his religion suffers by it, and the reputation of that is wounded through his side." We have need to pray that God will never leave us to ourselves, to say or do any thing which may make us a reproach to the foolish, Ps. xxxix. 8. (2.) As walking in the course of the ungodly, and standing in the way of sinners; He goes in company with the workers of iniquity; (v. 8.) not that in his conversation he did associate with them, but, in his opinion he did favour and countenance them, and strengthen their hands. (as i follows, v. 9. for the proof of this) it profits a man nothing to delight himself in God, why should he not lay the reins on the neck of his lusts, and herd himself with the workers of iniquity? He that says, I have cleansed my hands in vain, does not only offend against the generation of God's children, (Ps. lxxiii. 13, 14.) but gratifies his enemics, and says as they say.

10. Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding: Far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity. 11. For the work of a man shall be render unto hun, and cause every man to find according to his ways. 12. Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment. 13. Who hath given him a charge over the earth? 2 who hath dis-

posed the whole world? 14. If he set his heart upon man, if he gather upto himself his spirit and his breath; 15. Alt flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust.

The scope of Elihu's discourse is to reconcile Joh to his afflictions, and to pacify his spirit under them In order to this, he had showed, in the foregoing chapter, that God meant him no hurt in afflicting him, but intended it for his spiritual benefit. In this chapter, he shows that he did him no wrong in afflicting him, nor punished him more than he deserved. If the former could not prevail to satisfy him, yet this ought to silence him. In these verses, he directs his discourse to all the company; "Hearken to me, ye men of understanding, (v. 10.) and show yeurselves to be intelligent, by assenting to this which I say." And this is that which he says, That the righteous God never did, nor ever will, do any wrong to any of his creatures, but his ways are equal, curs are unequal.

The truth here maintained respects the justice and equity of all God's proceedings. Now observe

in these verses,

I. How plainly this truth is laid down, both negatively and positively. 1. He does wrong to none; God cannot do wickedness, nor the Almighty com mit iniquity, v. 10. It is inconsistent with the perfection of his nature, and so it is also with the purity of his will; (v. 12.) God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment. He nei-ther can, nor will, do a wrong thing, nor deal hardly with any man. He will never inflict the evil of punishment, but where he finds the evil of sin, nor in any undue proportion, for that would be to commit iniquity and do wickedly. If appeals be made to him, or he be to give a definitive senten co he will have an eye to the merits of the cause, and not respect the person, for that were to pervert judgment. He will never either do any man wrong, or deny any man right, but the heavens will shortly declare his righteousness. Because he is God, and therefore is infinitely perfect and holy, he can nei-ther do wrong himself, nor countenance it in others, any more than he can either die, or lie, or deny himself. Though he be Almighty, yet he never uses his power, as mighty men often do, for the support of injustice. He is Shaddai, God all-sufficient, and therefore he cannot be tempted with evil, (James i. 13.) to do an unrighteous thing. He ministers justice to all; (v. 11.) The work of a man shall he render unto him. Good works shall be rewarded, and evil works either punished or satisfied for; so that, sooner or later, in this world or in that to come, he will cause every man to find according to his ways. This is the standing rule of distributive justice, to give to every man according to his work; Say to the righteous, it shall be well with them; Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him. If services persevered in now go unrewarded, and sins persisted in now go unpunished, yet there is a day coming, when God will fully render to every man according to his works, with interest for the delay.

II. How warmly it is asserted; 1. With an assurance of the truth of it; Yea, surely, v. 12. It is a truth which none can deny or call in question, it is what we may take for granted, and are all agreed in, That God will not do wickedly. 2. With an abhorrence of the very thought of the contrary; (v. 10.) Fur be it from God, that he should do wickedness, and from us, that we should imagic e such a thing, that we should entertain the least suspicion of t, or say any thing that looks like charging him

III. How evidently it is proved by two arguments. 1. His independent absolute sovereignty and dominion; (v. 13.) Who has given him a charge over the earth, and deputed him to manage the affairs of men upon the earth? Or, Who besides has disprsed the whole world of mankind? He has the sole administration of the kingdoms of men, and has it of himself, nor is he intrusted with it by, or for, any other. (1.) It is certain that the government is his, and he does according to his will in all the hosts both of heaven and earth; and therefore he is not to be charged with injustice; for shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Gen. xviii. 25. How shall God either rule or judge the world, if there be, or could be, any unrighteousness with him? Rom. iii. 5, 6. He that is entitled to such unlimited power must certainly have in himself unspotted purity. This is also a good reason why we should acquiesce in all God's dealings with us. Shall not he, that disposes of the whole world, dispose of us and our concerns? (2.) It is as certain that he does not derive his power from any; nor is it a dispensation that is committed to him, but his power is original, and, like his being, of himself; and therefore, if he were not perfectly just, all the world and the affairs of it would soon be in the utmost confusion. The highest powers on earth have a God above them, to whom they are accountable, because it is not far from them to do iniquity. But therefore God has none above him, because it is not possible that he should do any thing (such is the perfection of his nature) that should need to be controlled. he be an absolute Sovereign, we are bound to submit to him, for there is no higher power to which we may appeal, so that the virtue is a necessity.

2. His irresistible power; (v. 14.) If he set his heart upon man, to contend with him, much more if (as some read it) he set his heart against man, to ruin him, if he should deal with man either by summa potestas-mere sovereignty, or by summa jus-strict justice, there were no standing before him; man's spirit and breath would soon be gone, and all flesh would fierish together, v. 15. Many men's honesty is owing purely to their impotency; they do not do wrong, because they cannot support it when it is done, or it is not in their power to do it. But God is able to crush any man easily and suddenly, and yet does not by arbitrary power crush any man, which therefore must be attributed to the infinite perfection of his nature, and that is immutable. See here, (1.) What God can do with us; he can soon bring us to dust; there needs not any positive act of his omnipotence to do it, if he do but withdraw that concurrence of his providence, by which we live, if he gather unto himself that breath which was from his hand at first, and is still in his hand, we expire immediately, like an animal in an air-pump, when the air is exhausted. (2.) What he may do with us, without doing us any wrong; he may recall the being he gave, of which we are but tenants at will, and which also we have forfeited; and therefore, as long as that is continued of his mere favour, we have no reason to cry out of wrong, whatever other comforts are removed.

16. If now thou hast understanding, hear this; hearken to the voice of my words: 17. Shall even he that hateth right govern? and wilt thou condemn him that is most just? 18. Is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked? and to princes, Ye are ungodly? 19. How much less to him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor? for

they all *are* the work of his hands. a moment shall they die, and the people shall be troubled at midnight, and pass away: and the mighty shall be taken away without hand. 21. For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. 22. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. 23. For he will not lay upon man more than right, that he should enter into judgment with God. 24. He shall break in pieces mighty men without number, and set others in their stead. Therefore he knoweth their works, and he overturneth them in the night, so that they are destroyed. 26. He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others; 27. Because they turned back from him, and would not consider any of his ways: 28. So that they cause the cry of the poor to come unto him, and he heareth the cry of the afflicted. 29. When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only: 30. That the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared.

Elihu here applies himself more directly to Job. He had spoken to the rest, (v. 10.) as men of understanding; now, speaking to Job, he puts an if upon his understanding; If thou hast understand-

ing, hear this, and observe it, v. 16.

1. Hear this, That God is not to be quarrelled with for any thing that he does. It is daring presumption to arraign and condemn God's proceedings, as Job had done by his discontents. It was, 1. As absurd as it would be to advance one to power, that is a professed enemy to justice; Shall even he that hates right, govern? v. 17. The righteous Lord so loves righteousness, that, in comparison with him, even Job himself, though a perfect and upright man, might be said to hate right; and shall he govern? Shall he pretend to direct God, or correct what he does? Shall such unrighteous creatures as we are, give law to the righteons God? Or, must he take his measures from us? When we consider the corruption of our nature, and the contrariety there is in us to the eternal rule of equity, we cannot but see it an impudent, impious, thing for us to prescribe to God. 2. It was as absurd as it would be to call a most righteous innocent person to the bar, and to give judgment against him, though it appeared ever so plain, upon the trial, that he was most just. Wilt thou condemn him that is righteous in all his ways, and cannot but be so? 3. It is more absurd and unbecoming than it would be to say to a sovereign prince, Thou art wicked, and to judges upon the bench, Ye are ungodly, v. 18. This would be looked upon as an insufferable affront to majesty and to magistracy; no king, no prince, would bear it. In favour of government, we presume it is a right sentence that is passed, unless the contrary be very evident; but, whatever we think, it is not fit to tell a king to his face that he is wicked. Nathan reproved David by a parable. But, whatever a high priest or a prophet might do, it is not for an ordinary subject to make so bold with the powers

To impute iniquity to him, who, having no respect of persons, is in no temptation to do an unjust thing! v. 19, He regardeth not the rich more than the poor, and therefore it is fit he should rule, and it is not fit we should find fault with him. Note, Rich and poor stand upon the same level before God. great man shall fare never the better, nor find any favour, for his wealth and greatness; nor shall a poor man fare 'ever the worse for his poverty, nor an honest cause be starved. Job, now that he was poor, should have as much favour with God, and be as much regarded by him, as when he was rich; for they all are the work of his hands. Their persons are so; the poor are made by the same hand, and of the same mould, as the rich. Their conditions are so; the poor were made poor by the Divine Providence, as well as the rich made rich; and therefore the poor shall fare never the worse for that which is their lot, not their fault.

II. Hear this, That God is to be acknowledged and submitted to in all that he does. Divers considerations Elihu here suggests to Job, to beget in him great and high thoughts of God, and so to persuade him to submit, and proceed no further in his

quarrel with him.

1. God is almighty, and able to deal with the strongest of men when he enters into judgment with them; (v. 20.) even the people, the body of a nation, though ever so numerous, shall be troubled, unhinged, and put into disorder, when God pleases; even the mighty man, the prince, though ever so honourable, ever so formidable among men, shall, if God speak the word, be taken away out of his throne, nay, out of the land of the living; they shall die, they shall pass away. What cannot He do, that has all the powers of death at his command? Observe the suddenness of this destruction; In a moment shall they die. It is not a work of time, with God, to bring down his proud enemies, but, when he pleases, it is soon done; nor is he bound to give them warning, no, not an hour's warning; This night thy soul shall be required. Observe the season of it; They shall be troubled at midnight, when they are secure and careless, and unable to help themselves; as the Egyptians, when their first-born were slain. This is the immediate work of God: they are taken away, without hand, insensibly, by secret judgments. God can himself humble the greatest tyrant, without the assistance or agency of any man. Whatever hand he sometimes uses in the accomplishing of his purposes, he needs none, but can do it without hand. Nor is it one single mighty man only that he can thus overpower, but even hosts of them; (v. 24.) He shall break in frieces mighty men without number; for no combined power can stand it out against Omnipotence. Yet, when God destroys tyranny, he does not design anarchy; if those are brought down that ruled ill, it does not therefore follow that people must have no rulers; for, when he breaks mighty men, he sets others in their stead, that will rule better; or, if they do not, he overturns them also in the night, or in a night, so that they are destroyed, v. 25. Witness Belshazzar. Or, if he designs them space to repent, he does not presently destroy them, but he strikes them as wicked men, v. 26. Some humbling, mortifying, judgments are brought upon them; these wicked rulers are stricken as other wicked men; as surely, as sorely, stricken in their bodies, estates, or families, and this, for warning to their neighbours; the stroke is given in terroremas an alarm to others, and therefore is given in the open sight of others, that they also may see, and fear, and tremble, before the justice of God. kings stand not before him, how shall we stand!

that are. How absurd is it then to say so to God! || which is most secret. As the strongest cannot oppose his arm, so the most subtle cannot escape his eye: and therefore, if some are punished, either more or less than we think they should be, instead of quarrelling with God, it becomes us to ascribe it to some secret cause known to God, only. For, (1.) Every thing is open before him; (v. 21.) His eyes are upon the ways of man: not only they are within reach of his eye, so that he can see them, but his eye is upon them, so that he actually observes and inspects them; he sees us all, and sees all our goings; go whither we will, we are under his eye; all our actions, good and evil, are regarded and recorded, and reserved to be brought into judgment when the books shall be opened. (2.) Nothing is or can be concealed from him; (v. 22.) There is no darkness nor shadow of death, so close, so thick, so solitary, so remote from light or sight, as that in it the workers of iniquity may hide themselves from the discovering eye, and avenging hand, of the righteous God. Observe here, [1.] The workers of iniquity would hide themselves, if they could, from the eye of the world for shame, and from the eye of God for fear, as Adam among the trees of the garden; the day is coming when mighty men, and chief captains, will call to the rocks and mountains to hide them. [2.] They would gladly be hid even by the shadow of death, be hid in the grave, and die for ever there, rather than appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. (3.) It is in vain to think of flying from God's justice, or absconding, when his wrath is in pursuit of us. The workers of iniquity may find ways and means to hide themselves from men, but not from God; He knows their works, (v. 25.) both what they do, and

what they design.

3. God is righteous, and, in all his proceedings, goes according to the rules of equity. Even then when he is overturning mighty men, and breaking them in pieces, yet he will not lay upon man more than right, v. 23. As he will not punish the innocent, so he will not exact of those that are guilty more than their iniquities deserve; of the proportion between the sin and the punishment Infinite Wisdom shall be the Judge. He will not give any man cause to complain that he deals hardly with him, nor shall any man enter into judgment with God, or bring an action against him. If he do, God will be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges. Therefore Job was very much to be blamed for his complaints of God, and is here well advised to let fall his action, for he would certainly be cast, or non-suited. It is not for man ever to furfiose to enter into judgment with the Omnifiotent; so some read the whole verse. Job had often wished to plead his cause before God. Elihu asks, "To what purpose? The judgment already given concerning thee will certainly be affirmed; no errors can be found in it, nor any exceptions taken to it, but, after all, it must rest as it is." All is well that God does,

and will be found so.

To prove, that, when God destroys the mighty men, and strikes them as wicked men, he does not lay upon them more than right, he shows what their wickedness was; (v. 27, 28.) and let any compere that with their punishment, and then judge whether they did not deserve it. In short, these unjust judges, whom God will justly judge, neither feared God, nor regarded man, Luke xviii. 2. (1.) They were rebels to God; they turned back from him, cast off the fear of him, and abandoned the very thoughts of him, for they would not consider any of his ways, took no heed either to his precepts or to his providences, but lived without God in the world. This is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked, they turn back from God; and it is God is omniscient, and can discover that || because they do not consider, not because they cancall upon God for themselves; but they cause the cry of the poor to come to him, and that cry is against them. They are injurious and oppressive to the poor, wrong them, crush them, impoverish them yet more, and add affliction to the afflicted, who cry unto God, make their complaint to him, and he hears them, and pleads their cause. case is bad who have the prayers and tears of the poor against them; for the cry of the oppressed will, sooner or later, draw down vengeance on the heads of the oppressors, and no one can say that this is more than right, Exod. xxii. 23.

4. God has an uncontrollable dominion in all the affairs of the children of men, and so guides and governs whatever concerns both communities and particular persons, that, as what he designs cannot be defeated, so what he does cannot be changed, v. 29. Observe, (1.) The frowns of all the world cannot trouble those whom God quiets with his smiles. When he gives quietness, who can then make trouble? This is a challenge to all the powers of hell and earth, to disquiet those to whom God speaks peace, and for whom he creates it. If God give outward peace to a nation, he can secure what he gives, and disable the enemies of it to give it any disturbance. If God give inward peace to a man only, the quietness and everlasting assurance which are the effect of righteousness, neither the accusations of Satan, nor the afflictions of this present time, no, nor the arrests of death itself, can give trouble. What can make them uneasy, whose souls dwell at ease in God? See Phil. iv. 7. (2.) The smiles of all the world cannot quiet those whom God troubles with his frowns: for if he, in displeasure, hide his face, and withhold the comfort of his favour, who then can behold him? that is, Who can behold a displeased God, so as to bear up under his wrath, or turn it away? Who can make him show his face when he resolves to hide it, or see through the clouds and darkness which are round about him? Or, Who can behold a disquieted sinner, so as to give him effectual relief? Who can stand a friend to him to whom God is an Enemy? None can relieve the distresses of the outward condition, without God; If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I? 2 Kings vi. 27. Nor can any relieve the distresses of the mind against God and his terrors. If he impress the sense of his wrath upon a guilty conscience, all the comforts the creature can administer are ineffectual: As vinegar unton nitre, so are songs to a heavy heart. The irresistibleness of God's operations must be acknowledged in his dealings, both with communities and with particular persons: what he does cannot be controlled, whether it be done against a nation in its public capacity, or against a man only in his private affairs. The same Providence that governs mighty kingdoms, presides in the concerns of the meanest individual. And neither the strength of a whole nation can resist his power, nor the smallness of a single person evade his cognizance; but what he does shall be done effectually and victoriously.

5. God is wise, and careful of the public welfare, and therefore provides that the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared, v. 30. See here, (1.) The pride of hypocrites; they aim to reign; the praise of men, and power in the world, are their reward, what they aim at. (2.) The policy of tyrants; when they aim to set up themselves, they sometimes make use of religion as a cloak and cover

not; they will not. From inconsideration comes hands of dissemblers, is often destructive to the impiety, and thence all immorality. (2.) They will not more easily wheedled out of, than forced out of. Much mischief has been done likewise to the power of godliness, under the pretence of a form of godliness. (4.) The care which Divine Providence takes of the people, to prevent this danger, that the hypocrite reign not; either that he do not reign at all, or that he do not reign long. If God has mercy in store for a people, he will either prevent the rise, or hasten the ruin, of hypocritical

> 31. Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne *chastisement*, I will not offend any more: 32. That which I see not, teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more. 33. Should it be according to thy mind? he will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose; and not I: therefore speak what thou knowest. Let men of understanding tell me, and let a wise man hearken unto me. 35. Job hath spoken without knowledge, and his words were without wisdom. 36. My desire is, that Job may be tried unto the end, because of his answers for wicked men. 37. For he addeth rebellion unto his sin; he clappeth his hands among us, and multiplieth his words against God.

In these verses,

I. Elihu instructs Job what he should say under his affliction, ν . 31, 32. Having reproved him for his peevish passionate words, here he puts better words into his mouth. When we reprove for what is amiss, we must direct to what is good; to the reproofs of instruction, Prov. vi. 23. He does not impose it upon Job to use these words, but recommends it to him, as that which was meet to be said. In general, he would have him repent of his misconduct, and indecent expressions, under his affliction. Job's other friends would have had him own himself a wicked man, and by overdoing they undid. Elihu will oblige him only to own that he had, in the management of this controversy, spoken unadvisedly with his lifts. Let us remember this, in giving reproofs, and not make the matter worse than it is; for the stretching of the crime may defeat the prosecution. Elihu drives the right nail, and speeds accordingly. He directs Job,

1. To humble himself before God for his sins,

and to accept the punishment of them; "I have borne chastisement. What I suffer comes justly upon me, and therefore I will bear it, and not only justify God in it, but acknowledge his goodness. Many are chastised, that do not bear chastisement, do not bear it well, and so, in effect, do not bear it at all. Penitents, if sincere, will take all well that God does, and will bear chastisement as a medicinal

operation intended for good.

2. To pray to God to discover his sins to him; (v. 32.) "That which I see not, teach thou me. Lord, upon the review, I find much amiss in me, and much done amiss by me, but I have reason to fear there is much more that I am not aware of; greater abominations, which, through ignorance, mistake, and partiality to myself, I do not yet see; Lord, give me to see it, awaken my conscience to do its office faithfully." A good man is willing to know the worst of himself, and particularly, under affliction, desires to be told wherefore God contends for their ambition, and by their hypocrisy come to the theorem of the theorem of

3. To promise reformation; (v. 31.) I will not offend any more. "If I have done iniquity, (or, Seeing I have,) I will do so no more; whatever thou shall discover to me to have been amiss, by thy grace I will amend it for the future." This implies a confession that we have offended, true remorse and godly sorrow for the offence, and a humble compliance with God's design in afflicting us, which is to part between us and our sins. The penitent here completes his repentance; for it is not enough to be sorry for our sins, but we must go and sin no more, and, as here, bind ourselves with the bond of a fixed resolution never more to return to folly. This is meet to be said to God in a solemn promise and vow.

II. He reasons with him concerning his discontent and uneasiness under his affliction, v. 33. We are ready to think every thing that concerns us should be just as we would have it; but Elihu here shows, 1. That it is absurd and unreasonable to expect it; "Should it be according to thy mind? No, what reason for that?" Elihu here speaks with a great deference to the divine will and wisdom, and a satisfaction therein. It is highly fit that every thing should be according to God's mind. Elihu speaks also with a just disdain of the pretensions of those that are proud, and would be their own earvers; Should it be according to thy mind? Should we alwavs have the good we have a mind to enjoy? We should then wrongfully encroach upon others, and foolishly ensuare ourselves. Must we never be afflicted, because we have no mind to it? Is it fit that sinners should feel no smart, that scholars should be under no discipline? Or, if we must be afflicted, is it fit that we should choose what rod we will be beaten with? No, it is fit that every thing should be according to God's mind, and not ours, for he is the Creator, and we are creatures; he is infinitely wise and knowing, we are foolish and short-sighted; he is in one mind, we are in many. 2. That it is in vain, and to no purpose, to expect it; "He will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose. God will take his own way, fulfil his own counsel, and recompense according to the sentence of his own justice, whether thou art pleased or displeased; he will neither ask thy leave, nor ask thy advice, but, what he pleases, that will he do; it is therefore thy wisdom to be easy, and make a virtue of necessity; make the best of that which is, because it is out of thy power to make it otherwise. If thou pretend to choose and refuse," that is, "to prescribe to God, and except against what he does, so will not I, I will acquiesce in all he does; and therefore speak what thou knowest, say what thou wilt do, whether thou wilt oppose or submit. The matter lies plain before thee; be at a point; thou art in God's hand, not in mine."

III. He appeals to all intelligent, indifferent, persons, whether there was not a great deal of sin and folly in that which Job said. I. He would have the matter thoroughly examined, and brought to an issue; (v. 36.) "My desire is that Job may be tried unto the end. If any will undertake to justify what he has said, let them do it; if not, let us all agree to bear our testimony against it." Many understand it of his trial by afflictions; "Let his troubles be continued till he be thoroughly humbled, and his proud spirit brought down, till he be made to see his error, and to retract what he has so presumptuously said against God and his providence. Let the trial be continued till the end be obtained." 2. He appeals both to God and man, and desires the judgment of both upon it. (1.) Some read v. 36. as to appe d to God, O my Father, let Job be tried. So the marg'n of our Bibles, for the same word signifies my desire, and my father; and some suppose

ing, "O my Father which art in heaven, let Job be tried till he be subdued." When we are praying for the benefit of afflictions either to ourselves or others, we must eye God as a Father, because they are fatherly corrections, and a part of our filial education, Heb. xii. 7. (2.) He appeals to the by-standers; (v. 34.) "Let men of understanding tell me, whether they can put any more favourable construction upon Job's words than I have put, and whether he had not spoken very ill, and ought not to cry *Peccavi—I have done wrong*." In what Job had said, he thought it appeared, [1.] That he did not rightly understand himself, but had talked foolishly, v. 35. He cannot say that Job is without knowledge and wisdom; but, in this matter, he has spoken without knowledge, and, whatever his heart is, his words are without prudence. What he said to his wife, may be retorted upon himself, (He speaks as one of the foolish men speak,) and for the same reason, Shall we not receive evil as well as good, at God's hand? ch. ii. 10. Sometimes we need and deserve those reproofs ourselves, which we have given to others. Those that reproach God's wisdom, really reproach their own. [2.] That he has not a due regard to God, but had talked wickedly. If what he has said be tried to the end, that is, if one put it to the utmost stretch, and make the worst of it, it will be found, *First*, That he has taken part with God's enemies. His anwers have been for wicked men, that is, what he had said, tends to strengthen the hands, and harden the hearts, of wicked people in their wickedness, he having carried the matter of their prosperity much further than he needed. Let wicked men, like Baal, plead for themselves, if they will, but far be it from us that we should answer for them, or say any thing in favour of them. Secondly, That he has insulted God's friends, and hectored over them; "He clapheth his hands among us; and if he be not thoroughly tried and humbled, will grow yet more insolent and imperious, as if he had gotten the day, and silenced us all." To speak ill is bad enough, but to clap our hands, and triumph in it when we have done, as if error and passion had won the victory, is much worse. Thirdly, That he has spoken against God himself, and, by standing to what he had said, added rebellion to his sin. To speak, though but one word, against God, by whom we speak, and for whom we ought to speak, is a great sin; what is it then to multiply words against him, as if we would out-talk him? What is it to repeat them, instead of unsaying them? Those that have sinned, and, when they are called to repent, thus go on frowardly, add rebellion to their sin, and make it exceeding sinful. Errare possum, hæreticus esse nolo—I may fall into error, but I will not flunge into heresy.

CHAP. XXXV.

Job being still silent, Elihu follows his blow, and here, a third time, undertakes to show him that he had spoken amiss, and ought to recent. Three improper savings he here charges him with, and returns answer to thein distinctly.

I. He had represented religion as an indifferent, unprofitable thing, which God enjoins for his own sake, not fur ours; Elihu evinces the contrary, v. 1...8. II. He had complained of God as deaf to the cries of the oppressed, against which imputation Elihu here justifies God, v. 9..13. HI. He had despaired of the return of God's favour to him, because it was so long deferred, but Elihu shows him the true cause of the delay, v. 14..16.

1. LIHU spake moreover, and said, 2. Thinkest thou this to be right, that thou saidst, My righteousness is more than God's? 3. For thou saidst, What advantage

will it be unto thee ? and, What profit shall] I have, if I be cleansed from my sin? 4. I will answer thee, and thy companions with thee. 5. Look unto the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds, which are higher than thou. 6. If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him? 7. If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? 8. Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the son of

We have here,

I. The bad words which Elihu charges upon Job, v. 2, 3. To evince the badness of them, he appeals to himself, and his own sober thoughts, in the reflection, Thinkest thou this to be right? This intimates, 1. Elihu's confidence that the reproof he now gave was just, for he could refer the judgment of it even to Job himself. They that have truth and equity on their side, sooner or later will have every man's conscience on their side. 2. His good opinion of Job, that he thought better than he spake, and that, yet, though he had spoken amiss, when he perceived his mistake, he would not stand to it. When we have said, in our haste, that which was not right, it becomes us to own that our second thoughts convince us that it was wrong.

Two things Elihu here reproves Job for;

(1.) For justifying himself more than God, which was the thing that first provoked him; (ch. xxxii. 2.) "Thou hast, in effect, said, My righteousness is more than God's," that is, "I have done more for God than ever he did for me; so that, when the accounts are balanced, he will be brought in Debtor to me. As if Job thought his services had been paid less than they deserved, and his sins punished more than they deserved; which is a most unjust and wicked thought for any man to harbour, and espe-cially to utter. When Job insisted so much upon his own integrity, and the severity of God's dealings with him, he did, in effect, say, My righteousness is more than God's; whereas, though we be ever so good, and our afflictions ever so great, we are chargeable with unrighteousness, and God is not.

(2.) For disowning the benefits and advantages of religion, because he suffers these things; What firefit shall I have if I be cleansed from my sin? v. 3. This is gathered from ch. ix. 30, 31, Though I make my hands ever so clean, what the nearer am I? Thou shalt plunge me in the ditch. And ch. x. 15, If I be wicked, woe to me; but if I be righteous, it is all one. The psalmist, when he compared his own afflictions with the prosperity of the wicked, was tempted to say, Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, Ps. lxxiii. 13. And if Job said so, he did, in effect, say. Mu righteousness is more than God's; (v. 2.) for if he got nothing by his religion, God was more beholden to him than he was to God. But though there might be some colour for it, yet it was not fair to charge these words upon Job, when he himself had made them the wicked words of prospering sinners, (ch. xxi. 15.) What profit shall we have, if we pray to him? and had immediately disclaimed them, (v. 16.) The counsel of the wicked is far from me. It is not a fair way of disputing, to charge men with those consequences of their opinions, which they expressly renounce.

II. The good answer which Elihu gives to this; (v. 4.) "I will undertake to answer thee, and thy

prove thy sayings, and are ready to justify thee in them; and all others that say as thou sayest: I have that to offer which will silence them all." To do this, he has recourse to his old maxim; (ch. xxxiii. 12.) That God is greater than man. That is a truth, which, if duly improved, will serve many good purposes, and this particularly, to prove that God is Debtor to no man. The greatest of men may be a debtor to the meanest, but such is the infinite disproportion between God and man, that the great God cannot possibly receive any benefit by man, and therefore cannot be supposed to lie under any obligation to man; for if he be obliged by his purpose and promise, it is only to himself. That is a challenge which no man can take up, (Rom. xi. 35.) Who hath first given to God, let him prove it, and it shall be recompensed to him again. Why should we demand it, as a just debt, to gain by our religion, (as Job seemed to do,) when the God we serve docs not gain by it?

1. Elihu needs not prove that God is above man; it is agreed by all; but he endeavours to affect Job and us with it, by an ocular demonstration of the height of the heavens and the clouds, v. 5. They are far above us, and God is far above them; how much then is he set out of the reach either of our sirs or of our services! Look unto the heavens, and behold the clouds. God made man erect, Calumque tueri jussit—And bade him look un to heaven. Ídolaters looked up, and worshipped the hosts of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars; but we must look up to heaven, and wership the Lord of those hosts. They are higher than we, but God is infinitely above them. His gloru is above the heavens, (Ps. viii. 1.) and the knowledge of him higher than heaven, ch. xi. 8.

2. But hence he infers that God is not affected, either one way or other, by any thing that we do.

(1.) He owns that men may be either bettered or damaged by what we do; (v. 8.) Thy wickedness, perhaps, may hurt a man as thou art, may occasion him trouble in his outward concerns. A wicked man may wound, or rob, or slander, his neighbour, or may draw him into sin, and so prejudice his soul. Thy righteousness, thy justice, thy charity, thy wisdom, thy piety, may, perhaps, profit the son of man; our goodness extends to the saints that are in the earth, Ps. xvi. 3. To men like ourselves, we are in a capacity either of doing injury, or of showing kindness. And in both these the sovereign Lord and Judge of all will interest himself, will reward those that do good, and punish those that do hurt, to their fellow-creatures and fellow-subjects; but,

(2.) He utterly denies that God can really be either prejudiced, or advantaged, by what any, even the greatest of all the men of the East, do, or can do.

[1.] The sins of the worst sinners are no damage to him; (v. 6.) "If thou sinnest wilfully, and of malice prepense, against him, with a high hand, nay, if thy transgressions be multiplied, and the acts of sin be ever so often repeated, yet what doest thou against him?" This is a challenge to the carnal mind, and defies the most daring sinner to do his worst. It speaks much for the greatness and glory of God, that it is not in the power of his worst enemies to do him any real prejudice. Sin is said to be against God, because so the sinner intends it, and so he takes it, and it is an injury to his honour; yet it cannot do any thing against him. The malice of sinners is impotent malice: it cannot destroy his being or perfections, cannot dethrone him from his power and dominion, cannot diminish his wealth and possessions, cannot disturb his peace and repose, cannot defeat his counsels and designs, nor can it derogate from his essential glory. Job therefore erred in saying, What profit is it that I am cleansed from my sin? God was no Gainer by his refercompanions with thee," that is, "all those that ap- | mation; who then would gain, if he himself did not

[2.] The services of the best saints are no profit [to him; (v. 7.) If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? He needs not our service; or, if he did want to have the work done, he has better hands than ours at command. Our religion brings no accession at all to his felicity. He is so far from being beholden to us, that we are beholden to him for making us righteous, and accepting our righteousness; and therefore we can demand nothing from him, nor have any reason to complain if we have not what we expect, but to be thankful that we have better than we deserve.

9. By reason of the multitude of oppressions they make the oppressed to cry; they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty: 10. But none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night; 11. Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven? 12. There they cry, but none giveth answer, because of the pride of evil men. 13. Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it.

Elihu here returns answer to another word that Job had said, which, he thought, reflected much upon the justice and goodness of God, and therefore ought not to pass without a remark. Observe,

I. What it was that Job complained of; it was this, That God did not regard the cries of the oppressed against their oppressors; (v. 9.) By reason of the multitude of oppressions, the many hardships which proud tyrants put upon poor people, and the barbarous usage they give them, they make the op-hressed to cry; but it is to no purpose, God does not appear to right them. They cry out, they cry on, by reason of the arm of the mighty, which lies heavy upon them. This seems to refer to those words of Job, (ch. xxiv. 12.) Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out against the oppressors, yet God lays not folly to them, does not reckon with them for it. This is a thing that Job knows not what to make of, nor how to reconcile to the justice of God and his government. Is there a righteous God, and can it be that he should so slowly hear, so slowly see?

II. How Elihu solves the difficulty: If the cries

of the oppressed be not heard, the fault is not in God, he is ready to hear and help them, but the fault is in themselves; they ask and have not, but it is because they ask amiss, James iv. 3. They cry out, by reason of the arm of the mighty, but it is a complaining cry, a wailing cry, not a penitent praying cry, the cry of nature and passion, not of grace. See Hos. vii. 14. They have not cried unto me with their heart when they howled upon their beds. How then can we expect that they should be answered

and relieved?

1. They do not inquire after God, nor seek to acquaint themselves with him, under their affliction; (v. 10.) But none saith, Where is God my Maker? Afflictions are sent to direct and quicken us to inquire early after God, Ps. Ixxviii. 34. But many, that groan under great oppressions, never mind God, nor take notice of his hand in their troubles; if they did, they would bear their troubles more patiently, and be more benefited by them. Of the many that are afflicted and oppressed, few get the good they might get by their affliction. It should drive them to God, but how seldom is this the case! It is lamentable to see so little religion among the poor and miserable part of mankind. Every one complains of his troubles; but none saith, Where is

God my Maker? that is, None repent of their sins. none return to him that smites them, none seek the face and favour of God, and that comfort in him which would balance their outward afflictions. They are wholly taken up with the wretchedness of their condition, as if that would excuse them in living without God in the world, which should engage them to cleave the more closely to him. serve, (1.) God is our Maker, the Author of cur being, and, under that notion, it concerns us to regard and remember him, Eccl. xii. 1. God my Makers, in the plural number; which some think is, if not an indication, yet an intimation, of the Trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead; Let us make man. (2.) It is our duty therefore to inquire after him. Where is he, that we may pay our homage to him, may own our dependence upon him, and obligations to him? Where is he, that we may apply ourselves to him for maintenance and protection, may receive law from him, and may seek our happiness in his favour, from whose power we received our being? (3.) It is to be lamented, that he is so little inquired after by the children of men. All are asking, Where is mirth? Where is wealth? Where is a good bargain? But none ask, Where is God my Maker?

2. They do not take notice of the mercies they enjoy in and under their afflictions, nor are thankful for them, and therefore cannot expect that God should deliver them out of their afflictions. He provides for our inward comfort and joy under our outward troubles, and we ought to make use of that, and wait his time for the removal of our trou-He gives songs in the night, that is, when our condition is ever so dark, and sad, and melancholy, there is that in Gcd, in his providence and promise, which is sufficient, not only to support us, but to fill us with joy and consolation, and enable us, in every thing, to give thanks, and even to rejoice in tribulation. When we only pore upon the afflictions we are under, and neglect the consolations of God which are treasured up for us, it is just with God to reject our prayers. (2.) He preserves to us the use of our reason and understanding; (v. 11.) who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth, that is, who has endued us with more noble powers and faculties than they are endued with, and has made us capable of more excellent pleasures and employments here and for ever. Now this comes in here, [1.] As that which furnishes us with matter for thanksgiving, even under the heaviest bur-then of affliction. Whatever we are deprived of, we have our immortal souls, those jewels, more worth than all the world, continued to us; even those that kill the body, cannot hurt them. And if our affliction prevail not to disturb the exercise of their faculties, but we enjoy the use of our reason, and the peace of our consciences, we have much reason to be thankful, how pressing seever our calamities otherwise are. [2.] As a reason why we should, under our afflictions, inquire after God our Maker, and seek unto him. This is the greatest excellency of reason, that it makes us capable of religion, and it is in that especially that we are taught more than the beasts and the fowls. They have wonderful instincts and sagacities in seeking out their food, their physic, their shelter; but none of them are capable of inquiring, Where is God my Maker? Something like logic, and philosophy, and politics, has been observed among the brute-creatures, but never any thing of divinity or religion; these are peculiar to man. If, therefore, the oppressed only cry by reason of the arm of the mighty, and do not look up to God, they do no more than the brutes, (who complain when they are hurt,) and they forget that instruction and wisdom by which they are advanced so far above them. Gcd relieves the brute-creatures, because they cry to him according to the best of their capacity, Ps. civ. 21. ch. xxxviii. 41. But what reason have men to expect relief, who are capable of inquiring after God as their Maker, and yet cry to him no other-

wise than as brutes do?

3. They are proud and unhumbled under their afflictions, which were sent to mortify them, and to hide pride from them; (v. 12.) There they cry, there they lie exclaiming against their oppressors, and filling the ears of all about them with their complaints, not sparing to reflect upon God himself and his providence; but none give answer. God does not work deliverance for them, and perhaps men do not much regard them; and why so? It is because of the pride of evil men; they are evil men; they regard iniquity in their hearts, and therefore God will not hear their prayers, Ps. lxvi. 18. Isa. i. 15. God hears not such sinners. They have, it may be, brought themselves into trouble by their own wickedness, they are the Devil's poor; and then who can pity them? Yet this is not all; they are proud still, therefore they do not seek unto God; (Ps. x. 4.) or if they do cry unto him, therefore he does not give answer, for he hears only the desire of the humble, (Ps. x. 17.) and delivers those by his providence, whom he has first, by his grace, prepared and made fit for deliverance; and that we are not, if, under humbling afflictions, our hearts remain unhumbled, and pride unmortified. The case is plain then, If we cry to God for the removal of the oppression and affliction we are under, and it is not removed, the reason is, not because the Lord's hand is shortened, or his ear heavy, but because the affliction has not done its work; we are not sufficiently humbled, and therefore must thank ourselves that it is continued.

4. They are not sincere and upright, and inward with God, in their supplications to him, and therefore he does not hear and answer them; (v. 13.) God will not hear vanity, that is, the hypocritical prayer, which is a vain prayer, coming out of feigned lips. It is a vanity to think that God should hear it, who searches the heart, and requires truth

in the inward part.

14. Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him, yet judgment is before him; therefore trust thou in him. 15. But now, because it is not so, he hath visited in his anger; yet he knoweth it not in great extremity: 16. Therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain: he multiplieth words without knowledge.

Here is,

I. Another improper word, for which Elihu reproves Job; (v. 14.) Thou sayest thou shalt not see him; that is, (1.) "Thou complainest that thou dost not understand the meaning of his severe dealings with thee, nor discern the drift and design of them," ch. xxiii. 8, 9. And, (2.) "Thou despairest of seeing his gracious returns to thee, of seeing better days again, and art ready to give up all for gone;" as Hezekiah, (Isa. xxxviii. 11.) I shall not see the Lord. As, when we are in prosperity, we are ready to think our mountain will never be brought low; so, when we are in adversity, we are ready to think our valley will never be filled, but, in both, to conclude that to-morrow must be as this day, which is as absurd as to think that the weather, when it is either fair or foul, will be always so, that the flowing tide will always flow, or the ebbing tide will always ebb.

II. The answer which Elihu gives to this des-

pairing word that Job had said, which is this,

(1.) That, when he looked up to God, he had no just reason to speak thus despairingly; Judgment is before him, that is, "He knows what he has to do, and will do all in infinite wisdom and justice; he has the entire plan and model of providence before him, and knows what he will do, which we do not, and therefore we understand not what he does. There is a day of judgment before him, when all the seeming disorders of Providence will be set to rights, and the dark chapters of it will be expounded. Then thou shalt see the full meaning of these dark events, and the final period of these dismal events; then thou shalt see his face with joy; therefore trust in him, depend upon him, wait for him, and believe that the issue will be good at last." When we consider that God is infinitely wise, and righteous, and faithful, and that he is a God of judgment, (Isa. xxx. 18.) we shall see no reason to despair of relief from him, but all the reason in the world to hope in him, that it will come in due

time, in the best time.
(2.) That, if he had not yet seen an end of his troubles, the reason was, Because he did not thus trust in God, and wait for him; (v. 15.) "Because it is not so; because thou dost not thus trust in him. therefore the affliction which came at first from love, has now displeasure mixed with it. Now God has visited thee in his anger, taking it very ill that thou canst not find in thy heart to trust him, but harbourest such hard misgiving thoughts of him." If there be any mixtures of divine wrath in our afflictions, we may thank ourselves, it is because we do not behave aright under them; we quarrel with God, are fretful and impatient, and distrustful of the Divine Providence. This was Job's case; The foolishness of man perverts his way, and then his heart frets against the Lord; (Prov. xix. 3.) yet Elihu thinks that Job, being in great extremity, did not know and consider that as he should, that it was his own fault that he was not yet delivered.

He concludes, therefore, that Job opens his mouth in vain, (v. 16.) in complaining of his grievances, and crying for redress, or in justifying himself, and clearing up his own innocency; it is all in vain, because he does not trust in God and wait for him. and had not a due regard to him in his afflictions. He had said a great deal, had multiplied words, but all without knowledge; all to no purpose, because he did not encourage himself in God, and humble himself before him. It is in vain for us either to appeal to God, or to acquit ourselves, if we do not study to answer the end for which affliction is sent; and in vain to pray for relief, if we do not trust in God: let not that man who distrusts God, think that he shall receive any thing from him, James i. 7. Or this may refer to all that Job had said. Having showed the absurdity of some passages in his discourse, he concludes that there were many other passages which were, in like manner, the fruits of his ignorance and mistake. He did not, as his other friends, condemn him for a hypocrite, but charges him only with Moses's sin, speaking unadvisedly with his lips, when his spirit was provoked. at any time we do so, (and who is there that offends not in word?) it is a mercy to be told of it, and we must take it patiently and kindly, as Job did; not repeating, but recanting, what we have said amiss.

CHAP. XXXVI.

Elihu, having largely reproved Job for some of his unadvised speeches, which Job had nothing to say in the vin-dication of, here comes more generally to set him to rights in his notions of God's dealings with him. His other friends had stood to it, that, because he was a wicked man, therefore his afflictions were so great and But Elihn only maintained that the affliction was sent for his trial, and that, therefore, it was length

ened out, because Job was not, as yet, thoroughly humbled under it, nor had duly accommodated himself to it. He urges many reasons, taken from the wisdom and righteousness of God, his care of his people, and especially his greatness and almighty power, with which, in this and the following chapter, he persuades him to submit to the hand of God. Here we have, I. His preface, v. 2..4. II. The account he gives of the method of God's providences toward the children of men, according as they conduct themselves, v. 5...15. III. The fair warning and good counsel he gives to Job thereupon, v. 16...21. IV. His demonstration of God's sovereignty and omnipotence, which he gives instances of, in the operations of common providence, and which is a reason why we should all submit to him in his dealings with us, v. 22...33. This he prosecutes, and enlarges upon, in the following

E LIHU also proceeded, and said, 2. Suffer me a little, and I will show thee that I have yet to speak on God's behalf. 3. I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker. 4. For truly my words shall not be false: he that is perfect in knowledge is with thee.

Once more Elihu begs the patience of the auditory, and Job's particularly, for he has not said all that he has to say, but he will not detain them long. Stand about me a little; so some read it, v. 2. "Let me have your attendance, your attention, a while longer, and I will speak but this once, as plainly and as much to the purpose as I can." To gain this,

he pleads,

1. That he had a good cause, a noble and fruitful subject; I have yet to speak on God's behalf. He spake as an advocate for God, and therefore might justly expect the ear of the court. Some, indeed, pretend to speak on God's behalf, who really speak for themselves; but those who sincerely appear in the cause of God, and speak in behalf of his honour, his truths, his ways, his people, shall be sure neither to want instructions, (It shall be given them in that same hour what they shall speak,) nor to lose their cause, or their fee. Nor need they fear lest they should exhaust their subject. They that have spoken ever so much, may yet find more to be spoken on God's behalf.

2. That he had something to offer that was uncommon, and out of the road of vulgar observation; I will fetch my knowledge from afar, (v. 3) that is, "We will have recourse to our first principles, and the highest notions we can make use of to scrve any purpose." It is worth while to go far for this knowledge of God, to dig for it, to travel for it; it will recompense our pains, and, though far-fetched,

is not dear-bought.

3. That his design was undeniably honest; for all he aimed at was, to ascribe rightconsness to his Maker; to maintain and clear this truth, that God is righteous in all his ways. In speaking of God, and speaking for him, it is good to remember that he is cur Maker, to call him so, and therefore to be ready to do him, and the interests of his kingd m, the best service we can. If he be our Maker, we have our all from him, must use our all for him, and be

very zealous for his honour.

4. That his management should be very just and tair; (v. 4.) " My words shall not be false, neither disagreeable to the thing itself, nor to my own thoughts and apprehensions. It is truth that I am contending for, and that for truth's sake, with all possible sincerity and plainness." He will make use of plain and solid arguments, and not the subtleties and niceties of the schools. "He who is perfect or upright in knowledge, is now reasoning with thee; and, therefore, let him not only have a fair hearing, but let what he says be taken in good part, as meant well." The perfection of our knowledge,

in this world, is, to be honest and sincere in search ing out truth, in applying it to ourselves, and in making use of what we know for the good of others.

5. Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any: he is mighty in strength and wisdom. 6. He preserveth not the life of the wicked: but giveth right to the poor. 7. He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous: but with kings are they on the throne; yea, he doth establish them for ever and they are exalted. 8. And if they $b\epsilon$ bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction; 9. Then he showeth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. 10. He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity. 11. If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures: 12. But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without know-13. But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath; they cry not when he bindeth them: 14. They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean.

Elihu, being to speak on God's behalf, and particularly to ascribe righteousness to his Maker, here shows, that the disposals of Divine Providence are all, not only according to the eternal counsels of his will, but according to the eternal rules of equity.

God acts as a righteous Governor. For,

 He does not think it below him to take notice of the meanest of his subjects, nor does poverty or obscurity set any at a distance from his favour. If men are mighty, they are apt to look with a haughty disdain upon those that are not of distinction, and make no figure; but God is mighty, infinitely so, and yet he despises not any, v. 5. He humbles himself, to take cognizance of the affairs of the meanest, to do them justice, and to show them kind ness. Job thought himself and his cause slighted, because God did not immediately appear for him. "No," says Elihu, God despises not any; which is a good reason why we should honour all men. He is mighty in strength and wisdom, and yet does not look with contempt upon those that have but a little strength and wisdom, if they but mean honestly. Nay, therefore, he despises not any, because his wisdom and strength are incontestably infinite, and therefore the condescensions of his grace can be no diminution to him. They that are wise and good, will not look upon any with scorn and disdain.

II. He gives no countenance to the greatest, if they be bad; (v. 6.) He preserves not the life of the wicked. Though their life may be prolonged, yet not under any special care of the Divine Providence, but only its common protection. Job had said that the wicked live, become old, and are mighty in hower, ch. xxi. 7. "No," says Elihu. "he seldom suffers wicked men to become old. He preserves not their life so long as they expected, nor with that comfort and satisfaction which are indeed our life; and their preservation is but a reservation for the day of wrath," Rom. ii. 5.

III. He is always ready to right these that are any way injured, and to plead their causes; (v. 6.) He gives right to the poor, avenges their quarrel upon their persecutors, and forces them to make restitution of what they have robbed them of. If men will not right the injured poor, God will.

IV. He takes a particular care for the protection of his good subjects, v. 7. He not only looks on them, but he never looks off them. He withdraws not his eyes from the righteous. Though they may seem sometimes neglected and forgotten, and that befalls them which looks like an oversight of Providence, yet the tender careful eye of their Heavenly Father never withdraws from them. If our eye be ever toward God in duty, his eye will be ever upon us in mercy, and, when we are at the lowest, will not overlook us.

1. Sometimes he prefers good people to places of trust and honour; (v. 7.) With kings are they on the throne, and every sheaf is made to bow to theirs. When righteous persons are advanced to places of honour and power, it is in mercy to them; for God's grace in them will both arm them against the temptations that attend preferment, and enable them to improve the opportunity it gives them of doing good. It is also in mercy to those over whom they are set; When the righteous bear rule, the city rejoices. If the righteous be advanced, they are established. They that in honour keep a good conscience, stand upon sure ground; and high places are not such shppery ground, to them as they are to others. But, because it is not often that we see good men made great men in this world, this may be supposed to refer to the honour to which the righteous shall rise when their Redeemer shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; for then only they shall be exalted for ever, and estabhshed for ever, then shall they all shine forth as the sun, and be made kings and priests to our God.

2. If, at any time, he bring them into affliction, it is for the good of their souls, v. 8.10. Some good people are preferred to honour and power, but others are in trouble. Now observe, (1.) The distress supposed (2.2.) tress supposed, (v. 8.) If they be bound in fetters, laid in prison, as Joseph was, or holden in the cords of any other affliction, confined by pain and sickness, hampered by poverty, bound in their counsels, and, not withstanding all their struggles, held long in this This was Job's case; he was caught, and kept fast, in the cords of anguish, as some read it. But observe, (2.) The design God has, in bringing his people into such distresses as these; it is for the benefit of their souls; the consideration of which should reconcile us to affliction, and make us think well of it. Three things God intends, when he afflicts us, [1.] To discover past sins to us, and to bring them to our remembrance; (v. 9.) Then he shows them that amiss in them, which, before, they did not see. He discovers to them the fact of sin, he shows them their work. Sin is our own work; if there be any good in us, it is God's work; and we are concerned to see what work we have made by sin. He discovers the fault of sin, shows them their transgressions of the law of God, and, withal, the sinfulness of sin, that they have exceeded, and have been beyond measure sinful. True penitents lay a load upon themselves, do not extenuate, but aggravate, their sins, and own that they have ex-

if there be any good in us, it is God's work; and we are concerned to see what work we have made by sin. He discovers the fault of sin, shows them their transgressions of the law of God, and, withal, the sinfulness of sin, that they have exceeded, and have been beyond measure sinful. True penitents lay a load upon themselves, do not extenuate, but aggravate, their sins, and own that they have exceeded in them. Affliction sometimes answers to the sin; it serves however to awaken the conscience, and puts men upon considering. [2.] To dispose our hearts to receive present instructions; then he opens their ear to discipline, v. 10. Whom God chastens, he teaches; (Ps. xciv. 12.) and the affliction makes people willing to learn, softens the wax, that it may receive the impression of the seal; yet it does not do it of itself, but the grace of God, working with and by it: it is he that opens the ear, that opens the heart, who has the key of David. [3.] To deter and draw us off from iniquity for the future. This is the errand on which the affliction is sent; it is a command to return from iniquity,

to have no more to do with sin, to turn from it with

an aversion to it, and a resolution never to return

to it any more, Hos. xiv. 8.

3. If the affliction do its work, and accomplish that for which it is sent, he will comfort them again, according to the time that he has afflicted them: (v. 11.) If they obey and serve him, if they comply with his design, and serve his purpose, in these dispensations, if, when the affliction is removed, they continue in the same good mind that they were in, when they were under the smart of it, and perform the vows they made then, if they live in obedience to God's commands, particularly these which relate to his service and worship, and, in all instances, make conscience of their duty to him, then they shall spend their days in prosperity again, and their years in true pleasures. Piety is the only sure way to prosperity and pleasure; this is a certain truth, and yet few will believe it. If we faithfully serve God, (1.) We have the promise of outward prosperity, the promise of the life that now is, and the comforts of it, as far as is for God's glory and our good; and who would desire them any further? (2.) We have the possession of inward pleasures, the comfort of communion with God, and a good conscience, and that great peace which they have that love God's law. If we rejoice not in the Lord always, and in hope of eternal life, it is our own fault; and what better pleasures can we spend our years in?

4. If the affliction do not do its work, let them expect the furnace to be heated seven times hotter, till they are consumed; (v. 12.) If they obey not, if they are not bettered by their afflictions, are not reclaimed and reformed, they shall perish by the sword of God's wrath. Those whom his rod does not cure, his sword will kill; and the consuming fire will prevail, if the refining fire do not; for when God judges, he will overcome. If Ahaz, in his distress, treshass yet more against the Lord, this is that king Ahaz that is marked for ruin, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. Jer. vi. 29, 30. God would have instructed them by their afflictions, but they received not instruction, would not take the hints that were given them; and therefore they shall die without knowledge, ere they are aware, without any further previous notices given them; or, they shall die because they are without knowledge, notwithstanding the means of knowledge which they were blessed with. They that die without knowledge, die with-

out grace, and are undone for ever.

Lastly, He brings ruin upon hypocrites, the secret enemies of his kingdom, such as he described, v. 12. who, though they were numbered among the righteous whom he had spoken of before, yet did not obey him, but, being children of disobedience and darkness, become children of wrath and perdition; these are the hypocrites in heart, who heap uf wrath, (v. 13.) See the nature of hypocrisy; it lies in the heart, that is, for the world and the flesh, when the outside seems to be for God and religion. Many that are saints in show, and saints in word, are hypocrites in heart. That spring is corrupt, and there is an evil treasure there. See the mischievousness of it; hypocrites heap up wrath. They are doing that every day which is provoking to God, and will be reckoned with for it altogether in the great day. They treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, Rom. ii. 5. Their sins are laid up in store with God among his treasures, Deut. xxxii. 34. Compare Jam. v. 3. As what goes up a vapour, comes down a shower, so what goes up sin, if not repented of, will come down wrath. They think they are heaping up wealth, heaping up merits, but, when the treasures are opened, it will prove they were heaping up wrath.

Observe, 1. What they do to heap up wrath

Observe, 1. What they do to heap up wrate what is it that is so provoking? It is this, They cry not when he binds them; that is, When they are

in affliction, bound with the cords of trouble, their || not confined thus, by thy sickness and disgrace; he hearts are hardened, they are stubborn and unhumbled, and will not cry to God, nor make their application to him. They are stupid and senseless, as stocks and stones, despising the chastening of the Lord. 2. What are the effects of that wrath? (v. 14.) They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean. This is the portion of hypocrites, whom Christ denounced many woes against. If they continue impenitent, (1.) They shall die a sudden death; die in youth, when death is most a surprise; and death (that is, the consequences of it) is always such to hypocrites; as they that die in youth die when they hoped to live, so hypocrites, at death, go to hell, when they hoped to go to heaven. If hen a wicked man dies, his expectations shall perish. (2.) They shall die the second death; their life, after death, (for so it comes in here,) is among the unclean; among the fornicators, so some; among the worst and vilest of sinners, not with standing their specious and plausible profession. It is among the Sodomites, so the margin; those filthy wretches, who, going after strange fiesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude 7. The souls of the wicked live after death, but they live among the unclean, the unclean spirits, the Devil and his angels, for ever separated from the New Jerusalem, which no unclean thing shall

15. He delivereth the poor in his affliction, and openeth their ears in oppression: 16. Even so would be have removed thee out of the strait into a broad place, where there is no straitness; and that which should be set on thy table should be full of fatness. 17. But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked: judgment and justice take hold on thee. 18. Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee. Will be esteem thy riches? no, not gold, nor all the forces of strength. 20. Desire not the night, when people are cut off in their place. 21. Take heed, regard not iniquity: for this hast thou chosen rather than afflic-22. Behold, God exalteth by his power: who teacheth like him? 23. Who hath enjoined him his way? or who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity?

Elihu here comes more closely to Job; and,

1. He tells him what God would have done for him, before this, if he had been duly humbled un-der his affliction; "We all know how ready God is to deliver the poor in his affliction; (v. 15.) he always was so; the poor in spirit, those that are of a broken and contrite heart, he looks upon with tenderness, and, when they are in affliction, is ready to help them. He opens their ears, and makes them to hear joy and gladness, even in their oppressions: while he does not yet deliver them, he speaks to them good words and comfortable words, for the encouragement of their faith and patience, the silencing of their fears, and the balancing of their griefs; and even so (v. 16.) would be have done to thee, if thou hadst submitted to his providence, and conducted thyself well; he would have delivered and comforted thee, and we should have had none of these complaints. If thou hadst accommodated thyself to the will of God, thy liberty and plenty would have been restored to thee with advantage." 1. "Thou hadst been enlarged, and

would have removed thee into a broad place, where is no straitness, and thou shouldest no longer have been cramped thus, and have had all thy measures broken." 2. "Thou hadst been enriched, and not in this poor condition; thou shouldest have had thy table richly spread, not only with food convenient, but with the finest of the wheat," (see Deut. xxxii. 14.) "and the fattest of the flesh." Note, it ought to silence us under our afflictions, to consider that, if we were better, it would be every way better with us: if we had answered the ends of an affliction, the affliction would be removed; and deliverance would come, if we were ready for it. God would have done well for us, if we had conducted ourselves well, Ps. lxxxi. 13, 14. Isa. xlviii. 18.

II. He charges him with standing in his own light, and makes him the cause of the continuance of his own trouble; (v. 17.) "But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked," that is, "Whatever thou art really, in this thing thou hast conducted thyself like a wicked man, hast spoken and done like them; thou hast gratified them and served their cause; and therefore judgment and justice take hold on thee as a wicked man, because thou goest in company with them, actest as if thou wert in their interest, aiding and abetting. Thou hast maintained the cause of the wicked; and such as a man's cause is, such will the judgment of God be upon him.' So Bishop Patrick. It is dangerous being on the wrong side: accessaries to treason will be dealt with as principals.

III. He cautions him not to persist in his frowardness; several good cautions he gives him to

this purport.

1. Let him not make light of divine vengeance, nor be secure, as if he were in no danger of it; (v. 18.) "Because there is wrath," (that is,) "because God is a righteous Governor, who resents all the affronts given to his government, because he has revealed his wrath from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, and because thou hast reason to fear that thou art under God's displeasure, therefore beware lest he take thee away suddenly with his stroke, and be so wise as to make thy peace with him quickly, and get his anger turned away from thee." A warning to this pur-port Job had given his friends; (ch. xix. 29.) Be ye afraid of the sword, for wrath brings the hunish-ment of the sword. Thus contenders are apt, with too much boldness, to bind one another over to the judgment of God, and threaten one another with his wrath: but he that keeps a good conscience, needs not fear the impotent menaces of proud men. This was a friendly caution to Job, and necessary. Even good men have need to be kept to their duty by the fear of God's wrath. "Thou art a wise and good man, but beware lest he take thee away, for the wisest and best have enough in them to descrive his

2. Let him not promise himself that, if God's wrath should kindle against him, he could find out ways to escape the strokes of it. (1.) There is no escaping by money; no purchasing a pardon with silver or gold, and such corruptible things. a great ransom cannot deliver thee, when God enters into judgment with thee; his justice cannot be bribed, nor any of the ministers of his justice. he esteem thy riches, and take from them a commutation of the punishment? No, not gold, v. 19. thou hadst as much wealth as ever thou hadst, that would not ease thee, would not secure thee from the strokes of God's wrath, in the day of the revelation of which, riches profit not," Prov. xi. 4. See Ps. xlix. 7, 8. (2.) No escaping by rescue. "If all the forces of strength were at thy command, if thou couldst muster ever so many servants and vassals to

appear for thee to force thee out of the hands of | divine vengeance, it were all in vain, God would not regard it, there is none that can deliver out of his hand." (3.) No escaping by absconding, v. 20. "Desire not the night, which often favours the retreat of a conquered army, and covers it: think not that thou canst so escape the righteous judgment of God, for the darkness hideth not from him," Ps. cxxxix. 11, 12. See ch. xxxiv. 22. Think not, because in the night people retire to their place, go up to their beds, and it is easy then to escape being discovered by them, that God also ascends to his place, and cannot see thee: no, he neither slumbers nor sleeps; his eyes are open upon the children of men, not only in all places, but at all times: no rocks or mountains can shelter us from his eye. Some understand it of the night of death; that is the night by which men are cut off from their place, and Job had earnestly breathed for that night, as the hireling desires the evening, ch. vii. 2. "But do not do so," says Elihu, "for thou knowest not what the night of death is." Those that passionately wish for death, in hopes to make that their shelter from God's wrath, may perhaps be mistaken. There are those whom wrath pursues into that night.

3. Let him not continue his unjust quarrel with God and his providence, which hitherto he had persisted in, when he should have submitted to the affliction; (v. 21.) "Take heed, look well to thine own spirit, and regard not iniquity, return not to it;" so some; "for it is at thy peril if thou do." Let us never dare to think a favourable thought of sin, never indulge it, nor allow ourselves in it. thinks Job had need of this caution, he having chosen iniquity rather than affliction, that is, having chosen rather to gratify his own pride and humour in contending with God, than to mortify it by a submission to him, and accepting the punishment. may take it more generally, and observe, that they who choose iniquity rather than affliction, make a very foolish choice; they that ease their cares by sinful pleasures, increase their wealth by sinful pursuits, escape their troubles by sinful projects, and evade sufferings for righteousness' sake by sinful compliances against their consciences, these make a choice they will repent of, for there is more evil in the least sin than in the greatest affliction. It is an evil, it is only evil.

4. Let him not dare to prescribe to God, nor give him his measures; (v. 22, 23.) "Behold, God exalteth by his flower," that is, "He does, may, and can, set up and pull down whom he pleases, and therefore it is not for thee and me to contend with him." The more we magnify God, the more do we humble and abase ourselves. Now consider,

(1.) That God is an absolute Sovereign; He exalts by his own power, and not by strength derived from any other: he exalts whom he pleases, exalts those that were afflicted and cast down, by the strength and power which he gives his people. And therefore who has enjoined him his way? Who presides above him in his way? Is there any superior from whom he has his commission, and to whom he is accountable? No, he himself is supreme and independent. Who futs him in mind of his way? (so some,) Does the Eternal Mind need a remembrancer? No, his own way, as well as ours, is ever before him; he has not received orders or instructions from any, (Isa. xl. 13, 14.) nor is he accountable to any: he enjoins to all the creatures their way; let not us then enjoin him his, but leave it to him to govern the world, who is fit to do it.

(2.) That he is an incomparable Teacher; Who teaches like him? It is absurd for us to teach him who is himself the Fountain of light, truth, knowledge, and instruction: he that teaches man knowPs. xciv. 9, 10. Shall we light a candle to the sun? Observe, when Elihu would give glory to God as a Ruler, he praises him as a Teacher, for rulers must teach; God does so, he binds with the cords of a In this, as in other things, he is unequalled. None so fit to direct his own actions as he himself is: he knows what he has to do, and how to do it for the best, and needs no information or advice. Solomon himself had a privy-council to advise him, but the King of kings has none. Nor is any so fit to direct our actions as he is: none teaches with such authority and convincing evidence, with such condescension and compassion, nor with such power and efficacy, as God does. He teaches by the Bible, and that is the best book, teaches by his Son, and he is the best Master.

(3.) That he is unexceptionably just in all his proceedings; Who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity? Not, Who dares say it? (many do iniquity, and persons tell them of it, at their peril;) but, Who can say it? Who had any cause to say it? Who can say it, and prove it? It is a maxim undoubtedly true, without limitation, that the King of kings can do no wrong.

24. Remember that thou magnify his work, which men behold. 25. Every man may see it; man may behold it afar off. Behold, God is great, and we know him not; neither can the number of his years be searched out. 27. For he maketh small the drops of water: they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof, 28. Which the clouds do drop and distil upon man abundantly. 29. Also can any understand the spreadings of the clouds, or the noise of his tabernacle? 30. Behold, he spreadeth his light upon it, and covereth the bottom of the sea. 31. For by them judgeth he the people; he giveth meat in abundance. 32. With clouds he covereth the light; and commandeth it not to shine, by the cloud that cometh betwixt. 33. The noise thereof showeth concerning it, the cattle also concerning the vapour.

Elihu is here endeavoring to possess Job with great and high thoughts of God, and so to persuade him into a cheerful submission to his providence.

I. He represents the work of God, in general, as illustrious and conspicuous, v. 24. His whole work is so, God does nothing mean: this is a good reason why we should acquiesce in all the operations of his providence concerning us in particular: his visible works, those of nature, and which concern the world in general, are such as we admire and commend, and in which we observe the Creator's wisdom, power, and goodness; shall we then find fault with his dispensations concerning us, and the counsels of his will concerning our affairs? We are here called to consider the work of God, Eccl. vii. 13. 1. It is plain before our eves, nothing more obvious. it is what men behold: every man that has but half an eye may see it, may behold it afar off. Look which way we will, we see the productions of God's wisdom and power; we see that done, and that doing, concerning which we cannot but say, This is the work of God; the finger of God; it is the Lord's doing. Every man may see, afar off, the heaven and all its lights, the earth and all its fruits, to be the work of Omnipotence: much more when we be edge, and so as none else can, shall not he know? hold them nigh at hand. Look at the minutest

works of nature through a microscope; do they not appear curious? The eternal power and godhead of the Creator are clearly seen and understood by the things that are made, Rom. i. 20. Every man, even those that have not the benefit of divine revelation, may see this, for there is no speech or language where the voice of these natural constant preachers is not heard, Ps. xix. 3. 2. It ought to be marvellous in our eyes. The beauty and excellency of the work of God, and the agreement of all the parts of it, are what we must remember to magnify and highly to extol: not only justify it as right and good, and what cannot be blamed, but magnify it as wise and glorious, and such as no creature could contrive or produce. Man may see his works, and is capable of discerning his hand in them, (which the beasts are not,) and therefore ought to praise them, and

give him the glory of them. II. He represents God, the Author of them, as infinite and unsearchable, v. 26. The streams of being, power, and perfection, should lead us to the Fountain. God is great, infinitely so: great in power, for he is omnipotent and independent; great in wealth, for he is self-sufficient, and all-sufficient; great in himself, great in all his works; great, and therefore greatly to be praised; great, and therefore we know him not; we know that he is, but not what heis; we know what he is not, but not what he is. We know in part, but not in perfection. This comes in here as a reason why we must not arraign his proceedings, nor find fault with what he does, because it is speaking evil of the things that we understand not, and answering a matter before we hear it. We know not the duration of his existence, for it is infinite; the number of his years cannot possibly be searched out, for he is eternal, there is no number of them: he is a Being without beginning, succession, or period, who ever was, and ever will be, and ever the same, the great IAM. This is a good reason why we should not prescribe to him, or quarrel with him, because, as he is, such are his operations, quite out of our reach.

III. He gives some instances of God's wisdom, power, and sovereign dominion, in the works of nature, and the dispensations of common providence; beginning, in this chapter, with the clouds, and the rain that descends from them. We need not be critical in examining either the phrase, or the philosophy, of this noble discourse. The general philosophy, of this noble discourse. The general scope of it is, to show, (1.) That God is infinitely great, and the Lord of all, the first Cause and supreme Director of all the creatures, and has all frower in heaven and earth, and whom therefore we ought, with all humility and reverence, to adore, to speak well of, and to give honour to. (2.) That it is presumption for us to prescribe to him the rules and methods of his special providence toward the children of men, or to expect from him an account of them, when the operations even of common providences, about the meteors, are so various, and so mysterious and unaccountable.

Elihu, to affect Job with God's sublimity and sovereiguty, had directed him (ch. xxxv. 5.) to look unto the clouds: in these verses, he shows us what we may observe in the clouds we see, which will lead us to consider the glorious perfections of their Creator. Consider the clouds,

1. As springs to this lower world; the source and treasure of its moisture, and the great bank through which it circulates, a necessary provision, the stagnation of which would be as hurtful to this lower world as of the blood to the body of man. It is worth while to observe, in this common occurrence, (1.) That the clouds above distil upon the earth below: if the heavens become brass, the earth becomes iron; therefore thus the promise of plenty runs, I wil. hear the heavens, and they shall hear the

This intimates to us, that every good gift is earth. from above, from him who is both Father of lights, and Father of the rain, and it instructs us to direct our prayers to him, and to look up. (2.) That they are here said to distil upon man; (v. 28.) for though indeed he caused it to rain in the wilderness, where no man is, (ch. xxxviii. 26. Ps. civ. 11.) yet special respect is had to man herein, to whom the inferior creatures are all made serviceable, and from whom the actual return of the tributes of praise is required. Among men, he caused his rain to fall upon the just, and upon the unjust, Matth. v. 45. (3.) They are said to distil the water in small drops; not in spouts, as when the windows of heaven were opened, Gen. vii. 11. God waters the earth with that with which he once drowned it, only dispensing it in another manner, to let us know how much we lie at his mercy, and how kind he is, in giving rain by drops, that the benefit of it may be the further and the more equally diffused, as by an artificial water-pot. (4.) Though, sometimes, the rain comes in very small drops, yet, at other times, it pours down in great rain, and this difference between one shower and another must be resolved into the Divine Providence which orders it so. (5.) Though it comes down in drops, yet it distils upon man abundantly, (v. 28.) and therefore is called the river of God which is full of water, Ps. 1xv. 9. (6.) The clouds pour down according to the vapour that they draw up, v. 27. So just the heavens are to the earth, but the earth is not so in the return it makes. (7.) The produce of the clouds is, sometimes, a great terror, and, at other times, a great favour, to the earth, v. 31. When he pleases, by them he judges the people he is angry with. Storms, and tempests, and excessive rains, destroying the fruits of the earth, and causing inundations, come from the clouds; but, on the other hand, from them, usually, he gives meat in abundance, they drop fatness upon the pastures that are clothed with flocks, and the valleys that are covered with corn, Ps. lxv. 11.13. Lastly, Notice is sometimes given of the approach of rain, v. 33. The noise thereof, among other things, shows concerning it. Hence we read (1 Kings xviii. 41.) of the sound of abundance of rain, or, as it is in the margin, a sound of a noise of rain, before it came, and a welcome harbinger it was then. As the noise, so the face of the sky, shows concerning it, Luke xii. 56. The cattle also, by a strange instinct, are apprehensive of a change in the weather nigh at hand, and seek for shelter, shaming man, who will not foresee the evil, and

2. As shadows to the upper world; (v. 29.) Can any understand the spreading of the clouds? They are spread over the earth as a curtain or canopy; how they come to be so, how stretched out, and how poised, as they are, we cannot understand, though we daily see they are so. Shall we then pretend to understand the reasons and methods of God's judicial proceedings with the children of men, whose characters and cases are so various, when we cannot account for the spreading of the clouds, which cover the light? v. 32. It is a cloud coming betwixt, v. 32. ch. xxvi. 9. And this we are sensible of, that, by the interposition of the clouds between us and the sun, we are, (1.) Sometimes favoured; for they serve as an umbrella to shelter us from the violent heat of the sun, which otherwise would beat upon us. A cloud of dew in the heat of harvest, is spoken of as a very great refreshment, Isa. xviii. 4. (2.) Sometimes we are by them frowned upon; for they darken the earth at noon-day, and eclipse the Sin is compared to a cloud, light of the sun. (Isa. xliv. 22.) because it comes between us and the light of God's countenance, and obstructs the shining of it. But though the clouds darken the

sun for a time, and pour down rain, yet, (Post nubila Phabus—The sun shines forth after the rain,) after he has wearied the cloud, he spreads his light upon it, v. 30. There is a clear shining after rain; (2 Sam. xxiii. 4.) the sun-beams are darted forth, and reach to cover even the bottom of the sca, thence to exhale a fresh supply of vapours, and so raise recruits for the clouds. In all this we must remember to magnify the work of God.

CHAP. XXXVII.

Elihu here goes on to extol the wonderful power of God in the meteors, and all the changes of the weather: if, in those changes, we submit to the will of God, take the weather as it is, and make the best of it, why should we not do so in other changes of our condition? Here he observes the hand of God, I. In the thunder and lightning, v. 1..5. If. In the frost and snow, the rains and wind, v. 6..13. III. He applies it to Job, and challenges him to solve the phenomena of these works of nature, that, confessing his ignorance in them, he might own himself an incompetent judge in the proceedings of Divine Pravidence, v. 14..22. And then, IV. Concludes with his principle which he undertook to make out, That God is great, and greatly to be feared, v. 23, 24.

1. A T this also my heart trembleth, and is moved out of his place. 2. Hear attentively the noise of his voice, and the sound that goeth out of his mouth. 3. He directeth it under the whole heaven, and his lightning unto the ends of the earth. 4. After it a voice roareth: he thundereth with the voice of his excellency; and he will not stay them when his voice is heard. 5. God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend.

Thunder and lightning, which usually go together, are sensible indications of the glory and majesty, the power and terror, of Almighty God, one to the ear, and the other to the eye; in these, God leaves not himself without witness of his greatness, as, in the rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, he leaves not himself without witness of his goodness, (Acts xiv. 17.) even to the most stupid and unthinking. Though there are natural causes and useful effects of them, which the philosophers undertake to account for, yet they seem chiefly designed by the Creator to startle and awaken the slumbering world of mankind to the consideration of a God above them. The eye and the ear are the two learning senses; and therefore, though such a circumstance is possible, they say it was never known in fact, that any one was born both blind and deaf. By the word of God divine instructions are conveyed to the mind through the ear, by his works, through the eye; but because those ordinary sights and sounds do not duly affect men, God is pleased sometimes to astonish men by the eye, with his lightnings, and by the ear, with his thunder. It is very probable that at this time, when Elihu was speaking, it thundered and lightened, for he speaks of it as present: and God being about to speak, (ch. xxxviii. 1.) these were, as afterward on mount Sinai, the proper prefaces to command attention and Observe here,

1. How Elihu was himself affected, and desired to affect Job, with the appearances of God's glory in the thunder and lightning; (v. 1, 2.) "For my part," (says Elihu,) "my heart trembles at it; though I have often heard it, often seen it, vet it is still terrible to me, and makes every joint of me tremble, and my heart beat as if it would move out of its place." Thunder and lightning have been draws from all this; (v. 5.) Does God thunder thus marvellously with his voice? We must the way argue to all, that, in the dispensations of providence, there is that which is too great, strong, for us to oppose or strive against, and high, too deep, for us to arraign or quarrel with.

dreadful to the wicked; the emperor Caligula would run into a corner, or under a bed, for fear of them: those who are very much astonished, we say, are thunder-struck. Even good people think thunder and lightning very awful: that which makes them the more terrible, is, the hurt often done by lightning, many having been killed by it: Sodom and Gomorrah were laid in ruins by it: it is a sensible indication of what God could do to this sinful world, and what he will do, at last, by the fire to which it is reserved. Our hearts, like Elihu's, should tremble at it for fear of God's judgments, Ps. cxix. 120. He also calls upon Job to attend to it; (v. 2.) Hear attentively the noise of his voice. Perhaps, as yet, Perhaps, as yet, it thundered at a distance, and could not be heard without listening: or rather, though the thunder itself will be heard, and, whatever we are doing, we cannot help attending to it, yet, to apprehend and understand the instructions God thereby gives us, we have need to hear with great attention and application of mind. Thunder is called the voice of the Lord, (Ps. xxix. 3, &c.) because, by it, God speaks to the children of men, to fear before him, and it should put us in mind of that mighty word by which the world was at first made, which is called thunder; (Ps. civ. 7.) At the voice of thy thunder, they hasted away, namely, the waters, when God said, Let them be gathered into one place. They that are themselves affected with God's greatness should labour to affect others.

2. How he describes them. (1.) Their original; not their second causes, but the first. God directs the thunder, and the lightning is his, v. 3. Their production and motion are not from chance, but from the counsel of God, and under the direction and dominion of his providence, though, to us, they seem accidental and ungovernable. (2.) Their ex-The claps of thunder roll under the whole heaven, and are heard far and near; so are the lightnings darted to the ends of the earth, they come out of the one part under heaven, and shine to the other, Luke xvii. 24. Though the same lightning and thunder do not reach to all places, yet they reach to very distant places in a moment, and there is no place but, some time or other, has these alarms from heaven. (3.) Their order. The lightning is first directed, and after it a voice roars, v. 4. The flash of fire, and the noise it makes in a watery cloud, are really at the same time; but, because the motion of light is much quicker than that of sounds, we see the lightning some time before we hear the thunder, as we see the firing of a great gun at a distance before we hear the report of it. The thunder is here called the voice of God's excellency, because by it he proclaims his transcendant power and greatness. He sends forth his voice, and that a mighty voice, Ps. lxviii. 33. (4.) Their violence. He will not stay them, that is, he does not need to check them, or hold them back, lest they should grow unruly, and out of his power to restrain them, but lets them take their course, says to them, Go, and they go; Come, and they come, Do this, and they do it. He will not stay the rains and showers that usually follow upon the thunder, which he had spoken of; (ch. xxxvi. 27, 29.) so some; but will pour them out upon the earth, when his voice is heard. Thundershowers are sweeping rains, and for them he makes the lightning, Ps. exxxv. 7. (5.) The inference he draws from all this; (v. 5.) Does God thunder thus marvellously with his voice? We must then conclude that his other works are great, and such as we cannot comprehend: from this one instance we may argue to all, that, in the dispensations of his providence, there is that which is too great, too strong, for us to oppose or strive against, and too

6. For he saith to the snow, Be thou on !! the earth: likewise to the small rain, and to the great rain of his strength. 7. He sealeth up the hand of every man, that all men may know his work. 3. Then the beasts go into dens, and remain in their places. 9. Out of the south cometh the whirlwind; and cold out of the north. 10. By the breath of God frost is given; and the breadth of the waters is straitened. 11. Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud; he scattereth his bright cloud, 12. And it is turned round about by his counsels; that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth. 13. He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy.

The changes and extremities of the weather, wet or dry, hot or cold, are the subject of a great deal of our common talk and observation; but how seldom do we think and speak of these things, as Elihu does here, with an awful regard to God the Director of them, who shows his power, and serves the purposes of his providence, by them? We must take notice of the glory of God, not only in the thunder and lightning, but in the more common revolutions of the weather, which are not so terri-

ole, and which make less noise. As,
I. In the snow and rain, v. 6. Thunder and lightning happen usually in the summer, but here he takes notice of the winter weather; then he saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth; he commissions it, he commands it, he appoints it, where it shall light, and how long it shall lie. He speaks. and it is done, as in the creation of the world, Let there be light: so in the works of common providence, Snow, be thou on the earth. Saying and doing are not two things with God, though they are with us. When he speaks the word, the small rain distils, and the great rain pours down as he pleases. The winter rain, so the LXX; for, in these countries, when the winter was past, the rain was over and gone, Cant. ii. 11. The distinction in the Hebrew between the small rain and the great rain, is this, that the former is called a shower of rain, the latter of rains, many showers in one; but all are the showers of his strength: the power of God is to be observed as much in the small rain that soaks into the earth, as in the great rain that batters on the house-top, and washes away all before it. Note, The providence of God is to be acknowledged both by husbandmen in the fields, and travellers upon the road, in every shower of rain, whether it does them a kindness or a diskindness. It is sin and folly to contend with God's providence in the weather; if he send the snow or rain, can we hinder them? Or shall we be angry at them? It is as absurd to quarrel with any other disposal of Providence concerning ourselves or ours.

The effect of the extremity of the winter weather, is, that it obliges both men and beasts to retire, making it uncomfortable and unsafe for them to go abroad. (1.) Men retire to their houses from their labours in the field, and keep within doors; (v,7.) He seals up the hand of every man. In frost and snow, husbandmen cannot follow their business, nor some tradesmen, nor travellers, when the weather is extreme: the plough is laid by, the shipping laid up, nothing is to be done, nothing to be got, that men, being taken off from their own work may know his work, and contemplate that,

and give him the glory of that; and, by the consideration of that work of his in the weather which seals up their hands, be led to celebrate his other great and marvellous works. Note, When we are, upon any account, disabled to follow our worldly business, and taken off from it, we should spend our time rather in the exercises of piety and devotion, (in acquainting ourselves with the works of God, and praising him in them,) than in foolish idle sports and recreations. When our hands are sealed up, our hearts should be thus opened, and the less we have at any time to do in the world, the more we should do for God and our souls. When we are confined to our houses, we should thereby be driven to our Bibles and our knees. (2.) The beasts also retire to their dens, and remain in their close places, v. 8. It is meant of the wild beasts, which, being wild, must seek a shelter for themselves, to which, by instinct, they are directed, while the tame beasts, which are serviceable to man, are housed and protected by his care, as Exod. ix. 20. The ass has no den but his master's crib, and thither he goes, not only to be safe and warm, but to be fed. Nature directs all creatures to shelter themselves from a storm; and shall man only be unprovided with an ark?

2. In the winds, which blow from different quarters, and produce different effects, v. 9. Out of the hidden place (so it may be read) comes the whirlwind; it turns round, and so it is hard to say from which point it comes, but it comes from the secret chamber, as the word signifies, which I am not so willing to understand of the south, because he says here, (v. 17.) that the wind out of the south is so far from being a whirlwind, that it is a warming, quieting, wind. But, at this time, perhaps, Elihu saw a whirlwind-cloud coming out of the south and making toward them, out of which the Lord spake soon after, ch. xxxviii. 1. Or, if turbulent winds, which bring showers, come out of the south, cold and drying blasts come out of the north to scatter the vapours, and clear the air of them.

3. In the frost, v. 10. See the cause of it; it is given by the breath of God, that is, by the word of his power, and the command of his will; or, as some understand it, by the wind, which is the breath of God, as the thunder is his voice; it is caused by the cold freezing wind out of the north. See the effect of it; The breadth of the waters is straitened; that is, the waters that had spread themselves, and flowed with liberty, are congealed, benumbed, arrested, bound up in crystal fetters. This is such an instance of the power of God, as, if it were not common, would be next to a miracle.

4. In the clouds; the womb where all these watery meteors are conceived, of which he had Three sorts of clouds he spoken, ch. xxxvi. 28. here speaks of;

(1.) Close, black, thick, clouds, pregnant with showers; these with watering he wearies; (v. 11.) they spend themselves, and are exhausted by the rain into which they melt and are dissolved, pouring out water till they are weary, and can pour out no more. See what pains, as 1 may say, the creatures, even those above us, take to serve man; the clouds water the earth till they are weary; they spend, and are spent, for our benefit; which shames and condemns us for the little good we do in our places, though it would be to our own advantage; for he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

(2.) Bright, thin, clouds, clouds without water; these he scattereth, they are dispersed of themselves, and not dissolved into rain, but what becomes of them we know not. The bright cloud, in the evening, when the sky is red, is scattered, and

proves an earnest of a fair day, Matth. xvi. 2.

(3.) Flying clouds, which do not dissolve, as the | the effects of them; (v. 15.17.) Dost thou know thick cloud, into a close rain, but are carried upon the wings of the wind from place to place, dropping showers as they go; these are said to be turned round about by his counsels, v. 12. The common people say that the rain is determined by the planets, which is as bad divinity as it is philosophy, for it is guided and governed by the counsel of God, which extends itself even to those things that seem most casual and minute, that they may do whatsoever he commands them; for the stormy winds, and the clouds that are driven by them, fulfil his word; and, by this means, he causes it to rain ufton one city, and not ufton another, Amos iv. 7, 8. Thus his will is done ufton the face of the world in the earth, that is, among the children of men, to whom God has an eye in all these things, of whom it is said, that he made them to dwell on the face of all the earth, Acts xvii. 26. The inferior creatures, being incapable of doing moral actions, are incapable of receiving rewards and punishments: but, among the children of men, God causes the rain to come, either for the correction of his land, or for a mercy to it, v. 13. [1.] Rain sometimes turns into a judgment; it is a scourge to a sinful land: as once it was for the destruction of the whole world, so it is now often for the correction or discipline of some parts of it, by hindering seedness and harvest, raising the waters, and damaging the fruits. have said that our nation has received much more prejudice by the excess of rain than by the want of it. [2.] At other times, it is a blessing: it is for his land, that that may be made fruitful, and, beside that which is just necessary, he gives for mercy, to futten it, and make it more fruitful. See what a necessary dependence we have upon God, when the very same thing, according to the proportion in which it is given, may be either a great judgment, or a great mercy, and without God we cannot have either a shower or a fair gleam.

14. Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still and consider the wondrous works of 15. Dost thou know when God disposed them, and caused the light of his cloud to shine? 16. Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge ? 17. How thy garments are warm, when he quieteth the earth by the south wind? 18. Hast thou with him spread out the sky, which is strong, and as a molten looking-glass? 19. Teach us what we shall say unto him: for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. 20. Shall it be told him that I speak? If a man speak, surely he shall be swallowed up.

Elihu here applies himself closely to Job, desiring him to apply what he had hitherto said, to himself. He begs he would hearken to this discourse, (v. 14.) that he would pause a while; Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God. What we hear, is not likely to profit us, unless we consider it, and we are not likely to consider things fully, unless we stand still, and compose ourselves to the consideration of them. The works of God, being wondrous, both deserve, and need, our consideration, and the due consideration of them will help to reconcile us to all his providences. Elihu, for the humbling of Job, shows him,

I. That he had no insight into natural causes, could neither see the springs of them, nor foresee | visible heavens, (Gen. i. 6..8.) which we see in Vol. III.-Y

the wondrous works of him which is perfect in know ledge? We are here taught,

1. The perfection of God's knowledge: it is one

of the most glorious perfections of God, that he is perfect in knowledge; he is omniscient. His knowledge is intuitive; he sees, and does not know by report: it is intimate and entire; he knows things truly, and not by their colours, thoroughly, and not by piece-meal. To his knowledge there is nothing distant, but all near; nothing future, but all present; nothing hid, but all open. We ought to acknowledge this in all his wondrous works, and it is sufficient to satisfy us, in those wondrous works which we know not the meaning of, that they are the works of one that knows what he does.

2. The imperfection of our knowledge. The greatest philosophers are much in the dark concerning the powers and works of nature. We are a paradox to ourselves, and every thing about us is a mystery. The gravitation of bodies, and the cohesion of the parts, are most certain, and yet unaccountable. It is good for us to be made sensible of our own ignorance; some have confessed it, and those that would not have wished to expose it: but we must all infer from it what incompetent judges we are of the divine politics, who understand so lit tle even of the divine mechanics. (1.) We know not what orders God has given concerning the clouds, nor what orders he will give, v. 15. That all is done by determination and with design, we are sure; but what is determined, and what designed, and when the plan was laid, we know not. God often causes the light of his cloud to shine; in the rainbow, so some; in the lightning, so others; but did we foresee, or could we foretell, when he would do it? If we foresee the change of weather a few hours before, by vulgar observation, or when second causes have begun to work by the weatherglass, yet how little do these show us of the purposes of God by these changes! (2.) We know not how the clouds are poised in the air, the balancing of them, which is one of the wondrous works of God. They are so balanced, so spread, that they never rob us of the benefit of the sun; even the cloudy day is day: so balanced, that they do not fall at once, or burst into cataracts or waterspouts: the rainbow is an intimation of God's favour in balancing the clouds, so as to keep them from drowning the world. Nay, so are they balanced, that they impartially distribute their showers on the earth, so that, one time or other, every place has its share. (3.) We know not how the comfortable change comes, when the winter is past, v. 17. [1.] How the weather becomes warm, after it has been cold. We know how our garment came to be warm upon us, that is, how we come to be warm in our clothes, by reason of the warmth of the air we breathe in. Without God's blessing, we should clothe us, yet not be warm, Hag. i. 6. But when he so orders it, the clothes are warm upon us, which, in the extremity of cold weather, would not serve to keep us warm. [2.] How it becomes calm, after it has been stormy; he quiets the earth by the south-wind, when the spring comes. As he has a blustering, freezing, north-wind, so he has a thawing, composing, south-wind; the Spirit is compared to both, because he both convinces and comforts, Cant. iv. 16.

II. That he had no share at all in the first making

of the world; (v. 18.) "Hast thou with him spread out the sky? Thou canst not pretend to have stretched it out without him, no nor to have stretched it out in conjunction with him, for he was far from needing any help, either in contriving or in working." The creation of the vast expanse of the

being to this day, is a glorious instance of the divine power, considering, 1. That, though it is fluid, yet it is firm. It is strong, and has its name from its stability. It still is what it was, and suffers no decay, nor shall the ordinances of heaven be altered, till the lease expires with time. 2. That, though it is large, it is bright and most curiously fine; it is a molten looking-glass, smooth and polished, and without the least flaw or crack. this, as in a looking-glass, we may behold the glory of God, and the wisdom of his handy-work, Ps. When we look up to heaven above, we should remember it is a mirror or looking-glass, not to show us our own faces, but to be a feint representation of the purity, dignity, and brightness of the upper world, and its glorious inhabitants.

III. That neither he nor they were able to speak

of the glory of God, in any proportion to the merit of the subject, v. 19, 20. 1. He challenges Job to be their director, if he durst undertake it. He speaks it ironically, "Teach us, if thou canst, what we shall say unto him. Thou hast a mind to reason with God, and wouldest have us to contend with him on thy behalf; teach us, then, what we shall say; canst thou see further into this abyss than we can? If thou canst, favour us with the discoveries, furnish us with instructions." 2. He owns his own insufficiency, both in speaking to God, and in speaking of him; "We cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. Note, The best of men are much in the dark concerning the glorious perfections of the divine nature, and the administrations of the divine government. They that through grace know much of God, know little, nothing, in comparison with what is to be known, and what will be known, when that which is perfect is come, and the veil When we would speak of God, we shall be rent. speak confusedly and with great uncertainty, and are soon at a loss, and run a-ground, not for want of matter, but for want of words. As we must always begin with fear and trembling, lest we speak amiss, (De Deo etiam vera dicere periculosum est-Even while affirming what is true concerning God, we incur risk,) so we must conclude with shame and blushing, for having spoken no better. Elihu himself had, for his part, spoken well on God's behalf, and yet is far from expecting a fee, or thinking that God was beholden to him for it, or that he was fit to be standing counsel for him, that (1.) He is even ashamed of what he has said; not of the cause, but of his own management of it. Shall it be told him that I speak? Shall it be reported to him as a meritorious piece of service, worthy his notice? By no means, let it never be spoken of, for he fears that the subject has suffered by his undertaking it, as a fine face is wronged by a bad painter, and his performance is so far from meriting thanks, that it needs pardon. When we have done all we can for God, we must acknowledge that we are unprofitable servants, and have nothing at all to boast of. He is afraid of saying any more. If a man speak, if he undertake to plead, for God, much more, if he offers to plead against him, surely he shall be swallowed up. If he speak presumptuously, God's wrath shall soon consume him; but if ever so well, he will soon lose himself in the mystery, and be overpowered by the divine lustre. Astonishment will strike him blind and dumb.

21. And now *men* see not the bright light which is in the clouds; but the wind passeth and cleanseth them. 22. Fair weather **co**meth out of the north: with God *is* terrible majesty. 23. Touching the Almighty, we power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice: he will not afflict. 24. Men do therefore fear him: he respecteth not any that are wise of heart.

Elihu here concludes his discourse with some short, but great, sayings concerning the glory of God, as that which he was himself possessed, and desired to possess others, with a holy awe of. He speaks concisely, and in haste, because, it should seem, he perceived that God was about to take the work into his own hands.

1. He observes, that God, who has said that he will dwell in the thick darkness, and make that his pavilion, (2 Chron. vi. 1. Ps. xviii. 11.) is in that awful chariot advancing toward them, as if he were preparing his throne for judgment, surrounded with clouds and darkness, Ps. xevii. 2..9. He saw the cloud, with a whirlwind in the bosom of it, coming out of the south; but now it hung so thick, so black, over their heads, that they could none of them see the bright light, which just before was in the clouds. The light of the sun was now eclipsed; this reminded him of the darkness, by reason of which he could not speak, (v. 19.) and made him afraid to go on, v. 20. Thus the disciples feared when they entered into a cloud, Luke ix. 34. Yet he looks to the north, and sees it clear that way, which gives him hope that the clouds are not gathering for a deluge; they are covered, but not surrounded, with them. He expects that the wind will pass, (so it may be read,) and cleanse them; such a wind as p ssed over the earth, to clear it from the waters of Noah's flood; (Gen. viii. 1.) in token of the return of God's favour; and then fair weather will come out of the north, (v. 22.) and all will be well. God will not always frown, nor contend for ever.

2. He hastens to conclude, now that God is about to speak; and therefore delivers much in a few words, as the sum of all that he had been discoursing of, which, if duly considered, would not only clench the nail he had been driving, but make

way for what God would say.

(1.) That with God is terrible majesty. He is a God of glory, and such transcendent perfection as cannot but strike an awe upon all his attendants, and a terror upon all his adversaries. With God is terrible praise; so some; for he is fearful in praises, Exod. xv. 11.

(2.) That when we speak touching the Almighty, we must own that we cannot find him out; our finite understandings cannot comprehend his infinite perfections. Can we put the sea into an egg-shell? We cannot trace the steps he takes in his provi-

dence. His way is in the sea.
(3.) That he is excellent in power. It is the excellency of his power, that he can do whatever he pleases, in heaven and earth. The universal extent and irresistible force of his power, are the excellency of it; no creature has an arm like him, so

long, so strong.

(4.) That he is no less excellent in wisdom and righteousness; in judgment and plenty of justice; else there would be little excellency in his power. We may be sure that he who can do every thing, will do every thing for the best, for he is infinitely wise; and will not in any thing do wrong, for he is infinitely just. When he executes judgments upon sinners, yet there is plenty of justice in it, and he inflicts not more than they deserve.

(5.) That he will not afflict, that is, he will not afflict willingly; it is no pleasure to him to grieve the children of men, much less his own children. He never afflicts but when there is cause, and when there is need, and he does not overburthen us with cannot find him out: he is excellent in affliction, but considers our frame. Some read it thus: "The Almighty, whom we cannot find out, is great in power, but he will not afflict in judgment, and with him is plenty of justice, nor is he extreme

to mark what we do amiss."

(6.) He values not the censures of those that are wise in their own conceit; He respecteth them not, v. 24. He will not alter his counsels to oblige them, nor can those that prescribe to him prevail with him to do as they would have him do. He regards the prayer of the humble, but not the policies of the craftv. No, the foolishness of God is wiser than men, 1 Cor. i. 25.

Lastly, From all this it is easy to infer, that, since God is great, he is greatly to be feared; nay, because he is gracious, and will not afflict, men do therefore fear him, for there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared, Ps. cxxx. 4. It is the duty and interest of all men to fear God. Men shall fear him; so some. Sooner or later, they shall fear him. They that will not fear the Lord and his goodness, shall for ever tremble under the pourings out of the vials

of his wrath.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

In most disputes, the strife is, who shall have the last word. Job's friends had, in this controversy, tamely yielded it to Job, and then he to Elihu. But, after all the wranglings of the counsel at bar, the Judge upon the bench must have the last word; so God had here, and so he will have in every controversy, for every man's judgment proceeds from him, and by his definitive sentence every man must stand or fall, and every cause be won or lost. Job had often appealed to God, and had talked boldly how he would order his cause before him, and as a prince would be go near upto him; but when God and as a prince would be go near unto him; but when God took the throne, Job had nothing to say in his own defence, but was silent before him. It is not so easy a matter as some think it, to contest with the Almighty, Job's friends had sometimes appealed to God too; Oh that God would speak! ch. xi. 5. And now, at length, God does speak, when Joh, by Elihu's clear and close arguings, was mollified a little, and mortified, and so prepared to hear what God had to say. It is the office of ministers to prepare the way of the Lord. That which the great God designs in this discourse, is, to humble Job, and bring him to repent of, and to recant, his passionate, indecent, expressions concerning God's providential dealings with him; and this he does by calling upon Job to compare God's eternity with his own time, God's omniscience with his own ignorance, and God's omnipo-tence with his own impotence. I. He begins with an awakening challenge and demand in general, v. 2, 3. II. He proceeds in divers particular instances and proofs of Job's utter inability to contend with God, because of of Job's utter mainty to contend with God, because of this ignorance and weakness; for, 1. He knew nothing of the founding of the earth, v. 4..7. 2. Nothing of the limiting of the sea, v. 8..11. 3. Nothing of the morning-light, v. 12..15. 4. Nothing of the dark recesses of the sea and earth, v. 16..21. 5. Nothing of the springs in the clouds, (v. 22..27.) nor the secret counsels by which they are directed. 6. He could do nothing toward the production of the rain or forst or lightlings (v. 28..80). they are directed. 5. He could no hotting toward the production of the rain, or frost, or lightning; (v. 28... 30, 34, 35, 37, 38.) nothing toward the directing of the stars and their influences; (v. 31...33.) nothing toward the making of his own soul, v. 36. And, lastly, he could not provide for the lions and the ravens, v. 39... 41. If, in these ordinary works of nature, Job was puzzled, how durst he pretend to dive into the counsels of God's government, and to judge of them? In this, (as Bishop Patrick observes,) God takes up the argument begun by Elihu, (who came nearest to the truth,) and prosecutes it in inimitable words, excelling his, and all other men's, in the loftiness of the style, as much as thunder does a whisper.

t. THEN the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said a Wil of the whirlwind, and said, 2. Who us this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? 3. Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.

Let us observe here.

1. Who speaks; The Lord Jehovah, not a created angel, but the Eternal Word himself, the second person in the blessed Trinity, for it is he by whom the worlds were made, and that was no other than the Son of God. The same speaks here that afterward spake from mount Sinai. Here he begins with the creation of the world, there with the redemption of Israel out of Egypt, and from both is inferred the necessity of our subjection to him. Elihu had said, God speaks to men, and they do not per ceive it; (ch. xxxiii. 14.) but this they could not but

perceive, and yet we have a more sure word of prophecy, 2 Pet. i. 19.
2. When he spake; Then: when they had all had their saying, and yet had not gained their point. then it was time for God to interpose, whose judgment is according to truth. When we know not who is in the right, and perhaps are doubtful whether we ourselves are, this may satisfy us, That God will determine shortly in the valley of decision, Joel iii. 14. Job had silenced his three friends, and yet could not convince them of his integrity in the main; Elihu had silenced Job, and yet could not bring him to acknowledge his mismanagement of this dispute; but now God comes, and does both; convinces Job, first, of his unadvised speaking, and makes him cry, Peccavi-I have done wrong; and, having humbled him, he puts honour upon him, by convincing his three friends that they had done him wrong. These two things God will, sooner or later, do for his people; he will show them their faults, that they may be themselves ashamed of them, and he will show others their righteousness, and bring it forth as the light, that they may be ashamed of their unjust censures of them.

3. How he spake; Out of the whirlwind, the rolling and involving cloud, which Elihu took notice of, ch. xxxvii. 1, 2, 9. A whirlwind prefaced Ezekiel's vision, (Ezek. i. 4.) and Elijah's, 1 Kings xix. 11. God is said to have his way in the whirlwind, (Nah. i. 3.) and, to show that even the stormy wind fulfils his word, here it was made the vehicle of it. This shows what a mighty voice God's is, that it was not lost, but perfectly audible, even in the noise of a whirlwind. Thus God designed to startle Job, and to command his attention. Sometimes God answers his own people in terrible corrections, as out of the whirlwind, but always in

righteousness.

4. To whom he spake; He answered Job, directed his speech to him, to convince him of what was amiss, before he cleared him from the unjust aspersions cast upon him. It is God only that can effectually convince of sin; and those shall so be humbled, whom he designs to exalt. Those that desire to hear from God, as Job did, shall certainly hear from

him at length.

5. What he said; We may conjecture that Elihu, or some other of the auditory, wrote down verbatim what was delivered out of the whirlwind, for we find, (Rev. x. 4.) that, when the thunders uttered their voices, John was prepared to write. Or, if it was not written then, yet, the penman of the book being inspired by the Holy Ghost, we are sure that we have here a very true and exact report of what was said; The Spirit (says Christ) shall bring to your remembrance, as he did here, what I have said to you.

The preface is very searching.

(1.) God charges him with ignorance and presumption in what he had said; (v. 2.) "Who is this that talks at this rate? Is it Job? What, a man? That weak, foolish, despicable creature—shall he pretend to prescribe to me what I must do, or to quarrel with me for what I have done? Is it Job' What! my servant Job, a perfect and an upright

man? Can he so far forget himself, and act unlike | himself? Who, where, is he that darkens counsel thus by words without knowledge? Let him show his fice if he dare, and stand to what he has said." Note, Darkening the counsels of God's wisdom with our folly, is a great affront and provocation to God. Concerning God's counsels, we must own that we are without knowledge. They are a deep which we cannot fathom; we are quite out of our element, out of our aim, when we pretend to account for them. Yet we are too apt to talk of them as if we understood them, with a great deal of niceness and boldness: but, alas! we do but darken them, instead of explaining them; we confound and perplex ourselves and one another, when we dispute of the order of God's decrees, and the designs, and reasons, and methods, of his operations of providence and grace. A humble faith and sincere obedience shall see further and better into the secret of the Lord, than all the philosophy of their schools, and the searches of science so called. This first word which God spake is the more observable, because Job, in his repentance, fastens upon it as that which succeeded to humble him, ch. xlii. 3. This he repeated and echoed to, as the arrow that stuck fast in him; "I am the fool that have darkened counsel." There was some colour to have turned it upon Elihu, as if God meant him, for he spake last, and was speaking when the whirlwind began; but Job applied it to himself, as it becomes us to do, when faithful reproofs are given, and not (as most do) to billet them upon other people.

(2.) He challenges him to give such proofs of his knowledge as would serve to justify his inquiries into the divine counsels; (v. 3.) "Gird up now thy loins like a stout man; prepare thyself for the encounter; I will demand of thee, will put some questions to thee; and answer me, if thou canst, before I answer thine." Those that go about to call God to an account, must expect to be catechised and called to an account themselves, that they may be made sensible of their ignorance and arrogance. God here puts Job in mind of what he had said, (ch. xiii. 22.) Call thou, and I will answer: "Now make thy words good."

4. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. 5. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? 6. Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner-stone thereof, When the morning-stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? 8. Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth as if it had issued out of the womb? 9. When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling-band for it, 10. And brake up for it my decreed *place*, and set bars and doors, 11. And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?

For the humbling of Job, God here shows him his ignorance, even concerning the earth and the Though so near, though so bulky, yet he could give no account of their origination; much ess of heaven above or hell beneath, which are at such a distance, or of the several parts of matter which are so minute, and then, least of all, of the divine counsels.

I. Concerning the founding of the earth. If he have such a mighty insight, as he pretends to have, into the counsels of God, let him give some account of the earth he goes upon, which is given to the children of men.

1. Let him tell where he was when this lower world was made, and whether he was advising or assisting in that wonderful work; (v. 4.) "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Thy pretensions are high; canst thou pretend to this? Wast thou present when the world was made?" See here, (1.) The greatness and glory of God; I laid the foundations of the earth. This proves him to be the only living and true God, and a God of power, (Isa. xl. 21. Jer. x. 11, 12.) and encourages us to trust in him at all times, Isa. li. 13, 16. (2.) The meanness and contemptibleness of man; "Where wast thou then? Thou that hast made such a figure among the children of the east, and settest up for an oracle, and a judge of the divine counsels, where wast thou when the foundations of the earth were laid?" So far were we from having any hand in the creation of the world, which might entitle us to a dominion in it, or so much as being witnesses of it, by which we might have gained an insight into it, that we were not then in being. The first man was not, much less were we. It is the honour of Christ that he was present when this was done; (Prov. viii. 22, &c. John i. 1, 2.) but we are of yesterday, and know nothing. Let us not, therefore, find fault with the works of God, nor prescribe to him. He did not consult us in making the world, and yet it is well made; why should we expect, then, that he should take his measures from us in governing it?

2. Let him describe how this world was made, and give a particular account of the manner in which this strong and stately edifice was formed and erected; "Declare, if thou hast so much understanding as thou fanciest thyself to have, what were the advances of that work?" Those that pretend to have understanding above others, ought to give proof of it; show me thy faith by thy works, thy knowledge by thy words. Let Job declare, if

he can,

(1.) How the world came to be so finely framed, with so much exactness, and such an admirable symmetry and proportion of all the parts of it; (v. 5.) "Stand forth, and tell who laid the measures thereof, and stretched out the line upon it. Wast thou the architect that formed the model, and then drew the dimensions by rule according to it? The vast bulk of the earth is moulded as regularly as if it had been done by line and measure; but who can describe how it was cast into this figure? Who can determine its circumference and diameter, and all the lines that are drawn on the terrestrial globe? It is to this day a dispute whether the earth stands still or turns round;* how then can we determine by what measures it was first formed?

(2.) How it came to be so firmly fixed. Though it is hung upon nothing, yet it is established, that it cannot be moved; but who can tell upon what the foundations of it are fastened, that it may not sink with its own weight, or who laid the corner stone thereof, that the parts of it may not fall asunder? v. 6. What God does, it shall be for ever; (Eccl. iii. 14.) and therefore, as we cannot find fault with God's work, so we need not be in fear concerning it; it will last, and answer the end, the works of his providence, as well as the work of creation; the measures of neither can ever be broken; and the work of redemption is no less firm, of which Christ himself is both the Foundation and the Corner-stone. The church stands as fast as the earth.

^{*} Such a dispute, in the present day, scarcely exists, even among the vulgar.-Ep.

3. Let him repeat, if he can, the songs of praise | which were sung at that solemnity; (v. 7.) when the morning-stars sang together, the blessed angels, (the First-born of the Father of light,) who, in the morning of time, shone bright as the morning-star, going immediately before the light which God commanded to shine out of darkness upon the seeds of this lower world, the earth, which was without form and void. They were the sons of God, who shouted for joy, when they saw the foundations of the earth laid, because, though it was not made for them, but for the children of men, and though it would increase their work and service, yet they knew that the Eternal Wisdom and Word, whom they were to worship, (Heb. i. 6.) would rejoice in the habitable parts of the earth, and that much of his delight would be in the sons of men, Prov. viii. The angels are called the sons of God, because they bear much of his image, are with him in his house above, and serve him as a son does his father. Now observe here, (1.) The glory of God, as the Creator of the world, is to be celebrated with joy and triumph by all his reasonable creatures; for they are qualified and appointed to be the collectors of his praises from the inferior creatures, who can praise him merely as objects that exemplify his workmanship. (2.) The work of angels is to praise God; the more we abound in holy, humble, thankful, joyful praise, the more we do the will of God as they do it; and whereas we are so barren and defective in praising God, it is a comfort to think that they are doing it in a better manner. (3.) They were unanimous in singing God's praises: they sang together with one accord, and there was no jar in their harmony. The sweetest concerts are in praising God. (4.) They all did it, even those who afterward fell, and left their first estate; even those who have praised God may, by the deceicful power of sin, be brought to blaspheme him, and yet God will be eternally praised.

II. Concerning the limiting of the sea to the place appointed for it, v. 8, &c. This refers to the third day's work, when God said, (Gen. i. 9.) Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one filace, and it was so. 1. Out of the great deep or chaos, in which earth

1. Out of the great deep or chaos, in which earth and water were internixed, in obedience to the divine command, the waters break forth like a child out of the teening womb, v. 8. Then the waters that had covered the deep, and stood above the mountains, retired with precipitation; at God's re-

buke they fled, Ps. civ. 6, 7.

2. This new-born babe is clothed and swaddled, v. 9. The cloud is made the garment thereof, with which it is covered, and thick darkness (that is, shores vastly remote and distant from one another, and quite in the dark one to another) is a swaddling-band for it. See with what ease the great God manages the raging sea; notwithstanding the violence of its tides, and the strength of its billows, he manages it as the nurse does the child in swaddling-clothes. It is not said, He made rocks and mountains its swaddling-bands, but clouds and darkness; something that we are not aware of, and would think least likely for such a purpose.

3. There is a cradle, too, provided for this babe; I brake uh for it my decreed place, v. 10. Valleys were sunk for it in the earth, capacious enough to receive it, and there it is hid to sleep; if it be sometimes tossed with winds, that (as Bishop Patrick observes) is but the rocking of the cradle, which makes it sleep the fister. As for the sea, so for every one of us, there is a decreed place; for he that determined the times before appointed, deter-

mined also the bounds of our habitation.

4. This babe being made unruly and dangerous by the sin of man, which was the original of all un-

quietness and danger in this lower world, there is also a prison provided for it; bars and doors are set, And it is said to it, by way of check to its insolence, Hutherto shalt thou come, but no further. The sea is God's, for he made it, he restrains it; he says to it, Here shall thy proud waves be stayed, v. 11. This may be considered as an act of God's power over the sea; though it is so vast a body, and though its motion is sometimes extremely violent, yet God has it under cheek; its waves rise no higher, its tides roll no further, than God permits; and it is mentioned as a reason why we should stand in awe of God, (Jer. v. 22.) and yet why we should encourage ourselves in him; for he that stops the noise of the sea, even the noise of her waves, can, when he pleases, still the tumult of the people, Ps. lxv. 7. It is also to be looked upon as an act of God's mercy to the world of mankind, and an instance of his patience toward that provoking race; though he could easily cover the earth again with the waters of the sea, (and, methinks, every flowing tide twice a-day threatens us, and shows what the sea could do, and would do, if God would give it leave,) yet he restrains them, being not willing that any should perish, and having reserved the world that now is, unto fire, 2 Pet. iii. 7.

12. Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the day-spring to know his place; 13. That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, that the wicked might be shaken out of it! 14. It is turned as clay to the seal; and they stand as a garment. 15. And from the wicked their light is withholden, and the high arm shall be broken. 16. Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? 18. Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? declare, if thou knowest it all. 19. Where is the way where light dwelleth? and as for darkness, where is the place thereof, 20. That thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof, and that thou shouldest know the paths to the house thereof! 21. Knowest thou it, because thou wast then born? or because the number of thy days is great? 22. Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow, or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, 23. Which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war? 24. By what way is the light parted, which scattereth the east wind upon the earth?

The Lord here proceeds to ask Job many confounding questions, to convince him of his ignerance, and so to shame him for his folly in prescribing to God. If we will but try ourselves with such interrogatories as these, we shall soon be brought to own that what we know is nothing in comparison with what we know not.

Job is here challenged to give an account of six

tnings

I. Of the springs of the morning, the day-spring from on high, v. 12...15. As there is no visible being of which we may be more firmly assured that

it is, so there is none which we are more puzzled | in describing, nor more doubtful in determining what it is, than the light. We welcome the morning, and are glad of the day-spring; but, 1. It is not commanded since our days, but what it is, it was long before we were born, so that it was neither made by us, nor designed primarily for us, but we take it as we find it, and as the many generations had it that went before us. The day-spring knew its place before we knew ours, for we are but of vesterday. 2. It was not we, it was not any man, that commanded the morning-light at first, or appointed the place of its springing up and shining forth, or the time of it. The constant and regular succession of day and night, was no contrivance of ours, it is the glory of God that it shows, and his handy-work, not ours, Ps. xix. 1, 2. 3. It is quite out of our power to alter this course; "Hast thou countermanded the morning since thy days? Hast thou at any time raised the morning light sooner than its appointed time, to serve thy purpose, when thou hast waited for the morning; or ordered the day-spring for thy convenience to any other place than its own? No, never. Why then wilt thou pretend to direct the divine counsels, or expect to have the methods of Providence altered in favour of thee?" We may as soon break the covenant of the day and of the night, as any part of God's coven int with his people, and particularly that, I will chasten them with the rod of men. 4. It is God that has appointed the day-spring to visit the earth, and diffuses the morning-light through the air, which receives it as readily as the clay does the seal, (v. 14.) immediately admitting the impressions of it, so as of a sudden to be all over enlightened by it, as the seal stamps its image on the wax; and they stand as a garment, or as if they were clothed with a garment. The earth puts on a new face every morning, and dresses itself as we do, puts on light as a garment, and is then to be seen.

5. This is made a terror to earl-doors. Nothing is more comfortable to mankind than the light of the morning; it is pleasant to the eyes, it is serviceable to life and the business of it, and the favour of it is universally extended, for it takes hold of the ends of the earth; and we should dwell, in our hymns to the light, on its advantages to the earth; but God here observes how unwell one it is to those that do evil, and therefore hate the light. God makes the light a minister of his justice, as well as of his mercy; it is designed to shake the wicked out of the earth, and for that purpose it takes hold of the ends of it, as we take hold of the ends of a garment to shake the dust and moths out of it. Job had observed what a terror the morning-light is to criminals, because it discovers them, (ch. xxiv. 13, &c.) and God here seconds the observation, and asks him, whether the world was indebted to him for that kindness? No, the great Judge of the world sends forth the beams of the morning-light, as his messengers to detect criminals, that they may not only be defeated in their purposes, and put to shame, but that they may be brought to condign punishment, (v. 15.) that their light may be withholden from them, that is, that they may lose their comfort, their confidence, their liberties, their lives, and that their high arm, which they have lifted up against God and man, may be broken, and they deprived of their power to do mischief. Whether what is here said of the morning-light, was designed to represent, as in a figure, the light of the gospel of Christ, and to give a type of it, I will not say; but I am sure it may serve to put us in mind of the encomiums given to the gospel just at the rising of its morning-star, by Zecharias, (Luke i. 78.) By the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high has visited us, to give light to them that sit

in darkness, whose hearts are turned to it as clay to the seal, 2 Cor. iv. 6. The virgin Mary too, (Luke i. 51.) shows that God, in his gospel, has showed strength with his arm, scattered the proud, and put down the mighty, by that light which he designed to shake the wicked, to shake wickedness itself out of the earth, and break its high arm.

II. Of the springs of the sea; (v. 16.) "Hast the. entered into them, or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? Knowest thou what lies in the bettem of the sea, the treasures there hid in the sands? Or canst thou give an account of the rise and original of the waters of the sea? Vapours are continually exhibed out of the sea. Dost thou know how the recruits are raised, by which it is continually supplied? Rivers are constantly poured into the sea Dost thou know how they are continually discharged, so as not to overflow the earth? Art thou acquainted with the secret subterraneous passages by which the waters circulate?" God's way, in the government of the world, is said to be in the sea, and in the great waters, (Ps. 1xxvii. 19.) intimating that it is hid from us, and not to be pried into by us.

III. Of the gates of death; Have those been often to thee? v. 16. Death is a grand secret. 1. We know not beforeh ind when and how, and by what means, we'or others shall be brought to death; by what road we must go the way whence we shall not return; what dise use or what disaster will be the door to let us into the house appointed for all living; Man knows not his time. 2. We cannot describe what death is, how the knot is untied between body and soul, nor how the spirit of a man goes upward, (Eccl. iii. 21.) to be we know not what, and live we know not how, as Mr. Norris expresses it; with what dreadful curiosity (says he) does the soul launch out into the vast ocean of eternity, and resign to an untried abyss! Let us make it sure that the gates of heaven shall be opened to us on the other side death, and then we need not fear the opening of the gates of death, though it is a way we are to go but once. 3. We have no correspondence at all with separate souls, nor any acquain-tance with their state. It is an unknown, undiscovered, region to which they are removed, we can neither hear from them, nor send to them. While we are here in a world of sense, we speak of the world of spirits, as blind men do of colours, and when we remove thither, shall be amazed to find how much we are mistaken.

IV. Of the breadth of the earth; (v. 18.) Hast thou perceived that? The knowledge of this might seem most level to him, and within his reach; yet he is challenged to declare this, if he can. We have our residence on the earth, God has given it to the children of men; but who ever surveyed it, or could give an account of the number of its acres? It is but a point to the universe; yet, small as it is, we cannot be exact in declaring the dimensions of it. Job had never sailed round the world, nor any before him; so little did men know the breadth of the earth, that it was but a few ages ago that the vast continent of America was discovered, which had, time out of mind, lain hid. The divine perfec tion is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea; it is therefore presumption for us, who perceive not the breadth of the earth, to dive into the depth of God's counsels.

V. Of the place and way of light and darsknes. Of the day-spring he had spoken before, (v. 12.) and he returns to speak of it again; (v. 19.) Where is the way where light dwells? And again, (v. 24.) By what way is the light parted? He challenges him to describe,

1. How the light and darkness were at first made; when God, in the beginning, first spread darkness upon the face of the deep, and afterward commanded the light to shine out of darkness, by that might

word, Let there be light, was Job a witness to the order, to the operation? can he tell where the fountains of light and darkness are, and where those mighty princes keep their courts distinct, while in one world they rule alternately? Though we long ever so much either for the shining forth of the morning, or the shadows of the evening, we know not whither to send, or go, to fetch them, nor can tell the paths to the house thereof, v. 20. We were not then born, nor is the number of our days so great, that we can describe the birth of that firstborn of the visible creation, v. 21. Shall we then undertake to discourse of God's counsels, which were from eternity, or to find out the paths to the house thereof, to solicit for the alteration of them? God glories in it, that he forms the light and creates the darkness; and, if we must take those as we find them, take those as they come, and quarrel with neither, but make the best of both, then we must, in like manner, accommodate ourselves to the peace and the evil which God likewise created, Isa, xlv. 7.

2. How they still keep their turns interchangeably. It is God that makes the outgoings of the morning and of the evening to rejoice; (Ps. lxv. 8.) for it is his order, and no order of ours, that is executed by the outgoings of the morning-light, and the darkness of the night. We cannot so much as tell whence they come, or whither they go, (v. 24.) By what way is the light parted in the morning, when, in an instant, it shoots itself into all parts of the air above the horizon, as if the morning-light flew upon the wings of an east-wind, so swiftly, so strongly, as it carried, scattering the darkness of the night, as the east-wind does the clouds? Hence we read of the wings of the morning, (Ps. cxxxix. 9.) on which the light is conveyed to the uttermost parts of the sea, and scattered like an east-wind upon the earth. It is a marvellous change, that passes over us every morning by the return of the light, and every evening by the return of the darkness; but we expect them, and so they are no surprise or uneasiness to us. If we would, in like manner, count upon changes in our outward condition, we should neither in the brightest noon count upon perpetual day, nor in the darkest midnight despair of the return of the morning. God has set the one over against the other, like the day and night; and so must we, Eccl. vii. 14.

VI. Of the treasures of the snow and hail; (v. 22, 23.) "Hast thou entered into those, and taken a view of them?" In the clouds the snow and hail are generated, and thence they come in such abundance, that one would think there were treasures of them laid up in store there, whereas indeed they are produced extempore, as I may say, and pro re nata—on the occasion. Sometimes they come so opportunely, to serve the purposes of Providence, in God's fighting for his people, and against his and their enemies, that one would think they were laid up as magazines, or stores of arms, ammunition, and provisions, against the time of trouble, the day of battle and war; when God will either contend with the world in general, as in the deluge, when the windows of heaven were opened, and the waters fetched out of these treasures to drown a wicked world, that waged war with Heaven, or with some particular persons or parties, as when God out of these treasures fetched great hail-stones wherewith to fight against the Canaanites, Josh. x. 11. See what folly it is to strive against God, who is thus prepared for battle and war, and how much it is our interest to make our peace with him, and to keep ourselves in his love! God can fight as effec-tually with snow and hail, if he pleases, as with thunder and lightning, or the sword of an angel.

the overflowing of waters; or a way for the lightning of thunder; 26. To cause it to rain on the earth, where no man is; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man; 27. To satisfy the desolate and waste ground, and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth! 28. Hath the rain a father! or who hath begotten the drops of dew! 29. Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it? 30. The waters are hid as with a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen. 31. Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? 32, Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? 33. Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth? 34. Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee ? 35. Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are? 36. Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart? 37. Who can number the clouds in wisdom? or who can stay the bottles of heaven, 38. When the dust groweth into hardness, and the clods cleave fast together? 39. Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion? or fill the appetite of the young lions, 40. When they couch in their dens, and abide in the covert to lie in wait? 41. Who provide the for the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat.

Hitherto, God had put such questions to Job, as were proper to convince him of his ignorance and short-sightedness. Now, he comes, in the same manner, to show his impotency and weakness. As it is but little that he knows, and therefore he ought not to arraign the divine counsels, so it is but little that he can do, and therefore he ought not to oppose the proceedings of Providence. Let him consider what great things God does, and try whether he can do the like, or whether he thinks himself an equal match for him.

I. God has thunder, and lightning, and rain, and frost, at command, but Job has not, and therefore let him not dare to compare with God, or to contest with him. Nothing is more uncertain than what weather it shall be, nor more out of our reach to appoint; it shall be what weather pleases God, not what pleases us, unless, as becomes us, whatever pleases God, pleases us. Concerning this, observe

here,
1. How great God is. (1.) He has a sovereign dominion over the waters, has appointed them their course, even then when they seem to overflow, and to be from under his check, \dot{v} . 25. He has divided a water-course, directs the rain where to fall, even when the shower is most violent, with as much certainty as if it were conveyed by canals or conduit-pipes. Thus the hearts of kings are said to be in God's hand; and, as the rains, those rivers of God, he turns them whithersoever he will. Every drop 25. Who hath divided a water-course for | goes as it is directed. God has sworn, that the wa-

ters of Noah shall no more return to cover the earth; and we see that he is able to make good what he has promised, for he has the rain in a water-course. (2.) He has dominion over the lightning and the thunder, which go not at random, but in the way that he directs them. They are mentioned here, because he prepares the lightnings for the rain, Ps. exxxv. 7. Let not those that fear God, be afraid of the lightning or the thunder, for they are not blind bullets, but go the way that God himself directs them, who means no hunt to them. (3.) In directing the course of the rain, he does not neglect the wilderness, the desert land, (v. 26, 27.) where no man is: [1.] No man to be employed in taking care of the productions. God's providence reaches further than man's industry; if he had not more kindness for many of the inferior creatures than man has, it would go ill with them. God can make the earth fruitful, without any art or pains of ours; (Gen. ii. 5, 6.) when there was not a man to till the ground, yet there went up a mist, and watered it. But we cannot make it fruitful without God, it is he that gives the increase. [2.] Where there is no man to be provided for, or to take the benefit of the fruits that are produced. Though God does with very peculiar favour visit and regard man, yet he does not overlook the inferior creatures, but causes the bud of the tender herb to spring forth for food for all flesh, as well as for he service of man. Even the wild asses shall have their thirst quenched, Ps. civ. 11. God has enough for all, and wonderfully provides even for those creatures that man neither has service from, nor makes provision for. (4.) He is, in a sense, the Father of the rain, v. 28. It has no other father. He produces it by his power, he governs and directs it, and makes what use he pleases of it. Even the small drops of the dew he distils upon the earth, as the God of nature, and, as the God of grace, rains righteousness upon us, and is himself as the dew unto Israel; see Hos. xiv. 5, 6. Mic. v. 7. (5.) The ice and the frost, by which the waters are congealed, and the earth incrustated, are produced by his providence, v. 29, 30. These are very common things, which lessens the strangeness of them. But, considering what a change is made by them in a very little time, how the waters are hid as with a stone, as with a grave-stone, laid upon them; (so thick, so strong, is the ice that covers them, and the face even of the deep is sometimes frozen;) we may well ask, "Out of whose womb came the ice? What created power could produce such a wonderful work?" No power but that of the Creator himself. Frost and snow come from him, and therefore should lead our thoughts and meditations to him who doeth such great things, past finding out. And we shall the more easily bear the inconveniencies of winter weather, if we learn to make this good use of it.

2. Observe, How weak man is; can he do such things as these? Could Job? No, v. 34, 35. (1.) He cannot command one shower of rain for the relief of himself or his friends; "Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, those bottles of heaven, that abundance of waters may cover thee, to water thy fields when they are dry and purched?" If we lift up our voice to God, to firay for rain, we may have it; (Zech. x. 1.) but if we lift up our voice to the clouds, to demand it, they will soon tell us they are not at our beck, and we shall go without it, Jer. xiv. 22. The heavens will not hear the earth, unless God hear them, Hos. ii. 21. See what poor, indigent, depending, creatures we are; we cannot do without rain, nor can we have it when we will. (2.) He cannot commission one flash of lightning, if he had a mind to make use of it for the terror of his enemies; (v. 35.) "Canst thou send lightnings, that they may | We did not make our own souls, nor can we de-

go on thine errand, and do the execution thou wish est for? Will they come at thy call, and say unto thee, Here we are?" No, the ministers of God's wrath will not be ministers of ours. Why should they, since the wrath of man works not the righle-ousness of God? See Luke ix. 55.

II. God has the stars of heaven under his command and cognizance; we have not. Our meditations are now to rise higher, far above the clouds, to the glorious lights above. He mentions, not the planets, which move in lower orbs, but the fixed stars, which are much higher. It is supposed that they have an influence upon this earth, notwithstanding their vast distance; not upon the minds of men, or the events of providence, (men's fate is not determined by their stars,) but upon the ordinary course of nature; they are set for signs and seas us, for days and years, Gen. i. 14. And if the stars have such a dominion over this earth, (v. 33.) though they have their place in the heavens, and are but mere matter, much more has He who is their Maker, and ours, and who is an Eternal Mind. Now see how weak we are, 1. We cannot alter the influences of the stars, (v. 31.) not theirs that are instrumental to produce the pleasures of the spring; Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?—the seven stars, that constellation which lies in so small a compass, (none in less,) and yet sheds very benign influences upon the earth. Nor can we alter theirs that introduce the rigour of the winter; Canst thou loose the bands of Orion?-that magnificent constellation which makes so great a figure, (none greater,) and dispenses rough and unpleasing influences, which we cannot control or Both summer and winter will have their course; God can change them when he pleases, can make the spring cold, and so bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, and the winter warm, and so loose the bands of Orion; but we cannot. 2. It is not in our power to order the motions of the stars. nor are we entrusted with the conduct of them. God, who calls the stars by their names, (Ps. cxlvii. 4.) calls them forth in their respective seasons, appoints them the time of their rising and setting; but this is not in our province, we cannot bring forth Mazzaroth—the stars in the southern signs, nor guide Arcturus—those in the northern, v. 32. God can bring forth the stars to battle, (as he did when in their courses they fought against Sisera,) and guide them in the attacks they are ordered to make; but man cannot do so. 3. We are not only unconcerned in the government of the stars, (the government they are under, and the government they are intrusted with, for they both rule and are ruled,) but utterly unacquainted with it; we know not the ordinances of heaven, v. 33. So far are we from being able to change them, that we can give no ac-Shall we count of them: they are a secret to us. then pretend to know God's counsels, and the reasons of them? If it were left to us to set the dominion of the stars upon the earth, we should soon be at a loss. Shall we then teach God how to

govern the world? III. God is the Author and Giver, the Father and Fountain, of all wisdom and understanding, v. The souls of men are nobler and more excellent beings than the stars of heaven themselves, and shine brighter. The powers and faculties of reason with which man is enducd, and the wenderful performances of thought, brings him into some alliance to the blessed angels; and whence comes this light. but from the Father of lights? Who else has put wisdom into the inward parts of man, and given understanding to the heart? 1. The rational scul itself, and its capacities, come from him as the God of nature, for he forms the spirit of man within him.

scribe how they act, or how they are united to our # bodies. He only, that made them, knows them, and knows how to manage them. He fashioneth men's hearts alike in some things, and yet unlike in others. 2. True wisdom, with its furniture and improvement, comes from him as the God of grace, and the Father of every good and perfect gift. Shall we pretend to be wiser than God, who have all our wisdom from him? Nay, shall we pretend to be wise above our sphere, and beyond the limits which he that gave us our understanding sets to it? He designed we should with it serve God, and do our duty, but never intended we should with it set up for directors of the stars or the lightning.

IV. God has the clouds under his cognizance and government, but so have not we, v. 37. Can any man, with all his wisdom, undertake to number the clouds? or (as it may be read) to declare and describe the nature of them? Though they are near us, in our own atmosphere, yet we know little more of them than of the stars which are at so great a distance. And when the clouds have poured down rain in abundance, so that the dust grows into solid mire, and the clods cleave fast together, (v. 38.) who can stay the bottles of heaven? Who can stop them, that it may not always rain? The power and goodness of God are herein to be acknowledged, that he gives the earth rain enough, but does not surfeit it; softens it, but does not drown it; makes it fit for the plough, but not unfit for the seed. we cannot command a shower of rain, so we cannot command a fair day, without God; so necessary, so constant, is our dependence upon him.

V. God provides food for the inferior creatures, and it is by his providence, not by any care or pains of ours, that they are fed. The following chapter is wholly taken up with the instances of God's power and goodness about animals; and therefore some transfer to it the three last verses of this chap-

ter, which speak of the provision made,

1. For the *lions*; (v. 39, 40.) "Thou dost not pretend that the clouds and stars have any dependence upon thee, for they are above thee; but, on the earth, thou thinkest thyself paramount, let us try that then; Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion? Thou valuest thyself upon thy possessions of cattle which thou wast once owner of, the oxen, and asses, and camels, that were fed at thy crib. thou undertake the maintenance of the lions, and the young lions, when they couch in their dens, waiting for a prey? No, thou needest not do it, they can shift for themselves without thee: thou canst not do it, for thou hast not wherewithal to satisfy them: thou darest not do it; shouldest thou come to feed them, they would be upon thee. But I do it." See the all-sufficiency of the Divine Providence: it has wherewithal to satisfy the desire of every living thing, even the most ravenous. See the bounty of the Divine Providence, that, wherever it has given life, will give livelihood, even to those creatures that are not only not serviceable, but dangerous, to man. And see its sovereignty, that it suffers some creatures to be killed for the support of other creatures: the harmless sheep are torn to pieces, to fill the appetite of the young lions, who vet sometimes are made to lack and suffer hunger, to punish them for their cruelty, while those that fear God want no good thing.

2. For the young ravens, v. 41. As ravenous beasts, so ravenous birds, are fed by the Divine Providence. Who but God provides for the raven his food? Man does not, he takes care only of those creatures that are, or may be, useful to him. But God has a regard to all the works of his hands, even the meanest and least valuable. The ravens, young ones, are in a special manner necessitous, and God here shows Job what little acquaintance he God supplies them, Ps. cxlvii. 9. God's feeding the had with the untamed creatures that run wild in the

fowls, especially these fowls, (Matth. vi. 26.) is an encouragement to us to trust him for our daily bread. See here, (1.) What distress the young ravens are often in; they wander for lack of meat. The old ones, they say, neglect them, and do not provide for them as other birds do for their young: and indeed those that are ravenous to others, are commonly barbarous to their own, and unnatural. (2.) What they are supposed to do in that distress; they cry, for they are noisy, clamorous, creatures, and this is interpreted a crying to God. It being the distress of nature, it is looked upon as directed to the God of nature. The putting of so favourable a construction as this upon the cries of the young ravens, may encourage us in our prayers, though we can but cry, Abba, Father. (3.) What God does for them; some way or other, he provides for them, so that they grow up, and come to maturity. And he that takes this care of the young ravens, certainly will not be wanting to his people, or theirs. This being but one instance of many of the divine compassion, may give us occasion to think how much good our God does, every day, beyond what we are aware of.

CHAP. XXXIX.

God proceeds here to show Job what little reason he had to charge him with unkindness, who was so compassionate to the inferior creatures, and took such a tender care of them; or to boast of himself, and his own good deeds before God, which were nothing to the divine mercies. He shows him also what great reason he had to be humble, who knew so little of the nature of the creatures about him, and had so little influence upon them, and to about nim, and had so little influence upon them, and to submit to that God on whom they all depend. He discourses particularly, I. Concerning the wild goats and the hinds, v. 1.. 4. II. Concerning the wild ass, v. 5.. 8. III. Concerning the unicorn, v. 9.. 12. IV. Concerning the peacock, v. 13. V. Concerning the ostrich, v. 13.. 18. VI. Concerning the horse, v. 19.. 25. VII. Concerning the hawk and the eagle, v. 26.. 30.

NOWEST thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth or canst thou mark when the hinds do calve? 2. Canst thou number the months *that* they fulfil; or knowest thou the time when they bring forth? 3. They bow themselves, they bring forth their young ones, they cast out their sorrows. 4. Their young ones are in good liking, they grow up with corn; they go forth, and return not unto them. 5. Who hath sent out the wild ass free? or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass? 6. Whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwellings. 7. He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver. 8. The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing. 9. Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? 10. Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? or will he harrow the vallies after thee? 11. Wilt thou trust him, because his strength is great? or wilt thou leave thy labour to him? 12. Wilt thou believe him, that he will bring home thy seed, and gather it into thy barn?

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deserts, and live at large, but are the care of the rate of things. (2.) Having no owner, he has no Divine Providence. As,

I. The wild goats and the hinds. That which is taken notice of concerning them, is, the bringing forth, and bringing up, of their young ones. For as every individual is fed, so every species of animals is preserved, by the care of the Divine Providence, and, for aught we know, none extinct to this

day. Observe here,

i. Concerning the production of their young. (1.) Man is wholly ignorant of the time when they bring forth, v. 1, 2. Shall we pretend to tell what is in the wenb of Providence, or what a day will bring forth, who know not the time of the pregnancy of a hind or a wild goat? (2.) Though they bring forth their young with a great deal of difficulty and sorrow, and have no assistance from man, yet, by the good providence of God, their young ones are safely produced, and their sorrows cast out and forgotten, v. 3. Some think it is intimated, (Ps. xxix. 9.) that God by thunder helps the hinds in calving. Let it be observed, for the comfort of women in labour, that God helps even the hinds to bring forth their young; and shall he not much more succour them, and save them in child-bearing, who are his children in covenant with him?

2. Concerning the growth of their young; (v. 4.) They are in good liking; though they are brought forth in sorrow, after their dams have suckled them a while, they shift for themselves in the corn-fields, and are no more burthensome to them, which is an example to children, when they are grown up, not to be always hanging upon their parents, and craving from them, but to put forth themselves to get their own livelihood, and to requite their parents.

II. The wild ass; a creature we frequently read of in scripture; some say, untameable. Man is said to be born as the wild ass's colt, so hard to be go-Three things Providence has allotted to the wild ass. 1. An unbounded liberty; (v. 5.) Who, but God, has sent out the wild ass free? He has given a disposition to it, and therefore a dispen-sation for it. The tame ass is bound to labour, the wild ass has no bonds on him. Note, Freedom from service, and liberty to range at pleasure, are but the privileges of a wild ass. It is a pity that any of the children of men should covet it, or value themselves on it. It is better to labour and be good for something, than ramble and be good for nothing. But if, among men, Providence sets some at liberty, and suffers them to live at ease, while others are doomed to servitude, we must not marvel at the matter, it is so among the brute-creatures. nnenclosed lodging; (v. 6.) whose house I have made the wilderness, where he has room enough to traverse his ways, and snuff up the wind at his pleasure, as the wild ass is said to do, (Jer. ii. 24.) as if he were to live upon the air, for it is the barren land that is his dwelling. Observe, The tame ass, that tabours, and is serviceable to man, has his master's crib to go to, both for shelter and food, and lives in a fruitful land: but the wild ass, that will have his liberty, must have it in a barren land. He that will not labour, let him not eat. He that will, shall eat the labour of his hands, and have also to give to him that needs. Jacob, the shepherd, has good red pottage to spare, when Esau, a sportsman, was ready to perish for hunger. A further description of the liberty and livelihood of the wild ass we have, v. 7, 8. (1.) He has no owner, nor will he be in subjection: he scorns the multitude of the city. If they attempt to take him, and, in order to that, surround him with a multitude, he will soon get clear of them, and the crying of the driver is nothing to him. He laughs at those that live in the tunnit and bustle of cities, (so Bishop Patrick,) thinking himself happier in the wilderness; and opinion is the rate of things. (2.) Having no owner, he has no feeder, nor is any provision made for him, but he must shift far himself; the range of the mountains is his pasture, and a bare pasture it is; there he searches here and there after a green thing, as he can find it and pick it up; whereas the labouring asses have green things in plenty, without their searching for them. From the untameableness of this and other creatures, we may infer how unfit we are to give law to Providence, who cannot give law even to a wild ass's colt.

III. The unicorn; *Rhem*; a strong creature, (Numb. xcii. 22.) a stately proud creature, Ps. lxiii. 10. He is able to serve, but not willing; and God here challenges Job to force him to it. Job expected every thing should be just as he would have it. "Since thou dost pretend" (says God) "to bring every thing beneath thy sway, begin with the unicorn, and try thy skill upon him. Now that thine oxen and asses are all gone, try whether he will be willing to serve thee in their stead, (v. 9.) and whether he will take up with the provision thou usest to make for them. Will he abide by thy crib? No," 1. "Thou canst not tame him, nor bind him with his band, nor set him to draw the harrow, There are creatures that are willing to serve man, and seem to take a pleasure in it, and to have a love for their masters; but there are such as will never be brought to it; and it is the effect of sin: m n is revolted from his subjection to his Maker, and is therefore justly punished with the revolt of the inferior creatures from their subjection to him; and yet, as an instance of God's good-will to man, there are some that are still serviceable to him. Though the wild bull (which some think is meant here by the unicorn) will not serve man, nor submit to his band in the furrows, yet there are tame bullocks that will, and other animals that are may have a property, for whom he provides, and to whose service he is entitled. Lord, what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him? 2. "Thou darest not trust him; though his strength is great, yet thou wilt not leave thy labour to him, as thou dost with thine asses or oxen, whom a little child may lead or drive, leaving to them all the pains. Thou wilt rever depend upon the wild bull, as likely to come to thy harvest-work, much less to go through it, to bring home thy seed, and gather it into thy barn," v. 11, 12. And, because he will not serve about the corn, he is not fed so well as the tame ox, whose mouth was not to be muzzled in treading out the corn; but therefore he will not draw the plough, because he that made him never designed him for it. A disposition to labour is as much the gift of God as an ability for it; and it is a great mercy, if, where God gives strength for service, he gives a heart; it is what we should pray for, and reason ourselves into, which the brutes cannot do; for, as among beasts, so among men, those may justly be reckoned wild and abandoned to the deserts, who have no mind either to take pains, or to do good.

13. Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks? or wings and feathers unto the ostrich? 14. Which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in the dust, 15. And forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. 16. She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers: her labour is in vain without fear; 17. Because God hath deprived her of wisdom.

mg. 18. What time she lifteth up herself on high, she scorneth the horse and his rider.

The ostrich is a wonderful animal, a very large bird, but it never flies. Some have called it a winged camel. God here gives an account of it, and observes,

I. Something that it has in common with the peacock, that is, beautiful feathers; (v. 13.) Gavest thou froud wings unto the freecocks? So some read it. Fine feathers make proud birds. The peacock is an emblem of pride; when he struts, and shows his fine feathers, Solomon, in all his glory, is not arrayed like him. The ostrich too has goodly feathers, and yet is a foolish bird; for wisdom does not always go along with beauty and gaiety. Other birds do not envy the peacock or the ostrich their gaudy colours, nor complain for want of them; why then should we repine, if we see others wear better clothes than we can afford to wear? God gives his gifts variously, and those gifts are not always the most valuable, that make the finest show. Who would not rather have the voice of the nightingale, than the tail of the peacock, the eye of the eagle, and her soaring wing, and the natural affection of the stork, than the beautiful wings and feathers of the ostrich, which can never rise above the earth, and is without natural affection?

II. Something that is peculiar to itself,

1. Carelessness of her young. It is well that this is peculiar to herself, for it is a very bad character. Observe, (1.) How she exposes her eggs; she does not retire to some private place, and make a nest there, as the sparrows and swallows do, (Ps. lxxxiv, 3.) and there lay eggs and her young. Most birds, as well as other animals, are strangely guided by natural instinct in providing for the preservation of their young. But the ostrich is a monster in nature, for she drops her eggs any where upon the ground, and takes no care to hatch them. If the sand and the sun will hatch them, well and good, they may for her, for she will not warm them, v. 14. Nay, she takes no care to preserve them; the foot of the traveller may crush them, and the wild beast break them, v. 15. But how then are any young ones brought forth, and whence is it that the species is not perished? We must suppose, either that God, by a special providence, with the heat of the sun and the sand (so some think) hatches the neglected eggs of the ostrich, as he feeds the neglected young ones of the raven; or that, though the ostrich often leaves her eggs thus, vet not always. (2.) The reason why she does thus expose her eggs; it is, [1.] For want of natural affection; (v. 16.) She is hardened against her young ones. To be hardened against any is unamiable, even in a brute creature, much more in a rational creature that boasts of humanity; especially to be hardened against young ones, that cannot help themselves, and therefore merit compassion, that give no provocation, and therefore merit no hard usage: but it is worst of all for her to be hardened against her own young ones, as though they were not hers, whereas, really, they are parts of herself. Her labour in laying her eggs, is in vain, and all lost, because she has not that fear and tender concern for them, that she should have. Those are most likely to lose their labour, that are least in fear of losing it. [2.] For want of wisdom; (v. 17.) God has deprived her of wisdom. This intimates, that the art which other animals have to nourish and preserve their young, is God's gift, and that, where it is not, God denies it, that, by the folly of the ostrich, as well as by the wisdom of the ant, we may learn to be wise; for, First, As careless as the ostrich is of

neither hath he imparted to her understand. | her eggs, many people are of their own souls; they make no provision for them, no proper nest which they may be safe, they leave them exposed to Satan and his temptations; a certain evidence that they are deprived of wisdom. Secondly, So careless are many parents of their children; some, of their bodies, not providing for their own house, their own bowels, and therefore worse than infidels, and as bad as the ostrich; but many more are thus careless of their children's souls, take no care of their education, send them abroad into the world untaught, unarmed, forgetting what corruption there is in the world through lust, which will certainly crush them. Thus their labour in rearing them comes to be in vain; it were better for their country that they had never been born. Thirdly, So careless are too many ministers of their people, with whom they should reside; but they leave them in the earth, and forget how busy Satan is to sow tares while men sleep. They overlook those whom they should oversee, and are really hardened against them.

2. Care of herself. She leaves her eggs in dan-

ger, but, if she herself be in danger, no creature shall strive better to get out of the way of it than the ostrich, v. 18. Then she lifts up her wings on high, (the strength of which then stands her in better stead than their beauty,) and, with the help of them, runs so fast, that a horseman, at full speed, cannot overtake her; She scorneth the horse and his rider. Those that are least under the law of natural affection, often contend most for the law of self-preservation. Let not the rider be proud of the swiftness of his horse, when such an animal as the ostrich

shall out-run him.

19. Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? 20. Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils is terrible. 21. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. 22. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. 23. The guiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. 24. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage; neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. 25. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha! and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.

God, having displayed his own power in those creatures that are strong, and despise man, here shows it in one scarcely inferior to any of them in strength, and yet very tame, and serviceable to man, and that is, the horse; especially, the horse that is prepared against the day of battle, and is serviceable to man at a time when he has more than ordinary occasion for his service. It seems there was, in Job's country, a noble generous breed of horses. Job, it is probable, kept many, though they are not mentioned among his possessions; cattle for use in husbandry being there valued more than those for state and war, which alone horses were then reserved for; and they were not then put to such mean services as with us they are commonly put to. Concerning the great horse, that stately beast, it is here observed,

1. That he has a great deal of strength and spirit; (v. 19.) Hast thou given the horse strength? He uses his strength for man, but has it not from him: God gave it him, who is the Fountain of all the powers of nature, and yet he himself delights not m the strength of the horse, (Ps. cxlvii. 10.) but has told us that a horse is a vam thing for safety, Ps. xxxiii. 17. For running, drawing, and carrying, no creature that is ordinarily in the service of man, has so much strength as the horse has, nor is of so stout and bold a spirit; not to be made afraid as a grasshopper, but daring and forward to face danger. It is a mercy to man to have such a servant, which, though very strong, submits to the management of a child, and rebels not against his owner: but let not the strength of a horse be trusted to, Hos. xiv. 3. Ps. xx. 7. Isa. xxxi. 1, 3.

2. That his neck and nostrils look great; his neck is clothed with a large flowing mane, which makes him formidable, and is an ornament to him. The glory of his nostrils, when he snorts, flings up his head, and throws foam about, is terrible. Perhaps there might be, at that time, and in that country, a more stately breed of horses than any we have now.

3. That he is very fierce and furious in battle,

and charges with an undaunted courage, though he pushes on in imminent danger of his life. (1.) See how frolicksome he is; (v. 21.) He paws in the valley, scarcely knowing what ground he stands upon. He is proud of his strength, and he has much more reason to be so as using his strength in the service of man, and under his direction, than the wild ass that uses it in contempt of man, and in a revolt from him, v. 8. (2.) See how forward he is to engage; he goes on to meet the armed men, animated, not by the goodness of the cause, or the prospect of honour, but only by the sound of the trumpet, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting of the soldiers, which are as bellows to the fire of his innate courage, and make him spring forward with the utmost eagerness, as if he cried, Ha, ha, How wonderfully are the brute-creatures fitted for, and inclined to, the services for which they were designed. (3.) See how fearless he is, how he despises death, and the most threatening dangers; (v. 22.) He mocks at fear, and makes a jest of it; slash at him with a sword, rattle the quiver, brandish the spear, to drive him back, he will not retreat, but press forward, and even inspires courage into his rider. (4.) See how furious he is; he curvets and prances, and runs on with so much violence and heat against the enemy, that one would think he even swallowed the ground with fierceness and rage, v. 24. High mettle is the praise of a horse rather than of a man, whom fierceness and rage ill become. This description of the war-horse will help to explain that character which is given of presumptuous sinners; (Jer. viii. 6.) Every one turneth to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. When a man's heart is fully set in him to do evil, and he is carried on in a wicked way by the violence of inordinate appetites and passions, there is no making him afraid of the wrath of God, and the fatal consequences of sin. Let his own conscience set before him the curse of the law, the death, that is, the wages, of sin, and all the terrors of the Almighty, in battle-array; he mocks at this fear, and is not affrighted, neither turns he back from the flaming sword of the cherubim. Let ministers lift up their voice like a trumpet, to proclaim the wrath of God against him, he believes not that it is the sound of the trumpet, nor that God and his heralds are in earnest with him; but what will be in the end hereof it is easy to foresee.

26. Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings toward the south? 27. Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? 28. She dwelteth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. 29. From

thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off. 30. Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she.

The birds of the air are proofs of the wonderful power and providence of God, as well as the beasts of the earth; God here specifies two stately ones.

1. The hawk, a noble bird, of great strength and sagacity, and yet a bird of prey, v. 26. This bird is here taken notice of for her flight, which is swift and strong, and especially for the course she steers toward the south, whither she follows the sun in winter, out of the colder countries in the north, especially when she is to cast her plumes, and renew them. This is her wisdom, and it was God that gave her this wisdom, not man. Perhaps the extraordinary wisdom of the hawk's flight after her prey, was not used then for men's diversion and recreation, as it has been since. It is pity that the reclaimed hawk, which is taught to fly at man's command, and to make him sport, should at any time be abused to the dishonour of God, since it is from God that she receives that wisdom which makes her flight entertaining and serviceable.

2. The eagle, a royal bird, and yet a bird of prey too, the permission of which, nay, the giving of power to which, may help to reconcile us to the prosperity of oppressors among men. The eagle is here taken notice of, (1.) For the height of her flight; no bird soars so high, has so strong a wing, she mount at thy command? (v. 27.) Is it by any strength she has from thee; or dost thou direct her flight? No, it is by the natural power and instinct God has given her, that she will soar out of thy sight, much more out of thy call." (2.) For the strength of her nest; her house is her castle and strong hold; she makes it on high and on the rock, the crag of the rock, (v. 28.) which sets her and her young out of the reach of danger. Secure sinners think themselves as safe in their sins as the eagle in her nest on high, in the clefts of the rock; (Jer. xlix. 16.) But I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord. The higher bad men sit above the resentments of the earth, the nearer they ought to think themselves to the vengeance of Heaven. her quicksightedness; (v. 29.) Her eyes behold afar off, not upward, but downward, in quest of her prey. In this, she is an emblem of a hypocrite, who, while in the profession of religion, he seems to rise toward heaven, keeps his eye and heart upon the prey on earth, some temporal advantage, some widow's house or other, that he hopes to devour, under pretence of devotion. (4.) For the way she has of maintaining herself and her young; she preys upon living animals, which she seizes and tears to pieces, and then carries to her young ones, who are taught to suck up blood; they do it by instinct, and know no better; but for men that have reason and conscience, to thirst after blood, is what could scarcely be believed, if there had not been, in every age, wretched instances of it. She also preys upon the dead bodies of men; where the slain are, there is she. These birds of prey (in another sense than the horse, v. 25.) smell the battle afar off. Therefore, when a great slaughter is to be made among the enemies of the church, the fowls are invited to the supper of the great God, to eat the flesh of kings and captains, Rev. xix. 17, 18. Our Saviour refers to this instinct of the eagle, (Matth. xxiv. 28.) Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Every creature will make toward that which is its proper food; for he that provides them their food, has implanted in them that inclination. These, and many such instances

tures, which we cannot account for, oblige us to confess our own weakness and ignorance, and to give glory to God as the Fountain of all being, power, wisdom, and perfection.

CHAP. XL.

Many humbling confounding questions God had put to Job, Iany humbling confounding questions God had put to Job, in the foregoing chapter; now, in this chapter, I. He demands an answer to them, v. 1, 2. II. Job submits in a humble silence, v. 3..5. III. God proceeds to reason with him, for his conviction of the infinite distance and disproportion between him and God, and that he was by no means an equal match for him. He challenges him, (v. 6, 7.) to vie with him, if he durst, for justice, (v. 8.) power, (v. 9.) majesty, (v. 10.) and dominion over the proud; (v. 11..14.) and he gives an instance of his power in one particular animal, here called Behemoth, v. 15..24.

OREOVER, the Lord answered . Job, and said, 2. Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reprove God, let him answer it. Then Job answered the Lord, and said, 4. Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice; but I will proceed no further.

I. A humbling challenge which God gave to Job. After he had heaped up many hard questions upon him, to show him, by his manifest ignorance in the works of nature, what an incompetent judge he was of the methods and designs of Providence, he clenches the nail with one demand more, which stands by itself here as the application of the whole. It should seem, God paused a while, as Elihu had done, to give Job time to say what he had to say, or to think of what God had said; but Job was in such confusion, that he remained silent, and therefore God here put him upon replying, v. 1, 2. This is not said to be spoken out of the whirlwind, as before; and therefore some think God said it in a still small voice, which wrought more upon Job than the whirlwind did, as upon Elijah, 1 Kings xix. 12, 13. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, and then it does wonders. Though Job had not spoken any thing, vet God is said to answer him; for he knows men's thoughts, and can return a suitable answer to their silence. Here,

1. God puts a convincing question to him; "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty, instruct him? Shall he pretend to dictate to God's wisdom, or prescribe to his will? Shall God receive instruction from every peevish complainer, and change the measures he has taken, to please him?" It is a question with disdain; Shall any teach God knowledge? ch. xxi. 22. It is intimated, that those who quarrel with God, do, in effect, go about to teach him how to mend his work. For if we contend with men like ourselves, as not having done well, we ought to instruct them how to do better; but is it a thing to be suffered, that any man should teach his Maker? He that contends with God, is justly looked upon as his enemy; and shall he pretend so far to have prevailed in the contest, as to prescribe to him? We are ignorant and short-sighted, but before him all things are naked and open; we are foolish, but his wisdom is infinite; we are depending creatures, but he is the Sovereign Creater; and shall we pretend to instruct him? Some read it, Is it any wisdom to contend with the Almighty? The answer is easy; No, it is the greatest folly in the world. Is it wisdom to contend with him whom it will certainly be our ruin to oppose, and unspeakably our interest to submit to?

2. He demands a speedy reply to it; "He that

reproaches God, let him answer this question to his own conscience, and answer it thus, Far be it from me to contend with the Almighty, or to instruct him. Let him answer all those questions which I have put, if he can. Let him answer for his presumption and insolence, answer it at God's bar, to his confusion." Those have high thoughts of themselves, and mean thoughts of God, who reprove any thing he says or does.

II. Job's humble submission thereupon. Now Job came to himself, and began to melt into godly sorrow; when his friends reasoned with him, he did not yield; but the voice of the Lord is powerful. When the Shirit of truth is come, he shall convince. They had condemned him for a wicked man, Elihu himself had been very sharp upon him, (ch. xxxiv. 7, 8, 37.) but God had not given him such hard words. We may sometimes have reason to expect better treatment from God, and a more candid construction of what we do, than we meet with from our friends. This the good man is here overcome by, and yields himself a conquered captive to the grace of God. 1. He owns himself an offender, and has nothing to say in his own justification, (v. 4.) "Behold, I am vile; not only mean and contemptible, but vile and abominable, in my own eyes." He is now sensible that he has sinned, and therefore calls himself vile. Sin debases us, and penitents abase themselves, reproach themselves, are ashamed, yea, even confounded. "I have acted undutifully to my Father, ungratefully to my Benefactor, unwisely for myself; and therefore I am vile." Job now vilifies himself as much as ever he had justified and magnified himself: repentance changes men's opinion of themselves. Job had been too bold in demanding a conference with God, and thought he could make his part good with him; but now he is convinced of his error, and owns himself utterly unable to stand before God, or to produce any thing worth his notice, the veriest dunghill worm that ever crawled upon God's ground. While his friends talked with him, he answered them, for he thought himself as good as they; but when God talked with him, he had nothing to say; for, in comparison with him, he sees himself nothing, less than nothing, worse than nothing, vanity and vileness itself; and, therefore, What shall I answer thee? God demanded an answer, v. 2. Here he gives the reason of his silence; it was not because he was sullen, but because he was convinced he had been in the wrong. Those that are truly sensible of their own sinfulness and vileness, dare not justify themselves before God, but are ashamed that ever they entertained such a thought, and, in token of their shame, lay their hand upon their mouth.

2. He promises not to offend any more as he had done; for Elihu had told him this was meet to be When we have spoken amiss, we said unto God. must repent of it, and not repeat nor stand to it. He enjoins himself silence; (v. 4.) "I will lay my hand upon my mouth, will keep that as with a bridle, to suppress all passionate thoughts which may arise in my mind, and keep them from breaking out in intemperate speeches." It is bad to think amiss, but it is much worse to speak amiss, for that is an allowance of the evil thought, and gives it an imprimatur-a sanction; it is publishing the seditious libel; and, therefore, if thou hast thought evil, lay thy hand upon thy mouth, and let it go no further, (Prov. xxx. 32.) and that will be an evidence for thee, that that which thou thoughtest, thou allowest not. Job had suffered his evil thoughts to vent themselves; "Once have I spoken amiss, yea twice," that is, "divers times, in one discourse and in another; but I have done, I will not answer, I will not stand to what I have said, nor say it again, I will proceed no further." Observe here what true repentance is. (1.) It is to rectify our errors, and the false principles we went upon, in doing as we did. What we have long, and often, and vigorously, maintained, we must retract, once, yea twice, as soon as we are convinced that it is a mistake, not adhere to it any longer, but take shame to ourselves for holding it so long. (2.) It is to return from every by-path, and to proceed not one step further in it; "I will not add," so the word is; "I will never indulge my passion so much again, nor give myself such a liberty of speech, will never say as I have said, nor do as I have done." Till it comes to this, we come short of repentance. Further observe, Those who dispute with God, will be silenced at last. Job had been very bold and forward in demanding a conference with God, and talked very boldly, how plain he would make his case, and how sure he was that he should be justified; as a prince he would go near unto him, (ch. xxxi. 37.) he would come even to his seat; (ch. xxii. 3.) but he has soon enough of it, he lets fall his plea, and will not answer; "Lord, the wisdom and right are all on thy side, and I have done foolishly and wickedly in questioning it."

6. Then answered the Lorp unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said, 7. Gird up thy loins now like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. 8. Wilt thou also disannul my judgment! wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous? 9. Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him? Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty. 11. Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath; and behold every one that is proud, and abase him. 12. Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place. 13. Hide them in the dust together, and bind their faces in secret. 14. Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee.

Job was greatly humbled for what God had already said, but not sufficiently; brought low, but not low enough; and therefore God here proceeds to reason with him, in the same manner and to the same purport as before, v. 6. Observe, 1. Those who duly receive what they have heard from God, and profit by it, shall hear more from him. 2. Those who are truly convinced of sin, and penitent for it, yet have need to be more thoroughly convinced, and to be made more deeply penitent. Those who are under convictions, who have their sins set in order before their eyes, and their hearts broken for them, must learn from this instance not to catch at comfort too soon; it will be everlasting when it comes, and therefore it is necessary that we be prepared for it by deep humiliation, that the wound be searched to the bottom, and not skinned over, and that we do not make more haste out of our convictions than good speed. When our hearts begin to melt and relent within us, let those considerations be dwelt upon and pursued, which will help to make a thorough effectual thaw of it.

God begins with a challenge, (v. 7.) as before; (ch. xxxviii. 3.) "Gird up thu loins now like a man; if thou hast the courage and confidence thou hast pretended to, show it now; but thou wilt soon be nade to see and own thyself no match for me."

This is that which every proud heart must be brought to at last, either by its repentance, or by its ruin; and thus low must every mountain and hill be, sooner or later, brought. We must acknowledge,

I. That we cannot vie with God for justice; that the Lord is righteous and holy in his dealings with us, but that we are unrighteous and unholy in our conduct toward him; we have a great deal to blame ourselves for, but nothing to blame him for; (v. 8.) "Wilt thou disannul my judgment? Wilt thou take exceptions to what I say and do, and bring a writ of error, to reverse the judgment I have given as erroneous and unjust?" Many of Job's complaints had too much of a tendency this way; I cry out of wrong, says he, but I am not heard; but such language as this is by no means to be suffered. God's judgment cannot, must not, be disannulied, for we are sure it is according to truth, and therefore it is a great piece of impudence and iniquity in us to call it in question. "Wilt thou," says God, "condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous? Must my honour suffer for the support of thy reputation? Must I be charged as dealing unjustly with thee, because thou canst not otherwise clear thyself from the censures thou liest under?" Our duty is to condemn ourselves, that God may be righteous. David is therefore ready to own the evil he has done in God's sight, that God may be justified, when he speaks, and clear when he judges, Ps. li. 4. See Neh. ix. 33. Dan. ix. 7 But those are very proud, and very ignorant both of God and themselves, who, to clear themselves, will condemn God; and the day is coming, when, if the mistake be not rectified in time by repentance, the etern 1 judgment will be both the confutation of the plea, and the confusion of the prisoner; for the heavens shall declare God's righteousness, and all the world

shall become guilty before him.

II. That we cannot vie with God for power: and therefore, as it is great impiety, so it is great impudence, to contest with him, and we go as much against our interest, as we do against reason and right; (v. 9.) " Hast thou an arm like God, equal to his in length and strength? Or canst thou thunder with a voice like him, as he did, (ch. xxxvii. 1, 2.) or does now, out of the whirlwind?" To convince Job that he was not so able as he thought himself, to contest with God, he shows him, 1. That he could never fight it out with him, nor carry his cause by force of arms. Sometimes, among men, controversies have been decided by battle, and the victorious champion is adjudged to have the right on his side; but if it be put upon that issue between God and man, man would certainly go by the worse, for all the force he could raise against the Almighty, would be but like briers and thorns before a consuming fire, Isa. xxvii. 4. "Hast thou, a poor weak worm of the earth, an arm comparable to his, who upholds all things?" The power of creatures, even of angels themselves, is derived from God, limited by him, and dependent on him; but the power of God is original, independent, and unlimited. He can do every thing without us, we can do nothing without him, and therefore we have not an arm like God. 2. That he could never talk it out with him, nor carry his cause by noise and big words, which sometimes among men go a great way toward the gaining of a point; "Canst thou thunder with a voice like him? No, his voice will soon drown thine, and one of his thunders will overpower and overrule all thy whispers." Man cannot speak so convincingly, so powerfully, nor with such a commanding conquering force, as God can, who speaks, and it is done. His creating voice is called his thunder; (Ps. civ. 7.) so is that voice of his, with which he terrifies and discomfits his

enemies; (1 Sam. ii. 10.) Out of heaven shall he

thunder upon them. The wrath of a king may sometimes be like the roaring of a lion, but can ne-

ver pretend to imitate God's thunder.

III. That we cannot vie with God for beauty and majesty; (v. 10.) "If thou wilt enter into a comparison with him, and appear more amiable, put on thy best attire; Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency. Appear in all the martial, in all the royal pomp thou hast, make the best of every thing that will set thee off, array thyself with glory and beauty, such as may awe thine enemies, and charm thy friends; but what is it all to the divine majesty and beauty? No more than the light of a glow-worm to that of the sun, when he goes forth in his strength." God decks himself with such majesty and glory as are the terror of devils, and all the powers of darkness, and make them tremble; ne arrays himself with such glory and beauty, as are the wonder of angels, and all the saints in light, and make them rejoice. David could dwell all his days in God's house, to behold the beauty of the Lord. But, in comparison with this, what is all the majesty and excellency by which princes think to make themselves feared, and all the glory and beauty by which lovers think to make themselves beloved? If Job think, in contending with God, to carry the day by looking great, and making a figure, he is quite mistaken; The sun shall be ashamed,

and the moon confounded, when God shines forth.

IV. That we cannot vie with God for dominion over the proud, v. 11..14. Here the cause is put upon this short issue; if Job can humble and abase proud tyrants and oppressors as easily and effectually as God can, it shall be acknowledged that he has some colour to compare with God. Observe

1. The justice Job is here challenged to do, and that is, to bring the proud low, with a look; if Job will pretend to be a rival with God, especially if he pretend to be a judge of his actions, he must be able

to do this.

(1.) It is here supposed that God can do it, and will do it, himself, else he would not have put it thus upon Job. By this, God proves himself to be God, that he resisted the proud, sat Judge upon them, and is able to bring them to ruin. Observe here, [1.] That proud people are wicked people, and pride is at the bottom of a great deal of wickedness that is in this world, both toward God and [2.] Proud people will certainly be abased and brought low, for pride goes before destruction. If they bend not, they will break; if they humble not themselves by true repentance, God will humble them, to their everlasting confusion. The wicked will be trodden down in their place, that is, Wherever they are found, though they pretend to have a place of their own, and to have taken root in it, yet even there they shall be trodden down, and all the wealth, and power, and interest, which their place entitles them to, will not be their security. [3.] The wrath of God, scattered among the proud, will humble them, and break them, and bring them down. If he casts abroad the rage of his wrath, as he will do at the great day, and sometimes does in this life, the stoutest heart cannot hold out against him; who knows the power of his anger? [4.] God can, and does, easily abase proud tyrants; he can look upon them, and bring them low, can overwhelm them with shame, and fear, and utter ruin, by one angry look, as he can, by a gracious look, revive the hearts of the contrite ones. [5.] He can, and will, at last, do it effectually, (v. 13.) not only bring them to the dust, from which they might hope to arise, but hide them in the dust, like the proud Egyptian whom Moses slew, and hid in the sand, (Exod. ii. 12.) that is, They shall be brought not only to death, but to the grave, that pit out of which there | food, where all the beasts of the field play

is no return. They were proud of the figure they made, but they shall be buried in oblivion, and be no more remembered than those that are hid in the dust; out of sight, and out of mind. They were linked in leagues and confederacies to do mischief, and are now bound in bundles; they are hid together, not their rest, but their shame together is in the dust, ch. xvii. 16. Nay, they are treated as malefactors, who, when condemned, had their faces covered, as Haman's was; he binds their faces in secret; they are treated as dead men; Lazarus, in the grave, had his face bound about. So complete will the victory be that God will gain, at last, over proud sinners that set themselves in opposition to him. Now by this he proves himself to be God. Does he thus hate proud men? Then he is holy. Will he thus punish them? Then he is the just Judge of the world. Can he thus humble them? Then he is the Lord Almighty. When he had abased proud Pharaoh, and hid him in the sand of the Red-sea, Jethro inferred, that doubtless the Lord is greater than all gods, for wherein the proud enemies of his Israel dealt proudly, he was above them, he was too hard for them, Exod. xviii. 11. See Rev. xix. 1, 2,

(2.) It is here proposed to Job to do it. He had been passionately quarrelling with God and his providence, casting abroad the rage of his wrath toward heaven, as if he thought thereby to bring God him-self to his mind; "Come," says God, "try thy hand first upon proud men, and thou wilt soon see how little they value the rage of thy wrath; and shall I then regard it, or be moved by it?" Job had complained of the presperity and power of tyrants and oppressors, and was ready to charge God with mal-administration for suffering it; but he ought not to find fault, except he could mend. If God, and he only, has power enough to humble and bring down proud men, no doubt he has wisdom enough to know when and how to do it, and it is not for us to prescribe to him, or to teach him how to govern the world; unless we had an arm like God, we must not think to take his work out of his hands.

2. The justice which is here promised, shall be done him, if he can perform such mighty works as these; (v. 14.) "Then will I also confess unto thee, that thy right hand is sufficient to save thee, though, after all, it would be too weak to contend with me.' It is the innate pride and ambition of man, that he would be his own saviour, would have his own hands sufficient for him, and be independent; but it is presumption to pretend to it; our own hands cannot save us by recommending us to God's grace, much less by rescuing us from his justice; unless we could by our own power humble our enemies, we cannot pretend by our own power to save curselves; but if we could, Ged himself would confess it. He never did, nor ever will, defraud any man of his just praise, nor deny him the honour he has merited. But since we cannot do this, we must confess unto him, that our own hands cannot save us, and therefore into his hand we must commit ourselves.

Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee; he eateth grass as an ox. Lo now, his strength is in his loins, and his force is in the navel of his belly. moveth his tail like a cedar: the sinews of his stones are wrapped together. 18. His bones are as strong pieces of brass; his bones are like bars of iron. 19. He is the chief of the ways of God: he that made him can make his sword to approach unto him. 20. Surely the mountains bring him forth

21. He lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reed, and fens. 22. The shady trees cover him with their shadow; the willows of the brook compass him about. Behold, he drinketh up a river, and hasteth not: he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth. 24. He taketh it with his eyes: his nose pierceth through snares.

God, for the further proving of his own power, and disproving of Job's pretensions, concludes his discourse with the description of two vast animals, far exceeding man in bulk and strength; one he calls behemoth, the other, leviathan. In these verses, we have the former described. "Behold now behemoth, and consider whether thou art able to contend with him who made that beast, and gave him all the power he has, and whether it is not thy wisdom rather to submit to him, and make thy peace with him."

Behemoth signifies beasts in general, but must here be meant of some one particular species. Some understand it of the bull; others of an amphibious animal, well-known (they say) in Egypt, called the river-horse, (Hippopotamus,) living among the fish in the river Nile, but coming out to feed upon the earth. But I confess I see no reason to depart from the ancient and most generally received opinion, that it is the elephant that is here described, which is a very strong stately creature, of very large stature above any other, and of wonderful sagacity, and of so great a reputation in the animalkingdom, that, among so many four-footed beasts as we have had the natural history of, (ch. xxxviii. and xxxix.) we can scarcely suppose this should be omitted.

Observe, I. The description here given of the behemoth. 1. His body is very strong, and well-built; His strength is in his loins, v. 16. His bones, compared with those of other creatures, are like bars of iron, His back-bone is so strong, that, though his tail be not large, yet he moves it like a cedar, with a commanding force, v. 17. Some understand it of the trunk of the elephant, for the word signifies any extreme part, and in that there is indeed a wonderful strength; so strong is the elephant in his back and loins, and the sinews of his thighs, that he will carry a large wooden tower, and a great number of fighting men in it. No animal whatsoever comes near the elephant for strength of body, which is the

main thing insisted on in this description.

2. He feeds on the productions of the earth, and does not prey upon other animals, he eats grass as an ox, (v. 15.) the mountains bring forth food, (v. 20.) and the beasts of the field do not tremble before him, nor flee from him, as from a lion, but they play about him, knowing they are in no danger from him. This may give us occasion, (1.) To acknowledge the goodness of God, in ordering it so, that a creature of such bulk, which requires so much food, should not feed upon flesh, (for then multitudes must die, to keep him alive,) but should be content with the grass of the field, to prevent such destruction of lives as otherwise must have ensued. (2.) To commend living upon herbs and fruits, without flesh, according to the original appointment of man's food, Gen. i. 29. Even the strength of an elephant, as of a horse and an ox, may be supported without flesh; and why not that of a man? Though, therefore, we use the liberty God has allowed us, yet be not among riotous eaters of flesh, Prov. xxiii. 20. (3.) To command a quiet and peaceable life. Who would not rather, like about him, than, like the lion, have them a'l afraid

3. He lodges under the shady trees, (v. 21.) which cover him with their shadow, (v. 22.) where he has a free and open air to breathe in, while lions, which live by prey, when they would repose themselves, are obliged to retire into a close and dark den, to live therein, and to abide in the covert of that, ch. xxxviii. 40. They who are a terror to others, cannot but be sometimes a terror to themselves too; but they will be easy, who will let others be easy about them; and the reed and fens, and the willows of the brook, though a very weak and slender for-tification, yet are sufficient for the defence and security of those who therefore dread no harm, because they design none.

4. That he is a very great and greedy drinker, not of wine and strong drink, (to be greedy of that is peculiar to man, who by his drunkenness makes a beast of himself,) but of fair water. (1.) His size is prodigious, and therefore he must have supply accordingly, v. 23. He drinks so much, that one would think he could drink up a river, if you would give him time, and not hasten him. Or, when he drinks, he hasteth not, as those do that drink in fear; he is confident of his own strength and safety, and therefore makes no haste when he drinks, no more haste than good speed. (2.) His eye anticipates more than he can take; for, when he is very thirsty, having been long kept without water, he trusts that he can drink up Jordan in his mouth, and even takes it with his eyes, v. 24. As a covetous man causes his eyes to fly upon the wealth of this world, which he is greedy of, so this great beast is said to snatch, or draw up, even a river with his eyes. (3.) His nose has in it strength enough for both; for when he goes greedily to drink with it, he pierces through snares or nets, which perhaps are laid in the waters to catch fish. He makes nothing of the difficulties that lie in his way, so great is his strength, and so eager his appetite.

II. The use that is to be made of this description.

We have taken a view of this mountain of a beast, this overgrown animal, which is here set before us, not merely as a show, (as sometimes it is in our country,) to satisfy our curiosity and to amuse us, but as an argument with us to humble ourselves be-

fore the great God; for,

1. He made this vast animal, which is so fearfully and wonderfully made; it is the work of his hands, the contrivance of his wisdom, the production of his power; it is behemoth which I made, v. 15. Whatever strength this, or any other creature, has, it is derived from God, who therefore must be acknowledged to have all power originally and infinitely in himself, and such an arm as it is not for us to contest with. This beast is here called the chief, in its kind, of the ways of God; (v. 19.) an eminent instance of the Creator's power and wisdom. They that will peruse the accounts given by historians of the elephant, will find that his capacities approach nearer to those of reason, than the capacities of any other brute-creature whatsoever, and therefore he is fitly called the chief of the ways of God, in the inferior part of the creation no creature below man being preferable to him.

2. He made him with man, as he made other four-footed beasts; on the same day with man, (Gen. i. 25, 26.) whereas the fish and fowl were made the day before; he made him, to live and move on the same earth, in the same element, and therefore man and beast are said to be jointly preserved by Divine Providence, as fellow-commoners; (Ps. xxxvi. 6.) "It is behemoth which I made with thee; I made that beast as well as thee, and he does not quarrel with me; why then dost thou? Why the elephant, have his neighbours easy and pleasant | shouldest thou demand peculiar favours, because 1

made thee, (ch. x. 9.) when I made the behemoth likewise with thee? I made thee as well as that beast. and therefore can as easily manage thee at pleasure as that beast, and will do it, whether thou refuse or whether thou choose. I made him with thee, that thou mayest look upon him, and receive in-struction." We need not go far for proofs and instances of God's almighty power and sovereign dominion; they are near us, they are with us, they

are under our eye, wherever we are. 3. He that made him, can make his sword to approach to him, (v. 19.) that is, The same hand that made him, notwithstanding his great bulk and strength, can unmake him again at pleasure, and kill an elephant as easily as a worm or a fly, without any difficulty, and without the imputation either of waste or wrong. God, that gave to all the creatures their being, may take away the being he gave; for may he not do what he will with his own? And he can do it; he that has power to create with a word, no doubt, has power to destroy with a word, and can as easily speak the creature into nothing, as, at first, he spake it out of nothing. The behemoth The behemoth perhaps is here intended (as well as the leviathan afterward) to represent those proud tyrants and oppressors, whom God had just now challenged Job to abase and bring down. They think themselves as well fortified against the judgments of God, as the elephant with his bones of brass and iron; but he that made the soul of man knows all the avenues to it, and can make the sword of justice, his wrath, to approach to it, and touch it in the most tender and sensible part. He that framed the engine, and put the parts of it together, knows how to take it in Woe to him therefore that strives with his Maker, for he that made, has therefore power to make him miserable, and will not make him happy, unless he will be ruled by him.

CHAP. XLI.

The description here given of the leviathan, a very large, strong, formidable, fish, or water-animal, is designed yet further to convince Job of his own impotency, and of God's omnipotence, that he might be humbled for his folly in making so bold with him as he had done. tolly in making so bold with nim as ne had done. I. To convince Job of his own weakness, he is here challenged to subdue and tame this leviathan, if he could, and make himself master of him, (v. 2. .9.) which because he cannot do, he must own himself utterly unable to stand before the great God, v. 10. II. To convince Job of God's power and terrible majesty, divers particular instances are here given of the strength and terror of the leviathan, which is no more than what God has given him nor which is no more than what God has given him, nor more than he has under his check, v. 11, 12. The face of the leviathan is here described to be terrible; (v. 13, 14.) his scales close, (v. 15..17.) his breath and neesings sparkling, (v. 18..21.) his flesh firm, (v. 22..24.) his strength and spirit, when he is attacked, insuperable, (v. 25..30.) his motions turbulent, and disturbing to the protection (v. 23..30.) the waters; (v. 31, 32.) so that, upon the whole, he is a very terrible creature, and man is no match for him, v. 33, 34.

1. CANST thou draw out leviathan with a hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down? 2. Canst thou put a hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn? 3. Will be make many supplications unto thee! will be speak soft words unto thee? 4. Will be make a covenant with thee? wilt thou take him for a servant for ever? 5. Wilt thou play with him as with a bird? wilt thou bind him for thy maidens? 6. Shall thy companions make a banquet of him? shall they part him

his skin with barbed irons? or his head with fish-spears? 8. Lay thy hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more. 9. Behold, the hope of him is in vain: shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him? 10. None is so fierce that dare stir him up; who then is able to stand before me?

Whether this leviathan be a whale or a crocodile, is a great dispute among the learned, which I will not undertake to determine; some of the particulars agree more easily to the one, others to the other; both are very strong and fierce, and the power of the Creator appears in them. The ingenious Sir Richard Blackmore, though he admits the more received opinion concerning the behemoth, that that must be meant of the *elephant*, yet agrees with the learned Bochart's notion of the *leviathan*, that it is the crocodile which was so well known in the river of Egypt. I confess that that which in clines me rather to understand it of the whale, is, not only because it is much larger, and a nobler animal, but because, in the history of the Creation, there is such an express notice taken of it, as is not of any other species of animals whatsoever; (Gen. 1. 21.) God created great whales; by which it appears, not only that whales were well known in those parts, in Moses's time, who lived a little after Job, but that the creation of whales was generally looked upon as a most illustrious proof of the eternal power and godhead of the Creator; and we may conjecture that this was the reason (for otherwise it seems unaccountable) why Moses there so particularly mentions the creation of the whales, because God had so lately, in this discourse with Job, more largely insisted upon the bulk and strength of that creature than of any other, as the proof of his power; and the leviathan is here spoken of as an inhabitant of the sea, (v. 31.) which the crocodile is not; and (Ps. civ. 25, 26.) There, in the great and wide sea, is that leviathan.

Here, in these verses,

1. He shows how unable Job was to master the *leviathan*. (1.) That he could not catch him, as a little fish, with angling, v. 1, 2. He had no bait wherewith to deceive him, no hook wherewith to catch him, no fish-line wherewith to draw him out of the water, nor a thorn to run through his gills, on which to carry him home. (2.) That he could not make him his prisoner, nor force him to cry for quarter, or surrender himself at discretion, v. 3, 4. "He knows his own strength too well to make many supplications to thee, and to make a covenant with thee to be thy servant, on condition thou wilt save his life." (3.) That he could not entice him into a cage, and keep him there as a bird for the children to play with, v. 5. There are creatures so little, so weak, as to be easily restrained thus, and triumphed over; but the leviathan is none of those, he is made to be the terror, not the sport and diversion, of mankind. (4.) That he could not have him served up to his table; he and his companions could not make a banquet of him; his flesh is too strong to be fit for food, and if it were not, he is not easily caught. (5.) That they could not enrich themselves with the spoil of him; Shall they part him among the merchants, the bones to one, the oil to another? If they can catch him, they will; but it is probable that the art of fishing for whales was not brought to perfection then, as it has been since. (6.) That they could not destroy him, could not fill his head with fish-spears, v. 7. He kept out of the reach of their instruments of slaughter, or, if they touched him, they could not touch him to the quick. among the merchants? 7. Canst thou fill | (7.) That it was to no purpose to attempt it; The

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hope of taking him is in vain, v. 9. If men go about to seize him, so formidable is he, that the very sight of him will appal them, and make a stout man ready to faint away; Shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him? And will not that deter the pursuers from their attempt? Job is bid, at his peril, to lay his hand upon him, (v. 8.) "Touch him if thou dare, remember the battle, how unable thou art to encounter such a force, and what is therefore likely to be the issue of the battle, and do no more, but desist from the attempt." It is good to remember the battle before we engage in a war, and put off the harness in time, if we foresee it will be to no purpose to gird it on. Job is hereby admonished not to proceed in his controversy with God, but to make his peace with him, remembering what the battle will certainly end in, if he come to an engagement. See Isa. xxvii. 4, 5.

2. Thence he infers how unable he was to contend with the Almighty. None is so ferce, none so fool-hardy, as to stir up the leviathan, (v. 10.) it being known that he will certainly be too hard for them; and who then is able to stand before God, either to impeach and arraign his proceeding, or to out-face the power of his wrath? If the inferior creatures that are put under the feet of man, and over whom he has dominion, keep us in awe thus, how terrible must the majesty of our great Lord be, who has a sovereign dominion over us, and against whom man has been so long in rebellion! If ho can stand before him when once he is angry?

11. Who hath prevented me, that I should repay him? whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine. 12. I will not conceal his parts, nor his power, nor his comely proportion. 13. Who can discover the face of his garment? or who can come to him with his double bridle? 14. Who can open the doors of his face? his teeth are terrible round 15. His scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal. 16. One is so near to another, that no air can come between them. 17. They are joined one to another, they stick together, that they cannot be sundered. 18. By his neesings a light doth shine, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning. 19. Out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out. 20. Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething-pot or caldron. 21. His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth. 22. In his neck remaineth strength, and sorrow is turned into joy before him. 23. The flakes of his flesh are joined together: they are firm in themselves; they cannot be moved. 24. His heart is as firm as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of the nether *millstone*. 25. When he raiseth up himself, the mighty are afraid: by reason of breakings they purify themselves. 26. The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold; the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon. 27. He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. 20. The arrow cannot make him flee: sling stones are turned with him into stubble. |

29. Darts are counted as stubble: he laugh eth at the shaking of a spear. 30. Sharpstones are under him: he spreadeth sharppointed things upon the mire. 31. He maketh the deep to boil like a pot: he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment. 32. He maketh a path to shine after him; one would think the deep to be hoary. 33. Upon earth there is not his like, who is made without fear. 34. He beholdeth all high things: he is a king over all the children of pride.

God, having in the foregoing verses showed Job how unable he was to deal with the *leviathan*, here sets forth his own power in that massy mighty

creature. Here is,

I. God's sovereign dominion and independency laid down, v. 11. 1. That he is indebted to none of his creatures. If any pretend he is indebted to them, let them make their demand and prove their debt, and they shall receive it in full, and not by composition; "Who has prevented me?" that is, "Who has laid any obligations upon me, by any service they have done me? Who can pretend to be before-hand with me? If any were, I would not long be behind-hand with them, I would soon repay them." The apostle quotes this, for the silencing of all flesh in God's presence; (Rom. xi. 35.) Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recombensed to him again? As God does not inflict upon us the evils we have deserved, so he does bestow upon us the favours we have not deserved. 2. That he is the rightful Lord and Owner of all the creatures; "Whatsoever is under the whole heavens, animate or inanimate, is mine, (and particularly this leviathan,) at my command and disposal; what I have an incontestable property in, and dominion over." All is his, we are his, all we have and do, and therefore we cannot make God our Debtor; but of thine own, Lord, have we given thee. All is his, and therefore, if he were indebted to any, he has wherewithal to repay them; the debt is in good hands. All is his, and therefore he needs not our services, nor can he be benefitted by them. If I were hungry I would not tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof, Ps. V. 12.

II. The proof and illustration of it, from the wonderful structure of the leviathan, v. 12. The

parts of his body, the power he exerts, especially when he is set upon, and the comely proportion of the whole of him, are what God will not conceal, and therefore what we must observe and acknow-ledge the power of God in. Though he is a creature of monstrous bulk, yet there is in him a comely proportion. In our eye, beauty lies in little, (Inest sua gratia parvis—Little things have a gracefulness all their own,) because we ourselves are little; but, in God's eye, even the leviathan is comely; and if he pronounce even the whale, even the crocodile, so, it is not for us to say of any of the works of his hands, that they are ugly or ill-favoured; it is enough to say so, as we have cause, of our own works. God here goes about to give us an anatomical view (as it were) of the leviathan; for his works appear most beautiful and excellent, and his wisdom and power appear most in them, when they are taken in pieces, and viewed in their several

parts and proportions.

1. The leviathan, even prima facie—at first sight, appears formidable and inaccessible, v. 13, 14. Who dares come so near him, while he is alive, as to discover or take a distinct view of the face of the garment, the skin with which he is clothed as with a garment; so near him, as to bridle him like a horse,

and so lead him away; so near him, as to be within reach of his jaws, which are like a double bridle? Who will venture to look into his mouth, as we do into a horse's mouth? He that opens the doors of his face, will see his teeth terrible round about, strong and sharp, and fitted to devour; it would make a man tremble to think of having a leg or an arm between them.

2. His scales are his beauty and strength, and therefore his pride, v. 15..17. The crocodile is indeed remarkable for his scales; if we understand it of the whale, we must understand by these shields, (for so the word is,) the several coats of his skin; or there might be whales in that country with scales. That which is remarkable concerning the scales, is, that they stick so close together, by which he is not only kept warm, for no air can pierce him, but kept safe, for no sword can pierce him, through those scales. Fishes, that live in the water, are fortified accordingly by the wisdom of Providence, which

gives clothes as it gives cold.

3. He scatters terror with his very breath and looks; if he sneeze or spout by water, it is like a light shining, either with the froth, or the light of the sun shining through it, v. 18. The eyes of the whale are reported to shine in the night-time, like a flame, or, as here, like the eye-lids of the morning; the same they say of the crocodile. The breath of this creature is so hot and fiery, from the great natural heat within, that burning lamps and sparks of fire, smoke and a flame, are said to go out of his mouth, even such as one would think sufficient to set coals on fire, v. 19. 21. Probably, these hyperbolical expressions are used concerning the leviathan, to intimate the power and terror of the wrath of God, for that is it which all this is designed to convince us of; fire out of his mouth devours, Ps. xviii. 7, 8. The breath of the Almighty, like a stream of brimstone, kindles Tothet, and will for ever keep it burning, Isa, xxx, 33. The wicked

one shall be consumed with the breath of his mouth, 2 Thess. ii. 8.

2 Thess. ii. 8. 4. He is of invincible strength and most terrible fierceness, so that he frightens all that come in his way, but is not himself frightened by any. view of his neck, and there remains strength, v. 22. His head and his body are well-set together; sorrow rejoices, or rides in triumph, before him, for he makes terrible work wherever he comes. Or, Those storms which are the sorrow of others, are his joy; what is tossing to others, is dancing to him. His flesh is well-knit, v. 23. The flakes of it are joined so closely together, and are so firm, that it is hard to pierce it; he is as if he were all bone; his flesh is of brass, which Job had complained his was not, ch. vi. 12. His heart is as firm as a stone, v. 24. He has spirit equal to his bodily strength, and, though he is bulky, he is sprightly, and not un-wieldy; as his flesh and skin cannot be pierced, so his courage cannot be daunted; but, on the contrary, he daunts all he meets, and puts them into a consternation; (v. 25.) When he raises up himself like a moving mountain in the great waters, even the mighty are afraid lest he overturn their ships, or do them some other mischief: by reason of the breakings he makes in the water, which threaten death, they purify themselves, confess their sins, betake themselves to their prayers, and get ready for death. We read (ch. iii. 8.) of those who, when they raise up a leviathan, are in such a fright, that they curse the day. It was a fear which, it seems, used to drive some to their curses, and others to their prayers; for as now, so then there were seafaring men of different characters, and on whom the terrors of the sea have contrary effects; but all agree there is a great fright among them when the leviathan raises up himself.

5. All the instruments of slaughter that are used against him, do him no hurt, and therefore are no terror to him, v. 26..29. The sword and the spear, which wound nigh at hand, are nothing to him, the darts, arrows, and sling-stones, which wound at a distance, do him no damage; nature has so well armed him against them all. The defensive weapons which men use when they engage with the leviathan, as the habergeon, or breast-plate, often serve men no more than their offensive weapons; iron and brass are to him as straw and rotten wood, and he laughs at them. It is the picture of a hardhearted sinner, that despises the terrors of the Almighty, and laughs at all the threatenings of his word. The *leviathan* so little dreads the weapons that are used against him, that, to show how hardy he is, he chooses to lie on the sharp stones. the sharp pointed things, (v. 30.) and lies as easy there, as if he lay on the soft mire. Those that Those that would endure hardness, must inure themselves to it.

6. His very motion in the water troubles it, and puts it into a ferment, v. 31, 32. When he rolls and tosses, and makes a stir in the water, or is in pursuit of his prey, he makes the deep to boil like a hot, he raises a great froth and foam upon the water, such as is upon a boiling pot, especially a pot of boiling ointment; and he makes a path to shine after him, which even a ship in the midst of the sea does not, Prov. xxx. 19. One may trace the leviathan under water by the bubbles on the surface; and yet who can take that advantage against him in pursuing him? Men track hares in the snow and kill them, but he that tracks the leviathan dares not

come near him.

Lastly, Having given this particular account of his farts, and his hower, and his comely proportion, he concludes with four things in general concerning this animal, v. 33, 34. (1.) That he is a none such among the inferior creatures; Upon earth there is not his like, no creature in this world is comparable to him for strength and terror; or, the earth is here distinguished from the sea; His dominion is not upon the earth, so some, but in the waters; none of all the savage creatures upon earth come near him for bulk and strength, and it is well for man that he is confined to the waters, and there has a watch set upon him, (ch. vii. 12.) by the Di vine Providence, for if such a terrible creature were allowed to roam and ravage upon this earth, it would be an unsafe and uncomfortable habitation for the children of men, for whom it is intended. (2.) That he is more bold and daring than any other creature whatsoever; He is made without fear: the creatures are as they are made; the leviathan has courage in his constitution, nothing can frighten him; other creatures, quite contrary, seem as much designed for flying as this for fighting; among men, some are in their natural temper bold, others are timorous. (3.) That he is himself very proud; though lodged in the deep, yet he beholds all high things; the rolling waves, the impending rocks, the hovering clouds, and the ships under sail with top and top-gallant, this mighty animal beholds with contempt, for he does not think they either lessen him or threaten him. These that are great, are apt to be scornful. (4.) That he is a king over all the children of pride, that is, He is the proudest of all proud ones. He has more to be proud of (so Mr. Caryl expounds it) than the proudest people in the world have; and so it is a mortification to the haughtiness and lofty looks of men. Whatever bodily accomplishments men are proud of, and puffed up with, the leviathan excels them, and is a king over them. Some read it, so as to understand it of God; He that beholds all high things, even he. is King over all the children of pride; he can tame the behemoth, (ch. xl. 19.) and the leviation, hig

as they are, and stout-hearted as they are. This discourse, concerning those two animals, was brought in to prove that it is God only who can look upon proud men and abase them, bring them low and tread them down, and hide them in the dust; (ch. xl. 11.13.) and so it concludes with a Quod erat demonstrandum—Which was to be demonstrated; there is one that beholds all high things, and, wherein men deal proudly, is above them; he is King over all the children of pride, whether brutal or rational, and can make them all either bend, or break, before him; (Isa. ii. 11.) The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and thus the Lord alone shall be exalted

CHAP. XLII.

Solomon says, Better is the end of a thing than the be-ginning thereof, Eccl. vii. 8. It was so here in the story of Job; at evening-time it was light. Three things we have met with in this book, which, I confess, have trou-bled me much; but we find all the three grievances redressed, thoroughly redressed, in this chapter, every thing set to rights. I. It has been a great trouble to us, to see such a holy man as Job was, so fretful and peevish, and uneasy to himself, and especially to hear him quarrel with God, and speak indecently to him; but, though he thus fall, he is not utterly cast down, for here he recovers his temper, comes to himself, and to his right mind again, by repentance, is sorry for what he has said amiss, unsays it, and humbles himself before God, v. 1...6. II. It has been likewise a great trouble to us, to see Job and his friends so much at variance, not only differing in their opinions, but giving one another a great many hard words, and passing severe censures one upon another, though they were all very wise and good men; but here we have this grievance redressed likewise, the differences between them happily adjusted, the quarrel taken up, all the peevish reflections they had east upon one another forgiven and forgotten. and all joining in sacrifices and prayers, mutually accepted of God, v. 7...9. III. It has troubled us, to see a man of such eminent piety and usefulness as Job was, so grievously afflicted, so pained, so sick, so poor, so reproached, so slighted, and made the very centre of all the calamities of human life; but here we have this grievance redressed too; Job healed of all his ailments, more honoured and beloved than ever, enriched with an the comforts of life, and as great an instance of prosperity as even he had been of affliction and patience, v.10..17. All this is written for our learning, that we, under these and the like discouragements that we meet with, through patience and comfort of this scripture, may have hope.

1. THEN Job answered the Lord, and said, 2. I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. 3. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. 4. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. 5. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: 6. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

The words of Job justifying himself, were ended, ch. xxxi. 40. After that, he said no more to that purport: the words of Job judging and condemning himself, began, ch. xl. 4, 5. Here he goes on with words to the same purport; though his patience had not its perfect work, his repentance for his impatience had. He is here thoroughly humbled for his folly and unadvised speaking, and it was for-

given him. Good men will see and own their faults at last, though it may be some difficulty to bring them to it. Then when God had said all that to him concerning his own greatness and power appearing in the creatures, then Job answered the Lord, (v. 1.) not by way of contradiction, he had promised not so to answer again, (ch. xl. 5.) but by way of submission; and thus we must all answer the calls of God.

I. He subscribes to the truth of God's unlimited power, knowledge, and dominion, to prove which was the scope of God's discourse out of the whirlwind, v. 2. Corrupt passions and practices arise either from some corrupt principles, or from the neglect and disbelief of the principles of truth; and therefore true repentance begins in the acknowledgment of the truth, 2 Tim. ii. 25. Job here owns his judgment convinced of the greatness, glory, and perfec-tion, of God, from which would follow the conviction of his conscience concerning his own folly, in speaking irreverently to him. 1. He owns that God can do every thing. What can be too hard for him that made behemoth and leviathan, and manages both as he pleases? He knew this before and had himself discoursed very well upon the subject, but now he knew it with application; God had spoken it once, and then he heard it twice, that power belongs to God; and therefore it is the greatest madness and presumption imaginable to contend with him. "Thou canst do every thing, and therefore canst raise me out of this low condition, which I have so often foolishly despaired of as impossible; I now believe thou art able to do this.' That no thought can be withholden from him, that is, (1.) There is no thought of ours that he can be hindered from the knowledge of. Not a fretful, discontented, unbelieving, thought is in our minds at any time, but God is a Witness to it: it is in vain to contest with him, for we cannot hide our counsels and projects from him; and if he discover them, he can defeat them. (2.) There is no thought of his that he can be hindered from the execution of; Whatever the Lord pleased, that did Job had said this passionately, complaining of it; (ch. xxiii. 13.) What his soul desireth, that he doeth; now he says, with pleasure and satisfaction, that God's counsels shall stand. If God's thoughts concerning us be thoughts of good, to give us an unexpected end, he cannot be withheld from accomplishing his gracious purposes, whatever diffi-culties may seem to lie in the way.

II. He owns himself to be guilty of that which God had charged him with in the beginning of his discourse; (v. 3.) "Lord, the first word thou saidst, was, Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? There needed no more; that word convinced me; I own, I am the man that has been so foolish. That word reached my conscience, and set my sin in order before me; it is too plain to be denied, too bad to be excused; I have hid counsel without knowledge; I have ignorantly overlooked the counsels and designs of God in afflicting me, and therefore have quarrelled with God, and insisted too much upon my own justification; Therefore I uttered that I understood not," that is, "I have passed a judgment upon the dispensations of Providence, though I was utterly a stranger to the reasons of them." Here, 1. He owns himself ignorant of the divine counsels; and so we are all. God's judgments are a great deep, which we cannot fathom, much less find out the springs of. We see what God does, but we neither know why he does it, what he is driving at, nor what he will bring it to; these are things too wonderful for us, out of our sight to discover, out of our reach to alter, and out of our jurisdiction to judge of; they are things which we know not, it is quite above our repacity to pass a verdict upon them: the reason why we quarrel with Providence is, because we do not understand it; and we must be content to be in the dark about it, until the mystery of God shall be finished. 2. He owns himself imprudent and presumptuous, in undertaking to discourse of that which he did not understand, and to arraign that which he could not judge of. He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame to him. We wrong ourselves, as well as the cause which we undertake to determine, while we are no competent judges of it.

III. He will not answer, but he will make supplication to his Judge, as he had said; (ch. ix. 15.) "Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak, (v. 4.) not speak either as plaintiff or defendant, (ch. xii. 22.) but as a humble petitioner; not as one that will undertake to teach and prescribe, but as one that desires to learn, and is willing to be prescribed to. Lord, put no more hard questions to me, for I am not able to answer thee one of a thousand of those which thou hast put; but give me leave to ask instruction from thee, and do not deny it me, do not upbraid me with my folly and self-sufficiency," Jam. i. 5. Now he is brought to the prayer Elihu taught him, That which I see not, teach thou me.

IV. He puts himself into the posture of a penitent, and therein goes upon a right principle. In true repentance there must be not only conviction of sin, but contrition and godly sorrow for it, sorrowing according to God, 2 Cor. vii. 9. Such was

Job's sorrow for his sins.

1. Job had an eye to God in his repentance, thought highly of him, and went upon that as the principle of it; (v. 5.) "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear many a time from my teachers, when I was young; from my friends, now of late; I have known something of thy greatness, and power, and sovereign dominion; and yet was not brought, by what I heard, to submit myself to thee as I ought; the notions I had of these things, served me only to talk of, and had not a due influence upon my mind: but now thou hast by immediate revelation discovered thyself to me in thy glorious majesty; now mine eyes see thee, now I feel the power of those truths which before I had only the notion of, and therefore now I repent, and unsay what I have foolishly said." Note, (1.) It is a great mercy to have a good education, and to know the things of God by the instructions of his word and ministers; faith comes by hearing, and then it is most likely to come, when we hear attentively, and with the hearing of the ear. (2.) When the understanding is enlightened by the Spirit of grace, our knowledge of divine things as far exceeds what we had before, as that by ocular demonstration exceeds that by report and common fame. By the teachings of men God reveals his Son to us; but by the teachings of his Spirit he reveals his Son in us, (Gal. i. 16.) and so changes us into the same image, 2 Cor. iii. 18. (3.) God is pleased sometimes to manifest himself most fully to his people by the rebukes of his word and providence; "Now that I have been afflicted, now that I have been told of my faults, now mine eye sees thee. The rod and reproof give wisdom. Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest and teachest."

2. Job had an eye to himself in his repentance, thought hardly of himself, and thereby expressed his sorrow for his sins; (v. 6.) I! herefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. Observe, (1.) It concerns us to be deeply humbled for the sins we are convinced of, and not to rest in a slight superficial displeasure against ourselves for them. Even good people, that have no gross enormities to repent of, must be greatly afflicted in soul for the workings and breakings out of pride, passion, pee-

vishness, and discontent, and all their hasty unadvised speeches; for these we must be pricked to the heart, and be in bitterness. Till the enemy be effectually humbled, the peace will be insecure. (2.) Outward expressions of godly sorrow well become penitents; Job repented in dust and ashes. These, without an inward change, do but meck God; but where they come from sincere contrition of soul, the sinner by them gives glory to God, takes shame to himself, and may be instrumental to bring others to repentance. Job's afflictions had brought him to the ashes, (ch. ii. 8.) he sat down among the ashes; but now his sins brought him thither. True penitents mourn for their sins as heartily as ever they did for any outward afflictions; and are in bitterness, as for an only son or a firstborn, for they are brought to see more evils in their sins than in their troubles. (3.) Self-loathing is evermore the companion of true repentance; (Ezek. vi. 9.) They shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed. We must not only be angry at ourselves for the wrong and damage we have by sin done to our own souls, but must abhor ourselves, as having by sin made ourselves odious to the pure and holy God, who cannot endure to lock upon iniquity. If sin be truly an abomination to us, sin in ourselves will especially be so; the nearer it is to us, the more loathsome it will be. (4.) The more we see of the glory and majesty of God, and the more we see of the vileness and odiousness of sin, and of ourselves because of sin, the more we shall abase and abhor ourselves for it. "Now mine eyes see what a God he is, whom I have offended, the brightness of that majesty which by wilful sin I have spit in the face of, the tenderness of that mercy which I have spurned at the bowels of; now I see what a just and holy God he is, whose wrath I have incurred; wherefore I abhor myself, Woe is me, for I am undone," Isa. vi. 5. God had challenged Job to look upon proud men and abase them; "I cannot," says Job, "pretend to it; I have enough to do to get my own proud heart humbled, to abase that and bring that low." Let us leave it to God to govern the world, and make it our care, in the strength of his grace, to govern ourselves and our own hearts well.

7. And it was so, that, after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. 8. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you, for him will m I accept ; lest m Ideal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job. 9. So Eliphaz the Temanite, and Pildad the Shuhite. and **Zophar the N**aamathite, went, and did according as the Lord commanded them: the Lord also accepted Job.

Job, in his discourses, had complained very much of the censures of his friends, and their hard usage of him, and had appealed to God as Judge between him and them, and thought it hard, that judgment was not immediately given upon the appeal. While God was catechising Job out of the whirlwin.

would have thought that he only was in the wrong, and that the cause would certainly go against him; but here, to our great surprise, we find it quite otherwise, and the definitive sentence given in Job's favour. Wherefore judge nothing before the time. Those who are truly righteous before God, may have their righteousness clouded and eclipsed by great and uncommon afflictions, by the severe censures of men, by their own frailties and foolish passions, by the sliarp reproofs of the word and conscience, and the deep humiliation of their own spirits under the sense of God's terrors; and yet, in due time, these clouds shall all blow over, and God will bring forth their righteousness as the light, and their judgment as the noon-day, Ps. xxxvii. 6. He cleared Job's righteousness here, because he, like an honest man, held it fast, and would not let it go. We have here,

I. Judgment given against Job's three friends, upon the controversy between them and Job. Elihu is not censured here, for he distinguished himself from the rest in the management of the dispute, and acted, not as a party, but as a moderator; and moderation will have its praise with God, whether it have with men or no. In the judgment here given, Job is magnified, and his three friends morti-fied. While we were examining the discourses on both sides, we could not discern, and therefore durst not determine, who was in the right; something of truth we thought they both had on their side, but we could not cleave the hair between them; nor would we, for all the world, have been to give the decisive sentence upon the case, lest we should have determined wrong: but it is well that the judgment is the Lord's, and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth; to it we will refer ourselves, and by it we will abide.

Now, in the judgment here given,

1. Job is greatly magnified, and comes off with mour. He was but one against three, a beggar against three princes, and yet, having God on his side, he needed not fear the result, though thousands set themselves against him. Observe here,

(1.) When God appeared for him; After the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, v. 7. After he had convinced and humbled him, and brought him to repentance, for what he had said amiss, then he owned him in what he had said well, comforted him, and put honour upon him; not till then, for we are not ready for God's approbation till we judge and condemn ourselves; but then he thus pleaded his cause, for he that has torn, will heal us, he that has smitten, will bind us. The Comforter shall convince, John xvi. 8. See in what method we are to expect divine acceptance; we must first be humbled under divine rebukes. After God, by speaking these words, had caused grief, he returned and had compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies; for he will not contend for ever, but will debate in measure, and stay his rough wind in the day of his east wind. Now that Job had humbled himself, God exalted him. True penitents shall find favour with God, and what they have said and done amiss, shall no more be mentioned against them. Then God is well-pleased with us, when we are brought to abhor ourselves.

(2.) How he appeared for him. It is taken for granted that all his offences are forgiven, for if he be dignified, as we find he is here, no doubt he is justified. Job had sometimes intimated with great assurance, that God would clear him at last, and

he was not made ashamed of the hope.

[1.] God calls him again and again his servant Job; four times in two verses, and he seems to take a ple sure in calling him so, as before his troubles, (-h. i. 8.) " Hast thou considered my servant Job?

and as dear to me as when he was in prosperity: though he has his faults, and has appeared to be a man subject to like passions as others; though he has contended with me, has gone about to disannul my judgment, and has darkened counsel by words without knowledge; yet he sees his error, and retracts it, and therefore he is my servant Job still." If we still hold fast the integrity and fidelity of servants to God, as Job did, though we may for a time be deprived of the credit and comfort of the relation, we shall be restored to it at last, as he was. The Devil had undertaken to prove Job a hypocrite, and his three friends had condemned him as a wicked man; but God will confess those whom he accepts, and will not suffer them to be run down by the malice of hell or earth. If God says, Well done, good and faithful servant, it is of little consequence

who says otherwise.

[2.] He owns that he had spoken of him the thing that was right, beyond what his antagonists had done; he had given a much better account of the Divine Providence, than they had done. They had wronged God, by making presperity a mark of the true church, and affliction a certain indication of God's wrath; but Job had done him right, by main taining that God's love and hatred are to be judged of by what is *in* men, not by what is *before* them, Eccl. ix. 1. Observe, *First*, Those do the mos. justice to God and his providence, who have an eye to the rewards and punishments of another world more than to those of this, and with the prospect of those solve the difficulties of the present adminis-Job had referred things to the future judgment, and the future state, more than his friends had done, and therefore he spake of God that which was right, better than his friends had done. Secondly, Though Job had spoken some things amiss, even concerning God, whom he made too bold with, yet he is commended for what he spake that was right. We must not only not reject that which is true and good, but must not deny it its due praise, though there appear in it a mixture of human frailty and Thirdly, Job was in the right, and infirmity. his friends in the wrong, and yet he was in pain, and they at ease; a plain evidence that we cannot judge of men and their sentiments by looking in their faces or purses; He only can do it infallibly, who sees men's hearts.

[3.] He will pass his word for Job, that, notwithstanding all the wrong his friends had done him, he is so good a man, and of such a humble tender forgiving spirit, that he will very readily pray for them, and use his interest in heaven on their be-"My servant Job will pray for you, I know he will. I have pardoned him, and he has the comfort of it, and therefore he will pardon you.'

[4.] He appoints him to be the priest of this congregation, and promises to accept him and his mediation for his friends. "Take your sacrifices to my servant Job, for him will I accept." Those whom God washes from their sins, he makes to himself kings and priests. True penitents shall not only find favour as petitioners for themselves, but be accepted as intercessors for others also. It was a great honour that God hereby put upon Job, in appointing him to offer sacrifice for his friends, as formerly he used to do for his own children, ch. i. 5. And a happy presage it was of his restoration to his prosperity again, and indeed a good step towards it, that he was thus restored to the priest-hood. Thus he became a type of Christ, through whom alone we and our spiritual sacrifices are ac ceptuble to God; see 1 Pet. ii. 5. "Go to my servant Job, to my servant Jesus," (from whom for a time he hid his face,) "put your sacrifices into his hand, make use of him as your Advocate, for him Though he is poor and despised, he is my servant, I will I accept, but, out of him, you must expect to

be dealt with according to your folly." And as Job prayed and offered sacrifice for those that had grieved and wounded his spirit, so Christ prayed and died for his persecutors, and ever lives, making

intercession for the transgressors.

2. Job's friends are greatly mortified. They were good men and belonged to God, and therefore he would not let them lie still in their mistake any more than Job, but, having humbled him by a discourse out of the whirlwind, he takes another course to humble them. Job, who was dearest to him, was first chidden, but the rest in their turn. When they heard Job talked to, it is probable they flattered themselves with a conceit that they were in the right, and Job in all the fault, but God soon took them to task, and made them know the contrary. In most disputes and controversies, there is something amiss on both sides, either in the merits of the cause, or in the management, or in both; and it is fit that both sides should be told of it, and made to see their errors. God addresses this to Eliphaz. not only as the senior, but as the ringleader in the attack made upon Job. Now,

(1.) God tells them plainly, they had not spoken of him the thing that was right, like Job, that is, they had censured and condemned Job, upon a false hypothesis, had represented God fighting against Jc-b as an Enemy, when really he was only trying h.m as a Friend; and this was not right. Those do not say well of God, who represent his fatherly chastisements of his own children as judicial punishments, and who cut them off from his favour upon the account of them. Note, It is a dangerous thing to judge uncharitably of the spiritual and eternal state of others, for, in so doing, we may perhaps condemn those whom God has accepted, which is a great provocation to him, it is offending his little ones; and he takes himself to be wronged in all the

wrongs that are done to them.

(2.) He assures them he was angry with them; My wrath is kindled against thee and thy two friends. God is very angry with those who despise and reproach their brethren, who insult over them, and judge hardly of them, either for their calamities, or for their infirmities. Though they were wise and good men, yet, when they spake amiss, God was angry with them, and let them know it.

(3.) He requires from them a sacrifice, to make atonement for what they had said amiss: they must bring each of them seven bullocks, and each of them seven rams, to be offered up to God for a burnt-offering; for it should seem, that, before the law of Moses, all sacrifices, even those of atonement, were wholly burnt, and therefore were so called. They thought they had spoken wonderfully well, and that God was beholden to them for pleading his cause, and owed them a good reward for it; but they are told, that, on the contrary, he is displeased with them, requires from them a sacrifice, and threatens, that, otherwise, he will deal with them after their folly. God is often angry at that in us, which we are ourselves proud of, and sees much amiss in that which we think was done well.

(4.) He orders them to go to Job, and beg of him to offer their sacrifices, and pray for them, otherwise they should not be accepted. By this, God designed, [1.] To humble them and lay them low. They thought that they only were the favourites of Heaven, and that Job had no interest there; but God gives them to understand that he had a better interest there than they had, and stood fairer for God's acceptance than they did. The day may come, when those who despise and censure God's people will court their favour, and be made to know that God has loved them, Rev. iii. 9. The foolish virgins will beg oil of the wise. [2.] To oblige them to make their peace with Job, as the condi-

tion of their making their peace with God. If thy brother has aught against thee, (as Job had a great deal against them,) first be reconciled to thy bro-ther, and then come and offer thy gift. Satisfaction must first be made for wrong done, according as the nature of the thing requires, before we can hope to obtain from God the forgiveness of sin. See how thoroughly God espoused the cause of his servant Job, and engaged in it; God will not be reconciled to those that have offended him, till they have first begged his pardon, for, it is to be observed, Job and his friends had differed in their opinion about many things, and been too keen in their reflections one upon another, but now they were to be made friends; in order to that, they are not to argue the matter over again, and try to give it a new turn, (that might be endless,) but they must agree in a sacrifice and a prayer, and that must reconcile them: they must unite in affection and devotion, when they could not concur in the same sentiments. Those who differ in judgment about lesser things, yet are one in Christ the great Sacrifice, and meet at the same throne of grace, and therefore ought to love and bear with one another. Once more, observe, When God was angry with Job's friends, he did himself put them in a way to make their peace with him. Our quarrels with God always begin on our part, but the reconciliation begins on his.

II. The acquiescence of Job's friends in this judgment given, v. 9. They were good men, and, as soon as they understood what the mind of the Lord was, they did as he commanded them, and that speedily and without gainsaying, though it was against flesh and blood to ccurt him thus whom they had condemned. Note, Those who would be reconciled to Gcd, must carefully use the prescribed means and methods of reconciliation. Peace with God is to be had only in his own way, and upon his own terms, and they will never seem hard to those who know how to value the privilege, but they will be glad of it upon any terms, though ever so humbling. Job's friends had all joined in accusing Job, and now they join in begging his pardon; those that have sinned together, should repent together. They that appeal to God, as both Job and his friends had often done, must resolve to stand by his award, whether pleasing or unpleasing to their own mind. And they that conscientiously observe God's commands, need not doubt of his favour; The Lord also accepted Job, and his friends, in answer to his prayer. It is not said, He accepted them, (though that is implied,) but, He accepted Job, for them; so he has made us accepted in the Beloved, Eph. i. 6. Matth. iii. 17. Job did not insult over his friends, upon the testimony God had given concerning him, and the submission they were obliged to make to him; but, God being graciously reconciled to him, he was easily reconciled to them, and then God accepted him. This is what we should aim at in all our prayers and services, to be accepted of the Lord; this must be the top of our ambition, not to have praise of men, but to please God.

of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. 11. Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house; and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one

an ear-ring of gold. 12. So the LORD | lations of God were now as much the delight of his blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand 13. He had also seven sons, and three daughters. 14. And he called the name of the first Jeminia; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Keren-happuch. 15. And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. 16. After this lived Job a hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. Job died, being old and full of days.

Ye have heard of the patience of Job, (says the apostle, Jam. v. 11.) and have seen the end of the Lord, that is, what end the Lord, at length, put to his troubles. In the beginning of this book, we had Job's patience under his troubles, for an example; here, in the close, for our encouragement to follow that example, we have the happy issue of his troubles, and the prosperous condition to which he was restored after them, which confirms us in counting them happy which endure. Perhaps, too, the extraordinary prosperity which Job was crowned with after his afflictions, was intended to be to us Christians a type and figure of the glory and happiness of heaven, which the afflictions of this present time are working for us, and in which they will issue at last; this will be more than double to all the delights and satisfactions we now enjoy, as Job's after-prosperity was to his former, though then he was the greatest of all the men of the east. He that rightly endures temptation, when he is tried, shall receive a *crown of life*, (Jam. i. 12.) as Job, when he was tried, received all the wealth, and honour, and comfort, which here we have an account of.

I. God returned in ways of mercy to him; and his thoughts concerning him were thoughts of good, and not of evil, to give the expected (nay the unex-fected) end, Jer. xxix. 11. His troubles began in Satan's malice, which God restrained; his restoration began in God's mercy, which Satan could not oppose. Job's sorest complaint, and indeed the sorrowful accent of all his complaints, on which he laid the greatest emphasis, was, that God appeared against him: but now God plainly appeared for him, and watched over him to build and to plant, like as he had (at least, in his apprehension) watched over him to pluck up and to throw down, Jer. xxxi. 28. This put a new face upon his affairs immediately, and every thing now looked as pleasing and promising, as, before, it had looked gloomy and frightful. 1. God turned his captivity, that is, he redressed his grievances, and took away all the causes of his complaints; he loosed him from the bond with which Satan had now, for a great while, bound him, and delivered him out of those cruel hands into which he had delivered him. We may suppose that now all his bodily pains and distempers were healed, so suddenly, and so thoroughly, that the cure was a suddenly and so thoroughly, that the cure was next to miraculous; His flesh became fresher than a child's, and he returned to the days of his youth; what was more, he felt a very great alteration in his mind; it was calm and easy, and the tumult was all over, his disquieting thoughts were all vanished, his fears silenced, and the conso- || calamities of his afflicted state; and comforted him,

thus turned, and his troubles began to ebb as fast as they had flowed, just then when he was praying for his friends, praying over his sacrifice which he offered for them. Mercy did not return, when he was disputing with his friends, no, not though he had right on his side, but when he was praying for them; for God is better served and pleased with our warm devotions than with our warm disputations. When Job completed his repentance by this instance of his forgiving men their trespasses, then God completed his remission by turning his captivi-Note, We are really doing our business, when we are fraying for our friends, if we pray in a right manner, for in those prayers there is not only faith, but love. Christ has taught us to firay with, and for, others, in teaching us to say, Our Father; and in seeking mercy for others, we may find mercy ourselves. Our Lord Jesus has his exaltation and dominion there, where he ever lives making inter-cession. Some, by the turning of Job's captivity, understand the restitution which the Sabeans and Chaldeans made of the cattle which they had taken from him, God wonderfully inclining them to do it; and with these he began the world again. Probably, it was so; those spoilers had swallowed down his riches, but they were forced to vomit them up again, ch. xx. 15. But I rather understand this more generally of the turn now given. 2. God doubled his possessions; Also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. It is probable that he did at first, by some way or other, intimate to him, that it was his gracious purpose, by degrees, in due time, to bring him to such a height of prosperity, that he should have twice as much as ever he had, for the encouraging of his hope and the quickening of his industry, and that it might appear that this wonderful increase was a special token of God's favour. And it may be considered as intended, (1.) To balance his losses: he suffered for the glory of God, and therefore God made it up to him with advan-tage, and allowed him more than interest upon interest. God will take care that none shall lose by him. (2.) To recompense his patience and his confidence in God, which (notwithstanding the workings of corruption) he did not cast away, but still held fast, and that is it which has a great recompense of reward, Heb. x. 35. Job's friends had often put their severe censure of Job upon this issue, If thou wert pure and upright, surely now he would awake for thee, ch. viii. 6. But he does not awake for thee, therefore thou art not uhright; "Well," says God, "though your argument be not conclusive, I will, even by that, demonstrate the integrity of my servant Job; his latter end shall greatly increase, and by that it shall appear, since you will have it so, that it was not for any injustice in his hands, that he suffered the loss of all things." Now it appeared that Job had reason to bless God for taking away, (as he did, ch. i. 21.) since it made so good a return.

soul, as his terrors had been its burthen.

II. His old acquaintance, neighbours, and relations, were very kind to him, v. 11. They had been estranged from him, and it was not the least of the grievances of his afflicted state; he bitterly complained of their unkindness, ch. xix. 13, &c. But now they visited him, with all possible expressions of affection and respect. 1. They put honour upon him, in coming to dine with him as formerly, (but we may suppose) privately bringing their entertainment along with them, so that he had the reputation of feasting them without the expense. 2. They sympathized with him, and showed a tender concern for him, such as becomes brethren. They bemoaned him, when they talked over the

when they took notice of God's gracious returns to They wept for his griefs, and rejoiced in his joys, and proved not such miserable comforters as his three friends, that, at first, were so forward and officious to attend him. These were not such great men, nor such learned and eloquent men as those, but they proved much more skilful and kind in comforting Job. God sometimes chooses the foolish and weak things of the world, as for conviction, so for comfort. 3. They made a collection among them for the repair of his losses, and the setting of him up again: they did not think it enough to say, Be warmed, Be filled, but gave him such things as would be of use to him, Jam. ii. 16. Every one gave him a piece of money, some more, it is likely, and some less, according to their ability, and every one an ear-ring of gold, (an ornament much used by the children of the east,) which would be as good as money to him; this was a superfluity which they could well spare, and the rule is, That our abundance must be a supply to our brethren's necessity. But why did Job's relations now, at length, show this kindness to him? (1.) God put it in their hearts to do so; and every creature is that to us that he makes it to be. Job had acknowledged God in their estrangement from him, for which he now rewarded him in turning them to him again. (2.) Perhaps some of them withdrew from him because they thought him a hypocrite, but, now that his integrity was made manifest, they returned to him, and to communion with him again. God was friendly to him, they were all willing to be friendly too, Ps. cxix. 74, 79. Others of them, it may be, withdrew, because he was poor, and sore, and a rueful spectacle, but now that he began to recover, they were willing to renew their acquaintance with him. Swallow-friends, that are gone in winter, will return in the spring, though their friendship is of little value. (3.) Perhaps the rebuke which God had given to Eliphaz and the other two, for their unkindness to Job, awakened the rest of his friends to return to their duty. Reproofs to others we should thus take as admonitions and instructions to us. 4. Job prayed for his friends, and then they flocked about him, overcome by his kindness, and every one desiring an interest in his prayers. The more we pray for our friends and relations, the more comfort we may expect in them.

III. His estate strangely increased, by the blessing of God upon the little that his friends gave him. He thankfully received their courtesy, and did not think it below him to have his estate repaired by contributions; he did not, on the one hand, urge his friends to raise money for him, he acquits himself from that, (ch. vi. 22.) Did I say, Bring unto me or give me a reward of your substance? Yet what they brought, he thankfully accepted, and did not upbraid them with their former unkindnesses, nor ask them why they did not do this sooner; he was neither so covetous and griping as to ask their charity, nor so proud and ill-natured as to refuse it, when they offered it; and being in so good a temper, God gave him that which was far better than their money and ear-rings, and that was, his bless-The Lord comforted him now, according, v. 12. ing to the days wherein he had afflicted him, and blessed his latter end more than his beginning. Observe, 1. The blessing of the Lord makes rich; it is he that gives us power to get wealth, and gives success in honest endeavours. Those therefore that would thrive, must have an eye to God's blessing, and never go out of it, no, not into the warm sun; and those that have thriven, must not sacrifice to their own net, but acknowledge their obligations to very rich, and sometimes make good people so. Those that are become rich by getting, think they can easily make themselves very rich by saving; but as those that have little, must depend upon God to make it much, so those that have much, must depend upon God to make it more and to double it, else ye have sown much, and bring in little, Hag. i. 6. 3. The last days of a good man sometimes prove his best days, his last works his best works, his last comforts his best comforts; for his path, like that of the morning-light, shines more and more to the perfect day. Of a wicked man it is said, His last state is worse than his first, (Luke xi. 26.) but of the upright man, His end is peace; and sometimes the nearer it is, the clearer are the views of it. In respect of outward prosperity, God is pleased sometimes to make the latter end of a good man's life more comfortable than the former part of it has been, and strangely to outdo the expectations of his afflicted people, who thought they should never have lived to see better days, that we may not despair even in the depths of adversity; we know not what good times we may yet be re-served for in our latter end. Non si male nunc, et olim sic erit—It may be well with us, though now it is otherwise. Job, in his affliction, had wished to be as in months fast, as tich as he had been before, and quite despaired of that; but God is often better to us than our own fears, nay, than our own wishes, for Job's possessions were doubled to him; the number of his cattle, his sheep and camels, his oxen and she-asses, is just double here to what it was, ch. i. This is a remarkable instance of the extent of the Divine Providence to things that seem minute, as this, of the exact number of a man's cattle; as also of the harmony of Providence, and the reference of one event to another; for known unto God are all his works, from the beginning to the end. Job's other possessions, no doubt, were increased in proportion to his cattle, lands, money, and servants, &c. So that if before he was the greatest of all the men of the east, what was he now?

IV. His family was built up again, and he had great comfort in his children, v. 13..15. The last of his afflictions that are recorded, (ch. i.) and the most grievous, was, the death of all his children at once: his friends upbraided him with it, (ch. viii. 4.) but God repaired even that breach in process of time, either by the same wife, or, she being dead, by another. 1. The number of his children was the same as before, seven sons and three daughters. Some give this reason why they were not doubled as his cattle were, because his children that were dead, were not lost, but gone before to a better world; and therefore if he have but the same number of them, they may be reckened doubled, for he has two fleeces of children, (as I may say,) Mahanaim—Two hosts, one in heaven, the other on earth, and in both he is rich. 2. The names of his daughters are here registered, (v. 14.) because, in the significations of them, they seemed designed to perpetuate the remembrance of God's great goodness to him in the surprising change of his condition; he called the first *Jemima*. The day, (whence perhaps Diana had her name,) because of the shining forth of his presperity after a dark night of affliction. The next Kezia, a spice of a very fragrant smell, because (says Bishop Patrick) God had healed his ulcers. The third Keren-happuch, that is, Plenty restored, or A horn of paint; because (says he) God had wiped away the tears which fouled his are here told, v. 15. (1.) That God adorned them with great beauty, no women so fair as the daughters of Job. In the Old Testament we often find God for his blessing. 2. That blessing can make || women praised for their beauty, as Sarah, Rebekah,

and many others; but we never find any women in the New Testament, whose beauty is in the least taken notice of, no not the Virgin Mary herself, because the beauty of holiness is that which is brought to a much clearer light by the gospel. (2.) That their father (God enabling him to do it) supplied them with great fortunes. He gave them inheritance among their brethren, and did not turn them off with small portions, as most did. It is probable that they had some extraordinary personal merit, which Job had an eye to in the extraordinary favour he showed them. Perhaps they excelled their brethren in wisdom and piety; and therefore, that they might continue in his family, to be a stay and blessing to it, he made them co-heirs with their brethren.

V. His life was long. What age he was, when

V. His life was long. What age he was, when his troubles came, we are no where told; but here we are told he lived 140 years; whence some conjecture that he was 70 when he was in his troubles,

and that so his age was doubled, as his other possessions.

1. He lived to have much of the comfort of this life, for he saw his posterity to the fourth generation, v. 16. Though his children were not doubled to him, yet, in his children's children, (and those are the crown of old men,) they were more than doubled. As God appointed to Adam another seed instead of that which was slain, (Gen. iv. 25.) so he did to Job with advantage. God has ways to repair the losses, and balance the griefs, of those who are written childless, as Job was, when he had buried all his children.

2. He lived till he was satisfied, for he died full of days, satisfied with living in this world, and willing to leave it; not peevishly so, as in the days of his affliction, but piously so, and thus, as Eliphaz had encouraged him to hope, he came to his grave

like a shock of corn in his season.